Praying With Fire
Matthew 6:5-6 // Craig Smith
August 5, 2018

Craig // Welcome to all of our campuses including those of you who are joining us on church online. So glad you are here for the launch of our summer miniseries, Praying with Fire, where we are going to be taking a deep dive on a very famous prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. So famous a prayer that it actually has its own name. Of course, we call it -- “the Lord’s prayer.”

It’s so famous that honestly, even if church or faith in the Bible has never been part of your life, chances are you know at least a little bit of the Lord’s Prayer. Even if you have never heard it, you have probably seen it printed on things. I don’t know why, but we print it on lots of things -- some of them very weird. Here’s kind of a fun thing, the next time you are at a thrift store play Lord’s Prayer bingo. You get one point for everything that you find that the Lord’s Prayer is printed on. Some of them are perfectly normal. There are pictures. There are crocheted versions. That’s all great. I have a lovely wood carved version of the Lord’s prayer that was given to me, but some of the things we print it on are weird, like -- dinnerware. I was at a meal once where we all ate off of plates that had the Lord’s prayer printed down the center of it. Of course, food blocked some of the words. It was like, our Father who art in mashed potato, hallowed be thy meatloaf. It was just a weird -- but I think we do that because it is such a famous prayer, and I think the reason that it is so famous in part is that it’s so simple.

While prayer should be a very simple thing, the reality is that a lot of us find prayer pretty complicated and confusing. I talked to someone this weekend who said, I have been struggling with prayer for 35 years. I have read every book on the subject, and I just continue to find myself confused. That shouldn’t be the case, and we are going to try to demystify some things about prayer this weekend. Prayer is simple, but it’s little powerful. Let me let the cat out of the bag and say this, prayer is the most powerful tool we have. Prayer is the most powerful tool we have, because in prayer we connect to the all-powerful God. That makes prayer an incredible thing, and yet it’s a pretty simple thing, and the Lord’s Prayer is an example of how simple prayer can and should be, but just because it’s simple doesn’t mean that it doesn’t have a lot to teach us, and so I think whether or not you consider yourself a brand new prayer. Maybe you have never prayed before in your life. Maybe you consider yourself an expert prayer. Anyone willing to claim that one? Like, yeah, I got this whole thing figured out? No? All right. Well, no matter where you are on the spectrum, what the Lord’s prayer has to teach us is going to be powerful. I think you will be challenged by some of the things that Jesus has to share here.

So why don’t you go ahead and grab your Bible, and we are going to make our way to Matthew 6, the Gospel of Matthew 6:5, which actually doesn’t contain the Lord’s Prayer. It’s kind of the lead up to the Lord’s Prayer. We are going to look at a couple of verses today where Jesus has some general principles to give us about how to pray and how not to pray. He begins this way in Matthew 6:5, he says, and when you pray. We are just going to stop there for a second, and I realize we are only four words in, but those are four loaded words, because you notice Jesus doesn’t say, if you should find yourself praying, or on the off chance that at some point you should need to pray. He didn’t say that. He says, and when you pray. In other words, Jesus assumes that prayer is a regular part of our lives. Jesus assumes that his followers are praying, that it’s just kind of the rhythm of what it means to follow Jesus. So why does Jesus assume that? Because I think of two truths that he knows that we often forget. Truth number one is that we need God. We need God every bit as much as we need food and sleep. We need God. Unfortunately, the fall, the thing we call the fall, when Adam and eve sinned and all of our sin since then is contributed to it, the fall broke our relationship with God. It broke our ability to experience God, but it didn’t get rid of the desire. It didn’t get rid of the hunger. That’s the reason we have so many religions, because every human being that ever lived has been trying somehow to satisfy this longing we have, this hunger that we have for God. We need God. The second truth is this. Prayer is the easiest way to experience God. Prayer is the easiest way to experience God. Understand it’s not that God doesn’t pay attention to us until we are praying. It’s not like God ignores us until the moment we begin to pray. On the contrary, scripture is really clear, the Bible says over and over again that eyes of the Lord are on His people. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous.

