I'm so glad you are here for our last and final week on the Book of Daniel. I'm going to be honest, today was probably the hardest message I have ever prepared.

And it's not because the big idea that God wants us to walk away with is so controversial or really hard to get a handle on, it's just getting there is complicated. I always share a rough draft of the message with the planning team Tuesday morning. I did that this past week. I said what do you guys think? Wren on the planning team said, I love where it lands, but getting there is kind of bumpy, and she's absolutely right, and it's bumpy for a couple of reasons. Partly because the last couple of chapters of Daniel is prophecy, and prophecy is just difficult, but it's even bumpier than that because even in the last couple of chapters of Daniel, something weird happens in the prophecy. On the one hand, it's pretty clear that Daniel is foreseeing events that would take place in the second century B.C. It's still a couple of centuries away for him, but he saw with incredible clarity exactly events that would happen in second century B.C. But we talked about that last week, and for instance, we looked at an example where he saw the coming of someone called the king of the North who would sweep south from Syrian area and he would conquer Israel, and he would set his eyes on Egypt, and we said, hey all of that was fulfilled in the second century by Antiochus IV. But I got a couple of e-mails this week, and I really enjoy this kind of conversation. I had some e-mails from people who said, I'm a little confused because like, I get it. You are saying that was all fulfilled second century B.C., and I see the details are way too precise to be coincidence, but my study Bible has this little note that says he was actually foreseeing the anti-Christ at the second coming.

You said it was Antiochus second century B.C., but my study Bible, or this other Christian teacher says it's the anti-Christ right before the second coming, so which is it? Is it Antiochus or the anti-Christ? Is it the second century or the second coming? And the answer is -- yes. And what I mean is that literally for thousands of years, Christian scholars have recognized that something strange is happening in the last couple of chapters of Daniel. On the one hand Daniel seems to be seeing events from the second century B.C. At the same time, the events seem to be almost slightly bigger than the events of the second century. It's almost like the prophecies Daniel gives us are a sport coat that's just a little bit too big for the people and the events he's foreseeing. A little bit like this one. You guys are hilarious. Like so many of you are so relieved right now, because you were like, man, I didn't want to say anything, but somebody needs to say something.

My daughter after the last service, she was like, I saw you get up there, and I couldn't figure out how that one made it past mom and me. Like why did you --see here's the thing, can I wear this. It fits. It does. It's not too small. I can wear it. It's got the right number of arms, but at the same time you look at it and you think, it really looks like it's waiting for someone bigger to come along and fill it out properly, right? That's the kind of thing that's happening in the last few chapters of Daniel. Daniel is seeing events of the second century, and yet he seems to see almost as a ghostly overlay of those events, something else that's very similar but somehow is bigger even than the events of the second century.

You're welcome. I promised when we began this series that even though there is a lot of prophecy in Daniel, I wouldn't spend a lot of time giving you complicated charts of the end times. I'm going to bend that rule a tiny bit. Now I'm going to give you one chart, very simple, but it might help a little bit to understand what I'm saying. See, what we find, especially in the last few chapters of Daniel is prophecies that seem to
have three kinds of fulfillment. Some of the prophecies are fulfilled in the second century B.C. period and only there. Some of the things that he foresees are only fulfilled at the second coming of Christ, but there's a whole bunch of stuff that kinda seems to be fulfilled at both places.

This might be a little bit clearer if we look at some specific examples, so why don't you go ahead and grab a Bible and make your way to Daniel 12. In Daniel 12, we are getting the end of a conversation that Daniel has been having with an angel that are giving him a vision of things that are to come. And in chapter 12:1, the angel says this, at that time, Michael, the great prince that protects your people will arise. Now we know from earlier in Daniel that Michael is the archangel that has been given the responsibility of fighting for and protecting and influencing the nation of Israel, and what this angel is telling Daniel is that at some time in the future, Michael -- he will win some decisive victories in the spiritual realm, and that's going to be good news for the people of Israel, but before that happens, he says, there will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.

