

A.S.K. (7/5/26)

Part 2: Chasing the Dragon

Please turn to

Sermon #1: Our Relationship with God.

- God says we can approach and ask Him for things, and this is a great honor!
- Please remember He's a King, sitting on a throne, in power and glory.
- He is the Creator of all, He is Holy, and all of existence lives for His pleasure.
- The truth that He allows us to approach Him and make requests is truly mind-boggling.
- SO LET'S DO IT.
- It sounds pious when others say "we shouldn't be asking God for stuff" or "seek His face and not just His hand" and I'll affirm that we should be desiring Him and not just what He gives us.
- But He tells us to ask Him.
- Asking is humility because we expose our weakness that pride tries to keep hidden.
- We want to be self-reliant and therefore not need God or others to help us.
- Truth is we're complete dependents on God and need to be approaching Him consistently.
- God knows our needs and knows us...but He doesn't just "do" things.
- There are Christians in 3rd world countries starving. Is there any doubt they need food?
- So why doesn't God just get them food? He wants all his believers to approach Him and ask, seek, and find.
- No hints, not insinuations, no nudges...let's appear before Him and make our requests known.
- Jesus knew Bartimaeus was blind and wanted to be healed, yet our Lord would have kept walking. Why did He stop and heal him? Because BB cried out to Jesus.
- When Jesus was walking on water, He didn't intend to get on the boat (Mark 6:48: "He meant to pass by them.") It was only when the disciples cried to Him that He changed direction and joined them.
- It's time to ask our Lord and make our requests be heard!

TODAY I start with a parable. **Have you heard of the multiverse theory?**
That parallel realities exist depending on the choices we make.

The parable starts with a *fictional experiment* where scientists discovered one of these realities and they even gave it a name: Awetuh.

The magical realm of Awetuh is an **alternate reality that's better than this world**. Everyone has enough to eat and a place to live. There's little fear, lots of joy, less anxiety, greater peace, loneliness is rare, and love abounds. The skies are blue, the sun shines, flowers bloom, and birds sing. Truly it's a Shangri-La—a lost Paradise that seems to offer greater fulfillment.

They scientists also discovered that every human being regardless of age, nationality, religion, or sex **had the ability to see into this world using just their imagination**. They didn't need to pray, meditate, fast, or take some mind-altering drug to glimpse into this other dimension.

Scientists then decided to **perform an experiment** where they took 99 people and split them into 3 groups of 33.

- **Group #1** was the control group, and they were told to live their lives normally for the next 30 days...no change.
- **Group #2** was told to concentrate on Awetuh as much as possible, to strive to use their imaginations to see into that world and even try to go there, if possible.
- **Group #3** was told to ignore Awetuh and live in this world.

After 30 days, all 3 groups were called back in and interviewed and here were the results:

- Group #1 said there was **no change** to their lives...same old, same old.
- Group #2 (told to concentrate on Awetuh) reported **more disappointment**, stress, frustration, a lack of peace and their hope seemed drained.
- Group #3 (told to ignore Awetuh) discovered **a slight improvement** in their lives, but also felt an increased awareness of personal issues & problems.

They were told to continue **for another 5 months**, then called back in. Here are the results:

- Group #1 reported no change, positive or negative.
- Group #2 reported **a sharp increase in feeling let down**, a sense of something missing/a void, anxiety, feeling disconnected from God and others, a lack of control over their lives, a desire to escape/isolate, and depression. They were more likely to resort to addictive substances.
- Group #3 reported an **uptick of problem solving**, increased adaption, greater peace, more self-control, and greater connection with God and others.

Among group 2, scientists used an old phrase that came from the far east: ***“Chasing the Dragon.”*** In the 1950’s there was a heroin epidemic in Hong Kong and the way it was heated up, it would form a trail of smoke. Said smoke would curl upward in a spiral, resembling an eastern dragon (much more serpentine). The idea was to inhale the smoke ASAP for the max high.

The term morphed into the drug experience itself. The “dragon” represented joy, peace, pleasure, and relief from the problems of this world. What the users reported was common: the first hit was the best, but then the body and brain adapted, and the returns diminished.

Thus ***“chasing the dragon” morphed into true peace, escape, and joy always being out of reach no matter how hard one tried (when using the drug).***

Scientists discovered that the *more someone gazed into amazing world of Awetuh, the further away it seemed to get and the more it eluded them.* This is what led to experiencing depression, disappointment, emptiness, a lack of control, etc.

Now is the moment of the big reveal. Here is the true spelling of this magical alternate universe:

Oughta (Ought To)

How often are we dwelling the way things “ought ta” be vs the real world?

How much are we wishing that reality would become this one?

