

“A Hedge of Protection”

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[0 : 00] It's time. No more putting it off, Mark. It's time. It's go time. We are going to be in the book of Job for a moment, and then going to the book of Hosea also.

In your pew Bible, page 417 for the book of Job. And we are going to be reading from chapter 1, verse 1 through 12.

And I'm sure you guys are all familiar with the story of Job and the trials and things that come his way. But today we're going to be looking at, in particular, the...

Ooh, water. Thank you. Looking at the hedge of protection that God has placed around Job.

My thoughts are all over the place this morning. They have been all over the place for about a month now and even trying to put this together.

[1 : 15] My wife can attest to that as far as my mind going everywhere, like it normally does. And trying to put this together.

I've sat down hundreds of times over the last couple weeks, last month, trying to put this in an order. And again, just all over the place.

So I apologize if all of a sudden I jump in there and you guys are going, what is this guy talking about? How did he get there from here to there? But hopefully, again, the Holy Spirit will come upon this and give you what you need to get.

All right? I really feel strongly about this subject. And maybe not in the way that you think, but how it speaks to me, how it ministered to me.

And so with that, let's go ahead and read this here. So if you're able, please stand for the reading of God's word. Job chapter 1.

[2 : 29] There was a man in the land of Uz, I don't know how to say that, whose name was Job. And that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil.

Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants.

And that man was the greatest of all the men of the East. His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day.

And they would send and invite their three sisters and eat and drink with them. When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and concentrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all.

For Job said, perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus Job did continually. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord.

[3 : 47] And Satan also came among them. The Lord said to Satan, From where do you come? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From roaming about the earth and walking around on it.

The Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.

Then Satan answered the Lord, Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has on every side?

You have blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth your hand now and touch all that he has. He will surely curse you to your face.

Then the Lord said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power. Only do not put forth your hand on him. So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.

[4 : 49] So reads his word. Father, As we look at this today, I just ask that it would, as it did mine, touch my heart and that for practical reasons of how we can look at your protection in our life and how you go about it and the times that we need it and the times that we can pray it over others who

we see wandering, even ourselves as we wander from time to time.

And just ask that your word would speak to us. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. You can be seated. Nah, keep standing for the rest of the sermon.

I gotta stand. How come you guys don't have to stand? You know, that's the way it used to be. The preacher sat down and then everybody else stood up and just listened.

That's the way it is. Okay, I think we should do that. What do you think? No? All right. Never mind. Never mind. Never mind. So, have you ever been scared?

You know, it's nighttime or even the daytime. It can be that. And you hear a noise outside and you're scared and you're going, ooh, what's that? That's a scary noise. What's going on out there? And, but, to a degree, you feel safe in your home.

[6 : 20] And you're going, yeah, I got protection around me. I got my four walls around me. I'm good. I'm good. And, oh, got my doors locked. I'm good. I'm good. And, so, anyway, you feel more secure.

And, even more so, you feel more secure if you go hide underneath your covers. Because now, you're even tighter, closed in, and you got even more protection.

Nobody can see me. You know, that type of thing. But, anyway, you feel protected because you're covered. Because you have a covering around you. You have a barrier that keeps, that is hopefully going to keep the enemy out.

Well, that's what is going on in our story here. You've got this man named Job who is a righteous man. And, as it happens that the angels come before the Lord on their appointed time that they come around.

And, Satan being a fallen angel, he also comes around too because at this point he still has access to heaven. And, so he is going there and the Lord asks him, hmm, what have you been doing?

[7 : 27] Oh, I've been walking around to and fro. And, we're actually told what he was really trying to do. We told in, I want to say, Peter, 2 Peter, 1 Peter, I don't remember, I didn't look that up, but from memory.

Anyway, that he's seeking whom he may devour. So that he wants, he's not doing this to just be a nice guy and just looking around and going, oh, look, there's a tree growing over there.

Oh, look, there's the ocean over there. No, no, he's looking for whom he can devour and a roaring lion. And anyway, so then the Lord says to him that, have you, have you, I know you've been looking for someone who you can devour.

Have you noticed my servant Job? He's a good guy. He does, he does well. Well, of course he does. It's because you protect him. You have protection on four sides of him, all the way around him.

You have, on all sides, you are protecting him. You're protecting his possessions. You're protecting his health, his wealth, his everything. You've got him completely.

[8 : 32] Well, of course he's going to fear you and praise you. And you take away that protection, what's going to happen? what's going to happen? Oh, well, he'll still praise me.

You'll see. He's not going to curse me. Okay, let me at him. All right, you can, you can go after him, but you can't touch him. You can only touch his, basically his possessions or the things that he cares about and stuff.

So, as we go on to the story, of course, we really, we know the first thing he attacks is his children and his, all his livestock and everything. And so the story goes on and on.

Through it all, that, at the end, we find out that Job never does curse God to his face. Right?

So, he holds up. He is a righteous person. He is blameless in that regard. Okay? And why, you know, for however it worked out for Job, but why he did that or didn't curse even when his wife told him to, just curse God and die.

[9 : 44] You know, aren't you tired of this? Oh, everything being taken away. And he wouldn't do it. Woman, be quiet. I don't, anyway, but we can say the same thing to people from time to time.

Man, you really got it rough. Why don't you just not tell them to curse God? But, you know, in a way, if we're feeling, I don't know, not, if, if we're going along with them and saying, oh, I can't believe God did this to you and stuff or God's allowed this in your life and this, what's happening and stuff and so basically that's, in a sense, cursing God because you're saying he doesn't know what he's doing and that's not a good place to be, right?

