

2005 Missions Conference - Session 4

by Peter Sorenson

Peter Sorenson shares his transformative journey from Wall Street to missionary work in Africa, focusing on ministering to prisoners and spreading the Gospel.

Duration: 56:10

Scripture: Numbers 13:30, Joshua 1:9, Psalm 40:3, Matthew 6:33, John 5:6, Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Gods Provision"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that God can use anyone, regardless of their current circumstances or past mistakes. He uses the example of the man who was paralyzed for 38 years and was healed by Jesus. The speaker encourages listeners to have faith and take the first step towards obedience, just as the man on the mat did. The sermon also highlights the importance of stepping out in courage and trusting in God's provision. The speaker shares his own experience of God's faithfulness in providing for his family and emphasizes the need for discipleship and reaching out to others, particularly prisoners in Africa.

Transcript

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And then they had, I believe, one daughter, Christine, and now they have Christine, Grace, and Luke. Luke is five. He's got Africa in his sights already.

He has got his father's missionary zeal already. And we met them back about, it must be ten years ago now. A friend of ours at the church said, you must meet this couple.

They have a purity and a passion for God. And we did, and we've had opportunities to have fellowship together over the years. And I've gotten to know Peter.

I've gotten to know his family. I've gotten to know his life. And I can stand here today with an assurance in my heart for you that stepping into this pulpit is a man of integrity.

He's been a businessman, a very successful businessman, in New York City on Wall Street for quite a few years. But recently the Lord spoke to his heart, and he's given it all up, and he's moved. He lives now in Africa, and he has a ministry to the forgotten prisoners of Africa.

And when he shares with you the forgotten prisoner, they really are. He and his wife, Victoria, go into some of the most atrocious prison conditions that you would ever imagine. They bring in a team.

They have a banquet, a prodigal son banquet, they call it. And even in some cases they do what the father did. They kill a cow, and they butcher it, cook it for the prisoners.

And then Peter, or a preacher he may bring with him, tells the prisoners about the love of Christ. But it doesn't end there. They continue to minister.

They continue to bring in medical dental clinics and to feed prisoners in Africa. And Peter is being led of the Holy Ghost now, and he's waiting on the Lord for the next step. He has a vision to see prisoners who come to Christ disciples and themselves released to planted, established churches throughout Africa.

I thank God for this with all of my heart. I thank God for men and women of purpose and vision. About ten years ago when we met, I think it was the first or second time we went out for dinner together, we were saying goodbye as Teresa and I left to go home.

And Peter looked at me and says, I believe somehow our meeting is a divine appointment. And that was ten years ago. And now today we're on the same platform, and we have embraced not only Peter and his family, but the ministry that God has given to them.

Listen carefully today, because many of you are going to be going to Africa. You're going to be visiting prisons. You don't have to be afraid.

Peter's wife, Victoria, was a model here in New York City, and she stands right in the middle of the prison yard, some of the worst prisons in Africa, fearlessly tells prisoners about the love of God for them through Jesus Christ. A wonderful family. I thank God for them with all of my heart.

I look forward to a great association, not only personally, but this church as well, with the ministry to the forgotten prisoners of Africa. And I want you to hear this heart of this man today because we're going to be in a larger way involved in this ministry in the future. You'll have opportunities to support some of the things that the Lord is going to be doing and to physically support it by going and being part of the ministry teams that God will send over there.

I come again and bring you greetings from South Africa. And I bring you greetings on behalf of Victoria, Christine, Grace, and Luke, who should be fast asleep right now. It is 10 p.m. in Cape Town.

And Victoria apologizes for not joining me on this trip. Our children are still in school right now, and they're still very young. So it's very difficult for us to be away from them, as you can imagine.

My middle child, Grace, who is eight years old, and I have started a tradition when I travel. As I'm preparing my suitcases and putting my clothes away, getting ready to go on my trips, Grace comes to me and says, Daddy, can I have a shirt? So I go in my closet and I get a shirt and say, Sure, honey, here's a shirt. And she says, No, Daddy, I don't want that shirt.

I want a dirty shirt. Give me a dirty shirt of yours. And then she takes my shirt while I'm away and wraps it around her pillow.

And that's what she sleeps on while I'm away. And you know, for me, when I think of that, it's actually a wonderful representation of what our relationship with Christ should be. And Song of Solomon talks about the fragrance and the aroma of the garment of the Lord.

