

SO HELP ME

GOOD



Touching Lives
with James Merritt

SO HELP ME GOD

SERIES OVERVIEW

We have a tradition in America that so many oaths end with “So help me God.” The military’s oath of enlistment ends with “So help me God.” The commissioned officer’s oath ends with “So help me God.” Presidents take the oath of office and end with “So help me God.” In this series, we are going to deal with three key areas where we all need help. As we look at each of these areas, I hope we all will better understand that only God can give us the help that we need.

SERIES VERSES

Ephesians 1:1-6

Matthew 6:25-34

Matthew 4:1-11

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WEEK 1: Help Me With Me

Ephesians 1:1-6

OVERVIEW

: It's a very common goal to want to be the best version of yourself. Go into any bookstore and bookshelf after bookshelf is lined with writings that will help you address your self-image and your self-worth and give you all kind of techniques to help you feel better about yourself. But here is the problem. At the end of the day, whether it is losing weight, or gaining financial success, or becoming famous, or getting plastic surgery, or photo-shopping, it doesn't solve the problem of low self-esteem. Here is why. The problem is not on the outside; it is on the inside. You will never see who you truly are on the inside until you know who you should be on the inside. Only God can help you see that.

KEY POINTS

1. Recognize Your Position with Jesus

Here is an interesting fact. Did you know the Bible rarely, if ever, describes a Christian as a sinner? Now, unbelievers are referred to as "sinners" more than 300 times, but overwhelmingly the Bible refers to Christians as "saints" or "holy" or "righteous" more than 200 times. As a believer, you are a sinner by activity at times, but you are a saint by identity always. Why is that? It has nothing to do with your performance; it has everything to do with your position. Everyone outside the family of God is a sinner. Everyone inside the family of God is a saint.

If you are a believer, you are a saint, not because of what you have done for God, but because of what Jesus has done for you. You are not a saint because of what you do, based on your performance. You are a saint because of who you are based on your position. So, the first thing you've got to recognize is who you are and in Jesus you are a saint.

2. Realize Your Possessions From Jesus

The greatest blessings in life are not material, because one day either you will lose them, or you will leave them. The greatest blessings in life are spiritual and we have already been blessed with every spiritual blessing that can be found in Jesus. In other words, you don't need what you already have, and in Jesus you already have all that you need. You have all the love that you need. You have all the joy that you need. You have all of the peace that you need. You have all the goodness that you need.

We think our problem is we don't have what we need. But the real problem is we don't realize that we have it and we can get it anytime we want it. Too often, we ask for something that we already have. We don't need as much as we think we need, because whatever we need, we already have. Once you realize what you have in Jesus, you will quit asking for God's blessings and you will start accepting and applying God's blessings. How many times have you ever asked God for more patience? You already have all the patience

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you need. He has given it to you. How many times have you asked God for peace in your heart? You already have peace; He has given it to you.

3. Revise Your Perception In Jesus

When we were kids, we wanted to be in the “in” group. After all, the thing we fear more than anything else is to be rejected. I want you to listen carefully. Because of Jesus, God has accepted us. That means we can’t do anything so bad it would make God love us less nor can we do anything so good it would make God love us more. Because of Jesus, God has accepted us for who we are and then changes us into what we need to be.

In light of this, you must learn to change your perception of self-esteem, so that you can understand the kind of confidence you can have because of Jesus. Self-esteem comes from what God says about you; not how others see you. Until you see who you are in Jesus, you will never be what God created you to be. That is why you’ve got to realize who you are in Jesus. You’ve got to center your identity in Jesus. If you center your life and your identity on your spouse, or another person, you will be emotionally dependent, jealous, and controlling.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you live each day in the freedom that comes from being a saint, or do you struggle with trying to earn God’s favor through your actions?
2. When was a time God provided what you needed in an unexpected way?
3. What is one truth that God says is true of you that contradicts what others might be saying about you or what you might be saying about yourself?

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WEEK 2: Help Me With Worry

Matthew 6:25-34

OVERVIEW

There is a difference between worry and concern. You should be concerned about your children getting a good education, coming to know Jesus as Lord and Savior, and concerned about the relationships they have and the friends that they make. If those things don't concern you, you are a bad parent. You should be concerned about saving money for a rainy day and planning for retirement. Otherwise, you are foolish. There are certain things every day that call for legitimate concern. There is a difference between being care-free and care-less. But worry is a different matter and in the greatest sermon ever preached in the history of this planet, by the greatest preacher who ever lived, Jesus Christ, He took this issue of worry head on. He addressed it with the greatest advice any counselor could ever give. In this message, we're going to take a look at what Jesus has to say about worry and how we can overcome the temptation to worry in the circumstances we face each day.

KEY POINTS

1. Thank God For Yesterday

One of the best things you can do when you are worried about something is take a trip down memory lane and just remember how God has always come through for you in the past. Your life is like two bookends. From the moment, you are conceived to the moment you die, God was there, God is there, and God will always be there taking care of you. If you are like me you can look back at so many times in your life and see how God intervened on your behalf, how God provided for a need, or how God protected you from harm. So, remember how God has performed in the past, because there is no reason He won't perform like that in the present or in the future.

So, if you feel like you've got an Egyptian Army behind you and a Red Sea before you and you are worried, the first thing I would say to you is to thank God for yesterday. Remember how God has been faithful in the past and realize He will be faithful in the present and faithful in the future.

