

Commitment

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, January 4, 2026
PASSAGES	1 Timothy 4; Luke 14; Philippians 1; 1 Corinthians 1; John 4; Luke 15; Matthew 18
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:20:33 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

The disciplines we keep show what we are committed to — and Jesus asks for total loyalty, not our best slice of it. The comfort hidden in that hard ask is his own character: he does not lecture us about counting the cost and then abandon the project himself.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Evangelicals have a strange relationship with disciplines — either identity-building rule-keeping, or so much emphasis on human failure that we become, in Matt’s phrase, “legalistically anti-legalistic.”
- ◆ You would not try every machine on your first day at a gym. Pick one discipline, celebrate the win, and build from there.
- ◆ Scripture’s commitments are long and physical — Noah’s boat, Joseph’s granaries, blood on the doorposts, Daniel’s diet. None of them were an afternoon’s work.
- ◆ “Hate” in Luke 14 is priority by comparison, not emotion. Jesus is asking to come first, ahead of family and ahead of your own life.
- ◆ The tower and the war are not threats about your stamina. They are Jesus’ own standard — and he meets it.
- ◆ Paul is not confident about the Philippians. He is confident about the one who began the work in them.
- ◆ What waits on the other side of a long absence is not a cold shoulder but the father who ran. That fear is our character, not God’s.

- ◆ Seventy times seven is not a number Jesus set for Peter and exempted himself from. He has already done it for you more times than you want to count.

► 1:20:34

It was the first Sunday of the year, so Matt started where the calendar starts — with resolutions, and with Paul's instruction to train yourself for godliness, since godliness is of value in every way. Diet and exercise sometimes last a while and sometimes do not. The same is true of the goals we set for our souls.

The evangelical wobble on disciplines

► 1:21:02

Matt named the two ditches honestly. Sometimes we are so into the disciplines that we build our identity out of our dos and don'ts, and then set that identity between other people and Jesus. Other times we stress human failing so heavily that the vibe becomes *why bother*. "Legalistically anti-legalistic," he called it — *what did you do, just read your Bible? That wasn't premeditated, was it?*

► 1:22:06

Then the list Hope Chapel has been encouraging, with a warning attached to it: do not take up all of it at once. You would not walk into a gym and try every machine on day one. Bible reading, whether a plan through the year or a binge the way you would binge a novel, because we coast on what we assume God is like and need reminding what he is actually like. Prayer, in small daily habits or in long sittings. Repentance and confession, which is how we pursue godly character on purpose rather than by accident. Generosity, in baby steps, and not only with money — with energy and time, which may be the most valuable thing we have to give. Service, and letting go of busyness in order to do it. Giving your testimony. Worship, set aside on purpose, done even when your body feels bad or you feel discouraged.

► 1:24:24

What we keep, and why we keep it, shows what we are committed to. And the biblical examples of commitment are all long and physical. Noah building a boat — not, Matt noted, the kind of thing you announce on your way to Home Depot the way someone might say they will remodel a bathroom that afternoon. Joseph's granaries, built before a single year of famine arrived. Blood on the doorposts, a thing Israel had never once needed to do, done because God said so. Joshua putting away the gods his fathers served beyond the river (Joshua 24:14–15), and Daniel keeping a prayer routine and a diet in Babylon (Daniel 1:8).

What Jesus asks for

► 1:26:50

Matt gave away the ending first: a friend once told him Jesus does not want your best. He wants all of it — your best, your worst, and everything in between.

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”

LUKE 14:26-27 ↗

The word cannot carry its ordinary American English weight, since the same scriptures tell us to honor father and mother and to love our neighbor as ourselves. It is priority by comparison — Jesus above even our own lives, possibly to our deaths.

► 1:27:50

“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him.”

LUKE 14:28-30 ↗

Then the king with ten thousand men weighing whether to march against twenty thousand, and the conclusion: any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. Jesus is putting the half-finished tower and the unwinnable war next to the person who signs up as a disciple without renouncing everything, and so has to abandon him the moment a competing interest shows up.

Is Jesus a hypocrite?

► 1:29:29

This is where the message turned, and it is the turn worth keeping. The weight of that demand hurts — until you ask what it reveals about the one making it. Jesus has no patience for hypocrisy: he is the one who asked about the speck and the log, and who told the men fussing over ceremonial washing “this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”

► 1:31:12

So Matt asked the room a run of questions and let them sit. Would Jesus start a war he could not win? A building project he could not fund? Would he start a church he could not establish? Would he break into the darkness of your life and then lose steam? “Would Jesus break into your life and then later be annoyed by how hard it is to shepherd you and then say, ‘You know what, this is exhausting, I didn’t count the cost — now I’m going to lecture my disciples about counting the cost, but I’m not going to count the cost.’ How ridiculous is that? We should laugh at that.”

