

# Have You Forsaken Your First Love

by Michael L. Brown

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*Michael L. Brown challenges believers to examine their relationship with God and rekindle their first love through prayer and openness to His presence.*

**Duration:** 51:14

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:18, Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 55:6, Matthew 6:33, Luke 5:4-6, Luke 5:8, Acts 2:1-4

**Topics:** "Spiritual Revival", "Kingdom Living"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of obedience and commitment in changing the world. Despite the energy and activity in their efforts, they keep hitting the same walls and witnessing suffering. The speaker mentions a compilation of children praying for America, which deeply touched them and highlighted the hunger and desperation for God. They discuss the need for a spiritual and moral revolution, which will ultimately lead to a cultural revolution. The speaker also reflects on their own life and the desire to make a lasting impact for God's kingdom.

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## Transcript

Praise God. It'll be a miracle of technology if I could be with you here in the future at present. In fact, every time I've ever spoken anywhere in the world, it has been at present.

So, yet again today. By God's grace, as he brought us into relationship years ago through Gary and Cindy, meeting Pastor Walter Maureen and beginning to minister grace and peace back in 87, it's been a joy to see the progress of the church and the growth and the influence and favor God's given you through the years. And as I always remind you, this church has stood with us steadily as we've traveled and preached around the world and raised up a school and raised up labors from that school that have gone around the world.

This church has steadily supported us every month. In fact, been the most generous church supporting us through the months. And as I go to debate a rabbi in Phoenix next week, next week, a few days from now, you guys are part of that.

As I go to Italy and preach later, you guys are part of that. As we raise up and send out our workers from Fire School of Ministry around the world, you guys are part of that. I preached in October of last year at the church in which I was saved in 71.

They relocated to a different part of the island from Queens, New York, where they used to be. And I hadn't been there for a long time. And one of the brothers, it was a key man involved in leading me to the Lord, his two daughters were unsaved, and he was praying them into the kingdom.

They started to go to this church. And then my two friends that played in the rock band with me, they started to go to the church to spend time with the girls. And then I went to the church to pull them all out.

And God saved all of us. The father of these girls, his brother was the pastor, and he had been praying for them for years and years. And God started to convict them of their sins.

The mom wasn't saved either, and God started to work on her heart. And this was just a key guy. He would pick me up and drive me to the services and patiently witness to me.

And out of all of the older folks, he was the key man involved in helping leading me to the Lord. He's about 82 years old now and just as full of passion and commitment to Jesus as when I was with him years and years ago. And we have missionaries now from our school, about 200 full-time workers living in about 25 nations now, serving the Lord and bearing fruit.

And we get newsletters from them. I can't even keep up with reading them. Every month, stacks put on my desk of all of our workers and then others all around America, what they're doing for the Lord.

So I just brought a stack of these newsletters with me. And I called this dear brother up, Rudy, and I just presented them to him. I said, listen, every one of these people who's bearing fruit, who's touching lives, these folks touching prostitutes in Thailand and young people in Holland and working with the underground church in China and working with orphans here in Africa and touching Muslims in this part.

And it's the whole bit. I said, you share in the fruit of every one of those because you were able to touch my life and my life's been able to touch these lives. And it's a joint effort.

So in a similar way, some of you don't even know me, but your funds are actually helping us in the work so you get to share in the reward. So you might as well pray for us also. Amen? And you can be praying this Thursday.

Shmueli Boteach, you may see him on television a lot. One cause or another, he'll be up speaking. And we had five debates last year, beginning at the Hilton Hotel with 1,000 people in February, right before Mel Gibson's Who Really Killed Jesus? Excuse me.

It was the name of our debate. His passion movie came out. But we did a debate, Who Really Killed Jesus? right before it came out.

And right before Newsweek put that out as the front page story, the cover story, Who Really Killed Jesus? We did a debate on that. We had five last year. He actually came and spent a week with us, excuse me, a day with us at FIRE at our school and spoke to our students, did his radio broadcast from there.

And you may see us debating sometimes. We just did one on TV a few days ago. And he's come after me pretty aggressively.

In fact, one recent show he called me a spiritual Nazi, actually. But what you may not know is that we've become really close friends. In fact, I sent him a note after the spiritual Nazi line.

