



Jesus' True Family

Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God - Part 32
Pastor Mark Driscoll | June 13, 2010



Luke 8:16–21

¹⁶ “No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. ¹⁸ Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.”

¹⁹ Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.” ²¹ But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.”

A QUICK BUSINESS REPORT

All right, Mars Hill. We'll be in Luke 8:16–21, little business, and then a lot of Bible. This is the end of our fiscal year. It actually concludes at the end of June, and so we like to tell you kind of how things are going and what God's been doing, as well as big plans for our future. So we want to finish the budget year strong, and here is a quick report of what God's been doing.

We love church planting, this includes our campuses of Mars Hill through Acts 29. And you can see in the last decade God's been really gracious. We've gone from 2 churches to more than 300 church plants just in the U.S., as well as around the world. In addition to those numbers, we're continually assessing upwards of 500 church-planting candidates. We are seeing planted more than a church a week in the U.S. alone. And we are really excited about what God is doing. We're bringing together the pastors and their wives here in a few weeks in Vail, Colorado, for a conference and retreat time. You are covering most of their expenses, so on their behalf, thank you. Under the leadership of Scott Thomas, this is going exceedingly well. And in about 5 to 6 years, we anticipate, by God's grace, to be at a thousand churches. Right now it's almost 80,000 people a week in Acts 29 churches, and we anticipate that number to grow to more than a quarter million in the next 5 or 6 years. That's the big picture. We give 10% of all of our dollars to this cause.

Additionally, here's what's been going on at Mars Hill. In the last decade, we've gone from one campus to ten, with a few more in planning, from just over a thousand people to a high point at Easter of 13,000 people. Seattle used to be the least-churched city in America. It no longer is. The Northwest used to be the least-churched

region in the country, it no longer is. And there's a lot still left to do, but there's a lot to rejoice in. *[Congregation applauding]*

One of these campuses, as well, is in Albuquerque, New Mexico, under the leadership of Dave Bruskas, going exceedingly well. And now we're looking for other opportunities out of state. There will be at least one that we'll be informing you of in the coming months.

And as well, Mars Hill has community groups that meet all over the region, condos, dorms, homes, apartments, coffee shops, and the like. We went from a mere 3 groups a decade ago to over 400 today with those getting ready to replicate and multiply, 500 or 600 should be open to welcome thousands and thousands of people come this September when we push hard again and school is back in session. So we rejoice for all of these connecting points for you to get involved, to get in community, and to get on mission.

And I'll tell you what else God is doing. This is a really incredible, busy, fantastic week. I was so tired. I went to bed last night at 6 o'clock, and I slept 12 hours, to the glory of God, like a Calvinist. 'Cause we have so much left to do, I just needed some more energy. Here's what is going on: the campuses are growing, God is at work. This is that time of year where we clean up our budget, and to tell you the truth, we need to finish our year strong. We're about a million dollars behind projected giving. Some people have been exceedingly faithful. Some are still needing to get on board. We want to let you know all the good things that have happened, and we want to finish the budget year strong. We're asking you to pray, pray, pray, give, give, give, pray some more, give some more.

Let's finish the year strong, 'cause here's what we've got on tap as well. This week, if you can believe this, we're opening the John Danz Theatre in Bellevue. The Bellevue Campus will be having an open house. We're bringing all of that campus in. They've outgrown their location. They have grown very, very rapidly, and so the John Danz Theatre will double their seating to almost a thousand. It's downtown right next to the mall right by Rock Bottom and Barnes & Noble and Starbucks all next door. Right in the heart of downtown Bellevue, we'll be able to launch multiple other campuses around the region from there. The seating will be upwards of a thousand. So there'll be an open house at Bellevue to notify all the people, let them come in and check it out.

In addition, be in prayer for Olympia and Albuquerque. As they've outgrown their buildings, they're looking for new space. As well, this week, we are intending to sign the deal to purchase a Baptist church within walking distance of the University of Washington, almost 20,000 square feet, seating 400 in the sanctuary, lots of classroom and office space to train young and emerging leaders, 2 apartments included therein to house interns, as that is a very poor campus. They have been meeting this year. They've got 400 plus students. For the first time that I am aware of in my 15 years of pastoral ministry at Mars Hill Church, a church building has come for sale in the U District, and we're grabbing it. And we'll be able to plant a flag there, and train people, and reach students, and develop the leadership pipeline for generations to come. *[Congregation applauding]*

So that's this week, unless something else comes up, and we'll do that too. And so what we're asking you to do is pray, pray, pray, give, give, give, pray some more, give some more. If you've been praying and giving, praise God. Thank you. Like fishes and loaves handed to Jesus by a little boy, it's all getting multiplied. And for those of you that are still looking at your Lunchable, please share. We've got lots left to do. It's exciting. It's an amazing time. I just can't believe all that's actually happening this week, and I may have forgot some things but that's how much is going on. And so we're gonna open more seats, more opportunities, and we want to make up the million dollars, finish this month strong, hit the summer with everything coming together for an enormous push and the biggest year we've ever had come fall, Amen? Very exciting. So, if that doesn't fire you up, your wood's wet.

LUKE 8:16-21

We're gonna do a little Bible now. We'll be in Luke 8:16-21. I'm gonna go ahead and pray, and we're gonna study God's Word.

Father God, thank you that you are a father, you're a dad who loves the church, your family, that you love our church and its campuses as part of your extended family. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you're the big brother who came to take away sin, and give salvation, and allow us to experience adoption into the family of God. As we open your Word, please open our hearts and minds to learn and to receive what you would have for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

IDENTITY THEN ACTIVITY

All right, here's where it's going to go today. There is a parable told by Jesus, as well as a teaching moment that we'll enjoy from him. And in both of these, he's working from identity to activity. And this is the reverse of how religion and most people in our world work. In our world, including, sadly, in false-teaching churches and non-Christian religions, it is predicated on activity establishes identity. So you do something to become someone. In religion, this would be you have to give, you have to serve, you have to pray, you have to go to Mecca, so that God would find you pleasing in his sight. You have to reincarnate, you have to suffer, you have to go to purgatory, so that God would find you pleasing in his sight, so that you could be in a loving relationship, or at least a forgiving relationship with him. So activity creates identity.

