

**Resolution Solution**  
***Beyond Belief***  
**January 19, 2020**

- Literal opportunity to come to the altar
- Not something we do to “get forgiveness” – there is no religious ritual that can accomplish that.
- It’s something we to do ...
  - To be reminded that we *are* already forgiven and to rejoice in that
  - To remember why and how we are forgiven (through Jesus’ body and blood)

- And to remind us that because we are forgiven we too can forgive
- Take the next few minutes to do that

Would you pray with me?

God, thank you for this time and this way to be reminded that, as great and as holy as you are, you were willing to go beyond yourself on our behalf because you loved us. And not just us, but this whole world that you made.

I pray that this would go beyond mere "head knowledge" and that the personal experience of being loved by You would become a force so strong in us that we cannot help but love like You do.

We know that is your will for us, so we ask for it in the authority that Jesus gave us.

Amen.

What a great day this is, right?

- It's a beautiful Sunday morning, which hasn't been the case for a couple of weeks.
- And the Chiefs are going to beat the Titans this afternoon and head to the Super Bowl in two weeks.

- Any Titans' fans here today?

It's also a great day because today is part three of our series *Resolution Solution*.<sup>i</sup>

And, if you're new with us or if you missed the

first two parts, or if you want to see this third part again (which I'm just sure you will), you can find all of three messages (and every other message we do) in the media section of our app and website.

## **A Quick Review**

Now, what we've done so far in this series is to try to change the question that most of us ask ourselves at the beginning of every new year. Whether we actually make a formal resolution or we just think about how we'd like things to be different in the next 12 months, the question we typically ask ourselves is ...

**“What should I do about *me*? How do I make *me* better?”**

- How do I get slimmer?
- How do I get stronger?

- How do I get smarter?
- How do I get out of debt?
- How do I make sure that my kids are moving in the right direction?"

And those are all worthy goals but we've said throughout this series that there is a bigger, broader and better question, a question that goes way beyond us.

And *that* question is ...

**"What should be done about *what's around me*?  
How can I make *the world* better?"**

"How can I make my neighborhood, my community, my whatever better?" ... because you and I really *do* have the potential to make the world – or at least *a slice of the world* – a better place.

That said, because this is not the kind of question that we typically ask ourselves at the beginning of the year or any other time, it's hard to know where to start. So, to help with that, we talked about two *additional* questions that bring a little clarity to us personally.

The first one is kind of an emotional question and some of us relate to it because that's how we're wired.

### **The question is ... “what breaks your heart?”**

A lot of things you see on the news are disturbing, and you think, “Man, somebody needs to do something about that.” But you just switch over to whatever you're binge watching right now and forget about it.

Or, somebody tells you a sad story about

someone and you think, “That’s too bad. I feel so sorry for them.” But you move on to whatever’s next.

But every once in a while you hear a story or you see a trend in culture, maybe in our community, maybe in our city, maybe in our state, maybe in our country, maybe somewhere else in the world – and it’s more than just a news item or a sad story. It really bothers you and you just can’t let go of it.

That’s because it’s doing something to your heart. It breaking your heart.

So “what breaks your heart?” is a good place to start when trying to figure out what you should do about what’s around you.

Now, the second clarifying question, as we saw last week, is kind of the opposite. It’s not emotional at all. It’s much more practical.

**“At the end of your life, what would you like people to line up and thank you for?”**

If all of the people you have come into contact with over the years came by your house in your final days and stopped in to say, “hey, you may not have even known me, but I want you to know that I am really thankful that you did <this> or did <that>” ...

What would “this” or “that” be? What would you like people to line up and thank you for at the end of your life?

Now, somebody pointed out to me after last Sunday that this question might be taken the wrong way – maybe as encouraging people to be prideful, like “I want everybody to line up and say how great I am because I did this or I did that.”

So just to be clear – and it think it will *become*



clear a bit later in this message – that is not what I'm encouraging. The purpose of the question is to help reveal what matters most to you *beyond* you (if there is anything).

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Now the problem with all of these questions – with both the focusing questions and the main question of “what needs to be done about what's around me?” ...

