

JUDE: The Issue at Stake

JUDE, The Call to Stand

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Bible Text: Jude 3-4

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I want to encourage you this morning to open your Bibles to the book of Jude. If you're a first time guest or visitor with us or by chance were unable to be with us last week, let me help you or at least give you what I think is the best means to find the book of Jude in your Bible. Go all the way back to the end, to the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible and take a hard left for the book of Jude is only 25 verses in length and comprises based on the font of your Bible probably one, maybe two pages immediately before the book of Revelation. As we're turning to the book of Jude, allow me to also make you aware that later in the message today we're going to find ourselves in the gospel of Matthew 7. So, the book of Jude toward the end of your Bible and the gospel of Matthew 7.

As we turn to the book of Jude, one of the things that we are addressing from this at least quantity wise, short book of the Bible but quality wise extremely different, is this concept or idea that in the world that we live in today there is a desperate need for those who are believers in Jesus Christ to take a stand for that which is godly and to stand against that which is ungodly. When we come to the book of Jude, understand that all that we're going to deal with in the context of this passage of the Bible, that you cannot read it and just leave it sitting there on the table. You cannot read these words and simply say, "That is fine. Let's move on." For the requirement of what God is challenging us with today for the book of Jude requires us that we must put actions to that which we believe. It requires us to actually do something in our lives that is an expression of that which we believe internally.

As we come to Jude today, verses 3 and 4, this is kind of the vortex, the centerpiece. This is what the book of Jude really if you boil it down, these two verses are the most critical part of the entire book of the Bible. Over the course of the next weeks, we're going to unpack those as it unfolds into the rest of these 25 verses but in verses 3 and 4 we're going to be challenged today to contend and to stand for the faith. Kind of the title of today is "The Issue at Stake." With all of the struggles, with all of the concerns, with all the things that can and they should bother us, what is the root issue? What is at the hub of the wheel? What is at the core of all those concerns? Today we're going to discover that in the book of Jude verses 3 and 4.

As you turn to the book of Jude for the sake of context, I'm going to go ahead and read verses 1-4. It says,

“1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: 2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

As we begin to unpack this in a few moments, yes, there are going to be some key headings that we're going to focus on but under every one of those headings, kind of some subplots or some subpoints that I want to refer to. Under every one of them, we're going to deal with these two issues: the fundamentals and the futility. Let me share with you what those words mean before we unpack this passage: the term “fundamentals” by definition means “that which is the foundation; that which is the basis.” How many times have you watched a football game or even a basketball game and you get to half-time and they're interviewing the coach whose team is losing and he'll say something of this magnitude, “We just need to get back to the fundamentals. We need to get back to running the ball, catching the ball, throwing the ball. Just the basics of the game.”

We're going to deal with today when it regards our faith in Jesus Christ and in every one of these subsections, we're going to deal with what are the fundamentals. That word is a word that's under attack today. The word “fundamentals” is very different than the word “fundamentalist.” A fundamentalist is somebody who has a certain approach or an attitude that is sometimes, at times, belittling. You can have the fundamentals in your life and not be a fundamentalist. You can have a fundamentalist and not have any fundamentals. So, the word that we're going to use today is the concept, the idea of fundamentals. Then, the futility of what happens if we neglect those fundamentals in our life and in our faith.

What's kind of the first hook that we're going to hang those two words on is this idea that the issue at stake, our faith, is a common issue. Notice what it says in verse 3, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” He makes it very clear that the faith that is at stake, the faith that needs to be stood for and contended for is that which is common and for a lack of better terms, is so simple to understand that over the course of the next few moments, you may feel like that you're in a first or second grade Sunday School class. Let me remind you that in 2 Corinthians 11, the Apostle Paul warned us. He warned us about betraying the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. And even in Jude's day, just a few years removed from the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus there were

those as we will address next week, who have crept in unawares. There are those who have come in and they've tried to belittle the faith, they've tried to betray the faith, they tried to destroy the faith and he says, "That which we contend for, we stand for, it is the common salvation."

