

Where Are We
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Will you pray with me?

Lord, as we pause this moment in preparation for the reading, for the hearing, for the studying of your word, Lord, we recognize that it is your grace that has found us as we were wandering and running. Lord, you have reached down and your grace has found us, it has saved us, it has forgiven us, it has healed us and, Lord, we call on that grace right now as we study your word not only a grace that saves and heals but a grace that enlightens and shows and gives clarity. So, Lord, we ask you today, give us clarity from your word. Show us what we need to know so that as we walk in your grace, we can be the people you've called us to be. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning I want to ask you to open your Bibles to the book of Matthew 1. Now, as you turn to Matthew 1, you're going to discover this is a very unique portion of Scripture in your Bible and today is going to be kind of a unique message from Matthew 1 in several ways, the first of which, if you are a first-time guest or visitor with us, I'm up here a little earlier than normal, usually I'm a little bit later in the service but today's message is going to be lengthier than normal so that's a little bit unique. It's going to be a little bit longer, a lot more content, so to speak. The second aspect of uniqueness is today is not the first time that I have ever communicated this message from Matthew 1. In fact, I have probably shared the content you're going to hear today in various forms and formats hundreds of times. Now, that doesn't compare to a man who many of you may have heard of named R. G. Lee. He was a pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee who preached a famous sermon entitled "Payday Some Day." He preached it over 1,200 times so if R. G. Lee cannot preach the same message 1,200 times, I can preach the same message several hundred times.

But that being said, it's kind of unique because this may not be the first time you've heard this message because of the wonders of the internet and all that and it's available, at least as far as the past is concerned. I've spoken this at some length on a Wednesday night several months ago. And allow me to share with you that this won't be the last time you hear this contact here. In fact, one of the practices that I've had over the last decade is sharing this information at least once a year with the church body just as a reminder to this important question, to answer: where are we? I believe every one of us senses that there is something different in the air, there is something in our culture, there is something in our country and in our communities, we just sense that there is change on

the horizon. There is a difference. There is something that's happening and we can't quite pinpoint it.

Today's message from Matthew 1:17, we are going to go back thousands of years in history and we're going to discover something very important: that God has given us truth. God has given us principles and philosophies that if we will just heed what he told us in this very simple verse, it will help us to understand not just the world that we live in but the life we are called to live.

Matthew 1:17, we find ourselves in the midst of the genealogy of Jesus. Admittedly those of you who have begun this year with a Bible reading program if you started in the New Testament, this is one of those chapters that you struggle with. So-and-so begat So-and-so, that beget So-and-so and finally you're wondering how many begets do we have to have until we get to the good stuff. But in verse 17 there is this one obscure, unique, you almost kind of look at it twice verse, it says,

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

Over the course of the next few moments, we're going to take this one verse and we're going to kind of unpack it and discover that beginning in Genesis 12 with Abraham, God has just given us an entire history of the Israelite people in one single verse.

Now before we delve into it in particular, the first thing we need to do is we need to define some very specific terms in relationship to verse 17. The first term or the first concept is the idea of time. Time as you and I know it, chronology is linear. What I mean by that is there will hopefully be a tomorrow, there definitely was a yesterday but as far as today is concerned, this hour, this time period, this moment, we cannot recapture it. Time is linear. It continues to go forth and though we may long to speed it up or though we may desire to revisit the past, we are incapable of doing so because time is linear.

History is much different. History is cyclical. In other words, we see the same stories, the same events, just the names have been changed. Some of the most famous commentary in regards to history as being cyclical are such as this: the one thing that men do not learn from history is to learn from history; and those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. So what we discover is even though time is linear, you can't get the past back, you can't hurry up the future, we discover that as we look back through the lens of time, we discover that the history of humanity, the history of cultures and communities, is cyclical. We repeat the same mistakes, we endeavor the same opportunities and often times with very similar results.

Which brings about the word that kind of combines time and history, this word generation. It says here in verse 17 that there were 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 generations from David until the carrying away, and 14 generations from the

carrying away unto Christ. When you combine that concept to time and history into a generation, you actually get varied concepts. You know, when we think of a generation today, most typically we think of a chronological period. Our parents' generation, our grandparents' generation, our children, our grandchildren's generation. We typically think of it, it's just a strict time period of chronology of living. But Jesus himself used this word "generation" in two very distinct ways. He spoke of it chronologically but he also spoke of it philosophically. What I mean as philosophical generation, think back to your Old Testament. You would have a king that would do the ways of the Lord. His son would be doing the things of God. His grandson would walk in the ways of the Lord. But his great-grandson would build back the idols and the groves and he would go away from the things of God. You would have four chronological generations but only two philosophical generations. So even though you had four chronological generations, you had two distinct different ways of thinking and Jesus addressed this.

