

Hanukkah – A Time of Dedication

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MAIN VERSES

[John 10](#) • [1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#) • [Romans 12](#) • [Acts 15](#)

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home. Shabbat Shalom. Happy Hanukkah!

I'm excited about going to the talkings this evening and celebrating this amazing time of the year. I think it's fitting that the weather is how it is outside. I just walked outside. I always like to pray before I get up and speak, and I walked outside. It was crisp, cool air. It's kind of dim outside, right? The sun's not out. It's kind of gloomy outside. But this is a time of dedication, a time of light, a time of allowing God's light to shine through us. So I thought it was kind of fitting that it was like that. I was reminded of John when Yeshua was at the temple during the Feast of Dedication, and it was wintertime. I thought it's really fitting that it's a cool day outside because just a few days ago it was very warm.

A Grateful Heart

I want to start today by thanking everybody here. You have an amazing community. I've been, for the past eight and a half weeks, at Fort Jackson. I'm from Louisiana—Monroe, West Monroe, Louisiana. I've been at Fort Jackson attending the United States Army Drill Sergeant Academy. I graduate on Wednesday, so this is kind of my last weekend here. Over the past eight and a half weeks, I've been able to come here and be a part of the fellowship. Matt and Jenny have graciously allowed me to stay in their home. They don't realize how much that has helped because I stay in a barracks while I'm at the academy. Even though it's a nice barracks with my own private room and a stove, it's very nice to get out of that environment for just a weekend, even if it's for a night or two, sleep in a comfortable bed and wake up in a normal house. So it's been great to have that break.

I have a few other people, Jason and Pete. And I can tell she poured her heart and soul into this and went to God about it. I can always tell when someone puts a lot of energy into something, especially a teaching, when the food matches the teaching, right? Because Ellie gave this message, and in the message she talked about pie and getting the whole pie, not half the pie. And then what she served was this great pecan pie afterwards for dessert. I love pecan pie. Again, another taste of home for me. So that was a very welcoming thing. I appreciate that. And then the talkings. This past week, the timing was perfect, right? Because I spent some time at the code with you guys and then I was able to come up here immediately following and spend these last eight and a half weeks here. So that's kind of my introduction, my thanks. I appreciate that.

Miracles in the Midst

Hanukkah is a time of miracles, right? I want to open up with a couple of personal stories about miracles that God has done in my life. The first one has to do with today. When they cornered me about seven weeks ago, they said, "Matt, when are you going to teach here?" I said, "Man, I'm not here to teach. I just need some refreshment every week to come up here and be able to be rejuvenated from a God-fearing, Torah-observant fellowship." They said, "Oh, no, no, no. Give us a week. You're teaching." I said, "Well..." I'll do the last weekend I'm here because the Drill Sergeant Academy is really intense, really tough, long hours, lots of information, lots of studying, sleepless nights. I said, "I'll do the last weekend. From what I understand, it kind of gets a little bit better as the course goes on. The last weekend ought to be good." Boy, was I ever wrong.

So the miracle this week is that the week I had planned to prepare and give a message and do diligence to God and His Word was the week that I had no time to prepare. The miracle is that what you hear today is straight from God and not me. As a matter of fact, I was sitting out in the lobby this morning writing my notes on a Sharpie and a piece of paper here.

It was neat because I like to prepare, I like to pray a lot, and I like to build up a message. I love to build slides. You're not going to have any slides today—I'm sorry. You've got a nice graphic and that's it. I like to prepare and everything, but I knew I was going to have a word to speak when God woke me up on Wednesday night and I had dreamed this message. I'd been praying about it, meditating on it, and I woke up and said, "Man, I just dreamed the message I'm giving. I dreamed this moment standing right here in front of you all." I also had the opportunity to listen to a friend earlier this week give a message down in Columbia. The only free time I had

this week, I went and heard someone else deliver a message from God who also poured into my life and gave me direction for a message today.