Now, we live in a world today that there's all kinds of different titles, there's all kinds of different names and denominations but yet when we use words today, oftentimes, the biblical definitions do not necessarily line up with the culture's terminology. For example: the word today "Christian" can mean so many different things to so many different people. Most people are surprised that the word Christian was not used immediately after the resurrection of Jesus. In fact, in the book of Acts 11, the term "Christian" was first used 18 months after Jesus rose from the dead by the pagans and the heathens to describe those who believed in him because they looked so much like him, hence a Christ-follower or a Christian. When the Apostle Paul who was Saul, when he began to not only to betray so to speak, but when he began to murder the believers of his day, he's on the road to Damascus, he sees the shining light, he describes that he is going to persecute the people of the Way.

So, when we use terminology, oftentimes what they mean means different things to different people and about 100 years ago, what we know as Christianity, particularly in Western civilization, had all of these terms and all of these different groups but there was no consensus. There was no commonality. There was no simplicity. And so a group of people got together in California and they had a Bible conference and out of that Bible conference came a series of lectures, came a series of books that has properly been titled "The Fundamentals." Let me share with you what they shared with all of us that these are the fundamentals. When it says "contend for the faith" there's not a denominational title put on that, there's not a segment placed upon that. What is the faith? A hundred years ago these individuals came together and said, "These are the pillars. These are the aspects or the fundamentals of Christianity." First and foremost: that the Bible is true. Now, I told you this was going to be simple, didn't I? But how many people believe otherwise? That the Bible is true from cover to cover, from Genesis to Revelation. It's inspired; it's preserved; it's good faith and practice that the Bible is true.

Point number 2: that what we know in Scripture as the Trinity is the expression of the godhead, that he is Father, he is Son and he is Holy Spirit. He is Creator, he is Redeemer, he is Communicator. The third point is simply this: that Jesus Christ lived his entire life sinless. Now, folks, you do realize you're in bad shape when you have to reiterate that aspect of the message. The Bible is true, that God expresses himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that Jesus is sinless. Listen to the fourth one: that salvation cannot be earned, it cannot be bought and you can't do something to get it. It is by the grace of Jesus Christ alone and finally, Jesus is coming back.

That sounds like first grade, doesn't it? But the sad part is that you and I live in a world today that even those who would claim the name "Christian," even those who would claim the name of Jesus, the belief in the fundamentals, that which here is said to be contended for, is waning at best. In recent days, there is a Christian statistician, many of

you may have heard his name, George Barna, and he does surveys from coast to coast. He interviews believers, non-believers, different subject matters, this and that. What he did, he went on a path some years ago to survey those who claim to be believers, those who would claim to be a born-again Christian, to discover how many of us are evangelicals. Now, you've heard the term evangelical Christian, right? An evangelical Christian theologically is someone who adheres to the fundamentals. Not one of them, not two of them but all of them. And in the process of communicating, just so there would be no doubt about what was being communicated, George Barna expanded those five fundamentals and just broadened them a little bit. Not adding to but exploring more. For example: added to the fact that Satan is a real living entity that affects our lives. Adding the fact that God is Creator of all that we know in this universe. Adding to the fact that as a believer in Jesus Christ we have been commissioned to share our faith with the world at large. That's nothing new, it's just an expanse of what the fundamentals laid out for us.

You say, "Jeff, why is this so significant?" In his research of thousands of Americans, yes, I said Americans. Not those on other continents, not those on the other side of the world. Thousands of Americans from coast to coast. The number of people who ascribed properly to every one of the "fundamentals": 8%. You know, in our world today we hear these statistics: there's the 1% and then there's the 99%. Maybe our problem isn't the 1 and the 99, maybe it's the 8 and the 92. That there's 8% of this land who understands and believes what the faith is and how it is to be expressed and 92 who do not.

Now, you may be thinking to yourself, "Okay, that's the country at large. What about the church? Irrespectively of denomination?" Well, today I kind of feel like picking on us and since we're technically in a Baptist church, I thought I'd pick on Baptists, those who would claim, at least on the survey, that that's the church they attend or that's their heritage or that's their tradition. Those who claimed a Baptists heritage or a current Baptist affiliation ascribing to every one of those fundamentals. Are you read? We knocked it out of the park at 14%.

