THE LIVES GOD ALWAYS WANTED

HE SAID WHAT?!
Matthew 5:17-20 // Craig Smith
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PREFACE

Today we will be looking at a very important passage in the Gospel of Matthew that has caused a lot of confusion over the years, partly because a very literal translation involves phrases and imagery familiar to the original audience, but unfamiliar to us today. Below Craig has provided a paraphrase of Matthew 5:17-20 in modern, familiar language that should help us understand exactly what Jesus was saying. While we will be looking primarily at a more literal translation today (the NIV translation which can be found in the Bibles in the seat pockets), he thought you might want to have a copy of this paraphrase to consider after the service ends today. Jesus said to his disciples, “In spite of what you may have heard or be wondering yourself, don’t think that I’ve come to tear down the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. Nothing could be further from the truth! Instead, I have come to bring into reality the kind of life to which the Old Testament was always intended to lead!

“Let me be clear: no portion of the Law, no matter how insignificant you might think it is, will ever stop having authority. Anyone who dismisses the authority of even the so-called “minor” parts of the Law – and who teaches this to others - will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who actually lives the life to which the Law leads – and who teaches others to live this life – will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who thinks I’m dismissing the authority of the Old Testament Law has completely misunderstood what I’m saying.

But . . . that doesn’t mean I’m not saying something radical, because I totally am. Here’s what I’m saying that will really surprise you: submitting to the authority of the Law doesn’t necessarily mean strict, meticulous obedience to specific regulations of the Law. That kind of external obedience is not the same thing as actually living the life to which the Law leads! The Pharisees and the scribes are famous for exactly this kind of strict, meticulous obedience…but I say that unless your righteousness goes above and beyond theirs – not by even more strict external obedience, but by an internal alignment with God’s own heart – you won’t be in the Kingdom of Heaven at all.”

CRAIG: Welcome to Mission Hills, so glad you’re here, whether you’re in the big room or joining us online or down The Mill. So glad that you’re here for, as Dan said, a special weekend. Not for the reason he said, that’s all fine. But two other reasons this is a special week, and the first is that this is baptism weekend. And so we’ve got about more than 40 people who are going public with their faith in Jesus this weekend. And they’re also...a lot of them are sitting down here. We spread them out throughout the services. We get to be part of that later in the service. But before we even move in that direction, let me just say that if you’re here today and you have a relationship with God through faith in His Son Jesus, and yet you’ve never been baptized as a believer and you’ve been maybe feeling like, “Uh, I wonder if I should do that or not,” then I would say to you today is the day. And it’s not too late. If you wanna be part of this, then at any time during the service, just head out to the back, go out to the Welcome Center and say, “I wanna be baptized today,” and they’ll get you connected. And we would love to celebrate that decision to go public with your faith in Jesus today. So, if you’re feeling that tug, don’t miss the opportunity.

Second reason this is a special weekend is we’re starting a new series today which is called, “He said what?” Which you can’t...we couldn’t figure how to put in text form, but I wanted to make sure you understood where the emphasis is supposed to be. It’s on the “what?” Because what we’re gonna be doing for the next few weeks, we’re gonna be looking at a portion of the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus says some pretty radical things about some everyday stuff like anger, lust, marriage, promise-keeping.

And what He says, basically, is your standard is not high enough. And He calls people to a higher standard, so high a standard, honestly, that even the most committed religious people of His day listened to what He said and then went, “He said what? What is this guy talking about? Like, that’s not even possible.” And the interesting thing is that the standard that Jesus is gonna call
us to over these next few weeks isn’t possible. It’s an unattainable standard unless you understand something very important that He says at the very beginning of this portion of the Gospel of Matthew.

