

Authentic Christianity – Part 2

Authentic Christianity

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: 1 John 1:5-10
Preached On: Sunday, August 14, 2016

Crossroads Ministries
301 S. 8th Street
Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

Good morning. I want to encourage you this morning to open your Bibles to two very specific places in the New Testament, the book of 1 John 1 and the Gospel of John 1. As you're turning to those two passages of Scripture, I want to welcome you today. Many of you may not have been here last week for the first message in this series entitled "Authentic Christianity." What we're studying through the book of 1 John is not what somebody or some group says that Christianity ought to be but what does the word of God say that authentic Christianity should look like whether you're in the first century or whether you're in the 21st century. And today we're going to be in 1 John 1, but as you're finding those two passages of Scripture, many of you are aware that what we know as football season has formally commenced and last night was the first pre-season game in the National Football League, and over the course of the next month, it's going to be pro games, college games, high school games, peewee games; football is going to consume many of our lives. In fact, many people tease that in their home they have a man cave. Tracy says we just have a man house, I mean she is completely outnumbered, and let me share with you what's going to happen in about 6-8 weeks, she's going to come in one night and she's going to be a little frustrated, maybe a little frazzled, she's going to say, "Guys," referring to all of us, "can we not have one night where we don't watch football?" To which we're all going to look at her like, "Why would we not want to watch football? I mean, you're supposed to do that every night. That's what we do."

And so today as we come to this message from 1 John, I kind of want to weave in the beginning of football season with the continuing of this message because we're going to talk about the basics of the faith. In fact, I want to talk about today about getting back to basics and one of the best illustrations that demonstrates this for us is a man by the name of Vince Lombardi. Even if you're not an avid football fan, you may have heard of his name because it's inscribed on the Super Bowl trophy. One of the most acclaimed coaches and men of the sidelines, the game has ever seen. But I want to take us back to 1961. The Green Bay Packers that he led for so many years find themselves on the heels of actually giving up the lead in the fourth quarter and losing the NFL championship game just a few months before. They thought they had victory in hand, they thought they would be hoisting up the trophy again and they found themselves losing.

Well, spring training commenced and Vince Lombardi had before him 38 of the greatest athletes the world had seen at that time. In fact, many of the men would find themselves in what we know as the NFL Hall of Fame. These were men who played at the pro level at its highest level, the collegiate level, the high school and even on the peewee level. But this date in July of 1961, Vince Lombardi began spring training a little bit differently, spring practice. He held up a football, one of which these men had handled thousands of times, and he said, "Gentleman, this is a football." And he began to share with them the importance of understanding what the football was and the purpose thereof and how it played and interacted with the game. Now, you can imagine the response of some of these men who played football for decades of their life. Why do we need an instruction today on such a basic concept?

Well, Vince Lombardi's idea proved true for after he gave that famous speech and after they went out that season, not only did they win the championship that year 37-0, but they would win five out of the next seven championships including three in a row and Vince Lombardi never lost another playoff game as a coach. Sometimes when we get back to the basics, it makes us become more successful in the days ahead and today that's my challenge for you. There are some of you today that you've been walking with Jesus for decades. Some of you have been saved longer than I've been alive and you may be thinking to yourself, "I don't need the basics. I got this." Well, don't we want what Vince Lombardi had on the backside of that speech rather than on the front side? So I want to challenge you today as we turn to 1 John 1, hang in there with me as we talk about the basics of the faith.

Now, I'm going to trade this football for a Bible. Now, they're both leather and both comfortable in my hands and I want to introduce someone very special to our church family today. You may have met this person, you may not, but I want to introduce you a young lady who herself played in the championship game of the flag football league at Baylor University, my wife, Miss Tracy Meyers. We're going to play a little pitch and catch here. Alright, baby, have you got this one? Are you ready? Guys, no interceptions. This is your momma. You ready, baby? You got it? Oh yeah, that's what I'm talking about.

