

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 16:49-50, John 4:23-24

Sermon Title: Challenge for College Fellowships – April 08

Introduction

Good evening everyone. My name is John-Michael Becker. I am a full time orphanage volunteer at Geon Christian Children's Home in Seoul, South Korea. I graduated from Virginia Tech in May 2005 with a degree in Systems engineering. Through prayer, fasting, and waiting, the Lord soon made it clear to both me and my family that I was to live as a missionary at the orphanage in Korea. I have been living and serving there for two years and a few months now. I also now direct an orphanage volunteering ministry in Seoul called, "Jerusalem Ministry."

I spoke here a year and a half ago and shared my testimony of how God led me to Korea, some of my experiences there, and challenged the fellowship.

Tonight's Plan

Because there are a number of 1st years and visitors, I am going to briefly share again how God led me to Korea. I will also update you all on the orphanage ministry that has been growing in Korea before getting into the message. But before all that, let's pray...

Pray (open hearts, encouragement, strengthening)

How God Led Me to Korea

Give them the shorter version...

Jerusalem Ministry and the Vision for North Korea

Continue to share how Jerusalem Ministry was formed, its purpose, and our plans...

I prepared a short slideshow/video for you all. Most of the video clips that you will see were taken on the same day, so you will be able to get a glimpse of my daily life at the home...

5 minute video

Needs of the Orphanage Ministry

Currently the ministry has two full time volunteers and a little more than 25 part time volunteers. We are praying for more full time volunteers to join us and give us a 6 month or 1 year commitment to just come to Korea to serve in a home and love on the kids. We are also accepting summer volunteer "interns" who can come and serve for two months during their summer vacation. Currently we have 7 volunteers who plan to come to Korea during their summer and really invest their time in the kids. The ministry always welcomes prayer supporters, so if you would like to receive monthly updates from the ministry or weekly updates from me, please come to me after the large group and give me your e-mail address. The ministry is also in need of financial support since all that we do is out of our own pockets. I share all this because while hearing my testimony, watching the video, or perhaps just now you might be feeling a stirring in your heart and God may be calling you to become active in this ministry.

I will tell you that sometimes as I am directing the orphanage ministry or simply serving within my orphanage I start to feel overwhelmed. I worry if I am really up for everything. Doubt and concern creep in. But I will tell you that in each of these moments, as I cast my cares and concerns up to the Lord, He gives me strength. The Lord wants His work to be accomplished. And I find security knowing that I am in His will and that He wants me to succeed.

Psalm 55:22 – Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.

Transition to Encouragement/Challenge

Okay, now what I want to do is share a few things that I have learned over the years. I only have so much time with you guys, so I'm just going to take as much advantage of this time as possible. I encourage you to take notes if you can.

Please turn in your Bibles to Ezekiel 16:49-50... as you read this please think of America

Ezekiel 16:49-50 – Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen.

Every time I return to America I am amazed at just how comfortable this country is. Everything is so comfortable. People have cars, the food is so good and in big portions, people have nice houses and furniture, there are tons of gadgets that make life easier and more entertaining. The country is comfortable.

But what I've also noticed is that as people grow in making their own life more comfortable, they begin to think about themselves more. I believe that the spirit that is beginning to take down America is the spirit of Selfishness. "I'm not satisfied with this marriage any longer, its time to divorce." "This church no longer feeds me, its time to go to another." "If only I had that camera, if only I had that iPod, if only I had that car, if only I had that TV..."

As people begin to want things more for themselves, they begin to look more inwards. **And as they look more inwards, they lose sight of the hurt in the world and they live only for their own pleasure, just like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.** This is what the Enemy wants.

So how do we escape? How do we live in this world but not be of it? How do we escape the grips of the Enemy? I believe God is calling His church to a higher level of worship. And that is what I want to share tonight. What we need to be doing as followers of God to glorify His name in this fallen world.

John 4:23-24 – Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

Lets look closer at verse 24...

John 4:24 – God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

I'm now going to pick apart this verse. What I'm about to share are lessons that have been critical for me in my growth with God. If you have a notebook and a pen, I want to encourage you to take notes. Ready?

