

# Hanging Out with Jesus

Stories About Jesus from the Gospels

## No One Thinks They're Going to Fall Away

Unedited Transcript

*Matthew 26:31-35*

Good morning, men! Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew, Chapter 26, Verse 31. Let's go ahead and begin our morning by doing a shout-out. We have a new group with us, the men from Community Bible Church of Omaha, NE. 6 men who have been meeting for 3 years on Friday mornings at the church using the Video Bible Study. Led by Eric Nelson and we are looking for a Field Representative for the Omaha area. Isn't that awesome? Omaha. Would you join me in giving a rousing Man in the Mirror welcome to the men from Community Bible Church in Omaha? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're glad to have you with us!

Welcome to the bible study, so we're doing a series called Hanging Out With Jesus, and we're going through the gospels one story at a time. Last week, we went through the high priestly prayer in John 17, the whole chapter, so it's a little peculiar that this week I've just picked these few verses, but there's an idea in here that I think is so profound and can be so helpful to each of us, not only in our own walks, but in the walks of people around us that I really wanted to focus in on this text. The title of the message, "No One Thinks They're Going to Fall Away."

Nobody thinks that, no-one thinks they're going to fall away. You perhaps are familiar with the pew research that indicates that in the year 2007, 78% of Americans called themselves Christians. In the intervening years, from 2007 to 2014, the number of people who identify themselves as Christians fell from 78% of Americans to 70% of Americans. Meanwhile, the number of unaffiliated people rose from 16% in 2007 to 23% in 2014. There is some sort of a seismic activity going on in our culture these days and there is not a week that goes by that I don't hear about some man who fell away from his Christian faith. Every week!

Now, no-one sets out to fall away. No man plans to have a crisis of faith, and yet it happens, and so hence the reason for today's message. Could it happen to you, and if it does or if it has, what does that mean and then what can you do about that? That's what we're going to talk about today.

### **Can you fall away?**

First up, can you fall away? Can you fall away? The situation in Matthew 26, beginning at Verse 31 is that Jesus is predicting the denial and the falling away of the disciples, the eleven disciples. Verse 31, which Jesus told them, "This very night you will fall away on account of me for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."

Now he knew these disciples well. He had been with them for three, three-and-a-half years, like I've been with many of you. I've been with some of you for over 25 years, and I know you well. For example, one of our table leaders over here, Scott McCarthy, goes over to The Coupe with his guys on Friday mornings after the bible study. I was walking through there a couple of weeks ago and I heard Scott talking and I walked over and I said, "Guys, I have known Scott so long I can just tell by the tone of his voice whether he's telling the truth or lying." Jesus knew these men so well and he makes this prediction that they're all going to fall away, that they're all going to fall away.

How would you respond if I told you that you were going to fall away? How would you respond if Jesus told you that you were going to fall away? How did they respond to it? Let's look. Peter replied, "Even if everybody else falls away on account of you, I will never fall away." That's the Peter we all know and relate to! Then Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this very night before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." What do we learn from this text that we can learn in no other way? We learn that Jesus knows the minutest details of what's going to happen. He knew the minutest details of their desertion of him that was coming up.

Reading on, but Peter declared, "Lord, even if I have to die with you, I will never ever disown you," and watch this, all the other disciples said the same. Nobody thinks they are going to fall away. Nobody thinks that that's going to happen to them and yet we know what happened. First of all, they all did deny him and they all did fall away. Look over at Verse 56. "Then all the disciples deserted him and fled." Now when they said this, "I will never disown you, we will never fall away," do you think that they meant it? Absolutely. They meant that with all their hearts, with all their mind, with everything that they had. All of the resources that they had available to them, they were absolutely certain that they would not disown Jesus, that they would not deny Jesus, that they would not fall away, that they would not be caught in the snare.

I'm guessing that unless you are here because you fell away and you are trying to get back, you probably feel like you're in that position too. I certainly know that I feel like that, that I would never fall away, that I couldn't fall away. What happened? We'll read about this in coming weeks, but Jesus was arrested by force and they were afraid and they were not in the position of knowing all the things that we know and having seen a couple of billion people follow Jesus, and this prediction of his resurrection and so forth, we've seen all that work out.

They hadn't seen that so they had doubts and then in one of the verses, Jesus says in the garden, that the spirit, when they fell asleep, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" so there's just this human weakness. That song, "I'm only human." There's a lot going on here as to why these men fell away, but they meant it. They really meant it that they didn't think that they would ever disown him. Now, what are some of the other reasons that men fall away then and now? What are some of the reasons that we see that men fall away? I've been thinking about this pretty deeply this week so I have a little bit of a head-start on you, and it's interesting because we think of things like of idolatry and sexual immorality, things like this.

