

What do you think is the greatest issue facing the world today with all of its heartbreaking needs? All of us probably have something that comes to mind. This question comes from the introduction of a book called *The Great Omission* by a guy named Dallas Willard. He was a professor of philosophy and phenomenology at the University of Southern California for 48 years. While he was a giant in the academic world of philosophy, his heartbeat was always for the church, specifically spiritual formation. He wrote:

**So the greatest issue facing the world today, with all of its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as “Christians” will become disciples—students, apprentices, practitioners—of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence. Will they break out of the churches to be his Church—to be, without human force or violence, his mighty force for good on earth, drawing the churches after them toward the eternal purposes of God? And, on its own scale, there is no greater issue facing the individual human being, Christian or not. Dallas Willard**

It's a lofty statement to say that amongst all of the issues we face in this world, the number one issue is whether those of us who call ourselves Christians will actually step into the call to be apprentices of Jesus. I love that line in the middle of that where he says, “Learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.” Willard's assessment is built on a few different realities.

The first is that the gospel is not primarily about going to heaven when you die, but about the availability of the kingdom of heaven now. It is that eternity has begun in this moment. That's how each of the four gospels begins. When Jesus starts his ministry, it says, “Repent and believe the good news, the kingdom of heaven is here.”

Secondly, this invitation to discipleship or apprenticeship to Jesus is rooted in this worldly reality. It's about living the eternal kingdom life now, because that is what Jesus has done in the gospels. He's allowed and made the kingdom of heaven come close so we can step into it and live it now. That's the journey of the gospels. That's what we see from the beginning of each one of them—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—is Jesus pronouncing the availability of the kingdom of God and then gathering people to learn how to live into that reality.

Thirdly, Willard bases this on the fact that as disciples of Jesus, we are part of God's world project. That goes all the way back to the beginning of the story in Genesis, where humans were given the task of co-ruling the world with God. That's what it is in the beginning of the story, Adam

and Eve called to create, to cultivate a world, to extend the bounds of Eden through all the world. This is what the call is.

God's vision of renewal in the world was predicated on the partnership of humans, in which we join him in learning to renew the world. That's why Willard can make such an audacious claim: that the issue, against all the heartbreaking issues we face, is whether we, as Christians, step into our God-given calling. We do so by apprenticeship to Jesus. This is the greatest need. It's not political, it's not social, and it's not a humanitarian fix. Of course, some of those will be impacted by disciples following Jesus, but it's whether we as Christians become true disciples, learning to live the Jesus way right here in every corner of human existence.

At CPC, the center of everything we do, our mission is to make and mature followers of Christ. Those are the two things, the anchor points of how we exist as a community. We want to make and mature followers of Christ. In a different language, we want to be a transformed people transforming the Peninsula. A little over four years ago, I stood here, and we laid out this vision to reorganize our lives, to take the call of Jesus to be disciples quite seriously and place it right in the center of what we do.

So we began by reorganizing our life together around what we called a shared rule of life. That may be new language for you. Let me bring you up to speed. You can go to [cpc.org/rule](http://cpc.org/rule) for more resources. There's no way I can do a full summarization in the next two minutes, so I encourage you to go back if you're new and track some of the journey that we've been on regarding this. But here are a few things:

First, notice that it is a rule of life, not rules for life. That is a very important distinction. This is not about a list of to-dos that we check off and then achieve some accomplishment at the end of the journey, but rather a rule of life is a tool that has been part of church history for thousands of years. Communities of followers of Jesus have gathered around a shared set of commitments or practices to say, “This is how we follow Jesus in our particular day and age.”

The word “rule” comes from the Latin word “*regula*,” which is linked to the idea of a ruler, meaning like a straight edge. It's like what a trellis is to the vine of a grape. It's lifting it up; it's giving it structure. That's what the rule is, again, not rules, but rule. The best definition for a rule of life comes from the writer Andy Crouch. He wrote, “A rule of life is a set of practices to guard our habits and guide our lives.”

The reality that we understand is that we are a collection of a thousand decisions we make every single day. Everything we do and the habits we have form us over time. That's how God created us as humans. And there in that is how we want to, as a rule of life, say that if that's how we're formed, how do we organize our habits in such a way that we

open our lives up to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of our life?

So a rule of life is just that. It's a set of commitments asking, "What if we could abide by a certain way of living in which we are in an interactive communion and relationship with God, so that God can form us in the deepest parts of our character and our being? Then we can live out the kingdom of God in every corner of life." Or, put in shorthand, a transformed people transforming the Peninsula.

