MARK & FRIENDS

God’s Recipe for Life: Faith, Prayer, and Forgiveness

Monday, November 23, 2026 | Ministry Package V5.1
Host: Mark Burns | Speaker: Pastor Jason Epperson

Program Summary

What if God has a better recipe for your life than the one you have been following? Mark Burns opens with Proverbs 3:5-6 and introduces Pastor Jason Epperson of CU Church teaching from Mark 11:20-33. Through a family cinnamon-roll recipe, the withered fig tree, and Jesus’ teaching about prayer and forgiveness, Pastor Jason invites the listening friend to trust God’s character and live under His authority. The message challenges outward appearances, people-pleasing, and self-reliance while encouraging genuine spiritual fruit, ongoing prayer, and grace toward others. Mark closes by asking what part of life needs to be surrendered more fully to God.

Key Takeaways

- Faith in God includes trusting who He is and placing my daily life under His authority.
- A life with attractive religious appearances can still lack the fruit that blesses other people.
- God’s power, rather than the strength of my own faith, is the foundation of my hope.
- Prayer begins with trust and submission: God’s kingdom and will take priority over my demands.
- Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane models honest desire joined to surrender to the Father.
- Forgiveness entrusts judgment to God; it does not declare that the wrong done was acceptable.
- The desire to win approval can reveal whose authority is shaping my choices.
- God invites me into a daily relationship that bears fruit in love, service, and grace.

Scripture References

- Proverbs 3:5-6 — Mark’s opening reading: trust in the Lord and acknowledge Him in every part of life.
- Mark 11:20-33 — main teaching: the withered fig tree, faith, prayer, forgiveness, and the question of Jesus’ authority.
- John 3:16 — quoted while discussing belief in God and eternal life.
- James 2:19 — alluded to in the distinction between acknowledging God and trusting Him.
- Matthew 6:9-12 — the Lord’s Prayer is discussed as a model of submission, daily dependence, and forgiveness.
- Luke 22:42 — Jesus’ surrender in Gethsemane is paraphrased: the Father’s will above His own.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:17 — the instruction to pray without ceasing is applied to the posture of everyday life.
- John 1:29 — John the Baptist's testimony about the Lamb of God is quoted.
- John 15:4-5 — companion reading: abiding in Christ and bearing fruit.

Quote of the Day

"I'm trusting God with the moment because I know he knows the next moment and I don't." — Pastor Jason Epperson

Broadcast Notes

Pastor Jason Epperson of CU Church teaches from Mark 11:20-33. Mark Burns opens with Proverbs 3:5-6 and the question of God's better recipe, then closes by returning to the family-recipe illustration and inviting personal surrender. The message treats prayer as dependence on God and alignment with His will, with Jesus' Gethsemane prayer as a central example. The transcript preserves the speaker's conversational illustrations, personal reflections, and paraphrases of Scripture. References identify passages quoted, paraphrased, or alluded to; John 15:4-5 is a companion reading supplied for further reflection. The opening "We're Glad You're Here" theme is marked without reproducing lyrics. Obvious transcription errors and the local place-name Mahomet have been proofread.

Practical Applications

- Name one area where I have relied on my own understanding and bring it to God in prayer.
- Ask whose approval I am seeking before making a difficult decision.
- Pray honestly about a concern, then add, "Father, Your will be done."
- Look for one practical way to bear fruit through love or service today.
- Bring a lingering hurt to God and take a prayerful step toward forgiveness, without calling the wrong acceptable.
- Pause before a conversation and ask, "Lord, how do You want me to love and serve here?"
- Admit a mistake and offer a sincere apology instead of protecting appearances.
- Read Mark 11:20-33 and reflect on how trust in God can shape my next ordinary choice.

Today's Challenge

Identify one part of your life that needs fuller surrender to God's authority. Pray about it, then take one specific step of obedience today.

