

The Church and The Devil

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MAIN VERSES

[1 Peter 5:8](#) • [1 Peter 5:9](#) • [Philippians 3:20](#) • [John 17:11](#) • [Matthew 28:16](#) • [Matthew 28:19](#) • [Matthew 28:20](#) • [Genesis 1:1](#) • [Acts 2](#) • [Daniel 7](#) • [Ephesians 6](#)

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.

Discovering C.S. Lewis

This week's message, "The Church and the Devil," was inspired by an author that many of you may know: C.S. Lewis, who wrote a book in 1941. Anyone like Lewis? Anybody like some C.S. Lewis? Yeah, we love C.S. Lewis. Chronicles of Narnia, love it. The one thing that I'm beginning to realize—I was speaking to Al about this just the other day—is that Clive Lewis is absolutely savage when it comes to articulating his theological views in a way that can be injected through the eyes of its readers and solidified in their hearts. And the more that I read Lewis's books, the more I realize most people, I believe, who claim to be his biggest fans, I'm not sure if they've actually read his books. Because there are certainly a lot of fans in the Christian community of C.S. Lewis, but his books are very thought-provoking and are extremely controversial in contrast to the standards that we have in the majority of Christian churches today. Most people know him and are a fan. Maybe they've seen Chronicles of Narnia, the Majestic Jesus Lion, and it's like, yes, I like Lewis. His books are very raw. He takes no prisoners when he writes.

The Screwtape Letters

So this week, I read one of his books: The Screwtape Letters. Anybody? It's a pretty short book. It was written in 1941, initially as a response to the war breaking out. And while he was listening to one of Hitler's speeches during this time, he admits to his brother, Warnie, that, and I quote, "I don't know if I am weaker than other people. It is a positive revelation to me that

while the speech lasts, it is impossible not to waver just a little as I hear this man speak." And this sparked the idea to write a book structured after a fictitious conversation between two demons. It became a book we know as *The Screwtape Letters* not long after.

Screwtape is the name of an elder, experienced demon, and he writes a series of letters to Wormwood, a very young demon who has seemingly just got his first assignment—what they call a patient. So Wormwood has his first patient, his first assignment, a patient that he has to attend to, who has just become a believer. He's just become a Christian. And so Screwtape gives him advice and wisdom and strategy for how to speak absolute destruction into the life of his patient in order to turn his loyalty not towards God, who he refers to as the enemy, but towards our Father down below. And that's how the whole book is laid out. It's a really short book. You can knock it out in a day. It's about a three to four hour read. You can get a three and a half hour audiobook. The central theme of the book is both compelling as it is convicting. So yeah, that's your homework. Go read it. It's fantastic.

The Battlefield Within

You see, the wisdom that Screwtape gives Wormwood is not necessarily that he should sever his relationship with his Christian faith from God. No, the wisdom that he imparts is to keep him in church, keep him in a community, keep him praying, keep him surrounded by all of the things that remind him that he truly is a believer, all while in the background building up a parallel life that serves the Father below, that represents a reality that is truly far from God.

The battlefield of light and darkness does not take place in the bars or the clubs or in those climactic moments where you give in to lust and addiction and the seemingly obvious indicators of a life apart from God. No, the shots are fired right here at the altar. The shots are fired from the pews that we sit in, right here within the walls of a community that claims to be devoted to God. If the devil does a good job, he claims, you will find both reassurance and security of your faith in God—this self-inducing status of a Christian within the walls of a building, within the prayer circles, holding hands with those around you. Right here, in the congregations, in the churches, in the fellowships, where Yeshua is lifted up. The walls of the devil are launched.

And it isn't necessarily fueled by leadership. That's a big accusation that I used to have towards churches and larger communities—that if the devil is working in the churches and communities around the world, then obviously it has to be from this vague, unidentifiable group of leaders controlling everything. Well, no. From experience, I've learned that typically it starts at home. It starts with members that come in, and it begins to spread. And leaders have issues just like

everyone else. But everybody's prone to the trap of the devil. And once fallen into it, it can spread for those who have not been immunized in their character.

In other words, what better plan than to make a Christian believe they are a Christian when the reality of their life is far from the devotion to the living God of Israel? Are you following? Are you tracking with me? Good.

[1 Peter 5](#), 8-9 says, "Be alert and be sober-minded. Speaking to believers. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kinds of sufferings." We're all laid out in the battlefield. We're all running through the trenches. We're all fighting, and we have to be diligent that we know who our enemy is and what weapons are being used against us.

Step One: Distract from Prayer and Worship

Step one—Screwtape says to Wormwood—this is some of his initial advice to this new vocation that Wormwood has taken up to oppress believers: distract this newfound Christian in the direction of his or her worship and prayer. That's where you start, Wormwood.