The problem with these questions is that, once you give an answer, and once you decide to do something ...

**It's going to cost you.**

- It's going to cost some time.
- It's going to cost some money.

- It's going to require you to say no to some other opportunities.
- It's probably going to require you to get out of your comfort zone.
- It might even take away from what you're doing with your family.

Because once you discover what it is you can do about what's around you and once you take a step of faith out into the great unknown ...

- Even though you're not super-resourced
- Even though you're not super-connected
- Even though you don't have the same capacity health-wise as you once did
- Even though you don't think you can really make a *big* difference, but you're

thinking, "I'm going to make a *little bit* of a difference" ...

Eventually, you're going to feel that tension of, "This is going to cost me. This is going to distract me from the other things that are *my life*."

And that's really hard because we don't by nature want to give up our lives. And as we said last week, we are all by nature, life preservers.

So, to help us out, as we saw last week, Jesus of Nazareth comes along and says to His followers and to us, in essence:

**"Whosoever devotes themselves to themselves, will have nothing *but* themselves to show for themselves."**

... which is incredibly sad.

- Because you don't want to get to the end of your life and have maintained the perfect weight, and the perfect schedule, and you never went in debt, *but you never did anything for anybody else.*
- Because at the end of your life, you will have leveraged your whole life for nothing but *you*. And Jesus says that is a total loss.

Fortunately, when Jesus said that, He also gave the antidote – the cure for a wasted life.

**He said, “But if you devote yourself to *more* than yourself, you’ll have *more* than yourself to show for yourself.”**

“You’ll get to the end of your life,” Jesus said, “and maybe people won’t literally line up and thank you but *you’ll* know and God will know that you made a difference.”

## Where Christians Go Wrong

Now, most of what we've said in the series so far applies to everybody. Even though we've been looking at what Jesus said and what the Bible says, this isn't just "a Christian thing" or "a religious thing."

Because many people throughout history – Christian and non – have gotten outside of themselves and given some of their time, and some of their resources, and done incredible things about what was around them.

For example, we saw a video earlier about Martin Luther King, Jr.. He was most definitely a Christian – a Baptist preacher no less. But many who later came to his aid and to the cause of Civil Rights were not religious at all.

So, what we've said to this point isn't just a

“Christian thing” – you can do this even if you’re an atheist!

But if you *are* a Christian, there is a piece of this that is very important for you and very important for me to understand; a piece that goes beyond having more than yourself to show for yourself.

Let me put it like this:

As Christians, if we’re not careful – and this is true of all religions but let’s just talk about us today ...

We Christians, if we’re not careful, have a tendency to substitute *private religious devotion* for *action*; to substitute *devotion* (the vertical dimension of faith) for *action* (the horizontal dimension).

If we’re not careful, we can become content

with just *believing*, and so content with believing *all the right things* that we'll think, "You know what? I believe Jesus is the son of God, I believe he rose from the dead, I believe the New Testament, I believe, I believe, I believe."

"I believe all the things I was taught to believe, so *me and God are good because I believe all the right things.*"

However, when you actually open up the New Testament and read about what it means to follow Jesus, you discover, as we're going to discover today, that Jesus has much higher expectations of us than that.

There is much more to being a Christian than just "believing."

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not talking about how to *become* a Christian or

how to *stay* a Christian.

This isn't about "you need to do this and don't do that to earn God's grace or remain in God's grace or avoid falling from grace" because salvation is by faith and faith alone. It comes wholly and completely by trusting in what Jesus did – all of which we visualized when we did communion.

But too many Christians stop there.

**Too many Christians are content merely to *believe* something rather than *do* something.**

And that's really, really bad according to Jesus.

He said, "If you hear these words of mine and don't *do* anything with them, you are like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And when the storm came, the whole thing fell down."



In addition, too many Christians – and this is true of the tradition in which I became a Christian ...

**Too many Christians are far more content with making a *point* than making a *difference*.**

And we Christians are really good at making a point, aren't we?

- We're really good at shaking our fingers at a TV screen.
- We're really good at shaking our fingers at culture.
- We're really good at shaking our fingers at all the things that are wrong in the world.

