

Productive Problem Solving

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[0:00] Father God, we are so grateful to be here together this morning, gathered in the name of! Jesus Christ, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and the Savior to all who call on his name! We are so grateful that we are part of your great story of redemption centered around giving your name ultimate glory forever. And we're so glad, God, that you promised that you began to be a good work and that you will complete it because you are not just the author, you're also the perfecter of our faith. Now, Lord, we'll open your word and we will see your faithfulness.

We will see human faithlessness and we will see divine faithfulness. Lord, please help us to remember that that's all we really can hope in and trust in, is that you are faithful, oh God.

We praise your name for it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You can be seated. We'll dismiss our kids to children's ministry. And we're going to be talking about problem solving today, productive problem solving out of the book of 1 Samuel chapter 8. We've got four weeks of walking through some of the key government issues in Israel before we turn the page and discuss Isaiah. These four weeks are meant to sort of be a good thing to do. And we'll be talking about the key government issues in Israel. And we'll be going to be talking about the key government. And we'll be talking about the key government.

Now, have you ever met someone who is kind of like, you just can tell, like they are exceptionally good at solving problems? They're very productive in solving problems. And not only can they solve a problem, but they might solve other problems in the process. They are very efficient problem solvers.

Have you ever met someone or been the kind of person who is a destructive problem solver? You go to solve a problem and you create six more. Is there somebody at work that you would not like to ask to fix a copier? Because you're not sure like that there would be a building standing after a few hours of this particular person trying to solve that particular problem.

[2:09] Well, at some point really early on in my ministry, I remember in my 20s, I realized, you know, a huge part of my job is going to involve solving problems. And I don't really have any kind of way of thinking about that.

And so I began to search through the scriptures and find places where problem solving was put on display. One of those is in the book of Acts when the widows were being treated unfairly, or that was the claim.

And the problem solving of the apostles there, that was one of the first passages that I studied. And I soon found my way to 1 Samuel chapter 8, where a problem is presented. I agree with the problem as it is identified.

And then you just see the problem is presented and the wrong people solve it, and it creates a whole mess. And so through that early study of problem solving, I kind of came up with six things that I try to habituate and kind of reflexively think about whenever a problem is presented to me. And the first one is clarity. Am I confident I can actually, I understand the problem? Am I confident I actually understand the problem? Sometimes I think the problem is this, it's that.

[3:20] There's a thing in biblical counseling called the presenting problem. Someone comes in and says, this is my problem. But after talking, you realize that's not the actual deep down problem.

It's over here. So first thing try to do, often fail, is clarity. Do I actually understand the problem? The next one is humility. Am I the person who is supposed to solve this problem?

That's another one that I had to tap the brakes on many times and continue to have to tap the brakes on. Just because I can see the problem doesn't mean that I'm the person to solve the problem.

There's humility required there. There's also humility because there's a bit of an ego trip in someone expecting you to solve a problem. And you need to pause and ask, like, yeah, they expect me to solve this problem.

And they will think highly of me if I do. But is this actually my problem to solve? Number three, urgency. This is a huge one. Does this problem really need to be solved right away?

[4:16] Because a lot of times the thing that's called for is just carefully monitoring the situation, but don't touch it. And God has a way of resolving problems if we don't panic and rush to them too urgently.

And the next three are the most important. Identity. Am I approaching this problem as a child of God who has been adopted in Christ? Like, am I approaching this problem as if the creator of the universe has bent over backwards to make me his son?

You know, that's a key one. Identity. How am I thinking about myself in this particular crisis or in this particular problem? The next is memory. Do I have a clear embodied sense?

I'll explain what that means in a minute. Of God's past faithfulness. What I mean by embodied is any one of us who knows even a little Bible or has paid attention even a little bit could if I just said, give me five ways that God's been faithful to you in the past.

You know, you could tell me those ways. The reason the word embodied is there is because I want to, it's not testing my ability to remember the things that God has done. It's testing how impactful those things are in my current disposition.

