THE EXCESSIVE LIFE

The Real Jesus
John 10:1-10 // Craig Smith
February 11, 2018

Craig // Hey, welcome to Mission Hills. So glad that you are here. You guys probably heard that Colorado lost another police officer this past week. That's three in 36 days here. I was just discovering that couple of police officers were killed in Ohio just yesterday. I want to do something. If you are a first responder, police, fire, military -- if you would be willing to stand up and let us recognize you and pray over you today? Can we have our first responders stand?

[Applause]

We are so grateful for the work that you do. We would love to pray over you. If you would join me in praying over our first responders. Lord, we are sick about this. We want to see this horrible pattern broken. Lord, would you provide safety to our first responders here in Colorado and around the country. We thank you for these men and women that stand in the gap, that keep horrible things from happening that we never know about because they are on duty. We thank you for them. Lord, we pray for protection upon them. We pray for protection upon their families. Give them strength and courage, give them wisdom and discernment, but Lord, you keep them safe. In Jesus name. Amen.

If you want to grab a Bible, love to have you turn with me to John 10. We’re gonna pick up where we left off last week. Today what we are going to do is take a look at a promise of Jesus that I would say is one of the most often quoted promises and least experienced. It’s one of those promises people use all the time. They often speak this promise to people on the edge of becoming a Christian. They say if you come to Jesus, this is what he promises to be true. And yet one of the things I find, an awful lot of Christians are not experiencing the promise Jesus makes themselves. We have two tasks today. The first is to understand what exactly is this promise? Second, what does it look like to actually experience the fulfillment of this promise? We are going to pick up in John 10 where we are told this. Jesus is speaking to a group of Pharisees where he says, very truly I tell you. We’ll stop right there for a second. I know you are skeptical that I can get anything deep out of that, right? Just watch me. No. I just want to make sure we are on the same page here. Not that it’s deep stuff, but I want to make sure we are on the same page. The first thing I want to make sure we understand that Jesus begins this section in kind of an unusual way. The new international version I’m reading translates it as very truly. The literal Greek there is amen, amen, which might seem like a strange thing to begin a section with because we use amen at the end of something, right? It’s our way of closing a prayer. We are talking to God a prayer and we close it by saying amen. Jesus begins a conversation with amen, amen. The reason he does that is because I men means truly. It means truth. When he says amen, amen, he’s saying truly, truly, or as the NIV puts it, very truly. What he’s really saying is, hey, guys, what I’m about to say is really important.

It’s his way to calling attention to it, emphasizing it. Anything that comes out of his mouth is true. He Jesus is the Son of God, so everything out of his mouth is true. When he says truly, truly it’s true truth, which means you really need to pay attention to this. Its not just that it’s accurate. It’s acute, okay? It matters. This is deeply important. He’s calling attention to this thing he’s about to say. We need to pay attention to that. The other thing I said he’s talking to the group of Pharisees. He says very truly I tell you, and the NIV adds the word Pharisees there. Because this is a continuation of a conversation. This is actually part two of the conversation we were looking at last week. Last week Jesus healed a blind man. We get to this moment in that story where there is kind of an ironic statement that’s made, Jesus is looking these religious leaders, the Pharisees, and he says, the blind guy sees. Not just physically, but he sees the truth. He sees I am the real deal. I am the Messiah, I am the Savior. I’m the one you have been waiting looking for. You guys that think you live with eyes wide open to God are blind as bats when it comes to recognizing who I am.

What’s happening now in chapter 10, he’s continuing that conversation. He’s continuing to try to get them to see the truth of who he is. He says very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone that does not enter the sheep pen by the gate but climbs in by some other way is a thief and a robber. The one that enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all of his own he goes ahead of them and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger. In fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice. Now, I don’t know about you but I don’t have a lot of experience with sheep. Anyone here that’s intimately familiar with sheep on an ongoing basis? So this might feel like a strange thing for us, a little bit foreign, but just understand what Jesus is doing is using an everyday life circumstance for his listeners. They were familiar with this. They lived with the reality of what he’s talking about here day in and day out.

