

The Who's Who of Hebrews

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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We know if his eye is on the sparrow, then surely he is watching me.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we prepare for the study of your word, Lord, we recognize not only in song but also in verse that there is nothing in this world that escapes your attention no matter how minute we may believe that it appears or its value may be. Lord, if your eye is on that sparrow, Lord, we know that you have great interest in us so help us, O God, to realize our place in your world but more importantly the place you should have in ours. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I want to encourage you again to turn to the book of Hebrews 11. I mentioned this morning that even though we don't elevate any portion of Scripture above any others, this is just one of those chapters that I believe is at least worthy of two messages from, Hebrews 11 as we'll discuss in more detail in a moment, oftentimes people call the Hall of Fame of faith, tonight we're going to address the Who's Who of Hebrews, but in light of that which we have celebrated together in worship, I think it would be apropos as we talk about a Hall of Fame to address a situation that took place almost 2 decades ago.

I was privileged in the year 2000 to be in Indianapolis, Indiana for the duration of the Billy Graham Crusade that took place that year, the early fall of that year. And if you've had the privilege of being at a Billy Graham Crusade, particularly in what I would call the contemporary ages, not necessarily back in the 50s and 60s or the international Crusades, but at least late 80s and on, there is a typical format that took place and typically at one point throughout the portion of the service, there would be a high-profile celebrity with a testimony that would share their faith story. Oftentimes it would be someone who was in the entertainment industry, someone who was a high-profile actor or actress, singer whatnot, but in Indianapolis that week, it seemed that the theme was that of the sports world and every night there was a new sports figure who had a testimony of salvation through Jesus Christ that would get up for just a few moments and tell their story.

Well, if you kind of put that aside, one of the reasons that I was there to kind of get a behind-the-scenes of what took place not just in the Billy Graham Crusades but more importantly how they took those that made decisions and they began the process of pairing them up and communicating with local churches, their need to do follow-up with them. So because of that, I had what we might call privileged access, let's just be very simple, I had a backstage pass at the Billy Graham Crusade, and one of the things that at least at that Indiana Crusade that took place was because of where the choir was seated versus where the platform was and where all the skirting for the television cameras and such, what we might call backstage was actually a large open area probably about half the size of this sanctuary and it was where everybody would gather. That is where anybody who was associated with that night's events whether they were going to be speaking, singing, giving an announcement or they were relatives there or friends, anybody who had one of those big plastic badges could make their way back to that area. The reason that that is significant is that that week I had the privilege each and every night of meeting a variety of athletes who now have been selected into their sports Hall of Fame. They were great athletes at the time, they were all active in their sports, they were all very well known and had large followings, as you can imagine. Now that their careers have ended, they have been selected into their Hall of Fame.

One night, I'll never forget, there was a very well-known athlete who, shall I say, the crowds were bustling about, and even though we were singing in what was then known as the RCA Dome, people were bustling around, trying to get autographs and such, and I looked out of the corner of my eye and there sitting on a bench by himself was a very stately elderly man with big, thick, black-rimmed glasses. I went and sat by him. I said, "How are you doing tonight, sir?" And he looked at me with that deep bass voice and he said, "Why would you want to come over here and sit by an old man with all this stuff going on?" And I said, "Because, sir, you're the one who sang 'I'd rather have Jesus.'" It was funny that everybody was flocking to the sports stars and no one realized that someone who had already been put in the Hall of Fame was sitting among them, George Beverly Shea. You know, one of the blessings of knowing someone like that, at least what they look like, is because nobody else knew who he was. I had a great 20-25 minute conversation with him. It was a wonderful opportunity. It was a wonderful time and I would say that he had a lovely voice but he even had a better laugh.

