

How We Think We Get The Good Life

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[0 : 00] Almost every human being on this planet is plagued with the assumption that within their reach is a good life.

A life that is happy. A life that is fulfilled. A life that is at peace. Every human being has the sense that that life is there, it's attainable, and all you need to do is earn a little bit more to get it.

All you need to do is work a little bit harder or save enough and then the good life can be yours. That is what every advert is telling you that you watch.

Everything on TV, everything you hear from the radio is somehow adding to that message that if you just did a little bit more and if you just got a little bit more and if you just bought our product, you would have the good life.

It's the dangling carrot that keeps everyone going frantically. And yet, no matter how hard we strive for that good life that the world is holding out for us to get, we never quite get it, do we?

[1 : 18] No matter how much of their stuff you buy, no matter how much money you earn, we never quite get that good life that we're trying to get.

And yet, we always keep trying. Just like that dangling carrot. You know, you've seen that picture, that dangling carrot off the donkey. And it keeps him going forward, but as he goes forward, it's still just out of his reach.

Well, that seems to be this good life, doesn't it? This good life that the world tries to sell us. Well, it might come as a surprise to you that one of the main themes throughout the Bible and God's story with humanity is the theme of having the good life.

Having a good life. In fact, it's right from the beginning when God first came to Abraham, that's what he said. I want to bless you. I want to give you a land. I want to give you promise.

I want to give you and your people a good life. And the story of the Bible is God seeking to give his people a good life.

[2 : 27] And the tantalizing truth of Scripture is that it's actually more within our reach than we think it is. The problem is that the way we are all trying to get the good life is all wrong.

We miss the point. And that principle that God wants us to experience the good life, the real good life, but we're looking for it in all the wrong places, that principle is actually at the very heart of these ancient farming laws that we're reading about this morning in Exodus 23 from verse 10 onwards.

So have that open in front of you. Remember, all of God's laws, and you should be convinced of this if you've been with us for the last few weeks, all of God's ancient laws to Israel, even though they don't directly apply to us because we're not ancient Israel, they still each have principles and something for us to get.

God is trying to say something through them, not just to Israel, but to us today. And it's the same with these laws that when we read the first time we think are so irrelevant to us.

But when we read them again and we get a little bit deeper into them, which we're going to do this morning, we realize that these laws actually challenge the very heart of how each of us think we get the good life.

[3 : 51] Because I promise you, each of us think that the life that we want is attainable through a particular recipe. That we get the good life in a particular way.

And so the first point I want us to consider is just that, how we think we get the good life. So the Israelites, at this point in Exodus, you know the story, what's happened so far.

They have seen the good life. They've seen it. But they've seen it from a distance. They've seen it in Egypt when they were slaves. They didn't experience it, but they saw the Egyptians experiencing it.

Remember, Egypt was probably the most wealthy kingdom at the time when they were there. And they saw people enjoying their wealth.

When they were slaves there, for centuries in Egypt, they saw the good life. They saw these rich Egyptians living in luxury in the Nile Delta.

[4 : 58] And really raking it in and enjoying stuff. And enjoying luxuries. And they always, as slaves, they would be working in the fields and looking on at their Egyptian masters, enjoying their wealth.

And they would be going home to their hovels and thinking, Wow, wouldn't it be great to be like that? Like so many people today do. They had seen the luxury, but now God had rescued them out of that slavery.

God had brought them to Sinai. And He had promised them that they were going to have their own land. In other words, now it was their turn. Now it was their turn to live the good life that they had been watching for centuries.

And they knew how. They knew just how. After having observed the Egyptians living it up, they knew how they were going to get this good life. They knew how they were going to get their good life.

And you know how it was? Farming. Farming was the key to getting rich. In the ancient world, that was it. I mean today, there's many ways that people try to get rich.

[6 : 09] Investing in property. Buying a second home. Buying a first home. Maybe trying your hand at some Bitcoin. Seeing if you strike it lucky there.

Or just investing in the stock market. Maybe going in for some high risk, high return yield bonds. These are all the different ways people are trying to get rich today.

And everybody's got their plan. Everybody's got their strategy. This is how I'm going to crack it. This is how I'm going to make my money. You know, I often hear when I'm talking with sort of richer people, they're like, how did so-and-so make his money?