They understood immediately what he was getting at and it takes a little more work for us, but what Jesus is doing is using an everyday circum-
He says let’s unpack this a little bit. He says the first sign that someone is a true shepherd is because he goes in through the proper opening. The true shepherd enters through the proper opening. He goes in through the gate. He doesn’t climb over the back walls. Typically, the sheep pen in this area is very often up against a house. The house formed one wall and they had two other walls and then there was a place where there was a gate. The true shepherd always goes in through the gate. The true shepherd is not going to go climbing over the back wall, right? Anyone climbing over the back wall is not up to good things, right? When was the last time you saw someone climbing over a fence and you thought, I bet charitable giving is happening here, right? Anyone that climbs over a wall like that, you are like, they are up to some no-good purpose, right? Jesus says the same thing. Whoever comes in through the gate, the proper opening, that’s how you recognize the true shepherd. I suspect partly what he has in mind here is the fact that the Old Testament specifies what that gate is going to be. The Old Testament in many, many instances tells you exactly how the Messiah, the Savior, the True Shepherd is going to come in.

For instance, we are told in the Old Testament that the Messiah, the True Shepherd would be from the family of David, that he would be a descendant of King David. Jesus was a descendant of King David. He came in through that proper door. The Old Testament said the Messiah would come into the world being born in Bethlehem. You don’t have to spend a lot of time in church to know that part of the Christmas story, right? Where was Jesus born? Bethlehem. He came in through the right gate. The Old Testament gets pretty specific about when he would arrive. The Book of Daniel narrows it to a very specific timeframe and Jesus entered in precisely that timeframe. We could go on but you understand the point. The Old Testament specifies what the gate is going to be so you will know he will come in through that gate. Jesus met every one of those. So Jesus is saying, I came in through the proper opening. That’s your first sign that I’m the True Shepherd.

He also says the appointed doorkeeper opens the door for him, right? It’s common. It’s every day. It’s a no-brainer, right? Typically what would happen when the shepherd was away he would appoint an under-shepherd, a doorkeeper that would stay at the gate? His job was to wait in the early morning hours when the shepherd came and you couldn’t see very well, the under-shepherd was familiar enough with the true shepherd to go, this is him. This is the one, to open the gate for him. I suspect what Jesus is talking about here is probably a man by the name of John the Baptist. If you don’t know the name John the Baptist, you can find him in the beginning of every one of the four Gospels.

John the Baptist is an interesting figure. He was wildly popular. The reason for that, if you go to the Old Testament, there are these powerful men of God that play a regular part in the life of Israel. They are called the Prophets. They were big prophets. There was Moses, obviously.

Then you have prophets like Elijah, and Elisha and Ezekiel, and Isaiah big time old school prophets, and then they kind of disappeared. There is a period between the writing of the Old Testament and the New that we call the Intertestamental period between the testaments. One of the things commonly recognized among the Israelites, we don’t have any of those kind of guys anymore. We don’t have any more old school prophets, and then John the Baptist showed up and they said, they are back. This guy’s like an old school prophet. They said this is amazing. This is what we have been waiting for.

We were waiting for you, and John said, no you weren’t waiting for me. I’m not the one you were waiting for. My job is to get you ready for the one you were waiting for, to make straight the paths in the desert because he’s coming. And at the beginning of all four of the Gospels, it’s important enough that all four Gospels report that early in his ministry Jesus went to John the Baptist and John said to everybody, there He is.

