

(Audio) Restoring The First Love For Jesus

by Michael Koulianos

This sermon emphasizes the centrality of Jesus in the church and in individual lives, highlighting the need to return to the heart of worship where it's all about Jesus. It calls for personal surrender, repentance, and a deep desire to encounter Jesus in a transformative way, breaking free from sin and cycles of bondage through faith in Him.

Scripture: John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Philippians 2:9, Psalm 51:10, James 4:8, Matthew 11:28, 1 John 1:9, Romans 10:9, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Centrality of Jesus", "Transformative Worship"

Description

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Transcript

I was on a friend's podcast the other day, and he asked me, what is the Lord speaking to the church and to the world? The Lord is saying the same thing to the church and to the world. He's saying Jesus. That's all he's ever spoken.

Thank you, yeah, I got one guy with me. Thank you, Jesus. Tonight, I felt like the Lord wanted to remind us of our personal beginnings, not just our corporate beginning, which is obviously special to us as a church family, how we started in that little Presbyterian church, just singing until he came, with no pressure, no clock.

Aren't you glad the clock did not die on the cross? Yeah, I'll never forget Heidi saying, oil takes time, sweetie, and so does wine. That's just the truth. But I wanna talk about just our personal beginnings, how it all started for you, for me, where it started, how it started.

Andrew Murray said, if you're looking for your end, you'll find it in your beginning. I've never really been into open and closed doors. I believe in them, but I used to hear people say, he opens and closes doors, but it's hell in the hallway.

And I thought, well, why does that have to be hell in the hallway if I'm walking with Jesus? It could be heaven in the hallway. It was actually Jay Valatin who asked me that question last week, what is the Lord

saying? And he's saying Jesus. The Lord, hear me, he is specifying and sharpening the message of the church.

He is specifying and sharpening the message of the church. I found it to be interesting that Lauren Cunningham goes to glory, who was a dear friend and the father of something that the world has never really seen. And then the next day, what happens in Israel takes place.

Proof, God doesn't take his generals home by happenstance. And then Israel is this time clock, this time piece for the whole world. And Jesse actually said last night as we talked about it, should we have vision Sunday tomorrow with what's going on in Israel? Would that sound numb or deaf or tone deaf? I said, absolutely we should.

More than ever, Jesus needs to be preached all over the world, and this is proof of it. The only one who will solve what's going on over there is King Jesus. Every generation, another five-year-old sees something bombed that is ingrained in his soul, and that doesn't just go away, you understand? That doesn't just leave you, regardless of what side you may be born into, you are marked, and this stuff goes on for generations.

And as hard as we try, we need to realize this thing will continue generation after generation after generation until a greater king than David, who is the son of David, comes on the scene. There is no replacing the gospel. And the gospel is quite simply Jesus himself preached by the power of the Holy Spirit, period.

As much as I believe in signs and wonders, and we've seen them here by the thousands, there's stuff that's happened here that I didn't even agree with. And then it happened and I agreed with it. It's amazing how that works.

It's heretical until it happens to you, and then you gotta figure it out. I remember some people would pray and their hands would shake, and they used to bother me so bad. And then I went to a meeting in Orlando where Bill and Randy were speaking, and Randy took a step toward me and my hands started shaking.

So I tried to hide them in my pocket. Really. And I didn't know Bill at the time very well.

We met twice. He was sitting next to me and my hands were doing this. I thought, this is worse, I might as well just let him out.

And he just kinda looked over and, you know. I'm in. I have seen stuff that I never thought I'd see.

Stuff that stretches you. Stuff that offends your balanced thinking, which is really oftentimes dead thinking. Where many people are more comfortable with a savior who didn't come out of the grave.

Because they can control that version of him. So I'm in. I've seen too many things.

I've seen tumors fly out of people's mouths on the floor in front of me. I've felt dozens disappear under my hand. I'm in.

I believe. But I wanna say something. In some supernatural environments, we have forgotten Jesus.

And that is not a small issue. The thousands who came to the pastor's conference, there was no secret sauce. The secret sauce was him.

He was him. So this is not a small issue to lose our vision of Jesus. There is no faith, called the Christian faith, without Jesus.

And so when Jay asked me that question, the answer was quite simple. The Father is speaking Jesus. It's all he's ever spoken.

And it's all he's ever spoken prior to the incarnation. Your Bible is about Jesus. Because Jesus said that.

