

My name is Afshin Ziafat, and I have preached here two or three times. The really weird thing is that I've always preached here when Matt was sick. And I'll get a call at the last minute, "Hey, Matt's sick. Will you fill in for him?" And so this is really sort of new territory for me where Matt's not sick and I was asked in advance. So I'm pumped to be here. It's been a crazy time for me recently. I've been in Jordan and Turkey and eight youth camps, I just finished number five. And so I feel like I've been gone from you for a long time. Some of you may have heard, I don't know if I mentioned last time I was here that I was going to Turkey and that's why I showed you that video before I came up here. Because it's preparing me for where I want us to go this morning. Matt and Josh asked me to come speak this morning, and I just began praying what God would have me to bring for you this morning. I just felt like the Lord wanted me to share what was the biggest on my heart recently. I went to Turkey with this ministry, Elam, and this is their promo video.

And I just wanted you to see it so you could get a taste of what's going on over there. Because we do hear in the headlines that everything over there, especially in Iran, is all going to hell. But I'm telling you, I just got back from Turkey and God is working in Iran. There are seventy Iranians who came to this conference, this Elam Ministries in London and found out about me. For those of you who don't know me at all, basically my testimony is I came here from Iran when I was in the first grade. Well I was born here, when I was two, moved to Iran, in the middle of first grade I moved back to the States and ten years later, through a Bible I was given when I first moved here, I began reading that Bible my senior year in high school and gave my life to Christ. My father found out and he disowned me, took me back and disowned me again when I went into the ministry. And my story has just been a story of God's faithfulness when you just let go and follow Christ. So they found out about me, took me to dinner and said, "Man, do you still speak Farsi?" And I do, which is unbelievable, because most of my friends have forgotten it. They asked, "And you've got your Masters?" I said, "Yes, I did." And they asked, "And you travel and speak?" And I did, so they said, "Man, you're the guy we've been looking for." And I'm like, "What do you want me to do?" They said, "We want you to come to Turkey and train our men who have left Iran because of persecution and want to be trained how to preach and how do do evangelism. And they want to go back to Iran and plant underground churches." And I was just like, "Are you kidding me?"

And at that moment, my eyes opened up to the big picture of how God took a little Iranian kid, brought him to the States, ten years later I come to Christ, He's been training me this whole time so that I can go back and pour into these men who are going to go back to their country where I started from. And let me just tell you, I was with seventy Iranian men and women who left their family. I mean forget my testimony. They asked me to share my testimony and I did and I thought they'd be sitting there going, "Yeah, so what?" Like, "You left your father? Yeah, we have people after us to kill us." This one lady studied at Islamic theology school and found a Bible, came to faith in Christ and left this Islamic theology school. Her family has already bought the plot of land to bury her and is looking to kill her. She's in Turkey because of persecution. Another guy signed a piece of paper that said he understands that if he comes back into this village, he will be killed. Another girl I met is an evangelist and her work kicked her out and told the authorities and they're looking to kill her. These are the kind of people I was around. And these are people who were praying, I mean you've never seen people pray. Man, they were praying with a passion and an urgency and a dependency. And they were praying for their country. It was so refreshing. And sometimes, we just pray, "God, bless my meal."

If You want to help out, great but I'm pretty much taken care of." I mean I don't say that, but it's almost the way I pray. But over there, they're praying with this urgency, like "We need You." And then I saw them devouring God's word. I saw baby

Christians who know more about God's word than so many Christians I've met here that have been walking with Christ for years. I saw people risking their lives but passionate about sharing their faith. And I know many people go overseas and get a taste of this, but being in the Middle East, especially among my people, and hearing them praise Jesus in Farsi was just blowing my mind. Because I come out of a Muslim background where that's exactly the opposite. And to come back here to the States, I just wonder if we've missed what this is all about. They've got a vision for their country. They've got a big vision, and God turned this world upside down with eleven who were willing to die for Him. And I'm telling you, I was with 70 who I believe are willing to die for Jesus, to get the gospel into Iran. And they've reckoned themselves dead, they just want the gospel to come into Iran. So I just wonder if we've missed the vision of really why we're here. And I'm not saying this to you as "you Americans," I'm saying it to us because this is my home.

