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00:00:01 - James Early

Hey there, and welcome again to the Bible speaks to you podcast. I'm so grateful you've tuned in to listen today. I have a wonderful guest and new friend, Paul Granger. Paul, welcome to the Bible speaks to you.

00:00:14 - Paul Granger

It's great to be here. I'm excited for us to have another conversation together. This is fantastic.

00:00:20 - James Early

Yeah. Recently I was a guest on Paul's podcast, where did you see God? And I'll actually put that link in the show notes to this episode, so in case you missed that, you can check that out. We had a wonderful conversation and I just wanted to keep that ball rolling a little bit because I felt like he has a lot of wonderful ideas that would be helpful to you. We're going to start off with the idea of what it means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and we'll kind of see where the Holy Spirit takes us. But before we get started, I want to tell you a little bit about Paul. He lives in Richmond, Virginia with his wife, Becca. You've got three kids, and he has been focused on various types of ministry. Since 2005. He's been really focusing on shepherding others, helping others learn to love God and to love others. He works alongside of youth with a mission in Virginia as an interim campus director of youth with a mission, city Lights, and he's presidente of the New Visions Civics League. The cool thing is he facilitates a community Bible study. I think that's really awesome. And of course, as I mentioned, he is the host of where did you see God? Podcast. He's also written a bunch of books that are available on Amazon, and I'll have a link to his author's page. Paul, I just really am grateful you're here, and I want to welcome you again. Before we get started, I'd really just like to know what God is doing in your life right now.

00:01:56 - Paul Granger

Yeah, I laugh because there's so many ways I could go with that question, but the direction my mind goes is actually the one where I have the least clarity. And it's actually what you and I prayed before we started recording, and it's what I hinted at in the prayer. This has been a weird morning, so you and I had some very strange technical issues that just did not make any sense. Before that, I was doing recording for a Ywam podcast that I host. Had really weird technical issues there. But the morning started, James, with my wife calling me into the kitchen because smoke was pouring out of our microwave.

00:02:36 - James Early

Oh my.

00:02:36 - Paul Granger

And they didn't know what was happening. We saw my, one of my children was making Mac and cheese for lunch, and turns out he didn't put water in. Always put water in if it says to put water in. And, I mean, kitchen's filled with smoke. And not just smoke, but there's smoke is like. Is that a plastic smell? Is this poisonous? We got to get everybody out of here. Getting the kids out of the house this morning was. Was not fun. And, you know, I think about how that can feel for me. A bit like a picture of so many moments of my life the last couple years, wherever things

were supposed to go a certain way, or I knew how things could go smoothly, and yet sometimes in life, smoke's just pouring out the microwave. You don't know what to do. You don't know how to fix the situation, and you still have to move forward. And there's been a lot of times, James, I'll be honest, the last couple years, where I've been frustrated because God's invited me to spaces that oftentimes don't seem to produce the fruit that I would want them to produce, or sometimes seem to be going in the opposite direction, or I will pour myself out and not feel like I'm getting poured back into or any number of things. And yet, this morning, I still had to get the kids ready for school and get them. And in life, I have committed to being an ambassador of Christ. So no matter what gets thrown at me, I know that my invitation is to continue to still seek God first, to continue to still love others. And in my humanity, it could be hard to know how to do that. And thank goodness there is a God who is patient with me and gracious with me. Jesus said, I'm sending a helper who will remind you of everything I've said and allow you to do even greater things than I've done. I'm not actually meant to do this alone, and so there's peace in that. But today, I smell like smoke. I could feel it in my nostrils. But I'm here talking with you. And so in the midst of the hard stuff, there's also these beautiful things. And so I'm glad this conversation is a part of this morning. Cause I needed this.

00:04:56 - James Early

You know, it's interesting, usually when I ask someone that question, they have some big, grandiose thing project they're working on, and. But, you know, God is in the minutia of daily life, even when the microwave catches on fire.

00:05:08 - Paul Granger

Uh huh.

00:05:08 - James Early

And I think that can be a metaphor, don't you, of how whatever the situation is, you can go forward. You don't always know what the right step is to take, but you can go forward, you can trust God one step at a time and, and still get accomplished. Maybe not in the way you thought it was going to happen, like you said. I really appreciate you sharing that. Yeah, I mentioned that we're going to talk about what it means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and that's kind of a broad, general topic. But I. The reason that's important to me, I know it's important to you, too. So many times today, Christians are arguing about theological doctrines and accusing each other of not believing the right thing, or you have to believe it exactly the way I do. Jesus said, though, you're going to know my disciples by their love for each other, you're going to know a tree by its fruit. He never said, you're going to know the disciples by the correct doctrine. Now, I'm, you know, you need to know what you believe. And we don't always agree on matters of doctrine, but, you know, what does it mean to actually walk in the footsteps of Jesus? That's a big, loaded question. You could answer lots of ways, but what does that really mean to you? Why is that so important for someone who says they believe in Jesus?

00:06:28 - Paul Granger

Yeah, I think this is part of the beauty of God's plan in sending his son as a man, as Philippians two puts it, not counting equality with God, something to be grasped came to earth and take the form of a servant, being obedient even unto death. That's a bridged version. There's a lot of ways that God could have enacted things, but the genius of sending Jesus as a human allows us to

learn what it means to know God, understand God, and seek God, God, and walk towards God in a very different way than if it just was academic, it was just intellectual.

00:07:10 - Paul Granger

And we see this difference most profoundly in the Pharisees. If there was anyone that knew doctrine, at least on a level, it was the Pharisees. I mean, they knew the law, they knew the scripture. They're the ones who actually had access to the scrolls. And yet they were the ones that most profoundly missed it as they were trying to uphold the law. Jesus would say to him, you're missing the heart of the law. You're accusing me of not keeping the law, but I'm actually keeping it. You should know better. Or when he's talking to Nicodemus and explaining these things, and Nicodemus is like, I don't understand. You're saying I need to be born again. I have to go back to my mom. I don't understand this. And Jesus is like, if even you, a teacher of the law, can't understand this.

00:08:01 - Paul Granger

And so if it's just words on a page, we're going to run into the problems that we see in our world today and throughout human history. People could see the same sentence and read it different, right? Or you get a text from somebody and you're like, oh, what was their tone in that? Yeah, they were angry. Like, we could take written words in so many ways, but when you are seeing a person, and not just seeing a person, but actually walking with them, actually spending time with, seeing him in different moments, there's a depth that comes in that.

00:08:36 - Paul Granger

And so the disciples had a really great opportunity here. But I think we need to be honest that even they struggled with this gift of walking with the living word, right? Because they were still bringing in their own understanding, their own interpretation, but most importantly, their own desires. For example, they didn't want to die. And so their responses to Jesus sometimes were based on that or they didn't want to be taken advantage of. So when the 5000 plus people were gathered, they're like, they're going to take all our money. We don't even have food enough for us. Like, we got to get rid of them because they're just going to use us here. And so part of their journeying was learning what they actually believed, what they actually desired, what they were actually pursuing.