The Scriptures testify of me, he said. They speak of me, but you won't come to me. And that's why I tell our students, don't just come to your Bible.

Come to Jesus through your Bible. At the same time, don't create a Jesus that isn't in the Bible. Prayer, friends, is about Jesus.

In fact, you're not really praying until you forget you are. Until you forget about it all. Until the light that shines from his face dissolves every other thought.

If you've ever been in the glory of Jesus, you know what I'm talking about. It cancels every other awareness. And one of the things I'm concerned about, but I'm hopeful, is that a generation of young people is coming up in the church who's never been in the glory.

And once you are, there's no way home from there. There's no way home. Worship is about Jesus.

Are you listening tonight? Worship is about Jesus. Worship is not about music, though he likes it. Aren't you grateful? I don't know why the Lord enjoys a change of key.

Or a certain melody. Or why he has chosen to live in praise that is united. There's something about the sound of the saints that will, listen church, listen to me, that will forever carry us further and deeper for longer than the voice of somebody.

I could go down that road. I am jealous over our worship environment. And I don't apologize for it.

Because worship is about him. It's about him. And we don't know we're really worshiping until we, I should say, we're not really worshiping until we forget we are.

There's this loss of self, this loss of thought that is us-centered, we get lost in his presence and finally we're worshiping. Prayer, as I said earlier, is simply about the Lord. It's all about Jesus.

Church should be about Jesus. Is anyone listening? Church should be about Jesus Christ. Here's a newsflash, it's his house.

He said, no, it's mine. No, you're adopted and you got invited in. It's his house.

His name is on the title deed. And he didn't buy it with a mortgage. He bought it with his blood.

That's what Peter wrote, that we've been purchased by the blood of the Son of God. Say, the church is his. So hold on, Michael, you're saying everything is his.

Yes, that's what I'm saying. So the message to the world is this, Jesus. The message to the church is this, Jesus.

The message to the believer is Jesus. The message to the unbeliever is Jesus. The message to the backslider is Jesus.

The message to the person who's lacking power is Jesus. The message to the person who is lonely is Jesus. There is no other remedy than Jesus himself.

That is all God has to offer. And friends, when you realize who Jesus is, you will realize that he has offered everything in his Son. There's nothing left over.

Not that you want, at least. But the specificity, I just wanna get to here. In fact, I talked about it today.

I hope Smith was running a camera on me. I had to do all these videos after service. I had to talk about, or I think I was asked to send a video to some friends who have a ministry school.

And they're 30 years, wanted a video. And they asked me to talk about the servant king. I want you to hear these words.

Listen to this from Zechariah. You don't need to turn there. Your king cometh unto you lowly.

Your king cometh unto you lowly. Riding on a donkey. So if you wanna know how the Lord comes, he comes lowly.

Even if he comes with might and power, which he does, he does not forfeit his lowliness. Jesus is the perfect definition of the Father. The perfect one.

So the Lord Jesus comes to tell us who God is. He is fully God. So here's the question.

How does he arrive? Lowly. There's a big difference, listen, between a cross that kills you and a ladder you climb. I have seen so many people become offended in the church because somebody else did not give them what they felt like they deserved.

And the Bible says that promotion cometh from above and that man cannot receive anything that heaven doesn't give. Oh, friends, listen, I'm begging you guys. Our media team, our worship team, songwriters, the House of Bethany group, our musicians, the directors, all of it, listen to me.

If you've gotta climb a ladder to get it, you have to fight to stay on that ladder and it will contaminate the soul. The king comes lowly. Now, friends, this has defined greatness.

And this is why Israel missed Jesus because he was not their version of greatness. They wanted a warrior who in the flesh would set them free. But Jesus redefined greatness.

Greatness is Calvary. According to the Lord. Is this making sense? That's why there's a lamb on the throne.

So Jesus comes this way, not merely to do something, but to reveal who he really is. The humility of Christ Jesus is greatness. And so that's what I sent the third years, actually to BSSM, I had to record it today.

That's what I sent them. Tell me about the servant king. This isn't just something the Lord accomplished, but this is who he is.

He also redefined kingdom. Kingdom is not about volume. In fact, he didn't even quench a smoking flax or bruise a wreath.

A humble heart will take us further than the loudest voice. If I'm going, I want my eyes to fill with tears like they used to when I first started. I want to weep the same way I used to weep.

