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Well, good morning. Welcome to The MET. I want to welcome everyone out on *Fry Road* (our Cypress campus) and with us here on the *Jones Road Campus*. My name is Scott [Rodgers, *Jones Road Campus Pastor*]. Glad to have you here. Are you excited this morning? Right!

Well, last weekend, in the spirit of our series called *Kickin' It Old School*, we had a little fun with each other. And word got around that some of you felt a little left out in whether or not you were old school. So we're going to take another attempt at this thing and you may find yourself falling in one of these:

- If you have this on your desk right now...[picture displayed on the screens is the Commodore 64 Micro Computer] you are old school.
- If you drove up to our Cypress campus this morning in this...[picture displayed on the screens is a 1972-era AMC Gremlin] yes, Cypress campus, you are old school.
- If you're wearing this hair style in this day and age...[picture displayed on the screens is of Pastor Sal Sberna with slightly longer, wavy hair from just a few years ago] you are old school. (Oh my, take it down quick. I can still see it up there; take it down. All right, take it down.)
- All right, if you think that I resemble this guy...[picture displayed on the screens is of Barry Manilow]—stop it!—and you are old school. Don't even go there. I'd sing for you, but then you'd all run away. (Oh, how do I go from here?)

*Psalm 14:1* (this is taking a 90-degree turn right now)—*Psalm 14:1* says:

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."  
*Psalm 14:1 (NIV)*

*1 Scott 24:4* tells us:

The honest person says in his heart, "There are times when it seems like there is no God."

Stop turning through your Bible looking for *1 Scott 24:4*; it's not there. The first one is, but this isn't. Have you ever had the thought though...

- Where is God?
- Where is God in my life?
- Where is God around me?
- I cannot see God moving anywhere.

If you've had that thought, I want you to know that you're not alone. I've had that thought a number of times.

Today we're going to look at the person in the book of *Esther*. *Esther* reads like a soap opera to the hilt. Let me give you a flyover of the book of *Esther* in the *Old Testament*.

There's a king; his name is King Xerxes. He's throwing a party. It's a six-month bash and He decides to end it up on a seven-day binge. And while he's doing that, his wife Queen Vashti is partying in the palace with the ladies—having (kind of) a seven-day, week-long ladies' week out—and they're doing their own partying.

So the king is on this binge and he decides: Hey, I'm going to call the queen (because she's really hot). I'm going to get her to show off her beauty to everyone and get her in here. So, go get the queen and tell her to come to me. So they go to get Queen Vashti and she refuses to come, which is a no-no if your husband's the king.

So the king is outraged and he thinks: Well, what am I going to do?—this is so crazy. So he pulls his inner circle of counselors together and says: What am I going to do? Queen Vashti just refused to come to the king. They're talking and they're full of insecurity. One of them pipes up and says: Well, if we don't do something about Queen Vashti, all the women in the kingdom are going to begin to disrespect their husbands, so we must do something. How about we banish Queen Vashti from the kingdom? Oh, that's a great idea (King Xerxes says). So he banishes his wife from being queen and from ever seeing him again.

Then a few days later he begins to get lonely and he's thinking: What have I done? So he decides: Hey, I'm going to have my own season of *The Bachelor* [an American reality-television dating game-show]. I'm going to go across my kingdom and let's draw all the good-looking women together, put them in the harem, and take them through a 12-month *Mary Kay* beauty-preparation process. And they do that. Then they're going to go to him one at a time to see which one he chooses.

Well, while this is going on, there's this guy named Mordecai. Mordecai works near the palace and he is a Jew. The Jews have been exiled a long time ago and they're here in this place called Susa, which is a Persian kingdom. Mordecai is raising his cousin up, who's an orphan, and her name is Esther. Well, Esther is good looking and they take notice of Esther and think: Okay, let's get her on this season of *The Bachelor*. So she goes and she's in the harem going through the whole deal. And she goes to the king (it's her turn). She finds favor with King Xerxes and he allows her to become queen.

While that's happening, there's this guy in the kingdom; his name is Haman. Haman's a royal official and the king promotes him to the second person in the kingdom. Haman is a really insecure, prideful, arrogant jerk. (That's really what he is.) But the thing is (is that) when Haman walks out of the palace—because of who he is—the people are supposed to kneel and bow down to Haman. Well, Mordecai does not bow.