1 John 1, beginning in verse 5, simply verse 5 through 10, it says,

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

These simple verses today take us back to what are the basics of this authentic Christian faith and I want to utilize three very simple terms this morning to help kind of break this down. I want to talk about facts, I want to talk about faith, and I want to talk about feelings. Now, I think every one of us here will testify that there are times in our lives where feelings sometimes get in the way of the facts. Sometimes our emotions or our responses are how we feel about something can distort what is actually happening around us. In fact, in this passage in verse 8, it says we deceive ourselves at times, and so as we look at the facts and the faith and the feelings through this passage, one of the things we need to do is go back into the Gospel of John 1 because in 1 John 1:5 there is this great summary statement, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." That is a fabulous summary statement about the facts of the faith.

Now, as you go back to the Gospel of John 1, it begins, the very first verse with, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life," listen to this, "was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." Skip over to verse 10, "He," being Jesus, "was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Now, I want you to go ahead and flip a couple pages to the right to the Gospel of John 3. We're going to pick up the story, actually the backside of this story of Jesus and his interaction with Nicodemus. Now, on this very simple statement that, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all," you may be wondering dealing with the facts, "Why are we going over to John 1? Why are we going to John 3? Why are we going to all of these passages?" Let me remind you of kind of the ground rules that I laid out last week. If you weren't here with us, allow just a simple refresher course. Ground rule 1: my opinion does not matter. Ground rule 2: neither does yours. It doesn't matter what you think, I think or somebody else thinks, what matters is what does God say, and he said that he is light and in him is no darkness at all. John 1 says that light has come into the world but the world has not comprehended it and he even gave us the opportunity to become the sons of God but as a whole, humanity and the world has rejected it.

Now let's pick up John 3 with that famous verse 16, it says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Listen to verse 19, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

So when we talk about the facts of what we believe, the facts of authentic Christianity based on 1 John 1:5, I thought today that we would break it down into four very basic simple questions. Now these questions that I'm going to address, these are not unique to myself or anybody else. In fact, these are the four questions that every human being has to answer. It doesn't matter if you're born in the West, if you're born in the East, if you're born in the Northern or Southern hemisphere. It does not matter if you are born wealthy or born poor. It doesn't matter what your educational level is or your socioeconomic level. It doesn't matter. Every single human being has to answer these four questions. Now, sometimes we answer them consciously, sometimes unconsciously, but here are the four questions everybody has to answer. Question 1: where did I come from? Question 2: what's the problem? Question 3: how do I fix it? Question 4: where am I going? Those are the four basic questions of life.

Now, we could spend a lot of time today, we could look at this from the animistic perspective, the pluralistic perspective, the this and the that perspective but, again, what does the word of God say? What does what we just read tell us about these questions? Well, question 1: where did you come from? Well, according to John 1, you came from God. You didn't come from some other entity or some other item or some other philosophy or concept, you came from God. It says there in John 1 that there is nothing that was made that did not come from him and since you have been made, you came from him. You came from God.

But here's the second question. We may recognize we came from God but we all recognize there are some problems in this world. There are some things that are happening in this world and there are lots of messed up situations and we live in a world today, have you noticed or is it just me, everybody wants to blame somebody else for their problems? Everybody says, "Well, if they were different. If this person were in that position. Or if this was the rules or if that were the rules." I'm going to share with you something today that you will not hear in the media, you will not hear in the news, in fact, we hardly even use this word anymore but it is biblically true. I can tell you what the problem is. Are you read? Sin. That's the problem. The problem in your life and the problem in the world's life is that we've decided that we're smarter than God.

Now, we're in the South so I can say this and I'm from the South so I really can say this, you know the last four words of a good Southern man, right? "Hey, guys, watch this." We think we're pretty clever, don't we? But what we realize is when we think we're smarter than we are, we're not and what has happened is we've somehow allowed ourselves to be talked into, it's somebody else's fault. Guess what? The Bible says all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Do you not find it interesting that that word "sin" has the letter "i" right in the middle of it? You see, that's our problem, we have sinned, we have messed up. That's the problem in our lives.

So we came from God, the problem of sin. Well, if that's the problem, how do we fix it? I've got another answer that's not real popular in our world today: the answer is Jesus Christ. You see, I grew up in a home where I'm the son of a pharmacist and the son of a teacher and I'm not picking on them or the professions of which they had for their entire

careers but when you're the son of a pharmacist and a teacher, you believe that most problems can be either solved with a pill or a program. But this problem, sin, can only be solved with Jesus.