I don't want to not be triggered like I used to. Anyone remember listening to the same worship song over and over and over and over and over and over again? Anybody remember weeping over their Bible? Has anyone ever been on their face in their prayer closet or in a room and your actual flesh begins to cry out for the living God? So much so that you don't have any words. That's what Madam Guyon said.

We are quiet for two reasons in God's presence. One, we have too little to say, or two, because we have too much to say. Have you ever been in the Lord's presence to such a degree that your being is crying out his holy name? So Jesus has defined what success looks like.

And if we're going to make it until the end, church, if we're gonna make it as a church family, we've gotta know what the win is. And for those of you who came in from out of town, you need to know. That's why the Lord sent you here tonight.

Yes, to be in his presence and worship. Yes, to get touched. Yes, to get healed unapologetically.

Yes, to give your life to Jesus. But you must leave tonight knowing that God sent you here to hear his holy word. The Father is showing us who his son is.

And before he is a water walker, listen to me, he is the lamb who comes to die. If we lose that, if we lose the tree, then water walking becomes about us. Is this making any sense? If you lose Calvary, you'll start hosting events on how to walk on water.

And that's what we do, that's our default. We do this, I don't know why we do it. But Jesus multiplies bread and fish.

Imagine if his disciples said, hey, Lord, we should host a conference on food multiplication. And pack that thing out. But we've done that.

There's power, listen, there's power in the tree. And I've told you this many times. The cross is not a mere accomplishment.

It is the greatest definition of who our God is. We serve a God who comes to die for his harlot bride. This is who he is.

This is what keeps the soul. This will keep you to the end. And I wanna see all of you at the throne.

Well, maybe not all of you, no, I'm joking. I was like, oh, fear the Lord. It's been a wonderful journey, but in the age to come, maybe, but I don't know, no, I'm joking.

I hope you're not near mine. You'll be in my mansion, Carla. You'll be sending spreadsheets.

Carla will give us a to-do list in glory. Go mow Peter's lawn. She sent her husband to the grocery store with a spreadsheet.

Poor guy, color-coded, too. So when I say the Lord is speaking Jesus, I wanna be very clear about the Jesus that he's speaking, because there's only one. I've read this to you so many times, but I just don't see it as a waste.

First Corinthians two, verse one. And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. How free can I be tonight? All right, it is live, though.

Like, once it gets out there, it's out there. All right, help me say it, Lord, in a way that's sneaky. Paul is saying here, I didn't come with excellence of speech.

Yet we teach excellence of speech. And I'm not saying if you have it, it's wrong. But Paul's like, you know what, I threw it all away.

And Paul had excellence of speech. He memorized Torah, he's trained by Gamaliel, he's a philosopher, spoke multiple languages. We're not talking about an idiot.

We're talking about a very smart guy who said, I didn't show up that way. He didn't show up that way because he was addicted, because he saw the God of the Torah who redeemed him when he was out murdering this God's bride. And so Paul throws all of that away.

All right, I'm just gonna say it, and I'm saying it in love. We are hosting events, teaching people how to, not we, but events are held, teaching preachers how to communicate, right? From the worship perspective, we teach, we can teach, we shouldn't, but we can and often do teach people who aren't in love how to write. Too much tonight? This is half my home church, so.

I gotta do it somewhere. But if you write and you're not in love, and you're an employee, and you just write a song that you didn't get from glory, not realizing the only songs that work here are the ones they're singing up there. That's why they work here.

You know, they are worshiping up there. That's why we worship here. There aren't two services going on when you're in the Spirit.

You just join the one that's going on around the throne. And as I said before, the book of Revelation says, they were singing the song of the Lamb, listen, and Moses' song. That's when you know you've written something good.

Why were they singing it? It was from heaven. That's why we wait and worship the way we wait, because we're not moving on until we are aware of him. If we are not, we have missed the only biblical proof that he liked it.

Biblically, the only way we know the Lord liked the worship is if he came. Biblically, that'd be refreshing, let's just be biblical. The only way they knew that the Lord liked it was with fire and a cloud.

That was it. You say we're in the New Testament. Well, look at the day of Pentecost.

They were anointed by the Spirit in the same room that they celebrated the Last Supper. That's why we sing of the blood, because blood always comes before fire. Blood always comes before oil.

You forget Calvary, I'm telling you, you will forfeit the presence of God. Calvary is not, once again, something he did. Calvary is a revelation of who he is.

