



Season 12: Episode 9 | David Koop | How Can the Bible Help You Find Peace?

Hello and welcome to Scripture Untangled, a podcast by the Canadian Bible Society. My name is Joanna la Fleur. I'm a friend of the Canadian Bible Society and I'm going to be your guide for today's episode.

Today, Pastor Dave Koop is being interviewed by CBS Ambassador, Reverend Dr. Andrew Stirling. David Koop grew up on a farm in southwestern Alberta, and from there he left the farm to pursue a career in the oil industry, but then later transitioned into ministry. In 1994, along with his wife Cheryl, they planted Coastal Church in Vancouver, and by 2010 he had also earned a doctorate in ministry to serve his church with even more focus.

As well as pastoring and speaking at various conferences, David serves as a director on a number of boards. David is the author of *The Contented Life* and *Helping Make the City a Better Place*. Dave and Cheryl have been married for 48 years and are the proud parents of four married children and six grandchildren.

Enjoy this conversation.

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Andrew Stirling: Well, David, I am delighted that you can be with us from Vancouver to celebrate and to discuss the faith on Scripture Untangled.

I have looked forward to this for quite some time, and I must tell you it is a great joy that you are willing to join us, and I know that it'll be a great help to those who are going to be listening. Welcome to Scripture Untangled.

David Koop: Hey Andrew, great to be with you, and love what you're doing through Scripture Untangled.

It's an amazing title. It's so appropriate for today. We need to untangle some things.

Andrew Stirling: We do, but let's start with something that doesn't need untangling, and that is your experience in life. Can you tell us something very briefly about your background in the faith, and what were the influences that helped you develop such a strong Christian faith that we all know you possess?

David Koop: Well, Andrew, I was privileged to be raised in a Christian home. My parents were farmers, but my father was also a pastor, so I had the privilege of having that kind of dual background.

My father was a Mennonite pastor in rural Alberta, so that was tremendous. I owe a lot of my Christian faith to my mom, my dad, the way they raised us there. It was a small community, so that was a big piece.

I would say the cornerstone. I came to faith as a young man in Christ when we had a missionary come to church, and as they often did, they gave a slideshow, and afterwards they'd have a few things that they brought from the country they were from. We had some food afterwards, but that particular day, I was really moved, and I remember going home and feeling I'm not right with God, even though I was in church since I was a baby, but I remember as a boy kneeling down and giving my life to the Lord.

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So, I'm much to be thankful for, for my upbringing in my Mennonite home in rural Alberta.

Andrew Stirling: Were there any sort of particular aspects of what you heard at that time that caused you to feel that not everything was right with yourself? I mean, was there an encounter with something in the Scriptures? Was there a moment? Was there something about Jesus? Like, give us a sense, David, if you can, of when a person realizes something's not right, what inspires that, do you think?

David Koop: You know, it's a great question, Andrew, and actually, because I grew up in a Christian home, I actually had to pray and say, Lord, when was I born again? When did I give my life to you? Because later on in life, I thought, well, was I always a Christian? And then the Lord brought that experience back to my memory, and when I focused on it again, all I felt was like, I just knew that I was a sinner. I knew that there was pride in my life as a young boy.

I knew that there was things in my life that were wrong, that I had grieved the Lord, and I think it was in very simple faith, I just turned my life over to the Lord and knew that I wasn't, my sin was keeping me from entering into His presence. So, I don't have a lot on it, simply because I grew up around it, and I actually had to pray and say, Lord, when did I come to faith? When was that defining moment? And I'm thankful He revealed it to me, and I wish I could say, and it got better and better every day thereafter, but I, like a lot of them, I went through the ups and downs in my high school years, and it wasn't until we were working in Calgary, my wife and I, we were both working for oil companies, and Andrew, we just got to the place, I tell people, we had enough Christianity to be miserable.

Andrew Stirling: I understand that feeling, yes, I get it, David, I get it.

David Koop: We were going to church, we were in a small group, but one day we just read the Scriptures where it says to go and make disciples, and we asked each other, have we ever shared our faith? And we said, no, not really, and I felt like we

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were a bit what Jesus talked about in Revelations to other churches, that we were lukewarm, and so we said, Lord, what do we do?

