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**Title:** 212: *Alignment*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 14:24-25

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Good morning. We have been in this series 212. And the basic idea has been as water boils at 212 degrees and it changes, it transforms. So, when there's heat in our lives, spiritually, it leads to spiritual transformation. But here's my guess, and that is if you've been a Christian for years, maybe even decades, that for some of us there's still a sense in which we say, but my spiritual life can be stagnant or not all that I hoped it would be.

In fact, for many of us, the reason that we come to faith in the first place is that we have this hope that we will be able to encounter God, and that we'll be able to experience God in our day-to-day life. And yet for some of us, we say, well, I believe that and I have sought that. And yet at times, it seems like God isn't as close as I would like.

And what we've tried to do over these weeks is consider First Corinthians 11 through 14 and look at some of the factors that help us to encounter God more fully, to experience God in our day-to-day life, to hit that point of transformation, if you will. And today, we're going to end this series not by taking the next passage, but by looking at some of the verses we've looked at and drilling into just a few of the words and concepts that are there.

And I'd like to suggest that one of the keys to spiritual life, to transformation, is alignment. And here's why I use this word. I think it's in these verses, and I'll show you in just a moment, but I use this word because I was thinking about obedience or purity or something like that as I was looking at this.

But what I realized is that if you talk about obedience or purity, there's a sense in which it says, well, if I do these things, then I'm aligned with God. But alignment is bigger because it communicates the idea of obedience or being in alignment. But then what do we do when we're out of alignment? We get back in it. We correct. We repent, and we turn.

And when I say the word alignment, my guess is many of us, our first thought is that alignment means something like a car with its tires out of alignment. In fact, I had a mechanic say to me not long ago that the alignment thing when you go in to get your car tires changed, is actually overblown.

That it's rare for a car to be very far out of alignment to cause your tires to warp. His take. I'm not repeating it for anything other than just a point of interest. But if you've had your car out of alignment, what happens is you go and you get in and you say, oh, my car is pulling a little.

And you say to yourself, I should get that fixed sometime or my tires are going to wear prematurely. Does anybody have this moment? And so, you think I'll get to that. And here's how it works for me, at least when I do this, and that is I start to get my tires aligned in my head.

And I think I'll have to do that. And then I forget about it until the next time I'm in the car. And then I think, oh, I should get that done. And I forget about it till the next time I'm in the car and I say, well, okay, I'll get to it next week or the week after. And sometimes I can go way too long and probably do wear my tires prematurely before they are out of alignment.

But as a result of that, we tend to think of alignment as not being that urgent. But there are times in which alignment is urgent. Think about when you are a passenger in a plane and the pilot is getting ready to land the plane. While alignment isn't just a nice thought that we need to get to, it's like critical.

And if you've ever seen planes lined up at night where they've fallen into line and they're landing in order, and you can see them across the sky as they're coming down toward an airport. They're not just aligned for the landing on the airstrip, but they're also aligned in order, and their alignment is critical. And that's the kind of alignment that I'm thinking about here.

And we're going to look at just a couple of words that exist in First Corinthians 14 verses 24 and 25 and one other verse from First Corinthians. And here's what I hope to say today. And that is, if you want to be aligned with God, you need to know what alignment is. You need to want alignment. And then we need to choose alignment.

We need to know what it is. We need to want it and we need to choose it. So, here's the first idea. We need to know what alignment is. And in First Corinthians chapter 14 verses 24 and 25, it says, "But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin..."

And I want to use that word sin here to talk about knowing what is alignment. This is a word that in the culture we don't like to use a whole lot and we don't even like to use

it in the church a whole lot because nobody likes to say somebody else is sinning or something's wrong. We'd prefer not to have right and wrong language, but to have, you know, better, best kind of language.

But in the Bible, this concept of sin has to do with saying God has a way, a standard. And when we follow his standard, it's ultimately best for us. And there is a way that's right and wrong. Now, here in First Corinthians 14, verse 24, the word sin in the original language doesn't actually appear. You can see this in the original language. You can see this in the ESV because it'll just say convicted by all. It doesn't say convicted by sin. I think the NIV is right in translating it that way.

But the reason I point this out is that it points to something very typical for the way that we think about sin, and that is we think about sin as being there are certain things we should never do. And so, anything across that line is a sin. And that's how we think about sin.