And really, that's the relationship we should all have with Christ, where we just stick close and just smell the fragrance of His closeness. Let me begin by expressing to you, really for myself and Victoria, but also I know I speak for the other missionaries that have been here this week, just a heartfelt thank you to this church. Let me tell you, this church has been and played a critical role in the victories that we have experienced overseas.

I have no doubt about that. And I visited the prayer service on Thursday evening. And I have to tell you that it was the most dynamic and the most incredible prayer meeting I've ever attended in my life.

That's really true. And if none of you have experienced their prayer meeting, you need to get to it, because I believe that prayer meeting is the heartbeat of this church. I also want to thank the pastoral staff, Pastor Dave, Pastor Carter, Pastor Neil, Treg and all of his staff.

These ones have made us feel so welcome this week. And it's been an incredible privilege to be with you. I was last before you about 16 months ago and explained to you how I got into the place that I got myself into in Africa.

And I'm here to tell you that God continues to be very faithful and continues to uphold us. You see, five years ago, we were called very supernaturally and very specifically to work in the prisons of Africa. At that time, I was working on Wall Street.

And I have to say that the difference between Wall Street and the prisons of Africa was like being sent to another planet. Truly, you might as well have beamed me aboard a ship because that was the difference in that experience. But Victoria and I made a decision to follow the Lord and to follow Christ and to follow his leading in that wonderful opportunity.

But I have to tell you that I haven't always had the ability to follow Christ. I haven't always had the desire to follow the Lord and to follow him closely. And just so you don't think that somehow as a missionary, we're unique in a sense in terms of our abilities and our skills.

I was right where you are just five years ago. And it was only that decision to follow Christ that made the difference. You see, I learned a long time ago that even as a Christian, if I don't stay close to Jesus, it's very easy to go off and go into a dead end.

And what I've learned is that actually what I need to do is I need to put my hand on Jesus's shoulder. And that's how close I need to be with him. And I need to follow him like this.

And I need to keep my hand on his shoulder because if he gets too far ahead of me, I sway off to the right or to the left. Recently, I had a discussion with my children about heaven. And they were very fascinated.

I don't know why I hadn't had that discussion with them previously, but we just had it recently. And after having this discussion and explaining to them what was in store for them, my daughter Grace said, Daddy, is that true? Is that what heaven is really like? And I said, Honey, that's true. That's what it's like.

And she did this to me. She goes, Yes! She threw her hands in the air and said, Yes! And really, that's what we have in store for us. And as beautiful a sanctuary as this is here, it's only just a glimpse.

And with the worship and with the gold and the beauty here, this is just a glimpse of what heaven is like and what's in store for us. It was not too long after that description of heaven that my son Luke, who's now five years old, got into an argument with one of his sisters. And she must have threatened him because he responded to his sister and said, That's all right.

You can kill me because I want to see what heaven is like. And then Luke asked me a question. He said, Daddy, do we go to heaven in a box? I don't know what picture he saw, but Luke is convinced that we all go to heaven in a box.

And, you know, I realized that as I thought about that, that that's exactly what I had done with God for most of my life. I put God in a box. You see, I worked on Wall Street and I was and don't hold that against me, by the way, but on Wall Street, most things are supposed to add up.

Most things are logical, understandable, and they fit into a box. At the end of the day, the accounts have to balance and everything fits into a box. But, you know, God doesn't always fit into our box.

God isn't always logical at the time that he calls us to do something. God isn't always understandable when he speaks to us. God sometimes defies our logic.

But I had tried to put God into a box. But you know what? I realized that faith that is in a box, and when you put God in a box, that's a faith that's dead. That's a tradition.

It's not a faith. That's a tradition, and that's what I had done. So I finally had to listen to God and God began to supernaturally speak to me and supernaturally speak to my wife, Victoria.

And essentially, our work, as Pastor Carter has described, is a work of discipleship. Our goal is discipleship. We want to disciple prisoners in Africa, the forgotten prisoners of Africa.

But, you know, the way that we get to discipleship is by first reaching out to them. First going to them and describing to them that they have a Father in Heaven who loves them and wants to spend eternity with them. We reach out to them through medical care, and Dr. Ibanga at ProHealth and his team of doctors come into the prison with us and provide medical care.

What we do for a banquet is we first go to the prison and we speak to the authorities. The first time we went to do this, I was convinced the authorities would say no. But you see, in Africa, the opportunities are enormous, and usually they say yes when you want to do something in Africa.