We were hungry for more, and then we had a visiting pastor come, and he shared a message, are you free to serve? And we were so convicted, we went back, we said, Lord, what is it? And during that time, I met a fellow, I went to high school with this guy, I had gone to graduate from the U of A, he was much more successful than I was in the oil industry, he graduated from the London School of Economics, and met him on the street, and he said, Dave, let's go for coffee and get caught up.

So we went, actually for lunch, and all the way to lunch, he looked at me and he said, Dave, you know Jesus, don't you? And I go, Len, we don't talk about this in public, what are you doing? Somebody's going to hear us. And then we sat down to eat, and he prayed before the meal out loud.

And I would kind of do an undercover prayer, I would pray so that he could see that I was praying, but he prayed out loud, I said, Len, what are you...? So, I just asked him, what happened to you? Like, when did you become spiritual? And he says, well, I, and he grew up in a Dutch Reformed church, and he said, Dave, I had an encounter with Jesus, and an encounter with the Holy Spirit. Have you had an encounter with the Holy Spirit? I said, well, of course, I was raised in church. And then he said, you know, I want to give you some Scriptures to read.

And so, we went back, and that was really, you know, we didn't have any real experience in this, but we went back and we read that we receive power, Acts 1-8, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And so that was a verse that was a turning point for us. And we said, Lord, that's what we're lacking, we don't have the power to be a witness.

And so, we prayed, and we prayed with them. That really was a turning point, Andrew, we just said, Lord, we totally surrender to You. And we prayed an ancient prayer, "Come Holy Spirit, may Your Spirit flow out of us."

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And after that, the trajectory of our life changed, we really felt like God was now had the steering wheel of our life.

Andrew Stirling: Is there a relationship? I did a podcast, recorded a podcast with James Pedler at Tyndale. And he spoke a lot about sort of the charisms, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and how, in a sense, our experience of the Holy Spirit also is empowered by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Did you at that time sort of have that feeling that not only were you to be empowered, and not only were you to go and be disciples, but did you feel you were given specific gifts for the purpose of being able to minister more fully?

David Koop: Oh, that's a great question. Well, in my experience, I hadn't really understood the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And it wasn't like I probably was taught them, but I probably wasn't listening.

So, we began to study, now we had a huge interest. You know, I think the closer you are to wanting the Holy Spirit to work in your life, the hungrier you are going to be for God's Word. And so, we began to study about the gifts of the Spirit.

And it was then that we realized they were there for us, they're still for today. And so, there were some of the gifts of the Spirit, as we would call them, that worked in our life. And as coming from my background, we didn't have any experience with that, at least not that we knew of.

I think we experienced them, we just didn't know we were experiencing. And so those gifts began to, some of the gifts were manifested in our life. And to this day, and we weren't seeking any gifts, Andrew, we were just seeking the Giver of the gifts.

And that was the difference, I think. And, you know, when they had called us over to their home to meet them for, and it's interesting, Andrew, that all my experiences to really be drawn into ministry have usually taken place outside the church in more of a business setting. So, he was a business guy, him and his wife invited us over.

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And then, long story short, after supper and everything, they said, would you like us to pray for you to be filled with the Spirit, to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit? We said, yes. And so, they said, well, who wants to go first? I said, well, Cheryl wants to go first. I want to see what happens.

Andrew Stirling: A very wise, wise marital position to take, yes.

David Koop: Oh, and so they prayed for her. And, you know, I'd never heard of it or seen this before, but she began to pray in the most beautiful prayer language that I'd ever heard.

And I was just so moved by it. And then as they prayed for me, that same prayer language, the tongues began to flow. And I'd read about this, but we'd never experienced it.

So that was, that was really a turning point in our lives. And again, our quest was, we wanted to have that power to be a witness. We were unsatisfied with where we were in our Christian life, that we were not really on fire for the Lord.

And so, it led us to that place. And that really was a transformative moment in our journey.

Andrew Stirling: And so, from that inspiration, you were inspired to form Coastal Church in Vancouver.

