

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

April 7, 2013

For Not Even His Brothers Believed in Him

John 7:1-5

Prayer: *Father God, we do thank you, we praise you, and we bless you for of the incredible gift that we are remembering this morning. Father, I thank you for the gift of the cross. I pray that this morning as we open up your word as we spend time meditating on what you've done for us at the cross, that we would have the pleasure and the privilege of your Holy Spirit guiding us, walking us through this, and giving us the ability to take in even more of what it is you've done for us. I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit and again, I pray that you would give us the ability to make this permanent. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as you know, this is the first Sunday of the month, this is the Sunday in which we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated a Passover Supper, and Matthew 26:26-29 describes it. It says this: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave*

it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood and then he asked the disciples to eat the bread and to partake of the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat this remembrance on a regular basis, and this is what we do, we call it "The Lord's Table," we celebrate it here every month, and we do that by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, we do that by examining ourselves, allowing God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, by confessing our sins and then by participating in the elements.

John 6:53 says: So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." Now we've been following the life of Jesus and we've been working our way through the Gospel of John and we're past the sixth chapter of John, just starting on the seventh chapter, and the sixth chapter represents a tipping point in Jesus' public ministry. If you recall, in rapid succession

Jesus goes from being a miracle worker who fed some 20,000 people with five loaves and two fishes, to a miracle walker, somebody who appeared in the middle of the night to his disciples walking on water, to a misunderstood Messiah whose pronouncements provoke outrage and profound confusion. Within the course of only a few days, Jesus went from refusing to be made into a king to asking his disciples in John 6:67: *"Do you also want to go away?"* And Peter's response to that question captures what every believer at some point will wrestle with, and that is the offense of believing in Jesus. And whether it's the spiritual offense of being told that my goodness is just not good enough or whether it's the social offense of living in a broken and fallen world where justice is often delayed or denied, or whether it's the personal offense of trying to live a life that's pleasing to Jesus while you're getting kicked in the teeth. The fact is, there's going to come a time in every single believer's life when that question is going to loom as well. The question is *"Do you want to go away as well?"* In John 6:68, Simon Peter answers: *"Lord, who will we go to? You have the words of eternal life? We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God!"* What Peter is saying there is Jesus, we've got nowhere else to go. There's no other options for us because there is no other options for people of faith. In fact, anyone who has not been given the gift of faith by God himself will eventually find some other option. They will eventually find Jesus

so offensive and find the pressures so great that he or she will walk away. They may still come to church, they may still participate regularly but they have left their heart, they have left their passion, they have left the desire to serve, they have left their first love.

John chapter 6 is about the wholesale rejection of Christ by the multitudes, and you could call it the macro rejection. What we're going to be looking at in John chapter 7 is more a series of micro rejections, and they begin first with Jesus' own family. John 7:1-5 says this: *After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the Jew's Feast of Booths was at hand. So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." For not even his brothers believed in him.*

Well, a couple of quick explanations. First of all, the Feast of Booths, this was a mandatory gathering of the Jews and it was in order to celebrate the time when they lived in the desert and hastily assembled booths, hastily assembled artifices that they just lived in temporarily and this is something that they did after they escaped from Egypt. And so huge numbers of Jews were

assembling in Judea in order to celebrate this feast. Second fact is that Jesus did in fact have four brothers, children of Mary and Joseph that he was born and raised with. In Matthew 13:54 it says this: *And coming to his hometown, he -- that's Jesus -- taught them in their synagogues, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get his wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"*

All right. We know so far that his brothers at this point are non-believers because the scripture makes that clear in verse 5, it says, *For not even his brothers believed in him.* I think what we can't really imagine is how that could have happened. What must it have been like to grow up in a typical family with God as your big brother? I mean, what is it like to brush your teeth every night with God? How in the world does that happen? How do you do your daily chores with God? How do you sit at breakfast, lunch and dinner with the flawless God man Jesus? You know, never once did Jesus ever do anything less than morally perfect. In the games that he played, in the chores that he had to do and the disciplines that he had to endure, Jesus did them all flawlessly. There was one refrain that I can remember hearing and saying all the time as

I was growing up whenever I fought with my brothers and sisters, and it was the phrase, "Oh, I bet you think you're perfect." Have you ever heard that? What must it have been like if that person was perfect? Scripture makes that claim of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 it says: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* Now, apparently that did not matter to Jesus' brothers.