These are not the reasons that men fall away. These are the things that happen because men fell away. But here's why, here's some of the reasons why men fall away. Bad teaching. I remember one young lady that came to work at our ministry and I think I've mentioned it here a long time ago but her grandmother died and she was taught that she should not cry, that she should be joyful because her grandmother was going to heaven and so she never really grieved the loss of this grandmother who was a very important figure in her life and so she was carrying around this shame and this guilt.

Bad teaching, there's all kinds of bad teaching out there. I once succumbed to the teaching that unless I could speak in tongues, I did not have the Holy Spirit and so I went around for months and months and months in my private prayer time praying in gibberish because I wanted the Holy Spirit, and I didn't want to be found without the Holy Spirit. That's not one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that I've ever received. I would love to be able to speak in tongues, but I don't. Some of you perhaps do, great, I don't, but I have the Holy Spirit, but I was taught that I wouldn't have the Holy Spirit, couldn't have the Holy Spirit, didn't have the Holy Spirit and I said, "Yeah, bad teaching causes people to fall away."

Bad examples, bad examples. I'm aware of a young man who was part of a church that split and all of the men in the church that he admired turned against each other and began to say these vitriolic, venomous unsupported allegations against each other. They turned against each other and set such a bad example that it caused him, the young man, a crisis in faith. Bad teaching, bad examples. How about just honest doubt? Doubting Thomas. There are people who have scientific minds who by their nature respond to verifiable proofs better than they respond to the mysteries of the spiritual world. Sometimes that causes men to fall away.

There are bondages, there are addictions. How about people who have been bruised? I've told the story a long time ago about a woman that lived down the street from us. She grew up in a home where she wasn't allowed to go to parties, to wear make-up, to basically do any, a very fundamentalist home, a very legalistic home, rules and regulations that Christianity was about obeying the rules and if you did the right thing, you were okay. If you disobeyed the rules, you were not okay, and so this woman was 90 years old and she had never gotten over that. She was so bruised, so bruised.

Neglect is another reason people fall away. They just neglect their faith. They say, "I have Christ in my life. I have all these other interests" and they neglect themselves. They neglect their spiritual and so they just drift away and then one day they are too far away from the dock to be able to swim back. Or worldliness. Just loving the world and the things of it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life, loving money, loving the praise of men. These are the kinds of things that cause people to fall away. As to these men, what was their mistake? What's obvious in this text? What's obvious in this text is no-one thinks they're going to fall away.

Nobody thinks they're going to fall away. Certainly these disciples never thought that they would fall away. What is it that if these disciples could speak to you today and Jesus could speak to you today, what is it that they would want to say to us? What is it that they would want to say to you? It's this. **Let us learn to distrust any confidence that does not depend entirely on the Holy Spirit.** In other words, they were putting their confidence in their flesh. They were putting their confidence in their strength. They believed that because of their will, their determination, their understanding, their knowledge, their wisdom, their personal strength that "I will never fall away."

Take heed that you're standing lest you fall. Just learn to distrust any kind of confidence that you have in your own abilities. Those disciples, they thought they had it in hand, you see. You might think you have it in hand. Now I need to say at this point that this was a moment in history, okay? The Holy Spirit had not even been given to these disciples yet, all right? You have to keep that in mind. What I'm talking about in terms of application is not exactly the same scenario that these disciples had and yet we have this scripture here to make us aware that people do fall away, can fall away, and what do you do if it happens to you?

**What will happen if you do?**

What will happen, rather, if you do fall away? A couple of things. Number one, you're going to suffer. Is there anybody in the room who has never neglected their faith and as a result has never suffered? Has anybody? This is not really a rhetorical question. I was just curious. Is there anybody in the room who for the neglect of their faith, because of the neglect of their faith, has never suffered? Yeah, me either. You will suffer and then the second thing that's going to happen is that God's going to restore you. We know the end of the story here. We know that Jesus met these men in Galilee. Look back at the text because we breezed over that.

Verse 32, "After I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." To comfort them, to reinstate them, to restore them. He's not going to desert you. If we are faithless, he remains faithful. 2 Timothy, Chapter 2. If we are faithless, he remains faithful, because he cannot disown himself and we belong to him. In John, Chapter 17, from the previous message at the twenty-third verse, Jesus says that the father loves us in the same way that he loves me. The father loves you just like he loves me. Think about how much love that is. The father loves you as much as he loves Jesus. Just think for a moment of how much the father loves Jesus. He was there with God in the beginning. He is the creator.