Speaking of prayer, are you heavily engaged daily in some form of prayer? It's important. It's something that as we mature as believers, we come to realize the impact and the value of it. Even if you're not sure what to say, laying on the ground in silence, opening up that conversation for God to speak. If not for you to speak, just to be there listening, creating an open portal from heaven to earth through diligent prayer. This is something that all believers should be striving to hone in their lives. Something I'm still maturing in after all these years. And I hope I never stop.

So I'm going to read a few quotes from the book, and it's fun because I get to kind of act out the parts a little bit, so bear with me. And I want you to dare to ask yourself: when we read these quotes from a book that was written in 1941, is this familiar to you?

Screwtape speaks. He says:

"The humans, they do not start from that direct perception of him which we unhappily cannot avoid. They have never known that ghastly luminosity, that stabbing and searing glare which makes the background a permanent pain to our lives. No, if you look, Wormwood, if you look into your patient's mind when he's praying, you will not find that. If you examine the object to which he is attending, you will find that it is a composite object containing many quite

ridiculous ingredients. There will be images derived from pictures of the enemy as he appeared during the discreditable episode known as the Incarnation. There will be a vaguer, perhaps quite savage, imperial images associated with the other two persons in the divine community. There will even be some of his own reverence and bodily sensations and emotional sensations that accompany it when he prays, objectified and attributed to the object that he reveres. I've known cases where what the patient called his God was actually located up in the far left corner of the room or located in his own head or in a crucifix on the wall, but whatever the nature of the composite object, you must keep him praying to it—to the thing that he has made, not to the person who has made him. You may even encourage him to attach great importance to the correction and improvement of his composite object and to keeping it steadily before his imagination during the whole of prayer. For if he ever comes to make the distinction, if he ever consciously directs his prayers not to what I think thou art, but to what thou knowest thyself to be, our situation is for the moment desperate."

Idolatry Within Our Religion

In other words, the advice here that he's given is: how many of us are enslaved in idolatry within the bounds of our own religion? We surround ourselves with images and objects and instruments to somehow invoke an atmosphere of worship, which is not necessarily unbiblical. It is not. But instead of keeping our focus on the one who created us, we shift our focal point to the things that we have created, whether it be a wooden cross or a tallit that we clothe ourselves in, whether it be a statue or blowing a shofar that somehow has magical powers to scare demons away. My prayers are certainly heard clear. I definitely jumped the priority in the ears of the Father when I speak Hebrew instead of English. What an overwhelming victory for the devil within the walls of the house of God, when we put stipulations on how we can cheat to get God's attention, if we only focus more energy on mere objects that we have created.

As Christians, we're at the real risk of reimagining our God into something that lifts us up. And I've seen it, and I've been a part of this specific type of idol worship in my life. For me, it was the Bible itself. Yeah, wrap your mind around that one.

The Goal vs. the Tool

For me, I lifted the Bible up as my God. The thing that was designed to introduce me to and equip me to be a living image bearer of God became my end goal, my pursuit in faith. That is the finish line—the Bible. I would go out into the world, and instead of introducing them to God, I'd introduce them to the Bible. These commands, these statutes, these words, these

poems, these stories—instead of introducing people to the very thing the Bible says it was produced to show us and introduce us to, I introduced them to my knowledge of the Bible. Instead of my testimony of God's power in my life, I only showed off how I could navigate the words within the book. Not how the good news of a new life had crashed into this earth through the person of Yeshua, introducing me to a God that has no bounds on his love or justice. The Bible was meant to equip me for that relationship, not be the goal of that relationship.

The pursuit in my life during this time was not God, although I claimed it to be. Because I carried my God—it was leather-bound in my hand. My God was pride. My God was arrogance and a sense of empowerment that was fueled by the father below.

Our pursuit is always towards the King of Kings, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Bible is a tool that equips us for that. It gives us wisdom in this life to pursue the vocation that he gives. It gives us the wisdom to run into his arms. It itself is not the goal. It is a tool that helps us run towards the goal. It alone is not God. Without the Spirit of God and the pursuit into his arms, all of the religious stuff that we have is simply superficial devotion to darkness.

Does that hit too close to home? Because the walls of hell manifest here first and foremost.

When Causes Replace Faith

I had not forgotten my promise to consider whether we should make your patient an extreme patriot or an extreme pacifist. All extremes except extreme devotion to the enemy are to be encouraged—not always, of course, but at this period. Some ages are lukewarm and complacent, and then it is our business to soothe them to sleep. The demon's talking. Other ages, at which the present is one, are unbalanced and prone to submission or alliance to factions, and it is our business to inflame these very factions in their life. Any small quarry or bound together by some interest which each other men dislike or ignore tends to develop itself unbalanced inside, a hot house of mutual admiration, and towards the outer world, a great deal of pride and hatred, which is entertained without shame because of the cause that your patient has taken up. The cause is its sponsor, and it is thought to be impersonal.