Let me look at my notes here as I move along. So, Job never did curse him. Oh, yeah, so, we have been learning in the book, we've been going through the book of 1 John over the last several years and, and, sorry, Bill, and, no, I'm just teasing.

It's, it's a very good lesson that we're doing through that. Anyway, we've been going through it in 1 John and we're going through about how there are tests in there that we can examine ourselves to see if we have authentic Christianity.

Okay, there's the, and I'll repeat them, just because they're out there, that the first test, are we walking in darkness or are we walking in light?

[11 : 29] Which one? Are we loving our brother or do we hate our brother? Do we confess the truth, in other words, who Jesus truly is, or do we do the opposite, in other words, antichrist?

Okay, so those are the tests that we've been going through. There are different depths to those tests and everything. We all know about it. We've been, we've been going through it. There's another way, another test to reveal our authentic Christianity.

And that is, this test comes when our hedge of protection is pulled back in our life. What do we do? Okay?

How do we respond to trials and tribulations that come our way? The hedge can be around our family, our kids.

It can be around our jobs. The hedge can be around our health, our marriages, our spouse, in other words, our finances, our possessions, possessions, our relationships, even our mind.

[12 : 43] That protection can be around that. And of course, it can be around your very life. And when that hedge is allowed to be breached in one of those areas or whatever, fill in the blank for yourself, will you be like Job and proclaim in verse 21 of our, we didn't get into that over here, but in verse 21 of chapter 1 there, it says, the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. He's got that right. He gave it to us and he can take it away anytime he wants for whatever reason he wants. You argue with him.

He gave it to you and he can do what he wants. Ultimately, he's doing it to bless us. He's doing it to test us and Job is passing with flying colors.

Now, he does have his struggles and stuff, but he says, the Lord gives and the Lord takes away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. In other words, he continued in his faith that God is good no matter what and he's worthy of praise.

We're told to trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. You press into the Lord. You press into God. You don't pull away from.

[14 : 09] You press in when the hedge of protection is taken away, is removed, is breached. You press into him. When any of these areas are attacked, how do you respond?

How easily do you go toward evil and sin against God because your faith is weakened? How easily do you fall back into old habits and desires?

Or are you strong? Or do you just give up quickly? Oh, I don't know what to do. And, oh, God's not good. Remember the reason for trials and tests?

We learned about it a while ago in the book of Deuteronomy when we studied the Israelites going into the wilderness after they crossed the Red Sea and we were told why they were taken into the wilderness.

God did it so that they would know what was in their heart. Right? Remember that? What was in their heart?

[15 : 18] Grumble, grumble, grumble, grumble, grumble, grumbling about everything. So, he took them into the wilderness to show them what was in their heart. There's another reason that we're given trials and tests is because it will reveal the sin that lurks in our heart.

We all have it. It all is sitting there. There's sin that lurks in just waiting. It's at the doorstep. It is waiting to take over.

And if we allow it to and it becomes evident or it becomes easier to allow it to when our hedge of protection is breached because we're vulnerable.

Okay? So, trials and tests and rest assured, Jesus has told us, in this world, you will have many trials and sorrows.

But, of course, the good news is, he says, but don't worry, I have overcome the world. There's hope. So, you will face those trials and tribulations, those sorrows.

[16:26] You will have your hedge of protection breached at some point. 1 Peter 4.12 tells us, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you as though something strange were happening to you.

How often do we do that? We look around, even we say it about the world. Oh, the world's crazy. All this stuff is going on. Is this something strange is happening? No, it's all written down in Scripture. It's all prophesied.

It's going to happen. And it just confirms God's word being true. Okay? So, don't be surprised by these things that happen in your life.

Oh, it caught me off guard. No, well, that can happen. It can catch you off guard. But don't be surprised by it. Don't just go, Lord, what are you doing? What are you trying to show me and what's in me?

Search me and even find my hidden sins. Reveal them. That's all he's doing because he loves you. Because he wants it exposed. He wants it rooted out of you.

[17:35] Right? In Job, this type of hedge is one of protection from enemy attacks. But, there is another type of hedge spoken of in Scripture that has a similar but different function.

It still protects us from our enemies, but, the other part of it is, it also protects us from ourselves. Sometimes this hedge is needed because we are in a season of backsliding.

The pleasures of sin have entrapped us and we are headed down the wrong path. We begin to push God out of our life and make other things our God. In other words, idols.

The Bible calls those things idols that we put up in our life. And the act of it is called idolatry. We also tend to rely on other things.

In other words, people or different things for our protection to help us with problems or whatever. We are elevating other things higher than God and in the place of God.

[18:43] this is where we enter the book of Hosea. That is on page 751 in the Pew Bible.

You need that one. Otherwise, you look in your table of contents on how to find it. But anyway, in the book of Hosea.

And we are not going to read through the book of Hosea here. Not the whole thing. But we may go through most of it. Uh-oh. What did I do with it? Got it.

Mine is page 1213 in my Bible. So, no, I lied. 1211. Anyway, in the book of Hosea, what is happening here, the nation of Israel has been, this is a loose synopsis, okay, so I'm not doing details and stuff because there's a lot more to this than what I'm giving.

The nation of Israel has been under God's protection. At this time, also, the nation of Israel split into the northern and the southern kingdoms and the northern kingdom not doing so good.

[19:54] They got nothing but bad kings all over the place. They never listened to the prophets, the warnings and stuff. And God is just about ready to send the Assyrians to come in and overtake them.

But then you also have the southern kingdom, Judah, and they also, they wave back and forth. They oscillate. They got good kings, bad kings, bad king, good king, and they just keep going like that.

