

On Our Knees

by John Franklin

God desires to impact the world, beginning one community at a time, and He wants to use us to impact the world, but only if He first impacts us, revolutionizing our thinking, relationships, and prayer life.

Duration: 45:17

Scripture: Isaiah 41:17, Matthew 6:10, Matthew 16:19, Matthew 21:21-22

Topics: "Faith And Surrender", "Gods Providence"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a little boy who only ate half of his hamburger at school because his mother told him to bring the other half home for his sister. The speaker then goes on to talk about the potential that God has to do great things in our lives if we are willing to believe in Him and surrender ourselves to His will. He shares examples of how God has provided for his community, including a man who drove from California to Kentucky to donate supplies and a company that donated \$150,000 worth of clothing. The speaker also discusses the illiteracy rate in his community and how his wife started a Bible study for women who couldn't read. Overall, the message emphasizes the power of God to work miracles and make a difference in our lives and communities.

Transcript

Wow. How y'all doing? I'm glad to be here tonight. Of course, my children tell me, Dad, now that you're over 50, you better be glad to be anywhere.

I am glad to be able to come tonight and share a few thoughts about what the Lord's doing in my part of the world. I've come to understand one thing. Many things I've come to understand, but this one has become more important to me in these latter days.

I believe that God is desiring to impact the world, beginning one community at a time. And God wants to use you and me to impact that world. But God will never use us to impact the world if He does not first impact us.

We must have a great encounter with God to the degree that God revolutionizes our thinking. That God revolutionizes our relationship, particularly in relationship to Him. And our relationship in prayer.

I'm going to share just a couple of verses with you tonight. And as Van Saverin once said, I'll depart therefrom, never to return thereto. I just want to give you this as a backdrop for what shall I say tonight,

because I'm going to share with you what God has been doing.

Psalms 78 said that we're to tell the praiseworthy deeds of our God. So that's what I'm going to share with you tonight. What God is doing where I am.

And I'm going to ask you to turn to Matthew chapter 21. And I'll read verses 21 and 22 and maybe another verse or so in another chapter. Matthew 21, 21.

This is the story of Jesus and He came to the fig tree and He was hungry and the fig tree didn't have anything on it. So He spoke to the tree and the tree withered away. And then Jesus began to speak in verse 21.

So Jesus answered and said to them, Surely I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, it will be done. For whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive. And then in Matthew chapter 16, verse 19, Jesus was talking to Peter and Peter had made his great confession of faith.

You remember that story? Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus said, Flesh and blood does not reveal that to you. And then He said to him, Peter, I will give to you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

And whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. And then Jesus, teaching in another passage of Scripture that will be taught more on, I'm sure this week, in Matthew chapter 6, verse 10, Jesus in giving His model prayer said something like this, when you pray, pray like this, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth.

How? As it is in heaven. Wouldn't you agree with me tonight that it would be pretty important that if we were to ask God to deliver something to earth like it's being done in heaven, we would need to know what's going on up there. Right? And that's what prayer is all about.

That relationship of ushering you from where you are to where God is so that you might be able to see what God sees and then whatever God shows you, then call that as being reality and God will do what He shows you. But we're afraid of that. And we want to take, now hear this closely, we want to take Jesus Christ as an add-on to our life.

What do I mean by that? I simply mean this, that we want the Lord Jesus to come into our life, forgive our sins, take care of all of our problems, but leave my lifestyle alone. Right? Somebody say, Amen. Now, I know I'll quit preaching and go on to medium probably, but we want the Lord to do everything, fix everything, but don't expect me to do anything.

And that's the way we approach God. That's not a relationship. God's not a glorified Santa Claus.

And whenever you ask something, God just doesn't zap it down. It's through a relationship where God gets your heart to beat with His heart. When God gets you in that manner, whatever you ask, God will do.

Now, I'm going to share with you three things about where I am in eastern Kentucky. Anybody know where Lynch, Kentucky is? Wow! You're blessed, as in eastern Kentucky. And we have some folks here that's been on mission trips there from Black Oak Heights and Tennessee and other places.

But when I grew up in the mountains of eastern Kentucky, I'm a mountain boy. My wife grew up in Lynch. That's where we now live.

And I'm proud to be a mountain boy. I just had the good fortune of receiving education, the Lord taking us around the world literally in mission endeavors of different kinds through different pastorates and different positions. I've been an administrator at one of our college campuses in Kentucky, one of our Baptist schools.

I served as assistant to the president there for a number of years at Cumberland College. Perhaps some of you are familiar with that. I served on the state staff in Ohio for eight years in the evangelism department.

