

The Eye Witness Of Christ

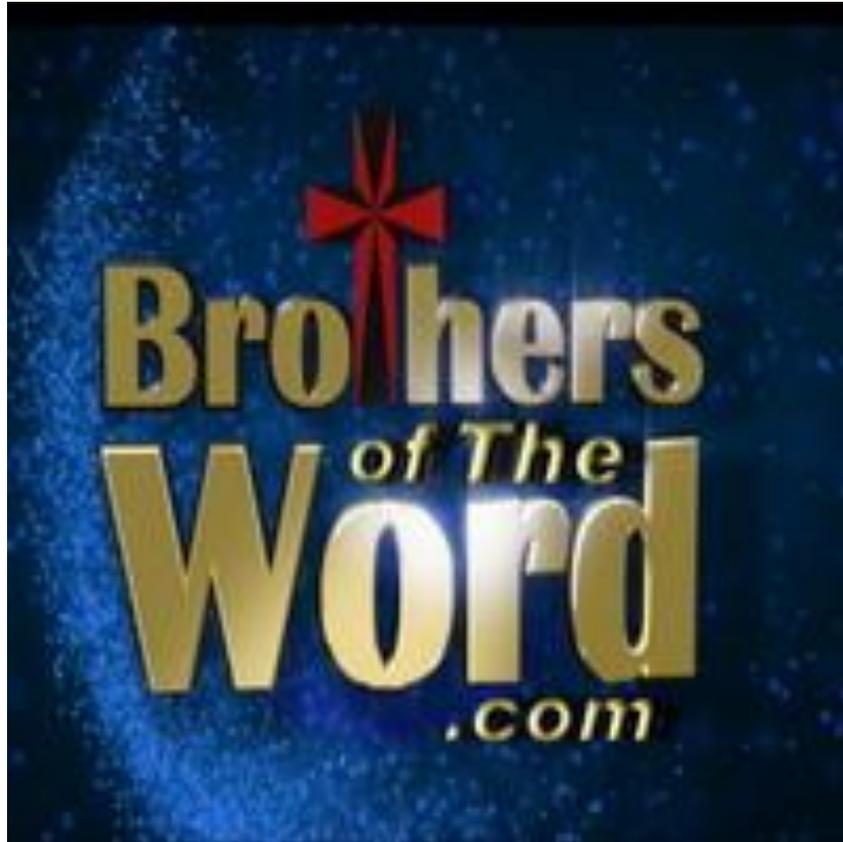
Sermon Title: **The Eye Witness Of Christ**

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Speaker: **Byron Green**

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Byron Green: It's easy to like Jesus, but it's hard to love like Jesus.

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(Music Playing: 00:00:19 - 00:00:47)

And now for 6527, "The Eye Witness Of Christ".

Byron Green: Welcome to Brothers of The Word because brother, you need the word. So, do your sisters and so do I. If I can just talk, one-tenth is good as you sang, I'll have a speech, I'll have all kinds of appointments. I am not a really professional speaker. I'm a teacher. I love teaching teachers and -- so, I started out as a biology teacher, then a principal, and a superintendent. I've been in private education most of my life other than working for the State Department in Afghanistan for five years, and that was an experience.

And as you might think, "Wow! Why would you go there?" Because as you said, I'm unusual. I mean, you hit the nail with the head, right Dexter, James? I'm unusual I had to go to Afghanistan. So, my challenge this morning is to stay within a time limit. So, I'm going to do my best. Amen?

Do I get extra points if you get out in 15 minutes? I've got enough for about two hours here. I'm married. I have a daughter, 37, a son, 31. I think I got their ages right and a stepson who just graduated from high school and I had another stepson that we lost in December. He was 15 and it's been a rough seven or eight months. He took his own life and it makes no sense, but it's starting to make sense and I'll talk to you about that a little bit later.