How did that leading come about and what was sort of the call, if in a sense, that you had to embark on such an enterprise when, I mean, essentially, as you said, you'd moved from being in the business community and now all of a sudden, you're part of founding a church in the middle of Vancouver, which at the time, and even now, very much needed. So, what inspired you, David, to do that?

David Koop: I was working for drilling wells for mobile oil in Southern Saskatchewan, and they're going very well. And I had one of the, this engineer I worked for, very crusty old engineer who had come to faith in Christ later in life.

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And we were having, eating poached eggs in a little cafe in the light of Saskatchewan. And he said, Dave, we're living the life. This is it.

We're drilling wells, they're coming in several thousand barrels a day. And look at, look, this is it. And I said to him, I said, Terry, the only thing better is leading somebody to Jesus.

And then he said to me in a rather rough voice, is get out of here. I say, what do you mean, get out of here? He says, get out of here. You don't belong here.

I said, what do you mean, Terry? He said, Dave, you belong in ministry. You shouldn't be here. And so, the key events that really were inspirational for me to move into ministry were in the business world.

And he said, well, you'll have support, just go do it. And so that push really encouraged me to take the step of faith. And shortly after that, I answered a call to come start a Bible school in Surrey, which I did. And then the pastor there said, Dave, let me take you to the West End of Vancouver. There hasn't been a church there for years. They need a fresh church there.

And so, we went on that, looked around and we started on a Friday night and we tried everything. Andrew, we failed so bad, so bad. There was a thing called Phones for You campaign where you had an old crisscross directory where you call everybody in the neighborhood.

So, we called everybody. We made 30,000 phone calls. And back then, more people answered.

And so, we had about 10 to 15,000 people answer the call. All of them, we sent two pieces of literature, and then we invited them to our first service. They had this whole campaign.

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And I have an engineering background, so I followed this thing to a T. And they said, you're in a highly resistant area. We suggest you go find your church somewhere else. And we thought, hey, well, maybe it's the sick that need the doctor, so let's stay.

So, we stayed. And they said, look, we've done this many, many times, all kinds of cities across the U.S. and Canada. You'll have at least a couple hundred people show up the first night on your work.

Well, we had four people show up, and none of them back. They said, we're not interested in this.

So, we tried, you know, the Jesus video worked for a lot of people back in the day, but it didn't work for us. So, it was a very challenging start. But you know what did work, was small groups.

And we weren't familiar with small groups in our background, at least intentionally building small groups. But that was the key to answering the need of loneliness and isolation in the city. And when we met that need, that's when we turned the corner.

And we just started doing what we read in the Scriptures to meet in the house and to meet on the weekend. And we became, at the time, it was called cell groups, you know, back in the day. So, we became a cell group church, and we still are to this day. But that was the background.

Andrew Stirling: And today, I mean, what is Coastal Church like today?

David Koop: Well, Andrew, it's a sign and a wonder, really it is. I think something broke over the years since we came here in 94.

Today we have a strong presence in the heart of the city, but then there's, you know, nine other campuses around us where we have other multiple sites because we've outgrown this place where we are. And our church, much like the church you pastored downtown Toronto, we're under the apex of the skyline. So, it's, as you know, in the heart of the city, it's a little bit different than rural suburbs.

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It's a very unique place to pastor. So, we've really found it to be something... I just, Andrew, I just think it's so special that God wrote me into the story.

My wife and I think, we don't think we're God's first pick. We just said, hey, if You need us, we'll go do it. We're two people that we don't really fit, but we'll go do it.

And then a number of years ago, there was a book written called *Streams of the Negev*. And I think he did a good job of capturing the history of what's happened in the city. So, we're, we're glad that God sent us.

It's been, as every church is a challenging journey, but grateful for His grace. And we, going all the way back to why I don't think we could do it, certainly on our own strength. We needed the power of the Holy Spirit, because it's been the Holy Spirit. It hasn't been us. It's been the grace of God, the power of His Spirit working in the lives of people.

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That's Bible course . ca. The link for this and anything else talked about in this podcast will be down in the show notes.