Doug Metzger, who's here, that I met earlier. I worked with him many years there. And then I pastored in Ohio and Mississippi for the remaining time until the Lord called us back home.

Now, my final pastorate was in South Haven, Mississippi. Anybody from Mississippi here? Yeah, we've got some good Mississippi folks. I'll tell you one thing, God blessed me down in Mississippi now.

He gave me a wonderful church. They called me down there running less than 100 and said, unless you come to be our pastor, we think we're going to have to close our doors. Now, I left the church that had 25 ministries going on at home and around the world in Ohio, the third largest church in the convention in Ohio, to go pastor a church running less than 100.

But I knew God was in that because God had spoken to me and said, you dwelt long enough at this mountain, take your journey now and go south. I didn't know where I was going, but I knew God knew, and that's all I needed to know. And when that church called me Mississippi, I went.

Four and a half years later, God had grown that church to a little over 400 in Sunday School. We'd built a \$3.7 million building, moved into it debt-free, and we'd sent missionaries to five foreign countries. We'd started works to African Americans and Hispanics and called local pastors from Mid-America Seminary to pastor those two churches, and God was just doing a great work.

And this church was a very wealthy church. In fact, they bought my wife and I our dream home. They bought us a five-bedroom, three-bath, Tudor estate executive home right near a 40-acre lake.

Now, that's for those of you who are pastors here. The guy in the church said, now, you can't live near a 40-acre lake and not have a bass boat, so he gave me a new bass boat. We had Cadillacs and cell phones.

Anything we wanted, we had. And I think Boulevard Church already has a pastor, men, so settle down, okay? God gave us everything we wanted, and I thought, well, I'm just going to retire here. I love the church.

They love me. But my mother-in-law lived with us for seven years, and the last seven years of our lives, she passed away in our home in Mississippi, and we went back to Lynch, Kentucky, to close out her estate, which consisted of one half house. The old coal camps built these duplexes, and there was a family lived on one side, the family lived on the other with a wall right down the middle.

And my mother-in-law just had four rooms. Initially, it was four rooms and a bath, but they did add a bath later. So we went back to close up the old house to clean it out, sell it, rent it, whatever we could do.

And while we were there, several people in the community came by and said, you're a preacher, aren't you? And I said, I sure am. They said, we need somebody to come back to the mountains and help us. Now, I want you to know that I saw hopelessness, despair, poverty.

I saw a lot of things there. And my response then, because I was living the life of Riley, pardon the pun, down there in Mississippi. And when I looked out over that community, I said, boy, you sure do need help.

And anybody know what the other badgers' response is? Not what? Yeah, I'll pray for you. Well, we don't intend to pray for people. Right? Now, don't you all look pious at me.

We want to get about our business, right? We want to go about our business, and we just tell that to get rid of folks. But I'm telling you, when my wife and I was going back to Mississippi, God gripped our heart, and God said, that's where I want you to be. And so we began to seek the Lord.

Now, my income before I left that wonderful church was approaching six-digit income as a senior pastor. You figure it out. God was very good to me.

And here's what the Lord said. The Lord said to me, Lonnie, I want you and Melinda to go back to Kentucky, but I just want you to know you won't have a fancy home. In fact, you'll have a four-room house.

You won't have the big fancy cars. In fact, you won't have a salary. You won't have any salary.

You're going to have to trust Me in this. But here's what God said. But God said, Lonnie, you'll have Me.

And I said, God, as long as I have You, that's all I'll ever need. I don't need fancy homes. I don't need fancy cars.

I don't need big salaries. But I do need Jesus. I need Him every single day of my life.

He's not an add-on to me. He's all I have. I don't have anything else to boast of except Jesus.

That's the way He likes it. So we went back, resigned the church, sold the home, gave the money back to the church. It was theirs.

Let our lease Cadillacs go back. Moved to Kentucky. No promise of an income.

And I didn't have a clue what to do, except I knew that God had called me there because in Isaiah 41, 17 and following, you can write it down and read it later, here's what God said to me in that Scripture. God said, The poor and the needy are thirsty, and there is no water. But I, the God of heaven, have heard them, and I will make a river to flow from the mountains so that all men will know that God has done this thing.

And based upon that Scripture, my wife and I moved, not knowing what to do, except we were to go and help the people in eastern Kentucky. Now when I got to eastern Kentucky, I didn't hear another word from God for six months. What do you do in those six months? You just hang on to the last thing God told you.

Because when God tells you, it doesn't matter if it's six months or six years or sixty years, God's going to do it. When God says it, it's as good as done. I look up and down our street.

We had thirteen empty homes on our street. And all of them had, most of them, had hedges. And you know what happens to hedges when they grow up, don't you? They grow wild.