God is spirit

The first three words of verse 24 are, "God is spirit." First thing we have to understand as Christians is that God is not a physical being, He is spiritual. With our physical eyes we are seeing in the physical realm. What we see right now are fellow college students sitting in a room. You see chairs, instruments, and me. What you do not see are angels walking among us. You don't see them fighting demons. You don't see the power of God resting in the believers here.

What God wants of His children is for us to stop looking at the world through our physical eyes and to start looking at the world through our spiritual eyes. Turn with me to 2Kings 6. Here the king of Aram is furious with the prophet Elisha and wants to kill him. He orders his army to find the prophet and slay him.

1Kings 6:14-18 – Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, **open his eyes so he may see.**" Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, "Strike these people with blindness." So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

The servant saw through his physical eyes. What he saw caused him to fear and doubt. Elisha saw through his spiritual eyes. What he saw gave him faith and strength.

When we look through our **physical eyes, we see things in how they relate to us.** If we have been hurt by someone, when we look at them we are filled with hurt or anger because of how they have treated us.

When we look through our **spiritual eyes, we see things in how they relate to God.** If we have been hurt by someone, when we look at them we are filled with compassion and mercy because we recognize their struggles and how much they need love.

At my orphanage many of the kids are very selfish. They only think about themselves and they can be very difficult. If I didn't know any better, I would just say, "These are just bad kids" and move on from them. But as I have been with them God has given me a deep love for them. He has revealed to me my kids' hurts and struggles. It is because of the lack of love and the scars in their past that they act the way they do. The kids need deep love. They need people who will be patient and faithful with them and give them the care that they need.

If I were to just look through my physical eyes, I would have given up long ago. I would have gotten burnt out and would have quit. But thanks to prayer, God's Word, and His

encouragement, God has continually filled me with the love and strength needed to keep caring for these kids. As long as I am looking through spiritual eyes, I have the love, grace, and mercy I need to care for them.

God is spirit. God is calling us to stop looking through our physical eyes and to start looking through our spiritual eyes. I'm going to explain more about how we can grow in that in a moment.

Lets go back to John 4:24...

John 4:24 – God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

Unity

The next two words I want to zero in on are, “His worshipers.” I believe Jesus spoke in the plural on purpose. When God looks in this room, He doesn't see a bunch of individual Christians. Instead, He sees His family. He sees an army. And so what I want to emphasize here is **unity**. If you want to grow with the Lord and really witness His power, you are going to need unity with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

I will give you an example of this. Some of you might know the band, “Hillsong United.” It's a huge band from a church in Australia that writes a ton of awesome praise music and tours the world giving concerts. Last year this group visited Seoul and had a big praise concert. Some of my friends were privileged to work with the band as translators and as helpers. My friends shared with me that before the concert the whole praise team... band members, stage managers, sound people, and others... all gathered together in one huge circle to pray. They held hands and did popcorn style prayer, one person praying at a time. And my friends said that as people in the group would pray, the rest of the members would agree in prayer and respond with, “Amen!” or “Yes!” There was a unity in this group that was so strong that my friends could feel the Spirit increasing in more and more power as the people prayed. The Spirit's presence was so strong that afterwards my friends approached each other wide eyed and said, “Did you feel that???”

When there is unity in the body, the power increases exponentially.

Leviticus 26:8 – Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.

If you really want to grow with the Lord and experience breakthrough, you need to grow in unity with your brothers and sisters. And I think one of the best ways to do that is to pray together. Pray that you all may have the same heart. Support and encourage one another. And this leads to another important part of unity...

Hebrews 13:17 – Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

I'm going to be very strong here because this is a lesson God has made very very clear to me. **Do NOT slander, do not gossip about, and do not judge your leaders.** Respect them,

encourage them, and pray for them. Being a leader is not easy. Believe me, I know. Every prayer and every encouragement has helped so much. But when I hear gossip or slander or judging, especially against leaders, my heart breaks. What you all must understand is that all of us are human. We are all going to make mistakes or maybe lead in ways that don't seem perfect to you. We need your encouragement and your prayers.