[5:27] Am I feeling God's faithfulness by recounting these facts or are these just facts? If I'm not able to in the moment say that God is for me and that I am personally, spiritually affected by God's past faithfulness, I'm in some really difficult, shaky ground when it comes to solving a problem.

I'm probably not going to do a great job. And the last one is fearfully. Am I making this decision with suitable fear of God? And I'll lean into that one a little bit more as we get into our text.

So if you'll open your Bibles with me to 1 Samuel chapter 8. Better read verses 1 through 6 first.

And this is point 1, which is the problem. When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.

The name of his firstborn son was Joel. And the name of his second son was Abijah. And they were judges in Beersheba. Beersheba is like the El Paso of Israel.

It's the border town. It's the deep south. Yet his son did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

[6:42] That's the problem stated. Samuel's old. And his sons are not walking in his ways. Verse 4. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways.

Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations. So the problem is, I think, fairly stated.

So my first question, clarity. Do they understand the nature of the problem? I think so. I mean, as simply put as it can be put, is that their leader, the man who was set by God to be judge over them, Samuel, is getting old.

And he has two sons. And those sons are not following in his ways. We should note, this is the classic problem of the Old Testament. This is the classic problem of the Old Testament.

A leader does not finish well. That's just, that's like every other story of a leader in the Old Testament has this sort of tension. He either fails to finish well because of his own personal sin or his failure to instruct his children in the way they should go, so forth.

[8:00] This is like the problem. That's why I'm pretty confident they identified it rightly because it's always the problem. It's really in every Bible story. Now, that's the problem, but now we see the destructive solution.

We already read this. We'll look back at verse 4. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways.

Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations. So let's ask a few questions. Clarity, do they understand the problem? I think so. Humility, is this their problem to solve?

Probably not. Probably not. This was God's doing. God had a plan. It was probably not their problem to solve. It was, this is a classic moment where we understand kind of how submission works.

If you're in a relationship where you're the one called by God to submit, this is one of those moments where you bring the problem to the attention of the one in charge. Without prescribing a must be solution.

[9:04] That's a humble way of following a leader is, hey, I'm concerned. I see a problem over there and I'm not even 100% confident I see it correctly. But this is the problem I see. I need you to let me know that you see that and that you're working on that.

Can I hand this to you? Oh, dear leader. That's what a submissive attitude would look like in this moment. That doesn't seem to be where they're at. Urgency.

Did this problem need to be solved right away? No. Samuel has a lot of years of ministry left. He'll anoint David. He's around for a long time after this particular moment.

So is this a problem that had to be solved right away? No. And yet look at the text. Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.

So they are operating under a false sense of urgency here. And identity. Are they acting like a people who are set apart by God as his loving chosen people?

[10:07] No. Look at their solution. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations. Here's the basic idea. A peculiar people, a peculiar and chosen people must not solve problems as if they are like everybody else.

And if you maybe hear like just three things today, I would just tell you that when you arrive at a problem, if you're not fully aware of your identity in Christ and fully aware of your uniqueness because of who Christ is and what he's done for you, you're going to just reach into the world's playbook and run the play that they would run in this particular case.

Your instinct will be to just do what everybody else does in this situation. And that is absolutely not going to work for you. God has you. If you're chosen in Christ, if he saved you, if you're his child, he has a unique path for you to walk throughout the world and a unique way to solve problems.

And if you aren't secure and aware and it's not pressing down on you that Jesus is my Lord and Savior and I am chosen by God, I have the God of the universe as my father.

If that's not all kind of frothy and real in your brain, you know, you're just going to assume that the way to fix the problem is the way that any Joe Schmo who doesn't have Jesus is going to fix the problem.

[11:26] And that's what they're doing here. Now, a point for us, a king to judge us like all the nations. So, yeah, this is how they get into a lot of trouble.

This is a destructive solution to a problem that didn't even need to be solved right away. Now, I did go ahead and write a bit of fan fiction to imagine what the productive encounter would look like.