It looked like a jungle in Lynch, right downtown Main Street. I said, Well, God's called me here to help people. The least I can do is help make the town look better.

So I went down to Walmart. That's America's store. Bought me a set of hedge clippers \$24.99 and bought me a hundred foot extension cord.

And I said, At least I can make the town look better. So I went up and down the street cutting everybody's hedges in these old empty homes. Now, folks, that'll bless you, going from a nice big church with everything to cutting hedges.

Try that sometime. It blessed me. It still does.

And I remember this guy happened by the house one day. He said, Lonnie, somebody told me you're a preacher. He said, I really need \$75.

My kids are hungry. My car's tore up. I can't get to work.

By the way, do you live near a church that's by an interstate and folks just happen by your church going somewhere else? You all like that? Shake your head, yeah. And they'll stop and ask you for money and food overnight, Lonnie. Well, that don't happen in Lynch.

You don't just pass through Lynch, Kentucky. I mean, you've got to be going there to get there. It's dead end, right? And so if somebody comes to you, usually it's a legitimate need.

So here's what I said to him. I say the same thing today if it's true. I said, man, I don't have \$75.

But if God gives me \$75, I'll give it to you. By the way, you ought to try that sometime. Somebody asks you for something, don't just say, no, maybe yeah.

If you don't have it, just say, listen, I don't have it. But if God gives it to me, I'll give it to you. But if God gives it to you, you better cough it up.

Because God's not going to give you anything else if you don't. Two days later, my wife and I were out in the backyard working on an old door. This lady pulls up in a Jeep from Ohio.

She gets out of the Jeep, crosses her arms, came up to me and said, I came to pay my bill. I said, well, ma'am, you don't owe me a bill as I know of. I don't even know who you are.

She said, well, I'm the lady that owns the house three doors up from you. It's an empty house. I said, I always pay to have my hedges clipped, and I'm going to pay you.

You did a good job. She pulled out a \$100 bill and laid it on that door. She said, now, if you don't pick up that \$100 bill, it's going to lay there.

Now, folks, you don't say that to a broke Baptist preacher. I thought, I thought, I'll go to Western Citizen tonight and get me a stake. That's the best we can do in Harlan County, and that's 40 miles from where I live.

As I was going in the door, God reminded me, now, Lonnie, you told that boy if I gave you \$75, you'd give it to him. I just gave you \$75. I said, Lord, you're right.

And with all the joy in my heart. You see, that's the reason it's important to understand that prayer is not an activity. It's a relationship.

Anytime God wants your life, He just has to speak to you, and if you're ready, you'll do it. If your heart's out of tune, you won't do it no matter how many times or how loudly He speaks. So just getting your heart in tune, getting it right and getting it softened up, when God speaks, you'll know it's God and you'll respond.

And so I said, Lord, you're right. And with joy in my heart, I went in and sat down and the phone called. This fellow on the phone, I said, listen, I just want you to know that God's been good to you today.

Because I told you if God gave me \$75, I'd give it to you. God just gave me \$75, and I just want you to know that when you sit down tonight and your family has a warm meal for the first time in a long time, and you be able to drive your car to work in the next couple of days, you'll know that God's been extremely good to you. And with joy in my heart, I was walking out the back door to give him his \$75.

It's almost like God touched me on the shoulder and spoke to me automatically and said, now, Lonnie, I just wanted you to know, boy, not only did I give Darrell that \$75, but I just paid you back your \$24.99 hedge clippers all in one shot. Isn't that just like God? I mean, God does it, and He does it right, doesn't He? So that's kind of how we started our ministry. Because whatever you ask, in prayer, believing, God will do it for you.

I am 100% convinced that if your heart is right with God, when you ask God for something, that God will do it every single time. But I want you to know this, that God will not give you what you want, but God will give you what you need in relationship to what His will is for your life, every single time. And so we began to pray.

We didn't have a strategy. By the way, does God know what He wants to do in your town more than you do? Well, absolutely. Now, the key is finding out what God wants to do.

Not what you want to do. Finding out what God wants to do. So here was our strategy.

Lord, You know more about Lynch and Harlan County than we do. And we trust You to do what's right. Anytime You want to, You let us know what You're going to do.

If You want to let somebody else know, that's okay too. You're God. But if You want us to get in on what's going on around here, then You just let us know.

Just show us what You want us to do. But now, when you pray that, you better see what happens. And I think somebody's leading the conference on praying and connecting what happens with your life.

I think that's vitally important. So 98% of the children where I live are on the free lunch program. That means they can't afford a lunch at school.