But at that time, your people -- everyone whose name is found written in the book -- will be delivered. Daniel is being given a vision of things that took place in the second century -- but, interestingly enough, if you want to flip over to the Gospel of Matthew 24, in Matthew 24, Jesus is speaking about the things that will be true right before he returns to Earth, right before the second coming, and he says in chapter 24:21, for them there will be great distress, unaqualed from the beginning of the world until now, never to be equaled again.

Sound familiar? Yeah, it's remarkable similar to what Daniel says in 12:1, so similar in fact, that there is almost no way that it's coincidence, and this is precisely why most scholars believe that Daniel is seeing more than just the second century. Jesus himself comes along, and he points backwards. He says, hey, you remember what Daniel said that was fulfilled in the second century? Well, it's going to be just like that before the second coming, so Jesus is both pointing back and pointing forward, and the only way for that to work is if Daniel is seeing not just the second century, but something bigger beyond that.

I want you to go back to Daniel 12:1. He says there will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of the nations until then, but at that time your people, everyone whose name is found written in the book will be delivered. And the point of this, setting aside the second century second coming, the point of this is to communicate something encouraging to Daniel and the people who read this, and it's -- it's a truth that we have seen throughout the book of Daniel, it's a reminder of this truth. And we might say it this way. Its basically, hey, hold on, in the middle of those difficult times, hold on because rescue is coming. Rescue is coming for those who trust God in spite of the pressure to change teams.

All the way back to the beginning of the book of Daniel we saw that the Babylonians worked really hard to get Daniel and his friends to change teams, to shift their allegiance from the God of Israel to the gods of Babylon, even changing their names to reflect that, and throughout history there are these periods where people persecute the people of God, and they bring pressure on them and try to get them to change teams, to abandon their faith and to get behind them, but the interesting thing about pressure, pressure brings out what's really inside us. We are like sponges. The thing about a sponge, you don't necessarily know what's in a sponge until what happens? Yeah, until you squeeze it, until you put pressure on it, and here's the thing, there has never been a sponge full of -- like milk, that got squeezed and orange juice came out, right? When you squeeze it, what you get out is what's actually in there, and what Daniel is dealing with in this promise that rescue is coming, he says rescue is coming for those specifically for those names that are written in the book.

What's going on there? What he's saying is this; hey this pressure is going to come. And the temptation is going to be whether it's the second century or the second coming or any time in between, the pressure is going to be there to turn from God, to turn from trusting Him, and to cast your lot with whoever looks successful at that given time, but that trust is going to prove what's really in you. Is it real trust, or is it something else? He says deliverance is coming for those whose names are written in the book. Okay, what book? Well, throughout the Old Testament as well as the New, this metaphor of a book -- sometimes called the Book of Life, comes up over and over again, and the idea is that in that book is a list of those that really trust God.

You might go, why do you need a book? Can't you just tell by looking at people if they really trust God? And the answer is no, not really because it's pretty easy to put on a show, right? It's pretty easy, to -- I go to church every week, and I shop at the right stores, you know? The Christian ones, and I eat Christian chicken. I do all the right things. I listen to all the right radio -- well, nobody listens to radio stations anymore, right? But I have all of the right Spotify channels going, right? So I must be one who really trusts God, right? Not necessarily. Not until the pressure comes, and then you really see what is in them. It's only in that minute that God's true people are revealed, and what Daniel promises is, if you will truly trust God, if you will hold on to Him, rescue is coming.

