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JOHN 1:29-51

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Lord, we value your word. We hold it with such regard that when we open it, we read it, we recognize that you are revealing yourself through it. It's your word to us, your communication to us. We've learned in John that Jesus is the word. The communication of who you are to come and live among us, full of glory, full of grace and truth. So Lord, thank you for the example of Jesus Christ, for the teaching of Jesus Christ, for the sacrifice of Jesus. Most importantly we're grateful for the transformation that takes place in our lives when we come in contact with you. So Father, I just pray right now for each person here, that you would give them that encounter with you this morning that would be transformational. I pray for anybody here that doesn't know you yet that you would reveal yourself in a powerful way this morning through your word as we look at it. In Jesus' name, amen.

It is very important how we handle God's word and what we do with it. I like the story of the two successful businessmen. One of the businessmen said to the other, "I'll tell you about my success, what it is. It's because of the Bible."

The other guy says, "From the Bible?"

"Yeah. Here's what I do. I close my eyes, I open the Bible to some random page, I put my finger there, and whatever it lands, it tells me to do something. So two years ago I put my finger down and opened it up and it said oil. So I bought oil and now I've got all kinds of riches because of oil. The next year I did the same thing. I opened it up, closed my eyes, put my finger down, it said gold. So I bought gold. So now I'm rich because I have all this gold. Boy, the Bible helps me a lot."

The other businessman says, "This is great. Wow. I can hardly wait to do this." He goes back to his hotel room and gets the Gideon Bible out. He gets it out, closes his eyes, puts his finger down, it says chapter 11. (Like bankruptcy, you know...chapter 11.) Yes. Okay. Thank you. Thank you.

Okay look. We are looking at God's word in a strategic way. We're trying to understand what it says by reading it, seeing what it means in its context, and then taking advantage of what God might say through it through application.

So we're going to look at John 1 today. We're going to take the rest of the chapter. We've already looked up through the first verses here, but now we're going to move into the next part of the chapter and we're going to watch how Jesus is interacting with people. Okay?

So would you please stand with me and I'm just going to read the first portion, these verses you see here, although we'll take the rest of the chapter this morning as our text for today.

In John 1:29-34 it reads this way: *The next day John (this is John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* You want to note as we go through today the different names for God or the way Jesus is referred to. Here it's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. *"This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."*

Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."

That's John the Baptist's testimony. You may be seated. We're going to look now as Jesus is entering into ministry how He comes into contact with people. In fact we're going to identify now five gospel interactions. Five opportunities for people to understand the gospel, to see. Now when I say the gospel, I mean the good news of Jesus Christ. That's what we mean. This news that Jesus Christ came for us to give us this new perspective on life, to change our lives. And so we have these gospel interactions that take place and we're going to look at five of them.

We're going to start with John the Baptist, but let me give you an overview of where we're going just so you can see these five interactions. I've kind of given each one a name because there's an application that I see in the name that helps me run with this and know where we're going in the passage. I'll illustrate all of this as we go through, but here's where we're going today.

We're going to see John who is the redirector. That's John the Baptist. We're going to see Andrew the connector. Jesus with Peter, he's the visualizer. We're going to see Philip who's a follower. And Nathaniel is the questioner. Those are the five interactions we're going to see, these gospel encounters. And they're relevant for us.

I just pray that in my life I can encounter Jesus Christ in the way that these guys did. I hope you'll have that same prayer as you look at God's word as well and we see what He's doing here.

So let's go back to the passage and look at John, the redirector first. This is the passage we already looked at. Notice this is his testimony and I want to point out the bottom words there. *I have seen and I testify*. We're going to see this word *see* multiple times throughout the passage. *See*. And it's not 'see with the eyes'. If you want the word 'see with the eyes', you go to the first line. *The next day John saw (with his eyes) Jesus*. But that isn't the same word that's used down here. This is the word *eido* down here at the bottom. *I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One*. It's that word that means spiritual understanding.