Historians tell us that the reason Mordecai and the Jewish people would not bow to Haman is because—if you look way down his family tree—he was connected to people that were called the Amalekites. In the book of *Exodus* they were the arch enemies of not only the people of God but of the movement of God on the planet. So Mordecai being a devout follower of God [says]: There's no way that we're going to bow down to this Amalekite Haman. Not a chance.

Word gets to Haman that Mordecai's not bowing down. And word gets to Haman also that—not only is he not bowing down but—he is of Jewish descent. So Haman is outraged and he thinks:

I've got to get rid of this guy. I'm going to get rid of this guy. Then he goes: Oh, he's a Jew as well, huh? Well, I'm not just going to kill him; I'm going to kill them all.

So he goes to the king and convinces the king that there's this peculiar group of people in the kingdom causing problems—could be a future threat—and he says: I tell you what, King—

- Let's just do (a) genocide.
- Let's get rid of them all.
- Let's annihilate the whole race. (Sounds a little familiar, doesn't it?)

Let's annihilate the whole race and, by the way, I'll pay for it myself. And the king says: Okay—whatever, whatever—go ahead and do what you want.

Well, word gets out to Mordecai that now genocide is coming later in the year and he starts to (just): What am I going to do? So he goes to the—now—the queen, who actually is Jewish. The king didn't notice this because she has hidden her lineage (and her deal) from the king—so he didn't know that. So he tries to talk the queen into going to the king to stop this deal.

Well, Haman—this guy is (while [Mordecai's] doing that)—he's all excited. He's going to get rid of them all. Then while that's all going on, he gets even more and more mad at this guy named Mordecai because he will not bow to him. So he goes to the king and says—Oh!—he wants to get rid of Mordecai and he's (just) in this outrage. And so what happens is—

He goes to his family and says: I cannot handle this guy; I've got to get rid of him.

The family says: Well, why don't you build a gallows and hang the guy in front of everybody in public so that they know we do not disrespect Haman.

While that's going on the queen is trying to go to the king and get his ear so that she can stop the killing of the Jews (and he doesn't even know that his wife is one yet). So she goes to the king and—

He says: What do you want?

She says: Ah...well, can we have dinner tomorrow night?

He says: Well sure. I'll give you anything up to half the kingdom.

So she invites Haman and the king to dinner the next night. They go to dinner and—

The king says: What would you like? I'll give you anything up to half the kingdom.

And she says: Well, if you'll be patient with me, King, come to dinner tomorrow night and I will tell you what's on my heart. I just want you and Haman.

So Haman is thinking: Oh, man, this is amazing. So he rushes off to home to tell his family how great he is and how he's been invited to a personal meal with only the king and the queen. He's (just kind of) arrogant about the whole thing. But while he's out on his way home, he passes by Mordecai. Mordecai does not bow and he (just) can't stand it anymore and that's when his family says you've got to hang him.

So they're building this big/huge *Hangman* contraption one night. While they're doing that, Haman realizes: I've got to go ask the king to make sure I get permission for this. (Are you still tracking with me? Cypress campus, are you still there? All right.) So he's going to go to the king to get permission.

But the king is trying to go to bed—he can't sleep—so he gets up and he asks someone: Hey, read me some recent history books of my kingdom. So they pull out this account and—

They say: There was a time, King, when you were going to be assassinated—do you remember?—and this guy named Mordecai was the one who let Esther know, who let you know, that it was happening. Because of him the assassination attempt was thwarted.

The king asked: Well, what have I done for Mordecai? How did I show that I appreciated and thanked him?

They said: You've never done anything.

So the king is sitting there going: Hmmm, what am I going to do? What am I going to do? Hmmm, does anybody have any good ideas? Hey, is anybody outside who can help me think this through?

They said: Well, by chance, here comes Haman.

Haman's walking in asking for permission to hang Mordecai, but the king stops him and says: Hey, Haman, there's this guy in my kingdom and I really want to honor him. What's Haman thinking?—Oh, he's thinking: [demonstrates egotistically patting himself on the chest] Oh, why do you do this to me all the time? I'm just such a good guy!

“How do I honor him,” the king says, “and show him how much I value him? And Haman's thinking: Well, here's what you need to do.

- Take a robe that you've worn,
- Take a crown that you've worn—put them on the guy
- Put him on a horse that you've ridden (and)
- March him all over the city and tell the people how great he is.

And the king says: That's a good idea. Well, you go get Mordecai and do that. And Haman is like: What?! He cannot disobey though, so he goes and gets Mordecai, marches him around, and says: Hey, this guy's great! The king is honoring him.

