

## JUDE: Who's to blame?

*JUDE, The Call to Stand*

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Jude 4

**Preached On:** Sunday, January 19, 2014

### **Greenwell Springs Baptist Church**

19421 Greenwell Springs Road

Greenwell Springs, LA. 70739

**Website:** <http://www.gsbcla.com>

**Online Sermons:** <http://www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers>

I would encourage you this morning to open your Bibles to the book of Jude. Now, if you're a first time guest or visitor with us or by chance haven't had the privilege of being with us for the last couple of weeks, the book of Jude, at least quantity wise is a very small book of the Bible. It only has 25 verses but as we've seen over the last couple of weeks, it is powerful in quality and if you're kind of confused, "Where do I find the book of Jude?" Let me give you the best tip I know: go to the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, hang a hard left. The book of Jude is the book of the Bible before the book of Revelation. Twenty-five, yet very simple profound verses.

As you're turning to the book of Jude, if you're a first time guest or visitor with us, one of the things that we are addressing as we walk through this passage of Scripture is this: that you and I are living in a world and in particular, we are living in a culture that is in crisis. Every day that we wake up and every day that we go to bed, we continue to see a cycle of the same "shame." Every day that we're living it, it just appears that we're sinking deeper and deeper away from the things of God rather than to the person of God. And the book of Jude is powerful for us because it shares this great insight: that in the midst of that which is headed in the wrong direction, we are called in the book of Jude to take a stand. In particular, it calls us to contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

Today, as we come to the book of Jude, verse 4, we're going to deal with a very important topic: who is responsible for the mess this world has gotten into? Who is responsible for the things that are being taught? Who is responsible for the messages that are being sent? Who is it that is behind all of the cultural crisis and chaos that we see? We're not only going to identify those who are responsible, but we're also going to provide the identity of those who are capable of contending or standing against those who are in error.

If you would, turn with me to the book of Jude. We're going to focus on verse 4 today but for the sake of context, I want to read the first four verses. 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 I mentioned, in just a moment we're going to focus primarily on verse 4. We're going to deal with who are these individuals? Who are these men who have crept in unawares? But just kind of as an introduction here, please understand that it says that this process that has occurred in Jude's day which is occurring in our day, is a very slow incremental process much like the famous illustration of the frog being boiled in water. If you have boiling water on the stove, you throw a frog in it, they will immediately jump out but if you put the frog in at room temperature and you incrementally turn it up, eventually the frog will boil to death because the environment is incredibly comfortable to him. Folks, we have become a culture that has become comfortable with the chaos in which we are sitting and what we need to discover today is this: that according to Jude, verse 4, there are certain individuals, there are certain entities that have crept in. Notice what it says about them: they are ungodly; they are turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness. That means they are taking that which was once godly and making it ungodly. They are taking that which once was built on the foundation of God's word and they have decided to build upon another foundation. It's that they have turned that which originally glorified and honored God to that which is despicable to him.

Notice what it says, “they have turned it into lasciviousness.” Now, I know that's one of those big Bible words. Let me tell you what that means: anything goes. We live in a culture today where just when you thought they wouldn't take it another step further, they do. Just when you thought they wouldn't put something more perverse on, they do. We live in a culture of lasciviousness and trust me, we did not get to Miley Cyrus directly from Leave it to Beaver. There were multiple dots in the exchange to get us to where we are today.

Now, the book of Jude does not specifically tell us what was happening. It doesn't tell us the exact doctrinal issue. It doesn't tell us the political issue. It doesn't tell us what was actually happening and I believe that in God's infinite wisdom, he left it vague for this reason: because since Jesus Christ lived, died, rose again and ascended into heaven, for the last 2,000 years there have been believers both small and great who have always struggled with the culture around them going away from the things of God. And so, what we see in Jude is an open invitation. Any time we see as believers the culture creeping in and going against the things of God, we are now given the instructions on how to deal with it. The rest of our series in Jude is going to be one of a “how-to” but today, it's going to be more of an identification and I want to deal with who are the particular personalities. Who are those that have crept into our culture and turned it to one of lasciviousness, turned it away from the things of God to the things that are completely contrary to who he is.

