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GENESIS 37:5-36

Series: Understanding Your Roots

[PRAYER] Father, right now we're praying for the church in India. We ask that you would work in the hearts of the people there and raise up more pastors, more leaders. I thank you for Dr. PC Mathew and his word at the Urban India Ministry there. I pray that you would bless him and his work. Strengthen the church, Lord, we ask. It just reminds us, Father, that there are Christians all over the world that are experiencing challenges and experiencing your grace. So we're honored that we're here on a Sunday morning worshipping you. We know that all around the world people are worshipping you on Sunday. Some worship on Saturdays. Some even as in Dubai when I was there we worshiped on Friday because that's their worship day. But we are coming before you and worshipping you and thanking you for your work in our lives. Today now as we look at our own church in our own barn in our own hearts, we ask that you would speak to us and teach us. Lead us into your throne of grace and dispense your grace to us today. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.

There are two different aspects of the Christian life. I call it the academic side and then also the experiential side. The academic side is where we learn the Bible stories and so on from God's word. Now when we're teaching children we teach them about 200 Bible stories. And then of course there's the teachings in the epistles and so on. Then we also encourage everyone to memorize scripture. When parents ask me "How many verses should my child memorize?" I say, "100 is good; 1,000 is better." Because memorizing scripture gets it into your head and then allows it to get down in to your heart. And then there's the theology that we learn. A theology of money, a theology of decision-making, a theology of creation. When we understand the theology of creation we understand that God made us in His image. That He created marriage. He's the one who designed that. Where we see all of that, we're just struck by just the immensity of it all. So the academic side of the Christian life is very important.

That's why we dig into God's work every week here at Calvary Chapel Living Hope. That's why you're having your quiet time. That's why you're reading and studying God's word because that's the portion that gives us truth. But there's another side of the Christian life and that's the experiential side. That's when we're praying. That's when we're serving the Lord, that's when we're looking out at creation and seeing God's work. That's when we're watching God at work in our lives and we see things take place. We experience God. Both are important. When we experience something we always have to check it with God's word. Because sometimes people think well God told me this and they're often running on something that's rather crazy. Everybody else can see it's crazy, but they can't. We have to check it with God's word and make sure it fits in there. But there's these two aspects of the Christian life that are strategic for us as we move forward.

Does God speak to us through dreams, for example? That's an experience. Well let's find out as we look at Genesis 37 and Joseph who has these dreams, six of them in the passage (not today) – two of them in our passage today and then all through the passages through the end of Genesis we'll see these six dreams. But there are two dreams we're going to look at today.

But let's pull this back a little bit and let's take it from verse 1, even though we looked at verses 1-4 last week. Let's bring ourselves into the picture as Moses under the influence of the Holy Spirit is laying this all out for us so that we can understand what's going on.

It says in verse 1 – *Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph, a young man of seventeen...* This is a very obvious link to young people and understanding God working in the lives of young people and children. Very clear here.

He was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. Now Moses records this piece of information here to help us see the backdrop. There's going to be a backdrop on the stage of the dreams. The backdrop is sibling conflict here. A bad report that he brought and you can feel the feelings of the brothers start to engage. That he's a snitch. That he's tattletale-ing on us.

Verse 3 amplifies this problem by saying this: *Now Israel (or Jacob) loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.*

Now did Jacob make a mistake by making a robe for his son? No. He didn't make a mistake. That was a beautiful thing because the robe represented the love of the father. We talked about that last week. We have the love of the Father and He's given us these clothes to wear in gentleness, compassion, humility, and patience, and kindness. Those words that we saw that we clothes ourself with. Why do we do that? Because we have the love of the Father. So there's nothing wrong with Jacob making the robe for him. The problem is he only made a robe for one of his twelve sons. He should have expressed his value and his love to all of them. Maybe not with a robe. Maybe the second one should have gotten a nice staff that was all carved beautifully. Maybe a third one should have gotten a ring that was very nice. Uniquely and individually showing the love of the father to the son. In the same way God uniquely and in a special way shows His love for each of us. So that we can be proud to wear the clothes that God has given to us.