Notice the importance of that order, by the way, that the transformed life is where we begin. Present to God, living and cultivating a life in which we're open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. This eventually gives way to the work we do outside these walls, the work of the very ordinary part of our life.

For the past four years, we've been introducing this rule of life, which should look familiar by this point—attentiveness, renewing the mind, hospitality, and vocation. You can catch up on what all of this means on the website, but today we've come to the very final habit: contribution. What does it look like for our life to be organized in such a way that we're living from a calling God has placed on us, not as consumers of the world around us, but rather living a life of contribution?

The habit of contribution is partnering with God in the renewal of all things through the continual integration of our inner and outer lives. You can see how there are a lot of moving parts here. What we're ultimately pushing towards is that, as followers of Jesus, we want to see our lives not primarily through the lens of consumption but through the lens of contribution. God has called us to co-rule this world, to reign over creation in such a way that brings the kingdom of heaven on earth as it is in heaven. Doing it so that we see everything in our lives as contribution.

I want to make sure you don't miss that this is talking about very ordinary things. This is everything from your nine-to-five job, from the work you do in the home, to the work you do, running errands—every aspect of your life. What would it look like to filter it through the lens of contribution? Maybe just maybe God has placed you in your particular circumstances, on your particular street, in your particular office, or in your particular home with your particular friends, coworkers, and children. Instead of dreaming of something else, what if you looked at all of that raw material and say that maybe this is what God has called you to cultivate?

I want to zoom back out and take a broad look at what it means to take the journey of faith. How do we mature into this vision? This habit of contribution of integrating our inner and outer lives is an overview of all of the rule of life things we've been doing for four years. It's a capstone of this journey with Jesus to begin to look at our lives through a different lens.

Open to John 21. It's at the very end of John's gospel, and it is fitting because it's a post-Easter moment in the Gospel of John. This is after the resurrection of Jesus, when Jesus and Peter meet on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and engage in conversation. It's a fascinating moment in the

biblical story. The church hasn't yet been born. That comes at Pentecost. But here we see these unique moments in time.

**When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." John 21:15**

Now in context, Jesus' opening question, "Do you love me more than these," is likely connected to the fish they were eating. That's a nod to Peter's earlier vocation of being a fisherman. Jesus had come along and said, "Follow me." It's Jesus pointing and asking if Peter loved him more than the life he had before, or if he was about to go back to that old way of living. The metaphor of the sheep alludes to the church. It's to the people of God. It's a common metaphor throughout scripture that you and I are part of as well. We are often likened to sheep needing a shepherd. Jesus, the good shepherd.

**Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. John 21:16-17**

We're picking up in an active story, so it's coming at a moment right after what is easily Peter's greatest failure in life. Peter just denied Jesus three times. The three questions that Jesus asked are: "Do you love me?" It was quite intentional. It was Jesus provoking Peter, who had just walked through this great failure, and inevitably, it's spurring all of these reminders in Peter. That's why it says Peter was hurt. It's not just that he asked him three times, but that Jesus was clearly recalling this moment, just a few days prior, when Peter had been through such a painful denial of knowing Jesus.

Notice that it hurts him. Sometimes the process of healing is one that inflicts pain. Jesus, like a surgeon, is taking out his scalpel and cutting away in such a way that it brings healing and restoration to Peter, yet it was still a painful process. As we read this next part, you'll notice that in this healing process, Jesus is now summarizing. He's done some of the restorative work with Peter, and now he comes to this moment. Take in that these are some of the last words of Jesus that John chooses to record in the Gospel of John, particularly to Peter. Look down at verse 18. It is still Jesus speaking.

**Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. "Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" vv. 18-19**

Notice that Jesus breaks down Peter's life into two distinct phases or seasons. When he was young and when he was old. One of the things Jesus is doing is laying out a very rudimentary, broad look at the journey

of apprenticeship to Jesus through the lens of two seasons: the young and the old.

One thing about Peter's story is that it's paradigmatic, meaning it is also an illusion of our stories. It isn't just his story, although it is, but it's also our story. I find so much resonance in the person of Peter because I find myself overlapping with it and wondering if I would probably do that as well. He's often bolder than I would be, and also maybe more idiotic than I would be, I would hope, but I'll let you decide that. But he has this exuberance in following Jesus, and yet he has these moments of failure.