Now, what I'm about to share with you is something that I never desire to happen in life. I have no ambitions. I have no inkling toward it. In fact, I don't know if I would live to see tomorrow if it were ever to come to fruition because my wife would have none of it. But if by chance, if by chance and I doubt it's ever going to occur so don't get excited, if I were ever to run for public office – oh, please, Lord, don't ever let it happen – but if I were, I want you to know my campaign slogan. Are you ready for this one? "If your name is not God, I don't care what you think." I might get one vote. I don't even know if I'd vote for that, to be quite honest with you. But why do I share that with you? Because in a world today that has so many issues and so many struggles, number 1, we diagnosed the problem is sin. The only real answer is Jesus. That's it. In fact, it says there in verse 6 and 7, his blood is what cleanses us from all unrighteousness. It says in John 1:12, that he came unto his own. They received him not but to those who do receive him, they can be called the sons of God.

So where are we headed? We know we came from God. The problem is sin. The answer is Jesus. You're either on a destination to one of two places, folks: you're either headed to a place the Bible calls heaven or a place the Bible calls hell and that destination is based on how you've resolved the sin problem in your life. You can trust Jesus to resolve it or you can trust anything else and those, my friends, are the facts. When it says that God is light and in him is no darkness at all, we need to understand we came from God, we have a sin problem, Jesus is the only answer and our eternal existence is either in a place the Bible calls heaven because we've asked Jesus to forgive us, or in a place the Bible calls hell because we've decided we know better how to live life than God. Those are the facts.

So how is our faith expressed? Now notice here in verse 6, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin," etc. It continues to go back and forth in this passage talking about, "Well, if we say we're really saved and we do this," and it goes back and forth almost like a great table tennis game, but let me just make it simple this morning. There are two words that I want to introduce to you that you may be very familiar with but this is a back-to-the-basics message. The words are "sonship" and "fellowship," and what that simply means is this: that when the time came in your life, or if it has not occurred, the time that does come in your life where you understand you've got a sin problem and Jesus is the only answer and you ask him according to Romans 10:13, to forgive you, you become a child of God.

This is what Nicodemus struggled with. You remember old Nicodemus: he was intelligent, had degrees, had wealth. He said, "I don't understand. How do I return to my mother's womb? I don't get this." And Jesus said, "You must be born again, born of water and of spirit." And he couldn't grasp it. And you go over to Romans 8 and it says that when we believe upon Jesus we are the children of God, we are heirs with Christ Jesus,

there is imagery all over Scripture about a son or a daughter, to be politically correct, a child of God.

Now, let me explain how this works. I, as you well know, have three young men that are in my home. They are Tracy and I's children and what's important to this illustration is I was there at their birth and I can testify they are our children. Now, let's just say hypothetically and, guys on the front row, y'all may want to close your ears for just a moment so don't do what I'm about to talk about. Hypothetically, that one of my children, just one of them, decides one day, "I've had enough of this whole Meyers crew. I'm going to go to the other side of the planet. In fact, I'm so tired of being a Meyers, I'm going to change my first name, I'm going to change my last name, I'm going to rip up and burn my social security card. I'm going to have nothing to do with those people." In the eyes of many of the world, identity has been changed, family has been restructured. But I've got news for you: it doesn't matter who's the judge or who is the jury, according to verse 7 it says the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed us from all sin, you can change your name, you can change your location but my blood flows through these young men. They are my sons just like it says here that we, when we believe on Jesus, are called the sons of God. In other words, that day that we ask Jesus to forgive our sins, we become his child. That's why Jesus said in John 12, "Nothing or nobody can take them out of my hand." You can change your name, you can change your location, but you cannot change the blood that flows through you and here it says in 1 John 1, even at the times where we're struggling and not doing and being what we're supposed to be, it is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us.