There’s the one. There’s the one you have been waiting for. Now, he said, I must decrease so that he can increase. I have to get out of the way because he’s the real deal. He’s the true Shepherd. I suspect Jesus of saying, hey, John the Baptist, widely recognized, even Pharisees went to him. Said he was the doorkeeper. He recognized the shepherd and he opened the door. You need to pay attention to that. I’m the real deal. Third thing he talks about is the fact that the sheep respond to the true shepherd’s voice. That’s what he says, right? It’s not that he goes in through the right door. It’s not just that the door is open by the gatekeeper, but the sheep respond to his voice. In the western world, we often deal with herding sheep by driving them from behind. Most western shepherds get behind the sheep and drive them forward often using a sheepdog to do that. In the ancient east it was more common that the shepherd herded the sheep by standing in front of the sheep and calling them. They often had nicknames for them which is why Jesus talks about calling them by name.

The thing is, the sheep went not because they had been conditioned to obey a particular command, but they had been conditioned to trust a particular voice. They knew the shepherd’s voice. Even if it was in the early morning hours when they couldn’t see clearly, when they heard the shepherd’s voice, they knew the sound of that voice, and they would respond. Jesus says that’s another way reason that you know the true shep-
People came to Jesus in droves. They responded to his voice. The religious leaders were struggling because we are the leader of the Israel. We are the ones they should be listening to, but they are listening to this guy. He doesn’t have the pedigree. He doesn’t have the background. Jesus says, yeah, but I’m the real right deal. There are three ways you see it. Number one, I came in through the right opening. I came in through the right gate that had been specified from old. The door keeper recognized me, opened the door to me, and the sheep are responding. The flock is responding. The people are responding. Understand that everything Jesus is saying here is using familiar language to them, a little unfamiliar to us, familiar language to them to try to say, guys, it’s common sense. You know how to recognize the real deal. Apply the same principles to what you see God doing in my ministry. What he’s saying is I’m the real deal. I’m the real Shepherd. It should be pretty apparent. It’s important that we be able to recognize the true shepherd because only the true shepherd pursues what is best for the sheep.

Very important. It’s only the true shepherd that pursues what is best for the sheep. Anybody who is sneaking over the back wall to take a sheep is not going to set the sheep up in a penthouse. He has other plans, and they are not so good for the sheep that he steals, right? Only the true shepherd pursues what is best for the sheep. In the case of Jesus, it’s not just that he pursues what is best, he also provides what is best. Jesus used this figure of speech, this familiar story but the Pharisees still didn’t understand what Jesus was telling them. Jesus tried again, he said, okay, very truly, again, amen, amen, truth, truth coming, guys, this is really important. I am the gate for the sheep. All who come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and they will go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. There it is, he says the thief comes to steal and to kill and destroy. They don’t have the sheep’s best interest in mind. It’s tempting; I think at this point to try to figure out, who is the thief? Who is he talking about? Is the devil the thief who comes to steal and kill and destroy? Is it the religious leaders he’s pointing at? Honestly, I don’t know. I don’t think we have to try to figure out who the thief is because has’ not Jesus main point. His point is not to try to identify who is trying to destroy the people. His point is, I’m not like them. His point is I’m the only one who has the sheep’s best interest in mind. I’m the only one who came that they may have life and have it to the full. We don’t need to know who the thief is because we know who the shepherd is.

He says, I’m not just pursuing what’s good for the sheep, like the shepherd, I’m providing what’s good best for the sheep like the gate. He makes this interesting shift, right? He shifts from being the shepherd to being the gate which may seem odd to us but think of it like this, the shepherd is the one who pursues what is good for the sheep, and the gate is the one who provides access of what is good for the sheep. He talks about the gate here providing access in two different ways. He says they’ll enter in through the gate, and they’ll be saved. He says here’s what the sheep do, they enter into the pen through the gate and what do they do? They find the pen. They find protection, protection from predator, protection from wandering off the cliffs in the dark, protection from all of those things. In the same way, I am the gate. Those that enter in through me enter into protection, he says that through Jesus we experience God’s protection. He says they’ll enter through me and they’ll be -- what? They’ll be saved. Saved from what? Saved from sin. Saved from the consequences of sin, from eternal separation from God, saved from spiritual predators that are out there.

