

Four Things God Wants Us to Lift Up (Part 3)

by Bayless Conley

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Hello, my friend. Thank you for joining me, and I want to ask you something. If you can, and hopefully you're able to do this, why not sit down and just invest the next 30 minutes with me? Let's get into the Word of God together. I realize that sometimes, we're interested in something, but we're washing the dishes while we're doing it. We're working on something while we're doing it. We're scrolling through social media and kind of listening out of one ear, occasionally looking out of one eye. We really miss some key things that we should get. God's Word should have our undivided attention. In the book of Proverbs, it says that God said, "Attend to My Word. Keep it in the midst of your heart. Don't let it depart from before your eyes. Incline your ears to it. It's life to those who find it and health to all their flesh."

So, let's give attention. Let's not let it depart from our eyes. Let's incline our ear. Let's keep it in the midst of our hearts. Keep it as our central focus. I believe if you'll do that with me over the next few minutes, as I just share some thoughts from the Word of God with you that can transform your life. It really just takes the Holy Spirit whispering to your heart a truth from the Bible that can change your whole trajectory in life. It can change everything when the Spirit of God illuminates something to you. We have, over the last few messages, been talking about things that God, specifically in His Word, wants us to lift up.

He has told us in His Word that we're to lift up our voices in praise and thanksgiving, to lift up our voice in prayer, and to lift up our voice in testimony as we tell others about Christ. We talked about how we're told to lift up our hands as a sign of agreement to God's Word in worship and in a sign of faith in the New Testament. The apostle Paul said, "I desire that men everywhere lift up holy hands as they pray without wrath and without doubting." So, there are things that we are to lift up. We're to lift up our voice in prayer, lift up our voice in praise, lift up our voice in thanksgiving, and lift up our hands to the Lord. We are told to lift up our souls to the Lord. We spent quite a bit of time talking about that. If you didn't get that particular message, you ought to go back. It's easy to find. Go to our YouTube channel or any of our other social media platforms, our church website, and hopefully find those things because it's worth listening to.

We began talking last time about the fact that God commands us and tells us to lift up our eyes. He wants us to see several things. Now, I began the series by saying there are four things. Then I said, "Well, we actually have five." Well, there are four, but this last one, when I get to it in a few moments, is just so significant. It sort of deserves a category all its own. So, you could say five things, but it actually is a part of this fourth one, really. Lifting up our eyes. Number one, we're to lift up our eyes to see the harvest fields. Jesus is there at the well of Sychar. He has been ministering to the woman who's had five husbands. She's living with a guy now who she is not married to. She was hungering after God because you can listen to her talk. She said, "I know when the Messiah comes, He is going to tell us all things." To me, that says, "Hey, I know my life is messed up, but they tell us in synagogue, they tell us in church that the Messiah is going to have the answers. He's going to set everything right. Well, I need to be set right in my thinking. I have so many questions. I never set out on any of these marriages to have the thing fold and be destroyed."

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Nobody gets married thinking that it's going to self-destruct, but it has self-destructed for her, or the marriages have dissolved five times. Finally, she says, "Why even try? I'm just going to live with a guy." Jesus revealed the secrets of her heart. He revealed Himself to her as the Messiah. She's the first one where He actually revealed Himself, outside of His disciples, really, that He was the Messiah. She runs into town, tells everybody and the whole town comes out. As this massive humanity is moving toward Jesus, He says to His disciples there at the well, "Lift up your eyes and look at the harvest field. The harvest is white, and it's ready. It's ready to thrust in the sickle. It's ready to be reaped." He's talking about humanity. Jesus said, "Hey, don't say certain months are going to happen, and then the harvest is going to come." He says, "Look, the harvest is right now." He's talking about people coming into the Kingdom. There is always this thought, "Well, God did it in the past. You should have been here. We had such a move of God. Oh, the way that God moved, and we had a revival. We know God's going to do it again."

