

Give and Go for Jesus

All In

Acts: 18:1-3; 24-26

We are going to continue on our sermon series of being all in for Jesus. The last two sermon series we've had here at Hardin Baptist Church is 'He is Greater,' and 'All In.' The point was to communicate that He must increase and we must decrease, and the last few weeks we've talked about being all in for Jesus, for gathering, for connecting and serving, and this morning, we're talking about all in for giving and all in for going in the name of Jesus. As we think through all in for giving and all in for going, I think it's important to remember we started out in the sermon series, 'He is Greater.' At the very first talk of that series, Kory brought up this question: Which movie do you want to be a part of? He gave us two options. You could have one movie that's all about you. It won't be very popular; it will be all about you. It will be small, or you can have George Lucas and Steven Spielberg knock on your door and you can play a part in a blockbuster. Which one do you want? His point in communicating that was we have two options in this life; we can either live for ourselves, or live for the greatest story ever, and it's the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When we think about that and about that movie analogy, I think it's important to ask ourselves what really makes a good movie. I think when we look at a good movie there will be four parts. There will be creation. When you watch that movie, you enter into this world and no matter how good or bad things are you fall in love with these characters. You're drawn to these characters. Then there's a fall. There's got to be drama. There's got to be a plot. There's going to be something to fix. Then it leads to the rescue. The harder the fall, the sweeter the rescue. Someone needs to rescue, which leads into the happy ending. That is where we're restored. We're in a better spot. The happy ending is a better spot than what it was

like before the beginning of the movie. As I was thinking through this, I watched this movie that is about twelve or thirteen years old. It is a movie called, 'Cinderella Man.' It is about this boxer named James J. Braddock, who is played by Russell Crowe. It has these elements, and I think it's these elements that make this movie so good. At the beginning of the movie, you see Russell Crowe play James J. Braddock. He's a struggling boxer trying to make it, but he's positive. He's got a lot going on. You see him with his relationship with his wife; they're laughing and joking. It's just a good family. You fall in love with this family. You fall in love with this boxer, but a few minutes into this movie, everything changes. The fall occurs. This family is now living in the Great Depression, and instead of being joyous, it's very, very difficult. It's cold, it's hard, and they don't know how they're going to provide milk and bread for their children. They're in the Great Depression, and you can feel the weight of the depression as you see this family trying to survive. So you've got the creation, you've got the fall, but the harder the fall, the better the rescue. You have James J. Braddock gets to start fighting again. He gets to start boxing. He starts winning and here comes the rescue; he literally puts his life on the line. As he wins, he saves his family. As he wins, he becomes a sign of hope for the community. Then you see the restoration, where on the other end, the happy ending, his family and his situation is so much better than what it was like at the beginning of the movie.

I think we're drawn to that storyline because it points us to the ultimate storyline. The ultimate storyline of how God created a world that was absolutely perfect. It was amazing, but then the fall occurs, and the fall was hard. It was brutal. Because of this fall, disaster comes. Because of this fall, war comes. Because of this fall, death comes. But then as we continue reading in Scripture, we see the rescuer. We see how Jesus comes on the scene and He redeems. He makes things right. He doesn't just make things right, He restores things. We can be part of this kingdom now and one day He is coming back. Because of what He did on the cross for us, there will be a new heaven and a new earth where we will be able to dwell with Him forever. As we think through that story, we need to know that story if we're going to be all in on giving and all in on going. When we think through being all in on giving and all in on going, we can almost

