

Series: Grace Forward

Sermon #2: HOW to Become Like Christ in ALL of Life

Hebrews 12:1-3; Proverbs 24:16, 27:17

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- January 10, 2021

Well, good morning, Grace. For those of you who are here, wow—we might be spending the afternoon here. So, I hope you enjoy the people you're sitting around. But listen, before we start, Happy New Year. Wow, we've got to start over. We're going to start Monday. Monday's the new year. Let's pray for our country. Did you ever think you'd say, *Man, I miss 2020?* What a week, dear God. Let's pray.

Lord, You command us. You tell us that, first of all, we're to pray, give petition, intercession, and thanksgiving for all the people—the kings and all who are in authority over us, that we might live peaceful and quiet lives filled with godliness and holiness. And this is good. This pleases our Savior, to be saved and come to the knowledge of You. Lord, I'd ask that You would put on our hearts to pray for all the people in leadership; that You would cause them to be true and to be honorable.

As it says in Jeremiah, "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to those who have been carried off in the exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses, settle down, plant gardens, eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters into marriage so that they too will have sons and daughters; Increase in number. And seek peace and prosperity for that city that has called you into exile, that has destroyed your town and taken you away from those loved ones. Pray for peace and prosperity for that town. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. And this the Lord Almighty says as well, the God of Israel: Do not listen to the liars, those who divide the house and split up your families and deceive you. Do not listen to liars and dreamers who encourage you to do things that are against the kingdom of God, for they prophesy and they lie, not in my name; I did not send them, declares the Lord."

Lord, I'd ask that You would help us sort out what is propaganda and what is true; what is the kingdom of God that we live for and what is temporary and transitional. Help us be a body of believers, and I pray that the Church itself at large would be so enamored with Your holiness, so longing for a presence with You, that we would put in appropriate places the things around us. If You call us to be courageous, let us be courageous. If You call us to be passive, let us be passive in our courage. But Lord, call us to do Your will and give us the courage us to do that. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction

All right, let's start over. Happy New Year! Okay, good. Listen, this is a great year for Grace and I want to tell you about how we can seize this year. Let me introduce someone to you. This is Eugene Robinson. He's famous. He's famous in a good way, and he's kind of famous in a bad way.

He's famous in a good way: sixteen years in the NFL, three trips to the Super Bowl. He has a ring. And that's not bad for a kid that weighed 130 pounds as an upperclassman in high school. He didn't get recruited out of college. He had to fight his way onto a team. He plays a position of free safety. Now free safety is the last guy on defense between the offense and the goal. He's the last guy to stop a touchdown from happening. Sometimes this position is the fastest guy on the field. If you get past the free safety you get six points. And this is a man who knew how to play the game. He was famous. His reputation was famous. He was a good man; he loved giving back to Hartford, where he was from. He would go back multiple times a year and give gifts and money, speeches, helping inner city kids figure out a way to get out of that trap. He was honorable.

As a matter of fact, on January 30, 1999, he was given the Bart Starr Award. Here's what the Bart Starr Award is for: "He who best exemplifies outstanding character and leadership in the home, on the field, and in the community." That was the morning before the Super Bowl XXX that he played in. That's how he started that weekend, getting the Bart Starr Award.

Later that night he was arrested for the solicitation of prostitution. Yeah. He didn't sleep that night, as you would imagine. And the other team knew that, and so they went long. And his team lost because he wasn't as fast as he could have been, would have been, should have been.

He didn't lose; the team lost. The team lost the ring, the team lost all that bonus money, everyone on the team. The guy that sets up the little tees before the kickoff—he lost bonus money, because this man, Eugene, decided to do something that was against everything he believed in. It cost him.

As a matter of fact, he gave back the Bart Starr Award. He knew better.

That was twenty years ago. Eugene Robinson still travels and tells stories. He goes to tell younger players not to do what he did. He says this: “You’ve got to stay in the game for the team.” And this is interesting. He said, “I forgot the reason I was there.”

Anyone listening to me? Forget the reason you’re here? Did you just get lost, distracted, bored? This is the reason you’re here: to glorify God with your life. How do you do that? By becoming like Christ in all of life and telling others about Jesus Christ and guiding them to become like Christ in all of life.

