



Pastor Doug Wilson • BETHANY - A PLACE OF NEW BEGINNINGS  
March 1, 2026 • Sixth in a series of messages

## 1. When life is hard, ask, is there anything God wants me to know?

### ■ Only one thing gets us through tough times: **RELATIONSHIP!**

JOHN 17:3 (NIV)

Now **this is eternal LIFE**: that they **KNOW YOU**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

JEREMIAH 9:23-24 (NASB 1995)

<sup>23</sup> Thus says the Lord, “Let not a **wise** man boast of his wisdom, and let not the **mighty** man boast of his might, let not a **rich** man boast of his riches;  
<sup>24</sup> **but let him who boasts boast of this, that he UNDERSTANDS and KNOWS ME,** that I am the Lord who exercises **lovingkindness, justice and righteousness** on earth; for I **DELIGHT** in these things,” declares the Lord.

## 2. When life is hard, ask, how can I get to know the Lord?

### ■ **HOW** can I get to know the Lord?

#### a. \_\_\_\_\_ with Him.

GENESIS 3:8-9 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> ...the man and his wife **heard** the sound of the Lord God as **he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day**, and **they** hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called to the man, “**Where are you?**”

#### b. \_\_\_\_\_ with Him.

PSALM 116:1-2 (NLT)

<sup>1</sup> I love the Lord because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy.

<sup>2</sup> Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!

#### c. \_\_\_\_\_ to Him.

1 SAMUEL 3:10 (TNIV)

Then Samuel said, “**Speak, for your servant is listening.**”

1 KINGS 19:11-13 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain **in the presence of the Lord**, for the Lord is about to pass by.” **Elijah is exhausted.**

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, *but the Lord was not in the wind*. After the wind there was an earthquake, *but the Lord was not in the earthquake*. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, *but the Lord was not in the fire*. And **after the fire came A GENTLE WHISPER**. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah **heard** it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, “**What are you doing here, Elijah?**”

MARK 4:37-39 (NIV)

<sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup> **Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion**. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

<sup>39</sup> **He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!”** Then the wind died down and it was **completely calm**.

MATTHEW 17:5 (NLT)

...a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “**This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. LISTEN TO HIM.**”

JOHN 5:25-26 (NLT)

<sup>25</sup> “...I assure you that the time is coming, indeed it’s here now, when **THE DEAD will hear my voice** — the voice of the Son of God. **And THOSE WHO LISTEN WILL LIVE.** <sup>26</sup> **The Father has LIFE in himself, & he has granted that same LIFE-giving power to his Son.**

MATTHEW 7:28-29 (NIV)

<sup>28</sup> When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were **amazed** at his teaching, <sup>29</sup> **because he taught as one who had AUTHORITY**, and not as their teachers of the law.

■ Authority: *ek*, “out of” and *ousia*, “the center of being” — so the people are amazed because **he teaches “out of the center of reality.” THIS is the way things really are!**

d. \_\_\_\_\_ what He says.

GENESIS 4:2-16 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. <sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought **some** of the fruits of the **soil** as an offering to the Lord. <sup>4</sup> And Abel also brought an offering — **fat portions** from **some of the firstborn of his flock**. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup> but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was **very angry**, and his face was **downcast**.

**WHY DID THE LORD NOT “LOOK WITH FAVOR” ON CAIN AND HIS OFFERING?**

1. Because in Genesis 3:21 the Lord had already demonstrated that a \_\_\_\_\_ sacrifice covers sin and restores relationship.

“The killing of an animal necessary to make garments of skin may suggest/imply the image of a sacrifice for sin. ...with the ‘sacrifice’ of an animal...Brueggemann explains, ‘...God does (3:21) for the couple what they cannot do for themselves (3:7). They cannot deal with their shame. But God can, will, and does.’ [And clothing them with ‘garments’] depicts an image of God’s tender care for the couple. Through his sacrifice, he restores the alienated couple to fellowship with him and one another.”