And I said, hey, you know, people might not know how close our relationship is after watching the show tonight. He sent me a note back saying that's showbiz. But we've spent quality time together.

When I turned 50 a couple of weeks ago, I got a very warm special call from him and just, you know, as sweet as could be towards me. And we're going to be having another debate in Phoenix about who is Jesus and can Jews accept Jesus as Messiah. And I'll be taking the yes position on that.

But pray for him. If you want to get this, there's a debate video that we have from last year, or DVD. It really blessed you to watch it.

You'll enjoy it. You'll be stirred. You'll learn something.

But it's great to sit down with an unsaved Jewish friend or give it to him and actually ask him to watch it. I believe God will speak to him through it. So we appreciate your standing with us.

And we're going to open the word today and see which way the wind of the spirit blows. Is that all right? Amen. Father, we love you.

I thank you so much for this fellowship. I thank you for what you've done through the years. I thank you for your hand on their lives.

I thank you, Lord, for our partnership together in the Gospel and the lives we've been able to touch together. Now I pray, God, that you'd speak with power. I pray, Lord, that your spirit would move freely.

I pray, God, that I'd be a vessel, Lord, to deliver your word and the life and power of your spirit and that your people here would receive and hear and be touched and changed. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Turn with me to a familiar passage, Acts 2. In the first service, I asked the question, how much do you really want God in your lives? We might all immediately say, Lord, we want everything you have, but when God really comes and you begin to realize His power and His majesty and who He is and that He's an all-consuming fire and that He doesn't just want a portion of our lives, He wants all of our lives, it becomes a little bit overwhelming. You don't answer that question so quickly. How much of God do we really want in our lives? How much room do we really have for God to flood our lives and take control? And I read a couple of passages, one from Mark, the fifth chapter, after Jesus miraculously delivered the terribly demonized man and people came and saw him clothed and in his right mind and heard about how he had driven the demons out of this man into these pigs and the 2,000 pigs rushed down off an embankment into the water and killed themselves and the whole place was astir.

And it says amazingly that when they saw what happened and saw this man delivered, they begged Jesus to leave. Instead of falling on their faces and worshiping, instead of saying, this is the moment we've been waiting for, God is showing favor and mercy to us, instead of bringing other sick people and other demonized people and other people in need and said, Jesus, can you touch them the way you touched him, they said, please leave. It's too much.

The invasion of his presence didn't just deliver this demonized man, it brought God's presence into their lives. He's not the only one that needed to change. We can do the same thing with revival and outpouring and visitation.

We can beseech him to come and then when he comes, we beg him to leave. We read from Luke, the fifth chapter, where Peter was out in the boat. Jesus told him after they were fishing all night and caught nothing, go out in the deep water.

Throw your nets out on this side. And they went out in the deep water and they obeyed, even though it was the wrong time and the wrong place, they obeyed. And there was a miraculous catch of fish, so much so that they started to bring all the fish in the boat and the boat started to sink and they called over their colleagues and brought them over and they started to fill both boats with fish and both boats started to sink.

And what does Peter do? He's so overwhelmed by this presence. He's so overwhelmed by the realization of who's in the boat with him, who this Jesus is. You know what he says? Depart from me, Lord, I'm a sinful man.

Please leave. I don't know where you're going to go in a boat in the water, but please leave. It's an interesting thing that here's God manifesting His power through Jesus, showing His greatness and His glory, and it's too overwhelming for Peter.

Please get away. He's suddenly aware of how sinful he is. I wonder how much we really want God to come in our lives.

I wonder how much we want outside of our own little religious box of our daily routine and our Christian service and our church services and living our Christian lives. I wonder how much we really want God to be our all in all. I wonder how much we've just become comfortable with serving God within a certain form and pattern.

Comfortable with I came out of sin. Okay, I had to repent of this. My life went through a lot of upheaval then.

Now everything is just kind of stable and nice and I have this lovely Christian religion. I wonder if God would disrupt our routine if we came in power. I wonder if we'd welcome Him.

Here in Acts 2, verses that are so familiar to us, but verses whose punch we sometimes lose, it says that when the day of Pentecost, the Jewish Feast of Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Why were they all together? Well, Acts 1.14 tells us that they were praying unceasingly. They joined together day and night praying.

Why were they joining together day and night praying? Because Jesus had told them in Luke 24.49, don't leave the city of Jerusalem until you're endued with power from on high. There's a job to do. There's a commission.

