

## THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

SERIES: REACH | WEEK 1 | 1.24.2021

Good morning,  
thank you for being here

Good morning, thank you for being here. Those of you who are jumping online joining us, welcome. I was thinking this week what would be a lot of fun is if all those of you online if I could have you on camera so we can just have all those little tiles on the screen behind us of where all of you are at right now. Some of you are sitting having some scrambled eggs, some of you laying in bed watching it on your little rectangle whatever it may be, but we just wish we could look at you and see you and say hello to you, so we're reaching out doing that. In fact, everyone in this room, let's say hello to the people online real quick. Good morning! [HE LAUGHS; WEAK AUDIENCE RESPONSE] They're not real alive yet, I guess, that was sort of flat. So anyhow, so good to see each of you here this morning. I don't know about you, I'm happy. Are you happy? [ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE HEARD OFF TO HIS LEFT; HE TURNS & LOOKS AT THEM] Man! I love this group over here, young adults taking up what – five rows today? You all rock! It's the best. Anyhow, so hey, good morning.

I'm excited about something this week I wanted to tell you about. Earlier this week we had, as a church, had the opportunity to pay off the mortgage on this church, and Calvary for the first time ever [APPLAUSE, CHEERING] is debt free. That's just a big deal. You know, I think debt's a great slave, a horrible master, and so it allowed what you see and for us to be meeting here for lots and lots of years and neat things to happen here as a result of that, but now that has freed up money to just go straight towards ministry. So as you are giving this morning, that QR code's coming up on the screen, the boxes are out in the lobby, you can jump on [cfdowntown.com/give](http://cfdowntown.com/give) and give—just know that Calvary is just pushing ahead like crazy despite what all is going on in the world and any slow down or whatever, speed up, that we have going on, we are just focused in on doing ministry.



And even ministry taking place all over this building right now. At the end I want to share with you our own who is going into missions. So we're excited, cool things are happening here, and thank you for being involved. We were here Wednesday night, this place was just throbbing with excitement, and the women had just an awesome experience here Wednesday night, and our students—God is moving here and blessing. So we're excited. Thank you for being part of what God's doing at Calvary.

By the way, if it's your first time here, whether it's in this room or online, welcome. There is a little card in the seat in front of you—if you scan that with your phone it'll just take you to the website and let us know that you're here, or see us over at the blue wall afterwards. Those of you online you're better off than the people in this room, you actually have a pastor that's hosting you this morning and they'll say hello to you and boy, we would love for you to say hello to them and just shout out your name or where you're watching from today. So, we're excited we can be together as a church, whether you're all over the world or whether you're in this room or whether you're watching us a year from now, God bless you. It's so fun to be a part of this.

I was thinking this week that all of us are pursuing a whole bunch of different things. And whether it's a career or whether it's a financial goal or whether it's an educational endeavor that we're on, or whether it's just the day to day busyness of life, or whether it's raising a family, we have that pursuit. You add to that what we come here to talk about this morning, following Jesus Christ, and there would be the possibility and maybe even the probability in many of our lives that that's two separate tracks going very separate apart from each other, so now you've arrived here to focus in on that one area. And what I'm going to suggest today is that that doesn't have to be.

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In fact, I would encourage us to begin to think differently about our pursuits. That as we pursue Jesus, as we follow Jesus, we don't do that on a separate track but that we bring it together with every pursuit in our lives, and what that would do if we would allow that to happen, it would allow us to reach beyond this room with Jesus. We would be able to reach beyond this building and into every aspect of our lives following Jesus would become part of our educational pursuit; following Jesus would become part of our career; following Jesus would become part of our family experience. And so over the next few weeks that's what

we're going to be doing in this new series, taken again and continuing in the book of Matthew. This new series called REACH, the idea of reaching beyond just this crowd and this excitement that we have in this room where we're all pumped up, to take it and reach beyond by following Jesus in every aspect of our lives.