So, if you have your Bible, I’d love to ask you to grab it and grab one from the seats in front of you if you don’t have one. But I want you to turn with me to Matthew chapter 5. We’re gonna be looking in verse 17 today, where Jesus begins a whole section of radical statements with probably the most radical. And yet, sometimes, what He says and how radical it is is a little bit hard for us to understand in the 21st century. This is what He says in verse 17. He says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

And you need to understand that in the 1st century, that was a mic-drop moment. Jesus said that and everybody went, “Whoa, what did He just say?” And I think something that’s a little hard for us to understand that, but we can if we just do a little bit of work. The first step is to make sure we understand what He’s talking about. He says, “I didn’t come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.” And that’s really just a way of talking about what you and I would call the Old Testament, okay, that four-fifths of the Bible that comes before the Gospel of Matthew, before Jesus showed up on the scene. Quite honestly, that part of the Bible that a lot of Christians kinda avoid because it’s full of a lot of stuff that we don’t fully understand and it’s got a lot of rules and regulations. And Jesus says, “I didn’t come to abolish that. I came to fulfill it.”

Okay, well, what does that mean? Well, on the one level, it’s not really hard to understand what He’s saying. I mean, “abolish” means get rid of or get rid of the authority of, remove. “Fulfill,” it means to accomplish what was promised. So, in effect, what He just says is, “Listen,” He says, “I didn’t come to get rid of the Old Testament, I came to accomplish what was promised.” I mean, if I say that I fulfilled my obligation, what I mean is that I did everything I said I would do. I accomplished all that I promised. And that’s what Jesus is saying about the Old Testament. “I didn’t come to get rid of it. I came to accomplish all that it promised.”

And I think that’s where you begin to go, “Okay, but what do you mean?” And He means two different things. One thing that He means is that He fulfilled the Old Testament promises and predictions about the Messiah. That’s the first thing. He fulfilled the Old Testament promises and predictions about the Messiah because from the moment that Adam and Eve sinned and the world was plunged into darkness and enslaved to sin, God said, “I am not gonna leave my beloved sons and daughters in that state, I’m going to rescue them. I’m gonna save them.” And he began to promise, “I’m going to send a savior at exactly the right time to accomplish what has to be accomplished.” And the Old Testament’s filled with promises and predictions about the Savior, this...as the Jewish people called it, “This Messiah.”

And the predictions and the promises run the gamut. They run everything from...they tell exactly what town He was gonna be born in, Bethlehem, to how He would die and how He would rise again. There’s hundreds of these promises and predictions, and Jesus fulfilled every single one of them. Which is one of the ways that we know that Jesus was the Messiah that God had been promising all along. So that’s one thing Jesus means when He says, “I came to fulfill the Old Testament.” He says, “I came to fulfill the promises and the predictions about the Messiah.”

But it’s not the only thing He’s talking about. The second thing He’s talking about is that He fulfilled the promise of the Old Testament rules and regulations. And in fact, this is the one that He’s gonna focus in on for the next several passages that we’re gonna be looking at over the next few weeks. He says, “I came to fulfill the promise of the Old Testament laws, rules, and regulations.” And that’s the part where we go, “What are you talking about?” Because we don’t normally think about rules or regulations, we don’t talk about laws as having promise. But if we think about it for a second, we can kind of understand in general terms what He’s talking about.

I mean, if you can imagine with me a neighborhood or a community where there’s no speed limit that’s been set. And so people just go through at whatever speed they want. And you live in sort of constant fear and worry that your kids are gonna get run
over or you’re gonna get run over. And so, the town gets together and they go, “No, we got to pass a new law.” And they put a speed limit in effect in that community. Now they say, you know, it’s 15 miles an hour. Now, can you understand how that law would have some promise? Because what that law does is it promises a safer community. It promises a place where you wouldn’t have to worry about getting run down, it promise is a place where you wouldn’t have to worry about your kids going out to play. So there’s a promise inherent in that rule, in that regulation.

And Jesus means something like that when He talks about fulfilling the promise of the rules and the regulations of the Old Testament.