We need people in love who are writing music. We need people who are in love preaching the gospel. Why would I teach someone to communicate who doesn't communicate Christ? Once you're in love, I'll help you out.

I've never preached a three-point sermon in my life. I don't even know how to do it. I mean, I guess they're all right.

I don't see that in the text. I don't see that in Jesus. So Paul says here, I have determined to know nothing.

In other words, I am trying, listen to the words of Paul. I am doing my best to forget everything I ever knew. Is that, that's not natural from a human perspective.

What's natural from a human perspective is to try your best to know a bunch more. But Paul is saying, I've discovered something about this God who has manifested himself through death, burial, and resurrection. He is not adding to me, he's reducing from me.

That's what God is in the business of. That's what the cross, the beauty of Christ crucified does, he whittles you away so that you can have what? Him. And then you get everything.

Does this make sense? So much of us, we want more, Lord, more, more. I know, I get it. We'll do it tonight.

I get it. But Paul is saying here, I have tried my best to forget everything I ever knew. So I literally showed up to you, listen, empty, or like Ms. Kuhlman used to say, I died 1,000 deaths before every service.

And then she'd take the platform and talk about her dad and how she was too skinny and didn't think she was pretty and that she had long skinny fingers and used to eat biscuits and butter and sleep in a barn when she first, and I would watch that and go, what is she talking about? Now I get it. She's just emptying herself out. She's getting Catherine out of the way.

That's the work of the cross. Some of you feel like, man, I've been hidden. Nobody sees me.

I'm in the shadows. It's a wonderful place to be. It's where the trusted, loving, glorious scalpel of the Holy Spirit begins to whittle you away.

It's wonderful. It's wonderful. Don't press into leadership.

Press into Jesus. You know, I'm telling you, if we, I can just tell you this. The Psalms that came to this house that are the least watched have the most glory.

I'm telling you, there's one where God literally stormed the room, and I've never heard worship and praise like that in my life, and it's nowhere near some of the videos with millions and millions of views. It just shows us the church needs a taste bud adjustment. It's gotta move beyond videography, a great mix on broadcast, a great mix in the house.

It's gotta move beyond that. That's all very valuable. There is an anointing for all that, and I'm grateful for every one of you, every technician, everyone who's mixing.

Zach, I love you. You know it's not even about you, okay? I get that, but it's gotta go beyond that, and you know the moments I'm talking about. What's that one called? The king is, welcome the king.

A glorious moment. Listen, people's eyeballs are not the barometer. His coming is.

His response is. The moment we become addicted to him and his response, we let him have his work in us. We need to die to all that.

If God raises us up as leaders, great. It's wonderful. But I can tell you this.

It'll be one of the hardest things you've ever had to do. There's a death to die, multiple every day. It's a privilege, but don't think for a moment that it's easy.

Ofentimes, we press into something not knowing what it costs. And the work of the Spirit is what prepares us. Just settle in.

Make his presence your ministry. Is this tracking tonight? I'll never forget Jesse's dad. He had me at one of the events in Orlando in 2009.

And Jesus' image was just a dream in my heart. I don't even think we owned a laptop. And he announces to a crusade here in the city with 18,000 people there, I think.

Mikey, come up here and tell the people about your new ministry. I was like, I don't have an office. And he goes, well, tell them about your ministry.

And I'll never forget what jumped out of my mouth. My ministry is him. And then someone said, tell them more.

I said, no, that's all I've got. Him, him, him. I used to have a lot more.

I used to have a lot to say. I used to have topics coming out of my ears because I was filled with myself. And then he takes you off the backside of some desert called Eifort.

Takes you to Sheol, the pit called Orlando Traffic. I never wanted to live here. Gosh, this is really a risky sermon.

I never did. I never did. I loved the water.

I grew up fishing. I don't love the summers. I hate traffic.

I am not a city boy. And I went all over Florida. I am a Florida boy.

And I went all over Florida. I tried Sarasota, West Palm, Tampa Bay, you name it. Went out to the country.

We didn't like, everywhere. And then finally we stayed here. And to my shock and torture, I felt the peace of God.

I'm not joking. This is not, I would rather mow your lawn than go to Disney. That's just me.

I'm not saying like, and this isn't like a political thing. It's just the lines, the heat, the no deodorant. All of it.