We make point, after point, after point, after point.

However, as we're about to discover, if all we do is make points – even if they're *right* – but don't make a difference, we are not very good Christians.

## **In Your Face**

And to see that, I want us to look at one of the most familiar passages in the entire New Testament. In fact, if you got married in a church, chances are the preacher read from this chapter of the Bible in your wedding.

Now, he or she didn't read the verses that we're about to look at because, frankly, they're kind of obnoxious and offensive.

You'll see what I mean.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 13, the Apostle Paul is writing to a group of Christians in the first-

century city of Corinth. And he's about to get in their face and he's going to be pretty intense about it because they were making the same kinds of mistakes that many Christians today make *and there were grave consequences to those mistakes.*

### **He starts by saying ...**

*If I ...*

... and he says "I" when he's really talking about *them* – and about you and me – because what's coming is going to be so offensive that he's trying the "soft sell" approach.

So instead of saying, "if you" he says "if I", but, really, he's talking about you and me if we're Christians.

### **He says ...**

*If I speak in the tongues of  
men ...*

And what he means by this (because of what comes before this in the letter) is, "if I had the supernatural ability to speak in multiple languages so that people from different parts of the world could understand me."

*If I speak in the tongues of  
men ...*

**And then, he goes even further to make the point ...**

*If I speak in the tongues of  
men or of angels ...*

"If on top of being able to speak to people from different parts of the world in their language without ever *studying* their language; if I was so gifted and so connected to God that God also gave me the ability to talk to the angels in angel language"

(whatever that is) ...

**“If I could do those incredible things ...**

*... but do not have love ...*

And this is that Greek word “agape” that, if you’ve been in church for a while, I’m sure you’ve heard about it.

The Greeks used this word to describe the kind of love that’s different from romantic love ... or parental and brotherly love ... or sexual love.

*Agape* is action-oriented love and other-centered love. It’s the *doing* kind love. It’s the love where you actually *do* something instead of just *feeling* something.

So Paul is saying “If I had this extraordinary connection with God where people looked at me like, ‘Oh, that’s amazing. Listen to him

pray. I mean, he's not like a one-handed worshiper, he's like a two-handed, all-in worshiper. It's like, it's intimidating to be around that guy because He's so connected to God.'"

Paul says, "If I had the most intimate, awe-inspiring prayer life and connection with God, but I don't do something as it relates to loving other people ...

**Then ...**

*I am only a resounding gong  
or a clanging cymbal. 1  
Corinthians 13:1 (NIV)*

"I'm just a bunch of obnoxious noise. In the end, that's all my worship and all my spiritual activity amounts to. Noise."

Now, again, if you're a Christian, you've heard this verse before so I'm guessing it

probably doesn't have the impact that it did when it was first delivered.

But I think when those Christians at Corinth – who were, by the way, incredibly spiritual and incredibly gifted; they had the vertical part down pat ...

I think when they read that statement, many would have thought, "How can he say that? Is Paul discounting the importance of our personal spiritual devotion to God?"

But he's not. What Paul is discounting is *stopping* there. What Paul is discounting is trying to measure your devotion to God by the vertical dimension while ignoring the horizontal.

If Paul were speaking to us today, I think he would say ...

- If the fullest expression of your Christianity is only in your private prayer life ...
- If it's only in the emotion and tears and the raising of hands during the worship songs ...
- If that's all it is ... if your Christianity stops there ...

As good and important and as necessary as all of that is, if it stops there, you need to understand that, from God's perspective ...

*IT'S. JUST. NOISE.*

And that had to sting those who were into worship and the "spooky spiritual stuff."

But they weren't the only ones with that problem.



So when Paul continues, he turns his sights to people who are more like me – more head-oriented, more intellectual.

### **He writes ...**

*And if I have the gift of  
prophecy, and can fathom all  
mysteries, and all knowledge*

...

And that word “prophecy” doesn’t mean telling the future. It means being able to discern deep truth and then explain and proclaim it to others ...