You can see why did they hate him? *They hated him all the more.* Why? It says – *When the brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them.* It's this hole that we all have in our hearts that needs the love of the Father. And none of our parents can fully meet that hole in our hearts. That's why we come to the heavenly Father who is the [garbled]. He says let's relate to Him as Father. That's how Jesus introduces Him to us as Father. So that we can get to know our heavenly Father in a way that touches us very specifically.

That brings us to verse 5 where we learn about the dreams. Notice verse 5 says – *Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.* Notice there’s a backdrop here of jealousy, hatred, sibling conflict. On this backdrop, on this stage comes down the dream. We’re going to see that the dream is interpreted by the brothers. Joseph doesn’t interpret his own dream. The passage doesn’t interpret the dream. It’s the brothers who interpret the dream for us. The dream is going to be interpreted based on their own jealousy and hatred, as we’re going to see.

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.”

Imagine the picture. Imagine the dream as he’s having this very vivid dream that strikes him in quite an amazing way. That there are twelve guys out in the field, he and his brothers all together, and they’re cutting down grain. Now when you cut down wheat you cut it down and it all falls down, of course. Then you pile it up and you tie it together. When you tie it together it is a sheaf. Then you take the sheaves and you put them on the cart and you take them to the threshing floor. That’s what happens you’re processing or harvesting this grain.

Well in the midst of their doing this, the boys are all looking around and the sheaves start moving. One sheaf stands upright (that’s Joseph’s sheaf) and the other sheaves come over to him and bow down. That’s the picture that we see. We aren’t told what it means. We’re just given that picture in the dream that Joseph is saying this is what I saw in the dream.

Well now you’re going to see what the brothers say because the brothers now are going to interpret the dream based on their experience with Joseph. I think they’re going to get it wrong, but this is how they interpret it. They say – *“Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.*

Their picture of the dream is this power that this person will have. Now we know that Joseph is raised up. But does he use his power in the story? As you think about how the story fulfills itself, do we see Joseph using his power to force them on their knees, to force them into servitude, to make them servants? No. He doesn’t use his power that way. He uses his power as provision for them. It’s very different. I mean if you come in your own heart with this backdrop of all kinds of anger and bitterness and resentment you start interpreting the world that way. You start looking at the world as a hostile place. You start criticizing other people when they make mistakes and they don’t fit into your kind of what you want to do. I mean you have this critical bent, and that’s what’s taking place. So they’re viewing this all from their perspective and they’re wrong. Joseph isn’t condemning them and coming down on them in a harsh way. In the end of the story he’s going to be there. They’re willingly coming to him and asking, “Would you please help us? We don’t have any food. We don’t have anything to eat.” Joseph says, “I have the food for you. Here it is.” It’s this beautiful statement of provision.

Well the boys don't know that and they come to this conclusion. Joseph doesn't know this now. But Joseph is so enamored by this dream that he shares. There are some who would say he wasn't very wise in sharing with his brothers who already had issues with him. He probably shouldn't have shared this. He probably should have kept it to himself. Maybe that's true. But if I put myself in Joseph's experience for just a moment (as I hope you will do) and you imagine this dream that he has, don't you get up sometimes after a vivid dream and you say, "Whoa. That was so wild of a dream. I've got to tell somebody about it." I think that's what he's doing.

The first thing I want to say about dreams is this. Let's think about dreams, not only in the physical sense of sleeping and having this dream, but let's think about the dreams like the Martin Luther King dream "I Have a Dream." I have this vision for where I'm going. I have a vision for a sweet marriage. I'm going to get married to someone and we're going to have this great relationship. That's my vision. Or I can hardly wait to have kids because we're all going to love the Lord and we're going to serve the Lord and that's my vision for life. So there's this vision that we take on in our lives.