It's not just rescue in the here and now, in fact he says in verse 2, he says multitudes who sleep in the dust of the Earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Sleeping in the dust of the Earth is obviously a metaphor for what? It's for death. They die, and they are buried. Who dies? He says multitudes, which is kind of Bible talk for everybody dies. Huge numbers, everybody dies, and in the context, the picture that's being painted is this interesting reality. This pressure comes, whether it's from Antiochus in the second century or later from the anti-Christ at the second coming, pressure comes, and some people will say, I'm not giving into the pressure. I'm not changing teams. I'm going to stick with God, and some of them will die. They will be killed. It happened in the second century.
But they are not the only ones who will die. Multitudes will die. Last week, if you were here, we saw that when Antiochus came into Israel in the second century there were some that went, hey, we’ll change teams. Whatever. They forsook the covenant, we are told. They abandoned their faith, and what Daniel is kind of hinting at here is, guess what? They are going to die too. Not necessarily at that moment. Not necessarily because of persecution, but I don’t know if you know this about life, but life is invariably fatal. Everybody dies, but here’s the thing, those who died because they refused to change teams, because they refused to abandon their faith, they are going to have a very different story than those who changed their faith, because the reality is that death is not the end of our story. He says -- go back, please.

He says, they will awake. He says everybody will awake. The Bible is very clear about this in many different places that there is a resurrection coming, that every human being at every level will rise to life at some point, but -- some people will arise to everlasting life. It’s not just a quantity, it’s a quality. It’s a quality of joy and peace. Those who do not change teams, those who insist on trusting God in spite of pressure to do otherwise, they will awake to everlasting life, but those who changed teams because it seemed easier, they will awake to shame and everlasting contempt. It’s easy to read this and this is this talking about heaven and hell, and that might be an implication a little further down the line, but the reality here is that it’s painting a contrast between those who appeared to be God’s people, who either stuck with Him or abandoned Him when things got hard.

And the heart of what Daniel is saying is just this; he’s saying that our faith in this life determines our experience of the next. Our faith in this life determines the experience of the next. On the one hand, there will be the people that rise to God saying, well done. On the other hand, there are those that were really close and they awake to shame and contempt. Notice it’s not to punishment. Notice it’s not to suffering. It’s to shame and contempt. It’s the sense that they arise to a judgment of -- I’m so disappointed. You were so close. You understood the truth. You knew who God was. You knew what He was capable of. You knew how the story had to turn out in the long run, but you sacrificed it all for a short-term gain, and really, what have you gained? Not much of anything.

Verse 3 he says, those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

I think it’s interesting; it’s not those who are righteous, not those who do better things than other people, not those who are more good than other people. This is not a contrast between good and evil. The heart of the Christian Gospel, nobody’s good. Nobody’s good enough for eternal life with God, but Jesus died on the cross to take our sins, to pay them off and make us clean and forgiven, and as long as we trust in him, we’ll experience this new life. So he doesn’t say those who are righteous, those who are good. He says those who are wise. That’s an odd word. Why wise? Because wisdom is the ability to make the right choice when it counts. Wisdom is the ability to make the right choice even when it’s hard, and those who are wise are those who choose to trust God in spite of the pressure to turn. Those who are wise are the ones who go, I’m not going to sacrifice an eternity of joy for a few more years getting on this guy’s good side because it would be easier here and now.

They’ll shine, and those who lead many, who not only choose to trust God in spite of the pressure, but they encourage others, they strengthen others to do the same thing, they will shine like the stars forever and ever. The long-term payout of that is so much greater.

Verse 4, the angel says, but you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and thereto increase knowledge.

And in English that might sound a little bit like Daniel is being told to hide these scrolls, but that’s not what’s happening. In the ancient near east, whenever a really important document was created, maybe it was a trade agreement, or maybe it was a treaty between nations, two copies were made. One copy was rolled up, and it was given a wax seal, and then it was locked away, and the other one was used to make all of the additional copies, and the reason for the locked away copy that had been rolled up and sealed was that if at any point somebody looked at a later copy and went, I think somebody added to this, or I think this has been changed in some way, you could always go back to the original to find the truth of the matter.

What the angel is telling Daniel is, Daniel you need to protect these words because they are important. These words matter. Not just the words that he’s giving here in the last couple of chapters, but really the words in the entire book of Daniel he says, this stuff is important. People are going to need it because there is a time when many will go here and thereto increase knowledge. They are going to go looking for information, and they are going to need a trustworthy source of it. They are going to need to be able to know the truths that I have shared with you.