So, this morning, I'm going to talk about one of the Gospels, Gospel of John. For many years being in a church and so on, the pastor, a friend will say, "If you want to know what's going on, if you're challenged about what you believe, why don't you just pick up the Book of John and read it?"

Now, how many of you read the whole Book of John in the last week, two weeks, one month? How about the last year, you've read the whole Book of John? Good job. Good job.

Now, why is that important? Because we as people tend to believe what we have evidence for and we tend to believe people whom we trust. So, maybe you grew up believing in Jesus and you had faith and somebody said, "Just believe in Jesus. It'll all be good. Just have faith sister, it'll be good. It'll be good." But it's much better than just believing and having faith because we have eye witness accounts of Jesus.

Now, the people will criticize our faith -- probably haven't read the Book of John. Unfortunately, some of them are kids that when they were eight and twelve and thirteen and fourteen, they trusted Jesus, they thought. Anyone off to college is somebody who talked them out of what they believe. Well, maybe nobody ever talked to them into it. Why don't you look at the Gospel of John and ask your friends to -- and see what John says about this.

Now, John was old when he wrote. He actually didn't write. The scholar say that John probably dictated this. He did no Greek. He was a fisherman. Peter was dead. Paul was dead. All the epistles have been written. John wrote John. John wrote for 2nd and 3rd John, but John was old. Do you think because he was blind, he probably had to dictate it?

Now, I want you to stop and think with me just a minute. I'm going to kind of wait into something you might not have thought of lately. There's an old covenant we call Old Testament and a New Testament, new covenant. How does that happen?

Put yourself in the sandals of a Jewish person back in Jesus' time and you have just found out that this guy that called himself God and Jesus was crucified, and you heard that He rose from the dead. In fact, you talked to people that were there at the crucifixion and you might have been one like His brother, James. You might have been one of them. There is no New Testament at that time. The only word that is around is Jesus is the Word, and who wrote that? The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, right?

Look at the first verse in John. Look at the first verse. John wrote that. How did he know? Because he followed Jesus around. Jesus didn't have to prove to him who He was. He just followed Jesus around and watched, and John said in his Gospel in John 20:31, "These things I have written, so that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah; and by believing you might have life everlasting."

What things has he written about? What things? Read John. You got an eye witness account. I'm going to give you an eye witness account or something in a few minutes and you're going to believe me. So, here is John. He's old, buddies are dead. He's got to die and someone says, "John, you need to write the stuff down. It's important." There's John. One of the four Gospels.

From a fisherman, you think God can't use you? How many people have come to Christ for the Book of John? Think about the millions hiding that New Testament around in China, in South Vietnam or Vietnam now. They're hiding that New Testament. The Book of John comes alive with them.

By the way, I've got from God's Healing, Miracle Ocean on before I got out here. (00:06:23) and it's so great right up into me. So, I'm, "I'm ready to go." All right, so this Gospel is a very important Gospel, but you got to think about what happened there at the end of his life, okay? So, remember, John followed Jesus around doing all of His work, His six miracles. In fact, John is about six miracles. It's really about -- he did a lot more. John said there's many things that he did that can't be contained in a book, but there are six. I don't know if I remember them all. There's water to wine, healing of the no woman's son, raising of Lazarus, healing of the blind man, and another one. Six of them. And these were the events and signs that John talked about to illustrate that this guy is real, okay?

Read it. But I want you to read it differently when you read it. I'm going to tell you this at the end, okay? I'm going to challenge you at the end. I want you to read it like, "This guy was really an eye witness." He was there. It will take on new meaning to you.

Now, remember there was no New Testament back then. All of the Christians had nothing to read except what? The Old Testament, and what's it all about? 613 commandments and 4,000 names that you dread to get to and you're reading the whole

Bible. There are 10 commandments in there. What are those all about? Do you suppose to follow those? Are you suppose to follow those? Who are they written to? Participate with me here. Who were those 10 commandments given to, for whom? The Jews, the Israelites. Are they had to do sacrifices on all of these? Every time they sin, there had to be a blood atonement?