So we said, well, we want to do a banquet in the prison, and so the prison warden said, absolutely, you come do whatever you want to do. I mean, essentially, he gave us the keys of the prison and said, here it is. It's all yours.

So we go to the prison and make the arrangements, and on the day of the banquet, the prison authorities will actually gather the whole population of the prison in the center courtyard of the prison for us. It's mandatory attendance. Everybody's got to be there.

And we start the banquet with a time of worship and praise. And this may go on for an hour, an hour and a half, two hours. It goes on for a while.

So we have praise and worship right in the center courtyard of the prison, and it's an incredible sight to see these men who, most of them are wearing rags. Most of them look sickly. Most of them are very, don't smell very good, I have to say.

I don't know what other words to use to describe it, but it's a physically unpleasant place, but it's a God-ordained place. And I have to tell you that when I sit in the center courtyard of the prison, to me, that's like going to Disney World. That is where I'd love to be.

I have to say, it's an incredible thing. And so we do the praise and worship, and then we have a time of prayer. And sometimes the time of prayer goes for 30 or 40 minutes.

And it's a time where we make sure that Satan doesn't have a foothold anywhere in that prison. And then following that, I will get up at least and welcome the prisoners. Obviously, I didn't have much choice.

But tell them that we're happy to be there, where we've come and why we are there. And then either myself or often we'll have an African national evangelist come and give the gospel to these men. And essentially tell these men that there's a Father in Heaven who loves them and wants to spend eternity with them.

And that through Jesus' death on the cross, the door has been opened to them. And they can choose that day. And we make sure that the opportunity for them to make a decision is not an easy one.

You know, we don't want some guy just raising his hand and putting it down. We want them to know that there are consequences to their decision. And that this is a total life change.

This is going to be a change in their life completely. It's not just an add-on to something else that they have. But their life and their behavior is going to change that day.

And so after that, we ask for a response from the inmates. And they respond. They respond enthusiastically.

In fact, I think there's a picture right here on the far side there of some of our inmates responding at a banquet. And you've never seen a picture of a face more desperate for the Lord than some of these prisoners as they respond to the Gospel. And the responses are incredible.

The responses typically are 70, 80, 90 percent. In fact, we've had some banquets recently up in West Africa where the entire prison has responded and come to Christ at the banquet. The whole prison.

There's nobody left. Then following the response, we will typically take the prisoners and take them in groups and counsel with them. And explain to them the decision that they've just made and what that decision entails.

Often we'll give Bibles to those that have just professed Christ. And then the banquet starts. And this is the part that they are mostly looking forward to, I believe.

We serve them good food. In fact, we had a banquet last year in Zambia. And one of the organizers suggested that, well, these guys have maize meal.

And so they're kind of used to that. So why don't we give them maize meal, but we'll just give them a lot of it. I thought, you know, if I was eating maize meal every day, I don't think I'd want a lot of it, really.

And I said, no, we're not going to do that. You know, we're going to serve these guys the best meal that we can serve them. And for the average man on the street in Zambia, they will have beef.

Now, you may have beef three days a week if you're not a vegetarian. Maybe four days a week. The average man in Zambia will have beef one day per year.

One day per year. And so it's like a Thanksgiving meal for them. And so that's what we serve them.

We serve them beef. And a lot of beef. And rice.

And we give them juice and other things. We give them gifts, as you saw in the video. Give them medicines.

A lot of them have skin diseases and things. So we give them medicated soap. Sometimes these guys don't have soap for six months.

And so soap is a treasure. I've handed the men soap, and their hands just tremble as they receive this gift. And then following the banquet, we have the medical team there.

And we're able to provide medical care for the inmates who are ailing. And as our friends from Doctors for Life here know, medical care in Africa is a real luxury. Truly.

In fact, in many of the countries, the average man on the street might see one doctor their whole life. Literally, from birth to death, they'll have one doctor visit. And often it's somebody from ProHealth who goes out into the bush areas and treats these people.

Last year, we were able to take a mobile operating unit, similar to the unit that Times Square Church donated to ProHealth, and we took it to the prison. We parked it right in front of the prison. And we were able to provide surgeries for 20 of the prisoners there who needed surgeries.

So it's been an incredible privilege to serve the prisoners of Africa. It was five years ago, as I said, that we were first called to this work. And it was a very specific call.

It was a very dramatic call. And Lord knows I'm hard of hearing, so he had to make it very specific and very dramatic. But I said, no, I need to follow Jesus in this thing.