So let's go through that. Point number three, the productive solution. Here's how I think it would go if it went well. Well, the people, we think we see a problem. It could be bigger or different than what we see, but we think we have a problem.

Urgency, well, we have time. We don't have to make a decision right now. We're just bringing the problem to your attention. It's not our problem to solve. Humility, not directly. This is God's problem. We trust him. Identity, we are God's chosen people, so we know whatever solution he provides, it likely will be different than the solution he would provide for someone who's not.

His chosen people. And memory. You know, God has handled this exact problem many times before. I didn't go through that in the last section, but it's clear that they are treating this like a one-off.

[12:39] Like, we have literally no data to tell us how we should think about this problem. They're not affected by a memory of God's past faithfulness. But if they were being productive, they would be affected by a memory of God's past faithfulness.

And that's kind of one of the inside jokes for only the Hebrew nerds in this passage. You know, in English, it doesn't come off at all. But there's this great irony that's taking place in the section we just read.

And that is because the name Samuel means God has heard. The name Samuel means God has heard. And the great irony of this passage is that these people are freaking out about a leadership crisis to a man who was God's last provision in their last leadership crisis.

Everybody said, like, there's always a leadership crisis in Israel. Well, they're talking to the last time. They're speaking to the man whom God provided through a miraculous event to be their leader.

And we developed a little infographic for this just to help you to see what I'm talking about. There's basically two needs at the beginning of 1 Samuel. Hannah is in a really rough situation.

[13:53] She is godly but barren. She's a faithful woman, and she cannot have children. And she is extremely provoked by her rival. She's in a polygamous situation, and her quote-unquote sister wife is fertile and cruel.

Great combo. And she is constantly berating Hannah year after year. So Hannah as a person is in a terrible spot.

And not only that, but here's the reality. For a woman in the Old Testament, if you don't have a son, you don't have anyone to take care of you when your husband inevitably dies.

You know, he touches the ark one day or something, and he drops dead. You need someone to, you need a son to watch out for you. If you're wondering, why are all these barren women so panicked to have children?

Well, there's layers. Like, there's honor. There's a sign that God's blessed me. But there's also just, like, that's your retirement account, to have a son. So Hannah's in a desperate situation, and she calls out to the Lord that the Lord would provide a child for her.

[14:56] Well, simultaneous to that story, there's another story happening at the national level. And that is that there is a man named Eli, who is current judge of the nation. And he is an aging priest in Shiloh.

And he has two sons who, guess what, did not walk in Eli's ways. Hophni and Phinehas abuse their office, are corrupt like Samuel's sons are.

And so there's a bleak future for Eli as well. There's a bleak future for Hannah. There's a bleak future for Israel. And what God does through the prayers of Hannah, and probably also through the prayers of other people in the nation, is he provides a man, a child named Samuel, who was born, and Hannah names him God has heard.

So now that you have that information in your head, think back to the text we just read in 1 Samuel 8, 1 through 6, and just think about how ridiculous this is.

They're talking to the living, breathing evidence of God being faithful. And they're panicked, and they're urgent, and they're not humble.

[16:06] They're rushing everything. They're not thinking about how good God has been, and so on and so forth. And so that way of acting, it creates a huge, huge problem.

The way that this problem was solved creates centuries of destruction. In fact, this sermon had to be my first sermon introducing us to Isaiah, because almost all of the problems we see in Isaiah come out of a seed that was planted in chapters 8 through 13 of 1 Samuel, centuries before. Look back at verse 4 of 1 Samuel chapter 8. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, Behold, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways.

Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed to the Lord.

Verse 7. And the Lord said to Samuel, Obey the voice of the people in all that they say. By the way, backing up to 6, I forgot to mention this. But the thing displeased Samuel.

[17:23] Samuel now has a problem. What's the productive thing that Samuel does with his problem? But Samuel prayed to the Lord. He's got a whole different way of approaching problems.