Now, what time is that? Is that the second century or the second coming? And the answer is -- yes. And every time in between. The words and the principles from Daniel that we have seen over and over, in the study, they matter. They are important whenever things get difficult, so he says, protect them.

Then in verse 5, and then Daniel looked and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. He sees two angels. One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river how long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled? And the man clothed in linen who was above the waters of the river lifted his right and his left hand, it’s a solemn way of swearing, lifted them toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever saying, it will be for time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.
What Daniel is being told here is in the second century, this man named Antiochus will come, and he will do terrible things, and his power will break the power of the holy people. There will be a time it gets bad as it’s ever going to get, and that period after that will be three and a half years. We have seen this language time, times, and a halftime several times in the Book of Daniel, and we have said a time is a symbolic way of talking about a year, times is two years, a half a time is another half a year, so that’s three and a half years. We have seen this several times. This is all old information. It all foresees what’s happening in the second century, but if you want to flip ahead to the book of Revelation, chapter 13:5, there is an interesting statement there. This is a description of the things that will be true before the second coming of Jesus. Revelation 13:5 says, the beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemers and to exercise its authority for 42 months.

Probably don’t need to point out the similarities if you have been following the series. That sounds a lot like Antiochus in the second century. Antiochus renamed himself Antiochus Epiphanes, which means God manifest, God is in the house. That’s proud words. That’s blasphemers. He desecrated the temple, and from the moment he desecrated the temple and started that three and a half year countdown clock until it was reconsecrated, God’s people were sort of at his mercy, but Jesus sort of points back to that, and then he points forward and he says before I come again, somebody will arise to do very, very similar things, and this one will exercise authority for 42 months. Has anyone done the math yet? That’s three and a half years.

So wait a minute is Daniel seeing second century B.C., or is he seeing second coming, and the answer is -- yes. It’s both of those things. But the point, in both cases, whether it’s the second century or the second coming, and it’s every moment of difficulty along the way, the truth God is communicating is hey, listen, I know it’s hard. I know you are suffering. I know these are difficult times, but understand; they are not the rest of your story. There is always a countdown clock on your suffering. We have seen this lesson over and over again in Daniel. There is always a countdown clock on your suffering, so you know what? You don’t need to know when the three and a half years begins. You don’t need to know exactly when that clock is going to hit zero. Here’s what you need to do, you need to keep trusting the God that is watching the clock for you. Stick with Him, and your suffering will hit zero, and after that will come something so much better, so keep trusting the God who is watching the clock.

And Daniel says in verse 8, I heard, but I did not understand. Anybody feeling like that yet? So I asked, My Lord, what will the outcome of all of this be? Another way to translate that is, what is after these things? Daniel is asking for a little bit more information, and the angel replied, go your way, Daniel because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end.

It’s a very interesting conversation, and I think in some ways, what happens here begins to orient us toward the big thing that God wants us to understand here. Daniel does a very natural thing. Daniel asks for a little bit more information. I’m a little confused. I don’t get this. What’s coming next? What is after this? What’s the outcome? He’s asking for more information. Anyone here ever wanted more information from God? You are in the midst of something and you are like, God, why is this happening? God, how long is this going to last? God, what’s the point of this? Anybody? Daniel asks a very natural question. Could I get a little bit more information, please? The angel’s response is interesting. He says, go your way, Daniel. The little Hebrew there is basically, walk forward toward the end. It’s a command. It’s a command to start walking. And in effect, what happens here is the angel gives a pretty gentle but significant rebuke. Daniel says, can I have a little bit more information and the angel goes, no. We are done.

It’s rolled up and sealed. The prophecies are over. The revelations are done. I have given you all of the information that I’m allowed to give you. There is no more information coming, so start going your way. Start moving forward. Walk forward in faith. You have been given all of the information that you need. I can’t read that and understand what the angel is saying there and not remember, see before I had kids, I would be like in King Sooper or somewhere, and I would hear what I thought was the most irritating parental response to children. The parent would say, I want you to do this or do that, and the kid would say, why? And the irritating response I would always hear was, because I said so, right?