Closing Prayer

Father, I trust that You know what is best for me, even when I cannot see the next step. Help me release my need to control the outcome or win another person’s approval. Teach me to pray with honesty and surrender, to forgive as one who has received Your grace, and to love the people You place around me. Let my life bear fruit that points others to Jesus. Show me the next step in Your better recipe for my life, and give me the courage to follow. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

About Today's Speaker

Pastor Jason Epperson

CU Church | Bible teaching from Mark 11:20-33

Jason Epperson is introduced in this broadcast as a pastor of CU Church. In this message, he uses everyday experiences, Scripture, and the illustration of a family recipe to encourage trust in God, prayer, forgiveness, and a life shaped by God’s authority. His teaching is featured on the Monday edition of Mark & Friends.

Featured on Mark & Friends - Listen anytime under the Mark & Friends tab at GreatNewsRadio.org or WLUJ.org.

About Today's Host

Mark Burns

Host of Mark & Friends

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLUJ Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. With decades of experience in Christian radio and ministry, he presents Scripture-centered programs intended to educate, edify, and evangelize.

Additional Ministry Resources

- Mark & Friends Program Resource Library
- Great News Radio
- WLUJ
- Mark 11:20-33 - faith, prayer, forgiveness, and authority
- Proverbs 3:5-6 - trust in the Lord
- John 15:4-5 - abiding and bearing fruit

Complete Proofread Transcript

[Opening theme: “We’re Glad You’re Here.” Lyrics omitted.]

Reading from Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He'll make your path straight.

That was Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6. What if God has a better recipe for your life than the one you've been following? It's Monday, November 23, 2026. Welcome to Mark and Friends. Here's Pastor Jason Epperson of CU Church.

In your life and in my life, we live in tension. This is the tension. Tension between my selfish desires, and tension between the authority of God.

The crazy thing is, if I will let go of my selfish desires, and place myself under the authority of God. This is the passage that actually I do walk in wholeness. I do walk in fulfillment.

I actually can love the people around me really well, because I'm not concerned with loving them so they love me. I'm loving them so they know Him. And that's what this is about today.

This is literally about, you're getting a family recipe from Jesus. Jesus wants to give you a family recipe every day, and every single day you're like, dang, that tastes good. I remember when the first time I had them, I was at Lacey's house, and her family, and someone brought cinnamon rolls.

I like food. But cinnamon rolls, there's this cinnamon roll, and I remember putting the cinnamon roll on my plate, and I'm eating the cinnamon roll, and I'm like, what? This is better than cinnamon. Like, this is crazy.

And I'm eating the cinnamon roll, and I might have had another one. And then I realize it's a family recipe, and I'm thinking, that's not the reason I married her, but it's on the list. I remember when we got married, her aunt, Nancy, actually put in a bag the cinnamon roll recipe for us, plus 60.

But the reality is, that's brought so much joy, and it's a family thing. Guys, the God of all creation every single day wants to give you a family thing. Today, I'm literally going to teach you something today that God has taught me that's like the secret sauce.

It's like everyone in this room, if you've never said yes to Jesus, yes. But then if you want to experience Him on a daily basis and live the life you were created to live, today, that's what we're talking about. So it starts this way, and it says these words.

It says, as they passed by in the morning, they saw a fig tree which withered away to its roots. And Peter remembered, he said to him, hey, rabbi, hey, teacher, look, the fig tree that you cursed has withered. And so this is what's happened.

Don't forget, Jesus is walking into the temple. On his way into the temple, he sees this fig tree. And basically, this fig tree was false advertisement.

It would be like, historically speaking, or even present day, it'd be like someone in the church saying, my life is perfect, and we have it all together, and you treat people awful. That's a hypothetical. But it's basically like the world says it's a bunch of hypocrites.

