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Today I'd like to teach out of the sixth chapter of John concerning the seven steps in our faith and trusting in God. It occurred to me as I was reading this chapter and while reading the whole gospel of John, how many things are echoed in some of the modern literature and movies we see, particularly the ones by J.R.R. Tolkien, "Lord of the Rings." Most of you have seen that film. There is one episode called the "Fellowship of the Ring." This describes a fellowship which Tolkien uses to give us a greater understanding of just what fellowship is all about.

Tolkien and C.S. Lewis were friends. They had a literary club where they met together and prayed together. They knew the direction their college at Oxford was heading in. It was *not* going in the direction of the Lord. However, this group of men knew what they wanted to express in their own literature, what they were writing, to try and head this off. As I was reading through that chapter on fellowship, it became clear to me that the things the characters were experiencing were the same kinds of feelings that the disciples were feeling in the gospels. Isn't that interesting. Well, Tolkien read the gospels after all. Of course he would want us to know and understand. So, I thank the Lord for men like J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis who bring back to us the reality of how we feel on a day to day basis in our own walk with the Lord.

I'm going to try and give you that kind of an interpretation. My pretext is actually John 1:50 where He says to Nathaniel:

⁵⁰ Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.”⁵¹ He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’”

What was He talking about other than the fact that Nathaniel is no longer just seeing with natural eyes. He is going to see with the eyes of the Spirit. And so He has also called us to do that very thing. The fellowship that we have together is awesome, the body of Christ. What a wonderful thing is enjoying that fellowship. We are not alone; we are together.

However, each one of us goes through our walk with the Lord in a different way. As we go through this chapter, we will see the disciples going through this same thing. Your experience is going to be different from mine. That’s okay but we have the same God, a caring and loving God who meets us in the night in the darkness. What darkness is there to the Lord? He is the light and we are the light! Wherever we go there is light.

Seven Steps to Trusting God

1) Jesus will meet our physical needs by healing diseases and providing for us, food, shelter, etc.

2) Our reaction is to make Him serve us. “*What can Jesus do for me today? I need to go to church because I need to have another miracle in my life. I need Jesus because He provides for me.*” Don’t demean that because every one of us has gone through that phase. I remember when I went through it. I just wanted Him to provide for me.

3) Jesus provides safety in our trial. He provides shelter. He provides a way. Not only does He provide for us physically when we have to go through certain circumstances where we deify the thing rather than the creator, but Jesus provides for us in our trial. There is no trial that is too big for Him. That’s a good place to be. Testimony after testimony, Jesus provides for us in our trials and He still does.

4) In Jesus we have eternal life. That eternal life isn’t just about when we die but eternal life is in the here and now. Jesus is in control. He is the bread of life. That is the central theme of this text. The bread of life, the life we breath in; with every breath He is there. Whatever we eat or drink, with spiritual eyes, He is it.

5) After we know all of this we go through another process we ***cannot go around nor escape from***. Many might say, “I don’t need to go through this.” No, we will go through a period of doubt, disbelief and a place where doctrine becomes more important than the Giver of the doctrine. Doubt, disbelief, doctrine, the three “D’s.”

6) Jesus answers ALL of our questions, when we see through the eyes of the Spirit. Jesus is the answer to all of our questions. I remember seeing a sign on a secretary’s desk, “*If chocolate is the answer who cares what the question is.*” Well, Jesus is the real answer not chocolate. When we find Jesus we no longer care what the question was. We come to worship the Lord. Now we can say, “*I don’t even remember why I came to church today.*” We just fall in love with the Lord! When we are in that kind of worship, that kind of context, things of the world disappear. We start to see in spiritual eyes and then God can start to speak to you in spiritual ways about your personal life, about the church and what we need. This isn’t just about the elders, or the board of deacons, or whatever else you might think of, the Friday prayer meeting . . . No, this comes to everyone of us, the fellowship of the believers. What a wonderful place to be.

7) Lastly, where else can we go to find life?! To find peace, to find anything? Where else can we go? Name a place or person, a country, a government. The only answer, the single answer is Jesus, Jesus only.

That is the seven steps in my faith. I’m sure there are more but these are the ones we will outline this morning. So let’s go to our text in the sixth chapter of John.

