

## Better Things Part 2

“Most of the time, better is a choice”

### 2 Cor 1:19

*<sup>20</sup>For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

Have you ever gone from doing something as a hobby, and then actually gone on to learn it properly? Maybe a sport or a skill or something you were naturally good at, but then decided to actually take lessons?

And if anyone has ever gone from being a complete amateur at something to actually taking lessons, you figure out really quickly that you had no idea what you were doing.

If you try enough times, you can be good. But if you want to be better, you need to learn how.

If we want the better things of God, we need to learn the ways of God. I think sometimes, we can get caught up in the result that we want that we forget there's a way to get there. We want better things this year, but the question is, how are we going to get those better things?

When it comes to pursuing the better things God has for me, the first thing I think is that my way is the best way. I know what to do, I know how to do it, and if you just let me go for it, I'll get those better things no problem.

But just like in playing golf, if I want to be better, there's a way to be better. If I want the better things of God, I need to learn to do things God's way and not my way.

And the truth is that if we want to do things God's way, we need to make one key decision. Last week, Ps Luis said, “Better, most of the time, is a choice.” And this is the very first foundational choice that frames the rest of our lives. Depending on what we choose, we either enter into or miss out on the better things that God has for us.

The question is simply this:

**“Will you follow Jesus?”**

I know that doesn't sound all that profound, and it kind of comes across like a trick question, but before you rush into just answering it, think about it for a second.

Jesus puts it like this in **Luke 14:28**, and He's talking about being a disciple, a follower of Jesus, and He says,

*<sup>28</sup>“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup>For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, <sup>30</sup>saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.’*

*<sup>31</sup>“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup>If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup>In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.*

Jesus gives us this perspective of following Him where He basically says, it's a really big deal. For those of us who've been followers of Jesus for a long time, sometimes we just need to remember that it's still a big commitment.

Our yes to Jesus means that we conform our lives to how He wants us to live. It means giving up the things that aren't aligned with Him, it means submitting our lives to His values, His standards, His thoughts.

**Choosing Better Things means choosing to follow Jesus.**

*1 Cor 1:20*

*<sup>20</sup>For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.*

This scripture perfectly frames how choosing to follow Jesus is the only way we can experience the better things God has for us.

God has given us free will. And what that means is that we can wander around, doing our own thing, trying to make our own way in this world. Now God created the world and despite it's fallen nature, we have the opportunity to live pretty good lives.

***Psalms 40:1***

*<sup>1</sup>I waited patiently for the Lord;  
he turned to me and heard my cry.*

*<sup>2</sup>He lifted me out of the slimy pit,  
out of the mud and mire;  
he set my feet on a rock  
and gave me a firm place to stand.*

We can either live good lives down here in the mud, the slimy pit, fighting for scraps, competing with everyone around us, struggling to just get by, hoping that we'll be the next CEO of Disney, hoping that the career will work out, the side hustle will make money, the right person will come along, the broken relationship will be restored, and just struggle along with everyone else, or, we can cry out to God, and let Him lift us out of the pit.

*<sup>20</sup>For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.*

The condition is to be in Christ. All of God's promises are yes, but only in Christ. We can do it on our own and live good, or we can do it with Jesus and live better.

The better things of God aren't earned, they're gifted. The promises of God aren't fought for, they're fulfilled. The faithfulness of God is not some complicated strategy that has to be deciphered and thought through, the faithfulness of God just has to be waited upon.

"And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God." Because when we see God's faithfulness, when we see the better things that God has for us actually come to pass, we say amen, we agree, we see the fulfillment of God's promises, and because it was Him that did all the work, He gets all the glory.

***John 3:30 (NKJV)*** says, *"He must increase, but I must decrease."*

I've always thought of it as one action. Like when God increases, you decrease, like one thing causes the other. I thought that it meant that it was an automatic process, the more I would read the bible and worship and pray and connect with Jesus, that automatically I would be less irritating and stubborn and aggressive and negative.

Now God certainly helps us, but, **better is a choice**, meaning that **God doesn't just do it for me, I have to choose it for me. Just because you are full of God, it doesn't mean you aren't full of yourself.**

**The key to better is choosing to surrender.**

Throughout our lives, we end up picking up dysfunction and unhealthy ways of living our lives, from when we were kids all through adulthood. Normal isn't always healthy. We just live with it and it results in anxiety, anger, frustration, negativity, being judgmental, and a whole bunch of toxic traits that we don't like.

And then when we encounter God and life changes, things get better, certain areas of our life definitely improve, and there is change, but what happens is that suddenly we're growing two trees. Or rather, a tree and a thorn. We're producing the fruit of the spirit, but sometimes it's stifled, sometimes we love AND we get angry. We have joy AND we're super negative. We have peace AND we're aggressive.

For me to live the better God has for me, I need more of God, AND less of me. It's surrendering my anger, it's admitting I'm wrong and choosing to lay those things down and surrender it to Jesus, again and again and again.

The thing is, what you'll realise, just like when I was learning how to play golf, when you start giving up the old ways of doing things, it doesn't get easier right away. In fact, it gets harder. Because we're so used to doing things a certain way, it feels so normal, even though it's unhealthy, that when we stop, when we change, when we choose to do things God's way but our situation is still the same, we encounter resistance. We encounter opposition, both from people and the devil.

And over time, as God increases and we decrease, even though it's harder, things will get better. Better things start with a choice.

And so back to my original question: Will you follow Jesus?

It comes with a cost, it means submitting, surrendering, and it means doing things God's way instead of your own way. It means that we don't always get the full explanation of how and why and the exact steps to get from good to better, it means sometimes we need to step out in faith, trust God, believe that if He's telling us that this is the right way to do it, then we just do it. It means that even if it's more difficult. Do it God's way, even if it's the hardest thing you've ever had to do and the biggest sacrifice you have to make.

When we do things God's way, we choose better things.

### ***Ephesians 3:20***

*<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us*

**James 1:17**

*<sup>17</sup> Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows*

**Psalms 34:8**

*Taste and see that the Lord is good;  
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.*

**Psalms 31:29**

*How abundant are the good things  
that you have stored up for those who fear you,  
that you bestow in the sight of all,  
on those who take refuge in you.*

**1 Cor 1:20**

*<sup>20</sup> For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.*