Now that's the sonship part. Let's talk about the fellowship because it's one thing to be born, it's another thing to live. Now, I don't want to utilize my children in this illustration so I think it's probably best to utilize myself. I grew up in a home and, in fact, it's something I've probably said, you know, unconsciously myself and I'm sure many of you have done so as well. In fact, this is a statement that is so well known in our culture, I bet you can finish this statement for me. I'm going to begin it out loud and you just openly finish. Are you ready? Alright, parents say this. Sometimes grandparents not so much because you grandparents, I don't know what happens to you but you get this gene in you that you do things for your grandkids you would have never done for your own kids. I don't know what happens but something in the genetic code just twists all of a sudden when grandparents come along, but work with me, pretend. How many times have you heard this statement: I brought you into the world... I can take you out. I heard that a few times growing up. I'll be honest with you, there were a few times I thought my dad was going to take that literally. Why is that the case? Because there things in my life, there were scenarios of my life that had taken place in my life that they could not change my blood relationship to him but our fellowship wasn't doing too good. There were times where we didn't speak as often as we should. There were times where we were estranged. There were times where...and by the way, what had occurred was I was the one who had violated the precepts and the laws and the rules, not him. And just what it says here in 1 John 1, if we say we have fellowship with him and we do this, it's literally saying we deceive ourselves.

So when we talk about an authentic Christian faith, there is that time where we're born again, there's that time that we're saved and we're forgiven of our sins, but then we begin walking with the Lord and we begin this fellowship, this relationship that sometimes has good moments and sometimes not so good moments. So we've looked at the facts, we've looked at the faith but I want to get to the area that really can, as this word of God says, deceive us or distort us. I want to talk about feelings. How many times do people come up to you and say, "Well, I'm not feeling that. Or I don't feel good about that." Well, maybe it's because you had Italian food last night, you've got indigestion. I don't know what that may be but just because you feel something does not necessarily change the facts.

You notice in this passage in verse 8 it says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Verse 10, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." This morning, I want to just go over two what I think are feelings that so easily creep up in a believer's life. The first one is pretty simple: when we begin to compromise the things of God, alienation creeps in. Now, alienation means there is a distance, there is a discord that maybe you've never felt this and I hope you haven't, but how many of you as people who know for a fact there's been a time where Jesus saved you, you've had moments in your life where you just don't feel real close to God. Have you ever had those moments where you even questioned, "God, do you even hear me? Do you even know I'm still here?" You say, "How does that happen?" Well, it's when compromise seeps in. You say, "What is compromise?" Compromise is when you trade an eternal truth for a temporary blessing.

Now, let me share with you what I mean. When you say, "I know what God wants me to do, but I'm gonna do this anyway. I know what God has said, but this is what I'm gonna promote." You see, that's what compromise is: we know what God's statement is but we decide to choose our own. This is probably best displayed in the book of Galatians 2. We have a man by the name of Peter. Now let's go and be honest, Peter was one of the champions of the faith. I mean, he was the one in Matthew 16 who said, "Jesus, you are the Son of the living God." Peter was the one in Acts 2 when the Lord had someone to preach the first "Christian sermon," he preached it, 3,000 people came forward. Peter was the one in the next chapter, he's walking down the street and because his shadow went over somebody, they were physically healed. I mean, this guy when it comes to the Christian life, pretty authentic and had it going pretty well. However in the book of Galatians 2, compromise seeps in. He decides to trade the call of God on his life for a temporary blessing.

You see, Peter grew up Jewish. He had grown up in a home that most of everything was dictated by the Levitical laws and he's walking through the streets of Jerusalem one day and all of a sudden he sees and he smells something that he decides he needs to partake of. You see, what he smelled was an all-you-can-eat barbecue buffet. Is it just me or is anybody else when you eat barbecue just thank the Lord that you're a Gentile? I mean, seriously? And so he goes and he begins to partake of that which he had never partaken of and no pun intended, I mean, he is all-in. I mean, he's hog wild here. He's going for it.

He's got sauce all over his face. He's got rib bones in his hands. I mean, he is having a field day when all of a sudden Paul comes in and he says, "What are you doing? God called you to reach the Jews. God called you to reach those who think they can be saved by doing the law. What are you doing out here? You need to stop this." You see, that's what compromise is and sometimes in life we just need to take a step back and say, "Why am I doing this? Why am I involved in this? Why would I go completely against the things of God in my life just to satisfy a curiosity, an interest or an itch?" That's compromise.

