

12Stone Church  
Kevin Myers  
Series: Home Run Life  
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Home Run Life – Week 2  
Romans 12:1-2

[Video]

**Male:** In life, we all step up to the plate hoping to hit a home run in our marriage, business, or family. What if the key was following a simple pattern: four words, four life-changing principles? There's only one way to get power at the plate: connect with God. Once you trust God, you're able to win battles within yourself. Secure in your identity, winning relationships with others is next. Rounding third means winning results in whatever you do. Excellence matters. God created this game plan, a pattern different from the world, so we can have the full life he intended.

[End of video]

Welcome to *Home Run Life – Week 2*. The question is...*How do you get on base for a home run life?* That's the question we're going to answer today. Let's go back to where we left off last week. Let's go to the whiteboard. Grab your teaching notes and let me remind us where we left off. There is a pattern for how God grows us up. We're using baseball to assist us, because baseball has a pattern, and the order of the bases matters.

So there is home plate. If you were not with us last week, this is a brief catch-up, but you might want to get online and pick up the teaching from last weekend. It'll help you immensely. But here's what we said together. Home plate is all about *connect*; that is to say, connect with God, connect with your Creator, get on God's purpose by God's power.

The reality is that home plate is where you start and where you end. It's true in life. You start with God and it all ends with God. You have to figure out, "Where did I come from, why am I here, and where am I going?" It doesn't center on us; it centers on him. When you get that right, when you connect with your Creator at home plate, the first thing God wants to do is take you to first base.

First base is the *character* base. That is, the personal base where you win within. Second base is *community*. That's the people base. It's where you win with others. Third base is *competence*. That's where you win results. It's the performance base. Of course, success is not an end in itself. We talked last week about how you have to bring that home to score; that is to say, bring it home to your God-ordained purpose.

Romans 12:1-2 tells us, "I urge you in view of God's mercy to offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. Now this is your reasonable act of worship. And no longer conform to the pattern of this world." There's a pattern of the world and there's a pattern God uses. Here's the pattern God uses. We connect with him at home plate. Then we win battles within first base character issues. That becomes foundational to winning with others, and that becomes a basis for our competence, and then we bring our success home.

In other words, we said it like this: Home plate: *love God*. First base: *love yourself*. Second base: *love others*. Third base: *love what you do*. Then back to home: *do all for the glory of God*. If that is how God grows us up and that's his pattern, then what is the pattern of the world we should not conform to? As we said, the world runs the bases backwards. We live in a performance-driven society, and as a result of that, we tend to cheat all of the other bases.

While we may all want a home run kind of life, the reason we often don't get it is either because we don't know how God grows us up or in knowing it we still run backwards and cheat the bases. So we're entering into conversations these days about how you actually get on base. Let's be honest. Most players never even make it to first base.

In the game of baseball, over three quarters of the time they never even get to first base. They get thrown out on the way. In fact, that seems to be true in life. Most of us get thrown out on the way to first base character. That is to say, integrity issues, self-respect, winning within. Those are our great battles, and that's the first thing God wants to help us win. That's where we're going today.

Now last week I already started getting a whole bunch of you coming to me and saying, "PK, why didn't you tell me this when I was in my twenties? I needed this back then." Because I didn't know it when you were in your twenties. I didn't know it when *I* was in my twenties. But I'll tell you what. The sooner you can get this stuff locked into your life... Oh my goodness. If you're a teenager listening in, get this in your life. If you're in your twenties, get this in your life early.

There's the greatest chance for a home run life the earlier you get it, but at any point when you get it it's going to benefit you. Such was the case with Brandon McCormick. You may not know the name or the person, but you know his work if you've been around here for a while, because he is behind the majority of films we have enjoyed here. Just his journey and how God has been forming him is a reminder of this home plate to first base process. Here's a slice of his story.

[Video]

**Brandon McCormick:** My name is Brandon McCormick. I own and founded Whitestone Motion Pictures, which is a boutique film company here in Georgia. I have a wife and two little ones running around at home. That's what I do daily.

I showed up at 12Stone when I was about 10 or 11. First I thought I was going to be a basketball player. I realized I'm terrible at it, so filmmaking was the next best thing. The leadership at

12Stone kind of saw what I was doing and brought me in and started to let me play with toys and cameras and equipment.