And then, this new guy comes along that claims to be God and (00:08:14) he is just like Him. The side you see is hated him. And so, they were sad, you see. Bad joke. Pretty good though, you're laughing. They hated him for a good reason because he's interfering with their control and their power. They can't manipulate people anymore. And not only that, he's eating with tax collectors and he's talking to publicans and centers and he's talking to this woman at the well, who's so bad. Why would you even associate with her? He's making them mad. And plus, he told the guy to get up and carry his mat on the Sabbath.

Imagine how horrible that is. But they didn't like their traditional rules messed with. They had a whole bunch of rules that they made. They weren't really commandments. They are just pharisee rules. And they walked around making sure everybody is following them. You know anybody like that? They walk around and making sure you're following all the rules instead of worrying about their own life and praying for you and leaning into your problems? They're worried about everything else going on in the world.

I'm guilty sometimes. Look, I'm not a preacher, but I'm teaching to myself here, okay? When I'm up here, don't even think that I'm close, okay? My wife is got to watch this and I think I heard a Amen from where? She's in Missouri for her dad's birthday. I don't think -- Amen, he's preaching.

So, anyway, you're in those sandals and you got the garb and you're reclining. I've worked in the Middle East, Afghanistan. You actually lay on what's called a toshak, and you eat with your fingers and it's just totally normal. And you're sitting around this table and He's in the upper room for the last supper and He's with His guys. One of them which is Judas, of course, but you know what happened with Judas.

He's eaten with His guys and it's only 12 hours before He's going to be crucified. They don't know that. He's tried to tell them, but they're all blonde. I mean -- right over their head. Okay, right over their head. They don't get it. "I'm going to another --." "No, no, no. You're going to be here, right?" "No, I need to tell them for some reason." He said, "A new commandment I give unto you." Now, why would you give somebody a new commandment when you have 613 commands in the Old Testament? Why would somebody drive an old car if they give you a new car? Why would you use your old blender if you get a new blender? Why did you say that? Because my wife needs a new blender.

We have to put in hearing plugs when that thing goes off. She's going to hear this. Why would you do that? So, for some reason, Jesus you just sit down and He looks around and He's going, "I'm going to give you a new commandment. A new commandment I give unto you." His guys. John 13:34, look it up. John 13:34, "Love one another; as I have loved you."

Disciples are going, "That's not hard. We'll just do what you did." How about you? How about me? Are we really loving each other like Christ loved us? Are we really? It's so inconvenient, isn't it? God will convict you through what I say. I don't know. You're all paying really good attention. Is there something wrong? Okay. I'm just making sure everything is okay.

I commute 15 minutes a day to my school. I thought I was going to kill somebody when I started that commuting last year. I never had to queue(ph) it in my life. I don't know why God just blessed me with that. I never had to commute. What is going on? Where are these people from?

"Love others as I have loved you." Well, what about my ex? What about my mother-in-law? No, my mother-in-law was fantastic. Okay. She is like the perfect mother-in-law, but what about your mother-in-law? What about your neighbor with the dogs? "Oh, I love my neighbor. It's dogs." "Well, why don't you ever talk to your neighbor?" "Because of the dogs." So, you're loving him like Jesus would love him. You're leaning into him and say, "What kind of dog do you have? Can I put something in his food?"

Anyway, think about all of the opportunities you have to love and you fail and I fail. Sometimes, we don't think we have time and we use some kind of an excuse. We can always come up with an

excuse. We are good excuse makers. What is it with your love of others? "Love others as I have loved you." But what about if they're of a different political party? "Oh, there's an exception for that."