God’s paying attention to you. God’s eyes are fixed on you. God’s attention on you never wavers, but we don’t return the favor. We spend an awful lot of our lives not paying attention. Not giving God our attention. What happens in prayer is we begin to reciprocate the attention God is giving us. It’s in that moment that we begin to experience God that we begin to connect with Him, to find the satisfaction to the longing we are all born with. Think about it this way, I sometimes find on the weekends in the lobby, I see somebody that I need to talk to about something, so I’ll go up to them, but they are already having a conversation with somebody. And I don’t want to just break in and interrupt the conversation if it’s not an emergency, so I lurk. I set myself up in their peripheral vision because they are busy, right? But it’s in that moment they notice me and bring their conversation to a close, that they turn to me and then they begin to converse with me, and I’m talking to them, and we are
We are experiencing relationship at that moment, and it works that way in prayer. God’s eyes are always upon us, but it’s in that moment that we put our eyes back, when we reciprocate His attention that we really begin to connect to and experience God, and so Jesus assumes that His people are praying because of those two truths, that we need God and prayer is the easiest way to experience God. That raises the natural question, how often should I be praying? Jesus assumes that I am praying, but how many times a day do I need to pray to satisfy Him? How many times do I check off the box that hey, I did that thing that I needed to do? Kind of a hard question to answer. Think about it in terms of any other thing we need to do, right? We need to eat. We need to sleep. So how often do we do those things? On one level the answer is, whenever we need to, right? We need to eat, so we eat as often as we need to. We need rest, and so we sleep as often as we need to, and prayer is no different. We need to pray as often as we need to pray, but how about this? How many of you have ever been so busy that you forgot to eat? You skipped a meal. You think, I can’t believe I did that.

How many of you have been so busy that you weren’t getting enough sleep? Yeah, here’s an interesting truth. The busyness of life can cause us to forget to do even the things that we most need to do, right? We can get so busy that even the things we most need to do like eating and sleeping, we can actually forget to do, so what do we do? We build rhythms. We build rhythms of regular occurrences of these things so we don’t forget to do what we need to do. So we eat in a rhythm, right? We have breakfast and we have lunch and we have dinner. That’s a rhythm. We go to sleep about the same time every night. That’s a rhythm. Rhythms help us to not forget to do what we most need to do, and we need to do the same thing with prayer. We need to have a rhythm. Having a daily rhythm of prayer will keep us from forgetting to pray. Having a daily rhythm of prayer will help us to remember to pray. What should that look like? I’m not going to give you an answer to that because it depends on your life. It depends on what works best for you.

What it needs to be is it needs to be something with regularity every day. I’ll tell you what mine looks like, not that you should follow this, but just so you can understand practically the kind of thing I’m talking about. When I was really young, I used to be able to sleep in, and when I would wake up, I would wake up really groggy and be like, what’s going on, and gradually return to the land of the living. Those days are gone. Like I haven’t slept like that in so long. I usually wake up pretty early these days, and I wake up and my mind is already racing on things. I already have three or four things my brain is already working on. My rhythm partly is that the moment I wake up, I take those three or four things that my brain is already working on, and I lay them before the Lord. I go, God, here’s what I’m thinking about right now. Maybe it’s something I need to ask for. Maybe it’s something I need to say, I’m struggling with this. I don’t know what to do with it. Maybe it’s wisdom I need, but I lay them before the Lord, and I say, I don’t know what to do, but I trust You. That’s my first rhythm. As soon as my eyes open up, I pray. Then when I get to the office, I look at my schedule, and I pray through my schedule.