The secular version is: you're defined by your appearance, by your job, by your performance, by your status in life. So it's whatever you do or accomplish that determines your identity.

In Christianity, it's completely the opposite. Through the grace of God, and the work of Jesus, and the love of the Father, we receive an identity. And out of that identity, there is activity, not so that God would love us, but because he already has, not so that God would accept us, but because in Christ, he already does. So who we are determines what we do. It is not that what we do determines who we are. That's the miracle of Christianity. And so as God commands us to activity, it is simply the outworking of our identity. He makes us someone so we can do some things.

IN THE WORLD, BE A LIGHT

And Jesus begins by telling it in this way. Luke 8:16-18, he says, "In the world, be a

light.” “No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.”

This is a parable from the Lord Jesus, and he establishes for the Christian, us being in identity as light. So here’s the story that Jesus tells in parable form. The world is filled with darkness. Sin, temptation, lies, that it is filled with darkness. It doesn’t know God. It doesn’t love God. It doesn’t seek God. It doesn’t savor God. The world is darkness, and Jesus is the light of the world. That’s what he says elsewhere. And Jesus is our great God and savior, and he comes as light into the darkness of the world.

And Jesus, where there is sin, he exposes it. That’s part of the function of light. Where there is error, he illuminates it as being erroneous. That’s part of the function of light, is to expose and to illuminate where there is need. And Jesus dies for our sin, rises for our salvation, and he places in the child of God, in the Christian, the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the presence of the light, and life, and love of God.

This absolutely, inextricably, eternally alters our identity. The Bible says it elsewhere that old things have passed away, that all things are made new, that we’re made a new creation, a new person with a new identity in Christ. That’s why many people in the Bible are actually given a new name. So Abram becomes Abraham, and Saul becomes Paul, and Cephas becomes Peter. It’s that you’re so radically changed at the core, depth, seat, sum, center, essence of who you are, that you get a new identity.

And out of that new identity, there’s new activity, that God does something in you, and then God does some things through you. That’s why the Bible says elsewhere, “to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to do according to his good pleasure.” God works in you, and then God works through you. God establishes identity, that leads to activity. You say, “I used to do this, but I don’t do this anymore, ‘cause I met Jesus. I used to think that way, I don’t think that way anymore, ‘cause I met Jesus. And now the presence and the power of God is taking residence in my life. The Holy Spirit is in me as I am in Christ, and I get to be a light. That’s my identity, I get to be a light in a dark world.”

And so the song isn’t that great, but it’s theologically accurate. “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.” It’s theologically accurate, artistically not so phenomenal, so I will not sing it for you. But if you sang it as a little kid, it’s actually a pretty good little theological instruction piece. You want your light to shine. What that means is where there are lies, you want to bring truth. Where there is sin, you want to bring conviction of sin and repentance of sin. Where people are enslaved to sin, you want to bring redemption through the gospel. Where people are hiding and sinning in secrecy and shame, you want to shine the light of God’s truth and love, and invite them to repentance in Jesus.

So the picture is as if the whole world is filled with darkness, and Jesus comes as a torch, as it were, and that each Christian is like a small candle who’s lit by the torch

of Jesus. By the grace of God, we are to humbly carry our light into the world, take it to work or school or wherever it is that we happen to be as missionaries in a dark world bringing the light of the gospel and good news, and exposing and illuminating of Jesus Christ.

So my question to you is this: How's it going? For those of you who are Christian, or claim to be Christian, how's it going? Because what Jesus exhorts us is not to hide our light, he uses this analogy that if the Holy Spirit has set his light aflame in you, you can either illuminate and expose, or you can conceal and hide that light. And what this looks like, practically, is that with your family, you don't really talk about Jesus. With your friends, you don't really talk about Jesus, or at least your non-Christian family and friends. And the whole point of your job is not to annoy people and talk about God all the time while you're not doing your job, but you want to do well at your job. As part of your light, you want to show up early, stay late, work hard, be honest, tell the truth, deliver results, love others, pray for them, serve them, be gracious and kind. And as opportunity arises through friendship, love, and service, to talk to people about Jesus. Let them know you'll pray for them, serve them in functional and practical ways.

But what happens is there is a lot of pressure from the darkness to hide the light. That's what Jesus is saying. Some of your family members, they don't want to hear about Jesus, so you don't say anything, but they need him. Some of your friends, coworkers, neighbors, roommates, they don't want to hear about Jesus, but they need him. And the question is, well, are you going to conceal, to cover, to hide your light, or will you be open, and honest, and authentic, and live according to your convictions, who you truly are?

And the pressure in our culture is this, there is a distinction between that which is to be public and that which is to be private, and sadly, the Western world has decided that spiritual, religious convictions about God and life are to be in the private sphere, not in the public sphere. But the truth is, we're supposed to have freedom of religion, not freedom from religion, that we are to be able to worship God freely and publicly, and it was never intended that our faith would not have anything to do with our life.

See, this is a false dichotomy. If we believe God created the world and we're to be stewards of it, that affects how we view stewardship, recycling, environmentalism, and care of the earth. If we believe that men and women are created equal, that determines how we view gender and the equality of women. If we believe that human life is sacred, that affects how we view such things as abortion or murder. If we believe that all races are created equal in the image of God, that changes how we view racism and slavery. If we believe that, ultimately, those who are being abused need justice because our God is a God of justice, then we'll work for justice. If we believe that God cares for the widow, and the poor, and the orphan, then we will give generously and we'll be involved in foster care, and we'll adopt children. And we'll serve single mothers. And we'll have redemption groups for rape victims. Why? Because it works out of our faith. It works out of our deep convictions about who the God of the Bible is, why he made the world, and our place in it.