Let's begin with the philosophical. In Matthew 12, Jesus is preaching and teaching a large group of people. They are on the hillside and they come to him saying, "We want a sign. Show us something more. Sure, you've walked on water, you've fed the thousands, we want something big. We want something supernatural." Jesus says, "I'm only going to give you one sign, as Jonah was in the belly of the whale, so I," speaking of himself, "will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights." He said, "You want a sign? Here's your sign. They are going to bury me and three days later the tomb is going to be empty." But what's important for our study today is on that hillside there would have been senior adults, there would have been young adults, there would have been young children, there would have been median adults. Most likely with the crowd size, there would have been every chronological generation known to man. Here's what's important, Jesus gave us this commentary in Matthew 12: an adulterous generation seeks after a sign. He didn't speak just to young adults or just to senior adults or just to kids, he was speaking to the crowds. He said, "Your way of thinking is wrong." But later in Matthew 24 in what we know as the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, speaking of the end times and his second coming, he would make this famous statement in regards to the parable of the fig tree. He said, "When you see it begin to bloom, know it is the last generation." So Jesus Christ himself used this term both in a chronological sense and in a philosophical sense.

You say, "Well, why is that so important to Matthew 1:17?" It doesn't matter how much time you spend, how much study you put into it or how much you desire to reconcile it, you cannot reconcile this verse strictly by chronology. In other words, if you go to Abraham unto David and from David unto the carrying away into Babylon and from Babylon to the time of Christ, all three of these time periods have different lengths, all three of them have more than 14 specific chronological generations but you will discover that both when you blend the philosophical and the chronology of it, that it all works out. Why is that so important for our understanding today? Because we're going to see in just a moment that God's blueprint and his formula for cultures and communities and for generations has not changed and maybe the thing we need to learn today is to learn from history lest we repeat the same mistakes.

It says there were 14 generations from Abraham to David, and 14 from David to the carrying away, 14 from the carrying away unto Christ. Now there are those individuals out there today who are a lot smarter and more intelligent than I am, social scientists and such, and they have discovered as they began to go through and look at cultures not just ours but cultures across the ocean and cultures in times past, they have discovered a very unique phenomena and it's amazing. You know, oftentimes we think the Bible needs to catch up with us, I'm convinced we're spending time trying to catch up with the Bible because God has laid things out. If we would just read what he says maybe it would guide us into a clearer understanding. One of the things they've discovered is that it doesn't matter what the culture is, it doesn't matter if it's East culture or West culture, back then culture, today culture, that oftentimes the significance of a culture has a 14 generation time span. Interesting. The same thing God told us in Matthew 1:17.

But allow me to show with you how this plays out in our lives and then we're going to go back to verse 17. Within this cycle of generations, within this history, we discover that it doesn't matter what the culture is, American culture, British culture, Chinese culture, Jewish culture, it doesn't matter, that within the cycle of history as the generations come and as the generations go, they've discovered that within these cultures there are these events known as turnings and by definition that means something significant has occurred, something has changed significantly.

Allow me just to use our culture here in America because it's the one that the most of us are the most familiar with. The first one would be called the American Revolution. Let me give you a little insight. In 1775 we were British, by 1776 we were American. In other words, it was such a significant seismic event in the history of us as a people it changed us. It defined us. It determined who we would be.

As the generations began to cycle through, the next great what we call turning or significant event will be known as the Civil War, a time period that beforehand there was great division. And even though there was still division afterwards, probably philosophically at least legally, there was a unification. It was a significant time period where we would decide would we be two different countries or will we have our differences but still be one.

The next major turning or event in this culture is what we know as the Great Depression and World War II. It would be a time period that Tom Brokaw would call the greatest generation. Would we continue to be the land of freedom? Would we continue to propagate democracy? Or would we fall to fascism? Would we fall to the ideology of dictatorships and be like the rest of the world? As we gathered with what we know as the Allied powers, there was a battle and many that were fought and it would be determined who would we be.