condemn ourselves, because you might be in this room saying I really want to give more financially to this church, but it is hard. It is difficult based on my financial situation. I'm barely able to pay the bills right now. I know I need to give, and I wish I could give like somebody who has a million dollars, but that's not me. We almost beat ourselves up because we can't give like other people. Or going...we hear about missionaries who have gone across the world, and we have people in our own church who have left everything and gone to foreign lands for the name of Jesus. A lot of us probably won't be leaving Western Kentucky. We might be in our same neighborhood for the rest of our lives. So what's our role? I want to tell you this morning that no matter who you are, no matter what your position is as a follower of Jesus Christ, each and every single one of us has a role, a part to play in giving and going for the spread of His name. With that in mind, I want to look at a married couple in Scripture. They are not some big name like David, Moses, or Paul, their name is Aquila and Priscilla. When you look at this couple, I think they are all in on giving, I think they are all in on going, yet at the same time the application applies to all of us in this room tied into the big story of the creation, fall, redemption, and restoration of what Jesus did for us on the cross. With that in mind, let's stand and look at two places in Acts 18. Let's read Acts 18:1-3 and 24-26.

Scripture

"After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade."

"Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila

heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

(Prayer)

Father, we love You. Father, we pray that we not be condemned this morning. We pray that we be convicted this morning. We pray that we do not feel like we need to do these things; we pray we want to do these things. We want to give and we want to go based on who You are. Father, we love You and ask these things in Jesus name, amen.

When we look at this passage, I think there are a couple of things we immediately see with Aquila and Priscilla. They gave. My first point here and maybe this could be worded a little better, but open up your wallet. When you look in Acts 18, we see this, specifically in verse 3, "...and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade." Paul comes on the scene and wants to spread the gospel, but he needs a place to stay and he needs money. Aquila and Priscilla offer that for Paul. They offer up their house, they provide him a job so he can financially get by so he can preach the gospel. I think we will see in later verses about Aquila and Priscilla is they didn't feel like they had to; they wanted to do this because they believed in Paul and in the name of Jesus. So when it comes to giving, how does that play out for you and me? This couple gave up their house, gave up their money, so that Paul could go do his thing.

How does that apply? So we immediately start thinking about tithing. As we think about tithing, we start asking the question of how much we need to give. How much do I need to give? This conversation comes about...do I need to give before taxes, or after taxes? What counts for tithing? I think that is just absolutely the wrong mindset. The wrong question is how much do I need to give? The right question is how much do I want to give? It is a matter of the heart. The more the heart wants it, the more you're going to give. I have this guy I look up to; he's one of the best salesman I know,

unbelievable. One of the things he talks about is the difference between a need sale and a want sale. You just need something. If you don't want it, but you need it, you are going to go bare minimum. You're going to go as cheap as you can possibly go. You're just going to get it because you need it; you don't want it. But if you want it, if you really genuinely want it, you're going to get the most you can possibly get. Think about this. When it comes to clothes, if you need clothes, you don't want the clothes, you don't care how the clothes look, you just need it, the thought is what? I'm going to go as cheap as I possibly can. Just get it. I don't care, I just need it, I don't care what it looks like, I just need it; you're going to go cheap. Then you walk through that mall or you start shopping online, you start seeing things that are a little more pricey. That would really look cute. That would look really good. I like it! All of a sudden, it goes from a need to a want. I want that! I think that would look good on me! Then all of a sudden, the process goes from a needs purchase to a wants purchase. Instead of seeing how cheap I can make it, it is how much can I spend in order to be able to get that? It is the same way with a car. You can go in there and say I need a car. I just need the bare minimum, but then you go in that parking lot and start seeing some of the features of other cars, you start seeing how nice they are, how nice they drive, and all the new technology, and all of a sudden, it goes from a need. But can I afford this? I would really like to have this. It becomes a want. It is the same way with a house. People all over the world live in tents and huts, but all of a sudden, we start purchasing and looking for houses. We start seeing the bathroom. We start seeing the backyard. We start seeing all these different things, and all of a sudden, as we're going to the bank, how much will you give me. We say we need, but what we're really saying is I want.