Even when a small group exists originally for the enemy's own purposes, this is true. In other words, when your patient, Wormwood, finds a group of interest, a faction, a subgroup that may or may not be within his community of faith, make sure that you have him infatuated with the goals and pursuits of this subgroup and only to its bounds. Then this subgroup will simply be

fueled by his associated faith community, but it will be his journey. It will be his life pursuit, not the goals of the faith community that he's joined himself to.

Whichever he adopts, your main task will be the same. Let him begin by treating the patriotism or the pacifism as a part of his own religion. Then let him, under the influence of this partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part. Then quietly and gradually nurse him onto the stage at which the religion becomes merely a part of the cause which he is subscribed to, in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of its excellent arguments it can produce in favor of the British war effort or of pacifism—all the same. The attitude which you want to guard against, a warm word, is that in which temporal affairs are treated primarily as material for obedience. Once you have made the world an end and faith as a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing, provided that meetings and pamphlets and policies and movements, causes and crusades matter more to him than prayers and sacraments and charity. He is ours. And the more religious, on those terms of his devotion to the factional sections that he's aligned himself with, the more religious he is in that aspect, the more securely ours is.

I could show you a pretty cageful down here, oh Wormwood. Your affectionate uncle, Screwtape.

Remember when this book was written? Did you catch what he said there? A little bit of a poetic word salad, but I love it. He's essentially saying make sure that you can find something—an ideology, something or faction that he joins into—that he becomes so passionate about that it takes the priority over his faith. In other words, his faith goes from number one to number two or three, and this new ideology that he stands for goes up to number one. But in his mind, he believes that it's part of his faith. He believes that his devotion to the King of Kings is being pursued ultimately when all of his energy is put forth in this goal, in this girl of the worldly pursuit, which his faith is simply a means to get to.

Remember when this book was written? Britain is heavily involved in the war, mostly as a victim. Not just that, but London itself had been a target for German bombers, killing many men, women, and children, even directly hitting Buckingham Palace on March 8th that year. The Germans are dropping bombs on citizens in the nation that he lives in. And here, Lewis has the audacity to write that some of the greatest tools the devil will use will be a distraction via a cause—to develop extreme patriotism or extreme pacifism—devaluing the Christian faith in one's life as simply a trinket to be worn in pursuit of such causes.

September 11, 2001

Who remembers September 11, 2001? Most of us were there. Who remembers turning on the news around 8:45 in the morning to see that a plane had just hit one of the towers? Interesting, sad, but tragic. Not something that was going to upset your whole day. Let's be honest. Something happened. A plane went off course. It's very sad. But then about 15 minutes later, we see another plane hit the other tower. And a few minutes later, a plane hit the Pentagon. And suddenly, things changed.

Did things change when we realized that it wasn't an accident? A whole different array of emotions bubbled up, didn't they? As they should, as you would expect. Remember how you felt. Do you remember what the cause and focus was in your life that day? Some of us were ready to enlist. We didn't know who, but we were ready to join up and go fight whoever we needed to, putting our own lives at risk. Because of the perception of what we saw, honor filled many Americans that enlisted that day. It was incredible. Others just wanted to hit a button and nuke somebody.

I was an immature 16-year-old at that point. Yeah, let's just nuke somebody. Let's just—we've got the power to destroy a whole country, men and kids. America, right? I mean, that was me. That was my experience. I was just new. I remember telling a teacher—remember telling them, "How does it feel that this just happened?" Like, I remember a sense of unity driving around. I think I was driving at this point. I remember the way that people treated police officers and firemen on this day. Taking the time to thank them, taking the time to give them a hug. Not any other day, but on this day because of the events—appropriately enough. We were one that afternoon.

But I have to ask, just as Lewis is asking his fellow British civilians here, amidst the rubble that was down the street, amidst the underground station that collapsed because of the bombs in Britain, amidst the small memorial that was set up outside the Bank of England where 57 people had died that year due to a German bomb dropping on them: Were you, on September 11, 2001, were you a patriot because you were a Christian on that day?

The Question of Allegiance

And what I mean is, was your Christian allegiance, your full-fledged pledge of allegiance to the King of Kings—was that still elevated at the top of your priorities in your life and pursuits and your dedication to this country that God had placed you in? That dedication was a byproduct of your faith that you had committed to. Or on this day, were you a Christian because you were a

patriot? Was your allegiance to your God and your faith and your loyal pursuit of showing the world—not just your country, but the world—of what God's kingdom looks like, was that lowered just a little bit in pursuit of a culminating patriotic spirit in which your faith was simply transformed into an accessory to fuel?