Peter, in this moment in John 21, is in a liminal space between when he was young and when he will be old. It's an inflection point. It's coming right after Peter's greatest failure. It's a moment where Jesus wants to restore and heal him, but also to launch him into what will be. You'll see that this moment really is the changing moment in Peter's life. Where he encounters the resurrected Jesus and is launched into an entirely new phase of discipleship with Jesus.

### **When You Were Young**

In the broadest sense, this is Jesus defining two stages of life, but also two stages of discipleship to him. "When you were young." Notice that Jesus begins this stage when you are young, you believe you have control over your life. You dress yourself and go wherever you want. Peter felt like he was in charge. He felt like his life had a forward momentum; there was a sense of even upward mobility. He had left being a fisherman to follow Jesus. It felt like there was this linear trajectory in which Peter was in the driver's seat.

### **When You Are Old**

However, notice the shift when it says, "When you are old." When Jesus speaks of the second stage of life, with its expectancy in the first century much less than it is today, maybe into their thirties or forties, Peter was, in fact, towards the end of his life. Notice that Jesus says, "You will stretch out your hands." This is a nod to the crucifixion, which is Jesus' way of saying, "If you follow your rabbi, your life will continually take the shape of that." If Peter follows Jesus, his life will continually take the shape of Jesus' life, that of crucifixion.

As you age, you lose more and more control of your life. As I've entered the middle, long years of my own life, I find that this is increasingly true. It seems true in my work, in my parenting, in my marriage, and in the realization of life events. As you grow older, our world believes you have more freedom, but you actually have to mature and stay within your commitments, so you lose greater and greater control.

Maturity, in all respects, is typically about the ability not to go wherever you'd want, but rather to limit those options to stay within your commitments. Henry Nouwen wrote a beautiful little book on Christian leadership, and he writes this about this particular passage.

**The world says, "When you were young, you were dependent and could not go where you wanted, but when you are old, you will be able to make your own decisions, go your own way, and control your own destiny." But Jesus has a different vision**

**of maturity: It is the ability and willingness to be led where you would rather not go...The way of the Christian...is not the way of upward mobility in which our world has invested so much, but the way of downward mobility ending on the cross. This might sound morbid and masochistic, but for those who have heard the voice of the first love and said yes to it, the downward moving way of Jesus is the way to the joy and the peace of God, a joy and peace that is not of this world. Nouwen**

I love that definition of maturity. Maturity, in the way of Jesus, is the ability and willingness to be led where you would rather not go. That's what Jesus says to Peter. "You will stretch out your hands, and you will be led where you do not want to go."

That's potent for us today because this counters everything that we know about the world. Our world communicates freedom. Live your life. You are the controller of your own destiny as we age in this world. The Bay Area preaches a radically different view of maturity. It's self-expression. You can live in whichever direction you want. You control your destiny. The world is your oyster. That's what the world teaches. Yet there's a different understanding of this.

To be led where we do not want to go, preaches in this moment, because it is not a life of consumption to do whatever you please, but rather contribution; you'll be led where you do not want to go. Put simply, the process of maturation and the journey of faith can be summarized by Jesus as moving from a life of consumption to a life of contribution.

The Catholic writer Ronald Rolheiser recently published a third book in a trilogy that lays out a framework for maturity or a journey of faith. I want to focus on the first two, which seem the most potent. He breaks life down into three different seasons. The first season is the struggle to get our lives together. The second season is the struggle to give our lives away. This layers very nicely with this teaching of Jesus with Peter, when you were young and when you were old.

I also like the way Rolheiser puts it, framing these as a struggle. That might seem pessimistic, but as I've grown older, I've come to realize that life is as described, a struggle. Earlier this week, I noticed I had done something to my shoulder. I realized I had hurt it while reading. I'm not even kidding. I was leaning on my couch for too long. How did I hurt myself reading?

If you were to talk to my 10-year-old and say, "Hey, life is a struggle." She would have no concept of what that means. But as you age into your forties and fifties, you begin to realize that life can be defined as a bit of a struggle. This first season is the struggle to get your life together, or in Jesus' words, "When you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted."

### **First Stage**

Now, this first stage of life/discipleship overlaps with the journey of what it means to be human, but don't think that it's based on age. You don't just enter these seasons based on that. But this first stage of development typically mirrors what we were like when we were young.

Like most of us, our childhood, for the most part, and I'm speaking in generalities, I know there's a lot of nuances, but for most of us, we grow up with a sense of stability, happiness, and comfort in our home. That is not everyone's story. Some of us carry trauma from a tumultuous upbringing. I get that.