So, Paul is saying, “If you’re one of those Christians who’s got it all figured out ...”

- If you’re someone who, for everything that happens, you’re going “there’s a verse for that ... there’s a verse for that

... there's a verse for that" ...

- If you're one of those Christians who studies the Bible so much that if somebody says "John 11" you say "Lazarus" ...
- If you're a Christian who has it all figured out. You know the Old Testament, The New Testament, and all about the Book of Revelation, and the Second Coming and the colors of the horses everyone will be riding on.

I mean, you just know it all. If anybody wants to know anything about God and the Bible and Jesus and Christianity, you are the Bible answer woman or the answer man ...

And by the way, I'm not being mean or making fun in saying those things because this is the branch of Christianity from which I

come ... and for which I'm exceedingly grateful!

- We went to church Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night.
- We did Bible Study in small groups and on our own.
- We memorized scripture.
- We spent time figuring out how the first three chapters of Genesis trumped science.
- We studied the "signs of the times" of Jesus' return.
- And we believed He was coming back every time a Democrat was elected President. ☺

But Paul says, "If you're one of those Christians who are so educated and knowledgeable that you can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge" ...

And again, I think the people who first read this were probably a little put off by where Paul was going.

"He's not going to say that's unimportant, is he? He's not going to diss knowing the scriptures and being rooted in the Word, is he?"

And he's not.

What Paul is hammering against is *stopping* there because, if you do, it's still all about you and how smart you are.

**He continues ...**

*And if I have faith that can  
move mountains ...*

This is the person or sometimes the leader or the pastor who is sure that they're sure, that they're sure, that they're right.

And they can do their voice in such a way that everyone pays attention to whatever they say because it sounds like it's coming from the mouth of God.

And they're so confident, and you listen to them and you think, "Clearly, God speaks to them in a way that God doesn't speak to me."

Paul says, "Even if you are the kind person that, when you speak, people move. When you pray, God always seems to answer ..."

Now, wait a minute Paul. Are you saying that isn't important?

"No, I'm not saying that. It *is* important. But it's also *incomplete*."

**If you're that kind of person ...**

*... but do not have love ...*

Now, time out for a minute because I want you to notice something.

In just these few words, Paul has described the people that most of us think of as the most spiritual people we know, right? Probably the people most of us think we're supposed to be, if we're good and serious Christians.

And Paul is saying, "If you are that man or that woman, that's great. But if your spirituality does not also express itself in unconditional, servant-hearted, other-oriented *agape* love ... "

Now this is the really offensive part.

Paul says "If your Christianity doesn't also include that, you are... "

But, remember, he's soft selling it.

**So he says,**

*I am nothing.                      I*  
*Corinthians 13:2 (NIV)*

In other words ...

- You may be the Bible answer man or the Bible answer woman.
- You may pray prayers that are spellbinding and powerful.
- And you may be the most ferocious, faith-filled leader in the world.

But if you don't have love ...

*YOU. ARE. NOTHING.*

You're nobody special.

And your spiritual depth is meaningless. It's no good because it doesn't do *anybody else* any good.

But Paul isn't finished. There's a whole 'nother level comin'. It's extreme, almost crazy talk.

**He says,**

*And if I give all I possess to the  
poor ...*

And everyone is thinking "Okay, now this is a good thing, right? Benevolence is good, right?"

But Paul's not talking about living a lifestyle of



generosity or tithing or percentage giving or anything like that.

Paul's talking about where you go out and do something big, with trumpets and fanfare, to gain points with God or to be seen, where people everywhere go "Wow, did you hear about Paul? Did you hear about Paul? He just gave everything. Did you hear about Paul?"

And, once again, the emphasis is on the giver, not the receiver.

*If I give all that I possess to the poor ...*

... and now, Paul is going to get really extreme ...

**And if I ...**

*... give over my body to hardship that I may boast ... "*

Now, the word translated "hardship" in the past was sometimes translated "burned" or "sacrificed" – but more recent scholarship has determined that Paul is talking about a person selling themselves into slavery.

So, in other words, "if I am the most benevolent person in the history of benevolence, to the point that I even sold myself into slavery so I could give more money to the poor ..."