I'm sending you out to change the world, to go into all the world and make disciples and bring transformation through the Gospel. But you can't do it in your own strength. You need the anointing and power of my Spirit.

You need the immersion and baptism in the Spirit. So they were praying together. They didn't necessarily know what they were waiting for, but they knew they had to wait and they had to seek God.

And after the ascension of Jesus, it's now ten days that goes by. I'll just offer a number of testing and trying in Scripture. Ten days, they're all together in one place because they've been all together in one place seeking God.

120 of them. Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Suddenly, when they're ready, when they're seeking, when they're hungry, when they're desiring, when they've been seeking God day and night, why does He still come suddenly? Why can't we have it scheduled and planned out? Why can't we know the time? Look, it's better to be ready. Better to have everything set up properly.

All right, God will be coming tomorrow, two in the afternoon. Daylight savings time, of course. Make sure you move your watches up.

We'll all be ready and prepared. And He'll be finishing about 3.30 because you need to know when it's going to stop, too. Because you can get on with your day, get on with your life, get on with your plans, get on with your ministry, get on with your church.

Why does He come suddenly? And then why does He come with this intensity? Why not come like a gentle breeze? I mean, what about the God of Psalm 23? That's the same God? That's part of our experience. Jesus saying in Matthew 11, 28-30, come to me and rest. Psalm 23, still waters, green pastures.

Why not? Why does He come suddenly? Why does the Spirit come? The sound of a blowing, violent wind. Why does it fill the whole house where they're sitting? Why tongues of fire? Why immediate controversy? This is God. No, they're drunk.

Immediate shaking. People convicted and thousands saved and upheaval and then miracles and persecution. Everything's shaking.

Why not just a lovely service? I wonder what would happen if God invaded our lives. I wonder what would happen if God invaded our services. Thank God for the life that's here.

Thank God for the passion and the hunger and the fruit bearing that's here. But what would happen if God just took over? What would happen if God began to dominate our lives? Listen, it's one thing to shout about and get excited about it. It's another thing to experience the fire.

It's another thing when it's not just anointing and blessing, but God's starting to deal with your inner being. God's starting to deal with the motivation of your heart. And God's starting to deal with coldness and compromise and wrong attitudes.

God begins to deal with your time and your schedule and your life. Listen, all of us, I don't care who you are, unless you are a total exception to the rule, unless you're that very rare individual, almost all of us get settled into some kind of spiritual routine at a certain point. And we don't get challenged out of it all that much.

We don't get shaken out of it all that much. And we don't get jarred out of it all that much because we have our routine. And within that, we have our hunger.

And within that, we have our worship. And within that, we have our devotion. And within that, we have our sacrifice.

We have a nice little thing erected that's pretty safe. I wonder what would happen if God took over. I wonder what would happen if God started to answer our prayers and started to visit, if we'd have room for Him.

Some years ago, I wrote a sarcastic prayer. Just trying to drill home a point. It's called, Prayer for a Nice Revival.

Oh, Lord, come and quench this longing of our soul, but please, oh, Lord, just leave us in control. God, send your glory, send your power, but please, oh, Lord, just keep it to an hour. I've been having God challenge me lately.

Do you really want me to come and flood your services? Do you really want me to come and take over? Are you really willing to stay and pray and labor and pour yourself out for people that are hungry and thirsty? What would happen if God starts sending in a massive harvest of the worst sinners you've ever known? And they're hungry for God, but they need attention and they need prayer, and they need people to stay up with them and see them delivered and set free. I wonder how much room for God we have. I wonder if it starts affecting just some of our little lifestyle things that we've built in.

The rewards, the perks that we get for our sacrifice. Oh, listen, I'm not talking about the extreme sinful stuff. There was a guy who apparently had some corruption in his ministry for a while, but apparently also started with some tremendous gifts and anointing.

One lady was the worship leader with his ministry, finally went and quit. She said, I can't take this anymore, because she knew that he was having affairs with a number of women. And his response, according to this sister, his response was, because of the tremendous gifts that God has given me, he allows me this.

Oh, that's repulsive. That's gross. That's despicable.

But I wonder if we do that in little ways. I'm not talking about sinful ways. I'm just talking about my time, my life, my leisure.