It's a subtle shift. It's a subtle shift. And I dare say we do it all the time, not just with varying degrees of allegiance to our country, but varying degrees of allegiance in other areas of our life.

What Lewis is saying is, everybody, these atrocities to our country are wrong. But before we make any decisions moving forward, we need to remember who we serve first and foremost, and let that define how we fight. You are still representing the God of the universe when you enlist and when you go and fight. Wars happen. Wars happen. But you are still a soldier of Christ first and foremost.

Or extreme pacifism. No, we shouldn't use violent resistance to this. We can find another way because Jesus taught this. Did you come to that conclusion because you truly believe that that's the pursuit of your faith, or because this is an isolated cause that you're now putting as your pursuit that you're faced with the means to? That afternoon, reflecting there, did you subconsciously enlist into a factional mindset where your Christian vocation became second, and therefore a simple accessory to what you now elevated as a greater cause?

I did. And I didn't know I did it until years later. This is why I say this. That's the thing about our country. Our country is awesome. And the spirit of patriotism and pride for our country is something I am completely and utterly blessed to be a part of. But the issue comes when our faithfulness to God and our devotion to our country become interchangeable as our ultimate pursuit, when they get combined as a singular pursuit. This is what the entire book of Revelation orbits around—this very topic, a topic that you don't hear preached in the South, period.

The Banner We Follow

In Revelation, the theme of the book is: Are you going to fully devote your full loyalty, no matter what, to the banner of Rome, or the banner of Yeshua as king? We are patriots as a result of our fully-fledged pursuit of our faith in Yeshua, not the other way around. And some of you may not be able to realize the difference. It's subtle. It's subtle. We're a patriot because God has blessed us here, placed us here, so that we can bless this nation by fighting to show heaven on earth, to fight to show what God's kingdom looks like in this great nation. We're not simply a Christian because that's the patriotic thing to do. What a brilliant ploy.

If we as believers are told that we're not citizens of an earthly kingdom, but citizens—fully citizens, fully loyal—only to a kingdom that is not of this earth ([Philippians 3.20](#)), what a greater distraction from our mission to live on earth as citizens of heaven than to coax us into elevating our loyalty to some other faction, in which our faith and loyalty to God's kingdom are simply an accessory to our newfound pursuit, which gives us a seemingly greater sense of inclusion in our worldly ideals?

The thing—the implications that Lewis is presenting here in 1941 in England when they were attacked by the Germans—he looked around and he saw all of his peers rising up and saying, "I'm a patriot. My country comes first. We need to go kill all these Germans." And he makes a point in his book to speak about—it was a damning quote—he speaks about how the faces of the Germans were only what the propaganda and the newsreels and the newspaper showed them to be. That must be a foreign concept for us, painting who our enemies are in the world. And I go fight because the Bible says that this is what we do. We fight for justice, and this is God's justice. They are sinning against our nation, therefore, as a good Christian, I will go and fight.' Or he saw his peers say, 'I'm a pacifist, and you are all wrong. The way of the world is love,' and the way I pursue that goal is to elevate that cause as greater priority than anything else—why? Because that's what Yeshua did. You see how easily that happens? It's almost indiscernible. That sounds about right. When we do this, we tend to make Yeshua a simple exit ramp instead of a destination toward which we run with open arms.

Please do not misunderstand. Patriotism is honorable—to stand for the great things our country has given to us. But our king will always be above our president. That's the pledge of allegiance we've taken in Yeshua. Does it bother you when that's said out loud? Does it seem uncomfortable to say that? It does for me because I was raised, not by my parents but by my culture, to put devotion to my country at the same level as devotion to God. And they can be close, but that one does not trump the other. Devotion to God is who we... God's reign extends to the whole world, not to the borders of our nation. God's not an accessory.

Our Duty in This Nation

And you were placed in this amazing nation by God. Be thankful. As a Christian, it is your job to vote or not to vote to empower this country with the values of heaven on earth. That's your duty in this country as a patriot of this country. But instead, we tend to nitpick and choose injustices that are more popular to stand for or against, because it makes us feel like we are included in something in the here and now instead of something that's vaguely in the future. It

makes us feel less like a Christian that stands in contrast to the worldly powers and more like a member of a group we tend to like feeling a part of.

Abortion is a great example. An option that is promoted in this country that disturbs me to the very core of my soul. Do not mistake me—I stand against the killing of unborn children. But what about the efforts and the social programs that empower these children after they're born, equipping them and equipping the parents who likely cannot afford to raise a family with a quality influence or education? Are we as passionate about that as we are protesting outside abortion clinics? And I'm not minimizing standing against the evil that has made murder casual. I'm standing against the blatant hypocrisy so many claim in being pro-life, but only until the child is born. Then, let the children see Jesus only if they can make it on their own.

