

Gateway Fellowship Church

Marathon Faith

Part Three- Walk with God

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Teacher: John Van Pay, Lead Pastor

What would it take for you to be closer to Jesus right now, than you have ever been in your life? Sometimes it takes a wake-up call, right? A reality check. That's what it took for me. A couple of weeks ago our staff team went deep into the hill country to spend time together, to retreat, to get closer to the Lord, and then, just to spend time with each other. Just play together and pray together and have a good time. One of our sessions we invited one of our missionaries, Dick Brogden who spent time with our church family for a month, pouring into us. He had the first session. He said he had been praying and he had been in our church for a month and had been walking around seeing the nice building and all the things that are happening here. How busy we have been doing ministry and training small group leaders and training people in our Gateway School of Ministry and starting new churches and how intentional we have been. During prayer he felt like the Holy Spirit had given him a word for our team. He opened up to the book of Revelation to where Jesus wrote a letter to one of the churches and He said, "I have seen your works, and you have forgotten your first love." How many of you have ever been punched in the gut and you didn't even see it coming; like you just lost your breath? Has that ever happened to you? That's what I felt like happened to me spiritually. I remember in the moment I was getting real defensive. In my mind I was saying, "God, we just got this building, and we are trying to make disciples, and we are trying to start new small groups and take care of our church family that You are adding to." I'm saying all these things to God. It was exactly what the Lord was trying to speak to my heart about. The reality is that I have a daily time of Bible study, I feel like I sometimes try to rush it to get to the next thing. It had been too long since I had spent an extended amount of time in prayer. It had been too long since I had taken an extended fast. I felt very convicted. I felt my spirit was desiring and yearning to get closer to the Lord again.

I don't know if you have felt that way too. As a Pastor I am somewhat embarrassed to confess that sometimes I struggle with discipline of spending an extended or extravagant amount of time with the Lord. I don't know if you struggled with your private time with God too. But I wonder today if that word that was given to me, to our team, was a word that was needed for our church family? What if Jesus was writing a letter today to Gateway Fellowship? What would it look like? I see all of the building and the lights and the things that you have worked so hard for, but, be cautious for you might forsake your first love. You've showed up at church. You've braved the great San Antonio Monsoon of 2018. But are you

braving your secret place when no one is looking to spend time with me in the presence of God? Do you abide with me as much as you abide with social media? And Netflix? Are you as devoted to me as you are to college and NFL and Fantasy Football? Do you take great intentionality and care in developing and growing your spiritual soul like you do with working out your own body and exercising and lifting weights? This is as much the Holy Spirit speaking to me as to anyone else. But the Lord is calling. He is calling us back to our first love. Calling us back to where the noise would subside. Where we would treasure a personal relationship with Him. That we would each take the responsibility for the relationship and intimacy with God. I'm so glad you're here as we begin this new series called Marathon Faith where we are looking in the Bible. If you have your Bible, please turn with me to Hebrews 11 and we are discovering a new endurance runner that is listed in Hebrews 11. What is it about them? What is unique in their life that helped them finish their race that could help us finish our race as well?

We are going to discover starting in verse 5 our next endurance runner. "By faith, Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death and was not found because God had taken him. For before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God." That he what? That he pleased God. How many of you desire in your heart that you want to stand before the Lord and say, "God, I want to please you"? How many of you desire that? How did he please God? Well, let's discover. Hebrews 11:6 "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." God is a rewarder of those who what? Diligently seek Him. Are you diligently seeking the Lord? Is there a hunger inside of you? Is there a fire that's burning? That you would rather spend time with the Lord than anyone else? Do you long to spend time with God? Are you seeking Him?