Over those 10 years, we got to hone our craft on the short films and got to work on trying to create a group in an effort that would let us create longer, bigger films. To do that, we knew we had to separate from 12Stone and create Whitestone as its own entity. We still created content for 12Stone, but we started working toward our bigger goal, which is the feature film industry and to start playing with the big boys in Hollywood.

The real question became, "How do we get success and not sell our souls?" The first advice any young filmmaker gets is to go west. "Go to LA. That's the only way to do it. You have to go to LA and work your way up and build the relationships." What I was attracted to was the community and the family of being here working with a community of people I actually loved and loved to work with.

In Hollywood and that system was very much a singular effort. It was just "eat or be eaten." It was about the person, the individual. It was never about the group or the bigger vision. While we were asked to go out there, while *I* was asked to go out there... The asks got bigger and bigger and I got to go to the studios and got to go sit down with the big production companies. They would comment on how much easier it would be to work with me if I moved out.

That never was that interesting to me, because what we were doing here was always more exciting. It's the long route, and it certainly means saying no a lot more than saying yes. A lot of people thought I was crazy. Some people still do. But now, as we're starting to come into our own, as we're really starting to establish a brand and still working with people out in Hollywood but not having to work *under* them, it's starting to make a little more sense to them why we did the things we did.

It was because we wanted to go about it the right way. Again, with people and community and doing things with integrity and making films about redemption, things we loved, not getting stuck under the commercial monster that is Hollywood, and making films we believed in. It would have been a lot easier to go out there and just take the offers, but it never aligned with what I felt like God had called me to do.

[End of video]

Maybe you caught the highlights of Brandon on his journey. I jotted them down when they first shared the film with me. How do we get success without selling our souls? We want a home run life. That's what we're all kind of working on. The long route, integrity. See, that's running to first base first. It seems shorter to just run to third, performance, and then home, but the long way around is how baseball is played. It's how you actually score in life: getting on God's purpose.

There are some things you need to know, one principle we're going to go after, and there are some things you need to do. Let's go after them. Here's what you need to know to get on base for

a home run life: *In the Vine is the power to win within. When I drift from the Vine, I drift into vice.* That's what you need to know.

Jesus said in John 15, "I am the Vine, you are the branch. Man or woman, remain in me. You will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing." What he's teaching us is that there is a main vine through which life flows. There is a power in the main vine. Then it goes through the branch, and that power allows the branch to produce fruit. That is how we were meant to live.

You were created to connect with your Creator, to connect with God. Through God flows life, power. If you would connect with God, the power of God would flow through you (he's the Vine; you're the branch) and you would produce fruit. That is to say and include that you would have the power to become a person of character, that you would be able to win first base battles. The power to win within is in the Vine. It's in God.

If you're *in* God, connected *to* God, you get his power. That's how you transform. It's not your power that pulls off first base battles. You can't become that person on your own. If you live disconnected from God, then you will become a slave to your appetites, to your passions, to your fears, to sin. You become enslaved to it. You can't stop it. Oh, you can get a couple of them managed in your life, but ultimately you'll be owned by it and it'll take you out repeatedly on your way to first base. Nobody has the power to pull that off on their own.

At the same time, let me add this. Those of us who are Christians, who follow Christ, who came into a relationship to God through the work of Jesus Christ, we've been forgiven of our sins, we trust him, we've been given the gift of eternal life, we are *in* Christ. What we've also noticed is that early on you begin to grow spiritually. You begin to have some breakthroughs. Sin begins to be shed from you. Have you noticed that? Early on it's a cool thing. You're like, "Oh, this is exciting. God is growing me up."

What you also may have noticed is that after a while you get a little bit lazy and kind of drift from the Vine. Have you noticed you can also drift into your old self? Maybe you've not noticed it about you. Have you noticed it about your neighbor? Have you noticed it in other people? *They* do that. *You* don't. You're beyond this. But *they* do. I've noticed this in my own life. If I drift from the Vine, I drift into my old self, because I was never that person who was that righteous.