The first thing I see in this passage is that we should expect big things from God. I think that what's happening in the passage is that the experience that Joseph has in this dream is so big that he has to share it. I've got to tell you this story because I don't know what it means, but I've got to tell you this story of what happened. There's this grandeur about God's word in our lives. I think we need to enlarge our box. We put God in a box sometimes, but He's so big that we need to recognize how big He is and what He wants to do. I think He blows us away sometimes. I think Joseph is so blown away by this dream that he has to tell his brothers what's going on.

Well let's go on because it doesn't stop. He's got another dream. Verse 9 – *Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."*

Now I don't know if he's a constellation or a person or whatever, but somehow the sun and the moon and the stars (probably representing his father, mother, and brothers) are bowing down to him. There's this grandeur. This is a cosmic dream. This isn't just about food and sheaves of grain. This is something really big that's taking place. Of course Joseph is going to be in this great place when he gets to Egypt after a little while. He's going to rise to this amazing place of power, yes, but he uses this power with wisdom. So people are bowing down to him in a cosmic way because of that wisdom that God has given to him.

Notice what happens now because his father hears about the dreams. It says – *When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

His first reaction was to rebuke his son. What are you doing here? Are you being arrogant. But then it says – *He kept the matter in mind.* Which gives the impression he thought about it for a while. He kind of pondered this. I think it's because Jacob had this picture of God being big. He knew that God can do all kinds of things.

I think we need to expect big things from God, but we also need to maintain the wonder of life. The wonder of God at work in our lives. What is God doing here? Do you ever ask that question of yourself? What is God doing here? This is strange what's going on here. God must be doing something.

So there's this wonder that Jacob has. Because Jacob himself, remember, had a dream when he left his family and he's going off to college or going off to work or wherever he's going. He leaves his home, he puts his head down on a pillow (which was a rock) and he has this dream, this picture of God or angels ascending and descending. This picture of connecting with God. So he's familiar with this idea of nighttime experiences. You see Jacob at that part of the story is on his way to visit Laban and so on because he's going to find a wife. He knows this is a really important decision. "Lord, would you give me someone that I can match up with that's going to be just right for me?" He knows how valuable that is. He knows how much power is needed for that. So he has this experience with God that is a dream kind of experience. And now his son is having these dreams. So it says Jacob pondered these things or he thought about them.

It reminds me of Mary in the New Testament. Do you remember that the angel came to Mary. I kind of see that as the academic side of the Christian life when the angel came to Mary and told her, "You're going to have a child," and she says, "Not me." "No really, it's going to be you," the angel says. So she has this knowledge. "And this is going to be the Son of God." So she has this knowledge, but then life starts to play out. Things start to happen. And then when the shepherds come and the wise men come, the passage says this: *And Mary pondered all these things in her heart.*

We need to do that. When life starts to unfold before us, we need to maintain the wonder of God at work in our world. What is He doing in the midst of all these things? I'm often asking the question, "God, what are you doing here? What do you want me to do? How should I respond in this situation?"

A man asked me this week if I would help him move a couch. He wanted to move it into his girlfriend's house because they were going to be moving in together. Now you know my opinion of that. I think that's a disaster because both by God's word and my experience when you move in together it destroys what you have for a marriage and really damages what God could do in making that marriage really strong. But he's asking me this question, will you help me move the couch? In this case I felt like the Lord was saying well you do have some time here, why don't you go do this? So I said okay. I'm thinking well maybe I'll talk to my friend about some things on the way. So we're moving this couch together. And I did have an opportunity to share some things with him.

But the intriguing thing for me happened when we arrived at the house where his girlfriend's mother was. We're carrying in this couch and as I'm carrying it into the house she says, "I know you."

I say, "Oh okay."

She says, "Are you a pastor?"

I say, "Yeah, I'm a pastor."

She says, "Oh yeah. I've heard about you," and so on.

I said, “Well what church do you go to?”

She says, “Well I’m not really going to any church right now.”

I said, “Well your house right here is only a few miles from the Barn where we meet.”

“You meet in a barn?”

I say, “Yes, we meet in a barn. You can come worship the Lord there and be part of this.”

