

1 Peter 1 (Part 3) :8–9 • The internal evidence of the Spirit

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1 Peter chapter 1. Today, we're going to be doing something a little different. Well, I don't know. Is it fair to call this different, Sue, than what we normally do? I mean, I'm taking. She says no, just do it and just shut up. Because I'm taking a couple of verses here. We're just going to be looking at a couple of verses.

As I read them, I felt like there was a great need for us to ponder these verses a little bit and really ask ourselves the question, what are they talking about? What do they mean and why are they meaningful to us? And we're going to be looking at verses 8 and 9 of 1 Peter chapter 1, so just 8 and 9. So, look with me there if you would please. Follow along as I read.

“⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” (ESV)

Stop there. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, just a couple of verses here, but so much, so much for us to ponder, think about, and pursue today. But Lord, our pursuit is of You. We long for more of You. We long to be closer to You, to have greater understanding and insight. We long, Lord God, to be filled with You and to walk with You, to love You.

We ask You to guide and direct our thoughts related to these verses this morning and fill us with Your grace. We ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen.

Along the lines of these verses, I want to start by advancing some questions that I want to put up on the screen for you to consider. And we won't answer them immediately.

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- Do you know that Jesus is alive and living within you?
- Are you confident that you are a child of God?

- Do you know beyond a doubt that you are heaven bound?
- Do you know who you are?

Do you know that Jesus is alive and living within you? That's the first question. Are you confident that you are a child of God today? Do you know beyond a doubt that you are heaven bound? And lastly, do you know who you are?

I have to admit, when I wrote that last one, I kind of wondered what kind of looks I would get on people's faces. And I kind of expected to get a little bit of a chuckle out of that last one, but I hope you can answer it. But, anyway, the questions that we're looking at here are actually really important because answering them requires evidence in order to give a firm answer. They require evidence.

And, we make judgment calls about evidence or lack of evidence every day when we're thinking about, talking about, considering whatever. And Evidence is something that is fairly big in the world of Christianity. We have a whole branch of the Christian faith that deals with evidence, and we call it apologetics.

And some of you are kind of really big on apologetics. In fact, some of you might remember a number of years ago a book that came out, written by Josh McDowell called "Evidence that Demands a Verdict." Who read that? Yeah, A few of you. He recently put out a renewed kind of a retooled version of it with his son, kind of updating some things, encouraging the connecting with the current generation, and so forth.

Still great information, but it was essentially, and it is still today, I think, considered kind of a classic of apologetics. But it helped us to think about the evidence of Christianity in such a way as to convey it to our current culture, which is filled with skepticism and a lot of biblical illiteracy.

Here's my definition of apologetics, just so you can know. I say,

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Apologetics is the intellectual defense for the truths of Christianity through reasoned and logical arguments based on evidence.

Now, if you're one of those people who's really big into apologetics, you might add or subtract a couple of the words that I've used, but I think it's a fairly close definition. And, again, I have a very deep appreciation for the work of

apologists and apologetics because they've helped us to be able to respond to our culture in many very positive ways.

But here's the deal about apologetics. It can only go so far. It can only deal with so much. And the reason that it can only go so far is that whatever you say in terms of the evidence you bring related to apologetics is all external information. It's external to the individual. All right? Now that doesn't make it bad necessarily because even Jesus used external evidence to convey to the people who are listening to him who he was.

Let me give you an example of this from John chapter 10, up on the screen. It says,

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John 10:24-25;37-38 (ESV)

So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. (but listen to what he said) The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me (in other words, they are evidence). If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

This is one of those interesting biblical examples where Jesus pointed to external evidence to convey to the people the reality of who He was and who He claimed to be and that sort of thing.

And then, of course, you have all the disciples who were eyewitnesses of the things that took place during the ministry of Jesus, and they spent the rest of their natural lives on this earth witnessing about what they had seen and heard, giving evidence concerning the reality of who Jesus was, what he did on the cross. But that too was external evidence. That was external. Okay? So, let me put to you all the questions that I asked at the beginning here up on the screen again.