And when he is done he runs home in total humiliation telling his family. And his family is like: Oh, you're done for, buddy. And while he's weeping and crying and pouting to his family, people come in and say: Hey, you have dinner with Queen Vashti and the king in just a few minutes, get over here.

So he goes to dinner and they're sitting there—not Vashti, but Queen Esther—

Esther says: Here's what you can do for me.

The King says again: Well, what is it? Up to half my kingdom.

She says: You need to stop the annihilation of my people.

He says: What are you talking about?

[Esther says:] Well, I'm Jewish, and my people are going to be wiped out.

[He asks:] Whoa! Who did this?

[She answers:] Haman.

Well, the king flips out over Haman and ends up taking him and hanging him on the gallows he made for Mordecai; and Mordecai gets his estate and takes his place. And these are the *Days of Our Lives*. I told you; it's a soap opera!

Something is very interesting about the book of *Esther*. It's ten chapters long, but never once does it mention the name of God. It's the only book in Scripture that does not mention the name of God. I find that really interesting. Because even though God's name is not mentioned, His hand is clearly seen all throughout.

I believe that this morning we're going to learn a few things from the book of *Esther* about—

- How to recognize when God is moving in our midst (and)
- How to identify those moments when God wants to align us with what He's doing
- How to seize those moments where God wants to use us to further His purposes in this world.

I like to call it seizing your divine moment.

## **SEIZE YOUR DIVINE MOMENTS**

Say it with us—Cypress campus, say it with us—say: Seize my divine moment. Cypress, you were much louder than Jones Road. Try it again: Seize my divine moment.

How do we recognize when those times come when we can clearly see God is moving and He wants to use me to do something and fall into His plan to further His purposes?

If you have your bible, turn to *Esther, chapter 4*. Let me recap real quick the context here: Haman convinces the king to annihilate the Jewish race in the kingdom of Susa. Mordecai hears about it. Here's where we pick it up in *verse 1, Esther, chapter 4*. It says this:

When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, {referring to what I just mentioned} he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes {in other words he's grieving; terribly grieving}, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly.

*Esther 1:4 (NIV)*

And write this down if you're taking notes because out of this, here's what I saw in this: If we're going to seize our divine moment, we have to first realize that God's purposes are bigger than just me.

## **GOD'S PURPOSES ARE BIGGER THAN JUST ME**

You see, God got ahold of Mordecai's heart. He didn't get ahold of his heart to build his faith to get a new Cadillac. He got ahold of Mordecai's heart and filled it with a burden of compassion—a burden of concern for his people.

Whenever God is moving it seems like—when He wants to use us to further His purposes—we first have to get to the place where we're past our self and we realize: God's purposes are bigger than just me. I hate to be a big brown fuzzy bearer of bad news, but it's not all about you. It's partly about you, but it's not all.

And here's one of the ways I really believe are the reasons why (I believe) God is moving here at The MET:

- At our Cypress campus there were some guys who got up this morning at about 4:30 or 5:00 a.m. and went and picked up some equipment so they could set up at the school. There was a whole team of people there at about 6:00 a.m. And they're still there working their tails off, because they believe God is moving and God cares about that community.
- I pulled in here at 7:30 a.m. and there's a bunch of guys out in the parking lot putting up cones and setting things up. And they're doing that because they believe that God's going to show up today.
- I hear from Zach [King], our *Student Pastor*, about the students who went to Mexico this past week and the adults that went with them who gave up a week of their time—either vacation or unpaid, whatever it was. But they went because they believe that God wanted them to go, and wanted to touch peoples' lives.
- When I hear about the Orphanage in Uganda
- When I hear about the team that just went to Haiti this last week trying to figure out: How can we do a sustainable, long-term help to some of these people?
- When I see the hundreds of volunteers at both our campuses serving—you guys, when I see your heart.
- When I see Pastor Sal's heart that wants to reach people far from Christ

To me, that's a big indicator that God just might be in this, because His purposes are bigger than just me.

So, if we're going to seize that divine moment, put ourselves in the position for God to use us to further His purposes, I think it kind of starts with realizing: It's bigger than just me. And once we get there, once we get to that place—write this down—I think here's the second place we get to. Not that it's all linear, it (kind of) may not necessarily be, but we certainly do arrive at this place; and that's this: (that) we face certain uncertainty.