Or how did so-and-so make his money? Oh, he's a real expert in business. That's how he made his money. Everybody's out to make their money, to crack their good life. And that's how they do it today.

Back then in ancient Israel, ancient Egypt, it was farming. You would get some land. You would get some laborers. And you would start to rake in the wealth.

[7 : 10] And you would start to live the good life. You would rise above poverty. And that's how you would get investment. It's farming. And so they were keen. They were here at Mount Sinai.

They had broken out of slavery in Egypt. They were ready to go into their land and start this good life. But first, they're here and they have to go through the law.

Right? That's the few chapters we've been in so far. God is giving them the law through Moses. And so they're patiently taking it in. This is what they've got to do if they want to be able to go to their land and live this good life.

It's kind of like when you're leaving for a party and your parents are checking. Do you have your phone with you? Yes, yes, mom. I've got my phone. Okay. Okay. You're going to be home by 11.

Yes, yes. Okay, good. Okay, can I go now? Do you have warm clothes? Yes, I've got warm. Can I go now? I don't know if you've been in that situation. But I think that's kind of the feeling that the Israelites are having now.

[8 : 11] It's like we want to go. We want to start farming. We want to get our land. And God's like, yes, but just before you go, are you going to uphold the value of life? Yes, yes, we will uphold the value. Are you going to restore what is lost?

Yes, are you going to look after the vulnerable? Yes, God. Are you going to have justice in the courts? Yes, we will. Can we go now? They're ready to go. Yes, we'll listen to your law, but can we go to our land?

But just before the law ends here in Exodus, God has one last thing to say. Oh, before you go, yes, God, I'm going to tell you how to farm.

What? Yes, don't overuse the land. Don't exploit your laborers. Take Sabbath breaks. Now, how do you think their reaction was?

This is probably not the stuff they were planning to do in order to get wealth. This is probably one area that they didn't want God to be involved in. No, this is our thing. Farming will be ours. We'll do it. We'll get our money.

[9 : 14] We'll make our money this way. But God now has laws around farming that would restrain their ability to get maximum wealth from it.

God is giving them restrictions on how to get rich. And they probably didn't receive that too well. He was kind of, they probably took it.

He was spoiling their fun. Yes, we'll do the court thing. We'll look after life. But this is our money you're talking about. Is God actually wanting to get involved in that? Probably in the attitude a lot of Christians have.

When, you know, yeah, we'll go to church. We'll listen to the sermons. We'll try to do the right thing. But my money's mine. I earned this. You know, this is, this is, God can't touch this.

God can't say, well, how I should spend this, right? It's still an attitude of a lot of God's people today. And it was certainly the attitude of God's people then. But what they didn't realize is that God was giving them these instructions for their good.

[10 : 15] Because God knew that what they thought was the route to the good life really wasn't. And that is why, as we look at these laws, we see that they specifically challenge how the Israelites thought that they would get rich.

How they assumed they would reach success. They had seen the Egyptians do it. They had seen the Egyptians with their land and with their workers maximizing agricultural output and appeasing the gods.

It seemed to help. They were very successful. That was the route to economic success in the ancient world. And that is why God gives His people these laws to challenge the way they thought they would get the good life.

They were to operate very differently. So let's have a look at what He says from verse 10 of Exodus 23. So this was a law that God gave specifically to the Israelites.

There was nothing like it in the other ancient nations where they would structure their agricultural life that it would give opportunities to even the poor and even nature, the animals, not to be left out.

[12 : 00] Not to be left out of the economy. But to be involved in it and to benefit from it. In other words, it was not to exploit.

It was not to over-exploit the land. It was not to over-exploit the workers. It was to pause and give everybody a chance. But what we need to realize is that in an ancient agricultural society, to stop every six years and to not cultivate your land was crazy talk.

It just made no economic sense. Let me put it in today's terms. Imagine your employer, you get a new job and your employer says, okay, we're going to pay you X and X salary per month.

That's great. But every six months, we're going to give your monthly salary to charity instead of to you. Is that okay? I mean, would you sign a contract where that was the restriction?