It wasn't me; it was God's power in me. See, when God's power is in you, after a while you start thinking it's you. It's not; it's him. It's him in you. So there are three things you need to practice, three things you need to do, three major league swings you need to take, and you don't want to strike out on these three. Let's talk about them one at a time.

1. *Live for the truth.* When someone says, "Well, there's no such thing as truth," isn't that an oxymoron? When somebody says, "There's no such thing as absolute truth," what they just said can't be the absolute truth. If it's true that there's no such thing as truth, then what you just said can't be true. So if there *is* truth (and there is), then there are also lies, and which one you live for will mark your life.

So who has the truth? When Jesus came, he said, "I tell you the truth." You have to figure out who's telling the truth. God, as your Father in heaven, loves you so much he's going to give you the truth. He's going to coach you into the truth. He loves you. He is for you. He is not against you. I don't care what you've heard growing up.

If you've heard somebody say, "Well, God is against you and he wants you..." No, no. God is for you, he loves you, and he wants you to win. Because of that, like any father, he's going to coach you into the game plan of life. He wants you to win. We coach our own kids. As a dad, I coach my own kid in sports. I want him to win. I teach him the game plan. That's what God is doing for us.

A pastor and friend of mine, Stan Toler, tells the story of coaching his son in baseball. This is so good. Lean into this story with me. He writes something like, "My son Seth has always loved baseball. From the time he was 18 months old he could swing a small bat and throw a ball. We would often watch the Cincinnati Reds play baseball on TV and then go outside and play ball ourselves. Seth really loved to watch Johnny Bench hit home runs." That dates it. Now you know what era.

"By the time Seth reached 4 years old, I became concerned about his knowledge of the game." Get this. Are you ready? He says, "Seth always hit a home run. Always. No matter what he actually hit, he hit a home run. No matter where the ball went, he hit a home run. I can still see him running around our imaginary infield, going into his Pete Rose slide, taking off his hat, exposing his blond curly locks, and looking up at me, declaring, 'Home run, Daddy. Home run.'

One afternoon we were in the front yard playing baseball, and I decided it was time to teach Seth that he didn't always hit a home run. First, I launched into a significant lesson on what it means to make an out. Then I began to explain the purposes of the bases. Just about the time I had confused him thoroughly, his mother came out the front door with four of Seth's reading books that now served as bases.

Together we carefully placed the books at first, second, third, and home plate. Everything was coming together for a great life lesson. Then I explained to Seth, 'If you overrun a base and I tag you, you're out.' 'Okay, Daddy,' he exclaimed. 'Play ball!' So I pitched a few balls and let Seth run the bases to warm up. Each time, he went through the same ritual: headfirst slide into home plate, hat off, dust himself off, and then declare, 'Home run, Daddy!'

Now came the big moment. It had arrived. I reviewed the rules with a warning. 'Seth, Seth, my son, if you overrun a base, I will tag you out.' 'Okay, Daddy! Play ball!' I pitched. Seth swung mightily and hit the ball toward shortstop. I fielded the ball. He rounded first, his little legs churning. I called out, 'I've got the ball! Don't overrun second!' He kept going. I tagged him on the way to third and said, 'You're out!' And he kept running.

He rounded third, slid into home, dusted himself off, sat down, and said, 'Home run, Daddy! Home run.' I said, 'No, no, no. You're out.' He said, 'No, home run, Daddy.' I said, 'You're out.' He retorted, 'Home run!' I said, 'You're out!' Disgusted, he folded his chubby little arms, shook

his head, and looked at me. 'Daddy, my books, my bat, my ball. If you're not going to play right, I'm going home.'"

Isn't that a great story? I love that story. We're a lot like Seth. When God teaches us the truth of how the game of life works, sometimes we don't like it, and we say, "I'm going to take my bat and ball and go home." God teaches us what it means to get thrown out on the way to first base character, and we say, "I'm not playing *that* way."

In 2 Timothy 3:16 here's what God taught us: "All Scripture..." That is, the Bible. "...is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness." That's how you live right. There's a way to win the game of life. There's a home run life available to you. God gave us the training, and God teaches us in the Bible how you score in life, how you win in life. But you know what? We get ticked at God. We tell God we don't like that.