What if they're in a gang? "Oh, I'd say they need love." What if they deal drugs? What if they're your neighbor who doesn't keep their yard up and your yard is perfect? You're always cutting off the limbs at your fence and throwing them over to their side. Well, I don't know. I'll bet you can think of some time for you to just flat out, fail, because it's not convenient and nobody got time for that. That lady was funny. Was she not funny? I bet I repeated that line a hundred times when I get up and said, "Nobody got time for that." I don't even remember what it was about, but I remember what -- do you remember that or not? Nobody got time for that.

My wife and I laughed so hard and we repeated it. And then, I thought about this -- and we don't have time to be patient with you. We are busy. We got to get it done. We have stuff to do. People see places to go. I don't have time and I am guilty. I'm a high D, type A personality. That will give you a heart attack. How many of you had a heart attack? Raise your hand. Nobody in here? Anybody had a hip replacement? Has anybody had a kidney stone? Thank you. Well, you are the healthiest bunch of people I have ever been with.

Is that a lotion? It's a lotion. I'm getting some of it. Well, I get a discount because Ms. Bronner is on my school board. Thank you.

All right. So, yeah, I've had all three. I've had a heart attack in Afghanistan. On the side of the mountain, they airlifted me over Iraq to Dubai where I got three stents from a Muslim doctor. I didn't have a choice. Do you think I would let a Muslim do it, just to love everybody?

I'm having trouble loving Al-Qaeda and Taliban. Taliban actually executed two of my teachers over there. I'm not joking along with eight other people. So, if there's anybody I hate and don't want to admit it, it's that group of people and I'm just struggling with that still.

I'm still mad with that and they're just crazy people. But not Muslims, 95% of them are just fine. I live with them. I've got good friends, but we're supposed to love everybody. That isn't so hard. What if we don't like their gender change? What if we don't like their sexual preference? Oh, I forgot. There's an exception for that. Jesus said, "Love one another like I loved you unless you can find a way to justify and be your selfish stingy self and make up stuff that means you don't have to love them." Because that's just like he would do, just like Jesus would do. Turn His back, would He? Oh, He's God. He knows you're not God. It doesn't change what the commandment is, they just replaced all of the commandments in the Old Testament. There is just one. If you want to get three out of it, love God, love your neighbor, and love yourself.

If you really want to make it simple, just ask when you go out today in the traffic, "Am I loving that person in front of me? Oh, man!" And my stepson that we lost would not allow us to say moron and idiot in the car. He's only 15. He didn't even drive yet. He doesn't know, but he did. He did know. My wife has a little sign that says, "I'm a Christian, but I cuss a little." I know none of you do that. Okay. Darn! "I'm a Christian, but I cuss a little." My stepson stopped that pretty good nipped it in the bottle at least when he was around.

I got too much material for today. I like you. I like you. So, here's Jesus up at the room and He knows it's going to be 12 hours. They don't know it's going to be 12 hours and He gives His new commandment and they're going, "Wow!"

Now, Jesus is a very likable person like everybody likes Jesus. If you're a Muslim, you like Jesus. He's great a prophet. All of the religions basically say Jesus was a great guy. He's easy to like. He's walking around and making lots of food out of just a little boy's package. He's healing blind people and raising people from the dead, right? He's likable. It's easy to like Jesus, but it's hard to love like Jesus. That's the problem.

I'm like, "I can't ever do that." "Oh, so you're not going to try?" You're not going to try when that guy cuts you off or that woman cuts you off, it's never a woman. And when that guy cuts you off without a blinker and goes across three lanes to take the exit that there was a sign for a mile and a half back, you're not going to cuss and you're not going to call him a moron because you're not

allowed to do that. Well, you are, but then you will say, "I'm sorry, Lord. I remember that command now. It's in John somewhere, John 13:34." Can you say that? John 13:34, "A new commandment I give unto you. Love others as if it's convenient."

You guys can think. You, ladies and gentlemen, can think. You young men can think all kinds of opportunities to just turn your back on that commandment. And so, can I -- I had one last weekend.