Well, Hosea has been a prophet during this time. And so, but God is still protecting them up to this point. but he's going to be giving a warning, okay, like he always does.

And God's protection at the time, they were tested so he could let them see what was in their heart and to reveal their desire for sin that lurked in their hearts.

So he's going to give them a test or he has been testing them also. I'll read it.

[20:59] Well, even though God took care of them, they often backslid and went down the wrong path and pursued the pleasures of sin which enslaved them. They went and worshipped other gods and trusted other things for their needs and protections.

They were committing spiritual idolatry. Putting it bluntly, as scripture does, spiritual adultery, I mean, that's what he calls it.

Hosea is God's prophet. He's God's spokesman. So, and like other prophets, he's called to call, no, he is to call God's people back to their covenant relationship, okay, and their covenant faithfulness to him.

But Hosea is unique in how he's being called to do this to talk to the people. He is told to marry a promiscuous woman.

Her name is Gomer. If you're my age, your mind immediately goes to Gomer Pyle, but that ain't it. His name, I'm sorry, it does.

[22 : 09] Whenever I see Gomer, I think of that. But be that as it may. Anyway, so her name is Gomer and she represents Israel's covenant unfaithfulness, right?

So she's a promiscuous woman and that parallels to how God looks at Israel, the nation of Israel, Judah and the northern kingdom, that their covenant unfaithfulness.

but God's love for Israel is so great that he doesn't abandon them in their sin, their unfaithfulness. He doesn't abandon them. Even though they're sinning, even though they're being idolatrous, playing the harlot, he doesn't leave them. Okay? It's going to be, it's neat to see what he does.

I was going to play a song that said you never let go of me. You guys may, you never let go, I can't do that, never mind.

[23 : 15] No, that one's not on there, I don't think. Let me see. Nope, that one's not on there. So it's not timed yet. I couldn't get that one to come up with our rights and everything.

So anyway, we're not going to play that. You'll understand why I'm trying to do this later on.

Anyway, so, what does he do? Again, I told you it's going to jump all over the place. I apologize.

What happens? He, God, has Hosea marry an adulterous woman, and it's as if to say, God is trying to tell Hosea, you need to understand how my heart is broken when my children, Israel, play the harlot.

because by marrying Gomer, you're going to feel what I feel. Okay? And could you imagine being married to somebody who was running out all the time, and you love that person.

It wasn't just, hey, I married her because I was told to. No. He loved her, and he took care of her, Hosea did, but she still ran out on.

[24 : 33] Could you just imagine that for a second of how that would feel? And maybe you already do. I'm very fortunate that I do not know how that feels, and I'm very thankful for that. But there are people in here that do know what that's like.

And so this can take an extra special meaning to you. Anyway, this is how God is feeling, and he wants Hosea. Remember, Hosea is supposed to tell the people to repent of their sin and come back to him to restore that covenant relationship, faithfulness.

But God is saying, in order for you to convey this message properly, you need to go through what I'm going through. Okay?

And because that's how you're going to be able to convey it accurately. I mean, this thing is going to be heartfelt when you are telling the people.

It's not just going to be words that are out there. That got me to thinking that how often does God have us in relationships and situations because it is a direct reflection of our relationship with him.

[25 : 52] I was just thinking about that and going, wow, so what kind of relationships do I have with people at work, with friends, with family members?

What are my relationships like? And is that how, do I have those type of relationships with them, be they good or bad?

But it's a reflection, Lord, of how my relationship is with you or things that are happening in my life?

Is it because it's that's how I treat you, Lord, is with this situation or that situation?

And I think that he allows that or that's what he does. That's how he teaches us. At least that's how he teaches me. I read that kids reflect what's going on in the family.

So how your kids are behaving, what's happening with your kids, that's a direct reflection on what's happening in your family? Now, we're talking about young kids or kids that are at home and everything.

[26 : 59] Obviously, once they're out of the home, you have no control over that. So now that becomes them and their families and what happens. But marriages also reflect what is going on with our relationship with God.

We need to take time to examine our relationships, to find out what's to go. I'm struggling in this area. I'm fighting in this area. Why?

Why do I fight with my spouse? Why am I angry at them for this? Why are they doing this? Why am I doing that? And the Lord's saying, hmm, hello, that's how my relationship is.

I told the story one other time, and I will repeat it again, because the Lord showed me this a long time ago. Anyway, I was working at a place and I was the office manager and so I was responsible for answering the phone, but I also take orders and stuff and help out customers.

But I also was in charge of helping the people in the warehouse get the orders ready and stuff. And it never failed.

[28 : 19] I'd get an order and everything, print up the invoice, put it out in the call box, whatever, and then I'd go out there to start filling the order.

I'd start pulling the product off the shelves and everything, and I no sooner start getting into it and the phone would ring again. Okay, run over, answer the phone, and get back, all right, I was over here, start doing it again, picking up where I left off, and anyway, pull more stuff, and I'd just start to get to it, to start to it again, and the phone rings.

Like, oh, and this was constant that this would happen to me, constantly, drove me insane. I'm just going, Lord, why is this?

You know I'm getting angry inside. I don't like this. I don't like being interrupted. I would just like to be able to concentrate and do, I used to think that I was able to be a person that was multitask, and I recently found out I don't like multitasking.

I'd like to concentrate on one thing, get it done, do it properly, and be done with it. So every time I got interrupted, I was getting more and more frustrated. Well, this was going on for years.

[29 : 42] I was at this place for 13 years, and I'm just going, and I was always asking, Lord, I don't get it, I don't get it. Probably about the 10th year, he finally gave me the answer.