You know, I had a season in my life, well, actually about the first 31 years in the Lord, of kind of a kamikaze mentality of, I want to strive on taking on more than was humanly possible. I got free from drugs immediately when I got saved, but some of that mentality of just kind of doing more than others could do, I think it stayed with me. And I just enjoyed taking on more.

I enjoyed crazy schedule. I enjoyed pushing more. I enjoyed, you know, I mean, I would joke with people about flying around the world.

I'd tell them if you made the trip short enough, you would pass yourself in midair. They'd say, how do you get so much done? I'd tell them, you'd pass yourself in midair. Always taking on another writing project and preaching thing and this and that.

And on one hand, I would enjoy thriving in that and enjoy just the challenge of it and enjoy depending on God, but there was a certain aspect that was just too driven. And God dealt with me about that a couple years ago, about three years back. And in certain ways, I determined as much as I'm pushing and running, that I would slow down in certain ways.

I determined in certain ways, I'd make sure I just had a certain amount of leisure time. Nancy and I had a seven-year stretch where my wife Nancy and I, where we physically went away on vacation and that seven years a total of seven days. And otherwise, it was barely vacation time and we were both fine with it on a certain level.

God dealt with me to slow down in certain ways. And I understand that and I embrace that and Sabbath rest and other principles, absolutely. God's not glorified through our burnout.

God's not glorified through our exhaustion. God's not glorified through our pushing ourselves into the ground. I understand that.

But He's also been stirring me lately. Time to press in a little more. Time to change gears.

No, not to get into a driven lifestyle. Not to try to overcommit. Not to try to impress somebody with activity.

God forbid. But there's just been a little stirring. Are you really hungry? It's starting to grip my heart and has been gripping my heart.

I've been realizing, oh God, this is very costly. Because when He visits, everything else stops. I've been just trying to get certain things done and certain projects completed.

And books finished. And trying to get other things more organized in our life and ministry. Just to make more room that when God comes and God dominates and God takes over, I can just be ready.

Lord, let's go. I wonder how many loose ends there are in our lives. If He said, I'm ready to visit, it's like, tomorrow.

Give me one month, I'll be ready. I wonder how much junk there is in our lives we have to deal with. I don't know if you ever sold a house and the realtor calls you out of the blue.

They said, hey, we've got somebody who looks like a hot prospect. Can we bring him by in an hour? You've just had a chaos teenage weekend or something. You've just had three weeks of guests and you haven't cleaned the house yet.

And everybody, kids, everybody, hit the room. Do this, do that. You're running quick because the realtor is coming in an hour.

And then they call back an hour later. And they said, oh, they canceled out. I wonder what would happen if God said, I'm coming to visit today.

And I'm staying. I'm coming to your home today. You know, we finished the service.

Great service. Great job. Worship team.

Praise God. This is wonderful. We had a great service.

We get in the car and Jesus is in the car with us. Where are you going? You get to work tomorrow, there's Jesus at work with you. I wonder if He says, identify with me.

Be known as one of my servants. I wonder if He begins to just stand there with us as we're... That's amazing. You've answered 300 emails already today and you still haven't had time to commune with me.

Isn't that interesting? You seem to be so hungry for this and that and latest sports and stocks and information. My words don't seem to appeal to you anymore. I wonder if He just started saying, you really want me? You really want me? You want to have a nice little compartment, have everything fit in nice, nice church, nice life, nice ministry.

Or you want God? See, this revolution thing has burned in us for years. And I was defining it yesterday for folks that weren't familiar. I said, use the acronym SMACK.

S-M-A-C-K. S is spiritual. It's a spiritual revolution.

When Jesus comes into someone's life, there's spiritual transformation. You go from darkness to light. You go from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God.

You go from being alienated and distant, you become His child. It's spiritual. It's not only spiritual M, it's moral.

There's a transformation of your morals. The things you love are different than the things you used to love. Your standards, entertainment, the way you conduct yourself, the way you raise your children, your family.

It's a moral revolution. And because it's a spiritual and a moral revolution, see, it's a cultural revolution. Someone said Jesus transforms people.

People transform culture. The very motto you have here is shaping the people that are going to go out and shape the world. As there's a moral revolution in our lives and our standards change and our lifestyles change and our interests change, it touches the world.