Grace Forward

This is a great year for Grace. We’ve got to seize this year. And when we’re talking right now about Grace going forward, the key is not like the institution of Grace in mass going forward. Because that’s not the way we do things here. It’s about Team Grace. It’s about all of us on the team getting competition ready, in competition shape, in playoff condition, so our spiritual lives are up to tune, our souls are where they ought to be. We are becoming like Christ in all of life, because if we are all that way, then we can play as Team Grace and play to win. It’s up to all of us. It’s up to each of us for all of us to be this way. Don’t be Eugene Robinson.

The world has changed. You are working from home, we do school from home, we do ministry from home. Wait a minute—that’s never changed here. At Grace every believer is a minister. We’ve always said the ministry is out there, not on this campus. Yeah, we do ministry here on campus, don’t get me wrong, but not essentially, not primarily. It’s out there. We’ve always believed that every believer is a minister. We’ve always thought that you’re the priest for your neighborhood, your workplace, wherever.

1 Peter 2:9

“For you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for He called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

Look, it’s right out of the Bible in 1 Peter: “For you are a chosen people. You are a royal priest, you are a holy nation, God’s very own possessions. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God. He called you out of darkness and into this wonderful life.”

So, it’s a whole new way of doing ministry. Nah, it’s not. Grace going forward is what we’ve always done; we’re just going to seize this year. And one of the reasons it’s strategic for us is because people are at home all the time. And connecting with your neighbors—you had ten months to get there. We’re actually having neighborhoods again. And so, going forward, Grace Forward looks like this: it looks like a focused application where every believer is a minister here and we’re getting in competition shape, competition condition. The last two weeks of our series together (we’ll do four weeks) are how we’re going to go through that corporately. But the first two weeks have been about, one, what does it mean to become like Christ in all of life—set some goals for yourself. And then, two, today, is super, over-the-top practical: how to get in competition shape, in competition condition.

Last Week: What to Change

First, here’s the review of last week. It’s your whole life that should become like Christ in all of life.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look what it says in Thessalonians, how it talks about the whole man: “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, that your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How to Get into Competition Condition

The definition of mankind, the definition of man, is body, soul, and spirit. And so, hopefully you made some body, soul, and spirit type of goals. Today we talk about how to get those goals accomplished, how to get into competition condition.

The key to this is perseverance. That’s the problem. Because anybody can have attributes or an esteemed kind of presence for a short period of time. You can appear to be smart or in condition or spiritual or caring. It’s the distance that finds us out. It’s the ability to endure that shows ourselves to have those attributes essentially, in our souls. So, when we talk about getting in competition condition, we’re talking about how to endure well.

So, what I’m going to do today is talk about keys to endurance; steps to take, attitudes to have so that you can plow through the “I want to quit” part of life. Everything you want, for the most part, that is worth having, you’re going to have to work for. And so, how to do this work? I’m going to look at three descriptions, three ways, to start strong and end strong—three principles, three points, three applications. Here we go. Ready? Write this down.

Principle #1: Keep the Goal in Mind

One: keep the goal in mind. One fundamental of endurance is to have the prize in your mind. You visualize it, you’re tasting it, touching it, you can see the finish line, you can see yourself getting that diploma, you can hear the voice of God. What is the goal?

Watch how even Jesus does this. Watch how the writer of Hebrews –we don’t know who that is—but watch how he shows us how Jesus endures. He shows how He’s not going to lose heart, He’s not going to grow weary, because He’s going to one, focus. He’s going to take off all the stuff that would possibly hinder that progress. And then He’s going to visualize the joy set before him. How did He set the goal? Watch this.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

“Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders us and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with perseverance”—there’s our word—“the race marked out for us.” Here’s how Jesus did it. Let’s fix our eyes on Jesus—that’s the goal. “Let’s fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” Here’s what He did: “Who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Now consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and not lose heart.”

The author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ, says, *Here’s how you do not grow weary. Here’s how you don’t lose heart. You focus on me, and I was focusing on the joy set before me. You have that goal.*

Application: Write Down the Goal

And here’s the key to keeping the goal in mind. Write it down. Statistically, the number of people that write down their goals achieve them far more than people that just have it in their mind. Think about it a lot. Hope, hope, hope. Write it down. Put it everywhere you look.

And then see that as your goal. Have a goal for your body, maybe that you will stop eating so much or stop drinking so much. Your body is what you eat, what you drink, and how much you sleep. That could be the goal that you set. That’s pretty simple.

