

HIGHLANDS CHURCH

---

Study Guide

# Preparing the Way

Kevin Yule  
December 15, 2025

## Major Points

- 1 The religious leaders hijacked God's law, turning it from a reminder of their need for a savior into a self-saving system of rule-keeping**  
*Isaiah 29:13*
- 2 John the Baptist's call to repentance means stopping self-effort and acknowledging our complete inability to save ourselves**  
*Matthew 3:2*
- 3 The judgment of wheat and chaff separates those who humbly surrender to God from those who rely on their own obedience without accepting their need for a savior**  
*Matthew 7:23*
- 4 Jesus' baptism fulfills the 2,000-year-old promise to Abraham and Jeremiah's new covenant, inaugurating God's kingdom and turning religious systems on their head**  
*Genesis 12:3*

## Key Quotes

- “God cares more about why you do what you do than what you do.”*  
at 17:59
- “Blessed are those that show up and go, God, I have nothing, but I need you for everything. God goes, now we can do our best work.”*  
at 20:51
- “Stop trying because you can't tie your own shoes. In fact, I made you tie your shoes so you would realize you couldn't.”*  
at 20:19
- “Every time God's doing his work and we try and help him, we slow things down.”*  
at 24:18
- “God, you provided a way for all the times when I get it wrong.”*  
at 33:03

## Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Yule used the shoe-tying illustration to show how we often try to fix things on our own before asking for help. Can you think of a time when you kept trying to 'tie your own shoes' spiritually before finally surrendering to God? What did that turning point look like?

2. John the Baptist told the Pharisees not to rely on their connection to Abraham for their standing before God. In what ways do we sometimes rely on religious heritage, church attendance, or family background instead of a personal relationship with Jesus?

-----

-----

3. Pastor Yule emphasized that God cares more about WHY we do what we do than WHAT we do. How can we practically examine our own motivations for the spiritual disciplines and service we engage in?

-----

-----

4. The sermon highlighted that the Old Testament law was designed to point people to their need for a Savior, not to be a means of self-salvation. How does understanding this purpose of the law change the way we read the Old Testament today?

-----

-----

5. Pastor Yule shared personal examples of areas where he needed to surrender — finances, a calloused heart toward certain people. What does a 'posture of surrender' look like practically in everyday life, and why is it so difficult for us to maintain?

-----

-----

## Word Studies

*μετανοέω*

**metanoēō**

*Greek*

To undergo a fundamental change of mind and direction, involving not merely regret but a complete reorientation of thought and life toward God.

*καρπός*

**karpos**

*Greek*

Fruit or produce, used metaphorically for the visible evidence and outward results of an inward spiritual condition or transformation.

בְּרִית

**b·rît**

*Hebrew*

A solemn, binding agreement or covenant, denoting a committed relational bond initiated and guaranteed by the superior party, especially God.

## Cross References

### **Ezekiel 36:26-27**

God promises to give His people a new heart and put His Spirit within them — the Old Testament foundation for the internal transformation that Jeremiah 31's new covenant anticipates, and exactly the shift from external rule-keeping to Spirit-empowered life that Pastor Yule described.

### **Psalms 51:16-17**

David declares that God does not desire sacrifice but a broken and contrite heart — the same contrast between outward religious performance and inward humility that John the Baptist confronted the Pharisees with.

### **Ephesians 2:8-9**

Paul states that salvation is by grace through faith, not by works — the New Testament theological articulation of the sermon's central theme that we cannot 'tie our own shoes' and must rely entirely on God's provision in Christ.

### **Micah 6:6-8**

The prophet asks what offerings God truly requires and answers with justice, mercy, and humble walk with God — reinforcing the prophetic tradition (alongside Isaiah 1 and 29) that external religion without heart transformation is worthless.

### **Philippians 3:4-9**

Paul lists his impressive religious credentials and then counts them as loss compared to knowing Christ — a personal testimony paralleling John the Baptist's rebuke of those who relied on Abrahamic heritage and law-keeping rather than faith in the Messiah.

## Further Reading

- **The Holiness of God**  
*by R.C. Sproul*
- **Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers**  
*by Dane C. Ortlund*
- **The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance**  
*by Sinclair B. Ferguson*

## Scripture References

REFERENCE	TYPE	TIME	CONTEXT
Matthew 3:1-3	Read Aloud	8:08	<i>In those days John the Baptist came preaching in t...</i>
Genesis 12:3	Referenced	8:43	<i>I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse...</i>
Jeremiah 31:31-34	Read Aloud	9:35	<i>"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, w...</i>
Matthew 3:4-6	Read Aloud	11:19	<i>Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leat...</i>
Matthew 3:7-10	Read Aloud	12:20	<i>But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducee...</i>
Matthew 3:11-12	Read Aloud	18:12	<i>"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he w...</i>
Matthew 3:13-17	Read Aloud	24:18	<i>Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John...</i>
Isaiah 29:13	Referenced	14:58	<i>The Lord said, "Because this people draws near wit...</i>
Romans 7:7	Referenced	26:40	<i>What shall we say then? Is the law sin? May it nev...</i>
Isaiah 40:3	Referenced	8:48	<i>The voice of one who calls out, "Prepare the way o...</i>
Colossians 3:5	Referenced	7:08	<i>Put to death therefore your members which are on t...</i>
2 Kings 1:8	Referenced	12:01	<i>They answered him, "He was a hairy man, and wearin...</i>
Isaiah 1:11-14	Referenced	14:58	<i>"What are the multitude of your sacrifices to me?"...</i>
Matthew 7:22-23	Referenced	17:21	<i>Many will tell me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't...</i>
Matthew 5:3	Referenced	20:40	<i>"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the...</i>
Galatians 5:22	Referenced	27:28	<i>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, p...</i>