Now, we can't tell from the scripture this morning what level of unbelief his brothers possessed, but their attitude certainly seemed to mirror that of the crowds that Jesus had just dismissed. These were the crowds that now turned on Jesus. The reason for Jesus' fall from grace lay in his insistence on speaking the truth to the crowds that were surrounding him, and to them, he very matter of factly pointed out that their interest in him lay primarily in what they could get from him, that they found him a useful God, they found him useful for food, they found him useful for protection, for healing from diseases and from the potential he had as a political Messiah, but they clearly did not get Jesus at all. And his brothers seem to mirror the attitude of the crowds. They knew that Jesus was clearly extraordinary but they too were only looking for a God who was useful. It says: *So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples may also see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he*

seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." Jesus, you've got skill, you've got talent, why in the world do you want to be shut up in this two-bit town when you can go to Judea and really make a name for yourself. Jesus' own brothers, the members of his own household did not begin to get who he was. We say how could that be? How could they not know who he was? Well, the first thing this points out is the absolute impossibility of coming to know Jesus Christ on your own. You could not know Jesus more intimately than his brothers did. You couldn't have come closer to the perfection that was Jesus than his brothers did, and yet for all practical purposes they were as clueless as anyone else in that crowd.

Jesus responded to a similar lack of faith in John 10. In this case it was unbelieving Jews, and he gave them there the reason for their unbelief. This is what he said in John 10: *And Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."* Jesus answered them, *"I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bare witness about me."* Now, this was just a slightly different flavor of unbelief from the unbelief that Jesus received from his brothers. See, the Jews said *"If you are the Christ, tell us plainly,"* and his own brothers said, *"Leave here*

and go to Judea, that your disciples may also see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." Same non-belief, just different non-believers. Jesus tells them why, why they don't believe in the very next verse. Verse 26 says: "But you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

Now it's very important here not to get the word order wrong. Jesus didn't say "but you're not part of my flock because you don't believe," as if the key to being one of Jesus' sheep is coming up with a requisite amount of faith on your own. No, in fact Jesus said just the opposite. He said, *"But you do not believe because you are not one of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."* You see, Jesus' own brothers were as close as they could possibly be to the Savior and yet they might as well have been a million miles away. They were not at that time part of his flock and they couldn't at that time hear his voice because that ability is supernatural, that ability is a gift from God, and it is given so that God alone will receive the ultimate glory for each and every saint who does come to know him.

Ephesians 1:4 says this, it says: *He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.* You see, God raises up his sheep not for their sake but for his sake. *He has chosen us for adoption as sons so that we might be to the praise of his glorious grace.* And that, folks, is why we are here. That's why we exist. Ten thousand years from now there is not going to be one single trace of anything that you and I did that was not to the praise of his glorious grace. A hundred years from now there's not going to be a trace. As the song says: "Only one life so soon it will pass, only what's done for Christ will last." Now if these words make any sense to you at all, it's only because you are one of his sheep. It's because you hear his voice, and because you hear his voice, you are compelled to follow him.

As the elders begin distributing the bread, I'd like us to spend some time considering how you came to follow him. Just consider the abundance of grace that has been shed on you. Also consider what Jesus it is that you are following, and consider also this warning that God gives in 1 Corinthians 11:28, he says this: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and*

drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. You know, each service, each remembrance service at this time I remind us that communion is extremely serious business, and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster, and that if you are not absolutely confident you are a child of the King, just pass the elements on when they come to you. I say it each month, I said nobody's going to think you're weird, nobody's going to think you're strange; in fact they'll think you're wise. But on the other hand, we can also make the mistake of thinking that unless we are spotlessly perfect we are unworthy to receive communion, and that, too, is a mistake. Being a child of the King does not mean that we don't sin and that we never fail; it means that when we do fail, we are aware of the fact that we have sinned because God's spirit is inside us, convicting us. And so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive us and cleanse us. And God says this in 1 John 1:9, he says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* You see, being a child of the King does not mean that we are without sin. What it means is that we

know that when we sin, we have an advocate, somebody who is speaking for us, we have an advocate with the Father. 1 John 2:1 says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* So because we have Jesus' righteousness and not our own, we are free to eat from the table. So if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus Christ purchased for you. Take a couple of minutes, as the bread comes by, to consider the miracle that enabled you to be part of the flock of Jesus. You hear the voice his own brothers could not hear even though they lived with him. You follow the Shepherd. You are more privileged than you could possibly imagine. Just think on that for a bit.