## FACE CERTAIN UNCERTAINTY

Mordecai goes to Queen Esther and he just pleads with her: You've got to go to the king! You've got to go to the king and get him to change this whole deal—this genocide. And Esther's response is: But you know that if anyone goes to the king without first being asked—what's the result?—death. Weird deal, but that's just the way it was then. They would literally have people around the throne that if someone came to the king without being asked, they would kill them on the spot—wife included; that's crazy!

So Esther's sitting there thinking: Well, I don't know. I can't do this. And here's Mordecai's response to Esther, in *verse 14 of chapter 4*. He says: But if you, Esther—

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, {I like Mordecai's confidence in the providence of God, and the will of God being done. Hey, if it's not today in the big picture of things, God's going to make it happen. But here's the deal, Esther. You need to know this: that if you're going to remain silent God is going to figure out another plan.} but you and your father's family will perish. {And then he says,} And who knows {Say that: And who knows} but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

*Esther 4:14 (NIV)*

How many of you have ever heard the statement before: I've come for such a time as this? It's kind of a biblical thing. Put your hand up. Isn't it funny that when we hear that statement—

- You've come for such a time as this (or)
- I have come for such a time as this

—there's such a confidence and a boldness out of that. But when I look at the context of the text, it's not there. And the sentence starts with, "And who knows..."

I mean, imagine if you were Esther, going to go to the king, and it's probable that you're going to die, and someone's trying to encourage you and give you confidence and they say before you go: And who knows maybe God's put you here for just this moment in history. "And who knows..."

I was standing here, right in this spot on Sunday, December 27, 2009. It was over the holidays this last year. Pastor Sal had asked me to come and do a two-week series and we called it *Resolutions*. I don't know if any of you were here. The first weekend was *Lose Your Religion*, and the second weekend was *Find Your Freedom*. I'm standing here on the first weekend talking to you guys, just like I am right now (and some of you may have heard a little bit of the story)

and I literally felt like I was blindsided by a genuine care and love for Sal and the people here at The MET. And you say: Well, didn't you care about us before?—No, that's not the issue:

- It was extra!
- It was different.
- It went to a new level.

I'm standing here and I'm just overwhelmed with this sense of just wow! And while I'm talking to you, out of my mouth is one conversation [and] in my head is another conversation going on; which is kind of creepy when the person talking to you has that going on. But it's going on inside of me and I'm thinking: What am I going to do with this? What is up?

And the very next service I'm standing right here [in the front row] where Gary [Scheive, non-staff head of campus security] is sitting and worshipping, and just started [thinking] like: Wow, man, I wonder what God has in store for this place down the road? I wonder (you know) what's He's doing? I was just kind of captivated by a curiosity of what God's doing in this place. I didn't know what to do with that, so I just kind of put it aside.

About a month later Pastor Sal calls me up—if any of you know Sal, he's a pretty aggressive guy—and he just starts talking. He says: Hey, you want to talk about...I wonder if you know...hey, do you want to come down here (and all that kind of stuff) and move to Houston and be a—I was going to say: be a Sooner's fan (dumb)—be a Long Horn's fan? (Whew! Okay.) And all of that stuff is going on and I'm sitting there thinking: Oh my gosh! I don't know. I don't know because we are in a very-very-very good place—an awesome church with phenomenal people and it is fantastic. And I am sitting here going: Is this God? Is this God?

Well, I got the sense that it was bigger than just me, but there was a whole lot of uncertainty with the deal. And there still is, and we are going to figure out what that means for the future—together now baby, we are in this together now. But we're here and we're still facing all of this uncertainty in our life and in our family.

And a lot of you are sitting here and facing the same kind of uncertainty. God has put a burden on your heart—something to further His purposes—but you're frozen in that uncertainty. Let me just push you off the ledge here, because we have to live with a level of uncertainty. There is always a level of risk. There are no guarantees. The only guarantee that I can find is that we ask Christ to be your Lord and Savior—that's a guarantee. Other than that, who knows? But embrace the uncertainty. And just—man!—don't be frozen with it.

If we are going to seize our divine moment, get in position for God to use us to further His purposes, I think it's going to start with realizing that His purposes are bigger than just me. And once I do that, I'm going to face uncertainty. Like last week, we talked about having the risk of faith—there's that uncertainty—but I need to step into it.

Write this down—here's another thing that if we're going to seize our divine moments, I think we need to ask *what* more than *why*.