Number 1 - Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

6¹Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),² and a great crowd of people followed Him because they saw the signs He had performed by healing the sick.³ Then Jesus went up on a mountain-side and sat down with His disciples.

Number one, Jesus meets our needs. That’s the first thing He does when we first come to Him. He’s there for us. He performs signs and wonders, more for the unbeliever than the believers.

⁴The Jewish Passover Festival was near.⁵ When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward Him, he said to Philip,

“Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”⁶ He asked this only to test him, for He already had in mind what He was going to do.

You see, many times Jesus asks questions that He already knows the answer to. That is because He is trying to bring something of spiritual site so you will no longer see with just natural eyes, like needing something to eat. *“Lord, I need to pay the rent. Lord, I need gas for the car. Lord, I need, I need, I need.”* This could go on forever. This is the fundamental idea behind Capitalism. You need something; we’ll provide for it. But this isn’t the foundation of the spiritual realm at all.

⁷ *Philip answered Him, “It would take more than half a year’s wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”*

. . . for each one of them to even have a little. *“Even if I go to Lowe’s or Sam’s Club, or wherever, it is not going to be enough for this crowd.”* When you look with the natural realm, can’t you see it? There’s never going to be enough. That’s why we get these advertisements about your 401K, your retirement investment. *“Are you going to have enough to retire?”* The answer is, *“You will never have enough.”* In the natural realm, we can’t conceive of achieving this goal. It is more blessed to give than to receive. You will not be blessed if you are hoarding. But if you are giving, you will be. That’s a counter to a retirement plan, isn’t it?

⁸ *Another of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up,⁹ “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”*

Now why would Andrew even bring this up? Think about that. Because there was a seed of faith, a spark of seeing with spiritual eyes that caused him to think, *“Maybe we don’t have 200 denarii. Maybe Judas cannot open the purse wide enough to feed these people, but maybe something else can happen.”* My answer to him is that in the natural it would never happen.

The answer to our problems is often right in front of us. This boy had some fish and loaves and we would think it just isn’t going to work. How many times have you heard especially in church settings, *“This is never going to work.”* I’ve heard that about our Sunday school. Someone said we had better pray about this. *“We don’t know if it is going to work!”* Well excuse me. Jesus said, *“Let the children come to Me.”* He didn’t say to find out if it was going to work or not. Let them come. The provision of the Lord will be there.

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

Jesus actually prayed before meals too by the way. He is the example set before us to do the same.

¹² When they had all had enough to eat, He said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." ¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴ After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

The first points of God's provision in 1 and 3 are very evident here. Plus, we could say, "Surely something is truly different about this candidate for President (Trump)." That kind of gives us the idea of how our faith starts, the One who is faithful to provide for us. So many times when we are together our testimonies and our prayers are all about article Number 1.

Number 2 - We Have to Go Through This

Jesus cannot be captured. He cannot be defined by just what He has given to us. In fact:

¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by Himself.

Jesus cannot be captured by you in order to just be your provider. That's not what He wants. He doesn't desire you to just want Him for things!

Number 3 - Jesus Provides Safety and Peace in our Trials

¹⁶ When evening came, His disciples went down to the lake, ¹⁷ where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. ¹⁸ A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. ¹⁹ When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. ²⁰ But He said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." ²¹ Then they were willing to take Him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

Jesus provides safety and peace in the midst of the storm.

²² *The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with His disciples, but that they had gone away alone.* ²³ *Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.* ²⁴ *Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.*

²⁵ *When they found Him on the other side of the lake, they asked Him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”*

So that was the sign for them. Jesus was not there just to provide for them, physical bread and things, but it was also to provide a place of peace in the midst of your travels, in the midst of your adventure. There is going to be peace and safety there.

I don't know where you don't feel safe. Sometimes I don't feel safe at night when I am sleeping so I get up and walk around checking everything. *“Everything okay here? Heater working? Yep. Water is turned off? Yep. Garage door closed? Yep.”* But when you have Jesus you have the safety of the Lord no matter where you find yourself. The Peace of God will be there. So I get back into bed and say, *“Well thank You for letting me see all of that, Lord, but I'm more comforted by Your peace and Your safety that You gave to me.”* That's part of our faith and inheritance in God.

Number 4 - Jesus is the Bread of Life

This is the central theme of chapter six.