That being said, as we turn to Hebrews 11, it is in this chapter that we find those like those athletes that we expect to see, I mean, how can you have a Hall of Fame without Abraham and Moses and David? And then there are those that sometimes you look and say of all the people, that's who's listed? Whether it be Rahab or Esau and Jacob or Jacob and Isaac, whoever it may be, you know, you just kind of look and say, "Well, I understand those but I didn't realize that." And as we pick up the story in verse 32, I want to read through the end of this famous chapter regarding the Hall of Fame of faith and then because of what we have titled this chapter, I'm going to apologize in advance that there's going to be a lot of sports allusions this evening as we take that which is so well-known in our culture and kind of overlay the Scripture and see how the Lord is speaking. It says in verse 32,

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

As we read kind of that second half of what we know as this famous chapter regarding the Hall of Fame of faith, there are as I mentioned this morning, roughly some two dozen specific individuals, characters, men and women who are mentioned, but by the time we get to verse 33 and on, there are descriptions of individuals who we can go back and say, I'd be willing to say it's the story of that individual but we're not told conclusively. In fact, what I love about this last part of Hebrews 11 is it leaves it open for us to interpret, is this only those in the Old Testament era or is it also bringing into that New Testament timeframe those who were martyred for their faith and stoned for their faith as we know of many that were, or because of chapter 12, verse 1, that says, "Let us go forth because we are surrounded with such a great cloud of witnesses," has the Lord even allowed us to supersede the constraints of time and allow these descriptions not to be relegated to the time before Christ, not to be relegated even to the early church time period, but if you've read Fox's "Book of Martyrs" along with other histories of persecution, many of the descriptions that are described here are even taking place this year in specific parts of the world. So this chapter challenges us not just to look back at those who modeled faith, but it challenges us to say how can our faith emulate theirs, and as we'll see at the end of the message, how is it that we one day might be able to find our name written in the same log as theirs.

So four very simple observations about those not only who are listed in Hebrews 11 but those who are described toward the end. The first observation is simply this: that they had a faith, they had a life, they had as a descriptor that which was prolonging. You know, very reminiscent to meet of the parable of the sower and I'm sure you're very familiar with it, it's that one of the 32 parables of Jesus in which he said if you get this one, you can get all of them, and I think one of the reasons he said that is because it's just a timeless story of the decision that we must make when confronted with the truth of Scripture and in particular Jesus Christ, either A we allow the devil to come in and take away the seed and fly away, B we get real excited about what the Lord is doing but

because there is no root in us, we spring up and quickly wither away, but thirdly everything seems to be well, the root is established, fruit begins to be born, but the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and other things seep into our lives, then fourthly there is that one which is on good soil, it is good fruit and it bears some 30, 60, 100 fold. When you look at that parable, when you look at this chapter, you see individuals as we shared this morning, that whether they have successes and/or failures, from our perspective they finished their race and their "lives of faith" were prolonged.

You know, one of the things when we look at what we call the Hall of Fame and tonight specifically if you'll allow me just because it's kind of my comfort zone to stay in the world of sports, you have individuals who are in those specific halls of recognition not because they had one spectacular season, not because sometimes they even had two or three spectacular seasons, but they oftentimes had a career that can be described as prolonged. There was an endurance to it, oftentimes there are statistics not of the number of something done in one season but the number over the entirety of a career.

Allow me if you will, to illustrate tonight one individual who I've not sought permission to use his name but I promise you if I had his cell phone number, I would have texted him to ask and not because we find ourselves in this part of the world and long before I ever moved to the great state of Alabama, I had always considered and always told my boys the best athlete I ever saw play was Bo Jackson and I say that because what he could do on the football field, what he could do on the baseball field was amazing. You've seen the clips of climbing walls, throwing guys out, and then in the next season running past every defensive back that there was, and who could forget on Monday Night Football running over the boss. Man, his career was brief but filled with some of the most amazing highlight yet he's not in the Hall of Fame. Considered by many one of the, if not the greatest athlete that we've ever seen and yet because his career was cut short by injury, an individual who most sports fans would say should be is not. Was his ability there? Of course. Were the statistics there? Absolutely. But because it was over such a brief period of time. And then yet in what we know as the baseball Hall of Fame there is a pitcher of whom a family friend of ours has a relationship with that you may have never heard of in your life that finds himself in Cooperstown, New York, a man by the name of Don Sutton. You know, Don Sutton was an individual who never made the highlight reels, oftentimes you say his name to a younger generation of fans and they don't even know who you're speaking of, yet when you play as long as he did for as consistently as he did, then they call your number and they place you in the hall. One had the highlight films, the other not so much. One is considered one of the greatest, the other one is rarely known and yet their position in their respective Hall of Fame is reversed from what our flesh would naturally say.