Two years ago, we got another call. And, you know, when the Lord calls, that's the phone you want to answer. You definitely want to answer that phone call.

And the Lord had been working on my heart and on Victoria's heart, both at the same time. And we had both sensed that at that time we were doing this work from New Jersey, flying over to Africa to minister, and then flying all the way back. And so it was a little bit disconnected, if you will.

It didn't feel as if we had made the full commitment there. And the Lord called us again very supernaturally and very specifically to move to Africa. The day that we got the call, we just wept.

We were in tears. And we gathered our children and told our kids, said, kids, we're moving to Africa. And Luke said, I want to go.

I'm ready to go. Christine and Grace started crying and said, we don't want to go to Africa. And Victoria and I said, well, you know, if the Lord is going to call us, he's going to call all of us.

He's not just going to call us. He's going to call the whole family. So we didn't say a word to them, not a single word.

We said, no, let's just leave it at that. And, you know, before the end of the day, without any coaching from anybody, those two children came back to us and said, Daddy, we want to go to Africa and we're ready to go. So when we got this call to move to Africa, we said, well, that's great, honey.

Let's let's make plans here. Let's sell the house. And at that time, we had a business down on Wall Street.

It was a little bit more difficult to sell. But let's sell the house and let's sell the business and we'll go. And we thought about it for a little while and said, you know, the Lord didn't say sell the house and get out of business and go.

He said go. And so we went down to the hardware store and bought a for sale sign, came home and put it in front of the house. And and that was it.

We took whatever belongings we knew we needed and put them in a container. Had a big garage sale, got rid of everything else and got on an airplane and arrived in Africa. Flew to Cape Town before receiving God's call.

Neither one of us had ever been to South Africa. We we knew that we didn't want to raise our kids in the areas where the malaria is is bad. And so we knew that that wasn't a problem in Cape Town.

So we followed God's leading and arrived in Cape Town. Let me tell you, you know, our life in Cape Town has been incredible. And there there have been a lot of things that we have had to adjust with.

Security is an issue in in South Africa and certainly in Cape Town. And that was one big adjustment. You know, in South Africa, everyone's home has a big gate in front of it.

And so you have to sit in front of the house and hit a button and the gate opens and you drive in and then you close the gate. And and all of that. And out of New Jersey, we didn't even have a key for the house.

When we went to sell the house, we had to call the locksmith to come make a key for the house. So it was a it was a big change. And I have to say that even after receiving the call.

You know, there were nights where I got nervous and there were nights that I wasn't sure. I never questioned the call. The call was obvious.

The call was clear. There was never a doubt about that. But there were times that I wondered, you know, did I bring my family to Cape Town to be endangered? And wouldn't you know that within four months of our arrival, Pastor Dave and Pastor Gary had planned a pastor's conference in Cape Town.

And I had the privilege of chauffeuring Pastor Dave. If you ever get that job, take it. That's a good job.

And, you know, I learned from Bettina. So when you have Pastor Dave in the car, don't say anything. And so sure enough, I took Dave Pastor Dave to the crusade and and he ministered there very effectively.

And then I had to drive him back to the hotel. So I didn't say anything as I knew he was tired and everything. So we got him back to the hotel and then we're in the car another time.

And again, I just kept my mouth shut. Just listen. And, you know, out of the blue, Pastor Dave looked at me and he said, Peter, the Lord's going to take care of your family.

And, you know, I wept. Truly, I wept. And from that moment on, security has never been an issue for us.

Now, I want to tell you that everything that we've done has been, you know, with the courage of Joshua and Caleb. And that we've stood out there with our armor on, ready to do battle with the evil one. But that really hasn't been the case.

And you know what it's been is just a step of courage and a step of courage and a step of courage. And, you know, when you string them all together, it actually looks like a big step. But it really, truly is just a lot of very small steps.

And so moving to Cape Town has been actually looking back an incredible blessing in our lives. Our lives have become so rich in that place, I can't begin to tell you. Now, you know, especially for Victoria, it's been difficult because she left a lot of friends in the States and a lot of friends here at Times Square Church.

And to move to the other side of the world has not been an easy thing. But, you know, the Lord has given us friends on top of friends on top of friends. And people have been there to welcome us and to help us and to guide us.

And we have just made an incredible number of friends. We're getting together to celebrate Thanksgiving this year. And people in South Africa are very curious about Thanksgiving because they don't celebrate it there.