Now, I'm going to go over four classifications today and please understand, we could go through hundreds of different classifications but for the sake of time, I'm going to deal with four. Every one of these classifications is going to have quotation marks around them because I don't want you to see just that specific entity but the influence that that entity has in so many different areas. The second thing I want you to notice is this: we're going to start big and then we're going to get specific. We're going to start with a broad stroke of our culture and eventually we're going to end up in your own very back yard.

So, let's start with what is the first group? It says there are certain people, there are certain men that have crept in, ungodly, that have turned the world into lasciviousness so let's just start with the big broad most obvious. Let's begin with the politicians. How many times have you heard a promise on the campaign trail that got broken once office took place? How many times have men and women crept in, promising to advocate one thing and then legislating something else? You see, we have a culture and we have a society today where what we know as the Washington, DC area, there is over 500 individuals: there is the President, the Vice-President, the Senate, the Congress, the House of Representatives. Everybody there that you and I as a civilized country went to the ballot box and voted for them to be in the office in which they are and yet many of them are in the process of turning this great place which once was a bastion for godliness, turning it into a place of lasciviousness. They are creating laws that are contrary to the things of God; they are ignoring the ones that are an advocate of the things of God; and then sometimes they just flat out do whatever they want.

Do you know what? What's happening is that because of that legislation and because of that political aura, they are turning by way of the laws, they are turning that which used to be godly into a place of lasciviousness. But, folks, it's not just those 500 individuals +, you do realize that those elected officials are the ones who appoint the judges who oversee the cases. They are the ones who appoint leaders and there are literally thousands and thousands and thousands of people who currently, unfortunately, right now have through the electoral process, they have crept in incrementally and they're allowing things to happen to turn our culture away from the things of God.

And it's easy to get upset about this and hopefully you will and you should but I'm one of those individuals - maybe some of you are thinking, "Well Jeff, you sure are griping a lot." I'm griping because I vote. If you vote, you get to gripe. If you don't vote, you have no license to gripe which brings up a point that we, the church, need to really hear. You see, several years ago in this great state, there was a legislative proposition going forth state-wide and the issue at hand was one of morality, it was one of ethics. It was one of those where those who were rooted in the biblical teachings of God's word were taking a stand against this particular legislation and those who weren't did not. So, the battle lines were drawn and there were those individuals in this state and those organizations and groups, they began to go to church to church to church to begin to rally up support because we, the people, needed to stand for our godly heritage and culture and something was discovered that is frightening. Now, this isn't just about our state, I'm sure it's about every state in the Union, that as they went from church to church, they discovered that half of the people who were at church were not even registered to vote. That means that

half of the local church has lost not only its right to gripe, but its right to make an impact and make a difference.

Well, it gets even worse than that because half of the “church” was registered, they then discovered that of the half that were registered, only half of them ever actually voted which tells me if you had 100 individuals who had the potential of making a difference, only 25 of them actually followed through. That tells me that of every 100 votes that we have the possibility of making, we're leaving 75 of them on the table. You say, “Well Jeff, what does that really mean?” Now, when you get into the realm of statistics, you understand there are ample and multiple sources out there so I'm going to use kind of round, vague numbers. The United States of America as of today has roughly about 315-320 million people. That's who we have as a part of our country. According to the voting gurus in statistics and such, there are between about 200-210 million potential registered voters. That means there's nothing keeping them from being one, they just have to become one. That's about 210 million people.

