

Cross Your Heart

The Hope to Thrive

August 30, 2026



Today we're learning to take what we hear to heart! Cuz if this life has taught us anything about ourselves – it's that *knowing* better doesn't always lead to *doing* better. I mean, if information *forced* transformation, WebMD would've made us mostly *immortal* and God's Word would've stopped *sin* before it *began*! Instead, *how we live with what we learn* is entirely *up to us* cuz *how we behave* reveals *what we believe*. And *all of eternity* hangs on whether we've learned to *allow the truth we hear to change the choices we make*. So, **What are you doing with what you know?**



That's a big question for our generation, cuz **we've never known more – yet somehow, it's never affected what we've done less!** Science just keeps proving the secret to human thriving is deliberately living with organic connections to the earth, our food, our bodies, and each other – and we keep choosing the most synthetic, processed, medicated, and isolated life humans have ever lived! We know we need better sleep while scrolling at 1:00 in the morning, we know we need better nutrition while eating fast food full of empty calories and known poisons, and we know we need real relationships while preparing posts that falsify how we look, how we feel, and who we are! Why? Cuz **desires can contaminate what we know to shape what we do!** And Paul warns us about it:

In the last days, people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. ... [They're] swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. – 2 Timothy 3:1-7 NIV

See the pattern? **What we love sways how we hear.** So if we love ourselves, money, or pleasure more than God, giving, or goodness – we'll never know the truth – cuz we'll never hear the truth! Cuz the *confirmation bias* in lovers of all things earthly will *only amplify* the stuff that produces *personal and material gain* – even in God's Word. That's how we got the *pro-slavery* theology of the 18th and 19th centuries, the *anti-semitic* doctrines of Nazi Germany, and the *prosperity Gospel* of some American evangelists. So, let me repeat a pair of verses to paint the volatility and responsibility:

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. [So,] – Jeremiah 17:9 NIV

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. – Proverbs 4:23 NIV



Our heart isn't just our emotional side, it's our command center – cuz it has the power to *overrule* all other input and prioritize whatever it wants. And yet, **the heart is as corruptible as it is powerful!** But since God knows that, He didn't send more words that could be misheard – He sent an experience of love powerful enough to transform ours.



You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ... God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ... while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the *death* of His Son – Romans 5:6-10 NIV



[So – yeah,] We love because He first loved us. – 1 John 4:19 NIV



I mean, it'd be *stupid not to!* What *more* could He *do* to *prove* Himself?! Like we said a few weeks back – *explanations* just can't compete with an *experience* – and *while* we were God's *weak, criminal nemesis*, He let us *experience* an *undeserved, unreturned, and undeniable love* that chose to take the cross that *we all deserved*. So, if *actions* speak louder than *words* – **the loudest thing God ever said was the cross.**



And *that's* why it's so *central* to Christians; the cross *changes everything!* Cuz **the cross is a real world experience of a true love influence!** It's *not* just a *fact to know* – it's a love to *sway* how we *hear* what we *know*. And it makes a *big difference!* For example, you may *know* about the Venezuela earthquakes; but you'd sure *hear* it *differently* if *your kid* was living there.

Cuz **the influence of love transforms information into action items!** You'd be making *calls*, buying *tickets*, and praying *constantly* all because your *heart* got *involved* in what you *heard*. And that's one of the big reasons God *chose* the cross to *publicly pay* for our sin instead of *privately punishing* it: **showing His heart invites ours to get involved.** And because His love offers the most important relationship we could ever have, the cross has the power to transform all our information into *action*.



Cuz **when we account for God's love displayed on the cross, we'll take to heart everything we hear in His Word.** From *creation* to *Revelation* – we should hang on every word of Scripture as the *critical* communication that the *love of our life* was willing to *die* for *us* to *hear*. Cuz *knowing* our *true love* gave *His life* to give weight to *His words* – *should* inspire our *heart* to:

Humbly accept the Word planted in you, which *can* save you. [Cuz **humbly hearing in light of His love means we**] Do not *merely* listen to the Word ... [we] Do what it says. Anyone who *listens* to the Word but *does not do what it says* is like someone who looks at his face in a *mirror* and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately *forgets* what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and *continues* in it—*not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it*—they will be *blessed* in *what they do*. – James 1:21-25 NIV

Get it? Mirrors *don't* fail – but **information fails without action.** And *Scripture* works the same way. Contrary to *many* Christian views, *just reading* God's Word *doesn't* change your life, **reading God's Word reveals the change your life needs.** Lots of *atheists* have read *every word* of the Bible and still *failed* to “**come to a knowledge of its truth**” – cuz **we gotta see things in action to know them in full.**

Listen, you can *read* every book ever written about *riding a bicycle* to memorize the *gear ratios*, learn about *gyroscopic stability*, and understand the physics of *counter-steering*. But – eventually someone's gonna say, **"Great. Now get on the bike."** And in *that* moment, you'll *realize* that **some things can only be known by doing them.** And Biblical *faith* is one of them.



That's why we've been following the story of Joseph – cuz his *whole life* has been showing *us* how God turns painful *experience* into useful *understanding* – and then turns *that understanding* into a *life* that can *bless* somebody else. And after seeing how all the pit-stops *prepared* Joe to *carry* God's blessing – last week we saw where it all landed when Joseph opened the storehouses to feed a starving world.