He said, Mark, that's yours and my relationship. What? He goes, every time I try to talk with you, every time I'm going to pour into you, every time I'm going to, that I want to show you something, you go off and go do something else.

You are, you know, the typical man, squirrel. That was me. That was my relationship with the Lord. It still is, I'm sorry to say, I still haven't learned it. I still get distracted so quickly and easily. He's just trying to, he's just trying to show me in his loving way, Mark, this is not good.

Take the time, sit down, be quiet, be still before me. Another one was at the same job that there was, I set up an alarm system so that I knew, because we had to close the doors, this is in Arizona, it's hot, you try to keep the swamp coolers on, keep the poor warehouse cool, so anyway, you had the doors closed, but you never knew when a customer drove up.

[31 : 04] And so I put in an alarm system that it would beep, beep, beep, very loudly, that when the customer drove up to the will call door so that we could open up the door and the customer wasn't sitting out there waiting.

So I put up this nice alarm system. So they would drive by it, beep, beep, beep, and then it would stop and they'd back up to the will call door. Okay? All right, fantastic.

Try it out a few times in my own car. Yeah, that's great. This will be perfect. And it took a lot of setting up to do because back then, the back, anyway. But what would happen?

The customer would drive up to the driveway or through the driveway to get to the call door and they would stop right where the beeper was at. And it would just simply go beep, beep, beep, beep. And you're going, what is going on? Why don't you continue pulling forward and coming to the will call area? I don't get it.

[32 : 04] You never did that before until I put in this beep, this alarm system. Beep, beep, beep. Again, drove me crazy. I was putting signs out there, please pull forward, doing everything I could to get them to stop.

Didn't matter. They just did that. And again, this went on for years. And I'm just going, why is that? Getting vexed and frustrated and everything. Lord, why?

I don't get it. I know you're trying to teach me something. Not that I listen, but you're trying to teach me something. What is it? And finally, many years later, he finally told me, Mark, this is an example of yours and my relationship.

What are you talking about? He says, you never, you stop right in the middle of it. You don't follow through. You don't continue. You don't go to the end.

You stop short all the time, Mark, with how you're studying things about me, how our relationship is to go deeper. Had the same thing to do with the getting distracted, just another way of telling me.

[33 : 14] You always stop short, Mark. All right. Anyway, God's gracious. God loves me so much, he doesn't want to leave me where I'm at.

Okay? He tries. He is always constantly trying to get my attention. Now, I tell these stories, I've got to make sure that you guys understand, I do not tell these stories to elevate myself or make me the center of attention.

That is not why I do it. I'm doing it to give examples of how God works in all of our lives. Okay? It's not just me.

I just want you guys to recognize, I'm trying to give examples so that you guys can relate to that, and you guys can now pull back and think of your own life. Your own relationships.

You can say, hmm, I wonder. It's something as innocuous as a phone ringing all the time, or somebody stopping short. What is happening in your life that is, God's saying, this is a direct reflection of yours and my relationship.

[34 : 23] Story, nice bit, Mark. the stories are always meant to give God the glory. These stories that I tell, they're no different than the stories in the Bible about God's faithfulness.

Amen? To me, they are. I'm just not written down in scripture, but they're still the stories, okay? And it talks about God and what he does for us.

All right, Hosea is married to Gomer. It starts out well enough. Well, at least the firstborn is his, but then she starts playing the harlot.

The next couple of children that come along are not his. Sad. Just like some of us, when we first get married to Christ, that's a weird statement there for some of you, when we first get married to Christ, the honeymoon is good.

He takes care of us and things are going well. But then slowly we start to drift away from him due to sin's enticements or because a prayer wasn't answered the way we wanted or we start listening to the wrong influences.

[35 : 31] And before you know it, we are cheating on him and going after other things that bring us perceived pleasure. We go after idols.

We go after things that we think are going to make us happy. we are just like the nation of Israel and Gomer, sad to say, we do it.

And we not only are back sliding, but we sometimes are in an all-out rebellion against God. God. We push God out of our life and make other things our God.

We rely on other things, people, things for our protection and help with our problems. We elevate other things higher than God and we place them as priorities.

now, again, I said from time to time, we don't stay there, but sometimes people do stay there.

[36 : 41] And we know people like that. They've tasted the goodness of God. They've benefited from his protection and his provisions.

you know them. You've witnessed it. But now, the pursuit of worldly pleasures, bad company, indulging in sex, money, drugs, sports, hobbies, video games, you name it, making those things their idol, the things they go after.

They're trusting in horses and chariots instead of remembering the name of the Lord. What do I mean by that? Look it up. Trusting in chariots and horses, or horses and chariots, whichever way it goes.

To me, when I think of that, again, just something to think about. Psychologists, go to psychologists to help us with our problems.

Therapists, okay? We're trusting in horses and chariots to take care of our problems. We're not getting into God's word. That's where we need to get into. Yeah, these people will take your money.

[37 : 58] They don't mind. And I'm not saying that they're bad. There is a time and a place for them. However, don't be so dependent on them. We're hooked on medications for peace and calmness.

I need that. I'm all anxious. I need anyway. We're trusting. They're not remembering the name of the Lord. Maybe people, and we know them too, that never even knew the Lord, but their life is still filled the same way, meaning that they're going after idols and everything.

Again, we know them. We've witnessed it. they are our kids, their family members, their friends, their co-workers, their spouses.

It breaks our heart to see destructive behavior and lack of any acknowledgement of God in their life. We love them. We don't want to see them go through this.