The other miracle I want to talk about happened years ago. Is anybody here who, when you come into this walk and you learn about God's feast days, you say, "There's Hanukkah. There's this thing. It's not in the Torah. I don't know if I should do it or not"? Just me? Okay. Oh, no, I got one! Thanks. So you come into this walk, and I'm like, "What do we do with Hanukkah? It's Jewish, right? And what do we do?" So my wife and I came to a point before we had children, years ago, and we said, "I think this is something we should do. I think we could get behind this day, this celebration." I'll talk about why later, but we came to a conclusion: this is the year we're going to start celebrating Hanukkah.

The Search for the Perfect Hanukkiah

It was kind of late—about Thanksgiving time when we decided this. So I get online, and I'm kind of a guy that if I'm going to do something, I'm going to go all out, right? I'm going to do it big. So I'm not just going to go to Hobby Lobby and get this little Hanukkiah. I'm going to find the best Hanukkiah. That's just kind of how I am, right? So I went online. There's an artist in Israel. His name is Yair Emanuel. I love his style, the bright colors. We have a lot of his stuff now. Yair Emanuel had this beautiful Hanukkiah you could buy and order from Israel—hand-painted with these birds, really elaborate. I said, "That's the Hanukkiah I want."

Waited till the next day to order it—sold out online. Couldn't find it anywhere. I said, "Well, babe, I think we're just going to get some little tea lights, and we'll do Hanukkah that way. I'll order the fancy Hanukkiah later." I work in the military, so the military had me down in Jackson Barracks that week, which is in New Orleans, about five hours from home. So we were just going to light some little tea lights in our room for Hanukkah.

New Orleans is a place I still call my town. I live on the opposite end of Louisiana, but I love New Orleans. I love the culture—not the bad part, stay away from Bourbon Street—but it has a robust Jewish culture, robust food culture. The people are super friendly if you get a chance to go there. One of the best museums in the world is the World War II Museum in New Orleans. You can spend about four days there and still not see everything. So I love the city.

What I did not know is that right in the heart of the French Quarter, there's a Judaica store. Right in the heart of the French Quarter. And I've walked all through the French Quarter all my life. So we're walking at this time of Hanukkah, going down the street. I can't remember what street it is now, to be honest with you. But we're walking through the French Quarter. This is

the first day of Hanukkah. All of a sudden, I see this tiny shop—a Judaica store. I said, "I never knew this was here. Let's go in. Let's check it out."

Walk in the front door, and what is standing right there on the first display—the Yair Emanuel Hanukkiah that I had dreamed of having. I wanted it. So I said, "Look, this is crazy. We got to buy it. I don't care what the price is." It was cheaper than online by \$20. I picked it up, took it to the counter. I said, "I've got to have this Hanukkiah." And before I could tell the lady the story, she said, "Man, it's so crazy. I just got that thing in this morning, and now I don't even get to look at it."

So this Hanukkiah showed up right there in New Orleans the morning that I came. That was my Hanukkah miracle, right? God placed that Hanukkiah right there just for us.

The History and Meaning

So let's talk about the history of Hanukkah. There's this Feast of Dedication, but it's also the Festival of Lights.

And we have latkes. We have donuts. Matt and Jenny allowed me to be a part of their intimate family celebration of Hanukkah last week. I was about to leave, and I decided to stay, and I got to cook latkes all afternoon, which I love to do. And it was just them and his mom. Miss Karen got me an awesome Hanukkah gift. I still have yet to use it. I plan on using it today.

The Purpose of Tradition

So you have all these traditions, right? And that's kind of what scares people away, right? Are the traditions of Hanukkah about dedication, or are they about the lights and the latkes and the donuts? And why can't it be about both, right?

