

My name is Josh Patterson. I'm one of the pastors here on staff at the church. I'm excited to be here, I love being here and it is certainly good to be here with you. I have shared bits and pieces of my story at different times. So depending on how long you've been here, you've been able to piece a couple of things together. Really for the first nineteen years of my life, you could characterize me by one simple term: fool. I really just was a fool. Everything about my life was foolish. I didn't know the Lord, and I didn't grow up in a family that pursued Christ or anything like that. It was a great family in its own right, but I just didn't have faith. And I lived like that. In order for me to get to my senior year in high school, I had to go through my 11th grade year, get kicked out of school to go to military school, get kicked out of military school to repeat the 11th grade to finally get to my senior year. So that's just an indication of what it took to get to my senior year. So I'm there in Spanish class, and in Spanish class, we would have these conversation partners. I had one particular conversation partner with whom I conversed a lot in both in Spanish and English. She and I developed an interest in one another and began dating, which for me was no big deal. It was a big leap of faith for her because she was religious and I was altogether not religious. In fact, she was Mormon and to me that meant nothing at all. I just thought she's cute and she's a good girl, so this should be interesting. I literally had two different lives. I had the life that I was around her in Spanish class during 7th period, and then I'd hang out with her until her curfew at 9:30. And then there was this whole different side of my life. She just thought I was a guy who liked to party and really had no idea who I was.

So we dated for six months, and at the six month mark, she's out of town and I go to a party where I get in a fight. It was not really a fight per se, because it was really me just getting beat up. There was no punching on my end. It was all receiving everything that other people had for me, which landed me in the hospital with a broken jaw. I remember getting up off the ground after being kicked and pummeled and running for my life to the car, I remember my jaw doing strange things and thinking, "This isn't right. Something's off here." So I get to the hospital and wake up next morning with my jaw wired shut. It was that way for eight weeks. So I couldn't open my mouth, which in hindsight is ironic because it was my mouth that got me beat up in the first place. And now here I am unable to open my mouth. So when I wake up the next morning, my friends and family are there in the room, and I just remember thinking, "I'm just kind of sick of this." I could just go through the laundry list of where my foolishness has brought me. It has taken me into rehab and out of rehab, into military school and out of military school, I got kicked out of school, I was unwelcome in this neighborhood and I had gotten into trouble with the law. I had done all of these different things, and here I am now, in a hospital, unable to talk and my face is swollen. My dad is an oral surgeon, so he did the surgery. And he figured that, while he was in there, he was going to go ahead and take out my wisdom teeth as well. So I wake up the next morning and my face is swollen. Not only do I have a broken jaw, but now I'm missing four wisdom teeth. I'm despairing where I am in life, and I really want something different. So I tell my family that morning, "I'm not going to college. I'm going to stay here. Something has got to change." So I enrolled in the community college, and I stayed here.

About two weeks later, a friend invites me to a Bible study. I literally had nothing else to do because I was too prideful to go anywhere looking the way that I looked. So I went with him, and I walked in and sat down in the back. And the guy leading the Bible study is just teaching to fifty high school students in his living room. I'm there just listening, and eventually he unpacks the gospel of Jesus Christ. I had heard this before. This is where I grew up. You just hear this growing up in Dallas. But I heard it altogether differently that night. My heart just longed to know what he was saying. I just wanted it. The Lord had just been priming the pump of my life to receive that good news that this man was sharing that night. The students start to leave and the crowd begins to clear when I walk up with my jaw wired shut and I say, "I

need to talk with you about this some more. I've heard this before, but whatever is going on in me is different now." And just walks me through again and shares with me the gospel. And I prayed some innocent, believing, desperate prayer of hope and faith and belief begging God to do something in me, and He did. I left that night, got in the car and went to IHOP, watched my friend eat and distinctly remember telling him, "I have no idea what just happened, but I'm not the same. I'm not the same guy as when you picked me up. I don't know what it is, but I'm not the same." And then this guy Tom begins to pull me in and disciple me, walk with me, share with me, help me grow, teach me and shape me in so many ways. I had a thousand questions.