Confession is so hard. Weren't you a priest in here or something like -- okay. I'm not catholic. I'm just kidding. We have a high priest, don't we? Who knows us very well straight to the father, right? We have a high priest who knows the feelings of our affirmitities and speaks in an unknown tongue to the father who know you. We are a mess. On our best dress update, you're looking really sharp. Whoa! Look at his outfit. We get all dressed to come to church, don't we? That's kind of a tradition. And look at me, I read the directions and I promise you I've got a jacket and a tie in my car. When I found out I didn't have to wear them, no way. And then, instructions said, "No flashy jewelry." "Not a problem." "No lipstick too bright." "I have no problem with that."

Anyway, you're all looking good, but Jesus definitely like care about how we look, does he? No, he doesn't. So, we all come into church and we dance good, and we sing really good. Listen, I could tell that this was from the heart. You weren't performing to please everybody. You were singing to bless God and bless everybody. There's a difference in people if we get up in the stage. I'm old. I see a lot of people that teach all about themselves out there. That wasn't you from the heart.

So, I had a thing last weekend -- and I grew up fishing. I did. I grew up fishing. My dad would take me fishing. Anybody like fishing in here? Say, "Amen." Okay, I got my prop here. And I like to share my fishing prowess with my grandsons like my dad did me.

00:20:06

Unfortunately, a lot of things I do with those grandsons was just like dad did with me and I'm working on that. "You're just waiting for this, aren't you?"

So, I'm done at the hunting camp and this started three weeks ago. I rotate. I have to stop. No, not because of that, but I have to rotate the boys because my daughter doesn't want to lose both of her sons by accident, okay? She said, "Just one, papa." "Well, when can I take the youngest one?" "When he's five." Okay. So, finally, I got that boy down there and he survived without any serious damages, okay? My eight-year-old, last time I took him came home with mosquito bites, chiggers, poison ivy, a big cut on his hand and sunburn, something like that. He was happy though. Oh, and a burn. And a burn because if you have a campfire, a boy could not stay out of the fire. There something about a fire and a boy, okay?

So, anyway, I got this kid down there and I'm just stupid sometimes, okay? What? What do I try to teach him how to use? A spinning reel. This is a spinning reel in case you didn't know. How many knew this is a spinning reel? Okay, it's not a Zebco where you just push a button, flip it out there, right? No, this has all kinds of ways to go wrong. And I thought, "Well, if he can get this, he can get a Zebco."

So, I spent the last time down here teaching him how to do it. And by (00:21:34), he got five. He was not quite five yet, he got -- "You have to reel it up just right and then you have to put your finger there and flip the bail, and then you have to let it go so it goes where you're pointing, right?" He got to where he could do that if I was so proud of him. So, I'm down there Saturday and I'm working on a little four-wheeler up there and he's down on the dock without a life jacket. But it's a safe dock. And he is down there and he was, "Dad, Papa, Papa, I got one on. I got one on." I'm going, "Right. You just reel it in." "I got one. I got one. It's a big one." I'm serious this is God on us truth, I'm telling you.

So, I looked down there and his pole is like this. Well, he's got a hooked on a log and I walked down there and it wasn't a log. It was bass, okay? It was a bass. So, we got it up to the thing and I said, "I got to recreate this." So, I got the bass and threw it back out there and I got it all on video and I sent it to my daughter and she was quite proud at that and I thought, "These bass are hitting. I'm going to get out in the lake and catch some bass."

So, I get the little 14-foot jon boat there with a trolling motor. The 67-year-old guy with a brand-new hip four weeks ago then, brand-new hip, whole thing. Oh, I had a hip replacement too, okay? I

told you, hip replacement, kidney stones, heart attack. Got out in that boat and I swear that boy forgot how to cast one of these things. He was trying. He was trying. Every time we turn around the boat, I was dodging the thing and the little popper had a treble hook on it, treble is like three hooks with barbs on it and it's stuck in the anchor rope. It's stuck around the end of his pole. Then, it gets tangled with my pole. "Love others as I would love you."

