

# What Happens From God's Perspective When He Visits a Church

by Henry Blackaby

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*Henry Blackaby explores the transformative impact of God's visitation on a church and its members through prayer and worship.*

**Duration:** 58:32

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 7:14, Malachi 3:1, Matthew 3:3, Matthew 24:42, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 1:3, 1 Corinthians 10:13

**Topics:** "Divine Visitation", "Spiritual Revival"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his experiences of witnessing God's visitation in churches. He emphasizes that when God visits a congregation, it can be overwhelming and surprising. The speaker recounts instances where people were deeply impacted by encountering God, leading them to cry out in agony and repentance. He also highlights biblical examples such as Abraham and Moses, whose lives were radically changed when they encountered God. The speaker encourages listeners to recognize and embrace God's visitation, even if it may be different from their expectations.

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## Transcript

Your church family invited others from all over the surrounding states and Tennessee to come and gather here in what was and has been known as the Great Commission Prayer Conference. That is, the one assignment God gave to us is to take the good news and make disciples to every solitary person, to every nation, but Mark's Gospel says to every person. And God's people have been seeking to understand that assignment ever since.

But your church chose to invite not only people to come, but then with coordinated prayer over a prolonged time, not only here, but across the state and across the nation. And those who are a part of our ministry, they are aware of where I'm going to be, and thousands of people have been praying for you. Do you know what it is like to be the object of other people's praying? Some of the most profound and committed intercessors God has ever raised up have been marshaled by God to pray for you.

I realize they pray for me. That puts an incredible responsibility on my part to be alert to what God's going to do in answer to other people's prayers. I never see my life as functioning on my own.

I always see what's happening in my life and around my life as God hearing the cry of his people. And as I did in the first service, I bear witness to you that God chose to visit your church. He could have come anywhere he wanted, and I've been in other prayer conferences where I did not sense that necessarily there was a manifestation of the presence of God.

I know we can always say where two or more of God's people are gathered, there he is, but not always is there a very real and personal awareness of God's visitation among his people. So I come to you this morning to help you as a church to understand what happens in the life of a church where God chooses to visit. You will never be the same again, and so many of you have told me that.

Even between the services, there were those who made their way to where I was sitting and with a great deal of emotion began to describe how God came to them in these three days, two days, and today, and then began to describe the total life transformation. Now when God chooses to visit a person, they're never the same again. They just are never the same again.

Be very careful about asking God to visit your life. He just may do it, but you will never be the same again. Your mind will not be the same, your heart will not be the same, your activity will not be the same.

You can go all the way down through the scriptures and see where God chose to come to an individual, and the whole course of their life was changed. That certainly was obvious when he came to the Apostle Paul. His whole life was changed, his heart was changed, his purposes of life were changed.

He was never the same again. When Jesus encountered the disciples, and God met his son in the middle of the night and said, let me tell you the ones I have chosen, and God began to talk through the night with his son about the ones the Father had chosen for him. You remember in John 17, Jesus praying that incredible prayer, said, Father, these men were yours.

You gave them to me, and you told me what to tell them, and I've told them, and they have believed. But their lives were forever changed. They could never go back.

They closed the door, and they could never go back to what they were before. They tried at one point to go back to fishing, and Jesus stood on the shore and reminded them that they have a lifelong call of God. That certainly was true when he met Abraham.

His life was changed. When he met Moses, Moses did not continue herding sheep in the backside of the desert. His life took a radical change.

I've watched this all the way through history, and I'm watching it here in your church. There are many lives that God chose to visit during this conference, and their lives will never be the same again. Now, for those of you who are not here, I just give you a word of counsel.

You will observe that there have been some life changes. Don't try to interfere. Don't try to convince them they don't have to leave their business in order to follow Christ, simply because you're determined you're not going to leave your business to follow Christ, and you don't want anyone around you who does such an audacious thing.

But all the way through history and all across the ages, God told many to leave their present vocation and be wholly available to him. And even in this worship service, some of you have already been experiencing a holy restlessness in your life, and you somehow have been sensing that God has something more for

your life. You don't know what it is.