A number of years ago I read this book, it was a business book, and I don't know, you've had books like this where, I don't know, I just connected with the author. Everything he wrote I'm like, "Yeah, that was good!" I read the book, like, so fast it was insane and I don't consider myself a speed reader, and by the time I hit the last chapter I was like, "Uh, this thing's over already?" I just wanted to keep on going and going and going and it didn't. Most books are not like that; most books by the third chapter I'm like, "You're saying the same thing again." I guess you gotta fill out eight more chapters so you can call it a book and it just drives me crazy. Well, anyhow, after I read this book and I liked it so much I saw that he had a social media presence so I clicked LIKE on all of his social media channels and started getting fed all of that kind of stuff.

And one day I was in here and someone came up to me and said, "Hey, I see you follow so-and-so." And I was sort of shocked, I'm not the most social media savvy, but evidently the way social media works is it sends you a note that says, "Hey, Pastor Lee's following this person, you ought to follow him, too." And when I saw that I went, "UH!" This isn't a guy that, I mean, like, there's nothing immoral or ungodly or anything like that, but this isn't a Christian person and his thoughts and philosophies are not thoughts and philosophies that I would necessarily line up with this Book [LIFTS HIS BIBLE], um, there were some good business thoughts but I really didn't want anyone to hear that Lee's following this guy. I didn't see it that way. So that day when I went home I pressed the LIKE button again which I guess unfollows the person and then I officially was no longer following him. But isn't that fascinating, I go from LIKE, I'm following this guy, to [SNAPS HIS FINGERS] that fast; someone makes a comment and like I'm out.

And I think about it in regards to what we want to talk about here today is that so often in our lives that's exactly how we are with Jesus. We can follow Jesus, come in here today, we're all shouting and we're clapping and we're singing out songs, we're lifting up hands, and then we walk into an environment where someone says something, someone makes a comment, or something happens and we back up, we pull out. We're in a family setting and all of a sudden we go, "Oop, I'm not going to talk about Jesus in this setting." We're going to work and we're like, "Uhh, I don't think this ought to be the place." And we unfollow in a moment's time. And I think to myself, how is it—I get it, some guy that wrote a book that I thought was pretty cool, I unfollow – who cares?—but when you talk about the God of the universe who has saved us from our sins, who gave us the greatest gift ever given, the sacrifice of His

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life so that our sins could be forgiven, what could cause us to quickly unfollow? And yet it happens all the time.

I want to read to you today from Matthew Chapter 8, verse 18, we're going to see this very thing. When we read the Scripture, we open up our Bibles every week in here, whether you open up your phone or whether you open up a physical Bible, I'm old school, I open up that, one of the things we want to do here is model following Jesus. So whether that's giving our tithes and offerings like we did a little bit ago, whether that's getting out of debt like we've done as a church, we want to lead you in that kind of behavior, we're opening up our Bible to follow Jesus Christ. If you want to follow, if you want to hear what they have to say, sort of like I was reading that guy's book going, "I want more chapters," that's how we ought to be with the Word of God and we're going, "Jesus, I'm following You, I want to hear everything You have to say." So, Matthew Chapter 8, verse 18 says this:

***18 Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side.***

— we talked about that last week. By the way, we've backed up one passage from last week. So you'll remember He was just about ready – because the crowds were pushing in on Him so much – about ready to go over to the other side of the lake, the Sea of Galilee, to a place called Decapolis, the ten cities, a Greek and Roman area where they gave lands to their soldiers as a reward for good service. They're still over on the other side at this point. Verse 19 says:

***19 And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."***

***20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." 21 Another of the disciples***

— so a second person approaches Him —

***said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." 22 And Jesus said to him,***

— there's that word again —

***"Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead."***

**– MATTHEW 8:18-22 (ESV)**

I want to focus in and just go right back to verse 18 there a minute, and he says now when Jesus sees this crowd in front of Him that that crowd was pressing in. I want to talk about that crowd for just a second because as Jesus is there along the sea, more and more people are starting to follow Him, more and more people are interested. Well, you can imagine, you start healing, you start feeding, some of the things that He was saying were absolutely amazing, and people were going home and passing on the word saying, "Guess what I just heard." "Guess what I just heard Jesus say." "You've gotta come and find out about this Jesus. You gotta hear Him speak." "I saw Him heal someone." "Oh, are you serious? I need to get down there. I need to get a little bit of that." And so the crowds are pressing in on Jesus.

