

Standing on the Promises of God

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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Tonight I want to encourage you again to turn to the book of Habakkuk, what we know as that third to the last book in the Old Testament, and as we're turning there, I want to have a little bit of fun tonight. I want you to know I appreciate John being with us today and assisting us, but one thing I want you to notice is notice his and my pulpit there. There's a little bit of a difference. I'm just gonna get mine and bring it on up here right here. Here we go. Here we go. So I think you can just leave right behind me and everybody could see and it would be... No.

But tonight as we turn to the book of Haggai, you know, I want to clear something in the air and then we'll get to the text here. I know that the messages right now are kind of a week behind our reading schedule and the reason for that is I had the privilege, as you all know, of going to South Korea a couple of weeks ago and the week that Pastor Lloyd came and spoke and preached was the week that technically we were supposed to be in Zephaniah and that was the very first time that he ever preached in English and I did not think it was fair to ask him to preach his first English sermon from Zephaniah. I just didn't think that was fair. And as you work through the reading schedule that hopefully you're participating on a daily basis, the book of Zechariah is just an amazing book in Scripture that actually comprises two weeks of our Bible reading plan and so technically it should have comprised two Sunday messages based on the text but I just took a little liberty and kind of a week behind. I wanted to be sure and talk about the remnant of Zephaniah. Today we find ourselves in Haggai and next week as we gather together, rather than two Sundays being dedicated to Zechariah, there will actually be just one Sunday dedicated to Zechariah and then we'll be in Malachi and then we're gonna be right back on track again. So for those of you who are keeping up with the reading plan and discovering, well, the messages are kind of a week behind, that all lies at my feet because I just could not ask a guy to preach his first English sermon from the book of Zephaniah. I just didn't have it in me.

But as we turn to Haggai tonight, just a little bit of a reminder about what I touched on this morning when it comes to the minor prophets. You find them in one of three sections: either pre or before the exile, during the exile, or after the exile. Most of us are familiar with the pre-exilic material. Almost the entirety of the prophets are pre-exilic, particularly when we get to Isaiah and Amos and Hosea. If you take the content of the

prophets, the overwhelming majority of it is leading up to the exile. There are those that are within the exile such as a little bit of Jeremiah, all of Daniel, and the text of Ezekiel, and by the way, when we get to Ezekiel, just hold on, brothers and sisters, that's gonna be entertaining. But there are three prophets, all of them classified as minor prophets, that are what we call post-exilic. They're on the backside of the exile. It's been 70 years in captivity. The Lord has supernaturally in his providence delivered his people back to the land. They're going to eventually rebuild the city. They're going to eventually rebuild the wall. They're going to eventually restore worship in the temple with the revivals of Nehemiah and Ezra. But one of the things that Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi do for us and we're gonna touch a little bit on this tonight, is rather than this message of impending doom, it's looking back at the captivity as a historical lesson for the eventual Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Now when we were in Isaiah, we were looking forward to the captivity as a precursor to the Second Coming. In other words, what's about to take place, the rebellion, the captivity, the judgment that's going to ensue is a precursor to the final judgment. By the time we get to Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, we're able to look back and realize that captivity is not on the horizon but the Lord's return is, and eventually it would be about 500 years after the Lord gave this vision to Haggai that what we know as the Incarnation took place, the birth, the life and the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You and I have the privilege on this side of the empty tomb of not just looking back at the prophets and all of their stages, but looking forward to the next great event on God's calendar is his return. So when we come to these three books, the last three books of what we know as the Old Testament, they look back to the captivity but, honestly, they're looking forward to what you and I collectively call the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

So tonight from Haggai 2. Many of you today for the first time heard a message on Haggai. Aren't you blessed to have two in one day from what we know as Haggai the prophet. In chapter 2, I've addressed tonight's message "Standing on the Promises of God." That's something we need to hear each and every day of our lives because what we see in Haggai looking backwards is the testimony that the Lord brought them through captivity, he was faithful to his word. He said if they didn't repent, that judgment would come and they didn't and judgment did. And so the perspective of the listeners there 2,500 years ago was that when God says it, God means it. We need to learn from the mistakes of the past. We need to learn from the blessings of the past. And we need to make sure that as we step forward, we step in blessing and not in judgment.