Where every six months, your next monthly salary would not go to you, but it would go to charity. That's essentially what God is asking the Israelites to do here. And in fact, when he elaborates on these laws in Leviticus, takes these laws and kind of expands them, and he reminds them of this Sabbath year law, every seventh year to not make money, they say to him, but how are we going to survive?

[13 : 30] And he answers them, I will look after you. Listen, trust me. Trust me. If you do this, I will make sure you get what you need. Just do it and trust me.

But it was very hard for them to do that. Because essentially, God is asking them to give up their income voluntarily for a whole year.

And that's a big thing. Just so that the poor can have an opportunity and the environment and nature can also have a break.

Look at the next one, verse 12. This is another law, which also made very little economic sense. If you want to make maximum money, this is not what you do.

Verse 12. Do your work for six days, but rest on the seventh day, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave as well as the resident alien may be refreshed.

[14 : 30] In other words, God is saying to his people, every week I want you to take a day where you are deliberately unproductive. What? But we've got to be productive. If we want to make money, if we want to live the good life, you know, we've got to keep producing.

We've got to keep working. No, you don't, God is saying. I want you to stop. Take a break. Be unproductive. But again, this made no economic sense.

But we know that it actually does make life sense, doesn't it? And behind it is the principle that God is telling his people, listen, you work in order to live.

You don't live in order to work. That's the principle that God wants his people to get you. Take a break. Don't become a machine where you think you have to work all the time because you don't live to work.

And then verse 13 is the next law he gives them. And this is also an agricultural law. It doesn't look like it. Pay strict attention to everything I have said to you. You must not invoke the names of other gods.

[15 : 39] They must not be heard on your lips. Now, why is this in a list of agricultural laws? Because that was one of the main ways you ensured that you had good harvests, is that you prayed to the right gods.

That's what the Egyptians did. It worked for them. And the Israelites knew that there was a spiritual world with spiritual forces that influenced physical things. And if they just hedge their bets, and yes, they'll follow Yahweh, the Israelite God, but they're also just going to make sure they put in a little few prayers with these other gods so that they get good harvests.

But God said, no, that's not how you're going to get the good life. And so these are the principles that God is giving His people that are going to restrain them from producing and reaching the good life the way they thought they were going to.

But as we go through these principles of not exploiting, working to live, not living to work, not relying and sacrificing to the gods of the nations, do you see why these principles are still so valid for us today?

Do you? In our world that wants everybody to be working at maximum productivity, and that's where people derive their value from, don't you see how these principles are so vital for us today in our busy world in 2023, where society wants us to work longer and longer hours, where society wants us to be more and more productive, to be machines, and where we eventually identify ourselves by how productive we are.

[17 : 26] And if we're not being productive, we don't feel like we're valuable. And we live in a society where the ultimate goal is to get ahead, to make your money, to be better than the next person.

And so if that's the goal, to make as much so that we can retire well, and we can be comfortable, well then we conveniently forget our responsibility to the poor, let alone our responsibility to nature.

And we conveniently overlook the amount of plastics that are filling the oceans, the amount of CO2 emissions that are going into the air, because we need to produce in order to get the good life.

And this is all the result of people trying to get the good life. And what do we do? We end up sacrificing to the gods of the world, don't we? Just as much as they did back then, we end up sacrificing to the gods of the age today.

Our sanity, our peace, even our families, with the endless desire and the push that the nations around us are pushing us just to become workaholics.

[18 : 37] And the result is not just ecological crisis when we treat the world as a ceaseless factory, but it sucks our life away, doesn't it?

It sucks our life away when that becomes our priority, when getting the good life and working so hard to get that good life, to get our family in a good position, to get us in a good, comfortable, safe position, when that becomes the idol and the goal, what it actually does is it sucks our very life away, our very soul.

Look again at verse 12. This is very interesting. I'll refer a little bit to the Hebrew. The original word here is interesting. Verse 12, it says, at the end of it, you must take this break, you must take a break, so that the son of your female slave, as well as the resident alien, may be refreshed.

That word refreshed in the original Hebrew literally means maybe given life or given soul. If you know the Hebrew word for soul, it's nefesh. That word is nafesh.

