

## Introduction

Well, good morning. I'm certainly glad that you're here. If you have a Bible, you can go ahead and get that out with me at this time. If you don't have a Bible with you, that's fine; you can just follow along with the Scriptures that will be up here on the screen or use your smart phone or tablet with an app that you have there. We are going to be concluding today our series through the Book of 1 Thessalonians. We'll be in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, starting in verse 12. We'll be reading through to the end of the chapter, and what we'll be doing is kind of wrapping up this emphasis that we've been having on disciple-making. Why don't you open up your Bible with me at this time? Let's read this and then we'll pray and ask God to speak to us, as we look at what this Scripture says. 1Thessalonians chapter 5, starting in verse 12: *"We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it. Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."*

Let's pray. "Lord, we need to hear from You today. We've been running around doing our own thing this week, if we're honest. We, probably many times, should have been thinking about You but we weren't. We were thinking about ourselves, as we always are. God, we need to hear from You today because we need our hearts recalibrated... refocused. We need to speak to You, to hear from You. Lord, we need to know how to live this life in a way that brings honor to You and peace to one another. God, in the middle of this broken mess of a world, You have proclaimed goodness; so Lord, let us understand that a little bit better today. Father, change us. We don't want to be the same. God, do that through the power of Your Holy Spirit and Your Son Jesus Christ. Lord, it's in His Name that we pray. Amen."

We all have reasons for the things that we do. Right? I mean, you don't just do something just because. You always have a reason that you do that. For instance, we all have a reason that we like French fries. (Laughter) Do y'all not like French fries? I mean... everybody likes French fries. We all like French fries. Why? ...Because it brings you pleasure to your taste buds when you put the fry... the hot grease... the salt... it's a magical thing that happens whenever it touches your taste buds. We eat the French fry because it brings benefit to us. We're ultimately very self-absorbed and self-interested creatures. We like the sensation that we get whenever the French fry touches our lips. We also have a reason that we go jogging after we eat the French fries... (Laughter) ...because we don't necessarily like the things that the French fries do to our body. While we like the fact that it brings pleasure to our senses, we also like to maintain a certain level of health, so therefore we will go jogging after we eat the French fries because we're all so self-interested and self-absorbed creatures. In fact, I could list off numerous activities that we do on a regular basis, and based on your priorities and on your schedule, you would say, "I'm doing this thing because I'm ultimately a self-interested and self-absorbed creature; I'm doing this thing because I think it's actually good for me."

So why go to church? I mean, at least at some level, everybody here would say, "Well, we do it because there's a God, and we want to bring Him honor and bring Him glory." Yeah, yeah, yeah; I know that. But why are YOU here? You might, at least at some level, feel like it's good for you. Right? ...Because if you are kind of a self-absorbed and self-interested creature, you would say, at some level, you know it's good for you to be in this place. And you might even say, "I need it." What do we need?

Isaiah 55:10-13 has been working on me this week. I just want to read this to you. I don't know if you're familiar with this passage, but just listen. It's kind of a poetic prophecy that Isaiah gives: He says, *"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty..."* have you ever heard someone say, "The Word of the Lord will not return void"? That comes from Isaiah 55. Whatever God speaks and He wants to have happen, it happens. *"...but it shall accomplish that which I purpose..."* So, in other words, whatever God purposes, His Word will do. *"...and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*

*"For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."* But this is the verse that's really getting me. Listen to this one: *"Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."*