And they're required to eat all of their lunch when they come to school. In the summertime, some of those children lose as much as 15 pounds. It's documented.

Because there's no free lunch. And so this little boy came to school. And he had hamburgers that day.

And the little boy cut the hamburger in two. And if y'all get bored, go like that, will ya? Okay, and then I'll quit. This little boy had hamburgers that day.

And he cut his hamburger in two. And he ate half the hamburger. And he wrapped half of it up and stuffed it in his pocket.

And the teacher caught him. She said, Son, why didn't you eat the rest of that hamburger today? And the little boy looked at her sadly and said, And the teacher, my mama, told me I wasn't allowed to eat the other day. Had to bring half of this sandwich home so that my little sister would have something to eat tonight.

That broke my heart. That's where I live. That's not some third world country.

That's right here where my people live. And our prayer began to be with the Lord this, Lord, if you fed two million people in the desert with manna, surely you can feed mountain people who are hungry and don't have any food. And from that one little bag of groceries that we took to that family that day, we began what we call manna house.

I think appropriately so. And today we distribute absolutely free \$25,000 worth of food every single month. Brand name food.

Every single month through that store. That translates to about \$300,000 every year. And we don't ask anybody for money.

And we don't ask anybody for food. We simply ask God since he is the great manna provider. And God is able to bring his resources to bear upon where the greatest need is.

Pauline White, a 73-year-old widow lady, read about our ministry in On-Site Magazine and sold everything she had in Florida and moved to Lynch, Kentucky a year ago. And just about every time that that manna house is open in the summertime, kids and adults are giving their heart to Jesus. Isn't it amazing how God can do things like that? That's just up in nowhere.

What could God do with your life where you are? Your resources are probably far greater. The resource provider isn't any greater. I've got the same one you've got.

No matter where you are. And so we began to minister in that way. We had a Christmas party.

Kids came to a Christmas party in December with shorts on, no shoes, short-sleeved shirts. It's cold in the mountains in the summer. First year we were there, it got 34 below zero chill factor.

It was pretty cold. And I asked where these kids' clothing were. They said they don't have any clothes.

This is all they have. And so we began to collect clothing. And so we began to pray and say, Lord, you've provided everybody in the Bible that I know of, even Adam and Eve, you've provided them with some clothes.

Surely you can provide us with some clothes that we can give to folks in Jesus' name so that they might know of your wonderful provision and be able to glorify you. This lady from northern Kentucky called me up and set up a little mission trip to come visit with us. And just before she hung up the phone, she said, By the way, you wouldn't need any new jeans down your way, would you? I said, Yes, ma'am, we could use some good jeans down our way, as long as you don't have holes in them, paint all over them.

We've got that kind of stuff down here. I said, As long as they're good and nice. She said, Oh, they're nice.

I said, I work for Levi and Gap Corporation in Cincinnati. And to date, they've given us \$150,000 worth of brand new Levi and Gap jeans and shoes and bibbed overhauled that we're just able to distribute to mountain folks, sharing Jesus. We call it the Freedom Center.

You'll come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free. And my wife started a Bible study at the Freedom Center. Nobody showed up.

They love my wife around town. And nobody showed up. She couldn't understand it.

Finally, the Lord showed her these women couldn't read. We have a 50% illiteracy rate among the adults where I live. One out of every two adults you pass on the street will not be able to read above a third grade level.

We're talking just a few hours away from here. So she came to me and said, Honey, what shall we do to share Jesus with these ladies? I said, We'll just see who the Lord sends. And so this group from Knoxville, Tennessee.

Am I from Knoxville here besides Black Oak Heights? Well, a lot of them here. They've got a group down there called the Enterprisers. You may know who that is.

I won't tell you which church it's from. The leader of the group is 85 years old. The youngest is 65.

If your age is giving you a problem, get over it. 85 years old, 65 years old, and everywhere in between. So she calls my wife up and said, We want to come up.

We've got these ladies from 65 to 85. We want to come up and do a mission trip. Blended said, Well, what can you all do? She said, We're 85.

We can't do nothing. Blended said, Well, let me rephrase the question. She said, What have you been doing all of your life? She said, Oh, most of us are retired cosmetologists.

She said, Oh, come on up. We'll have a free hair and nail day. So we opened up the Freedom Center.

They were standing in line out that door down the street waiting to get their hair cut and nails done. Men came. I'm telling you.

And they led eight folks to the Lord the first day they were opening that hair and nail day. I mean, who would have thought that? But God knows how to do that, doesn't He? Because God knows more about what He wants where we are than we do. If we would just let Him take control of what we do and not have an agenda so that God had to fit into our plan, then it'd be amazing what God would do.