Now, let's break it down even a little more: let's talk about the “evangelical” world. Last week I gave kind of a doctrinal litmus test about what made an evangelical and it was scary how small that number was but let's broaden that today, not just to an evangelical as far as pure doctrine is concerned, but how about those in our land who would claim some type of church allegiance. In other words, maybe they're not there every week, maybe they don't believe everything but they at least understand that the Bible is true and they understand that we should live life according to it and they frequent some church occasionally. You say, “Well, how many of those are there in this country?” Well, the most conservative organizations will say about 40% of Americans who are registered, possible adults will darken the door of a church at some point on a somewhat frequent basis. Those who are not so conservative will say about 20%. Let's hit it right down the fairway today, how about 30%? Let's just say that about 1 in 3 potential registered voters in this country could vote, that are what we would call a church-based individual. They at least have some type of foundation that is Christian/church oriented. Do you realize that if you do the numbers there and that's about 60-65 million people and yet about 40-45 million of them never actually act on the convictions that they supposedly claim to have. Forty-five million.

Now, I don't know about you but I've noticed a trend in the American political landscape lately: the elections are tight. In fact, we don't even talk about states anymore, we talk about counties and parishes and red and blue and white and pink and purple and polka dot and striped or whatever they come up with and we have gotten to such a political science, so to speak, that we understand that it can be a handful of people in a small remote location that can lead to the turning of this culture in this country. And yet we “the people of God,” those of us who would claim the name of Jesus Christ or at a minimum, at least have some type of church allegiance, are sitting on the sidelines and letting the turning happen without any potential of even changing it. Folks, you can't change it unless you become a part of it and get involved. We'll deal with that in just a moment.

That's group 1. Now, let's make it a little more narrow. What's the second group? It says here there are certain people, certain men who have crept in. The second group, I'm going to use quotations once again and I'm going to call this group "the professors." These are the ones who have the opportunity and the privilege to teach somebody in our culture. Now, this could be at the collegiate level or other levels but these are those that are in the "business of instruction."

You know, about a year ago I had the privilege of taking my oldest son on one of those famous middle school Washington, DC trips. It's the one where you all get in a bus and you head up there in the middle of the night and they take you from place to place, from memorial to memorial and it's an absolute fabulous trip. And as we're going to and fro, understandably, he wanted to be with his friends and they were having a good time and, you know, I'm just kind of there just sitting on the bus, me and God just hanging out. As we began to drive around, I began to think about some of these issues because I realized something that day: nobody who serves in Washington, DC actually lives there. They're from other states; they're from other entities. In other words, the mess that we have was imported. It's not being exported, it's imported and so I said, "Okay Lord, I know I'm not a genius and I'm not the brightest bulb in the chandelier but as I'm walking around, would you help me to see where all this mess is coming from?" Lo and behold that day, everywhere I turned there was a brand new college graduate. Robe on, hat, taking pictures.

Everybody was so proud and I realized there are 4,500 institutions of higher learning in this country that are importing their beliefs and philosophies that ultimately become the officials that we elect and the problem is that young people all across this land, go in with this bright and brilliant idea that they're going to be world-changers. The problem is, how are they going to change this world? Because according to Jude, verse 4, it says there are certain people who have crept and in creeping in, they have turned that which used to be godly into lasciviousness. Folks, do the research and do the history. Those of which we know as the Ivy League schools, the ones that did not even think about letting me in, didn't even consider it, originally a great number of them were designed and originated for the purpose of training men to be pastors and preachers and missionaries. And now, they have become the leading advocates of turning our society unto lasciviousness.

Folks, I have been there and listen, I'm not anti-education. I went to college 13 years. I was a fan of it. Now, I did get multiple degrees, please, I want to make that very clear. I've heard of fifth year seniors, I was not a 13 year senior, I just want to make that clear. But I've been in the classroom. I've been there where a professor would just drop the seed of doubt. Did it really happen that way? Did it really occur that way? Were we really founded that way? Is that really what it means?

