TikTok Devotional Series Transcript:

May 2023

May 1, 2023 - Fear Not!

"Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself." (1 Samuel 12:20–22)

When the Israelites have been brought to fear and they repent of their sin of demanding that Samuel give them a king to be like the other nations, then comes the good news: *"Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil." Do you hear how backward that sounds — how wonderfully backward? You might expect him to say, "Fear, for you have done all this evil."*

He goes on, *"Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty."*

This is the gospel: Even though you have sinned greatly, and terribly dishonored the Lord, even though you now have a king which it was a sin to demand, even though there is no undoing that sin or its painful consequences that are yet to come, nevertheless there is a future and a hope. There is mercy. Fear not! So do not be afraid.

May 2, 2023 - Goodness and Fear

Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind! (Psalm 31:19)

Consider two important truths in this verse.

1. The goodness of the Lord

There is a peculiar goodness of God. That is, there is not only God's general goodness that he shows to all people, making his sun rise on the evil and the good (Matthew 5:45), but also a peculiar goodness, as the psalm says, for *"those who fear"* him.

This goodness is abundant beyond measure. It is boundless. It lasts forever. It is all-encompassing. There is only goodness for those who fear him. Everything works together for their good (Romans 8:28). Even their pains are filled with profit according to Romans 5:3–5.

2. The fear of the Lord

The fear of the Lord is the fear of straying from him. Therefore, it expresses itself in taking refuge in God. That's why two conditions are mentioned in this verse — fearing the Lord and taking refuge in him.

They seem to be opposites. Fear seems to drive away and taking refuge seems to draw in. But when we see that this fear is a fear of running away — a fear of straying from him — then they work together. So, cherish the goodness of the Lord. Fear straying from him. Flee from every sin and take refuge in him.

May 3, 2023 - Grounds of The Truth

The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 1 Timothy 3:15

Have we entered a new cultural moment, characterized by an increased hostility toward Christians and others who are "culturally non-conforming"? Sudents speaking about unborn babies at a University, from a group call "Students for Life", were confronted, threatened, and assaulted by an obscenity-crying crowd who failed to notice the irony of suppressing free speech by screaming "fascists!" Rather than remove those disrupting the presentation, the campus police removed the pro-lifers!

There were three such incidents in nine days but when placed alongside a host of others in the last few years, a disturbing trend begins to emerge. After examining the data, The Family Research Council concluded that over 400 "acts of hostility" have been committed against churches in the last five years including "vandalism, arson, gun-related incidents, bomb threats, and more." Of these incidents, 137 occurred in the months between January to September of last year.

The headline is not that there are suddenly those who disagree with Christian convictions. That has always been the case. In the past those who disagreed with Christians were content to let them have their say. Whereas an older secularist thought of truth as something "out there" to be discovered through study, discussion, and even debate, truth in the contemporary critical mood isn't about what is said but who is saying it. More specifically, it's about where everyone is pre-ranked in an ever-shifting, intersectional hierarchy.

Anyone who insists that there are truths of a higher order, particularly truths that establish sexual morality and identity, will become a target of those who are blinded by today's ideologies. We need more than ever that pillar and ground of the truth which is The Church of the Living God.

May 4, 2023 - Love Your Enemy

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11–12)

How do you love the people who kidnap you and then kill you? How can we do this? Where does the power to love like this come from? Just think how astonishing this is when it appears in the real world! Could anything show the truth and power and reality of Christ more than this? I believe Jesus gives us the key to this radical, self-sacrificing love.

This seems even more beyond our reach than praying for our enemies or doing good to them. If I could do this humanly impossible thing — namely, rejoice in being persecuted — then it would be possible to love my persecutors. If the miracle of joy in the midst of the horror of injustice and pain and loss could happen, then the miracle of love for the perpetrators could happen too.