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- Do you know that Jesus is alive and living within you?
- Are you confident that you are a child of God?
- Do you know beyond a doubt that you are heaven bound?
- Do you know who you are?

In order for you to respond to those questions with a confident, yes, you need to have more than just external evidence. You need to have internal evidence, and I'll explain to you what I mean by that.

Because, when Jesus spoke to His disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit, which was a powerful and wonderful thing that He talked about, He promised them that they would receive from the Spirit internal evidence as a witness, which proceeds from the heart, not just the head. And He spoke of that kind of internal witness, which is, I believe, required to make sense of the two verses that we're looking at here in 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 8 and 9.

Let's read him again, verses 8 and 9, “*8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. What is Peter saying here? He says, you've never met the man. We told you about Jesus. These people were living quite a long way away from Israel and where Jesus ministered. But he said, you've never met him. You don't see him even now. And yet you not only love him, but you believe in him in such a way that you are filled, he says, with this inexpressible joy at the knowledge of the fact that you are obtaining the outcome of your faith, which is the salvation of your souls. All right?*

So, let me ask you something. How in the world do you love someone you've never met, love them to such a degree that you are filled with an inexpressible joy, but you never met the person? Well, I mean, the question could be asked of you today just as easily as it could be asked of the people that Peter was writing his letter to. How in the world do you love somebody like Jesus, whom you've never met?

You've never been able to look at Him face to face, shake his hand and say, Hey, it's me and you're you. Let's get to know each other and go through that process of getting to know, which is the way that we eventually come to that place of saying, I love you. I love this person. How in the world does that happen?

What Peter is writing about in verses 8 and 9 here is he is telling these people, you have an internal witness. You have internal evidence going on in your lives that has brought you to the place of absolutely adoring, loving this man that you've never met physically, okay, to the point where you are filled with an inexpressible joy about your salvation, which you are receiving.

Do you guys understand that is what New Testament Christianity is all about? I love apologetics, but that can only go so far. Jesus came to bring internal

evidence to light. Let me share a quote from A. W. Tozer, my favorite author, I would have to say. He said,

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"Jesus wanted to take religion out of the external and make it internal and put it on the same level as life itself, so that a man knows, he knows God the same as he knows he is himself and not somebody else. The Holy Spirit came to carry the evidence of Christianity from the books of apologetics into the human heart, and that is exactly what He does." -A.W. Tozer

Isn't that an incredible thought? Now, you remember that silly kind of question that I asked at the end of the ones that I put up, which was, do you know who you are? And so, I mean, like I said, I hope you can answer that positively, that you know who you are. But do you know what it takes to be able to say that, other than sanity, it takes an internal evidence.

I know who I am because internally I am self-aware. And that self-awareness means that I don't need to pull out my driver's license to prove who I am or look at my name embroidered on my underwear to be able to remember who I am. I know it internally. I understand and I know who I am.

Well, the Holy Spirit is also using that same internal evidence to enable the believer to look through that list of questions and to be able to confidently say yes, yes, yes, and amen to those various things. In fact, let me put those up again. We'll put the first three anyway, since I'm trusting you know who you are. But we'll go through the rest of these.

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- Do you know that Jesus is alive and living within you?
- Are you confident that you are a child of God?
- Do you know beyond a doubt that you are heaven bound?

Do you know that Jesus is alive and living within you? And the believer goes, yes, absolutely. No question about it.

Are you confident that you are a child of God? Yes, absolutely. I'm confident about that.

Have you ever been filled with inexpressible joy just at the knowledge and understanding that you are a born-again Christian and on your way, to heaven? Yeah. Yeah. Yes. And amen.

But again, the ability to be able to answer those questions with a confident, yes, comes through internal evidence, which is imparted to us through the Holy Spirit. You cannot underestimate the work of the Holy Spirit and the life of the believer. All right?