I say, I have this meeting coming up, and I need this one. I need wisdom here. That’s going to be a hard conversation. I need courage to say what needs to be said, but I need grace to say it in a loving way, and I pray through my schedule. I have a prayer list that I tell people I’ll be praying for, or things that are on my heart. I pray through the prayer list. I do that every day. That’s part of my rhythm, and then at night, the last thing I do before I go to sleep, I say God, thank you for this day, and I run through the day, the things I’m grateful for, the things that I saw Him do. So that’s kind of my rhythm, and you need to have a rhythm like that because having a daily rhythm will allow us to remember to pray, but even though we have a rhythm for things like eating or sleeping, we also have other times that we need to do them, right? We eat at breakfast, lunch and dinner, and yet we find ourselves hungry so we need to have a -- a snack. We are responding to the need that we have for fuel at that moment, and though we have a regular rhythm for sleeping, we often find ourselves at times during the day in need of rest.

I don’t know that what that rest looks like for you. I can’t nap. I have just never been able to, but I still find those moments where I really have a need for some rest, and so I put my phone on the desk and take a lap around the building, a slow walk. It’s rest. In other words, rhythm is part of the package, but also, we have this habit of responding to needs as they arise and we need to do the same thing we pray.

We need to have a rhythm of prayer, but we also need to have a habit of responding in prayer as needs arise. So throughout the day, I find myself in a conversation going, I don’t know what to say here. Prayer time. Oh, this is -- this is confusing. I need insight, Lord. In meetings here, someone will say so and so and is going through this or this kind of thing is happening, and we’ll just go, hey, let’s just stop and pray. We are not just going to say we are going to pray. We are going to pray, and then we are going to continue to pray at other times, and so we just stop things and pray. What’s happening is we are responding to the needs as they arise, and what happens is we need this rhythm in prayer and a habit of responding in prayer whenever the need arises. So Jesus says when you pray, assuming we are doing it because we need to do it. And then he begins to give us insight as to what it should look like or what it should not look like. He says this, do not be like the hypocrites for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others.

He says don’t pray like hypocrites, which is pretty good advice, right? A hypocrite is somebody who pretends to be something they are not actually, or somebody that pretends to do something they are not actually doing, and here he says don’t pray like hypocrites because they are pretending to pray but they are not actually praying. If they are not actually praying, what are they doing? They are performing. You notice what he says, don’t be like them. They love to pray to be seen by others. They are praying so that other people notice them. They are finding public places and public opportunities to pray so that other people pay attention to them, right? I don’t know if you have ever known anybody that struggles with this. I know a couple that I think did. I try not to judge, but every time I see somebody, that when I talk to them one-on-one, it’s
just a normal every day conversation. Even when they address the group, it feels like a normal every day conversation, but when they begin to pray out loud they suddenly turn into Shakespeare. Have you ever known anyone like that? Suddenly it’s thee and thou and art-eth and stuff.

It’s like what just happened? Who are you? It’s like you are a different person. Yeah, because they are. What’s happening in that moment, I think, they are really not attempting to return God’s attention to Him. They are not really focused on God. They are doing something for the other people who are watching. They are performing rather than praying. Honestly, I try not to look down on that because the reality is that I struggle with the same thing. I struggle with the same thing, but this is an important truth that we have to recognize. When we pray to be seen by others, we are not praying. We are performing. I don’t know what that might look like for you, but my guess is, even if your temptation is not to stand on an actual street corner praying, or to stand up in a group to pray in order to be seen by others, I think we all struggle with this on some level. I know I do. Here are three things that tip me off if I’m performing rather than praying.

The first one is planning. If I’m in a group that is praying and I find myself think, okay, when it’s my turn, this is what I’m going to say. That’s planning, right? Well, that’s a performance thing. Have you ever done that in prayer? When it’s just you and God, have you ever sat down by yourself and said, what am I going to say when I say this to Jesus? We don’t do that. If you are planning what you are going to say in a group setting, the chances are what you are doing is that you are performing rather than praying. That’s a pretty good tip off.