Verse 7. And the Lord said to Samuel, Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you. For they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me. For being king over them, according to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day, forsaking me, and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.

Like, one of the crazy things is that if you won't remember God's faithfulness, God will remember your bad memory. He notices when you don't notice him.

He keeps track of when you're not keeping track of all he's done for you. He is repulsed by ingratitude, not simply for its attitudinal purposes, but because you need gratitude to guide you into future decisions.

And so the Lord is essentially saying here to Samuel, they are in the cycle that they have been in all along. Now then, verse 9. Obey their voice. Only you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them.

[18:47] Now I'm going to talk about the sixth question, and that is, am I making this decision fearfully? Am I making this decision fearfully?

Meaning, am I approaching this problem with a real sense of the fear of the Lord? And I would just summarize it as this. There is a high likelihood that if I solve one of my problems in a way that is not pleasing to the Lord, that he will, in his discipline, give me what I'm asking for.

He will give me what I'm asking for. This is a stirring and troublesome thought to wonder how much of my life is fine because I like it, but it's actually God's discipline.

He gave me what I, I had X, Y, and Z problems in my 20s, and I came up with all these solutions. And God gave them to me. That's why I say that the number six, like, attitude you have to have when you're facing a problem is, you have to, like, have a deep fear of the Lord.

He's not to be messed with. He's not to be trifled with. He's not to be ignored. He's not to be discounted. You know, as C.S. Lewis would say, you know, he is, he is kind, but he is not safe.

[20:19] And here we find exactly that. This is not the grandfatherly God who sucks on a Werther's and hopes for the best. This is a God who says, they've rejected me.

Give them what they've asked for. Now, friends, let's just take a moment. I won't, I won't go too dark, too deep. But, like, you might have wealth.

And that might be God's discipline. You might have health. And that might be God's discipline. You might have a great marriage.

And that might be God's discipline. Having those things is no indicator that you've obeyed the Lord well.

It could be that you were so headstrong when you sought out certain things that God said, you've rejected me. Here. Here's the life you'd ask for.

[21:20] That's what he does here. Only he says to, through Samuel, make sure you solemnly warn them. That's why I just want to encourage you that, boy, it's just so essential that you fear God.

It's an uncomfortable feeling. It's a confusing feeling. It's kind of a fine line. He's our father. What does this mean? Well, I think the reformers would talk about filial fear.

Like, fearing a father who is good but also doesn't suffer foolishness. Fearing a father who's wise and will let you, you know, he'll hand you the whole carton of cigarettes.

When you get caught with the one ciggy behind the shed. Like, the fear of God is absolutely a must when solving a problem.

And this other incredible aspect of fear of God, and that is, is that one of the main reasons we solve problems poorly is because we're panicked, we're overreacting, and we're afraid of the consequences that come if this problem doesn't get resolved.

[22:30] And so what's so incredible about the fear of God is that it actually will displace your fear of everything else. If you fear God soberly, deeply, consistently, your fear about all these other things starts to fall away.

In fact, this is a great evidence about whether or not you do fear God. Don Carson says it really well in a sermon on the call to Jeremiah. He says, get yourself ready.

Fear God. Fear no other. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Those are the options. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them.

In other words, you're either going to trust me, or you're going to be scared all the time. That's the life of any person who's trying to serve God's kingdom, by the way. You're either going to, you're going to do hard things, people aren't going to like you for it, you're either going to trust me, or you're going to be terrified constantly.

You either refuse to be terrified by the world around you, or God in his providential working out of things will see to it that you live your life in fear before them.

[23:39] That is important in our culture, Carson continues. Resolve it every day. I will not be afraid. I will not be afraid. I will fear God only. I will not fear this world, because if you do not resolve in this way to fear God, and thus no other, you will, by God's own decree, be sentenced to scaredness, to being frightened, to being fearful before the watching world.

And it's pretty obvious, you can kind of smell the panic in this story. And the point of Carson here is that if they had feared God rightly, they would have approached this problem differently.