It's only an American holiday. So we began to make a list of those that we would invite. And we said, let's just invite close friends, people that have helped us out, people that have been a part of our lives since we've been here.

And we're getting ready to celebrate our second anniversary coming up in December. And just in the short time that we've been there, the list is now about 150 people. That's our flag up there, by the way.

That big Y is for Yahweh. So how is the work going in Africa? Well, as I mentioned and as the video had mentioned, we started off in Togo. Togo is a very small country.

It's kind of like putting Connecticut up on its end. It sits up on the panhandle in West Africa. And that's where we started.

And even as small as Togo is, there are still 13 prisons in Togo. And we have visited maybe half of those prisons. We have a staff member in Togo named Pastor Adam.

Pastor Adam gets on his motorcycle, and he drives for hours to get to these different prisons out in the bush areas of Togo. And has ministered very effectively for us there. We continue to do banquets there.

And Togo is one of the places where we've had 100 percent response among the prisoners there. Pastor Adam is also discipling one of the prison wardens in one of the larger prisons who has come to Christ and wants to serve the Lord. And he's going and meeting with this man on a weekly basis and discipling this man.

Because, you know, if you can reach those that guard the prison and administer the prison, you know, that affects the situation for all the prisoners there. Our work in Nigeria continues. Again, partnering with Dr. Ibanga in that country.

We have an office in his headquarters building there in the city of Jos, Nigeria. And are working, again, at a deep discipleship program in that country. We have made a decision in that country that our discipleship is going to be very intensive and very purposeful.

In fact, I've told the staff people there, I said, don't assign more than four or five people per discipler. And as it is now, they have one person discipling just one or two people. I said, you know, if the Lord chose twelve, and even out of those twelve, one fell aside, you know, why do we think that we can disciple twenty or thirty people? Let's just disciple one or two.

And let's focus on getting those men grounded. Because I believe with all my heart that there are some incredibly powerful ministers of the gospel in the prisons of Africa. And our goal is to find those men, and to equip those men, and prepare those men, and then send them out to minister on the continent.

Our work in Zambia began with the decision of Times Square Church to go there last year. Zambia is an exciting country to work in. It is a very poor country.

The unemployment in Zambia is about 90%. And so what happens in that country is that there will be one wage earner, and all the extended family will live in the house of that one wage earner, because there are not many people that earn a wage there. And as you saw in the video, the pictures that you saw were taken in Zambia.

When we were there last year, we went to a very large prison in Zambia. And in that prison, as you looked in, and anybody who was here on the Times Square Church team that went into this prison with me, and I see some of them here, can attest to the conditions there. They were very difficult.

They had prison cells that were built to house 20 inmates. And those same prison cells would have over 100 prisoners in them. Literally, they can't all lay down and sleep.

And for those that do lay down, they wake them up in the middle of the night, and everybody rolls over. And there's not even room for you to roll over if you're trying to sleep in that cell. And I asked the man who was there, one of the Zambian coordinators, I said, is this the worst prison in Zambia? And he said, no.

He said, there's a much worse prison two hours north of here. So, trying once again to push myself out of my comfort zone and out of the box, I said, well, we need to go there. And that's where we were.

That's where some of these pictures were taken. It's hard to get permission to take video in the prisons, and so that's a little bit unusual to have an actual video of a banquet in the prison. It's not often that they

want to give permission for those videos.

In one of the prisons that we were in in Zambia this past month, when they went to serve the food, there was at least one inmate that was so weak that he had to crawl up to take the food that we were offering to him, the banquet. And as our friends from Doctors for Life know, HIV is a very serious issue in Africa, and especially in southern Africa. It's an extremely difficult issue.

And so much more in the prisons. In fact, in the one difficult prison that we were in in Zambia, the government doesn't have enough money to survey the whole prison population in terms of their health. And so they just selected 300, and they just randomly picked 300 men, and they said, we're going to test all of these men and see where they are in terms of this illness.

And out of the 300, 295 were HIV positive. We also, in that same prison, ministered to a large group of condemned prisoners. These were inmates that are only allowed out for just a little bit each day, but had special permission to come to our banquet.

And there was just one whole section, the men in chains on death row. But when you consider the disease there and the illness there, every prisoner there is condemned. I mean, truly.

It's just a difficult place. Also, when we were in Zambia, one of the issues in Africa is that it's very difficult to go do one thing in Africa. You know, it's very difficult to go minister in just one area and ignore the other needs that are there.