Andrew Stirling: That's beautifully put. From a Biblical point of view, the impression I get is that you were, in a sense, almost sent to a Corinth in Vancouver and into a place that is difficult to penetrate.

Really, in a sense, and I agree with you, it's not always ability that causes the Lord to use us, but availability. I know it's a corny phrase, but it's very true. Then the abilities are given, and then the path opens up.

But it's His story into which we fit, as opposed to our story into which the Lord fits.

David Koop: Absolutely. That's what we feel.

Every year, we feel like we turn another page. It's like, what are you writing this year, Lord? What are You going to do? We're certainly not that smart. We could have never scripted this.

This was His script. We just are following the script as best we can.

Andrew Stirling: David, you have done some very insightful blogs, and you've addressed many issues facing the Christian faith.

I do hope people will go on and look at these. Each one has a very strong Biblical component to it, which from our point of view in the Bible Society is very encouraging. In reading some of them, three of them stood out to me.

I'd just like you to make a comment on these, if you wouldn't mind, David. Let's deal with each one separately, because they're all very important. One of the questions you address, and it's very pertinent today, is how do we address young people and

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children in the faith? In a secular society, in a society where if there's not a rejection of Christianity per se, there's a non-we, there's a really, we who don't care.

How do, say for example, you used the example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from Daniel. How do those images help us, and what guidance do you have really for the Church in dealing with the young?

David Koop: Yeah, good question. You know, I think for me, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they're really a source of encouragement.

If those three young men, and Daniel was involved with their group too, if they could all make it when they're, you know, as in a situation they were in, in a foreign land, learning a foreign language, and all the influence, studying in a foreign school, you know, they stayed true to their faith. I often wonder, well, what were their parents like?

I think they're the unsung heroes in their stories, because they instilled something in them that when, when they were thrown into the fire, they stood up for their faith.

And, you know, I think of Daniel when he was under pressure to give an interpretation of the dream, he goes to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, his small group, and says, hey guys, let's pray together.

And so, you know, they had each other, and I think one of the things that you can pray for your children is pray that they have good friends, because we need to, children need to have Godly friends around them that they can pray with and be encouraged with.

For us, because we have four children, we have six grandchildren, and we're thankful today that our children are involved in the church, we don't take that lightly, that's been a huge blessing to us. And sometimes we're asked, why are your children involved in the church? Why are they still, why are they following the Lord? They could have gone a different direction, obviously.

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And so, we look back and say, Lord, what did, how did, I think in the moment, you're taking it day by day, and then you look back and say, okay, Lord, what did we do? And what do, what can we pass on? And a lot of it, you know, we learned from good parents. I was privileged to come from a good home, Cheryl had a good home, and that's a big start. When you come from a good home, that's a leg up.

And often telling our congregation, you may not have had that, but you can be the first generation, you could set it up for the next. So, I had that. And, you know, Jesus said to build your house on the Rock, hear the sayings and do the sayings.

And in Psalm 127, it says, unless the Lord builds a house, they labor in vain to build it. And so, I encourage parents, you build a house with a blueprint, and God's Word is the blueprint. You know, thank goodness for Canadian Bible Society, the Bible's our blueprint for life.

It's a blueprint for family. And if you, if you wing it, if you just say, I'll just do this on my own. I'll watch some YouTube clips.

I'll get a little bit here and a little bit there. You can't build it. You have to go to the blueprint, and blueprints should be marked up. There should be coffee spilt on them. I keep running back. How do I do this? And I think that's key.

And then the other thing I would say is Proverbs 22.6 says, as we know, "Train the child in the way they should go." When they're old, they don't depart from it. So sometimes I ask people, you know, do you have a plan to train your children? What's your plan? We have plans for finance.

We have plans for fitness. You know, we have all kinds of plans, but what's the plan to train your children? Do you have a Biblical plan? So, then I would say three things. One, train your child lovingly.

You love God, love yourself, and love others. And so, the most important thing is, build a home with an atmosphere of love. The greatest of these is love.

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If Jesus had the Father say to Him at His baptism, this is My Beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased. If Jesus needed to hear those words, how much more do our children need to hear that they're well loved by their parents? So that's one of the first things. I really believe that children are likely to live up to what you believe of them.