And so you're not going to hear something this morning that you've never heard before, but we're going to go back to Jesus and see what's the point of all this. I want you to bow your head with me and close your eyes, and I just want everyone to prepare their heart. I like to do this before I start. Just take a moment and say, "God, speak to me. Shake me out of my day in/day out. Shake me out of the way things are supposed to be. And let me just hear from you." Take a moment and prepare your heart, and I'll close us in just a second. "Father, we just thank You for this great church that is very missions minded. God, I just thank You for the radical change that has happened among so many lives here. And God, I just pray that we see the world the way You see the world, we pray that we see ourselves the way You see us, we pray that we see You the way You see Yourself and we pray that we see others the way You see them, God, and Your heart beats for them. And Lord, I just pray if we've been on the sidelines, that we will get in the game, that you will lift up the scales from our eyes, that we would see the spiritual battle going on. And so, we need you, God. I need You. And Lord, I just pray that You would speak, that it would not just be my words but that You would speak through me, through Your word and show us, open our eyes to what Your truth is and what You've called us to. And so we love You, we lift Your name up and we pray that You would draw us to You today. In Christ's name we pray. Amen."

Two years ago, the day after Christmas, a terrible event happened off the coast of Sumatra. You may remember the tsunami. The tsunami happened like 10 miles or so off of the coast of Sumatra. Two tectonic plates on the ocean floor were displaced by 30 meters. So basically, it was an earthquake in the ocean floor. And this displacement produced an energy in the equivalent of ten Hiroshima atomic bombs, scientists say. And since it was such a powerful jolt, that energy produced a 500mph waves that were just like a ripple in the deep part of the ocean, but they were moving so fast that they slammed into East Africa in seven hours. And by the time they got to the shore in some places, these waves rose as high as 50 feet and there was mass destruction and mass loss of life. It was an incredible tragedy. Here's what I want to submit to you today. I believe that God wants to do something like that in your life and my life but with exact opposite results. I believe that God wants to displace our heart, to completely change us by His love in such a powerful way that from us would emanate and flow waves of not death but life and would influence people in our world. And here's a local place off the coast of Sumatra that something dramatic happened but had far-reaching effects. And I believe that's what God wants to do with you and with me. He wants us to be so radically changed by His love that it's not supposed to stop with us. The whole point of what Christ has done in our life is that it would cause life to flow out from us and slam into others.

And so I want you to look with me in 2 Corinthians 5 starting in verse 17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Not just some things, all things. So when you come to Christ, the Bible says in Ephesians 2 that you were spiritually dead. It says that Christ made you alive. So before Christ, you were spiritually flat-lined. And a dead person can't bring himself to life, right? So God has brought us to life. Now catch this. When we are brought to life, we are a new creation. And most people know that, but look what the new creation looks like. You should never read a verse by itself. Look how He describes the new creation in the following verses. Starting in verse 18, "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and

has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Church, I believe that if we really embraced what that passage is talking saying, it ought to change the way we live our lives. In our workplace, in our family, in our school, it ought to change our perspective completely.

The Bible says in Romans 5 that before the cross, we were enemies of God and God has reconciled us, brought us back into a friendship with Him. And it says I had nothing to do with it; God did that. But here's the crazy part. God would then turn around and hand to me, the one who had nothing to do with my being reconciled to Him, the ministry of reconciling others to Himself. That blows me away, that God would hand me the word, a fallen creature. It blows me away that His plan would be to use me. That blows me away that God would choose to do that. You see, I believe that you cannot divorce your being saved from your being sent on a mission. I love Erwin McManus, you've probably read his stuff but he's a pastor in Los Angeles. And Irwin says this, that when Christ calls you, He's not calling you just to be part of an institution, the church, but He's calling you to be part of a revolution, a life-changing message that is going throughout the world. So when you come to Christ, you are actually coming to be enlisted in an army that is going out, enlisted in a tsunami, if you will, that is flowing out. You are supposed to be part of this. You see, there are not two types of Christians: the Christians that sit in the church and the Christians who are special that go to seminary and get a degree and it's their job to preach the gospel and it's our job to bring the people to them.