And I vowed then and there, I’m not going to do that with my kids. When my kids say, why, I’m going to give them information. I’m going to help them understand. I’m going to help them develop critical thinking skills, right? I’m going to help them come to that point where they get why this information will help them understand why I’m asking them to do these things. That’s what I’m going to do, right? At first it worked really well when I had kids, because when they were really little, they trusted me. I would say, hey, let’s do this. They were like, okay, dad said we should do it. We should definitely do it. Then they hit that why stage. At first I was like, here it is. I’ll give you information. Here’s why. Here’s what you need to know. Then there would be the, okay, but why that? Okay, well, because this -- why that? Because this -- but why -- because -- because I said so.

[Laughter]

Right? Anyone that has small kids knows what this is like, right? And here’s the thing that I came to understand there, there’s actually a moment where it’s okay to say, because I said so because at some point seeking more information reveals a lack of trust, right? At some point, asking for more information reveals a lack of trust, and that’s kind of what’s happening with Daniel here. Understand, it’s not like Daniel was given no information. It’s not like God said, you don’t need to know anything. Just keep moving. God has given him a tremendous amount of information. When he asks for a little bit more what the angel says is, Daniel, it’s time to start moving forward in faith. There’s no more information coming, and there is a choice that has to be made now, which is are you going to trust what you already have, are you going to trust what you already
know, or not?

The angel goes on, and he says, verse 10, many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. Understand what? Understand that difficult times, suffering refines us. It's the sand paper that rubs off the rough edges. It's the thing that makes us more of who God wants us to be. I have never met anybody, and I have had a conversation where I have said, tell me about the most significant point of growth in your life? Tell me the times where God did the greatest thing? I have never met anybody that said, well there was this really happy time. Everything was going great, and I grew so much. I have never had that conversation, but I bet many of you can think back right now, and you can go, I remember a time that God grew me so much where my faith developed, my strength developed, my character developed, but it was a hard time. I see what God did during that time. Can anyone say an Amen to that?

Yeah. See, the wise understand that. Now, the wicked don't. The wicked change teams to get behind whoever, so they never experience that refining. They never experience all that God does through the difficult times as we walk through them with us, but the wise do. Now real wisdom is not only the ability to look back and see it, but the ability to recognize it when it's happening, to look at those difficult circumstances and go, I know God's doing something important right now. The reality is this; sometimes understanding comes only after we have chosen to move forward in faith. Sometimes the understanding of what God is doing comes only when we say, God, I don't quite get this. I would like a little more information, but I trust you. I'm going to keep walking forward with you. Sometimes the understand comes only at that time.

Verse 11, from that time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up; there will be 1,290 days. This is all familiar information for Daniel. He's actually been given this information several times. He's seeing the second century. He's seeing the time that Antiochus came. He abolished the daily sacrifices. He set up a temple to Zeus on the temple grounds, and that period lasted about three and a half years. He's seeing the second century. But, back in Matthew when Jesus predicted the second coming, Matthew 24:15 says, so when you see standing in the holy place, the temple, the abomination that causes desolation spoken through the prophet Daniel --

Jesus is pointing back to the second century, but he's also pointing ahead to the second coming, saying it's going to be just like that. These events are going to repeat themselves in history, so is Daniel seeing the second century or the second coming? Yes. He's seeing both of those things. But the point is, there is a countdown clock. Three and a half years, although here it says 1,290 days. Has anyone had their calculator out yet? If you take three and a half years times 365 in a year, you get to 1,278, so this is like an additional 12 days to get to 1,290. It's almost like he gets a little precise which is kind of interesting because Daniel's asked for more information, and the angel's like, okay, I'll give you a little bit. It's not really three years; it's three years and 12 days. It's getting really specific. You go, More information. Did that help? No?