There are actually several other passages that are scattered throughout the Bible that talk about the fact that we have this internal evidence, or some are even prophetic saying that there will be this internal evidence of who you are in Christ, who He is and so forth.

One of my favorites is one that you hear me quoting a lot from this pulpit, which is in the book of Jeremiah. It goes like this,

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Jeremiah 31:31-34a (ESV)

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant (this is talking about the New Testament, the new covenant) with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ... this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: (Check this out) I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. (That sounds like an internal work to me, doesn't it to you? But he goes on, he says,) And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD.”

Now, the one particular phrase that I want to bring out from that passage is the statement where he says, they shall all know me. This is not talking about know, as in I just Googled it or I know how an internal combustion engine works so that if it breaks, I can repair it. That's not the kind of knowing we're talking about.

In the Hebrew, this is the very same word that appears in Genesis chapter 4 where it says, Adam knew his wife. And it goes on to say, and she conceived (Genesis 4:1). That's a euphemism. It's not talking about they had a conversation around the coffee table and she got pregnant because of it. You with me? The word is being used there to describe, in the case of Adam and Eve, physical intimacy between a man and a woman.

So, it's talking about intimacy. And obviously we're not dealing with sexual intimacy here in Jeremiah, but we are dealing with intimacy. And so when God says they will know Me, He's not just saying they're going to understand an intellectual sort of a thing about Me. He says they will have an intimate relationship with Me. They will know Me in intimacy. You with me?

So, what is this talking about? He's talking about this internal work of the Holy Spirit, whereby we have this witness, this evidence within us that says, I am a child of God and I know the Lord. I know Him because He has taken up residency within me, through His Spirit. And it's not to say that I know everything about the Lord, but I know Him in intimacy.

And that's the point of what we're saying, and that is the intimacy once again that is behind Peter's words when he says, though you've not seen him, you love him, and though you don't see him now, you're filled with joy that you can't even express with words because you know, that you know, that you know you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. It's absolutely beautiful, but it's only possible through internal evidence, ultimately.

I want to share a couple other passages here. John Chapter 14. I love this one too. Look what Jesus said,

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John 14:20 (ESV)

In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

The context there is the coming of the Holy Spirit. He says on that day, the day when the Holy Spirit comes and takes up residence in you, you're going to know, that you know, that you know. You're going to know who I am. You're going to know who you know. You're going to know that I'm in you, that I am in the father, and that I'm in you. You're going to know that.

Again, that's not intellectual knowledge. That's not something you sit down and learn from a book or somebody goes, all right, no, let me instruct you about this. This is a personal, intimate knowing, right? And then I love Galatians chapter 4,

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Galatians 4:6 (ESV)

...because you are sons, (Paul writes) God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (And that is a term of intimacy).

I'm always a little bit bothered when I hear people talking about God, and it's in such formal terms, formal or even dumb. When people say, the big man upstairs. That's intimate. Or thou greatest holy, I mean, all this is fine. I don't want to be critical, but the point is, where's the intimacy?

The Bible says that you're going to cry out to God with a heart of intimacy. Sometimes people will write me and they'll talk about their relationship with Papa God. And that's not a term that I would particularly use, but I don't mind it because it speaks of that close relationship that they have with their Heavenly Father. It's really kind of a beautiful thing.

Now, the stuff that I'm talking about here this morning, this whole idea of internal evidence, and this intimacy with God is something that some of you know firsthand. And I'm just probably confirming what you've known for a long time because you've been aware of it ever since you perhaps even first got saved.

But, I know that there are others, who are perhaps in this room or listening to us today, that can't say for certain that they actually possess this internal evidence. And frankly, I've come to understand that that's a fairly large number of people. I wouldn't have known that otherwise, but I think that it is.