But because they did not fear God, they wound up on a trajectory that, like I said, would literally wreak havoc on centuries of people in Israel. Okay, look at verse 9, chapter 8, verse 9.

Now then, obey their voice. This is God speaking to Samuel. Obey their voice. Only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the kings who shall reign over them.

So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking for a king from him. And he said, these will be the ways of the king who will reign over you. He will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots, and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots.

[25 : 06] Verse 12. But he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground, and some to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war, and the equipment of his chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers, and he will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards, and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards, and give it to his officers and to his servants.

And he will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them in his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves. But the Lord will not answer you in that day. But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and they said, No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.

And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them to the ears of the Lord.

And the Lord said to Samuel, Obey their voice and make them a king.

[26 : 30] Samuel then said to the men of Israel, Go every man to his city. And the rest is literally history. They got the king they asked for, and worse than that, they got the kingship they asked for.

The whole office had been polluted by this discontentment and by this comparison and this lack of trust in God. And for centuries after this, the monarchy in Israel would cause problem after problem after problem.

The very things on this list, Samuel essentially, if it didn't click, Samuel essentially warned them, If you appoint a king like all the other nations, he's going to tax the snot out of you.

He's going to take your sons from you. He's going to take your daughters from you. By the time Solomon is in full reign and in his full Solomonic glory, he requires one, he divides the nation to ten regions, and each one of the regions has to provide for all of his court's needs one month at a time. He has something like 70,000 enslaved workers working for him, a thousand wives slash concubines. In fact, that all led to the main problem in Isaiah.

[27 : 50] There's a lot of problems in Isaiah, and that is that, did you know that Israel had a civil war and split into two different kingdoms? Some of you know that. Some of you don't. That'll be key when we study Isaiah.

But do you know why? Why the nation split? Why there were ten kingdoms to the north and ten tribes to the north and two to the south.

Why did that happen? Solomon's son, Rehoboam, was king. And a man from the north came and said, You guys are taxing us way too hard. Your dad was really hard on us.

Please lighten the burden. Please stop taking all of this stuff from us. Rehoboam had counsel to do that from some. And others in his court said, They're trying to take advantage of you because you're a young kid.

Rehoboam got insecure, and he said, You think my father was bad? I'm increasing all of this stuff. And it was that king doing exactly what Samuel warned against hundreds of years before that ultimately caused the division of the nation of Israel.

[28 : 54] Now, you probably know that Israel was always kind of a military weakling surrounded by nations. There were plenty of moments throughout the story of Israel where, Gosh, we're not sure they're going to be okay against the Philistines, against this or against that.

Well, just around the time the mega empires arose, Babylon and Assyria, Assyria first, Israel was divided against itself.

And so Isaiah is a prophet to the kings of the southern kingdom, Judah. And these howling, the most vicious army probably in the history of the world, the Assyrians, are starting to gain their full strength.

And now, just at the moment when Israel has half of its strength at most. And you just see throughout, you're going to see throughout the book of Isaiah, the kings just keep making it worse.

That all, that's all a harvest of what was planted in this text we read today. In 1 Samuel chapter 8. Their wickedness, the king's wickedness would bring on even additional judgments.

[30:06] Not only were they unwise, but they were consistently wicked. And ultimately, we can go all, we can trace this passage all the way to the cross and ask, why did they kill him? Why did the crowd turn on him?

And the answer is found in 1 Samuel 8. These people still, by Jesus' time, were operating out of a category of, we want a king like all the other nations. And they expected him to be a certain kind of king.

And so the echoes of this decision in chapter 8 of 1 Samuel go all the way to the cross. That's how important it is.

You know, if you don't like my six questions, something like that. Have some philosophy of problem solving that involves trusting the Lord. Because it's really easy to solve a problem in a way that creates a thousand more.

And it's really easy to do that thinking immediately afterward, I've solved the problem. I'm okay. Only to see that the consequences of the problem you solve are just getting started.