Maybe more information is not what you need, Daniel. Maybe more information won't help as much as you think it will. Then he does a very strange thing. Verse 13 he says, as for you, go your way until the end. You will rest -- I'm sorry, verse 12, back up. Blessed is the one who waits and reaches the end of the 1,335 days. What? If you are doing the math, that's an extra 45 days. 45 more days than the 1,290 days. Okay, so three and a half years, we'll get a little more specific. It's 1,290, and then it's 1,335. What do we do with those extra 45 days? What's the point? What happens during those 45 days? I'll tell you. I -- have no idea. I don't, and nobody does. It's the only time we have that kind of detail. There is nothing in scripture that reveals what those 45 days are for. I mean, that doesn't stop people from guessing. If you go on the internet and look this up, which I do not recommend, you will find all kinds of speculation.

My favorite one, I saw someone speculating, well you know what, when the anti-Christ comes before the second coming, he's going to mess up the world a lot, and so I think that 45 days is when we'll basically clean up the planet, so it's like a 45 day spring cleaning. I was like -- no. I mean, maybe, I don't know, and someday, honestly, we'll understand the significance of those, we'll go, oh, I see what you are talking about God, but right now, we have absolutely no idea, so Daniel asks for more information. He's given more information. Does it help him? No. I wonder if that's not the point. I wonder if the angel isn't making the point, Daniel, you want more information, but it's not going to help as much as you think it would. You've got enough. God has given you enough to move forward in faith. Start walking.

And I'm not just guessing at that. I'm quite certain that's exactly what the angel is getting at because in verse 13 he says, as for you, go your way until the end. You will rest and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance. It's the same command we saw earlier. He says walk towards the end. He says as for you, gave you a little bit more information. You wanted it. Did it help? No? Daniel, start moving forward in faith. Go your way 'til the end because here's what's waiting if you will do that. Three things. Rest. Life can be hard. Circumstances can be difficult, but rest is coming if you will move forward in faith. There is a resurrection coming. You will rise. This life is not the end of your life. In fact, honestly, there is a day coming, you will look back on the hardships of this life, and they are going to be so distant and dim in light of the eternity of joy that you experience that you will wonder how it ever seemed like such a big deal.

Resurrection is coming. Your reward is coming. An inheritance where God says well done good and faithful servant. You move forward in faith. Throughout this series we have tried to pull out of each of these chapters in Daniel a principle of what it looks like to thrive as God's people in difficult circumstances, and we have seen a lot of these principles. We have seen that God tells us that we thrive when we refuse to let the chaos shake our trust in God's control. We thrive when we remember that God rebukes arrogance, but he rewards humility. We have seen God tell us that we thrive when we trust him in spite of the pressure not to.
Here at the very end, we are given a principle that in some ways ties them all together. It's really the big lesson from the Book of Daniel. In some sense, it's the point of the entire Book of Daniel was communicated to us to get across, and it's that we thrive when we trust what God has told us and we move forward in faith. You are not going to ever have all of the information you want. There will always be additional questions, but at a certain point real understanding is only going to come if we move forward in faith. We thrive when we trust what God has said and we move forward in faith. Whether it's one of those principles that we talked about, or whether it's just the truth that God is good, and He has good plans for you, and so you move forward in faith. That's how we thrive in difficult circumstances.

I have three questions for you. Question number one, where are you struggling to move forward in faith? Where is it hard right now? Where is it, you have some sense of where God's calling you to. Maybe it's a difficult decision, or honestly, it's difficult circumstances, and you feel trapped where you are. It's hard to trust God and honestly, get your head up and get through the days, because you are struggling. Or maybe it's faith itself. Maybe you are here today and you don't have a relationship with God through faith in Jesus because there is information you are still looking for. If I could just get this questioned answered, or this. Yes, I know these things, but maybe I could -- maybe that's where you are stuck. You are not quite ready to trust. Where are you struggling to move forward in faith? It's going to look different for everybody.