Jesus gives the key to joy in these verses. He says, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." The key to joy is faith in God's grace — that is, being satisfied in all that God promises to be for you. The command to love our enemy is a command to find our hope and our deepest soul-satisfaction in God and his great reward. We must be persuaded in the midst of our agony that the love of God is "better than life" (Psalm 63:3). Loving your enemy doesn't earn you the reward of heaven. Treasuring the reward of heaven empowers you to love your enemy.

May 5, 2023 - Treasure God

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32)

The reason God wants us not to be afraid concerning money or other things of the world is because that fearlessness — that freedom from anxiety — will magnify five great things about him.

First, not being afraid shows that we treasure God as our Shepherd. I shall not lack anything I truly need.

Second, not being afraid shows that we treasure God as our Father. He really cares and really knows what you need and will work for you to be sure that you have what you need.

Third, not being anxious shows that we treasure God as King. He can give us the "kingdom" because he is the King. "King" connotes power and sovereignty and wealth.

Fourth, not being afraid shows how free and generous God is. God is generous and free with his bounty. This is what we magnify about him when we are not afraid, but trust him with our needs.

Finally, not being afraid — not being anxious — shows that we trust that God really wants to do this. It delights him. He is not begrudging. It makes him glad to give us the kingdom.

So, the point of this verse is that we should treasure God as our Shepherd and Father and King who is generous and happy to give us the kingdom of God — to give us heaven, to give us eternal life and joy, and everything we need to get there. If we treasure God in this way, we will be fearless and God will be worshiped.

May 6, 2023 - Build Houses

"Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. . . . But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." (Jeremiah 29:4–5, 7)

If that was true for God's exiles in Babylon, it would seem to be even more true for Christian exiles in this very "Babylon-like" world. What, then, shall we do? We should do the ordinary things that need to be done: build houses; live in them; plant gardens. This does not contaminate you if you do it all for the real King. Seek the welfare of the place where God has sent you. Think of yourself as sent there by God for his glory. Because you are.

Pray to the Lord on behalf of your city. Ask for great and good things to happen for the city, by God's power and for his glory. Never lose sight of the ultimate good that the city needs a thousand times more than it needs material prosperity. Christians care about all suffering — especially eternal suffering. That's the greatest danger every city faces.

But neither God nor his people are indifferent to the health and safety and prosperity and freedom of the city. We will do most good for this world by keeping a steadfast freedom from its beguiling attractions. So build houses but keep looking to the Lord.

May 7, 2023 - Your Sins Are Forgiven

"Your sins are forgiven." (Luke 7:48)

A woman comes to Jesus in a Pharisee's house weeping and washing his feet. No doubt she felt shame as the eyes of Simon communicated to everyone present that this woman was a sinner and that Jesus had no business letting her touch him. Indeed, she was a sinner. There was a place for true shame. But not for too long.

Jesus said, *"Your sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48).* And when the guests murmured about this, he strengthened her faith by saying, *"Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50).*

How did Jesus help her battle the crippling effects of shame? He gave her a promise: "Your sins have been forgiven! Your faith has saved you. Your future will be one of peace." He declared that past pardon would now yield future peace.

So, the issue for her was faith in God's grace, rooted in the authority of Jesus's forgiving work and freeing word. That is the way every one of us must battle the effects of well-placed shame — not false shame, but shame that we really should feel, but shame that threatens to linger too long and cripple us.

We must battle the unbelief of crippling shame by taking hold of the promises of grace and peace that come through the forgiveness of our shameful acts. When we live by faith in grace, rooted in God's forgiveness, we are freed from the lingering, paralyzing effects even of the shame we deserve to feel. That's what happens when your sins are forgiven.

May 8, 2023 - New Things

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. Revelation 21:5

Christians should never fall into fatalism over Artificial Inteligence. The threat of extinction by a superior race of sentient beings seems somewhere between possible and inevitable. If the story of reality is the survival of the strongest and fittest, as atheistic Naturalism declares, then AI seems perfectly cast to take humanity's place at the top of the heap. Absent a better definition for "humanity" than brute intelligence and ability, AI is a new and potentially violent master destined to replace humanity.