You see, what's significant about these "turnings" these cycles of generations, is that every "fourth turning" a culture, a community, a group of people has to make a very important decision: do we continue to be the people that we started to be or do we cut a new path? Do we change directions? Why is this so important to Matthew 1:17? Why is it

important to your life today? Because you and I find ourselves at that juncture in history once again. We are at that point where the generations have turned to such a level where we must as a culture now decide will we continue to be the people that we have been for hundreds of years or will we change course, will we change directions?

Allow me to illustrate kind of how this works in everyday life so you'll see how this has happened. Right now today though it is an occasional rarity that you'll find somebody with what we call a five generation picture, at any given time the majority of a culture there are four generations that are alive and well. And as we come out of a turning and the last one that we experienced was what we know as World War II, there is a time period of what we call the high. There is this almost euphoric mentality that everything is great, there's food on the table, there is shelter above us, everybody is getting along. It was the mentality of the late 40s, the 50s, maybe even into the early 60s. It was the day of "Leave it to Beaver, Father knows Best, Sunday, Monday, Happy Days, Tuesday, Wednesday, Happy Days." Everybody is just having happy days. Everything is great.

That generation that has children and that next-generation is called the awakening. This in our culture would probably be the mid to late 60s through the middle 70s, a time period where we decided as a culture we want to explore something new, we want to push the envelope, what can we experience that we've never experienced before? We became a culture who tried things we never tried, went places we had never gone, and experimented with things we never experimented with before. In fact, kind of the mentality of that time period can be summed up by a group that came across the ocean known as the Rolling Stones. Now, it's really bad English but it's a good lyric when he says, "I can't get no satisfaction, but I tried and I tried and I tried." Then a man in 1971 by the name of Don McLean wrote these lyrics, he said, "Bye-bye, Miss American Pie, I drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry." They had tried everything they could try, experimented with everything they could experiment. They wanted to awaken themselves.

Then they produced a generation who chronologically I find myself in. My grandparents are part of the high, my parents are a part of the awakening, I'm an unraveler and if you're about my age, you are an unraveler too. You say, "What is an unraveler?" We think the sky is falling. Everything is falling apart. In fact, if you want to look at it through the lens of music, my generation's music, a good majority of it came from Seattle and that part of the world where it rains 364 1/2 days a year. It's dark. It's depressing. And most of the music that my generation wrote either expressed a desire to end it all or to end one's life. It's unraveling.

But now my generation is having children and whether they be in the college classroom or still in the nursery, they are growing up with great grandparents who think everything's okay, grandparents who are still trying to get that euphoric high, and parents who think the world is coming to an end, and yet these are the individuals who are going to walk through one of the most historic time periods in the history of our culture. Why? Because we are now at that fourth turning. The first one was the Revolution, the second the Civil War, the third was World War II and now we find ourselves knocking on history's door.

Not only are we at that critical juncture of history but we find ourselves whether it be in the nursery or in the college classroom, we find ourselves now raising the 14th American generation.

You know, the one thing they say about history is that people do not learn from it. What did God say in Matthew 1:17? He said the generations from Abraham to David are 14 generations, from David to the carrying away are 14 generations, and from the carrying away unto Christ are 14 generations. What can we learn about this 14th generation in Israel's history?

Well, it begins from Abraham to David. Now, Abraham shows up in Genesis 12 in your Bible. He's up there in the Ur of the Chaldees. He's minding his own business and all of a sudden God says, "Do you want to do something new? Do you want me to see me bless the nations through you?" He says, "I would love that." He says, "Even though you and your wife do not have as a child as of yet, you will have a child of promise." The Bible records that he takes Sarah, his wife, his snotty nosed nephew, Lot, they go down to a land that they knew not of and what we know as the Jewish people began, Abraham and Isaac and the 12 tribes. But how did God mark that? What was the covenant? What was the statement that they were a part of his plan? The Bible records that it was circumcision. It was a cutting of the flesh. That's what determined whether you were a part of his covenant or not. It established that, "I am trusting, I am believing. This is who I am." And as you read your Old Testament from the days of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob unto the days of David, what was the foundation, what was the under girding, what established them as a people was circumcision. It was the mark of a covenant.

But then you study the life of David. Notice it says, from Abraham to David are 14 generations. You study the life of David and as he is grown to middle and median age, he is struggling. He's a lot like where you are right now, wondering what's happening. Something is different in the air. I just sense it. In fact, he got so desperate one day he called on a group of people known as the Issacharites, people who knew the times, and he got a counsel together and he said, "Tell me what's happening." You see, David had one very simple desire: he wanted to build a temple. He wanted to build a permanent place for the presence of God. But you remember the story, right? God said, "No, not you. Your hands are bloody. This is for your son, Solomon."