Then we could even get into what we call the biblical theological section. How many times has some person's faith been challenged because some professor said, "Well, did Matthew really write Matthew? Did Moses really write the first five books of the Bible? Is the Bible really inspired and inerrant?" And those seeds of doubt get watered. They watered by the culture. They get watered by society. And then we are shocked when we

discover that what we know as high school seniors, those who are graduating, those who are going on to whatever field or profession, we are shocked to discover that in the society that we live in today, of those seniors that are active, not just at this church but at any church, those seniors are there when the doors are open, they go on the retreats and they go to camps, they are faithful in Bible study, these are the core of the church as far as student ministry and we're shocked to discover that about only one in ten of them are still in church at age 30. You say, "Well, how does that occur?" Well, that wasn't legislated. That was the professors in their life, the instructors in their life, the teachers in their life that started planting those seeds of doubt.

Folks, those who have crept in and have turned this culture, it's the politicians, it's the professors but now we're going to get a little more personal: it's the preachers. Do you realize that we have 4,500 institutions of higher learning in this country. We have over 300,000 churches just in the Southern Baptist Convention which this church is affiliated with. For every college in America, we've got ten churches. Do you realize that numerically we have the advantage? But yet what's happening is the preachers have started to turn. The preachers have started to take that which used to be believed and godly and they have turned it into lasciviousness. They have changed what they believe, what they promote and what they preach. The Apostle Paul was right: he said in the last days they will seek people who itch their ears. You notice it says teachers not preachers. You see, when you teach, and I'm not against teaching, teaching is the opportunity for somebody to engage in the conversation, preaching is the proclamation of truth whether they want to engage or not and the last time I checked, the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9, "Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel."

Folks, we've become of the world. At least in Christendom, at least for the preachers, we've become a world of book writers and tv shows but very few preachers. You know, just this week I saw an episode of one of these young upstart preachers. A young guy, 40 years old, I mean he was young. Forty years of age, young guy, I mean just barely getting going in life, 40 years old. He was being interviewed on a national talk show. He's on this national talk show and this individual who was interviewing him – by the way, he pastors a small little church up in New York City, about 6,000 people. So, we're talking a significant number of people and he's got the look I just can't do, he's got what I call the preacher Harley look. I mean, you've either got the preacher look or you've got the Harley look. He's got them both because he's got that look that he's rough and he's tough but he's real soft and he's gentle. And he's being interviewed and the question asked of him is: where do you and where does your church stand on issues of morality? And this individual started naming certain things about our life in our perverse culture. Where do you stand on this? Where do you stand on that? Listen to what this guy had the audacity to say, this is on national television. He claims to be a pastor of a church of 6,000 people. He says, "Jesus," this is his words, "Jesus never addressed morality so we don't either."

Now folks, he may be a pastor but I question if he's ever read the Bible because in John 8 there is a woman who is caught in adultery – moral issue. She is presented before Jesus, he says, "Those of you who are without sin, cast the first stone" - moral issue. Then he looks down at her and says, "Where are your accusers? Neither do I accuse you. Go and

sin not” - moral issue. That's only one story in the life of Jesus and what's happening, not just in our culture at large but in our culture is this: we have become a by product of that which is influencing us so that we've been the ones influenced rather than the ones doing the influencing.

As many of you know, having three young boys, sports is an active part of our life and one of the things that's been fun as they've grown up is to watch – when I say little kids, understand this is a couple of years ago, now they're big kids or at least they want to be – the little kids playing soccer. Little kids playing soccer. Little League Soccer. It's kind of like ants fighting over chocolate if you're ever seen it. You just throw it out there and they go. It's a lot of fun to watch; it's entertaining. I mean, every now and then it just looks like kind of football, hockey, wrestling but there's a soccer ball somewhere. Some seasons ago, a couple of my kids were on the same team and they played in a league that was six on six. Our team had six, their team had six. The only problem was this: there was an individual on our team who enjoyed the practice of interfering with his own team. When one of our guys would be dribbling the ball, he would just get in the way and take it away from them. When one of our guys would shoot the ball, he'd actually get in the way and block it. We may have had six red jerseys and six black jerseys but we had five on one team and we had seven on the other.