Folks, now do you understand why we have a problem? Because just like in the book of Jude, he says, "You know what? I would love to come and encourage you. I would love to come and tell you 19 ways to make your life better but I can't do that because we've got a basic, fundamental belief problem here that has got to be contended for and if we do not stand for that which God's word has laid out, we will fall for anything." Now, here's the futility of abandoning the fundamentals. I know some of you may be thinking it's no big deal. What if you get 8 out of 9? What if you get half? Isn't a "C" for credit and a "D" for diploma? Isn't that good enough? The last time I checked, the Bible says that all Scripture is inspired by God not just the parts that we conveniently like, not the parts that we say, "Well, that won't get me in trouble here or there." Here's the futility of abandoning the fundamentals of our common salvation: here in the book of Jude, these individuals had the ability to look back on thousands of years of history in what we know as the Old Testament, those 39 books from Genesis to Malachi, the testimony of Moses, the testimony of Abraham, the testimony of David and Solomon and Samuel and Elijah and Elisha. Don't forget Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, etc. all the way to Malachi.

And throughout all of the Old Testament, there are 48 specific prophecies about the birth of Jesus, the life of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the Second Coming of Jesus.

Can you imagine having all that history and having all that data and saying, “Well, 47 out of 48 is not bad. That'll pass.” No, understand, Jesus was 100% God, he was 100% man and he 100% fulfilled everything that was said of him. And when it comes to this passage that Jude is saying, “Whoa, whoa. Time out. We've got a major problem here. We are beginning to abandon the fundamentals of the faith that we adhere to.” Listen, it's not a 2,000 year old problem, it's a 21st century problem because we have started to abandon. Here's our problem: we have fallen into this trap of thinking that the latest, the greatest or the coolest must necessarily be the best. And we hear the latest fad or we hear the latest poll that whatever is taken we say, “Well, that's a new way of looking at it. Well, that kind of sounds neat.” The problem is that oftentimes those cool perspectives and those neat mentalities have allowed us to stray from the basics and here he says, “I'd love to get into the minutiae but if there's one thing that we've got to fight for and we've got to stand on, it's the faith and the faith that Jesus Christ was prophesied, he was born, he lived, he died, he rose and he alone is the means of salvation.”

Folks, that's it in a nutshell. That is the common salvation. But it goes even a little deeper because it isn't just about it being common, it's not just about being the faith that was delivered once unto the saints. In fact, I believe verse 3 says that this faith is very critical. He says, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me.” Once again, there is this attitude, this mentality that, “I would love to have conversation A with you but we need to have B. I would love to talk about the flowery things of the faith but we've got to get down to the nuts and the bolts,” and it's almost this idea that this is a critical condition that must be addressed because he's abandoning whatever else he had on his agenda.

Listen to me: the standing and contending for the faith that was once delivered to the saints is a critical concept for our world today. Let me share with you the fundamentals behind this. Whether you understand it or not, hopefully you will in a moment, all of the behavior that you see in the world, good, bad or indifferent, is an extension of somebody's belief system. Let me share with you how this works: what you believe and by the way, everybody believes something, there are those in our world, they call themselves, they pride themselves on being atheists. They say, “We believe nothing.” You do understand that is a belief system. There is nobody with a lack of belief. Everybody believes something even if you believe nothing. We all have beliefs. Every single person walking on planet earth has a belief. Whatever you believe necessarily establishes the convictions that you hold. Now, the convictions are simply this: that which you assume or presume to be true versus false; that which you presume to be proper versus improper; that which is right, that which is wrong. A conviction is a held concept of that which is morally and intricately right and/or wrong.

So, whatever you believe will determine what your convictions are. What your convictions are will determine the decisions that you make. You don't make a random decision based on random data, a decision is based on a conviction you hold which is