No, this Scripture tears down that wall and says, "If you are a Christian, you have the ministry. You have it where you are." In 2 Corinthians 4, this is how simple it is for Paul. He says this, "We also believe and therefore speak." It doesn't get more simple than that. Paul says, "If you believe in Jesus, then guess what. You speak about Him. You cannot divorce it." You're an ambassador now. That's what the new creation looks like. And what does an ambassador do? An ambassador speaks in a foreign country on behalf of his king. He has been enlisted, and he has been sent to a foreign country to speak on behalf of his king. That's what an ambassador is. The Bible says in Philippians 3 that our citizenship is in heaven. That means that even as an American, the Bible teaches you that you are a foreigner here. Before I'm an American, I'm a Christian and my citizenship is in the kingdom of God and I am placed here to speak on behalf of my king. Now what would happen if we sent an ambassador to Jordan and placed him in Amman and he got so comfortable with the culture there, he loved the Arabic food, the Arabic language that he buys a plot of land and builds a foundation and builds a home and switches his citizenship to Jordanian and in time, he stops speaking on behalf of our policies. What would our government do? We would cut him off and send another ambassador or we'd yank him back. Now, can you imagine if God has placed us to be His ambassador and we've gotten too comfortable in this foreign land that we're in?

Now look at John 17. When Jesus is going to the cross, He's in the garden and He's praying for His disciples and I believe He's praying for us today. And listen to how He prays here. In John 17:13, He prays to the Father, "But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word [there's the word of reconciliation]; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." If I hear Jesus praying that, that the world hates me and that I don't belong to the world, those are two big pieces of information. Do you know what I would say? And this might sound really basic for you, but I really want us all to go here. If I heard Jesus say I don't belong to the world and the world hates me, my next thought would be, "Then why am I here?" Have you ever thought about that? How come when we pray to receive Christ, we don't immediately rapture up to heaven? Why not? If that's where we belong, why does He leave us here? Now I know I'm being really basic but let's go here. Do you think He's left us here so we can have a job? So we can get married? So we can have children? So we can have some sort of a status, some sort of a position? Why has He left us here? He said the world hates you and

you don't belong to the world. So, I would probably think "Let's get out." But look what He says here in verse 15. "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world..." So we don't belong to the world and the world hates us, but now He's praying, "Don't take them out. Leave them in the world." Why? He continues, "...but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth." That word "sanctify" literally means to be set apart for a specific purpose. That's what sanctify means. It's like a tool that is set apart and it's only used for one purpose. So we are to be in the world but we're to be set apart from the world to go back into the world and do a purpose. So sanctification has this idea of holiness and when we think of holiness, we think of being perfect, but here's what I want you to think about and here's what the language really conveys. To be completely separated from the world so that you can be in line with God's purpose for you. The degree that you are completely separated from the world and you're attached to God is the degree that you will be a stronger tool in His hands. But the degree that you hold onto the world and the American dream, you will become a weaker tool in God's hands. And He says, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." So what is our purpose here? Look at verse 18, "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." Jesus came into the world for the sake of the gospel going out, for salvation. That's why He was sent into the world. Why are we sent into the world? Verse 19, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word." There it is. He prays for the disciples and then He says, "I'm praying for those who will believe in Me through their word." That's why He said, "Keep them in the world." They knew and they understood that they're in the world primarily to spread this message and eleven of them were faithful. Here's the deal. Jesus didn't come into this world and try to get a huge church of people. He didn't try to get a mass of people to follow Him. In fact, when a mass of people were following Him in Luke 14, He turned to them and said, "By the way, if you don't hate your father, mother, life, don't follow Me." He was trying to get people off His bandwagon. And so Jesus didn't come to get a whole mass of people to follow Him; He wanted to come and get twelve, eleven of which were faithful, who would be willing to die for Him, who were willing to reckon themselves dead for this message to go out. But here's what we think. We think, "They're the apostles, they're the disciples, so they were professional ministers." No, they're Christians. That's why. That's why they were sent into the world, not because they were professional ministers. And you are the same thing.