And so if you're one of those people who says, "Well, it works for me, not for you. My faith is a private thing, not a public thing, and I only talk about Jesus with people who

already know him.” Jesus says, “Hey, please don’t hide that light. I lit your candle so you could go out into the dark world and others could be attracted to who I am and what I do. And if you cover your candle, you’re not helping the cause, in fact, you’re ashamed of me, and you’re not wanting to suffer for me. And the truth is, I should be ashamed of you, and I’ve already suffered for you. So if you want to follow me, live as I live, speak as I spoke, do as I did, and don’t be ashamed of me.” Some of you say, “But the darkness will push back. My family will be upset. I will lose my job. My grade point will go down.” To the glory of God, yes. You worship someone who was murdered. Lean over the plate, take one for the team. That’s the big idea. That’s the big idea.

Because the truth is, as much as some in the darkness will push back, there are others who will be attracted and compelled. They’ll say, “You know what? I’m interested. Could you pray for me? Could you talk to me? You’re the one person who doesn’t seem to be using me, taking advantage of me. You’re not perfect, but you’re not a total hypocrite, you practice what you preach, and you preach what you practice.”

And see for some of you, it’s shame. For others of you, it will be hypocrisy. “I’m not gonna tell him I’m a Christian, look what I’m doing with him.” And your hypocrisy is that with your Christian friends, your language, your behavior, your activity, or, ladies, even your wardrobe, is a certain way, and then with your non-Christian friends, that all changes and is altered. And your non-Christian friends then will realize that you ultimately are a hypocrite, that you have two different parallel worlds. You conduct yourself in community group in a way that is different than other social scenes, and settings, and relationships. And Jesus here is calling for authenticity, for consistency. He’s preaching against hypocrisy, and he’s saying, “I came into the world and it was dark and I brought light. And my torch has lit your candle, and I expect you to live openly, publicly, authentically, honestly, serve in love, speak in truth. The world needs me and you are the means.”

So go, and as you go, let your light shine. So my question to you is: How’s it going? Who are you hiding your light from? Who have you not talked to about Jesus? Who are you not serving? Where is there hypocrisy? Who are you not inviting to community group or church? ‘Cause see, identity determines activity. If you’re a light, you need to shine. If Jesus has set your heart aflame, others need to come to know him.

This is very important at Mars Hill because we stress so much that you’re not saved by what you do, but rather what Jesus does. Some people get very lazy and they say, “So I don’t have to do anything?” You don’t do anything to become a Christian, but as a Christian, there are certain expectations. Identity determines activity. Activity doesn’t determine identity. You’re not gonna do anything to become a Christian. Jesus did it all. Jesus said, “It’s finished.” Jesus died in your place. Jesus rose for your salvation. The work of salvation is done by Jesus, received by us through faith, by grace, trusting him. But once our identities change, our activities change. Your sex life is different ‘cause you met Jesus. Your financial life is different ‘cause you met Jesus. Your friendships are different ‘cause you met Jesus. The way you view and treat people is different ‘cause you met Jesus.

CONSIDER CAREFULLY HOW YOU LISTEN

And Jesus says that not only are we to allow others to see open, authentic, real faith, and hear true, biblical doctrine and exposition, but we want our light to continue to grow brighter. And this is maturing or sanctifying as a Christian, this is growing in Christlikeness. And so what he tells us to do in light of that is this: consider carefully how you listen.

One of your activities is to listen, and we live in a world where listening is not really encouraged. From cell phones, to blogs, to e-mails, to Facebook, to Twitter, to conversations, it's all about speaking. It's not about listening. Right? There are degrees in speech communication. I have one. There's no degree in listening. There's not even a class in listening. I have a Bachelor's degree in communication. I didn't take a class on listening. You can go to a bookstore, Barnes & Noble, B. Dalton, what have you, there's a whole section on communication. There's no corresponding section on listening. People in our world like to speak. People are not trained to listen, or as Jesus says, to listen carefully, to listen.

And so some of you may wonder, "Why do I come to church, and why do I sit here for an hour, and why do I have to listen?" 'Cause it's an act of worship. It's an act of worship. It's actually an act of humility to say, "He may—" not gonna overstate my case, "say something that is helpful. So I'm going to listen. And he says a lot, so I'm gonna have to listen very carefully to get that potential thing that could conceivably be helpful," and it's an act of worship, to listen carefully, to listen carefully.

Because see, some churches are all about activity: go, go, go, do, do, do. Jesus says, "First, listen, listen, listen." Once you listen, then you'll learn. Once you learn, then you can do, but you need to listen before you do, otherwise you're gonna make great mistakes in your life and in your ministry. And so listening is this skill that we are to hone. Jesus says, "Listen carefully."

Once you become a Christian, what this means is you've gotta be a student. You've gotta be a student. This includes reading your Bible, Christian books, downloading classes, sermons on the Internet, listening. We live in this amazing world where there's so much information that's made available. This is listening to the Bible on your way to work. This is listening to God's Word being taught and preached. And this includes and centers around as well, reading the Bible to your children, letting your children read the Bible out loud to you in an age-appropriate version when they're of age to be able to read. This is as well, you reading the Bible for yourself, reading the Bible aloud. This is you hearing carefully, listening carefully, considering carefully what the Bible has to say, what God would have to say to you through his Word.

So let me ask, how's your listening? How's your listening? Are you listening carefully as Jesus would instruct and admonish you?

"HOW TO LISTEN TO A SERMON" BY GEORGE WHITEFIELD

I'll give you something that I hope will be helpful. George Whitefield was an amazing preacher, preached to enormous crowds, upwards of 10,000-plus at a time, in open air, was this amazing evangelist, part of one of the Great Awakenings, unbelievably used by God. And he was studying Luke 8:18, exactly where we find ourselves. And a few hundred years ago, he put together six points for people to learn to listen to sermons better. And here's what he had to say. He lived from 1714 to 1770.