Perhaps it's because we prefer to live for temporary pleasures instead of for the truth. That's really what's going on. We keep running around the bases, calling ourselves Christians, saying we're getting a home run, when we were thrown out a long time ago, way back on the way to first base. There's a whole bunch of pretending going on, because we're living in blatant sin and we're not even addressing it. Live for the truth. It's the first major swing. You don't want to strike out on this.

2. *Plug into the Vine.* We can overcomplicate God's teaching. Jesus was taking a very profound deep and wide spiritual idea and then translating it into a picture that was accessible. He was teaching us how we connect with God, but Jesus was telling it in John 15 as, "I am the Vine, you are the branch. Man or woman, remain in me. You'll bear much fruit."

When God was doing this, when Jesus was teaching it, he was speaking to a predominately agricultural society, people living directly off the land. So when he taught it, they were like, "Oh, I get it. There's a grape. The grape has a branch. The branch is connected to the vine. That's how the grape gets... I get it. I'm the branch." Simple. It's no more complicated than that.

If Jesus were talking modern day, he might, in this technological society, have said to us, "I am the power outlet and you are the cord. If a man or woman will connect with me, you'll get light. Apart from me, you're in the dark." That may have been too complicated, so I'm going to do it one more time and slower for anybody who didn't get it. Are you ready? This will help you. "I am the power outlet, you are the cord. If you plug into me, voila! You have power, and that power is from him."

Did we get it? Do I have to do this again or did you get it? Okay, we all got that. That's what he's telling us. So the real question of life is...*How do you connect to him?* Because just the disconnect of being unplugged is enough to leave you in a rough place in life. That is enough. This past week I was at a store, and when I ran back out to the car in the bitter cold (it had to be one of those), I turned to start it and got nothing. Zero. Dead. Nada. Annoyed.

I wasn't particularly Christian. I have moments where I can be so deep with God, and within a millisecond I'm not there anymore. I know I'm supposed to say, "Oh, praise God. I have no way

to get anywhere right now and I have no car and I'm just stuck here. Hallelujah." I'm not that guy. I'm ticked. I'm immediately ticked. I'm like, "Man! I have to call Marcia..." So I'm sitting there thinking, "What's wrong? What can be wrong?"

I'm going through all the complexity of a vehicle. It's not the battery, because I had the battery recently changed. "What's this going to cost me now? Now I've got to...blah, blah, blah." Then I stopped and I had a moment. I thought, "What if it's simple?" So I popped open the hood. The cable had loosened and popped off the terminal of the battery. That's it. I popped it back on, shut the hood, started the car, and was on my way. That's all it was.

Many times we're like, "Oh, my life is just... And I don't know why. I think God's..." Maybe you ought to just stop, pop the hood, and say, "How am I doing in my Bible study and in my prayer life?" Because if you're not in the Word and you're not in prayer, you're not connected. That's it. "You mean that's all it could be?" Yes, that's all it could be.

See, the reason we wrote *Home Run* is not so you could own the book or display the book, but so you would read the book, engage the book, and live it. When I wrote over in chapter 5 about how to connect with God and leagues of play... It basically reads, "If you want to win with God by connecting with him and continuing to connect with him all the days of your life, you must be willing to not only work at it but reset some expectations. You're going to have to go after some things."

We talk about amateur league, learning God's principles and obeying them. How do you develop a life of being in the Word of God? Church, the majority of Christians do not have a regular commitment to be in God's Word. The majority of Christians do not have a regular commitment of prayer. It's what we teach. In this section we go right through how to get there. Then we teach you kind of minor league spiritual development: connecting with God, learning God prompts and how to respond to them, then leaning upon God's favor.

Then at the end Maxwell gives some great ideas in application and how you can wrestle things down. The point of this is that you have it in your hands and you can go learn this. There's no point in writing it if you're not going to develop in it. That's the only point. Don't buy a book and say, "Oh, I got a book." Who cares if you got a book? There's no value in it if you don't actually live it. You have to connect. There are places God wants to take you, but if your car is dead and you're going nowhere, it may be just because you're not plugged in. You're disconnected.