Now, what if you discover your leader is in sin? You need to pray. You do not gossip, you do not slander, you pray. And the Lord will either give you the courage to approach that leader one-on-one in private, or you need to go to one of the staff, share with them, and approach that person together in private. And you do this in love and in secrecy. If the leader refuses to listen, then the responsibility for that leader is in the staff member's hands. You just need to pray and keep quiet. If you hear gossip or slander about a leader in the fellowship, you need to shut it up. Gossip, slander, and judging destroy unity and they are also each sin that will bring judgment on those doing it.

In the book of 1 Samuel, David is running away from King Saul. King Saul has been filled with jealousy and wants to kill David. David knows he is in the right and that Saul is in the wrong, but he recognizes that as long as Saul is wearing the crown, Saul is the king and is the Lord's anointed. So David refuses to even touch Saul or speak bad about him.

1 Samuel 24:6-7 – David said to his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the Lord. With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul.

There are going to be times when you just know a better way than your leader. And you will want to question your leader or straight up disobey. But God is watching. He wants each and every one of you to be humble and not to be rebellious. Submission to authorities is a strong lesson God has taught me over the years. If you are in disagreement with a leader, or you see a weakness in them, do not gossip or slander or judge. Rather, pray for the leader. Encourage the leader. And let God touch the person.

If you hear gossip, slander, or judging... then stop if immediately. Pray together for your leaders. Pray for your fellowship and let the Lord work. He will!

Alright, let's go back to verse 24...

John 4:24 – God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

Must Worship

The next two words I want to focus on are, “must worship.” What I want to emphasize here is that worship is a lifestyle. **True worship is a life lived from your heart, fully surrendered to Him.**

Romans 12:1 – Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

If you are not surrendered to God, then you are not offering worship. Worship is devotion. God doesn't just want songs from lips, that is just praise. What God really wants is your heart.

An encouragement to you all who are not fully surrendered to the Lord, understand that the Lord is already devoted to you. He sent His son to die for you so that He may have fellowship with you. God loves you. He wants all of you.

Let's go back to verse 24...

John 4:24 – God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

In Spirit

The next two words I want to focus on are, "In spirit." This goes back to, "God is spirit" and the understanding that true reality is in the spiritual realm. One of the simplest ways we demonstrate this is through prayer. Prayer is talking to God, right? To the world, it looks like we are just wasting our time, it looks like we are just talking to nothing. But we know there is a spiritual realm. We know God is real. And we know God hears. And we know that God can handle and do things so much better and so much more powerfully than we ever could. And so we pray. We pray in the spirit. We pray in faith.

While I was at Virginia Tech I attended a staff and officers meeting for CCF. One of the officers shared how in her prayer time she felt the Lord revealing to her some specific hurts in the fellowship. As these things were revealed to her, God gave her a burden to pray for them and we were able to join her in praying for them. I was encouraged by her because I could see she was seeing through spiritual eyes. As she prayed, God was opening herself to things she would have never known otherwise.

Dreams

Now I think prayer is something most of you all grasp. I want to share about two other things of the Spirit to encourage you in. The first is dreams. Straight up guys, I want to tell you that God speaks in dreams.

Job 33:14-15 – For God does speak—now one way, now another—though man may not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds.

How did Jesus speak to the people in the New Testament? Through parables. He used stories about people or objects that symbolized deep things. To the average person, the stories made little sense. Even the disciples would have to ask Jesus for interpretation. But that was what Jesus wanted. **He doesn't want to just give us faith and knowledge and everything else, He wants us to seek it.** And as we ask Him for wisdom and understanding, He gives them to us. In the same way, God spoke to Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, and many other people in the Bible through dreams. And what they all understood is that without interpretation from God, the dreams are meaningless. But if we seek understanding, God can reveal the symbols and teach us or encourage us in powerful ways.

For example, last year I had a dream involving cockroaches. At one point I was in a room and there was a huge cockroach, really disgusting. I tried killing it, but it just wouldn't die. I finally found a big book, which seemed like my Korean-English Bible, its like a brick, and I set it on the cockroach, trapping it underneath. Later I went to another room and found it filled with cockroaches, straight up disgusting. So I picked up a big water hose that just happened to be right next to me and I sprayed all the cockroaches into a corner where a drain was and washed them all out.