²⁶ *Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for Me, not because you saw the signs (the miracles) I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.*

You follow Me because I provided for you. But then He says to them, *“That's wrong.”*

²⁷ *Do not work for food that spoils, . . .*

What food can do that? You know that if you eat breakfast this morning you will be hungry at noon. Already He is trying to get them to wake up and not look with natural eyes. Look with spiritual eyes at what I am saying. Over and over again the Lord is saying, *“Look with spiritual eyes not your natural eyes. Don't look just at the provision.*

Don't just look at the circumstance. Don't just look at the peace. Don't just look at the food."

*... but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on Him God the Father has placed His **seal** of approval."*

What is that seal? That seal is the signs which He was demonstrating for them at that time. That seal is the seal of the Covenant which He performed on the cross. That seal is the seal of the Holy Spirit which He sent down to us that we would not be left as orphans to somehow make it through this maze of circumstances. But rather the Holy Spirit would teach us and comfort us and show us the way, show us the ways of the Spirit not the ways of the flesh. The ways of the Spirit cannot be the ways of the flesh.

²⁸ *Then they asked Him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"*

We are all about doing things in our faith when we are young Christians. *"What can I do then to posture myself to be in a place of blessing?"* It is the nature of posturing. You go to politics, everybody postures themselves. *"Why did that person say that on the news?!"* Well they are probably posturing the narrative they want you to understand and to believe. None of that is about being real only about what they themselves feel and do. They are posturing. So that's what these people talking to Jesus are doing, *"What do we do to work the works of God? How do I posture myself to be in the position to be blessed?"*

²⁹ *Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent."*

"Oh well. There is nothing I can do?" No. The work we are to do is the work of belief. The work is a work of faith. The work is to be able to see with spiritual eyes. *"Nathaniel, you cannot just look at what is going on in Nazareth right now, you need to wake up and see the angels descending and ascending on the Son of Man. You need to see what's happening in the heavenlies."* Jesus is the one who is in control, not you, not a government, not a man, not the circumstance. Jesus is in control. Why do you think prayer is so powerful? Because, Jesus is the one in control!

Well what can we do then?

³⁰ *So they asked him, "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? . . ."*

And that's what we do in our faith walk. At some point as we are growing in faith we may say, "Lord, I need another miracle. How do I really know it is You?" We act like Gideon. "Put the dew on this side of the mat. Then put it onto the other side of the mat. Let me know when it is You. What work will You do?"

. . . What will you do? ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

By the way, Jesus, we know miracles. We have heard about them. That is when God provided for us when we crossed the desert with the bread called Manna. Wow! They read the bible. When they want to know something it seems the word is right on the edge of their tongue.

³² Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, . . .

Moses, their leader, the one that they trust and still trust today, did not give them the bread from heaven.

. . . but it is My Father who gives you the **true** bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread (Jesus) that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

It is not a physical bread! It is not something they can see, taste and touch. Then they said.

³⁴ "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."

What! Were they blind? Yes, they were. And, many still are even today. Because, through this faith walk, even when you get to step four, *Jesus is the bread from heaven*, there will be people who make choices and then walk away. They are not going to see it. They will say, "This isn't for me."

Sometimes I see in the gospel so clearly, Jesus says words that are eternal and not just for the current circumstance He is in but much more. This is for eternity. It was true then, it was true before and these words will be true forever:

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, "**I am the bread of life** . . .

Do you think that will stop after He dies? Will it stop after He is resurrected and comes back at His return? No. He will always be the bread of life.

. . . Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty. ³⁶ But as I told you, you have

*seen Me and still you do not believe. (You are not seeing with spiritual eyes.)*³⁷ *All those the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away.*

He is not going to turn you away. You don't somehow have to have a credit card.

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of all those He has given Me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

Boy those words cut through and are the focus of everything throughout all eternity. Jesus and Jesus only, the Bread of Life.

Number 5 - Getting through Doubt and Unbelief

This one we want to skip. Let me tell you a secret. ***If you skip number 5 you are not going to come into 6 and 7!*** It has been said that in a group situation, or a friendship, or in any simple relationship between two people, those relationships are not real if you haven't gone through step number 5. There is something that happens after step 5 that causes us to say, "*Oh, this is bigger than all of the problems we are having.*" Suddenly your relationship with your spouse, your relationship with your brother, or your fellowship with believers in the kingdom of God, and even your relationship with God Himself is **TOTALLY** different. Getting through doubt and unbelief, getting through the doctrine that you don't agree with.