Wouldn't it be? And so God began to increase what we did. Now, I don't know why, except to say God is sovereign. He chooses the vessel that He chooses.

I didn't choose God to put me there. God chose to put me there. Do you understand? God chose to put you where you are.

You didn't choose that for yourself. If you did, you're out of the will of God. But if God chose to put you where you are, He had something in mind when He did.

And anything that God has in mind is far greater than anything you can think. Isn't it? And so let's just think on God's terms and let Him lead us into there. There was an African-American man in our community, 86 years old, had a blue tarp on his roof.

World War II veteran. Now, I'm just kind of taking the example that Jesus did. He saw a need and filled it, and then He shared what was most on his heart.

That's the kind of approach we're taking. I say it's a pretty safe method if you follow what Jesus does. They came to me and said, Could you help this old man get a roof on his house? I said, I don't know.

If God provides me the material, I'll be glad to put a roof on his house. And this lady called me from Georgia. Anybody from Georgia down here? Yeah.

Down in Griffin, Georgia. Called me up and set up a mission trip, and just before she hung up the phone, God can say some amazing things just before people hang up. You better listen.

She said, By the way, you wouldn't need any shingles up your way, would you? I'm telling you now, this is not a preacher story, this is truth. I knew you'd get that. She said, You wouldn't need any shingles? I said, Yes, ma'am, we would.

I've got a house right now that needs some shingles. She said, Well, I've got 248 squares down here that I want to give you. I said, Well, bring them on up, and we'll put them on this house.

That's about how much I knew about shingles. 248 squares is a semi-load. That's a whole bunch of houses.

I said, Well, bring them on up. God must be going to use them up here. He wouldn't be going to give them to me.

So you just bring them on up. She said, That's a problem. We don't have a truck to get them from Atlanta, Georgia to Harlan County.

I said, Well, surely God wouldn't give us a bunch of shingles and not give us a truck. Let's just go to God and see what God's up to. So we began to pray.

Now I'm telling you how God operates in prayer. We began to pray that God would provide us what the people needed. We didn't need it.

The people did. And we just needed to share it in Jesus' name so that we could give it to them. And this guy from western Kentucky called me up on a Friday and said, Lonnie, we just heard about your ministry last night at our associational meeting, and God has requested me to call you to see if there's anything I can pray with you about.

I mean, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure this out. I said, Yes, sir. You can pray that God would provide us a semi-truck to go from Atlanta, Georgia, pick up these shingles and bring them to Harlan County.

And so he called me back on Monday. He said, Lonnie, God's answered your prayer. I said, What do you mean? He said, There's a young man saved in our church.

His dad is a trucker. I asked our church to pray for you in the need. He went home and called his dad, who was a lost man in California, told him about the need.

His dad said, I'd be glad to go down and pick those up. Now, you've got to get this. A lost man drove all the way from California to Atlanta, Georgia, picked up 248 squares and brought them to Harlan County, Kentucky at no cost.

And in the pouring rain, they were unloading those shingles, and I was sharing Jesus with Mr. Mallory. Now, I wish I could tell you he got saved that day, but he didn't. But three months later, Jesse called me up and said, You'll never believe who gave his heart to Jesus today.

I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt. You know why? Because he saw God do something he couldn't explain himself. I wonder how you live.

Can your life be explained in terms other than God? I tell you, if you allow your life to be lived in terms that can only be described as this is God, then God will do something major where you are. Now, we had 3,000 people visit us last year in Lynch, Kentucky from 30 different states. Pretty amazing to me.

When I didn't call one church to say, Well, y'all come. I don't know, unless they found out about us, God just sent them there somehow. And so we have to coordinate all the material and jobs and revivals and VBSs and backyard Bible clubs and concerts in the park, and you name it, laser light shows.

I mean, we do everything. Where do you keep 3,000 people? Well, we were sticking them in empty basements of churches. We'd find an abandoned home in town, throw a mattress down on the floor and let a group stay in there.

I mean, it's okay in Lynch. You can do that. And so we were praying that God would give us a mission house, just one big house that we could put some teams in and let them sleep comfortably in.

This fellow came from Georgia, and I'll be through here in just a minute. This fellow came from Georgia, and he was an investor. You know, one of them wealthy deacons that invest.

Hang on, deacon, God may be talking to you tonight. And he saw this big empty hospital, one of the most historic buildings in town, four floors, 69 rooms. Every stone was hand-carved by Italian masons, brought there by U.S. Steel in the early 1900s.