I say all of that as it is the same way with giving to the Kingdom of Christ. It is the same way with giving to this church. If you feel like when you're writing that tithing check, or giving money online that this is what I need to do, you're just doing what you feel like the bare minimum is. If you really believe in this church, if you really believe in the spreading of the name of Jesus Christ, it shouldn't be a need; it should be a want. I want to give more. Why? Because you believe in what this church is doing. One of the things I love about this church is that I really genuinely believe we have

people that give, not because they feel like they need to give, but because they want to give. I look at our VBS offering. We raised over \$130,000 this year for missions! Now, are we excited? Is there a buzz in the room? Yes there is. Are we excited there's a buzz in the room because 400 kids are in this room? Yes. Are we excited and there's a buzz because Bro Ricky, Kory, or Chuck is going to get something dumped on their head? Yes, we are. But what really is motivated is that people want the name of Jesus to be spread. What I love about it is that no matter how small or big the donation is everybody is playing their part. You have these little kids that will be taking money out of their piggybanks, maybe putting quarters in there. You have people putting ten or twenty dollar bills in there. You have people writing some big checks. It doesn't matter; every single person is playing their part, not because they feel like they need to, but because they want to. Do you know what is so awesome about my position? I get to see where the money goes. I get to see the benefit. Here again, we have all this money that goes to all these different places. It goes to Brazil, Malawi, Nicaragua, and the two trips that I'm really a part of are Arizona and New York City. I was thinking about these donations and all the times I've been to Arizona. One example I was thinking about was six or seven years ago, we went to a place called Cockelburr. When we went there, almost every single person was drunk or high. We had one of our students share the gospel with this lady named, Daya. Daya came to Christ. She was the very first person in this village to ever come to Christ. The next year we see some of the very first baptisms. They now have a church in Cockelburr, and when you hear them tell the founding of their church, it goes back to Eric and Brittany doing all these amazing things, but they also go back to this young man who shared to gospel with Daya. I say all that because we're not able to do all that work in Arizona if people in this church aren't wanting to give. I went back to New York City this last July. New York is massive; it's huge! They have five different boroughs in this city. We work in the borough of Brooklyn. In the borough of Brooklyn, there is a neighborhood called Bay Ridge. Bay Ridge is about a two square mile radius. It's small. They have over 70,000 people in this neighborhood. To put that into perspective, it is two square miles, but if you add up all of Calloway and Marshall Counties, we would not get up to 70,000. This

neighborhood, two square mile radius, is bigger than both counties combined! What is crazy about this; in this area, this city is three to five percent evangelical Christians. In the neighborhood we're working in, there is one and a half percent evangelical Christians. Think about that. What would it be like to live in Marshall and Calloway counties and only a little over one percent are believers in Christ, and that's what it's like. One of the things that's unbelievable about this place is it is so diverse. There are people from all over this world in this area. This family from Alabama, Nate and Leslie Tubbs, moved there and is living in the middle of this city. They have church in this little room at the Best Western hotel. That's where they have church. They are trying to literally reach these people, and they are able to have a VBS because we bring a team up there. This year, one of the things that really hit me is one of the days at VBS Nathan pulled me aside and said, "I want you to look." What we saw were two girls, probably in the first and second grade, and one was from Asia and the other from the Middle East. They were holding hands, playing, laughing, and giggling. You don't see that every single day. We started looking around the room and there were people from Russia, Moldova, Egypt, Israel, Costa Rica, Honduras, just nation after nation! Nathan said, "Look, we have almost every single continent in the world in this room right now!" It just blew my mind. How in the world are we in Western Kentucky, Hardin Baptist Church, able to go somewhere and literally minister to the world! Unbelievable! We're not able to do that unless people are giving, and not just giving, wanting to give.