But sin is actually a much broader concept. In fact, the idea of conviction, which is in the text, which is the word that draws this idea of sin here, is that when we hear prophecy, and if you've been here, you've heard me talk about my understanding of prophecy, that it's Scripture being applied.

So, any time we read the Bible and it's applied to us, we hear teaching, it is applicable word, were convicted in worship, whatever it is, and we say, this is right. This is the standard of God. It brings a conviction about two kinds of sin that I want to just mention here. One is what I'm going to call sins, and this isn't unique to me, is sins of commission, where we cross a line, and then sins of omission, where we simply don't do something that we should do or could do that would be right before God.

In the old prayer of confession, in the *Book of Common Prayer*, they pick up this idea beautifully. Here's what it says,

"Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against thee in thought,  
word, and deed,

By what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved thee with our whole heart;

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;

That we may delight in Thy will, and walk in thy ways,

To the glory of thy Name. Amen.

And here, the simple idea of this prayer is this idea that says there are things that we do and don't do. And those two things make up the conviction in saying, I know what God's will is. And here's what this means when I say we have to know alignment, is we need to be in a place where we say, I understand what is of God and what is not of God so that I can say this is alignment.

And what that means is that there would be a sense in which you would say, well, how would Jesus live if he were a student at my school? How would Jesus live if he ran my business or worked at my company? How would Jesus be a mom? How would Jesus be a dad or a spouse? How would Jesus be single if he were living in this environment?

Because as we study and know what Scripture says, what happens is we begin to see what it is that alignment with the things of God really looks like. But sometimes the truth is we don't actually want to know because if you know, it means that you either have to be compliant or not compliant.

And so, one of the reasons sometimes that we avoid church, hearing the teaching of the word, the conviction that goes with the speaking of Scripture in the application, is we don't want to be convicted. One of the reasons that sometimes we don't read our Bible is that we don't actually want to be convicted by what it says. One of the reasons that sometimes we don't sing or worship is we know when we sing words that sometimes there's a conviction.

And so, sometimes what people want to do is they say, I want to avoid putting myself in a place where I will be convicted and know what alignment looks like, and know when I'm not in alignment with the things of God because that allows us to say my way is still just kind of okay. I don't need to have a God that I surrender to.

One of the reasons often people don't come to faith or stay in faith is because they say, I don't want to have a God who tells me how to do anything in my life. I want to do what I want to do sexually. I want to do what I want to do with my marriage. I want to do what I want to do with my money. If I want to forgive or not forgive, that's my prerogative. If I want to be kind or merciful or not kind and merciful, that is my choice. And so even if we have an idea of what it is to know what alignment looks like, sometimes we don't act like we want to know, and as a result, we avoid what alignment is.

Now, sometimes what will also happen is we'll say, well, if God has forgiven us for our sins, then it doesn't matter what I do now. Does anybody ever have this thought or hear somebody who has this thought? If God forgives us for whatever it is that we do that's sinful, then what we do doesn't matter. But the problem with that is in the Bible, I think you can see this in First John chapter one, there's this concept of sin and usually it's used kind of in a singular. It is in First John one at least, where if we say that we have no sin, we lie and the light is not in us, meaning that we're denying our need for a savior.

But then a couple of verses later it says, but if we confess our sins, plural, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins. And so, there's this concept of saying, yes, I need to ask for forgiveness for my sins so that I have eternity in salvation because of what Jesus Christ has done. But it doesn't mean that I don't have alignment issues, sins that I still need to confess or I still need to bring under the rule and alignment of Jesus Christ in my life.

Sometimes we can say, well, since I am forgiven, therefore it doesn't matter if I'm aligned, but it actually has a huge impact on our lives. Dallas Willard said this. He said, "A disciple of Jesus is one who is with Him, learning to be like Him and who intends to say and do what Jesus would say and do in the manner in which He would say and do it."

So, it isn't just sins of commission and things where we actively do something we shouldn't do, but its sins of omission where we say, I'm not choosing to live as Jesus would live in this environment. And so, we need to know what alignment is.

But I also believe we have to want alignment. And I see this in this word worship, verse 25, "...as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" So, worship is important because what happens in our lives is we all worship something we want, something to be of supreme importance. And when that isn't God in our lives, what happens is then other things become what is dominant or most important to us.