based on a belief that you have. So, we have a belief, has a conviction, has a decision and guess what that decision produces? Behavior. Every behavior that we see whether we approve or disapprove is rooted in a belief and I think one of the errors, not just of our society but the church of Jesus Christ at large, is that we try to band-aid the behavior instead of addressing the belief. Let me give you a couple of examples that come forth in our culture one of which I heard of just this week: it happened to a young man in our church, a man in our community. He's in the ninth grade and the reason I tell you he's in the ninth grade is because of the story that I'm about to share with you. He's a freshman in high school and has this individual come up to him at school this week and ask his opinion on something. "What do you think," now this is a person asking somebody, "What do you think if this weekend," this was a young lady, "that my boyfriend and I get together and are intimate together? What do you think about that?" He said, "No. It's not right. You shouldn't do that." I know many of you would applaud and say, "That young man gave some great advice." Let me tell you why that young man gave some great advice: because the behavior that she was asking about is based on the decision to do something versus not do something that's rooted in the conviction that the word of God says "flee fornication" which is rooted in the belief that the Bible is true. This young man had no idea what he was expressing was just a simple extension of what he believes. If we believe that Jesus is Savior, the Bible is true, then we are convicted that what it says is the proper means of behavior and will naturally flow out of our lives. Listen, if the behavior is wrong, maybe the belief is in error as well. But here's the problem, the futility of abandoning the fundamentals when it comes to this.

You see, some years ago we had an event in our country that changed every one of our lives. It is an event that will always go down in history as 9/11. We'll never see the 11th of September the same again. The emotions, everything that is surrounded by that. On that day, the following behavior took place. There were individuals who had hijacked planes and they flew them into buildings for the purpose of killing people and making a statement. That was the behavior. That behavior was rooted in the decision that one's life in their opinion was worth giving for the reward on the other side. That decision was based on the conviction that what they held as their system of belief was true and accurate and if they did these things, they would be doing the proper things and receive the proper reward and that was rooted in the belief that their faith is one of peace and humble accord. Bull. Not a theological word but it's an accurate word because we have become a culture and a society that says, "Oh, no, no, no, no. Don't judge what they did based on their faith." Yes, judge everything everybody does based on their faith. And if the behavior doesn't match with the faith it's supposed to be, then the problem leads to bad behavior or bad belief or both.

Now, let me give you a somewhat frivolous analogy of this to show you how this happens in our society and for the sake of this illustration, please understand that every story or sense of humor like this has to have somebody as the bad end of the stick and you can make this illustration on your own about anybody you want but I'm going to use this illustration about two men who live in LA, it stands for Lower Alabama. You didn't know LA was Lower Alabama? Two guys in Lower Alabama grew up together, life-long friends, have been hanging out their whole life and go to school and end up becoming

farmers. And they're working the fields together and they're hard workers and they're good workers. One day they come in from the fields and there in their probably early to mid 30s and one of them turns to the other one and says, "You know what? I appreciate what we do and I love what we do but I'm tired of what we do. You know, I think it's time I'm going to go and get an education." He says, "What do you mean you're going to get an education?" "That's right, I'm going to Tuscaloosa, I'm going to the University of Alabama and I'm going to get me an education." Now, if you're an Alabama fan you can make this about any school you want. Don't get upset with me.

He said, "I'm going to Tuscaloosa." He says, "Alright fine." So, he takes off to Tuscaloosa, shows up to the Guidance Counselor and says, "Hey, I want to come to school. I want to go to college." The young lady says, "Well, that's great but school is about to start in just a couple of weeks and we needed to do all the paperwork." He says, "I can do it." Well, they get through all the paperwork and finally she says, "Now, young man, what do you want to major in? What is your field of study? What do you want to study?" He said, "I don't have a clue. I just want to go to school. Do you have any suggestions?" She said, "Well, we have a brand new major here at the University of Alabama. It's called deductive reasoning." He said, "Deductive what?" She said, "Deductive reasoning." He said, "Well, how does that work." She said, "Let me give you an example: do you own a weed eater?" He said, "Well, I do own a weeder." She said, "If you own a weed eater, I can deduct that you have a yard." He said, "I do have a yard." "If you have a yard, I can deduct that you have a house. Do you have a house?" He said, "I sure do." "If you have a house and a yard, I bet I can deduct that you have children that run around and play in that yard. Is that true?" He said, "Absolutely." "If you have children, a yard and a house, I can deduct that you have a wife." "Why, I sure do." "And if you have children and a wife, then you are a man." He said, "Wow, you got all that just from the weed eater? Sign me up."