"If I made a big bodacious giant demonstration of my religious devotion to God ...

*But I do not have love, I gain  
nothing. 1 Corinthians  
13:3 (NIV)*

Wow.

If you're a Christian, no matter how spiritual and knowledgeable and even outwardly generous, if it's all about you, you are nothing and you *gain* nothing. Your faith is of no earthly value to you or anyone else.

That's harsh, isn't it?

But this is from the guy that knows. In fact, he was so *right*, God allowed him to write about half the New Testament. He knows what he's talking about.

And he's saying exactly what Jesus and the other apostles before Him said before him which is, in essence ...

**You've got to put your devotion in motion because ...**

If your devotion is *not* in motion, it's not what you think it is ...

Because devotion to God – and this is Christianity at its heart; this is where there's a fork in the road between us and everybody else ...

**Devotion to God is authenticated by love for others.**

## **Negative Consequences**

Now, if you're listening to all of this and you're not a Christian, I want to say something to you directly because this is where some of us may owe you an apology. This is probably why you left church. This is where many of us got it wrong.

But we didn't do it on purpose. It was how we were raised. It was how we were taught.

Most of us who could be labeled "evangelical

Christians" were part of a faith community where it was ...

- All about being good
- All about being sinless
- All about not having any bad habits
- And all about "how am I doing with God?"

... which is not a bad question to ask – don't hear what I'm not saying.

The problem was that we went to bed at night asking God to forgive us of our sins. So, every night, we're thinking "What sins did I commit today?"

And we thought of moral things and lying things and cheating things and "I raised my

voice" things and "I was disrespectful" things and "Oh, God, I did it again, I did it again. Please forgive me and help me so I don't do it again."

It was all "I, I, I, I, I."

And I can imagine the Lord was thinking, "Well, OK, but you know we're good, right? You believe in Jesus and trust in Him, so you know we *could* move beyond *you* in this conversation, right?"

So, what happened – and this gets into those consequences I mentioned earlier ...

Because ...

- Our faith went no further than private internal devotion
- And our faith pretty much stopped with

"How am I doing God?"

- And our faith was all about our attempt to personally be more godly ...

... what happened is that we unintentionally communicated to you and to the whole world ...

**"We *know* it all and we're *better* than y'all."**

We know it all ... "um, you shouldn't be doing that; we've got a verse for that."

And we're better than y'all.

- "We don't do *that*."
- "We don't go *there*."
- "We don't spend time with *those* people."

- “We’d never put that in *our* body; our body’s a temple.”

“And when y’all get all that straightened out, come be with us. We’d love to have you. It’d be fun, really.”

When Christians get confused and think that our devotion to God is to be measured in terms that primarily come back to ...

- “How am I doing?”
- And “am I breaking my bad habits?”
- And “am I getting my life together?”
- And “me, me, me ... I, I, I ...”

... when it ends there, then our message to the world is basically ...



- “We know it all, come join us and you can know it all, too.
- And we’re better than you all. Come join us but don’t come quite yet: you’ve got to work on cleaning up your act first, okay?”

If we communicate by our inaction *in* the world and our lack of love *for* the world that “we know it all and we’re better than y’all” ... then who in the world is going to be attracted to that?

That’s why Paul told Christians, “All those spiritual things you do are good. The vertical is important. *It just isn’t the end game.*”

“If you don’t love – if your devotion doesn’t go into motion – then you’re nothing and you gain nothing. And neither does anyone else.”

## Why We're Grateful

Now, let me try to come at this from a completely different angle – maybe a somewhat softer angle – and then we'll wrap this up.

**[SPACE] If you're a Christian, what are you most grateful for about God?**

Think about it.

Have you ever thought, "The thing I love most about Jesus – the thing I'm so grateful for about Him – is that He was tempted in all ways just as I am, and He never sinned. That's all I need: just to know that God is perfect and sinless and separate and holy."

Have you ever had trouble in your life, and you've stopped and prayed, "O God, my life's

a mess, but knowing that you're perfect and sinless and holy and so far above us, that's encouraging to me. I just thank you."