We want so desperately to bring them around, to point them back to the cross. But more importantly, God loves them, and it breaks his heart.

[39 : 16] The Holy Spirit is grieved. What are we to do? We've tried praying, but we're exhausted and tired from doing it.

In fact, we don't even know how to pray anymore. We've prayed it all. We tried to witness to them from time to time gently, but all that's happening is it's driving them further away.

It's doing the opposite of what we want. It's just breaking our heart. Help! There's good news. God has given us the answer.

It's powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, able to penetrate so deep into the problem that it divides soul and spirit, joint, and marrow.

Of course, that is the word of God. Amen? Yeah. And we're going to look at one. What does God do to those who are seeking other idols?

[40 : 21] Does he give up on them or does he pursue them? Of course, he pursues them. He doesn't say, oh, no, they're lost cause. Can't do anything about that.

I'm not sovereign. I'm not able to take care of that. Oh, well, next. No, no, he pursues them. Let's check what's happening.

Let's get back to see what's happening with Hosea and Gomer. Hosea loves his wife, still providing for her needs. He's providing for her and she thinks that everything is coming from her lovers.

It's weird. weird thing. She's equating all of her things, how she's taken care of and stuff. She's attributing it to her lovers, to these idols, to these things.

We do that in our life. We think that we're being taken care of when we pursue something that isn't God and we attribute it to that thing as taking care of us or meeting our need when in fact it's God that's taking care of us and providing for us.

[41 : 35] It's weird. Because Gomer is still playing the harlot and will not listen to Hosea about putting off adultery and being faithful to him, God is about to do something amazing.

He is going to surround her with a hedge. Chapter 2, verse 6. If you just want to, finally going to get to there.

You guys can read the story and everything later on. It's just fascinating, this whole story and the symbolism that's in there and everything, the name of the kids and he changes the names of the kids later on and how all this just intertwines in our life and we can relate it to ourselves.

It's just really cool. Anyway, 2, 6. So, that hedge. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way, because she's not turning from her adulterous ways.

Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her ways with thorns and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths.

[42 : 49] She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them. She will seek them, but will not find them. Pretty cool.

This isn't just a hedge of protection like it talks about in Job. This is a different, this is a little bit more intense hedge.

This is a hedge of thorns. Think about that for a minute. If you were surrounded by a hedge of thorns, what do you think that would do for you? you want to, let's see, I want to go over to the liquor store because I really need to have a drink because I'm an alcoholic and I just can't help myself.

That's where I find my pleasure. That's where I find my need being met. So I need to go over there. All of a sudden the Lord puts a hedge of thorns around you.

You start to go there, car won't start. painful. Now your money's got to go towards repairing your car. I don't know.

[44 : 00] But how did the hedge of thorns, how does that look in our life? Well, it's meant to thwart us from going after our lovers, going after our idols, the things that we think bring us pleasure.

Be it whatever it may. I mean, you can, again, fill in the blank. The struggles that you have can be drugs. You know, I always go back to the standard things, you know, sex, drugs, and alcohol, but there are so many other things that you can fill in the blank.

I get my self-worth from all the number of hours I work. I get myself worth from cleaning all the time. My house is immaculate. I know that sounds weird, but again, if something is taking you away from God, your time with God, it's an idol, because you elevated that higher than God.

God. God. Why the hedge of thorns?

[45 : 21] What will it accomplish? We're told in, we've already read that, that she cannot find her path. She will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them, and she will seek them, but will not find them.

She will be unable to find her way, the things that bring her pleasure. If she tries, she will get pricked by the thorns. It will be painful, and it will be unpleasant.

My, I won't name a name. Yes, I will, because he said I could. My brother, one of my brothers, and he loves to tell this story, because, again, it brings glory to God.

That's his purpose of doing that. So, my brother Mike, he was an alcoholic, is an alcoholic. That was the place I was working at for 13 years.

He owned the business, I managed it for him, but, because he was an alcoholic, he couldn't wait until 4.30 came, and I was ecstatic, because I came from a job when I worked about 17 hours a day, and that was a normal day for me.

[46 : 36] So, when I only had to work eight hours a day, to that 4.30, he'd kick me out, and he'd say, go home, go home, and he's like, you bet you I'm going to go home, on vacation, I felt like I was on vacation every day, getting off at 4.30, that was just amazing.

Anyway, found out the reason why he did that is because he wanted to go to the liquor store. It was 4.30, I've got to go to the liquor store, it's time to get soused, business hours are over, and that was his routine.

The guy came in, stranger, not a stranger, customer came in at one point, didn't remember what he was doing, but he said, hey Mike, I just have a word, I was just told to come over here and tell you this, that if you don't stop what you're doing, you're going to lose your family, the business, your wealth, everything, it's going to go down.