Now, I promised to God. I sit there in that boat and I said, "You idiot." Not to him. This is your grandson. This is not about you. This is about him. What is he going to remember? You're getting ticked off that he can't, at five, control a pole. I still have trouble with this damn thing sometimes. And they get tangled, you know? Those of you that fish. They get tangled really easy. And I did. I sit there and I say, "You are bad. You got to be patient with this grandchild. He's going to remember if you were patient and not that you're angry." And if he was five and can think about, he'd say, "What do you expect? You didn't give a Zebco." But he didn't say that. He just looks at me with those eyes and it just melted me. I said, "Okay. It's not about you. Not about you. We're going to keep fishing. Fine, we're going to keep fishing." And he said, "Papa, you cast it and let me reel them in."

Now, this is when the bad part comes. This is when the part comes. Okay. So, we're on the boat and I see this branch coming down. The tree to fell in the water. If any of you fish, the fish love the branches and the branches love the lures. And so, I perfect cast. It felt right in this little crack over a limb, and so I just twitched it a little bit and that water comes over that limb and hits the water. And as soon as I hit the water, bam! A big bass came up and Michael went crazy, okay? So, did I actually.

So, I hand him the rod. "Reel it in. Reel it in. Okay, reel it in. Reel it in. So, this is the way you reel this." No, not a five-year-old when he's excited. He goes backwards. It was like 12-feet of line right here. And so, I just say, "Well, we're going to get over and get around tangled."

00:25:00

So, I get the trolling motor behind me and I put it in drive and put it in two or three to get over there, so about probably from me to you, okay? And I put it in drive and we're getting up close. "I

better put this thing in reverse because I'm going pretty fast." So, I thought I turned it to reverse. So, I turned it to three. Three is not good. And so, we zoomed right up that limb on that tree. Right up the limb. The whole 14-foot boat went right up the limb and I'm sitting on the right of the boat and guess where my grandson is. On the right of the boat and it's a jon boat and the size of the jon boat are this wide. Over the side that fast with the pole because he was holding (00:25:45).

I was on the right. I tipped the boat. I fell in and he couldn't stop. So, where did he go? Riding with me without a life jacket because I'm stupid. That wasn't even funny, was it? You go, "You really are stupid."

So, he's in the water. He fell right beside me and he comes up like this and his eyes are that big and I said, "It's okay. I'm already plotting how we get our story straight, okay? It's okay. It's okay. You can swim. You can swim." He's going crazy. He's just going a mile a minute -- and I grabbed him by the shoulder. He had fishing line around his neck, okay? I grabbed him and put him in the front of the boat. I was standing up. IT was shallow water. That was my reason there was no life jacket. I did have a cushion in the boat that floated, that stayed in the boat. So, anyway, I pushed the boat to shore. The bass got off, the pole is in the bottom, and I'm talking about how much fun this was. "What an adventure. Wasn't this fun, Mica?" And he stopped and went, "I want to go back to camp and change clothes." "First, we got to find the pole. We got to find the pole." So, I find the pole, put in the boat and push off and we go over there. Okay, so I'm in the boat and I'm soaking wet because I was in (00:26:55) dock, I'm saying. "God, I'll never get to go to camp again with Mica.

So, I start fabricating, taking a preacher's liberty to make this a really exciting story and adventure and I thought, "No, if I get back to that dock and I get him in the water again, you got to get back on the horse when you fall off, right?" I ride on my motorcycle still and I fell off. Once you got to get back on that thing, I figured, he needs to get back in the water. I'm not going to that water. Here's a cushion. So, I won. I lured him in to the water and let him float around the cushion. He didn't cry and then I jerked him up and said, "Watch this." And I jumped off into the dock, into the water, which was over my head. And so, I got out and we're laughing about, "Wasn't that a great adventure?"