His first point was: “Come to hear them,” the preacher, “not of curiosity, but from a sincere desire to know and do your duty.” So what he says is when you come to hear a sermon, some of you are new to church, new to Christ, say, “I don’t know what this—what is this? Is this like a concert? There’s a band.” No, it’s not a concert. “Is this like a movie, we have a screen?” No, it’s not a movie. “Well, is this like a lecture in school?” No, not really because, ultimately, it’s not just for information, but transformation. “Well, is this a stand-up comic, ‘cause occasionally Mark says something that, at least, he finds funny.” No, it’s not a stand-up comic. “Well, is this a politician, are we getting on board with some cause?” No, it’s about Christ, not some cause. “Well, what is this?” This is church. And you come to listen to the Word of God, so that you might learn to obey God, okay?

So he says you’ve gotta know why you’re coming to church, and why you’re listening, and hearing. Come to listen, not out of curiosity, not ‘cause they’re funny, or entertaining, or cool, or whatever it is, just come to listen, to hear God’s Word. See, we live in this day when it can become all about the personality, and he’s saying it should be primarily about the content. Is God’s Word being taught? Are God’s people being fed? Is God’s conviction coming to you? That’s really the big idea. So don’t come, he says, just out of curiosity, but a sincere desire to seek of the Lord and ask, “Okay, I’m not coming to be entertained. I’m coming to obey. I’m coming to get marching orders from God through his Word via the preacher, and I want to walk away knowing who God is, and how he wants me to respond. That’s why I’m going to church. That’s why I’m gonna sit there. That’s why I’m going to listen.”

Number two: “Give diligent heed to the things that are spoken from the Word of God.” That’s exactly what Jesus says, listen carefully, listen carefully. I’ll give you a couple examples. Have a Bible, and a notebook, and a pen, okay? If you’re under twenty, this is a pen. You can find these at a store next to modified trees in something called notebooks. Okay? Now some of you, you use technology. You say, “Well, can I not bring my phone? Can I not bring my iPad? Can I not bring my laptop? Because I’ve got a Bible program on there, and I can take notes.” That’s totally fine, but you can’t get distracted, ‘cause if you’re like me, it’s like, “Oh, did the Mariners pick up anyone who could hit a ball?” I’m always checking something. “No, they didn’t. Oh, darn.” Okay? Because what happens is if your note-taking capacity plugs in, you’re gonna be distracted. You’re gonna be totally distracted. You’re gonna go somewhere else. You’re gonna absolutely lose focus.

So for me, I do it old school. When I’m not preaching, I come to Mars Hill to listen to the campus pastors. I travel and lecture a lot, and I’m in a lot of conferences, where there are other preachers, and I bring my notebook, and my pen, and my Bible. I do it old school, okay? Is it a sin to have a laptop? No, if you got a laptop, bring it, but don’t be on the Internet like Facebooking and Twittering and checking your websites, and organizing your schedule, and, you know, competing for something on eBay. All right, and you’re like, how was church? “I got a lot done. I don’t know what he was talking about, but I got an afghan for only twelve bucks,” you know? That’s not the point. Designate that time. It’s sacred time. Time to listen. Time to listen. So be careful you’re not just distracted by the technology.

And if you’re like me—I just have a hard time not dinking around on my technology

—you gotta go old school. Bible, notebook, pen, old school. Okay, but that's what he's talking about is not being distracted, and give diligent heed. Listen, pay attention to what's being said. And then find a way to organize this. For my daughter, Ashley, she brings her Moleskine, and her—well, she uses the Bible on her phone. She brings her Moleskine to church, and she keeps her notes every week, and so it's all organized. She's got this organizational system to keep everything tidy. That's what we're talking about, otherwise it's like, "I remember that one sermon and they hit that thing, and I don't know. I lost it, it's gone. I wasn't paying attention, but I got an afghan." No, you gotta pay attention, and then you flag certain things, you say, "Oh, this is for me. I gotta memorize that verse. I gotta repent of this sin. I gotta call that person. I gotta pray for this." All the way through you're actively engaging, not by speaking but by hearing, and then planning out your obedience. "Ah, that one was for me. I definitely need to pay attention to that."

Number three, he says, "Do not entertain even the least prejudice against the minister." What he says is, "Don't be offended." Yes, I love this point. What he's saying is that the preacher is a sinner, and he's imperfect, and sometimes he'll say things he shouldn't, hypothetically. And, sometimes he'll say something that offends you, but you shouldn't be offended, he just got ya. And there's other times that he offends you, and he shouldn't have said that, and so in advance, hypothetically, he's sorry. So in this, what can happen is though you get so offended by the messenger that you don't avail yourself to the message.

See, and the deal is, he's kind of saying, does it really matter who cooked the meal? If it's edible, why don't you eat it? All right, if the food's good, right, even if you got a few bones to spit out, take the nourishment, feed your soul from the preacher, spit out the bones, and don't obsess over the cook. Just enjoy the meal.

And that can happen. Some of you are like, "I don't like his personality. I don't like his sense of humor. I don't like his dress. I don't like his huge head," hypothetically. And you can easily get offended, right? And part of the reason I offend you is 'cause I just want to sort of crack a bit of the religion in all of us. Sometimes the religious people are so stuffy, so devout, so tidy, so serious. They just—they need a wedgie, they just do. And we're glad to serve. So make sure you're not easily offended, and don't, if you do take offense, at least take whatever's helpful, 'cause here's the deal, if you're gonna sit there for an hour, get what you can, take what there is, please, please, please, make whatever is helpful available to you.

He goes on, number four, "Be careful not to depend too much on a preacher, or think more highly of him than you ought to think." And here in his statement—and I'll put this whole list of things with commentary from Whitefield on the Mars Hill Church blog so you can read the rest for yourself. But in this section, he goes through a portion of Corinthians where the church is divided saying, "I'm with Cephas." "I'm with Apollos." "I'm with Paul." They've all got their favorite preacher, right? And they're all like, "My preacher's better than yours." "No, my preacher's better than yours." "Your preacher's terrible, and he bores me, but my preacher's funny." And they're making criticisms of one another. And what he says is, "Hey, Paul, and Peter, and Apollos, we all love Jesus, and we're all talking about the same guy, and we're all friends, so quit dividing into teams unnecessarily." Learn and listen and be humble and wherever there's wisdom and truth from God's Word, receive it and

welcome it.