That desire of wanting to give comes back to the ultimate story; we look back at creation and see that God created and it was good. Adam and Eve lacked nothing. They had an abundance of everything. They were rich! But what happens after the fall? Poverty. They are now poor. They are now lacking in everything because of the fall. They lack financial resources. They lack wisdom. They lack knowledge. They lack understanding. Because of that, they experience famine and drought. All of these things come because of the fall. We still to this day feel the effects of poverty. At the same time, this is what's so glorious about the gospel; let's read 2 Corinthians 8:9. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you, but

His poverty, might become rich." I love that. The thought here is the more we understand how rich Jesus is, how He lacks absolutely nothing, and yet became poor, became a bondservant and lacked absolutely everything, on the point to death on the cross, and why did He do that? So that you and I might become rich in Him. One of the things I love with people giving in this church, sometimes I'll have somebody give money for some event or some person, and the person that's giving me money is going to be a stretch for them to give me the money, but I know why they do it. They do it for two reasons. One, they know who they are in Christ right now. No matter how difficult it might be financially to give, they know they are rich in Christ. But not only rich in Christ right now, they know that whatever they're lacking right now, they won't be lacking one day. As King Jesus will come back, we will have an abundance of everything when we get our eternal inheritance. The more we understand this story, giving is not a need; it's a want for you want others to be rich like we have been blessed in being rich in Christ.

Now, with that being said, it's not just about writing a check, or opening up your wallet. It's more. It's a lifestyle. It's opening up your house. We look at Acts 18. Where is Paul staying? With Aquila and Priscilla, right there with them. Verse 3 says, "...and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them..." We skip over to Romans 16, and Paul gives a shout out to Aquila and Priscilla. Priscilla gets a name change, but it's still the same people. Verse 3 says, "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. Greet also the church in their house." The next letter over in 1 Corinthians 16, Paul is giving his final thoughts. Verse 19 says, "The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house..." One of the things that are made very evident with this couple is not only do they give to help Paul spread the gospel, but when you go to their house, they're having church. That's one of the things we need to see, our houses. We need to see in our houses, not just as our house, but as the Lord's house as an extension of Hardin Baptist Church.

Rosaria Butterfield talks about what this is like. I love what she says, "Those who live out radically ordinary hospitality see their homes not as theirs at all, but as God's gift to use for the furtherance of His kingdom." She says, "They know the gospel comes with a house key." I love that! Here is the thought, I love to hear this, and if I could break down the definition, (she does it a lot better than I will) but hospitality; what does that mean? Hospitality means that we're loving a stranger, and as Christians it should be part of our DNA. This should be ordinary, but in our world today, it seems radical. If we really get the story, if we really understand the situation, it should lead into us opening up our houses, opening up our homes for the name of Jesus.

What does this look like? You have to remember the story: creation, fall, rescue, restoration. When you come over to the Lawrence household, you should see Chris, Brandi, Graham, Brax, and Hannah are all created in the image of God. We all have a uniqueness by how God has created us. Hopefully, you see that in our gifts, talents, and abilities when you walk in our house. Do you know what else you will see? You will see our fallen-ness. We are fallen. We can be embarrassed. The other day, Brandi was wanting to invite our neighbor across the street to dinner. You can literally look out our window them across the street, so we wanted to be hospitable. We want to love our neighbor. Brandi wanted to invite them out for Friday, so she gets on the phone and calls them up. The first question our neighbor asked was, "Are clothes optional?" That's an awkward question...a little uncomfortable. But then Brandi looks out the window, and our two-year-old daughter thought it would be funny to take off all of her clothes and stand in the front yard to wave at our neighbor. 😊 Now, that was a little embarrassing. With that in mind, you come to our house and sometimes it will be clean, sometimes it will be messy. If you're around our family very long, sometimes our kids are getting along, sometimes there is drama. There is chaos. It's messy. There's shame. There's sin! Yet, through the fallen-ness at the Lawrence household, hopefully you see a husband striving to be like Christ, as he loves Christ like Christ loves the church. Hopefully you see my wife trying to live out what it looks like to like the church, honoring her husband as she follows my leadership. Hopefully, you see us as a mom and dad where no matter

what comes our way, no matter how good or bad it might be that our hope is not now. Our hope is that we've been rescued by Christ and we believe we're going to be restored in Him. Hopefully, when a stranger walks in our house, they see a uniqueness of how we were created. They will experience our fallen-ness, but they're pointed to the light of Jesus Christ. Hospitality is hard. Hospitality is difficult, but it is worth it.