And so here's where I want us to go. Here's the perspective shift. I think we need to have new eyes to see why we're here. And here's the new eyes I want us to have. When we hear the term "Christian doctor," or "Christian engineer, Christian dentist, Christian high school student," here's what we think. We think, "A doctor who happens to be a Christian...An engineer who happens to be a Christian...A teacher who happens to be a Christian." There's a Buddhist teacher, a Muslim teacher and a Christian teacher. What if our perspective shifted and we saw it this way? A Christian doctor is a Christian ambassador for Christ disguised in the world as a doctor. Do you see the change in perspective there? Do you see how that makes you look at your existence completely differently? A Christian ambassador disguised in the world as a teacher...A Christian ambassador disguised in the world as a physical trainer...A Christian ambassador disguised in the world as a high school student. It completely changes your perspective. And we see that my sole existence is first to be an ambassador, and oh by the way, my entry into the world is as a doctor. You see, there are some places that you will get to that I will never get to as a minister. Greg Mott, who's a buddy of mine, he's a pastor in Houston, he told me that one of his former college students called him and said, "Greg, can you bet me Bibles in Arabic?" And he goes, "I think I can. Why?" And basically, this kid had this job that was like if he told you, he'd have to kill you, like a CIA type job. And he goes, "I can get into this country without going through security, so I can take Bibles in." And Greg thought, "You know what? I went to seminary, I studied all this stuff, but I'll never get into that country." So God has placed you specifically in your field to be an ambassador first, because you're going to get into places I will never get into.

So, what are we to do? I'm going to give you a few things. And I'm going to give them to you and you're going to go, "Oh, I already know these." But my challenge to you is: Okay, are we really doing them? Number one: Every one of us if you want to be a Christian ambassador, you have got to be engaged in praying for non-Christians. Praying for the non-

Christians in your life, this is God's design. In Luke 10 when Jesus sends out the 70 two by two into every place where He is about to go, He first asks them to pray the Lord of the harvest. So everywhere Jesus is about to move into, He first saturates that place with prayer. And I believe prayer is the beginning of evangelism. God has called us to pray. 1 Timothy 2 says, "Pray for all men. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." God is desiring people to know Him and He's saying, "Pray for all men." We are commanded to pray. And I'm telling you, when you pray, first of all God's going to work in their life but God's going to work in your heart and your perspective will shift. I could preach for five hours about being a Christian ambassador, but nothing will motivate you like when you pray for someone. I've seen it in these Iranians. You're going to see the needs of your non-Christian friends the way you've never seen them before. You're going to see them the way God sees them. So you're to pray.

Number two: Every one of us is commanded by God to love non-Christians, to serve them, to show them Jesus. In 1 John 4:12 He says this, "No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us." The last time I was here, I talked about the displaced life and walking by faith and seeing the God who is invisible. Well, when we are walking by faith seeing the God who is invisible, how do we make the invisible God visible to the world? This is what it says. "No one has seen God at any time." So how do they see God? If we love one another, God abides in us. The way they see Christ is through your actions, through your love. In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul is speaking to a group of Christians who have become all about themselves. He says, "You've become full, you've become rich, you've become wise in Christ." They're the kind of Christians who have gathered together and they're all about the next conference, the next John Piper book, the next Passion CD, it's all about us. And he says, "You're already reigning." Do you know what that means? He's saying, "Y'all are acting like we're already in heaven." Imagine if you're in a battle and you are fighting and someone's over there just talking among themselves. He's looking at them and saying, "What are you all doing? There's still a war going on and you're acting like this thing is over." He's going, "You're already acting like you're reigning. I wish you were reigning because then we'd be reigning too. We'd all be in heaven, but the battle's not over." He says, "You're becoming full, you're becoming spiritually fat, you're becoming wise. I'm becoming a fool for Christ. I'm being whipped for Christ." And in 1 Corinthians 9:19, he says, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more." So Paul is saying, "My number one desire is not even my rights. I'm free. My number one desire is that I would win more for Christ, that people would know Jesus. And so I'm going to do whatever it takes, I'm going to serve them, I'm going to humble myself and serve them."

And let me tell you, I know that's powerful because when I came to this country, the Iran hostage crisis hit and everyone hated my family because we were from Iran...except for one lady who decided, "I'm going to love this Iranian kid." And she took me under her wing and she taught me English. And she loved me and she gave me the Bible. And I held on to it because it came from her, and ten years later I read that Bible and came to faith in Christ. It doesn't happen unless they see Christ first. They don't care about what you know until they know that you care. You've got to love them. 2 Corinthians 5:14 says, "The love of Christ compels us..." The love of Christ pushes us into action. "...because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." I wonder, does the love of Christ really compel us today? I travel the country and I'm an American so don't hear me speaking against Americans but I come among so many Christians that are too much into us vs. them, us being America and them being those foreign Arab Muslims. I think the us vs. them needs to be us being the kingdom of God and them being the enemy who is trying to blind Muslims all over the country with fear that if they're not good enough, Allah will send them to hell. Do we see the world that way in this country? In Romans 9, Paul says, "I could wish that I myself were accursed so that my people would know Christ." I wonder if that kind of passion burns within us. If you embrace the love of Christ, it ought to change the way you view people. And for some of us, there's people who have hurt us that we've held on to bitterness. And how can we receive the love of Christ who says, "Forgive them for they do not know what they do" and then demand someone else to earn our forgiveness.