—BRUCE K. WALTKE, *Genesis: A Commentary* (2001) 95.

HEBREWS 9:22 (Living Bible)

...we can say that under the Torah almost everything was cleansed by sprinkling it with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

2. Because the \_\_\_\_\_ of the offerings was radically different.

“...actually Genesis has drawn attention to the differences between the quality of the brothers’ offerings, “some of the firstborn of his flock, some of the fat parts,” over against “some of the fruit of the ground.”

—JOHN GOLDINGAY, *Genesis* [Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch] (2020).

3. Perhaps \_\_\_\_\_ gifts (whether fruit or flock) could have honored the Lord, and thus been “acceptable” and “right” (v. 7).

PROVERBS 3:9 (NIV)

Honor the Lord with your wealth,  
with the **firstfruits** of all your crops...

4. The Lord always looks at our \_\_\_\_\_. Cain’s downcast face was an external indicator, but his angry heart was the internal reality.

1 SAMUEL 16:7 (GNT)

“...I do not judge as people judge.  
They look at the **outward** appearance,  
but I look at the **heart**.”

Cain did not honor the Lord with his **heart**. He was seeking **the Lord’s “favor”** (vv. 4-5), not a **relationship** where he cares about the Father’s heart and carries out what the Father wants (see Psalm 133:1, 1 John 4:20, Luke 10:27).

PSALM 133:1

See how good and how pleasant it is **when brothers and sisters live together in unity!**  
For **THERE** the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

1 JOHN 4:20-21 (TNIV)

<sup>20</sup> If we say we love God yet **hate** a brother or sister, we are liars.  
For if we do not love a fellow believer, whom we have seen,  
we cannot love God, whom we have not seen.

<sup>21</sup> And he has given us this command: **Those who love God must also love one another.**

<sup>6</sup> Then the Lord said to Cain, “**Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?**” <sup>7</sup> If you **DO** what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you **DO NOT DO** what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

**GOD’S GRACIOUS INTERVENTION WITH CAIN**

1. Despite what God observes, He mercifully seeks to connect with and continue guiding Cain, offering him a way out of his dilemma.
2. If he does what is right, he will get the acceptance and favor he desires.
3. But God also gives him a gracious warning about the dangerous consequences of continuing down the angry path he is on:
  - A predator will hunt him down (a demon, a vicious animal, a serpent?)...
  - who wants to attack him, control him and destroy his future...
  - but God assures Cain he is able to seek God’s help and conquer his sin.

<sup>8</sup> Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

<sup>9</sup> Then the Lord said to Cain, “**Where is your brother Abel?**”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

**CAIN’S ARROGANT AND SELFISH RESPONSE**

1. Cain doesn’t even \_\_\_\_\_ to God.

“Cain has nothing to say back to Yahweh. Perhaps he was not listening. He believes that actions speak louder than words. He turns his plowshare into a sword.

—JOHN GOLDINGAY, *Genesis* [Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch] (2020).

2. Cain prefers murder to \_\_\_\_\_ to God’s liberating wisdom.

3. He \_\_\_\_\_ to God.

4. He reveals the condition of his \_\_\_\_\_: he is only concerned for his own well-being. No one else’s. He is self-absorbed, self-seeking, self-centered.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD said, “**What have you done?** Listen! Your brother’s blood **cries out to me** from the ground. <sup>11</sup> Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. <sup>12</sup> When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

<sup>13</sup> Cain said to the LORD, “**My punishment is more than I can bear.**” <sup>14</sup> Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

<sup>15</sup> But the LORD said to him, “**Not so;** anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. <sup>16</sup> So Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

**THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT LISTENING, AND NOT OBEYING**

1. He invites a \_\_\_\_\_ into his life.
2. He made \_\_\_\_\_ even more frustrating than before! (He contaminated the ground that was a primary source of joy and fulfillment for him.)
3. He loses his \_\_\_\_\_.
4. He loses God’s \_\_\_\_\_ and protection.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ will become a way of life.