Is God's sinless perfection what you're most grateful for about God?

I don't think so.

If you're a Christian – if you know what it is to be saved by grace ...

**What you're most grateful for is God's *sacrificial intervention* on your behalf.**

That's what we sing about. That's what we worship about. That's what brings tears to our eyes.

It's not when we hear that Jesus is perfect – and He is – but it's not when we hear that Jesus is perfect that something rises up on the inside.

- What makes something rise up on the inside is when we hear that *a perfect God sent his perfect Son* into our imperfect world *for our benefit*.
- What brings tears to our eyes is that God chose to send his Son *for us* to atone for us and to overcome our sin.

It is God's *action*, it's God's *doing*, it's God's *intervention* that moves us and breaks down our resistance.

If just being "sinless" was enough, God would have looked at the world and at us and said, "Wow, somebody needs to do something about that mess. But I'm good, I'm perfect so never mind. Change the channel."

But God didn't. Instead, God *believed* something about us and then God *did*

something for us.

And your devotion to God and my devotion to God is incomplete until we put motion into our devotion.

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What if that had been the posture of the church in our country for the last 100 years or so?

What if the only thing people resisted about the church was the fact that we believe Jesus was the son of God and that He died and rose from the dead?

Because ...

- No one has resisted the church because the church loved too much.

- No one has resisted the church because we were too welcoming.
- No one has resisted the church because we were so willing to carry other people's burdens.
- No one resisted Jesus and the church, because we're so forgiving, and so open, and so gracious.

What people find easy to resist about me and you and Christians is that "we know it all and we're better than y'all."

And Paul said, "If that's your Christianity, if that's your approach to following Jesus? You're nothing. You're nothing. Because it doesn't do anyone any good but you."

So, you don't want to be that kind of Christian. I know you don't. And we don't want to be that

kind of church.

## Conclusion

<BAND GET INTO PLACE – 2 minutes left>

And that brings us back to our question,  
“What needs to be done not just about you  
but *what’s around you*?

What breaks your heart? How do you want to  
impact the world – your world – so that at  
least a few people would line up and thank  
you at the end of your life?

And are you willing to put some motion in your  
devotion?”

- You don’t have to quit your job to do that,  
but you’re probably going to have to quit  
something.

- You don't have to leave the country, but you will have to leave your comfort zone.
- You don't have to give all your money away, but you're probably going to have to start giving more than you currently give.
- And you don't have to stop thinking about and working on the vertical dimension of your spiritual life – and you shouldn't. But you will have to start including the horizontal in your thinking of what it means to be a true believer in and follower of Jesus.

A couple of months ago, we started singing a worship song called "Build My Life" and I asked the band if we could close out this message with it. And the reason I did is because it says exactly what we're talking about this morning.



That even though God is perfect and holy and righteous and powerful and all those God-things, what we rest in, what we build on is His love that took action on our behalf.

And then in response, we bring that love to those who are around us.

So, would you stand and let's sing that together?

And then I'll come back for a minute because I have something important I need to ask you to help with.

Here we go.

## **Worship Song – Build My Life (5)**

## **CLOSING COMMENTS (2)**

1. Next week ... closing out Resolution

Solution series, focus on getting specific about “what” you can do about what’s around you.

2. We have changed database software and that has unfortunately affected our electronic communications, i.e, our email, in several ways – none of them good.

a. First, if you have previously gotten regular emails from us but now you’re not, it’s not because we don’t love you or have stopped communicating. It’s because we’re in your spam folder so you should check that out.

b. Second, some of you have opted out of emails from us that don’t pertain to you but, because of the system change, you got opted out

of *everything* ... including the wonderful weekly email I send out that lets you know what's happening each Sunday.

c. So, if you'll look in your program right now, there is an information card that we'd really appreciate you filling out so that we can verify we have your correct email and also make sure you're getting the communications you want.

d. You can put that in the offering basket as you leave.

### 3. Speaking of offering ...

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> This message is based on Andy Stanley's message, Pro-Motion. Only it's better.