Have you ever lost your keys at home? Like, before the whole little "tile" came out for the keychain? That was like one of the greatest gifts that God ever has given me. Keys getting misplaced. How many of you had to be somewhere so you feel that urgency to look everywhere? In every place in your house, and the closet. You try to think, where was I last? You look in your vehicle. There is just this desperation, right? Can you imagine doing that? What would that look like if we were so diligently seeking the Lord? So intentional, by faith? Lord, I know you desire to spend time with me and I desire to spend time with you. I want to see you. I want to seek your face. I want to be in your presence. What would that look like? If you're not as close to God, right now, more than you have ever been in your life, it is your fault. You can't blame your parents. You can't blame a small group leader. You can't blame the church, right? How many of you have heard the excuse from someone who went to another church, they are just church hopping because they weren't "being fed"—that is the excuse they use. That pastor doesn't feed me. It is the greatest excuse of immaturity I have ever heard. Because there is a dependence on the church to feed them, rather than feeding themselves. Can you imagine physically that the only time you eat was the All-You-Can-Eat buffet on Sundays at the Golden Corral? And then by Thursday you get really hungry, but you blame Golden Corral because you're still hungry. Does that make sense at all? But don't we do that? We expect other people to feed and nourish our soul. You are responsible for your own walk with the Lord.

That is what is so unique about Enoch. Every day he was seeking the Lord. This was the time right before the Flood. It was violent. It was an age and a culture of people who weren't just out seeking the Lord. But Genesis records it as Enoch walking with God. That is the desire. God created Adam in the garden. He said, "Adam it is not good for you to be alone." And God gave Adam his wife, Eve so he could have fellowship with someone else. In the garden they would walk together. They would spend time walking together. God desires that kind of fellowship with those He created. He created you for fellowship that you may glorify Him and spend time with Him. Before you can ever finish running your race, you must first learn to walk with the Lord.

How do we walk with the Lord? You have got to take responsibility for your own walk and your own spiritual growth and your relationship with the Lord. In Ephesians 5, starting in verse 11 it says, "About this, we have much to say and it is hard to explain since you become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature. For those who are full of age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. None of us would object to a four-month-old in a high chair being fed, right? The imagery of a forty-year-old person in a high chair whining and complaining about being fed, there is just something wrong with that. Spiritually it is the same way. Hebrews 6:1 "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God." God's will for you is that you would grow in maturity. That you wouldn't stay in the same place. That you wouldn't become complacent and that you certainly shouldn't go backwards. Rather your love for Him should grow more intense. How can you grow in your faith? How can you get closer to the Lord? We can look to Jesus. If you want to turn with me to the Gospel of John chapter 15. Jesus' own disciples saw a life-giving connection that He had with his Father. Early in the morning before it was ever daylight, Jesus would go into the wilderness and abide and pray and have devotions with the Lord. His own disciples said Father teach us how to pray. Teach us what it means to be close to the Father. In John 15, one of the greatest passages in the Bible, Jesus says starting in vs 1, "I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away, and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered, and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoke to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

Jesus uses the word abide fifteen times in this passage. It's an important word to understand. Maybe not a word we use in our everyday language. But as Jesus used the metaphor of a vine, he says I am the true vine, you are the branches. You understand this, right? A branch, apart from a tree won't survive on its own. But if it's connected to the vine or the tree, if you broke the branch and opened it up, you couldn't see where the vine ended, and the branches begin, because they are one. Jesus has this one, this unity, this life-giving connection with his Father and He is saying I want to have this with you as well. I want us to be one. You have to abide in Me as much as I want to abide in you. It's the desire of the Father to draw close to you. Draw close to Me and I will draw close to you. That is what the word of God says. The word abide comes from the Greek word meno which is associated with the Latin word manio-meaning house. That is where we get the English word derived from that Latin word for mansion. Abide literally means to dwell in one place with one person. It means to have this fellowship. This life-giving connection. This union. That's what the Lord desires. A lot of times we can have all of these lists and to-do's and things, that we choke out this relationship that God wants to have with us. It's so natural. He wants to abide with you. He wants to walk with you. He wants to have this extravagant, extended time where maybe there is no agenda. You're just being. You just talk what's on your heart and you listen to what's on His heart. You're in the Word of God and there is this hunger and desire of what He wants to speak and reveal to you. That's what abiding is. Now I have written some content in Chapter 3 of Marathon Faith, but to complement that content I wanted to share with you the word ABIDE as an acronym as Dick Brogden shared with our team that will help you in understanding what Abide means. Help you get closer to the Lord. Now Dick Brogden, I was with him for breakfast yesterday, he flew out to Washington like 8 billion miles away, so he can't be with us here. But we have someone who is just as good and anointed and effective as Dick Brogden, and he is going to help us understand the word ABIDE. Will you put your hands together and help me welcome Luke Brogden, Dick's son to the stage?