And then I realized this is why I’m on this journey to take this couch somewhere. I had no idea. It’s the wonder of what God is doing in the world. So when I got back to my office I pulled out a greeting card and I said to my friend, “Tell me that lady’s name again? What was the address where she lives?” And I sent her a greeting card. Maybe she’ll come here to the Barn. I don’t know. But I do know that there’s this wonder about life that we need to have and recognize what is God doing in each of these situations. How is He working?

That’s what Jacob has. He has this wonder because his son now is telling these dreams that seem to be unusual, even appear to be arrogant. So he has this wonder about it all.

Well let’s go on to verse 12. It says – *Now his brothers had gone to graze their father’s flocks near Shechem, and Israel (that is Jacob) said to Joseph, “As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them.”*

“Very well,” he replied. Imagine Joseph saying, “Okay. Very well. I’ll just do whatever you tell me to do.” He has no idea. He’s just kind of taking life as it comes.

So he said to him, “Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me.” Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, “What are you looking for?”

He replied, “I’m looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?” “They have moved on from here,” the man answered. “I heard them say, ‘Let’s go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan.

Here’s another principle about the experiential side of the Christian life. God speaks to us in a lot of different ways. You never know when a message is going to come from a child and you’re going to go, “Whoa. God taught me something or rebuked me even from that child or from a husband or a wife, and God’s going to say something to you. In this case it’s a random guy comes up. Here Joseph is out in the fields wandering around. Obviously he looks like he’s lost, doesn’t know what’s going on. Here the only guy or at least a guy in Shechem comes up who says, “I happen to know what you’re looking for. What are you looking for? You’re looking for your brothers. Oh I overheard them saying they’re going to Dothan.”

It’s amazing to me that God is at work here and He’s working through a random guy. We aren’t even told his name. But God works in our lives that way. Sometimes we come across an experience, even what we think is a random experience and God is in the midst of that guiding our direction and moving us in a way to protect us sometimes, to lead us in a certain way. I think this is the adventure of the Christian life. We never know what’s going to happen today. We

never know what's going to happen as we're moving forward, that God might do something significant in our lives through someone or something that takes place.

When my wife and I were in our early twenties we went to Europe for three weeks. In our three-week tour we had ideas of where we were going to go, but we weren't with a tour group or anything. We were on our own. We were having the time of our life just going wherever we want. We happened to be in Paris at this part of the story. We had a terrible night the night before. We had gotten sick, food poisoning on some food that we ate in Paris and now we had determined we were going to Switzerland. So we're feeling sick, we get on the train, and we're heading to Switzerland on this train just for the next few hours (however long it takes to get from Paris to this place in Switzerland where we're going). We're feeling lousy.

There's this guy over here on the side kind of looking at us. He's making us feel uncomfortable. Now you have to understand in France they do not like to speak English. They speak French because that is the language. They don't want to speak to you in English. But this guy is looking at us for a while and we're feeling uncomfortable. Finally he gets up and comes over to us and he says to us, "Are you guys going to Switzerland?" in English. We said yeah, we are going to Switzerland. He says, "You're on the wrong part of the train. This train is going to split in a little while and the back half of the train is going some other place and you want to be on the front part of the train because it's going to Switzerland." We walked out of there. I mean we took our stuff and went to the front part of the train.

But you know what we were saying? We're saying, "Was that an angel? How did that guy know we were going to Switzerland?" God brought this random guy into our lives that pointed us into the direction we need. I don't know if that happens to you. Surely it must at times where there's something happening the spiritual side of the Christian life where you know God is directing you because you're His child and He's taking care of you. You get that unexpected check in the mail because God is caring for you or He sends someone alongside of you to encourage you when you need it most and He's caring for you. It's just a beautiful experience, this wonder of what God is doing.

He had a dream. But also God is speaking to him in different ways and now we're going to come to a different part of the story where if I had a dream like this I wouldn't know what to do with it. When you come to this next part of the story things start getting bad here and they go from bad to worse. Let's read about this and see what happens.