When I bring this up, sometimes our knee-jerk reaction when we look at children who are not getting the love and affection from the community or their parents—children who have no access to the love of God because the people that surround them won't be the hands and feet of Yeshua—I've heard someone say something like that's not our responsibility. If a family couldn't afford to have kids, they shouldn't have gotten pregnant. I've heard this. I've heard this. That's not my quote. And my issue as a believer is saying anything remotely around that, especially when it comes to the overlapping topic of fighting to end abortion and protesting, and giving parents who see no other option in their life than to go and terminate a pregnancy—give them hope of God's peace, give them hope of God's love.

Listen, you will find the peace of God in the eyes of your unborn child. Push through. God will make a way. There will be a way, and he will not abandon you. And then they walk out the hospital holding their child, and God's hands and feet are nowhere to be found. I guess they should have had the child if they couldn't afford it. Do you see the hypocrisy in that attitude? This is Lewis's objective. It's so controversial. You can't say that. As a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, you are pro-life for life. It's what we're called to be as the people of God, not just in the womb.

This is why it's the Christian duty to participate in not only solving the abortion crisis in our country, but also being there, arms open, when children are born and disregarded by the communities that surround them. We claim that an unborn child is not just a bunch of cells. It's not. It's more than just a bunch of cells. But when they're born, that's all they end up being to us after they leave the womb. We take the stand that anything else than that would simply be inconvenient for us to participate in.

It is the duty of the church to stand against the death of unborn children. I mean, that's a gimme. It's also the duty of the church to intervene in the foster care system. It's also the duty of the church to intervene in low-income communities, fighting for their quality of life and education so that they can see and grow up to be testimonies of God's goodness in this world. The duty of the church. It's the duty of the church to support adoption. It's the duty of the church to show children the life and the love of Yeshua. "Let them come unto me," he says. How will they ever feel the love of Yeshua if they never feel his hands and feet? It's the duty of the church to stand as representatives of heaven on earth.

Your politics should follow your faith, not the other way around. And sometimes the varying parties that we tend to support, they drive our faith. And they tell us what is important to focus on, but you don't have to worry about that. Do not fall for it, and do not let politicians define the scope of your faith. Do not.

Factionalism Within the Church

Our factional pursuits are not just those in secular divisions, however. They exist in the utmost potency right here within the fellowship of our Savior. We want the church to be small, Screwtape says, not only that fewer men may know the enemy—God—but also that those who do may acquire the uneasy intensity and the defensive self-righteousness of a secret society or clique. We want the church to be small, not only that fewer men may know who God is, but also that those who do may acquire the uneasy intensity and the defensive self-righteousness of a secret society or a clique. In other words, one of the biggest traps for believers is elevating themselves above others in regards of the divine knowledge of God. I know this is probably foreign for most of us. Phrases like "I know truth," "I know more than others," "I know more than that other church," "I know more than all of those non-believers out there," "I am righteous, more righteous, because of X and Y and Z."

I was part of a fellowship once where we had a meeting concerning outreach programs because it finally came to the surface as a priority, and we were in a middle building off a road, and if someone was looking there's no way they'd find us. We weren't—no signage, no nothing. Just a middle building over there. We barely had a website running. Again, hard to find if someone's looking. And it was brought up during this meeting that the idea of maybe getting some signage, maybe putting some flags up—that's a popular thing to do in the 2000s.

Growth and the Gospel's Outward Call

Get people to know that there is something there. There is a place that is centered around Yeshua here. And there was an older gentleman that was in the position of leadership, and he promptly made the remark that we don't need to grow. We have our community. As if to say, heaven is satisfied with the members of this community, and that world should not know nor have access to the divine relationship that we foster here among our own clique. That ideal stands in stark contrast to the very nature and gospel preached by Yeshua himself. If the very nature of God is a community, one that we ourselves are invited into via the good news of the work of Yeshua that he has completed on the cross, then the objective we are charged with is to continue to grow that divine community that we find ourselves a part of and our commission is to offer it to the world around us. That's like how the Gospel of Matthew ends with this last decree. The church herself is, of course, heavily defended, and we have never yet quite successfully succeeded in giving her all of the characteristics of a faction, but subordinate factions within her have often produced admirable results. From the parties of Paul and of Apollos at Corinth to the high and low parties of the Church of England, if your patient can be induced to become a conscientious objector, he will automatically find himself one of a small, vocal, organized, and yet unpopular society. And the effects of this on one so new to Christianity will almost certainly be good. But only almost certainly.