I'm gonna begin in chapter 2, verse 1. It says,

1 In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying, 2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, 3 Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? 4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua,

son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:

Now backing up to this morning, remember the Lord said that he was calling his people to rebuild and to restore that which he had promised would be, and that is what we know as the temple. The original temple was built in Solomon's day. Remember David? His dad desired to do so but because he had blood on his hands, it was reserved for his son whom we know as Solomon. That temple stood for a little over 400 years. That is where the sacrifice, that's where the festivals, that's where the celebration, that's where the worship took place. And then what we know as Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians not only came and took them off into Babylon, but they took the temple and razed it, that's razed with a "z," to the ground. Once Cyrus declared that they could go back, remember Nehemiah, the cupbearer who was of sad countenance and if I had been the king and the ruler, I would have been curious too, "What is going on, brother? What is happening here?" He looked sad and despondent and he said, "I'm just grieved for my people are not in their place." They were decreed they could go back. They went back and as we studied this morning, for 16 years they had begun the process of reestablishing their community but they had not rebuilt the temple and the Lord said it's time to do so. Then at the end of chapter 1, they said, "We will."

What's interesting is when we get to these first four verses of chapter 2, God asks his people to contemplate the past. Now I'm gonna give you a very practical life lesson here. Anytime you're feeling despondent, anytime you're feeling in despair, anytime you're saying, "Oh, woe is me!" Spend a little time and contemplate on the past of what God has done in your life. You know, sometimes we're so upset that God's not moving today that we forget how God moved in the past, and every now and then I just have to go back and do a little what I call blessing tree. I know that's kind of a weird name. I just start writing down or start thinking upon the things that God blessed me with in days past because it's real easy to forget how he came through in the past when we're not seeing him come through in the present.

And that's exactly what he says, he asks them to contemplate, to dwell upon the past and I love what it says in verse 3, "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?" Now that first glory would have been when Solomon originally built the construction thereof. It would have been torn down in what you know and I know as 586 BC, the year according to the calendar in Haggai is 520 BC. It has been 66 years. Not only did they go in captivity but according to the Scriptures particularly in Daniel, all of those that were more of a maturity of age were eliminated, only those that were young and had the potential to learn the Babylonian language and to be schooled by them were preserved during the age of the captivity.

So when the Lord says, "Who is among you that saw its first glory," can I give you the answer? Nobody. There was nobody there who remembers but I'm gonna tell you what they do remember: they remember what mom and dad and grandma and grandpa and those that had gone by the wayside. Because I can imagine it, during the captivity as they're there in Babylon, I can imagine the stories being told of what it used to be like. I

can imagine the stories of days gone by when they talked about the feast of Pentecost or the feast of the Tabernacles or the feast of Unleavened Bread, when their brethren, the Israelites, would gather from the four corners of the earth, relatives that you only saw once a year, would gather up in such not only mass quantity but the quality of their worship and their sacrifice.

I'm sure many of those hearing the message of Haggai had heard the stories of days gone by but it's a question that you and I need to contemplate, "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?" I want to encourage you to turn back a little further in the Old Testament to the book of Judges and the book of Judges is famous for a lot of different reasons, but one of them is what we call the sin cycle. If you're not familiar with the sin cycle, as you're turning to Judges 2, allow me to explain. The sin cycle goes a little something like this and I'm sure you've seen this in your life, that everything is going great with the Lord, you're doing great, everybody's doing great, you're walking with him, he's satisfied with you, life is great. Then all of a sudden complacency, rebellion seeps in and the Lord allows the natural, or should I say the supernatural consequences of that rebellion to happen. Pretty soon the blessings begin to fade, the judgment begins to be pronounced in our lives. Finally we hit to the point where we're in a desperate situation. We cry out to the Lord, "Please, deliver us! Please, help us!" He comes to our rescue. He delivers us. We walk with the Lord. We get apathetic again. And the cycle just continues. That is the sin cycle that is explored in the book of Judges.

