

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Not Ashamed

PART

1

TITLE

Not Ashamed Of His Life

SCRIPTURE

Mark 3:13-21; 6:1-6; 8:34-38



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Well, it is so good to see you, Providence family. If you are new with us, a guest, welcome. We are thrilled that you have joined us. I hope you've had a good week. It's great to sing with you. In two weeks, we get to celebrate Easter. You excited? All right. That was really pathetic, but we're really excited about Easter. I trust that you are. You just weren't ready for that moment. We at Providence, we love the fact that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead, and so we want to celebrate in a way that bears witness to the hope that we have that Jesus did rise from the dead. There's a few things that you can do in two weeks to actually help us to celebrate well and to care for people. The first thing is that all of us can be praying.

I want to ask you specifically to be praying for people who will be here who do not know Christ as Savior and Lord, that God would open up their eyes and help them to see that Jesus Christ, when he rose from the dead, that that's the most consequential moment in the history of the world, and it has personal effects even in their life. We want to pray that God would move, and all of us know people. I want to ask you to invite, invite a neighbor or a friend. There may be somebody, I would ask you just to start praying, "God, is there anybody in my life, in my workplace, in my neighborhood that I need to invite to church on that weekend?" The third thing is to worship. I hope you do this every single week, but if you don't, this is a great Sunday to start. That is I want to encourage you to worship the Lord before you get here to worship the Lord.

You see, when our hearts are ready, which means that we come and we've already confessed our sin, we've already thought about Jesus, we've already been absolutely amazed once again, it's fresh again what he has done and who he is, what happens to our worship is it's unlocked from apathy. I want to encourage you to walk in these doors come Easter and have your heart already to worship. Then, there's a fourth thing that you can do, and that's serve. You see, the fact is on that Sunday, at least here at Providence, we normally see a spike of about 500 or 600 people. Most of those 500 or 600 people are going to come to this hour and the next hour of the three because 8:00 is pretty early.

The fact is that we really want to be able to provide them a seat, but if you did that, we added 250 to our room right now, they wouldn't fit. On Easter weekend, we are planning a fourth service, and it's going to start on Saturday night. We'd have one Saturday night, three on Sunday morning. Now, what can you do to help? Well, first of all, on Saturday night, we need folks to help in the parking lot, the front doors just to greet people, as well as with all of our kids. Then, there's another way that you can serve. You can think of it in terms of your participation in the outreach. That is that if you would be willing, if you can ... Now, you may be inviting someone to this service with you. In which case, don't all clear out because we're going to need people this hour as well.

If you can come on Saturday or Sunday at 8:00 AM, bright and early Easter Sunday morning, we would ask you to consider to free up your seat just for that Sunday at this service hour. What we really want to be able to do is to say to all of our guests that we have a place for you in this room as opposed to off in some other room with a screen.

If you can just think through those ways, we would love for you to help us celebrate the fact that he rose from the dead. Let's bow. Let's pray together toward that end. Father in heaven, we look to you, and the greatest thing that we want to take place on Easter is for the name of your Son Jesus Christ to be exalted in our life.

As a result of that, I pray, Father, that we who already know Christ, Lord, that we would be encouraged, Lord, that day as it draws near, Lord, that our hearts would be ready and that would be a special day for us. We also pray that it would be a special day for those who may, for the very first time, hear the gospel and see that it's consequential to their own life and eternity. We pray, God, that you would do a miracle. I pray, God, that you would use our time right now as we think about this idea of not being ashamed to be associated with Jesus Christ. I pray that as we examine the life of Jesus this morning, God, that you would help us to be interested. Would you help us to believe what your word says? Would you give us courage, Lord, to apply it to our life? Would you speak through weakness once again? I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Mark chapter three, I would love for you to turn there in your Bible. If you don't have one, there's lots in the chairs near you. If you don't have one at home, take that home as a gift. There's actually three different places in Mark that, in a moment, I'm going to read from, Mark three, Mark six, and Mark eight. If you can multi-task, you can hold a finger in all of those places. If not, I will give you time to turn, but Mark chapter three. You know, in 1947, Jackie Robinson, in a feat of courage and ability and skill, he broke a barrier in baseball where he became the very first black man to play in that league. The fact is there's a lot of people in this nation that were not ready for it.

