



## Bethel Sunrise Sermon Notes - “Lessons from Leetha Ross”

**Speaker:** Pastor Preston Dobbins

**Date:** May 31, 2026

**Scriptures:** John 10, James 1, 1 John 1, Hebrews 13, Proverbs 5, 2 Corinthians 3

### Main Idea

Leetha's life was a powerful example of what it means to follow Jesus wholeheartedly. Through her example, we learn how to live fully, endure faithfully, love generously, and keep Jesus on the throne of our hearts no matter what season of life we face.

### A Life Worth Following

Leetha was more than a church member, friend, wife, mother, or grandmother.

She was what Paul described as:

A "living letter" from Christ.

Her life consistently pointed people to Jesus.

She modeled:

- **Faith in difficult seasons**
- **Joy in hardship**
- **Radical hospitality**
- **Genuine encouragement**
- **Deep trust in God**

Pastor Preston reminded us that one of the greatest ways we can honor Leetha's legacy is by loving people the way she did—especially those who are overlooked, alone, or on the outside looking in.

The greatest legacy is not what you accomplish—it's how you reflect Jesus to others.

## 9 Lessons We Can Learn from Leetha

### 1. Live Life to the Full

**John 10:10**

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

Leetha was one of the most alive people Pastor Preston had ever known.

She didn't wait for:

- **perfect circumstances**

- **easier seasons**
- **fewer problems**

She chose joy.

She rejoiced in every season and refused to allow hardship to steal her love for life.

### **Key Thought:**

Don't wait for life to agree with you before you decide to enjoy it.

### **Questions:**

- **What am I postponing until circumstances improve?**
- **Am I experiencing the abundant life Jesus promised?**

## **2. Stir Yourself Up in the Lord**

Life will push against your faith.

Hard seasons come.  
Disappointments happen.  
Loss is inevitable.

But Leetha refused to surrender her joy.

She continued to:

- **trust God**
- **worship God**
- **believe God's promises**

When life pushed against her, she didn't shrink back.

### **Key Thought:**

Don't allow difficult circumstances to shrink your confidence in God.

## **3. Let Trials Become Your Teacher**

### **James 1:2-4**

"Count it all joy... when you meet trials of various kinds."

Trials reveal what is inside us.

But they can also develop:

- **perseverance**
- **maturity**
- **faith**
- **character**

Leetha allowed adversity to refine her rather than define her.

Like gold purified through fire, she allowed God to use every trial for growth.

### **Key Thought:**

You don't get to choose your trials, but you do get to choose what they produce in you.

## **4. Ask God for Wisdom**

### **James 1:5**

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God."

There are moments in life when we simply don't know what to do.

God never intended for us to have all the answers.

He invites us to ask Him.

Pastor Preston reminded us not to spend our lives pretending we've "got it."

### **Key Thought:**

Strength is not pretending you've got it all together. Strength is knowing where to go when you don't.

## **5. Walk in Transparency**

### **1 John 1:7**

"If we walk in the light..."

Leetha lived honestly.

She was free because she was transparent.

Walking in the light means:

- **honesty**
- **vulnerability**
- **confession**
- **authenticity**

Pastor Preston emphasized:

The only dangerous sin is hidden sin.

### **Key Thought:**

Hidden sin grows in darkness. Healing happens in the light.

### **Practical Application:**

- **Confess your sins to God.**
- **Confess struggles to trusted believers.**
- **Stop pretending everything is okay when it isn't.**

## 6. Welcome the Stranger

### Hebrews 13:2

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers."

Leetha had a remarkable ability to make outsiders feel like family.

She noticed:

- **the lonely**
- **the overlooked**
- **the forgotten**
- **the person standing alone**

And she intentionally moved toward them.

She didn't wait for people to approach her—she pursued them.

### Key Thought:

Love notices people.

### Challenge:

Look around before and after church.

Who is standing alone?

Who needs someone to see them?

Who needs someone to invite them in?

## 7. Be an Encourager

Leetha constantly built people up.

She believed in people.

She celebrated people.

She reminded people of God's calling on their lives.

She was known for "gassing people up" and helping them see what God saw in them.

Like Barnabas, she used her words to strengthen others.

### Key Thought:

People often need encouragement more than criticism.

The authority God gives us is for:

- **building up**
- **strengthening**
- **restoring**

Not tearing down.

## 8. Enjoy Your Marriage

### Proverbs 5

"Rejoice in the wife of your youth."

Leetha and Stu modeled a joyful, life-giving marriage.

Their marriage was marked by:

- **friendship**
- **affection**
- **laughter**
- **intentionality**

Pastor Preston challenged married couples not to simply maintain their marriage but to fight for it.

### Fight For:

- **connection**
- **friendship**
- **affection**
- **laughter**
- **unity**

### Key Thought:

Don't merely stay married. Stay in love.

## 9. Embrace Your Identity as God's Child

Leetha understood sonship and daughtership.

She knew she belonged to God.

She related to Him as:

- **Father**
- **Protector**
- **Provider**
- **Friend**

She knew she was loved by her Heavenly Father.

Jesus came to restore our relationship with the Father.

### Key Thought:

When you know whose you are, you can face anything.

### Reflection:

Do I truly see God as my Father?

Or do I only relate to Him as a distant authority figure?

## Stuart's Testimony: Keep Worshiping

After Leetha passed away, Stu found himself overwhelmed with grief and shock.

In that moment, he chose to do what Leetha had taught him:

Pull Jesus in.

He asked God:

- **What do You want me to know?**
- **What do You want me to do?**

God answered with one word:

Revival.

And then another instruction:

Keep worshiping Me.

Even in unimaginable loss, God remained on the throne.

## Final Challenge

Life will continually try to pull Jesus off the throne of your heart.

Pain.

Disappointment.

Loss.

Fear.

Distraction.

Every day we are faced with a choice:

### Who will sit on the throne of my life?

Will it be:

- **fear?**
- **grief?**
- **comfort?**
- **success?**
- **control?**

Or will it be Jesus?

Pastor Preston challenged us to take an honest look at our hearts:

Where is Jesus right now in your life?

## **Key Thought:**

The goal of the Christian life is not simply surviving hardship—it's keeping Jesus on the throne through it.

## **The Invitation**

Let's become a church that:

- **Lives fully**
- **Loves deeply**
- **Welcomes outsiders**
- **Encourages freely**
- **Walks transparently**
- **Worships faithfully**

Just like Leetha did.

Let's be a congregation that pulls people from the outside in so they can experience the love of Jesus for themselves.

And most importantly:

Choose this day whom you will serve.

Choose this day whom you will worship.

No matter what season comes, may Jesus remain on the throne of our hearts.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. **Which of the nine lessons from Leetha's life resonates most with you right now, and why?**
2. **What does it practically look like to "stir yourself up in the Lord" during difficult seasons?**
3. **How has God used a trial in your life to teach, mature, or strengthen you?**
4. **Is there an area where you need to be more transparent with God or with trusted believers?**
5. **What is one practical way you can honor Leetha's legacy this week by loving, encouraging, or welcoming someone who may feel overlooked or forgotten?**
- 6.