Well, in the book of Judges 2, I want to begin in verse 7 and I want you to hear a passage of Scripture that is frightening relevant not only for the hearers of Haggai but for you and I today. It says, "And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel." Now I'm gonna push pause for a moment. That sin cycle that I just addressed, do not think of that as a necessarily generational cycle because Joshua served, those who came after him served, they're staying true to the things of God for multiple chronological generations.

Verse 8, "And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim." Now I want you to think about that. It says there arose a new generation. It's much like in the book of Exodus, it says there arose a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph. Joseph dies at 110 years of age. Those who served alongside of him and after him, they are dying out and it says there was a generation that arose who did not and had no memory of observing the greatness that the Lord had done.

Now there's a lot of aspects and there's an entire message wrapped up there in the book of Judges 2, one of which is this, that the Israelites were commanded, remember, to put the stones in the river Jordan and they were commanded to go back every year and to retell

the story. So obviously the story had lapsed, so to speak, but even if they were telling the story year after year, those hearing the story didn't witness the miraculous works of God, they didn't witness the Jordan River being parted, they didn't witness them being in the wilderness and their shoes not wearing out and food being supernaturally provided. As we go back to the book of Haggai when it says, "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory," the Lord is acknowledging the fact that none of them who are going to be tasked with restoring this famous temple can go back and say, "Well, in my day this is what it looked like." They had the stories of their parents, they probably had the stories of their grandparents, probably had the stories of their mentors and those who had gone before him, but none of them had actually laid eyes upon what it looked like and could testify to its former glory.

Allow me to share a frightening parallel to our world today. You and I live today in a culture and in a context where there is not one single person here, there's not one person in this place, there's not a person on the other side of that camera, there is nobody that even lives in what you and I know as Western civilization who personally witnessed the last time an incredible awakening went across this land. Not one of us. Now there are testimonies and there are stories of what I might call pockets of revival. Some 40 to 50 years ago, there were a group of students in the college scene and in the coffee cafes of America who witnessed what I might call a spotty revival, it was relegated to a small group of collegiate age or young 20 somethings, and it was very small in number, and we called it the Jesus movement. There have been times in places and many people testify that where they live they saw God move in miraculous ways and God is always at looking because according to 2 Chronicles, his eyes are moving to and fro looking for whose heart is toward him, but when I talk about an awakening, I'm talking about like back in the mid-1700s and I know none of us were around but if you read the accounts not just of the preachers but even of the politicians back in the mid-1700s before you and I lived in a place that we now know as the United States of America, this place was a mess. I mean, the lasciviousness of life, the open rebellion, the debauchery that ran rampant.

Many of you may or may not be aware of this single fact, that there's a state in our Union a little bit east of us called Georgia. You may know that Georgia is named after King George because that's where they put everybody who couldn't pay their debts to the king. We had an entire colony dedicated to those who couldn't pay their bills yet what we know as the first Great Awakening swept through this land. Incidentally, it started in the middle colonies, it made its way to the northern colonies, and last but not least, it made it down here to the south. But when you begin to look at what we know as the first Great Awakening, in a time period where the population of the United States barely touched about 4 to 5 million people, about the current population of Alabama, over a million people got saved. I mean, can you imagine? And it wasn't just a group of people of a certain age or in a certain colony, it was the entirety, it even stretched beyond those original colonies and began to go out into the outer provinces and began to go out there on the outskirts. The first Great Awakening was so impactful that it led to the establishment of seminaries such as Harvard and Dartmouth and others. Many people are unaware that some of the greatest institutions of learning in our land were because so

many young men got called to preach and got called to lead worship, we had to have a place to educate them and those institutions were established and they were promoted for the purpose thereof.

But much like in Judges and much like in Haggai, we walked with the Lord, we got apathetic, we got rebellious, and we cried out again. The second Great Awakening would take place some years later and the then President of Yale University, now it wasn't a large school at the time, it only had about 200-250 students which then was a large university, was bemoaning in his journal that he knew not one student who had been born again. It sounds like our world, doesn't it? Here's the difference: those who were there at Yale University, those that were the professors at Yale University remembered the first Great Awakening. The professors had seen it with their own eyes. The students had grown up in homes of the testimonies of their parents and their grandparents.