Sometimes in the spiritual realm, we get the idea that if we don't feel like doing something or want to do something, it's inauthentic to do it. In other words, I didn't feel like coming to church, so I don't want to go because I don't want to be hypocritical or I don't want to in some way be inauthentic. I don't feel like praying, so I'm not going to pray because I don't want to be inauthentic. I don't feel like giving or I can't give joyfully so I'm not going to give because I don't want to be a non-joyful, inauthentic giver. Any on you know what I'm talking about here?

But here's the reality. In other areas of life, you know full well that we don't actually judge maturity on our surface want-to or feel-like level, we judge it on the want to level. Now, that sounds like a lot, but let me just make this really plain. How many of you, every time you wake up say, I can't wait to go to work now, maybe you love your job so much that you almost every day get up and say that.

But my guess is there are at least some days that you say, I'd rather be at the beach. I would rather stay home today and do something else with my time than physically go to work. But why do you still go to work? Well, you go to work because you want to be somebody who's relied upon, somebody who contributes to the greater good, and somebody who gets a paycheck. All of which are you acting on the deeper want to. The want to want to. You want to be the kind of a person who therefore you do things you don't feel like doing.

And so, when it comes to the spiritual realm, sometimes what we want to do is we want to say, well, if I don't feel like it, then it isn't legitimate or it isn't authentic when actually I would say it's more authentic in some ways to say I'm acting on the deeper want to because what happens is sometimes, we feel our way into acting and sometimes we act our way into feeling. But they both produce spiritual life inside of us when we say I want to because I want to give my ultimate praise, my ultimate glory to God rather than just to myself.

And when we experience grace, which goes back to the want to again, sometimes we will tend to think, well, if God is a God of grace, then again, it doesn't matter what I do, but grace does not erase consequences. Grace eliminates punishment, and grace restores standing, but it doesn't eliminate consequences.

Again, just a simple illustration in the Bible. I believe that drunkenness is a sin. I believe that that's what the Scripture teaches if you look at it. I don't think drinking is a sin, but drinking to the point of excess is. So, if you drink too much day after day, week after week, year after year, decade after decade, and you get to an age and you say, I probably shouldn't have drunk that much. You know what? God forgive me. I'm bringing my life into alignment.

The punishment and the standing are restored. But you may still have liver issues. That doesn't eliminate the natural consequence. And here's why. Again, this is important because sometimes what we'll want to do is say, well, grace gets me off the hook. No, grace does not eliminate consequences. And therefore, to want alignment is to say, I understand that God is at work giving me his good plan.

In the Old Testament, there's a story about Joseph. If you remember, Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery and he ended up in Egypt rising to prominence in a house of a man named Potiphar.

And while he was there, in Genesis 39, we're told, that Potiphar's wife, came after him and wanted him sexually day after day. And one day she sent everybody out of the house and she said, come lie with me. And he didn't. Instead, he ran out and left his coat. She said he tried to assault me. He was put in prison.

From there, God lifted him even higher than he would have been in Potiphar's house. But there's a verse there, in verse nine, where he says this. He says, "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" Do you see what he's doing? He's bringing worship into his immediate situation because what he's saying is there are a lot of ways I could think about this.

This woman wants me. Why wouldn't I? This woman's powerful. She can help me. Why wouldn't I? She's probably attractive. Why wouldn't I? There's probably no chance of being caught. Everyone's gone. I deserve this. I bet you can hear the kind of rationale. But what does he do? He brings worship in and he says, how can I do this great evil and sin against God because God has a better way?

I think it was Paul David Tripp who once said, because we worship our way into sin, we have to worship our way out of sin. What we do is idealize something and we say, this is what I need. This is the thing that will give me fulfillment. This will make me happy, and we worship it until it becomes so enticing that we don't feel like we can say no, rather than saying, I worship God who is worthy and good and knows what is best for me.

In James chapter one, there are another few verses that speak to this. Here's what it says. James 1:13 and following, "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

So, his rendition here is that we're drawn by our desires. By the way, evil there is again supplied by the translators. It's the word Epithumia. And it is a word that can be translated as evil desires, but it can also just be our desires. And so, James is actually not here saying you have these horrible evil desires that you need to curtail. He's saying you have desires, some of which might just be strong desires over desires. But

what you're doing is you're letting them entice you into sin. And then when sin is conceived, it gives birth to death.