Another one that I struggle with is language. I can laugh at the people that become like Shakespeare, but the reality is, I often find myself in a group situation using words that I wouldn’t normally use. I’m not sure why that is, but it’s something to do with the people listening and not to the God whose attention is on me and that I’m returning, so language can be a cue. The other big one for me, the tip off is, am I making points? Am I making points for other people to understand. Because here’s the thing, God doesn’t need to be taught anything, you know that? Like yes never make a point in prayer and God’s like, wow, that’s good.

[Laughter]

That’s never going to happen, but we tend to do it sometimes when we are in groups right? I’ll be honest, preachers are really bad at this. In fact we joke about it as preachers. We say, hey, if you get to the end of your message and you realize, hey, you forget that point you really wanted to make, don’t worry. Shove it into the closing prayer. You know, we do that. Here’s a quick clue. This is like all of the behind scenes secrets. If you have ever hear a preacher in his closing prayer say, Lord, help us to remember -- chances are what’s about to happen is a point that he forgot to make earlier.

[Laughter]

It happens. Feel free to call me on it if I do it. But all of these things are tip offs that we are praying to be heard by other people rather than by God. So what does that mean? What do we do? Do we just not pray in groups? Do we not pray out loud? I don’t think so because Jesus prayed in groups, and he prayed out loud, and I don’t think he was a hypocrite. He had mastered what he needed to master to be able to do this. Here’s what we have to do. We have to -- we have to recognize that temptation to perform rather than to pray, and we have to resist that temptation by remembering that real prayer has an audience of real prayer. Real prayer has an audience of One. Real prayer is about connecting to God and God alone. Whether other people are listening or not, real prayer is all about connecting to God. Real prayer has an audience of One. It’s really important that we pray that way because Jesus says, truly I tell you, they -- meaning they who are praying to be heard by others, they who are performing, really, they have received their reward in full.

Interesting statement. What is the reward he’s talking about? And the answer in the context is, the reward is enjoying attention. See, here’s the thing. The reward of real prayer is enjoying the attention of our Father. Our Father’s eyes are always fixed upon us. In real prayer, prayer to an audience of One, we actually begin to return that attention. We begin entering into that relationship. We begin to enjoy that attention. We are aware of it. We are experiencing it. The reward of real prayer is that we get to enjoy our Father’s attention. But people he says that are praying are performing for others to hear, they don’t get to enjoy their Father’s attention. The only attention they get to enjoy is the attention of those that they are talking to, or performing for. So he says, hey, if you are praying for other people to hear you, if you are praying to attract their attention to convince them that you are so spiritual or whatever, I hope you are satisfied by that because it’s the only attention you are going to get to enjoy. If you have managed to attract their attention, you’re done.

That’s it. That’s as far as it goes. That’s the only attention you get to enjoy, but not mine. So he says instead, do this. When you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father who is unseen. So when you pray, go into your room. I love that. Some translations instead of room say things like, go into your secret chamber, which sounds sort of like mysterious, right? Others say, go into your inner room. Also mysterious. Others, probably my favorite translation says go into your closet. I love that one because it’s actually the literal word. It’s a word for closet. If you have spent time in church, you might have heard this phrase. I heard it a lot growing up. People would talk about my prayer closet. Anybody ever heard that? Yeah, this is where it comes from, because the Lord here literally means closet and that’s where they are praying, so it’s a prayer closet. When I heard that growing up, I heard people talking about it, I thought that’s the most spiritual person like ever. Like they have a room in their house devoted to prayer. I don’t know why they call it a closet, but whatever.