You know, Billy Graham had doubt. You know how I know that? At one point it says that he went into the woods and took his bible, and he was so frustrated because there were so many people coming to him saying the bible cannot be true. He took the bible and put it onto the stump of a tree and said, "*Lord, I don't know what to believe!*" The Lord responded by filling him with the Holy Spirit. Then immediately he knew the bible was true! It no longer mattered if he understood it all. It didn't matter if he couldn't make sense of it all. Either it was all true or none of it was true! He made a decision while facing the doubt and disbelief. He made a **DECISION** to follow after the word of God. *Everyone of us has to do the same.*

In the trials you have not yet experienced, you have to make this same decision again and again. However, after you have gone through the process a few times it is not as difficult to face the doubt and disbe-

lief in a doctrine. Now it is easier for me to say, “*I don’t understand this.*” I no longer have to. I put it up on the shelf until the Lord let’s me understand. There are even very simple things I don’t understand. *God is love.* Do you really understand that? Go ahead. Try and put your mind around the love of God and no matter how much you try, you’ll miss it. No matter how much you try to define it, you’ve boxed it in. I could think, “*God will never love that person.*” And then, that person is saved! He is growing in God.

God could never bring the Soviet Union to its knees. Ha! I was on vacation and came back and said, “*What just happened while I was gone?*” God can do anything He wants. We have to face this doubt and unbelief that we have almost inherent within us, all the questioning to try and understand.

⁴¹ *At this the Jews there began to grumble about Him because He said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.”*

This was a hard doctrine for them, wasn’t it? Think about it. They didn’t know what communion was. They didn’t give Him a chance.

⁴² *They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can He now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”*

Doubt. Disbelief. “*I don’t believe Jesus can do this for me. He never did it for me before.*” Maybe our prayers need to be expanded a little. Mine do!

⁴³ “*Stop **grumbling** among yourselves,*” Jesus answered.

Has the Lord ever told you you’ve been murmuring recently? I come to prayer and the Lord says to me, “*You know, Peter; you are murmuring.*” Okay, I get it.

⁴⁴ “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws them, . . .*

Are you praying for somebody? Pray that the Holy Spirit works in them.

. . . and I will raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁵ *It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from Him comes to Me.*

So, if you are reading the Old Testament, you are going to hear the Holy Spirit speak to you.

*46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only He has seen the Father. 47 Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. 51 I am the **living** bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”*

Well! Why would Jesus say such a “terrible” thing? Animal Sacrifice. Giving of Flesh. Are you kidding me!

52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

This was a doctrine they just could not understand. A lot of people still have problems with communion today in trying to understand the sharing of the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. You can relegate it off to just a sacrament. You can relegate it to trans-substantiation. In the overall fellowship of believers, we hear all of that about communion. But remember what Jesus did for us. Well, those Jews listening didn’t know any of this. Doctrines are disputed amongst the denominations to the “nth” degree even today. Then Jesus really doubles down:

52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

53 Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

Are you kidding me? Come on! You are not going to make it.

*54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is real food and My **blood** is real drink. 56 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in them.*

There is an abiding nature God wants to bring us into through this doctrine, this disbelief and all that is not true in the natural. It can only be true in the spiritual.

57 Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live for-

ever.”⁵⁹ *He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.*

How dare He?! I don't think Jesus was in the mood in this particular part of the text to make amends or to make some kind of retreat from the doctrines which He is going to set forth and actually sustain in the upcoming Cross as we know He shed His blood. His body died for us that we would have no sin. Let's discuss this together. *“Though your sins be as scarlet they will be white as snow.”* That's an Old Testament scripture, Isaiah 1:18. It never happened in the Old Testament. It could only happen by the blood of Christ.

Number 6 - We Need Spiritual Eyes to Understand.

After we get through the doubt and disbelief and say, *“Okay, I cannot live through this problem, these circumstances, this friendship, whatever is breaking apart in my life, whatever my needs are, I cannot do it in the natural.”* You finally come to number six where you say, *“I NEED spiritual eyes!”* This is a **DECISION**.

⁶⁰ *On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”*

⁶¹ *Aware that His disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you?”*

He triples down this time!