The reason I allude to them specifically, does it intrigue you the difference between verse 31 and 32? I mean, verse 32 speaks of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel, I mean, there's no descriptor there. It's like the Lord takes all of these incredible men, puts them in one verse but in verse 31 he gives Rahab an entire verse by herself. Doesn't that seem backwards to you? I mean, David should get his own chapter. Samson should get

his own chapter. These guys should get an incredible amount of quantitative material but it is Rahab who gets more material than they.

Now I'm sure there is lots of speculation of the why that is, but there is one aspect about the person of Rahab, we alluded to it this morning, that must be addressed tonight. In spite of how she began, in spite of the life that was discovered by the spies of which she was living, there is no evidence at all that she got off the path the rest of the days of her life. There is no highlight film, there is no great stories, it is the story of a consistent walk with the Lord, and yet when you read verse 32, these are the men who had the highlight films, is it not? I mean, David is one of whom the women came and sang, "Well, Saul has slain his thousands but David his ten thousands." Jephthae was the man who never lost a single battle. Samson even in his worst days slew more of the Philistines in his final act than the rest of his life combined. Samuel, the great prophet, who trusted the Lord enough to go and to anoint David as the king when nobody else would give him a chance, not even his own family, including his dad. And yet when you look at verse 32, there are also some other highlights. It was Samson who not only ate of the food that he was not allowed to with the Nazirite vow but he gave unto his parents without sharing the truth. When you look at the person of David, we know about that famous Bathsheba incident but there's also the story of his children as they grew in age and how they behaved among each other and how they behaved even after his death. Jephthae, a story you may not be as familiar with but a man who won every battle, trusted the Lord with everything until the final one he didn't believe God could provide, so he made a horrific vow, he said, "God, if you will guarantee a victory for me in this upcoming battle, whoever walks in the door next, I will sacrifice them on your behalf," and it was his daughter who walked in. Samuel, the great prophet and priest of God, whose children were an abomination at best. And even the man by the name of Gideon, the one who trusted the Lord with 300 rather than 30,000, who in his last days he built a golden ephod to celebrate the victories of the Lord and the Bible records that after his death the people of Israel "went a whoring after it." Don't get me wrong, the men that are listed in verse 32 had some incredible highlight films, but when you look at Rahab, there's no evidence of the ups and the downs, just a consistent walk with the Lord all the way from the book of Joshua and Judges through the book of Matthew, Hebrews and James.

So there is this prolonging. On a more relevant note, you and I are in the midst or in the throes of a time period where our community, at least physically and even emotionally, mentally and shall we say spiritually, is being put back together after the last two weeks. You've seen it, I've seen it in other communities and in this, there are a lot of groups, they come in with telethons, they come in with fundraisers, they come in with all kinds of things, they come in and they make a big spectacle and then they run right out of town, and yet as I've heard over and over again in meeting after meeting, that those who are entrenched in this community, myself included, have said we're not interested in the flash and the dash, we're interested in who is going to be here when the cameras leave, who's going to be here when the press finds the newest latest story. You see, when you get to the last part of the book of Hebrews 11, it's not the highlight films as much as it is a prolonged lifelong walk with the Lord.

But what you also see beginning in verse 33 is individuals who persevere through difficult times. I mean, just look at the descriptions here, not only do you have children coming back to life, obviously a reflection back specifically to the ministry of Elijah, but when you talk about people that were torn in two, they were stoned, they were tempted with the sword, they were fleeced in the flesh, what you see in this last part of Hebrews 11 were a group of people who though not specifically given a name or specific incidents, we know that they were willing to persevere.

Some of you may be aware of but this last few months, I took a trip with one of my sons. Just to give you a little background here, one of the things that Tracy and I have done is that when our boys turn 13, they get to take a man trip, that's just them and myself, just the two of us, and we go and, yes, we have a lot of fun and we do some things, but really it's about having conversations that men need to have with their sons; not just talking about who they are at the age they are but talking about who the Lord has hopefully made them to be in the days ahead. So it's a lot of fun but there is a spattering and a sprinkling of some serious conversation and one of the things that I like to do is take something that they're interested in and not specifically make it a dream trip because then that's all fun and no serious, but make it something that's tangent to something that they enjoy. So there is an aspect of fun.