Beautiful structure. He came to me and he said, Lonnie, I wonder if that old building is available. I'd like to buy that, invest in that property, and I'll just let you use it for ten years, for a dollar a year, and you keep all your mission teams in there.

I said, man, that would be wonderful. So I found out who owned it, the vice president of our clan company. I called him up.

So I hooked the two men up, praying that God would do whatever He wanted to do. Well, the vice president called me back. He said, Lonnie, I hate to tell you, but that deal fell through.

And he said, I've got to sell that old hospital in Lynch. I've got to get rid of that thing. And here's what I said to him.

I'll never forget it. I said, man, don't do that. I believe God wants to use that old hospital in the mountains for His glory.

He said, do you really believe that? I said, yes, sir, I do. He said, well, why don't you buy it? That's called putting your faith where your mouth is. Now, Terry Irons is not a Christian.

I said, okay, I'll buy it. We settled on a price for \$85,000. It's a 27,000 square foot building, the most historic building in town.

Probably today would be valued \$1-2 million. I said, okay, I'll buy it. He said, how much money you got? I said, I don't have any money.

I don't have any money. I said, my Heavenly Father's rich. And when He gets ready, He'll buy this building.

And he said, he'll ask, be like y'all did. He said, I know you're a man of faith. He said, but the only thing I can do is hold this for you for 30 days.

I said, that ought to be enough time for my father to come up with that kind of money. And so we began to pray. We don't do fundraisers.

We've never done fundraisers where we are, and so we just sent out the word to our prayer partners to pray that God would provide us what we needed. Three weeks later, God had given us \$25,000 from around the country. We'd been putting it back, knowing that God was bringing this old hospital up for sale.

So three weeks into the deal, Terry Irons, who's the Vice President of Arc Land today, out in St. Louis, Missouri, called me back up. He said, Lonnie, are you ready to close on the old hospital? I said, yes, sir, I'm ready when you are. He said, okay, today's Tuesday.

Next Tuesday at 1 o'clock will be your 30 days. Just bring the money up there and I'll have the deed and we'll just exchange and it'll be yours. I said, okay.

He said, how much money do you have? I said, I've got \$25,000. He said, now you know you need \$85,000. I said, yes, sir, but I don't need it today.

You told me I had a whole week, right? You know what I found out about God? He's never late or early, but He's always on time. He's an on-time God. You know, we want God to show up early so we can figure out what to do with what God gives us, right? But God doesn't operate that way.

But God's always on time. He will never fail you. If God ever fails you, He will fail to be God.

Because God cannot fail. It's impossible for Him to do so. And so I said, I've got a whole week here.

And so I went out of town on Wednesday. My wife calls me on Thursday and said, honey, this fellow from Ohio called today and said he had been praying for us and felt impressed of the Lord to let you use some money to buy the old hospital with. I said, great.

David, just tell him to send it on down. Whatever he doesn't send, we'll just pray for it. Today's Thursday.

We've got until next Tuesday. No use to worry about this, right? God's always on time. And so I called her back on Friday.

I said, honey, did he send down the money? She said, yeah. He wired it down today. I said, how much did he wire down? She said, \$65,000.

Yeah, I think God needs a big hand on that one. Now, if you're a banker, you'll understand this. It took that wired money one working day to clear the bank.

He wired it on Friday. I couldn't close on that old hospital on Monday. But Tuesday at 12 o'clock, the money came available.

And I got a cashier's check for \$85,000. And at 1 o'clock on Tuesday, I handed it to Terry Irons in front of what we now call the Solomon's Porch Retreat Center. A place of wisdom and healing.

What greater place can that be than an old hospital that God's converted and God is using for His glory. I gave him that check for \$85,000. His eyes got about that big.

He said, boy, you sure are a man of great faith. I said, no, sir, it has nothing to do with me. But it has everything to do with the Father.

And you can come to know the Father just like I do through Jesus. And Terry didn't get saved that day. In fact, Terry's still not a Christian.

But about every other week, he calls me up to just see what God's doing. He knows that God's in the arrangement. And if you come to Solomon's Porch, it's probably a show place in the community.

Harold and Joyce Croggs, would you all stand? They're from South Carolina, right here in Belton. They have come to work with us full time by faith. God's providing their salary just like He's providing mine.

And you can be seated. And they're the administrators and directors of Solomon's Porch Retreat Center. And God has some amazing things that He's doing in their life, too.

And Belinda and I began to pray about staff members to come and help us. We don't have a budget. We don't have a salary.

We don't have anything, but we have God. And God knows where they are. God knows where we are.

And to date, we have 13 full-time staff members on staff with us. And they're all serving just like we are. In fact, some live on retirement income and things like that.