There are places my 10-year-old son Jadon wants to go. There was one place he wanted to go this weekend, and he has wanted to go there for weeks to months. I mean he *wanted* to go, but he doesn't have the power to get there. I would have to make possible power that he doesn't possess. Now you're wondering where is that place? If you're a parent and you know Jadon and your kids are like this, you already know, but these next 30 seconds will help you.

[Video]

**Emmet Brickowski:** I'm freaking out!

**Batman:** Relax, everybody. I'm here.

**Emmet Brickowski:** Batman? Awesome! Could you make one of these in orange?

**Batman:** I only work in black...and sometimes very, very dark gray.

[End of video]

There you have it. All of the parents who have to live with kids who love Legos know the movie has come out. It's an awesome little movie. Jadon gave it an A+. I gave it two thumbs up. I won't spoil it. The best character is Batman, in my opinion. The closing was awesome, but I'm going to leave it right there.

Now this mattered to my son Jadon, and that's why it mattered to me. He wanted to go somewhere only I could take him. The things you're wrestling with, God is not wrestling with, but because you are and he loves you very much, he wants to take you to places (and it's not a Lego movie) in first base character and help you win things you cannot win on your own, but you have to plug in. You have to plug into the Vine.

3. *Draw the line.* See, living for the truth and being plugged into the Vine allows God to speak *to* you, pour *into* you, and reveal things *in* you where you're not where you need to be. He's going to tell you, "Here are your first base issues, and you're going to get thrown out. You're listening to the world and it's a lie. You don't understand how this is going to impact your life. You think it's no big deal right now, but it's going to be a big deal someday."

It has taken you out, you're being thrown out, and God wants to help you see it. He has drawn a line, "This is how the game of life is played," and he wants you to win. When God draws a line, you have to agree with God and draw the line with him. Yeah, church? Oh yes. Why? Because he wants you to win. Because he wants to free you up. Because he knows if you make it to first, you're on your way to a home run life.

By the way, he did all the heavy lifting to make this possible. Take your Bibles across the campuses and turn to Romans, chapter 6. This is worth a moment. You have to see this. Sometimes we just have to read Scripture and soak in the strength of what God did for us. If you don't have a Bible of your own, let this be our gift to you. Put your name on it, take it with you, and go soak in this Scripture.

By the way, in chapter 12, verses 1-2, it says, "Therefore..." You need to know what it's *there for*, and this is what it's there for. This is what preceded. This is what God did for us to make possible for us to run the bases of life by God's design. Here we go. Chapter 6, verse 6: "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away

with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been set free from sin."

It's a spiritual explanation. Jesus Christ died on the cross. He conquered sin and death, and because he conquered sin and death, through him *we* conquer sin and death. Because of his work, because we die to ourselves and to sin, because we die with him in that sense, we become alive in him. That's what verse 11 is telling us: "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires."

Verse 14: "For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law but under grace." Verse 17: "But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of the teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness." You're set free from sin. You don't have to sin. You've been set free from it, which means God has made it possible for you to live free from sin. You can live free from sin. God draws the line.

Now our common experience, I think, is that early on we shed sin, we begin to grow, we begin to get freed up, and then we discover there are maybe one, two, or three sins that have a greater grip on us than any others. Have you noticed this? Again, maybe you haven't. Have you noticed this in other people? Maybe in your spouse or in your family? Maybe you've even noticed it in the church. Hey, I know it's true for me. I watched.

By the time I was in my twenties and thirties, there were one, two, or three things that had the capacity to consistently take me out, to get me thrown out on the way to first base. I'll just be honest for a bit and give you mine. Those were *anger*, *lust*, and *fear*. I can go back to my journals and describe them. *Anger*: a rage wrapped up in a wounded, selfish, insecure soul that was easily offended and demanded having things my way.

*Lust*: a lust for food, for material things, for sexual appetites, a lust for success that would drive my life and I would long to indulge without regard to discipline, moderation, or timing. *Fear*, in so many forms, but for me, especially financial fear. The sin of worry dominated my life, though Jesus said, "Don't worry because your heavenly Father knows you have need."

I found that these things had a greater grip on me, but by the grace of God and the deeper application of Romans, chapter 6, and more intensity of staying in the Vine, that was the only way these were going to lose their grip or dominance in my life. Thank God, by his favor over time and by his strength pouring in through the vine into the branch, these lost their dominance in my life.