It's to be sold, to be filled with life again. And if you don't, if you keep on chasing after what the world can give you, then it sucks away your nefesh, your soul.

[20 : 01] And we do that, and it makes stress, and it causes family issues, and we can't do the things we know we should be doing, and then it inevitably ends up, if you're a Christian, drifting from God and His people, because you're just too busy for church right now.

Life is too busy. And we don't even, when we're caught up in that, we don't even stop and realize, surely this is not the way to the good life. Surely this is not the good life.

And yet we still go after that dangling carrot. No, I'm just going to work a little bit harder, save a little bit more, and then I'll have the good life. Well, that mistake is the mistake that Israel went on to make.

That's exactly, in the history of Israel, the mistake they went on to make. God wanted them to have the real good life. God promised them to give them this land, and this set of instructions by which they could actually get the good life, that the nations around them are chasing after, but can't get.

And He wanted, the idea was that once they're there in the land, and they're living according to His law, they are going to draw the nations to the good life that God can give. They're going to draw the nations to them.

[21 : 22] But do you know what happened? If you carry on reading the Bible and you look at the story, you realize they didn't actually believe God wanted them to have the good life. And they kept looking over the fence, seeing the other nations and going, you know, that's how to get the good life.

And they were then drawn to their gods. Instead of the nations being drawn to their God, Israel's God, the true God, they were drawn to the gods of the nations, because they believed that those, that was the way to get the good life.

They didn't believe God had that in store for them. And so you know what happened? As they got drawn to the gods of the nations, they ended up losing everything. When they went to exile.

So they lived in the land for about 490 years, and then they were taken off into exile, because in the course of those years, they lost trust in God to give them the good life, and they looked to what the world could give them.

They didn't trust God enough to keep these laws that God said would give them the good life. They didn't believe that. They, like so many people today, Christians included, looked at the world, and they still believed that that is the way to the good life, not God's instructions.

[22 : 43] And they didn't trust this. They didn't keep these laws. They didn't do the whole seventh year Sabbath thing, because it was too crazy. That surely wasn't the way to live the good life, to give up a year's worth of production.

And you know, that was actually one of the main reasons, according to Scripture, that they went into exile. Let me read to you some stuff from the Old Testament. Later on, when they went into exile, 2 Chronicles 36.

You don't have to turn there. It'll be on the screen behind me. 2 Chronicles 36, 20 to 21. This is the end of the books of Chronicles, the whole history of Israel and the land.

And right at the end, it says, He deported those who escaped from the sword to Babylon. Those were the enemies of God's people. And they became servants to Him and His sons until the rise of the Persian kingdom.

Now look at what it says in verse 21. This fulfilled the word of the Lord through Jeremiah, and the land enjoyed its Sabbath rest all the days of the desolation until 70 years were fulfilled.

[23 : 48] What's going on there? Why mention the Sabbaths when it's talking about Israel going into exile? Well, it's because God warned them that this would happen if they didn't follow these laws.

If they didn't trust Him for the good life, then they would go away for as long as they didn't give the land the Sabbath rest He commanded. He says this in Leviticus 26, 34 to 35.

Listen to what God warns them. Then the land will make up for its Sabbath years during the time it lies desolate while you are in the land of your enemies. At that time, the land will rest and make up for its Sabbaths.

As long as it lies desolate, it will have the rest it did not have during your Sabbaths when you lived there. This is very interesting. They were in exile.

Israel were for 70 years. You may or may not know that. They were in exile in the land of their enemies. 70 years is exactly one-seventh of the time they were in the land, 490 years, not obeying the Sabbath command.

[24 : 54] In other words, God exiled them for the amount of years that they were supposed to exercise this command every seven years to give a Sabbath to the land, and they didn't. In other words, exile happened because they failed to trust God's way to the good life and instead chose how the world says they will get it.

That is the problem. That was the whole cause of the exile. They didn't trust God's way to the good life, and instead they chose how the world says they will get the good life, and so do we.

Each one of us. One of the hardest things to do is to trust God's way to the good life and to reject the world around you and the voices around you telling you this is how you're going to get the good life.