⁶² *Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before!*

Then He really interprets this. If you really had a problem with the doctrine, He explains it right here in black and white so we don't misunderstand. He says:

⁶³ *The **Spirit** gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life.*

I'm not talking about My real flesh. I'm talking about the Spirit. I'm talking to you about spiritual things. Wake up. But they didn't hear it. In fact:

⁶⁴ *Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him. ⁶⁵ He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless the Father has enabled them.”*

Here's an interesting, heartbreaking verse for any teacher. This is heartbreaking for someone who is a prophet. Seeing this happen is heartbreaking for somebody who knows the will and intent of the Father in heaven.

⁶⁶From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed Him.

After all that they've been through!! They only have one more step to go! They say, *"I've had it. I cannot go this way."* Statistics will say most people can only go through two church splits. Then they don't go to church any more. However many of us in this room have been through step six . . . When you've been through the doubt, the disbelief and sometimes the disgust, when you've come to the reconciliation of all of that, you make a Decision. Then your friendship with God is a whole different friendship. Your friendship with your friends is a whole different friendship after you've been through your worst argument together, your spouse and those you love the most, those who tore your heart out and said terrible things to you. Yet you went with forgiveness and made-up because now you understand, because you've made a decision that the relationship you have is more important than the doctrine and the misunderstanding. Years later you say, *"What was the argument about anyway?"* I cannot remember a single one that I had with my wife within the first two years of our marriage, but I know we had a lot of them!

It is really nice to know when we get into an argument today that arguments are not the point of the friendship that we have together. When I come to the Lord and I don't see things the way the Lord sees them, when I don't see with those spiritual eyes, when I'm seeing with natural eyes, It is nice to know that I still have a relationship with God. It isn't broken. He will never turn me away. You could turn Him away but He will never turn you away.

Some of you may be condemned or know of somebody who is condemned because they are going through doubt and disbelief and doctrinal issues. **Let me tell you this is not a bad thing!** Give them hope. When they come through to the other side there will be a friendship that's worth more than steps 1-5. It is worth more than just His provision, His miracles in your life. It is worth more than the peace and safety. It is a relationship that will never be severed! The enemy can come with all the darkness he can muster, with all of his demons, with all of the fire and fear and stuff that he has that is yet to be revealed. **You**

will not be afraid! Because you know and you have decided to go with the Lord anyway.

This is the kind of saint and faith that Jesus is looking for in you. That is the kind of faith that He is looking for in all of His disciples. Let's see how He doubles down again. He turns to the twelve, the ones that He chose:

⁶⁷ *"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.*

There must have been a seed of that thought there that He was confronting. *"Make your decision now boys. Do you want to go away?"* Here's the last point, the last step towards trusting God:

Number 7 - Where Else can We go to Find Life?!

⁶⁸ *Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"*

Are you kidding me! Is there a place other than the throne of God? Is there a place where we can go? Are there riches that we can have? Is there a teacher that's more anointed? Is there a PA system that's better? Is there a television set that has nano-technology that we can have?! Is there a car that's faster? Is there a spouse that's better? Is there a friend? On and on. Where shall we go? This question we ask but the question already has an answer in our heart. The answer is already there.

"... You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

What God had put into Peter was a desire to know and understand, yes and *hunger* for eternal life that could not be satisfied by anything else. Why do you think you are here today?! You could be shopping. You could be resting at home. You could be doing many other things. But you also have a desire for eternal life. We hear the words of eternal life as we worship the Lord. We hear the words of eternal life as we share our lives together. We hear the words of eternal life in the word of God. Where else should we go? He has the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe. See it is a faith process. We have come to believe through steps 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. And now number 7, we KNOW You are the Christ, the Son of the living God! Not of a God who has long since deserted us and is now working on another solar system somewhere. But the Son of the living God.

I can see J.R.R. Tolkien writing about the loyalties that were put under stress in the "fellowship of the ring," the loyalties stressed be-

cause the evil that was coming from the land of Mordor was being poured out more and more. Evil was so obvious and the stress of the fellowship of believers could be seen. And yet, what Tolkien was looking for and what he was expressing in the story of the “Lord of the Rings” was a fellowship that could not be broken. He didn’t find that out from his other friends in Oxford. He knew that from scripture! He knew that because he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew it because he knew the word of God. He read this same chapter in John that we are. Guaranteed. The Son of the living God, the Savior of the world. Jesus. That’s what the Samaritan woman at the well said, “*He’s the Savior of the world.*”

⁷⁰ Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!”