I'm like, oh, what am I doing? And now, why are we doing this again? One time, my daughter, she loves it there. So, of course, if she asks for it, we do it. And it was her birthday.

And it was torture. Like an hour in, I'm like, I'm not gonna survive it. I've been to Sudan.

I've been all over the Middle East. This is worse, Lord. If they put me in an area where there are militants, I can say that this is something else.

And I actually said to the Lord, is Sophia here tonight? I said, Lord, send the rain. Please, rain this thing out, and I'll buy her something after this. I'll make it up.

Sure enough, it started storming. Storming, and she comes up. She's like, buh-bye, it's gonna rain.

I go, I know it can't believe it. And we left. It was awesome.

It was great. She's like weeping, and I'm walking with her. I'm like, oh, you'll be okay.

But we came here. And that's another thing I just wanna say. We don't choose where we live.

Clearly. No, this is important. Listen.

You died. No, I'm serious. You died.

We don't choose where we live based on what's most expensive or most convenient, or who has the coolest coffee shop, or what little streets are cobblestone and have little vines growing up the wall and make you feel all eclectic. People move places, or it has a nice, like weather, that's not what the saints do. The saints are the dying ones.

I was preaching in Nashville once, and Heidi was there. It was always very intimidating when Heidi's watching a preach. And I said, I think I'm done traveling for a while, because the church just got planted.

She pulled me aside in the back. She goes, don't you ever say that again. I said, okay, what did I do? She said, you don't have the right to tell the Lord where you'll go and what you'll do.

You're dead. It marked me. I thought I was doing the pastoral balance thing, because I had been traveling my whole life.

She goes, no, no, no, you don't get a vote. You don't get a vote. We don't choose where we're gonna go based on anything but the Lord's voice and word.

I think it was Chris Vallotton who said to us, Jesse and I once, you will find your destiny where you find your place and your people. Your place and your people. You put those two together, destiny comes forth.

But I can't tell you how many people have been uprooted from the wind of the Spirit that will carry them further than they could have ever carried themselves, because they chose locations. I'm speaking this by the Spirit. I don't even know why I'm saying it.

Because they chose locations that God did not lead them to, with the eyes of the flesh. It's not about the mall. It's not about the coffee.

It's not about the look. It's not about the feel. It's about his voice.

At the end of the day, he is where his voice is. When I asked Dave Papavisi, when he moved to Iraq, I said, you could die, you know that. ISIS was going through.

He's been there 10 years now. I said, bro, you could die. And if he's my friend, so of course, I didn't want to lose him.

And the Lord has protected him, thank God. But he said, bro, I signed that check a long time ago. And then he told me this, I never forgot it.

He said, I'm not going to Iraq to reach Muslims. I said, what? That's exactly what you're doing. He said, no, I'm going to Iraq, because that's where I'm gonna walk with Jesus.

I'll walk with him there in a way that I just can't walk with him here, because he's called me there to be with him. That's how Paul showed up, empty. I have purpose to know nothing.

And what I want for us, listen, is regardless of the request, I want this church to have one answer, Jesus. I want us to be the ones who are that crazy to believe that Jesus, who is all in all and has filled all things with himself, is actually enough for every need under the heavens. I want, when somebody comes to you with a substance abuse issue, I want you to turn them to Jesus.

If they come to you with a marriage issue, I want you to turn them to Jesus. If they come to you with a sickness in their body, turn them to Jesus. If their heart's not burning, turn them to the baptizer.

If they feel alone, turn them to the shepherd. If they're bound with devils, turn them to the warrior. If they're prideful, turn them to the lamb.

Turn them to Jesus every single time. I want us to have one answer, just one. I want our songs to be about Jesus.

I want us to write songs to him, that come from him, that are empowered by him, and are all about him. Did you hear that? I want them to be to him, about him, from him, and by him. I want his glory on them.

I want his spirit to empower them. I want him to be the topic of this house until we are in glory with him. I came to you, and purposed to know nothing, except, listen to the word of the Lord, first Corinthians two, and then I'm gonna close it down.

First Corinthians two. I came to you, I determined to know nothing, or not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. There's one Jesus.

There's one Jesus. When the ministry first started, I got invited to do a show in California, a TV show, and this pastor, he had like 15,000 people in his church, and I was in my early 30s, and he said, now son, what are you gonna preach? I said, Jesus, and I wasn't trying to be like catchy, or start a Jesus movement, you know, I want one, but that wasn't the agenda, I was just hooked. You know what I'm talking about? I was just hooked on his beauty, because there's no one like him.