It’s a little harder for us to keep hold of that idea when we begin to think about the specific rules and regulations because a lot of them feel very odd to us. I mean, the rules and regulations in the Old Testament run the gamut from like, really obvious to what feels pretty obscure. I mean, on the really obvious side we have rules and regulations like, “Thou shalt not murder.” On the more obscure side of things, we have regulations like Numbers: 15. Do you know this? Numbers: 15, actually, commands that you’re supposed to wear tassels on the corners of your cloak. Commands it. It’s not a fashion suggestion, it’s a commandment, and if they didn’t do it it was sin.

And Jesus says, “For all the rules and regulations, for all the laws from the obvious to the obscure, I came to fulfill their promise.” And I think we tend to go. “Whoa, what does that mean?”

What does that mean? Well, in very simple terms, at the risk of maybe of even over simplifying it, I think what it means is this, it means that the Old Testament was meant to point us to the kind of life that God always wanted us to lead. Does that make sense? The Old Testament paints a picture, it points us in the direction of the life that God designed us to live.

And if we step back for a moment and we think even about those big examples, those two extreme examples, I think we can begin to see that. We go... I mean, if we’re the kind of people who don’t murder, then what we really are is the kind of people who value and protect life. And God wants us to be the kind of people who live in constant awareness of His desires for us so that we don’t get tricked into only running after our desires,” because the problem with our desires is they’re not that good.

Well, our desires are kinda mixed. I mean, I decided a few months ago, you know what, I need to be in better shape, I need to walk around more. And so I got up out of my chair, and I walked out of my office, and I walked down the stairs to the church, and I walked out of the building, and I walked through the parking lot, and I walked across the street, and I walked through the next parking lot, and I got to the dollar store, and I bought a big bag of candy, and then I walked back. See, we have conflicting desires.

But God said, “I want you to be people who live in a constant awareness.” See, the tassels were intended to remind these people, when they saw the moving and shaking around, they were to remember the commandments of the Lord. They were to remember His desires for them, so that they wouldn’t be tempted into following only after their own. So you see what we’re saying? Every one of the laws of the Old Testament is intended to lead us to a kind of life that God has always wanted us to live. And so for that reason, Jesus says, “You can’t get rid of the Old Testament.”
Some people might have thought that He was looking to do that because He was calling His disciples to live out those principles in some ways that weren’t common to them. But He says, “Man, don’t misunderstand. I didn’t come to get rid of the Old Testament, I came to fulfill its promise.” And He pushes on in that. To make sure we don’t miss it, He says this in verse 18, “For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen will, by any means, disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least...” And you can put quotation marks around that, there’s air quotes around that. “Anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commandments and teaches others accordingly will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

And this is where things get a little hard for us. Because Jesus is being very clear there, right? I mean, I don’t know if you can be any more clear. “I didn’t come to get rid of any of the Old Testament, not even the smallest stroke of the pen.” And we find ourselves going, “Okay well, does that mean we’re supposed to have come in with tassels on our clothes today?” Does that mean that we’re supposed to be engaging in meticulous observance of every one of those Old Testament rules and regulations?

And the answer is no, it doesn’t, for one very simple but all important reason. Because following the rules and regulations doesn’t turn us into the kind of people that God wants us to be. Meticulous observation of the rules and regulations doesn’t actually make us the kind of people that God intends us to be.

Can we fill that picture up? I found this this weekend. There’s a kid, he’s got two rules. Don’t get ahead of me. Rule number one, food is not allowed in the living room. Is he obeying the rule?

Male 1: Yeah.

Craig: Is he fudging on the rule? Not really, no food in the living room. Tablet’s not allowed in the kitchen. Is he obeying the rule?

Female 1: Yes.

Craig: This kid’s nailing it. And yet, his mom is probably pretty ticked off. He’s nailed the meticulous observation of the rules, and yet, he’s clearly not the kind of kid that she’s looking for him to be.