You don't have a reference point around you, but you have that holy restlessness that knows that God is dealing with you, and that there's a lot more to your life that God has in mind than you have up until now been experiencing. Well, that's true. That's true of nearly everybody that God calls.

But it may be that in this service you can settle that with God, that you'll know it's him, you'll know what to expect, you'll know when it happens, and you'll know how you need to respond. Isn't that interesting and wonderful how your worship leader, Stephen, has so wonderfully lifted our thinking toward God, and he is God alone? Now, we sing that, but often we do not respond to him as God alone. He's the only God there is.

There is no other God, and he's the God of the whole earth. He has been planning and purposing all of time, and he didn't create us for time, he created us for eternity. And in the midst of that, he works on us to prepare us for eternity.

And it may be that in this service you will sense that. And you need to do what they did in the scriptures. They responded immediately.

Now, when he's the God of the universe, you don't postpone a decision with him. You can, but it brings you into the realm of death. Deuteronomy 30 says, See, I've set before you today life and blessing, death and cursing.

There's no middle ground. When you're dealing with God, you're dealing with life and death. If you respond to him, it's fullness of life.

If you reject him, it is certain death. That is, everything about your life will have life withdrawn from it. And the definition of death is no life.

You may exist for a while, but no life, because you have turned your back on the source of life. But you need to know, he never gives you a concept or a principle to believe. He doesn't give you a doctrine to believe.

He gives you himself. So, when you start to argue with him, you're arguing with the God of the universe. That is very dangerous.

God will read your heart and say, you're not only arguing, you are rejecting me. And so, if you reject me, I will reject you. All through the Bible it says that.

And in the scripture we're going to read this morning, he defines what it will be like when he, whom we have been seeking, comes. What will it be like? What will he do? And he ends this by saying, return to me and I will return to you. Without him, we are nothing.

You remember Jesus in John 15 makes this statement. We reword it. But he said, without me, you can do nothing.

We reword it to say, without him, we can't do very much. God says politically, read my lips. When I tell you that without me, you can do nothing, I mean exactly that.

No modification. So, when I read that word from the Lord Jesus, I just believe him. And I say, then Lord, I need to have every ounce of my life, every ounce of my life, every part of my life, in union with you.

So that you are the Lord of my entire life. Now, if you were to ask God from his word, what is the one thing that you want from me? Have you ever asked that? I wonder what God wants from me. Well, I can tell you.

He said, you're to love me with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all of your strength. You're to have a love relationship with the God of the universe, which he initiated and he provided. And for you to know that the holy God of the universe has provided a way for you, a sinner at best, to have a relationship with him, it would be unthinkable for me to treat that lightly or to ignore it.

Because without him, we continue in death. You're familiar with a scripture from Romans 6, 23, which we always apply to the unbeliever. But this scripture was written to God's people.

The wages of sin is death. He's writing that to God's people. But we apply it to the lost, and God applies it to his own.

And all the way through the Bible, you can see where a person who encountered God, knew his will, knew his way, knew his choice, and said no, his whole life was shut down. And there were others that would have experienced immediate death had not God intervened in his kindness, like David, and forgave him, and restored him. And that's the hope we have this morning.

So because I have witnessed God in visitation in your church, and that God has privileged me to be here, so that I could see what God does, putting it against the scriptures, when he chooses to visit a church, and without a question, he visited your church. And I will show you from his word, how God responds and how God deals with a church that he chooses to visit. So if you will, by the way, let me also say, what a joy it's been for me personally to know your dear pastor.

You have one of God's best, and I know you know that, but don't take that for granted. I know what some other churches have, and I know what you have. And you have a long-term, deeply committed servant of God, who walks with God, trembles at God's word, and opens his word faithfully to you, to guide you to be God's very best.

And he knows the ways of God, and the purposes of God. And it's been a joy for me, by the way, he is a pretty safe driver. I've driven with him, and of course, in the process of driving with him, my prayer life was improved immensely.

But he's a good driver, and he's very kind, and he distributes every opportunity to others, rather than doing it all himself. And you have a marvelous worship leader, who's shaped by God, uniquely shaped by God, one of a kind. And I sense his heart.