Luke is a friend. Luke, thank you for joining us today. Luke, where do you go to school? I go to UTSA. Do we have any other Road Runners in the house? Luke, you're a sophomore, and a small group leader. What is your major in school? Construction Science. Very good. Not only are you a small group leader with Chi Alpha but you also volunteer. Tell us where you volunteer here at the church? I work with the kid's ministry in Adventure Kids. You did that last year and you're doing that now. You're committed-- Thank you so much Luke! When we look at the word ABIDE, I know that when we think of Jesus, we know that his disciples would get up early in the morning and see that he wasn't there. Scripture says that before it was even light out Jesus was in the wilderness spending time with the Father and abiding.

Comment a little on your dad about his time and his abiding. What did you learn from your dad? That was the biggest thing I did learn from my dad. Everywhere we went, and everywhere he preached, we heard this sermon—like 100 times—it was always ABIDE. We used to make fun of him for it. Like if he ever was going to say hey boys I need to tell you something, we would answer and say “Is it about abiding dad?” Because we've heard that one.

I learned it not only from hearing him, but from seeing him. Every morning when I would wake up I would see him abiding. Not for a little while, but for the whole morning. He would spend it there and then tell us about what he read. It made a huge impact on me. I never want to go a day without

spending time in the Word. Just because of what he did. You're busy, and you're a student and you work and serve. We had lunch this past week and you shared some things with me about how the Lord was speaking to your heart through scripture. What did he say?

It's crazy because that same verse is what the Lord spoke to me as I was reading in Revelation 2 and 3. Before I had even heard that my dad had said that. I was reading it and it talks about how God sees our works and He knows our toil and how we can't bear with those who hate evil. But he has one thing against that. That we have lost the first love. The Greatest love which should be for God. We have lost it. I felt so convicted for myself and for Chi Alpha. I know that a lot of times we can get distracted by thinking that we have to serve others, or to do works, but the greatest commandment isn't to love others, it is to love God. I felt convicted about that. I have the appearance of being alive but if I am not spending time in the Word with God, then I am actually dead, and I can't really bear fruit. Thank you for sharing that. It's helping me and helping all of us. Let's take the word ABIDE

A-All the time

You should always be abiding with God wherever you go. We are living examples of the spirit of God so as we go about our day, we should always be in the presence of the Lord and spending time with Him wherever we go. So, when Paul is writing to "Pray without ceasing" he means just always be aware of God's presence. Not just compartmentalizing a devotion time for 20 minutes, but just being aware of God's presence.

B-Blocks of time

You are giving God the most important part of your day. You are designating a time to be with him. Just like you are being intentional in pursuing those you may be discipling, you have to be intentional about pursuing God and setting aside the most important part of your day. It could be the morning for you or maybe the evening. Just giving God the best part of your day. Usually a long part of time, not short. Like an hour or two hours of blocks of time that you spend seeking after the Lord. Intentions aren't enough. I desire to be close to my spouse. You may desire to be close to a friend. You're going to be intentional. But if something is important, you're going to put a mechanism in place to support it. Like on your calendar--I have a date. Every single week at this time, on this day, I have a date. Nothing is going to get in the way of that. I'm not going to schedule other things. I am not going to cancel it. It's the same way with our walk with the Lord. We understand the concept of tithing financially and obeying the Lord with the tithe. 10% of what God gives us, we return to Him. But what would it look like if we tithed our time? What would it look like if on a Saturday we tithed say 2 hours and 40 minutes with the Lord?