We could tell the story throughout all the time of our history that that second Great Awakening would come and go. The Layman's Prayer Revival before what we know as the Civil War would come and it would go and what I call the dust bowl revival of the early 20s which actually was an extension of the Welsh Revival of 1904 in Europe, would come and go. What's unique to our history is that up until a few years ago, everybody could find somebody who could tell you the story. They could tell you the story of what it was like in those tent meetings of the 1920s; those who walked through the dust bowl of the 20s and 30s could find somebody who knew what it was like during the Layman's Prayer Revival. Do you see the connection there? Yet when you get to Haggai, it's been 70 years. The average age of the lifespan was very different than Joshua at 110 years, it was much less than that.

"Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory and how do you see it now?" You and I today are living in a very peculiar time in life. Nobody here can ever find anybody who was there the last time that revival swept from this land coast to coast and so we've discovered that you and I really are reliving this text. We are commissioned to restore worship having never seen what it truly authentically looked like. You and I are called to revival that we've never seen take place. You and I are called to an awakening that we've never witnessed. We do have the privilege of having history that has been written and reading the stories, but we need to contemplate the past, that even though we may not have been a part of it, it has been written down exhaustively and extensively and we are very blessed to be living in a place that has had multiple times of which the Lord visited here. In fact, there was a book that was written years ago about the Layman's Prayer Revival and here was the title of it, "When Heaven Touched Earth."

Beginning in verse 5 it says,

5 According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. 6 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; 7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with

glory, saith the LORD of hosts. 8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. 9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

Now it's at this time I want to give just a very brief commentary that we're gonna walk down the path thereof. The temple that's eventually going to be built in the fifth century BC is an exact replica of that which Solomon constructed years before. The book of Ezekiel in chapter 40 talks about this incredible temple that will one day be built in the future and the book of Revelation 21 and 22 it says there is no need of that temple anymore for the Lord is the glory thereof. What we're reading here is not just the mention of that physical temple that they would build in the next 80 years, but it's actually foreshadowing the ultimate glorious presence of the Lord in the midst of his creation, which leads us to contemplate this thought: the capacity that the Lord possesses. When we do as the Lord commands, when we respond as he has requested, the capacity.

Notice what it says here in verse 6 and 7. A statement is made that you've probably never seen and I know I've never seen, God shook the place. God actually took the physical structure and said, "I will shake the heavens. I will shake the earth. I will shake the sea. I will shake the dry land. I will shake all nations." Can you imagine being a part of a worship service, can you imagine being even in your own prayer closet, can you imagine being in a prayer meeting that was so rich with the presence of God that the building actually shook?

I'm gonna show you a place where that actually happened. Turn to the book of Acts 4. In the book of Acts 4 we have the beginning of what you and I know as the visible church of Jesus Christ. There have been 3,000 people that were saved and baptized. If you hold on just a chapter later, there's gonna be 5,000 people that are saved and baptized. By the way, as you're looking for Acts 4, I cannot tell you how many times people come to me and they say, "Oh, pastor, I want you to know I love the church you serve at but it's just too big for me." Number one, you're really not gonna like heaven. Number two, you wouldn't have enjoyed the first church. You know, the first church was a whole lot bigger than we give it credit for. Within the first three chapters of the visible manifestation of what we know as the church of Jesus Christ, we know of at least 8,000 people that got saved. That's a big body of believers. That's a big group of folks and yet miraculously the Lord just multiplied them just exponentially.