And so it's actually been a lot of fun to be able to not only do the work in the prison, but also as opportunity arises to be able to minister in different areas. And so when we took a team there this last month, we also went to minister to the street children that Tom Larkin and a number of those here from the church went to minister to in Zambia. And again, the Lord took me out of my comfort zone.

It was an incredible experience. We had a small bus that we drove around Zambia that week, and the one night that we went out, it was very dark, and we drove for a while through the streets of the city, and then got to one area of the city where there were no street lights. Everything was really pitch black dark.

And we're driving down this road, and we came to a fire that was burning in the middle of the road. And literally they had to stop and go out and tell the people to move the fire off the road. And so these people kind of, you know, pushed the logs that were burning off the road.

And I'll never forget looking back as we drove through and seeing the sparks coming up behind the bus, hoping that it didn't light anything under the bus. And we drove further, and there were more fires kind of burning. And as we got closer to the area where these street kids would spend the night, one of the guys on the team, who was just about my size, turned to me and said, I'm going to stay near you tonight.

And I didn't tell him, and I was thinking the same thing, actually. You know, the Lord calls you to do these things that your flesh isn't comfortable with, and your flesh says, please, let's go back to the hotel and pray. Let's go have a worship service rather than put our lives in danger here.

But we went and we ministered to these kids. And, you know, the response was unbelievable. And you saw some of the video of the street kids there.

These are kids, and they look 6, 7, 8 years old. The parents are gone. They're living down the street.

And there's truly nobody there to care for them. And I know that Tom Larkins has an enormous call on his life to go and work there and to help these kids, and we want to stand with him in that. In South Africa, we've had some wonderful ministry.

Actually, where we live in Cape Town, the Lord has ordained that the area that we live is right across the street from the largest prison in Cape Town. There are literally 8,000 inmates across the street from where we live. And it's been an incredible opportunity for us to minister there.

Victoria goes over there once a week. She ministers among the juvenile girls. These are 14-, 15-, 16-year-olds who are in there.

She ministers among the women inmates, the longer-term inmates. She ministers among the mothers there, the young mothers. They're literally babies that are born in prison, and they spend their first two years in the prison there with their mothers, which is good and bad, but difficult, to say the least.

And, in fact, she's been ministering lately to a few young women who got caught coming from South America over to South Africa trying to bring drugs into the country. And these two or three young women who speak no English, they only speak Spanish, and very few people in South Africa speak Spanish. So the Lord miraculously gave Victoria back her high school Spanish, and she's now ministering to these young women and having a very effective ministry with them.

As I said, the opportunities in Africa are unusual. There are things that you're able to do there in terms of ministry that you just wouldn't get permission to do here. It's just open doors.

And, in fact, one day as I was driving in front of the prison near our home, I looked over and I saw a guard tower there not too far from the street. And the guard tower had a couple of broken windows in it, but I never saw any guards in the guard tower. And so I thought, you know, the verses in Scripture about manning the watchtower and the watchman and watching out over the city, that came to mind, and I thought, well, maybe we could do something there.

And so I contacted a couple of friends who work in the prison, and I said, you know, do you think you could ask the administration if they would allow us to maybe go up into that guard tower and pray? Kind of a strange thing, right? I mean, try going to your local prison here. Say, can we go in your guard tower and pray? I don't think they'll say yes. Well, not only did the administration say yes, they said you can come and go in every guard tower of the prison.

And so we organized a group of people. We had about 150 people who walked through the prison grounds and prayed for several hours. And then we had 40 people who manned the guard towers for the whole night.

And they prayed over that prison, over that enormous prison. And it was incredible to hear through the broken glass the fervent prayers of these people as they just pleaded to the Lord on behalf of the inmates and those that were in the prison. It was an incredible thing.

And then the next morning after the all-night prayer session in the guard towers, we had a communion service together as a group. And then we had an outreach breakfast for the 300 most senior administrators of the prison and gave them the gospel. And sure enough, quite a number of them came forward and responded to the gospel.

But again, just the incredible opportunities that the Lord has given us, things that in my flesh don't make any sense, but in God's logic make an awful lot of sense. But you know, what's been fun about being in Africa is that it's not just a ministry that I have or even just a ministry that Victoria and I are doing, but in actuality our whole family is actually ministering. And that's very exciting to see.

Recently my daughter had a classmate come over to our house. This young man, Henri, who's French and I think interested in my daughter. Little does he know that I know more than he does.