And by the way, that guy never remembers that he came in and said that, gave that prophetic word to my brother, but Mike took it to heart, and he said, I've got to stop, but he didn't know how, so he didn't know about this hedge of thorns, but he did know enough to say, hey Lord, I can't do this on my own, this is entrenched in me, I can try, but I know what's going to happen, I know I'm going to fail, so I'm asking you Lord, that when I go to take a drink, that it will be unpleasurable for me, it will bring me no pleasure, in fact, it will make me sick, again, he didn't even know about, you know, that you can take a pill that makes you sick if you drink alcohol, I guess they're out there, I guess so, anyway, he didn't know about any of that, but he just simply prayed that prayer, Lord, I don't want to sin against you in this way any longer,

I'm, hear your prophetic word to me, and I want to stop, so please, help me, the Lord honored that, and to this day, of course, he is alcohol-free, has been for many, many years, but the Lord delivered him from it, because he was sincere in his prayer, not that we're not sincere in our prayers, but are we asking for that it, that we can see what it does to the Lord, that it breaks his heart, that we can feel that, that we can say that, that thing that I do is pleasurable to me, make it not pleasurable, that's exactly what's happening with this hedge of thorns, okay, um, we should ask, oh, oh, skip down for a second, so the hedge of thorn is applied and what happens after after some time goes by verse seven uh in here it said the seven b the bottom part of it then she will say i will go back to my first husband for it was better for me than than now so it accomplished its goal the goal was the reason for putting the hedge of thorns around her was so that it would be unpleasurable and she says i should just return to my first love that's that's kind of neat isn't it so it accomplished its goal again follow track with me for a moment here um in verses 14 through 17 it talks about that she is restored the relationship is mended with hosea it just it's a a this is a really cool picture and again this is mirroring what god is going to uh do with the nation of israel it's still being played out by the way because towards the as it goes on this is still some of it is future tense and it's not going to be realized until the latter days um and but because god has not given up on the nation of israel just like he does not give up on us so how can we apply this this thing to our loved ones we can pray it over them i ask you i mean this part of hosea meditate on what the story of hosea and hosea and gomer represent in relationship to god and them or us and what the full potency of the hedge of thorns can do what will it look like in their life pray that over them think about it it'd be intentional when you're praying this hedge of thorns be specific on things that you can that you're going to say another story i love stories because again god is so gracious and so merciful there was a uh um we had an elder at a a church in tucson and uh he had a brother that was a wayward um brother didn't want anything to do with the lord um but uh he um trip is the guy's name uh not the he was the elder his brother joey um he um just you know heartbroken for his brother uh and she's like i wish my brother knew the lord or bush but he's too busy out pursuing other things um that are just not good for him it's destroying his life everything so trip would ask us to pray and then that's when the lord

[52 : 38] first brought me to this passage about the hedge of thorns and so it was like pretty cool so decided let's pray this over joey so we prayed it specifically for things that joey was going after things that enticed him and stuff we just wanted those idols to be not pleasurable any longer that he had that that hedge that those thorns would prick him um and that also that his friends or the influences that they weren't able to come into him that's the other part of that thorn of protection or hedge of protection of the thorn is that they can't you can't go out and they can't come in it's double-sided man it's cool anyway prayed over it prayed through it kept praying about it and of course the happy story is he came to the lord and he uh married has children he is now actually died and is now with the lord but he died young in age um comparably and but all that if his brother hadn't reached out um we wouldn't have known about it as as leaders and stuff um but anyway it just uh an encouragement there um this this stuff is for real it's not a formula it's not hey do this and this will happen this is god's word and if god's word does it we know with confidence that we can do it and somehow some way god will make this work out his word will not return void amen all right um so prayed prayed that over them and we prayed it for him joey wasn't able to pray this for himself obviously right he was in no place to pray for it we pleaded it it's called intercessory prayer that simply means praying on someone else's behalf because they are unable to be told to intercede for one another right i'm sure you guys have all been there to where you've had times i don't even know what to pray i can't pray for myself i don't even know how to pray anymore i've lost my faith in god i've lost my trust in god you know whatever um and but boy wouldn't it be nice if somebody could come along beside you or instead of you don't even know that they're doing it but they're bringing you before the father and praying in your stead as if you were praying it that's how you pray it as if that person were praying you're bringing them before the throne room and you're saying god i'm praying in place of my brother in place of my sister in place of my children in place of my spouse i'm not just asking that you would touch them touch them with the cross with the blood of jesus just power in that stuff god has given us his word to pray over people what a blessing when we don't know how to pray or what to pray for we are to ask the holy spirit to intercede for us and guess what he will he does it with groanings that's from romans 8 26 here's another story there was a pastor who was um counseling a couple because their marriage was on the rocks not doing well he'd met with them several times had um you know conversation they were talking back and forth and everything but it just didn't seem like it was getting anywhere and the pastor was frustrated he was going lord i don't know what to do i don't know how to pray i i've done everything that i can think of doing and trying to counsel them and bring them to this and that you know look at each other's side and stuff and so he said god i just don't know what to do anymore he was meeting that night with the couple and he wasn't getting an answer of how what else to do next he met with them sat down and he just looked at them and they're going expectantly you know what's the meeting going to be about or you know how are we going to do it this time and all of a sudden he just started weeping uncontrollable the pastor couldn't stop he just kept crying and crying and and while he was crying he's praying out he's crying out to lord what is going on with me i'm on i'm just i can't control myself i i just am just full of sorrow and grief for this situation for this marriage i can't help but cry and weep and the lord spoke to him spoke to his heart and said that's how i feel i love them so much i cry for them my heart is broken for them and they're not listening so the pastor conveyed that to the couple they were so moved by it because it touched that that that word just went directly into their life and it just cut right through all their excuses and everything else their sins towards each other just cut right through that they reconciled had another wedding renewed their vows i guess is how you say it but the point is the pastor didn't know how to pray anymore he just cried out to god to me that is just so cool how intercessory prayer can work and we don't have to have the right words we and and it can just be in private with you and the lord it doesn't have to be with the other person but if it does and that the lord leads you to that i mean if the holy spirit just and you just start crying don't be embarrassed by it don't be ashamed of it don't try to suppress it let the holy spirit work through you man we need to have faith in our prayers we need to have confidence if the bible declares something we can hold on to that we don't have to worry about it philippians 1 6 says he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of christ jesus what does that mean so when you have a brother sister child spouse on and on you have a relationship somebody and they are backslidden they have pulled away from the lord but they know the lord he who you can have confidence in praying this that god i am confident that in the end somehow some way they are going to come around back to