Now, I'm not really a gardener. I mean... I have a lemon tree on my back porch. It's got five lemons on it, so I've done something this year. I'm not really the green-thumb individual. I can do a little bit, but I know enough to know this: If you plant a thorn bush and snow falls upon it... water falls upon it... it's buried there under the snow; the snow melts. When the snow melts, what do you have where the thorn bush once was? You still have a thorn bush; it's just a little bit bigger now. Right? ...Because it got watered. Here comes the spring and these thorns get even bigger. The same with the brier patch; it just continues to expand. But that is not what Isaiah describes in chapter 55. He says something really interesting. He says, "Instead of the thorn... a cypress; and instead of a brier, a myrtle." What in the world does he mean? "Lord, work Your Word so wonderfully and so powerfully in us that where we ought to have thorns come up, make there be something beautiful and life-giving." How does that happen? It happens because a fundamental transformation takes place. You see, no matter how much paint you put on a thorn bush, it does not look like a cypress. I mean, you can try and move it around a little bit, but it is still a thorn bush. It needs to undergo a fundamental transformation if it is actually going to become a cypress. How would that ever happen? Isaiah 55 says the way that it happens is because of the Word of the Lord. If you're here today and you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, or if you are considering becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, it's probably because there was a moment or you've been sensing a need in your life and you say, "I've got to get my act together. I've got to change. There are some things in me that are fundamentally flawed, they're broken, and they need to be fixed." Isaiah 55 says that God can do that through the power of His Word. So that's what we're going to look at today; it is to see actually one of the beautiful things about being a disciple, Paul says, is that we are actually and totally changed whenever we begin to allow the Word of God through Jesus Christ to work in our heart.

## **1. God is working faithfully to change us. (v.24)**

Now, we're going to take the backwards approach to this passage; we're going to start at the end. It's kind of like the film "Memento." We're going to start at the end. Verse 24: *"He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it."* "He"... who is "He"? That's Jesus. *"He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it."* Verse

23... if you go back a verse. *"...may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely..."* (so, remember that word "sanctify") *"...and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Two things that He (Jesus) does in us... the way that He changes us. The first one is called "justification." What is "justification"? Justification is when you receive, by faith, Jesus. You were not a believer and then you decided to become a believer. You received Christ. You were in darkness; now you are in the light. That moment when you move from death into life, you are justified. What does it mean to be justified? Justified means this: It's a court language. You were condemned; you had a sentence of death over you. You were going to the gallows. You were headed to prison; you were a prisoner. You were in trouble but then the judge declared you innocent... justified... you were free to go, in that moment. If you're justified... if you're free... you walk about with no fear of arrest, with no fear of punishment because you have been completely and totally delivered. So that is being blameless.

The Book of Romans chapter 8 says, *"...there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* What does that mean? It means this: Kind of in a cosmic, crazy way, "I deserve death but Jesus Christ took my sin, and He died for me on the cross." When we took this meal moments ago, we were declaring, "Jesus Christ stood in my place. He took my sin; He took my punishment." That's what happened on the cross. That's why there is a cross at the front of the church. We say, "This is the centerpiece of the Christian Good News." Anyone who receives, by faith, the truth that they have been delivered by the power of the cross, through Jesus, they are justified. This is important: Who does the justifying? God does... through His Son Jesus. In other words, how much power do you have in being justified? Zero. That's why it's completely efficient. Right? ...Because God did it. There's nothing you could do to mess it up. If you got saved, if you came to faith in Christ, if that happened... guess what? You had absolutely nothing to do with that. That's why it worked. Right? ...Because we can't mess it up. It's a beautiful thing.

But then verse 23 also says... this is where it gets kind of messy, guys: *"May He sanctify us."* "Sanctification." What is "sanctification"? Sanctification is the next thing that happens. You see, many of us in this room would say that we are believers. "We're already justified. We're clean. We're sinless. We stand before the Father, knowing that one day we will enter into eternity with Jesus Christ." But sanctification... that's the messier stuff. "What's that?" That's the part where you then are supposed to mature in Christ. You see, lots of people would say that they are converts... that they believe. But sanctification... that requires growing in Christ... maturing, changing.

Whenever I was younger, I had two very small boys. I had a really nice, large backyard. I had these hundred-year-old oak trees in it. It was an incredible back yard. It was massive. So mowing it was kind of a big thing. To make matters worse, I didn't have a riding mower; I just had a push mower. To make matters worse, it wasn't even a self-propelled. It was a true push mower. It was a real workout to go out there and mow the backyard. So I'd go out there and I'd mow. My children, both of them at different phases in their life, both of them about the time they were three, four, five... somewhere in that range... they would be overcome with a desire. They would look into the backyard, and they would see me back there mowing. And do you know what they would want to do? They would want to come help me mow. A three-year-old helping me mow... awesome! So how does that work? I'm out there pushing the mower. I'm sweating; it's hot. Here comes Ben or Drew, and they come and they want to get in between me and the mower, so I can stretch my arms out like this... and they want to stand there and they want to grab on lower. They want to mow. At first, it's a little bit slower, but it's not terrible. Right? I'm mowing with them and kind of got my arms stretched out and we're going. We get to the turn and then we'll turn around and we'll go back.