00:09:24 - Paul Granger

And then as they walked with Jesus, learning to unlearn that, and then learning what Jesus was inviting them to replace that with. And it took a lifetime. And so I think this is why this concept of walking with Jesus is so important. Somebody could be listening and say, yeah, but Jesus isn't physically here with me. And what you and I know is that he is still alive. And it is a hard. I mean, we could spend a whole podcast episode getting into what that actually means. But you and I know that his presence today with us is actually probably more real than what we would think was the realist presence of somebody physically with.

00:10:08 - Paul Granger

I'll give you an example. Sometimes you can be in the room with someone and be totally disconnected with them. Meanwhile, you could have someone you care deeply about, that's traveling, and maybe you have very limited interaction, but you feel this closeness to them still,

somehow you still feel connected to them even when there's miles apart. I think we got a name that even in our understanding of proximity and connection and ways that we experience things, we're limited.

00:10:38 - Paul Granger

We're limited in our understanding Jesus died and rose again is living and present. He sent a spirit to be present and work through us and in us. And so this idea of walking with Jesus is still relevant for us. And the reason we've got a hold to that is because our default is going to be that informational, academic approach. Just tell me what I need to know and then I'll do it.

00:11:04 - James Early

Oh, right.

00:11:04 - Paul Granger

Just tell me what I need to understand, and I'll understand it.

00:11:06 - James Early

Right.

00:11:07 - Paul Granger

But we are like the disciples, where even in our best intentions, even in our best efforts, we're going to fall short because there's a lot that we already think we know. There's a lot that is legitimate knowledge based on this world, but falls short when you bring the spiritual reality into it. Take, for example, we need money, right? In order to survive, we need money. Like, if you don't have money, then you can't buy food. And you, the way you get money is you either win the lottery or you have wealthy family or you have a job. So you need to have a job. Most of us need to have a job. But then you have stories of Jesus inviting these guys to leave their jobs, to leave their sources of income, and guess what? They didn't starve and die like. In fact, they went on to not have traditional jobs for the rest of their lives. And so even what we know may not actually be the full truth. And so walking with Jesus is the way for us to learn what we actually believe, what we actually desire, to learn how to unlearn the things that are actually leading us in the wrong direction, and then to learn what Jesus is actually communicating about truth, to learn how to accept that when it seems counterintuitive. The wisdom of God is foolishness to Mandev. And that, my friends, is a lifelong journey, but a fantastic one, that we see the fruit and the growth as we go.

00:12:39 - James Early

Yeah, I love that you said so many things. I want to come back to one thing you talked about when the Holy Spirit came that will teach us all things. Jesus actually said, if I don't leave you personally, physically, the Holy Spirit won't come. The way I see that sometimes is, I'd like your thoughts on this is, you know, he basically had to tie their shoes for them. I mean, you know, they were almost dependent on his physical proximity. And he said, if I don't go away, you'll still be depending on me in that way. You need to be depending directly on your faith, your relationship to God. Don't use me as a crutch now. That sounds kind of funny to say that, because we are supposed to lean on Christ and follow Christ, but you know what I'm saying?

And so when the Holy Spirit came upon them on the day of Pentecost, it broadened their understanding. It wasn't just an intellectual thing.

00:13:43 - Paul Granger  
Yeah.

00:13:45 - James Early  
And it inspired them in ways that they couldn't have been inspired just through the human intellect.

00:13:50 - Paul Granger  
Yeah.

00:13:51 - James Early  
So I love that point that you're saying that.

00:13:53 - Paul Granger  
Yeah.

00:13:54 - James Early  
What if Jesus was literally in the room with someone today? Doesn't mean that they would recognize him. He was literally under the Pharisees noses, and they didn't recognize him as the messiah. So Jesus was literally in the boat with the disciples during the storm, and they were still afraid.

00:14:13 - Paul Granger  
Yeah, yeah. He tells them and he tells us to take his yoke upon us. And when you see depictions of that, oftentimes you see two oxen and the yoke across them. What he's inviting us into is he is doing this beautiful work. He's inviting us to partner with him in that work. But as you noted, what the disciples often did was take the approach of, Jesus is doing this important work, and we're kind of just supporting from afar, but he's the one doing the work. A beautiful example of this is like going back to the feeding of the 5000. What was it that Jesus actually did in that moment when it was clear everyone was hungry? He didn't feed them. He said, you feed them. He invited them to actually do that. And their response is, no, actually, no. You're the miracle worker. We're just the helpers here. And he does end up beating. But Jesus is actually trying to point out to them, like, I am inviting you to something greater here that you don't need to. Like you said, use me as a crutch. You can actually serve alongside me. As you were talking, it made me think of a passage in numbers 21 that reflects on how this has actually been a very unfortunate part of human nature, because people did this with Moses. Moses was meant to be just a representative of God, not the one doing all the things. And everyone just kind of benefited from Moses work. And so, over and over, the people of Israel were invited to seek God. Now, Moses was that direct connection. He was the one who went into the tent, but they were invited to gather, man. They were invited to go through the Red Sea. They were invited, these things. And sometimes they did them, and sometimes they grumbled. And so when you come into chapter 21, they're grumbling. They're saying, why in the world did we even fall for this. Like, Moses is leading us into the wilderness. God is leading us to our death. We were better off in

Egypt when we had everything we wanted to eat. Now, what you and I know is they weren't better off in Egypt. They were enslaved for 400 years, and their enslavement had gotten harder. They were crying out to be freed, and yet they were so bitter that things weren't going the way they wanted them to go, that they had changed the narrative in their mind. How often do we do that in life?

00:16:41 - James Early  
Right?

00:16:41 - Paul Granger

Change the narrative. I was better off then. God's making this worse. And there's this. There's this difficult passage. I don't think it's difficult anymore. But for a long time, I did. Where makes God seem a little mean because they're grumbling and grumbling, and then it says, and then God sent venomous snakes to bite them, and they got bit and died. I'm like, oh, man, did God just have a rash reaction, like, my kids, like, what is going on here? And, you know, I could try to build it out. Well, no, God is holy, and so he has a right to do that. But actually, what helped me to understand that passage better was the word sent, in Hebrew has many connotations, as do many words throughout the Bible, that when we actually get into the word, we can find out that there may be a deeper meaning. And the word sent can mean, you go there, but it can also mean to send out as from an assembly. So imagine you're holding an assembly and everyone's there, and they can't leave until it's done. When it's done, you could say, and the assembly's over and everyone leaves. And it gave this picture of what if what actually happened there is. The venomous snakes were always present. They were always in this land that they were going into. But the difference was, God was holding them back. And then the people come and they complain and they argue and they rail against God, and they say, we don't want your way. We don't want your protection. We want to do things our way. And it was almost like God just lifted his hands.

00:18:11 - James Early  
They kind of did it to themselves. Almost.