And one of the things Tom kept talking with me about was my relationship with that girl. He'd say, "You see, now you're in a place where you're confessing this and believing this, right?" And I would say, "Absolutely I believe this." He'd say, "Do you see where your life here is inconsistent with your belief? You believe this here and you say that you want to live your life in accordance with the Scriptures and what God has for you. And then clearly the Scriptures are saying this about your relationship here. There is an inconsistency. I'm not saying she's a bad person, but I'm saying you need to deal with this. You're walking in foolishness." And I just spurned that advice. Because that's what I took it as, advice. I just thought, "You know what? I'm not going to do this." And this is where the crazy story actually gets a little crazier. I moved to Utah because she moved to Utah. Like I said, she's a Mormon girl, so she goes to BYU. And so I head up to Provo too. I live in Provo, Utah, which is all Mormon. I lived with four guys that I had never met before. They had just come home from the mission field. So here I am, four months into my new faith with four eager missionaries as roommates. And every single night, it was just conversations about faith, about what they believe and all this stuff. And I would be on the phone back here with Tom going, "Can you help me out?" And he would say, "Yes. You need to break up with that girl and come home." So I stayed there for a year, and I stayed there in disobedience for a year. It was painful and I justified it every bit of the way. Wisdom was screaming in the streets. It wasn't just Tom, it was my buddies and my family. They were pleading with me, not that this was a bad person, but that this was foolishness. They would say, "Josh, you believe this. Is this the kind of man that you're going to be where you're just okay with inconsistencies in your life?" I eventually leave Provo, the relationship ends and what they said would happen happened. Pain, hurt, regret, it's all there.

And then I moved to Texas and transferred into Texas A&M and go to College Station. So I get there and I'm living for the first time of my whole life with another believer. I'm living with a guy who is my age, a peer with whom I can share and talk and just do this with. I'm excited about this. He's a guy who I grew up with my whole life. He and I came to faith the same night. We're going to do this together. I get there and month later he leaves. So a month into the semester, he leaves and I'm by myself in Bryan, Texas, which is miserable. Even if you're an Aggie, Bryan is miserable. I'm in an apartment with no TV, no overhead light, just a lamp and a kitchen light, which just demonstrates the drabness of that apartment. And the Lord took me to the woodshed. He just cleared everything out and then just pulled up my life, not just that relationship but nineteen years of my life. And the question that was penetrating my soul was, "Who are you going to be? This is what you confess, and this is what you say you believe. Are you going to be a man who is okay with inconsistencies?" It was not just a little thing here, but a gaping, clear voice from the Scriptures speaking out and I will justify it and stuff it down and not deal with it. "Are you going to be that kind of man?" And I found myself on my face, literally prostrate on my face many, many nights that first semester in college as the Lord chopped me down. He just cut me down. And I would cry out and beg out to Him to make this stop, whatever it was. Because I just wanted Him, not knowing actually what He was doing by pressing me down was giving me more of Him. And the one thing I walked away from that semester with was this, "I'm going to fear the Lord. I'm no longer going to be okay with gaping inconsistencies in my life. I am going to be a man, by God's grace and His power, who fears the Lord."

So what I want to talk about tonight is just that. I want to unpack a teaching a theology of the fear of the Lord and talk about why the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowing what it means to bridge that gap between what you believe and how you live. So turn with me to Proverbs 1. Let me tell you a little bit about the book of Proverbs. It was mostly

written by king Solomon, the son of David, the king of Israel. That's how it starts out in Proverbs 1:1. A proverb simply a little saying, a little phrase, a little comparison, an object lesson that is said and held up for us to look at, analyze as a general truth and then principalize that truth to my specific reality and context. So that's Proverbs in essence. It's in a collection called the wisdom literature of the Scriptures. The wisdom literature includes Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Proverbs, Psalms and the New Testament book of James. It's a genre of literature that screams out that this is the practical day to day, this is what you need to hear. They're covering the big metanarrative story. They're speaking of God's redemptive plan for humanity and the world as it works out in a restored person day in and day out. That's what Proverbs is about.