► 1:32:17

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

PHILIPPIANS 1:6 ↗

Notice what Paul is sure *of*. Not of them, mixed with a little apostolic help — he is not saying the Philippians look like the sort of people who will finish what Jesus started on his behalf. And, Matt added, we are not the first humans God has attempted to shepherd. He is not rusty at this.

► 1:34:14

“...who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

1 CORINTHIANS 1:8–9 ↗

God will not ask us for a faithfulness he is unwilling to show. We say “Lord, I’m committed to you” in a flurry of feeling, get discouraged a week later, and are down to *maybe I am now, I will be tomorrow*. He does not have that. He does not run out of patience or out of ideas. Which is why 1 Corinthians 1:30–31 ends where it does: let the one who boasts boast in the Lord. God does want your prayer, your loyalty, your giving, your testimony — but the boasting will be about his intercession, his loyalty, his generosity.

► 1:36:44

“I have felt many times discouraged about my end of the relationship,” Matt admitted. You can take Jesus’ call to forsake all others and use it to load yourself with anxiety, or you can let it show you what kind of savior you have. “You might have to let him be better than you. That might hurt, but it’s also unavoidably true.”

He is not doing community service

► 1:37:56

The disciples urged Jesus to eat; he answered

“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” There is satisfaction in that. Making humanity, wanting to be our God, wanting to dwell in our midst — none of it is court-ordered service in this corner of the universe, and it is not a tax write off. At the table he says “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you.” He desired it already knowing exactly what we are like. He did not sign up and then discover it was harder than advertised. “That’s what you and I are like. That is not how Jesus is.”

The father who ran

► 1:39:54

So if it is January and the Spirit is prompting you toward prayer, but it has been a long time and you feel like the character in the movie who says *God, I don’t know if you’re still listening* — your intercession may have been broken, but the Spirit’s intercession for you never has been. And do not imagine passive aggression waiting on the other side of trying again. The younger son squandered everything, got hungry enough to envy pigs, and rehearsed an apology on the road home. He never got to finish it.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.”

LUKE 15:20 ↗

The dread we bring to a discipline we have dropped — prayer, worship, the Bible, telling someone what God has done — is our character projected onto him. “That’s not God’s character. That’s our character.”

Seventy times seven, and who has to do it

► 1:42:15

Peter asks how many times he has to forgive, and Matt liked imagining the story behind the question — Peter has been keeping count on somebody and wants a ruling. Jesus answers seventy times seven, which is not a literal 490 but a number meant to mean *far more than you want*. Then the obvious question: does Jesus expect more of Peter than he is willing to do himself? Does he set that standard and then meet your twenty-fifth return with *wow, that’s a lot?*

► 1:43:40

You wandered like a sheep, got yourself into some strange place, and the shepherd came out and found you — for the twentieth time, the fiftieth, the seventieth. It feels like too many. It is not too many. “Come to him, all who are thirsty, and drink for free. And you think, I know it’s obscene at this point how many times I’ve had to come back to him. Do it again. Where are you going to go anyway? There’s nowhere else.” This is not a merit badge for him, and it is not a performance for the angels. It is a bridegroom who earnestly desires to be with you.

How it ended

► 1:45:17

Matt admitted his sermons end abruptly, then declined to fix it — better to leave the thought out there and pray with it. He asked the room to pray one question: *Lord, how should I respond to this?* Then he prayed that God would stir up our affection for him, make clear whatever discipline he is calling us to, and give grace both to follow and to believe in his goodness. The heart ministry team came forward afterward for anyone who wanted prayer.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- 1 Timothy 4:7–8
- Joshua 24:14–15
- Daniel 1:8
- Luke 14:26–27
- Exodus 20:12
- Mark 12:31
- Luke 14:28–30
- Luke 14:31–33
- Matthew 7:3–5
- Mark 7:6
- Philippians 1:6
- 1 Corinthians 1:8–9
- 1 Corinthians 1:30–31
- John 4:34
- Luke 22:15
- Luke 15:20
- Matthew 18:21–22

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Which ditch do you fall into more easily — building your identity out of your disciplines, or being so wary of legalism that you never start anything?
2. Noah, Joseph, Daniel: each commitment took years of repeated action. What in your life right now requires that kind of repetition rather than a decision?
3. Matt asked whether Jesus would start something he could not finish. Where are you living as though the answer were yes?
4. What do you actually expect to meet on the other side of returning to a discipline you dropped — and where did that expectation come from?
5. Name the one discipline you sense God calling you to this month, and what the first small step looks like this week.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_y2WXvOl2Zw&t=4833s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.