Be very careful you don't so preference one preacher that you only read their books, you only RSS feed their blogs, you only follow them on Twitter and Facebook. You only listen to people who graduated from the same school as them. You only listen to people who they are close friends with. You only download sermons that have their name on it. Be very careful. Be very careful to not, at the enjoyment of one, be exclusive of all who would serve Christ faithfully. Now, it's okay to say, "This person's a specialist in this area, and I feel really well served by them." Praise be to God, but then don't become negative against everyone else, and don't become overly dependent on them.

People would come to church and say, "I don't feel like I'm being fed." Part of it is, as a preacher, my job, along with the other pastors, elders, and leaders, is to feed the sheep. To be sure, that's what Jesus tells Peter after his resurrection, feed the sheep. That's part of the job. Open the Bible, teach the Bible, feed the sheep. But also, you need to feed yourself. You need to read the Bible, feed yourself. Pray, feed yourself. Go to community group, feed yourself. Avail yourself to training opportunities, activities, including membership at the church, feed yourself. Subscribe to good podcasts, vodcasts, classes, feed yourself. Listen to the Bible on your way to and from work, or redeem your workout. Listen carefully, feed yourself. It has to be both. It has to be both.

Who's your favorite preacher or teacher? Who do you love? Who's your author? Who, if you met them, that'd be a big deal? Who do you really appreciate? Who do you really enjoy? And what he says is, be careful that it doesn't become idolatry. Be careful that this person isn't made into the mediator between you and God, that you're closer to God, 'cause you read their books, and listen to their sermons, and take their counsel. Be careful that Jesus is the only mediator between you and God, and these are just servants. So keep them at the right level. Keep them in their place, and expand your horizons to learn from lots of good, faithful Bible teachers and preachers. You get the point?

Some of you, too much of one person. Too much of one teacher. Too much of one author. Too much of one seminary. Too much of one systematic. Be careful, 'cause then you're not listening carefully, you're listening critically. "Ooh, so-and-so wouldn't have said it like that. Ooh, so-and-so wouldn't have done it like that. Ooh, so-and-so, they do it better." You're not listening carefully, you're listening critically. Now, there is a sense in which you want to be discerning and not believe everything you hear, but the standard by which you listen in a discerning way is the Bible, not some teacher of the Bible.

Goes on to say, number five, "Make particular application to your own hearts of everything that is delivered." So as you're listening to this sermon, don't do like religious people do and say, "Oh, they totally need to hear that. Oh, and I'm gonna send them that link, 'cause they're nasty, and that'll fix it." All right, you're not thinking about all the other people that need these truths and points. Maybe secondarily, someone you love, you're gonna follow up with them, but your primary motivation in listening to a sermon is, "God, I'm listening carefully for your Word to talk to me. What do you have for me? What are you saying to me? Oh, that's a sin I

need to repent of, that's a truth I need to believe, that's a person I need to pray for, that's a place I need to serve?"

You're listening into the sermon for the Holy Spirit to highlight something for you and you go, "That's mine. Gotta take notes on that, gotta write that down, gotta remember that," 'cause you will forget. As soon as the service is over, you're immediately thinking, "What am I gonna eat?" And whatever God said to you during the sermon is secondary to the burger, fries, and a shake, to the glory of God, and I would recommend it. But first, write down what it is that God and the sermon told you that you should apply for yourself. And this isn't selfish, this is submissive. This is, "God, your Word's true, your servant teaches, what do you want me to hear? What do you want me to do? Who do you want me to serve? Where do you want me to give? What are you trying to say to me?"

You should have in every sermon at least one big idea, one takeaway, one application, one implication of what was said through God's Word. And then you should talk about it and work it out with your family and your community group. Okay, that's why we do community groups, most of them following the sermon. I preach. People get together, "Okay, what did you hear? What did God tell you? What are we supposed to do, repent of, learn? How do we pray for one another, hold one another accountable? What is our mission? How do we reach our neighborhood? How does this apply to our city? What does this mean for our church? How does this affect our lives? What else do we need to read, study, pray for, pursue, learn, embrace, apply, what now?"

'Cause what can happen is it's just sermon, after sermon, after sermon, after sermon. There's no application. There's no personal adoption of those truths and application of those insights. And all you have is information, not transformation. You're not growing spiritually, and that's what Jesus is saying here. He's saying, "If you want your light to grow brighter, you've gotta learn more carefully, listen more attentively, and apply more vigorously that which God gives to you."

And lastly, "pray to the Lord, before, during, and after every sermon." Pray before you come to church. Pray during the week as myself or others are preparing the sermons, or the lectures, or the classes, or the teaching opportunities, whatever they are. Pray for us. What that'll do as well, that'll incline your heart to at least give us the benefit of the doubt and have open ears. As you pray, pray for those who would come to hear in person. Pray for the millions who download online, that they would hear something from God through the Scriptures, and that God would serve them through our ministry. Pray as well for the non-Christians who would come, that they would learn about Jesus and come to know him as Savior, Lord, God, and Christ. Pray for the community groups as they discuss what's going to be taught in God's Word.

For yourself as well, pray that you'd have a teachable heart. Pray you'd have a discerning heart. Pray you'd have a humble heart. As you look around and people are dinking on their phone, and texting, and Twittering, pray for them as well that the Holy Spirit would remind them to listen carefully, like Jesus says, so they don't waste an opportunity to let their light shine a little brighter, and to get their torch relit every week.

And you can also prayerfully read the Bible in advance. We generally go through books of the Bible, so if we end at chapter 8:21 this week, I'll give you two guesses where we're gonna be next week. We're gonna be chapter 8:22, that's what we're gonna do. "I don't know where we're gonna be." Well, whatever's next, that's where we're going to be. So you can read in advance, study in advance, prayerfully consider in advance, come with a heart prepared. And if you don't know where we're going, on the preaching and speaking calendar on the main website, the preaching schedule is laid out there. You can find out exactly what we'll be talking about on that Sunday, the text of the Bible to read. Honestly, I've got the preaching schedule set up, up until the summer of 2012. I could tell you every week the text and the topic, and what we'll be covering, 'cause I have ADD, to the glory of God, and it's all organized.