And you're most fortunate, I've met the other staff. And you've got a great staff, and you've got great leaders in your church. And I believe, in part, that's why God chose to visit with you.

But if you'll turn with me to Malachi chapter 3, we'll look from God's perspective of what happens, from God's perspective, and from God's activity, when he visits a church, and why. So that, as God begins to do this, you'll know it's God, and you'll know why. So I've chosen to speak from the first seven verses of Malachi 3. And you'll notice that it mentions the one you seek.

Your church has had great prayers, and they have been seeking for a visitation from God himself. But you'll notice how God chooses to come. For instance, I'm one that rarely misses any meeting of the gathering of the church where I'm a member.

You know why? It may be in the gathering of God's people when I'm not there, that God will choose to come. And I don't want to be one like Thomas, who wasn't there when the risen Lord appeared. Now, he may be gracious and have a second visitation, but it will still be when God's people gather.

Most of the encounters that God has with his people is in the corporate gathering of his people. Now, if you're a normal congregation, all too many of you never attend a prayer meeting. I don't know the reasoning behind that.

It's unthinkable for me. Because it may be when the people of God in your church are in prayer that God visits you. I just don't want to miss it.

I don't want to not be there. And some of the most precious moments in my life have been when God's people gathered. If people, and they often do, ask me, Henry, in all of your ministry and all that God is letting you be a part of, what would you say is the most significant aspect of your entire ministry? I would answer without hesitation, worship.

More has happened in my life when I was worshiping with the people of God than any other single factor. When I came to know the Lord. When I was called by God.

When I have sensed the call with my wife to missions. We were gathering in Glorietta and Baker James Coffin, the head of the foreign mission board then, was speaking. And it was when I was gathered with the people of God that the presence of God filled that place.

And because I was there, I experienced that. And my wife and I both went forward and offered our lives to God to go to East Africa. And so we went through the whole process and filled out all the application forms.

It is an awesome moment to be appointed by the international mission board. You have to go through an awful lot. We got right to the end and we're ready to present everything to the foreign mission board.

And our oldest son had seizures. We did not understand what that was or why it was or what the medical condition was. We found out later it was really not that serious.

But the foreign mission board then turned to us and said, we cannot appoint you. You need to take a couple of years to work through that medical condition with your son. And so it was again when we were worshiping.

People have often said, were you disappointed? And I said, no, not at all. Because we had done everything God had told us to do. And I just simply went back to God and said, God, we've done everything you told us to do.

And this door seems to have closed. What do you want us to do now? And it was there that he sent us to Canada. And we are both convinced, probably experiencing God would have never been written had we not gone to Canada.

Now, since then, God has a tremendous sense of humor. Because since then, we visited over 110 countries of the world. And I have at times said, is this what you meant when you said you wanted to send us to missions? You sent us all over the world to speak with our missionaries and the nationals.

And since then, I've gotten involved recently, last year or so, with the United Nations, have spoke there and been invited by the ambassadors to come to their countries. And I'm involved with the 170 of the CEOs, Christian CEOs of the Fortune 100 and 500 companies. And nearly every one of these are global in their direction.

And it's dropping me into so many countries of the world. And I've had to stand back and say, well, I remember you calling us to missions. But I didn't know quite what you meant.

We just did all what the culture told us to do. But I never forgot the call. And every time we land up in another country, I say, and Lord, this is what you had in mind.

Thank you for not letting me cancel your call to missions. You just had a different way of expressing it. Now, God's ways are not our ways, are they? There are many of you who have had a call of God to missions.

And because it didn't work out, you said, I guess I missed my call. That may not be true at all. You may have clearly sensed the call to missions.

You just have misunderstood when and how and why He was going to send you. But it's still there. And it may be in the immediate future, with our world so tumultuously turned upside down, it was for such a time as this that God issued a call.

You need to go back and reaffirm the call and don't put parameters on it. Well, God has visited your church. And many are sensing a freshness of an encounter.