The goal of Proverbs can be found in Proverbs 2:6. "For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." The goal of Proverbs is simply to instill wisdom and discipline for these four people: the wise, the simple, the fool and the youth. That's who Proverbs is written to. It's the idea here that you and I would position ourselves in such a way that we would be ready to receive what God has for us and know how to live day in and day out. It's practical living.

So let's read Proverbs 1:1-7. "The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." Verse 7 is the absolute key of the entire book. The first section of the book includes chapters 1-9. Chapter 9 ends with the same verse nuanced this way, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight." So it's setting up this idea of the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord, to you and me as we live day in and day out, is simply like letters are to the alphabet, like numbers are to math, like notes are to music. You cannot have them without this. You cannot know how to live day in and day out in your life without understanding the fear of the Lord. And the very premise, the very starting point, the entry gate of understanding how to live is this, "You must first understand your posture and position in this world. And the posture and position of this world is you are to fear the Lord."

So what does it mean to fear the Lord? There are two realities in tension here. The fear of the Lord can mean terror and dread. We tend to minimize that because we don't want to think that way, especially as Christians, because of what Christ did on the cross. So we don't think of God as holy and righteous as He truly is, but God is absolutely as holy and righteous as He is as seen in the very thing that He punished, sin in His Son on the cross. He doesn't just sweep it to the side; He deals with it to the nth degree. Except it's not just dealt with in you; it's dealt with on Christ. So the first posture is you on your face before the One who is altogether holy, a righteous God who is separate from you and me. So we walk in absolute trepidation before Him. Anytime He shows up in the Scriptures, people fall on their faces. His angels show up and people fall on their faces. So the fear of the Lord is one holding in tension this reality, that He is to be feared with terror and dread. And the only reason you and I do not simply explode in this world is because the other reality is to be held in tension with the fear of the Lord, and it's the reverential awe and gratitude for who He is and what He has done in Christ. So the fear of the Lord, the picture is me on my face looking up at the cross holding up a hand in complete gratitude as I bow down before His divinity. It's that tension. If you get either one off, if you've got one where you wear the t-shirt proudly of "Jesus is my homeboy," and you completely diminish the fact that He is God and He is not your homeboy, you have a foolish depiction of who He is. Or if you may have the other picture that He's some vindictive, mean, wicked ruler who rules with an iron fist and a cane letting it crack down on you. Neither one is true. Because in the cross of Jesus Christ, you see both the horror and the dread that He has toward sin and the love and the invitation that He gives to you and beckons to us to draw near.

Listen to this quote by P.J. Buys. "The true fear of God is a child-like fear. Some of the Puritans used to call it a "filial fear." It is a combination of holy respect and glowing love. To fear God is to have a heart that is sensitive to both His Godness and His graciousness. It means to experience great awe and a deep joy simultaneously when one begins to understand who God really is and what He has done for us. Therefore the true fear of God is not a fear that makes a person run away and flee from God. It is a fear that drives him to God. Love for God and fear of Him are, therefore, not at all incompatible. To think that they are is to fail to see the richness of the character of the God we worship. It is to ignore the way in which knowing Him in all of His attributes, and responding appropriately to Him, stretches our emotional capacities to their limit. Scripture portrays the fear of the Lord and the love of the Lord as companion emotions."

Here's another quote by J. Gresham Machen. "The Christian must fear God. But it is another kind of fear. It is a fear rather of what might have been than of what is; it is a fear of what would come were we not in Christ. Without such fear there can be no true love; for love of the Saviour is proportioned to one's horror of that from which man has been saved."

Until you and I understand the very reality of our position apart from Christ, we will not fear the Lord. You and I will not fear the Lord until we understand that apart from Christ we have no righteousness, apart from Christ we are born enemies to the Father, apart from Christ we have no link, no relationship to Him, apart from Christ we are destined towards damnation. That is where we're headed, and there is nothing but terror and dread before us. There is no joy, there is no laughter and there are no smiles in that reality. But because of Christ, because of His great love with which He loved us, Christ died for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin, that we might become the righteousness of God. What we could not become on our own, He gives us freely in Christ. And the horror and dread of standing before a holy and righteous God, He makes peace through the cross. And if you and I don't understand that very fundamental beginning reality, you and I have no idea what it means to link our life with our belief. We have no idea what it means to live a life in wisdom and walking in godliness, because our posture is off. We have a passive posture, we have a dismissive posture or we have a haughty or prideful posture. We don't have the posture of humility that bows down before the One to whom we owe everything.