Because we have Passover. Who here does a Seder—Passover Seder celebration? A lot of you. The Seder that we do today was not at all observed in the first century, the time of Yeshua. It's a tradition, but it's a good one, and it's a way to honor the celebration of Passover. Another tradition for Shavuot is eating dairy—cheesecake. I love cheesecake. Cheesecake on Shavuot definitely wasn't a tradition in the wilderness when Israel was walking through the desert. But does that make it a wrong tradition? Absolutely not.

So I think that traditions are good. Traditions instill a sense of pride, right? Last night was kind of the culmination of my time at the Drill Sergeant Academy. We did a 12-mile ruck march—12K, not 12 miles—7½ miles. Where you have to have your pack on your back, weapon in your

hand, you have to carry these crew-serve weapons, you have to pick up water cans along the way, this 200-pound dummy, all these things. It's a tough time. It was cold. You get done, you're miserable, you're dehydrated, your feet are hurting. I've got a purple toe this morning.

But then what makes it all better? At the end of that 12K ruck march, you go into the woods and they have this rites of passage ceremony with these lights. And everybody says the Drosar and Creed and they put the badge on you and stuff. And it's that tradition that makes it all worth it. It's that tradition that makes you realize the tough times that the people before you came through, right?

And that's why traditions are good. For Passover, right? We're reminded of the time when Israel suffered through some great trials, but God brought them through. We're reminded of the time of Shavuot with cheesecake, right? The time that God gave the milk of his word, the Torah, to his people.

And so these traditions help instill pride, they help instill reverence, because without these traditions, without Shabbat traditions, without the traditions of—at least in my house—the candles and the bread and stuff, we didn't use to do that stuff, and we just kind of went into Shabbat. I was like, oh, it's Shabbat now, right? But we stop. We pause. We revere God. We say, "This is your day. This is your time. This is a time that we honor you and we give it solely to you."

So these traditions do this, and can it not be the same thing with Hanukkah, right?

Hanukkah as Veterans Day

And we'll talk about that Hanukkah is the Veterans Day of Israel. A friend of mine earlier this week said that, and I used to say that Passover was kind of Veterans Day—or what was it? No, I said Hanukkah was like the 4th of July, and I think I was wrong in that, because that's kind of Passover, right? That's the time the nation of Israel was birthed out of Egypt.

But Hanukkah is the Veterans Day. It's a time to honor the people of Israel that fought for a nation to be preserved in the face of annihilation, in the face of totally wiping away the identity of who Israel had been and who Israel would continue to become, right?

And that's kind of special for me, right? Because I'm in the military, and I look back and I think about just in our nation: we have D-Day. D-Day, a time when people who fought harder wars than I fought, who had harder times than I did, who faced more trials than I did. And I look

back and I cannot ever forget that time, because what happens if I do? I forget the freedom that we have because of the people who sacrificed before us.

The Maccabees—the people of Israel at the time of Hanukkah—ensured that Yeshua had an Israel to step into, right? And ultimately it was God. But the obedience of the people of that time ensured that when Yeshua came to dwell amongst us, to tabernacle amongst us, that he had an Israel to step into. That he had a temple mount to go to and preach from the fullness of God's word, right?

Someone online recently said, well, if we celebrated every national victory of Israel, then we would be celebrating every day of the year. Do we have a problem with celebrating God's victories in our history every day of the year? Because it's kind of like the idea that when we come into this movement, all of a sudden we think we have to bash everything we came from.

We say, well, God didn't say to worship him on Sunday. Hang on, I beg to differ. God said to keep the Sabbath. And if someone wants to worship God on any day of the week, is there anything wrong with that? I personally get up and I worship God every single day. And then I honor his Sabbath in the way that he said, right?

We have to be careful about what God has said to do and not try to inject words into his word about things that we're not supposed to do, right? Because God told us we're to keep the feast—the eight feasts of the year. He said, "These are my feasts. Keep these things." But nowhere does he say, don't honor the other times that I'm going to provide victories from this point forward. He doesn't say, when I do a great work, forget about it, leave it in history. That's what he doesn't say, right?