Because you know, you hear that. You hear the world's propaganda about how you're going to have a happy life six days a week. You hear God's truth about how you're going to get a good life like for an hour on Sunday.

Who's going to win? This is why we need to spend more time in the Word, not just at church. Because this is truth. This is truth.

[26 : 10] The world is feeding you lies. The world is causing you to chase after promises it will never fulfill. And yet, just like the Israelites, we fail to trust God's way to the good life, and instead, we get enamored and caught up in the world's way of having the good life.

that's what happened to the Israelites, and that's why they lost everything. That's why they were exiled. But, that wasn't the end of the story. Because God promised that He was going to provide a way back for them.

Once they'd realized what they'd done. Once they realized that the world could not give them the good life, that the other nations could not, the gods of the other nations could not protect them, only in God could they get the good life.

Once they realized that God was going to give them a way back, and He was going to give them a way to have the true good life. A true way to the good life.

I want to read to you from Isaiah 55. It's a beautiful, after all these prophecies in Isaiah about how they're going to be taken into exile and lose everything, you've just, like an oasis in the desert, you've got this beautiful prophecy at the beginning of Isaiah 55 where God is actually pouring His heart out to them and basically saying to them, I want you to have a good life.

[27 : 33] Don't think I don't. I want you to enjoy life far more than you think. He says this, Isaiah 55, 1 to 3. But, He's also saying, but don't look for it in the wrong place.

That's your problem, Israel. Listen to what He says, Isaiah 55, come everyone who is thirsty, come to the water, and you without silver, come buy and eat, come buy wine and milk without silver and without cost.

Why do you spend silver on what is not food and your wages on what does not satisfy? He could just as well be saying this to us today, couldn't He? Why do you spend your money on the things that you think are going to make you happy and they do not satisfy you?

Listen carefully to me and eat what is good and you will enjoy the choicest of foods. Pay attention and come to me. Listen so that you will live.

You see what God is saying here? Don't chase after the way the world is trying to convince you that you'll be happy and have the good life because I can give you a better life than you could ever imagine.

[28 : 43] And so, second point I want us to consider is how we really get the good life. You see, we've seen how we think we get the good life. How Israel thought they were going to get the good life and how wrong they were.

But let's look at how we really get the good life. And basically, if you take the Bible's teaching and summarize it, the way you get the good life is by realizing that the good life consists in God, not in the stuff that He gives you.

That's how to get the good life. by realizing and really being convinced that the good life consists in God rather than the stuff He gives you. And that is why when you go to Exodus 23, our passage, if you're not there still, go there again and look at how the laws continue.

God commands a number of feasts from verse 14 to verse 19. So this is the positive side. He's saying, you know, don't do all the things you think are going to give you the good life.

Rather, this is the way you'll get the good life. Have a bunch of feasts. God commands these feasts to remind the people that their life does not consist in what they have and their happiness does not come from the stuff, but it comes from God Himself.

[30 : 15] So look at some of these feasts. Let's see how this plays out. Verse 15, observe the festival of unleavened bread. As I commanded you, you are to eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib because you came out of Egypt in that month.

No one is to appear before me empty-handed. Okay, so God is commanding them a feast in a particular month to remind them of when He rescued them out of Egypt and then He says, when you come to this feast, bring something.

It's like a giant Israelite bringing brai, you know? Just, you know, don't come empty-handed. But what's interesting is that you've got to ask why.

Why does God want them to bring something? Why does He not want them to come to this feast empty-handed? It's not that He needs it. He doesn't need the stuff from them.

But this phrase, coming empty-handed, it appears twice in Exodus, once here and once back in Exodus 3.21 where God is promising Moses that He's going to take the Israelites out of Egypt and He says these words, He says, and I will give these people such favor with the Egyptians that when you go, you will not go empty-handed.

[31 : 28] In other words, when they celebrated this feast of unleavened bread, it was to remember that God gave them their freedom and God gave them at every point along the road everything they had.

That's what the feast was meant to remember, that God did not leave them empty-handed, that God provided everything they needed. And that's what they were to stop in the franticness of life, trying to provide for themselves, they were to stop and remember, wait a minute, wait a minute, do you remember what God did for us?