Christians know that this is not how the story ends. Though we are capable of great evil, Someone greater than us is at the helm of history. Christianity can ground a vision of technology both ethically and teleologically. AI is neither an aberration to be abandoned, nor a utopian dream to be pursued at all costs. Rather, like all technology, it is a powerful tool that must be controlled by a shared ethical framework and accurate vision of human value, dignity, and exceptionalism. Of course, that vision is only true if we were created by Someone with superior intelligence, love, and wisdom, that person is God who makes new things.

May 9, 2023 - Not Forsake His People

"For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself." (1 Samuel 12:22)

The name of God often refers to his reputation, his fame, his renown. This is the way we use the word "name" when we say someone is making a name for himself. Or we sometimes say, that's a "name" brand. We mean a brand with a big reputation. This is what I think Samuel means when he says that God made Israel a people "for himself" and that he would not cast Israel off "for his great name's sake." This way of thinking about God's zeal for his name is confirmed in many other passages.

For example, in Jeremiah 13:11 God describes Israel as a waistcloth, or belt, with which God chose to highlight his glory, even though there were times when Israel was temporarily unfit. "For as the loincloth clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory, but they would not

listen." Why was Israel chosen and made the garment of God? That it might be a "name, a praise, and a glory."

Israel and the church are chosen by God to make a name for him in the world. When we speak of being a God-centered people, remember, this is because we are joining God in his God-centeredness, and on this side of the cross, that means being a Christ-dependent, Christ-exalting people knowing that God will not forsake his people.

May 10, 2023 - Sin and Righteousness

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed. (Romans 1:16–17)

We need righteousness to be acceptable to God. But we don't have it. What we have is sin. God has what we need and don't deserve — righteousness; and we have what God hates and rejects — sin. What is God's answer to this situation?

His answer is Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died in our place and bore our condemnation. Whose flesh bore the condemnation? His. Whose sins were being condemned? Ours. This is the great exchange.

God lays our sins on Christ and punishes them in him. And in Christ's obedient death, God fulfills and vindicates his righteousness and imputes it to us. Our sin on Christ; his righteousness on us.

We can hardly stress too much that Christ is God's answer to our greatest problem. It is all owing to Christ. You can't love Christ too much. You can't think about him too much, or thank him too much, or depend upon him too much. All our forgiveness, all our justification, all our righteousness is in Christ.

This is the gospel — the good news that our sins are laid on Christ and his righteousness is laid on us, and that this great exchange becomes ours not by works but by faith alone. Here is the good news that lifts burdens, our sin is exchanged for Christ's righteousness.

May 11, 2023 - The Night is Far Gone

The night is far gone; the day is at hand. (Romans 13:12)

This is a word of hope to suffering Christians. It's a word of hope to Christians who hate their own sin and long to be done with sinning. It's a word of hope to Christians who long for the last enemy Death to be overcome and thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).

How is it a word of hope for all these? "The night" stands for this age of darkness and all its sin and misery and death. The age of sin and misery and death is almost spent. The day of righteousness and peace and total joy is dawning.

You might say, *"2,000 years seems like a long dawn."* From one standpoint it is. And we cry, How long, O Lord, how long will you let it go on? But the biblical way to think goes beyond this lament of "How long!" It looks at world history differently.

The key difference is that the "day" — the new age of the Messiah — has really dawned in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the end of this fallen age. That is, the end of this fallen age has, as it were, broken in to this world. Jesus defeated sin and pain and death and Satan when he died and rose again. The decisive battle of the ages is over. The kingdom has come. Eternal life has come, the night is far gone.

May 12, 2023 - Fullness of Joy

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11)

How do we fight for joy? Here are 15 pointers.