But God is doing a great work. Now, I'm going to tell you one more thing, and then I'll be through. I was sitting in my office one day and this pastor called me up.

He said, I've got a fellow here who wants to talk to you. I said, alright, bring him on up. So he came up to Solomon's Porch.

I showed him around. And he said, I want you to come to Revival tonight. He was from Florida.

He said, I'm doing a revival down here at the Cumberland Church and I just want you to come down and sit in on it. And I've got a guy flying up from Texas I want you to meet. Now, what are the odds in Lynch, Kentucky where 95% of you have no idea where it is that God would come to me and say, I want you to meet a guy from Texas and he says it through a guy from Florida? Now, what are the odds of that happening? I mean, you know God's up to something, right? So I said, okay, I'll be glad to come down

there.

I went down on that night, sat in the worship service, got through, and he introduced me to a guy from Texas. I wasn't too impressed. Neither was he.

We went on about our way and he said, well, I'd like to meet with you again on Wednesday morning at 8.30. I said, okay. We got there Wednesday morning at 8.30. Went across the mountain from where we live. By the way, if you go anywhere out of Lynch, you've got to go across the mountain.

So I went across the mountain. You'll have to figure out which way. And they showed me this beautiful 25-acre college campus.

And, man, we looked at that thing for three hours. And I said, well, why is it that God would want me to come over here and look at this with you? You feel like God may want to use me in helping you renovate this? Or what is it? And the guy looked around and he said, no, all you have to do is say yes and all that you see is yours. I said, what do you mean? He said, well, both of us are getting old and up in years and we're afraid we're going to die and the state's going to get this beautiful college campus.

And we were looking around in the mountains of eastern Kentucky to find somebody who was helping mountain people and you're the one that God led us to and we want to give this property to you. And God gave us a beautiful 25-acre college campus. Some of you may know where it is, near Whitesburg.

It's called Calvary College or the old Stuart Robinson School. It's now being renovated and it's going to be fixed up. Jamie and Rachel Reynolds have moved there from Alabama with their two kids and they are full-time administrators there on staff doing a wonderful job.

Now, what do you do with a 25-acre college campus? Well, you trust God. That's what you do with it. We didn't know what to do with it two weeks later.

And I'm telling you what God does. Two weeks later, I sat in my office. God gave me a call from Dallas, Texas.

There was a young man named Dr. Blair who teaches at Dallas Theological Seminary, has a PhD in New Testament. He teaches New Testament there and he called me up and said, I've been working up in your area with a fellow over in Whitesburg who works with deaf people. And we have found out that near Whitesburg area, the second largest concentration per capita of deaf people in America is right there in Whitesburg.

I said, well, that's pretty amazing to me. I didn't even know we had deaf folks around here. I'm telling you, I'm ignorant.

But God's amazingly smart, isn't He? And so I said, well, I don't know how I can help you. I said, what's God told you to do? He said, well, God's working on our heart and He's leading us to start a school for the deaf and hearing impaired. I said, that's amazing.

Did God tell you where? He said, no, God didn't tell me exactly where, but it would be great if it was located somewhere between Hazard, Kentucky and Whitesburg, Kentucky. I said, you wouldn't believe it if I told you God just gave me a 25-acre college campus located directly between Hazard and Whitesburg, Kentucky. I mean, isn't God amazing? And now we're in the process of renovating that so we can start a

school for the deaf and hearing impaired and share Jesus on a totally different level.

I wish I had time to tell you about the equestrian ministry and the many other things that God has brought to our lives. It's just been the most amazing thing. Now, by the way, we haven't been there for 15 years.

We've been there since 2000, January of 2000. And God is just doing amazing things. Over 1,500 people have prayed to receive Christ in the mountains of eastern Kentucky, which is unparalleled in the history of the mountains.

Five new churches. Not all of them have been Baptist, unfortunately. But God has raised up five new churches in that area in the last two years.

You see, if we don't accept folks, God's going to find somebody who will accept them and He'll put them right there. You see, I'm not interested in where God does what. I'm just interested in God doing something that no man can take credit for.

And I can't take credit for what I've been telling you tonight because God has been in the mix from the very beginning to this very single day. God has done that all. Now, is it work? It's hard work.

Is there opposition? There is always opposition to what God does. But you've got to understand, I read the last chapter of the book and guess what? We win. Ain't that right? We win over here.

So we don't have to worry about the opposition. We don't have to worry about all that. What we need to keep our focus is is not all the gifts that God can give to us, but the Giver.

And when you focus on the Giver, I mean everything you need, God will be supplying to you. There isn't anything that you will ever need that God can't supply. By the way, do you think you will ever have a need in your life or face a need in your life at which God would scratch his head and say, Boy, I didn't think of that one.