It says – So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

Let's just pause there for a moment and let me say this about dreams. Others may try, but they can't destroy your dreams. They're something that God has given to you. Others can try, but they can't kill your dreams.

But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one

of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. You can tell these guys do not know what they're doing. They have a lot of experience of their own bitterness and resentment, but they don't have an academic side of the God-filled life. They don't have any truth to rely on. There are a lot of people around in life who are like that. All they have is their experience to rely on and some of that is not good experience. So there are a lot of people who are going around in life just reacting to certain problems. They have no direction, no purpose and meaning. That's why we need the academic side of the Christian life, God's word to guide us and move us forward. These guys don't know what they're doing. So Reuben has this idea and says, "Let's not take his life," he said. "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

*So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now Moses makes it very clear to share this next detail with us, just so we get it. He says – *The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.* So they threw him into a cistern, but there was no water in there. You know that reminds me again that when God gives us a dream He goes before us in order to accomplish it. God is continually going before us to protect us, guide us, lead us. Oh yeah, this is a bad situation that he's in. But God is at work here and wouldn't you know, the cistern is dry. Surprise, surprise.*

Verse 25 – As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. No plan. Now they're reacting in a different way. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?" That sounds like a very brotherly thing to say until you read the rest of it. He says, "Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." I kind of laugh at that because we aren't going to kill him, but we'll sell him because he's our brother. His brothers agreed. So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. He went back to his brothers and said, "The boy isn't there! Where can I turn now?" Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe."

He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces."

I find it interesting in this passage that we never in the whole passage get Joseph's perspective on the dreams. We don't know how Joseph is feeling. We don't know what's going on in his heart

in the midst of this. I can imagine I'd feel pretty disappointed. Maybe he thought this dream would be fulfilled in six months that he was going to be this person that people are bowing down to. It doesn't happen that way.

Sometimes that's true in our dreams. We have this dream we're going to have this great marriage and then we get married, we find out we're married to this person? And then we find out that marriage does really require a lot of work. It's harder than we ever imagined to be married. So when we're in conflict and we've got to go to the other person, which is humbling and we've got to work on that, that's the challenge of being married. If you're going to have a good marriage then it's going to require a lot of work. If you think you're going to have these kids come into your home and they're going to make your family the best ever and you haven't had kids yet. Those of us who have children know that they are a tremendous amount of work. Sure, they might grow up and serve the Lord. That's great. But the work involved between the giving of the dream to the fulfillment of the dream is huge in a person's life.

I love to hear stories of people who are adopting children. When I meet an adopted child I go, "Wow, I am so honored to know you." Because I know that God has already rescued them from disaster in their lives. That's why they're adopted. God has rescued them already. I'm sure God has something great planned for their life. I want to stay close to you. Maybe some of the blessing will rub off on me. It is an honor for me to know you and to see what God is doing in your life. In some families you don't get to choose the kids, they just pop out. But in your case your parents loved you and picked you out. What an amazing thing! I can hardly wait to see what God is going to do.

God has His hand on Joseph who is going to now grow up, so to speak, in an alternative family situation. He's not going to grow up in his own family now till he's done with childhood and going into adulthood. In the middle of that it's shaken up and he goes into a new environment and life is going to be challenging for him. But God has His hand on Joseph and He's going to move Him around in a special way because God has His hand on adopted kids. God has His hand on kids who are in alternative living situations. God is at work in people's lives and that's what we're seeing in the life of Joseph. It's fascinating.

Let's take a pause and a parenthesis from our discussion of the experiential side of the Christian life, or at least about the dreams and see how Jacob responds here because I think there's an important message we need to understand. It says – *Then Jacob (this is Joseph's dad) tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave."*

I just think about our human hearts in our lives and I feel the pain of Jacob in this story. He's lost someone that he loves dearly. He lost his son, whom he really loved. We're told that in the passage. He loved him more than his other kids and he's lost him now. There's this grieving that takes place. I know some of you have experienced this. You've lost a loved one, whether it be a mate or a child, or you lost something you value, maybe your job or something. There's a grief that's there. I think you feel like Jacob that says this grief is going to be with me till the end of my life. I'm never going to get over this grief, although he will because he will see his son again.

