

The Journey

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

Preached On: Sunday, August 19, 2018

Crossroads Ministries
301 S. 8th Street
Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

You know, this is that time of the year, it's a very unique time in all of our lives. This is that time of year for many of you whether as a student or as a parental figure, we launch out into a new year. For some of you, this is the time that you've changed your major again. For those of you that follow the sports world, every team is undefeated today. And in the days, weeks, months, and even years ahead, every one of us at some level has plans for life whether that's career plans, athletic plans, relationship plans. Let me give you a statement that I have found very true in my life: man's best laid plans are rarely half-realized. Don't believe me? Watch media day in the sports world, every team says they're going to win the championship and only one can. Yet today, no matter what we believe this year has ahead for us, no matter what we believe the days ahead are coming, we know for a fact that God has laid out a plan for our lives that is better than anything we could construct, anything that we could contrive, or anything that we could formulate or postulate. The struggle we have is the same struggle humanity has had since the garden, is believing that God's plan is actually better than ours. So let's pray today that we would not trust our own invention but his intervention.

Let's pray.

It says study or be diligent to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. I mentioned that we as a family of faith are going to begin a journey on this very specific day and as we talk about this journey, I want to speak to three very simple constructs that are a part of every journey that we take in life. I want to talk about the plan for the journey, the pace of the journey, and the hopeful eventual product or the endgame of the journey.

Anytime you take a trip whether that's across town or across the country, or I just spoke with somebody across the ocean, anytime you do so, you always map out a plan. Now back in the old days we actually had maps that we unfolded but nowadays all we do is type in an address, we plug it into our phone or our iPad or tablet or whatever it may be, and pretty soon even the navigation system and it tells us the route and how we're going to get there. It will even talk to us, communicate with us, and tell us, "You turn here. You turn there." And eventually when you start at Point A, if you do everything that those instructions tell you, you will end up at the destination that you desired at the beginning.

Today we're going to begin a journey as a family of faith. You say, "Well, what's the plan? What's the path? What are we doing on this journey?" We want to begin a journey as a family of faith to walk through the Bible together as a family. Just to walk through it over the course of time. Every single chapter, every single verse and as we walk through, some of the things you're going to discover is this: you're going to discover that the book of Numbers has a whole lot more in common with the book of Hebrews than you ever thought. You're going to discover that Genesis and Revelation may be the same story just told from different perspectives. You're going to find out that the book of Leviticus that all of us avoid at all costs is very culturally relevant. And the desire that we have as a family of faith, no matter where you're from or what your background is, is to walk through this together as a family of faith.

Now what we're going to do is we're actually going to begin in the book of Genesis beginning tomorrow, we're going to end in the book of Revelation, but we're going to mix it up in between because we know that if we just go straight through, we will lose you in Joshua. We know that. So we're going to mix it up, but that being said, we're going to go on a journey walking through the Scriptures together that each and every day, no matter where you're located or what your background is, that everybody who's a part of this family of faith at whatever level, will be reading the same Scriptures and studying the same passages together. What we're going to find out that the Bible testifies to itself is true. 2 Timothy 3:16 says that all Scripture is inspired by God. You're going to discover that God has breathed, God has spoken his word not just to guys and gals long ago, but to you today. In fact, we live in a world today that is occupied, it is consumed with icons and apps. We simply put our finger or we look at the picture and it gets us to where we desire to go, but from the very beginning of Scripture, the Lord says that he communicates, he has breathed, he has spoken his words to us.

Think about this for just a moment. The book of Genesis, before the fall in the garden of Eden it says that the Lord came to Adam and he spoke to him. He communicated with him. And when Abram and Sarah's wife were given the promise of Isaac, their son, whom the Messiah would eventually come through, the Lord came and he spoke to them. When Moses was on the mount for 40 days and 40 nights, yes, the Lord wrote what we know as the 10 Commandments with his finger, but he spoke unto him. When Isaiah the prophet was in the midst of apostasy and all types of spiritual rebellion, the Lord came and spoke to him that a Messiah would be born. And when God was manifest in the flesh, Jesus Christ with the one exception because we don't know exactly what he wrote, when Jesus knelt down in John 8 and he wrote on the ground, what did he do? He spoke to humanity to communicate what the Lord desired of their lives.