But there's another emotion, there's another feeling that seeps in when we begin to compare ourselves with others, arrogance can creep in. Now, there is spiritually the feeling of alienation, feeling like, "God is out there somewhere but he's not here with me," but then the feeling of arrogance is this idea that, "I've been walking with the Lord so much, I know so much of the Bible. I have not missed Sunday school in 20+ years. I know what I'm doing. I'm not like that other person who is rarely here." You see, that's what happens when we begin to compare ourselves spiritually. I think the best example is in Luke 15, probably one of the most famous chapters in all the Bible. We know it because of the story of the prodigal son. I'm sure many of you are familiar with it. There is a man who has two sons, who the youngest of the sons comes and says, "Dad, I wish you were dead. You're not dead, I just want the money. Give it to me now." The dad says, "Okay." He gives him the money. The Bible says he spends his life in "riotous living." He squanders the money, he squanders his relationships and at the end of the day, he has no money, no friends, and he's literally eating with the pigs in the mud. He says and the Bible says he comes to his senses and he says, "My dad hopefully will make me an indentured servant," and he goes back repentful.

Well, the picture that we have in the Bible is that the earthly father is a picture of our heavenly Father and the prodigal is a picture of who we are as humanity, and when we come back, God comes running to us. He puts a ring on our finger, a robe on our back. He kills the fatted calf and, "Let's celebrate my son who was lost has now been found!" But the story doesn't end there. In fact, there's that other brother. The party has commenced. The dad goes outside and he begins to entreat him to come in and he won't come and in verse 29 of Luke 15, the "other son" says something very theologically profound and realistically ignorant. He says, "Dad, I have never sinned against you." Can you imagine the audacity of standing before an earthly parent and saying, "I've never done anything wrong." I mean, in our home, there are times where we will go to one resident of our house and say, "Did you do this?" No, they didn't. We'll go to another one, "Did you do this?" No, they didn't. Then we'll go to the third one and he says, "Well, I did something else but it wasn't as bad as what they did." And then Tracy usually turns to me and says, "Did you know about this?" And so what happens is we begin to compare, "Well, I'm not as bad as this or did you see what I did? Compared to them, I'm a saint." That's what he was doing and this arrogance creeps in and what happens is the feelings of, "I've got this," tend to distort and deceive the fact that according to Ephesians 2:8-9, we live by faith alone, not by how we either have or have not done compared to somebody else.

You know, probably the best earthly example that we have is the ring that I wear on my finger. In fact, the Bible says in Ephesians 5, if you want to get a good picture of Christ's relationship to the church, look at the relationship between a husband and a wife. Now, let me show you how this kind of works in my life. A little over 20 years ago, my wife Tracy and I, we were at the front steps of a little chapel, we were in front of family, we were in front of friends, and we exchanged vows and we exchanged rings and on that day, March 2, 1996 – please, ladies, be impressed that I remembered the date – on March 2, 1996, our relationship began. It was established. That relationship started, however, you do understand in 20 years of marriage there are some good times and there are some not-so-good times. There are some times where you feel very close to one another, and times where you don't feel so close. You know what happens in a marriage when you allow the feelings to dictate the facts, right? In fact, if we were to go back a few years in time when I was traveling, there is a time period when I was in vocational evangelism and I was gone about 200 nights a year and Tracy will tell you this story that in August of one year, out of 30 days of the calendar, I was gone for 28 of them. One day I came home from a trip to Europe and she said, "I don't feel very married." It didn't change the facts, it just meant we needed to work on some things if the fellowship was going to be where it needed to be.