Or maybe it's not that we need to peel back a layer of bitterness but we need to peel back a layer of apathy because our heart doesn't beat for lost people. 1 John 3 says, "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" If love is not flowing out of you, if your heart doesn't beat for those who don't know Christ, then do you really even have the love of God? Because the love of God is so powerful that cannot be contained just like that earthquake could not stay in one place.

And then look at 1 John 4:7. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love." If you want to bring down the message of the gospel, it's love. I'm watching the news and it's crazy about Hezbollah and the Israelites. And people are like, "Oh, this is a new thing." No, this has been going on forever. And it's so funny. I'm reading the newspaper and if you talk to people in Nazareth, if you talk to people in Israel and you talk to people in Beirut and Lebanon, and both sides are trying to say, "Well they started it first." Have you read this? It's like a childish fight. "Well they started it." And it continues on and on. That's why the message of Jesus is so powerful, because when love and forgiveness comes in, "Although you don't deserve it, I'm going to love you anyway," that's when they see Jesus Christ. That's when lives change. That's what changed my life as a former Muslim. They need to see the love of Christ. I thought it was really funny by the way when one of the rockets hit Nazareth and killed two Arab Muslim kids and the family got all mad at Israel. And I was like, "Hezbollah killed your kids, but you're saying, 'If Israel didn't attack, this wouldn't have happened.'" And so, they've drawn their lines in the sand. It doesn't matter what happens. But they need to see the love of Christ. So are you loving people that way?

Number three: You need to share your story with people. You need to share what God's done in your life with people in your workplace, in your family. John 9 says, "Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" They thought if a guy is blind, it must be because of sin in his life. "Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him." "He is in this state right now because I am about to move in his life in a way that he'll be a trophy for all the world to see the change and to see My power." And then He spits on the ground, makes the clay, puts it on his eyes and says to him, ""Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent)." Isn't that something? He's healed and he's sent. You can't divorce the two. "So he went and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him." He said, "I am he." Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." Then they said to him, "Where is He?" That's the power of a testimony. When you're able to share what Christ has done in your life, ultimately the goal is to get them to the point where they say, "Forget about you. Where is He?" And you may look at me and say, "Afshin, I don't have this unbelievable testimony where I came from Islam or I came out of drugs into Christianity." And I say, "Make one up." Just kidding. I say this to you. Baloney. You have powerful testimony. If you can say, "I had no hope, but now I have all hope...I used to look at myself this way, but now I see myself the way God sees me...I used to struggle with this sin, but God has set me free," you have a powerful testimony. By the way, testimony is not just "Let me tell you what happened way back when." Testimony is "Let me tell you how god is speaking to me today as I'm walking with Him...Let me tell you how Jesus is touching my life today." So you share your story. Then lastly, you share ultimately the gospel.

And here is the part that I am astounded by when I go to churches. Go to Acts 8 real quick with me. Acts 8:26 says, "Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." Basically, Philip is sent to go to this Ethiopian eunuch. He goes and in verse 30, the Ethiopian guy is reading Isaiah. And he asks, "Do you understand what you're reading?" In verse 31, the Ethiopian responds, "How can I,

unless someone guides me?" Once again, that's for our benefit today. Because I don't think our friends are going to say, "Will someone guide me to Jesus?" They may not do that, but that's for our benefit, that God is looking for someone. That's you, in your workplace, where you are that I'll never get to, to lead someone into Christ. "And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him." They read Scripture referring to Jesus. And verse 34 says, "So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" Then Philip opened his mouth,..." I love that it says that. Not just that I'm going to go and live my life in front of my workmates or my classmates and somehow they're going to see Jesus by osmosis.