Things are going fine, but with both of them, there would ultimately reach this moment of decision and do you know what they would want to do? They would then say, "Okay, Dad; I got it... Back up. I'm like, "No you don't. I don't know how to explain this to you. There's a lot of physics at play here, but essentially you don't even weigh enough to move this thing forward. It's not going to happen; you can't do it." I couldn't even go into the whole thing. "If you can't hold onto to this top bar and keep this thing down, the motor is going to die." But they both would. They would hold onto it and they'd motion, "Back away." When I was doing it by myself, we were humming. It was efficient. When they came out and they grabbed on with me, it slows down a little bit, but we are still mowing. But whenever they say, "Back up; I've got this," guess what? It comes to a grinding halt. First of all, they're not heavy enough. Second of all, the engine dies. They're just standing there and they're mad. And who are they mad at? Me; like it's my fault. I was trying to tell you. So you come over, you grab, you hold, you start the engine back up. "Okay. Are you ready? Let's do this." We go a few steps. You know what they do. "Okay, Dad. Backup. I've got this." Why? ...Because there's something that's weird within us whenever we're kids, right? We think, "Okay, I see what my dad is doing; I want to do what he's doing, and I am now going to do that." In some ways, it's really healthy and that's good, but here's this weird thing. The process of sanctification, as described in Scripture, works like this: God is doing work in your heart. It slows down because then He invites you to help Him. Right? You're like the three-year-old helping mow. I mean, we can still get it done, but it's just going to go a lot slower. But He wants you there. He wants you there because it's going to grow you up. He's going to train you in godliness. He brings you in, but you know how you are. Oh... you know. Right? What happens? Eventually you say, "Okay, Lord; I've got this. Back up a little bit." And there He is. Right? He's got His arms extended. He's trying to just... "No, no, no; let go. I can do this." You see, that's where the sanctification process breaks down. It becomes less efficient because sinful people like you and me are brought into the process, and we begin to thereby slow down what it is that God wants to do. You see, He is at work. He is the One who will certainly do it. He is the One who will grow us up. He is the One who will change us.

And you say, "What does that look like?" Well, I'm glad that you asked. Look at the list that Paul gives in verse 12. Just look at these things. If you're being sanctified... if you're growing up to look more like Jesus, this is the stuff you'll do: *"...respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you..."* Now he's talking about pastors, but he might as well be talking about your boss at work. Right? *"...respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you..."* Well, that's weird." But we're not done: *"...esteem them very highly in love because of their work."* Look at this next one: *"...Be at peace among yourselves."* Verse 14: *"...we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all."*

## **2. And thereby His Church. (v. 14)**

This week as we were back in our Life Group curriculum, I noticed one of the things that was in our study this week... this sentence. I wish I had written it because it is so great. It says this: "Every relational situation in our lives is an opportunity to respond like Jesus." Every time that you interact with someone, you get to choose, "Will I respond like Jesus or will I not?" This verse 14, I mean, it just kicks me in the face. *"...admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all."*

A couple of things about that verse. First of all, if you are going to admonish the idle, do you know that means that you actually have to know someone who is idle? I don't know about you, but when I meet the idle, the fainthearted, and the weak, do you know what I do? I kind of categorize them in my mind, and I say, "Oh, they're idle, they're fainthearted, they're weak... Yeah. I don't have time for those people..." and

I kind of move on. Right? Am I the only person that does that? (Laughter) I was about to say, "Well, someone else needs to come up here and start preaching now." Okay. This is the thing. They are people who cannot help me. Right? "The idle... they're not going to help me." "The fainthearted? Uhh. I don't have time for them." "The weak? Man, who has time for the weak?" But Scripture says, "Admonish, encourage, help; and on top of that, be patient with them." Every time that you interact with someone who is idle, fainthearted, or weak, you get to choose, "Will you respond to them in the manner that Jesus would respond to them?" I don't like that... I don't like that for a lot of reasons because I fail the test, it feels like, almost every single day. I don't like it also because I'm a much more self-interested, self-absorbed creature than that, and most of the relationships that I have in my life, I have because they are beneficial to me; they help me. This says that you'll just have relationships in your life because they are people and not projects, and you will love them because they are created in God's image. This is where things get trickier and messier. Then, after he says these things like this, "...*be patient with them.*" In other words, stick around. Right? "*Be patient with them.*" You can't be patient with the idle, the weak, or the fainthearted if you talk to them once and give up on them. If you're patient with them, that means you deal with them over and over and over. Do you have people coming into your mind right now?... or am I the only one that has that happening to them right now? You see these people. Why does the Lord allow those people to be in our lives? They are part of the growing up, sanctifying process. God has those people in our life so we can learn how to behave and respond like Jesus would.