Now these crowds aren't necessary believers. In fact, I would say that they're not. These are the curious; these are people whose attention has been piqued. Someone's come and told them and they're showing up and they're



***Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him...***  
**Matthew 8:18**

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going, "Wow, this is amazing." It's easy to draw a crowd, and just because you have a crowd doesn't mean anything about the nature of that crowd. I mean, we can fill up rooms like a room like this. I don't know why you're here, I don't know who invited you, I don't know, it might be one of those situations where you're just in here checking Jesus out. And I want to say this to all of us in this room today: To ask questions, to be curious, to check out Jesus is something that I think Jesus invites. Jesus wants to introduce Himself to you. Jesus wants to make Himself known to you. It's why Jesus steps out of Heaven and comes to this earth and becomes one of us to make Himself known to us—so that we can see Him, so that we can get to know Him, so that we can ask questions of Him.

If you ever find yourself in a church situation where they don't allow you to ask questions, where you were just told here's what you believe and here's how you're supposed to believe and here's who you're supposed to talk to and how you're supposed to talk to them and here's what you're not allowed to do—be very aware, be very careful because normally that's a gateway to a false teaching. You see, the Word of God, the message of Jesus, the Good News of Jesus – the Gospel – is open to questions. It's open to scrutiny. I'd just encourage asking those questions.



I was excited, this week one of our students in one of these series that they're teaching, they're actually poking on some of these things. Some of these questions that come up that are hard to answer and a lot of false teachers out there saying some really goofy things, and they're just opening up and having conversations about it in our Student Ministry. I love that about our Student Ministry – not afraid to ask those hard questions. And Jesus is very open to them asking those hard questions.

So, in the midst of that time when these people are coming up around Him, a curious crowd of people that don't believe, we understand that a scribe shows up, and I like this guy and I'll tell you why in a second, and when he shows up he says this to Jesus, he says, "***I will follow you wherever you go.***" And you could just sort of hear this moment where he shouts that out to Jesus, the crowd for ever so short of a second goes quiet, and you almost expect to hear [HE STARTS CLAPPING], "Yeah! Way to go! Yes! Another one for God! Another one believing Jesus." This guy, here's what I like about this guy, he goes, "I will follow you and I will go wherever you want me to go." Here's what I picture with this guy: I picture this sold-out guy who's like all in, all about Jesus saying, "Let's go! Let's take that hill! Let's roll! Let's do it now! Jesus, I'm your man, count me in." And I like that, it's just sort of the kind of response I have when I become convinced of something.

Now let's talk about this guy for a second. He was a scribe. He was a religious guy. Wait a minute, you say, you just said that he was one of the people in the crowd and he was a religious guy. **Understand that just because someone's a religious guy and just because someone's a studied person doesn't mean that they're a Christ follower. Remember that.** A lot of people have been messed up by "religion" in their life, been discouraged by religion and somehow connect that with Jesus. Here's a guy up until this point is not connected with Jesus but he is a scribe, he's a religious figure, he's a religious student. And in this moment he gets caught up with everything going on around him, the energy and the electricity in the room and he goes, "I want that! I'm in!" And we're supposed to shout out and scream, "Yes! Another one for the Kingdom." And Jesus' response is fascinating. Let me read it to you, verse 20:

***<sup>20</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."***

– MATTHEW 8:20 (ESV)

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This is what I believe Jesus says to him, "You want to follow Me—I'm homeless." Like, we're not going to be staying at the Holiday Inn. We're not staying at the Hilton. We're not even staying in some shelter somewhere. I don't have a place to lay my head. I don't have a place to sleep. Are you still in? Are you still following Me? You see, there's a lot of things that we can be told that say, "Yes, I want to go along." You know, when Jesus is healing and He's feeding and He's saying all these great things, there's this energy that says *I want to go along*. And then the air is let out of the room we say, well, maybe we'll be homeless. Maybe this is going to cost you something. Maybe this is going to get really hard; maybe it's going to get really tough. Are you sure you trust in Me? Are you sure you believe in Me? Do you believe in Me enough—here's what Jesus would say—they hated Me so they're going to hate you. "Oh, I don't know if I want that." So Jesus wants them to know what the realities of following Him are, because what Jesus doesn't want to have happen is that they just [SNAPS HIS FINGERS] BOOM! flip the switch, pull out, and walk away.