They don't quite know yet what it will look like. So I want us to read these seven verses. And it may surprise you what God says He does when He comes in answer to a diligent request for His presence.

Malachi 3.1, Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. Even the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

But who can endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver. And he will purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.

Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years. And I will come near you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, perjurers against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien.

Because they do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts. For I am the Lord. I do not change.

Therefore, you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from my ordinances. You have not kept them.

Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you said, in what way shall we return? And then, much against the desires of many, he speaks about the tithes and offerings. And he said, this is an acknowledgement of my right to be Lord.

And when you withhold your tithes and offerings, you have abandoned your relationship to my right to be Lord. Now, God said that. Man did not.

And God says, let me tell you, one of the ways that I have given you to acknowledge that you're following what I've said, is what you do when you bring your offerings. And it's not just tithes, it's tithes and offerings. Because God blesses beyond anything that we can imagine, and he creates the opportunity for us to go beyond the legal and do it from a full heart.

Lord, you are Lord, and you are so good to us. We want to acknowledge that in what we now bring to you by way of our offering. But I want you to notice just several things from this passage of scripture, about a people of God who seek earnestly after God, and God chooses to visit them.

And again, I say, the reason I'm talking to you this way, is because God let me be present when he guided a people called Powell First Baptist Church to pray. And many of you have prayed and told me about your praying, and sometimes in great agony of prayer. And God marshaled people from all over Tennessee to pray.

And this gathering was preceded by much prayer. That is not a minor matter, and it is not something orchestrated by us. When God is about to bless, or God is about to bring revival, he sets his people to pray.

If I am in a church and I do not sense any heart to pray, I automatically assume God is not about to do anything significant there. But when God is about to do something significant, he sets his people to pray. I had an experience several years ago at Howard Payne University in Texas.

And I was assigned to come and speak from Monday through Friday, especially in their chapel. And unlike many places that I go, they began to send me their newsletter from their campus. And I noticed from the first one right up until the time that I was to come, there was an increased witness to prayer on that campus.

And they began to say, students are praying in the doorways. They're praying early in the morning. They're praying under the trees.

They're praying in the classrooms. They're praying late at night. Some are praying all night.

And they began to describe how they're praying in the classrooms, praying with their professors. And they were gathering all over that campus. And the increase in that was substantial from the first to when I was going to go.

Now, I'm very much aware that when God sets his people to praying, it's because he intends to bless. And so there came over me an incredible sense of urgency for me to be right with God and for God to do a work in my life so that I do not miss what God intends for them to hear. And on Tuesday when I was sharing in chapel, something unusual happened.

I've not had it happen often. I have had it happen. But all of a sudden in the middle of the message, at least if they had been Baptists, they should have known you can't come to the altar until there's an invitation.

But two young men just ran from the back of the auditorium. And they ran right up onto the platform. And I, of course, recognized God was present.

I'd better not interfere with what God may be about to do. So I talked briefly with them. And they wanted to share with the entire chapel.

There was the president of the university, the faculty. And every seat was full. And the balcony was full.

Do you recognize the moment of God's visitation? Or would it be so unlike anything that you have anticipated that you would shut it down? We don't want any emotionalism. I don't know about you, but when I come face to face with Almighty God, I'm pretty emotional. It's God we're meeting.

It's not a religious service worked up by men. It is a moment when God chooses to visit. He came suddenly, just like this scripture said.

And these two young men, leaders on the campus, literally cried out to the group and said, we've been trying to repent all weekend. And God won't let us repent. He has commanded that we repent publicly and openly before our entire campus.

And then they began to describe how they knew that many saw them as leaders. And that they were leading Bible studies. And they were doing soul winning.

And said, you think we're leaders, but we're full of pornography. And God has devastated us and called on us to repent or it's over. And so we come to repent.

And so when they both had finished, I turned to them and said, you need to go to the back of the platform and you need to cry out unto God for mercy. Mercy is asking God to withhold from us what we really deserve. I said, you deserve the judgment of God for being religious leaders in the middle of this campus and leading many astray.