When we refuse to honor Hanukkah, when we refuse to honor the victory that God has in our history, they win, right? Because this is a story, this was a time when the Hellenists wanted to wipe away the identity of Israel. And a certain amount of people said, that's not going to happen. And when we refuse to honor God for the victories that he has in our history, then they win, right? They effectively have won that battle that was established so many years ago.

The Exodus and Maccabean Parallels

The story of Hanukkah didn't start a couple of centuries before Messiah. The story of Hanukkah started in Egypt.

And I think that the Torah portion this week is very fitting, right? Because it's the story of the beginning of the nation of Israel within Egypt through Joseph, a man whom Pharaoh did not

know, right?

And when we look at the story of the Maccabees—if we read carefully—we see some very distinguished parallels between it and the Exodus. What happens to the people at that time? How did those people start to get a grip on the people of Israel? Through tax collectors. Tax collectors. And what happened in Egypt? Tax collectors came in and started taking hold of the people through this tax collection. And then what? Then they started to enslave them and they caused them to make bricks.

What happens at the time of the Maccabees? They come in and they made them build this fortress. You have a person in Exodus in Egypt: You have Moses, who rises up and he's going to be a leader to the people. In Maccabees, you have Mattityahu—this person who's going to rise up and he's going to cause this separation between Israel and the people around him.

You have Moses who drives this slave driver to death. He causes this person to die over the abuse of his brothers. Mattityahu takes a stand against the king's men and kills them when trying to force them to dishonor God through the worship of idols, right?

The main theme in these two stories is the enslavement of the people. The people have been enslaved by those around them. One through a very obvious enslavement of making them work long hours all day by force, and the other through a culture, right? They were enslaved by their culture that wanted to force the identity of Israel out, right?

Can we see that today with us? Is there a culture that's trying to force our identity out? Is there a culture that's trying to say God's people don't need to be God's people? You need to look like the world.

Hanukkah as Metaphor

If you were at Sukkot, then you know that I love to talk about metaphors, right? And Hanukkah I see as a metaphor, not only because I see it as a metaphor in my personal life, but I see it as a metaphor that Yeshua used to talk about himself, right?

In [John 10](#), Yeshua, Jesus, was on the mount during the Feast of Dedication, during Hanukkah. And what does he talk about? What does he choose to talk about at that time, that moment, that point of celebration where the people of Israel are honoring those who fought and gave their lives for the nation of Israel before them? He talks about eternal life and how those who come to him, those who have faith through him, will have eternal life. They'll never perish.

What did those standing around him—those who got angry—want to do? They wanted to pick up stones and kill him. They had succumbed to the culture around them that said, not everybody can be a part of us, right? You must change who you are to look like us. Or else you're not part of us.

And how does John chapter 10 end? It ends with the people going to the place where John the Baptist had baptized the people. And they said, "John did no miracles here, but Yeshua did." And the very next chapter starts with Lazarus. A miracle.

Be the Light in the World

Yeshua performing a miracle at this time of miracles. What metaphor is there for us as believers, right? If we're to take this holiday and see it as a personal holiday for us, we can't just look backwards like with Passover. We can't look at Passover and just look at the historical context. We have to see it for how God wants to transform our lives through it. We have to see the fullness of Yeshua in it. And so what does Hanukkah mean for us?

Has anybody ever heard that we are the temple? It's a very common theme, right? [1 Corinthians 3](#), 16 through 17 says that, do you not know that you are the temple? Does that mean when that's being said, does that mean that it's disregarding the temple of God that was established in the physical realm on Mount Moriah? Absolutely not. That's a metaphor. It doesn't mean that the temple was no longer important. It means that it's being used as a way to inject meaning into our lives, to say that as much as God wanted the worship of him to happen there, it doesn't have to stop there once the temple is gone.