Back before COVID one of the favorite things that I had to do was go to Costco and it was not to go shopping, it was to get snacks at all these little booths throughout the place. I still go, but I've sort of lost my excitement, it's just out memorized habit that I go back now. They still have the food things but they don't serve food, it's just like the little plastic stuff. Back in the day you'd walk up and talk to every one of these girls that was handing out food. Now, you just ignore them. Amazing how quick we can switch. Right? By the way, I think that's what Jesus knows, how quick we can switch. How quick we can walk away. How quick we can move from being a follower. How quick we can move from being committed.

So this one day, probably a little over a year ago, I walked into this one Costco and I saw a commotion over by one of these booths where this lady was selling, and there were lots of people standing out there listening to her. And I was fascinated but I pretty soon saw why everyone was listening to her. She was selling this, I don't know what it was, like some sort of container to put leftovers in and, you know, all these fancy ways the lid opened and how you could store food in it and all this kind of stuff. Pretty boring stuff, quite truthfully, but I don't know what the deal was with this lady but she was able to get our attention. And before I knew it we were all just standing there and I'm serious, like, 30-40 other people standing there, jaw on the ground, just connecting with this lady. I, honestly, I do not know what she had to say. I mean, I go in there for snacks, not for leftover dishes... unless she was going to give me a leftover dish to go collect snacks in so I could even take some home, but that never happened.

So all of a sudden I noticed, like, she's like pushing, pushing, pushing, but she's not just good enough to tell you about it, she's grabbing off of this pallet behind her handing boxes to people going, "You want one? You want one?" People are like, "Yeah." "Yes." "Yes." They'd put it in their cart and they'd go



FIGURE 1.

away and more people would gather. And there was something about a crowd gathering that just built this energy and this woman had this incredible charismatic ability to sell and she was just selling these things out.

So I go to the next station shortly thereafter and they had this big huge cake there and she's cutting pieces of cake and giving it to people, you know, pieces of cake about this big [FIGURE 1], but I go up and I use my sales capabilities to get a piece of cake this big [FIGURE 2].

And I wasn't going to be satisfied with just a piece of cake this big [FIGURE 2], I wanted a couple times that. So I stood there and entertained her for a while and she was like, "Would you like another one?" "Yes, I'll take another one."



FIGURE 2.

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Entertained her a little bit longer and ate another one—and this is all true, my wife will tell you, and she's being a witness for that upfront right now.

Anyhow, all that to say is as we're talking I said to her, I said, "Man, what's up with that lady down there? That lady can sell! I mean, you've got sugar here and people aren't buying cakes like that lady is selling containers." And she looks at me and she says, "Oh, she's the biggest problem in the store today." I said, "What do you mean?" "Oh, all the big bosses are mad because everyone wants to buy her stuff but as soon as they get it in their cart they're asking themselves, "Why'd I take this? I don't want this. What were we gonna do with this anyhow?" And she said, "They'll just quietly take it out of their cart and put it on a shelf." And she said, "They actually have people today going throughout the whole store collecting all those things, putting them on palettes and then taking them back to her, and it just keeps on recycling through the place." Fascinating how quick you can go from someone who has bought something to someone saying, "Yeah, no thank you."

And I think that's what Jesus is trying to do here. He says I want you to follow Me. I want this to be a passion of your life. I don't want this just to be when we get in here and David gets us focused and pumped up. I don't want this to just be a sales job from the pastor where you're pumped but when you get out in the parking lot, "Yeah, I don't wanna live this." Jesus wants us to follow Him in the car on our way home today. Jesus wants us to follow Him at the dinner table today. Jesus wants us to follow Him when we get to work tomorrow morning. Jesus wants us to follow Him when we're sitting at the barber shop tomorrow afternoon. Jesus wants us to follow Him in every aspect of our life, and does not want those things to be separated. But Jesus knows hard times are coming and in that moment you're going to have to be fully convinced that He is God. It's one thing to follow Him when things are going good; it's another thing to follow Him when things are hard.