Do you have spiritual understanding to see things that other people don't see because of your relationship with Jesus Christ? That really is the question. So in this case, John is saying I get it. That's how we say it in our conversation. Oh I see. I get it. I perceive. I have this spiritual understanding. Or I just have understanding in general. It makes sense to me. So John says, *"I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."* So that's John's testimony. Notice the

Lamb of God, the Chosen One, two different ways to describe Jesus. Now let's go on to see more about John and how he is this redirector.

It says in the next verses – *The next day John was there again with two of his disciples*. We don't know the names of the disciples yet. We're going to find out one of their names in a moment. We don't know their names. That's not important right now. There were two disciples and they were John's disciples, followers of John. *When he (John) saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look (that's our word again, eido), the Lamb of God!"*

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi" (here's another name for Jesus, which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

"Come," he replied, "and you will see." That's the same word see, eido. So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

Now here's a spiritual encounter, a gospel encounter where you have these two disciples experience something that they haven't experienced before. But I want you to see what John did. I need what John did to these guys. Because I get my eyes down working on my stuff, doing the things I got to do, my to-do list, my shopping list, fixing this, and solving that problem, and spending time with this person. I've got my eyes down here all the time. And what does John say. *Look*. Look what? Oh. Oh. I think we need to lift our eyes up in the same way so we can see, we can perceive, not just see with our eyes, but see with our hearts that something else is going on here.

Look, the Lamb of God. Now the words *Lamb of God* are of course these words that have tremendous depth to them because in the Old Testament the lamb sacrifice, if you were Jewish you knew all about this because you would regularly be doing these sacrifices. And now to say the Lamb of God is Jesus? Oh. I get it. Oh this is big.

So these two disciples have this encounter. Notice their question because they don't even know what to ask. Don't you find this is true when you're interacting with people? They don't even know what to talk about. They find out they're a Christian, now they're talking to the Lamb of God. And what do they say? They say, "Where are you staying?" They don't even know what question to ask. I find that sometimes we're working with people, they don't even know what the questions are to ask.

And what does Jesus do? He just takes them where they are. He says, "Come on. Come on. Just experience this. Walk with me together. Let's go. Spend time with me and you will understand." There's such a valuable message there for me. I just need to spend more time with Jesus and I'll get it. I will perceive. I will understand. And I've got all these other questions going on about this and that and the other thing and I've got my things going on, but I need to get my eyes up. I need to look.

John was not interested in just building his own little kingdom. He was interested in pointing people to Jesus. He was the redirector. I would suggest all of us have that ability. If we know

Jesus, we can say, “Let me tell you about Him. Let me explain who He is.” John is the redirector. Jesus is this one you want to look at. *The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*

You know sometimes people say to me, “I just don’t know. I pray. God doesn’t seem to answer my prayers.” I love that. When someone tells me, I love that. You know why I love that? Because I like to tell them, “Wow really? Would you like to hear God speak? I think you’re praying the wrong prayer. You’re asking the wrong question. Instead of saying, ‘God, how can you fit into my plans and fix my problems?’ there’s nothing wrong with asking God and taking our needs before the Lord, but there’s something different when we ask and we pray to God this way: ‘Lord, how can I fit into your plans today?’ You ask, ‘Lord, how can I fit into your plans? Your eyes start getting off your own stuff. You start looking around at what’s going on in the world. And oh there’s a person over here that needs some care. And oh there’s a person over there that’s in conflict with someone else. There’s a person over there that’s in need. And now my life takes on new meaning and God starts to speak to me in ways that I can fit into His plans. It’s a whole different way to think.” God, I believe, wants us to get our eyes up and look.

So John is redirecting them. Look, there He is! There’s a spiritual understanding that is just really valuable. And sometimes people don’t even know what questions to ask and Jesus is just, “Come on. Come on experience life with me and you will see that more.”