I think about the college ministry and I've been doing this a while now, eleven or twelve years. When we first started, we wanted to have host homes. One of the things I was concerned about was these college students only hang around people who are between eighteen and twenty-two years old, which is great, but I want them to develop relationships with people who are outside that bubble, so we had these host homes. It was really easy; all that these host homes had to do was literally just open up their house periodically throughout the semester and let them come and hang out. That's it, just let them be part of the family. The kids loved this and it was going really good. There were two families in particular that I had, Ryan and Sarah Stanger, and Michael and Tiffany Stanger. Every time I do something, I'm always dragging them along with me and Brandi, so I was really excited with them hosting. Michael and Tiff decide to have about ten college students over one day. They really like to cook and they're really good at it. They bought groceries and spent all afternoon cooking, and they were really excited about it. We were living right beside them at the time, so I see them cook and do all these different things. About an hour before all the college students come over, every single one of them canceled. I remember just sitting on the couch with steam coming out of my ears at my college students. I just wanted to choke slam every single one of them because I was embarrassed! Michael and Tiff have spent all this money and given up their afternoon, and all of them just bailed. At the other extreme, I have the other brother, Ryan, about this same time he and Sarah had bought this brand new, big, nice, fancy house. I approached him and said, "We've got the Superbowl coming up. Can we have the Superbowl party at your house?" Ryan was like, "Oh yeah, that would be great!" I told him it was going to be a little bigger than his small group, but somehow there was some miscommunication, or I just didn't communicate that as well as I should have. I don't know, but I don't think I was

expecting a big of crowd. The Superbowl comes, and one after another, after another, after another, I think about 150 to 200 kids walked in...I felt like I was back in college at a fraternity party, that's all I know! The place was just bumping. I could barely move, and this house was only three to four weeks old! Michael, Tiff, Ryan, and Sarah, if they could have found me would have strangled me, like, what have you gotten us into? But do you know what I love? Last year, one of our best students that we've ever had come through here graduated. Now, when they graduate, you really don't see them again unless they stay around this area. We see them periodically, but that's about it. One of his last stops was at Michael and Tiffany Stanger's house because of the impact that family had on him. I cannot tell you the amount of times that Ryan and Sarah Stanger have had students come to their house seeking advice and wisdom.

Is hospitality inconvenient? Yeah, it is. Is hospitality uncomfortable? Yes, it is. Is hospitality difficult? Yes, it is, but when you're loving some strangers, lives will be changed forever. The more we understand this that Adam and Eve had the perfect home in the beginning; they had it all, yet through the fall, the home is now broken. There is divorce. We don't even know how to define marriage in our world anymore. It's crazy! People are now strangers and aliens to each other. Yet Jesus left the comforts of His home being with His heavenly Father, takes the form of a man and John chapter 1 says He comes to dwell with us. Why? So that you and I might dwell with Him and have the perfect home. You see, through the cross of Jesus Christ, we don't just dwell with God, but His Holy Spirit makes His home now in us. No matter what our life circumstances might be right now, the perfect home is coming when He returns. The more we understand how our homes have been changed by the good news of Jesus, the more it leads into us loving some strangers so their home might be changed forever through Jesus. Look at all the issues in the world today, I think if we try to figure out how to fix all these things, so much of it is if the Christian church would just start loving some strangers and inviting people into their homes. I know some people live out in the country and don't have neighbors, I know people are very, very introverted, but the whole that here is the more we understand the story of what Jesus has done for us, then the more we can go out and just love one stranger. I'm not telling you to go

have 150 people in your house. I'm not telling you that you have to cook a fancy meal. What I'm telling you is if the gospel really grips your heart, you can find one stranger to go love, to go be hospitable to.