And if you would just get a Bible and say, "Well, I guess I'm gonna read, and pray, and study a little bit, and get ready for church, and pray for the preacher, pray for the congregation, pray for my community group, pray for my family. I'm gonna go there, listen, learn, take notes, interact, pray, obey, meet with my group, meet with my family. God, what do you have for me? God, what do you have for us? What do we do next?" You know what? All of a sudden, a sermon is helpful. A sermon is helpful, because you're using it, not just observing it.

So Jesus says, "Listen carefully." Let's go back to it. "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed." You're a light. "But puts it on a stand—" Get out there where people can see you. Lots of other people with their beliefs and causes, they're public. They have parades, and bumper stickers, and come out of the closet, just do it. "So that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light."

Here's what Jesus is saying: whatever's in darkness in your life, whatever sin, secrecy, shame, is hidden, if you're trying to cover it, not let people see it, not let Christians get too close, the truth is in the end, Jesus sees, knows all. You're not hiding anything, so just bring it out in the open. Let us know. Let your community group know. Get some help, get it cleaned up. Jesus died for it. Let's move on. And let's serve Christ and see the world changed, not just stuck in our little sin, in our fear of man, in our own folly, and, "I don't want anybody to identify me with Jesus."

"Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away from him." He says, "There is no such thing as neutral in spiritual life." It's backward or forward, growing in maturity, or growing in immaturity. There is no stasis, those who stop listening, start retreating. Those who stop listening, start atrophying. That's the way that it works. So keep listening to understand your identity, and then that fuels your activity.

IN THE CHURCH, SERVE THE FAMILY

Pick it up again. The next section is in Luke 8:19–21. He's already told us in the world, be a light. Don't sin with your friends, bring light into darkness, and in the church, serve like family. "Then his mother and his brothers came to him," Luke 8:19–21, "But they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, 'Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.' But he answered

them, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God,'" and Nike stole this, "'Do it.'" That's what Jesus has to say. So what's our identity here? Family. Our activity is acting like a member of the family.

Let me give you a few preface observations before we launch into the identity and activity. The first is that the Catholics are wrong. They would say that not only was Mary a virgin when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, she conceived Jesus, but that she remained a virgin throughout her whole life, okay? That she never consummated her marriage with Joseph. And here we find that Jesus had brothers. What that tells you is his mother and his father had a normal, healthy, enjoyable marital relationship, okay? We read as well, in Mark 6:3, that they say, "Hey, Jesus had brothers and sisters." So Jesus came from a family. He was the oldest child, but then through the natural relations of Mary and Joseph, there were other sons and daughters. So this just shows us that marital intimacy, and joy, and offspring, and the blessing of children, it's all part of God's plan, and that's how it was in Jesus' family and it's perfectly healthy and good.

Another thing that I like in this is that Jesus was very busy, and you couldn't get a meeting with him. This is one of my favorite sermons, 'cause I get to tell you that you listen poorly and you can't meet with me. That's awesome, because what happens is as a pastor, people just love to make you feel guilty, like, "You're not very accessible like Jesus was." His own mother could not get an appointment. That's a very busy guy. "Jesus, your mother's here." "She's not on the calendar."

And see, the myth, and it's a powerful myth, is that Jesus was just always available—that people just walk right up and take as much time as they wanted, and he was just infinitely accessible. He wasn't. Large crowds around Jesus, his mother and his brothers, his family is like, "We can't even get in, the crowd is so tight." We've already learned in Luke on a few occasions that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to be alone with the Father. That's 'cause the crowds would press in on him. And the crowds would demand of him, and sometimes he just needed a break, just needed a break, and some silence, and solitude, and a day off, and a place to take a nap.

And here we see that Jesus wasn't accessible continually to everybody. His own mother and brothers don't have access to him, but does it seem like he's being rude? Be honest. If you heard that I said this to my mom who goes to Mars Hill, along with my dad—I give her a hug every Sunday. It's awesome. But if I was like, "Tell mom, I'm busy, and today she doesn't get her hug." You'd go, "Oh, that's not good. She gave birth to you. She should at least get a hug," okay? What's going on here? See, it almost looks like Jesus is being rude to his mom.

Let me say this, Jesus loved his mom without being a mama's boy. He loved his mom. You see this on the cross where he's being crucified. He looks down at his mother, Mary, who's at the foot of the cross, John, his friend, is next to Mary and he says, "John, I want you to look after mom." So he loved his mom without being a mama's boy.

Here's what I think is going on here. I don't think Jesus is sinning. I don't think he's being rude. I don't think he's being negligent toward his mom, but I think he's focused on his activity. He knows his identity is God, and his activity is preaching,

teaching, casting out demons, and atoning for the sin of the world. His identity is God. His activity is clear, and his mother, at this point, along with his brothers, doesn't yet agree with his identity, and doesn't understand his activity.

We read elsewhere, like in Mark 3:21, that on a similar occasion, Jesus' family came to him, and tried to take him away, thinking he had gone coo-coo for Cocoa Puffs, had totally lost his mind, right? And you can fathom that, right? If your brother said, "Hi, I'm God, Lord, Savior, and Christ. I'm here to atone for the sins of the world, and on the side, I like to water ski without a boat." You'd be like, "You know, you need to come home, drink chamomile tea, and not say these things to anyone else. We're gonna get you some help. You need help. You're not well." That's where Jesus' family started with him. They didn't immediately say, "Oh yes, of course he's God." They were convinced over time, particularly by the resurrection.