Again, I would just suggest that if you’re not experiencing the Christian life, you want to do that. You want to pray. Watch God work. He’ll tell you. He’ll show you. Open the Bible and allow God to speak to you. He will do that and it will give you a new way of looking at the common things you’re experiencing right around you in your life right now. It’s just amazing. And that’s what needed to happen. John was redirecting these disciples that were followers of him to follow the Lord. So we’re going to view John here as the redirector.

Now let’s go to the second character that has a spiritual encounter and try to learn some things from him. His name is Andrew. We’re going to call him the connector. So we’re going to go to the next verse, verse 40 says – *Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.* Now we know what one of their names was. His name was Andrew. Here’s what we know about Andrew. Not only did he spend some time with Jesus, but this is what we’re told about him. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, we have found the Messiah that is the Christ.

Notice another name for Jesus here in the story. If you’re logging these down or marking them in your Bible, here’s another reference to Jesus, different than the ones we’ve seen already. Because Andrew knows that his brother will recognize these words, Messiah, Christ. Any Jewish person would recognize this and say, “Really?” Because from the Garden of Eden, after they got out of there and God made the promise to them that there’s going to be some day someone who’s coming, every Jewish woman wondered, “I wonder if I’ll be the mother of the Messiah. When is the Messiah coming?” Everyone is waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue the world and so on. So now Andrew comes to Peter and says, “We have found the Messiah.” Really? Wow.

You know, people today are searching. There are rather dark places. I don’t know if you look around your world, but the world that I live in, as I look around, all the people that I’m connected

with, there are lots of problems that people have in their lives. There's marriage problems and there's financial problems and there's physical problems, all kinds of things. People want answers. What Andrew is saying to Peter is this: We have found the Messiah. So Andrew is one of those guys. "Let me show you what it looks like. Come on. Let me take you there."

I had to go to Home Depot this week because I'm replacing the dryer vent tube thing at the back of the dryer. I just want to warn you, if you haven't replaced yours, you should or you'll be calling our fireman here because your house would be on fire. You've got to replace that thing. I've got to replace it. I look back there and it's only held on by little plastic zip-ties. So I'm thinking I want to buy a clamp to hold it on better. So I go to Home Depot. Where do you find the clamps that hold on these metal things? I don't know. I go to the place where they're selling these metal vent tubes. I don't see any clamps there. So I go and I'm looking around for someone to help me.

So I go a few aisles over and there's a guy. I say, "Look, I'm looking for the clamp that goes around the dryer vent hose." And he says this to me (and I love Home depot for this): "Come on. I'll show you." He takes me over there to the same aisle I was where there's all these vent dryer hoses, and up on the top shelf there are the clamps. And I say, "Thank you." That's what he's saying. "Come on. I'll show you." I love it when they do that. Because if they just say, "Go to aisle five," I'm going, "Well yeah, I was just in aisle five and I have no idea where it is."

Andrew is a connector. He's the kind of guy who says, "Come on. We found something. I want to show you what it is."

You have people right around you who are waiting to be connected. And there are answers you have available. You might not know what the answers are, but you know where to find them. Right?

So Andrew, I like him. I like him. He's a connector. "*We have found the Messiah*" (that is, *Christ*). So that's Andrew has an encounter with the gospel, with Jesus Christ. He's a connector.

Let's go on now to Jesus with Peter. I call this, probably referring more to Jesus here, the visualizer. Great little story here. This is where Peter gets his name changed. Let's go back in the scriptures first and read the verse. Then we'll try to draw some application.

Verse 42 says – *And he brought him to Jesus*. This is Andrew saying, "Come with me. Let me show you in aisle whatever it is." He's bringing him to Jesus. *Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter)*.

Peter means rock. We also know in the gospels that this idea of changing his name became an illustration for Jesus to say, "*Upon this rock I will build my church*." And of course in that situation there is a lot of confusion. The Catholic Church believes that Peter is the first pope and therefore it's upon Peter that we're building this rock. Likely it's more his faith. Upon this faith of Peter, we're building this church. But the point is, He makes an analogy about his name. He changed his name to Rocky, to Peter. He went from Simon.