1. Realize that authentic joy in God is a gift.
2. Realize that joy must be fought for relentlessly. And don't be put off by the paradox of these first two pointers!
3. Resolve to attack all known sin in your life, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Learn the secret of gutsy guilt — how to fight like a justified sinner.
5. Realize that the battle is primarily a fight to see God for who he is.
6. Meditate on the word of God day and night.
7. Pray earnestly and continually for open heart-eyes and an inclination for God.
8. Learn to preach to yourself rather than listen to yourself.
9. Spend time with God-saturated people who help you see God and fight the fight.
10. Be patient in the night of God's seeming absence.
11. Get the rest, exercise, and proper diet that your body was designed by God to have.
12. Make a proper use of God's revelation in nature — take a walk in the woods.
13. Read great books about God and biographies of great saints.
14. Do the hard and loving things for the sake of others.
15. Get a global vision for the cause of Christ, and pour yourself out for the unreached.

May 13, 2023 - Righteous Deeds

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. (Isaiah 64:6)

It is true that any shortcoming of God's law offends his perfect holiness and makes us liable to judgment, since God cannot look with favor on any sin (Habakkuk 1:13; James 2:10–11).

But what brought a person to ruin in the Old Testament, and it is the same for us today, was not the failure to have the righteousness of sinless perfection. What brought them to ruin was the failure to trust in the merciful promises of God, especially the hope that he would one day provide a Redeemer who would be a perfect righteousness for his people ("The Lord is our righteousness," Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16). The Old Testament saints knew that this is how they were saved, and that this faith was the key to obedience, and that obedience was the evidence of this faith.

It is terribly confusing when people say that the only righteousness that has any value is the imputed righteousness of Christ. To be sure, justification is not grounded on any of our righteousness — even Spirit-given righteousness by faith — but only on the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. But sometimes

people are careless and speak disparagingly of all human righteousness, as if there were no such righteousness worked in us that pleased God. This is not helpful.

A Christian does produce righteous deeds, and this righteousness is precious to God and is, in fact, required — not as the ground of our justification, which is the righteousness of Christ only, but as an evidence of our being truly justified children of God.

May 14, 2023 - Christianity and Culture

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations Matthew 28:18-19

From the beginning of the Church, Christians have struggled to understand their relationship with and responsibility to the culture around them.

The best way to understand Christianity, the Gospel, and God's call for our lives isn't by citing isolated Scriptures. It is by embracing the entire scope of God's revelation of His plan and work throughout the Bible. The fruit of the Church's efforts are often overlooked. The Church has truly been salt and light in this world, preserving the good and exposing the evil, all through the power of God in Christ by the Spirit's presence among His people. Individuals saved by the Gospel, in following their Savior and working together, have had an incredibly transformative effect on the world by ending evils, fighting disease, bringing justice, and proclaiming truth. These are the eternal works to which God's people have been called. Just because they are cultural doesn't mean they are not eternal. Influencing culture to bring life closer to God's original goals for human flourishing is indeed eternal. Our job is faithfulness as we seek to influence the culture for good.

May 15, 2023 - Oppressed Christians

If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 1 Corinthians 12:26

The refusal of oppressed Christian is not unlike that of the Hebrew sons who refused to bow before Babylonian Emperor Nebuchadnezzar. And, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, these groups have learned the cost of faithfulness, lessons that unite them with the sufferings of Christ and offer inspiration to Christ's Church worldwide. In fact, the recent book Faithful Disobedience: Writings on Church and State from a Chinese House Church Movement by Early Rain's pastor Wang Yi, provides in-depth, theological reflections on the relationship between Christians and the state, particularly when the state is oppressive. For Wang, these theological reflections are not hypothetical. Even now, he is serving a prison sentence in his homeland for his godly defiance.

Persecuted church bodies are not merely to be objects of our mercy and care. When they suffer, we suffer. They are our fellow laborers and members of the same Body. We may not be able to share in their suffering, but we do have the honour of learning from their struggles. Our trials, at present, are not as extreme or dramatic as theirs. However, the wisdom they offer may well be the insight we will need to face down the challenges of our own times and the times that may come. Let us continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in China and elsewhere, aiding them however and whenever we can. Let us be grateful for the gifts of the hard-earned wisdom of oppressed Christians.