Once he rises from death, they're like, "Well, that we were not expecting. Some of that God stuff he was talking about, now it takes on a whole new credibility." So Jesus rises from death and then what we do see is his mother numbered among the 120 that constitute the early church in the upper room before the day of Pentecost. And Mary is there, numbered among them, praying to, worshiping her resurrected and then ascended back into heaven, son, Jesus, as God. And we see his own brothers, James and Jude, who went on to pen books of the Bible bearing their name, becoming Christian pastors, proclaiming boldly, "Our big brother is sinless, Lord, God, Savior, and Christ and he conquered Satan, sin, and death through the cross and the resurrection."

It's one of greatest arguments we have for Christianity. If you can get your kid brothers, plural, to worship you as God, that's pretty impressive. You know, it's hard to get your kid brothers to just like you, let alone to worship you as devout Jews who knew if they were wrong, they would be sentencing their soul to the conscious, eternal torments of hell. You don't just worship someone casually if you have their convictions.

That being said, what is the identity issue here, not just for Jesus but his family? Well, his family is saying, "We're not sure you're God, and would you stop preaching and teaching?" And Jesus is essentially saying, "I'm not going to meet with you now. I have activity to do." It's not that Jesus doesn't love his family, but he's committed to the calling that the Father has on his life. See, his family wants to meet with him, I think, in light of Mark's insight, to quit ministry, go home, and be quiet. And Jesus says, "No. Tell them family is not just by birth, but new birth, not just blood, but my blood. And tell them if they think they're family to act like family and help me do ministry, serve the Father. Don't come to get me off of my mission, come to help me on my mission." This is an invitation for his brothers and his mother to obey God, to worship him as God, and to serve alongside of him because he is God.

In the same way, some of you will have this experience where you love your family, but they're not Christians, and they're gonna give you counsel that you just can't take. "I don't think you should go to church. I don't think you should marry a Christian. I don't think you should give money. I don't think you should serve. I don't think you should be talking to people about Jesus. I don't think you should be praying like that. I don't think you should want other people to get saved." "I'm sorry, I love you, you're

family, but my identity is Christian, and my activity is Christian. And though I love you, I need to obey God, and I can't obey you because you're conflicting with his commands." That's what's going on here.

We get this a lot at Mars Hill. I've dealt with a few couples recently. Someone loves Jesus, they want to marry someone who loves Jesus, the family doesn't love Jesus, and says, "Can't you guys just live together?" No. "Well, do you guys have to marry someone who's a Christian?" Yes. Identity determines activity, and sometimes family wants to determine activity. Family can't determine activity, identity determines activity, and if you're a Christian, your ultimate allegiance is to Christ. It doesn't mean you hate your family. The Bible says to honor your mother and father.

And some of you are really blessed because your family's Christian, and so they're also part of your church family. Like for me, my mom and dad are Christians, go to Mars Hill. Grace's mom and dad are Christians, go to Mars Hill. Two of my sisters, my brother go to Mars Hill. See, I have biological family by birth, and I have spiritual family by new birth, all in the same church. It's amazing. It's wonderful. We rejoice in it and praise God for it. But some you don't have that. Your biological family is not also spiritual family. You love them, and you love Jesus, and they love you, but they don't love Jesus, and that's what's going on. At this point, they don't acknowledge him as God, and he loves them, but he won't get off his mission. He needs to obey God first.

But what he says is this, "Our identity is family." This is great, that God's a father, loving, perfect, gracious, merciful, amazing father. If you had a bad father, don't take that word and define it by your dad. Take the Bible and define it by Scripture. The Bible tells us who God the Father is. And we judge all fathers in light of what the Bible says about God the Father, that God the Father's an amazing, wonderful, perfect, loving, protecting, providing dad. That's who he is. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name." That's our dad, and that he views us as kids. And we are sinners, and rebels, and lawbreakers, every one of us, and we've fled from his goodness. We've turned our back on his provision, and so Jesus came on a mission as the big brother.

Jesus is the big brother, and Jesus comes to live without sin. He knows his identity is God, his activity is obedience that ultimately leads to death and resurrection for salvation. And Jesus atones for our sins, and you know what he does? He gives us this new identity as light and adopted children, these metaphors of identity. And as an adoptive child through Jesus' grace, by faith in him, we're adopted into the family of God. God's our Father, Jesus is our big brother, our whole identity changes. This is why Christians love foster care and adoption, 'cause it's all demonstrating the gospel, that God takes us and brings us into his family, the church, and then we get to share in his name, Christian. And we get access to all of his blessing, and his provision, and his kingdom, and our God is a lavish, generous, amazing giver. And so now we're adopted into the family of God.

What that means is, as the church, we're brothers and sisters. That's exactly what Paul tells a younger man some years later. He's wondering, "What kind of relationship should I have with these other single women in my church?" Paul says, "Treat them as," what? "Sisters." And it's this whole new category of male/female

relationship. It's wonderful 'cause in the world everything is sexual, but in the Bible it's familial. In the world, men and women, if they have any sort of relationship, it's usually going to some sinful place. But in the Bible, you can love your sister. You can love your brother. You can care for one another. You can enjoy one another. You can have fun together. You can serve God together 'cause you're family, and it's a category of relationship that the world knows nothing about, knows nothing about.

And see, everybody, Facebook, Twitter, "I've got friends. I've got friends. I've got friends." You know what's better than friends? Family. And God, through Christ, gives family, and God's the Father of our church family. And Jesus is the big brother in our church family, and we're brothers and sisters in the church family.

Some of you would say, "Yeah, but you know, Mars Hill's hard. "I don't feel like I'm connected. I don't feel like I'm close. You know, some people here annoyed me, bothered me. We don't get along." Welcome to family! Welcome to that's what a family is! It's a huge, painful annoying mess! That's the definition of a family! Actually, everything was awesome until you came and then it all just got very difficult. We've all been talking about that. And you know what? Family's awkward, and family's hard, and family's complicated, and family's trying, but you love the family, you serve the family. You don't give up on the family, and if you have family, you love them, but church is family, and church is first family, 'cause this is a family you're gonna be with forever.