This is the problem with rules and regulations. Attempting to go for meticulous observation of rules and regulations tends to make us really good loophole finders. It’s entirely possible to follow every one of the Old Testament rules and regulations and yet be far from God, to be far from God. Which is why Jesus pushes in on this and He says something even more staggering in verse 20. He says, “Listen, I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

This is one of those “Wait, He said what?” moments. Because in the 1st century, the Pharisees, they were the best at rule following. I mean, if you’re not familiar with the Pharisees, let me just give you a quick little snapshot. This is a group of people who were absolutely committed to complete and meticulous obedience to every one of those more than 600 rules and regulations in the Old Testament. Did they have tassels on the corners of their cloaks? Yes, they did. Did they make sure they didn’t wear cloth woven from two different kinds of fabric? Yes, they did. Did they make sure they didn’t wear. Did they avoid murdering? Yes, they did. Every one of those more than 600 commandments. They were the best at following the rules. They were better than the best. They went a step further, they went, “You know, we wanna make sure we don’t break these rules. We want to make sure we don’t fail in the observation of them, so we need to come up with some more rules to make sure people don’t do it accidentally.”

So they saw God’s commandment about the Sabbath, they said, “Well, God says don’t do any work on the Sabbath, but gosh, we don’t wanna accidentally do that.” So they made a rule that said, “Hey you cannot put a piece of cloth into you know, a bowl full of dye on the day before the Sabbath because when the Sabbath comes the cloth is still soaking up the dye, so in effect, you’re
really continuing to work on the Sabbath. So you can’t put your cloth into a vat of dye on the day before the Sabbath.” And I’m not making this up, by the way. I mean, I can show you the actual rabbinic writings from the 1st century where they laid this out. They said, “You can’t put a yeast into dough to let it rise on the day before the Sabbath because if it still rising on the Sabbath, it’s working. In effect, you are.”

Do you understand what I’m saying? They were so careful about observing those laws that they created new laws to make sure they didn’t accidentally break one of them. And you need to understand that in the mind of the average 1st-century person, the Pharisees, they weren’t just the best at following the rules, they were by definition the most righteous. Because righteousness came from following the rules, that was the equation. Following the rules equals righteousness.

So the Pharisees were the most righteous people on earth. And then Jesus shows up and goes, “Yeah, you’re gonna have to do better than them.” “He said what? That’s an absurd thing to say. It’s inconceivable for people in the 1st century, you can’t be more righteous than the Pharisees, you can’t follow more rules than they do. They’re perfect at it.” And by the way, they were perfect at it.

You may be aware if you’re familiar with the Gospels, that Jesus called them hypocrites, but you need to understand why. Our temptation is to go, “He called them hypocrites because they told people they had all the rules but they didn’t follow the rules.” No, that’s not what happened at all. He called them hypocrites because they followed the rules but they missed the spirit of them. They followed all the rules, they checked off all the boxes, but they weren’t the kind of people that God was longing for. Jesus called them to task, He said, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, you give your tithe to the temple, but you’re not charitable. You neglect mercy and just you don’t care for people. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, you follow all the rules but you’re far from God.”

And so when Jesus said, “Your righteousness has to go beyond that of the Pharisees,” understand he wasn’t saying, “You need to follow the rules better than them.” Because that wasn’t possible. What he was doing was calling into question their whole equation of righteousness. He was saying, “No, no, you’re wrong. Following the rules doesn’t equal righteousness. It just doesn’t.”

Okay, so what does? I’m gonna say something radical. I believe that it’s what Jesus is saying. But it’s gonna sound radical at first. And you better believe that it sounded even more radical in the 1st century. What Jesus basically said is, “You don’t understand what God’s looking for, let me tell you what God’s looking for. God doesn’t want people who follow the rules. God doesn’t want people who always follow the rules. God wants people for whom the rules aren’t necessary.”

You see why that would be radical? I mean, it’s radical even today, isn’t it? Because some people who have spent their whole lives in church, have spent their whole lives trying to follow the rules. And some people that are here today, maybe for the first time, maybe because somebody dragged you or because there was just something in you that said, “I think I need to go to church,” you’re in here going, “Wait, that doesn’t make sense. That’s what religion is all about. It’s about the rules, it’s about following them. What do you mean God doesn’t want people who always follow the rules?” He doesn’t. God wants people for whom the rules aren’t necessary. God wants people whose lives move to the ebbs and the flows of God’s Spirit. God wants people who naturally do the kinds of things that God us longs for us to do.