At some point, God is calling you to open your mouth. That's what an ambassador does. "...and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him." He took him through the Scriptures and showed him the message of Jesus Christ. And I am astounded how few Christians can do that. How many of you, if I called upon you, could stand up and start taking someone through Scriptures and point him to the cross? What scares me is when I go speak at youth camps and I ask that question, I have never gotten more than five hands being raised, never. Do you know what's happening in the East and the Middle East? There are madrasahs or Muslim school in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan where they are training elementary school students and having them memorize the Koran. Do you know what we do in the West? We put up the Xboxes. We have to spray paint them and throw eggs at them and all this stuff to make it all fun to try to get them to come. And I'm wondering what's going to happen when these kids raise up in the East memorizing their Koran and our kids raise up in the West being really good at Halo. And then they have to integrate, which they are more and more. What's going to happen? 1 Peter 3:15 says, "Be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you." You've got to be ready. So if you can't sit down and lead someone through Scriptures, I'm telling you the next thing you ought to do is you need to sit your rear down and start learning the Scriptures and say, "How am I going to show someone Christ?"

So why don't we do it? Why aren't we really on this mission? Why don't we see this incredible mission? Does anyone want to answer? Fear? What are we afraid of? Rejection? Fear of losing something or fear of losing face? Well, let me just say this. I wonder if we are sometimes ashamed. Now, I don't mean to say that to step on your toes, but I'm just saying we talk about our kids like crazy, we talk about our wives or our accomplishments like crazy. The thing that's most important to us, it comes out of our mouth. How many of you would say Jesus Christ is the reason that you're going to be in heaven one day? How many of you would say, "Therefore it's the most important thing in my life?" How can we be ashamed of the most important thing? I was at seminary in Ft. Worth and at TCU's campus there was a Starbucks and I'm reading, studying for my New Testament test. So I had the Bible open in Starbucks and this big group of giant offensive linemen for TCU walked in with their letter jackets and they had their girlfriends with them. And I don't know what got into my head, but I was all of a sudden like, "I'm in a public place, I got my Bible out, I look like some holy freak of nature." And so I grab my notebook and put it on top of my Bible. By the way, don't memorize Scripture if you don't want God to speak to you. So I put the notebook on top of my Bible and as soon as I did it, God nailed me with this verse. Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." And I was like, "How can I be ashamed of the greatest thing in my life?" So I took that notebook and put that Bible back on top and these TCU football players walked by and this last guy walks by, stops, looks down and goes, "Hey, are you a religion major?" And I go, "Well, sort of." Then he pulls up a chair and I'm like, "Okay, hello." And the rest of his friends get their Starbucks and go to the other side of the coffee shop and he sits down and starts telling me about how he used to be involved in his youth group. He goes, "Man, I went on these mission trips," and he starts telling me stories. And all of a sudden he goes, "But man, I've fallen away from God." And all of a sudden, he starts confessing. I'm like, "I'm not a priest." And he starts confessing to me and I have not said a word except "sort of," and he is telling me all of his sins and all his dirty laundry. And all of a sudden, this big, giant man starts crying and I'm just thinking, "I think this is God trying to teach me something." And all of a sudden, he goes, "I need to come back to God. Will you pray with me?" I said, "Sure. Come on." And so we pray and he says, "God, I need to come back to You. I want to walk with You. I want to

follow You." And God taught me a lesson. "Don't ever be ashamed of My gospel." Jesus says, "If you're ashamed of Me here on this earth, I'm going to be ashamed of you." There's people in Iran who are not ashamed. They've left Iran. How can we be ashamed in our workplaces in America?

And let me tell you this. Maybe you're going to lose something but if you risk for the glory of God going out, that's a good risk. That's a good thing to risk. Because God's going to show up. He always shows up when you step out and risk something for the gospel going out. He always shows up. He did it for David. When David shows up to the battlefield and all these men are standing here looking at the Philistines and Goliath and they're shaking in their boots. And David comes up and goes, "Who is this Philistine that's defying the armies of the living God?" One man said, "There's no way. God has shown up. I've already defeated the lion and the bear. God shows up." And so he says, "Let me go. I'll take him." Saul puts his armor on him and he goes, "I don't even need the armor. This stuff doesn't even fit me." He goes out there and he tells Goliath, "I'm going to whip you so that all the world may know there's a God in Israel. That's why." When you step out for God's glory going out, He's going to show up. And He did and he sliced his head off. It was sweet. Johnathan said to his armor bearer, "These Philistines here, let's go up and go after these uncircumcised Philistines. Who knows, maybe God will show up." And they take a risk and God sends an earthquake that shakes the earth and the Philistines are all confused and scattered and they run for their lives. God shows up. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego say, "We will not bow to your golden image. Our God's going to save us but even if He doesn't, we still won't." So they step into the furnace and only then did the king see the fourth person of Jesus there in the furnace with them and he prays to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Every time you risk it, what are you worried about?