And the Maccabees fought. They fought so that the temple could be established. But Yeshua came and showed us that even without that physical building, we can go out and be that light. We can go out and be the light in the world. [Romans 12](#) says that we're to be living sacrifices. We're to sacrifice our lives. We're to dedicate our lives in service to God and those around us.

And I think this holiday is fitting following Matthew's sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount. It's been really good to see that. I've learned so much from watching those videos, which started a few months back, even before I was here, and I've seen the fullness of what Yeshua was trying to tell his people there on the Mount.

And really, he was showing the deeper meaning of what it meant to walk in God's Word, right? We can all look at the Torah and we can say, let's do these things. We can eat kosher. We can keep Sabbath. We can show up on the Temple Mount on the feast days and show those around us that, hey, we obey God.

If You Have to Say It, You're Probably Not It

But what does it really mean to walk as God wanted us to walk? And Yeshua was sharing that with us, right? As a funny little side note, in the military you have infantry guys, non-infantry guys. I'm not an infantry guy, so I can make this joke, right? I came from the engineers. I work in recruiting and retention now. And I have some engineers in my squad here during this academy time. So you have infantry, who's like the core of the United States Army, according to them anyway. And then you have these other jobs that are considered combat arms. And so you have like combat engineers. You have engineers and you have combat engineers. And so their joke is, well, if you have to put combat in front of your job, you're probably not it, right? If you have to say you're combat, you're probably not combat.

So the same applies to us. If you have to go out and force people to know and you have to say it from the rooftops, I'm tour observant, you're probably not it. You're probably not it, right? Because we can spend so much hot air trying to force people to know that we know the truth, and that hot air blows those lights out. That hot air will force that light to extinguish.

And that's what Yeshua was facing. And that's what Yeshua was bringing the deeper meaning of. He's saying, if you have to force people to understand who you are, that's probably not who you are. You should be going out living your life, a life of service, a life of dedication, a life of selflessness, a life of selfless service to others in a way that those around you don't have to be told who you are.

Can I Dedicate Myself More to God?

So what does it mean to dedicate ourselves? And I just want to encourage you today to look at this time. It is a time of latkes and donuts, right? And those things are good in moderation for these eight days, right? But what can we see as a deeper meaning here? How can we apply this time to our lives? Can we look at the feast of dedication and say, can I look inside myself and see how I can dedicate myself more to God? How can I give more of myself?

If he calls me to be a living sacrifice and he equates me with the temple, the greatest monument in the nation of Israel at that time, am I doing justice to that responsibility? Is my life reflecting who I am or am I just blowing hot air to tell people what I believe? Right?

So I came up with a few things. I started to come up with eight things for eight days of Hanukkah, right? Eight things, eight ways of dedicating your life. And I thought that's a little much, right? Let's just take baby steps with a few things.

Can we dedicate our resources more to God? And that's really what it boils down to, right? And resources, I'm not just talking about money, though we'll get there. But what's the most valuable resource in our life? What's the one thing that we'll never get more of? Time. We'll never get more time.

Time: The Most Valuable Resource

When I first started this walk and I said, I'm going to start keeping Shabbat. I didn't work. I rested. But you know what I did all day? I watched football. I love football. Where are my veterans? I know I was here a few weeks ago and we had some veterans. Any Navy veterans? Good. No, I'm playing. Army's playing Navy today. And I hope this is the year we finally beat them. I don't know. But I used to sit on my couch and I watched football for like 12 hours a day. I thought, what a blessing from God. He gave me this day of rest. My wife, she's like, you're going to watch football all day? Now I'm like, God said I can rest, right? Is that a realistic application of what God intended for his time with me on Shabbat, for me to sit and watch football all day? I don't think so. And I came to that conclusion yesterday. After a couple years and many conversations and trying to justify my actions, right?