And they confessed that they had not been proper with the girls. So they went back and when they started to cry out to God, you could hear them all over that auditorium, just crying out their heart. So knowing that that was a moment of God, I assumed that probably he's talking to other young men as well.

So I said, you have experienced the visitation of God. Are there any of you young men who also have sinned grievously against God and against others? And God is convicting you to come and repent and cry out unto him for mercy. It was like a stampede.

They began to fall over chairs. The men, young men came, some fell at the altar at the front, big high, they couldn't have come up. And then the others gathered on the platform and began to cry out unto God.

Well, I was still at the microphone and I noticed a tall slender black girl had stepped up just crying her heart out. I spoke a moment with her and then she said, you fellows think that you're the only ones who need repentance. We girls do too.

We have not dressed modestly and we've created occasions for many of you young men to sin by the way we've dressed and the way we have behaved and our attitudes. And she just broke down sobbing and said, I come to confess to you and to repent before God. And I said, then why don't you go over by the piano and cry out unto God? Then I said, are there any other young women who have sensed the presence of God and the call of God for you to repent? Would you come? And even a greater number just ran to the altar and ran to the platform.

And that encounter with God lasted all night long into the early hours of the morning and the campus realized this was an encounter with God. And so they canceled some classes that God might have freedom to work. And then some of those whose lives were changed, they began to feel they need to travel to other campuses.

And several went to Southwestern Seminary to give a testimony of an encounter with God. I had two sons who were there during that chapel service. And when he was finished, there were students who just absolutely ran to the altar and several who were to graduate from seminary that term came confessing they were not even believers in Christ.

And they became a child of God. And out of that touch of God, I've asked some others. They estimate that probably 300 campuses were touched out of that one visitation of God in Howard Payne University.

God let me be present to see what happens. And so when I come to you and say, let me tell you about this passage of Scripture. He comes suddenly, the one you've been seeking.

He comes suddenly, but who can abide the time and the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? I want you to know when God visits his people, no one can seem to stand. It seems as though they all fall on their face before God. It is God they're meeting.

And then it says he comes as a refiner's fire. I bear witness that is true. Now, what does a refiner, and he sits as a refiner of silver and gold, what does a refiner's fire do? What's the purpose of a refiner's fire? It's okay if you answer.

To purify. And a refiner's fire, when applied, lifts all the impurities to the surface. And you scrape off the impurities.

And you keep doing that until there's none left. And now what you see is your image in the silver and in the gold. You know what God, why he comes as a refiner's fire? He comes to deal with all of the impurities in the life of his people.

And he knows what they are and where they are and how extensive they are. And that's why he says, who in the world can possibly stand when he comes? He comes like a refiner's fire. Everything that is not holy will be revealed as sin.

Now, do you know what keeps God from doing a work in your life? Sin. Do you know why God sent his son? Do you know why his son died on a cross? To deal with sin. Because sin brings death.

And God so loves his people that he's not willing that they perish because of their sin. So he dealt with sin. And he dealt with it so thoroughly and so completely in the death of his son and the resurrection of his son, giving victory over sin, that he not only, he not only defeated the consequences of sin and the nature of sin, but oh hear it, he brought victory over the power of sin.

So that never again does a believer need to sin. Read 1st John. He who is born of God does not continually sin.

Because his seed, Christ, remains in us and we cannot sin. Don't explain away your sin. It's bringing death to you.

It's canceling what God eternally purposed for you. Ephesians 1 verse 4 says, God, before the foundation of the world, chose you. Do you know that God knew you and chose you to be in union with his son? And he did that before he even began to create.

Do you suppose that this one life of yours is important to God? Do you think he has something in mind that he wants to do? First in you, to deal with sin that will keep him from functioning in you, and then set you free to be the maximum. Now when he comes to you, he will come to you like a refiner's fire, because he has something that he's immediately wanting to do. But up until now he couldn't do it.

There's too much impurity in your mind. I always encourage people, don't watch CNN before you go to bed. That's going to affect you all through the night.

And it's going to affect you when you awake in the morning. Set your affections on things above. Don't fill your mind and heart with the sin of the world.