But the reality is, Jesus isn’t talking about a prayer closet. He’s actually talking about a broom closet. I mean the word really, literally means this
very small room that you typically had in a first century Palestinian home that you use for storage. You would put, you know, food and maybe bedding, tools, brooms, those kind of things. It would be pretty small. It would be one of the very few rooms in the house that had a door. So Jesus says, go in there. And it’s kind of a comical image because usually there wouldn’t be room in there. Does anyone have a house that you have so much storage that you don’t know what to put in these storage spaces? Nobody ever has ever. These would be packed little rooms, and the idea is that you have to cram yourself in there trying not to knock things down and manage, and you are kind of contorted, and there is nowhere to sit really, and so you are in this awkward place and then he says close the door, but the thing is, no one is supposed to be in the closet, so there’s no handle on the inside of the door, which means closing the door is hard. You have to try not to squish your fingers as you pull it closed. It’s this kind of weird image but what Jesus is saying, yeah, it’s going to be uncomfortable, you have to do some things out of the normal, but what he’s saying is, do whatever you have to do to make sure God is your only audience.

Do whatever you have to do to make sure you are not performing for other people. Do whatever you have to do to make sure you are praying to an audience of One. Sometimes you might have to get uncomfortable. I’ll tell you what this kind of looks like in my life.

I come in, and I say part of my rhythm is to sit down early in the morning, and I pray through my schedule and every now and then, not every day, but every now and then this thought occurs to me that it’s good that I’m doing this where I’m sitting because if people walk past my door, they’ll see their pastor praying, and it will be good for them to see. And I try to spiritualize it, because they’ll pray, and so I’m actually leading. Then I have to think, I’m thinking about what other people -- so I move my chair over to the other side where they can’t see me, and then I think, yeah, but they are going to know that the chair’s been moved, so they are going to know I’m praying. That’s no good, so I have to leave the chair there and go sit on the hard floor over here. And I don’t do it very often, but every now and then, when I become aware of this temptation that I’m feeling to actually perform rather than pray, I do whatever I have to do to make sure that I’m praying to an audience of One.

Another uncomfortable thing that I do sometimes, when I’m in a group prayer situation, like for instance on Wednesdays, our staff gets together and we pray over a lot of different things that we know to be needs in this church, and in the seat in front of you, if you are online feel free to use the comment section to let us know about prayers, but you might have a little card in front of you that says “Let’s Connect” and there is an opportunity to write down things that you would like the staff to be praying for. We take all of those cards, we receive texts and things, we get the ones from online, and we pray through those as a group, and tables, we pray through every one of those, every Wednesday, and sometimes when we are doing that -- we always pray out loud, sometimes when we are doing that, I find myself planning what I’m about to say. And then I’m like, I’m performing rather than praying, and so what I have to do -- I don’t say anything.

I pray silently. I don’t say anything out loud because I know in my heart that if I said anything out loud at that moment, I would be performing and not praying, and I don’t want to do that, but that’s hard. It’s uncomfortable because I think if they don’t hear me pray, they’ll think that I’m not praying. They’ll think that I’m not spiritual, but the thing is, the more that I’m worried about what they are going to think about me if I don’t pray, the more I’m actually performing instead of praying if I do have the math, so I occasionally have to take that risk and do, yeah, they might think that, but it doesn’t matter. I’m not going to minimize the power of prayer. I’m not going to waste the opportunity to enjoy my Father’s presence in prayer because I’m actually doing it in a way to attract the attention, so I don’t know what that looks like for you, but Jesus says you have to go out of your way. You have to do whatever you have to do in order to make sure that you are praying to an audience of One, that you are praying to God and God alone - he says, then, your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. There’s that word reward again.

In the context, the reward is that we get to enjoy His attention, that in prayer we begin to return our Father’s attention. We begin to enter into a relationship where we actually experience the presence and the attention of God. His eyes are always on us, but in prayer we actually begin to enjoy His presence, and that is an incredible thing. You might be sitting here thinking, that doesn’t sound like all that great of a reward, but if that’s what you are thinking the, here’s what’s happened. You have forgotten how great it is to enjoy the attention of somebody special.