So that circumcision that began with Abraham unto the time of David and then David dies. Notice what it says in verse 17, from David. Who was it that came from David? It was Solomon, the man who the Lord entrusted to build that first temple. The Bible records that they went and got all the trees from Lebanon. That's why if you go to Google Earth, there are no trees in Lebanon today. They took all the trees. They said that they layered everything with gold, even the door hinges. And in 1 Kings 8 it says that when the Spirit of God showed up that first day of dedication, it was so thick they had to worship in what we would call the parking lot. You see, when Solomon built that temple, circumcision was still critical, don't get me wrong, but that temple was the focus of their culture. That temple was the foundation of who they were. They would celebrate by

going to the feasts whether it be Pentecost or whatever it may be, they would go to the temple, that was the central point of their lives.

Notice what it says, and from David to the carrying away into Babylon. The year was 586 BC. A man had risen to power by the name of Nebuchadnezzar and even though God had warned the people of the South, the Judeans that it was going to happen, they didn't listen. Nebuchadnezzar comes in in 586 and he tears down Jerusalem, he tears down the temple and for 70 years the people of God would find themselves in exile. They would find themselves in captivity.

I want you to think about this for a moment in verse 17: from Abraham to David 14 generations, what was the foundation of the Jewish people? It was circumcision. From David or Solomon into the carrying away, what was their cultural foundation? It was that temple that had been built. But when they found themselves in Babylon there was no temple. There was no opportunity for worship as they had known it. For 70 years people like Ezekiel and Daniel and Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego and Esther and Nehemiah and Ezra, they cried out to God and God heard their cries. They were allowed to go back after 70 years. You read the story of Ezra and Nehemiah, they rebuilt that wall in Jerusalem. They rebuilt that temple. When that temple was dedicated, again, that second temple was the foundation of who they were as a people of God.

I want you to notice what verse 17 says, from Abraham to David, from David to the carrying away, from the carrying away unto Christ. When Jesus Christ's ministry begins, there is a lot of talk about the temple. He overturns the tables in the temple. He communicates at the feasts of the temple. And then in his last earthly days, he communicates from the Mount of Olives very clearly. He says that, "though every rock of this temple be torn down, I will rebuild it in three days." They begin to question him. They say, "Jesus, it took 46 years for Nehemiah and Ezra and these guys to rebuild this place, how can you build it in three days?" To which then it says that they did not know he spoke of his body. And when the death of Jesus Christ took place, the veil was torn. The physical temple in a specific geographical location was no longer of necessity because 1 Corinthians 6 says that we now are the temple of God. We now are indwelt with the Spirit of God.

Why is this significant for us? Because it says that from Abraham to David were 14 generations, from David to the carrying away were 14 generations, and from the carrying away to Christ are 14 generations. Just like in Israel's day, just like in past cultures' day, we today find ourselves in a very interesting juncture of history. Not only are we going through that fourth what we know as turning, that time period that if we're not already there, we're about to be there in history, but we now have our 14th generation and the question must be asked: will we be who we initially were or will we cut a different path? Will we change paths?

You see, today I want to share with you one of the things that the history books won't share with you. Yes, we've had these three significant events in our history, what we know as the American Revolution, the Civil War and World War II, but we rarely talk

about what happened right before it. You see, as you begin to study history from an honest perspective and not just an agenda filled perspective, you will discover that there was an amazing thing that happened before all three of these incredible events: a major movement of God.

In fact, beginning in the early 1700s, about 1720, there was an event that most of us are familiar with called the first great awakening. It began in the middle colonies. It eventually went to the upper colonies and finally got down here to the southern colonies. But kind of that pivotal event, the marker, that spiritual marker of the first great awakening took place in 1741. A pastor that I truly can look down upon, his name was Jonathan Edwards; he would have physically been a little bit shorter than I am. That's why I would love to meet him one day. It's not going to happen but Jonathan Edwards was short in stature. He would preach by reading his notes for in excess of two hours at a time. Go home today and thank the Lord for your pastor that it's not that. Hard wood pews. Excitement is not a word that you would have used. But in July 1741, he preached a very famous message you may have read in English class called, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." From the book of Deuteronomy, he spoke.