So, if they believe that you really love them, no matter what, that's key. And then train them up in, to love God's Word. And, you know, when we were younger, our kids were younger, my dad did devotions every day.

And sometimes it was so boring. I was just so bored. Dad, you're praying way too long.

Let's just go play. And so, we did devotions with our children. And I thought, how do I make it interesting? So, one of the things that we would do is we would take a Bible story, and we would call them, acted out stories.

So, we'd act out the David and Goliath, or we'd act out feeding the fish and the loaves of bread and that story, we'd act it out. And then I was convicted in Deuteronomy where it says, "These words, which I've commanded you to, they shall be in your heart." (Deuteronomy 6:6)

So, I think as parents, it first has to be in our heart and then teach it diligently to your children. "When you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you rise up." (Deuteronomy 6:7)

So, you have to talk it and walk it. You have to talk it everywhere you can. You can go to a grocery store, teach them that Jesus is the Bread of Life.

You go by a lake, teach them how Jesus walked on the water, you know, just talk it. But then also you have to walk it. And that is, you know, I have to be with them.

I have to walk with them. I have to watch what they're watching. You know, I have to be involved with where they're at.

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So, train them to love God's Word in everyday life. And then one of the things I think that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego must have had is they must have taught their kids how to pray, because in that moment they stood up and they prayed in that scenario. And I think even as the disciples said to Jesus, teach us how to pray, one of the greatest things we can do for our children is teach them to pray.

And that means letting them hear you pray. A lot of times, you know, it's a very private thing, but let them hear you pray when you're vulnerable. Teach them to pray a verse. Teach them to pray in the name of Jesus. And so, I think those three things come to mind when I think of that story.

Andrew Stirling: Brilliant. Absolutely. And, you know, this seems to be a constant refrain, actually, that I hear, that need to inculcate and to inspire the faith in its fullness to young people and how important it is in this time, and particularly when you've got people who are new immigrants, you've got people who are refugees, you're dealing with people in downtown Vancouver, you're dealing with families who have often had very shaky backgrounds, and yet the foundation of that faith is important.

You also touch on another topic, and our time is coming to a close a bit, David, but I do want to spend some time on this, particularly in the light of our current world, and that is, how can Jesus Christ help us deal with forgiveness, and how do we deal with our enemies, or how do we deal with people with whom we disagree? It seems to me that we're in a world where the forgiveness, which is so central to our Christian faith, is one of the greatest societal needs.

David Koop: Boy, you're so right, Andrew. What would this world be like if we would forgive our enemies? I think to the Sermon on the Mount, you know, where Jesus says to love our enemies and to bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you might be called sons of your Father Who is in heaven, who causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

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So I think that's the posture that He wants us to do, to be quick to forgive, and I think the forgiveness that we have is something, that the forgiveness we give is only there because of the forgiveness we realize that we have, and if I know that I know that God has forgiven me of all that I have done, who am I not to forgive somebody else?

So, I think to forgive our enemies really must start with the fact that I have a revelation, not just information, but I have a revelation of how far I was from Christ. My sins had separated me from Him, and the depth of that forgiveness has to be the root of me being able to forgive others. Who am I not to forgive someone when Christ has cleaned the slate for me?

So, I think if that revelation isn't there, it's very easy not to forgive others. And then the second point I would say is when Jesus said to forgive 70 times 7, I find, I don't know if you do, Andrew, some of the people that are watching do, but sometimes I'll find that I'll forgive somebody and then, you know, it's like a day later, I need to forgive them again.

Again, the other day I was thinking, I was saying to the Lord, I think it's 70 times 7, because by the time you get there, you've actually forgiven them.

It takes you that long just to get over it. And so, it's not always just a one-time thing, it's ongoing. I think most of your listeners would know that the forgiveness is more, does more for me than it does for that other person.

Often that other person may not even know that I forgave them because it may not be appropriate to talk to them. But the forgiveness is also for me to let go of it, that the root of bitterness doesn't get into my heart. And so, I think the most important thing is that, as the Scripture says, "to guard our heart from the issues of life..." (Proverbs 4:23)

And one of the things that will poison your heart the quickest is unforgiveness and resentment. And from there comes anxiety, from there comes all the things that bring stress. And every part of your life begins to break down if you cannot forgive.