Question number two is, what has God told you that should be enough to move you forward in faith? Daniel was given so much information. He still wanted a little bit more and the angel said, it's not going to help as much as you think it will. God's already given you what you need. God never asks us to move forward in faith without evidence that He's good, without evidence that He's trustworthy, but sometimes we see it, and we say, yeah, yeah, I know that's true. Yes, I have experienced that. Yes, I have seen this, but really, what I really now is -- and sometimes we need to pull all of that stuff that we keep trying to push behind us and go, this is what I need to keep my eyes on. This is how I know. This is how I'm confident. This is all I need. Maybe that's a difficult decision. Maybe it's just that I know that God is good, and there is good coming out of these difficult circumstances, I just have to get my head up, and I have to move forward.

Or maybe, as I said, maybe it's faith itself. Maybe you have questions about what faith in Jesus means, but at the same time, if you are honest, you recognize, like, I know the truth. I know that Jesus came, and he lived a perfect life. I believe that. I believe that he died in the cross for my sins to pay the price for all of the wrong I have done. I believe that. I know that he rose from the dead three days later. That's not a matter of faith. It's a fact of history. It's provable from historical sources. That happened. The question is, are you willing to trust in it to say, I'm going to put my faith in those facts. I know them. I just haven't been able to somehow take the plunge. So whether it's faith or one of those other kinds of areas, what has God told you that should be enough to allow you to move forward in faith?

And the last question, what will you do this week to move forward in faith? What will you do to say, God, I have had enough. I know, I would love a little bit more information, but yeah, I have enough. I just need to move forward in faith. Maybe it is a difficult decision, but you have great confidence that this is what God is calling you to, and it's just fear that's keeping you from doing it, and you go, I'm going to commit. I'm going to jump on it. I'm going to do it. Maybe it's a conversation you need to have with somebody. Maybe it's a phone call you need to make. Maybe it's -- I need to say no to something that I have been feeling pressure to do, but I just know it's not what God's calling me to, but I have been waffling, and I just need to commit. I need to move forward in faith in the direction that I know is right and good and the direction He's calling me to.

Or maybe, as I said, maybe it's faith itself. Maybe what you need to do to move forward right now is to go, I'm going to act on what I know and I have been waffling on. I'm going to put my faith in Jesus. If you are here today and you don't have a relationship with Jesus, you can right here, right now. There is nothing stopping you. In fact, I'm going to ask everyone to close your eyes and bow your heads. If you are here today and you don't have a relationship with God through faith in His Son, Jesus and what he did on the cross, but you know the truth, it's time to put your faith in those facts. You can do it right now in the quietness of your own heart, you just say this to God, you say these simple things, say, God, I have done wrong. I have sinned. I'm not perfect -- and I'm sorry.

Jesus, I believe you died on the cross for me, for my sins. Jesus, I believe you rose from the dead three days later to prove that you had new life to offer. I choose to put my trust in you right now. Thank you. Amen. If you made that decision for the first time, we would love to know about it. In the seats in front of you are some Connection Cards. One of the things that you can check on that Connection Card is, I said, yes, to putting my faith in Jesus today. I would love for you to fill that out, drop it off at the welcome center. They have some resources they would love to give you. Bring it down front. There will be people down front to pray after the service. They would love to celebrate that you said yes to Jesus today.

You can drop them in the boxes on the way out of the doors. We would also love, if your decision today to move forward in faith is related to some decision you need to make, or something you know God is calling you to, we would love to pray over that with you as well, and as I said, there will be people down front that would love to do that with you, but also, the staff actually prays over those Connection Cards and those Prayer Cards every single week on Wednesday as we get together as a staff, and so if you would, I would love for you to share what you sense God calling you to do this week as we move forward, and we'll pray for you as a staff on a Wednesday, you can just drop those plates in the offering plates as they go around or in the boxes on the way out, and whatever it is that God is calling you to, understand, moving forward in faith will always inevitably take you to a place that is infinitely better than the one you find yourself in now. There is rest. There is resurrection, and there is reward waiting. So move. Walk forward in faith. God bless.