And so, I said, pastor, I'm gonna talk about Jesus, and he said, okay, and then what? And I said, I don't know, I don't think I've got anything else. And he said, well, we've got a problem. I'll never forget it.

I said, well, what's that? He said, this show is 26 minutes long. How are you gonna, this is what he said to me, the pastor and 15,000 people. How are you gonna fill 26 minutes by just talking about Jesus? And you

have to understand, at that time, I was like a rabid animal.

I remember actually coming to a meeting, y'all did, Kim, and Elisa Viejo, during that time. I think Benny Perez was there preaching as well, and people were getting touched and healed, and you were leading, and I was locked away in that season, hungry for God, and I would, I'm not joking, go on like three or four 40-day fasts a year. A year, I would fast everything except golf.

He's still doing a work in me. We're not quite there yet. And I would go to Jesse's daddy's meetings, and he could like sing Old MacDonald, and 300 people would get healed.

He didn't sing Old MacDonald, thank God, but it felt like he could have. And here I am, grinding, I'm going for it, I'm doing everything I know to do. People are coming in sick, and they're leaving sick.

They're coming in ready to die. Many of them, they did die. People were coming in unsaved, and leaving unsaved, and yet I had the scriptures in front of me, and I came to this place in my life where I said, either the Lord, it is either the Lord's fault or mine.

It can't be on him. And I looked at my life, can you help me, Joel, just softly, I looked at my life, and I said, it's not matching up with the life of Jesus. And all of us come to that place where we either choose Isaac or Ishmael.

We're gonna choose the son of promise, the word of the Lord, or we're gonna build something on our own. Now here's the issue. If we build something on our own, we have to keep it alive.

And that's how pastors fry. That's how worship leaders fry. Are y'all listening? That's how you fry, is the machine starts steering you, and you become an employee of an agenda, of an initiative, of a schedule that is Ishmael, it is the son of the flesh, it is not the son of promise.

And we come to these forks in the road, not just one time in life, multiple times, where we choose the word of the Lord, or what we will bring to the table. And friends, listen, the only thing God receives is what he himself does. So I began locking myself away to be with the Lord.

That's the only thing I knew to do. Because that was the common denominator that I saw in everyone I looked up to. I don't know what moves you or who moves you, but if they're really anointed by the Lord, I guarantee you, they're gonna trace you back, the roots will go back to their personal walk with Jesus.

I fasted, I prayed, I locked myself away, I drove to remote places, I wanted the Lord. Year after year, I wanted the Lord. I have to find him.

And I didn't know he was romancing me the whole time. And oh, the discouragement. Now, I remember, I'd drive up to Reading or fly up there, whatever I had to do, or go be with other people who had walked with God, or go sit with Pastor Hayford.

People who knew the Lord, Oral Robertson and Pastor Rex Humbarton, joy, and I'd sit there and just listen and listen and listen. And you know what, they told me what to do. I didn't get a vote.

I remember joy telling me, go take a nap right now. And I'm at her house, and I'm, she goes, you won't be able to receive what I'm about to tell you unless you go take a nap. And I said, joy, I'm like 35 years old at the time.

She's 80 something, she goes, no, darling boy, go take a nap in my lilac room. And it was all lilac. And I was like, uh, okay.

So she treated me like I was six months old, tucked me in, not joking, cooked a muffin for me, said, eat this so you'll be strong. I didn't sleep at all, I pretended I did. She came back in an hour on the dot, opened her Bible, and then said, now wait in silence.

And we waited there for an hour. And she said, what did you hear? I said, nothing. She said, do it again.

These are the people we need. I'm not joking. And over that time, the Lord was minimizing me, minimizing me, so that I would determine to know nothing.

I have a long way to go. I think we bring too much to the table. I think we have too many ideas.

I think we have too many initiatives. Let's get back to Jesus. And only God knows the tipping point.

But if you don't give up, the dam will break. Did you hear what I said? No, no, did you really? Are you really getting it? If you don't give up, if you don't stop seeking him, you will have your moment with him. Don't you throw in the towel.

And don't sell it, don't sell your birthright, don't trade it in, don't be for sale. One glimpse of Jesus, and I don't mean just the sense of his presence, that's how it begins. And it's wonderful.