In the movie 42 as well as his scene in this statue right here, which actually now lives in Brooklyn, what we're told was that one day in Cincinnati, the fans there, they were hurling out such racist hatred towards Robinson that eventually, his teammate, his name was Pee Wee Reese, he left shortstop, and he walked through the infield. He walks over and, unashamedly, not only did he stand next to him, but he put his arm around Robinson's shoulders as if to say, "I am not ashamed to be publicly associated with this man." It was an act of courage. The fact is I don't know much about either of the men personally or about their friendship, how long it endured, but what I do know is this. When you think about Jesus Christ in our culture today, we have all observed the ridicule that has been directed and that is now directed, not only at Jesus, but also his word. It causes each one of us to second guess.

We've felt the risk of publicly and willingly associating ourselves with Jesus Christ. It's only natural. When we see people throwing darts at a board, do you really want to stand that close to the board? Paul urged his son in the faith, his name was Timothy, and he says, "Timothy, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord." What we're going to do over the next four weeks starting today is to look at four different areas of Jesus, his life, his death, his resurrection, and then the message called the gospel that wraps not only who he is but what he accomplished. We're going to do that over four weeks. My hope in doing that is that your eyes and your heart, just like mine, will see that there are a million valid reasons to feel shame in this world, but being associated closely with Jesus Christ is not one of them. It's not.

The fact, though, is that every single one of us, whether we would affirm that with an amen or not, is that there are times when we have felt ashamed, when we've not exercised the courage that we wish that we would have to speak up for Jesus Christ. I want you to know that if you are ashamed or have felt ashamed, you are not alone, and you are not undone. For not only is he worthy, but he's also forgiving. This is what we find in Mark chapter three and Mark six and Mark eight, is three different episodes where people who knew Jesus, they felt a certain way about Jesus. The first two, his family and his friends actually felt shame for being associated with him, and so we want to read these.

Mark chapter three verse 13 says this, "And when he," that's Jesus, "went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed 12, whom he also named apostles, so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons." Mark shares the names of each of these 12 men, and then we get to verse 20. It says this, "Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'" Now, fast forward in your Bible and also in the life of Jesus to Mark chapter six.

In Mark six, Jesus, who had been walking through towns in Galilee, comes back to his hometown called Nazareth, and this is what we're told in verse one. It says, "He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his own disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, 'Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offense at him. And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives, in his own household.'"

Then we skip over to Mark chapter eight. Now Jesus wants to ask these 12 followers of his, his apostles, some questions. He begins, and he says, "Who do all the people tell you that I am? Who are they asking about? Who do they think that I am?" They give several answers. He says, "That's good, but let me ask you a question. Who do you say that I am?" In that moment in time and space, Peter stands up, and he says, "You're the Christ. You're the promised one." The word means Messiah, promised one, Savior. "You're the one that's been promised throughout the entire Old Testament that's going to come, that's going to make things right, that's going to reconcile us back into a right relationship with God Almighty. You are the Christ."

Now, notice what Jesus says a few verses later in verse 34, "And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?'"

What could a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Now, Providence, what do we as a people, what do we say in response to what we just read? There’s a few things.

The first is this. We are not ashamed of Jesus’ unusual life. The fact is it was unusual. He said things and did things that literally nobody else says and nobody else does. I want you to think about how hard it was to internalize for the people who knew him growing up. You see, for three decades, for 30 whole years, Jesus had grown up in a little town called Nazareth. It was little. It was rural. Everyone knew everyone. Everyone knew everyone’s business. Jesus was a little boy. He grew up. His neighbors say, “Hey, there’s little Jesus. Jesus, you want a little cookie?” Jesus was playing with his brothers. He’s with his friends out playing soccer. They’re playing ball. Jesus was a normal kid. He would go to worship with his family.