With that being said, we can look at this and be hospitable and write checks, but it leads into not just being hospitable, not just about opening up our house, not just about writing checks, but if we're going to be all in on giving, all in on going, it leads into us eventually speaking the good news of Jesus Christ. There should be the desire to share. When we think through this, this is hard. This is hard. It's hard to love strangers. It is hard to understand. I think how we view them is really important. Here again, creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. We need to see people as being created in the image of God, yet fallen. We need to open up our ears to hear the story. One of the things when I go take students to Arizona or New York, I want two things to occur immediately when they get there. I want them to be blown away by the creation. A lot of these kids have never been out west, and when we go to Arizona, one of the first things they notice is a cactus. Wow, there's a cactus! They fall in love with creation. I want them to fall in love with the people, but I also want them to feel the fallen-ness. One of the things we did this past time in New York City is go to Bay Ridge. If you're in Bay Ridge, it's just like a normal city neighborhood; it's nothing special. Then you get on the subway and pop up in Manhattan. We came up at the Freedom Tower. It's massive, huge buildings! It's a really impressive area, just a short walk away from Wall Street. You have these students get off the subway, see these huge buildings at what has been created and they're amazed by it. A few minutes later, we go into the 9/11 memorial, and they walked two or three hours into that. They walk out of that feeling the fallen-ness. That's what we want. When we are engaging strangers, we're listening, understanding, and appreciating that no matter how different they are from us, we see them as created in the image of God. No matter how bad, how different, no matter what their struggle might be, no matter how much we don't relate to them, we see them as created in the image of God. We enjoy that, but at the same time, we see them as fallen. They need a Savior. They need to be rescued. The more we understand that, whether it be in our work, our neighborhood, whatever it might be, the more it should lead

our hearts to proclaim the good news of Romans 10, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news." How are they to hear without someone bringing them the good news? The more we love the story, and the more we love others, we should have this desire, not a need, but a want; we desire to share the good news of Jesus. That's hard. That's difficult.

It's one thing if you're in a movie just to be an extra. You've just got to stand there. But it's another thing when you've got a speaking role. When you've got a speaking role, what are you nervous about? I'm going to mess up my line. I think when it comes to evangelism we can have the same thought. I'm going to say the wrong thing for God. I don't know the right thing to say, but this is what I do know. I do know our God. I do know if you're a Christian, God dwells within you, and if you're really in love with the story, He's going to take care of you and what you say. I just want to give you a couple of practical steps when we think about evangelism. There are three groups in this room of believers when it comes to sharing your faith.

1. It is a lifestyle.

If that's you, you can just say amen. We appreciate it!

2. You have done it before, but it's not really a lifestyle.

3. The thought of bringing up the name of Jesus in your workplace, with a family member or neighbor, absolutely scares you to death and you've never done it before.

You're in one of the three camps, or you might be a 1.5 or 2.5; who knows where you are. With that being said, I think there are some practical steps if we're really in love with the story of Jesus Christ and we really want to do it, but we're scared to death of starting a conversation.

- A. **Pray for lost people.** Even if you're nervous and scared about bringing it up, at least pray to God for the people you're concerned about.
- B. **Talk about Jesus with people who are on the same team.** If you're scared to death to talk to somebody that's lost, at least find a

Christian where you can actually talk to Jesus about them. Maybe a few of you in your Adult Bible Fellowship class can just share your testimony. It might terrify you to do it, but at least you're on the same team.