00:18:13 - Paul Granger

They did it to themselves. And we could keep on digging into that. But it brings us coming back to our point. You know, they cry out to God, God help him. Or actually to Moses. They didn't even want to go to God. Moses, tell God, we don't want to keep dying from these snakes. And here's the solution, that God gives Moses, he says, I want you to form this bronze snake, and I want you to put it up on a staff and hold it up. And anyone who gets bit, all they have to do is look at this snake and they'll be healed. Now, here's what's interesting that ties back to this idea of relying on Jesus to do all the work. God could have just made the snakes go away, or God could have made them impervious to snakes. Neither of those things happened. The snakes remained and they could still get bitten. Die. What was happening here is God was actually graciously giving them an opportunity to choose him instead of just relying on Moses. Fix this for us. God said, here's your solution. All it takes is for you to come back to me. Because the moral of all of those stories is God longed for relationship and connection with them. They longed for it, too. But their humanity, their misunderstanding, their false knowledge, their desires, frequently led them to reject God. God was gracious and gracious and gracious until it

was clear that they were unwilling. And he could have just written them off and said, fine, you're done. But he continued to create these opportunities to say, look, the answer to all your problems is to be in relationship with me, not for me to fix your problems. It's to be in relationship. So here, let me make it super easy for you. If the only way that you'll come to me is if that's the way that you live, then we'll start there. You're still only coming to me so that you live. But it's at least a starting point because it gets you back into my present. And then let's build from there, because ultimately, God is not looking for this punishment structure approach of like, you will be my friend, whether you like it or not. It's that he knows the only path to full life is in his presence. And he knows that our human intellect bakes against it. So much so, he creatively finds these ways to draw us back to him. And it brings us back to Jesus, because that was one of the most creative ways throughout the history of the israelite people, the jewish people, all the way up until we get to the New Testament, we see this cycle of longing for God and then forgetting that they were longing for God. Then comes Jesus, who becomes this portrayal of God that is a little easier to understand, still not easy to understand, as the disciples showed, but it allows us to understand and experience and approach God in a way that we didn't think we could. And then you get to, you and I, who are learning what that looks like when we don't have the man right in front of us. That invitation has remained. God is saying, I created you for relationship. That is where the fullness of your identity, value, purpose, potential, all that lies in that. And when you stray away from that, it's not just that you're straying away from me. You're actually straying away from yourself, from life, from value. And I want to invite you back, but I will not force you, but I will not give up on you.

00:21:32 - James Early

The word that keeps coming to me as you're talking, Paul, is participate. He wants us to participate. And think of that image you mentioned about Jesus saying, take my yoke upon you. You have two oxen and they're pulling together. Think of, I mean, literally, I'm an ox. Jesus is an ox. We're in this harness, this thing together. You can't get apart. If one pulls too much or not enough, it derails or whatever. I think Jesus helps set the pace, but he doesn't push us too hard. Now using that as a metaphor, because literally, it's not true. I am not an ox. Yeah, but working together and thinking of this as not Jesus physically present, like we were talking about, so it is a metaphor. But as we walk in the footsteps along with Jesus and how he lived his life, I think that the principle of what he taught, the love for God, the love for mankind, that's what guides us and keeps us on track, keeps us in the harness. But it's a participation. I really love what you said. Several examples about. It's about a relationship, you said, but you're right. He wants us to participate. It's not like we just sit back on our couch and punch the button and say, God, you solve all my problems. But he empowers us. And I think Jesus is the one who came and said, yeah, you can do. If you really believe on me, you'll be able to do the same things that I did. Because I'm going to the father. I won't be here. You can't rely on me personally. You're going to have to. It's about between you directly and the father. And he also said, I can only do what I see the father do.

00:23:23 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

00:23:23 - James Early

So if that's true for him, it's true for us. What can you and I see God doing? Can I see God loving that person over there that I don't like?

00:23:33 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

00:23:33 - James Early

Well, then I can love them after all, if I can see him loving them. Yeah, it goes on from there.

00:23:39 - Paul Granger

Well, and let's. Let's press into that participation piece, because I think that can become a stumbling block for us because of how we understand what that means. Because typically, participation with God, in our minds, is ministry and is doing these occasional things that show that we are christian. Well, the participation that we were just talking about with the Israelites and Moses was walking or with the manna eating, right? Like, it was their everyday lives, right. It was their everyday decisions. And this is what we need to understand. Those of us who are desiring to follow Jesus, to walk with him. We need to understand that it's not just those singular, big ministry moments or those moments where it's like, oh, here's an opportunity to love someone. Those are great. Those are good. But it's also all the other ones, because as people, we love to categorize things, to box them up. And so we have. This is. This is the analogy I used to use when I ran internships. We find ourselves struggling to work God into our life, to work scripture into our life, to pray, to do all these things, because what's happening is we have this table that is our life, and God is important. Yes, let's put God on the table. All right. But also, you know, maybe somebody's in school. School's important, or maybe they're working. Work's important. And then we got these relationships. So God's still important, but also have all these other things. And now things are kind of crowding at the table. And in certain seasons of life, you know, bills are getting really bad. So I really gotta focus on work. So I really. I gonna have to cut back a little bit on some of the extracurricular spiritual stuff that I'm doing. I still love God. He's still on the table. But work's important. So God gets nudged a little bit, and eventually you find God on the edge of the table or falling off the table, and we're like, oh, my gosh, how did I get here? Well, we didn't get there because we had a prioritization issue. We do have prioritization issues. Yes, but our bigger issue is an understanding issue, because we were operating with human understanding and saying that God is one of the important things in my life. And what Jesus demonstrated is that. No, like you noted, I only do what I see my father doing. He's saying, my father is my life.

00:25:56 - James Early

Right?

00:25:57 - Paul Granger

Like, that's the starting point. So what I would tell these interns is, it's not that you're working God onto the table or you're working the spiritual into the table. The spiritual is the table. That's the starting point and everything else. The proper way that this works is that those things are now placed on top of the spiritual. Everything that Jesus. There was nothing that Jesus did that he said, well, this is outside the spiritual. He knew everything was an opportunity to connect with his father, to love his father, to serve his father, to demonstrate his father, even simple things like



gleaning in a field or going to a fig tree. And so when we talk about participating, that can be one of the ways to actually set us up. Well, how can I shift my understanding from, God is a part of my life that I've got to fit in to. God is my life, and everything flows from that.

00:26:53 - James Early

That is such a mindset shift, isn't it? My wife and I have divided some of the household chores in different ways when our kids were little and now they're gone and everything. So currently, she does the cooking. She's a fabulous cook, and I do the cleanup of the dishes. Well, when we first initiated that process, like, talk about grumbling in the wilderness, it was like, why do I have to all these, you know? Well, it was my share of the chores, and that was fine. I have gotten to where I actually enjoy cleaning up the dishes. It can be, and not every time, but it can be a thoughtful, prayerful time. Somebody said to me one time, well, just because your hands are in the dishwasher doesn't mean your mind has to be there.

00:27:38 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

00:27:40 - James Early

You can be thoughtfully engaged in the joy of it. It's an act of love. It can be a way to glorify God. And if we make that shift, that God is my life, as you said, then everything we do, every single detail, it's. I love that idea because it's not trying to say you do as you said, we do still have to think of priorities and what's most important to do sometimes. But even the tiny little details are an opportunity to reflect God's love, to be unselfish, to be humble.