Wasn't that a great adventure? And we have to tell your mom how big a bass that was and all of that, okay?"

So, that all went great. That went great. We got done. We're headed home. He never did change his pants. So, he sat in the car seat all the way to Dallas, Georgia with wet pants. So, anyway, the end of the story, the moral of story is you got to learn patience and lean into your kids and your neighbors.

Now, if that little insignificant thing of not being patient with my grandson, it is kind of a repeat with my nine-year-old, he's nine. It's like, "What is wrong with you? If you call yourself a Christian and Jesus says, 'Love others --,' why is this so hard? Because it's not convenient and I'm old and I have a right to be impatient because I'm old." If it was younger and I was redhead, I'd say, "I can (00:28:41) and lose my temper because I'm a redhead."

We can think of all kinds of things, ladies and gentlemen. We can't lean to each other. These two are practically kissing each other up here. But I'll bet you there's been times where they couldn't get farther apart, right? We've all been there. Okay. No, you guys have never had a fight? Oh, yeah. And why do we have --? Why do these fights happen? Because we all want our way? "I'm not getting what I want. I'm not getting what I want." And we get stubborn and we're loving each other just like Jesus would love us. Nope.

I hope you think about John 13:34. That was my late son's life verse. When he was 14 and 15, he wrote 492 pages of devotions in a row. Kept them in a journal we found after his death. Four hundred ninety-two days, every day, read the Bible and journaled as a 14 and 15-year-old, never missed a today. Up early, up late encouraging people, scholar athlete, had time for the kids that were disabled, had time for the kids who need help. Everybody loved him. Fifteen-year-olds don't have their frontal lobes total developed yet. He wanted to be with God he said in his letter to his mom.

00:30:02

He's just tired, tired of trying to help people live for God. Had Sunday school class at 15, he went to camp every summer. You can look him up. There's a pretty good -- #lovelikereed. You want to see something cool and inspirational? That thousands of people

buy these T-shirts and #lovelikereed, R-E-E-D, #lovelikereed. You want to be inspired at what somebody can do when they really love like Jesus? He put his mom and I and his older brother --. That shouldn't be in that way.

I just realized that that pretty blonde back there is my daughter. Hi, Lauren Faith. I really did just realize thinking back then, "That is really a pretty blonde back there who looks like my daughter." I promise you. My eyes aren't that good anymore. A coma, I guess, cataracts. Then, my sister is here. Hi, Carrie! And my younger sister.

So, anyway, as we look at what we've done today, all I'm asking you and challenging you to do is go to the Book of John. This guy was an eye witness to what Jesus did. I was an eye witness to what happened with my grandson, her son. Who will wear a life jacket every time he is in the boat and I think I'm got to -- like I'm getting him a Zebco, okay? But how was an eye witness? John was an eye witness to what happened and everything John said is collaborated by what? Matthew, Mark, and Luke. So, not the Gospels.

So, when you're having your doubts about your Christianity and what your grandma or your pastor, or somebody ask you to believe and have faith in and you never really took hold of it, you wonder why things aren't going so good, maybe somebody talk to you out of it. Maybe you need to get an eye witness account because none of us were there because historically, those Gospel writers were there, just like you were there in every event that you got involved in and you believe they happen, don't you?

This happened. This happened. A man died on the cross who claim to the Son of God. He was buried. He rose again and He was seen by multitudes and talked to His own brother, James, who then called Him, "Lord". What brother calls brother a Lord? Because he knew He was Lord now not just a brother.

Now, this is a savior who can make a difference in our lives, your life. He can make a difference in your prejudice and my prejudice, your racism, my racism, your driving habits, my driving hobbits. Fixed marriage is with it. You can be kind to your neighbor and your ex with it, all right?

So, let's read the book of John this week. Thank you very much. God bless you. Thank you for being at Brothers of The Word because brother, you need the word.

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