Now, before I explain why I believe so many Christians don't sense that internal evidence, I want to just be careful to make one point about this. Internal evidence is certainly a sign that we've been saved, but it's not the biggest sign. I want to be careful about this because there's some people who could throw that out to you and say, well, if you have that internal evidence of your salvation, then that means you're saved.

If you have that intimate personal relationship and you just know, that you know, that you know that's a sign that you're saved. Well, it is a sign that you're saved, but it's not the sign that you're saved.

Here's my point. I believe that there can be and, in fact, are born-again Christians who truly understand what Jesus did on the cross and have personally embraced it and said that was for me, what He did on the cross, who still struggle with the issue of the internal evidence of the Spirit speaking to their hearts.

And I want to explain why many people struggle with this whole issue. And there is one particular passage that helps us to understand. And were it not for this passage, we might struggle in vain. But this one passage is so powerful, so

insightful. And it's just a few words from Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter e, verse 16, he says,

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Romans 8:16 (ESV)

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

Now, I want you to just take special note. It's very important that you see how the Holy Spirit communicates this internal evidence, this internal witness that we are God's children. He doesn't speak to you about it audibly. He doesn't write it on the wall. He doesn't send it in an email. He communicates it through your Spirit. You with me?

And that's what Paul's saying there. He bears witness with our Spirit that we in fact are children of God. And it's so important that we see that. First of all, I trust you know that you have a Spirit, that you are made up of Spirit, along with also body and soul.

Here's the problem though, we're pretty good, I mean, we're pretty good at being able to define our body and our soul. And my body, that's what you see here such as it is, aging as it is, yeah. And so it's the flesh and blood.

And my soul. I understand biblically that the soul is made up of my intellect, my will, and my emotions. Okay, cool. But you also are made up of Spirit. What is that? If I were to give you a piece of paper and a pen and say, define for me your spirit, what would you write? I think there would be a good number of people who would wonder how to proceed, and they might even be looking at somebody else's paper. What did you say? You know how we used to do that in school and try not to get caught?

It's very, very difficult. It's a mystery to many of our hearts. And yet, here's what's interesting, that's the way God communicates, internally, the evidence that we are children of God. And we don't even know how to define the mechanism. Isn't that crazy?

So, we're kind of sitting around here going, yeah, I'm not really sure what this is all about. Let me deepen the thing a little bit for you with a comment from the Apostle Paul. In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, he says that,

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1 Corinthians 6:17 9 (ESV)

...he who is joined to the Lord (that means comes to faith in Jesus Christ) becomes one spirit with him.

Isn't that a mind-blower? As believers, we have been joined with the Lord spiritually so that the Bible refers to that relationship as one spirit. Ah, it's like I'm sitting here trying to figure this out. I'm trying to gain some kind of a handle on this. This thing that is so mysterious to me and you, I believe, and is so important, it is how He communicates. It's how he speaks to us.

If I'm listening to the Lord with physical ears, I have short-changed myself. If I'm looking at the world around me with physical eyes, I have greatly short-changed myself. There's a spiritual dynamic that has come to life in our very lives because we are in Christ, and that is how God is talking. That is how He's communicating. That is how He is conveying the wonders of His love to us, and yet it is foreign to us.

This whole spiritual dynamic is very foreign to us. And here's the reason that it's so foreign to us. It's because we're so focused and so fixated on what we consider to be the realities of life, which are the physical, material, emotional, intellectual things that are all around us, that we've all but ignored or even neglected the life of the Spirit, the spiritual realities of what is happening all around us.

Do you guys remember what Jesus said to the woman at the well in Samaria. He made a point about God. He simply said to her,

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John 4:24 (ESV)

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Just think about the implications of that statement. God is spirit. We tend to dismiss spirit as something that's kind of like, well, I don't know. I don't know. It's something, I don't know. Casper, the friendly ghost. I don't know. I don't get it, you know it's something. And yet, God is Spirit. I submit to you, God is more real than you are, and God is Spirit.