00:28:16 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

00:28:17 - James Early

That way, you're really participating in life itself. It doesn't become a drudgery at that point. It becomes a joy.

00:28:27 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

00:28:27 - James Early

So, yeah, I love that idea.

00:28:29 - Paul Granger

And here's what's hard about this, is we can get behind a concept or an idea. We do this all the time. When we hear a sermon, the pastor would just say something profound, oh, my gosh, I never thought of it that way. Yeah, I like that. And then Monday arrives, and we're back in our contracts. And it can honestly be really hard to live these things out because it doesn't always mesh well with the way the world works. It doesn't. Jesus dealt with this. He was operating as he was supposed to operate, and people looked at him and said, oh, you're a glutton. You're demon possessed. You're a threat. And so let's name that, that. Some of these spiritual principles and

truths and mindsets that we're naming can be hard to live out also because it might not make sense to us.

00:29:20 - Paul Granger

And I want to encourage anyone where it's like, I get what you're saying, but it's really hard to internalize this. Two passages that come to mind. I love John 13 seven. Jesus is washing the disciples feet as a way to demonstrate what love looks like and what he's inviting them to. And Peter pushes back against it, because in his construct, rabbis should not wash common people's feet. His master did not wash this disciples feet. The son of God should not wash like, so that all that makes sense. Actually, Peter wasn't wrong. That is actually legitimate. But he was failing to really understand Jesus, because Jesus absolutely was one to wash feet. And so what Jesus says to him in 13 seven is right now you do not understand. Later you will understand. Jesus was knowingly inviting them to participate in, to accept something that made no sense to them, that actually felt wrong to them. Whew. Like, how often do we find ourselves in situations where someone's asking us to do something that we disagree with and we push against it? Right? Like, that's a normal human response.

00:30:36 - Paul Granger

Now, when it's coming from the God of the universe or from Jesus or from the spirit, we have this hard invitation, right? The other passage it made me think of is first corinthians 13, starting at verse eleven. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I felt like a child, I reasoned like a child. All right.

00:30:55 - Paul Granger

You and I and everyone listening knows this to be true. We can all think back to some point in our childhood where we understood the world in a certain way, that now we see as foolish things that we wanted with our life, things we wanted to happen, that now, as adults, we look at and say, oh, I'm so glad that didn't happen. Right? Because our childish brains, with its limited understanding of reality, thought it made sense. But our adult brains, it says, when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known the older we get, the more we realize this truth of reality, that we are perpetually limited in our understanding and yet perpetually convinced that we understand. The older we get, the more humble we get in realizing. But we're still growing in it. And now we're faced with this ultimate eternal reality that defies our understanding.

00:31:59 - Paul Granger

Again, the wisdom of God is foolishness to man. We are invited to participate into something that is foolish, functionally foolish, except it's only so because it's in our limited human construct. And so the good news for us is that God knows he's inviting us into something not only crazy, but impossible. But what's impossible for man is possible with Goddesse. And so again, our challenge is not to figure this all out or to fully grasp it.

00:32:29 - Paul Granger

Our challenge is to say, whether I understand this or not, I'm going to step towards God even though this seems like it will ruin my life. I will step towards God even though this is the

opposite of what I want. I will step towards God because I'm choosing to believe that God is God and God is good. And it's in those steps that we break out of our human mindsets, our human constructs, into this heaven on earth peace, because we have died to self. And it's in dying to self that we can actually live in Christ. And when we experience that, we realize, oh, there's actually something here. I still don't understand it, but I'm a little more inclined to step again. And the more we step, the more we experience heaven on earth.

00:33:14 - James Early

Hey, so, Paul, can you give me an example from your own life where you have experienced that, what you're talking about? Yeah, I have a feeling you're speaking from experience here.

00:33:23 - Paul Granger

Experiences, plural. God has had to invite me in so many different ways, from hard to joyful ways. I'll give you two. There are short versions of them. The good news is the long versions on my podcast for anyone who wants to hear more. My father passed away when I was five. And so I longed to be a father myself and to be able to live longer for my children than my father was able to live for me. And so, in 2011, my wife and I became pregnant with our first child. And I mean, so excited. Until we get to the nine week appointment when there's no heartbeat, I went from shock to suddenly having a sense of what if I'm being invited to pray? You know, scripture talks about the dead being raised. Scripture says, ask anything in my name and it will be given. I felt like God was inviting me to pray and to pray for life. James, this was the craziest thing I had ever done. I had prayed for lots of things, but to pray for a child to come back to life, I had never prayed something that intensely for that long. For two weeks, my wife and I prayed. Until our next appointment. We wrestled with, am I praying right? Is this the right prayer? What if God doesn't answer? What if I'm doing it right, but I sin? We get to the next appointment, no heartbeat. But then. But then I think, what if this is it? Because now we know that the baby is dead. So now when the baby come back, comes back to life, it will clearly be a miracle, not an issue with the machines. And I know this whole time, James, that I can't go back after doing this. Like, we went so deep into seeking God and praying that there was no going back because either the baby would live and we can no longer pray the same way again because we had experienced a miracle the dead had raised, or our baby didn't live. And what do I do with God at this point? Because he didn't answer my prayer, he didn't save my child. How is that a good thing? How are you a good God? Are you even God at all? Our baby didn't live.

00:35:14 - James Early

I'm sorry.

00:35:15 - Paul Granger

And I found myself at the crossroads. Well, and it was really interesting at that place. I knew everything that my mind and body and emotions and everything felt, that this didn't work. This must not be real. God must not be good or must not be real. That made the most sense. You know what made no sense? To continue to believe that God was God. That he was powerful and all present and all knowing and that he was good, that he was loving, because that did not seem reflected in what I had just experienced. That would be a foolish thing to choose. And something in me, I know it now, to be the spirit, prompted me to lean in that direction. I chose to believe that God was God, and God was good, even though it not only didn't make sense, but was the

opposite. Everything before it was a death to self, because it would have felt really good to blame everything on Goddesse, or it would have felt not good, but better to just fall into apathy and to just go numb and not care. But that moment, and there is more to that story, but that moment was really probably the first moment of really stepping into death to stealth. I had done it in small ways, but that was the most profound moment at that point in my life of stepping into death to self and choosing God. Over myself, choosing God over my plans.

00:36:36 - James Early

May I just ask a quick question here? You've used the phrase a couple of times, and I know it's kind of, in the parlance of in some christians, death to self. Yeah, just highlight that a little bit. What you actually mean. Cause that's a phrase we use, and you know what you mean. But if somebody's not familiar with that, what is that? What are you really talking about?

00:36:55 - Paul Granger

Yeah. Cause scripture just kind of goes big on that, and it's like, oh, my gosh, are you saying you want to die? There's so much in life, but even in scripture, that talks about the ways that man normally lives and we pursue life, we pursue to save ourselves. We have this natural inclination in us for self preservation. So, yes, it is on a life level. If there is a threat to our life, we naturally rebel against that. But it also happens on other levels. You know, when there's the risk of death to our reputation, death to our security, death to our happiness, anything that seems to come against what we feel would be a thriving life, a happy life, a good life, we push against it.