Let me go off the rails for a second here. How many people have been bowling in the last 10 years? Okay, not a lot of you. It’s not a super popular sport, but quite a few of you. When I was a kid, I hated bowling, okay? And the reason was no matter what I thought I was gonna do, no matter how much I tried, the ball always went into the gutter really quick. So I just didn’t like bowling. And when my kids were born, we decided, “Uh, we’re gonna give them the same experience of misery and we’re gonna take them bowling.” Only, I discovered that somewhere along the line between my childhood and theirs, they’d invented a new device, they’re called bumpers. And I was just stunned, like you press this button like, yeah, you know, that bowler that’s a child. You press this button. And so when it’s their turn, these big things come up and they cover those gutters, which meant that my kids hit pins every single time. They never once went in the gutter.
Here’s the thing, you can bowl with the bumpers up and you’re gonna hit pins every single time. You’re gonna look pretty good, but you don’t know how to bowl. You aren’t a bowler. Do you understand what we’re saying? The rules and the regulations of the Old Testament, they point to the kind of life God wants us to live, but they can’t get us there. They’re just like the bumpers on the gutter. We can’t become the people that God wants us to be simply because we follow all the rules. It’s entirely possible to follow every one of the rules perfectly, and yet, be far from God.

God doesn’t want people who always follow the rules, He wants people for whom the rules aren’t necessary. He wants people for whom loving others and protecting the life of human beings and living in constant awareness of His desires for us, that’s natural, that’s just what we do. And the rules and the regulations of the Old Testament can’t get us there, they can point us for the goal. They can help us have an understanding of what that kind of person would look like, but they can’t get us there.

But Jesus can. Jesus can get us there. That’s why He came, that’s why He died on the cross, to take our sins and to pay them off so that we’re no longer chained to them, we’re no longer living under the burden of our guilt and our sin. He came to give us the Holy Spirit who comes in and begins to transform us from the inside out so that what begins to come out of us is what’s inside of us, true righteousness. And righteousness is not brought on from external obedience, but a righteousness that flows out from an inner transformation. This is what Jesus came for. I love the way He said it. John 10:10, He said, “I came that they may have life and have it to the full.”

You may go, “Okay, what does that full life look like?” And the answer is it looks like being the kind of people that the Old Testament points us to. This is why Jesus said, “I didn’t come to get rid of the Old Testament. I came to fulfill its promise. I came to make possible the kind of life that the Old Testament was intended to lead you to.” That’s what Jesus is saying. He makes possible the kind of life that the Old Testament was intended to lead us to.

If you wanna…do me a favor, reach forward in the seats, you’re gonna find there’s a little green card in there with the “He said what?” thing at the top. And I’ve provided a paraphrase of this passage. I don’t usually do this, but I think this is so important to understand for two reasons. Number one, first off, it’s the heartbeat of the Christian faith. And faith is not about following the rules. Obviously, you can’t live a life that violates the principle, so if you’re here today going, “Okay, so Pastor Craig said God doesn’t want people to follow the rules. Well, I will go break all of them.” Not what I’m saying.

You can’t live a life that violates the principles that the rules point us towards, but what God is looking for is a heart that’s been transformed. And this is what Jesus came to make possible. And not only is this the heartbeat of the Christian faith but it’s also critical to understand the rest of what’s gonna happen in this section of the Gospel of Matthew. Because what’s gonna happen is that Jesus is gonna begin to lay out some more specifics of what it looks like to begin to live in this rhythm that God is calling us to follow rather than just obeying external rules.

And so I’ve actually provided a paraphrase that I’d love for you to take home, stick in a mirror somewhere, something like that, so you see it on a regular basis and just wrestle with it this week. Here’s my paraphrase that I believe, in modern English, really captures what Jesus is saying. He says, “In spite of what you may have heard or be wondering yourself, don’t think that I’ve come to tear down the authority of the Old Testament. Nothing could be further from the truth. Instead, I have come to bring into reality the kind of life to which the Old Testament was always intended to lead you.”