Okay, this is really starting to kind of get weird, because we tend to think of matter as that which is real. And spirit, we have a hard time even defining. And

what I'm saying here is that we have allowed ourselves to become so preoccupied with the life that is around us, the physical, material, emotional, and intellectual things that we have all around us. The things that we can determine with our senses that we have become apathetic and at times even indifferent to the reality of the Spirit.

You guys have heard me say many times from this pulpit that we live in a culture today where feelings have become so important that we literally, particularly young people, but older people can do it as well, we have come to the place of thinking that our feelings are a barometer to determine truth, just by how I feel, right?

I don't feel like God's listening to me, so therefore God's not listening to me. I don't feel like God loves me, so therefore God doesn't love me. See? My feelings determine what is true and what is false, which is a really, really bad way to go through life. But we've been taught that to the point where even in my marriage, if I don't happen to feel love for my wife, well then I guess I don't love my wife. And if I do feel love with my wife, it's yay, we're in love. And it's all based on my feelings.

And we make decisions in life based on those feelings because we're so driven by our emotions and our natural senses. What happens, the reality of the spirit becomes undetectable because we're so fixated.

So, I suppose we better ask the question. What's the answer? Huh? I mean, if I stopped right here and said, okay, let's close in prayer, we'd all be a little bit bummed because all I've done is kind of laid out the bad news. So, we have to ask ourselves, what is the answer?

How do we get from where we are, which is so dominated by the physical, material, and all the other things in this world, in this life, and so forth, and how do we become more aware of the life and the reality of the Spirit without getting weird. Because the world lives, pretty much, as you know, the world lives in the area of the physical and the emotional.

Everything is about how you physically look and how you feel. That's the world. Once in a while, the world will dip into the spiritual side of things, but they always get it wrong, always. Okay? So, don't ever go looking to the world for answers on a spiritual level because they're always going to get messed up.

And really the only thing they're ever going to arrive at is demonic for the most part. So, you have to understand that when we talk about a fix, it's not going to

be a simple one because this is a systemic issue, meaning that it's part of our DNA. We are very earthly creatures, and yet we are called to open our hearts to new realities through the life of the Spirit.

And I believe that the answer to this is summed up in two of the most amazing verses that you can read in the Bible. But before we read them, I just want you to know this isn't going to be just a quick answer. I'm not going to give you these two verses and you're going to go, oh, there you go. Thanks. Bye. I mean, I wish it was that easy.

But the verses I'm going to share with you are ones that we need to think about, meditate on, and I'm going to even encourage you to either write these down, at least the reference to it or whatever, and ponder it throughout the course of the next week or two, or month, or year. Because that's what it's going to take. It's going to take some real concerted sort of effort on our part to really kind of scrub our mind of some of the things that most naturally dominate our thoughts and begin to direct ourselves elsewhere.

Here are the verses that I feel are so incredibly important from Romans 12:1 and 2.

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Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, (Paul Wrights) by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

These verses are packed with so much insight and so much information that it's one of these things you can't just do a cursory reading of them and walk away and just go, oh yeah, no problem. It really means getting down and getting serious. And when you take these and kind of distill them down, you come up with three basic elements from them that Paul is telling us to do.

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1. Present your body as a living sacrifice.
2. Do not be conformed to this world.
3. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

And the first he says is, present your body, your physical body, as a living sacrifice. And that's kind of a fancy way of saying give yourself to God. And this is very contrary, of course, to the world. Stop being so fixated, he's saying, on your physical body and present it to God, to the point where hopefully we can get to that place where we can say with the Apostle Paul, which he said in Galatians, *"I have now been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but the life I now live in this body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20 ESV)

The world says, it's your body, do what you want with it. The Bible says, it belongs to Him. He purchased it with His blood, so offer it up to him as a sacrifice. And what this is really talking about, when you boil it all down, it's talking about obedience, obedience. It's talking about obeying. It's his body. He can do what he wants with it. He can tell it where to go, who to go talk to, who to touch, who to encourage. It's His. It belongs to Him. Offer it to Him as a living sacrifice. It's a very holy and pleasing thing in the sight of the Lord, but it is the absolute opposite of what the world would preach to you and me on a regular basis.