An individual who intentionally takes a knife and cuts away at the community of God, creating small, subordinate factions within a fellowship community, is a conscientious objector to the kingdom work of God. They are a soldier of God who has turned their back on Jesus and everything that he has done for them. If men become Christians, Screwtape says, if they become Christians at all, is to keep them in a state of mind that I like to call Christianity and. Christianity and the crisis. Christianity and the new psychology. Christianity and the new order. Christianity and faith healing. Christianity and psychical research. Christianity and vegetarianism. Christianity and spelling reform. If they must be Christians, if they must be Christians at all, at least be Christians with a difference. Substitute for the faith itself some fashion with a Christian coloring on it.

The Trap of Christianity And

Work on their horror of being subjected to the same old thing. The sheer density of truth in this accusation is heavy, especially for the Messianic community. This is similar to the trap of becoming occupied with a secular faction or pursuit, merely attaching your faith as a trinket or accessory, but this refracts internally, pulling the faith in on itself to evolve into some type of self-advancing form of idolatry.

It's a big trap for us as people because we like to be drawn to new things, new and exciting things that are not the same things that we're used to. The unusual, mundane things in life make us feel like we have a lack of identity because we're just doing the same old thing. We begin to blend into the same old community, we read the same Bible every day, have the same outlook every day. Certainly, having a newfound identity is something that you can spout and show off and feel alive again. What Lewis is speaking about: I am a believer, but I do this. I am a believer, but I am not that. I am a true believer, but I'm not like all of those believers. I'm a different type of believer, you see.

We love Yeshua. We love the Bible. We love what God has done for us. Overwhelmed by His grace and His love, offering a reality that can only be described as a new creation. This is who we are as believers. But sometimes I feel it's not always God calling us for an evolution in our walk with Him. Sometimes it's just wanting to idolize our own selfish pursuits.

I've talked to a lot of people over the years that have discovered the beauty and the magnificence of the Torah. Walking out the commandments to the best of their abilities, feeling like a piece of their life has been missing all these years, and now this emptiness in their heart has been filled. But I cannot help to voice a concern that appears to be obvious. That so many come to embrace the Torah, not because God's Spirit prompted them. No, they came to embrace Torah to have a new identity as being a rogue, a rebel that is solely known for being not a new creation in God, but against a demographic. I am who I am because I'm not them, making the focus of their newfound identity anything but Yeshua and Yeshua's gospel to mankind.

How many of us have heard someone embrace the Torah only to identify themselves distinctly as being apart from everyone else? I keep Torah. And I believe in Yeshua. As if it's a bumper sticker on the tailgate of your newfound faith pursuits. I believe in Yeshua too. I'm a follower of Messiah, but I'm not part of the church. I'm not part of churchianity. That's my identity. I'm not a full-fledged follower of Yeshua, no, but I'm one who's found the truth and not part of that churchianity thing that's going on. I'm not part of them. As if the gospel comes second to some self-defined checklist of commandments that we've taken upon ourselves as an identity. Why is this such a ploy of evil? Because it pits those who claim to have a committed, full loyalty to Yeshua against each other. Festering hatred and frustration among the very communities that claim that Yeshua has created. Devaluing the work of God to the world. What a fantastic distraction from the mission of God that we have been given through the gospel of his son. Spectacular distraction.

Screwtape concludes one of his letters—nowhere do we tempt so successfully at the very steps of the altar. Nowhere. These are the traps of committing to an idea of being part of a fellowship.

These are some of the traps that I feel like every single one of us will encounter, may have encountered, may be trapped in right now—we have no idea. These are just some of the traps. Lewis is brilliant for articulating and having the wisdom to identify these things in his own community, especially during such a high-intensity time in his country's history. These are the traps of being committed to the idea of being a believer and taking on the status of being part of the divine community of the love of God. These are the traps that we face when we like the idea of commitment without actually being willing to commit fully to God and his community that he's placed us in.

Community as God's Design

Fellowship is important. Because community is important. Community is a place you don't simply attend. You don't simply attend a community. It's a place where you join and you submerge yourself and commit yourself and all you have to each other. That's what the Bible says, if we're going to use it as a tool to help us in the pursuit of our faith. Many times we will join a church or a fellowship or a congregation based on theological ideas or knowledge or opinions that we want to assume said identity from. And no doubt that is important, at least in non-radical forms.

The communities that God has formed are not simply places of ideas, though. Communities that God has formed have one core focus, and that is to surround the person of Yeshua and be transformed as individuals, but also transformed into his walking, talking body, being his hands and feet in this world. That's what a God-mandated community does to the people who are part of it. A church or a fellowship like that is one that is sold out and believes with all of their being that Yeshua is the fullness of the revelation of God that can ever be experienced. That's what we believe here at Fit. That's one of our pillars. There is no greater revelation than the person of Yeshua that we have committed full loyalty to, our King, all power, all authority on heaven and earth. That's why community is so important, because we celebrate that fact together in building each other up, growing and becoming and maturing as disciples of this King that we follow.