So understanding the fear of the Lord is first and foremost understanding the correct posture of the believer, and it's one of deep desperation, servitude and humility before a holy and righteous God who has the ability to destroy us but has not because of the love that He has for us in Christ. If you don't get that, there are a million realities that you cannot and will not ever see. You just won't see it. Christ is the light by which you see everything else. So to understand the fear of God is to understand who you are, both without Him and now in Him. So you understand how to fear the Lord by considering who He is. Once you have developed a posture of dependence, humility, a recognition of who you are apart from God and now in God and who God is, now and only now are you ready to receive what the Scriptures call "wisdom." Now and only now are you ready to learn what it means to walk in godliness, to grow in your faith. To do it apart from that reality is to try it in your own strength and to do it out of your own fears, out of your own anger and out of your own issues. You need to do it out of a complete posture of dependence saying, "I need You. You are the One who will lead me, guide me and direct me. You are the One who knows all things. I am a follower of You. If You tell me to go left, I go left. Why? Because You know all things. And although I cannot see around the bend, I trust the One who is leading me." So when the words in that relationship come to my heart, I need to know it's for my good and for my joy. That's what God has for me in that. Because He is a good and gracious God. But it's only when my heart is ready to receive instruction, when my heart is open for correction, when my heart is in a posture of humility, that wisdom is even possible. Wisdom is possible when humility is present.

So I get to Texas A&M and I literally wanted everything to be different. I had this phrase that I wrote down in my journal, in my Bible, on my class notes and literally on my bedpost. "Action over intention." I want to be a man of action over intention. I've lived too long with good intentions only. And it takes a lot of energy to act, but it takes a lot more energy

to stuff down regret for not acting. So I just want to be a man who took action rather than having a bunch of good intentions. So I started with this understanding of who Christ is and who I am in light of Christ to think through all aspects of my life. It's a discipline that I still try to do this date, to think through, "How does a relationship with Christ affect this part of my day, of my week, of my life, of my marriage, of my parenting or of my leadership?" I want to be diligent in thinking and considering the reality of it through the grid of the fear of the Lord, understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ affects me. So that's what I wanted to do.

It came around again when I saw a girl that I was interested in and was interested in maybe pursuing this girl. So I started talking with some buddies and said, "Hey, what do you think about that Natalie girl? You think we might be able to work?" It's so awkward, but that's what we did. I had a friend come up to me and say, "Hey, have you considered her dad?" I was like, "No." "Do you know who her dad is?" "Uh, Mr. Jeffrey I guess. I don't know." He said, "Well you might want to go hang out with him just for a little bit." And then it dawned on me who he was. Now, I had just a few church experiences in my life. One of them was in 8th grade. I got invited to a church camp. So I went to church camp, showed up a day late and we get in our dorm room. The camp was in Arkansas, so it was a long drive. And so as an 8th grader, after a long drive, the first thing you've got to do is just relax and have a smoke in the dorm room. So that's what we did. We just kicked back and we're smoking by the window and unwinding a bit from the trip. And then we hear a knock on the door. It was the dorm mother or whoever this lady was. She was just like, "What are you doing?" "Nothing at all (except smoking)." She said, "You can't do that here or anywhere, because you're like 12 years old." So we go through that and they decided that they were probably going to have to search our room, just to see if we had anything else. That was smart on their part, because we did. We had brought a full bottle of vodka and a 12-pack of beer. We didn't know what the camp was going to be like, and we wanted to be able to be ready for whatever the Lord was going to do that week. So we literally had a carry on of contraband at camp. So they didn't send me home. They let me stay. I think they let me stay because they put some guy on me just to be like, "Could you please get this kid saved sometime this week? We don't want to send him back to his family because that would be hell for them." Just to make a long story short, the pastor over that camp was Mr. Jeffrey.