I think oftentimes we read these stories and say, "Well, sure, the Lord spoke to David, he spoke to Solomon, he spoke to Moses," we're going to discover that he'll speak to you as well. You see, the words of God are inspired, they are breathed not only in its inspiration but hear me clearly, in its preservation. Preservation simply means this, that what was written long ago is still valid today and in its validity today, it will still be so in the days ahead. You're going to discover that the word of God, the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is just as relevant to a technologically-based culture in the Western world

today as it was in the Middle East thousands of years ago. You're going to discover that the struggles and the problems and the difficulties that humanity had back in the "old days" are the same struggles we have today. We're going to discover as we walk through this journey together that the word of God was spoken by God, it has been preserved by God so that it's relevant to us, we're also going to discover that it's powerful. Hebrews 4:12 says the word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It is able to divide. It is able to speak into our lives like none other.

There are going to be days as you walk down this journey, there are going to be some dark days. There are going to be what King David called the valley of the shadow of death and you're going to discover that four chapters later in Psalm 27, the Lord makes this statement, "When my mother and my father forsake me, the Lord will lift me up." There are times when we feel like we're in absolute despair and the word of God is our comfort and our shield.

There's also going to be some times over the course of the days ahead as we naturally do, we fall into temptation. We fall into believing somehow we know better than God does and we're going to find out that the word of God is going to convict us of our sin and demonstrate to us where we have fallen short of the glory of God.

So over the course of time, we want to encourage you to join us on this journey. The plan is the word of God systematically daily reading, absorbing it into our lives, believing that it's not just the words of ancient history or future prophetic events but relevant for each and every situation of our lives. That is the path, shall we say, that is the plan.

Now let's talk about the pace. If you've ever had the privilege of walking through a read the Bible plan, you'll know that most commonly it's the Bible in one year. That's typically what we do and you can begin in January or any other time. There are lots of Bible reading plans out there. When you read through the Bible in any given one year time span, typically it takes about 15-20 minutes. You read 15-20 minutes a day over the course of a year and you'll read the whole Bible cover-to-cover, but sometimes we even want to get a little more intense than that. There are some folks, in fact I had a conversation with a friend of mine this last week, that he and an accountability partner read through the entire Bible in six months. It took about 30-40 minutes a day. I had a professor of mine in seminary, he challenged us as students, he challenged us to read through the entire New Testament once a month. If you're curious how long does that take, it's about 30 minutes a day. But the greatest encouragement that I've had to intensely read through and study Scripture comes from one of my heroes of the faith, a man by the name of Watchman Nee. Watchman Nee is attributed to much of the success of the evangelical church on the Asia continent today. 1972, he died a martyr's death in a Chinese prison. From the time in which he was converted to Jesus Christ, he read his New Testament – listen to this – once a week. You say, "Well, how long does that take?" It takes about 2 to 2 ½ hours a day.

Throughout my life, I've read the Bible in a year, I've done the reading programs in the New Testament in 30 days and I've even done what I call a Nee week, I even twice did

what's called a Nee weekend. You say, "What's a Nee weekend?" We read the whole New Testament in one weekend. Let me give you a hint: if you ever embark on that, you've got to begin Friday afternoon and you will end late Sunday night. I promise you that. It takes about 24 hours to digest the entire New Testament in one sitting. If you were to take your entire Bible and just read it as fast and as voraciously as you could at one time, it would take probably 7 to 10 days. You go online today and there is a plethora of Bible reading "plans and paces."

So what's our pace? It is our encouragement over the course of the next almost three years to read right at a chapter a day. Just a chapter a day. Now there will be some days where we'll read two chapters a day, when you get into kind of the narrative stories of Scripture. But this is our encouragement, this is the journey, what would it look like if every single one of us was reading the same small section of Scripture every day?