So let me try to, I'm gonna use this phrase here: Are you following Jesus? Remember, ultimately Jesus went to the cross, so ultimately when we follow Him we're going to go with Him into hard times—or—are we asking Jesus to follow us? *Jesus, follow me because I like the whole vending machine program. Feed me, pump me up, inspire me, heal me, fix me, fix my marriage, fix my life, solve my problems at work. Jesus, You can follow me anywhere You wanna go.* That's the following issue that we're struggling with here. When we follow Jesus and that's going to lead to a cross and things are going to get hard, we need to know that our faith is solid before we get to that point.

Let me tell you another story quickly. Um, when my kids were young they put their trust in Jesus. That was our prayer from the moment we found out we were pregnant to the moment they put their trust in Jesus, "Jesus, I want my kids to know You as their Savior." And I talked to someone in this room just this morning first thing and he said, "I could care less what else happens in my life, I just wish my adult kids would put their trust in Jesus." I think if you have family members you know that feeling, is I want my kid to come to know Jesus. We were blessed; our kids put their trust in Jesus at a very young age.



Well, growing up in a pastor's family they see daddy do baptisms a lot, so they were always asking, "Can we get baptized?" Well, when they're like that tall [HE DEMONSTRATES], you're like no, no, no, no. We want this to be a decision that you make and we want you to understand the ramifications of that decision, so we were always trying to hold it off. Now, I gotta tell you, you know, when you grow up in a pastor's family you play baptism. So when we were in a public pool in those days, "Dad, can we do baptism services in here?" So I'd dunk them and bring them out. "Oh, that was fun! Again!"

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Again!" I'd dunk them and bring them out. "My turn, Dad!" Dunk 'em and bring 'em out. They've been baptized hundreds of times by the time the day came that they finally got truly baptized. "Mom, why can't I get baptized? Why can't I get baptized?" Because there's going to come a day in your life where it's going to get hard; following Jesus is going to get very real and you're going to need to depend on Him. We want you to know that you know that you know that you've put your trust in Him.

Now, by the way, as an adult I believe that one of your first steps of obedience in following Jesus Christ is to get baptized, I don't want to mislead you on this. So if you've never been baptized and you've put your trust in Jesus, you want to get out there and declare it right away. But when you have a young kid they don't necessarily get it, and so they're just doing it because everyone else is doing it, because it's cool. And then one night, it was a Saturday night because we had Saturday night services in that church, all of a sudden I'm in the tank and all of a sudden I see my kids coming forward. It was on that night they knew that the reason we were holding off, we knew there was going to come a day when they'd be made fun of for their faith, when they were going to be laughed at for their faith, when some hard things were going to come and they question: Is God real?

And I believe what Jesus is trying to lay out for us here in this passage that's He wants us to hear is that you say you're going to follow Me but things are going to get hard, are you okay with that? Are you truly willing to follow Me, or do you only want the good stuff? That was the scribe that He was talking to. A religious guy who's a little bit over-confident going, "I'll follow You," and Jesus is saying, "Are you sure you want to follow Me? Count the cost upfront." You need to count that cost because when you start stepping out, you see, we're going to step outside the crowd here. In this REACH series one of our goals for us as a church is that we step outside of the crowd, that we step into the mainline aspects of our everyday and follow Jesus in that area, that we take Jesus verbally into those areas.

So the next person that shows up, the text tells us is a disciple and here's what happens.

<sup>21</sup> *Another of the disciples said to him,*

— so we're talking about just a follower, someone that just showed up in that crowd, but you're getting a little bit closer to Jesus —

*"Lord, let me first go and bury my father."*

— and Jesus looks at this person and says:

<sup>22</sup> *And Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead."*

— MATTHEW 8:21-22 (ESV)

Now let's address the tension in this. In our western world the thought process of this guy saying to Jesus, "Hey, um, Jesus, I want to follow You, but I gotta go bury my father first," our first reaction especially after reading it in the English text is *Let him go bury his dad. What are You so uptight about?* And Jesus looks at him and says, "Let the dead bury their own dead. Follow Me." We don't understand that.