But in Acts 4, persecution has been initiated. The disciples are being persecuted for their faith and beginning in verse 23, they offer a very frightening prayer. Allow me to summarize it tonight, "God, you promised in days past you would show up for those who cried. We're crying out, you haven't showed up. Where are you?" Now can we be honest that's a pretty bold prayer? Can you imagine getting in the face of God and saying, "God, you promised and you haven't done it. I'm calling you on the carpet." And then in verse 30-31 it says, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

Now Haggai said that the Lord shakes the heavens and the earth. In the book of Acts 4 it says the place was shaken. I don't know about you, but I've never been a part of a worship service where the building shook. I've never been a part of a prayer meeting where the building shook. I would love to be so, but you know that this is not relegated to Old Testament or even the book of Acts history? There is actually an account in our Western civilization of this occurring 70 years ago this year. The year was 1949. It was on the backside of what we know as WWII in a place over in Europe called the Hebrides Islands, a place where the people were seeking and desiring for God to move among them and they prayed and they prayed and they prayed to no avail. You can go back and you can read the accounts. There was a man by the name of Duncan Campbell, a well-esteemed pastor in those days who was called to these islands and they sought his advice. They said, "What do we do?" And he basically said, "Just keep doing what you're doing. Keep praying. Keep longing, Keep grieving." They told stories of prayer meetings – listen to this – that would last until 4 in the morning. Four in the morning! And yet nothing, but they didn't quit and they didn't give up. Duncan Campbell arrived on the scene. They were having services, they were having prayer meetings to no avail and finally one evening they were gathered up, it was about midnight, they were continuing in their time of prayer and they were in a little cottage there in the Hebrides Islands. There was just about a dozen or more folks in there. Duncan Campbell records this in his journal that he felt led to ask a young blacksmith to pray. Not an ordained pastor, not a missionary, not a worship leader, just what you and I would call a regular individual who worked with his hands who loved the Lord. That night as recorded in Duncan Campbell's journal, he prayed a prayer very similar to Acts 4. He said, "God, you told us that you would bring rain to a dry and thirsty land. We have prayed. We have begged. We've done everything we know what to do and you have not delivered. God, your honor is at stake."

Can you imagine praying that prayer? I'm gonna be honest with you, if that, if any of you prayed that prayer in my locale, I'm gonna get at least 12 feet away from you. Do you know why? Because lightning has a 12 foot radius. I'm getting out of the way. But do you know what happened that night? When he completed that prayer, according to those that were there, that little cottage began to shake, the plates actually fell off and hit the floor, and at 1 in the morning they went out and there were 600 people in their pajamas who brought their own chairs and begged Duncan Campbell to share Jesus with them. You see, we read these stories in Haggai, we read them in Acts and we say, "Well, that's just Bible stories." No. There are actually people today who are alive that can tell us what happened in the Hebrides. There are people alive that can tell us what happened in the Jesus movement. But there is none of us who remember what it looked like to go from coast to coast. We need to realize the capacity of the Lord.

Back to Haggai, we also need to remember the consequences, the consequences of our past rebellion. For the sake of time, I'm not gonna read verses 10 through 19 but allow me to summarize: if we don't get right, it gets bad quick. Remember, the Lord has moved mightily, we contemplate that, the fact that the Lord has a capacity to move beyond even our capacity, we've looked at that, but we need to remember the consequences of our past rebellion and this is where it may seem like and hopefully it is a little bit personal tonight,

we as a culture, even we as a church and I don't mean the church in its local setting, I mean church in its universal setting, we have become immeasurably arrogant in these days. For some reason, our culture believes that we are proverbially bullet-proof. We can do anything we want, we can celebrate any lifestyle, we can ordain any sin and we'll just make it through it. Here's the problem with that: you might want to go take a trip to Greece and see how they're doing. You might want to take a flight to Rome and see how they're doing. By the way, while you're there, why don't you stop off in England and see how they are. Why? Because those are the places where at one point biblical Christianity thrived. Biblical Christianity. Now I know Greece was actually the Old Testament but that being said, the people of the Lord who were faithful to the things of the Lord. At one time, those were places, the epicenters of faith and the celebration thereof, do you know what we've relegated them to now? A couple of pages in a history book and typically we talk about the art and the culture and the inventions and such, but yet all three of those, and there are many more that we could name, got arrogant and said, "Ah, we don't need God anymore. We got this." Where are they today on the map?