May 16, 2023 - He is Faithful

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. (1 John 1:9)

One of the best tests of a person's theology is the effect it has on their prayers. How they make the case before God on the ground of his glory. Beginning with "Hallowed be Thy name" and ending with "In Jesus's name" means that the glory of God's name is the goal and the ground of everything we pray for.

Strength will come into our lives as we learn that praying for forgiveness should be based not only on an appeal to God's mercy, but also on an appeal to his justice in crediting the worth of his Son's obedience. God is faithful and just and will forgive your sins (1 John 1:9).

In the New Testament, the basis of all forgiveness of sins is revealed more clearly than it was in the Old Testament, but the basis, namely, God's commitment to his name, does not change. Paul teaches that the death of Christ demonstrated God's righteousness in passing over sins, and vindicated God's justice in justifying the ungodly who bank on Jesus and not themselves (Romans 3:25–26).

Christ died once for all to clear the name of God in what looks like a gross miscarriage of justice — the acquittal of guilty sinners simply for Jesus's sake. But Jesus died in such a way that forgiveness "for Jesus's sake" is the same as forgiveness "for the sake of God's name." There is no miscarriage of justice. God's name, his righteousness, his justice is vindicated and we see clearly that He is Faithful.

May 17, 2023 - Protecting the Children

We will not conceal them from their children, But tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord. Psalm 78:4

This month, a state passed a bill that permits youth shelters to hide runaway youth seeking "protected health care services." These services include so-called "gender transition" and abortion. Shelters are not required to notify families who are not supportive of these services. Instead, shelters can now report the youth to a state department, which can then make service referrals.

Lawmakers claim the bill is necessary to "protect" minors who experience gender dysphoria, assuming children are better protected by the state than their parents. Nothing could be further from the truth. Parents should not become suspects of the state for refusing their children something as harmful and irreversible as "transition" procedures.

There may be times when the state must step in to protect children when the Family and the Church have failed, but drastic measures should be the exception, not the presumption; especially when it's over a brand-new, harmful ideology from which the rest of the world is backing off. It is time we were all protecting the children.

May 18, 2023 - Overflowing with Joy

In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy. (2 Corinthians 7:4)

What is extraordinary about Paul is how unbelievably durable his joy was when things weren't going well. Where did this come from?

First of all it was taught by Jesus: *"Blessed are you when people hate you. . . . Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6:22–23)*. Troubles for Jesus compound your interest in heaven — which lasts a lot longer than earth.

Second, it comes from the Holy Spirit, not our own efforts or imagination or family upbringing. *"The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy" (Galatians 5:22).*

Third, it comes from belonging to the kingdom of God. *"The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).*

Fourth, it comes through faith, that is, from believing God. *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Romans 15:13).*

Fifth, it comes from seeing and knowing Jesus as Lord. *"Rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4).*

Sixth, it comes from fellow believers who work hard to help us focus on these sources of joy, rather than deceitful circumstances. *"We work with you for your joy" (2 Corinthians 1:24).*

Seventh, it comes from the sanctifying effects of tribulations. *"We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Romans 5:3–4).* May we be overflowing with Joy.

May 19, 2023 - Burn with Joy

And all the people went their way . . . to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them. (Nehemiah 8:12)

The only joy that reflects the worth of God and overflows in God-glorifying love is rooted in the true knowledge of God. And to the degree that our knowledge is small or flawed, our joy will be a poor echo of God's true excellence.

The experience of Israel in this text, is a picture of how God-glorifying joy happens in the heart. Ezra had read the word of God to them and the Levites had explained it, and then the people went away "to make great rejoicing." Their great rejoicing was because they had understood words — the true words of God.

Most of us have tasted this experience of the heart burning with joy when the word of God was opened to us (Luke 24:32). Twice Jesus said that he taught his disciples for the sake of their joy.