He showed us the potential *power* we can personally *know* when *what God says* reaches our heart and *changes what we do*. And Joe *didn't* have the *cross* in hindsight like *we* do. He just *trusted* that fully *knowing* God's love in his *present*, meant *following* God's guidance to the future. Which means we got it easy cuz **Joe had the promise but we have the proof.**



And like us and the Bible, God gave Joseph *dreams* to guide his actions *before* knowing the *meaning*. Only *after* God led Joe from the depth of his brothers' *pit* to the *height* of Pharaoh's *power* – did Joe finally *know it all*:



You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. – Genesis 50:20 NIV

But notice that **things only become clear when God's will is in action.** It took *saving* the very people who wanted to *kill* him for Joe to *know* God's heart – cuz love that *deep* requires an *extreme* experience to *reveal* the *profound* truth. And like Joe, none of *us* can *fully know* God's *purpose* until we *fully follow* God's *plan*. Cuz once God's Word reaches our *heart*, it oughta reach our *hands*.



And since *Jesus* gives us the perfect picture of God's *profound love*, all we have to do is **add the Cross to what we plan and it becomes what we plant.** Cuz the cross is God's love moving from *intention* into *action*. Jesus didn't merely *plan* to save us; He *did* what love required. But we love plans cuz we get emotional credit for things we haven't had to do.

"I'm gonna start working out Monday and I wanna start tithing weekly!" Well that's awesome! Your *imaginary* future body looks *fantastic* and your *hypothetical* generosity is *inspiring*. It just doesn't *mean* anything until you *do* something. And while plans *point* us *toward* something – *planting* actually *starts* something. Cuz in the same way the *rubber* has to hit the *road* to get things *going* – **the seed has to hit the soil to get things growing!** And *starting* is our *responsibility*;

[Paul explains the process clearly:] I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. – 1 Corinthians 3:6 NIV

We plant and God grows. And that should feel *freeing* cuz one of the biggest reasons we *fail* to *start* is a *fear* of getting to the *finish*. **"What if I invite them to church and they say no?"** Good news: God didn't ask *us* to guarantee the *harvest* – He just asked *us* to put something in the *ground*. Cuz the only way to be sure *nothing* grows is to keep *planning without ever planting*. And once again, the *cross of Jesus* is a *shortcut* to the *faith* of *Joseph* – cuz when the *God* he *loved* sent a *message*, Joe's *heart* moved him from *planning* to *planting* so everyone could taste that God was good. Cuz **Joseph's plans didn't feed anybody – his obedience did.** Which explains an important principle:

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. – Matthew 9:37 NIV



Not *planners*; not *spectators*; *workers*. Cuz once you start *planting things*, people learn something *irritating* about *growing things*: **they need rain**. But rain is *discouraging* until your *heart's* invested in *what* you're planting and sees how a storm leads to *growing the seed*! So, **if we add the love of the cross to our storms, every drop of rain is just seen as how God trains**.

Once you know Jesus *died* to *save* us from the *punishment* of sin, it makes *no sense* to treat every painful thing He allows as *payback*. He already *paid it*! So rather than assuming *punishment*, **the cross should confirm that our pain must serve a productive purpose!** The problem is,

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. – Hebrews 12:11 NIV

The rain *isn't pleasant*, but it *can* be *productive* – and the *cross* should remind us that **a loving God can use unwanted rain to train unseen strength**. Joseph's *betrayal* trained *him* to value power *without* cruelty; prison trained him to serve without reward; and all the waiting trained him to trust God's timing. Cuz arriving at the palace didn't produce his character – it revealed what all the pain had trained. So instead of only asking, **"God, when can we be done?"** we should start asking, **"God, what's growing from what we're doing?"** Cuz **training always has a target**.



Joseph's storms were moving him from a pit he couldn't explain to a place where he could finally and *fully know* what God had been *doing* all along. But the *cross* gives us even *greater* confidence, cuz Jesus didn't just *tell* us about the life beyond *here*; He went *there* and *back*. And **when we let that fact affect what we do down here, we're on our way back up there!**

[Cuz the cross changes how our heart hears Jesus say:] I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. – John 14:6 NIV

[Cuz it was] For the joy set before Him He endured the cross. – Hebrews 12:2 NIV

Jesus came to die down here so we could have a way to live up there – and it was His love that made the *joy of saving us* worth the *pain of enduring the cross*. **You were God's kid caught in the earthquake** and the second He *heard* we were in *danger*, His *heart* turned the *information* into *action*, He *planted* a plan with a *purpose* that would *use* all the frustrating pain and *rain* to *train us* to *take action* when it was time to follow Him from the danger *here* to the safety *there*.

That's what we know from His Word and His cross. So, **what are you doing with what you know?** Well, whatever it *is*, if you want to do *better* – **the next time you look into God's Word, just take one thing you heard and do it**. Put *one seed* in the ground. Let one hard thing *train one holy thing* in you. And take *one faithful step* toward Jesus. Cuz **all hope of a better life hinges on how we hear God's truth** – and until we let the *love* of the *cross* influence the *information* in His *Word*, we'll *settle* for *knowing* better *without* ever *doing* better.

So don't leave here satisfied by knowing more – leave here determined to do something different. Let go of what you *think* you know, let your *heart* get involved, let *His love* make your *next move*. Cuz the cross has to rule your *heart* before it'll ever allow *hope* to *thrive*.