

12Stone Church
Kevin Myers
Series: Home Run Life
February 23, 2014

Home Run Life – Week 4
Matthew 6:25-34

[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 12Stone. How are we doing here and across the campuses? I can't hear you. Are we fired up for what God has for us? Well, yeah, because what God has for us today is the kind of stuff that changes your life. Everybody wants a home run life, but very few actually get it. Our temptation is to sell our souls for business, job, career, success, financial success, all in hopes that if you could just get material, business, or career success, that right there would give you a home run life. It can't. Only God can give you a home run life.

God has a plan, a game plan for how you do life and leadership, and there are some things you need to know and some things you need to do. So let's dive right in. What do you need to know? There's a principle. *My purpose is in my Creator, not my career, so I live and work for my Creator first.* See, we live in a world where people make their careers their life purpose. You know that's true. You work around them.

Maybe you're challenged by it and you're wrestling through it yourself. We end up saying, "Well, my work is my purpose and where I find my worth and my identity." We get all wrapped up in it, and that becomes the consuming part of our lives. We live in a world where people are willing to sacrifice their eternity, their integrity, and their families, all to get career success. You work alongside them. It's the world we live in.

God says, "You don't have to sacrifice all that." God invites us into eternity with him, the joy of it all. You can grow your character. You can win with family and you can have this measure of success and bring it all to God's glory. That life is what God invites us to. He says in Romans

12:1-2, "I urge you, in view of God's mercy, that you'd offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." That you would win home plate. "It's a reasonable act of worship. And that you would no longer conform to the pattern of this world."

The world has a pattern, and we are all tempted to join the world's pattern. We're all tempted to do life backwards. "So don't conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." We think differently, we see differently, we live differently, and we are, therefore, transformed. With that, we're able to discern God's will, his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

So let's remember where we've been. If you're a guest, it's a joy to have you with us. Thanks for hanging out. I'll catch you up. You might want to pick up my previous teachings online and figure out where we've been. I'll do it fairly quickly. We are using this baseball diamond as a metaphor, an analogy. You can draw this out somewhere in your teaching notes, if you want, and that might help you lay it out and comprehend.

There are only four things anybody ever has to win in life. We're all working on the same four things. Whether you're a believer or unbeliever, agnostic, atheist, follower of Christ, it doesn't matter. We're all having to win the same four things. We all live in the same world. God said it all begins at home plate where we *connect*. We connect to God's purpose by God's power.

In other words, just like in baseball, everything begins and ends at home plate, so everything begins and ends with God. It doesn't start with us. Many of us are trying to figure out our purpose in life, so we start with ourselves. The reason you can't get anywhere is because it doesn't start with you. It's not centered in you. Hello. You have to figure out, "Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?"

God says, "If you'll connect with me, home plate, get your foundation right, the rest begins to make sense." God will help you win first base: *character*. This is the personal base. It's where you win within. We've talked about that enough. We'll move on to second base: *community*. That's the people base. It's where you win with others. That brings us to where we are today: third base: *competence*. That's the performance base.

That's really where we talk about this whole success stuff, as we did in the early part of this series. This is where you win results. Of course, no baseball player gets to score when they get to third base. They ultimately have to surrender to home plate. You have to get home. You have to surrender to your purpose. In other words, if you would love God and love yourself and love others and love what you do and do all for the glory of God, that is the pattern God uses to grow us up.

Now we've also confessed in this series that if that's the way God grows us up, then there is a pattern of the world. Most of us are becoming quite familiar with that. The world runs the bases backwards. We live in a performance-driven society where your value is based on how you perform. We feel very real pressure here. It's normal to all of us.

The truth of the matter is, though, we have to set God, our Creator, as our purpose, not our careers. Many of us have bought into a lie in this world, and I want to draw this out for you. In fact, many people who are "Christians," followers of Christ, in the church have bought into this lie. I'll describe it for you. It's the secular on *this* side of the equation and the sacred on *this* side of the equation.