There’s something magical about being able to experience the attention of somebody special. When I was making the transition to Mission Hills a couple of years ago, I did something out of character for me. I reached out to some heroes of mine. I had some pastors that really influenced me. So I got $5 gift cards to Starbucks, and I wrote this short little letter, and then basically the letter just said, hey, God has really used you in my life. I’m grateful for that. I want you to enjoy this cup of coffee. If you ever have the chance, I would love to hear one thing that you think I need to keep in mind as I make this transition to this new church. And I gave them my e-mail so they could type a response and I gave them my cellphone to text a response. If you have a chance, great, otherwise just enjoy this cup of coffee, and I sent it out to 10 or 12 guys that I respected a lot. And honestly, most of them responded. It was amazing. Over the couple of weeks, I got responses back from almost all of them, and they gave me pieces of advice.

The one that really blew me away, one guy actually called me. My phone rang one day. I looked at it. I didn’t recognize the number. I answered it. He announced himself. He said this is so and so. I went, no it’s not. He went, yeah, it really is. I got this Starbucks card from you. I said holy cow, you called me? We had this great conversation. He gave me half an hour or 45 minutes. It was a great conversation. He asked questions. He was really interested in me. He heard some of my story and what God had been doing. It was just this amazing experience. He gave me some great advice. It was amazing advice. I don’t remember any of it.

[Laughter]
What I remember is how it felt to have his attention. What I remember is how good it felt that he paid attention to me. Maybe for you that’s a woman that you final got up the courage to ask out and she said yes, and you went out and she asked questions. She was interested in you. Maybe that’s your wife. Maybe it’s a girlfriend right now. Ladies, maybe it’s that guy that you really wanted to ask you out, but he was dense as could be. He missed clue after clue after clue. Finally you had to get your girlfriends involved, and finally, he asked you out, but you went out and he was interested in you. He gave you his attention and maybe that’s your husband now, or maybe it’s your boyfriend. Or maybe it was a teacher that you looked up to, and they paid special attention to you, or maybe it was a coach or a leader on your soccer team or your fraternity or sorority or at work. There’s something really powerful about enjoying the attention of somebody that we look up to.

And if that’s true of a pastor or a coach or a teacher or a man or a woman or a leader of some kind, how much more true, how much more incredible should it be to enjoy the attention of God Almighty Himself? To live in the truth that God’s eyes are always fixed upon you. His attention is always upon you and in prayer, you can begin to return that attention and enter into an experience where you actually get to enjoy that attention. That’s what Jesus is saying. That’s what Jesus is driving at here is that when we pray to an audience of One, we enjoy Our Father’s undivided attention. Just think about that for a second. When you pray to an audience of One, you enjoy God’s undivided attention. I know, you got some real technical people among us. You are like, technically, if He’s doing that for all of us, then He’s dividing His attention. No, He’s not. Here’s why. Let’s do some math. Nobody came here expecting math.

God’s infinitely knowledgeable. His attention span is infinite. Here’s the thing, you know what happens when you divide infinity by no matter how many, you know what you get? You get infinity still. God doesn’t give you less attention because He’s also paying attention to other people. God’s full attention, His undivided attention is on us. When we pray to an audience of One, we have God Almighty’s undivided attention. We get to experience the joy of His undivided attention. That is an unbelievable reality. So what do we do? First thing, enjoy God’s attention by developing a rhythm of daily prayer. Build a rhythm of daily prayer. Now, I have told you my rhythm. I’m not perfect. There are days that I miss things. I don’t pray as much as I would like to. I miss a piece, but the interesting thing about a rhythm is you know when it’s missing. You know when you have missed the beat. You feel it, and that drives you back to prayer again, so even when you miss a rhythm of prayer, you are drawn back to prayer because you feel its absence, so develop a daily rhythm of prayer.

Second thing, enjoy God’s attention by developing a habit of responding in prayer throughout the day as needs arise. Begin to develop this spiritual reflex. You can develop it. When you need insight, pray for insight. When God does something good and exciting, you thank God for it. When you find yourself talking to somebody who is hurting in some way, you stop and you pray. It begins to become a spiritual reflex so that you respond consistently throughout the day as the needs arrive without even thinking about it. We have a rhythm, and we have a habit of responding, and then the third thing is enjoy God’s attention by praying to an audience of One. Do whatever you have to do to make sure that God is the only audience for your prayer. Because it’s only when God is our only audience that we get to experience everything that prayer has to offer.