00:37:43 - Paul Granger

We seek to save ourselves and protect ourselves. And that makes total sense. And so when this guy enters the equation, this Jesus who's inviting us to do things where he says, this world, you will find trouble because of me. People are going to hate you because of me. Like, suddenly that's pushing against reputation, that's pushing against safety, that's pushing against comfort. Jesus is inviting us into spaces that are seemingly going to be the opposite of what a good, thriving life would be.

00:38:13 - Paul Granger

And so he knows in and of ourselves, we will not choose him. We see that in scripture as well. So many people that chose not to follow him when that was activated. And so this invitation of death itself, this invitation to die to the things of our lives, isn't Jesus saying those things are all bad? It's saying you are dying to your inherent inclination to control those things and to shape those things and to make those things what you think. The best thing would be to die to that and choose to live to my invitation, because I actually know what would be best for you.

00:38:53 - Paul Granger

I actually know what thriving would look like. I actually know what contentment would feel like. I'm actually bringing full life, eternal life. But as long as you're grasping onto those things, you can't hold on to me. And so that, for me, is what death to self is. It's saying, I have the freedom to choose myself and to shape my life for myself. And I have the invitation to forego that right for the sake of what God is inviting and doing.

00:39:23 - Paul Granger

Now, the hard part, James, is we're still humans, and it can be hard for us to know the difference sometimes. Is this God? Is God telling me to leave my job? And that's a whole, I mean, that's a whole other podcast right there. But I think that's part of it, is the. Is the journey. There are these moments where we can take a step towards it. And here's the good news. This isn't like some exam where there is like this right or wrong answer, and if you get it wrong, then you fail. God is journeying with us. He's in relationship with us, which means that if we were to think we were seeking him by doing this thing, and that wasn't what he wanted, he wouldn't say, well, that wasn't me, so I don't like you anymore.

00:40:04 - Paul Granger

He would say, you were authentically trying to seek me. That wasn't what I was inviting you to, but you were seeking me, and that's what matters. All of this stuff, all of our choices, which job, which place to live, all that's going to fade away. All the scripture says, like grass withers and just dies. Like all of these big moments, these big decisions in our life, all of that fades away. But choosing God and stepping towards God is what remains. And so that would be the second story, which, again, this is the short version.

00:40:36 - Paul Granger

My wife and I were in a place where we financially were both in ministry. We're not in a place to be able to purchase a home. We had a home, but there's this option of this home that we knew would be great for the community, great for some local ministry. I was dead set against it being a no. And then through a series of events, God invited us to pursue that house and did not promise we would get it.

00:41:00 - Paul Granger

Now, what kind of an invitation is that? I want you to seek this, but you might not get it. Then why am I seeking it? But it was such a clear sense that we stepped towards this impossible house. We didn't have the money, it was way overpriced. So many impossible things came onto the table. But it was so clear God was inviting us to pursue it. Now, where we made the mistake is at some point we shifted to pursuing the house, because though we thought that was the invitation, the invitation was actually to pursue God.

00:41:29 - Paul Granger

That's why he said, I'm not promising you'll get a house. There was one point where everything, it was all but done like there's just no way it was going to work. And I was just lamenting it, and it was like God was saying, Paul, why are you sad? Like, what was it you were pursuing here, the house or me? Because if it was me, it doesn't matter whether you get the house or not. And so I share, again, there's a much longer story to that, but I share that because we ended up getting the house.

00:41:55 - Paul Granger

But that wasn't the point. Like, the point was God was inviting us to seek him in this really foolish, unconventional journey, this sometimes costly journey, because it was about what it looks like for us to practice trusting, to practice listening for him, practice making decisions for his plan, even though it seems like a foolish thing for us. And there's been so many, so many moments like that. And each of those become ways to further hone me more into his image and

equip me more to be able to make that choice, to seek him. But I'm still human, and so I'm still journeying. And thank goodness for his grace in that.

00:42:33 - James Early

Yeah, I love that. So what would you say to someone who feels like they don't really have that ability to hear God's invitation? You've used that word several times, and I love that God's inviting you to do something, and it's not necessarily to get a house, it's to follow him, to listen to him. But what would you say to someone who doesn't feel like they hear those invitations and they sort of feel they don't know what to do?

00:43:04 - Paul Granger

Yeah, because it's hard when we hear these stories or we see these people, or we know these people, that's like, they are confident. They're hearing from God. They're clearly hearing from God. And I'm getting crickets. I'm getting silenced.

00:43:16 - James Early

Right?

00:43:17 - Paul Granger

Are they better christians? Are they super in tune? And there's a lot in that, but I think the really important thing here is, and this is supported by scripture, is that anything I've shared is not because I'm a super christian. If I told the full versions, you'd hear all kinds of times where I'm like, I'm not hearing from God. I don't know what to do. So many times, my humanity was on full display. And scripture shows that as well. Moses saw a bush that wasn't burning, heard a voice from the heavens, and still had the audacity to say, yeah, but I can't talk. Like, you know, so often Gideon, he's hiding. Like, these angels are there, and he's like, I'm the least of the least of the least. Like we are, I mean, really prone to dismiss ourselves and assume others are better equipped. But scripture talks about the least of these being chosen. So I want to name that for the person who feels like they are least equipped to hear from God. They are least worthy to hear from God. You may actually be the right person, the perfect person.

00:44:23 - James Early

Isn't that. I love that idea. It's so true so many times in scriptures like Gideon and so many others, right?

00:44:32 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

00:44:33 - James Early

It's a sense of humility, but it's also realizing that you can't do it by yourself.

00:44:38 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

00:44:39 - James Early

And the people who think they can do it without God's help, God doesn't usually pick those people.

00:44:44 - Paul Granger

Yup. And the people that begin to develop that notion, that's. We see that in scripture as well, because Saul gets off track once he gets up in his head. David gets off track once he gets up in his head, like so many people. And so this is good news for everybody, but it's particularly good news for those who feel the least that feel the most unworthy.

00:45:04 - James Early

Right.

00:45:04 - Paul Granger

Because like you said, you are most positioned to know your limitations and so you're not going to rely on yourself. All that's next is to choose to believe God's limitlessness and that he wants to work that limitlessness through you. And that's where the spirit comes in. I mean, really, that's the big thing that I would say because I could keep on going, but without that starting point, a willingness to consider the possibility that God might actually. Yes. Want to use you and he can use you even if you have nothing to bring to the table. Right. Like, unless we tackle that first piece, it's going to be really hard to move forward. But if you do tackle that, if you choose to say, you know what, even though I can't, it's hard to believe and I can't see it, I'm going to choose to claim that God is God and guys, good, that he wants to work through me and he can work through me despite me, then now the door is open to see the impossible happen. Because prior to that, when we're exerting control, you're only going to get the possible. But the impossible comes when we accept that the impossible can happen. And so, yeah, don't believe you have to be a super Christian. Yes, spend time growing and reading the word, spend time in prayer, do these things. But even in the seasons where you're like, I don't even remember where my bible is. And I can't remember the last time I prayed, you're not disqualified because God can work through whomever he wants to work through because he created all of us. He created us in his image, but he also created, we were fearfully and wonderfully made, fine tuned. And he has created you in specific ways, no matter who you think you are or what you've done. Because he's again, trying to draw us to himself individually, but also using us to draw others to himself because that, in that relationship, is where that full life exists.