Here's what we do, fundamentally. We draw the diamond, we put a line down the middle of the diamond, and we say, "You know what? The left-hand side of the diamond, this home run stuff, is really secular. It's finding purpose and doing your business and winning in performance and career and finance, and really, half of second base, your business relationships..." See, this whole world we call *secular*, and we're buying into this. *Secular* meaning it has really nothing to do with God. It's kind of the real world.

You can go talk about your church stuff on the weekend, and then we'll go do the real world, the secular, because this over here is the sacred. You can talk about God's power in your life and character issues and kind of half of second base, your family, and all the soft side of relationship stuff, sure. That's going to be all sacred. As if it's that separate in life. So many of us live our lives as if we have a sacred half and then a secular half that God has nothing to do with.

That is an absolute lie. God is the author of all that sits around the diamond. The whole home run life is from God, has the principles of God, and God's Word talks about *this* half as well as *this* half. You're messing up in your life. It's the reason many of us never go forward for what God has for us. In fact, I'll go a little bit further here. The difference between running forward versus running backwards is as great as the difference between a steak and a cow patty.

They both come from the same thing. They both come from a cow. Right? You have that in your head. See, we all have to win the same thing. We all have to win our careers over here, but how you get there produces two very different life experiences. One sizzles and one stinks. There is the steak, and it comes from the cow. How many love steak? Let me see your hands.

In fact, I'm losing some of you already. Some of you have just left. In your mind you're off on a steak. Ruth's Chris steak...oh, mmm. I know some of you who are vegetarians don't believe it, but there will be steak in heaven. I'm telling you, somehow, someday... Others of you are like, "I'm going to heaven, then. I want in on that." But that same cow can produce a cow patty, and that's not all that attractive. That's not something I get excited about.

I want to make sure you get this, because this could be confusing. When you make your career your life purpose, you're going to end up with a cow patty kind of life. If you make your Creator your purpose, your foundation, and you get it right so that your career is rightly placed in your life, you're going to get a steak kind of life.

There is something breaking down in our world. In the Christian community, statistics tell us Christians don't live any better quality of life than non-Christians. There are as many divorces among Christians as there are non-Christians, as many broken marriages, families, and circumstances. They fall in character as often. They mismanage their money just like the rest of the world.

They don't have any more peace than the rest. They're as messed up, broken, and unresolved, and they don't have any better quality of life. If that's true, I think I know why. Because while we say we follow Christ, we still live by the pattern of the world. In fact, many of us who have become Christians do nothing more than add God and ask him to bless a backwards base-running lifestyle.

We're like taking a cow patty and wrapping it in Christmas paper. It may make it seem more presentable, but it's still crap. If you have crappy thinking, you're going to have crappy living. Pray all you want. God can't bless crap. (It's at least memorable. But more than that, it's true.) Many of us, as Christians, have crappy lives because we've been wrapping crappy living around God language and haven't renewed our minds and changed the way we live.

We're not transformed; we're just trying to get God to bless the way the world does stuff. He can't and he won't. Of course your life isn't going to be any better. "How come God isn't blessing my life?" How come you're not living by a renewed mind? You can't put your purpose in your career. Your life purpose is in your Creator. So you work for him. Why? Because now God becomes your provider. Say it with me. "God is my provider." That's what changes, among many things.

Ever since I've been in college I've been trying to work that out in my life. God is my primary provider. It's not all on me. Like many of you, I didn't have the perfect family (whatever that is) growing up. For the first 10 years Dad was my hero. Soon after, family blew up. More distance with Dad, estranged by 17. For all practical purposes, I'm kind of on my own, but the weight and the burden of providing career and finance kind of stuff had almost a Kryptonite effect on me. It would just weaken me.

By the time I hit late twenties and thirties with kids and a failing career, I'm being undone by this. Just a moment of honesty. Has anybody ever felt like winning a career and managing a career and money is insurmountable, overwhelms you, and consumes your life? I just want to see hands. Does anybody know the pressure I'm talking about? Third base pressure is real, and we all have to win it.