The devil is a real creature. Forces of darkness are real creatures that are out there and they hate us. In Christ we have protection from them. We are given authority over them. Through Jesus we experience God’s protection. But it’s interesting, he doesn’t just say they come into the pen and experience his protection. He also says they come in and go where? They go out. They come in and experience his protection and go out to find pasture, which is to say provision. They come in for protection and go out for provision in both cases, they are passing through the same gate. What he’s saying is this gate is the access to God’s provision. For sheep, obviously, they go out and find pasture, so they get green grass and clear water and fresh air and warm sun on their little sheep noses, all that good stuff. In the same way people go through me into God’s provision and experience spiritual strength, joy and hope and peace, meaning and significance, all of these things we are built to long for.

It’s a rhythm of protection and provision through Jesus we experience God’s provision, and through the rhythm of provision and protection, what happens is we experience life as God intended it to be. But it’s only through Jesus that we can experience life as God intended it to be. What he’s saying is we have to go through Jesus to find the good life that God intended for us. But of course he didn’t just call it a good life, does he? What does he call it? The NIV says I came to give life and have it to the full. That’s the promise I mentioned in the beginning. It’s a familiar promise. You may have heard it in older language, maybe. Maybe you are more familiar with it in the older translation that says I came that you may have life and have it abundantly, which honestly, abundantly is probably a little bit better translation, except it’s not a word we use anymore. It’s not a word we are familiar with. Can you imagine you have a dinner party and you served your guests and someone asks, hey, did you get enough to eat? I ate abundantly.

You say, I’m not inviting you to dinner anymore. I don’t know, you are weird, right? It’s not a word we use anymore. The only time we use abundantly, it has a negative sense, right? Like when you say to someone -- this is the only time I ever hear it. It is abundantly clear that -- what’s coming after that is never good thing, right? Abundantly in our culture has lost a bit of its meaning. Understand what abundantly means literally is, is not some of something or a lot of something, but more of something than you can handle. It’s over and above. It’s excessive. Jesus is saying, I came that they may have life, and the life is not supposed to have some good. It’s not supposed to have a lot of good. It’s not even supposed to have the most good, it’s supposed to have more good than you can handle. It’s supposed to overflow. It’s supposed to be excessive. I can’t help but think as he’s talking about sheep and shepherds, I can’t help think that he’s probably thinking about Psalm 23. Very familiar Psalm, you don’t
have to have spent a lot of time in church to have heard at least pieces of it. Just listen. The Lord is my Shepherd. I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He provides.

He leads me beside quiet waters, and refreshes my soul. He provides. He guides me along the right paths for his namesake. He provides. Even though I walk through the darkest valley or the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and staff they comfort me. He protects. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, provision and protection. You anoint my head with oil and my cup -- anybody? Flows over or overflows. It's not the same word he uses when he says I came that you may have life to the full, but it's a closely related word to the overflows word. The point is not that the cup has some of whatever good thing is in it or a lot of it or full to the brim, but the cup has more than the cup can hold. It's splashing over. It's spilling over. It's overflowing. This is what Jesus says. I came that you may have life and have it excessively. What Jesus is saying is that he longs for us to experience a life of excessive good.

Do you understand that is Jesus heartbeat for you? Jesus longs for you to experience a life of excessive good, more good than you know what to do with, more good than you are prepared for, more good than you dreamed of. Now, there is an important question that you need to ask there. That question is what do you mean by good? We'll talk about it next week.

[Laughter]

It's a profoundly important question. If you think good means pleasant, if you think good means fun, God has a more profound sense of good. We are going to unpack that a little bit. We often settle for something far short of good. God doesn't ever settle. But when we begin to understand what true good is, when we begin to experience it, what we begin to understand is that Jesus longs for us to experience a life of excessive good. Honestly, we are just like, God, I don't know why you would do this, why you continue to pour -- I don't know why. There is a question for you. How many of you have experienced the life of excessive good? I'm so glad to see some hands go up. I'm so glad. You guys are done.