- *John 15:11, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."*
- *John 17:13, "These things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves."*

What we mainly see in the word is the Lord himself — God himself — offering himself to be known and enjoyed. The point is that if our joy is going to reflect the glory of God, then it must flow from true knowledge of how God is glorious. Let us burn with joy.

May 20, 2023 - The Eyes of the Lord

"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him." (2 Chronicles 16:9)

What is God looking for in the world? Assistants? No. The gospel is not a "help wanted" sign. Neither is the call to Christian service.

God is not looking for people to work for him. He's the great worker. He's the one with broad, burden-bearing shoulders. He's the strong one. And he is looking for ways to show it. This is what differentiates God from the so-called gods of the world: he works for us. Isaiah 64:4, *"From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you [in other words this is his uniqueness], who acts for those who wait for him."*

What does God want from us? Not what we might expect. He rebukes Israel for bringing him so many sacrifices: "I will not accept a bull from your house. . . . For every beast of the forest is mine. . . . *'If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine'" (Psalm 50:9–10, 12).*

But isn't there something we can give to God that won't belittle him to the status of beneficiary? Yes. Our anxieties. Our needs. Our cries for power to do his will. It's a command: "[Cast] all your anxieties on him" (1 Peter 5:7). God will gladly receive anything from us that shows our dependence and his all-sufficiency, His eyes are looking for this.

May 21, 2023 - This is the Love of God

This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:3–5)

What is plain in these verses is that being born again — being born of God — turns the commandments of God from being burdensome to being our delight. How does that work? How does being born of God make the commandments of God a delight rather than a burden?

The apostle John says, *"This is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith" (1 John 5:4)*. The way that being born of God overcomes the worldly burdensomeness of God's commandments is by begetting faith. This is confirmed in 1 John 5:1, which says, literally, *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God."*

Faith is the evidence that we have been born of God. We do not cause ourselves to be born again by deciding to believe. God creates our willingness to believe by causing us to be born again. As Peter said in his first letter, God *"caused us to be born again to a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3)*. Our living hope, or faith in grace, is the work of God through new birth.

It is faith that overcomes our inborn hostility to God and his will, and frees us to keep his commandments and this is the Love of God.

May 22, 2023 - The way to Death

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. Proverbs 14:12

Recently, Dr. Jennifer Gaudiani, a Colorado doctor of internal medicine, published a paper in which she advocates that physician-assisted suicide should be extended to patients struggling with anorexia.

Her advocacy is not theoretical. Jennifer Brown with the Colorado Sun reported on some of Gaudiani's practices: One 36-year-old woman died after ingesting the lethal doses prescribed by another doctor, with Gaudiani serving as consulting physician. Another 36-year-old woman died of severe malnutrition on the same day she planned to take aid-in-dying medication prescribed by Gaudiani.

But Denver-based psychiatrist Dr. Patricia Westmoreland argues, "Patients suffering from extreme anorexia are not mentally healthy enough to make a decision with such dire consequences." University of Maryland psychiatrist Dr. Annette Hanson adds, "Historically, we do not declare people futile when it comes to psychiatric illnesses," because *"suggestion is a form of coercion."*

The value of every human life is inherent, not determined by what we can do or how we feel. This is why, with obvious compassion for those suffering, Christians have always viewed self-harm as wrong and human

life as a gift. Assisted suicide, especially when extended to those most in need of compassion and care, subverts our collective understanding of human value.

May 23, 2023 - My Soul Thirsts for You

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. (Psalm 63:1–2)

Only God will satisfy our hearts if we are people after God's own heart. That's the way we were created to be. This is the essence of what it means to love God: to be satisfied in him. Not just his gifts, but God himself, as the glorious person that he is!

Loving God will include obeying all his commands; it will include believing all his word; it will include thanking him for all his gifts. But all that is overflow. The essence of loving God is admiring and enjoying all he is. It is this enjoyment of God that makes all of our other responses truly glorifying to him.

We all know this intuitively as well as from Scripture. Do we feel most honored by the love of those who serve us from the constraints of duty, or from the delights of fellowship?