Makes perfect sense, right? Well, what do cockroaches symbolize? One word would be, "Invasion." Another word would be, "Unclean." I sensed that the cockroaches represented evil trying to invade. What did I fight the cockroaches with? The Bible and the water. And what does the Bible represent? The truth. What does water represent? God calls the Holy Spirit the, "Living Water." So I fought the invasion with the spirit and the truth. And what verse am I teaching from tonight?

John 4:24 – God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

God spoke to me in that dream to warn my church about sin that was trying to get in. We prayed for God to pour out more of His Spirit on us and increase our wisdom in the Word to not only protect us from attack, but also enable us to fight back.

A simpler dream would be one I had my first night at Tech last week. I dreamed I was being taxied around in a police car by a police man. He was taking me to where I needed to be. After I woke up I understood that the police escort represented God's protection. That God's protection is with me as I was at Tech. Praise God!

I believe as God continues to pour His Spirit on you all, that dreams and visions are going to increase. Don't ignore these things. I believe God has already been speaking to many of you in dreams. **You need to journal them and pray about them.** Not every dream will have meaning, but some of them definitely will. As you are faithful, God is going to give you more and you will learn to discern Him better.

Spiritual Gifts

Along with dreams, I also want to emphasize spiritual gifts.

1Corinthians 12:1 – Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.

I'm not going to go deep into these, but you can find the nine spiritual gifts in 1Corinthians 12. The most common of them is the gift of tongues. Many of you have already received it. **And now I charge you, practice it.** I know it might seem silly to you, just noises coming from you when you practice it. But understand that God is again teaching you about the true reality, the spiritual realm. When you speak in tongues, little seems to happen in the natural, but a ton is happening in the spiritual. If God gives you a gift, you need to practice it. When you have your prayer time, spend some time speaking in tongues. When you pray altogether in groups, don't be ashamed or insecure about the gift God has given you, go ahead and use it. Grow in the spiritual gifts. They are called gifts because they are good. And believe me, they are of so much more value than any physical gift. You all need to be praying for more of the spiritual gifts. Pray that

they be released in your fellowship. You will receive POWER when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

1Corinthians 14:1 – Follow the way of love and **eagerly desire** the spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.

I know of an old Korean woman who received the gift of tongues when she was young. The people in the village she lived in mocked her, but she continued to practice it often. Soon she received the gift of healing and the same villagers who had once mocked her were then lining up outside her home to receive prayer.

Practicing your spiritual gifts is another way of worshiping God in spirit and in truth. I charge you guys, practice your spiritual gifts and pray for more. Pray for God to breakthrough in this fellowship.

Whew, okay, we are almost done. Lets go back to John 4:24...

John 4:24 – God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

In truth

Lets finish the verse and look at the last word, “Truth.” What is the truth? **This is the truth (hold up the Bible). This is the Word of God.** If you don’t know it, then how can you say you know God? To fully worship God, you don’t need just the living water of the Spirit, but you also need the bread of life, the Word of God.

I want to teach you all something simple that will encourage you in reading the Word. If you’re taking notes, write this down. Go ahead and draw a hand in your notes with all five fingers.

So you have five fingers. Your pinky represents “hearing the Word.” You’ve come tonight to large group and you’ve heard a lot of Scripture. You’ve, “heard the Word.” The next finger represents, “reading the Word.” The next step in growing in God’s Word is opening it up for yourself and reading it. The next finger represents, “Meditating or studying the Word.” To really grow in the Scripture, you need to study it and get deeper into it. The next finger represents, “Memorizing the Word.” Now you aren’t just hearing, reading, and studying the Word, you are also writing specific Scripture on your heart. There is power in memorization. The last finger, your thumb, represents, “Applying the Word.” You can be hearing, reading, studying, and memorizing the Word, but if you aren’t applying it, then its worthless.

Now, who has their Bible? Lift it up. Hold your Bible in one hand using just your pinky finger. This represents your grip on the Word if all you do is just listen. Now the person sitting next to you will represent the devil. Let the person next you take hold of the Bible and try and steal it from you. Try holding on with just your pinky. You can’t, right? Too weak. No grip. Now try two fingers. The devil can still overpower you and steal the Word from you. Now try all your fingers and your thumb. Look how much power you have. The Enemy cannot steal the Truth from you. Hallelujah!