It will cancel God's voice speaking to you. You won't even know it's him. I wonder what God has in mind for you.

Throughout the weekend I have tried to communicate. And whenever you're dealing with God and his activity, words fail you. And after you've tried to explain what it is you sense God doing, you just feel, I shouldn't have even said that.

It hasn't even come close to what I believe God is up to. And somehow at this time in my life, God is dropping my life into the Pentagon, into the White House, into Washington, into the military around the world, into CEOs around the world, into the United Nations, the ambassadors. And I have been asked from a group who invites all the heads of all the governments of Africa to come to a gathering.

And they have issued that call and they've all said they'll be there. And this little group came to me and said, we believe God wants you to be the keynote speaker to the heads of all the governments of Africa. And I shake my head and I say, why me? And he would say, why not you? I can put you anywhere I want.

And then I watch the average believer living below what God could do and really wants to do. We live in such a way that we set parameters, even on God. We don't expect him to do anything in our life, but simply bless us.

And God says, before the world began, I planned you would be here at this time under these conditions. And here's what I, God, want to do through you in your world. And I have to shake my head with amazement and say, God, it is impossible for me even to verbalize what it is you're asking me to do.

Who am I? And he said, the question is not who are you, but who am I? So who is the God that you serve? That God has chosen to visit you. You know that, goodness, the time really goes in this place. But I do want you to have a sense of what happens when the God of the universe visits a church, because he visited your church.

And I watched his activity. And I've watched it alongside of other great moments where God has let me be present. And I bear witness to you that it may surprise you and even overwhelm you what God chooses to do in the midst of your congregation.

There may be some so overcome by the encounter and so overcome by the revelation of the sin in their life that God is now pointing his finger at that they literally cry out in agony. I've been present when the whole place was filled with the agonizing cry of people who've been encountered by God because of their sin. Are you ready for that? Or would you say, Pastor, you need to keep these people quiet.

I pray that you would recognize from this passage when God comes, he comes as a refiner's fire and he refines the Levites, the staff and the leaders, so that their worship will now be acceptable. People who are leading others in worship whose lives are not clean with God, the whole worship of them and their congregation is canceled. And God says, I want my people in First Baptist Powell to have worship that's acceptable to me.

So I'm going to come and I'm going to refine the Levites, the spiritual leaders. And I'm going to refine them as silver and gold. And when I look in them after the impurities are lifted, I'll be able to see my face in them.

And then it says, then when they are purified, then the worship of Jerusalem and Judah will be acceptable to God. Don't be surprised at what you hear by the testimony of staff and others how God's dealt with them. Connect it, connect it and say, I need to get my life right with God because he may suddenly come to all of us together and I will be among them.

I won't want to miss. And when he comes to me, how will I respond? Will I cry out, O God, test me and try me and test my heart and see if there's any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting like David cried? That would be my prayer for you. So you hear him saying, I'm going to come.

But when I come, I'll expose sin and then I'll call on you to return to me. And the people said, wherein should we return? We don't know that we have left. He'd say, I know you've been doing religious activity so long you've lost the relationship to me.

I don't have access to you. You're caught up in religious activity. I didn't say return to religious activity.

I said return to me. When you return to me, then I will refine you. And you will be the instrument in my hand through which I can touch a waiting and watching world.

So we come to a moment of invitation. I never encounter God in this word without knowing I must deal with this. This is God's invitation to know me this way and to respond to me this way.

And so I give you that opportunity to encounter God. The Holy Spirit's the only one who can take the word of God and help you to understand and apply it. But you need to understand if there's a pulling in your heart to make some major adjustments in your life to God, you are face to face with God.

To say I'm not ready is to tell God that you do not believe him, trust him, nor are you willing to obey him. That is an awful place to be. The place to be is when you recognize God has chosen to come suddenly to you to immediately cry out, yes Lord, you are the Lord.

And the answer is yes. I don't know how you're going to deal with me. I don't know what it's going to look like.

But I know one thing, you alone are God. And you have come and visited my church. And this morning I am present as you visit all of us together.