You're going to suffer, but God's going to restore you, and then what happens is, like Jesus, you are able to sympathize with men and their weakness. You have the gift of being able to sympathize with other men and their weaknesses because of the sufferings that we ourselves have gone through and then what happens because of that is that out of that, God gives you a ministry passion. God gives you a ministry. We fall away, we suffer, and God restores us.

We're able to sympathize with other men and their weaknesses and then out of that God will give you a ministry. I'm sure you've noticed this but our ministry passions are developed, flow out of how we suffer, not how we succeed. Our ministry passions reflect our sufferings, not our successes. It's not what you succeed at. That's not where God will give you ministry, but it's where you fail that God will give you ministry. That's certainly been the case for me. My passion in ministry is men's discipleship and I have a special interest in cultural Christians, men on the fringe, men who are seeking the God or the Gods that they want instead of the God who is because that was me. I thought I could have my cake and eat it too.

I thought I could have the best of both worlds. I thought I could have the best of what God had to offer and the best of what the world had to offer at the same time, and so it was a syncretism. It was trying to blend two different world views and value systems together and so I have a special interest in that. The whole book, *The Man in the Mirror* is really, when you get down to it... so I've had people try to psychoanalyze the book or talk about who it's for and all that and, "Oh, it's for this kind of man" or "Oh, that kind of person would never want to read it" or "This kind of person ..."

Let me tell you, when God wants to do something, he just does it. There are high school boys all over the country doing groups on *The Man in the Mirror*. Did you know that *The Man in the Mirror* is in virtually every prison in the United States, in the prison library? Did you know that some guys from this table right here went down to the Orlando Rescue Mission and they took a case of books and they didn't know what would happen but after dinner, they handed them out and a few minutes later, they went into the main hall and there were a dozen men in the hall, sitting around reading them? Homeless men, reading *The Man in the Mirror*. 80-year-old guys up in North Carolina, up there in the summer, doing their retirement thing sitting around reading *The Man in the Mirror*.

The point is, is that there are cultural Christians everywhere. There are cultural Christians everywhere. That's my passion and ministry but it comes out of my failures. It comes out of my stumbles, my bumbles, and that's how it will be for you. For you, it might be you had a marriage problem and God worked through that or didn't work through that and so you are passionate now about helping men with their marriages or maybe you had a problem with pornography. Maybe you have a problem with pornography and so maybe you find yourself struggling to stay in the Gospel, or not in the Gospel but with Christ in the Gospel. You're in the Gospel. Hey look, if you have a pornography addiction and you've received Jesus, you still receive Jesus.

You just have this addiction, okay, so when you work through that, it would not be uncommon that God would give you a ministry passion in the area of pornography. By the way if you're looking at pornography, just stop it. Golly, come on. Then it could be something like... I met this guy camping. He works at the camp ground. I've invited him to come here. I don't know when that'll happen but ... so he was a One Percenter outlaw and spent a lot of time in prison because he was a really bad guy. This is the sweetest, absolutely the sweetest guy ... He's better than any of you, let me just put it that way. I love this guy, I love this guy, and it's because he's been in prison that he has a passion to help other men like he used to be, like the men he used to run with and that's the way that the Lord often works.

What's going to happen if you fall away? You're going to come back, and God is going to use your failure to help build a ministry in your life, if you let him, and then this all relates back to this Big Idea. The way that all of this happens and comes about is when we learn to distrust any confidence that we have in anything that does not depend entirely upon the Holy Spirit.

### **How can you protect or restore your faith?**

So finally then, how can you protect or restore your faith? Now it's possible that you're here this morning and you are absolutely strong in your faith and you will never fall away again because you fell away before and you have learned the lessons that God wanted you to learn in that falling away and so you're a solid. Many of you are like that.

There are others of you who are in the process of falling away and you know it. There are others of us who are in the process of falling away and we don't know it. There are others of us who have already fallen away and that's why we're here. We're trying to figure out how to restore what we lost, okay? Anyway you could be in any one of these situations but how do you maintain or restore your faith? 1 Corinthians, Chapter 10, Verse 12 if you want to turn there. Paul is talking about how the Jews in the wilderness committed idolatry and sexual immorality and tested God and grumbled and then in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 10, Verse ...

Let's just read at 11 because of the things I just mentioned. These things happened to them as examples that were written down as warnings to us on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. By the way, just a little parenthesis here. If you chafe at God warning you to do and not do things, why do you think first of all that God would warn us not to do something? There must be a reason, and God is good, so it must be a good reason, so if God is warning us not to do something, it's for our protection, it's for our benefit. It's because he loves us as much as he loves Jesus. If you find yourself chafing against the warning of God, guess what? You're not humble. You're not contrite so if you find yourself chafing against something that God is warning you to do for your own benefit, it's because he loves you so you're just like a rebellious teenager.