I don't know why they'd say that. Versus, if we can be honest with our brokenness, and honest with our struggles, and honest with the fact that we struggle, but we know the grace of Jesus, and we want to walk on the authority of God, and we make mistakes, we say sorry, and when we do the wrong thing, we say our bad, and we constantly are trying to align ourselves with God, then guess what? Your tree, a fig tree, in that

moment, it produces figs. An apple tree? Apples.

But a tree that's got pretty leaves, and is all buttoned up, and never says the words you're not supposed to, and you walk up to them, and it's just, there ain't nothing there. This passage is about, when you place your life under the authority of God, hear me say this, ooh wee boy, you got some fruit now, and when we don't, we don't. Here's the beauty, when you don't, you can.

Okay Lord, I'm screwing this up. The passage then goes on and says this, and Jesus answered them, are you ready for it? Here's how we are under the authority of God. Here it is, have faith in God.

Sounds pretty simple. I remember when I was a kid, I'd go to football games, basketball games, I'd watch them on the TV with my dad, watching the Orange Bowl, but the reality is, is they hold up the sign, and what do they say? For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. If you believe in God, you have eternal life.

It's like the verse, this is saying, it says these words, it says, have faith in God. What's it mean to have faith in God? What's it mean to believe? Is it just to acknowledge? No, the demons acknowledge them. Have faith in God means I put my trust in God.

It means I give God the authority of my life. So having faith in God today, we're going to talk about in two parts, and stay with me. The first is this, if you have faith in God, you are saying these words, that I believe God is who he says he is.

I believe he is the creator, the sustainer. I believe he hung the stars in the sky. I believe he breathed breath into my lungs.

I believe, I believe the songs we sing. I believe that he's transformed my life. I believe his grace covers my sin.

I believe God is who he says he is. He's the savior, the coverer of my sins. He's conquered death.

He gives us life. If I believe that, I believe who he says he is, and I know who I am. I believe who he says I am.

So my identity is in him, which means my authority is under him. And so the other part of having faith in God is not just knowing those things, it's also living your whole life under God's authority versus the world's authority or the crowd's authority. Did we catch that? I'm going to get to it now.

The reason we have tension is because we don't really believe God knows what's best. It's okay. And it's because we're like, well, I really want this.

I really want to do this. If I don't look out for me, then who will? I live in a culture that I've got to look out for, number one. If I don't look out for me, no one will.

Unless God is who he says he is, and he is the authority of my life. And every single day as I give, I say, Lord, I'm yours. Help my mind.

Help my eyes. Help my hands. Forgive me when I do my dumb stuff, which I do.

Then every single day when I turn to him in authority, every single day, it's like a new recipe. And it's better than cinnamon rolls. But the days that I follow the crowd's authority, the fruit of my life isn't the same.

I don't find purpose. I don't find wholeness. Now, life can be hard in both things.

But the peace that I walk in in Christ is present. And it says this, truly I say to you, if we have that kind of faith, so if I believe he is who he says he is, nod your heads, and if I am placing my life, the word I'm going to use today is alignment. If I am aligned with God, if I am trusting him like the veterans in the military were on the

battlefield, they can't see what's over the hill, but there's someone that can see what's over the hill and they tell you what to do, you're trusting a command.

I'm trusting God with the moment because I know he knows the next moment and I don't. So when I'm in alignment with God, and when I know he is who he says he is, then this next thing is what happens. Are you ready for this? This is the cool spot.

It says these words, truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, be taken up and thrown into the sea, and does not doubt it in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it'll be done for him. Does it mean that a physical mountain is going into the water? It could, but in this time in history, what it means is an impossible situation can be made possible with faith in God. Not your faith.

Your faith don't have the power, what you have your faith in has the power. And so when I'm in alignment with God, the creator, the sustainer, and the giver of life, when I am in alignment with him, guess what I ask him? I ask him what he already wants to do. And the reason why he loves when this happens is it builds my faith when I'm like, man, Lord, I need healing here.

They said that this sweet girl's heart wouldn't survive. They said that it's not going to be good. They said surgery after surgery.