Then Stuart, a pastor in Washington, D.C., speaks on this passage and he says this. He says, from our temptation, there are two issues. Downstream we minimize the consequences. We say there isn't really death here. I can do what I want, and God's not going to do anything about it or there's no issue, there's no consequence. And upstream, what happens is we believe that God isn't really good.

In fact, in James chapter one, just a couple of verses later, 1:17, we get the character of God brought into the idea around temptation because it says that every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from above, from the father of lights, with whom there's no turning, there's no shadow, there's no kind of variation.

So, upstream from our temptation is the deception that says, God isn't for me, God isn't good. Go back to Joseph's situation. If God was good, He wouldn't have let me here. Why should I not do what I want to do? And then downstream is this idea that there's no consequence. And what we need to do if we're going to address the want to of alignment is assert in our minds that God is always good. His way is always best, even if it doesn't seem like it, and there is death on the other side of choices that take us away from God.

Some of us may be gathered and maybe we're in our teens and we're saying, does it really make sense to follow God? Maybe you've had people who've gone ahead of you, brothers, sisters, parents, and you see people who in your mind tried to follow God, and their life didn't work out. Or maybe you are here and you're saying, I'm not sure that Christians always end up better. And so why would I not just live my own way?

Well, if God is a good father and a creator, what that means is that His way and aligning with it will always lead to more life. Now, that doesn't mean there won't be pain or hardship. Scripture is clear that there's pain and hardship, even for those who believe and follow Jesus' ways. But what it means is that there will be less hardship, less death in your life, and fewer consequences when you say, I'm going to align with the work of God, and the more I worship who God is, the more able I am to resist the temptation to give in.

If you've ever tried to train a dog, you'll understand this concept. If you try to train a dog, one of the ways that dogs are often trained is something's put in front of them that they want, like their dinner or meat. And then what happens is the trainer or the



master will say, no, stay, and they'll expect the dog to not attack the thing they really want.

But here's what you see with a dog. When a dog's successful at not diving into their meal immediately, it's always because they take their eyes off of the temptation and put it on to their master. As soon as they look down at the food, it's over. They're like, I'm having the food. I do not care what you say.

Now, obviously, that's a different analogy, but there's similar thought and that is if you look at the temptation and say this is good and I need it, even if it's a good thing, that's why I say the important thing in James is not saying every desire is evil, but that even if it's a good thing, if I just look at it long enough, it can lead me to sin.

But if I look at my master and say if he's telling me no right now, he is a good father and he knows what is actually best, that's when I'll start to develop, not just a knowing what alignment is, but a desire for alignment, a wanting alignment. And what I know from my own life, and the life of many people, is that almost every time that I get out of alignment, it is because I start doubting that God is good and His ways are best, or that there's any kind of consequence to getting out of alignment. And when we really understand how God works, what we'll do is we'll say, yes, I want to know what alignment is, but I also really want alignment.

And then I think we'll choose alignment. And here I'm not thinking as much from First Corinthians 14, but a verse in First Corinthians ten, verse 13, it says, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind." You don't have some unique temptation that no one else has ever had to deal with. Often people think, well, if you had to work in my environment with my boss, you'd steal from the company too. But lots of people have bad bosses.

A lot of times people say, well, if you had had to endure my, and they fill in their blank and say no one else could have. Well, what First Corinthians ten says is you don't have anything so unique that it hasn't been experienced by others along the way.

And then he says this, "And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." Now, a way out here is in some translations said to be a way of escape, and it means literally a way of egress. So, if you're in a basement and the basement is on fire and you see an exit sign, that's almost the picture, the word picture that's here, that God will provide you a way out of any dangerous situation you're in.

But sometimes what we do is we get in a situation, we say, oh, well, I mean, what was I to do? It's like the little kid who was caught having cookies from the cookie jar that was forbidden. And his explanation to his mom was, I just climbed up to smell them. And somehow my teeth got caught in the cookies. Because what we tend to do is say, well, what was I to do? But God provides a way of escape.