A goal for your soul gets more complicated. Your soul is defined by who you are and how you were raised, the way you were made—intellect, emotion, and will. But you could set a goal like this: *There’s an aspect of my upbringing that continues to influence the way I treat other people, and I will not be a victim to that. I will no longer let the way I’m made influence*

blank and blank. And show up with a goal that's focused on your intellect or on your emotions or on your volitional life. You could set a goal that's talking about an aspect of your personality that must change. Or maybe it's a relationship. Maybe it's your relational skills. Or maybe it's just adding a friend, or maybe confronting a friend. That's what it looks like for a soul goal.

Spiritual goals are (become like Christ in all of life, become like Christ in your body, become like Christ in your soul, become like Christ in your spirit) to have a deep relationship with the Father like Jesus had, where He talked to Him and He heard His voice. That's my goal. I want to hear God's voice. I want to have an intimacy with Jesus Christ in such a way that when the Spirit speaks, it's not contaminated by noise. And I can hear Him and I can respond back. And I want to do things that I wouldn't do unless He told me to do it and I heard Him tell me to do that.

Another goal for becoming like Christ in your spirit is one of the fruits of the Spirit, for example. Look those up in Galatians. How does that happen? It's a little more complicated because it's spiritual, but you look for ways to read the Bible, prayer, worship, evangelism impact.

The point is to write down the goal. There's a goal for your body, your soul, and your spirit, and you put it in front of you. You write it down. Jesus never said perseverance was going to be easy. He just said that perseverance would be worth it.

Principle #2: Decide Ahead

The second principle: decide ahead. It's called decision making because your motivation to get better is key. Your passion ... oh, please. It's discipline. Discipline wins the day. That's how you're successful. And the definition of discipline is advanced decision making.

Here's an easy example. When is the worst time to go to the grocery store? When you're hungry and you don't have a list. Where are you when you're hungry and you don't have a list in the grocery store? Oh, yeah, right in front of the ice cream, you and your cute little basket. *I'm going to need a cart—a big cart. I'm going to empty this ice cream bin, right here, right now.* You can't win in that scenario. You just know that.

And so, the idea is you plan ahead—advanced decision making. Here's what it looks like. When you're right with God, you're sitting down with your Bible. Your palms are up, your soul is open to hear His voice and to do His will no matter what. Maybe you're having input from

good, strong Christian friends that's challenging you. You're getting input from that person. You're fundamentally surrendered to the Holy Spirit. There you go. Now start making some decisions about your body, your soul, and your spirit. Because if you wait until the heat of the moment, you've already lost. If you wait until you're weak, you'll be found out. If you wait until there's battle going on, you'll be wondering, *Wow, I wish I had more ammo*. It's too late already. Decide ahead. Advanced decision making is the definition of discipline. And that's how you persevere.

Decide Ahead: Easy Wins

Three things you need to decide early—three areas. One, decide ahead—easy wins. Here's how you succeed. You succeed with a progression of a bunch of easy victories. If you make the goals too big, you'll never succeed and you'll be so defeated. Like in your body: *I'm going to wake up early. I'm going to start from what I've heard, 4:30 is a good time to wake up.* I'd say, *Pump the brake, Jacko. That's for him and he's crazy.*

So how about you do this? Wake up thirty minutes early. Just thirty. Spend the first fifteen—without touching any electronic device—reading your Bible, some kind of devotion. Spend the first fifteen doing that. The other fifteen, a quick workout, a fifteen-minute workout at home. You can do that. See, that's how you're setting yourself up for success. Decide early to have an easy victory.

You want an easy victory in picking a gym? Let me tell you how to pick a gym. You pick a gym where you walk in the door and they make you get in shape, like Orange Theory. The guy who runs Orange Theory comes here. You'll see him, he has orange hair. Camp Gladiator: if you just show up, you're going to get swept up in the moment and you'll get in shape, whether you like it or not. It's an easy win. If you go to a gym where it's vast rows of machines and dead weight—nah. You can if you're good and already have that discipline. But if not ...

That's how you set yourself up for an easy win. That's an easy win for the body. Here's an easy win for the soul. Just pick a single attribute to start and maybe a single attribute to stop, not the whole thing. Like courage: *I want courage enough to stand up to my mom*. Maybe you could just try standing up to your cat. Start there. And then set a goal: *I'm going to do something courageous once a week*. And just watch how that builds. Just little incremental wins.