So how do you live this out practically? Well, back in the late 80s when we moved to Atlanta to start 12Stone Church, I became familiar with the "voice of the Braves." I'll make sense of that in a few minutes, but maybe you knew that voice: Ernie Johnson Sr. Here's just a throwback in history. Check it out.

[Video]

Ernie Johnson Sr: Along with Darrel Chaney, this is Ernie Johnson speaking to you from Atlanta, where tonight it'll be the Braves against the Dodgers in game two of a two-game set. The Braves won...

Male: If you've ever listened or watched Braves baseball, and this year a whole lot of you have, you no doubt know Ernie Johnson. He has been broadcasting the exploits of our Braves for 15 years, bringing nearly 2,500 games to an audience that now totals some 22 million fans nationwide. If the Atlanta Braves can be called America's team, then that must qualify Ernie as America's announcer.

[End of video]

I enjoyed listening to the Braves back in the day. Here's why I bring it up. A decade after that, in the late 90s, I met his son, Ernie Johnson Jr, EJ. He started coming to 12Stone Church. We connected in friendship. Soon enough he gave his life to Christ. He asked for forgiveness of sin, came into the kingdom of God, and became a child of God. An awesome thing. We built a friendship. We would spend time together getting into God's Word.

As husbands, as guys in career, as dads trying to provide for family, we had a number of conversations that were around this whole thing. "What does it mean, God, to be provider? How do you live this differently than the rest of the world?" I mean, that pressure is on us. It's on many women, moms, single moms, wives, etcetera. We all get it. We're all in the world with this third base kind of performance pressure. "How do you provide?"

Of course, he came from a little bit better family. His dad was a pro ballplayer. In fact, this is a great picture from when EJ was a kid. This is his dad and him. Isn't that just adorable? His dad won the '57 World Series. So Ernie grew up with *that* kind of dad. I kind of had the opposite kind of dad. Here's what we realized. We came to an understanding that even though we had opposite tracks growing up, we both had the same heavenly Father.

Come on, that's good. You know that's good. We both had the same heavenly Father. I know you want to say "Yeah, that's awesome," because it is. It *is* awesome. See, I don't care what your background was. I don't care how you grew up or how you didn't grow up. The reality is when you come into faith through Jesus with God our Father, you get into the family of God, and he becomes your heavenly Father and your provider. It changes everything.

Take your Bibles and turn over to Matthew, chapter 6. You have to see this. You have to figure out how you are going to learn to live this out. You have to see this. You have to get this in your life. Matthew, chapter 6, verse 25: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life..." How many people have ever worried about their life? Okay, good. See how practical it is?

Jesus says, "Don't worry about your life," and he goes on, talking about third base issues. "...what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes?" Hey, isn't life more than just third base? Sure it is. "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."

Jesus is saying, "Listen, you have to understand what's going on here. You have to see the bigger picture. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?" Probably not. It seems like you can take a few away, but you can't add. Verse 32: "For the pagans run after all these things..."

Pagans, meaning people who don't believe in God, people who don't follow God, people who have dismissed Jesus, people who are god of their own lives, people who make career their purpose. They *have* to run after this stuff. They don't have their heavenly Father as the primary one who provides for them. It doesn't practically apply to their third base. So of course they run after it. They have to chase it like it's all they have, because it *is* all they have.

"For the pagans run after all these things, but your heavenly Father knows that you have need of them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness..." Hey, get your home plate right: foundation in God. Chase first base. Kingdom of God, righteousness. There it is. "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

What does that mean? That means by the time you get to third base, God is already intimately involved. That's all part of his plan. He knows. He made you a spiritual being wrapped in a material body and put you in a physical world. He gets it. He's part of it. Verse 34: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

I know we've all worried about life, but let me do it one more time. How many of us have worried about finance or business or career? Hands up. See this? He's talking to us. This stuff about God being your provider gets practical. In fact, there are some things we need to practice. I'll just tell you some things I've been working on. I think there are three of them here that we can take from the teaching.

1. *God is my provider; I trust in him.* One of the things you have to practice is "God is my provider; I trust in him." In Psalm 20:6-8... You can go read it later, but I'll give you the context. King David, whose primary role as king was to provide for the nation of Israel... He's a warrior, if you will. That's part of how he provides. He's now talking about third base issues when he says, "Some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."