And Lord, I need to personally respond to you. So the altar is open and at every service the altar has been filled with those who have suddenly encountered God, knew that they had to leave from where they were to where God wanted them to be. They know there's a holy restlessness that God has something much more significant he wants to accomplish through their life.

They don't know what it is, but they know they do not want to remain where they've been. And so symbolically they make their way to the altar. They leave where they are and in that response they're saying, Lord, I personally will not remain where I've been.

So I come and I lay my life before you. There may be those who have never put their faith in Christ. And there's a disturbing sense that you need a relationship to Christ.

And this is the day that God is saying, if you come to me, I will come to you. And you may need to hurry and say to one of the pastors, I want to put my faith in Christ for the first time. It's not that I haven't known what to do.

It's that I've not been willing to release my life to the only God there was. Somehow I've been confused, but this morning I want to come. And I want to release my life to him and my sin and let him change me and make me his child so I come.

And you may be among those that God is calling into ministry or missions. And you've been struggling with that. It's God who's calling you.

Why are you struggling? Well, all of my career. Put that alongside of what happens when the God of the universe calls you to himself. He's going to release you into things immeasurably beyond anything your career could bring you.

What are you holding on to when God's calling you? You may have known his calling. You don't know where it's going to lead. He will show you, but he's got to have the release of your life before he can show you.

And then as we experience the joy of receiving some new members into your church, and I rejoice just watching them. You're one of those who's been attending, but you've been looking for a church home. You couldn't find a better one.

The folk are so gracious and kind. Everyone I met had a smiley face. And I said, how can I get one of those? And then it dawned on me, if I wear a smiley face, they're going to tell me to do something.

Because everyone with a smiley face was committed to greet and receive and respond to all those who came. It's a wonderful church home. And if you need a church home, but you somehow have been a spiritual orphan away from a family, this is one of the great families that you could put your life in, and they will love you just like a family does and help you to come to your finest place and all of your children to their finest place.

So in a moment, I'm going to pray and we'll just be quiet. It doesn't take me long to make a decision with God. Two words.

Yes, Lord. I know what you're saying and the answer now, right now, is yes, Lord. And so we'll just leave the altar open.

And if you sense that you need to come and meet the Lord, there's something you need to say, there's something you need to do. You're not going to stay where you've been. You're going to get up and make your way to the altar and there let God deal with you.

You want to settle some things with God. This is a moment when you can. So let's bow in prayer and then we'll just be quiet and let the Spirit of God speak to the people of God in the house of God on the Lord's day.

And then watch to see how his people will respond. So let's pray together. Father, we know that gentle and increasingly firm tug that comes to our heart and our mind.

When we're focused on you and we know it's you, we're a little afraid because it might get out of our control. So we're not used to letting anything get out of our control, but somehow you're asking to release our life to you. You are perfect love.

You have perfect knowledge. Your plans are perfect for our life. Forgive us when we have withheld our lives from you and we're only now experiencing what we could do, but we have yet to discover what you can do.

But somehow we believe you've chosen to visit this church and you've chosen to express your presence and we've sensed you coming as a refiner's fire. You've been cleansing. You've been removing anything that has been keeping us from you and we have watched it and seen it.

And here again is another opportunity. I pray that you will give us a little time. But Father, don't let us presume that tomorrow may be ours.

When you speak is the time for us to respond. So Father, by your Spirit, convince us of our need to this morning release everything to you. For that one who would become your child for the first time, help them to run to the place of meeting with you who have provided for their forgiveness and provided for their sin and made a way for them to become your child.

For those who have been struggling with your claim and call, rightful claim on their life, Father, would you reduce all of that resistance to nothing and may with joyful hearts, even tearful hearts, they come acknowledging that you have been speaking. And for those who have been experiencing what it is like to be a spiritual orphan. They don't belong anywhere, but they want to.

They want a spiritual home. Would you convince them this may be the very place of your choosing for them and that's why they're here today. Now, O Lord, guide us to any decision, just the releasing of known sin to you, that we might be free and so we trust in your guidance in these few moments of invitation.

And we ask it in your name.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11773.mp3>

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