you because you tell me that he who began a good work in you will perfect it so if god started it he's going to complete it he's going to make it happen so hold on to that pray with confidence we're also told in ephesians 1:13 that when you become a believer that you are sealed with the holy spirit now if you get the seal of the holy spirit on you what do you think you have how do you how much protection do you think you have how much guarantee of your salvation do you think you have do you think that the holy spirit can be thwarted no absolutely not rest assured you are saved if you were truly saved and again you can go through the tests that we've been going through in first john you can go through tests to see are you truly saved do you truly believe but if you are and you are you cannot be snatched out of god's hands it is impossible i will say that with 100 confidence and if you'd like to challenge me on that show me a scripture verse and then maybe i'll uh believe you but i don't see any here's one for um people who need guidance and direction in their life uh because they're floundering i don't know which way to go i don't know what to do with my life i i just i'm so confused and stuff it's out of proverbs 19 many plans are in a man's heart but the lord directs his steps confidence in that the lord's going to direct you but you know what god can't steer a parked car you have to start moving in some direction right you got to get moving so start taking the steps if you got somebody who doesn't know how to proceed what to do in their life tell them just start doing something do something go get a job this do you know do i don't know what the where the god where god wants me to work or what he wants me to do go apply for places see where you get a job okay but that's where he's going to plant you for a while and start going with it he's going to direct your steps have confidence in it he says so many plans are in a man's heart well i'm going to go do this well no you think you're going to i'm going to take that and i'm going to lead you over here so even if we make the wrong decision don't worry about it he will bring you around it's okay you don't have to fret about that worry about that oh i don't know things aren't like what they used to be over here but don't worry about it stay calm it's okay god's word is powerful pray it over them and here's the neat part also and i like this because there's something about music that just touches my soul it cuts through the garbage for me it it and so in other words uh pray scripture over them but you can also sing scripture over somebody what do i mean by that god has inspired and gifted many songwriters to put his word into song find a song and sing it over your loved ones make it personal and put their name in it part put it part of the song as you're singing over it again music for me it just speaks to me

there's some people that doesn't but it just there's so often i don't know how to pray i don't know what to pray but then i hear a song and i'm going that's exactly how i'm feeling right now but caveat here it is a song that is scripturally based and it's just filling in the blanks so to speak for how i'm feeling and so and it doesn't have to be perfect i mean sometimes we think oh we got to examine the song so closely and say oh but this is wrong here and this is wrong there no it's the heart and god looks at the heart i remember before i wasn't even a christian yet i was raised in a catholic school and uh loved the lord as a child in fact everybody around me always said no mark's going to be a priest when he grows up oh cool cool with me i'd like to be a priest until met my wife and she said wait a minute if you're a priest and you can't get married so and uh well i'm gonna i don't want to be a priest anymore but that's all i knew anyway i wasn't saved but i knew who jesus was i knew he was the son of god i knew that he died for my sins i knew all that stuff but i wasn't saved it just hadn't sunk into me yet however i loved to sing songs to the lord loved it and the songs back then the only songs i knew were the songs from the catholic church which were a lot of hymns and stuff um but i didn't understand i mean anyway uh so i didn't i had no idea there was a whole genre out there called christian music no idea and so because i was limited uh and we didn't have the internet obviously uh so anyway i didn't know anything about any christian songs or anything like that out there so what i would do is when i would hear a love song on the radio i put god's name in there i put jesus's name in there and i can't remember songs now but i just remember that a love song would come on and i'd be singing it and going and just telling the lord i loved him and how much i loved him and it was just was it theologically correct was it doctrinally correct absolutely not if you were probably looking at some of those songs now you don't hear what you said that you sang that to god yes i did absolutely but it was the heart and he knew it eventually you know i get saved have faith to believe in fact one of the songs we're going to listen to it here in a second so what i'm saying is that pray a song over your loved one and the question is have you ever turned a song into prayer another story um when one of our daughters was wayward of course it was breaking our heart can i get through this because i relive it and i re i relive the power that god did in our the miracle that he did in our in our life and again i gotta share these stories she was wayward we had a group of

people at our church um where this one guy john he loved to gather people as many people that would come and he just loved to sing praises to the lord he he loved it he he just was all over that all the time he didn't like it didn't matter what time of day he'd call you up and say what are you doing oh just sitting here watching tv i got something better for you why don't you come on over the house and i'm getting together people we're going to be singing you knew what that meant he was going to put on some tracks um and songs about praises and worship to the lord and we just start singing and we'd do that for hours and hours and so there's one time he has this over it happened to be in the evening and he said we're going to sing this song or you know he had a whole bunch of songs and he says this song and he says um if you've got anybody who you're struggling or are praying over and you're struggling uh with because they they uh have fallen away from the lord um i want you to you know just meditate on this song as you're singing it and um just place their name in it it's like all right that's cool that's cool i know somebody i can put in there my daughter and uh i'm gonna do that so i want to i i want to give a demonstration of how this looks so um the song um your love reaches me and again is it doctrinally correct i don't know not 100 that's not the point of this song and it's also kind of a oh you'll get this all right go ahead i'll stop it after in a few minutes we're not going to go through the whole song um it takes a while they like to play their instruments first those musicians they want to show off their talent as well they should so they're doing it unto the lord it's cool you should have to pass forward through this part that's all right we're getting there so you're sitting there you're just going before the lord you

[71 : 16] NING Oh, my God.