I'm not being sarcastic. You are done for today. I'm not being sarcastic because I believe that there are many people in this room that have experienced the life of excessive good. Understand, I don't mean that their lives have been perfect, and their lives have been all bunnies and rainbows. You notice in the Psalm David talks about going through the valley of the shadow of death and yet still having a cup that overflows. In the presence of his enemies, he has a table and yet a cup that overflows. There are difficult things. On this side of heaven, life is going to be difficult. The life of excessive good, the excessive life doesn't mean that everything is easy. Yet, even in the midst of that there is more good than we know what to do with. Some of you know what I'm talking about. I have experienced it. I experience it on a regular basis. I don't mean I am perfect.

Not by a long shot. I don't mean I have perfect vision that never wavers from the reality of God's presence and power in my life, because I can take my eyes off it easy as anyone else, but I have absolutely had those moments in my life as have some of you where I say, in spite of my circumstances, my cup overflows, I have a life of excessive good. I have a life is filled with meaning and significance in spite of hardship, a life of confidence in spite of uncertainty about where the provision is going to come from. I know it's going to come from God, yet honestly, I'm not sure how I'm going to make that next mortgage payment, yet at the same time, I'm absolutely confident that my God is going to provide. It's inexplicable, unexplainable, but I know he will, and I'm okay. I know what it's like to be in the midst of pain and heartbreak, with health ailments and family struggling with incredibly hard things, yet to be confident to have a hope that eclipses pain and struggle, to have joy that robs grief of its ability to chain us to our past and to our pain.

I'm not talking about life without grief. I'm talking about a life that has an overflowing amount of joy in it that allows us to move forward in the midst of grief. We come to that place where grief no longer chains us. I'm talking about a life that understands the cost of what is to be gained is insignificant compared to the value of what is to be gained. I don't experience it perfectly, but I absolutely know what it's like to experience this excessive life, and some of you do too. Some of you don't.

I'm going to go out on a limb here and make a guess that every one of us would like to experience that. Am I right? Anyone here feel like yeah, I would really prefer not to have any more good in my life? Anyone feel like I have so much good, I'm drowning in good, and I can't take another drop of it. Nobody? Okay. So the question that I want to ask you to wrestle with is, am I experiencing this excessive life that Jesus promises? Am I experiencing it? It's okay if you say no, but it's not okay to be okay with that. It's okay if your answer is, I have experienced it. I experience it occasionally, but I'm not experiencing it regularly. It's okay. It's just not okay to be okay with that. Jesus is not okay with it. Jesus longs for you to experience a life of excessive good. It's okay for you to want more of God's goodness in your life. It's okay to want to experience the life that Jesus talks about because that's what you were made for, and that's what Jesus came to give you.

The question is, what do I need to do to experience that more? Let me suggest a few things. The first thing and it's absolutely fundamental, the excessive life is only experienced in a relationship with Jesus, you hear me? It's the only way to get it. The world offers very cheap imitations of the good life but they are cheap imitations and at the end of the day, they can't offer anything even close to the good that Jesus is talking about. It's only in a relationship with Jesus that you can experience this excessive life, this life overflowing with good. If you are here today and you realize, I don't have that relationship, you can have it. From that relationship, you can have the foundation that leads to the excessive life. Some of you don't have the relationship because you know you have never wanted it, or you have never been willing to step into it.

Some of you don't have the relationship -- and honestly, you have been tricked into thinking you did because you were checking off certain boxes. Maybe you thought you had a relationship with Jesus because, I'm a pretty good person, or I'm a better person than that person or that person...
or those people. I must have a relationship with Jesus because -- that's not how it works. Some of you might be checking off the box of church attendance. I must have a good relationship with Jesus because I have been going to church my whole life. It doesn't work that way. It's a little crass, but you can spend a lot of time at Chipotle. It doesn't make you a burrito. Proximity doesn't make relationship. You have to enter into that relationship. If you are here today and you don't have that relationship, you can have it right now.