Do you know, and I haven't ever said this, and I may be showing Matthew's hand in this, and oh well, that's fine. But do you know that some time ago I really wanted to get to know Matthew better? Because we met each other at a conference. We spent a week in a hotel room, six guys in a hotel room like a fraternity or something. They all needed nice cushioned beds and couches, and I slept on the floor like a real man. So we got to know each other. I didn't even know him before that trip. I showed up, and I'm like, hey, my name's Matt. He's like, yeah, my name's Matt. And I think I mentioned that to the coach. Our personalities were so different. He didn't like me at all, right?

The First Fruits of Every Day

But there came a time in our relationship where I said, I've really got to get to know this guy better. And do you know what it came from? It came from this conversation we had, and I finally realized, this guy gets up every morning and prays. He wakes up early. I'm like, this guy works from home. He doesn't have to get up early, right? He gets up early and prays.

And I knew it one morning because he said something about praying, and I was up praying myself, and I saw the message afterwards, and I thought, I always know when someone's

dedicated, when someone is truly serious about their walk with God, when they give the first fruits of every day. They wake up early.

One time I was speaking on prayer, and I said, I understand everybody struggles with prayer. Anybody here struggle with their prayer life? You can be honest, right? That's about right. About 60% of hands go up, and those are the honest people. The other 30% that don't raise their hands are just not being honest with me. But no, I'm joking.

But prayer is a struggle for people, and I used to say, well, people just don't know how to pray. And then I came to the realization that people struggle with giving God that time. And that's real talk from someone who's struggled with prayer, who struggles with prayer still, right?

Is God Worth Your Time?

I'm at the academy here where we had 12-hour days and then expected to do our own PT afterwards and expected to study after that and memorize and stuff after that. And I'm getting four hours of sleep a night and maybe God will forgive me if I don't pray at this time, right? So I struggle with it as well, right?

But that's what it boils down to. I said that one day and this lady said, But if I gave God that much time out of the day, I'd have to wake up earlier. God's not worth it, right? God's not worth our time to wake up earlier, to readjust our schedules. We spend so much time watching TV, playing video games, going out and doing all these things that don't matter.

Is God not worth cutting out some of that TV time, cutting out some of that video game time to give it to Him in prayer? So that's how I knew I wanted to know Matt better way back then and still to this day.

Just the other day, I was up praying, and I struggled with something that God's been working on me about—this past year at Sukkot here at Fit—and we had this ceremony of throwing our fears in the fire. Never knew how much it would impact me and my family. My fear is a fear of rejection. Anybody here suffer with a fear of rejection? That's right, I see two hands from some people, right?

And I wrote this down on a piece of paper, and I crumbled it up, went to throw it in the fire. I had no idea my wife was looking over my shoulder. And she said, our marriage makes so much sense now. So I suffered with this fear of rejection. And earlier this week, Matt, at 4 o'clock in the morning, sent me a message and said, "I prayed for you this morning. I'm not sure why, but I want you to know you're accepted by God, and he's using you in a big way." And it was what I

needed, and at that moment, I just happened to finish my prayer time, and I'm listening to a song. I can't remember the name of the song now, but it had to do with God accepting me for who he has made me into be.

Time and Your Community

So time. Time also involves your community, right? Everybody here gave up time this morning to be here to worship God together. I appreciate it, but that doesn't matter. God appreciates it, right? God appreciates the time that you give up to come here. Community is important, but it's not just about this community here. It's about those around you, right? Because God has called us, Yeshua has called us to be selfless servants to everybody around us. If you haven't found a way to inject yourself in the community around you, if you're only coming here and that's your selfless service to God every week, think about how you can dedicate more time to God through the service of those in need around you. Find a way to go to a prison and minister to people there. Find a way to go to a soup kitchen and minister to people there. Find a way to go to—I'll tell you, and this is not to be braggadocious, but back home we got to a point where we said, well, we're not really sure what we're going to do. We threw on some backpacks with food, water, and Bibles and just went across the city on foot and just started talking to anybody that would come by. If that's what you have to do, find a way to dedicate more time to God.