Here's what's really going on here. In the Jewish world by their tradition, they buried by sundown that day. So a person dies today, they will be buried before the sun goes down today. We know this story is taking place in the afternoon, possibly, probably at this point, in the latter part of the afternoon. If this guy's dad is dying, what's he doing there? And he'll be buried in an hour or two if it's that late in the afternoon. What's the point of throwing out a condition on this? I'll follow You, but I gotta go bury dad first.

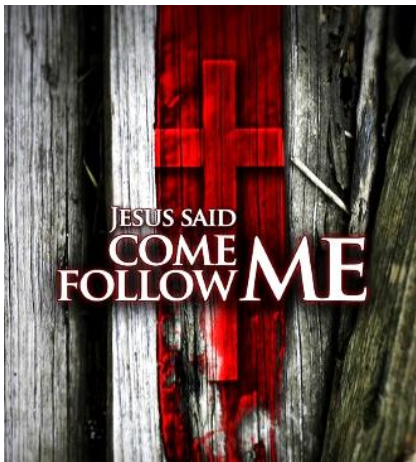
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The fact of the matter is what this guy was really saying was, "Hey, listen, I work for my dad in his business and we have business to do, we're going to go about all that business. Some day my dad's gonna die, at that point I'll wind down the business, I'll work on the inheritance; once I get that inheritance then I'll come serve You." Here's my condition: Jesus, I will serve You when \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus, I will serve you if \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus, there's coming a time when I'll be able to serve You. And a whole lot of us in this room relate with that. "Jesus, I will give my tithe to you at a given point when \_\_\_\_\_." "Lord Jesus, I will serve You... well, when COVID's over, right now is not a good time." "God, I'm going to speak up boldly for You, but at this point in my career that would be a huge risk." And we put conditions on Jesus.

And what He says here is let the dead bury their own dead—you're going to have to set into your life that there are certain things more important than the priorities of which there's nothing wrong with. They're the things we started out with—family, a job, the day to day stuff of life, and the kids—nothing wrong with all those things, but you're going to have to line up with that priority in the midst of that following Jesus. And that's what Jesus is saying to these people here. It's going to be all about Me. You're going to need to follow Me all the way to the cross.

So as Jesus says follow Me, no conditions, I want to suggest some of the hardest places to follow Jesus because this is why the conditions sort of gets real for us, because I don't want to put down the conditions as being something that's for someone that's just out there in their faith and they're not really walking yet. I think most of us understand these conditions. In corporate America today there are scenarios in which we're not allowed to address spiritual things, even if we're asked. There was a time



where, if someone asked you, you could bring up a spiritual thing, you could bring up your faith. Today this could be the very thing that ends up giving you the loss of your job. What do you do about that? How do you, you know, we're wanting to reach out beyond this room, we're wanting to take Jesus beyond this room, we're wanting to follow Him in every aspect of our life, how do you do that when it is very clear you're not allowed to?

You're in education and assigned a paper that you have to write. You're down to the last portion of your schooling and you know what the answer is and you know what you believe, you know what your worldview is based on this Book, so you begin to write it and you realize, *Yeah, I'm not going to be allowed to say that.* Do you write something different? But anyway, I'm saying right now that this is a tension that we all face. It's this condition of *I can't do it*

*here, but I'll do it [over] here.* [SHAKES HIS HEAD] *Shoot. I can't do it here.* You go to a family dinner and that one aunt, *I know it's going to turn her off. I know it's going to set her on edge. I know it's gonna start a fight. It's not worth it,* [PAUSES] *can't follow Jesus there.* Where does this begin and end?

And it is the struggle that so many of us in this room have. Maybe not in every one of those areas; maybe you've got a couple of those areas figured out, but most of us have an area like that where it's like *Jesus, I have to do this first. It's just not worth it. I just can't lose a job, we've gotta pay the bills. I can't risk writing that paper like that. I can't risk speaking that up. I can't risk bringing You into the conversation on Thanksgiving dinner.* Even as simple as just praying a prayer of thanksgiving, it's not worth the risk. The tension is not worth it.