Sometimes He says it like it is. He is not trying to posture but when someone has their hearts set on evil, betrayal is one of the biggest evils that the Lord confronted over and over. He abhorred a false witness and betrayal almost more than any other sin.

⁷¹ (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray Him.)

Well there were those who decide to go the other way, they leave the Lord. But there are also those, thankfully not in our midst but in the church at large, who have their heart and desires set on evil things, to disrupt, to spread doubt because their heart was never with us. They never even found step one.

I really don’t know why the Lord allows that. I really have trouble understanding that, except that we need to be on guard. When we find somebody who’s doctrine is “off” we need to confront it. The elders are not responsible to confront all these things. The body of Christ is. So when you see something that is not right, confront it. I have a feeling if Judas’ mom had really known what was in her son’s heart, it would have been nice for his parents to confront him and say, “*You know, Judas, it is not all about providing for the needy. It isn’t all about giving to the poor. It is about eternal life. You have got to get through step one. You cannot stay there.*” Maybe then it would have been different for Judas.

Where Judas is today is not for me to decide. It is for the Lord. I never stop praying for those who have walked away from the Lord. I encourage you to do the same. They are called the “prodigals.” We need to keep praying for one another. The story of the prodigal son is not just about the one who left. It is also about the one who stayed. In a way,

both of them are prodigals. They both needed to see that the provision from the Father wasn't really what it is all about. It wasn't in the inheritance that they would have coming. *It was about the Father's love itself!*

This story is considered by literary scholars to be THE most important literary short story in the world, "The Prodigal Son," for a good reason. It speaks through all eternity of what the *real* desire of your heart should be. The real desire is not for food. Your real desire is not just to have fellowship with others on a menial level. Your real desire is not just to find a mate and have a marriage that works so well and doesn't have any problems. Your REAL desire is to have that fellowship that you *decide* to have and will not be torn because the purposes of God will not be rent in your heart. A marriage that is "made in heaven" isn't one that puts your husband first or your wife first. It is one that puts God first! A friendship isn't a friendship that's made because you both consider each other so wonderful. Rather, it is a friendship that's based on the fact that you know the fellowship is in God.

A church is not a fellowship because it is just a wonderful place to be and wasn't the worship nice. Rather it is about our fellowship with God! So my question to you is, "*What step are you at in your faith towards God? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7*" Many of us go around the circle of 4-5-6-7. But this is what you should be doing: 4) Jesus is the bread of life. 5) doubt. 6) Jesus wants us to see with the eyes of the Spirit. And, 7) "*Where else can we go?*" That's the circle. However what God wants us to do is to **take that circle up to the next level!** Say, "*You know, where I was last year is NOT where I am this year. I will not go that direction again.*" Let God outline to you the mistakes you made last year and where you found the doubt. Let Him speak to you in your prayer closet. Say, "*Okay, I'm going to purpose in my heart, Lord, and decide now not to do that again.*" Now you may fall but you are going to decide to do it better. You are going to purpose that no matter what argument you have with your wife or your husband, with your friends, no matter what disappointments you find in the church, that is not going to be the determining level of your growth and your faith in Christ.

What is? The Lord Himself, the revelation of Christ Jesus. And, Jesus only. Amen

Let's stand and close in prayer. Thank You, Jesus.

Father, we commit our lives in prayer to You, whatever You have for us. Whatever new things coming, we don't yet know. Whatever

things we already know, made clearer. The things we have already been through, we will understand more clearly. We will say, *“Well, why did the Lord put me through that?”* And He will say, *“Here is the answer.”*

I prophesy to you that is what He is going to do this next year (2020). He is going to make it very clear to you, why you went through what you went through. *“You won’t remorse any more,”* says the Lord, *“but you will put on the garment of praise. You will put on the garment of His righteousness to clothe your nakedness”* says the Lord. *“And I will provide Myself for you. You will not eat of the bread of this world any more, but you will eat of the Bread of Life and drink of My Blood. And, it won’t be just at the time of communion. It will be day to day. Mercy upon mercy.”*

Thank You, Jesus. Father, let it be so. Amen.