Space Requires Sacrifice

What's another resource in our life that we'll never get more of? Space. Talk about investments—people invest in the stock market. I don't trust all that stuff. Real estate, right? There's only so much real estate in the world. And right here, not only have you given up your time, but people have sacrificed. As Matthew said, I'm able to stand here today because of the sacrifices of people that are part of this community that allow you to come here and be a part of this congregation. Do you know the New Testament talks about synagogues? It was Yeshua's tradition to go to the synagogue every Shabbat. It was Paul's tradition to go to the synagogues every Shabbat. You know, the synagogues didn't start in Israel. When we look at the history of synagogues and what we have from archaeology, synagogues started in Egypt at the time of the Babylonian exile because people needed a place to worship God together, to come together outside the land when they had no other resource. And they put their resources together and they came together and they were able to provide a place for people to come together. Congregations are very important.

Gathering Together

And one of my pet peeves in this movement is people who come out of the churches and they say, for some reason, getting together and worshiping God is bad. So I'm going to sit at home by myself and I'm going to worship God on the Sabbath by myself. It's one of my pet peeves. It's wrong. If you're not finding a way to get together with people, and I hear it all the time, the excuse: well, I don't know anybody that believes just like me in my community. That's not what God said. He didn't say find people that believe every single little doctrine like you, and then you can get together with them. He said the Sabbath was the first of all holy convocations. When I travel, I always look up people to fellowship with. Luckily, this place was here, and it's only an hour down the road. There are people who won't even drive five minutes down the road. No, this is my time to rest. I don't need to get up. I don't need to get ready. I don't need to go meet and fellowship with God's people on his day. God told me I can rest. I had that excuse, so I can talk against it, right? I had the excuse that I could just lay there and watch football all day long. Whenever I was in Missouri, I was stationed in Missouri a couple past two years, maybe three. I can't remember exactly. This is a short drive for me. I got up and drove two hours to David Wilber's congregation in St. Louis. And if I wasn't at David Wilber's congregation, I drove three hours to Daniel McGurk's congregation in Kansas City. Because it's that important. It's not just important for me to recharge and be rejuvenated by people like you. It's that important to God that we come together so that the world can never take away our identity. So that the world can never say that you have to succumb to our society that says that you have to look like everybody else, right?

Russell and Danielle—yeah, Russell—they drive two and a half hours here. I just asked him this morning, I said, I know you drive a long way. I'm not even a part of this congregation permanently, but I appreciate your sacrifice to get up and drive five hours every Shabbat to be with God's people.

Money and Your Resources

And then there's money, right? Resources. People sacrifice for us to be here, like Matthew said, right? I find it interesting, a friend of mine said this earlier this week. He said, it's funny that when we were in the church, we would make the argument that God's law was done away with, so why do we need to tithe? I made that argument back before I came into the truth, right? God's law was done away with, but this preacher, all he wants to preach about is tithing. And then we come into this movement, and we say the law is not done away with. The law is applicable today. Oh, except for tithing, right? We don't need to tithe. I've made that argument

before, and I hear that argument all the time. Well, it's not a biblical tithe, right? I'm not giving to the temple. I'm not giving resources to priests. What's a biblical Passover? On the Temple Mount, in Israel, in God's house. You're not keeping a biblical Passover. You're not keeping a biblical Sukkot. But we still do that, but we don't want to tithe, right? Giving to God's community is what establishes our identity. If we stop doing that, then people want... So we rent, just like you guys. And the people we rent from also had other events. And one day they canceled our Shabbat service because of a wedding. And I said, look, I'm not mad or anything. I understand that y'all have other events and all that. But do you know that I have a responsibility to have a place for people to come every week and hear the word of God? That's New Testament scripture, right? [Acts 15](#): "Stop all these few little pagan things, but every Shabbat, come and hear the law of Moses read so that you learn how to act." I have a responsibility to keep my doors open every Shabbat so that people come. And that takes resources and time and money.