It's really interesting because Jesus' first experience with Peter in this story is that He changes his name. With the other guys he says, "Come with me and live with me for a little bit." We're going to see that He responds to Nathaniel by dialoguing with him a little bit. That's not what He does here. What He does with Peter because He knows Peter. He says, "Peter, you're going to be the rock. Your name is going to be rock."

Now that must be a little bit of confusion for Peter because we know Peter. He is no rock. He is an unstable guy it seems. He's getting himself in trouble all the time. He doesn't know where he's going. He's the guy that wants to get out of the boat, but when he gets out of the boat, he doesn't know how to walk on the water and he falls in the water. Right? He's the guy who denies Christ three times. He's the guy at the Transfiguration who doesn't know what to say, so he says, "I know what we should do. Let's build some little tents here for Moses and Elijah and Jesus." Peter is just not a stable guy.

But here's the good thing. God knows the best version of you and me now. And He's saying to Peter, "Peter, I know you're the rock." Peter is going to take some time to grow into that rock. I think in a lot of our lives, we're the rough draft. We're looking at our life; we're going, "This is not ready to be published. I'll tell you that." So we're the rough draft, but God says, "I know the final product." God knows the best version of who you are. That's encouraging. That's hopeful.

So right away He says to Peter, "I believe in you." I think that children should receive this kind of statement from their parents as they're growing up. You know, that you're acceptable, you're loved. You did the wrong thing, but you I love, and I want to train you. I think that message of acceptance and affirmation really ought to come to children as they're growing up in a home. But I know that some of you did not receive as much of that as you needed in your home growing up and you need to know that God as your heavenly Father offers you something much more. I know the best version of you. I know where you can go. I've got something prepared for you that you can't even imagine. And here we are right now in the rough draft stage going, "Yeah, you're right. I can't even imagine it." But there's this faith that we can have in the Lord and what He's doing that's just strategic.

Ephesians 2:10 gives us these words along the same line as what Jesus was doing with Peter. *For we are his workmanship* (that is we're like His pottery, His letter that's He's creating, the rough draft). *We are like this workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.* He already knows where we're going.

Don't let anybody tell you you are nothing. Don't live in the past feelings, whatever came in your home that you're unworthy or unloved or unacceptable. God has plans for you and He knows what those plans are and He knows the best version of you and He wants to offer you that.

There's a story in the Old Testament about Elisha, the prophet. Well he wasn't a prophet in this part in the story. So two names, Elisha and Elijah. Elijah was the prophet. Elijah came to Elisha while Elisha was plowing in the farm. Now in those days if you had a round piece of land, you plowed in a square leaving the outsides for the poor people, for welfare. That was the welfare system. If you had a square piece of land, you plowed it in a circle leaving the corners for those

who would come and glean because they didn't have enough food. So it was part of God's system for caring for the poor.

Now here was Elisha. Elisha was out there plowing. Probably plowing in a circle or a square. We don't know which. But he's going around and around. And in the midst of that, Elijah says, "Elisha, you need to come with me." In other words, you need to stop being this farmer and you need to be a prophet. For Elisha this was a turning point. It's one of those trajectory changes for him. I don't know what the trajectory changes are for you, but when you hit that point, you go, "Yes, that's what I need." And that's what it was for him. Because he realized this is not it. Elijah says, "Okay, come on. You need to come with me." Elisha says, "No. I need to go back."

He goes back and you know what he does? He takes the wooden plow, breaks it all up, turns it into a fire pit, lights it all on fire, and kills one of the oxen. I'm thinking I wonder what his mom and dad think about what's going on here? He just ruined the tractor for the farming. But this guy was not a farmer. He knew that. God came into his life and said, "You are not a farmer. Why are you here?" Well I'm here because our family has land. "You are not a farmer. Why are you here?" Well because my father was a farmer and I'm a farmer.