There's a cultural revolution. K, it's a kingdom revolution. Clash between kingdoms.

Bottom line, there's the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, kingdom of God, kingdom of Satan. There's a clash between kingdoms that we're in the midst of. And the A just stands for advanced because it's forward, aggressive.

We've been burning with this message of Jesus revolution for years. We've been writing about it and preaching it and teaching it for years. But on a certain level, it's something that we do.

You hear what I'm saying? It's our obedience. It's our commitment. It's us going out and to change the world.

The problem is we keep hitting the same walls. Problem is we can get excited. We can see young people emerging.

But we keep hitting the same walls with all the activity, with all the energy. Some of our dearest friends praying down in Florida with Terry Schiavo and people getting arrested trying to bring a water. Some of our friends and colleagues in the whole bit.

We still hit this wall and watch someone starve to death. We look at one thing after another in our culture. I was reviewing the Jesus Manifesto, something I'd written five years ago.

And we just changed a few dates, updated a few things for an edition we just put out five years later. And I was looking at one line that was in there that said that massacres in our schools and houses of worship become a common thing. It's a matter of course.

It happens. And just about a month ago, I was saying, well, how relevant is that? When was the last time there was a massacre in our schools? When was the last time there was a massacre in our church? And within two weeks, both happened again. And it really was not that big a deal this time around.

We're kind of used to it. Kind of used to it. What I'm saying is God's begun to stir my heart and said, listen, with all that's going on, there is still no substitute for mighty outpouring.

There must be the fire of revival burning with the passion of revolution. There must be the mighty outpouring and visitation of God with our activism, with our evangelism. Come on, how many people are we actually seeing getting born again and added to the body in the church across America? On an ongoing basis, there's still a fair level of stagnation.

How much are we really seeing the power of God come down and set the captives free dramatically? How many miracles of healing are we even seeing? Or have we forgotten to even hunger and thirst for it because we hit too many walls? It's easy to impress ourselves. It's also easy to deceive ourselves. God plugged me back into New York City on a weekly basis for about two straight years.

And I'm sure I'm plugged in in different ways for the long haul. But it was enough time for him to get hold of my heart week after week and month after month and walk in the streets praying to get hold of my heart to know that he's promised there's an outpouring coming. There's revival coming.

New York's going to be touched. The region's going to be touched. It became so unshakable, God said, proclaim it, speak it.

I couldn't hold it back. And I knew others were saying the same thing. I was just adding my voice as witness.

I'm telling you, without revival, without visitation, without fresh outpouring, we can kiss our programs goodbye. We can kiss our best efforts goodbye. There must be something more.

It's unavoidable when you read the Word. It's unavoidable when you read church history. It's unavoidable when you walk close to God.

It's unavoidable when you look at this world. It's unavoidable when you've been caught up in revival yourself. There's got to be more.

I'm not nostalgic about the past. What happened in the past is wonderful. The things I was allowed to be part of, especially in Pensacola for four or five years, it's wonderful and extraordinary.

Some of it takes your breath away, what God did. But all that did is wet our appetite for something more. I was talking to God the other night, just thinking more about numbering my days and making my life count and asking God what have I been able to accomplish of lasting value for your kingdom and how has Jesus been glorified and where is my life in terms of my own life as a witness and example of Jesus after these

years and just turning 50 and asking myself these questions.

And I just journaled it before the Lord. It would be the greatest tragedy of tragedies if my best years were behind me. It would be the greatest tragedy of all if I had already seen God do the maximum that I'm ever going to see.

That I look back to what He did in the past instead of talking about what He's doing today and experiencing what He does tomorrow. He's been stirring my heart and as He does, I've been crying out. I start to get hit again with that realization, oh my God, it's costly.

He comes with suddenness and intensity. He comes with an overwhelming force in mind, not to kill us and maim us and destroy us, but to burn out what doesn't belong and to burn out our lack of interest. Come on, can we really say that we're passionate for Him? Can we really say, if someone watched our lives, watched us walk and watched us live and interacted with us, would they really see the passion and the fire and the burning? Would they really see, you're all about Jesus.

You burn for Jesus. He's everything to you, isn't He? Would they see that or would they say, you know, you're a very committed, godly person. I admire you.