And this is one of the beginning elements. This is the beginning of what it takes to begin to change our way of thinking and our way of just considering life. Why are you here on this planet? Why did God put you here? And why did He put you here at this specific time in history? Are you an accident, as the world would tell you? Are you a cosmic accident and there's absolutely no meaning or purpose to your existence? Or are you here by the choice and will of God to do His bidding, to accomplish His purpose, to serve Him and His kingdom?

Do you understand that we're talking about different worldviews here that are absolutely polar opposites, and it's important that we see that. And when you begin to have a biblical worldview, you start looking at your life and you start thinking, my life doesn't belong to me. It belongs to him. I can't just do what I want, go where I want, think what I want in terms of what I desire.

My heart is, Lord, what do you desire? Why have you put me here? How do you want to use me today? I offer myself today. I'm going to go to work today, and I'm going to put in my time so I ultimately get a paycheck. But I know that there's more to life than just going and working and getting a paycheck. So, here's the deal, I want to give myself to you today. I want to offer myself up to you today for you to use me. Is there somebody you want me to talk to while I'm there? Is there somebody I can pray with? If I'm not even working around other humans, maybe there's something you want me to pray about while I'm at work. I just want to serve you. I'm here for you. I am yours, right?

Offer up your life as a living sacrifice. But that's just the first step. The next thing he tells us to do is not be conformed to the world. And one of the first things we have to do as Christians is say, I've been conformed to the world. I think like the world thinks. I do what the world does. I basically take my cues from the world. Like many of you, I didn't get serious about walking with the Lord till I was in my mid-twenties. And 25 doesn't sound that old to me anymore, but I'll tell you something, it was long enough to really learn how the world works and to emulate it.

I fit right in with the world. And I have spent the rest of my life up to this point, and I know I will continue to spend the rest of my life, kind of decoupling my heart and mind from the ways of the world to the point where I begin to live the life of the Spirit. And it's a challenge, it's a struggle. But I have to start by admitting I've been conformed to the world. And, Lord, I want to be conformed to your kingdom, to what your spirit is doing in my life. But I present a real challenge because I have really been ingrained by the things, thoughts, and ways of the world.

I got to start asking questions of myself. Why do I do this? Why am I thinking that way? Why am I thinking about doing that? Why do I want to do this? Why is my desire for that? And start really asking questions. Remember, I don't know how long ago it was, you'd see that bumper sticker on people's car, question authority. And you could tell the attitude that they had. It's like, hey, man, question authority. And it was really just another word for rebellion. And that's what the world does.

But as believers, we should be questioning the world. We should question all the time. Why? Why? Why do we do that? What does the Bible say about that? I don't want to be conformed any longer to this world. But it starts by questioning, thinking, critically thinking, why am I doing what I'm doing?

And then the last thing Paul says in Romans 12, 1 and 2 is that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. I believe with everything within me that this happens as we totally saturate our hearts with the word of God. And the reason I believe that is because I get so many emails. Guys, I get like dozens of emails every week from people whose hearts and minds have been transformed by the word of God. And it's really crazy.

I think I'm going to start bringing some of them on Sunday and read them to you. Because it encourages me when somebody writes me and says, two years ago, I was absolutely tied in knots with fear over what was happening in the world. And I started to go to the word of God to look for answers. And I was

struggling to understand what I was reading. And so I Googled this book that I was doing, and here you came up. And I walked through this book, and then I got hooked and I did another book. And I've been doing this for the last two years. Just every day I'll listen to the word of God and the teaching of the scripture.