I am so grateful to God that my kids did not grow up with the rage and anger I grew up with and that I saw in my family. What undid my family growing up, my kids have never seen through me. Because I'm somebody? No, because of God through me. Now I'm not pretending I'm perfect. In fact, do I really need to? You already know me.

I'm vulnerable. I can be tempted. But it's not my goal to sin. I can make errors. Even in life, as well as baseball, we see that being true. That's why you see pro baseball players who are trying to win can still make errors. That's where we get bloopers. That's why we laugh at things like this. Check it out.

[Video]

**Kenny Lofton:** It was Cleveland against Texas, Jose Canseco playing right field.

**Announcer:** High fly ball, right field deep. Canseco back of the track, looking up. Off of his head, it looked like! Hit him on top! A home run!

**Kenny:** The ball clunks him right on top of the head and goes over for a home run.

**Announcer:** That looked like it hit Canseco on the top of the head. We'll have to check the replay.

**Announcer:** Oh, it did.

**Kenny:** He turned an out into a home run. The perfect blooper.

**Announcer:** He reaches up. It hits him right on the head and it goes over the top.

**Announcer:** It hit Canseco in the head and bounced over the wall for a homer. Look at this!  
*Boink!*

**Announcer:** Swing and a high fly ball. He drops the ball.

**Announcer:** Kinsler's back pedaling. He's got it. Drops it!

**Male:** Oh boy. Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy.

**Male:** I can't see anything!

**Announcer:** Fly ball to center field, hit deep. McLouth back at the warning track at the wall. Oh, he can't hold on to it!

**Announcer:** The ball is...

**Male:** I think he lost it in the sun.

**Announcer:** And...he drops the ball!

**Male:** Oh boy, it's frustrating.

[End of video]

It's funny when somebody else does it, but it is frustrating. I've looked like that in my Christian life at times. Haven't you? I mean it's just coming and I drop the ball and make the error, and it's just so embarrassing, so frustrating. But I know that by the power and the grace of God, he has made it possible for me to have a perfect heart and I don't have to be a slave to sin.

I've given you *my* three: anger, lust, and fear. What would *your* three be? What would be the three that most consistently tend to tempt you and take you out on the way to first base? In fact, what would be the one that if God would give you the power and you would stay connected to the Vine it would be major in your life? It would change your life.

What we're going to do here today is seek the Lord with fresh surrender, and we're going to ask God to break the cycle of sin. You might want to write that down. *Break the cycle of sin*. Let me tell you how we're going to do that today. The first thing I want you to do is grab your bulletin. Put it in front of you and open it up.

On the left-hand side of the top you see there is a bat and there is a perforated section. Fold it a couple of times. We're going to step into a spiritually intense moment, and we're going to use this little section right here. So go ahead and detach it. Then put that in your hand. This is going to serve as a tool today. What we're going to do is come before God and take a major swing to draw the line where God draws the line.

We're going to connect to the Vine and we're going to live for truth. We're going to say, "God, there is this one sin that if you could break the cycle, I know it would transform my life. It seems to own me. It seems to have a grip on me like no other in my life. O God, I don't even know if I could have the courage to confess it, own it, and believe you for it. I've come to you so many times over this issue. God, could you really break the control of this in my life? Could you free me from being enslaved?"

I don't know what yours is, folks, but I can draw from Scripture and give some examples of what you may end up having to write right here. Something like temper, lust, sexual sin, fear, worry, gossip, slander, drunkenness, lying, cheating, stealing, adultery, pornography, laziness, critical spirit, hate, unforgiving spirit, bitterness. What is the one that has dominion over your life and you would beg God to break the cycle of that sin?

That one is what you're going to write, to ask God to help you take a major league swing by his power and win over that. You're not going to write it right now; you're going to reflect on it, and we're going to have a moment of prayer together. In fact, the campus pastors will step up and lead that moment of prayer at each respective campus, praying over us and asking that God would reveal that by his Spirit and that we would have the courage to confess it and then surrender it to him.