Gentleness: *I'm going to be a kind and gentle person.* Start with the cat. That one's going to be harder to do, honestly. A soul win—little steps.

Spirit wins: here's a simple spiritual win—attend church. Just attend church every week, whatever that looks like, whatever the safest way is to attend church according to your doctor. And this is why it's important—advanced decision making. Because if you make advance decisions—*Oh, I'm going to church, oh, absolutely*—then it won't affect your decision making later on when you're making plans for Saturday night. *Oh, I can't stay out too late because I am going to church tomorrow.* You're out on the lake (back in the days when it was warm). *We've got to get in. It takes a long time to put the boat away. We need to make sure we're at home and rested because we're going to church tomorrow.* If you wait until Sunday morning to decide, especially on a day like today, oh, no, no, no. You know the people in this room right now—you decided a while back, didn't you? Yeah. Or your parents did and you're mad at them.

But let me tell you the power of just attending church weekly. I mentioned last week this national survey of mental health that's been done the last twenty-one years. It's released in December. I told you last week that 2020 hit an all-time low in the twenty-one years that they've done that. They have various categories of asking people about their mental condition, their mental health. They break it up in various subcategories. There's gender and marriage status and income level and age and all that sort of thing. Every one of those is at historic lows. Every one. Well, there's this one exception. Look at this. Regular weekly religious attendance—it went up four points last year. Up four!

How was 2020 for you?

It was awesome!

What, do you go to church every week?

As a matter of fact, I do.

Why? Why could it go up? Because it's good for your soul and spirit to attend church regularly. How do you get there? You make decisions in advance. And let me tell you, guys, in 2,000 years of church history, it has never been easier to attend weekly church services. Right now! Wait a minute, I can smell it. Some of you guys have a fire going. Do you have a fire in the fireplace, Melinda? Yeah. Most of you at home are probably in your jammies. And you're thinking, *Matt, these are my work pajamas. I also wear these during the week.* Okay. All I'm

saying is it's a pretty good time to say, I'm going to go to church each week, whatever that looks like. I'd say, make that one. Decide ahead of time. Make them easy wins.

Decide Ahead: Crash through the Quitting Points

The second thing is that you decide ahead of time to crash through the quitting points. Crash through the quitting points. You decide ahead, I will not comply and submit to pain. The very definition of endurance is that the moment you hit the "I don't want to do this anymore," you crash through that moment.

There's no such thing as endurance in pleasure. *Okay, I'm going to finish this bucket of Blue Bell Cookies 'n' Cream because I'm an endurance guy.* That's not a thing. Endurance only applies to things that are difficult. And so, you decide ahead, and when you feel that pain and suffering, *Too bad, pain and suffering. You're going to have to be left behind.*

So, in the gym, here's one of the problems people have with gyms. They quit too early. If you worked out in a regular routine for three to four weeks, there's a lot of times where there's almost nothing to show for that. Six weeks—something happens. And if you go two months, it shows up. So, sign up at a gym for six weeks and crash through those breaking points.

Now let me just say this, especially in the context of body goals. If you're trying to stop something and you can't stop something—like alcohol consumption has gone through the roof, right, over the COVID situation? So, now maybe your drinking level has gotten to the point where you're thinking, *I've got to stop this*, and you can't, there might be more to it than that. If you can't stop stress-eating, let's talk. There's a ministry called Celebrate Recovery. It's for that eye-opening moment when you realize, *Wait, I thought I had power over this, but it might have power over me. I can't stop this.* No shame, let's just get started on getting it working. Join Celebrate Recovery, our twelve-step program, and it will help you over that addiction. But what I love about Celebrate Recovery is that it's not just about physical addictions. It's about soul addictions, too. *I can't overcome rage*—soul issues. You break through those moments where it's causing you to want to stop. You crash through those quitting points. And Celebrate Recovery can help you with that too.

Choosing ahead to crash through quitting points on a soul level is the reason I'm still married and the reason that I'm happily married, like almost illegally happily married. But it started with our first five years of marriage, and they were not good at all—almost entirely my

fault. I never failed to fail. It was the easiest thing for me to do. And a lot of it, looking back with some insight, was because I was fighting demons, some of it the way I was raised and some of it the way that I'm made. And I felt like I couldn't overcome those. And listen, there's a time in a marriage—it happens regularly—where you can just quit. It doesn't mean divorce, it just means “We're done. We're just going to settle.” And there's no real settling. It gets worse. And it was very difficult, to say the least.