And then they'll tell me, I have been transformed. I am no longer that worrisome person that I was two years ago. I've changed. There's a peace in my life and I know, that I know, that I know God's in control. He's in charge, and I'm okay.

That sound good? And that's just the beginning. People write to me about how their marriages have been transformed, their relationships, their work situations. In some cases, even their health just transformed, just changed. But it's not because they dabbled in the word of God. It's because they saturated their hearts. And I mean, they just did a deep dive into the word of God. And they said I'm going to do this.

One of the most precious notes I got was a number of years ago from a woman who wrote to me, who had been involved for years in a lesbian relationship. And she and her partner knew that they wouldn't be accepted in most Christian churches, but they wanted to follow the things of Christ anyway. So, they decided just to do it in the comfort of their own home. And for some reason or another, they landed on Calvary Chapel Ontario and listened to those teachings for a period of like two years. And she wrote me this long letter to explain that there came a day where these two women looked at each other across the sofa as they were listening to the word of God, and they said, we can't do this anymore. We can't live like this anymore. And they made the decision to move into separate homes and live celibate lives. Why? They'd been transformed by the word of God.

Listen, it isn't me that does it. It's the word of God that's living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. And their lives were changed. And in fact, one of the ladies started a Christian business where she sold Christian apparel. In fact, she sent Sue and I both a t-shirt that said, team Jesus. It was pretty cool.

But I've been privileged to get those kind of notes on a fairly regular basis of people telling me what happens when they expose their hearts to the word of God in an ongoing and consistent manner. Transformation takes place. And that's what we're told there in Romans Chapter 12.

Be transformed. Let your minds be renewed in the Word of God. So, walk in obedience, offer your body as a living sacrifice, give it to God every day. Ask,

Lord, how can I obey you today? Number two, don't think like the world. Don't be conformed to the ways of the world. Question why you're doing what you're doing and saturate your heart and your mind. And I believe that this will create an openness in our lives to the spiritual dynamic of the presence of God's working in our lives through his Spirit.

And it will make a connection between us and God into that internal evidence that we so desperately desire. To know that we know that we know, yes, I am a child of God. Yes, I am heaven bound. Yes, he loves me with an everlasting love. Amen. Let's stand together.

If I could ask you to pray for Sue and myself, actually, Aaron and Matt as well. We're all heading up to McCall here, like right away, after church. And we are hosting a pastors' and wives' retreat for about 24 couples, something like that. So, we're going to be up there the rest of today, Monday, and then part of Tuesday and ministering the word.

Guess what our topic is, the life of the Spirit. You can tell where my brain's been. But anyway, if you think about us, would you just kind of shoot up a prayer that the Lord would bless and anoint that retreat? These are pastors from basically the Treasure Valley, some of them from beyond. But definitely pastors and wives, assistant pastors from the Treasure Valley who are going to come. And they're all dealing with their own burdens, and issues, and challenges, and they're coming for a time of rest and encouragement. And they need it, and I need it. And it would be a restful, blessed time.

So, if you need prayer this morning, I encourage you to come up after we're done. Father, thank you so much for your Word that challenges us to go deeper. Challenges us, Lord, to go beyond the physical, the material, the emotional and the intellectual, and challenges us, Lord, to tune into the work of the Spirit to have ears to hear, eyes to see, a heart to receive. Father, help us, we pray.

Help us, Lord, to, every day, offer ourselves up to you as living sacrifices, saying, Jesus, I'm yours. You purchased me with your blood, and I am yours. And I ask you to lead me today. And help us, Father God, we pray, to question the things of the world, to fight that conformity with the ways of the world, but instead continually and consistently expose ourselves to the Word of God, that our hearts and minds might be transformed. And that we might have a greater understanding and connection to the life of the Spirit, that work of the Spirit within our hearts, the internal evidence that the Holy Spirit is communicating to us through our spirit.

Be with us, we pray. Strengthen us, we ask, in Jesus' precious name. And all God's people said together, Amen. God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.