[31:14] Well, some of you might know that well at the beginning of Israel's history, right at the beginning of the Exodus, God actually said, like, you can have a king.

It wasn't against kings. He made provision for this in his word in Deuteronomy chapter 17. And I want to read some of that to you. Deuteronomy 17, many, many, many years before 1 Samuel 8. They're not even in the land at this point. He says to them, when you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it, and then say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me, you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose.

One from among your brothers, you shall set his king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you who is not your brother. Now listen to what God says explicitly, verse 16. He must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, you shall never return that way again.

And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. In other words, don't pick a king like all the other nations.

[32:34] Verse 18. This king must be a king after my own heart. Verse 18. And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law approved by the Levitical priests, and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of his law and these statutes and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children in Israel.

That would be my seventh point. You guys, you know, we like sevens over sixes, Bible numbers. And it's the most simple. Am I solving this problem biblically?

Am I actually consulting what God has already said and seeking to live that out? That would have been great for this crowd to just think back.

Well, has God ever talked about kings at all before? Someone, go get the book. Anyone got a concordance? Solve your problems biblically.

What has God said already about your problems? God's given us a whole host of ways to solve our problems. But I want to leave you with this glimpse of hope.

[33:59] I said that, like, kind of the whole storyline of the Old Testament is every leader will disappoint you and break your heart. That's kind of the whole story. Every leader will break your heart. There's a terrible king on the throne by the time we get to Isaiah 9.

His name's Ahaz. We'll talk about him when we get to him. And we'll get to this. This passage will be kind of right around Christmas time. Ahaz is just a real bummer of a king. He's just causing so many problems with his problem solving.

It's just really hard to watch. God gives this promise in the midst of Ahaz's reign. From Isaiah 9, this is the Lord. For to us a child is born.

To us a son is given. And the government shall be upon him, upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of his peace there will be no end. On the throne of David and over his kingdom. To establish it, to uphold it with justice, and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

[35 : 05] The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. The end of the story. Whether you're a good decision maker or a bad decision maker. And I think we probably all have a mixed record.

The end of the story is always Jesus Christ. The end of the story is always Jesus Christ. If you're sitting here and you're thinking, gosh, I really have made some bad decisions.

And I think they're kind of still hanging out in my life and bearing fruit and so forth. The end of that story is you standing with Jesus Christ who loves the brokenhearted. And a bruised reed he will not break.

And if you are a call out to him, he will not only save you, but he will walk with you. And he will actually for the rest of your life go through and help you pick out the weeds you planted when you were an idiot. And he will be humble and happy to do that with you.

He says, come to me who are weary and heavy laden. Take my yoke upon you. I will walk with you. I will work with you. We'll sort this out together. So every crisis you've ever experienced and handled poorly, praise God we have a Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[36 : 12] And praise God that he is fundamentally the King of kings and Lord of lords. When you come for communion today, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, if you're walking and obeying him, I just want to invite you to come and partake of the table that's meant to remind us that it always ends with Jesus.

All of the problems that we bring on ourselves when we try to problem solve not God's way, at the end of every day, and man, I've been there, I've created so many problems trying to solve problems.

And you know what I have to do sometimes? I have to stop and think, the Lord Jesus Christ took on flesh, lived a perfect life, and bled on the cross for my sin.

So now it's time to get up and go again. As a man who is forgiven and right with God, only through Christ. So let this time of communion be an opportunity for you to say, I am so glad that Jesus and the cross of Christ is the immovable backstop of my life story.

And that I will always have Jesus. Let me pray for us. Father God, would you please bless us with faith as we partake? Give us the faith to see that you are all sufficient and good.

[37 : 36] God, I pray that there would be no way our flesh would seek to take the grace of Jesus and dismantle the fear of the Lord with the grace of Jesus. That's highly inappropriate, not smart.

God, the great God who moved heaven and earth to give us salvation is a God to be loved and feared. God, give us those things even as we partake today. In Jesus' great name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.