Lord, I need you to make that heart perfect. I need you to take that mountain and throw it into the water. And three days later to hear, this girl's heart is perfect.

A mountain in the water. Why? Because in that moment, the desire that God gave me and his desire were the same. The workmanship of God, I don't always understand because there's times I cry out to God.

I think, why wouldn't God want this? But the reality is, he's the one that has the world view that I don't have. And when I pray the things that he is already desiring for the kingdom of God, for the people of the world to know who he is, my faith is grown. Here's the crazy thing.

The more I know him and the more I walk with him, the more power and the more understanding I have of who he is, and the more my prayers literally blow my mind at how God answers them. The longer I'm on earth, the more I actually do understand his workmanship. That's what I'm saying.

Not completely, but I'm getting closer. I've seen the mountains move in your relationships. I've seen the mountains move in your hearts, which some of you thought, I would never go into a church.

I'm not even going to talk to that person. Or, there's no way I can ever love this person again. Or, there's no way I'm ever going to respect this, or there's no way I can be forgiven for this.

We all have it, right? Just nod or blink, do something. And yet, we're here. When I lost a child, I never thought I'd be able to breathe again.

And now, I still miss my child. But I can smile and enjoy life. There's no way I thought I could be forgiven.

But now, the brokenness of my past is grace that I can offer to others. Y'all, those are impossible things that God makes possible when we align with His authority. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it'll be yours.

Whenever you ask, when you are aligned with God, whatever you ask will be done, because you're going to be asking what? The things that He desires, like, He wants to partner with us in this world. This is what I mean. It's quite this simple.

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, He says to God, what does He say? Hey, if there's any other way that I don't have to get on that cross and die for these folks' sin, like, if there's any other way from the folks from Tuscola to find forgiveness besides me going to that cross, please, let's do it. But He's like, no, no, no, no, no. Tuscola needs me to go to the cross.

So does Champaign-Urbana. So does Mahomet. So does Fisher.

Had to throw us in there. But the reality is, He said those words. He said, it's not my desire to suffer and to die, but not my will, but yours be done.

The Lord's prayer, let's throw it on the screen quick. I just want you to read this. It's the same aspect of prayer.

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. It is an establishment of God is the authority. In our prayer lives, in our lives in general, we have to establish what prayer is, is actually an act of submission.

It's not me sitting on Santa's lap. It's me saying, you are the creator of the universe. You are above and beyond and all-knowing and all-powerful.

And in the end, I trust you more than I trust me. And it says this, your kingdom come, your will be done. And when you are aligned with God, that is our attitude.

That doesn't mean we don't still have desires. But the more we align with Him, the more we want His desires versus, it's actually, it's sacrifice to give up things. I get it.

I get it. I get it. But sacrificing something that doesn't fulfill you to find something that does, it kind of redefines sacrifice.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts. What it's saying is, God, give me your recipe every day so I can enjoy this. Versus most of our lives, we just go back to the one moment.

Man, thank you for saving me from my sins. Thank you for dying on the cross. Thank you that you've conquered death.

I thank Him for it every day too. But He has something new for you every day. He literally wants to, like, Jason, yesterday you had a cinnamon roll.

Today you get a filet. That's the journey He wants to go on with you if we align ourselves under His authority. But most of our lives, it's like, we just get busy and our authority becomes work.

Our authority becomes a crowd. Our authority becomes a nation. Our authority becomes a sports team.

Our authority becomes a relationship. I mean, me too. Therefore I tell you, whatever you're asking in prayer, believe that you received it.

It'll be yours. And it says this, and whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in Heaven may forgive you for your trespasses. We just read it, right? Why is forgiveness such a big deal in alignment with God? I'm gonna say that out loud again, because I know this is hard.