00:46:58 - James Early

I love what you said about if you don't know where your Bible is and you haven't prayed, you're not disqualified. I think sometimes we have this sort of christian superstition that, oh, my gosh, I didn't pray today or I didn't do my bible study today. I mean, I certainly feel better when I really get into my prayers and connect, but sometimes I just don't have those that much time. But God still loves me. He still uses me. He still gives me an opportunity. And so if you're listening right now and you're feeling like, well, I've kind of not shown up the way I should, that doesn't mean you're disqualified, as Paul says. I just love that idea. God still loves you. He can still work through you in whatever way. We just show up and we go forward from where we are. Oh, something I want to talk about. I've been thinking about this a lot myself. One thing that you're really big on, I was looking at your website. You talk about evangelism and ministering to others and shepherding others and sharing your faith with others. Sometimes the word evangelism has

gotten a bad rap these days. It's been abused and it's been politicized. But let's go back to what that word originally means and just share some thoughts on that. How can we share our faith? And you might even bring in there, I'd also like to somewhere get in here talking about the great commission. I think sometimes we hear that and we think, oh, my gosh, I could never do that.

00:48:33 - Paul Granger  
Yeah.

00:48:35 - James Early  
It'S not some great big ministry necessarily. Back to what we were saying earlier about just living your daily life, letting your light shine. So, anyway, I'd love to hear your thoughts on that.

00:48:45 - Paul Granger  
Yeah. Yeah. And I think you're right on point. That word has so many connotations. And honestly, like, I have often not wanted to use that word because of what it might evoke or what it might communicate, that misses the mark of what's actually happening, because, yeah, I. A lot of times evangelism is boiled down to just the street preacher, the person that's going up into a group of strangers and.

00:49:14 - Paul Granger  
And just speaking this biblical truth, you know, the person who's handing out tracks. And these aren't bad things, but I think what happens is we make them the only things. That is what evangelism is. It's doing those things. So if you're an introvert and you don't like small talk or if you're shy or if you know any number of limitations, you can, like you said, disqualify yourself from evangelism. Evangelism is for the evangelist. And let's be clear. You know, you've got the passage that talks. I think it's ephesians four that talks about the apostle gifts, the apostle. Some were made to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds, some teachers.

00:49:54 - Paul Granger  
It's a misreading of that to say that only those people that were called to that can do those specific gifts. So you only get one of the five? No, it's that some of us are created with the eyes and ears to be able to recognize and understand and see and engage things in uniquely beautiful ways, but others can as well.

00:50:15 - Paul Granger  
So, yes, there are individuals who have been gifted with this gift of evangelism that it is more natural for them to go into these spaces or to speak publicly. But evangelism can look different. I am not a street preacher guy. I am not go up to strangers guy. I hate small talk, but I know that God called me to love my neighbors. So I'll give you a practical way that this is played out.

00:50:43 - Paul Granger  
I did not give myself this name, but I'm known as Pastor Paul in our community. People I've never met before will come up to me and say, hey, you're Pastor Paul. Because I live in a community that for a long time was predominantly black. So if anybody's listening, I'm white. And so I would stand out. My community has high levels of poverty, high levels of gun violence, high levels of drug use, overdoses. And so it's a type of environment where someone who's



thinking about evangelism would think, yeah, you got to go out into the streets. You got to talk to those that are dealing drugs. You got to talk to people that are wrestling with addiction. You got to talk to this, that, and the other. But again, that was not my natural inclination. I felt shame for a while, like I'm failing Jesus because I'm not willing to go out and, like, boldly preach the gospel in these spaces.

00:51:30 - Paul Granger

What's wrong with me? Where God showed up was teaching me one who he had made me to be and how his unique, wise craftsmanship actually equipped me for this space in ways that I didn't expect. Because today, like I said, people know me. As Pastor Paul, I've had many conversations, but it's not because I went out to be an evangelist. It's because God put it in me to love my neighbor. And in my community, I mentioned the demographics.

00:51:58 - Paul Granger

What's been changing. Gentrification has definitely had an impact on our community, and part of that has been a shift in culture from what used to be front porch culture, where neighbors knew each other. You spent your time in the front so you could talk to neighbors. You would go and ask for a cup of sugar. All that to back porch culture. Your home is your sanctuary. You go from your car to your house, and you really. You might not ever meet your neighbors. I'm not saying one is good and one is bad. I'm just saying they're different. But in this community, what happened is when that front porch culture began to be diminished by this back porch culture, a lot of neighbors began to be unseen more than they already had been. And I have a spiritual father, Don Coleman, I've known since 2007, who poured this into me, this idea of sitting on your front porch and actually talking to your neighbors.

00:52:47 - Paul Granger

And it starts simple. I hate small talk, but I can wave. I can make eye contact, right? And then I could take it up another level. When I get comfortable with that, I can actually engage in the small talk. I can learn names. So then the next time I see them, I call them by name. And now they feel known because, oh, this guy remembered my name, right? Wow. These little things that built up.

00:53:10 - James Early

Wow.

00:53:11 - Paul Granger

To one point, there's this woman, Thomasina. Still remember her name. I hadn't seen her in months, but we were doing a front yard cookout, and she was walking by. I was, hey, Thomasina, you want to come get some food? She's like, you remember my name? And I was like, yeah. And we started having this conversation. I don't even remember about what, but for, like, five minutes. And then she moves on. And then I was struck. I'm like, how in the world did that happen? Because I'm an introvert. This is not my space. My wife's the extrovert. Like, she should be the one that's having conversations with. And I realized it's because it's nothing. Because of me, the spirit was working through me, the good things that I've done. It's the spirit, which means my lack of capacity is not a deterrent for God's work. And so I don't even remember what the initial question was. James. But this is the beautiful thing that we're talking

about here, this participation, this invitation. The spirit is inviting us as we are who we are, to be able to come into these spaces and to serve and to love God and to love others. And we don't have to be perfect. We just have to be willing to wake up the next day and the next day and to continue to step.

00:54:20 - James Early

You know, you used an interesting phrase that most people wouldn't put these two ideas together. You said, God called me to love my neighbor. Usually we think of a calling as something much bigger than that, but you took it down into the nitty gritty of sitting on your porch and saying hello to people. I mean, it's easy to sit in your prayer chair, in your house, in your privacy, and love your neighbor as yourself. I can love anybody from my prayer chair, but to actually be out in the world and do it in your neighborhood. Yeah, it is a calling.

00:54:57 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

00:54:58 - James Early

God put that in your heart.