Verse 15: "*See that no one repays anyone evil for evil...*" Now he's just getting plain mean. He says, "Now, you look around... you see those people that they're mad at one another and they start saying, "Oh... I'm going to get back at her. Uh huh..." What you do is you step in and you say, "No, you're not going to do that because we do good." I know what you do whenever you hear people saying that kind of stuff. You say, "Oooh.... I'm going to back out of this one. This isn't my fight." But instead it's, "No... Intercede here; find those that are doing evil or plotting to do evil to one another and step in and encourage them. Work toward peace. Separate them and say, 'Don't do that'... instead only do good to one another." This is the process of sanctification.

I don't know if you've ever heard of Watchman Nee. He's one of the greatest missionary pastors in the history of China... Just an incredible man. He has many great stories that he tells. One of the stories that he tells to sort of illustrate this point that I'm describing. He tells about the two dogs that live inside each one of us... the black dog and the white dog. This is what he says, "There's a black dog and a white dog that are fighting within you. The white dog... the Holy Spirit is there, fighting, wanting to guide." He is wanting to push the mower. "Then the black dog... the sin nature coming after you, the flesh... desiring, fighting, wanting to take things over." Every day, whenever I interact with those who are weak, I get to make a decision. "Which dog am I going to feed?" Right? "...Because if I feed the right dog, it gets stronger, it gets bigger. When they get into a fight... the dog that's well-fed, it's going to win." But if I feed the wrong dog, what happens? Eventually I find that my desire to follow the Spirit has become anemic and weak and no longer is of any use for me. You see, there comes this moment every single day where we have to decide, "Which dog will I feed today?" as I run into those situations. But guess what? It's not even just about with people... it's also in our relationship to God.

Look, in verse 16: "*Rejoice always...*" Let's just stop. Those two words, "*Rejoice always...*" How many of us rejoiced always this week? I mean... man. I wish I would have. "*Rejoice always...*" This is the unsanctified view of God. Are you ready for the unsanctified view? "Whenever I'm good, God does good things to me, but whenever I'm bad, God does bad things to me." You see, that's not in this Book. Here's the thing. Actually what's in this Book is, "Whenever I've done bad, God has done good things to me anyway." The

bad guy got grace. But here's the thing. An immature, unsanctified view of God grows angry whenever things happen that you don't like, and you say, "I don't know if God is really good. I don't know if God really loves me. I don't know if God has truly done the things that I want Him to do." If you're not rejoicing whenever bad things happen to you, I can tell you right now, you don't believe that God is actually truly good. Right? ...Because if God is truly good, He'll take those bad circumstances and He will work them to redeem. Right? But if you don't believe that God is good, whenever bad things happen, you'll say, "I don't know if God really, truly loves me." *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing..."* And I'm going to be praying even in the bad times. I'm going to say, "Lord, You're here with me. I love You. Thank you for this. You're good." Verse 18: *"...give thanks in all circumstances..."* "Even when things are bad, I'm going to continue to give thanks. Even when things go against me, I'm going to continue to give thanks in all circumstances" ... *"for this is the will of God..."*

Verse 19: This is the verse that I want us to hear: *"Do not quench the Spirit."* "The Holy Spirit," Paul says, "essentially is a fire, and we can put out its work in our lives." How? The moment that we decide that we want to drive our lives instead of allowing Him to do it, we put out its work in our lives. It stops working in us. So this is the thing: "Every single day, I'm getting to decide which dog will I feed. Will I throw wood on the fire of the Spirit, or will I douse it with my own disbelief? What will happen each and every day as I decide to walk in that truth?" This is the thing that I want you to hear in this moment. God is saying, through Scripture, "You are being sanctified... you are being trained... you are getting to learn how to be a disciple every day in the way that you interact with people and also in the way that you interact with Him." When you interact with people, you are being trained to live as Jesus. When you interact with Him, you're getting trained to act as Jesus. You are deciding, "Do I truly believe that God's goodness is indeed what I stand for... what I believe?"