Your love reaches to me the stars. Even the great day. Oh, your love reaches to this heart. And it makes me sing. Your love reaches me. It's what I need. It's what I need. Your love reaches me. It's what I need. Your love reaches me.

It's what I need. We would put my daughter's name in there and insert it. your love is what Britt needs your love is what Britt needs it's what she needs it's what she needs she needs it let her feel it go ahead and stop it it's not going to put the words up but and we just we're singing that everybody joined in the group and we're just singing that and going before the Lord our daughter needed that she was wayward she was falling away she knew who Christ was she accepted him but her life was not like that anymore her hedge had been breached because she was being tried

[73 : 15] God had to become her God not her parents God it had to be her own personal we had our faith that's all she knew but God was testing her and she was failing in that test she needed to know that God loved her and that I knew that God's love would reach her that song is based out of Psalm 36 your love reaches me to the highest heavens to the lowest lows who do you have in your life that you need to sing that over pick a song find a song again this is what speaks to me this is what helped me through these times it was scripture that was in there and it was being sung and it was sung as a prayer my own conversion was when my brother

Mike came over to my house and he said Mark I don't know why I'm here yes I do the Lord told me to come on over and he told me to play this song for you if you can play that song you guys may be familiar with this song again raised a Catholic all about everything but there's something in my walk I was good enough I didn't need I wasn't that bad of a kid yes I was but in denial go ahead and play that so he came over and he played this song he said Mark just got something I want you to listen to look at the words Almighty God Great I am

Immovable rock Omnipotent Powerful Awesome Lord Victorious warrior Commanding king of kings mighty conqueror and the only time the only time I ever saw him runNING We got a branch And I left home I'd broken his heart I wondered if things could ever be the same One night I remembered his love for me And down that dusty road A head I could see It's the only time The only time I hear a song in front When he ran to me Took me in his heart And I had to do his chest Stand by silence, come home again He threw my face Biked the tears from my eyes With forgiveness and a voice He said, son Do you know I still love you?

He caught me by surprise He brought me to my knees And come on away I saw him run to me And then I ran to him Holy one, righteous judge Turned my way And now I know He's been waiting for this day And then he grabbed the week Took me in his heart

[78 : 41] Held my head to his chest Said my son's come home again He said, son Wicked the tears from my eyes Wicked the tears from my eyes Wicked forgiveness and a voice I felt his love for me again He ran to me Took me in his heart And I had to do his chest Said my son's come home again Wicked the tears from my eyes Wicked the tears from my eyes He said, son He said, son He

said, son My son Do you know I still love you?

Oh He ran to me God ran That day I accepted So that Sherry, we were together Got saved on the same day December 7, 1986 We know the day well It will live in infamy For me Now tell me that song's not scriptural All about the prodigal son And how the father ran to the son Waiting Just powerful It just Hit me like a ton of bricks And Weeping and everything else

That's so unusual Love that song One more song And this one's out of the Song of Solomon And it's Chapter 8, verse 6 Where it says You won't relent It's about Or this came about When our daughter Did come back to the She started coming back to church And The Worship team would play this song And She would just With all she could She would Stiff arm And just Resisting And Nope Not gonna She just But it broke through She couldn't help herself God was talking to her Through this song

She could play it I hope the words are on this one She's calling her She's getting her She's calling her She's getting her You won't relent until you Have it all My heart is yours You won't relent until you Have it all My heart is yours I'll set You as a seal Upon my heart As a seal Upon my arm For there is love That is as strong as death

Jealousy demanding As the grave Can you pause that for a second When I first Looked at the words here I'm going Love that is as strong as death That can't be scriptural Read it It's in the song of Solomon I was going What?

[82 : 51] What does that mean? Well Think about it But It was just The Lord was saying I'm going to pursue you I'm not gonna relent I love you Until I have it all I won't relent until you Have it all My heart is yours You won't relent until you Have it all My heart is yours I'll set you as a seal Upon my heart As a seal upon my arm For there is love And he is as strong as death Jealousy demanding As the grave And many waters

Cannot quench this loveNINGNING But yeah, again, as that song was being played, she was just resisting and resisting and finally broke through.

What a glorious day that was, I'll tell you. Again, want to give examples of how this works. Not a formula.

It's from the heart. God honors that. I also need to tell you that it's not a one and done thing. You can't just do it once and expect it to change overnight.

This is something you have to keep after. You're breaking down strongholds that are in their life. Things that have been built up. It's hard to break through that kind of stuff.

[85 : 25] That's why we need to pray that hedge of thorns. It's powerful. Those sins. Those desires.

We can all attest to it. We all have somebody that we love that needs this. It takes faithfulness and time on your part to see this through.

Let's pray. Father, I just... I thank you for your word.

I thank you that it is sharper than a two-edged sword. That it does cut through the problems. It penetrates the issues.

It gets to the heart of things. It gets to the heart of things. Your word is so full of life. But surgery has to be done.

[86 : 30] A cutting out must be done. And it's something that only your word can do. And we rest on that assurance that your word will not return void.

It will serve its purpose. It will do what it was sent out to do. Thank you that you love us so much that you pursue us.

And that you won't relent until you have it all. Just give us the strength to follow through with this. And the steadfastness to see it through. Even though there are times when it will seem like it just isn't working.

Father, again, resting in that assurance. Jesus, in all this is possible because of what you have done at the cross.

[87 : 43] You wore that crown of thorns. You know what it's like. The sorrows. Thank you, Jesus. In your name we pray. Amen. Amen.