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By the way, it's one of the reasons why I really encourage us in order to follow Jesus we need each other. That's why the Scripture is so clear, do not neglect the assembling together. Can you read your Bible alone? Can you pray alone? Can you worship alone? Absolutely. But we really need each other, just to lift each other up and strengthen each other. That's why I'm always talking about our groups. Go on to our website, go under Community and find a group to be a part of because these are conversations that we need to open up. We need to start saying, "Well, how'd you do it?" I entered the church this week, high up positions, I have my Bible on my desk and I start out my day by reading it. Not all of you can do that. Some of you are not comfortable having it laying there all day. Some of you say what that message would send would put me in a bad spot. How do we deal with that?

Here's what I'm going to ask you: Wrestle with this. Remember where we started out—in the crowd. Jesus wants you to follow Him, but He wants you to know what the realities are. And I think as we enter in as a church into the realities of how are we going to follow Jesus together, I think we need to open up this conversation and we need to be honest. And my goal is not to guilt you and you go, "Are you kidding me?" You can't bring Jesus up at work. Are you serious? Come on, you can do better. I know that that's oftentimes our response. I'd rather say no, let's enter into a conversation. I want to follow Jesus in this area of my life, but finances are keeping me from it because if I do that, then it's going to change how I have to handle finances. And I get that what I'm doing isn't right, but I don't know how to do otherwise. That's why we have each other, that's why we have His Word, that's why we work together so that we can continue to figure out how can I take the next step to following Jesus?

And that's what we're going to be asking you to do over the weeks and months ahead. If you believe in Jesus, you want to shout it out. The things that I like a lot I have zero problem writing a review on. I have zero problem pressing five stars on. You know when I get ticked? I go to the car dealership to have my car worked on and when I'm done after they have just extracted insane amounts of money out of me for probably something that I didn't need in the first place, they go, "Was everything good here today?" "Yes." "Okay, you'll be receiving a survey here momentarily and we really need all five stars. Can you give five stars on that survey?" I'm going, "Are you kidding me?" I don't like that pressure. And it causes me to go, "NO!" I don't want you to be under the pressure of having to do something in your following Jesus; I want it to be an overflow and a gushing out and an expression of your heart that just automatically has you trying to figure out how to take that next step. And we just want to do that together for the next few weeks.

I want to illustrate this with one last thing and I'd like to introduce it with a couple that you know. Pastor Mike Edelman came to us back in September and said he felt God leading him to something else, something more. And when that happened he didn't know where he was going; I think the rest of us knew where he was going. Well, ultimately he ended up coming to us going, "God's leading me to just do ministry and training pastors and training ministers in Senegal," which is what he's done for so long. And so all of us are like, "Uh, yeaah." And so God's really moved in him. But what's a little more fascinating and he shared it back in September with us, but I want to repeat it in the Lee version really fast.

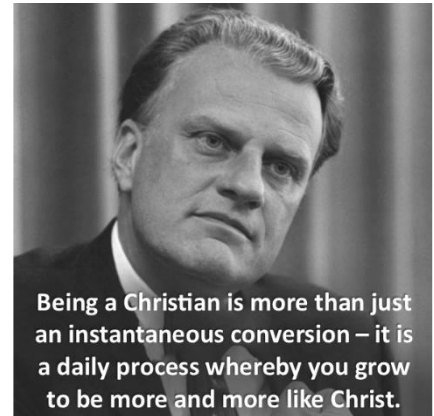
Mike tells of a story how back in—[LOOKS AT MIKE IN THE AUDIENCE] was it in the 1980's?—he arrived here at this – 1989 [LOOKS AT MIKE] see, I was gonna share it. [LAUGHTER] Um, back in 1989 he arrives here at this church like probably many of you did, not knowing Jesus but feeling, yeah, we need to, we probably need to come here. He's coming here for a few months and he doesn't know Jesus, but he likes the church, he's enjoying it and sort of getting into the groove of it all. When he's watching a Billy Graham crusade at home he realizes he's a sinner and he's lost, and that his sin is separating him from God and

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ultimately is going to send him into eternity separated from God in Hell. And in that moment in front of his TV, if I understand right, he put his trust in Jesus.