Let me be clear. No portion of the Law, no matter how insignificant you might think it is, will ever stop having authority. Anyone who dismisses the authority of even the so-called minor parts of the law and who teaches this to others will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. Oh, but anyone who actually lives the life to which the law leads and who teaches others to live this life, they will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who thinks I’m dismissing the authority of the Old Testament has completely misunderstood what I’m saying. But that doesn’t mean I’m not saying something radical because I totally am.
Here’s what I’m saying that will really surprise you. Submitting to the authority of the law doesn’t necessarily mean strict, meticulous obedience to specific regulations of the law. That kind of external obedience is not the same thing as actually living the life to which the law leads. The Pharisees and the Scribes are famous for exactly this kind of strict, meticulous obedience, but I say that unless your righteousness goes above and beyond theirs, not by even more strict external obedience but by an internal alignment with God’s own heart, you won’t be in the Kingdom of Heaven at all. What the law can’t do, Jesus can.

A few years ago, I was in the South. I was visiting at a church and I was sitting in the front row and kinda looking around and observing as you do, you know, what’s this church all about? And a couple things caught my eye. And one of them was that they had a big choir, and they were all in the robes and they were all up on their risers, and what kind of caught my attention was they were all swaying, perfectly, and, like, 200 of them, like, in perfect rhythm, like a metronome.

And I was surprised. And I’ll be honest, the reason I was surprised is because they were almost all white. And that is not something that white people are really good at typically, but they were nailing it. But as I continued to watch them, I began to think of a couple things. One was like, “Okay, I’m continually impressed by how much they’re nailing this rhythm. They’re all perfectly... but the other thing was, but there’s a certain rigidity to it. They’re really rigid. It’s almost mechanical.

I was like, “How are they pulling that off?” And out of the corner my eye, I noticed that in front of the choir loft, there was a bunch of plants, and there was something happening in the plants. You cannot make this stuff up, by the way. And I leaned forward enough to see what was happening and what was happening was that kind of in the plants in front of the choir, there was a small black woman. And she was doing this. I am not kidding you. And listen, I know the difference between like conducting music and conducting swaying. She was the sway conductor.

But what was interesting is that when I got a look at her I could see kind of the choir, and they’re like... And she was like... So they were pretty good at following the rules. She was feeling the rhythm. And they were very different experiences even to watch.

Listen, God isn’t looking for people who always follow the rules. God is looking for people who don’t even need the rules because they live out of the rhythm of the power of the Holy Spirit in them.

I have a question for you. This is a question I’d love for you to ask yourself this week. The question is this: “Am I following God’s rules or feeling God’s rhythm? Am I my following God’s rules or feeling God’s rhythm?” And I think there’s two categories of people that find themselves, “I’m following God’s rules first.” And one group of people in that category is, there are people who, the rule is the only thing they’ve ever known.

And maybe you’re here today and you’ve been coming to church your whole life and you’ve been doing everything you can to check the boxes of right behavior, to be righteous by following the rules. And you realize, even as I’m talking, that’s all that’s happened. “I’ve gotten really good at following the rules but I don’t feel God’s rhythm. I’m not experiencing inner transformation that makes that kind of stuff natural. I’m just being meticulous.”

Or you may be here for the first time today or you’ve only been recently coming and this is news to you because you thought religion was all about the rules. And I want you to understand it’s not. The Christian good news is the good news that it’s not about the rules. All they do is they paint a picture for something that is impossible apart from the life of God in us. But I want you to understand is that you can have that life, you can begin to experience that transformation right here, right now.

In fact, would everybody close their eyes and bow their heads. And if you’re here today, and you know that you don’t have a real relationship with God, you don’t have the ability to feel His rhythm, you don’t have His life inside you, if it’s all been about the rules, I’m gonna encourage you to say this prayer to Him and mean it.