So, he goes back to his buddy. They worked the fields that day and he's about to take off to the University of Alabama and he's sitting on the back porch drinking tea one day and saying his good-byes. He says, "Hey, you never told me, what are you going to study?" He said, "I'm studying deductive reasoning." He said, "What's that, friend." He said, "Let me ask you a question. Have you got a weed eater?" He said, "No." He goes, "Buddy, I hate to tell you but you're a woman." Now, let me unpack that for a moment. When you go share that with somebody, you can make it about any school you want and it's okay.

Number two: you see the futile logic in that story. What we've done as a culture is we've said this and this is why it's so critical. We've said that if you believe what the Bible says and it doesn't match with the latest fad, then you must be an arrogant, old fashioned bigot. That is not necessarily so. You cannot apply those adjectives to those convictions. We've become a culture that says if you subscribe to this system or that system and you believe the Bible is true here and there... and this is the one I love, if you believe that God created everything around you, you must just be flat stupid. Folks, some of the most brilliant people in the world believe that God created them. Your intelligence level is not necessarily equated to your convictions of the word of God that's based on your beliefs. This is why it is so critical because the model in our society today is broken because we

don't go all the way down to beliefs, we stop at behavior and all behavior is based on a decision, all decisions are based on our convictions and our convictions are rooted in our faith.

Yet, folks, only 8% of this culture can claim all of the fundamentals of the faith and I feel much like Jude does here in this verse. I don't want to equate myself to him but it's almost like he said, "You know, I'd love to preach this message but we've got to stand up and fight." He said, "You know, I would love to go this direction but we've got to hunker down and get this settled because if we don't get the belief fixed, folks, we're never going to get the behavior fixed." And we spend billions if not trillions of dollars addressing behavior in this culture but yet we can't talk about beliefs. Because if you talk about beliefs, you might offend somebody. What about my belief that I'm offended if we don't talk about beliefs? How about that one? Just a thought.

Which leads to the last and final point here: the culture that's involved. The issue of culture. You say, "Well, how do you get culture out of this?" Look in verse 4, "For there are certain men," we'll talk about them next week, "crept in." That tells me that there was a group of people doing just fine until a group showed up and said, "Y'all aren't doing it right. We're going to mess up your whole world." Let me share with you the fundamentals of culture. Now, we could give all the fancy academic definitions but a culture, whether it's in your home, whether it's in your community, whether it's in our country, whether it's the entire Western civilization, a culture is a group that finds itself or is in agreement on life values, of morals, concepts and yes, even beliefs.

This is where I want you to turn back to the book of Matthew 7. As you're turning to Matthew 7, we find ourselves on the tail end, the very last part of what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus started in chapter 5 with the Beatitudes, blessed are these and blessed are those. He has convicted us, he's shared with us challenges that you have heard it said, "But I say unto you." When you get to chapter 7, Jesus Christ concludes what we know as the Sermon on the Mount with an illustration that describes the fundamentals of a culture. Beginning in verse 24 of Matthew 7, "Therefore," this is it, this is the end, "whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not," by the way, that's the 92%, "shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Here's what Jesus is saying about culture, the culture of your home, the culture of your company, the culture of our country: he's saying you can only build the house two ways, you can put it upon the rock of Jesus Christ or anything else. But notice in both illustrations, he says, "But do not be marveled for the rain is going to come and the winds are going to blow and when that occurs, whatever you've built your house upon is going

to determine how it withstands the storm.” Let me share with you what has been happening in the culture that we live in. Why we are 8% evangelical and 92% not is that we've taken a house that was built upon the rock of Jesus Christ and said, “I don't like the way that looks. I don't like the way that feels. That offends me and so I want to take that part down and I want to move it over here on the sand because, after all, the sand is on the beach and it's a much better view when you're on the beach.” The problem is, the winds are going to come and the rain is going to come and that which is built on the beach or on the sand will necessarily fall down. And what we've done is systematically and we'll deal more with this next week, we have systematically in our culture, we have taken the faith, we have taken the values, we have taken the convictions, we have taken the ethics that have been here for hundreds of years and said, “You know what? Let's got with the newest, latest, greatest because the beach looks better and it feels better.” But what's going to happen when the rains come, folks? Because Jesus didn't say they might or might not. No, he said although rains will come. We've seen every culture comes and goes, every civilization comes and goes. There's always challenges, there's always tests and that which is built on the shifting sand, what does it say? It will be a great fall.