Fast-forward, he begins to take the next step and the next step. He gets baptized. His kids are starting to grow up and so he says, "I need to serve," and he starts serving in the kids ministry. And he tells me, he says, he was reading the story, they had given him a Bible story to give them, and he said, "I was just like amazed. I was always one Bible story ahead of them. And then as they'd go to the next grade I'd move to the next grade." He goes, "I learned my Bible by going up through that with them." And then pretty soon as he grows up through that he was asked to be a deacon. In that time deacons, they cleaned this building and picked up the parking lot and fixed things and this kind of stuff. After that he was asked to be an elder, and so he started serving in that capacity. And then after that Pastor Carl asked him to be a pastor on this staff—and how many years were you a pastor here? Thirteen. So 13 years he was a pastor on this staff. And then, as I shared with you in the beginning, God lays on his heart to be a missionary.



– BILLY GRAHAM

And again, I hesitate to throw this story out because one of the things that immediately we have a tendency to do is discount it because it's like, "Oh, he's a professional minister, God follower, like, of course he did it right." Mike's Mike, I mean, how do you be like Mike? It's just like Mike and Jill – OH! But what I think he would want you to see and what I want you to see is to just start taking that first step. That first step is showing up.

Those of you who are just here like checking us out today, watching online because you happened to see it, because a friend shared it [HE GESTURES TWO THUMBS UP] – well done! That's what Jesus was doing in that crowd. And some of you have taken that next step and you said, "Yes, I want to put my faith and trust in Jesus alone for my salvation." Awesome! And then when you do that, some of you say, "Wait a minute, there's a place I can serve right now? I can get – I want to learn some stories. That sounds like a no-conflict way to figure out God and figure out the Bible real fast. I like hearing it in child version. Maybe I can figure it out." So you jump into that. And then pretty soon you're helping out with other things, and pretty soon God is leading you down that path. And what we—and not everyone should get to a place of being an elder or a pastor or a missionary—but each one of us needs to be following Jesus. What I love about Mike and Jill, that's what they want to do. You can talk to Pastor Mike, it's like all he wants to talk about. You know, I've tried to talk to him about other things and he's like, you know, it always goes back to Jesus because he wants to follow Jesus; no matter what he's doing he wants to follow Jesus.



And so today, Mike's encouragement to us in this room is what's our next step, and that's what we're going to be helping you with over the bunch of weeks that are ahead. The reason why I wanted to bring up Pastor Mike and Jill into this today is because we want to pray over them. We want to commission them for the work that they're going to be doing as missionaries in Senegal. You know, they're here at the church, they're going to continue being here at the church and we love them. But I've asked them to come up here to the front, we're going to pray over them. I've asked Pastor Carl to come up here to the front. Pastor Carl, I call him the founding pastor of the church, he always corrects me, but he told me just say he's the old pastor of the church. So, yes, where's Pastor Carl? There he comes, Pastor Carl. We love Pastor Carl. Pastor Carl comes here every week. [APPLAUSE] And I've asked

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Pastor Bill to come up here. Pastor Bill has retired but he's been our missions pastor for many years and he's like here every week. And I've asked our other pastors to come up here, and I've asked our elders to come up here, and I've asked Pastor Carl to pray over Pastor Mike and to commission—yes, elders, come on up here, being all shy on me—and we're just gonna lay hands on Pastor Mike right now and Pastor Carl is gonna pray over him right now and just commit him to God as he is going to be training pastors, really all over the world but specifically in Senegal for Jesus. Let's pray with them right now.

[Pastor Carl] All right. Let's pray together.

Father,

I thank You for your work in the life of Jill and Mike here. Lord, I thank You for the way You have just guided and directed them, Lord, and all the life experiences they have now; through lives of the students way back when, their lives as athletes, and then working in the industry, Lord, and coming along and trusting You as Savior, getting involved in church here with the kids and then becoming a deacon and an elder and now a pastor. Lord, I thank You for all these life experiences; take all that they have learned now and use them for your honor and your glory as You launch them out as missionaries with Global Training Network. Lord, may they be used in a powerful way. They've already been in Senegal, it's just an extension of what they're already doing.



Praying over Mike and Jill Edelman



And so we thank You for the blessings they have been here to Calvary. Lord, the blessing they have been to the folks in Senegal. And Lord, You know what's in store for them, and so we trust You, we trust them to You, we ask your blessing upon them; use them in a strong and powerful way. And we ask this all in Jesus' Name. Amen. Amen.

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