He is our provider, I'm not my family's provider, God is. That was what the feast every year was meant to remind them of. But that wasn't the only feast. Have a look at verse 16.

Also observe the festival of harvest with the first fruits of your produce from what you sow in the field. Your first fruits, the festival of harvest, that was also called the festival of first fruits.

And if you look down to verse 19, he elaborates, bring the best of the first fruits of your land to the house of the Lord your God. So this festival was all about, and it was really difficult for the Israelites to do, to take the best parts of their harvest that was going to make them the most money and to sacrifice them to God instead of making money from them.

[32 : 55] They were to take the first fruits and the best of the first fruits. Again, God didn't need the harvest, but God was doing this for their good.

Why? Why is taking the best of their first fruits, their money, and giving it up to God, why was that for their good? Well, God wanted to discipline them to realize that God is more important than the stuff He gives them.

And they needed to realize that. And sometimes the only way to realize that is to give it up. It's the same as the Christian discipline of fasting or Lent, for that matter.

It's the principle of willingly giving up something and saying, it's an act of faith, saying to God, you know, you are more important. Coming, drawing closer to you is more important than this stuff that I'm giving up.

That was what that second festival was all about. But then there was a third festival, the end of verse 16, and observe the festival of ingathering at the end of the year when you gather your produce from the fields.

[33 : 59] That was right at the end of the harvest. They were to have another festival. And so these festivals were all farming-related festivals which were right at the beginning of the harvest and right at the end of the harvest.

In other words, it was a reminder that throughout the whole season of harvest, everything they had was actually from the hand of God. And these festivals at regular intervals in the Jewish calendar were to program into people's minds that to have the life that God intended for them is through relationship with Him rather than through pursuing things.

And it is exactly the same thing Jesus wants to teach us. See, when Jesus came, He had that same message in so many different ways to you and me.

Turn with me to John chapter 6. That was our New Testament reading. And let's see what He has to say to us about the good life that we all want to get.

So, just some context. Jesus had just miraculously fed 5,000 people all that they needed and more with this miracle of giving them bread and food when they were out in the wilderness.

[35 : 32] This was the beginning of John chapter 6. And then the next day, so then He goes, and then the next day these crowds catch up with Him and they say, give us more. We want more stuff, Jesus.

We've just seen that you can give us stuff. So, give us more stuff. Okay, that's what's going on here. So, let's see how Jesus responds to them. John 6, 35.

Okay, from verse 34. They said, so give us this bread always. See, they just realized Jesus can give us the stuff we want for a good life.

So, give us this stuff always. Look at His response to them. Verse 35. I am the bread of life. Jesus told them, no one who ever comes to Me will ever be hungry.

And no one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again. Do you see that what He's saying here is from the very same heart of God that we read in Isaiah 55? Where God says, come without money and I can give you so much more than you think.

[36 : 39] You know, don't chase after the things of the world. God said that in Isaiah 55. Jesus is saying that now. The same heart that they just, they want people to realize that I can, they're saying I can give you what you're looking for much more than the stuff you think you need.

How? How can Jesus do that? How can Jesus give us the good life that we're looking for much more than the stuff we think we need to have that good life?

Well, because Jesus can bring you to the giver Himself. The source of all the good stuff. Jesus, through His death on the cross and through taking the sins of His people and through connecting heaven and earth can bring you right to the very source of the good life itself.

That's why He said in John 10.10, I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full. I have come so that you may have life and have it abundantly.

And throughout the Bible we read that God wants you to have the good life. God wants you to be happy. God wants you to enjoy His gifts without limit but you really need to believe that.

[37 : 59] And I don't think a lot of Christians do because I think we nod our heads and we listen to sermons and we come to church and yet then we go out on Monday and we chase what the world can give us because we think that's where we'll be happy.

I don't think most Christians are convinced that God wants to give them what they're chasing after much more than they can get themselves but you really need to believe that.

You need to believe that Jesus is the way to the good life. That you're trying to get in all the other things that draw you away from Him. All the happiness you're trying to get in the things that keep you away from church and keep you away from the Bible and keep you away from spending time with God.

All those things Jesus is saying come on. You're trying to get life in all those things. You're trying to get happiness and I'm the bread. And He said the same thing to the woman at the well.