On earth he will see his son again. But at this point his heart is just torn and he's wrestling with it. It is so hard.

That is so difficult to be in that situation where you're grieving because you know you will never be the same person because you've lost someone and that has just torn your heart in a way that's so hard. I think that one word that can help you in the midst of that is the very next word in the passage. Because we don't look at the next word in the passage. We just see our pain and our grief. What's the next word in the passage? What is it? Verse 36, what's the first word? *Meanwhile*. There's always a meanwhile in our lives. There's always God's doing something else that we don't know about. There's always things going on behind the scenes. There's the meanwhile which increases the wonder of our experience with God. It increases this sense of expecting big things from God. There's always something bigger going on. There's a meanwhile going on.

Let me read the verse. It says – *Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.* I can imagine Joseph saying to himself... You know there is a lot in this story we don't see. There is probably how he's being bid on. And somebody wants him and somebody else wants him. Or somehow they're selling him to this guy. At some point Joseph says, "Wow, here I am now in the home of the captain of the guard." He's a high official in Egypt. "Maybe this is what God is doing. He's moving me in here so I can be the sheaf where others are going to bow down to me somehow, where the sun and the moon and the stars are going to bow down. I'm in this great place. Maybe this is it." Well if you know the story you know this isn't it. It goes from bad to worse, which we're going to learn about in the next few chapters.

Joseph seems to be a guy who just takes one day at a time. I want to suggest this about dreams. God may give you a big dream of what's going to happen, but you've got to live today. You've got to take one day at a time. Today is the day that we're going to serve the Lord. Today I'm going to do what God has me to do today.

I think it's important for us to understand two sides of the Christian life. There's the academic side, which is essential because it keeps us straight. But then there's the experiential side of the Christian life that allows us to fly. As you experience what God is doing in your life, you'll see God in a new and powerful way in your life.

In my mind it's kind of like driver training. Do you have your license yet, Dustin? Where is he? Do you have your license yet? You're still getting it. But you're still driving around getting your 200 hours in. Right? So he's doing the driver training. What is it, 200 hours or 60 hours? Six? They only require six hours now and you can be on the road?! Oh my goodness. Alright. Well there's two sides of learning how to drive. There's the academic part where you study all the rules of the road and the signs and all that stuff you need to know about the law, and then there's the behind the wheel experience. You can't just go out there and drive by reading the book. You go out there and live life.

I'm convinced that the Christian life has two parts that we need. We must have the academic side. We must understand the renewing of our mind and the standard of God's word to

experience this. But then we go out and Ephesians uses the word ‘walk.’ It's an experiential word. We're going to walk in Christ. We're going to walk the Christian life. As you start walking the Christian life you see that God does big things. You see that there's a wonder about life. You see that God speaks in a variety of different ways. You see that God goes before us and protects us and carries us forward. It's an amazing thing when we experience God in that very powerful way.

So I leave you with this question. What is God doing in your life?

Stand with me and let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, we want to experience you. I sense, Lord, that there are some here today who don't know you in that experiential way. They haven't accepted you as their Lord and Savior. We know that that's the first step in our experience with you is to get to know you personally. So Lord, I just pray that you would work in the hearts of each person who hears this message – whether it's online or on tape somewhere or here at the Barn, that you'd speak to their heart. Lord, we thank you for the experience that we have for you. We thank you for Jesus Christ dying on the cross for us as sinners and for the forgiveness that we can experience. We need experience of forgiveness, but we also need it because it justifies us before you so that we can have that close relationship with you. Lord, we want to get to know you more. So would you this week please reveal yourself to us. Reveal your power. Lord, we'll ask you now to show us yourself, reveal yourself to us this week. As we do, we'll follow you and serve you in our lives. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.