In general, the early years of life are characterized by an eagerness to live. We experience life. You watch a young child go through their early years, and they're attentive to everything; they ask the why questions. How does that work? What is this thing? There's a sense of joy and elation for life. For children, the struggle of life has not yet begun, but between the ages of 9 to 15, our lives are radically and violently interrupted by a development called puberty. In which you have a surge of unexpected energy. It just hits your body as everything begins to change.

That moment of change is the surge of energy. And it's quite obvious that the pubescent teen or preteen is trying to figure out what to do with all of this energy. Have you ever watched a middle school boy try to sit still? They're shaking, they're moving, because they have so much energy built up in them. They're trying to figure out what to do with it. This is the God-given process that pushes you out into life. This is when the first season begins. In the words of Genesis, it's when you leave your father and mother in which you go into the world to try to create your own life.

In the early stages of life, our connection and attachment to loved ones is looking for love, trying to figure out where we feel secure and safe. When those pubescent years hit with that surge of energy, what Rolheiser calls a sacred fire or a holy longing launches you into the world in which you're trying to figure out who you are. That's why the first stage of life could be labeled the outer journey. There's an echo to our definition of contribution: to go out into the world and try to identify who you are and who you are created to be. What am I to do? How do I spend my life in this energy?

This is a very healthy stage of life. You're finding where you're going to spend the majority of your life, and this is where you must launch out, and this is where we'll likely get stuck in either overachievement or underachievement. That's the temptation where you dedicate your whole life to work, and you throw yourself into it in such a way that you begin to make all of these wrong attachments or faulty attachments to things that won't satisfy. It's the first journey of life.

Now map it onto the followers of Jesus. Often, for the follower of Jesus, this is the stage where you journey with Jesus, and it is where you come later in life. You come to Jesus, and you're starting to realize that your identity is radically different from what you had developed before. So, in the early stage, the first season of following Jesus, when you were young, you're taking in all these things. You're reading scripture, you're absorbed in the story of Jesus. You're learning who Christ says you are—a beloved child of God. You're learning and growing, and it's this vibrant stage of life.

Often, what you see in that stage is this tension between who you are and what you've brought into that, and who Jesus says you are. Let's do

a quick rundown of the life of Peter. He's going to be our guide through this to see this first season of life. It's going to be quick, but you can read the stories later.

Matthew 14 is a famous story in which you see Peter walking on water. He steps out onto the ocean, so bold in his faith that he's willing to get out of the boat. He gets a bad rap in this story, but he's the one who's willing to say, "If Jesus is out there, I'm going." It's that energy in that first season that says, "I'll go wherever Jesus calls me." So he steps out of the boat, and he actually begins to walk on the water. Eventually, he loses his vision, takes his eyes off of Jesus, and then begins to sink. It's a sense in which he was wrestling with, "Who am I? I can do this on my own." So he fixes his eyes on Jesus, but then he lost the vision. He stepped off and begins to sink. That becomes the journey of how do I continually fix my eyes on Jesus?

A couple of chapters later in Matthew 16, you see Peter rebuking Jesus. Peter's the bold one. Jesus tells his disciples that in a little while he'll go to Jerusalem and lay down his life. That's what he's called to do, and Peter's like, "Jesus, what are you talking about? That's not how the story goes." With all the conviction of a young person telling Jesus how the kingdom of God works. You see his vision of what life would be, and it contradicts who Jesus is calling him to be. He's wrestling with trusting Jesus with this vision. Jesus has harsh words for him in that moment, working with Peter, trying to get this old vision to progress, to grow to maturity.

A little bit later in Matthew 26, you see the same zeal. It's when Peter draws the sword in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was just arrested. There is this horde of soldiers there to take Jesus to the cross, and Peter pulls the sword out, ready to attack this onslaught of soldiers, which is a moment of tremendous faith. At the same time, what was Jesus' response? "Put that sword away."

Peter had a different vision of the Kingdom of God. He could not imagine that the kingdom of God, in its fullness, is about laying your life down, not taking up arms and fighting for it. It's a moment in which the vision that Peter had of the kingdom of God was different than the picture Jesus had. He's learning "Who am I and who is Jesus?"

In that same chapter, Matthew 26, is where you see Peter's three denials. Easily his greatest failure, but it isn't so much the failure of a coward, and I want you to see that. We often think of it through the lens of a coward, but he's the one who just pulled the sword out. He's ready to go to battle with Jesus. But what's happening here is rather the failure of a man whose entire vision of following Jesus had just collapsed in front of him. When Jesus was arrested and taken to the cross, he thought that this was not how it was supposed to go. The bottom fell out, and he was wondering how he could understand who he was and how to follow Jesus is this is radically different outcome.