Now sometimes that means not putting ourselves in a situation where we've got to find the way of egress. It means saying, I'm going to stay out of situations where I know I'm going to be prone to gossip and slander. I'm going to stay out of situations where I'm going to be sexually tempted. I'm going to stay out of situations in which I know that the good that Jesus has called forth from me is something that I'll be tempted not to do.

But it also means that we choose repentance and correction and confession, realignment when we're out of alignment, when we recognize it, and this is the message of the Gospel, none of us will live in perfect alignment all the time. But Jesus died for us so that we can come back into alignment over and over again. And when we choose it, what we're doing is we're choosing our best.

In fact, I mentioned a little earlier about the planes landing. I texted one of my buddies who's a pilot, and I just asked him about how this works. And he said this. He said planes have basically two instrument systems that help them know how to be in alignment for landing. One is called the ILS, which is the Instrument Landing System, that helps you, which is the gear that tells you basically you are too far to one side or the other or you are too high to low in your approach. And he said basically once you follow your instrumentation, as long as you follow what it says, it's almost impossible to not have a proper approach on your landing.

And then he said this, he said, but there's another system. The RNAV, Required Navigational Approach, which is a satellite system, which he said is especially helpful when it's foggy or you don't have visibility. He said the first instrument helps you, but he said you still have this sense. And he said this one, what it does is it positions you in exactly the place that it wants you to go. And as long as you follow your instruments and not your eyes, you'll land fine when it's foggy.

Now, I'm not saying you don't trust your eyes, but what I'm saying is sometimes as people, we need to say I'll trust God's Word rather than my sense of what is best. And I'm going to make a choice that when I don't see what is best or I think I know better, that I'm going to say, the instrument, the revelation of God is what I'm going to base my life on. And when that's the choice that you make, what you're doing is you're

saying there's a good God who's upstream from this moment, and the downstream consequences are real. And so, I'm going to choose to fix my eyes on my master and do what he's called me to do.

See, alignment is what will help you and me to live with a real sense of God's work in our lives, rather than simply saying, yeah, I believe, but I just do life. And maybe today you're here and you've gotten out of alignment and you know it. Maybe it's been just a willful choice. Maybe you've chosen not to forgive that person and there's bitterness in your heart and you know it, and it's impacting and poisoning other relationships, and it's time to say, God, I'm going to bring that into alignment.

Maybe you've been dealing with some fantasy and you've been substituting it for legitimate intimacy. Maybe your addictions are your way to deaden the pain so that you don't have to deal with what's hard in your life. But what you're doing is you're using a cheap substitute to keep you from the things that will really satisfy your soul.

And maybe today is just your day to say, God, I want to come back into alignment because you are a good father, the Creator, who knows what is best. Maybe you're here and you say, you know, one of the reasons I've never come to Jesus is because I don't want to align my will with anyone. Can I just tell you that God's way is the best way, not just for eternity and heaven and everything that's after this life, but for this life. Alignment is your best path forward.

Maybe you're here and you've wanted alignment, but little compromises have caused you just to say, it's too hard. But there is no temptation which is come on you, that's unique to you and is so strong that God has now provided a way of escape, a way for you to find a different way forward.

So, we're going to just conclude our time today by partaking in communion. And in just a moment, the band will come and lead us in song. There are communion tables here in the front, back, balcony, and far outside, and you can come and partake in communion. But before we do that, I want us to say together this prayer of confession from the book of Common Prayer, and then as the team leads, maybe you want to do a little more praying in just saying, God, I want to align my life with you. I want to be aligned with you again.

We'll have the prayer rails open. You can come and take communion as you feel God leads you. And it's just a moment for you to say, God, I know that I don't always align, but thank you for what Jesus did, making it possible for me to come back into a full relationship with you and helping me to align my life with you.

So, let's together say and pray this prayer. And if you can't pray it today because you don't mean it, maybe you say, I want to, so I'll pray it. Or maybe you'll say not today, but commit to saying I'm going to try to seek to figure out who God is to me and if he really is the good father.

So, let's pray together. Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against thee in thought, word, and deed,  
By what we have done, and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved thee with our whole heart;  
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;  
That we may delight in Thy will, and walk in thy ways,  
To the glory of thy Name. Amen.

God help us today to live in alignment and to celebrate Jesus' open arms that bring us into alignment over and over and over again. And God, I pray that this would just be a moment of realigning our hearts with you. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.