### **3. To reflect Him. (v. 20)**

At the conclusion of this passage, we come back around, and we've read about this church that's been transformed and has been made into the likeness of Jesus, and I wonder, "Why then does God want that? What's beneficial for Him? Is He a self-interested creature as well? Is He doing this for some reason?" Well, in many ways, He's just completely and totally generous. He loves us. He has created us. He wants us to have what's best for us. But there is this thing that the Bible says that God wants, above everything else, and that is for His Name to be glorified. God wants His Name to be glorified, above all other names. He wants His Name to be lifted high, so therefore when we get to the end of that passage: "The God of peace Himself was doing these things. He Himself is faithful. He will surely do it." Everything flows back and pours back to Him.

So why does that matter? Let me explain. What if, Church, we take on honestly the call of being trained. We're not only justified. We know that we're not only believers and we're saved, but we also decide that we are going to allow the Holy Spirit of God to guide our lives and our responses so that that way we start to look... no, we don't even look different... we ARE different. What happens in that moment? I'll tell you what happens. The Church changes; and when the Church changes, it reflects Him. What if our church began to reflect the nature of Jesus... The nature of Jesus who receives and accepts everyone?

In Luke chapter 16, there's this story that Jesus tells about a wedding banquet. When He tells this story about the wedding banquet, He says, "There's this king who had this massive palace, and he wanted to have a wedding banquet. He invited all these people in, and he sent his servant out to bring people in. As they came out to bring people in, do you know what happened? There were a lot of people who said, "I'm

busy. I've got other stuff going on. I just got married; I've got some new oxen. I don't have time for that kind of stuff." So the king became angry and he sent the servant. Do you know what he did? He sent the servant out and he said, "Bring in the blind, the poor, the crippled, and the lame, and sit them down at my wedding feast." This is what I want you to hear, Church: "The people who get brought into the wedding feast are the blind, the crippled, the poor, and the lame..." Let me translate it for you: "If you're here right now, you are one of 'the blind, the crippled, and the poor, and the lame.' You were not the respected guests." If you think you're here right now because you've got that really winning personality, a certain "je ne sais quoi"... No; you do not. You have only nothing. You are crippled, blind, poor, and lame, and you nevertheless were brought in to sit at the table of the Lord. You are the cripple at His table. Why does that matter? It matters because of this: If you are the cripple at the table and I... by the way, this is me too.... I am the cripple at the table. If we all understand that we are at the King's table... broken, needy, nothing to offer... Once we begin to understand that, guess what? We then are willing to let other broken, needy, poor, hurt people come in and sit at the table as well.

The Church is not a country club because the Church is not for the people who already have it all together. It's for the blind, the lame, the poor, and the crippled. So, therefore, once we understand rightly who we are, then we are more than happy to welcome in those who are also broken. "You're the wrong color? Oh... you can come in." "You're the wrong political party? Right this way... have a seat at the table." "Oh... you're sexually confused? You can sit right here next to me because I am one of those people who struggle with all kinds of brokenness." "Oh... you cheated on your wife? ...you robbed your business partner blind?... you yelled at your kids this morning, on your way to church? You're secretly a racist... you cussed in traffic on your way to work this week?" No matter what your brokenness is, you are welcomed here at the table, because there is no sin, no brokenness, no need too big that the cross of Jesus Christ cannot deliver you. (Clapping) This matters because it reflects the indiscriminate, scandalous, crazy grace that God bestowed upon us in Jesus Christ. Only when we realize that it is because we are broken that we are saved, then we walk willingly into sanctification. So then I'll go you one even crazier. What if then we not only say, "All are welcomed here because... guess what?... I'm just a poor, crippled, blind, lame person... Why does Jesus say, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven'?" ...Because "poor in spirit" means you have nothing to give God, but yours is the Kingdom of heaven anyway. So what happens? Then you're sanctified. What would happen then if we didn't just reflect that and invited people in? What would also then happen if we said, "Guess what? You're blind, you're crippled, you're poor, you're lame... spiritually-speaking... but I've got good news: God didn't want you to stay that way. He wants you to grow by the grace of God in Jesus Christ."