And it kind of ends there. I felt the Lord lay this on my heart to ask me, but then to ask you, what are you hungry for? What are you hungry for? What consumes your thought life? Well, maybe you're in the business world, maybe you're busy with kids, maybe you're doing this and that. I understand that you're not going to be in the heavenly frame of mind 24-7.

Yes, Lord, are you telling me that the diapers need to be changed? Okay, Lord. You just kind of stroll in there, and Jesus name be changed, and you just kind of walk on. I'm not saying that, you know, you're supposed to be a computer programmer and all you're doing is quoting Scripture 24-7.

I'm not trying to talk about something unrealistic. I remember hearing a guy years ago said it's amazing. He said, we're never too busy to worry.

No matter what you're doing, no matter what's going on, if you're a worrier, if you haven't learned to give that over to the Lord, you know, that thing could be eating away at you all the time, no matter what you're doing, because that's the thing that's really on your mind. I often thought, you know, what would happen to a young lady, maybe newly married and her husband's captured in a war, and his pictures put on television, and she doesn't know if he's going to be killed, if he's going to be tortured, if she's ever going to see him again. I don't care whatever else is going on in her life.

That's what's on her mind. New carpet just got put in. That's good, but that's something else on her mind.

You know, her cousin's birthday today. Okay, great. We'll send the car, but that's not what's on her mind.

I mean, whatever else she's doing, there's something else on her mind. It's only natural. I wonder, what makes us tick? We get beyond the surface of the outward activity.

We get beyond the surface of our coming into a service and raising our hands and praising God. What really makes us tick? Who are we really? What's really on the inside? What do you long for? What do you hunger for? What do you thirst for? What dominates your being? Look, being active for Jesus is good, but that's not the highest. Being involved in different aspects of church ministry, that's good, but that's not the

highest.

I'm talking about devotion to Him. I'm talking about longing for Him and desiring Him. I don't know if you've ever gone to the Fire on the Altar website.

If you haven't, I encourage you to visit there, [fireonthealtar.com](http://fireonthealtar.com). [Unitedfortruth.com](http://Unitedfortruth.com) will get you over there also. One brother prefers to be anonymous, involved with it. One of our grads, spiritual son, is also involved with it.

They've gotten a lot of messages from different people, different speakers over the years. Put them together, some with musical backgrounds, some compilations like revival compilations and other things. They sent me, this one grad sent me some of the latest compilations.

I'm going to play a clip for you in a minute. There are some messages I had preached, but listening to just little excerpts of that. Some Leonard Ravenhill, some Art Katz, our friend Bob Gladstone, that'll be at the men's retreat.

Some crying out, revivalists from the Hebrides and past moves of God. Listening to this stuff, I started to get stirred again and I realized in my heart of hearts, the deepest thing that burns in me is to see Jesus glorified. I started getting stirred again and I realized I don't want to do anything else.

I just want to get a hold of God. I want to see God come down and flood our lives and flood our work. You can come to fire and you will see a revived community.

You will see that what other people consider radical and extreme, that's just our normal way of life. You'll see that what people consider to be high standards of holiness, that's just normal for us. You see the idea of sacrifice and service by life or by death, that's just normal for us.

But listen, we are a revived community but we are not in the midst of revival. We are not in the midst of that supernatural outpouring visitation. We are not in the midst of those things that we know God desires to do.

You ask yourself, how much evidence is there in our lives that Jesus is risen from the dead? Come on, what sets us apart from everybody else? It's not just good singing, good preaching, good teaching, good organization. What sets us apart? It's got to be that holy presence. God manifests in the midst of His people.

How do we know that Jesus is alive? Look at what He's doing. Look and listen and you'll see and hear what He's doing. That's how they preach in the book of Acts.

He's risen from the dead as you can all see. Look at this lame man. Look at this visitation.

Look at God coming down. Sometimes it seems we're just so natural. We're working hard and we're devoted.

We're so natural. Where is the presence of God? I want to urge you, I want to challenge you in your personal lives. Go after Him.

I want to challenge you to ask the question. He spoke it to the church in Ephesus. Ask yourselves the question, have I forsaken my first love? Ask yourself, were there times when I just devoured the word and

couldn't get enough of the word and had to hear from heaven and drink it in and now it's just kind of systematic reading or I'll do my Bible time, it's a little boring or if I get some good insight, that's cool but the love for the word, not there.