This past January, I took my son George to a place that I have discovered very few people have ever been, the NFL Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. If you've ever been to Canton, Ohio, you know why very few people have ever been. But nonetheless, I thought it would be a trip that would be memorable as it was and so tonight one of the things that I want to share with you are a few pictures from that trip because if there was a theme in the NFL Hall of Fame it was the theme of perseverance. Of all the millions of people that have put on shoulder pads and helmets, only 303 of them have made the Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. A very minuscule amount of individuals and I'm sure that parallels baseball and basketball and such, but if you think about the game of football with the brutality of which it places on one's body, one must persevere through the trials not just of life but of the physicality in order for their careers to be prolonged. There are stories in the Hall of Fame of individuals who played with digits of their fingers missing, there are stories of people playing through incredible pain and injury, but tonight we have a picture I want to show you, kind of a collage of sorts of our trip. You'll see on the bottom left, this is my son George right in front of the main, I guess entrance there, to the Hall of Fame. There he is if you see him, underneath the American flag at George Halas Drive. That's the entrance to the Pro Football Hall of Fame that looks eerily similar today as it did when it first opened up any many years ago.

But it's the other pictures that I want to talk about. You see, one of the things that the Hall of Fame has is they have a special presentation, it's a hologram. If you're not familiar with a hologram, it's a series of lasers and lights and such that makes images look as if they're really in the room even though they are not. And I'm going to be honest with you, as we toured the Hall of Fame and as we went through, we really weren't interested in going to this little hologram presentation. I mean, we wanted to see the helmets and the cleats and we wanted to see the memorabilia of football. Why would we want to go and

sit in a 20 minute presentation hosted by Joe Broadway Namath? I mean, seriously. I mean, that just wasn't something, so we got to where it was going to be, it was on the second floor, that's important in just a moment. It wasn't time yet and the lady that was one of the host, she said, "Guys, trust me, you don't want to miss this." I can't speak for my son but it's one of the most memorable experiences I've ever had outside of a church facility in my life.

Joe Namath is the host and, of course, many of you that know history and particularly when it comes to football know that it was his New York Jets that won the third Super Bowl, that he so blatantly and brazenly predicted a victory therein. Double-digit underdogs. They won 16 to 7 and for the first time a team from the AFL had won the Super Bowl, even though they were predicted not to. The title of the presentation was called "The Game of Life." And even though they interviewed famous football players and even though they talked about those who played the game of football, what's interesting are the individuals who were on the screen that were highlighted in that film of how they had to persevere through so much difficulty not just to play the game but the fact that they would actually be nominated and inducted into the Hall of Fame.

There in the top center, that's Steve Largent. Steve Largent, I guess I identify with him because he was told he was too short to play football. He was an undersized, slow wide receiver. He was a wide receiver that ran the 40 yard dash in 4.8. That's lineman territory, yet he was a wide receiver, undersized, under speed. He was told he was not good enough to play in college, much less in the pros, and he spoke about and that audience that was watching this presentation, primarily it was made up of young people that they brought in from area schools, and he talked about he had to persevere not just in what people thought of him by his physical size and speed but every time he turned around, every time he got on the field somebody told him he was not good enough. And yet he persevered. Even though his height and his speed is not what the experts say it should be, he persevered nonetheless.

The top right, that's Curtis Martin. Curtis Martin was a running back, particularly known for the New England Patriots. Curtis Martin came from a neighborhood that was less than admirable. In fact, one of the things that he said in that presentation, he said he knew that football was the only way that he could receive an education, to get out of the environment that he was in, to get away from the turmoils and the tribulations and the temptations of life, and he talked about that even though his family and even though his friends did not encourage him to study and to make academics a priority, he had to persevere because the only way was a combination of his athletic skills and a combination of his academic prowess and he persevered. When people told him that nobody from this neighborhood makes it, nobody from this neighborhood becomes anybody, again he had to listen over and over and over again to the "no" voices and he persevered.

Do you see the theme that's taking place here? Last but not least, Warren Moon. Warren Moon, the bottom right of the screen, is known, in fact it's even stated in the NFL Hall of Fame that he is credited with having the tightest spiral in the history of the NFL. Nobody

threw a spiral better than him yet all throughout high school he was not allowed to play quarterback. Even in college he was not allowed to be quarterback because as he stated in that demonstration, that people told him that because of the color of his skin he was welcome to play receiver or running back but not the position of quarterback. He stated in that presentation it wasn't until he was in college that all three quarterbacks on his collegiate team were injured and out of the game that they finally said, "We'll let you play." He would take that game and it would springboard him to a career that would end up in Canton, Ohio and being recognized as one of the greatest artists of the spiral that's ever played the game, yet his entire life until he was greater than age 20, he was not even allowed to play the position that he made the Hall of Fame in.