Let me close with this. One of my favorite movies is *Braveheart*. So William Wallace comes, they're all standing there looking at the English. They're outnumbered 3 to 1 and they're saying, "Let's high tail it." And so William Wallace comes up and he looks at them and is like, "If this is your army, why does it go?" And they say, "Man, we're going to go because we're outnumbered. We're going to run and live." And William Wallace responds, "Fight and you may die. Run and you'll live...but only for awhile. But how many of you, laying on your death bed, would not give every day between this one and that to come back on this battlefield and look at your enemies and say, 'You may take our lives, but you'll never take our freedom.'" And immediately the whole army turns around, unites and kicks some tail. Why were they united? What happened? At that instant, they saw something greater than even their lives. Up until that moment, they were looking at their life. "I'm going to lose something...I may die." They were looking at their life. And the perspective shift that needs to happen in America is we need to see something greater than even our lives. And for them, the greater thing was the freedom of Scotland. And when they went, "Wait a minute, the freedom of Scotland. Who cares about my life?" And so they reckon themselves dead. They went with William Wallace to that scene in the death bed and they came back. What happened is they reckoned themselves dead. They said, "I am already dead and I want freedom for Scotland." And when someone reckons themselves dead, that's a dangerous person. Terrorists, what have they done? Do you know that when they leave the terrorist camp, they make videos. They show these guys and they say, "When I die, I want my funeral to look like this, I want my family to get this and do this with my belongings." They make a video before they leave the terrorist camp and go and become a sleeper cell in the West. So do you know what they've done when they leave the terrorist camp? They've reckoned themselves dead already. And when someone is walking around and has already reckoned themselves dead, that's a dangerous person. He's not holding on to his life; he'll do whatever. And you know how they're using that concept...to kill themselves in order to murder others. For evil they're doing that. When I think about these terrorists, what does Galatians 2:20 say? "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Paul has reckoned himself dead. In Philippians 1:21, Paul says, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." How can someone say that? That's a dangerous person. And God took that man and turned the world upside down. It's a dangerous person who is willing to let go of his life.

So here's the deal. Are we on this mission? Are you part of this revolution? Ask yourself these questions: Is my life being used to impact others for life? Do I pray for people? Does my heart beat for people with love? Do I even know to share the gospel? And I'm saying, get in the game, all of us. It shouldn't just be the Iranians and the people over there. We should be on that same level. Let's get in the game. And so if you're afraid of losing something, you're going to sit in your death bed someday also. I'm the *Braveheart* today, okay. But you're going to sit in your deathbed someday, and what's going to be the most important "then" for you? When you get to heaven, you don't get to take any of your stuff with you. The things that last are God, His word and the souls of men and women.

Let's pray. I just want you to prepare your heart. I want you, where you are, to count the cost right now. Just say, "God, I'm holding onto something in my life. I'm not sanctified for you. I'm too afraid." As you've got your head bowed, let me tell you something about that *Braveheart* movie. Do you remember the nobles? They wanted freedom for Scotland but they didn't want to lose their land and their rights and their slaves. I wonder if in America we've become like the nobles. "We want the gospel to go out, but I don't want to lose my \$200,000 a year job if God wants me to....I don't want to lose my home." I'm just wondering if we've reckoned ourselves dead for the gospel going out. To live is Christ, to die is gain. If I live, Christ emanates from me; if I die, then I'm with Him. So let's bow our heads and let's just commission ourselves and say, "God, I want to be enlisted. I want to go. I want to see my life as being an ambassador disguised in the world." "We love You, Lord. Take this time now to speak to us as we go. God, I pray that we would not just be hearers of the word but doers of it. We love You. In Christ's name we pray. Amen."