Now let me give you kind of the intent of this pace. It's not just to wake-up in the morning, read for five minutes, check off the box and say, "I accomplished the task. I can't wait." No, look at the very first statement or the first phrase of 2 Timothy 2, it says study or be diligent or pay close attention to. You see, I've read through the Bible in a year and I've read through the Bible in a month and I've done the New Testament in a weekend, do you know what happens when you do that? You see the Scriptures at 30,000 feet. You see the connection between Genesis and Revelation and Numbers and Hebrews as I mentioned earlier, and that's wonderful, but as we go through this journey together as a family of faith, it is our desire to intently allow the words of God at a very moderate pace, not just to be read and checked off but to become digested and become a part of our life.

I want to encourage you to interact with the Scriptures. In fact, Deuteronomy 6 encourages us, it says make the Scriptures a part of your life when you wake-up, during the midday and also when you go to bed at night. If you participated in a read the Bible through the year program of 15-20 minutes a day, you could read each passage each day three, maybe even four times.

I mentioned we want you to interact with the Scriptures so one of the things that we are going to make available, in fact I mentioned earlier about the guest reception, you can find these in the guest reception today, is we're making available a journal. This is a journal that if you are a journaler will allow you more of a tangible way to interact with the Scriptures. If you make your way back there today and you decide to partake of one of these, you will notice that the entire almost three year Bible reading plan is in these pages. Now some of you are very verbose and you say, "There is no way that that small journal can take care of three year's worth." I know some of you that are going to go through 12 of these over the next three years and some of you won't even use one and that's okay, but one of the things you'll see in this journal is that everyday it allows you two interactive opportunities. I know it's hard to see from a distance but they're back there. On the left hand side, there are four boxes with four words: adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. As we read through that passage of Scripture, it may only be 20 verses in length, how do we adore, how do we recognize God, how do we

acknowledge his power and authority in our lives out of just this passage? Confession, what is this passage of Scripture, what does it reveal to us that is a shortcoming in us? What do we need to confess to the Lord? What do we need to do when King David says that we will when we discover our sins, we will cast them before the Lord? Thanksgiving, what are the things in life we discover that, "Lord, if it weren't for you, I wouldn't be in this place and I wouldn't have this experience and I wouldn't have these blessings." Then finally, supplication. That's that time where you actually ask the Lord of what it is you need and desire him to move and act in your life.

Then on the right hand side there's just blank lines for you to just freely interact with the Scriptures.

I want you to hear that we want to make the journals available for you. There will be done so afterwards in the guest reception and maybe you're one like me, you write within your Bible or maybe you have a separate pad. That's fine, but here's the purpose of the pace: not just to read, check off a box and go down the road, but to each and every day digest and take in what does this passage have to do with my life this day? "God, I know you wrote it thousands of years ago, you preserved it for me today, how will it change my tomorrow?"

So what we know as the plan is the word of God for almost three years. The pace is going to be a very methodical pace but it's going to be a regular pace. And here's the product, what's the goal? I want you to notice in 2 Timothy 2 again it says study or be diligent to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Two phrases there that it describes to us when we interact with the word of truth. It says that we would be approved of God and not be ashamed.

Now let me give you a warning from the very beginning: do not think in religious terms here. Do not think in checking off boxes. Do not think in doing all the to-do list and not the do-not-do list. For what we discover when we walk through the word of God, it's not about checking off boxes but it's allowing ourselves to be conformed to his will, his way, in his desires for our life. In fact, one of the most prolific illustrations we have in Scripture whether in the prophet Jeremiah or in the book of Romans, is the potter to the clay. The Lord is taking us and he's molding us and he's shaping us to be the vessel – listen to this – the vessel he desires us to be.