Here's the thing. Melinda and I decided way before that we would crash through quitting points. And we hit a point that felt like quitting and we were going to break through that. And I sought the help of some very good friends, people that were like me and had probably fought those battles. I looked at my mentors that were like me and fought those battles. I went to professional counseling because I needed that kind of help. But we would not quit. And we blew through those. And the first five years—not fun. The last thirty-one—come on, now, come on—I'm the happiest guy on the earth. And it's because we decided ahead to break through the quitting points. That's the gift you get on a soul level—advanced decision making.

Advanced decision making in your spiritual life is every ten years—about every ten years, give or take, in the seasons of life—you're going to stall. And the reason you stall is generally this: what worked for the last ten is not going to work for this ten. And it's because God is calling you to a deeper sense of surrender—less of you, more of Him. And each of those “less of you's” are getting harder and harder to remove, and they get deeper within you. He's going deeper into the root of this problem. And what He allowed you in His grace and mercy to stay with when you're in your twenties, He won't in your thirties. And what He permitted in the thirties, He won't tolerate in the forties. And each one of those times you can get stuck or stranded at this wall, and if you don't decide ahead of time, advance decision making, to break through these quitting points, you can be left at that wall for decades. Fear the patience of God. He'll let you sit in your little soup of pride or shame. But He's going to call you to something deeper. You'll see people talk about their spiritual lives in college—*I could hear God's voice and we had such a great relationship*—yeah, that was thirty years ago. And the reason they're still talking about it is because they hit a wall, they hit a breaking point, and they didn't decide ahead to do whatever it takes to plow through that.

Deciding Ahead: Get Back Up

When I hit a quitting point, I am going to break through that. So, you choose that ahead in your spiritual lives. Decide ahead. Easy wins, break through the quitting points, and third, get back up.

Proverbs 24:16

For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.

You decide ahead—this is a life verse for me: “For the righteous fall down seven times and they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.”

Failure—there’s no shame in failure. It’s not even failure unless you fail to learn from it. Stumbling, falling, getting knocked down—that’s part of life. If you live long enough, no matter how much you plan, no matter how much you hope, no matter how much you think you control, you’re going to get knocked down. And today you decide in that moment what you will do. I’m saying, do some advance decision making right now and say, *I’m going to get back up*. Christianity never promotes a supernatural cure for suffering. It says there’s a supernatural purpose or use for suffering. God somehow enters our suffering. But there is suffering in our lives that can knock us to the ground. The hottest flames are required to forge the strongest steel. And it can make you like Christ in all of life. Serious illness, financial ruin, maybe an affair in your marriage, prison time—that has all the potential of being life change for the glory of God. It also has potential to corrupt your faith, to abandon courage, to estrange you from Jesus, to make you think you have permission to be a renegade.

But here’s the thing. It’s coming if it hasn’t happened. Or maybe you’re down now. But when you get knocked out, you need to decide before you enter the cage, when you come out of the concussion, when you taste the blood of your own soul, that’s your cue to get back up. You have to decide that right now in the sobriety of life, hearts open, palms up, Spirit of God lead me. Whatever happens, I’m going to get back up. Because sometimes only pain can tell the truth. And when that pain comes, Jesus never said it was going to be easy; He just said it was going to be worth it. Decide ahead of time.

Principle #3: Never Alone

Here's how you endure. One, you keep the goal in mind. Two, you decide ahead of time on those three critical issues, and three, you are never alone. You partner up. You're never alone; you partner up.

Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Ecclesiastes 4:12

**Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.**

Proverbs says—you know these verses—“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” Ecclesiastes 4: “Although one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

There is power in accountability. There is a magical energy in really great, true relationships. Sometimes you just tap into your competitive nature and do something along with someone else. There are very few stories in the Bible of people being all by themselves and thriving. I think the only guy that's really alone in the Bible is Job, and he wishes he were alone. He's got those four comforters, if you remember that. Everyone else has teamed up with someone. Because this is what success looks like. It's setting that goal and putting it in front of you. It is choosing ahead of time on critical issues and then finding a friend. That's how you succeed.