00:54:59 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

00:55:00 - James Early

And look at the fruit that that's bearing. I just think that's beautiful. That kind of happens to me. I live on a corner, and I'm always out working in my garden. People come by. I've had some really interesting times where I've shared my faith with someone just because I'm giving them raspberries to eat or something, or we start talking, and you never know where God's going to take it.

00:55:22 - Paul Granger

Well, and that's an important thing, too, for everyone listening to understand that element of calling, because our default is, like you said, to go to the bigger specific calls. God called me to this ministry, to this nonprofit, to this specific thing. Well, what happens if that specific area becomes hard, or you cannot do that specific thing anymore? We see it time and time again. Either someone then questions the call, well, I must not have heard from God then. That must not have been God, because he wouldn't have made it hard, or it wouldn't have fallen apart, or they fight for the call. God called me to this ministry, so this ministry has to survive. All the callings in my life were not the specific things now.

00:56:02 - James Early

Hmm.

00:56:03 - Paul Granger

I thought they were. I often thought they were, but they weren't. There might have been specific elements, you know, served with this ministry, but it wasn't that my call is to be in this ministry. My call. My call is to be an ambassador of Christ. That's my call. My call, as Jesus put it, is to

love God and love others. That is the whole summation of scripture. Everything else may be opportunities to live that out. Spaces to live that out. People groups to live that out. A monk. But the main call is to be an ambassador of Christ who loves God and love others. And so there are times that I felt called into specific jobs, but it wasn't to have that job. It was to be an ambassador of Christ. So then when I. One of my stories, and I won't get into it now, because that would be a whole thing, but I felt called to a ministry that ended up being horrendously hard. It was. It was rough. It was rough. And I ended up losing that job. And in the midst of it, I was so confused. God, I was sure you called me here. Did I get it wrong? Did I? God's like, I didn't call you to a certain vocation. I called you to be my ambassador in this space for this time, to love these people. And so this is good news for everyone who, like, sees all the nonprofit leaders, all the pastors, all the ministry workers, all the missionaries, and seize them up on a pedestal as something like, they're doing great work and I'm doing nothing with my life. You mentioned at the start all the things that I'm doing, James, most of the time, I'm like, they really looked at my life. They'd wonder, what am I doing? They kind of question is, Paul, Paul just needs to get a real job because there's so much God has called me to that is not showing the fruit that people would want, is not playing out in these grandiose ways. I don't, I'm not an executive director of a nonprofit, but I know more than ever in my life that I'm living as God's invited me to live, because I'm embracing this idea of being an ambassador. I'm still learning what that means, but I'm more and more pulling away from my identity, being tied to a ministry or to a job or to what other people say. And more and more learning who has God made me to be, and what does that mean for today? For today, tomorrow will worry about itself. But for today, what is my ministry as an ambassador of Christ? To love God and love others that.

00:58:13 - James Early

Is so beautiful, to make that separation between your calling and what your calling might be attached to at the moment, that's really powerful.

00:58:24 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

00:58:25 - James Early

I love this idea of being an ambassador for Christ. What does an ambassador do? I mean, it's a word we all talk about, but what does that really mean to you?

00:58:34 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

00:58:34 - James Early

And where did that idea come from? Because I've heard people use that before, but it's a beautiful concept. Let's talk about that just a minute.

00:58:41 - Paul Granger

Yeah. And, you know, by now I should have memorized where in scripture that shows up. But let's just start with what that word actually means. What is an ambassador? I mean, very simply, an ambassador is going to a place to represent an individual or an entity, and that is the entirety of their role. They are not the ones who make the decisions or they're not the ones who are trying

to get their own will. Like, they are representing the will, the ideas, the plans of the one who sent. Very simple. Right. And so when we're talking about an ambassador of Christ, two corinthians 5:18 through 20 says this, all this from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation that is in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. Oh, I pushed a button. Not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. So we have been made ambassadors of Christ because God wants to make his appeal through us. He demonstrated that through Christ. Christ was an ambassador of his father. I only do what I see my father doing. I only say what I see my father saying.

01:00:09 - James Early  
Exactly right.

01:00:10 - Paul Granger

And my father is making his appeal through me to you because you were struggling to get it. So I'm going to come in living form. I'm going to serve alongside you. I'm going to love you. I'm going to serve you. And so what does that mean? Because, again, we could take the grandiose approach of an ambassador of Christ. Is a missionary going throughout the world? Sometimes, maybe. But it's also the person who works in a secular job. Because, again, an ambassador is simply someone who knows who sent them and is representing them well, which means I'm an ambassador of Christ, both when I'm doing formal ministry and when I'm in my house with my kids, when I'm leading a community Bible study, or when I'm just walking down the sidewalk, because at every given moment, because I am claiming to be a Christian at every given moment and with every word I speak, I am effectively saying, this is what Christ would do. This is what Christ would say. Now, this is kind of scary, James, because we all know the things we've done and said that are not what Christ would do or say, and we know our propensity to likely do that in the future. And this is where grace comes in. But I think this shift in understanding of recognizing the gift that at any given moment I get to represent Christ means that I can be functioning in the fullness of who God created me to be, even if there's no acclaim, even if there's no outcomes and metrics, even if nobody else sees it. Because in this moment with this person that I may never see again to the best of my ability, I tried to represent Christ, and I don't know how they received it. And here's the thing. The apostle Paul says, who is Paul and who is Apollos? Paul plants to see the palace watered it, but God makes it grow. That means that there are moments that Paul was living into his role as an ambassador of Christ that seemed to produce no fruit, that people said, oh, I don't care about Paul. Apollos is the one that helped me out. But what Paul knows is that in eternity, if God gives him the privilege of looking back, God could say, hey, Paul, remember that interaction? You planted a seed. It seemed like that failed, but watch what happened with the seed. You never saw it in your lifetime, but watch what happened. That is what God is inviting every listener to today is. He is inviting you to be an ambassador. And even if you're planting the smallest of seeds, you can take joy in knowing that the God of the universe chose you despite your limitations and failings in past, to be a part of his beautiful appeal and plan to draw creation back to himself in full life. And that can start today in the simplest of ways.

01:02:55 - James Early

Yeah, I love that all because it's. It is in those simple little things. Sometimes a simple, sometimes just a smile or a twinkle in the eye can make a difference in someone's life and they feel something, and that changes. I don't know. I've heard lots of stories where some simple little gesture like that changes the trajectory of a life. And it's not just the missionaries over in some foreign country, we all are. Well, Jesus said, let your light shine so that people would see your good works and glorify God. It's not about us getting the glory. It's all. It's all for God's glory. And that can be in the tiniest little thing. Yeah, we're going to have to wrap up here in just a few minutes. We could keep this going a long time. I've really enjoyed this so much. In this whole idea of following in Jesus footsteps. Is there anything you'd like to say, just kind of in summing that up or maybe something we didn't cover to kind of bring it all together?