On the lighter side of the equation and, guys, this is where I need your help, in fact, I need some amens in just a moment so, guys, get your throats warmed up. I need some help. Guys, those of you that are married, have you ever had that experience and I know, I know you've had this experience, where you get home one day from work or wherever you've been and you've had a pretty good day and you walk into the house, you walk into the kitchen and there's your wife and she's got that look on her face. Guys, y'all know what I'm talking about, right? It's that uh-oh look, and you do what we do as guys, you walk up and say, "Honey, um, what is wrong? What did I do?" You know the response, ladies, "Oh, you know what you did!" Ladies, I'm not here just to defend your husbands but I want to give you some insight into the male species: sometimes we are that stupid, we don't know what we did. We really are that dumb, okay? And so when he says, "I don't know," you may have to spell it out for him, okay? But what happens is, when that encounter occurs, the facts of our relationship haven't changed but the fellowship has, and there is sometimes distance and whether we have not done something or done too much of something else or whatever it may be, we've allowed situations to enter that relationship that the feelings, the fellowship aren't what they need to be. In the natural world, guys, you know what the answer is: you apologize. You ask forgiveness. You go in and say, "I am so sorry. This is what I did." Buy flowers. Buy a big gift. Do something, guys. You've got to intercede here. But what does 1 John 1:9 say? If we sin, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us. I love that verse of Scripture because it says if we're just willing to admit we've messed up, if we're just willing as believers to say, "God, the distance between us is my fault, the issue we're having is my problem," he is faithful and he is just to forgive us.

You see, the facts never change. You came from God. The problem is sin, the answer is Jesus. However the feelings can deceive us. Maybe today you've allowed some things

such as compromise or comparison to creep in that have tainted your perspective of your relationship with God.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed, as we enter into our time of invitation. You know, maybe you're that believer today, maybe you've been walking with Jesus 20, 25, 30, 40+ years but it's just not what it used to be or maybe you sense or you feel there's just some distance there, maybe it's compromise, maybe it's comparison, maybe it's something else, let me encourage you, believer, today as we come to our time of invitation, may this be the day where you confess that to the Lord, allow him the privilege of forgiving and cleansing you. But maybe you're that person today when we talk about the facts and the basics of the Christian faith, we could talk about fellowship all day long but you would say, "There's not even a relationship there." Boy, do I have great news for you today: that can begin this very moment. It doesn't matter where you've been, what you've been involved in, it doesn't matter how many times you have or have not been at church, if you're listening to my voice right now whether in this room or somewhere else and you've realized for the first time that you want to believe and you need to believe on Jesus to forgive you and save you, let me encourage you to do something: just have a conversation with God. I know technically we call it prayer. You don't have to say anything out loud, you don't necessarily even need to say the same words that I would say, but maybe that conversation would go a little something like this, you say, "God, today I want to go ahead and admit I'm the problem and I believe that Jesus is the only answer to my problem. God, I've sinned. I've messed up. You already know it, I just want to admit it. God, I've done things I shouldn't have done, I've said things I shouldn't have said, I've thought things I shouldn't have thought and, God, I know that because of that, your word is true, the wages of sin is death but the gift of Jesus Christ is life. And so, God, I'm coming to you today not knowing a whole lot of anything but I know this one thing, I desperately need the blood of Jesus Christ to forgive and save me so I'm confessing I'm the problem and I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed in just a moment I'm going to pray over us. Brian is going to come and lead us in a time of invitation and we're going to stand and sing. There are going to be some folks down here at the front. You have the opportunity just to step out and step forward and talk with somebody, pray with somebody. Maybe you're that person today who says, "I just got saved or I need to be saved. I want to talk to somebody about Jesus." Or maybe today you've known Jesus for a long time and you've never shared it with the world; you've never been publicly baptized. Maybe today is the day you come forward and say, "I need to do that." Or maybe just maybe you're that single, that couple or that family who says, "This needs to be our church home. We want to be a part of it formally." Whatever that decision may be, we want to welcome you during this time of invitation.

Lord, as we gather at this time of our service, how good it is to know that you're a God of second chances. God, how easy it would be in your economy to say, "Well, you've messed up one too many times. I'm not going to deal with you anymore, I'm just going to put you on the shelf." But, God, today you have decided, you have chosen to give us that second

chance. You have decided to reach out your arms of grace. God, help us today to take full advantage of it. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to encourage you to stand with me as Brian leads us, whatever decision, you come.