As he continued to grow, he learned a trade. He was a carpenter of some kind. He was a builder of some kind. Then, suddenly, 30 years later, Jesus leaves town, and he begins doing and saying things that his family and friends simply could not comprehend. “I thought this was just Jesus, and now you’re saying what?” Let’s look at few things that he did. One of the things he did was that he made stunning friends. In our text, the first one that we read, it says that he picked 12 men, apostles, disciples. This was quite a motley crew of 12 men. This was made up of fishermen. There was one tax collector, which was a legalized thief. There was also a zealot, Simon the zealot.

A zealot was an anarchist, was someone who was trying to overthrow the government. Jesus pulls these 12 men together and says, “This is going to be the people that I’m going to disciple. These will be my closest associates on the earth.” People looked at this and are like, “How does that 12 fit together? How could it fit together with you?” It’s interesting. It’s just like our culture. We say don’t hang out with bad people. Isn’t it amazing that Matthew chapter nine verse 10 says, “Tax collectors and sinners came and reclined with Jesus”? They were eating with him. Instead of shunning immoral people, Jesus was having dinner with immoral people, and it was hard to understand.

Then, there was another group of people that, for culture, all the little children. They were all taught throughout their life this is the people to emulate. This is the people who you want to model your life after. This is who you esteem. It’s these people. They’re called the Pharisees, this religious elite. Jesus, not only did he not want to associate with them, but he publicly condemned them a number of occasions with words such as this, “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, for you’re like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly they appear beautiful, but within you’re full of dead people’s bones.” It looks like to the people who have observed him for 30 years, “Man, he’s got his wires crossed. He’s hanging out with the wrong people. He’s wanting to be like the wrong people, and he’s wanting to shun the wrong people.”

Not only did he make stunning friends, but he made stunning claims. You read through the gospels, not only before but also after these passages that we read, and you find some amazing things. One day, the high priest actually looks at Jesus and asks him a question. He says, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed," or the Son of God. "Are you the Son of God?" Jesus says, "I am." Now, imagine being his childhood buddy. What? "I am." Jesus continued to share exclusive rights over things that literally no one's allowed to say. He says that he's the only path to heaven. He says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me."

He claimed to be the source of rest. Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." He claimed to be the ultimate and only victor over the grave, over death. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." He claimed to have all authority. Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." He went around saying, "I'm like the bread of life. I'm the light of the world. I'm the good shepherd." Nobody has ever walked this earth and said these kinds of things. Stunning friends, stunning claims, but also stunning demands, audacious demands that he would make of other people.

Let me just give you a sampling. One day, Jesus, he goes up on a mountain with his disciples, and this huge following comes up, and he begins teaching them. Right as he begins, he says this, "I want you to know that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. The reason is because they're not entering either." The scribes and Pharisees were there. It's not on the screen, but you continue to read that passage. Just a few verses later, in verse 48, he says, "Let me tell you who's going to heaven. You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Do you know who goes to heaven? Only morally perfect people. That's it. You say, "Wait a minute. I got a problem." We all have a problem. Here's the amazing thing. You see, the gospel, which is the good news of the Bible, actually says that Jesus Christ knew that heaven was a place marked by absolute holiness, absolute moral perfection, and no imperfection could enter.

You know what he did? He brought perfection to this earth. He lived without sin, and then he went to a cross where he died for our sin. He was buried in a grave, and he rose from the dead. He says, "If you'll believe in me and trust in me exclusively, I will take away your sin, and I will give you my perfection." It's called justification. In other words, you have to be morally perfect while you're on this earth or you have to go with the one who was, Jesus Christ. What a demand that he put upon others. He says in John 3:3, "Unless one is born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." John chapter five verse 23, he says, "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." Do you see what he says here? He says, "Regardless of an individual's sincerity or passion for their God or religion, if a person is not honoring me as the Son of God, that person, in all of their faith, is not honoring God." That is such brazen exclusivity. It's like this is it. What a demand.