There were about 250 people present that day at that little church. Before he finished his sermon, over 200 of them on their own volition ran to the front and began to cry out, "God, save me! Forgive me for I have sinned against you!" It was a picture of what we know of that revival that took place leading up to what we know as the Revolution. There were so many people saved, there were so many people called to preach the Gospel, we needed new schools, we needed new seminaries, we needed to train these people to go to the world to share the Gospel. And to this day with the exception of two of them, all of what you and I know as the Ivy League schools were started as seminaries. They were started to train people to teach the Bible and to preach Jesus. Princeton started as a seminary. Dartmouth started as a seminary. Brown started as a seminary. Isn't it interesting today that the institutions of higher learning that are most critical of the Bible were started to teach the Bible. You see, the first great awakening was so vast we created new institutions to train all the preachers that were coming out of it. People say, "How did we get through that Revolution? I mean, that was a horrific, critical time period?" We forget there was a major move of God right beforehand.

Let's move to the Civil War, you know that famed event in the 1860s. Most people have never heard of the layman's prayer revival. Most people have never heard of a man by the name of Lanphier who in 1858 left his high-paying job, went to New York City as a missionary, decided to reach the people of New York City. He didn't know what he was doing. He wasn't formally trained. He was just a layman. So what did he do? He put placards up and he said, "I'm going to have a prayer meeting on a specific time, a specific date on the third floor of the old Dutch Reformed Church." That day came and he went to pray beginning at 12 noon. Nobody showed for 40 minutes. How grateful I am that he hung in there for after about 40 or 45 minutes there were a few other individuals who arrived. They prayed until 1 o'clock. They committed to each other that they would come the next day and the next and the next. Pretty soon almost all of New York City was stopping from noon to one to pray. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, cities in New Jersey, in

Massachusetts, all the major cities were affected. Between 1858 and the beginning of what we know as the Civil War, over 1 million people came to know Jesus as their Savior. Let me put that in contemporary context: in our culture today with the population that we have today, that would be as if the entire state of Texas got saved.

Let me ask you a question: do you think that would change our culture? Do you think that would change our schools? Do you think that would change our country if that many people came to know Jesus? It changed us. In fact, as you study the Civil War, the bloodiest of wars we've ever been in, it was horrific. Brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor, but what history doesn't share with you is that when the sun went down and the bodies were being collected, the Union soldiers would invite Confederate chaplains to come do Bible study, and Confederate soldiers would invite Union chaplains to come do Bible study because they realized that even though they had major differences in the flesh, they had had revival. They had met Jesus in the days preceding. You say, "How did we get through that?" I'm going to tell you how we got through it: we got through it because we had yielded ourselves to God before we got into it.

Then we get to what we know as the Depression and World War II. I like to call this the great tent revival. In fact, as you begin to study the secular literature of America in the 19 teens and the 20s, you will discover that almost every city across the land had a tent up where there were people preaching and singing every night. All kinds of stories have been written about the countryside and the revivals of these days. The Billy Sunday's of the world came out of this time period. From coast to coast, untold numbers of people not only got saved but surrendered their life to the Lord.

My favorite story that comes out of this time period actually comes from the church, the physical church where Tracy and I were married almost 21 years ago. It comes out of the business meeting minutes. Now, I know what you're thinking, "How can something spiritual come out of the minutes of a business meeting of a church?" It just so happens that in the midst of talking about the budgets and the buildings, in the 20s this little church in the middle of Nowhere, Texas, these are the readings of the minutes. This was documented, put in the minutes of the church that currently there are no known prostitutes in our city. I've got news for you, folks, if you can say that in a business meeting you're having revival. If those places are no longer in business, if sin is no longer in the streets or even hidden behind dark doors. There was a movement of God that got us through that third turning.

So we find ourselves today, the same situation much like the American Revolution, the Civil War, World War II, knocking on the door of history. And I'm going to ask you a very rhetorical question: where is the revival? Where is the movement? Where has the move of God been leading up to today? You see, one of the problems is we have been so busy being consumed with what we wanted, we have forgotten to look out and see what is happening in history and we are there. We are at that point, not just of a generational turning, but we have in our homes as children and grandchildren, we have the 14th generation of this culture.