Never shortchange the sense of his presence. Become addicted to the sense of his presence. Become a master at walking with Jesus.

Let that be your ministry, is to walk with Jesus. But I'm not talking about, I'm talking about him coming your way. In a way that makes you feel like he stopped everything just to come your way.

Do you know that you finding him, if you seek him with all your heart, is as much a promise as John 3.16? Is anybody hearing me who came in from all over the world tonight? You did not come here to check off your Jesus image box, that would crush my heart. You came here to find him, that's who drew you. He knew you'd be in this room before you were ever born.

Don't you quit, don't you quit. He's a whisper away. Years of seeking, years of going to places, years of sitting under people, and one night, one night, one night, one night he came.

He was there the whole time, but he really came. And he is beautiful. I said, he is beautiful.

This is the Christian life. To discover and find the nail scarred one. This is glory, this is success, to be a friend of God.

I remember one night, I was in Reading, we had moved there, and I was already going to sleep in my bed, and I turned on, Bill was ministering. I was tired. I feel the Lord's stirring some of you tonight.

I was tired, I was in my bed, I turned it on, and Bill's singing, I Will Give You All My Worship, acapella, undeniable, undeniable, I felt the Lord come. I couldn't deny it, and I didn't want to go. And I'm there in my bed, and the Lord says, are you hungry? I have my kids on both sides of me.

And the Lord says, are you hungry? What'd you move here for? Did you move here just to say you came, or did you move here to find me? I don't know why you came, why did you come to Jesus School, why

have you become part of Jesus Image Church, why do you come to worship with us? Hopefully it's not just to say, that's where I go. Hopefully it's to find the bridegroom. I got dressed, I lived 15 minutes away from the sanctuary.

By then, I guess, you know, people knew our ministry. I could have done whatever to try to get up close to the front, but it was jam-packed, and I came in from the door, just like y'all do. I came in straight through the door.

Bill was preaching, and no one would let me sit next to them, because it was too packed. And I'm literally going, can I sit there? Do you have a seat? No. Is there room here? No.

Is there room here? And I just kept, talk about awkward and vulnerable. In the middle of the meeting. But the hungry don't care.

They don't care. They've got to behold the one that's been pulling on their heart, they've got to have it. And so then Bill says, you know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna share the stories tonight that are offensive.

I never forgot it. He goes, I want to tell you how this whole thing started. And he said, I want the young generation to know, in case you think this started in another way.

And I want this house to know how this started. This did not start with branding and a cool logo. It may never be all, but it started, it started in his glory.

May it forever be in his glory. May it end with a deeper glory. And I'll never forget what happened that night as they began to worship.

The blessed power of the Holy Spirit just began to move through that crowd. And I found his seat. And people started getting healed and touched and singing in the spirit.

The gifts of the spirit began being poured out. I'll never forget it. Then he said, I'm gonna do a prayer line.

And I waited in line. And I was one of the last people. And I came through, I had a hat on.

I came through and Bill looked at me and goes, what are you doing here? Like, why did you wait in line? Why are you here? And I said, I'm hungry, Bill. He gave me a nod like, I understand, I get it. I feel that the Lord is reminding you tonight how it all started for you.

And may he take you back to certain moments where he showed you himself, where the tears flowed. Where you sang hour after hour after hour after hour. Where you didn't care who knew you, who recognized you.

Where you'd go anywhere and sit with anyone who was his friend. May we never graduate from that place. The Christian life is a life of death, burial, and resurrection.

With every head bowed and eye closed, tonight, actually, I'm just gonna ask us all to stand. Can we do that before I close? I don't know where you are on the spectrum of your walk with Jesus. And please do just close your eyes for a moment.

I want everyone to feel safe. But what I can tell you unequivocally based on the authority of the word of God is that you do not have to leave here bound in sin. You do not have to leave here with chains.

You don't have to leave here with porn addictions, with addictions to lust, with a gossiping tongue, with envy, bitterness. You don't have to leave with any of that. You don't have to leave tonight with the same cycles that have been passed down through your family line.

It can end tonight. I said it can end tonight. You can actually leave here washed, cleansed, redeemed, filled, changed.

If you don't want it, you don't need to leave with it. You say, Michael, what do I do? Come to Jesus. You say, how? By faith, you reach out to him.