But the reason forgiveness is so hard to align yourself with God, is you can't align yourself with an all-forgiving, grace-filled, truth-powerful God if you're unwilling to forgive. And the reason that we can forgive is the recognition of our need to be forgiven. That does not mean you still might not be hurting, that doesn't mean you still might not be broken, that doesn't mean that that forgiveness is not saying what they did was okay.

Forgiveness is saying this, hey God, you're the authority, you sit on the judgment seat, I'll let you judge, I'm just gonna love and serve. Because when we are unwilling to forgive, what we're really doing is, hey God, I'm not giving you the right to judge them, I need you to push you off the judgment seat, and I need to sit here. Forgiveness is just the relinquishment of like, I was the one wrong, God, but guess what, you took my wrongs, I'm giving you their wrongs, I'm moving forward.

I know forgiveness is hard, but what's harder is not forgiving. How do we like, do this? For me, it's every single moment of my life recognizing your desires are greater than mine, give me your eyes to see, give me your hands to move, give me your voice to talk. It's every moment of my day, it says in scripture to pray without ceasing, it doesn't mean every single, it doesn't mean I live my life completely on my knees, but it means I live my life in the posture of always being on my knees.

Like the posture of my life is, Lord, what do you have for me when I walk into this place? Like when we walk into the place and it's like, Lord, what do you have for me? How do you want me to serve? How do you want me to love? How do you want me, versus walking into a place saying, how can I get what I want? How do I convince? How do I become noticed? How do I stay unnoticed? See, when you're under His authority, it means we're under His authority. But it's not authority by a mean boss who pokes you in the chest, it's under His authority and He's literally setting you free in every moment. Isn't it funny how Satan has deceived culture, even to the word authority bothers us? When God's authority is freedom.

It goes on and says this in verse 27, and they came again to Jerusalem, and as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, and they said to him, by what authority are you doing these things, or what gave you this authority to do them? So instantly they ask him, what? What's your authority? Like, because our authority, they would say, our authority is God, our authority is the Torah, our authority is the religious structure that we've set up, and this religious structure, we have rules and regulations that make us feel good about us, because we don't do that, we don't talk like that, we don't smoke that, drink that, we wear these clothes, we don't shave this, like, I don't know what it is, like, we don't eat this. And those rules and regulations make us feel very safe on the inside, and we feel better than everyone else, because we don't behave the way they behave, but then people on the outside, there's no room for them on the inside, because just because they do it, they can't get in, and Jesus is saying, no, no, no, no, no, get rid of all the stuff that I'm not saying, and be under my authority. See, their authority was a crowd, their authority was their power, their authority was, Jesus didn't fit in their box.

So Jesus said to them, Jesus' authority, think about that, almost every time Jesus performed a miracle, he went to his father first. Why? Because he wanted to show us the authority. Jesus said to them, I will ask you one question, answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? So they say, what authority, bro, what authority, what authority? And Jesus is like, hey, I'll tell you the authority, but first answer me this, this is the question, was John's baptism from God, was John's life, John the Baptist, was he a prophet, was he from God, or was he from man? Now, why would he ask, Jesus is not being cheeky, he's not dodging the question, he's not trying to be sarcastic, he's not being a jerk, Jesus is in this moment saying, listen to me, who do you say John is? Because if you don't say John is from God, then why am I going to fight with a bunch of people that don't already believe that? Because see, what did John say? John the Baptist said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. What John said is, this is the creator, the sustainer, and the savior of the world, this is the Messiah, John believed, John asked questions, are you really, John believed Jesus was God, and so Jesus is saying, is John from God, or is John from man? That's why he's asking, and this is their answer, do not miss this, it's like a centerpiece of this passage, and it's read over too much, and they discussed it with one another saying, if we say from heaven, he will say, why then did you not believe him?

But shall we say from man, hold on, do you know that when you are asked a question and you think, what do they want to hear, you're ultimately already not under the authority of God. You guys know, like Jason, you ask a lot of questions, you know why? Because I'm actually smart enough to rationalize my own stupidity and sin, and I think I'm good.