- C. Ask somebody if you can pray for them.** Whether it is a waitress, a waiter, or a neighbor, ask how you can be praying for them right now.
- D. Memorize a verse on the importance of sharing the gospel.** Maybe you can just meditate on Scripture.
- E. Invite somebody to church.** It can be someone who's not been here for a while, but just ask if they want to go to church with me.
- F. Find lost people.** If your heart is really wanting to reach out, find lost people to reach out to. If you're nervous and scared, you can still continue to pray for unreached people groups.
- G. Talk to other believers.** Go to somebody in this church about how to share the gospel. Ron Thompson and Brady Siress are going to be having a special class on evangelism that will literally teach you how to share your faith.
- H. Go do it.** With all that being said, sometimes you've just got to go do it.

These are like what and how, but if you're really going to share your faith, you're going to wrestle with how you're going to do it or where you're going to do it, but it's got to be motivated by the why. That why is you love the story, you know Jesus. I love this quote by Dr. Lawless, a professor I had. He said, "What amazes me now is that I'm not always amazed at Jesus." Wow. I see a lot of young believers that come to Christ, they don't know anything at all, but they know they love Jesus. They're scared, but they start sharing the gospel. Sometimes I cringe a little bit when they share, but there's this energy and zeal because they're blown away by what Jesus has done for them! If I'm not careful, I can lose that zeal. I've got to go back to the story. I've got to go back to having my mind and heart being amazed by what Jesus has done for me.

Lately, one of my prayers is I want to want Jesus more. I want to want Jesus more. When I think through the story of wanting to be more 'all in'

when it comes to giving, when it comes to going, I think to the whole story. I think through how I was created in the image of God. I think through how fallen I am. I think through how I've been restored. But do you know what I love about good movies, what my favorite part is? It is the ending. Can I confess something? Sometimes if there is a movie I really like, I will literally just go to the last ten or fifteen minutes and watch the end of the movie. I love it. The ending makes everything else worth it. I know and understand that giving financially is hard. It's difficult. I know and understand hospitality. There are days that we want to be hospitable, and there are days when we are exhausted. I know when it comes to sharing the gospel; it is never easy to be rejected by someone. It is difficult and awkward. The more we focus on the ending and what's coming our way, I believe the more it is worth it. I listen to a talk and read a book this week, and they both had sort of the same thought on two totally different topics, but it works. The speaker said if you had five minutes left to live, five minutes is all you've got, and you could analyze your life in those last five minutes, thinking about everything you've been through, what would you be thinking? Can I be honest with you? I don't think I would regret one dime I've given to this church or to the Kingdom of Christ. I don't think I would regret one time I loved a stranger. I don't think I would regret any time I've shared the gospel, not one. The book I read had the same question, but a tad bit different. He posed it this way; if you die, you're with Jesus, you're in a new earth, a new heaven, and it's been five minutes. You've been there five minutes, and you get to think and reflect on your life on earth. What are you thinking? I've got to believe when I'm in that place where there's no more death, no more disease, or conflict, Christ has wiped away all the tears, and I see how glorious it is, I've seen the end of the story and realize there is a brand new beginning, I've just got to think I would wish I had given even more! I just wish I would have loved more strangers. I wish I had shared the gospel even more because I see how great this place is all because of the rescuer, all because of the redeemer, and all because of what Jesus did on the cross for me! That's our goal. The more we know and understand this story, when it comes to giving, when it comes to going, to serving, gathering, connecting, and Jesus increasing, it is all about that story. The more we understand that

our hearts and minds are radiated with this love story, with this ultimate story, with this best story, the more this won't be a need, it will be a lifestyle of want. Will it be hard and difficult? Yes, but we will want to do more and more and more because we know we are created in the image of God, we know we are fallen, but we've been redeemed and He is coming back.

Where are you this morning? Where's your heart? When it comes to giving for the name of Christ, do you feel like you need to, or do you feel like you want to? When it comes to loving that stranger, do you feel like you need to, or do you feel like you want to? When it comes to sharing the gospel, do you feel like you need to, or do you feel like you want to? My prayer is that you fall in love with the story, know the story and no matter how small or big you might think you are in the grand story of God, desire to be a part of it.