So I'm thinking, "Okay, I've got to go talk to this guy." I was confident of what Christ had done in my life, so I set up a meeting, walked into his office and said, "Mr. Jeffrey, here are my intentions with this situation. I would like to date your daughter, and if you would be willing to let me do that, I'd love that." And his first question was, "Tell me what's been going on in your life since 8th grade." That is a fair question. So I shared with him what had been going on in my life since 8th grade, and I was just able to testify of what God had done in my life. And he said, "I will allow you to pursue my daughter under these conditions: that you treat her with respect, that you treat her with honor and that you treat her with purity." So I looked at this man in the face, the man who has done it well with his family and I said, "I will. By God's grace, I'll treat her with respect, with honor and with purity." And so every six months that Natalie and I dated, I would set up a meeting with her dad and I'd go and sit in his office and say, "Mr. Jeffrey, there are three things that I want to talk with you about. The first one is this. I'm thoroughly enjoying your daughter. You're right. She is fantastic, and the more I get to know her, the more I really enjoy being around her. The second thing is this. I'd like to continue to pursue her. If you would bless that, I would love to continue to get to know her even more. And the third thing is this. I want you to know that by God's grace I have treated your daughter with respect, with honor and with purity." Six months later, I would call him up and go, "Can we meet?" I dated her for five years and did this for every six months.

You see, what I didn't want to do is live the way that I had lived. I was a fool. I had a thousand regrets, a thousand stories of where I had no idea what it meant to respect anyone, what it meant to walk in purity or what it meant to honor a girl. That wasn't anywhere on my radar, but all of a sudden, with an understanding of the fear of the Lord, with an understanding of what it means to walk in wisdom, what it means to diligently and intentionally consider my life in light of Christ Jesus, I just wanted to do it differently. So when I went in on that tenth time and sat down with him, I said to

him, "For the past four and a half years, I have gotten to know your daughter, and I am crazy about her. And my second intention is this. If you would bless it, I would love her hand in marriage. And the third one is this. I have treated her with respect, honor and purity. And my commitment to you is this. Walking forward in marriage in God's grace, I'll continue to treat her with respect, honor and purity." And he said, "You have my blessing. I have cultivated her, grown her up and I am handing her to you in marriage. And your responsibility, Josh, is to take her hand and give it to the Father at the end of her life." I was like, "Uh, I just want to get married. We've been waiting a long time." But that blew me away. Because now he gives me a new nugget, a new element intentionality by which to understand my life. As I walk I a posture and a position of fearing the Lord, now that my dating is over, my life is meant to prepare this woman to meet the Savior, and her role is to prepare my heart to meet Him as well. One of us is getting there first, and the other will learn how to grieve. But that is coming for us in life.

Wisdom says that you and I would look through a grid and consider our lives in such a way because of the fear of the Lord that we wouldn't be flippant about these things, that we wouldn't be ho-hum about these things, that we would consider these things and live differently because of them. Wisdom is defined as the art of skillful and godly living. That's how the Proverbs are defining wisdom. It's this skill that is honed and crafted. It's not just something that you get one day. You develop it over time. Somebody is guiding and shaping you and gently leading you down a path. Wisdom is married to this idea of discipline and instruction. And your posture is, "Yes, I receive it. It is for my good, my joy and that I might be useful and beneficial to others and the kingdom. For Your glory, I will bow down and follow." That's what wisdom is, that you are recognizing, "This is the path to life." It's not just something that flies by; it is something that is intentional, sought after and to be strived for. You don't simply sit back and passively receive it. It's what Matt has been calling "grace-driven effort." You will, by your nature, drift towards idleness and idolatry, and you are swimming upstream, empowered by the Holy Spirit to fight the good fight to become a man or woman of courage, faith, humility and dependence. You strive for it and you work for it. It is difficult and painful, but it is life and joy. It is intentionality, it is the wellspring of fruit and it is what God has for His people. He says, "When you truly understand Me and you confess Me here, you will be unhappy and unable to live with the foolish inconsistencies in your life. So bow down and let Me lead you, and I'll take you."