It's sort of like when Jesus is talking to Martha about her brother Lazarus, who died. He said, "Martha, I am the resurrection. I am the life." She said, "Lord, if you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died. I know that one day, the resurrection is going to come." Martha had faith in the past. She had faith for the future, but she didn't have any faith for right now. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." I think God wants us to lift up our eyes because there is ripened grain all around us. Some people, every day, walk through fields of ripened grain. There are people who are ready to be reaped and come into the kingdom of God to give their lives to Jesus. Someone just needs to talk to them. Now, I believe in praying, and I'll talk a little bit about that probably in a few minutes. We need to talk to God about men, certainly. But then we need to go out and talk to men about God. We begin by talking to God about the souls of men. That He would prepare their hearts and make them ready and prepare the way and to give us the words to say and give us the right timing. Then, we need to go out and say, "God, here I am. Send me." Jesus said, "Hey, the harvest is great. The labors are few. Pray the Lord of the harvest thrust out labors into the harvest." Jesus did say that.

We do need to pray that God would send out labors into the harvest. Talking about humanity that needs to come into the kingdom of God. But do you know what the very next thing He said was? After He said, "Pray to the Lord of the harvest that He sends out labors into the harvest." The next thing Jesus said, the very next words out of His mouth, "You go, therefore." So, we need to pray that God will send people. We need to say, "Lord, I'm in line. Send me. I'm ready to go. I'm going to go to the local market. I'm going to talk to somebody about Jesus. I'm going to I'm going to go talk to somebody at the gym who's running on the treadmill next to me. I'm going to talk to a neighbor. I'm going to talk to somebody, even a stranger." Some of you just need to get bold, step out, and do it. I know it's just way out of your comfort zone. It's out of my comfort zone, too. But when I feel God prompting me to do something, I just do it. I was in an airport in Louisiana just a matter of weeks ago. As I'm in the airport, I see this woman walking. She has a severe limp, and I just felt prompted. I went up to her and said, "Ma'am, excuse me." She turned around, a little startled. I said, "God wants me to pray for you. What can I pray for?" I put my hands out. She took my hands and said, "I want to be healed." I said, "Okay, let's pray." We had a prayer meeting right there. God touched this woman, and then she squeezed me so tight I thought she was going to break my spine.

There are opportunities around us all the time, whether it's in an airport or across the fence to your neighbor. We need to tell somebody about Jesus. It's interesting when Jesus said, "Don't say the harvest is such and such months; the harvest is ripe." I believe that's true in every generation. Don't get me wrong. I believe that there are seasons when God's Spirit moves in unique and profound ways. I do believe that. We are praying for an awakening in our communities and an awakening in our land, and actually, a global awakening wherever

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you are right now. You need to know we're praying for an awakening where people will be awakened to the fact that there is a heaven to gain, a hell to shun, that sin is keeping them separated from God, and that Jesus Christ is the only answer, that He died on the cross for the sin of the world. He was raised from the dead for their justification. We're praying for an awakening in the world. We're praying for a revival in the church, but there is still a ripe harvest field around us all the time. There are some people where the seeds of the gospel have been sown into their lives. The people have prayed, and the reign of the Holy Spirit has fallen upon their hearts and they are ready. Someone needs to just come, thrust in the sickle, and reap that harvest.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus is depicted as sitting on a cloud with a crown on His head, and in His hand is a sharp sickle. An angel cries out, saying, "Thrust in the sickle for the harvest of the earth is ripe." Well, that sickle is the church in the hands of Jesus. Jesus is going to reap the harvest of the earth, but we're the ones that He reaps it through. We're the ones who preach the gospel. The Lord has chosen through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe. We're messengers of God. The Bible says we are ambassadors for God. We need to tell people that they've already been reconciled to God, that the work has been done, and the gift is available to them, the gift of salvation, if they would only repent of their sins and receive it. I was preaching in a particular country once. I was doing a minister's meeting, and the room was filled with pastors. It was in a major city of that country where I was doing the conference. The message I was preaching was about replacing wrong thinking. Wrong thinking leads to wrong believing. Sometimes, one wrong thought can keep the mercy of God from reaching us. It's true.