No. I just try to live practically. I believe what God says is true even if nobody believes it.

I just believe it's true. And I would stake my very existence and do. I would stake my very life and do.

I would stake my economy and I do. I would stake my ministry and I do on the fact that God is true. Nothing else.

I wonder what God may have been saying to your life tonight. I know that when you tell the praiseworthy deeds of your God, I know in some fashion, God puts a yearning in your heart, doesn't He? And that yearning might say something like this, Boy, I just wish God would do something great like that where I am. Maybe not in the same fashion, but in such a way that we would have to praise and glorify God because we knew that we couldn't do it.

Has God said something like that to you? If so, I'm going to ask you tonight, and I'm not down here to count heads. I'm not that kind of guy. I don't think God just counts heads.

You know what I think? I think God counts hearts. So God wants to count your heart tonight. And I don't want you to come down here unless God specifically gives you that direction and purpose to come.

But maybe God's just placed that on your heart and you'd want to say to Him tonight, Lord, I just want to be so in tune with You that whatever You do in my community will be done in such a way that You'll receive the glory. And Lord, if You want to use me, I just want to make myself available. But if You don't want to use me, I still want You to do it.

Just do something in my town that no man can take credit for except God did it. God did it. Let me tell you one more story and I'll be through.

The elementary school came to me, and we don't have a large tax base, so they don't have a lot of money. The elementary school came to me and said, Lonnie, can you help our elementary school build an outdoor classroom? I wonder how many churches would do that? And I said, well, I don't know if I can. If God sends me the right people, I'd be glad to do that.

And God sent me a bunch of farmers from Norwalk, Ohio. I showed them the project out behind that little school was just a big pile of lumber. It didn't have any plans.

It didn't have any architectural drawings. But they wanted an outdoor classroom and a greenhouse. And they said, can you all do this? And they said, we'll try.

So they got down there in late July and early August. It's hot down there then. They were building this little outdoor classroom.

One of those guys looked at me and said, Preacher, what in the world are we doing out here building this outdoor classroom? He said, I thought we were supposed to be doing mission work. I said, the only thing I can tell you, sir, is that God called us here to help people. And we're going to help people if they ask us.

And we'll just let God take care of the rest of it. By the way, just do what God asks you to do. And just let God take care of the rest of it.

So they finished that outdoor classroom and went on about their way. And that Christmas, the principal of elementary school called me up. She said, Lonnie, I wonder if you could do me another favor.

I said, if I can, I will. She said, we want you to come down to elementary school and we want you to share the Christmas story. What a chance that had me.

I said, oh, I'd be delighted to come down and share the Christmas story. She said, there's only one catch. I said, what's that? She said, you have to share it in every classroom individually.

They had 27 classes in that building. I said, what if I get a team to come and help me do that? They said, okay. So there was a team from Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, came up and we shared the Max Locato, the crippled lamb story, tied it in with a Christmas story, and that Christmas we saw 44 kids and teachers give their heart to Jesus in that elementary school.

I went home and immediately dialed the phone number of those Norwalk men in Ohio. I'm telling you, God's awesome, isn't He? I dialed that number of those farmers and I said, men, you want me to tell you what God did with your outdoor classroom? God knew that 44 people needed Jesus in that school, and the only way to get into the school was through that outdoor classroom. I can tell you that a hundred times, a thousand times over, of what God is doing where we are.

I do want to finish the story for you before I issue the invitation. The story is this. Last year in the state of Kentucky, that outdoor classroom won the Kentucky State Pride Award for the best outdoor classroom in the entire state of Kentucky, God built in Cumberland.

They've got trophies this high to prove it. Isn't that amazing? How much more can God do with you? Infinitely more. Infinitely more.

We have 15,000 people where we are. You may have 15 million where you live. I don't know.

But God does. And God knows how to use one life that's here tonight to make a difference. If that life is willing to believe Him, lay their all on the altar, and let God do in them what they cannot do themselves.

That's always been God's greatest gift, isn't it? Just doing you what you can't do for yourself. Would you bow your head with me for a moment of prayer? Ask our musicians to come. They're just going to sing a bit and play a bit.

And I'm just going to ask you to, after I've finished in prayer, that you just remain in prayer if you want to stand and come here to this altar and just present yourself to the Lord as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable in His sight. Then you do that. And you just get along with the Lord.

Others will be here to pray with you. And then after everyone's come that needs to come, I'll ask John to be sensitive to close our service tonight. I don't know what God may have said to you.

I do understand that God can speak a million ways in one simple word.

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