It's pretty simple. Here at Mission Hills I often talk about it like this because what Jesus is offering in his relationship is something we can take a hold of. We can grab a hold of this relationship with Jesus Christ. And in the same way that we grab a hold with five fingers I say there are five pieces to it. First you have to say to God, I have done wrong. If you want to use the religious term, I have sinned. I have committed sinned. But honestly, at the bottom of it, it just means I have done wrong. I haven't lived life the way God made me to and I know it. I admit it. Second thing is, God I'm sorry. I'm genuinely sorry for the sin that I have done. I have done wrong. I'm sorry. Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross to pay for my sin. Thank you for rising from the dead. I accept this relationship with you. I accept your forgiveness. When we put the five things together we grab a hold of the relationship with Jesus which is the foundation for the excessive good that he promises us. If you don't have that relationship, you can have it right now. In fact I'm going to ask everyone to close their eyes and bow their heads.

If you are here today and you don't have that relationship but you are ready to begin it, you just say to God right now, God, I have done wrong, and I'm sorry. Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for me. Thank you for rising from the dead. I accept your forgiveness. I'm taking hold of a relationship with you. For now and for eternity. Amen.

The excessive life is only experienced in a relationship with Jesus. That's the first foundation. If you don't have that relationship, you shouldn't be surprised if you are not experiencing the life of excessive good that Jesus is talking about. Now, you might have the relationship, but there are a couple of other things you need to keep in mind that might be getting in the way. One of those is, we have to invest in the relationship. When I say invest, I mean we have to learn to recognize his voice and obey his leading. We have to recognize his voice and obey his leading. Keep in mind with the analogy he's using, the sheep recognizes the shepherd's voice so they are able to follow him when he calls, right?

You have to be able to do the same thing. You have to recognize God's voice. The best place to do that is scripture. Scripture is the word of God. It's in reading scripture and understanding scripture so we begin to recognize what God sounds like so when he calls us in whatever way he does in our lives, we are able to say, I understand you want me to take that step, go through that direction, go here or go there. It's only in doing that and obeying that voice do that we find ourselves in the places from which the excessive life is experienced, so we have to invest in recognizing his voice and obeying him.

Maybe that means you read the Bible on a regular basis, or you join a Life Group that's studying the Bible, or you start going to a church on a regular basis that teaches the Bible. Mission Hills is one of those, but there are so many good churches in the South Denver area that is teaching God's Word. It's in that environment where we are hearing from God's Word that we begin to recognize God's voice. Then we have to obey it. Some of us struggle with the excessive life because we have seen what God says. We have heard God's voice saying, hey, you know those things in your life that are not supposed to be there? Get rid of them. Turn, repent. Get rid of that sin. We often know those things but we keep putting them on the back burner and say I'll deal with that sin later, deal with that thing later.

The thing is, if you know there is something in your life that doesn't belong in your life, if you know there is a sin in your life that you are not dealing with, don't be surprised that you are not finding yourself in a place that you are experiencing the excessive life Jesus is promising because you are not obeying him. You have planted your feet where you are and not where the excessive life is that God wants for you. You might need to make some changes. Then one other thing, and it's one that I'm consistently surprised that so many Christians fail to understand, but it's this -- the excessive life isn't a static gift. It's a proximity effect. Do you understand what I mean by that? It's not a static gift.