If you think that salvation is earned through your good works, well, friend, that is wrong thinking, and that needs to be replaced; that needs to be removed because it is not by our good works that we're saved. It's by the grace of God. It is by grace through faith that you're saved, not of works, lest anyone should boast. So, I was just dealing with different areas that are common among ministers that we tend to hold to. It's a wrong thought. It literally keeps an expression of the Holy Spirit from coming forth in our lives and ministries. One of the thoughts I was dealing with in that particular meeting was that people are always thinking, ministers are thinking, "Well, the revival is going to come. The harvest is going to come." It's like when Jesus said, "Hey, stop saying the harvest is months and months out. It's ripe."

So, I was saying that there are people in your city, in your country, just like in mine, who are ready and want to accept Jesus. We need to share the gospel with them. We need to pray certainly that God's Spirit will move in a profound way and that great things will happen, but we can't ignore the harvest that's around us. I said we have to deal with that thought. It's wrong. Sometimes, it keeps us from evangelizing. Anyway, when I got done, one of the local pastors came up, and he was quite upset. He said, "You Americans think you know everything." I said, "Excuse me, what do you mean?" He says, "You're saying that it's harvest time now. You don't know anything about our country. No, this is the time to pray." I said, "I agree. It's time to pray. It's always time to pray, but there is a harvest around you." He was he was from that city. He had his church in that city. I said, "There are people who want to be saved." He says, "You're wrong. You think you understand, but this is not the time to evangelize. You're wrong. God is not doing that now." He just wouldn't listen to me. I said, "Listen, please. I have a meeting tonight." We had actually leased out a hall in his town, and we'd advertise the meeting. I said, "Look, come out tonight, please. I'll save you a seat in the front row. Come out and just see what God might do in your city." He refused, and he walked away. He didn't come to the meeting that night.

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All right, right there. It was just like a block away from where we were holding the pastor's meeting. It was very close to his church. I got there, and the place was absolutely jammed. There wasn't a seat left in the building. We sang a couple of songs. I got up, and I preached an encouraging message. I preached a very strong salvation message and then asked people who wanted to accept Christ, people who were not saved, who knew that if they died, they wouldn't go to heaven, who wanted to accept and embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to come forward. The entire front of that building was packed all the way across. It's like maybe 40 feet across and about five or six feet deep. It was just packed with people who came up there, prayed, and accepted Christ as their Savior. They were people in this man's neighborhood and people in his community. He had this wrong thought. "No, God's not doing anything. This is not happening now." No, we need to lift up our eyes and look on the harvest fields that are ripe all around us. People are hungry.

They're looking for something that's not found in drugs or in sex. They can't find it in money. They won't find it in their good works. They won't find it in their extreme sports. They're not going to find it in the bottom of a bottle of alcohol. Jesus is the answer. We need to lift up our eyes. The book of James actually deals with this very thing. I'm going to back up a few verses because it's interesting what James writes about. We need to recall that this letter is actually written to believers. It's not written to the world. It's written to believers. I will grant you the fact that the first verses I read can be looked at in several different ways. I think both ways are valid. But I want to just share a thought with you that I believe is valid because of the context of the whole chapter and especially because of the verses that directly follow this. Here it says in James 5:1 NKJV. Again written to Christians,

¹ Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!

Now, he's not writing to the rich in the world, though it certainly could be applied to that. As you read the context, it maybe could be applied to the rich who are abusing their servants and employers who are abusing their employees. There is a wonderful truth there that I think is worthy of contemplation, but I want to look at it in a different way. Just thinking, "Okay, this came exclusively into a Christian setting, into a Christian community." James 5:1–3 NKJV,

¹ Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!

² Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

So, they've heaped up treasure. They've been greedy. They've kept it for themselves. Then, he says this in James 5:4–6 NKJV,

⁴ Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. ⁵ You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

So certainly, there is an obvious on the surface meaning here that somebody is cheating their workers. Listen, there will be a day of reckoning for all of that. There certainly will be. Judgment will certainly come, and everything's going to be on the books. Nothing is going to be hidden. It's all going to come out. Some people are in for a terrible day of judgment because they've cheated people, and they've spent everything on themselves, and they've grown fat in their

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own hearts and their own lives. Well, at the expense of other people, we understand that. If you look at this as a metaphorical truth, and I share it for this reason, because the next thing he says is, "Therefore, be patient, brethren." Again, "brethren," he's writing to Christians, not to those outside of the church. James 5:7–8 NKJV,

⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. ⁸ You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

The early and the latter rain in Scripture are types and shadows for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The early rain came into the land of Israel, and it would prepare and soften the ground so that they could plant the seed. The latter rain came just before harvest, and it would ripen the harvest so they could thrust in the sickle and reap the harvest. Now, here it says, "See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth." He's using an analogy there. My friend, God is the farmer waiting for the precious fruit of the earth. Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes on the harvest fields. They're white for harvest." Jesus said, "The harvest is great. The laborers are few. Pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out laborers into His harvest." Specifically talking about reaching lost people with the gospel. So here, James is saying, "Hey, the Lord is coming soon. But the reason He hasn't come, the only reason is the Father is waiting for the precious fruit of the earth. He's waiting for this end time harvest. He waits for the precious fruit of the earth." Now, that's not just the fruit of the United States where I live. It's not just the fruit of Australia. It's not just the fruit of Indonesia. It's not just the fruit of Borneo. It's not just the fruit of Spain or of Europe or the fruit of Africa or the fruit of Central America or the fruit of the Pacific Islands.

He's waiting for the precious fruit of the earth. There will be a worldwide awakening and a worldwide reaping of people who will come into the kingdom of God. The Bible says that God is not willing that any perish but that all come to repentance. Don't think that the Lord is slack concerning His promise of the Lord's return. What is He waiting for? He's giving people an opportunity to be saved. God's heart is that people be saved. So, understanding that here God is waiting for the precious fruit of the earth. He said in the previous verses to those who are wealthy in the church, those who have access to resources that the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields kept back by fraud cry out. The cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabbath. If we tie that to what directly follows and actually on down the chapter, it still talks about that as well. Using Elijah, talking about people being saved from a multitude of sin. Anyway, the analogy continues to run through. Elijah prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crop.

Later on, in the same chapter, the theme goes throughout. If I have been blessed by God and I have access to resources, and I don't give that into the gospel, but that money just stays in my accounts. It stays in my bank. I'm wasteful. Jesus said, "Hey, your riches are corroded. They're rusted. Your garments are moth-eaten. They're going to cry out against you on the day of judgment." He said that two things will cry out. Literally, the wages of the laborers cry out, and the laborers themselves cry out. There are undesignated funds, perhaps billions of dollars worldwide, that people who are followers of Jesus have access to great wealth. For some reason, they think they're going to take it with them. But God is calling them, and they've never caught sight of their higher purpose to support the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's why God gave you business savvy. Yes, you can enjoy the fruit of your labors. There's nothing wrong with that. He gives us virtually all things to enjoy. But the main reason God makes us successful is so that we can support the gospel. There are funds, billions of dollars, and in some people's cases, hundreds of dollars; in other people's cases, thousands, some people, millions that need

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to be sown into missions, needs to be sown into the work of the local church so that those who are called can go out and reap the harvest.

I know there are missionaries in some regions of the world. They're crying out to God. They say, "God, you've given me this vision. You've given me these tools, but I don't have the resources to carry it out." Those resources are sitting in some bank account or some investment thing. The believer who owns them is going to die. There are going to be wicked relatives who are going to eat that up, or it's going to be eaten up by bankruptcy courts. It's never going to make its way into the gospel. Friend, the highest purpose of our being blessed is to bless others through supporting the gospel. How can they believe in Him in whom they've not heard? How can they hear without a preacher? How can they preach unless they're sent? How do we send them? Well, we send them by our prayers. Pray to the Lord of the harvest that He sends out laborers in the harvest. We send them with our finances as well. So, hey, businessman, businesswoman, you who have been blessed, you who found grace and mercy in Christ Jesus. I want to challenge you.