Folks, we've got a lot of people that are standing up in pulpits, we've got a lot of people who are pastors of churches, we've got a lot of people that are writing books under the umbrella of the church, the problem is: when it comes to the word of God and morality, they're actually working against us, not with us. And what's happening here, it's not just DC. It's not just the educational system. It's not just the church and what's happening is that that which used to be godly, that which used to take a stand for the things of God, what does it say here in Jude 4, it says they are turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness where anything goes. The church of Jesus Christ and I use that very loosely in the United States of America, has unfortunately today become a place where truth is not necessarily proclaimed but coolness is ratified at all costs. Folks, we've got a problem and it's creeping in and it's continuing to propagate.

Those are the first three. We started kind of big with the politicians and we came down to the professors and I could go all day and night about the preachers. I've got story after story after story. Well, let's make it even a little bit more personal, let's bring it down in a more intimate circle of life. Are you all ready for this one? You're not going to like it but truth hurts. Are you ready? Here is the fourth entity that is creeping in and turning the faith in our culture in the wrong direction. Are you ready? Parents. You see, the last time I checked, those preachers and pastors we're upset about, they had parents. Those professors and educators that we get so upset with what they're allowing and teaching, they had parents. And those politicians, they had parents.

Now, I understand there are all kinds of demographics: that which is biological, that which is not. When I use the word “parent” I mean someone in an intimate family relationship who is responsible for the nurturing, is responsible for the teaching, is responsible. Listen, just weeks ago there is a famous emeritus professor at Stanford

University, not known for staunch conservatism, who said that still today, the number one most influential entity in a child's life is their parents. Do you realize even the secular world gets this so why can't the church world? Let me remind you, all the way back in the Old Testament there is a passage in the book of Deuteronomy 6. In Deuteronomy 6, it's kind of like John 3 to the church today. You know that story of Jesus and Nicodemus and "for God so loved the world," that famous passage about the exclusivity of Jesus. In Deuteronomy 6, there is this passage in verse 4, they call it the Shema where God gives to the people of Israel, he says, "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one God." You say, "Well, how significant is that?" Because everybody else disbelieved that. Everybody else had multiple gods. Everybody else was pagan, heathen. All kinds of sacrifices and such but the people of Israel were the ones who believed not only in the one true God but the words in which he had communicated to them.

Do you see the parallel? Folks, they stood out, we are to stand out. They were in a culture that had gone awry. We are in a culture that has gone awry. You say, "Why is that so significant?" Because God says, "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one God," and here's what he followed it up with, he said, "Be sure and teach this in your home. When you wake up, teach it. When you're walking around, teach it. When you go to bed, teach it. Put it on the front post of your door, even write it on your clothing." The Lord said, "If you want to be distinct and you want to make a difference in a world that's gone culturally chaotic," the Lord made it real clear, "you start inside your house." And one day your house can impact the church house and your house can impact the school house and your house can impact the White House.

It's easy to get upset about all those houses but, folks, we need to get upset about ours and so the question at hand is not just those who have crept in, there is a secondary issue here that the book of Jude deals with because up in verse 3 he tells us to contend for the faith. So, who are those who are capable of contending? Who are the individuals that actually have the ability to make a difference? First and foremost is this: those who are in the body of Christ. Listen, the Bible makes it very clear in 1 John 4:4, "He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world." We are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus. Zechariah says, "Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit saith the Lord," and the last time I checked, I've read Revelation and in the end, the body of Christ wins.