Then, he goes on, and he says, “By the way, everything I say is not only authoritative, but it’s helpful to you.” He says, “Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Now, just imagine that you have a friend that you’ve grown up with for 30 years, played soccer, eaten cookies with, worshiped next to. You come to church, and suddenly you see him out on the street corner, and they’re claiming to be the Son of God, the only way to heaven. They have all authority, and they’re demanding you not only to acknowledge them but to worship this person. Imagine how difficult that would be to absorb, and this is exactly what we read in Mark three and Mark six. His own family came to seize him. They planned an intervention because they thought he was out of his mind.

Later on, when he comes to Nazareth, his hometown, it says that they took offense at him. The word “took offense” is where we get the word scandal. In other words, they said, “You are scandalizing us. You’re embarrassing us. You’re shaming us as a community of people called the Nazarinians. We don’t want to associate with what you’re saying. Yet, because you’re from here, we have no choice.” They’re saying, “Aren’t you lowly, uncredentialed Jesus, little house on the corner, lots of brothers and sisters? Yeah, you played ball in my front yard, and now you want me to bow and worship you? You’re shaming us, so stop it.” You see, we’re not ashamed of Jesus’ unusual life because, number two is also true, we’re not ashamed for we have seen Jesus’ unrivaled supremacy.

You have to ask yourself a very important question, and it’s this. If it is true that God made a promise to send a rescuer who was his Son, and if it is true that that Son would come to this earth and accomplish something and then invite everyone to believe in him, and if it’s true that this rescuer cared not only about the religious but the irreligious, and he knew that both of their paths did not lead to heaven, and if it was true that he was the only way, that he had all authority, and that he required honor, what would we want him to say when he got here to the earth? You see, when he says these things, it’s because they’re true. I’m using words right now to describe thoughts in my own mind, what’s on this paper, what’s in my heart. I’m using words.

Well, God also used words. It’s a metaphor that he uses in John to describe it. He wanted to tell us something, to reveal something to us, and so he used his Son. This is what he says. He says, “The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, who’s full of grace and truth.” You see, Providence, we are not ashamed of Jesus Christ because Colossians one says, “He is the image of the invisible God.” We are not ashamed of his teaching on life and death and money and marriage and sexuality and servanthood. Why? Because, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” We are not ashamed of his miracles.

Do you know why we’re not ashamed of the fact that the Bible says that he actually healed people and walked on water and created bread out of bread just by breaking it, giving thanks, and just continuing to make more and more so that thousands could eat?

Do you know why we're not ashamed? Because the Bible says, "By him, all things were created." That means he has creator rights. He's not bound by gravity because he created gravity to serve us, to protect us. The laws of nature that he created he has the authority to live above. He can walk on water, and he can talk to wind. He has authority over evil. He has authority over our body, and we're not ashamed of his miracles because he is the creator.

We're not ashamed of the opposition that he knew at this time in his life and that we now know that he experiences now even in our own culture. Do you know why? Because that opposition is the very thing that brought him to a cross where he died for our sins. After making purification for our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High. You see, we see the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Oh, we see an unusual life, unusual friends, unusual claims and demands that he made when he was on the earth, but we as a people also see Jesus' unrivaled supremacy, and so we echo, just like Peter, we say, "Surely you are the Christ. You are the Son of God. You are the only way, the only truth, the only life. You are the light of the world. You are the good shepherd. You are the Son of God." We're not ashamed of Jesus Christ. He has unrivaled authority.