Then they'll guide you through a moment of reflection during the offering. Following the offering, we'll stand together and have an opportunity to surrender this to God. So let's take a moment for prayer. If you would, just bow your heads, here in the room, in the Café Theatre, if not for yourself, then out of respect to God and others.

Heavenly Father, I am so deeply grateful that by the power of your coming, Jesus, and your death on the cross, you have conquered sin and death. This is true and we celebrate it and affirm it. But I must also confess, Lord, that I would be embarrassed to humiliated if anybody in this room knew how certain sins were so repeated that they seemed to own me and how many times I have begged, if not wept, honestly wept before you and said, "God, why does this control me? Sure, I grew up this way. Sure, it seemed to be in my soul, but God, you're greater than this.

Why do I have to fight so hard? Why does it have such a grip on me? Why does it undo me? Why does it take me out so often?" Over these years, God, I've begged you to release the truth of Romans 6 into my life. It's so private. It's so intimate. God, it will take courage for any of us here to put the honest one on this little card and surrender it to you at an altar, to say, "God, I'm going to draw the line with you, and I'm going to believe again, and I'm going to chase you."

I have to do my part. Discipline won't win it, but I have to be connected to the Vine, in your Word, in prayer, attending to you. I need a new level of fresh surrender, yes, God. But would you, by the power of your Spirit, break the cycle of sin, God? I'm asking for this kindness, but I'm asking for this supernatural move of your Spirit. It's what you promised. It's what you're able to do. Grant this to us, I pray. In the name of Jesus Christ, move on us.

Church, I'm going to leave the prayer right there and come back to it. As you think about what would be your one, if you have the courage to ask God to break the cycle of sin in your life that's getting you thrown out on the way to first base and you're going to make a deeper commitment to connect to the Vine, then you consider what that will be.

For the next two minutes the offering will be received and you have time to reflect. As the ushers get ready, let me say to guests, there's no pressure on you. Let the basket pass. Some of you church family use the offering envelope right there. That's fine. That'll work. Some of you use online. You might as well jump into that. It's the easiest, best way to give. You can set it up and it's taken care of. The basket passes. But you say, "Thank you, God, you've given to me."

I want you to stay seated during the offering and be attentive to what God is saying to you. Do you have the courage...? See, some of you are going to give number two or three. God is asking for number one. This takes courage. I've been down this road. I'm not done. When the ushers are done, I'm going to invite you to stand. By then you can have already written down what is the one, and then I'll tell you how to bring that before the Lord.

Heavenly Father, this is so personal. This is so a battle at the spiritual level. You said we're in a spiritual battle. That's what you taught us in Ephesians 6, that our battle is not against flesh and blood, it's not against the things we can see, that there is a warfare going on. God, we desperately need for you to move in our hearts at a deeper level.

So I pray over all who have surrendered. You see these before you. You see what's on the list. You see the courage of our hearts to just confess and say, "God, this has taken me out." We beg of you, God (not that you need to be begged, but we need to beg), that you would break through and break the cycle of sin. God, we're going to take seriously. For some of us, we just need the courage and a fresh run at this. We've just given in. We quit fighting. We have to reset this in our souls.

Some of us are saying, "God, I'll meet you in the morning. It's time for us to be in the Word and pray. God, I'm going to reconnect. I'm not going to be casual on weekends anymore. 'One in seven is yours.' I'll gather together. I'll connect with brothers and sisters. I can't do this alone." God, we need a move of your Spirit, so I'm asking that you would choose to so supernaturally move among us that it would move things here on earth, that there would be a fresh awakening and a breakthrough among us.

God, we are desperate for you. We can't keep living like this. It's breaking things down in our marriages, in our families, and with our kids. It's breaking us down from the inside out. Some of us don't even know if we can really go to the next level because we're stalled out, and we just wonder are we really even walking with you. It messes with our belief. It breaks down the best part of who we are in you. So God, would you please move among us?

Some of us are just listening to this prayer and thinking, "Could this be true? Is there such a thing as God? Could it be that God loves me this much and would help me this deeply?" Then you move them along and draw them to you, I pray. May this be the start line, God, of major breakthroughs as you break the cycle of sin. I pray this blessing over all who would receive it and practice it. In Christ's name. And everyone agreed, saying, "Amen."