Peter, up until John 21, had been on this journey in which he was trying to understand who he was and who was Jesus. Who was Jesus calling him to be? Fast forward to John 21, and we arrive at that scene of Jesus by the sea. He's eating this meal with Peter, and what's beautiful about

this moment is that it's an utter reversal of everything from the beginning. We didn't read this part, but earlier, just a couple of verses, it says that they were sitting with Jesus, who was cooking fish over a fire.

Do you know where Peter was waiting when he denied Jesus for the first time? He was by a fire? Do you remember Peter's first job? It was a fisherman. What are they cooking? Fish. Do you know where Peter jumped out of that boat and walked on water? It's the same exact sea that Jesus was sitting by.

This moment with Jesus was an inflection point. It was a moment where Jesus was bringing healing to all of those earlier ventures where he was trying to figure out who he was. That's the beauty of Jesus. He's our Good Shepherd. As he walked this journey of faith towards maturity, Jesus was meeting him every step of the way, bringing healing to his failures, extending forgiveness and grace to him.

That first season of Peter's life, where he dressed himself and went where he wanted, was a healthy process because he was learning the trustworthiness of Jesus. As we talk about this second half of life, I don't want you to think of it at the expense of the first. We need to walk that journey of learning to trust Jesus. It was not out of outright rebellion, Peter was just being honest with who he was, and what he was wrestling with in each of those circumstances. He was learning, over time, that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. The questions that shape the first half of life are questions like, "Who am I? Who will love me? What will I do with my life?" And on the other side of that, these questions shift.

## **Second Stage**

They become how do I do all this? How do I give myself to all of these responsibilities and give my life away? That's the shift in which Peter meets Jesus. Remember, the second season is not so much the struggle to get your life together. That's what the first part of Peter's life was. The second part is the struggle to give our life away, or in the words of Jesus, "When you are old, you'll stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

Jesus is inviting Peter into this new level of maturity, maybe level's the wrong word. I don't want you to think it's like leveling up. This new part of the journey, in which maturity is growing within us, is a long obedience in the same direction. Now, all of a sudden, you're going places that you wouldn't normally go, but you're with Jesus, and that becomes the seedbed of where you want to be.

Notice that it shifts from active to passive. In the first season, it was dressing yourself and going where you want to go. In the second season, it is about stretching your hands out, and someone else will lead you. The transition to maturity is to realize you are not actually in control of your life. Part of what we learned in the middle passage of life is that we had the illusion of control. So much of life is beyond our control. So much just happens.

Consider, though, that is exactly the place where you grow in that maturity, where you begin to realize it's not about having all the options, it's about staying within the commitments we've made. Think about the mature spouse who's been married for many years. The mature spouse

is one who is not free to do whatever they want but is bound to the constraints of the covenant of marriage. All of us look at that and say that this is the beautiful picture we desire. There's maturity in that.

Think about the mature friend marked by resilience and commitment for the long haul. You connect with someone and say, "We're going to stay friends through thick and thin. We'll walk through this; we'll go through whatever life may bring." No longer is life marked by the search for options and the experience of all things, but rather there's a deeper, resounding contentment.

Your Friday night is staying home and watching a movie. We think of that as like an older thing, but there's a sense of your energy is now being channeled into certain ways. You simply lose energy as you age. The holy fire and longing you had in those pubescent years is radically different as you age and you begin to become focused and content on what God has called you to do. What are the things, the few things, in which you realize this is where the Lord would have you, where you find a deeper resounding contentment?

Rolheiser would say that to be mature means we have broken the pleasure principle as our fundamental motivation for doing things. Your life, in the second stage, may look very similar. You may have the same commitments at your job or whatever they are, but you have a different motivation. Contentment doesn't necessarily mean from doing things differently but doing things for a different reason.

Early on, you can climb the corporate ladder for your own fame and success, and you can pursue that, and it's usually more hidden than it is explicit, but it's there. You can parent your children well for the loving purpose of wanting to either launch them into life or to live vicariously through them, for them to be a badge of your own honor. You can use people rather than love them.

All of this is the struggle in the second stage of life, where we realize our life may look the same, but the struggle is different. It's not to get our life together anymore. It's to give our lives away. Realizing that the pleasure principle no longer drives us, but rather Christ has called us to take up our cross daily to lay our life down, which means the very commitments we have, he's called us to give those as his contribution to the goodness of the world.