The reason I bring that up is the individuals, the families, the people that have the God-given natural ability to take a stand and make a difference are those who are in the body of Christ, those who have understood that they were a sinner, they understood that Jesus was Savior and they called on him to save them. These are, we are the ones who are capable of contending. But the problem is, what I see over and over and over again is that those who have been called to contend and to stand, continually duck and hide. I mentioned to you that sports is an active part of our family's life but just yesterday, I found myself at a Little League basketball game and as I was there, the team that we were playing against – when I say "we," my children, I'm just in the stands, trust me. I may be the same height but I don't put on the jersey. As my children were playing, the other team had an absolute fabulous strategy: every time one of our players dribbled the ball, they double-teamed them. Two defenders on one offensive guy. Now, here's the thing about



being double-teamed: if you're being double-teamed, that guarantees that somebody is wide open because they've only got five players in basketball, we've only got five players. If two of theirs are on one of ours, somebody is wide open and the mistake that we see over and over again and what I would call Little League basketball but what I see in Christianity today is I see those who are double-teamed: double-teamed at home, double-teamed at work, double-teamed in a culture, what happens is, what I see often in Little League, is they take the ball, they pick it up and they hide, then all the defenders have got to do is put their arms over them and it's over. There is no place to move. There is no place to go and next thing, they turn over and they get an easy lay-up and you end up losing the game.

Folks, let me share with you what I shared with my boys yesterday, what I shared with them about the game of basketball and what I want you to hear about the game of life is this: when you get double-teamed, don't laugh when I say this based on my stature, it's time to get big. You say, "Get big?" Those of you who don't know much about basketball, when there's two people on you, you take that ball and you put it up as high as you can and start swinging the elbows. Why? Because nobody wants one in the jaw and when you get big, they get back and you can see the guy that's open. But when you get small, all you end up doing is turning the ball over and they score the points.

Folks, the church of Jesus Christ has been small way too long. It's time to get big. You say, "Well, how does that happen?" Three simple things. We'll unpack these over these next few weeks. The first one is this: we've got to identify what's going on. We've got to identify the situations, be informed of the problems. I'm about to say something that sounds very crass but I mean this in love: get your head out of the sand; quit ignoring what's really happening in our world and saying, "Oh, it's just going to pass by." No, it's like a tsunami, it's just going to take it out. Folks listen: what's happening in our society and in our culture and what's transpiring in all the things that I've discussed with you, please understand that we have got to be informed. We've got to identify what is happening and the next thing you've got to do is this: you've got to become involved. You can't duck with the ball and say, "Oh, this will just be fleeting." You've got to get big and say, "I'm going to be willing to get involved."

Do you know what that means? It means taking your pride, your reputation and what may feel comfortable to you and putting it on the line because I'm going to tell you what happens when you get involved: when you get involved, people get mad. And when you get involved, people throw darts. And when you get mad, people will criticize. I've shared this with you, let me share it with you again, I don't think we can ever hear it enough: one of my major professors, I was going through my doctoral program, had a sign on his door, "The quota for wimpy Christians has been filled." It's been filled, folks. When we're involved, guess what happens? We will be criticized. When we are involved, what happens is that people will tell us this and they'll tell us that. The last time I checked, didn't Jesus Christ say, "Marvel not if the world hates you. It hated me first." Did not what we know as the apostles, almost every one of them with the exception of the Apostle John was literally murdered and martyred for their faith.

You know, I had a football coach that used to say, "Blood makes the grass grow," but oftentimes as you study history, it is the blood of the martyrs that has made the church grow. Sometimes that blood is physical. Sometimes it's the blood of a reputation. Sometimes it's the blood of a long-standing relationship. Sometimes it's the blood of a promotion. Sometimes it's the blood of whatever. Maybe there needs to be involvement.