2. Turn To God For Today

As Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount, He gives us a beautiful illustration of how the birds of the air and the flowers of the field never have to worry because He takes care of them. And in the same way, we shouldn't worry either because the Lord is going to take care of us. I don't know about you, but I've never seen a flower break into a sweat. I've never seen a flower pacing a flower bed. If you look outside, whether it is tulips, or roses, or lilies, look at these flowers as God's way of reminding you, "Just as I feed the birds and just as I cloth the flowers, I will feed you and I will cloth you. I will give you the things in life that you need, because surely you understand you are far more valuable than the birds of the air and the flowers of the land."

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Matthew 6:25-34

So whatever you are worried about today, turn to God. Realize that God is taking care of you. Realize that God's got your back. Realize that God can handle whatever you are worried about. He'll handle everything today and He'll handle everything tomorrow.

3.Trust God For Tomorrow

The first thing you've got to do to deal with worry is you've got to leave tomorrow alone. When tomorrow comes, God will give you the grace and strength you need for it. For today, you already have the grace and strength that you need. The reason the calendar gives every day its own number is because you are supposed to live them in that order just as God has arranged them. God hasn't called you to worry about tomorrow; God has called you to live today.

I read somewhere where a counselor gave great advice on when to worry the best and how to worry the best way. He said, "Don't worry at night, because you will lose sleep and get tired. Don't worry at mealtimes or you will get indigestion and you can't eat. Don't worry while you are working, because it will affect the quality of your labor. The best time to worry is when you can get alone with your Bible and read the promises of God." What is the best way to deal with worry? It is to turn it into worship!

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are some memories of God's faithfulness in the past that you can recall when you're tempted to worry in the present?
2. What is one way this week that God has proven that He's taking care of you?
3. How can you turn your worry about tomorrow into worship for today?

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WEEK 3: Help Me With Temptation

Matthew 4:1-11

OVERVIEW

As we wrap up this series, we are going to deal with the third area where not only certain people need help, but frankly we all need help, and that is in the area of temptation. I want to challenge you to think about something. If you think about every regret you have in life, every do-over, or as we golfers would say, “every mulligan you wish you could take,” everything you wished you hadn’t done, words you wished you had not said, places you wished you had not gone, or people you wish you had not hurt, I would say without exception it is because you failed to handle temptation. The great playwright, Oscar Wilde, once said, “I can handle anything except temptation.” The good news is everyone who knows Jesus, loves Jesus, and follows Jesus can overcome any temptation because of Jesus. Jesus, himself, has shown us how to do that.

KEY POINTS

1. Expect It

There is no one immune to temptation. You never get too old to be tempted. You never get too good to be tempted. You never get too strong to be tempted. Even Jesus, who was perfect in every way, faced temptation. But it’s important to note that Jesus was not being tempted as God; He was being tempted as man. Jesus was not being tempted in His divinity, but in His humanity. He was not being tempted as Superman; He was being tempted as Clark Kent. How do I know that? Well, God doesn’t fast, and God doesn’t get hungry and God cannot be tempted. A human can be tempted. There would be nothing encouraging about this story if Jesus was Superman, but with glasses and a suit on working at the Daily Planet, Clark Kent can encourage people. Jesus faced the devil and temptation just like you and I have to face the devil and temptation.

That is why the first rule you have to follow if you are going to handle and defeat temptation is you have to expect it. You should never be taken by surprise by being tempted. Going out into the world every day with your spiritual antenna and your spiritual radar on is half the battle of defeating temptation.

2. Detect It

Jesus shows us how to detect temptation before it happens, because all temptation basically boils down to three things. Satan tempted Jesus in three different ways, and it is these same three ways he tempts us. He tempts us physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Therefore, we have to be ready to face any and all of these types of temptations if we’re going to keep from sinning. In order to be ready, we must prepare ourselves spiritually so we can detect temptation. That means spending time in the Word, spending time in prayer, and spending time in community with other believers. When we do these things, we learn how to better detect temptation when

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it arises, and as a result, learn how to withstand it. Leave it on the curb to be picked up. That is exactly the word that Paul uses in his letter to the Ephesians. If you have a temper, you need to treat it like trash. You need to haul it off from your heart, put it out to the curb where it belongs and leave it there.

2. Reject It

Temptation is powerless against truth. Temptation is always based on a lie. Here is the lie. Temptation will tell you that sin feels good, and it does, but then temptation will also tell you can get away with it, but you can't. Every time you are tempted one of two things is going to happen. You will either submit to what your eyes see and your ears hear and your heart feels or you will follow the truth of God's Word you know in your mind. Here is the key. If your gun isn't filled with the bullets of God's Word, if your sheath doesn't hold the sword of God's Word, you have no hope to defeat temptation.

Let me ask you a simple question, "If Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would not face the devil and temptation without a profound knowledge of the Bible in His mind and filling His heart, how are you going to try to do it any other way?" The best preventive medicine you will ever take against temptation is to read God's Word and heed God's Word. Listen carefully. For every temptation the devil brings into your life there is a word from God that counteracts it. Jesus didn't argue with the devil. He didn't negotiate or debate with the devil. He didn't use any magic formulas or magic words. He simply used God's Word.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you expect temptation to come your way, or are you surprised when you face a tempting situation?
2. Is there an area of life (reading the Word, praying, engaging with other believers) you can be better preparing yourself to detect temptation?
3. Are there verses you've memorized to help you reject the lies that tempt you to give into sin? If not, what is one verse you can begin memorizing today that you can recall next time you're being tempted to do something wrong?

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