## **ASK WHAT MORE THAN WHY**

*Esther*—backing up—*chapter 2, verse 5*—it says:

<sup>5</sup> Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of {somebody} [Jair], the son of {somebody else} [Shimei], the son of {somebody} [Kish], <sup>6</sup> who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar...

*Esther 2:5-6 (NIV)*

Say: Nebuchadnezzar. I love saying that. It's like a tongue twister. It says [Mordecai]—

<sup>6</sup> ...had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with {some dude} [Jehoiachin] king of Judah. <sup>7</sup> Mordecai had a cousin name Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This girl, [who] was also known as Esther...

*Esther 2:5-6 (NIV)*

God, why?...God, why?...Why, God?...Why? If there's anybody who had the excuse to ask why, don't you think it'd be Mordecai and Esther?

- Exiled from their homelands
- Esther's parents were somehow killed
- Her cousin Mordecai has to raise her up
- She's an orphan
- They have been loyal
- They have been faithful, devout followers of God

And now—what are they facing?—genocide of their people. Who better to be in the position to say: God, why? Why all this? But they didn't camp out there.

Jesus said it this way; He said: Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the rest, it'll be added to you. [*Matthew 6:33* (paraphrased)]

Ask *what* more than *why*. I'm not saying: Don't ever ask why. But I think we can get (we can kind of get) stuck in that place of questioning and wondering: Why, why, why, why? When if we stopped and just began to ask *what*—let me show you.

There was a time—a number of years ago, there was this guy who was kind of a mentor to me. I shouldn't say *kind of*, he was *definitely* mentoring me. I was with him one time and I was just sitting there complaining. I was just complaining about this and that and [asking]: Why, why, why, why, why? And he stopped me in my tracks. You know sometimes someone (kind of) has to slap you (you know)—stop! He just looks at me and says: Scott! Scott! What might God be doing in you because of that? And that just—I was like: What? That was the first time that question had ever been asked to me. Yeah—

- I know all this is going on
- I know it doesn't seem fair
- I know (you know) it is this and that

—but what might God be doing in you because of what's going on around you?

It was that question that really altered the trajectory of my future. Because instead of just sitting there questioning everything, questioning God more than I should have, I began to ask: God, what are You doing in me right now because of this? And it was a whole season of just inner [reflection] and contemplating [and] praying: God, search my heart. What is going on?

In addition to that I began to ask: What's going on around me? And I'll tell you this; if you can get past asking *why* all the time and start asking God:

- *What* is going on here?
- *What* are You trying to show me?

It's going to be like the blinders being pulled off and you're just going to start to see things differently. You're going to see it's bigger than just you. You're going to see that there's uncertainty that He's calling you into. And you're going to see that He's doing a work around you and in you. Ask *what* more than *why*.

I have a friend named Doug, who—this was, again, a number of years ago. I was sitting in a staff meeting one morning. It was a Tuesday morning and word had just come to us that Doug—he played in the band at church—he played guitar; it's pretty cool—that his wife and 11-year-old daughter had been tragically killed in a car accident that night before (Monday night). (And you know) it was terrible—tragedy! In (you know) a place this size, a number of you have experienced something similar to that. And what was really wild to me was that I heard about it on Tuesday, it happened on Monday, and that next Sunday, Doug was on the stage (in the band, at church) worshiping like crazy—just with an abandon. And I stood there—like where you're sitting right now—and I was just weeping. How does that happen? How do you do that?

I had an opportunity a while after that—I mean, it was significant time—it might have even been a year after that where I sat down with Doug and had lunch. We're at this restaurant called *Max & Erma's*—I don't know if they are down here. But we are at *Max & Erma's* and that image just burnt in my mind. So I just began to talk about it, you know? Okay, is this good ground to go: What do I do with this? And I asked Doug: How do you—tell me what's going on? How do you deal with that? Because after it happened, I saw you worshiping the following Sunday—six days later—and that just rocked my world.

He just with all sincerity (he) said: Scott, I was so angry at God. I was so angry at God, I mean; I've said things to God that I had to repent of. (You know) normal stuff—this is a normal response—I mean, come on, let's be honest here. Why?! I've served You my whole life and this—why? And he said (he said to me): You want to know something? I got to a place where God—he felt God just kind of spoke to his heart—and God said: Doug, you don't need to know why. And he was okay with this. And he said: When I got past asking why:

- That's when God healed me.
- That's when my heart came back together.
- That's when I was able to get back on track with the life I had in front of me.