But Henri come to visit. And I was in my office and my daughter came in and said, I said, Dad, would you come tell Henri about heaven? Recalling the conversation that we'd had. And it seemed a little strange.

I expected her to come say, Dad, would you come tell Henri about Jesus? She said, no, no, no, you don't have to tell him about Jesus. Tell him about heaven. I said, I already told him about Jesus.

And so Christine sat little Henri down and said, Henri, you need to pray to receive Jesus. Explained it to him and said, you pray after me. I'm going to lead you in a sinner's prayer.

And so I went in the room to visit with Henri and tell him about heaven. And he looked at me with these big eyes and he said, Mr. Sorensen, it's good to be a Christian. And Henri went the next day to school and took his Bible to school.

And asked the teacher if he could read his Bible during class. So I think we'll see Henri in heaven. But you know, why the Lord would take a guy like me and have me work in the prisons of Africa at first didn't make any sense to me.

Truly, I mean, it's illogical. But that's God's logic. And it wasn't until after we had started working in the prison that I looked back and I could actually see God's logic.

And I think the Lord does that for us. I think he often allows us to look back and say, oh, I see what he's doing here. And I look back and I realize that there's an important reason why he called us to the work in the prison.

And it had to do with a woman who I met. Don't remember meeting her. Met her as a child.

And her name is Christine. She lived in Chicago back in the 30s and the 40s. And she would regularly, as she was driving down the road, pull her car off on the side of the highway, grab her Bible, and with her dress blowing in the wind, go over and start ministering to the chain gangs on the side of the road.

That was my grandmother. And she also went and visited prisoners in prison. And my dad told me how one time there were these young men who were convicted of a crime, a capital crime, and they were on death row.

And she went to that prison and she led each one of them to Christ. And before they were executed, each one of them gave a testimony of how the Lord had changed their life. And then I also look at her son, my dad.

And my dad also worked on Wall Street. But my dad unashamedly shared Christ with his colleagues every step of the way. In fact, he told me about one time as he was walking down the street near Wall Street and a fellow stopped him.

And he said, Bert, are you still trying to save the world? And my dad had his briefcase and he said, well, you know, as a matter of fact, I am. And here's an invitation to an outreach that we're sponsoring. And my dad came up to visit me this week and he's here.

He's down in this section. I won't point him out and embarrass him, but he's a little bit taller than I am and he's much more handsome. So please greet my dad.

But, you know, the Lord promise promises us that when we walk with him and that we when we walk in obedience to him, that those blessings flow a thousand generations down. And, you know, even the richest man in the world doesn't have enough money to pass it down to a thousand generations. And so, you know, if you're here today and you don't want to follow Jesus for your own sake, follow Jesus for their sake, because that is a rich inheritance.

And that is an inheritance nobody can take away. And your generations be blessed because of your decision to follow Jesus. Put your hand on his shoulder, walk behind him, forget what other people say and follow Jesus.

Thank you. You know, while while Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit was speaking to my heart for you again today. And there was something that he said that really stood out to me all throughout.

He said, it's not the big steps we take, it's just the little steps. The little steps. I look back over the course of my own life and think of the times when I sat in churches, just overwhelmed at my own incompetence and inability.

And the possibility of ever following perhaps in the footsteps of those who had been used by God. But yet an invitation would come. And I would step out and just just take that little step.

And that's all it was. But God honors it. He hears it.

He honors it. And he multiplies it. And the next thing you know, you do have your hand on the shoulder.

You're not even aware of it, but you're just walking close to him. And you find yourself walking through doorways of impossibility and human strength. You find that with the calling comes the gifting, the change that is required, the necessary life that only God can give us, the wisdom, the knowledge, the abilities that we didn't possess.

That everything in the long run, when it's said and done, brings glory to him. Because we know who we are. We haven't forgotten where we've come from.

We were all prisoners. By God's grace, he set us free and called us to bring a proclamation of that freedom to others throughout our life and through our world. You might be here today and your family is a mess and your life is a mess.

And you're looking and you look in the mirror and you see a mess. And you're wondering, could God use this? And the answer is conclusively, yes. Then you ask the question, well, how? You know, I'm thinking of the man who laid for 38 years on a mat and Jesus walked by one day and said, will you be made whole? And included in that question was the inference that I've got something else for you.

So for now, just roll up the mat and stick it under your arm. Start to walk. And it's amazing when we get to heaven and we will see the testimonies of those who have just obeyed God.

And they just got up and they took the first step. And maybe that's really where you are at today. It's Africa is a long way off for you.