Though those are three of the stories that are highlighted in Canton, Ohio, and with Joe Namath leading the charge, I want you to think about Hebrews 11, how many of us when you hear of a woman who's child is dead, how many of us when they hear their about to stone you, how many of us would throw in the towel? And yet right before our eyes these are mere athletes, oh skilled, don't get me wrong, talented, absolutely, but they were willing to persevere. You see, the Hall of Fame is not just composed of the elongated prolonged careers, it is composed of people who persevere.

Thirdly, one of the things we discover in the last part of Hebrews 11 is the provision that is made. I alluded to this a little bit earlier. Even though you can go back and look at some of these descriptions like a woman whose child is raised from the dead, etc., you cannot take every description and specifically attribute it to one individual and/or story. In other words, this last part of chapter 11 just kind of rises to the top to allow us, I don't want to say interpretive freedom, but the ability to say it could be about him or it could be about her, it could be about this individual or that.

You know, it reminds me at least in our home and maybe this hasn't taken place in your life but when you have three teenage boys in your home, it does in our home, we consistently have conversations regarding GOATs. Y'all know what I mean when it comes to the sports world? A GOAT is the greatest of all time. Who's the GOAT? Who's the greatest quarterback? Who's the greatest football player? Who's the greatest basketball player? Who's the greatest point guard? Who's the greatest pitcher? Who's the greatest this? Who's the greatest that? And inevitably when you have a conversation with somebody at least in the sports world about who the greatest is, you're always pitting somebody from one era versus somebody of another and you always get into this discussion, "Well, if Babe Ruth had had today's technology, or if LeBron James had been restricted to wearing Chuck Taylor's," in other words, you cannot equally go apples to apples when you're separating generations not only of time but technology. Why is that critical? Because in this passage the Lord's given us provision as I mentioned, there are people that were torn in half for their faith in the Old Testament as well as in the New, and as I read most recently, almost a dozen believers in Jesus Christ face terminal persecution each and every day in our world today.

So when we talk about who was the greatest, who gave the most, who prolonged, it might be one of those that's listed in this chapter and it might be someone that's alluded to in the

last half, or it might be somebody that you've never heard of and I've never heard of either. It's possible that the Lord is referencing here situations that don't have necessarily specific biblical references but are those individuals who never made the highlight films, never made the headlines, but one day as we teasingly joke, may be seated in the front row of the heavens in front of those whose names are listed.

Last but not least, the possibility. When you get to the last two verses of this chapter, it says, "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Now I understand when you look at this historically and doctrinally, every person listed and every allusion if you specifically place them in the Old Testament, is someone who was on the other side of the empty tomb, someone who was anticipating and looking toward what we know as the coming of the Messiah, but I cannot get away from verse 40, that personal pronoun is used twice, us. It's almost as if the Lord wants to place us in the story and say, "Yes, look at the passage. Look at those who have gone before you but what is your story going to be?" The possibility that one day we might find ourselves listed among the great, the possibility that one day there might be someone somewhere describing your life as a picture of faithfulness.

I mentioned a couple of months ago we had the privilege of going to the NFL Hall of Fame and if you'll just endure with me for a few more moments, there is a lesson in that building that is so relevant to this portion of Scripture. When you walk into the main entrance of the NFL Hall of Fame, the first thing that you walk through is a display of football cards. They give you not only how they grade the cards from, you know, mint to poor and such, but they have football cards from the very early days of when the league started and the names of some of the great stars and, you know, it's somewhat academic but it's interesting.

As you walk on the first floor of the NFL Hall of Fame, you walk through a history, you walk through the history of the first Commissioner that I did not realize was Jim Thorpe. Jim Thorpe was the first Commissioner. I didn't realize why is it in Canton, Ohio? Because that's where the NFL was first started. I wondered why they put it there, and now I know why. And they began to walk you through the history of how this league came to be, where the teams were, how they were formed, the number of games they played, the players, the uniforms and such. In fact, as you walk through the first floor, I will confess it's really not real exciting unless you really love history because almost every person mentioned is either deceased or close to, often the names had been forgotten and the uniforms are just a matter of antiquity, but it's interesting if you like history.