What's he saying? He's saying, "I understand that I have all kinds of providing pressure here on third base." People would say on third base, "Oh, it's the right chariot. It's the right horse. It's the right business partner, the right environment. It's the right amount of money. It's the right team. It's the right tools. It's the right..."

Yes, yes, yes, but do you know what he says? He says, "People trust in those material things, and they matter; however, we trust in the name of the Lord our God." We understand that you get home plate foundationally right and God becomes involved in your third base success. That's what *he* understands.

So you have to learn how to practically live out the fact God is intimately involved in your business and your career and your finance. It's not separate. It's not secular. It's all one. There are

some things I practice in order to implement, "I trust in the Lord." I'll give you three of them just as an example.

First, *before I run to work, I walk with God*. You say, "Well, how do you practice this trusting God?" I'll tell you how. When I wake up in the morning, the first one I talk to is God. I say, "Good morning, heavenly Father. Thanks for a night's sleep. And here we go, another day. You've given me life, breath, option. That's all you. You've made the big deal. Now I get to go to work today."

Before I go to work, I talk with my Father, because he is my first provider. He's my highest purpose. I'll get inside God's Word and read some Scripture, sifting how that applies. I'll talk to God about the day and what's coming. I talk to God about my work worries, my work pressures, which, by the way, are you. (That just popped in my head. I thought I'd tell you that.)

I ask God every day for wisdom and success in the work I do. Daily. I don't do my work on my own. I bring to God whatever would bring worry in my life. I hand it off to him. He's God. He's my provider. Before I run to work, I walk with God, even when I have tight mornings or early meetings. Then it's in the shower and I'm talking to God about it and I'm listening to my iPod Scripture on the way to a meeting.

Secondly, *I work up to six days but not seven*. I know I live in a world that'll work seven days. I know that's how the world works, but this is an act of faith, every day off. One in seven. For me it's Thursday. I work Sundays. I work weekends. God carved one in seven days where you don't work, and on that day you rest and worship.

Every day off when I wake up, as a rule, I say, "Thank you, God, for this day off. I'm not going to go to work today. I have all kinds of problems I need to solve, but I'm not going to solve any more. I'm all done. For 24 hours I'm done, God. Why? Because you're God and I'm not. It's not all on me. My act of faith is I quit working. I leave it with you. Good luck. Help us, Lord."

I'm convinced I can do more in six days than I can in seven days of work, so I have to cease striving and know that he is God or I start feeling like God myself and it undoes my life. I'm telling you there's a huge advantage to this, but I'll get to it in a second. First I'm going to give you the third one.

Thirdly, *I put time limits on my work week*. I work about 50 hours a week. Some of you are thinking, "That much?" and some of you are thinking, "That little?" Hang on. I said I *work* 50 hours a week. I don't *show up* for 50 hours a week; I actually work. Focused, engaged, intense, undistracted, invested work. A whole lot of people show up but don't actually work. A whole lot of people are present but are not emotionally, mentally, and fully present.

A lot of people can *spend* an hour but not *invest* an hour. I'm talking about 50 hours where you actually make a difference, because life isn't just third base. I have to be spiritually fit or my life doesn't work. I have to be physically fit, some reasonable amount. I have to be relationally fit. I have to build a marriage and raise kids. I have to be available for sports and my kids at the park. I have to manage a household. A life is more than just work.

By the way, I live in a world where people run backwards. In the competition of the world... People say, "Oh no, they're going to outwork me. They're going to out-win." I don't think so. I'm going to tell you why. When you do life by God's design, what you begin to do is build layers of strength into your life. When things are going well because you put the right foundation and it's strong enough that it doesn't break and doesn't fall all the time, you have a huge advantage.

You see, you start building that into your life... The majority of people can't work focused and intense because they are in the drama and distraction of their lives that are broken and don't work. Whatever your life is broken in, you carry it with you everywhere you go. Most inefficiency in work and why things aren't getting done is because people are consumed with the drama and distraction of their own lives of what hasn't been lived out well. That's the reality.