So when it says that by studying to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, don't think in terms of, "I messed up here but I did good for two and so I must be somewhat ahead of the game." Don't think in those terms, think in the terms of every single day he is molding me and shaping me in my relationship to him. That may be in the Gospel of John. That may be in the prophet known as Micah or somewhere in between. But that's the desire, is that you and I today as we look in the days ahead, the weeks ahead, the months ahead, and for some cases the years ahead, we have plans, we have desires, but what does the Lord have for us three years from now? Not one of us knows exactly what life will look like for any of us in any situation but according to 2 Timothy 2:15, if you and I go on a journey of a daily digestion of the word

of God, we can look back three years from now and say that we are a workman that is approved, that we are not ashamed, because we have been molded, we have been shaped by God through his word to be the person he's called us and designed to be.

Today we begin the journey. As I mentioned, the list of Scriptures are in the journal. They're on the messenger or the worship guide every week. They're on the website. We even have paper copies around the campus. It's about a chapter a day and in some cases two. Let me encourage you to be a part of it for two reasons. 1. What I've already shared with you. 2. Every Sunday as we gather as a family of faith, the message that Sunday, the challenge from God's word that Sunday is going to be from the passages that you've read that week. So as you study and as you digest them as an individual or maybe in a community of faith, we as the larger family of faith are going to gather together and we're going to be convicted and we're going to be comforted and we're going to be challenged by those words in a collective corporate sense.

So on this journey, it's one of which hopefully you will take just you and the Lord but it's also one that we will all take together as an entire family of faith walking through the Scriptures knowing that each and every day what you're being challenged with by the word of God is what your friends are being challenged with, or the person that you see walking up in the parking lot that you've never laid eyes on before, you know that they've been in the same place you've been, studying the same thing you've studied and it is our goal that a few years from now 2 Timothy 2:15 will be true for each and every one of our lives. We would have studied to show ourselves approved unto God. We will be workman who need not be ashamed because we have rightly divided the word of truth. It's the challenge of the journey. We want to encourage you, whatever stage or age, that you take it with us.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, I mentioned just a moment ago that this isn't an act of religious fervor but it's about relationship and maybe you're that person here today that says, "Hey, I understand all this about being shaped and molded and looking like what I'm supposed to be, but that relationship hasn't even been initiated, it hasn't even started. I'm the furthest thing from that." Man, do I have some great news for you today. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved and maybe today this is your first time to ever hear that Scripture out loud, maybe this is the first time ever or the first time in a long time that you find yourself in an environment such as this, or maybe you're here every week, week-in, week-out, but somehow, some way it's all been about religion and it's never been about a relationship through Jesus Christ. I've got some great news for you, all you need to do is have a very sincere conversation with the Lord. You don't have to have this conversation out loud. In fact, you don't even have to say the same words that I might say, but maybe your conversation would sound a little something like this. "God, today the lightbulb turned on and I realized it. God, I realize my shortcomings. I realize that even in my best religious endeavors, I do nothing but fall short. Lord, I believe today, I believe that your word is true, that if I call upon you I will be saved and I will be forgiven. So God, that's what I want to do. Lord, today I believe. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he came on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he lived a sinless life on

my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to pay the price on Mount Calvary, nailing my sins to his cross. I believe Jesus loved me so much that three days later he rose from the dead so I could be forgiven and I could be saved. God, today I don't have the answers to all the world's problems, I don't even have the answers for this next semester and year, I don't even have the answers to the struggles of my own life, but I do know that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed. Maybe today's the day you had that conversation with the Lord. We'd love to celebrate with you. We'd love to have a conversation with you about your conversation with the Lord. So wherever you are and wherever you came from, isn't it good to know that all of us come the same way to the foot of the cross?

Lord, as we come to this time in our service, God, I think it's very fitting that we thank you for second chances. We thank you for new beginnings. We thank you for fresh starts that, Lord, no matter what days past have looked like or what days future may appear to be, that you're a God that intervenes and acts mightily in our lives. So Lord, as we begin this journey as a family of faith today, for those who just a few moments ago began their journey with you, Lord, we thank you and we desire the privilege of celebrating with them. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.