You have to be growing in the Word. **Daily.** The Word brings life. The Word will set you free.

John 8:32 – Then you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free.

Are you struggling with purity? Are you in sexual bondage?

Psalm 119:9 – How can a young man stay pure, by living according to your Word.

Are there other sins that you are struggling with?

Psalm 119:11 – I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against God.

Do you need vision in your life?

Psalm 119:105 – Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

I want to encourage you guys that you might not understand everything in here the first time you read it. But you need to pray and ask God to give you wisdom. Ask God to speak to you. I'm telling you, He definitely will. He wants you to know Him. Treasure your quiet time with God. Each day you all need to be having alone time with God in prayer and in His Word. Believe me, He is watching and wanting to bless you.

Found Under the Fig Tree

If you have your Bibles, please turn to John 1:45, let's read verses 45 – 50

John 1:45-50 – Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.” “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.”

What is going on here?

You see, the fig tree in Israel was usually planted on the side of the road because they gave shade. Fig trees have branches that hang very low with large leaves that nearly made it like an umbrella. You could go under the fig tree and not only have shade from the hot sun, but it would also allow for privacy. Many of the Jews of the time would go under the fig tree to meditate, study the Word, and pray. The fig tree represents one's quiet time. It represents one's personal relationship with God. So when Jesus said to Nathanael, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree,” Nathanael then understood He was in the presence of God. Only God could see him hidden under the fig tree. Only God could know that Nathanael was eagerly seeking Him.*

I share this story to again encourage you all in your quiet time with the Lord. **DO NOT NEGLECT** your time with God! He is all that matters. He wants to love on you. He wants to

strengthen you. He wants to send you out and use you for great things. More than anything, He wants a relationship with You.

Dream of Plants

I want to close this message by sharing another dream that I had. I had this dream a year ago. I dreamed that I was in my orphanage and that there were a ton of green green plants and tall trees all around. It was as green as the jungle. The leaves on the plants and trees were all wet. I then watched as this water from the plants and trees suddenly went up to the sky. I watched it travel over to another land. This land was barren, ravaged by famine and drought. I watched as the water began to descend on the land. It was a clear miracle. I was excited and then in the dream I found myself here at Virginia Tech, sharing with you all.

After I woke up I understood that the plants and trees represented my children at my orphanage in Korea. I understood that God was going to pour out His Spirit (the water) upon them and grow them into lush plants and mighty trees. And not only was God going to grow them, but He was going to use them to go to the neighboring land (North Korea), and bring the God's Living Water with them, bringing true spiritual life to the land.

The dream was yet another confirmation for me in my work at the orphanage.

But what about the ending? Why did I suddenly find myself at Virginia Tech, sharing? At first I thought the dream just meant that I would go and share about the orphanage work again to the college fellowships in Virginia. But as I was preparing for this message and praying, I felt the Lord telling me that these great plans of God, these miracles and outpourings of the Holy Spirit, these great works, they are not just for me or for those in my ministry. They are for you all as well. That God has plans for each and every one of you. God is yearning for you to seek Him and discover His awesome plans for You. He yearns for You to pray, to exercise spiritual gifts, to read the Word, and to grow in unity in His body. He yearns for you to worship Him with your whole heart.

When God says, "I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and future" (Jeremiah 29:11), He isn't just speaking to a few specific people. **He is speaking to all of you!** God has great things in store for you!!!

God knows where you are. He knows your weaknesses. He knows your failures and your sins. But I'm here to tell you that He loves you. Despite whatever failures you've experienced, His love for you has never changed. He adores you. And He wants to show Himself to you. He wants to love you, grow you, and strengthen you. He wants you to know Him and His plans for you.

I believe God is challenging this fellowship. He is saying, "Come near to me, and I will come near to you." He is saying, "Call to me, and I will answer you." He is saying, "Just stand for me, and I will meet you, empower you, and show you things you never dreamed of."

Let's pray...

*Found Under the Fig Tree – Pastor Judah Smith, Deluge III