I-In the Word and In Prayer

Like we read in John 15:7, "If you abide in Me and my word is in you, then whatever you ask of Me, it should be done for you." We really need to be filled with the words of God. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit. If we aren't filled with that, we can't point others to it. To be in prayer and in the Word is so crucial. To be reliant on the Word and be full of it and have it written on our hearts and from that we can point others to Him. May we just treasure the Word of God. This is God breathed. It's active. It's

living. I am going to take it wherever I go. I'm going to hide God's Word in my heart. The Bible says in 1 Timothy that it's God breathed, and every word is inspired. It is without error. It is used for correcting, teaching and training so that you as a follower of Christ may be equipped early for every good work.

And then prayer. I think sometimes when we get prayer backwards we think God, here's this list, bless it—like taking an agenda. I don't know if you have ever done that. I know I have. But what if we have it backwards? What if prayer is more about listening? Where we listen to God. To be still and know that I am God. I want to challenge you, when you pray this week, listen more than you talk. Ask Him, "God what is your mind on this area of my life?" or "What is your will?" Just getting behind it and saying God bless what You want to do, not what I want to do.

D-Discipline

Discipline is about being in the Word and being in prayer. Another thing my dad taught me was it always starts with desperation. You realize that you need the Word. You need to be filled. But it's not always easy. So you need discipline to help you keep on doing it. As you discipline yourself, you start to desire the word because it's good, it's from the Lord. The more you discipline yourself, the more you desire it. The more you desire it, the more you will delight in it. Once you get filled with it, you will be delighted to be in the Word. It won't be a struggle anymore because it is from the Lord. It will be a joy.

It goes Desperation, Discipline, Desire, Delight. That is powerful because a lot of times we can be lead by what we feel. Anyone ever just feel like taking the trash to the curb? Right? We don't feel like it. But we don't live out our faith by what we feel. If you start lifting weights and you're out of shape, you're going to be sore the next day. You're not going to feel like doing it the next time. But if you're persistent and consistent, you're going to see the value as you start to build up more stamina, confidence, more energy. It's the same thing spiritually. You're growing your spiritual soul.

E-Everyone

It means that we should all be corporately abiding which means that as a church and body of Christ, we wait upon the Lord. Like a Bride waiting for her Groom. It's not about one person by themselves. It's about everyone coming into the presence of the Lord. As we come expecting to see Him, we should also expect Him to answer. The Holy Spirit is going to come. We should wait together expecting Him to move in our hearts and in the body of Christ. What did ABIDE look like in your own small group? I would often go over to my small group leaders house and we would spend good quality time together. During small group we would spend time in the Word together and studying it and finding out what it meant and what we should do about it. We would pray together and just be together and seeking after the Lord together and just waiting for Him to move.

Awesome, powerful. Thank you, Luke

Here is the challenge for the week. I want you to start now by seeking the Lord. Ask Him to guide you and bring conviction if you haven't been spending time with the Lord. Don't be legalistic with it or condemnation. This is a relationship and the Lord is drawing you closer to Himself. How will you ABIDE with Him this week? I challenge you to consider every day this week; ABIDE with Him personally and privately 30 minutes a day. If you're not doing it at all, maybe you just start with 15 minutes. 7 minutes in the Word. 7 minutes in prayer. Let that be like training wheels until you grow more mature and in your relationship with the Lord. You're just going to want to spend more time with him. Then ABIDE with your family. ABIDE with your small group. And together, we are going to ABIDE as a church body.

Let's prepare our hearts and minds to not be in a hurry. Don't think about leaving or what's going to happen this afternoon. Let's be fully devoted to the Lord right now. That we are in the presence of the King. Would you demonstrate and express your love to Him in your own words right now? Would you just lift the name of Jesus? Would you exalt Him? Would you worship Him? He is worthy to be praised.

Prayer

KDD

9/12/18