1 Corinthians, the 11 chapter, the 23rd verse says this, it says: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* So take and eat.

Have you ever met someone, perhaps even shared the gospel with someone whose reaction made you think in a million years this person will never, never come to Christ? Has that ever happened to you? I remember the first person I ever witnessed to. It was

almost 40 years ago, Janice and I had just arrived in San Francisco, I was going to school there and she had a cousin, her cousin Bob, who lived in the city and he was going to kind of helped us get acclimated. So we visited with Jan's cousin Bob. We went over to his apartment and there was a number of people there whom we all met, and in the course of the conversation, I began to share with these people how Jesus Christ had turned my life upside down. I had been a Christian about two or three weeks at the time. I was beyond naive when it came to sharing the gospel. I only knew one thing; I knew that I was a sinner on his way to hell, I knew that Jesus Christ had come down, that he had lived a perfect life and offered up that life for me at the cross and that I was now given eternal life, and so I just -- I just shared that with these four or five people. Remember, this is 40 years ago back in the hippy days. So response to that gospel of these people that I had just met was to mock it and me, but I didn't really -- I didn't care at all. I was just so blown away by what Jesus had done in my life. They were all sitting around smoking pot at the time, as a matter of fact, and so as we were sitting around, I remember one of them challenged me to get Jesus to light his joint for him and that was kind of his response to how I had presented the gospel. Needless to say, it was not exactly the greatest presentation of all time, not the most rousing success, but a month -- about a month later, we had gotten established in the city, we had our own

apartment, and we wanted to invite Bob over for dinner. And so I called him up, and I said, "Bob, we'd love to have you over for dinner. Could you make it -- could you make it this Friday?" And there was a pause, and he said, "No, that's not good for me." So I said, "Well, could you make it Saturday?" Pause again, he said, "No, no, that won't work." So I said to him, I said, "Well, Bob, what day would be good for you?" And there was a pregnant pause and then he said, "Actually, to tell you the truth, no day would be good for me." You know, I love that phrase when they say now "awkward." Awkward. There was this awkward pause, and I said to him, "Okay, Bob, if you ever change your mind, we'd love to have dinner with you." I hung up the phone and I said to Janice, "That guy will never enter the kingdom of God."

You know, when we read John 7, we come upon the unbelief of Jesus' brothers and we are tempted to read the exact same conclusion into it because we cannot imagine a scenario in which Jesus could be more compelling than the one which they had already had. I mean, they had grown up with Jesus every single day of their lives and it still wasn't enough. Again, let me repeat. *So his brother said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea that your disciples may also see the works you are doing, for no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world."* For not even his brothers believed in him. Now they were

either so cynical that they didn't believe in him at all and they wanted to take the opportunity of the crowds to prove to themselves and to the world that their brother Jesus was a fraud, or more likely they believed in him just like the crowds believed in him, you know, they believed that he was useful that he was perhaps a healer, a provider, a potential political leader, but certainly not the Son of God, certainly not the Messiah. One thing we know for certain is that scripture itself referred to them as unbelievers. And Jesus told us if you are not part of his flock, you will not hear his voice and you will not follow him.

But that begs a very important question. The question is this. How does anybody on this earth ever know who is going to be part of his flock? God sovereignly saves his elect, but there is none of us on planet earth who are privy to what that group and who that group actually is. This is what Jesus said at the end of Matthew 28. It says: *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* You see, our marching orders -- and those are our marching orders, that applies to every single one of us -- our marching orders do not include deciding who we think God's sheep

are. We are to broadcast the gospel wholesale to every tribe, tongue and nation. God does the choosing retail. But he does it. We often think that we can know who Jesus chooses, and that's because I think we think naturally instead of supernaturally.