I can go to work fully focused, because if I do life by God's design, I can build strength into it and I'm not distracted. I'm not caught in the drama of what isn't working in my life. When I put an hour in, I can get a real hour's worth. I'm telling you, God has built life so that the longer you live and the longer you work and the better you build, the more freed up you are. Third base gets bigger with time. It's a powerful thing. All that comes in practicing "I trust in him." These are principles he has put in his Word. How you do life.

2. *God is my provider; I work for him.* My 10-year-old son, Jadon, had a wonderful, interesting little experience in his soccer game, but it comes as a result of reading Colossians. I want you to look at this with me. Colossians 3:22-25 in *The Message*. "Servants, do what you're told by your earthly masters." We can apply this in an employer/employee relationship.

"And don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Work from the heart for your real Master, for God, confident that you'll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ. The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible." I love this line. "Being a follower of Jesus doesn't cover up bad work."

So we were at soccer practice this past week, and the coach was having them do this training work. They were running around the cones and doing these serpentine working drills. As they were doing this, I watched. One of the players was running through, watching the coach, and as soon as the coach turned around he started walking. I just smiled. I'm watching him. I'm just like, "Oh my goodness."

Because do you know who this kid is right now? He's high talent and low self-leadership. If he doesn't drive that tendency out of himself, he will become a high talent, low self-leadership man who struggles greatly in his career, often fails, and won't know why. The problem is him. It's all him. Because when he should have been running, he was walking.

I've heard people say, "Oh, I do life by God's design. I do the bases around the diamond. Because of that, I'm less in third base. By following God, my third base career is smaller than it would be." I doubt that. I've watched. I've listened to people say it. As I watch their lives, I discover

they tend to be people who don't have discipline or diligence, don't train their talents, and don't demand a lot of themselves. They're too blind to it; they can't even see it.

Being a follower of Jesus Christ does not cover up shoddy or bad work. Period. You can't do bad work and then ask God to bless it. That's why as we're going through the *Home Run* book together in small groups and we're hanging out here... It's why I wrote a story that is memorable and marking for me.

"Earn Your Keep Every Day" on page 181. It basically reads, "A budding entrepreneur opened a cleaning business in a small city. She was a hard worker, and like other business people in her community, she was always competing for business. It wasn't long before she became aware of the reputation of one wealthy lady in town who used any particular cleaning service only once. In all her years, she'd never hired the same service twice to clean her house.

So this is a bit of a challenge. 'When I finally got the call,' the entrepreneur said, 'I was going to give it my personal best. We went into that home and we cleaned and we gave it our absolute best. As we cleaned together this house, we'd find a variety of change along the way. We'd just place it in a little cup in the kitchen.' After completing the job, the entrepreneur received her payment and left.

Imagine her shock when a few weeks later she got a phone call from the wealthy lady asking her to clean the house a second time. For the life of her she couldn't understand why she was getting a second chance when no one else did, so she asked. 'I'd love to do it again,' the entrepreneur answered, 'but can I ask you a question? With all the people who have cleaned your house, why are you letting me do it a second time?'

'It's very simple,' the wealthy lady answered, '\$1.61.' 'Excuse me?' 'Yes, \$1.61. You were the only one who found the entire \$1.61 in change that I strategically placed throughout the house. Some people found 89 cents, some found 90, some found \$1.25, one found \$1.40, but you were the only one who found the entire \$1.61.'"

Can I tell you something? When nobody is looking, what you do still counts. Many of us aren't where we want to be in third base, when the truth is we were walking when we should have been running. We've done shoddy work and we did it to ourselves. We don't have the discipline to make ourselves do what we need to do.

You see, we're in the country where these days people are starting to think somebody owes them a job, and they don't. You earn it every day. We're starting to think maybe because you did a good job *last* year you should keep your job *next* year. Not true. You need to do \$1.61 kind of work every day. You don't do bad work and then ask God to bless it.