There are three people in the Proverbs. There's the wise, there's the fool and there's the simple. The wise embrace the fear of the Lord and they live intentionally because of Him. The fear of the Lord is not something that terrifies them. The fear of the Lord is a warm blanket around their life. It is protection. It is an understanding that He has me, He guides me, He leads me and I am under the very watch of the Sovereign of the universe. So the wise man or woman walks in and is embracing the fear of the Lord, and they live intentionally because of Him. Their life is different in the way they consider their marriage, the way they consider parenting, the way they consider dating, finances, where they go, what they do and what they say. Their life has purpose, direction and intentionality. It is marked by usefulness, it is marked by a life moving towards a purpose because they have embraced the reality of the fear of the Lord. They know that, through the cross of Jesus Christ, they have been redeemed, reconciled and invited in. And because of that, their lives will never ever be the same. It can't be. So the wise embrace the fear of the Lord and live intentionally because of him.

The fool dismisses the fear of the Lord, and they live aimlessly without Him. You see, the fool has even considered the ways of the Lord and has literally chosen and absolutely made a statement that says, "I am the captain of this ship. I am the sovereign of my soul. My way is the right way. I will do it in my strength, I will do it in my energy and I will do it for my glory." Some of this happens from a posture of victimization, a posture of weakness, a posture of desperation, but it goes, "I'm not going to let anyone in. I'm going to continue to push everyone out. I am going to protect this." And you become a self-protector of your heart. Or your heart is so pridefully arrogant that you want everybody to see it because you think you are the show, you think you are the stuff and you set up a big ESPN interview and let everybody know what your great decision is. You just think life revolves around you. And the Scriptures would call you a damned fool.

You're a fool. You think you're going somewhere because you might be getting some accolades or you might be running towards accomplishment. But the Scriptures are going to say you are a fool and that you're running on a treadmill and you're going to slip off and fall backwards into a place called Sheol. Wake up. You are a fool. You can walk a thousand old ladies across the street, you can save hundreds of kitties from the trees, you can do a thousand good deeds, but you are a fool and your life is for naught. Solomon says in the book of Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." Another translation might say, "Meaningless, meaningless. Life is utterly meaningless." You are chasing the wind, and you will one day line up in your trophy room of self-made accomplishments, all the things you have done in your own strength by either inviting everyone in to applaud you or keeping everyone out to protect you, either way you're a damned fool and your life will end in destruction and despair. The Scriptures are saying, "Wake up!" They are calling out to the fool because the fool is not without hope. I lived my life as a fool for nineteen years with a laundry list of ridiculous regrets, shameful acts that I could go on and on about. And it's by God's grace that He has changed me. So for those of you who are so strong in your own strength or so weak and self-protective, there is hope for you. But you need to know this. The way that you're living your life right now, the Scriptures are calling you a fool.

So you've got the wise who embrace the fear of the Lord and live intentionally because of Him, you've got the fool who dismisses the fear of the Lord and lives aimlessly without Him and you've got the simple. And I don't mean simple as in "I've simplified my life and cling to nothing." The Proverbs are going to define the simple as stupid, naïve, impressionable, dangerous, highly influenced and not influential. The simple are passive, they're weak and they're not discerning. So the simple don't even consider the fear of the Lord, and they live passively forgetting it. Sometimes they do this over here and it works out, and sometimes they go here and it doesn't work out. They have no idea between their right and their left. The picture of the simple is the one who just drifts through life and goes whichever way the current flows. They are impressionable from everyone. They hang out with these people who are strong in their faith and they want to be strong in their faith. Then later that night they hang out with these people who are living completely ridiculous lives and they're in. There is no anchor for their soul, there's no conviction, there's no guiding reality, there is no grid by which they understand anything.

In Proverbs 9, wisdom prepares a feast and sends out her emissaries to proclaim, "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here! . . . Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight." It's this invitation to godliness. And just a few verses later, the harlot does the same thing. She climbs up the tower and calls aloud in the streets. And do you know who ventures into her home because he cannot tell the difference between the call of wisdom and the call of foolishness? He just walks down the street and hears this invitation, "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." And the fool just drifts and eventually walks into the house of the harlot, and it ends abruptly with this, "Her guests are in the depths of Sheol."