Application: Get in a Group

The ultimate goal in this is just get in a group. Get in a group. You want to change your body? Get in a group. Join a team and find a workout buddy. That's how it works. You want your soul to be better off than it was before? You get in a group, you join a team, you get a

workout buddy. In spirit life, you get in a group, you join a team, you get a workout buddy so that you can hear His voice, so that you can do His will, so that you can live a life without regret.

Big idea: get in a group. Get in a group. I think that's going to be one of the strategic applications of our Grace Forward. We would love for Team Grace—everyone on Team Grace—to get in a group this year. Give it a try.

We're going to have a seven-week series starting in February. We're going to go through the Book of Ecclesiastes in a survey fashion. What if everyone was going through that together? I mean everyone. We can count right now on the high school and junior high meeting, who know about the children's ministry? But they would be in small groups. We don't know if they'll be meeting, but the junior high is. All the sixth graders, seventh graders, eighth graders, the high school kids, everyone in our church being in a small group of some kind—everyone in a group, for the sake of our souls, for the care of our spirits. I'll talk more about that later on—how to get in a group, how to find a group, or start your own group—that sort of thing. But right now you can go to our website. Go to the webpage. The lead page goes down to this thing that says “Get in a group” and you can pick a group from one of our various ministries or you can just get in a group and have our small group ministry get a group for you. But get in a group. You've got to do this. You can't get where you want to be—who cares? You can't get where the Lord wants you to be in life without a friend, without friends, without a church. It just can't happen.

Here's how to become like Christ in all of life. You set goals, God goals, for your whole body, soul, and spirit. Write them down. You make decisions ahead of time about how you're going to endure when perseverance is required. And you partner up. You find a friend, you get in a group, you make it happen in community.

Where to Start

You want to know where to start? Here's what I'd recommend: fifteen minutes—just fifteen minutes—start your day—don't do another thing—start your day with an open Bible and an open soul. *Lord, I want to do Your will today. I want to have the courage to do that. I want to hear Your voice. I want to be with You, I want a story that can only be explained by Your power.* You could read the Book of Luke. There you go. Maybe have a highlighter with you. Just highlight those things that you feel are speaking to you from God's Spirit to your spirit. Fifteen

minutes—pray, *What do I do now?* Start your day that way. See what happens. Fifteen minutes. That's a decide ahead easy win in soul and spirit.

If you're parents of young kids, that's how you do that, and then you end the day with your child that way, fifteen minutes. They're going to want to stay up fifteen minutes extra anyway. Get in bed with them. Read a Bible story. Show them how to pray.

Here's what happens, friends. It's just little steps to success. A month goes by, or maybe a year goes by ... years go by. And then you're the one with that Bible that's all worn through. You're a person that's healthy in body, soul, and spirit. You're like Christ in as many ways in your life as you can possibly become—mature, full, complete, content, giving, facing out, used by God, hearing His sweet and gentle voice. Think of the decades you could have with that kind of health, being used by the Spirit of God.

Now ... you got that? What if we were all that way? One plus one is five. What if Grace were all that healthy? There's over 5,000 people that call this church their home. What if 5,000 of us were living by the voice of God, the Spirit of God, and the power of God? That'd be a year, wouldn't it? Give me that survey. Watch those points go up.

How'd it go—2021? Plus twenty.

Want to do that. Let's do that. Okay?

Let's pray.

Dear God, we long for, the goal in life, we envy the relationship Jesus had with You as an earthbound Adam. To hear Your voice, directed by Your Spirit, miraculous things because of the Spirit's work in His life—God, we want that so badly. Lord, I ask that You would cause us to want that, want that bad enough to do what it takes. Lord, let us be a church like that—not just a person or a group, but a church like that. You have made us ready, for every believer's a minister in the places that You have sovereignly provided for us to live in and meet and touch. Lord, now if You would just open our eyes to the ministry out there that's always been out there. Open our eyes to all that we have. Make us that beautiful vessel that You choose to pick up first. Make us the sharp saw. Make us the clean cup. Make us the thing You want to use because we're easy to work with; because we're surrendered to Your will. We're caught up in Your Spirit, we're in the jet stream of what Your kingdom is doing right here, right now, in the midst of this crazy. We are that anchor. We're that stone that does not move, the lighthouse that calls other

people to safety. Let's be that, Lord. Help us be that. Help me be that. And all God's people said, in Jesus' name. Amen.