What about just wanting to get along with Jesus? Just say, I've got to shut things down. I've got to, look, I'm just taking the night. I just, instead of just going out with the guys or going out with the ladies or doing this or doing that, I just want to close the door in my room and get with God and meet with Jesus and spend time with my best friend.

Where's the passion, the desire for that? What about just getting lost in His presence and worship? What about He's so real to you, you just have to tell everybody, tell the whole world. I'm not saying that to condemn anyone. I'm saying that to give a divine invitation.

And then you start to think, oh, that's costly, it's very costly. In a moment, I want you to hear something. Let me introduce it.

This was on the compilation. Just a segment of children praying. Different children praying for America and praying for God to come.

And sometimes when you hear kids that are hungry for God, it touches something real deep in you. And this is nothing put on. These are just prayers that were recorded at different meetings that these guys just compiled together with some music.

There's some real crying out. There's some real desperation. It's just an audio clip, so there's no video.

But I'm going to stop for a minute. Because this is some of what I'm talking about in terms of the hunger, in terms of the desire. I started listening to this the other night, late at night, and just started crying, thinking, oh, God.

There's something so desperate these kids want. There's something they're longing for in such a way. Only you can come and satisfy God.

You've got to visit. You've got to visit. Listen, hunger is a sign of health in many ways.

You ever see someone dying of cancer and they're losing weight, they have no appetite, and then you pray for them and they take a turn, they begin to improve, and one of the best signs is they're eating, they're hungry. Hunger is a sign of life. But it's also very uncomfortable to be hungry.

And it's very uncomfortable to be desperate. We prefer being in control. We prefer not just being in control, but we prefer having levels of hunger that are acceptable.

We don't want to be driven by desperation because that may rob us of some sleep. That may rob us of the big game we were planning on watching. That may rob us of this other show we've wanted to catch.

That may rob us of some other activity. That may rob us of just the joy of the new home or the joy of the new vehicle, the joy of the new computer, I'll confess, whatever the thing is. Some of the desperation just kind of takes everything away.

It's just, oh, God, if you don't come, I feel like I'm going to die. I just want you to, it's just a few minutes long, I just want you to hear the cries of some of the children. Then I'll come back and finish this.

Let's just listen together. Show them that there's more to life, God. I pray, Lord, move their hearts.

Take them back, Lord. We take them back, Lord. We break down religion and the bondage and the idol wars.

It says in the Bible, With your help, we can do whatever. We can become a missionary, and we can be only 7, 8, or 9, 11, 10, whatever age we are. We can do what grown-ups can do.

We can go into the world. We can preach the gospel. We need you, Lord, more of you, Lord, in this whole world.

We need you. Send your power down. Us, right in the circle, Lord, will go into the nation and preach the gospel and save many people.

If we get stoned, whipped, or beaten, or crucified, or dying because of you, Lord, I don't care. I just care that we've done what you want us to do, Lord. I call myself a wimp, and I call you a king, a majesty.

I don't think myself higher of you. I don't think about my hair, Lord. I take everything I put in front of you, Lord, and I put you in front.

Thank you so much. Thank you so much. Thank you, Jesus, for coming and dying down on the cross for us.

Thank you. We are eternally grateful for this God. Oh, God.

All we need is you. We don't need our sports, our toys. We don't need our house.

We don't need anything. We just need you, our one Father. Thank you, Jesus.

Fill it, Lord. May we be smitten by your love, Lord, that nothing else will matter but how much we love you, Lord. Nothing else will matter.

It doesn't matter what nail polish shade you have, what shoes you have, what skateboard you have, what TV, what video. How does my hair look? Is my makeup smeared? Is my shirt too buggy? We'll only worry about it if we're drifting away from you. That's what we want.

Not toys, not candy, not nothing else. We just want you. Satan, you have no authority whatsoever.

And we command you. We don't ask you. We command you to release those that you have.

Lord, take us deeper. Take us deeper. Take us into the Holy of Holies, Lord.

To where it doesn't matter anymore. To where nothing matters anymore. To where we won't care what we look like in front of the whole church, in front of the whole world.

We won't care anymore because we'll be so in love with you. Take this deeper, Lord. Take us deeper, Lord.

Take us deeper, Lord. Jesus. Jesus.

Jesus. Let's just all pray together. We really want to be able to say that, Lord.