Then, there's another thing that we look here in Mark eight. There's another reason we're not ashamed. That is because we have taken up our cross. Now, I want you to notice that Jesus actually uses this language to describe normal Christian behavior. In other words, if you have not taken up your cross, then Jesus does not describe your life as normal Christian behavior. He says stuff that's absolutely stunning about a cross. You see, when a man was seen carrying a cross, everyone knew that that was the last thing that that person was ever going to do. They were taking their cross to a hill where they would be crucified. Associated to the cross, what a cross signaled was four different things.

It signaled opposition. People were clearly opposed to this individual, either who they are or what they've done. There was opposition involved. There was shame involved. Normally, a criminal was crucified naked in public in order to say, "Everybody, I want you to know that this kind of behavior is not going to be tolerated." It was a shameful thing to carry a cross and to be hung upon a cross. It was also something that was so marked by suffering and pain, and it end with imminent death. This is what he says is normal Christian behavior. He says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me." The question is: Who in their right mind would choose this?

Jesus says, "This is who would choose it: someone who first denies themselves." Christianity is not about your interest. It's not about clever ideas. It's not about logic. It's about denying ourself and seeing Jesus as superior to whatever path we're walking. See, our old self doesn't want opposition, shame, suffering, and death. What does our old self want? It doesn't want opposition. It wants approval. We want people to think highly of us, to be encouraged by us, and to encourage us. It doesn't want shame. It wants honor. It wants people to approve of us and to say, "You're amazing. I love you, and I respect you, and I need you. We want you around. We want to honor you." That's what our old self wants.

The old self certainly does not want suffering and death. Why? Because we want comfort and safety. We want more pillows, and we want a longer life. To take up our cross means that we count the pain of associating with Jesus as preferable to a life without him. Do you see that's what he's saying? He saying this is what you can do. You can stack up everything that your natural heart wants, which is approval and honor and comfort and safety, over here. Jesus says this. To take up your cross, what it actually means, is to deny yourself what you think you actually want and to count the pain of associating with him as preferable to a life without him. You see, every single one of us has to come to the place in our life where we ask the question, "Is Jesus worth it?" Not, "How do I feel about him?" Not, "Do my parents believe in him?" "Is Jesus worth denying myself to carry his cross?"

What he does, if you notice our text in verse 38, it starts with the word "for." In fact, every next verse, it begins with the word "for" or "because." In other words, he wants to give us the evidence of why it's actually a trade up and not a trade down to deny ourself and take up our cross. He says, "For whoever saves his own life." What does that mean? It means whoever saves his life, his approval, his honor, comfort, safety, he says, "You're going to lose it all anyway one day, but whoever loves his life for my sake will save it." Then he asks two questions about our soul, basically saying, "Hey, what's worth your soul?" The answer is nothing. There's no amount of honor or security or comfort that's worth your eternal soul. Then, he moves into shame.

He says, "For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed." This is what he's saying. He's saying that when we are ashamed of Jesus Christ, what we're saying is that everything that I love is going to pass, and yet I've chosen it ahead of Jesus, who will live forever. You know what makes this so horrible? We choose all this honor and approval, and not to get the honor and approval from wise and godly people, but he says from adulterers and sinful people who we will one day leave anyway. This is the ultimate eternal trade down when we live on this earth and we say, "I'm ashamed of Jesus Christ." What do we do with this, Providence? What do you do with this? What do you do with Jesus' words when he says, "Whoever is ashamed of me in this world I will be ashamed of when you stand before my Father"? What do we do with that?

Let me give you a few applications. The first is this. Let's trust Jesus Christ with our lives. See, our culture does something that is so tragic. That it is makes feelings the authenticator of what is true. You've heard people say who are married, maybe, "I just don't know if I love him or her anymore." What we mean when we say that is, "If I could simply discern how I feel, then I would know what is real and true and therefore know what to do next." We give our feelings final authority, and I urge you, do not play this game when it comes to your soul. Do not play this game when it comes to Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus is not worthy because we feel he's worthy. He's not honorable because we honor him. In fact, were all the earth to be ashamed of him, he would be no less who he is. He is who he is. He is the only way to the Father. Were all the world to reject it, it wouldn't make it untrue. He's not an idea. He's a person.