It's not something that God gives you and says, there you go, enjoy. It's a proximity effect. It's something we experience because we are close to Jesus, because we are in proximity to him. It emanates from him. The excessive life is not only experienced in relationship with Jesus, it's experienced because we are close to him. The problem is, staying close to Jesus means recognizing that Jesus is a moving target. Jesus didn't say, come find me. Jesus said come follow me. He's a man on mission. Jesus said I didn't come to be served. I didn't come to sit on the throne and everyone gather around me in that one place, no, I'm going out. I came to serve. I came to rescue. I came to save. He's a man on mission. Jesus doesn't say come find me. He says come follow me. It's only when we are living on mission with Jesus, only when we are following Jesus on mission that we are in the proximity to him that allows us to begin to experience this excessive life. I have met many people over the years who blew me away by the degrees to which they were clearly experiencing what Jesus promises here, that their life was filled to capacity and overflowing with good. Not that everything was easy. Yet often I have seen people experiencing this excessive good and they were in circumstances that I thought, I don't think I could handle that. They could not only handle it, they could experience the goodness and power and presence of God in a way that I envied in the midst of those difficult circumstances. I have met many people experiencing the excessive life. Let me tell you something, I have never met anyone experiencing the excessive life that was not also living on mission with Jesus. I have just never seen it.

Everybody I have ever seen experiencing excessive life was also going constantly, Jesus, what's my part? What part do you want me to play? They were constantly concerned with sharing the good news with the lost. They were constantly concerned with being other centered outward facing. They were concerned with speaking into the lives and stepping into the worlds of people who were in pain and struggle, and being light
and health and hope for them. They were people who were constantly concerned with how do I help people see who Jesus is and become more like him. They are people living on mission. Listen. The excessive life is not a static gift. It’s a proximity effect. To experience it, we have to live missionally. We have to live on mission with Jesus. Let me give you three questions. Three questions that all come from understanding that Jesus longs for us to experience the life of excessive good. It’s not just a pie in the sky dream. It’s what Jesus longs for us. It’s what he came to give you. Jesus longs for you to experience the excessive life. Question one, how regularly am I experiencing the excessive life? If the answer is not regularly enough -- maybe I have never experienced it, I only experienced it infrequently. I have experienced it several times, but I would really like to have it more as an everyday part of my life, then the next question is what’s one concrete step that I am going to take to start experiencing the excessive life more?

What is one concrete step I’m going to take to start experiencing the excessive life more? Am I going to start my relationship with Jesus? If you know you don’t have a relationship with Jesus -- maybe you started it a few minutes ago. That’s awesome. Maybe you are not ready to make that commitment yet, but understand, if you don’t have a relationship with Jesus, the question you need to be asking yourself is, am I ready to start my relationship with Jesus? God says that’s the only way you will get to this kind of life. Or maybe you say, I need to invest in my relationship with Jesus. Do I need to invest in my life with Jesus? Do something to begin to learn to hear his voice better, to develop a habit of obedience? Or maybe, maybe you say, how am I going to find a way to start living missionally with Jesus? And honestly, for so many Christians, that’s the missing one.

How am I going to start living missionally with Jesus? One thing we do at Mission Hills, every month we do something called Discovering Mission Hills. Honestly, it’s not discovering Mission Hills, it’s about discovering mission. It’s about discovering what it looks like to live on mission with Jesus and figure out what your gifts are and how God wired you and how to get you off of the sidelines and on to the mission field, without going anywhere. You don’t have to go anywhere. Right where you are, God has a part for you to play in his mission. We do this once a month. You can look online or go to the Welcome Center. Join us for one of those, or maybe honestly, you already know what it is. But if you want to experience this excessive life that Jesus is promising, learning to live missionally is probably the most overlooked key to it for the largest number of Christians that I have ever seen. Would you pray with me?

Jesus, we thank you for this incredible offer that you give us. It’s incredible that you would not only be willing to put good into our lives, but as you say it, more good than we can handle. Good that overflows, Lord, we all want that. Would you speak to us through your Holy Spirit about what steps we need to take so we can begin experiencing more from what we know from your word that you long for us to experience? In Jesus name, amen.