So how do we protect ourselves from the wiles of the devil that Paul speaks about in [Ephesians 6](#)? Well, putting on the whole armor of God, for one. Staying focused on the intent for God's purposes in your life, as well as taking upon yourself the tools the Holy Spirit is equipping you with. But another necessary piece of being a believer is to attach yourself to a community of believers—where you can grow in and mature with and be accountable to. [Genesis 1](#), it's fascinating. God is so, so big about community. This is how page 1 starts out. Let us create man

in our image. Before God created man, he surrounded himself with a community. Now, what is that? Is that what we call the Trinity today, or is that the divine council? It doesn't matter. There's more. It's a community that God surrounded himself with before advancing and revealing himself even more.

We know from the New Testament, Paul is intent on emphasizing that God Himself is revealed through this divine community that he calls the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, revealed in the person fully in Yeshua. This is a community that we ourselves are invited to join, to be a part of communion with. In [John 17:11](#), Yeshua is praying to God, and do you know what He prays? He prays this: "Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name, the name You gave me, so that they may be one as we are one." Yeshua is praying that you will take up the invitation to become one and a part of the divine community of God's love and justice that he's pouring out on the earth. Yeshua's entire ministry was focused on an invitation to join him. And it's not surprising that the Great Commission focuses on this sole objective. I have come to be a part of this divine community of love, as I believe Augustus calls it.

The Community of Love

He calls God the community of love. I love the poetry undertones with that. And now the Great Commission says, Go out into the world and extend that divine invitation for all nations to join in this community. It just keeps advancing from [Genesis 1](#) all the way through. It gets me excited. Calm down, man.

The overwhelming love of God created a community that is so ecstatic and zealous for who God is that his love pours out on them, transforming lives and creation itself into something that can only be called a new creation, into something that can only be called new heavens and a new earth. Your faith, this faith, is not something you do alone. This is not a faith that you treat your fellowship community like something that you only keep at arm's length your entire life.

This will produce a failure to thrive in your faith. Commitment to a community is a commitment that displays the maturity of a believer. A church or fellowship is not just an organization of people. It is not just a weekly commitment. It is a life commitment that you're pouring out and have all things in common and overwhelmingly sharing in the love of God with other individuals that have surrounded themselves just like you to the King.

All Authority

[Matthew 28:16](#). The Great Commission. These are the final words that Yeshua has in the book of Matthew.

"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him. But some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, all. Everybody say all. Authority in heaven and on earth. Where? Heaven and earth. All of heaven or just a little bit of heaven? All of earth or just a little bit of earth? Fantastic. We're explaining and defining the scope of our king's reign right now. Take that in. All authority in heaven and earth has been given unto me. Fulfillment of [Daniel 7](#). That last verse, verse 20, is a promise, and it's a promise to you. Behold, I am with you always to the end of the age."

Disciple vs. Matheteuo

Dictionary of Biblical Languages is a great resource. It defines Greek words. So, we have this word right here at the very top. The first one in yellow is disciples. And it is a noun. The Greek word is Matthaheus. And it means a disciple. Not really a word that we use too often in our day-to-day society, except for religious purposes, but whatever.

What's fascinating is this word in verse 19 is a little bit different. It is methetuo. It is the verb version. Of course, they share the same root, but are a bit different in thought and how they're actually achieved.

The noun is, of course, a status. These are the disciples that come in. But what does mathatuos mean? Mathatuos means to make a disciple, to become a learner, to make a learner. And what's a learner? It's a disciple. A learner is someone who commits themselves entirely to a teacher. It's pretty basic. Some of you guys are like, well, duh. I know. It's pretty simple. Someone who has committed themselves entirely to become a learner and submitted themselves to a teacher. That's brilliant.

Right here in the Great Commission, Yeshua is calling his disciples to go out and show the life that he has taught them so that others would become a learner of Yeshua. And we do this by being an active community that shows God's love manifest through him in our hearts. This is what Acts is all about, by the way. A community got together and then it would jump from, what, 120 to 3,120 people? Because they saw the community and they saw God's love and justice and they wanted to be a part of it.

Wouldn't it be great if we could actually be that example of Yeshua's love? That people would just flock into his arms because they see something peculiar about us? Maybe one day.

Jesus Overflowing from Your Heart

There's always a focus when we talk about inviting Jesus or Yeshua into our heart, and it makes it so personal when we talk about that. Yeshua's in my heart. Private almost. As if Yeshua is all mine. This is my Yeshua in my heart. He's in there. He's the little door that he walked in.