A few years later, Doug was pastoring a church—a great church—leading people to the same God that he was asking: Why, why, why, why, why, why, why? Because he knew on the other side of *why* was *what* God would do in our life.

You see, God is moving. [In] the book of *Esther* we don't see His name mentioned, but we see His hand all over the place. God is moving. And to seize those moments when He wants to use us to further His purposes—this is not a formula, this is not an exhaustive list of one-two-three do this and that—these are just a few things I saw in the whole book of *Esther*. (Is that) if we want to be able to seize those moments—

- We have to realize God's purposes are bigger than just me (and then)
- We are going to face certain uncertainty and we have to live with that (and)
- We also have to ask *what* more than *why* or else we're going to camp out at *why*.

Some of you've been camping out at *why* for years. And it's not to make you feel bad or ashamed or guilty, but I believe that God's going to give you the ability to walk away from the *why* and just start saying: God, *what* are You doing in me? *What* are You doing around me?

One last thing—and I'm not going to give you a verse for this—but there [are] times when you have to go at it alone.

## **SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO GO IT ALONE**

Esther had to go to the king alone. You look throughout Scripture—people—they sometimes had to take that step alone. And today—we're going to pray in just a minute and—I think God's going to challenge you to take a step, to respond to what this guy [indicating himself] has said; but bigger than what anything I could say, what He's doing in your heart right now. Let's bow our heads, close our eyes, and pray:

Father, we thank You that we just have the opportunity to humbly come before You, God, and ask You to move in our hearts, Lord. We want to be a part of Your working in this world. We want You to further Your purposes through us. Help us to see those moments when we can do that.

If that's your prayer this morning—God just wake me up to see those moments, to seize the divine moments in my life where You want to do something and You want to use me to do it—if that's your prayer, just lift your hand; I want to see who I get to pray for. My hand's up first, honestly [saying]: God I want to see these moments.

Father—as hands go up everywhere, the Cypress campus and here at Jones Road—God, I pray that You would just help us to see them. Help us to realize this thing is bigger than just us. Help us to realize that we will face this uncertainty, Lord. Help us to ask *why* more often: *What* are You doing? *What* do You want us to see? What's going on here? Help me to get in step with what You are doing.

As we continue to pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed, I want to ask you a real quick question; and that is: Do you know Him? Do you know Jesus Christ? Have you asked Him into your life? We talk about going it alone:

- He went alone to the cross to die a bloody and brutal death for your sin and my sin.
- He went alone to pay the price for you and [me] so that we can have a relationship with our Father in Heaven.

He went alone to do that for you and [me]. Maybe you're sitting here today and you've never made that decision; that you've said basically: Jesus come into my life, be the Lord of my life. Save me. Forgive me of my sin. I want to be Yours.

If you've never made that decision but today you're wrestling with it because God's stirring in you, [then] today can be the moment where you respond and say: Christ I want You in my life. With our heads bowed and our eyes closed (at our Cypress campus and right here at Jones Road), if your prayer is: Scott, pray with me. I do not want to walk out of here the same. I want to be changed and I want to be a child of God. I want to be forgiven by God and I want Christ as my Lord and Savior.

If that's your prayer just lift your hand where you're seated. Just stay in your seat and lift your hand. Who am I praying for today? [Saying:] I want Christ in my life. Scott, pray with me; include me in this prayer. Come on, be bold; lift your hand. Ma'am I see your hand right over here. Who else? If you're at Cypress campus, lift your hand as well. I see your hand over here, sir, to my right. Good for you. Praise God for you. Ma'am I see you up there in the top to my right. Anybody else? Who do I get to pray for? [Saying:] I want Christ in my life. I'm going to go alone to the foot of the cross and ask for His forgiveness. Guys, let's pray together. Ma'am, I see your hand back there. Let's pray together as a family. Repeat this after me. Allow me the privilege to lead you in this prayer. But say it with your heart and just call out to Him because He will respond:

Father God, this morning I give You my life. Please forgive me of my sin—my mistakes. Jesus, be the Lord of my life. Thank You for dying for me on the cross. I believe You're the Son of God [and] that You've risen from the dead. Change me. Help me seize my divine moments and live for You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

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**Strategic planning is the key to warfare;  
to win, you need a lot of good counsel.**

*Proverbs 24:6*  
(THE MESSAGE)

**Legend:**

(words in parentheses) = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea  
[words in square brackets] = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher  
{words in curly brackets within indented quote} = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*