And if you're tired of that condemning feeling that you're not good enough to be in the presence of God, you're not good enough to be in the Lord's presence, friend, it's because you've been trying to wash away your own sin. You've been trying to set yourself free. But Jesus promised that if we come to him, he will by no means cast us away, his word says, and he will set us free.

And whom the Son sets free is free indeed. You will really be free. That's for everyone under the sound of my voice who is bound by the chains and the slavery of sin.

Jesus said, he who sins is a slave to it. You don't have to leave as a slave tonight. You say, Michael, I wanna be free.

I want you to lift your hand right now. I wanna be free. Hallelujah.

If you raised your hand or you wish you did, get down here now. Get down here, don't waste any time. If you're tired of the bondage, if you're tired of that stuff, that cycle, if you're sick of it, you want to be free.

You just, you got, you need darkness to leave and you want Jesus. Hallelujah. Thank you, Lord.

Can we just begin thanking the Lord? Thank you, Jesus. This is wonderful. This is wonderful.

Don't you settle. Listen, I feel the heart of God. Don't settle, don't settle, don't settle for darkness.

I don't care if it was your father or your grandfather or your, from your mother's side. It doesn't, you don't have to carry that. You can leave free tonight.

Look, they're coming from all over. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord.

Emma, can you, are you out there? Can you play your instrument? Thank you. The Lord's freeing many people tonight. It's just about Jesus.

It's just about Jesus. It is just about Jesus. It is just about Jesus.

It is about Jesus. And I declare his name over you tonight. The name of Jesus.

The holy name of Jesus. The name of every name over you. Every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The name of Jesus over you. Thank you, Lord. That's just one touch from him.

That's all you need is one touch from the Lord. Those addictions, those cycles, leave now. Those chains on your mind, be gone in Jesus' name.

Those memories that plagued your heart, that the abuse of the past, it goes in Jesus' name. May the Lord heal you. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

I declare that over you tonight. Be free, be free, be free, be free. Every hard heart, be broken.

Come alive, soften. In the name of Jesus, I want us to pray this out loud. There's no doubt the Lord's touching you in the heart, but your declaration is more powerful than you could ever believe.

I want us to declare this as one church family tonight. Those of you watching around the world, declare this in your homes. Heavenly Father, I've sinned against you.

I know I have. Wash me in the holy blood of Jesus. Cleanse my soul.

Set me free tonight of anything that is not from you. Jesus, I come directly to you, knowing you love me, and I trust you tonight. Touch me.

Touch me. Deeply. I believe that you died on the cross, that you suffered, that you bled, that you're buried and raised again.

You are the son of God. And tonight, I give you my heart, the best I know how. Receive me, Lord, as I receive you.

Thank you for your love. Fill me with your spirit, that I would know you. In the mighty name of Jesus.

Amen. Now, for those of you who came forward or those who wish you did, I wanna ask you now, just in your own words, listen in your own words, offer your life to Jesus. It's gotta be personal.

Just hand it over. Thank you, Lord. Holy Spirit, come and fill them.

Fill them. David, would you come up? Fill them, fill them, fill them. Fill them, fill them, fill them with your peace and joy.

Hallelujah. I thank you, Lord. Let your mercy flow.

Let your love flow. I want us to sing one song that I believe is for the house tonight. I need thee, oh, I need thee.

Then we'll go, but I want us to sing this from the depths of our hearts. Can we just worship for a moment?

■ I need thee, oh, I need thee ■ ■ My righteousness, oh, God, oh, I need thee ■ Let's sing that again. ■ I need thee, oh, I need thee ■ ■ Have my defense, my righteousness, oh, God, I need thee ■ Just one more time.

■ I need thee, my defense, my righteousness, oh, God, I need thee ■ ■ Have my defense, my righteousness, oh, God, I need thee ■ ■ Need you more, more than yesterday, I need you more ■ More than words. ■ More than words can say, I need you more than anything ■ ■ Need you more, need you more, need you more, need you more ■ ■ More than yesterday, I need you more ■ ■ More than even the song I sing, more than the next heartbeat ■ ■ More than anything, Lord, as time goes by, I'll be by your side ■ ■ Cause I never wanna go back to my old life, I need you more ■ ■ Yesterday, I need you more, more than words can say, I need you more than ever ■ ■ More than the air, more than the song I sing, more than my next heart is tired of trying, I'll be by your side ■ ■ Cause I never wanna go back to my old

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