When we pray to an audience of One, we enjoy God’s undivided attention. Why don’t we do just that. Let’s respond to this truth in prayer, would you? At all of our campuses, let’s just say this. God, thank You for paying attention to us. That Your eyes are on us is an incredible reality. It’s kind of a hard to believe reality, and yet Your Word is clear that Your eyes are always on us, and Lord, we don’t want You looking at the back of our heads. We want You looking into our eyes, and so we want to return that attention and enter into that relationship to experience and enjoy that attention. You have given us this simple tool of prayer to do that. Thank You. Thank You for making it so, so easy. I’m going to ask you to continue in an attitude of prayer and at all of our campuses, including church online, some of us are realizing that we have minimized the power of prayer in our lives. We have not made prayer a priority. It’s stupid not to. It’s an incredible gift, and it’s so simple, so at all of our campuses, those of us that are realizing like I am that I need to push in, I need to make prayer a bigger part of my life.

If you are feeling that need to make prayer a bigger part of my life, would you just slip your hand up right now and hold it up with me? We are going to pray about that in just a second. Online, if you would just click right below me. At all of our campuses, let’s just ask God for this. God, we want to pray more. We want to pray more powerfully. We want to enjoy Your presence more frequently. Would You -- give us the courage or the insight or whatever it is to begin making some changes? I’m going to build a rhythm of prayer in my life. I’m going to develop this habit of responding in prayer throughout the day, and I’m going to do whatever I have to do to make sure that You are my only audience so that I can enjoy Your attention. Amen. If you are continuing an attitude of prayer, for those of you that are followers of Jesus Christ, if you have given your lives to Jesus at some point, and you know what it means to experience the presence of God in your life, would you begin praying for the people around you that may not know Jesus, and may not have a relationship with God.

Pray for those who are online watching us from all over the world right now, and if that’s you. If you are listening right now, and you are hearing what we are talking about with the presence of God, and maybe a lightbulb is coming on, and you are realizing, that’s what I have been missing. It’s God’s attention. That’s the hole that I have been trying to fill by trying to attract his attention or her attention or their attention or the attention of the people over there, or trying to impress people or whatever it is, you realize that what you have been lacking or what you are longing for is a relationship with Your Creator. That’s a great place to be. And also, maybe you are in the place where you say, how could He possibly have His attention on me? How could He possibly want to have a relationship with me? Well, He does, and here’s how I know. He loves you so much that He sent His only Son who came and He lived a perfect life, and then He went to the cross, and He took all of our sins upon himself and on the cross he paid for our sins. He removed the barrier between us and God that we caused by sin. He paid for it, and He died, and then Jesus rose from the dead three days later to prove that sin was defeated, and to prove that He had new life to offer.
Hope. He said whoever calls upon the name of Jesus will be saved, will be forgiven. If, as you are hearing these words right now, you realize, I want that. I want that new life. I want that forgiveness. I want that relationship with My Creator; you can have it right now. If you are ready to receive that new life right now, would you just lift your hand up right now? That’s awesome. Amen. If you are online, just click the button right below me. Now let’s just pray. Wherever you are, you just say this to God in your own heart. God, I want You in my life. I’m tired of chasing after imitations that can’t satisfy. I want to enjoy Your attention. I know I have sinned. I know I don’t deserve Your love, but I also know that You loved me in spite of it. Jesus, I believe that you died on the cross for my sins. Jesus, I believe you rose from the dead. You can offer me new life. I’m ready to receive it. So Jesus, I give you my life. I invite you to come in and take your place.

I receive your gift of forgiveness and salvation, and a new relationship with My Creator. In Jesus name, amen. Can we celebrate those people here and around the world that just came into the family of God right now? That’s so awesome.