After Jesus had this confrontation with the rich young ruler, we know that the young man went away sad, that he went away dejected because Jesus had told him in Luke 18 this, he said: *"One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, *"How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."* I think we miss the impact of that statement because in Jesus' day everyone thought that the wealthy were only wealthy because God had specially blessed them. So they thought if it's difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God, how much more difficult is it going to be for me? I'm just a regular schmoe, I mean, how in the world can I get in if the rich aren't going to get in? And we see that in verse 26, it says this: *Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" But he -- that's Jesus -- said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." "What is impossible*

with men is possible with God."

You see, it was impossible to imagine that Jesus' brothers who had been exposed to Jesus their entire lives would suddenly begin to see their older brother as God in the flesh. That's just what happened. It turns out that they had all been chosen of God but it was all in God's timing and not ours. You see, we know that Jesus' brothers were all miraculously converted after Jesus had ascended into heaven. They were among the hundred and twenty that were assembled in the upper room when the Holy Spirit descended on them. Acts 1:14 says: *And all these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.* And furthermore we know that James became the bishop of the church at Jerusalem and that Judas wrote the book of Jude. You see, *"What is impossible with men is possible with God."*

Jesus said in Matthew 22: *"For many are called, but few are chosen."* What does that mean? What does it mean to be chosen of God? What it means is to be given ears to hear and eyes to see. Practically speaking, what that means is that the dots of the gospel story begin to connect. Jesus begins to make sense. God becomes the reason why I'm here. And we don't do it. God does it. And why does he do it? He does it for the praise of his

glory, not ours. It's not something reserved for the wealthy or the intelligent or the well-connected. In fact, it is usually the exact opposite, it is God as it were reaching into the very bottom of the barrel and pulling you and me out and saying to the rest of the universe, "Look how My grace can transform this person."

Listen to what 1 Corinthians 1:26 says. It says: *For consider your calling, brothers: Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."*

You see, this is God saying to us as he says in Romans 9:15: *"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."* So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy. That last line is incredibly important. What God is saying is my mercy is not dependent on your will or your exertion, but on my efforts alone. We have to bear that in mind, because too often we think naturally

instead of supernaturally.

Sometime around the year 2000 we were living in Greenville, we'd been there for over 20 years, I got a phone call from somebody I hadn't spoken to in many, many years. I'm sure you can guess who it was. It was Jan's cousin Bob. He couldn't wait to tell me that Jesus Christ had become the Lord of his life. He couldn't wait to tell me that after years and years of wandering in the deserts, the dots of the gospel suddenly began to line up, his eyes began to see, his ears began to hear, something he could not hear from me 40 years earlier. Now I had completely written him off. He went on to tell me that even the guy who asked me to ask Jesus to light his joint gave his life to Christ years later. Amazing. Now it was a very joyful but a very humbling experience, and it taught me something about the way God advances His kingdom. You see, whether it's Janice's brother -- Jesus' brothers or Janice's cousin, there's no one that is too hard for God. No one is beyond his reach.

As the elders come forward to distribute the cup, I'd like us to spend some time considering how, when, or even if we share the gospel. You know, people wrongly conclude that if you believe that God sovereignly chooses his sheep, then you will be disinclined to share the gospel. After all, God is going to do what God is going

to do, so what do I have to do with it? Well, there are two simple words to describe that attitude, the words are "sinful disobedience," 'cause that's what it is; it's sinful disobedience.

You see, there's a flip side of understanding the sovereignty of God's choice, and the flip side is the boldness of realizing that this is a supernatural enterprise that God has prearranged from before the dawning of time itself. And all God asks of you is an honest presentation of the facts. We are lost sinners, God has provided a perfect sacrifice in his Son, we by faith in his Son appropriate that sacrifice and find everlasting life. There you go. That's it in a nutshell. Now, I remember thinking that my first gospel presentation was a complete and utter disaster. Turns out I was mistaken. You know, it may have taken decades to complete but it was all part of God's plan.

Jesus Christ according to Philippians 2 says this: *Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* Now, sharing that gospel is something that Jesus calls each and every one of us here to, and it is a supernatural undertaking. Paul describes the process this way in 1 Corinthians

3, he says: *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.* So let us consider Jesus, let us consider his birth, his life, his sacrifice, his resurrection and his command, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Consider what great a privilege God has purchased for us. Consider also what great a responsibility we have. Take some time to meditate.