Remember? When she comes and she wants water. She needs water. And He's like I can give you living water. I can take you to the very source of the water. And He's saying the same thing to each of us.

[39 : 12] That the things you want in the world He's like I can bring you to the source. I can bring you to the giver. So that you won't even want the gifts. Because you've got the giver Himself.

That's what Jesus can do for you. He can bring you to the very source of the good life. life. And even though God wants to give you the good life with all the stuff.

Because God made some amazing things. This world is full of amazing enjoyable things. Broken, yes, because we're living under sin. And we're living in the broken world. But even in the broken world there's enjoyable things.

But they all come from God. And He made them for our enjoyment. But even though God wants to give you the good life with all the stuff, having God Himself is better. That's what He wants you to realize.

Having God Himself is better than all of it. And you know, because we're so enamored with the stuff, often God has to take it away before we realize that.

[40 : 14] Often God has to take the stuff that He actually wants you to enjoy away from you. Health and secure salary and the stuff that makes you happy. Often He has to take that away and go, hello, do you see me?

I've given you all this, but this is where you will find the life you're looking for. Just like He had to take the land away from Israel and lead them into exile before they could realize that He was the source of the good life.

He does the same to His people today. Because only when we realize that can we have the true good life of peace and rest that God made us for.

So in closing then, how do we train our minds to actually believe that? How do we train our hearts to really believe that God is the source, God is the way to the good life?

Well, I'll tell you how. Feasts and festivals. Not the Jewish feasts and festivals, but the principles behind them. You see, just as God told the Jews to have these feasts and festivals every year to remember and to program their minds to trust in Him, not their stuff, we also need to build into our lives ways of remembering God's provision.

- [41 : 34] A weekly Sabbath rest, for example, where we enjoy God's gifts and we remember that our lives are not based on our productivity, but on God's gracious provision, where we stop and we go, I don't need to be productive today, because my life does not consist in what I earn for myself.

My life consists in what God gives me, and I'm going to spend this day focusing on Him and not on the world. Also, the discipline of giving our first fruits, to remember that all we have actually belongs to God, God commands us to give of our first fruits.

God commands us to give our stuff to Him, of our stuff, the stuff that we earn. Now, this is an area we don't want God to touch, just like the Israelites didn't want Him to touch farming.

We don't want God to touch our money. No, I've earned that, that's my salary. I can do what I want with it, God. God's like, listen, I mean, I don't need it, but I want you to give it for your good.

not to spoil your fun, but for your good, because when you get into the discipline of giving money to God's work, that is actually the trick, and I can speak from experience, of ridding yourself of slavery to money, and the financial worry that comes with it, and freeing yourself to be generous with what you have, realizing that when I give to God, He makes sure I have what I need.

- [43 : 12] And when you get into that habit, you actually break free of the burden and the stress of money. If you don't believe me, try it, and you will be surprised at the results.

But ultimately, we feast by meditating on the gospel of Jesus Christ. We spend time in God's word, with God's people, even when it costs us to do that.

Those are our feasts things, which remind us of God's lavish love for us. Because we are so in need of being convinced over and over again that God actually wants the best for us.

We don't believe it, and so the way to remember it is to look back at Jesus, to look at the gospel, and see how much God gave for us so that we could come to Him.

And as we look at the gospel, we remember as Paul teaches in Romans 8 32, He who did not even spare His own Son, but offered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him give us all things?

- [44 : 22] If God gave His own Son for us, obviously He wants to give you all things. You've just got to believe that, and we get to believe that as we meditate on the gospel. That is what causes us to find our rest truly in God, and that is what causes us to truly trust in His provision both for the needs of this life and for the way to the ultimate good life that God has planned for His people in eternity.

And so let us do that now. Let us feast together on the gospel. Let's pray. Lord, we confess to You, forgive us, Lord, and change our minds and help us to truly believe that You are the source of our life and help us to pattern our life after that and to not be taken in by the empty promises of the world but to come to You and truly to feed on what You give us and to rest in

You, to be happy in You, and to find the true good life in You. Help us to do that in this coming week. In Jesus' name. Amen.