God has something special for you. God had something special for Peter. You are not confined or defined by your current situation. You are defined by your identity in Christ. And God has something really big. What could that be? Well you can't just use God as a genie that says, "Oh wow. God has something better for me." No. When you start serving the Lord, He starts opening doors for you and amazing things start happening.

That's what happened with Peter. So we start seeing a big difference in Peter's life between his life in the gospels where he seems to be rather unstable and his rock-like character in the book of Acts where he has conviction, he's going somewhere. God uses him in dramatic ways. He stands up on Pentecost. He is the one who preaches the sermon and three thousand people get saved. He speaks very firmly to the religious leaders of the day. He's got conviction. He's a rock at that point. The Holy Spirit had come on him and this transformation had taken place and now he's somebody different. Jesus is a visualizer. And when it comes to Peter, He expresses this to Peter in a way that just touches Peter. That is exactly what Peter needed.

Well let's go on to the fourth gospel encounter here, which is Philip. I like to call Philip the follower because that's all we know about him here in the passage. Let's go back to the verse. In verse 43 it says – *The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.* Follow me. That's all we got here. Follow me. And Philip did. He followed Jesus.

I want to remind you, whenever you follow or you go somewhere, you have to leave something behind. If you're trying to carry all this stuff from behind with you, it's going to weigh you down. You're not going to be able to follow. You're not going to be able to go where you need to be.

On Friday this week I packed my bags and flew to Louisiana. I think everybody has got to go to Louisiana. It is quite a place. Let me tell you. People are so friendly there. It's a really interesting

place in Louisiana. But I packed my bag. It's about this big. I did not take skis. I did not take my toolbox. I didn't take a basketball. I didn't take my bike helmet. I knew where I was going and I had a purpose. I was going down there to teach a parenting seminar on Saturday. So I packed my bag.

I would suggest that there are some people who are trying to follow Jesus, but they're carrying all this stuff behind them and they need to let it go so they can follow Jesus. I don't know what it is that you might need to let go, but if the Lord is speaking to you and saying, "Hey, you really ought to let that go..." Sometimes it's material physical thing. Other times it's something in your heart. If you experience disappointment or you're angry, maybe you need to let it go so you can follow Jesus.

There's something going on here with Philip. He's able to leave what he's doing. He's able to follow. I want to follow Jesus, but I know when you follow you often have to leave things behind. We need to learn how to do that. In the gospel encounter with Philip, he was following. He's the follower.

Well let's go to one more – Nathaniel, the questioner. This is a lot of dialogue, as you might imagine because he does a lot of questioning.

Verse 45 – *Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law." Do you see the different way we're describing Jesus here again? I mean each one of these guys are getting to know Jesus differently. "And about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*

Now here's Nathaniel speaking. Because Nathaniel was prejudiced. He had preconceived ideas about how God would be, where God would come from, how this would happen. He was prejudice. *"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.*

What did Philip say? Remember Jesus before was the one before who said, *"Come and follow me."* Notice Philip doesn't have the answer to the question. There are lot of questions out there you might ask me. I don't know the answer to the questions. I'm sorry, but I do know who knows the answer. *"Come and see."* Come and spend some time with Him. So Nathaniel asks this question and Philip says, "Come and see."

Verse 47 – *When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."* In other words, here's a guy who's genuine. Here's somebody who is real. Here's someone who is sincere. He was all those things, but did he have the truth? No. He didn't know Jesus yet.

There's a lot of sincere people today in our world that don't really know the truth, but they're really sincere. Does sincerity get you into heaven? No. Does sincerity get you into this spiritual understanding of the world? No. But Jesus knew this guy. And He says to him, "You know, you're a really sincere guy." And Nathaniel goes, "Whoa. *How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.*

Jesus answered, "I saw you." And here's our word again 'to perceive.' I knew about you. Not just I saw you physically under this tree, but I knew who you were. God looks into each one of our hearts and He knows who we are. He perceives. He has a spiritual understanding. He says, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Then Nathanael, this all just came together for him. You see, this is how spiritual encounters work. When you actually do come to God and you have this encounter with Him and you understand Him, He understands you, you go, "Okay. I got it." Notice it happens in different ways with different people. But Nathaniel declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God (another name in the whole passage. Fascinating that in this part of the chapter we have all these different references to Jesus and who He is). You are the king of Israel."

*Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see." Now He's talking about Nathaniel, you're going to perceive something bigger than this. What a beautiful statement to this Nathaniel questioning guy. Skeptic. I don't know about this. Oh I think there's lots of ways to heaven. There's so many different religions. They've all got a piece of the truth. It's not true. When this gospel encounter takes place, you go, "Oh, I get it. This makes sense." And so Jesus is telling him, "You're going to perceive greater things. You're going to get this. You think what you just got is important? Just you wait till you get the rest of these pieces. This is really valuable, but you will see *greater things than that.*" He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'"*

Let me show you another slide. Did you know that you can buy a bottle of Coke with a name on it? I know you've seen these in the store. I don't know how you find your name because it's not on the bottle, but you can order these. Five dollars. I thought about doing this. But it's five dollars for a bottle of Coke and I don't even drink Coke. But anyway, you can buy a bottle of Coke and have your name put on it. I just think that's an ingenious idea. Why? Why do I like that idea? Because it's personalized. It has my name on it.

That's what I see in this passage. I see that Jesus knows Andrew and He knows what he needs. He knows Philip; He knows what Philip needs. He knows Nathaniel, what Nathaniel needs. He knows what Peter needs. He knows every one of these people. And notice He treats them in different ways.

Those of us who've made a decision for Christ and say, "Yes, I'm going to live for Christ," we could all tell our stories. Right? The stories would all be different, but they would all have similar pieces, wouldn't they? We would all say something like this: "I came to an understanding that I am a sinner, that I needed a Savior." And then you can tell that story however you want. Because some of us did really bad things. Some of us didn't do bad things. But we all came to this place where we recognize that we are a sinner. We need something. Then we recognize that the solution is Jesus Christ.

Now you can tell that in all different ways. Some people heard it from an evangelist. Somebody else read a gospel track. Somebody else read it in the Bible on their own. Somebody else came to a church service or a friend told them or a family member. Whatever. The way you find out

about Jesus may differ. It's personalized, but it's the same message. I was lost, then I found the answer, and then I made a decision to accept Christ and it changed who I am. Those are basic components that are in all of our testimonies.

But I love it when we do testimony time. Don't you? When we have times when people can actually share their story? I'm so encouraged by that. Because it's not the same story every time. Because the way she tells it is different than the way he tells it. And it just goes on that way. I just find that that's because God does a personal work. He's a personal Savior for you and for me. He personalizes it. Yes, it has the same kind of message, but God wants to do something amazing in each of our hearts.

Gospel encounters is what we see now as we enter into some more parts of the gospel of John. We're going to see more gospel encounters as we continue on, and as we do, we'll learn from each one of those. But here are five. Five gospel encounters in the rest of John 1 and each one tells a lesson. What is God saying to you about the encounter He wants to have with you today?

Would you stand with me and let's pray.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I ask that you would convict us of sin. I know probably some people need to be smacked upside the head, and if that's necessary, we ask that you would do that gently. We ask that you would prompt us to see deeper than we are seeing now and recognize that we really need you. I know we live in a world that talks about how do it yourself, it's all about you, humanistic way, but you've got an answer that goes beyond that. Lord, I pray that you'd help us to see those answers before we get ourselves into trouble, before we get ourselves hurt, damaged. Help us to understand who you are. And then I ask you to just open our eyes. Open our eyes so that we can see, we can perceive, we can understand more about who you are and what you have for us. So Lord, speak to each of our hearts today. Use your Spirit in a mighty way inside of our hearts so compelling that we are drawn to make a decision to serve you today in every area of our life. In Jesus' name, amen.