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Andrew Stirling: Yeah. That leads into sort of my final question, David, because you wrote a book called, *Contentment*. And you make some fascinating observations of the importance of being content in the world.

I sometimes have spoken on the fact that we are in a culture of more, where everybody wants more. And it's a phrase that I didn't coin, it came from somebody else. But what led you to write a book on how to help people find some peace in their lives? And how do you find that contentment? Or perhaps I should put it another way, how does that contentment find you?

David Koop: Yeah.

What led me to write the book was, here we are in the heart of downtown Vancouver. It's a wealthy area where we are, you know, we have high-rises all around us, and a wealthy world-class city. But yet, some of the people were discontent.

And I traveled to other parts of the world where I saw a lot of poverty, and yet the people were more content than somebody living here. So that's what sparked me to write it. How do I help people as a pastor? How do I help them live a contented life? Paul had said, "I've learned the secret of being content in all things." (Philippians 4:12)

So, my prayer was, Lord, I don't think the secret is kept from us, it's a secret for us to go find. And so that was what caused the journey to figure out, okay, what does it take to be content? And what does it take to find peace in your life? That's always the goal that God has in mind for us, is peace. When we get to heaven, it's peace.

He is the Prince of Peace. You know, I talk about this in the book, in the storms of life, in Mark chapter 4 and 5, there's four storms that happen there. But at the end of all the storms, there was a storm in the circumstance when they were crossing the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus calms the storm, there's peace, that's a storm in your circumstance.

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They get to the side, there's a demoniac, he's got a storm in his mind. And a lot of people have storms in their mind, but He heals them, He brings peace to his mind. They cross back over the Sea of Galilee, and they meet Jairus, he's got a storm in his family, his daughter's dying, but He brings peace there.

And then a woman with the issue of blood interrupts him, and she's got a storm in her body, and He brings peace to her body and her social condition. So, His outcome is always peace. And so, I wrote the book for that reason.

In our world, despite our circumstances, what we're going through, I really believe God wants us to have the peace, as He says, "That passes all understanding." (Philippians 4:7) So that was the motivation to write it in our world today.

Andrew Stirling: Oh, excellent.

And how needed. And I do encourage people to read it. It's a good read. And, you know, moving on, in a sense, to my final question and comment, really, for you, David.

"You know, my peace I leave with you," said Jesus. (John 14:27) And one of the sources of peace is prayer and being able to have that time to go to the Lord in prayer. I've asked every guest, from the very beginning, the same question.

What is it that you would like our podcast listeners to pray for you, for David Koop, for your ministry? Just give us a couple of things that we should pray for you.

David Koop: Thank you for asking. That's very gracious of you.

I would take prayer for strength. There's, as you know, in the pastoral ministry, when you're, I read of your work that you were doing there at the church in Toronto. There's a lot of things that we carry.

Sometimes people don't understand all the different things that you're having to juggle when you're pastoring a large church. So, I would humbly ask for wisdom.

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There's a lot of decisions we make every day, and sometimes the decisions are very weighty, and I don't want to get it wrong.

So, I pray for wisdom and for strength that we need here as a church. Then also we pray for provision. It's changing times, and for the provisions to do the call that God has on our life.

So, I think those three would be summing up, in general, wisdom for strength and provision.

Andrew Stirling: Well, David, we will covenant to do that for you, and I'll covenant to do that for you. Thank you.

I must say, as an external observer, watching what's happened at Coastal Church and the wonderful footprint that you are leaving in Vancouver, your books, your writing, your presence, and your support of, and I do want to say this because this isn't something others would know, your tremendous encouragement to others who are in ministry and the sense of unity that you bring to discussions, which I've experienced personally. I want to thank you, but most of all, for taking the time today and being with Scripture Untangled. David, God bless you. God bless your ministry, and thanks so much for your time. It's been a joy.

David Koop: Thanks, Andrew. Privilege to be with you.