Now I know they're technically there but today in England, churches that used to run four and five thousand people on Sunday evening have been relegated to discotheques hotels and bars. Lest you think we won't go the same path, let me remind you that it wasn't long ago that a Baptist church was turned into a mosque in Tennessee. Times are a'changing, brother. The problem is you and I have received news in the last 48 hours of horrific tragedy on our land whether it be in El Paso or Dayton, Ohio, you can't put words to the tragedy there, and yet have you heard anybody crying for prayer? Have you heard anybody who has any "authority" in our culture, have you heard anybody say, "We need to turn to God!" What's everybody saying? "We need new laws! New legislation! We need more control!" Do you know what? You can get all the laws you want and get all the control you want, unless God touches us, it's not gonna change anything. But we're not crying out for that. In fact, if somebody began to shout out, "Oh, we just need to get back to the Bible," they probably would be relegated to the back page of the newspaper and pushed off the platform. We need to remember the consequences of past rebellion. It did not bode for those well that went before us and it's not going to work for us as well.

So here is the promise of God beginning in verse 20. Here's what we have to rest our hope on. Hopefully the Lord will touch again, hopefully revival will take place again, but in verse 20 it says,

20 And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, 21 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; 22 And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. 23 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.

What is the Lord proclaiming? What is he prophesying there? That there is gonna come a day where it doesn't matter how many of the powerful of this earth gather together, he is going to descend, as it says in Revelation 19, out of the heavens, he is gonna touch the earth and he is gonna overthrow every kingdom, what it says here according to Scripture, of the heathen, those who are opposed and contrary to him. It is my hope, it is my desire as I mentioned this morning, that we would be in a place that we could call Goshen, in the midst of the chaos where there is absolute darkness, we can live in a place that is the light.

That being said, one thing we do know is this: that those have risen and fallen in days past because of their spiritual arrogance, we may live in a place that will soon one day fall on its spiritual ignorance, but even if that occurs, it does not refute the truth that one day the Lord is coming back and it doesn't matter what one's geographical location was, it doesn't matter what person's first language of speech was or the color of their skin was, it says the Lord's gonna overthrow all of the earth's kingdoms and establish his for all of eternity.

There is a statement that I've probably said so many times that some of you have just let it go in one ear and out the other but can I share it again? You do know that eternity is too long to be wrong, right? It's too long to be wrong and no matter how much earthly success, earthly accolades and wealth one builds here, there's coming a day where that's all gonna go by the wayside, the Lord's gonna set up his kingdom and you and I have the privilege of reigning with him. Until that day, we long not only for his appearing and for his return but we also long for him to touch earth and to bring a movement that only he can that hopefully prayerfully might even start right here.

Let's pray.

With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, I know as we gather on an evening such as tonight that tonight's one of those times where we're kind of in the family room, so to speak, but maybe you're here tonight and maybe you're that individual for whatever reason has never come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. We want to give you that opportunity. Maybe you're that individual tonight who needs to acknowledge their sin and confess their belief in Jesus Christ. The Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord should be saved. Tonight we invite you to do that. We not only invite you to call out for the Lord to save you but in a moment as we stand and sing, we want to invite you to make your way up to this front area and we want to celebrate with you. This is not a place of condemnation, this is a place of celebration. Or maybe tonight you're one of those who's confessed faith years ago but has never followed in biblical baptism. Today we had the privilege on our campus of observing six young people do so. Maybe that's where you are tonight or maybe you're like many who came to me today saying, "This is our church family. This is where we want to make it official, we want to make it formal. This is our home." We would invite you as well. Or maybe tonight you just need to pray with somebody. In a moment as we have our time of response, we want you to know this is a time of celebration, not condemnation. If the Lord through his Spirit leads you to step out

and step forward, we want to celebrate whatever the Lord is doing in your life this evening.

O God, tonight as we come to this time of decision, Lord, your Holy Spirit has operated through your word to touch our lives and our hearts and, God, I know that you're big enough to touch us all at the same time with the same message but yet differently. So God, I pray that whatever decision needs to be made, whatever response needs to take place, may we just be faithful this evening. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm gonna ask you to stand with me in our time of invitation, whatever decision, I'll be right here at the front.