What I want to urge you to do is to follow Jesus' brothers. Oh, they didn't start so well. John 7:5 says, "For not even his brothers believed in him," but then Jesus Christ died for their sin, and he rose from the dead. In 1 Corinthians 15, we're told that Jesus went, and he appeared to specific people. It says the first person that he appeared to was James, which is not the brother of John. It's his brother. We know that because it says, "To James, and then to all the apostles," which would include the other James. This is the James who wrote the book of the Bible. This is James his next youngest brother. He comes and appears to James, and James becomes so convinced, clearly. You can imagine that conversation, "Hey, I told you."

He becomes so convinced that he becomes the pastor in the church in Jerusalem until he's martyred when they threw him off the top of the temple. Do you know what happened next? His brother Simeon said, "If you're going to shut him up, then I'm going to start preaching." He starts to preach. They couldn't shut him up, and so he said, "I got another brother. His name is Jude." He wrote one of the last books of the Bible. What a family. Do you know why there was such courage? They didn't fear the grave because they had seen their oldest brother conquer it. Our goal here is not to study and admire the family of Jesus. It's to join the family of Jesus. Mark 3:35 says, "For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

This morning, I beg of you to trust Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Admit to him that you can not save yourself. Lean upon him with your belief and confess him as Lord of your life, and the Bible says that you will be saved. I think another application for us who have already done that is let's confess our shame to Christ. You know, Jesus really does feel our shame. This is not a victimless crime. You remember Peter, not long after he said, "You're the Christ," the little girl says, "Hey, weren't you with him?" He was too ashamed to be associated with Jesus, the moment that this picture seeks to describe, that moment when he's warming himself, and Jesus is being condemned and accused.

It says that on the third time, he says, "I swear, if I know the man Jesus Christ, may I be condemned." At that very moment, it says that Jesus turned, and Peter and Jesus caught each other's eyes. Our shame is not a victimless crime. Jesus is not an idea that feels nothing when we reject it. Oh, he feels our shame, but the good news is he forgives our shame. I encourage you. If you think about your life, you think about the opportunities I've had this week and the number of times I had to be courage to say, "I want you to know something about me. Jesus Christ saved me." I wasn't as courageous as I wanted to be to invite people. Whatever it is, this is a great opportunity for us to say, "God, I ask that you would forgive me. I confess my shame to you."

Finally, let's confess our faith in Christ. Oh, Christian, your faith is so personal, but it is not private. Romans 1:16 says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." I encourage you to invite. I encourage you to go. I encourage you to share your story with the hope of sharing his story. You know what? His plan for you, his path for you looks differently, but every one of us has an opportunity to respond with what we believe God wants us to do. When we take a step of faith, what we're saying is, "I'm not ashamed." I want to show you a video of some people here at Providence and beyond who are saying, "This is what God's called me to do, and I am not ashamed." Watch this.

Thomas: I'm Thomas West, and this is my wife Elizabeth, and we're in the process of preparing to move to London, England to plant a church.

Elizabeth: We have two kids, Perry Elizabeth, who's five, and Shepherd, who just turned three.

Thomas: For the last seven years, I've been the college pastor at Providence Baptist Church, and God has been at work in our lives as we've been living right here in Raleigh, living life on mission right here where we are. God has been slowly preparing us for this new venture of moving to London to plant a church.

Daniel: We're Daniel and Paige Evans. We've got three kids. Hannah's seven, Eli's five, and David's two. We dated through college and then had some time apart right after we graduated. During that time, I think God did a huge work in both of our hearts, both in our own relationships with him, and really during that season gave us both a calling to God's mission around the world. I spent a season in Central Asia, came back. We got married, and then Providence sent us graciously back to Central Asia as a family.