01:03:56 - Paul Granger

Yeah. Yeah. I would like to just double down on the simplicity of today of it all, because you and I could talk even more about it. But somebody listening could have all the information in the world, all the inspiration in the world, but feel like they can't take that first step because it's too hard a step, it's too big an ask. I want to encourage that person that the good news about his step is technically, that could take a lot of forms. And so a step can be a toe nudge forward, like a singular inch. Right? It may be that that's all you have the strength for today, all you have the desire for today. Like, you may be actually really mad at God, but you're trying, and all you can do is, I'll give him a little toe nudge forward. Do it like, don't get caught up in these grand leaps that we're often called to, which are fantastic. And sometimes we may have to leap. But don't let that discount the beauty of the toe nudge, because here's the thing. If you take 1000 toe nudges, you're going to see a pretty big distance. The smallest of steps still adds up to a journey. And so this is your invitation today. Is what is that small toe nudge forward that you could do to walk with Christ today? Is it a dusting off that bible after you find it? Is it taking a moment to pray? And if you don't even have the words to pray, scripture says the Holy Spirit can give the words. Like, don't stress about it. Just say, I want to make a conscious effort to step towards God and to walk alongside Jesus. This is what I have to offer today and do it, and then tomorrow do it again. And you might find, like I have often, that I'm able to nudge my foot a little further the next time and a little further. You may have setbacks, right? But then you dust yourself off and you step again. This is the invitation is to not stress about what it's supposed to look like. Just focus on the fact that you have been given the privilege and gift and blessing of being able to step towards God and just do it however you can today.

01:06:03 - James Early

I love that. Paul. If people want to get ahold of you. What's the best way for them to connect?

01:06:08 - Paul Granger

Yeah. What God's called me to is not technically to write books and do podcasts and do these. All these things. It's. It's to create authentic, accessible space, to process God, to process who he's made us to be, process the hard questions of life. And so that happens through the podcast and through the books. But that's the first and foremost thing. If you are longing for a space to press into these things, I want to find a way to be that space for you. And so you can explore some of that at. Where did you see God.com? podcasts are on all the platforms and on YouTube. But if you just have a hard question and you just want to put it out there, just reach out to me and I'd be happy to connect.

01:06:49 - James Early

Paul, I want to honor you just for your heart, which is so devoted to helping people experience God's goodness in their lives and encouraging them to take that tone edge forward if that's the first step they need to do you minister to people in the so many different ways and help them follow Christ. I just really am so grateful that our paths have crossed as we're both trying to do that very thing. I have three final questions I ask all my guests.

01:07:16 - Paul Granger

Yeah.

01:07:17 - James Early

The first one is, if you could talk to any Bible character other than Jesus, who would it be and what would you ask them?

01:07:28 - Paul Granger

Yeah, you know, I mean, in my head, Paul pops to mind because it's partly my namesake, but I do think I really appreciate how vastly different his life was from Saul to Paul and how he had to learn to live into that. And I think, most importantly, learn how to live into living a life where he was often mocked or questioned or there didn't seem to be fruit of his work, because I feel that often. I often feel like what I'm doing isn't amounting to much or what are people thinking of me? And to be able to hear more of how he navigated that with grace and faith and Jesus in the spirit. Yeah, I'll say a little Paul, Paul coffee meeting.

01:08:16 - James Early

I imagine there'd be more than one question there. Yeah. Is there any Bible character who you especially identify with?

01:08:25 - Paul Granger

Hmm. Yeah, that's a good question, because that's a different question. You know, I feel like it depends on the period of life, depends on what I'm going through, because there's moments where I've wrestled with doubt that I could resonate with Thomas, where it's like I really I want to believe it, but I need to see it. I think there are other moments where I've felt like, the least, like Gideon, and there are other moments where the spirit gave me the. The words to speak or the boldness to speak. And so I was like Peter in acts, who's like, doing all these things that he never thought he could do. So, yeah, I don't know. It depends on the day, you ask me. I don't know which character had the deal with microwave fire, so I can't tell you who today's character is.

01:09:08 - James Early

Well, maybe that's a Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

01:09:11 - Paul Granger

Hey, there you go. There you go.

01:09:13 - James Early

The third question is, the Bible speaks to you. Podcast is about getting back to the original Christianity or message of Jesus learning to think and live and love and pray like he did. How would you describe Jesus's original message of how he wanted us to live our lives?

01:09:34 - Paul Granger

Yeah, I think what was so hard is we are getting, you see it in scripture, we get so caught up on the rules and what I'm supposed to do and what I'm not supposed to do. I mean, throughout scripture. Right? So two things come to mind. One is Jesus boils down scripture to love God and love others. And if we start there, that can take us a long way. All the law is combined in that. But I would also say proverbs three, five and six. I feel like that's what Jesus was inviting his disciples and us into. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding in all your ways. Submit to him and he will set your path straight. Jesus knew they had their own understanding, and he was inviting them, inviting them to participate in what it looks like to trust the father.

01:10:18 - James Early

Yeah.

01:10:18 - Paul Granger

Inviting them to participate in what it means to submit when it's not your plan and what it means to release what we think the path should be. Because the straight paths that Jesus laid out looked very different than what the disciples expected. But, man, by the end of their lives, when they were willing to be martyred, you can tell that they know that those were the passive whole life.

01:10:40 - James Early

Paul, I want to thank you so much for being with me this morning and sharing all these ideas with my listeners. I've just enjoyed this so much, and I hope we can keep our friendship going.

01:10:50 - Paul Granger

Absolutely.

01:10:51 - James Early

I just really appreciate your heart and thanks so much for being here today.

01:10:54 - Paul Granger

My pleasure. And thank you for all you're doing. This is a great space you've created.

## **Bible References**

**John 14:26** NASB20

26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and remind you of all that I said to you.

**Philippians 2:5-7** NIV

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature<sup>[fn]</sup> of a servant, being made in human likeness.

### **1 Corinthians 1:21** KJV

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

### **John 16:17** NIV

17 But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

### **Matthew 11:29** NIV

29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

### **Number 21:4-9** NIV

4 They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way;

5 they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!"

6 Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.

7 The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people."

8 The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live."

9 So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

### **John 14:12** NIV

12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

### **John 5:19** NIV

19 Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

### **John 13:6, 7** NIV

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."



**1 Corinthians 13:11, 12** ESV

11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

**1 Corinthians 15:31** AMP

31 I assure you, believers, by the pride which I have in you in [your union with] Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily [I face death and die to self].

**1 Peter 1:24, 25** NIV

24 For, "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,

25 but the word of the Lord endures forever." [Isaiah 40:6-8 Septuagint] And this is the word that was preached to you.

**Exodus 4:10** NIV

10 Moses said to the LORD, "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."

**Judges 6:15** NIV

15 "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."

**Psalms 149:15** NIV

15 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

**Ephesians 4:11, 12** KJV

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

**2 Corinthians 5:18-20** NIV

18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

**John 12:49, 50** NIV

49 For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken.

50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.

**1 Corinthians 3:6** NIV

6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.

**Matthew 5:16** NIV

16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

**Proverbs 3:5, 6** NIV

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.