I spent most of my life rationalizing what I did, well, and not feeling guilty for it, because I thought I was right. If someone asks me a question and I think, what do they want to hear, then God is not my authority. They're my authority, because I'm actually, what I would tell myself, this is what we tell ourselves, I'm sorry, I just want to love them.

No, no, no. You want them to love you. That's not love, that's manipulation.

The only way you can love them, the only way you can love your family, your kids, the only way you can love people you don't like, the only way we can love them is by being under the authority of God, and showing them the love. Like, me offering them stale bread versus a cinnamon roll is not me loving them. I'm telling you right now, when you ask yourself that question, as soon as you, oh Lord, sorry, me sitting down over here, man, Lord, what can I do today to capture their attention? What? I don't care if I capture your attention.

I just want you to know who Jesus is. But you know what sometimes I think? Because sometimes I allow you to be my authority. Now I stop myself most of the times, praise the Lord, but let's recognize who our authority is by who we're trying to please.

And this is what it says, here's how you know their authority. But shall we say from man, they were afraid of the people for they all held that John really was a prophet. So when I'm afraid of the consequence of telling the truth, the authority of God is no longer my authority, the other authority is.

Then the passage ends this way. So they answered Jesus, we do not know. And Jesus said to them, well then neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Why does Jesus not just say, by the way, he's told them before. But why in this moment does he not, it's the same reason why I don't go on social media. That was funny, you should have laughed.

It's literally this moment is this, it's me, Jesus is recognizing I can tell them what I believe, but if they already believe this, and I believe this, I'm going to tell them why they should believe. Everyone's on there telling each other what they should believe. Guess what no one wants to do? Listen to someone else.

So Jesus in the moment's like, nah, I'm not going to put this on X. Nope, this isn't on social media today. Like, oh, you don't believe John is from God? Okay, we're good. And then he can actually have some level of peace.

He doesn't live in the turmoil of, guess who's not going to be convinced? Them. Now lots of them are convinced once he raises from the dead. Who's your authority? What's our alignment? Does that make sense, girls? Like, what are we aligned with? Like, when I'm aligned with God, all of a sudden his desires are my desires.

All of a sudden the grace he gives me is the grace I can give others. But when I am concerned with aligning myself with something different, having authority with something different, then I don't get to enjoy his presence like he's created me to enjoy it. In the court of Gentiles, it was full of all the right things.

You ever think about that? In the court of Gentiles, it was things they needed to do for sacrifice. It was readings, it was literature, it was animals, like, the court of Gentiles was full of the right things, they just were in the wrong place. Why? Because the right things with the wrong purpose, the right things not under the right

authority are no longer the right things.

In our lives, you can be doing all the right things, but if it's not under the authority of God because you want to have a relationship with him, it's got no fruit. It's just a bunch of stuff. It's just kind of like a tree with leaves, but nothing to bless the people around you with.

Family, he loves us so much, he put a recipe card right there for us to enjoy something we love. And every single day, he wants to give you a little more. And you know what he'll do? He'll do it every day, every second, every moment, if we'll live with him being our authority, actually believing that the Father in heaven knows what's best for his son.

And when I believe that, I get to experience the beauty of who he is and who you are. Oh, listening friend, what recipe might God be stirring up in your life or getting ready to serve you? I love Pastor Jason's reminder that our heavenly Father knows what's best for us. And every day, he invites us to trust him, follow his leading, and experience more of his goodness.

You've been hearing Pastor Jason Epperson of CU Church teaching from Mark chapter 11. So here's my challenge. What part of your life do you need to surrender more fully to God's authority? And remember, you can hear this program again, read the transcript, and explore additional scriptures and ministry resources under the Mark and Friends tab at greatnewsradio.org or wluj.org. Thanks for listening, and being a part of our radio listening family, this is Mark Burns with Great News Media.

God bless you, and have a great day and night.