Our spouses are most honored when we say, "It makes me happy to spend time with you." Our happiness is the echo of their excellence. And so it is with God. He is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him as our soul thirsts for Him.

May 24, 2023 - Marriage Matters

Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Hebrews 13:4

Last month, the Somerville, Massachusetts city council passed an ordinance to add polyamorous relationships to the town's "nondiscrimination" rules. A 2020 ordinance made the town the first in the U.S. to legally recognize polyamorous relationships.

But for reasons unknown, the new ordinance draws lines on what counts as a recognized "domestic partnership," limiting it to six people. As one person jokingly asked on Twitter, "What about all the heptagamists? Bigotry, I tell you."

Whenever marriage is redefined away from its God-given design and from the biological realities of male and female and children, any line drawn is completely arbitrary. Marriage becomes little more than a question of preference.

Somerville's redefinition of marriage, like culture's, is only a knock-off. Though it can be obscured, marriage can never be replaced. Marriage is the union ordered by God toward the creation of new human life, and only two people of the opposite sex can ever produce a child which shows that marriage matters.

May 25, 2023 - A People for his Name

"Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14)

It is scarcely possible to overemphasize the centrality of the name of God, that is, the fame of God, in motivating the mission of the church. When Peter had his world turned upside down by the vision of unclean animals in Acts 10, and by the lesson from God that he should evangelize Gentiles as well as Jews, he came back to Jerusalem and told the apostles that it was all owing to God's zeal for his name.

It's not surprising that Peter would say that God's purpose was to gather a people for his name; because the Lord Jesus had stung Peter some years earlier with an unforgettable lesson. After a rich young man turned away from Jesus and refused to follow him, Peter said to Jesus, *"See, we have left everything and followed you [unlike this rich fellow]. What then will we have?" (Matthew 19:27)*. Jesus responded with a mild rebuke, which in effect said that there is no ultimate sacrifice when you live for the name of the Son of Man. He said, *"Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29).*

The truth is plain: God is pursuing with omnipotent delight a worldwide purpose of gathering a people for his name.

May 26, 2023 - Love Your Enemies

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." (Luke 6:27)

There are two main reasons why Christians should love their enemies and do good to them.

One is that it reveals something of the way God is. God is merciful.

- *He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:45)*
- *He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. (Psalm 103:10)*

The second reason is that the hearts of Christians are satisfied with God and are not driven by the craving for revenge or self-exaltation or money or earthly security.

God has become our all-satisfying treasure and so we don't treat our adversaries out of our own sense of need and insecurity, but out of our own fullness with the satisfying glory of God.

So, in both these reasons for loving our enemy we see the main thing: God is shown to be who he really is as a merciful God and as gloriously all-satisfying. The power to be merciful is that we have been satisfied with God's mercy toward us and we can now love our enemies.

May 27, 2023 - Find God in the Gospel

That they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us. Acts 17:27

More than a few folks, from theologian John Calvin to philosopher William James to French theologian and historian Louis Auguste Sabatier, have noted that humans are "incurably religious" creatures. In other words, religion is native to the human heart.

In the history of the world, the wholesale rejection of the supernatural is a quirk of Western secularism. At the same time, it will not ultimately survive the human longing for transcendence and communion with the supernatural, no matter how far technology advances.

Celebrations of “technoshamanism” should remind us that pagan mysticism also fails to fill the “God-shaped vacuum” in every human heart. With Virtual Reality headsets and tarot apps, would-be witches may try to reimagine what pre-Christian beliefs were like, but real paganism died out in Europe over a thousand years ago. The reason was the advance of Christianity, something historian Rodney Stark has called “The Victory of Reason.” Christianity’s triumph led to expanded human rights and freedom, capitalism, and the science that made the “tech” in technoshamanism possible in the first place.

Fundamentally, Christ supplanted paganism because His gospel was better news. The worldview centered on His rule and reign brings rest to the restless human heart. The more secular forces and ideologies in the contemporary West attempt to replace Christ with belief in nothing, the more paganism rushes back to fill the vacuum. But it has already been tried and found wanting before, and it will fail again. True hope, joy, and dignity come only from Christ and the gospel.