Take note, Verse 12. If you think you're standing firm, be careful that you don't fall, fall away, If you chafe at God's warnings, it's possible, at least possible that you're in danger of falling away. Just make a note to yourself, "I need to process through that. I need to humble myself. I need to be contrite." Secondly, you can protect yourself by not telling people how strong you are, but rather by confessing how weak you are. Paul did this. He said, "I will boast about all the things that are going wrong so that Christ's power may rest on me, for when I am weak, then I am strong." Remember that? 2 Corinthians, 12, I think, so don't go around trying to demonstrate what a strong Christian you are. You get it?

Don't be a strong Christian. You might be a strong Christian but the reason you're strong is because you don't go around pretending you're strong. You're not putting confidence in your own strength but you're depending entirely on the Holy Spirit. That's real strength. Third. We don't stay strong through human effort. Turn with me to Galatians, Chapter 3, Verse 3. Again if you're not a Bible flipper, that's fine. You can just listen. We don't stay strong by our own effort. You know what they call that? Legalism. It's living by the law. If you're depending on your own strength.

Now this doesn't mean you don't put in effort, but if you're depending on that effort instead of depending entirely on the Holy Spirit, guess what? You're a legalist or have legalist tendencies. Trying to live by the law. Look at what it says in Galatians Chapter 3, Verse 3. Paul says, "Are you so foolish after beginning with the spirit," depending entirely on the Holy Spirit, "after beginning with the spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Are you that foolish?"

This is the Gospel, so the Gospel is that we're saved by faith and sanctified by works, sanctified by our efforts, right? No, no, no, no. That's a wreck getting ready to happen. That's exactly what we're saying is not the way. We're saved by faith and we are sanctified by faith. We are saved by grace and we are sanctified by grace. The Big Idea today is this: Let us learn to distrust any confidence that does not depend entirely on the Holy Spirit. Put no confidence in the flesh, no confidence in your determination, no confidence in your will, no confidence in your knowledge, no confidence in your experience. Put your confidence in Christ and his spirit alone.

Now what if you have fallen away or what if you have been putting your confidence in your abilities? What can you do? The answer is, is to come humbly to the foot of the cross right now and once again make a full total complete surrender, a contrite surrender to the Lordship of Jesus, and make the profession that you're going to distrust any confidence that you have put in your flesh, in your own ability. Any kind of confidence that does not depend entirely on the Holy Spirit. Make sense? Is this liberating? Does this set us free? It sets us free to live with liberality, with exuberance in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray!

### **Closing Prayer**

Our dearest Father, Lord, protect us from ever being so naïve that we put confidence in anything that would lead us to say, "Oh, I will never fall away. I will never disown you" unless it depends entirely upon your Holy Spirit. Lord, we together make this profession that we will learn to never put any confidence in anything unless it depends entirely upon your Holy Spirit and we make this prayer in the loving name of Jesus. Amen.

All right, and so we're going to keep the camera rolling today because I want to present to each of you a copy of The Man in the Mirror annual report, so they're on the tables and if you would each get one of those, you can open it up. This is the first time we've ever done this. I guess we're getting fancy, and for

those of you who are online, if your group is registered within the last one year, you will be receiving several copies of this sent to your leader and you can go over them and if you have not registered or it's been more than a year ago, then if you will send me an email at [patrickmorley@maninthemirror.org](mailto:patrickmorley@maninthemirror.org), the address on the screen, then you can just put in the subject line, "Annual report" and 3 copies or 20 copies or whatever and we'll send those out to you.

I'm not going to go over this obviously but I want to cover the contents. There's a cover letter from me. The annual report and then there's also an envelope and what I would like to do is I'd like to encourage you. We need more monthly and major donors at our ministry. We're in a unique position. We have some people that have put up \$100,000 for new major donors of \$5,000 or more so if you have that potential, you can again send this email to [patrickmorley@maninthemirror.org](mailto:patrickmorley@maninthemirror.org). If you'd like to become or make a donation, a major donation or become a monthly donor or make a one-time gift, then you can use this envelope and send that in. I hope you all enjoy this annual report.

We're so excited about what God is doing. We actually have two choices. We believe that we're going to lose the next generation by the end of our lifetime or God is going to come again in a powerful way and we'll see a revival in the next generation. We're going to work for the latter and pray against the former and then just try to be faithful and hope that you would see that unless some of us join together to try to make this happen, it probably won't, humanly speaking.