Now, I hope that your whole biological family meets Jesus and is also a part of our spiritual family, but how many of you, truthfully, if you have or were to have children and you're having to write out your last will and testament, and decide, "Should something happen to me or us, who will get our children?" your first choice is church family. Say, "You know, my biological family, they don't love Jesus. They're not gonna read the Bible with them. They don't understand what they're doing. Somebody in the church is gonna go on the last will and testament 'cause you know what matters to me? My kids meeting Jesus." See, some of you have two families, and some of you, because your biological family loves Jesus, you just got one big extended family in church family.

TRUE FAMILY MEMBERS LISTEN AND OBEY

But church family's incredibly important, and here's what Jesus is saying. Those who are really members of the family, they do two things: listen and obey. They do what they're supposed to do after hearing what they're supposed to hear. That's their activity. So here's the big idea. If Mars Hill doesn't feel like home, serve.

You know the difference between a restaurant and a family dinner? You go to a restaurant, you sit down, somebody takes care of everything. And you can even complain about it. "I did not like the mashed potatoes. The gravy was too salty. I would like a comment card." If you do that to your mother, your father will do something to you. If you go to your mom's house, your dad's house, and you just sit down, they'd say, "Hey, what are you doing sitting down? You need to set the table. Hey, get up, set the table. You're part of the family." "I would like dessert." "Oh, really? No." This is family—you want something out of the fridge, go get it out of the fridge. You need to set the table, hey, when dinner's done, don't just leave your plate and walk away. You gotta bring it to the sink, you gotta scrape it out, you gotta clean

it. Why? 'Cause this is a family and in the family you do something.

The difference between a restaurant and a family is whether or not you do something. That's the difference, and some of you treat Mars Hill as family. You're like, "You know what? I'm coming early to serve. I'm gonna pick up my trash. I'm gonna tithe. I'm gonna be in a serving group. I'm gonna be in a community group. I'm gonna help some people. This is family. I know it's a mess. It's a big, crazy family, but it's my family, so give me a chore. Give me something to do. Help me be part of the family." Some of you are like, "I did not like the band. The sermon was very long. It was very hot." Tell you why it's hot, right, 'cause most of our campuses, nobody gives enough money to get air-conditioning, so—

And see what's different is in a family, if you see a need, you meet it, but in a business, you don't. You don't walk into a business and say, "Are there any non-met needs that can I give above and beyond the cost of the meal and sacrifice so that you can get new signage or chairs or maybe, I don't know, new linens. Because, you know, I want to go above and beyond the cost of the meal because I'm personally invested deeply in this restaurant." They'd be like, "Call 911, we got a crazy." But in the church that's what it is. You walk in, it's, "Where can I serve? Where am I needed? Where I can give? This is my family. I'm part of the family. Plug me in. Give me something to do. Give me a chore."

And the truth is this, if you're not plugged in, if you're not in a group, if you're not serving, if you're not connected, it's not gonna feel like family, and you'll be gone in less than a year, because you'll just stop going to church, or go to another church, or just complain about other churches, or long for the ideal church, rather than just saying, "You know what? It's family, I'm gonna love it, serve it, make it better, beginning where it's at." I want that for you, 'cause that's what this guy named Jesus said: "My mother and brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it." Those who are really the family of God, they're doing things. They're picking up chores. They're owning the mission. He says it elsewhere, where your treasure is, your heart is, so wherever you give your money, that's ultimately where your passion is going to reside.

So I'll close with a story of a guy. It's at the point now, it's in a grocery store, coffee shop, wherever I go, somebody comes up, "Oh Pastor Mark, let me tell you about my whole life, and I need counseling." So I was at the— Man, it's interesting. I don't even go out anymore. So, you know, I'm at the store and this guy comes, he goes, "Oh, I've always wanted to talk to you, and, you know, Mars Hill doesn't feel like home, and I just don't feel like I'm connected. I don't feel like I'm close. I don't feel like anybody loves me." I'm like, it could have something to do with this radiating, inviting personality. I said, "Okay, so what do you want?" He said, "Well, I just need somebody to talk to." I said, "Well, have you been in a community group?" "I don't really have a community group, and I'm not really plugged in." Okay, okay, okay. I said, "Look here, rather than being nice, can I be fast? 'Cause I'm looking for cereal. I'm gonna ask you two questions, number one, what did you give last year? Number two, where have you ever served at Mars Hill?" He said, "Well, you know, that's kind of between me and the Lord," which means jack squat. That's what that means. That's what that means. "Well, it's none of your business." "Well, guess what? I'm taking my cereal and I'm gonna eat it by myself, 'cause you're not helping, right?"

And here's the big idea: where you serve feels like family. In your history, in your life, look back. The people you felt closest to, that you knew the best, that you knew the best, that you were connected to, those relationships that were helpful, and enduring, and endearing. You weren't a consumer. You weren't a consumer. You were a servant. You did something with people, and you know what? Here's what's amazing, there are some amazingly faithful people that have made this into a vibrant, growing, explosive family. New campuses, new people meeting Jesus, new churches getting planted, new couples getting married, new babies being born, new community groups getting launched, new technology being innovated. Absolutely, unbelievable, how many people are getting how much done.

And here's what I'd invite you to do: get involved. Get plugged in. See what God's doing. Don't waste your life, invest it in God and his people. Identity, then what? Boy, nobody listened at all. That was one of my points! Ah! I'm gonna pray.

Father God, I love this family. Thank you for this family. This family needs work, Lord. It's a good family. We got some good brothers, some good sisters. We got some others that need some work. Thank you, Father, that you're a loving Father, a gracious Father, a patient Father, a compassionate Father, a generous Father. We thank you for thousands of people. We thank you for hundreds of churches. We thank you for hundreds of weddings. We thank you for thousands of new Christians. We thank you for thousands of children born. We thank you for new real estate. We thank you for millions of dollars of gifts. May we hear. Out of our hearing, may we understand our identity. Out of our identity, may there be activity for your glory, others' good, and our joy, in Jesus' name, Amen.

[End of Audio]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.