So my hope for this church, is that the Village Church would be marked by a people who fear the Lord first and foremost and are growing in godliness. My hope is that we would be a people who understand the posture of dependence, who understand the posture of humility and understand that wisdom is radically relational. My hope is that we would understand that walk in wisdom means that I have a dynamic, influential and growing relationship with the Savior because of who He is and what He has done, and in light of that I live differently, I heed wisdom, I discipline my life, I strive after these things and consider the impact of what it means to be a dad, what it means to be a husband, what it means to court somebody else in a relationship and I will be, by God's grace, godly in that context. But my fear is that most of us are just simple, that we just don't consider it. It's why we wake up weekend after weekend just wondering why we did what we just did, how we got to where we just got to. It's why we get into our marriages and we get into raising our children and ten years down the road we look back and go, "I never wanted it to be like this, but I've never done a thing to ensure that it wouldn't be here. I have never done anything to think through, to plan through, to discipline our lives in such a way that positions ourselves under the waterfall of God's grace. I have just passively lived, and I have hoped for

the best. But I have not pressed into the Lord God Almighty. I have not led my family in that way. I have not prayerfully waged war for my children, for my home, for my neighborhood. I have done nothing like that. I have done nothing to consider any of that. I have just done a job, come home, kissed the wife and kids, tucked them in, watched a couple of shows and gone to bed just to do the same thing over again."

The hope for my life, success for my life is for one day to sit around a table and see a generation of faithfulness grow and grow and grow. So I want to pray for that now. I want to share that now. I want to try to structure our lives in such a way that the reality of our home is that we are demonstrating with our lives that we are people of faith and that there is a marked difference between us and the guy across the street because we fear the Lord. I want the gospel of Jesus Christ to have impacted my heart in such a way that there is a tangible difference. I want you to be able to see a difference. I give money to charity. Why? Because I believe that money can do something to push back what is dark in the world. We go and share Christ to the nations. Why? Because we believe that He is coming back and we have the hope of the world in our mouths and in our hearts that we might share to others. I pray with my wife to cover and protect her and to invite her into my heart that we might engage Christ as companions. These are the things that I don't want to look back on however many years down the road and say, "Man, I wish I would have done that. That would have been great." Action over intention. And don't hear me talking about good works trying to earn anything. This is godliness lived out day in and day out as you press into Him and it pours out into how you live. If it doesn't, you need to check your heart. If it doesn't, you need to stop, back up and consider your posture. Do you fear the Lord and has that impacted your life? If not, why not? Why not deal with it now? Why wait for another weekend? Why not press in now? The invitation of Christ is ever before you, and He is beckoning you to come to Him. His ways are good, His intentions are kind, His mercies are new every single day and His promise is joy.

Let's pray. "Father, I long to know You more than I know You, and I long to walk in a greater level and measure of obedience than I certainly walk in now. My prayer and my hope is that this message is not confused for a check list of legalities. This is a dynamic, flowing, life-giving relationship that is absolutely poured out from the primary understanding of who You are and what You have done. I simply want to align my life with what I say I believe and with the life that you have lined out for me saying, 'This is life, Josh. Walk in it.' And I pray that I would be awakened from my simple ways. And although I'm a believer, when I walk in foolishness, would you quickly and swiftly stop me? So God, I pray for the fool. I pray for the one who just absolutely dismisses this. Would You awaken their eyes to see that, despite their foolishness, the love of the Savior still beckons the one who dismissed Him altogether. But for those of us who are simple and passive, God, breathe on us. I pray we feel the weight of this. There is no passivity in Your gospel. It is active, it is movement and it's all generated by a wellspring of life of Your Holy Spirit who is in us. Just to be a static statue of a believer is foreign in the Scriptures. So awaken our hearts. And to the wise in here, I pray that they would ever grow in their wisdom and that their usefulness would multiply by a thousand fold. And I pray that they would look up and find the youth, find the simple and teach them Your ways. I pray that they would give prudence to the simple, wisdom to the youth and that they would take us under their wings and teach us what it means to be godly, what it means to be a man or woman who walks in a fear of the Lord. May their tribe increase in this place. We bless You and we love You in Christ's name. Amen."