3. *God is my provider; I wait for favor.* I love this. Joshua, chapter 23, verses 9-11. Joshua is talking about the nation of Israel and, once again, the tremendous momentum God is giving the nation. Here's what Joshua says. He says, "God has given us great third base favor." Then he says, "One warrior routs a thousand because the Lord fights for you. So be very careful to love the Lord your God."

Here's what he's saying. "We're getting tremendous success on third base, and one warrior takes down one thousand. How is that possible? How can one Israelite take down a thousand enemies? Because the Lord fights for you." In other words, favor is when God does for you what you cannot do for yourself. God grants favor in your career, in your finances. God does for you what you could never do for yourself.

Then Joshua describes how you protect that favor. "One man routs a thousand because the Lord fights for you. So be very careful to love the Lord your God." Be very careful to keep your home plate centered in a deep love for God, because when you are right *here* and you walk by God's design, you free up God's favor *here*. That's what you've been waiting for all along. That's how God designed life.

When EJ came to Christ, surrendered his life to him, got his home plate right, made God his foundation, began to walk with God, cleaned up first base issues in his life, cleaned up second base, from using people to loving people... When he put third base in its rightful place, he didn't take a dive in his career and lose and say, "Oh, God has messed up everything." No, no, no. He got favor. His career increased. Third base enlarged.

See, many of you know EJ, whether you know you know him or not, because you've seen him on *NBA on TNT*. He's a broadcaster, fairly well known. He has won a couple of Sports Emmys, for sports broadcasters, beating out Bob Costas. I mean serious stuff, real world stuff. He lives in that world, competes in that world. All along, as he and his wife Cheryl have begun to walk with God and live this out over time, they see God's hand. I asked Ernie to share a couple of minutes for us. Here's his story in his own words.

[Video]

Ernie Johnson Jr: Hey, I'm Ernie Johnson, and I'm a husband of 31 years to Cheryl Ann, father of six, a sportscaster by trade, and a 12Stone member since way back in 1997.

[Media clip]

Ernie Johnson Jr: From Studio J in Atlanta, Ernie Johnson and Charles Barkley talking about the pre-game introduction.

[End of media clip]

Ernie Johnson Jr: I think it's just one of those times where your career is running away with you and you really don't understand that, or maybe you do and you don't care. I was anchoring

the weekend sports, and the weekend producer mistimed the show. I had like six and a half to seven minutes worth of sports.

We come back from commercial, and instead of having six and a half minutes I have like two minutes. I was ticked, and I went in there and let her have it. Then I walked upstairs, pretty puffed up and proud over what I had done, that I had put her in her place because she had screwed up my show.

In '97, here we are. We'd been married since 1982 and we have a couple of kids. In fact, we have four by that time. We're not going to church right now, and we're kind of feeling bad. We said, "You know what? We need to give the kids some spiritual background, some spiritual grounding." I had been going past this place on Collins Hill Road. Cheryl and I looked at it and we said, "Well, we could try this place."

His message that first day just kind of pierced me. I remember telling PK after a Sunday service, "Hey, God is messing with me big time." I just kind of told him. I said, "I'm feeling things in my life now and a purpose and a reason for things that I never felt before." I said, "I don't know what the next step is." He said, "Well, you're a prayer away." So we joined hands at this table and I prayed to accept Jesus Christ. I remember the guy who was waiting our table was like, "Would you like some more sweet tea?" and I said, "I'm good." And I was good.

This is a few months after my lunch with PK, and I'm saying, "Man, I remember that person, and that was so wrong." I found out she was producing at CNN. The first thing I said was, "Barbara Ann, this is Ernie Johnson. We used to work together at Channel 2." She said, "Oh no, I remember you."

"I have to ask for your forgiveness. I have to apologize for what I did that Saturday night in front of those folks to you." I said, "That was inexcusable, and I need your forgiveness." She said, "Ernie, you had it when you did it, because that's what my Christian faith tells me to do." I said, "This is going to be a great walk. I'm going to learn a lot."