May 28, 2023 - God the Holy Spirit

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Matthew 28:19-20

The Holy Spirit has been called the forgotten God. But He is also, according to Scripture, at the heart of the Christian life. “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” says the Nicene Creed, “The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son is both worshiped and glorified. Who has spoken to us by the prophets.”

There is a longstanding debate between Eastern and Western churches about whether the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone or from the Son as well. What Christians agree on, however, is that the Spirit is God. He’s a person, not a force.

The Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures. He raised Jesus Christ from the dead. He is the comforter sent by Jesus, the One who gives us ears to hear the Gospel and who intercedes for us when we pray, indwelling us to this day. We are His temples, and He is the pledge of our inheritance. He guarantees that the faith we now confess in the Triune God will one day be sight. He is God the Holy Spirit.

May 29, 2023 - In Love He Predestined

I*n love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will. (Ephesians 1:4–5)*

The experience of Charles Spurgeon is not beyond the ability of any ordinary Christian. Spurgeon, who lived from 1834 to 1892, was a contemporary and friend of George Mueller and Hudson Taylor. He served the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for over thirty years as the most famous pastor of his day.

His preaching was so powerful that people were converted to Christ every week. His sermons are still in print today and he is held up by many as a model soul winner. He recalls an experience when he was sixteen that shaped his life and ministry for the rest of his days.

When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this.

Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, “I ascribe my change wholly to God.”

What about you? Do you ascribe your conversion wholly to God? Is he the bottom of it all? Does this cause you to praise the glory of his sovereign, overcoming grace knowing that in love he predestined you?

May 30, 2023 - The Aim of Our Charge

The aim of our charge is love. (1 Timothy 1:5)

Victor Frankl was imprisoned in the Nazi concentration camps of Auschwitz and Dachau during the Second World War. As a Jewish professor of neurology and psychiatry he became world renowned for his book, Man's Search for Meaning, which sold over eight million copies.

In it he unfolds the essence of his philosophy that came to be called Logotherapy — namely, that the most fundamental human motive is to find meaning in life. He observed in the horrors of the concentration camps that man can endure almost any "how" of life, if he has a "why." But the quote that stirred me recently was this:

I am absolutely convinced that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Maidanek were ultimately prepared not in some ministry or other in Berlin, but rather at the desks and in the lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers. *("Victor Frankl at Ninety: An Interview," in First Things, April 1995, p. 41.)*

In other words, ideas have consequences — consequences that bless or destroy. People's behavior — good and bad — does not come out of nowhere. It comes from prevailing views of reality that take root in the mind and bring forth good or evil. Hope and love do not come from nowhere. They grow out of ideas — views of reality — revealed in the Scriptures which tells us that the aim of our charge is love.

May 31, 2023 - Blessed are the Meek

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

Meekness begins when we put our trust in God. Then, because we trust him, we commit our way to him. We roll onto him our anxieties, our frustrations, our plans, our relationships, our jobs, our health. Then we wait patiently for the Lord. We trust his timing and his power and his grace to work things out in the best way for his glory and for our good. The result is that we don't give way to quick and fretful anger. But instead, we give place to wrath and hand our cause over to God and let him vindicate us if he chooses.

James says, in this quiet confidence we are slow to speak and quick to listen (James 1:19). We become reasonable and open to correction *(James 3:17). James calls this "the meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13).*

Meekness loves to learn. And it counts the corrective blows of a friend as precious (Proverbs 27:6). When it must say a critical word to a person caught in sin or error, it speaks from the deep conviction of its own fallibility and its own susceptibility to sin and its utter dependence on the grace of God (Galatians 6:1).

The quietness and openness and vulnerability of meekness is very beautiful and very painful. It goes against all that we are by our sinful nature. It requires supernatural help and the fruit is that the meek are blessed and inherit the earth.