Here's the last thing: there needs to be investment. I don't know if you've learned this about the world or not, but they listen when it comes to money. The Bible makes it very clear that the love of money is the root of all evil. And we live in a world today where when you give or when you hold back your financial resources, it speaks volumes to those who want to benefit from them. It is amazing how all of a sudden people who would never listen to you speak will listen to you when they don't get your dollars. It will speak to people all of a sudden now when they receive your dollars, now all of a sudden they take you seriously. Understand, how we invest and how we spend the resources God has given us, makes a huge difference in what will be turned in this culture. If we continue to monetarily fuel the engine of ungodliness, what do you expect to get? Ungodliness. If you will begin to fuel the engine of godliness, imagine what we could receive.

We talked about the impact, not at just the voting booth, it's not about the impact not just within our home, but let's talk about this impact of investment. You know, there are people out there who are a lot smarter than I am, have done a lot more research but just like we leave about 75% of the votes on the table as an evangelic community, do you realize that according to the statisticians that if you were just to take the simple concept of the tithe in Scripture, just a simple 10% of the whole, that only about 25-30% of that which should be given is. Can you imagine the impact the church of Jesus Christ would have if we had 3-4 times the resources that we do to do the ministry that we do? To make the statements that we do? To take the stands that we do? To be vocal like we do? You say, "Well, how do we get that?" We already got it. The problem is rather than giving it to godly things, we keep spending it on whatever the world is promising us.

Let me tell you what the world is delivering: a turning to lasciviousness. We've got a culture today where almost anything goes. Do you know what the sad part is? We didn't get involved to keep it out and currently we're not investing to put it out. It is time today to take a stand. It is time today. We're not dealing with just real pragmatic practical things but today is the heart question: today is the day as we come and prepare for our invitation, today is the day where we say, "You know what? In my heart and in my mind, today I'm going to declare, I'm going to take a stand and decide to do things different in my life so that I can be a part of the body of Christ who will stop the turning of this culture in our land."

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed as we prepare for our time of invitation. There has been a lot of information, there's been a lot of data, there's been even a lot of emotion that has crept up within all of us but as we prepare for this time of invitation, please understand that everything that has been shared today is for naught if you do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That is what it's all about.

Maybe you're that young man, maybe you're that woman, maybe you're that child who today you realized that you've just gotten caught in the whirlwind of this culture and life and maybe today God has opened the blinds of your heart. Maybe he has showed you today that the only way to break out of the spinning of your life is to admit and confess that you're the problem, that the sin, that your rebellion against God is the problem. Would you be willing to do that today? Would you be willing to say, "You know what? It's time for a change. It's time to remove the ungodliness and go for the godliness."

If you're here this morning, not out loud, not necessarily these words, would you be that one who just has a conversation with the Lord and says, "God, it's my fault. I'm the one who sins but I believe that Jesus Christ loved me enough to come and live for me, to go to the cross for me and to raise from the dead so that my sins could be forgiven and I could be saved. God, I come this morning and I don't know everything but I know this one thing, that Jesus Christ and his blood is the answer to my sin problem. So, I ask you to forgive me and to save me in the best way I know how and I want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, if you're that individual who prayed with me today or maybe at some other time in the past, maybe today is one of those days where you step out, step forward and you take a stand and say, "You know what? It's time to tell people that Jesus is my Savior." Maybe you've already done that? Maybe today you need to step out and step forward and as we saw modeled for us, declare that to the world through what we know as baptism. Maybe today you're here as a single or even as a family and maybe you've realized with all of the chaos of our world, you've finally found a church that's going to take a stand. Maybe this is going to be your church. Step out, step forward, we're here for you.

Or maybe believer, you're that one. You know the situation. You know what you need to be standing for. Maybe you don't need to step out and step forward. Maybe what you need to do is pray as we sing that God would empower you to walk out of here to a changed life and direction.

*Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of invitation, Lord, you have moved and you have stirred us and now it's our privilege to respond. Lord, you've worked through our heart, you've worked through our mind, now would you work through our hands, our feet and our mouth. We yield to you because we understand that the only one who can change a heart and a life is you alone. Lord, as we sing, as we stand together, may we just respond to you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray. Amen.*