What if we would then admonish the idle? What if we would encourage the fainthearted? What if we would help the weak? What if we began to see that we ARE the idle, the fainthearted, and the weak? And what if I invited you to admonish me, encourage me, and help me? What if you invited me to admonish, encourage, and help you? Well, I would imagine that if that began to happen, this church would become a place where we would have to turn people away every Sunday because we couldn't fit them in this room because we would say, "We are truly ministering to one another as Jesus Christ ministered to people 2000 years ago. We would say, "We do not care what your issue is, but we love you anyway, but go and sin no more." You see, that's the beauty of grace. You are welcome but you are also called to be changed.

This is why we've been talking about disciple-making, Church. This is what I want you to hear. This is the kind of church that I am praying that God will make us: A church that is no longer focused simply on consumerism... "Give me what I need to hear"... but instead turn us into God's people for this time, for this city... What would that mean? It would mean this: We want to love and receive and accept all... and

we want to love, receive, and accept all, right to the point where they understand that they can be transformed and made whole through the grace of Jesus Christ. If that happens... there's no telling what God could do.

As you came in today, inside your Worship Guide, there was a bulletin insert that had the logo from "Advance" on it. This is what it looks like. For the last six weeks, we've been talking about what it would mean to be a disciple-making church. We're about to stop really emphasizing it as much, but I want you to hear something. This is not an emphasis. This is not a program. This is a philosophical shift in the way that we're doing church. We will be a disciple-making church. Period. And we want you to say "Yes" to that. If you are in on that, we want to invite you to get trained to be a disciple-maker. In January, we're going to have disciple-making training. We're bringing in a gentleman to come and do that. His name is Caleb Southerland. He works with a disciple-making ministry. We are going to ask that you come and you set aside some time to come in to get trained to know how you can speak about these things with your friends and talk to them and people who are here in the church that say, "I need someone to help me to grow up in Christ." Then you can visit them about that. You can be trained in that. So I want to encourage you to do that. If you look at that, there's a place where you can sign up on the web. If that's you, we want you to do that. But it's even more than that. Maybe you read this today and you say, "I don't know if I'm a disciple-maker." That's fine... but do you want to be changed?

There was a moment in Scripture... There was a man where Jesus encountered him, and He looked at him and He said, "Do you want to be healed?" Maybe that's you today, and Jesus will look at you and say, "Do you want to be healed? Do you want to be changed? Do you want to be transformed?" Fundamentally, I know that I do. If that's you, you say, "I can't train anybody... I can't help anybody, but I wish that someone would speak to me and heal me." This is the truth. You are spoken to, you are loved, and you are received through what God did on the cross in Jesus Christ, and it can change and heal you if you'll simply say "Yes" and receive Him by faith.

So Church, this is our response today. Some of us need to say "Yes" to Jesus, and others of us need to say "Yes" to the call to make disciples. But wherever you are, the time has come for us to say, "We'll be a church that affects change and does it, starting now. Let's pray together.

"Lord, we love You. God, You have been incredibly gracious to us. We deserve brokenness. We deserve hell. We deserve pain. We deserve suffering, but instead we get life. God, we get grace that comes through your Son Jesus. Lord, it happens because we deserve to be hanging on a cross, but He stands in our place. We deserve to be punished for sin, but He takes that punishment in our stead. Lord, we thank You for that truth, and God, we pray diligently that we would begin to understand it. Lord, we love You. We thank You for all the goodness that You give us, Lord. We pray God that we would walk with it. So, Lord, I pray this now over this congregation. For each person who is here and they are already a believer, Lord, I pray that You would speak to their heart right now and You motivate them, You move them to be a disciple-maker, to sign up for this training. And Father for those that have yet to say 'Yes' to You, God, I pray that You would speak to their heart right now, that they feel it... Lord, that they actually feel it physically in their chest, that You are calling them to faith. Lord, I pray that they would say 'Yes' to You right now and that they would move to follow You."