Let me just share with you the futility of what is happening in our culture today. Just the idea, just the idea. Forget the implementation. The idea that in the state of Oklahoma next to a “monument of the Ten Commandments,” we're going to build a monument of a Satanic god/goddess thing. Now folks, let me be honest with you: when the people came over on the Mayflower, they were diverse. There were some Presbyterians, there were some Methodists, there were some future Baptists. There were all kinds of different opinion but there were not any atheists. I hate to tell you but the idea of doing that is ludicrous at best. That is not a part of the house that was built for so long. That's a house on shifting sand not a rock. The idea that now if we go to see a Christmas play at school we've got to take out certain lyrics because they might offend somebody talking about Jesus, we sang them for 250 years before and nobody got upset. Now all of a sudden, “I don't want to be on the rock. I want to be on the sand.”

Here's the problem: it may sound good, it may make great sound bites and it may make good television coverage but I've got some bad news for anybody who builds their life, their family's life or any influence they have on sand. Here it comes: the wind is going to come and the rain is going to fall and if you build your life on anything other than the faith of Jesus Christ, it is going to cause what he said “a great fall.”

Folks, it may only be 8% of the American population but just because you are in the numerical minority does not mean you are in error or you are wrong because the last time I checked, when Jesus Christ hung on that cross, the number of people at the foot was lower than the number of people that were criticizing. Just because you're in the lesser number does not mean you're not in the right view.

Folks, quit listening to the static that's out there. Quit listening to that. Why? It's time that we start standing and saying, “You know what? It may not be numerically the majority, it may not be the greatest in number, it may not be the latest fad but if it's right, it's right, if

it's wrong, it's wrong and I'm going to stand on whatever it is.” And the question I have is this: have you placed our life, your personal life and your eternity on the only foundation that's going to withstand the coming winds and rain? And that's the foundation of Jesus Christ because, folks, if you listen to what you'll hear in the world today, you've got a world of hurt coming to you when it finally comes. He said if you build upon the Rock, him, that when the rains come, when the wind comes, the house will still stand.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed as we prepare for our time of invitation. Maybe you're here this morning in person, maybe you're part of our tv audience or even our internet audience and you're here whether at home or in this place, whether young or old. Maybe you've realized today that even with you best intentions, even with what you would consider the purest of motives, you've allowed the house of your life to be built on the wrong foundation and you've come this morning and you've realized that no matter what it sounded like or felt like, your house was built wrong and you need the Rock of Jesus Christ in your life.

No matter where you are or what your age, what your background is, let me encourage you in this hour and at this time just to have a conversation with the Lord, technically we would call it praying. You don't have to do it out loud. You don't have to say exactly what I would say but wherever you are in this place or outside of this place, would you just stop right now and say, “Okay, Lord, I get it. My life's been built on the wrong foundation, the wrong principles, the wrong everything. I confess that I'm the one in error, God. I confess I'm the one who has sinned but I believe that Jesus Christ was born for me. I believe that Jesus Christ came and he lived for me. I believe that Jesus Christ went to the cross for me. I believe he rose from the dead so that I could be forgiven, I could be set free and I could be what the Bible calls saved. God, this morning, I don't understand everything that's involved but I do know that I'm the problem and Jesus is the answer and so the best way I know how, I just turn my life over to you.”

With our heads bowed and our eyes still closed, in a moment, Brother Jimmy is going to come and lead us in a time of invitation and just like the words of the song, we're going to stand together. And maybe there's a decision that needs to be made in your life today. Let me encourage you just to step out and step forward and come and talk with somebody and pray with somebody. Or maybe today, the stand that needs to be taken in your life isn't walking down this aisle, it's walking out these aisles when we close in a moment and living differently out there.

Lord, I don't know how you've moved in our lives today I just know you've moved. And I know you've spoken. I know you've touched. I know you've addressed. I know in some areas you've comforted and in others you've convicted. Lord, we stand right now at a crossroads. We could either go forward with you or, God, we can go into retreat. So, Lord, I pray you would remove the excuses. I pray you would remove the fear. I pray, God, you would remove whatever would hinder us from going forward with you this day. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.