[End of video]

This *is* a great walk, a walk God invites all of us into. What Ernie found from God was forgiveness. What he extends to others is forgiveness. What he found back was forgiveness. In that moment of prayer it was a surrender to accept, to receive God's offer. That prayer was something like the prayer we're going to put on the screen for you. It's this simple. It's this profound. Take a look at this prayer and let's read it together.

"Father in heaven, I know that I have lived for myself instead of you. I have sinned against you, but I believe Jesus died for my sin, so I confess my sin and ask you to forgive me. I bow to you as Lord of my life. Help me to live for you from this day forward. In Jesus' name, amen."

Ernie had come to a point where he believed in God, but he had never bowed. I couldn't offer that prayer for Ernie. Ernie can't offer that prayer for you. God can't offer that prayer for you. The church can't save you. You can't earn your way back to God. Sin has separated you from God. That's really what John, chapter 1, tells us. In the book of John, chapter 1, it summarizes for us that God sent his Son Jesus, who is called the Word.

"The Word of God, Jesus, God's only Son, became a human being and lived among us. He came into this world, the world he had created, and the world [we] failed to recognize him. He came into his own creation and his own people would not accept him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

What Ernie learned that day is the reason God makes it possible for us to become children of God is that we are not. We're God's creation, but we're not his children. We didn't even recognize him when he came. So there has to be a moment when you bow to him and you receive. We're going to put that prayer back up on the screen, and across the campuses we're going to take the very moment Ernie had at that lunch table, a moment for you to decide what you will do with the offer of God.

Many of you have never said yes to Jesus. Many of you are spiritually unresolved. You, like Ernie, might now believe, but you've never bowed. The campus pastors are going to step up and we're going to have this moment together. This is a moment to get right with God. I'm going to help you understand how this moment works.

If you would, everybody here in the room and in the Café Theatre, if you would take out your bulletin... This may feel mechanical, but this is quite significant spiritually. I want you to open up your bulletins, and on the left-hand side you will see there is a home plate. I want you to take and pull that home plate, separate it off so that's all you have in your hand. Everybody get this, whether you're participating fully or not.

This moment we're describing is a moment in time when you finally say, "God, I'm going to get things right at home plate because you made it possible. Through the sacrifice of your Son Jesus, you're willing to forgive my sin. Jesus covering my sin debt by his sacrifice. O gracious God, how kind are you, how merciful. I recognize Jesus as the Son of God. I receive Jesus." You have to do the receiving.

If today is your day and the Spirit of God is drawing you and you sense it in your soul, then I want you to take this card and fill out your name, email, phone number, and birthday. You're saying, "Why birthday?" So I know if we're responding to a middle schooler or a high schooler or what age and stage. This isn't a solo journey. You do this as part of a team, part of the family of God.

Now we're going to take a moment. I'm going to read that prayer again. You in this room, you in the Café Theatre, if you've never said yes to God... You might be quite religious, quite churchied. This might be the first time it ever made sense. This might be the twentieth time you've had a moment like this, and you've been resisting. Dads, fathers, men, you haven't crossed the line.

There's a little bit of pride that sits right there in you, quite willful. It takes some humility. I've sat there with Ernie and many others.

There's a moment where you have to quit being god in your life and confess you're not and get your home plate right: God your Creator as your purpose. It might be ladies, moms, or young women. This is a marking moment. Will you keep resisting him or will you finally say yes? If you never have, this is your moment. It's up to you. God has to draw you. I'm going to read the prayer. You can read the prayer with me. In all sincerity of heart, just read this prayer as I read it, if this is your time.

"Father in heaven, I know that I have lived for myself instead of you. I've sinned against you, but I believe Jesus died for my sin, so I confess my sin and ask you to forgive me. I bow to you as Lord of my life. Help me to live for you from this day forward. In Jesus' name, amen."

You may need a moment or two. Maybe you haven't even prayed it yet. You're still wrestling. I'm going to step back and let the music play for about a minute. In that time, you can settle this. Maybe you've just prayed it with me and you're going to fill this out. In a moment I'll tell you what we're going to do with this little home plate card. What will you do with the offer of God? I'll step back for a minute and step right back up. Let this be a sacred moment of surrender.