Jesus, thank you for coming to die for me. Thank you for rising from the dead. Jesus, would you come into my life because I give
my life to you. Come save me. Come change me. Come pour your life into me. Amen.

And if you've prayed that for the first time today, you've taken the most important step in learning to live, not by following God's rules, but by feeling His rhythm.

The other thing that happens though is a lot of times even though we have that relationship, we have the Holy Spirit inside of us, what happens is that we get caught up in following the rules again and we make it all about that rather than about allowing Jesus to transform us. So that we're the kind of people who naturally want to do the very things that he's doing. And the rules can become an obstacle, actually, to that. And again, I'm not saying we should break the rules, but I'm saying we have to dig deeper than that.

And if that's the category you find yourself in, I just wanna encourage you not to miss any of the next few weeks because as we begin to look at this really high standard that Jesus calls us to and enables us to actually reach, we're gonna begin seeing what it looks like to live out of the rhythm of God's love for us.

Now, favorite part of the service. Right now we get to celebrate with some people who have made that decision to give their lives to Jesus. They are in the process of being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit as they're learning to live in rhythm with who God is and what He's made them to be. We get to celebrate as a bunch of people get baptized. We've had more than 40 people being baptized this weekend. And again, as I said at the very beginning, if today is your day, even if you haven't signed up, don't miss your opportunity. You can still head out to the back and talk to somebody at the Welcome Center, we'd love for you to be part of that. We've had several people make that decision on the spur of the moment this weekend, but we have a bunch of people who have said, “I've made this decision for Jesus and I wanna go public with that faith.” We've got a little snippet of each of their stories, so if you'd direct your attention to the screens.

Female 2: I accepted Christ when I was seven years old.
Female 3: I recently accepted Jesus in my heart.
Male 2: I know that Jesus died on the cross to save my sins.
Female 4: I accepted Jesus into my heart.
Male 3: I accepted Christ this summer at a camp.
Female 5: I asked Jesus into my heart and I wanted to share the world.
Female 6: I accepted Christ when I was seven years old.
Male 4: I grew up in a Mormon Church and I was baptized there but the Lord that I worship and love today is definitely different than the one that I was kind of forced into knowing as a child.
Male 5: I wanna follow Jesus and be baptized.
Female 7: I trust and serve the Lord.
Female 8: I'm being baptized because of active obedience.
Female 9: I want to be a better person through Christ.
Female 10: I wanna show Christ in my life.
Male 6: I want everybody to know that I am a Christian.
Female 11: I wanna show my trust and faith in God and Jesus.
Male 7: I would like to show my faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.
Female 12: I wanna show everyone how I believe in God.
Male 8: I wanna show everybody that I've given my life to Jesus.
Female 13: I've put my faith in Jesus Christ.
Male 9: I wanted to get baptized to share my faith with the world.
Male 10: I feel like it's the next step in my relationship with Christ.
Female 14: I am telling my family and friends that no matter what you do, Jesus will always love you.
Male 11: We're very excited about getting baptized as a group and really a statement of faith outwardly.
Female 15: I want everybody to know that I love Jesus.
Female 16: I accepted Jesus Christ into my heart because He forgave me from my sins.
Female 17: I want to get baptized so everybody knows who God is.
Female 18: I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior.
Male 12: I'm at a crossroads in my life and I wanna take that walk down that new path that I have to take, shoulder to shoulder with Jesus Christ.
Female 19: I want to give Him my all.
Female 20: I wanted to restart my life with Jesus.
Female 21: I am a follower of Jesus Christ and I want to be clean and right with Him.
Male 13: I chose to be baptized so I can renew my faith in Christ.
Female 22: I put my faith in God.
Male 14: I was baptized as a child. However, I've decided to be baptized publicly as an adult because I believe it's an act of faith.
Male 15: I remember Pastor Craig talking about the next step. For me, this is taking the next step.
Male 16: I love Jesus.
Female 23: I wanna get baptized because I am a transformed life, period.