Notice what happened in Matthew 1:17. They went from circumcision to the temple, from a temple to exile and another temple. In other words, something seismic happened. Have you ever felt like there is something seismic on the horizon? The reason you sense that is because there is. We are living history and the question begs us: what will we do with what we know? Because as a parent of what we call a millennial, those in the college classroom down to the nursery, we did not instrument revival. We were too busy saying the sky was falling. Those of you who are grandparents of the newest of our generations, so busy consumed with the next greatest whatever, never saw revival. And the great-grandparents so excited about what had happened in the past, never thought about the future. You see, there hasn't been a great revival, there hasn't been a movement of God and I know who you can blame. Don't blame the politicians. No, no, no. Don't blame the media. Don't blame the celebrities. Go home and look in the mirror and that's who you blame because you and I have been so self-consumed we didn't even bother looking at where we were in time and we are knocking on the door.

You may be thinking, "So what do I do about it? Okay, so it's reality. There have got to be some answers here." Well, I don't have all the answers but I've got one little small piece of the pie: next week, you may not be aware of this but next week there is a significant event that's going to happen on this campus, it's called Disciple Now. If you're not familiar with it, seventh through 12th graders will gather not just on this campus but specifically in this room. They will have a weekend of worship and Bible study and service and as of right now, there is about 250 young people that will be in this place next week and over a hundred adults volunteers facilitating. But listen to this: at least 12 different schools will be represented next weekend in this place. Now, I want you to think about that: 250 teenagers from 12 different schools. What would it look like if 1741 revisited us next weekend? Remember Jonathan Edwards? About 250 people? I can promise you that it will be more exciting next weekend. I can promise you there will be more energy next weekend. What would happen if among those 250 teenagers, what would happen if repentance took place? What would happen if forgiveness? What would happen if salvation? What would happen to their homes? What would happen to their schools? What would happen to the communities?

You see, you and I do a great job about complaining and not such a good job about doing. We love to say, "This generation, that generation. I can't believe they act this way. I can't believe they..." I'm going to tell you, it's our fault. We did not usher in revival, why would they act any differently? But this weekend here's what we can do: we can pray for these young people. In fact, all around our campus, visitor center, all of the ushers have them, there are prayer cards for Disciple Now weekend. Pray for these young people. Pray for the adults. Pray that revival happens. Can you imagine what would happen to our county, what would happen to our state, what would happen to our country if all of a sudden 250 kids from 12 different schools got real serious about Jesus. It might look like the past.

You see, when we say the one thing we don't learn from history is to learn from it, we forget that there is not just a negative history, there is also a positive history. You see, it's

at this juncture in history that there has been a time of renewal and there has been a time of revival. It has not occurred yet but it could occur again.

Not only do we pray but next Sunday when we show up to our worship service as we join with these teenagers, let us celebrate whatever God does in their life. If there has ever been a time to be serious about our walk with Jesus, it's right now, folks. It's real easy to say what about next week, next month, next year, next generation. Do not ignore history. You and I are walking through the door right now. It was 14 generations from Abraham to David, it was 14 from David to the carrying away, it was 14 from the carrying to the time of Christ, and you and I right now are walking alongside that critical generation in our culture as well. What will we do with what we know?

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed as we prepare for our time of invitation. Maybe you're that individual today, maybe you don't need to wait until Disciple Now, maybe you don't need to hear another sermon, maybe you're that person right here right now much like when Jonathan Edwards was preaching and said, "I need to be saved. I need to be forgiven. I need to repent of my sins." I've got great news for you, it can happen right here, right now. All you have to do is have a real serious conversation with God. It doesn't have to be long. It doesn't have to be out loud. Maybe it would sound a little something like this, "God, I just want you to know that I know that I'm the problem. I've messed up and I've sinned but I believe that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem. I believe he was born for me, I believe he lived for me, I believe he died for me, I believe he rose from the dead so I be forgiven and I could be saved. And God, I don't know all the answers in life but I do know that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem so 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."

Or maybe you are that person today who has already made that decision. You've never followed in believers' baptism. Maybe today is the day you walk forward and say, "I'm ready to celebrate what Jesus has done in my life in front of everybody." Or maybe you're that individual, that couple or that family, who maybe today God put kind of the final piece to the puzzle and you realize that this is the church, this is the place, this is the family of faith that you're supposed to be a part of. Whether it be one of those decisions or another, in a moment I'm going to pray over us and you have the opportunity to step out and step forward. We just want to celebrate with whatever God is doing in your life.

Lord, as we come to this time of invitation, how good it is to know that your grace finds us, that as we wander and as we go through life, your desire is no less than to extend your grace toward us. We thank you for the conviction of your Holy Spirit, the truth of your word and I pray whatever it is you have laid on our heart today, that we would just yield it to you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to ask you to stand with me. Whatever decision, you come and we will be here at the front.