It starts with the first step. Just that first step. And that first step says it's always been.

Yes, Jesus. God, if you lead me, I will follow you. And, you know, he won't give you more than you can handle.

He never does. He's very gracious, very gentle. Won't take you deeper than you have of him the ability to survive and succeed.

He'll be with you every step of the way. You can trust that. He doesn't require you to come to an altar today and then pack your bag and head for Africa tomorrow.

That could happen someday, but not necessarily. You just begin to walk with him. And that is the joy of it.

It's a supernatural journey. You don't have to figure it out. You don't have to know everything that's coming.

And as Peter said, and I agree completely, you look back in retrospect. And that's where you see the hand of God and how he's been faithful all the way through. And we're going to stand in a moment.

And as we do, the education annex, I think, is pretty well filled right now. And for those who are there, I'm going to ask that you just simply step up between the screens. And for those in the main sanctuary and the Holy Spirit speaking to you today.

And it's just about taking that first step. You don't have to even feel anything inside. It's just, God, I want to obey you.

And you just step out and take that first step. If that's the cry of your heart today, I'm going to ask that as we all stand, balcony, main sanctuary, make your way to this altar. And we will pray together.

Would you do that? Balcony, you can go to either exit. Main sanctuary, slip out of wherever you are. In the annex, if you could step out of your seats and just stand between the screens there for a moment.

We'll pray together. Please just come right to the altar. Make your way down.

Take that first step. Big, big step of faith for you today. It may seem like a big step, but it's just a first step in the direction of God.

You'll find that he begins by leading you out of your old life. He'll lead you out of the power and the penalty of sin. Leads you through faith into an understanding that he died on the cross and took your place.

And that as you trust in him and receive him as the one who died in your place, as your savior, he forgives your sin. The Bible says that he will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. That means the wrong practices, wrong thinking, things that offend God that have gotten into your lives.

He then begins to lead away from the power of sin, away from the penalty of sin and into a new life. New ways of thinking. Gives you a new heart.

The Bible says, gives you a new song, a new voice. Gives you new objectives. He changes you from the inside out.

You get up in the morning and you say, God, I don't know how it's happening, but it's happening. I am changing. Not from the outside in.

I'm changing from the inside out. I have an evidence in my life and in my heart that you are real. You are changing me.

As I simply behold you, you are changing me. And then with this new life and the new heart, then he begins to lead you on a new path. And that path is as big as God is.

The calling is as vast as his mind. There is no limit to what God can do through your life because he is God and he's not limited unless we choose to do so. But as you yield to him, he'll make you a living testimony because he has sworn that through the lives of those that trust in him, he will glorify his own name.

He has sworn. He says, I'm going to take you and I'm going to bring my name to glory through you. And that's the promise of God for you.

It's all about Jesus. It's not about us. It's all about Jesus from beginning to end.

We are invited to this incredible banquet that you heard about today for the prisoners. But we are invited to this banquet of his life. Every day we sit at the table with God.

Every day we eat what he puts before us. And this food nourishes us and changes us into the men and women that God has called us to be. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Father, I thank you with all my heart, God, for what you're doing at this altar today. For your salvation is a supernatural transaction.

It is a gift of your goodness that comes to those who will acknowledge their sin and will turn to you with all of their heart. I pray today for the grace for those who are receiving you as savior to turn from sin and to trust you for the power that you will lead them out of death's grip and you will bring them into the pathway of God's life. I thank you today for the pathway that you're setting before many, a pathway that will bring glory to you, Jesus.

It will bring honor to your name because you have determined that it should be so. I pray, Father, that you give every man, every woman at this altar a yielded heart to believe you, to trust you from this day forward, to walk with you, to not be discouraged when they falter. But know that you are a faithful, loving savior and you don't forsake your children.

Thank you, God. I pray that you make this a love relationship, not a religious ritual, a love relationship with the son of God. Pray you do something so deep and profound that family and friends be astounded.

God Almighty, may we live long enough to hear reports that people who are at this altar this day went on with you and you glorified your name through them. Father, I thank you for it with all my heart. I know that this is real.

I know that people's lives are being changed this moment. I know it because you're speaking it to my heart. Jesus, be glorified.

Don't let these turn back. Don't let the devil come and rob them of this life in Christ. Cause them, oh God, to walk with you because they have chosen to do so.

Thank you for this with all my heart. In Jesus' name. This is the conclusion of the message.

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