But for those of us who are the true sports fans, it's the second floor that really gets us. You see, the second floor is the modern era from the Super Bowl on, and that's really when what we know as pro football really caught way in our culture and our communities because with the advent of television and the Super Bowl, they have an example of every ring all the way back from the first Super Bowl. They have displays of the great dynasties whether it be the Steelers in the 70s, the 49ers of the 80s, the Cowboys in the 90s, or the New England Patriots of the 21st century, they have all the dynasties and what took place.

They even have displays where you can see the size, they made these replicas of the sizes of some of these guys' hands and you compare your hands to how large these men are and were; you can compare the size of your shoe to theirs. It takes you all the way from the Super Bowl initiation, really to be quite honest with you, almost to the contemporary age. It's just incredible history of how football has become so popular in our culture.

But then there's the third floor. It may not be a historical floor, it may not be a floor of dynasties but it's the one that intrigued myself and I'll speak on behalf of my son, the most. When you go up to the top floor of the NFL Hall of Fame, there are uniforms and memorabilia of games that were played in recent years including this season. In fact, there was a pair of cleats that had been used by a kicker two weeks before when we were up there, and the theme of the third floor is: is it possible that the jerseys on this floor will make their way down to the second? Is it possible that the cleats that are displayed on the third floor will make their way to the second? Because the stories of the names and the individuals and the accomplishments on the third floor have not been finished. We don't know how long their careers will last, we don't know if they'll persevere through the difficulties and injuries, we don't know if the statistics will remain constant through the ages.

Allow me to draw the parallel to Hebrews 11, each and every one of us right now, we're on the third floor of life. We are walking through, we are making the journey, we're waking up every day trusting the Lord for the provisions of life and the things of life, the question is when it comes to that final moment, that final day, will we be as these, will we be given a locker on the second floor? What took place in these individuals lives of prolonged faith, of persevering in faith and of faith of proficiency, here's the possibility, that because the way that Hebrews 11 ends, it does not remove the possibility of one day however the Lord shall see fit, that it's your name and your life and your story, and maybe you're that person today going, "There's no way," then I daresay you might be the perfect candidate because oftentimes it's the ones who guarantee a spot who rarely enter in, it's the ones who say, "I'm the greatest," who rarely have a seat at the table. When it comes to matters of faith and walking with the Lord, oftentimes it's the unsung heroes who when they get knocked down, they get up, when people tell them to quit, they continue, and when everybody says give up on God, they say, "How dare I?" Hebrews 11 is a fabulous chronology of the saints of days past but it leaves open the possibility of the saints present and future. So you and I are challenged today not just to learn from those who've gone before us but to strive to join them.

Let's pray.

With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, as we prepare for our time of invitation, you know, maybe you're that person tonight even though it's a Sunday evening, maybe you're one of those individuals who said, do you know what, it's great to talk about the Hall of Fame of faith but I'm not even a person of faith. There's never come a time in my life where I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. We would invite you to do so tonight. In fact, in just a moment after I pray for us, if that's who you are and that's the position you find yourself in, we'd love the privilege of talking with you and praying with you. Let me just

encourage you to step out and step forward. We'd love to celebrate how the Lord is moving in your life. Or maybe as I had the privilege today of speaking with people on our campus, maybe that's already taken place but you need to take that step, the next step of baptism or maybe that's occurred, maybe you're like the couple that was here a couple of weeks ago on Sunday evening who said it's time for this to be our official place of faith. Or maybe it's something else, whatever and however the Lord is moving in your life, we'd just love the privilege of celebrating with you.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time, the time that we spoke of this morning, the time of decision, Lord, we recognize that Moses, he made the decision he did not want to suffer the season of sin but rather the glories of you. Abraham who made the decision to go to a land he knew not of, Rahab who made the decision to put out that scarlet thread, Lord, I pray that tonight we would make the decision that whatever it is in our life that maybe hinders, whatever in our life that we need to be striving for, that God, tonight we would decide to trust you with whatever that is, and whatever it is, we will celebrate your goodness and your grace. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to invite you to stand with me as Jimmy leads us. Any and all decisions, I'll be right here at the front.