- No one ought to starve or be homeless, everyone should have food and shelter.
- We ought to be at peace and get along with each other instead of fighting.
- We ought to love one another, especially in the church.
- My kids ought to take the garbage out on Tuesday night w/o having to be reminded and then bring the cans back in the next day.
- My wife ought to greet me with a smile when I come home from work.
- Kids ought to be respectful and obedient to their parents.
- God ought to protect my trees from the deer.
- God and other people ought to meet my needs without having to be asked.

My dad struggled with this and so do I. Dad used to say to me a lot: “if there’s a board lying on the ground and I bend down to grab one end, you should grab the other end w/o having to be asked.”

He was right...**but things rarely worked out that way in THIS world.**

Therefore Dad was angry and frustrated a lot b/c he felt surrounded by people he always had to direct and he didn't feel things ought to be that way.

The more we indulge Ought To, try and see and live in that alternate reality, the more we're chasing the dragon.

How about we start living in this world vs inventing one of our own?

The more “ought to's” we've create in our hearts and minds, the more ***we've invented our own reality that we're trying to get everyone else—including God—to live in.***

- The world of Oughta constantly compares reality with fantasy, and reality falls short.
- The more we indulge in Oughta, the more God and the people in our lives fail to live up to expectations and don't meet our needs.
- Oughta disconnects us from reality and makes us want to isolate and escape. It can make us cynical and judgmental toward life and others.

Ought to short-circuits asking and indulges our pride. We don't want to appear weak, dependent, or reliant on another. We hide behind “I don't want to be a burden on others” a saying that seems humble, but is a cover for too much time spent in Oughta.

Let me reveal something **I hear consistently**, and this is just one example of several I could give.

“Pastor Scott, my grown son refuses to help me! IDK why he's like this, I didn't raise him that way. I had a doctor's appointment at Corning Vision Works on Denison Pkwy last Friday at 1 PM. They wanted to dilate my pupils and told me I needed to have someone drive me home—they wouldn't even do the procedure unless another driver was with me. And my son wouldn't take me! I had to call my 80 year sister to bring me.”

As a much younger pastor, **I used to take testimonies like this at face value** ... but I'd like to believe I'm wiser now. When I hear this today, I ask: “so you called your son, gave him all those details, asked him to take you, and he flat out refused?”

THEM: *“He knew I about my appointment. He’s really busy. He works all the time, has a wife and kids, and has no time for me.”*

ME: *“But did you actually ask him to take you? Did you say the words to him ‘would you please take me to my eye appt?’ and you gave him all the details? And he refused?”*

The answer is no, she didn’t ask. She may have told him about the appointment, even that she couldn’t drive herself there... **but she never put it in the form of a question** because her son ought ta have taken the hint, and ought ta have offered.

- He ought ta have done so with a good attitude and willing heart.
- After all, she did lots of things for him as both a kid and an adult, and he ought ta remember that and show some appreciation.
- He ought to have taken time off from work, or arranged a ride for her, whatever he needed to do to help his mom.

Therefore this poor lady, who DOES need help, **ends up disappointed and feeling let down and the paradise world of ought to is the thief.**

When my mother calls, *she asks and that makes things a lot simpler and EFFECTIVE*. Whether she needs to go to the doctor, get her lawn mowed, rake her yard, clean the pine needles from her roof. She doesn’t hint, doesn’t insinuate, doesn’t just state the need or problem hoping I will “get it” and then offer.

She ASKS and therefore she receives. She seeks and thus finds. She knocks on my proverbial door until I open and you know what? Yes...sometimes I’m like the fellow in Jesus’ parable: I don’t want to get up and open the door. But if mom keeps knocking, guess what happens?

The Lord says in His Bible we’re to be **soberly minded** and I’ve already compared the fantasy realm of Oughta to be like a drug...and it is. Something we can become addicted to thus end up chasing the dragon that always eludes.

So it’s time to sober up, stop complaining, and start asking.

1 Peter 1:13 — “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and **being sober-minded**, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

[2Co 10:4-5 ESV] 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

1 John 5:14-15 (NIV) “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”

[Phl 4:6-7 ESV] 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 55:6

“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.”

Psalms 145:18-19

“The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.”

Jeremiah 33:3

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

Psalms 34:10

“Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”

Daniel 9:3 (Example of earnest asking)

“So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.”

Did you see my Facebook post this morning? 240 chairs need to be set up in the new Sanctuary. If I decided to chase the dragon of Oughta, I would go over there silently and just start doing it...thinking that you all would see me and follow suit w/o having to be asked.

Or I can ask...which do think gets the better result?

**Would you please come and
help set up chairs?**