Thomas: In August, we went on with Summit Residency, where they have been preparing us for what it would look like to move to London and plant. A series of trainings have been very helpful for our family and for our team.

Elizabeth: There are ups and downs in that because it's a big prayer to pray, to say, "Okay, Lord. I'm ready to do this. I see this is where you're leading me. I see this is where you're calling me." We just prayed that he would open the doors for us, and he continued to open door after door after door for London. Then my prayer also turned into having the courage to step through those doors that he was opening because they were big, scary doors sometimes. Exciting to see his faithfulness and just how he's gone before us in so many ways and paved the way.

Daniel: We came back in 2013, and the prayer was, "God, if you want us to be overseas again, provide the opportunity, but, most importantly, provide the team." He's done that over and abundantly, forming us into a close family friendship with the Wests over the last five years in community and now building a ministry partnership. Just really overjoyed and thankful that he answered that prayer directly.

Paige: It will be very hard for our older two kids. They've had some emotional moments processing that they'll be away from everything they've known so far, their school, their house, their grandparents.

Daniel: The biggest ways that folks can be praying for us for the kids and their transition.

Thomas: He's leading us to something that, it's hard to see sometimes. It's hard to understand everything that he's leading us into, but he is so good in how he continues to provide and care for us as we take what feels like these trembling steps of faith.

Brian Frost: This is the London launch team. What I guess a year ago started with God's call upon a single family has mushroomed now to a team of 25 people. We can't have all of them speak, but on behalf of the whole team, I'm going to ask Thomas just to share a few words.

Thomas: Thanks, Brian. Thanks, Providence family. Just a little under a year ago, we stood before you and shared with you the dream for planting in London that God was laying on our hearts and the process we've been going through with it. God has done so much in the last year. He's prepared our family, the West family, the Evans family. He's brought together this amazing team of 25 people, not all of which have visas and jobs lined up yet, but are believing God, standing here before you today in faith, believing God that he's going to provide that. Got us over 80% funded through your budget of \$1.5 million. God is simply great, and he's good. While we don't have everything figured out about what's about to happen in the next couple of months and years, we're eager to plant a church that will plant churches together. On behalf of my family, the Evans, this entire launch team before you, thank you, Providence, for sending us. Thank you, Brian, for your leadership and care over the years, for this amazing pastoral staff, this elder board, and the whole church family. Thank you for the nurturing and care that makes moments like this possible in so many ways. We are able to go because you give, so we say thank you.

Brian Frost: It's fantastic. As you can see, this is a little bit more than a mission trip. These people are actually securing jobs and visas to stay there in the hope of planting a church that would plant churches. In Acts, what we're told is that when God raised up a calling in people's lives to leave a place and to go in some other work to say, "We're not ashamed of the gospel," in that place, what we find is the church gathered. They laid hands on them, and they prayed and sent them out, which is what we're going to do now. If you would, would you bow and would you pray for them and with us? Father in heaven, we thank you for your amazing grace in each of our lives. I thank you for the calling that you have placed in each individual on this stage and for those who are not here this morning. I pray, Father, that you would be so gracious.

Our prayer, our ultimate prayer, Father, is that people would come to faith in Jesus Christ as a result of them going and not only come to faith in Christ, but, Father, that they would then become not ashamed, and as a result of that, this one plant would plant other churches that would plant other churches. We pray for London. We know that it's a place that lives in spiritual darkness. So many people, they're not even conscious of their reality of God. We pray, Father, for your mercy and your grace upon the people. Would you give the team great endurance? Would you give them creativity? Would you provide for their needs? Would you give them protection? God, would you guard them from the schemes of evil? I pray, Father, that many people would come to faith in Jesus Christ. We lift them to you and ask for your blessing upon each person. Give them what they need to do exactly what you've called them to do. We ask for wisdom and grace and love. I pray, Father, that in each of their hearts, Lord, that they would not be ashamed of the gospel. We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.



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