I would guess, if you're like me, you likely know people who never move beyond this stage. They're five or six decades into life, and they're still chasing that same pleasure principal motivation. All of us can look at that and realize it's not the life we're intended to live, but of course, the opposite is also true. I have the pleasure of knowing many people in their fifties and sixties, who've realized that the teachings of Jesus are true, that it's better to give than to receive. That it's better not to be first, but to be last. And usually, the word we define those lives by is the beautiful. It's just a beautiful life.

This moment in which Peter is here at John 21 is at the inflection point I mentioned. On the other side of this moment, he begins to catch the vision of giving his life away. Here are just a few examples in which he

transitions, and you see a radically different Peter in the Gospels than you do in the Book of Acts.

Acts 2, Peter at Pentecost. All of a sudden, Peter, who was afraid to admit to a young girl that he even knew Jesus was standing before that crowd at Pentecost, proclaiming the reality of the resurrected Jesus, no matter the cost that would come to him. In Acts 3, you see Peter going into the temple gates, and he comes across a beggar. This man is begging for money, and Peter looks at him and says, "Silver and gold, I do not have, but what I do have I give to you." And it's the healing encounter with Jesus that he gives.

In Acts 4, Peter is before the Sanhedrin. It's right there that he finds himself with John. They're both arrested and brought before the council because he was proclaiming the resurrected Jesus. He essentially says, "There's nothing I can do but continue to preach the gospel." It's in that moment that he has laid his life down. Church history would attest that the culmination of Peter's transformation comes at the end of his life. When, just like Jesus told him in John 21, Peter is crucified for his faith, but not just crucified, he demanded to be crucified upside down because he didn't see himself worthy of being crucified in the same manner as Jesus.

Peter was at this inflection point, and what he found is that it is better to give than to receive. His life was transformed in such a way that Jesus says, "You are the rock on which I build my church." But what's beautiful in that moment is that Peter had gone through this phase of maturing and realizing it wasn't because he wanted to be the rock. It was by the grace of God that God worked through his life. Peter said, "I'll offer it all to you."

The question I want you to walk out with is, where do you find yourself in this journey? Maybe you're in that first season, you've just come to Jesus, and you're struggling to get your life together. What does this mean? Who is this Jesus? My encouragement to you is to follow him. Continue to follow him. Learn about him. Observe his life. Figure out who you are, and who Jesus is. How does he intersect with your life? Don't go too fast through that stage. Just continually follow Jesus. That's the invitation.

Maybe some of you are here, and you're in that middle passage. Like Jesus and Peter in John 21, he's inviting you to a deeper place, but you're not quite sure where your life will go. I would guess the majority of us are in this phase, in which we are wrestling. You sense the call of Jesus on your life, and you're at that inflection moment. You're not sure you want to be there because it's scary to give up these things, to step into that next part of the journey. My encouragement to you is to follow Jesus. Continually lean in and open up more and more the deepest parts of who you are. Can you trust that it's better to give than to receive? It's better to take up the cross than to put it down.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

Still others of us might be firmly in that second stage. You're in the long middle years of life. You're continuing to learn what it means to give your life away. You've made commitments, and you're learning to stay within them, allowing the slow work of God to transform you. My encouragement to you is to follow Jesus, follow him in that faith. I find it beautifully poetic that at the end of this conversation with Peter by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus ends with the same words that he started with. "Peter, follow me."

It's always been the invitation in every journey, to follow him. What would it look like for you to find your life caught up in a mode of contribution, not consumption? What would it look like for us, collectively as a church, to be a people marked by giving our lives away for the sake of what God is doing in the renewal of all things?

In that third book that I haven't finished, Rolheiser tells this story about him and a younger colleague who were going to visit a 90-year-old man on his deathbed. He was a man who had a big reputation. He was one who was categorized by warmth and gratitude, by blessing and humor. It was someone everybody respected and looked up to. So Rolheiser and this younger colleague go into the room, and the younger colleague looks at the 90-year-old man and says, "When I'm your age, I want to be like you." He asked what the secret was. To which the old man just replied, "Start now."

Start now. We often buy into the myth that we will grow eventually when we arrive at that stage. The invitation is exactly where you are. What God is inviting you into here and now is to follow Jesus on this journey of life. Would you respond like Peter to that simple invitation to follow Jesus?

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Catalog No. 1501 FC