Leadership and Sacrifice

And I can tell you, one excuse I used to have, right? I would say, well, I've given so much time to my congregation, and I don't do it full-time, right? I'm active duty military. I give so much time every week to my congregation. That's my tithe. That's my dedication. And that's wrong, right? Because as a leader, if I'm not giving monetarily to my own congregation, then do I really believe what God is doing there? And I say that to say that being with Matthew these past couple of months, I know that as a leader, right, he's giving his time, his money, his family is sacrificing so much because he believes what God is doing here at Fit. I believe it. We're sitting in someone else's sacrifice. And we can give tithe money to a lot of other stuff, right? We have gadgets and tools and the latest iPhone. We'll go spend \$1,000 on a phone but make an excuse not to give God the resources here in our local communities.

Not Taking for Granted

So what happened after Hanukkah? Right? This big movement, we kick the people out, we rededicate the temple, and what happened? The people of Israel still allowed the society around them to make them conform to who they were not supposed to be. By the time Yeshua showed up on the scene a couple hundred years ago, it's as if nothing was accomplished. They took for granted the sacrifice of the people that came before them. They took for granted the victory that God had done. Let's not take for granted the victory that Yeshua has given us in our life, right? Let's not take for granted. We can become so complacent in our walk and we can show up here for a couple hours every week and I'm guilty of it, right? And we can go throughout our day and

not think about God another time that week. We cannot do another selfless act for God and his people for the rest of the week. Let's not do that. Let's let this be a time where this is a time when there's more suicides this time of year, right? This is a time of depression. The sun's not shining as bright, so how fitting that this was the time that God came and said, this is going to be a time of lights. This is going to be a time of rededication.

A Time of Rededication

This is going to be a time of sparking that within us. It's needed whenever it's cold outside and you're stuck indoors. We need that fire to be relit. Where's the praise team? Y'all can come back up if you want to. Let this be a time of rededication, a time of giving more of ourselves, more of our time, our space, and our money to God.

And what we're going to do here is they're going to come up and they're going to sing some praise songs. Prayer team, if you can come up as well. Because what I want to do here is have an opportunity for people, maybe you've felt like your dedication to God hasn't been what it should have been in the past year, past months, past weeks. And you need prayer. Prayer team's here. I'll pray for you. And then if you feel led, we can have a time of declarations of dedication.

Making Your Vows Known

God does things publicly a lot in his word. If you wanted to make a vow to God back in the time of his temple, you had to go and bring your animals and you had to go to the temple and you had to stand before all these people and say, "I'm making this vow to God." And everybody knew and they could hold you accountable. Nowadays, we try to make vows to God within ourselves and there's no accountability.

So I encourage you, if you feel led to give a dedication, a vow of dedication to God at this time, come and do so publicly so that whenever you get complacent, the people in our community can say, "Hey Matt, remember that time you stood up, you vowed to dedicate this time and this space to God. Let me encourage you to get back to that vow." So if you feel like you have something on your heart that God's leading you to vow to Him as a time of dedication, then come up and do so. We'll have a mic for that. If you just need prayer, you can come and get prayer.

Father, we come to you this morning. We thank you for the victories that you've had in Israel's history. We thank you for the victories in our personal lives. We thank you for the sacrifice of Yeshua, your Son, that has freed us from the law of sin and death. We thank you for the greater

exodus that we have through his sacrifice and his resurrection that has led us out of the slavery of sin.

Let us not take for granted the victory in our life. Let us live lives. Lead us, encourage us to live a life more dedicated to you, to your people, to the people of the community that need to know you. And the people that need to be encouraged by the light that you shine through us. Remind us what it means to truly walk in your word. Your word that says, "Don't just talk about my word, but live it. Live it in a way that allows people to know who you are without having to scream it." We love you. We bless you. We thank you. Amen. Shalom.

In Closing

I'm Matthew Vandrells, and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to cultivate a fellowship of image bearers that live the redeemed life only Yeshua can give.

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