1 Corinthians 11:25 says this: *In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."* So take and drink.

This is the part of the service that I call heads, hands and feet because it's the part where we try to understand some more of the practical ways that we can remember Jesus Christ, and I was just thinking about this incident that I described today that happened 20 years ago, I was thinking of another incident that happened more recently, it was about six years ago, actually when I was still by vocationally, I was still doing work, and I was building a

kitchen for this fellow, and he was -- he was a pagan's pagan. He loved to argue and he loved to discuss things and so we would often -- I'd start off going to work on his kitchen, designing things and putting things in, et cetera, and we'd wind up sideways speaking for hours and hours just about the gospel and how weird Christians were. That was his take. And I remember, I knew I had earned his confidence when after about a week or two he invited me to go to a topless bar with him. So we had a good conversation about the poor people that wind up going to those places, and you know, I said to him, I said, "Every girl in there is some daddy's daughter. How do you feel about that?" "Oh, you're just weird." That's what he thought. So we had these conversations that went on for oh, a couple of months. Like I said, this was six years ago. And he's another guy that I said to Janice, I mean, he was -- he was of all things a musician, and you know musicians, I mean, come on, he was -- and he was a prominent, he was a backup to a very famous rock singer, and so he was very much in that world, and I said to Janice, "This is another lost cause. This guy's -- this guy's gone." And that was six years ago, and about two years ago I was in the house and Janice got the phone and she said -- she spoke for a minute or so, she said, "George is on the phone." I didn't know what George it was. So I picked up the phone, and it was a guy's voice on the phone, he said, "I just want you to know I bought it." That's all he said. "Okay. What did you buy?"

"Jesus Christ." "What?" He said, "Jesus Christ is my Lord and my Savior." "Who are you?" "Oh, George!" And once again, it was the same kind of thing, I mean, it's like God saying "I make these decisions, not you. In my time, not yours." It turns out this guy is on fire. I mean, I just talked to somebody recently, he's in a worship team for a church around here, just on fire. I would have said in a million years, never.

So what I would like you to do this morning, there's two things I would like you to think of this morning, two people I would like you to think of. We're going to pray to conclude our service but what I would like you to do is envision in your own mind the person you think most likely to become a Christian, and the person least likely to become a Christian. I want you to get a vision in your own mind of those two people, the person who you say in a million years, this person will never come to Christ. And I want to pray because I believe that God wants to do great things through every single one of us. Discipleship is not for professionals.

Discipleship is for each and every one of us, and it starts with praying, actively seeking God's will. So what I would like us to do is envision these two people, and I'm going to pray with us, and then I would like you all to be sensitive, just tuned in, say God, when the opportunity presents itself, don't say, oh, I don't have the Ph.D. in theology, I don't have the Bible memorized, you do

whatever you need to do. I was lost; Jesus found me. That's where you start. Everybody can start there. And you just trust that God is going to give you the words. Okay? Let's pray.

Father God, I do thank you. I thank you for the love that you give to us that is completely unconditional. I thank you that if we had to earn that love, if we had to earn the grace that brought us into your flock, we would never get there. I thank you that our will and our exertion amounts to nothing but it's all your mercy. And Father, this morning as we are thinking of different individuals who might come to know Jesus or would never, never come to know Jesus, I want to pray that you would give each and every one of us a vision for what it is you have called us to do. It is not our task to make people -- make people Christians. It is our task to be ambassadors for you, to speak the truth in love as we know it, as we understand it, and that means we don't have to have a Ph.D. in Theology, we just have to know that we are lost sinners and that Jesus Christ is God's provision for sin, and that at the cross he traded his perfection, his righteousness for our sin. Father, I pray for individuals. I pray for opportunities. I pray for each of us as we go through the next week or two weeks or month, that somebody will say something and it will trigger in our mind this prayer that we're praying this morning, that we'll say, "Oh, maybe this is God trying to tell me something" and that we'll have that

extra little measure of faith that says God grant me the ability to just blurt out whatever it is I need to blurt out and just take it from there, just trust that God knows what he's doing. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.