And yes, the same spirit that raised Yeshua from the dead now resides in you as a learner, a disciple of Yeshua. But as a Christian, Yeshua should not just be in your heart. He should be overflowing out of your heart. That's an attribute of a maturing disciple of Yeshua. Very actively. It's not something you keep private, locked in your heart. It does not work that way.

When you go from an internal perspective of who God is in your life, to allow that to manifest outward, to matheteuo, to make disciples, outpouring it into the world so that others can be invited in to become those disciples, guys, it was designed to be a communal thing.

When We See the Word Disciple

When we see the word disciple, we sometimes think to ourselves that I need to become a disciple of Yeshua, so I need to join a church, and I need to take that eight-week class to become a disciple and I'll get the certificate at the end of it, right? Anyone ever been part of one of those? I've been part of it. I'm going to get my certificate—it's signed. I am now a disciple. Well, that's not what this is talking about.

It's speaking about someone who is fully committed to renewing their passions, their prior priorities, to renewing their worldview, to renewing their mind and maturing constantly to this newfound good news that the world around you, the way that you see the world around you, is simply, quite put, deficient. And that there is a life and a grace and a justice that can only be explained as something called a new creation that has crashed into this world through the person and the work of Yeshua. Let me invite you into that worldview and let it change your life and your heart and your mind forever.

Protecting Our Community

C.S. Lewis viewed the church community as the most potent place for an outbreak of satanic influence to occur. It is our job to protect it, to keep it holy, to make our community a priority so that God's intention for it can occur and will never be swayed. That's our job, so that we can be filled with the love of Yeshua and that it would overflow into the streets right out here, not

simply be bound by the walls. That can only happen if we're willing to commit ourselves to this community, to your community.

And I know there's many of us here who have done that. This guy's a rock. Fully on board, right? Fully on board. Not just on board, but taking your station and steering the ship. Many of us.

And maybe there's those of you who are just taking a ride on the ship. Just hanging out. You are welcome to do that. You're welcome to stand at the front of the ship and watch the dolphins and the waves and to come to eat at the appropriate times. And we will cater to you.

Maybe committing to a fellowship fully in all aspects of your life is something that you just want to be a fly on a wall for a while, just kind of see what it's like. Totally totes coached to do that here. This is a safe place. We will meet you where you are. And hopefully, hopefully we as a community symbolize God's love into your life that you would want to join us in surrounding this person of Yeshua in a walk of life together.

You're welcome to do that, but what you're not welcome to do is stay here and be a stowaway. You're not welcome to stay a fly on the wall forever. And the reason why I say this is not for our benefit because we would love for all of you to fill a seat. I mean, it looks good. It's for your benefit, right? Because this will stunt your growth as a believer if you refuse to commit yourself and surround yourself and be accountable to an actual community that is following the Lord. You will grow in many areas of your life without a community, but there will be some that will be impossible to grow, and you will be stunted. Community is important.

Time, Money, Energy

When we read [Acts 2](#), we could read how a Yeshua committed community acts in [Acts 2](#). We could review how they came together at the end as a fellowship. We could review how they shared meals together and broke bread, had that communion with each other. We're about to do outside, please join us. We could talk about their level of maturity as they came together, had all things common. Koinonia is the Greek word. It means to have all things in giving to one another. Joining a community and giving their time and their energy and their money is what it says. Those are the three things that we give to the things we love in life. Time, money, energy. It's fascinating how it highlights that.

You guys ever realize that this is my life? That's usually the workflow and the stages of the maturity of a believer when they get involved with the community. First, I'm going to commit a little bit of time here and there and I'll greet. And then maybe some energy—yeah, I'll help out

with some programs or events. And then when it comes to actually pouring in, maybe with resources or finances or money. That's one of those—usually the last for me—it's one of the last maturity steps for me to grow as a believer. We give our resources, our time, and our energy to the things that we are most committed to.

We're growing here as a small community devoted to God.

We are part of a much larger network of what God is doing in the world. Isn't that amazing? We do our part here, and we're contributing to, I'm going to Lewis it up a little bit, to the war effort worldwide. We stand at our post here in this community, and we are contributing to the kingdom that is overtaking the world here and now.

And we need to make sure we stay focused on that, and not be swayed, and not be drawn, and watch out for the traps, the roaring lion that is waiting to devour us.

Committed to Maturing

It's our job to make sure we are committed to maturing and growing so that we can be used to create disciples in the world, followers, learners of Yeshua to manifest heaven on earth. Becoming a learner of Yeshua will be something you do your entire life. That's the beauty of it.

We do this by checking ourselves, by checking our motives, and by making sure that we're not entertaining the traps of the devil that he set amid the very pews in which we sit now. This is how we make a distinction between the church and the devil.

Share This Message

Shalom, I'm Matthew Vanderels and I hope you enjoyed this message.

Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives. If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we would love to hear from you.

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