Do something with what God has blessed you with, with the finances with which God has blessed you. We have a vision that's overflowing. We don't have enough to do everything that's on our heart to do. I think we're in some 11 languages right now. We go to regions around the world with these gospel broadcasts, sharing the Word of God with people. The response is staggering. There are so many other regions of the world that we would like to broadcast in and languages that we would like to do it. We just don't have the funds. We have the vision. We just don't have the funds to do it all. There are some who are so extremely blessed. You just need to pray, "God, where are You calling me to sow it?" I'm not saying—we would love for you to sow it here. We will use it. It is it is sacred, and we'll stand before God by how we treat the finances that He brings into this ministry. But we're certainly not the only ones. Learn the higher purpose of your prosperity. It's to support the gospel of Jesus Christ. Lift up your eyes and look on the harvest field.

I've only have a few minutes left. I'm going to get to this final one, and it's certainly tied to lift up your eyes. But it's so important. It's really a category all on its own. He said here in James that the coming of the Lord is at hand. "Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand." The final thing that we need to lift up our eyes and look for is the return of Jesus. Jesus is coming soon. He said Himself in the book of Revelation, "I'm coming quickly." If you have any knowledge of Bible end times prophecy, you just can't dismiss the daily headlines. My friend, an end time clock began ticking when Israel became a nation. It was prophesied the rebirth of Israel, and it happened in 1948. The end time clock began to tick. We're not just in the last days. We are in the final moments of the last days.

In Matthew 24 and Luke 21, we have the account of the disciples asking for clarity. They're speaking to Jesus about His statements regarding the destruction of the temple, His coming, and the end of the age. "When is it going to be?" Jesus knew that their perception was limited. At the time, they had no concept of His second coming. He knew that very soon, they would understand about His second coming. So, He spoke to them, knowing that in the future, they would have a fuller perspective and understanding. He spoke to them about that. He also spoke to them about the events that would immediately precede the destruction of the temple, which occurred in 70 A.D. When Titus, the Roman general, came in and sacked Jerusalem, razed the temple to the ground, and burned it. Then, He spoke of events as well that would immediately precede His second coming. Though they didn't realize it at the time, that's what He was speaking of. You can read in those two chapters, Luke 21, Matthew 24. He said there'd be wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, incurable diseases and plagues,

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persecution of the church, the rise of false religions, global turmoil, and earthquakes in various places.

The gospel of the kingdom being preached in every single, Greek word, ethnos to every language group, and that's happening right now. That will happen in my lifetime. That's never been possible before in the history of the world. Like I said, the final seconds are ticking away before Christ returns. Now, Jesus said, "When these things begin to happen," He said it in Luke 21, I believe verse 28. "When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads because the redemption draws near, and He will be seen coming in great power on the clouds and in great glory." You don't want to be caught with your life in disarray. You don't want to be caught with undesigned funds that God blessed you with that should have been sown into the kingdom of God. My friend, Jesus is coming soon. The only thing you take with you is who you are, your character, your relationship with God, and the precious souls that we reach and touch for Jesus Christ. I think we need to lift up our eyes and look because of the signs of the times, because of the things that Jesus said, and because He's coming soon. We need to be busy about the Master's business.

If you're watching me, and you've confessed Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and you're backslidden, listen. Repent, get right with God. Jesus is coming soon, and you want to be ready to meet Him. Friend, He loves you, but you don't want to be punished with the wicked. You need to repent. If you're a believer, you need to live like it. There needs to be a difference between your life and the lives of those in the world around you. Wake up, sleeper. If there's a field full of dead bodies, and I go lay down and fall asleep among them. Hey, nobody can tell that I'm not dead. If you're acting just like the spiritually lost people around you, nobody can tell the difference. They don't know that you have eternal life beating in your heart. If you're in sin, my brother, my sister, you need to repent. Get your behind in church, start loving Jesus, start giving of your finances to the kingdom, and start living for Him. There is nothing else worthy in this whole world. Do you know what? I could go on and on, but I'm going to stop right here. I hope that you've gotten something out of this. I have preached my heart out to you. I love you. Jesus loves you. We'll talk to you again.

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