Nothing matters except you, Jesus. The only issue is, Lord, are we drifting from you? Lord Jesus. Lord Jesus.

I wonder if God's dealing with some of you, you just want to fill this altar, begin to cry out to God. We've got more good teaching here week in, week out, than most places get in ten years. I just need another message.

I wonder if some of you are hungry and thirsty and longing for God. You just want to get out of your seat and begin to seek the face of God and cry out for a fresh visitation in your own life. Friend, if He's pulling on you, Jesus.

Jesus. Pour your heart out, friend. No reason to be proper and restrained today.

Pour your heart out. It's a desperate hour. Oh, God.

Oh, God. Oh, God. Nothing else matters.

Nothing else matters. Jesus. Father.

Father. He's near to the broken heart. If He wounds us, it's because He wants to heal us.

God. God. Shatter our indifference, Lord.

Break us out of our religious habit, God. Father. Break our hearts with the things that break Your heart, God.

Oh, God. We want to be consumed with knowing You. We want Jesus to be our all in all, God.

Strip away the facades. Strip away the deception. Cut through the layers of hardness that we've unconsciously erected around our hearts.

Oh, God. I want to encourage you to pray for visitation in your own life. Not just in the church, not just in the region.

Visitation in your own life. Cry out to God, friend. Father.

If this is foreign to you, if you're just on the outside, say, God, make Yourself real to me. Make Yourself real to me. Jesus didn't die to make you a spectator.

God. God. Out of passion for You, we say, by life or by death.

Out of devotion to You, oh, God. Father. Father.

Father. We lay our lives on the altar, God. Send Your fire.

Burn up the dross. Burn up everything unclean. Burn up everything that's a mixture.

Make us wholly Yours, God. Make us wholly Yours. Lord, I'm longing for You.

That will be with us, Lord, more tomorrow than it is today. More than next week than it is tomorrow. Oh, God, deliver us from professionalism.

Deliver us from habitual Christianity. Deliver us from knowing how to do it. God.

Whatever the cost or consequences, come and visit. Come and visit my life. Come and visit my family.

Come and visit us, oh, God. Come and visit our church. God.

God. Speak to us, Lord, the things we need to put down. The things we need to lay down.

The things we need to turn from. The things we need to turn to. God, there's some that cry out and they seem to get no answer.

And they cry out and they seem to hit a wall. They just get frustrated and they're afraid to let their hope rise again. Meet them this time, oh God.

Satisfy the longing of their hearts. God. God.

God. God. It's going to take more than we've seen so far to turn this culture of death back.

It's going to take more than we've seen so far to visit this young generation. It's going to take more than we've seen so far to transform our cities. God.

God. Don't pass our nation by. Don't pass this region by.

Don't let us congratulate ourselves for our great exploits while your presence passes by. God. Shake me, oh God.

Quicken my life, oh God. Father. Father.

God. Turn us. Turn us.

Turn us. Turn us. Turn us.

Give us a fresh baptism of tears, Father. Let there be passion and brokenness added to our prayers, oh God. Raise up the houses of prayer, oh God.

In our own lives and citywide, Father. Hear our cry. Hear our cry.

Hear our cry, Lord. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you.

He's near to the brokenhearted. Come on, what else do you really want? What else really matters? What else can you measure compared to His presence? If you're not right with God, if you've been living in compromise, if you're in the balcony, if you're down here, if there's sin in your life, you're not right with God, you need to deal with it today. You need to get up from where you are.

If you've been living a secret life, a double life, if there's sin, things that are displeasing and they're habitual in your lives, you need to get up, you need to get on your face, get on your knees before God and ask Him to wash you clean. God didn't send His Son into the world to condemn you, but to save you, to change you, to change me. Don't resist Him.

If there's sin, if your life is not right, if we put a picture of your life over the last week or last month or last six months on the screen here, and you'd have to run out in embarrassment, you need to repent and get

right. The blood of Jesus is shed to forgive you and wash you. If you're not right, if there's compromise, if there's a secret life, a double life, if there's sin you're holding on to, get out from where you are and get down on your knees at this altar and repent and ask Him for mercy while there's yet time.

Don't play games with His grace. Better to humble yourself here than to be embarrassed before His throne for the whole universe to see. Come on, get right with God.

Get right with God. Get right with God.

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