

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

Brian Frost

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Grace Does Good

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7

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Mobilizing For Good Works

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Titus 3:8-15



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Well, each year, we set aside a day to just think back and to consider, and then to celebrate God's faithfulness that we have seen, that we have truly experienced. And sometimes, in fact, the vast majority of his blessings actually pass us by. We don't even have eyes to see most of them. And so, it's only fitting, though, for us to pause and to give thanks to God for the ones that we do see. And yet the reality is that some of us showed up on this day, when we call it Celebration Sunday, and we were not ready to celebrate. Our heart is very far from what would we normally think of as the emotions that we would align with a day of celebration. That happiness. You may be full of pain right now. You may feel loss right now. You may feel dark. You may feel depressed. You just may feel cold. Maybe physically cold, but also spiritually cold. Or you just feel apathetic.

It's true that pain is no respecter of our days, that you and I can say, "On this day, we're going to call it Celebration Sunday," and we have no way for us to know who is going to be fit emotionally to come and celebrate on that day. And yet it is absolutely worthwhile, and this is why: in Psalm 111, verse two, it says this. It says, "Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them."

Every single one of us, we find no problem studying whatever it is that we delight. That's why a new mother will study every crevice of a baby's face. It's because it's easy to do so. The heart of the mother is delighting in the child; and so it is with the Lord with those who delight in him. To actually look at the kindnesses that he has bestowed upon us, even in sustaining us and keeping us through seasons and maybe even years of difficulty, and for us to recognize, "Man, this is what God did in my life!" is so critically important.

You and I, when we build things, we show them to people. And if someone wants to look at what we built, we say, "Now listen, don't look too closely." And the reason is because you and I know where the flaws are found. And yet when God builds something, when he does something, he constantly says, "I'll tell you what, I want you to just look closer. If you look closer, you're going to be even more impressed."

Think about snow for a second. One day, here in Raleigh, it's going to snow again. It is. One day, it will happen. It's going to look something like this, right? And we look, and from inside, you just kind of look out and you go, "Hey, it's snowing!" Like it all is collected together. And we can look at that and say, "Hey, that's amazing!" Job 37, God says, "I'm the one who sends snow to the earth." And we look at that, and we go, "Hey, go God!"

But listen, God says, "Listen, if you're actually so duly impressed with me, as you should be, you're going to actually even find more joy if you study what I've done." And that's why, if you stick any one of these snowflakes under a microscope, you might find something like this: more precision, more order, more complexity. There's more brilliance with whatever God has done the closer you look.

And here, we're going to finish up our study in Titus. And he's talking about mobilizing for good works. To see where we're at today, and to say, "Okay, this is the mission and this is the glory of Jesus. What can we do in the next year for us to be able to actually take the Gospel to all people? How do these two things align?"

Let me tell you how they align. The psalmist, in the very next verse, he says this: he starts, and he says, "Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them." In other words, when you look back, we find great delight in what we see and what God has done, but it also propels us with hope. And do you know why? Because his righteousness endures forever. In other words, all the sin that he forgave us yesterday and throughout the last year, we can be assured, on the basis of his character, his righteousness is going to endure forever. And so, we can expect, and hope, and even be mobilized in hope, knowing who he is and what he does.

When you think of the kindnesses that he has bestowed upon us as a church family. I think it is so critically important you understand this is not Scoreboard Sunday where we just look at numbers. Every one of those individuals ... When we say over 100 of us led someone to faith in Christ, we go, "Hey, that's wonderful!" But if any of us would actually have the heart and we would take the time to take any one of those individuals and begin to look at all that God had to do in their life in order to bring them to that place, that someone had to be compelled within their heart to tell them the Gospel, that God had to move within that heart to actually believe it and understand it. It is a remarkable thing, everything that God has done. And you think back over the last year. Just think of your moral life. How many sins has he forgiven you? And compound that by everybody in this room, and in the last service, and next. Think about everything that he's taught us. God's Word says that in the human heart there's no capacity to understand a single thing from God's Word without the Spirit of God. So, if in the last year you have heard anything and you understood it, in that moment, God was at work in your life. It's something worth studying.

He has protected us. He has provided us. He has sustained us. He's kept us together. He's kept us unified around a single mission. He's led many people to trust Christ as their Savior and Lord, many people to want to be baptized, to tell other people what God has done within their heart, to join the church. He's led many of us to plant our lives within the church.

It's absolutely remarkable for me from time to time just to look back and to see what God is doing through your lives. When we think about all the gifts that he is using, all the gifts in this place to care for one another; how I hear you're loving one another, and praying for one another, and caring for one another, and visiting for one another, and blessing one another, and giving to one another. When I hear your stories of how you're inclined, that God has given you an opportunity, a friend for you to be able to share your testimony with them. It is a miracle. And then you think about how he's called us, because he is worthy of worship from every single person throughout the face of the earth. So, he's called us to take this Gospel to the ends of the earth.

You think, this last year, 250 people got on an airplane and went somewhere. Nearly all of those across the pond, somewhere far away from here. You just look at the map: these are the places that we had the opportunity to actually send people from Providence within the last year. And you know what? Every single person that sat on an airplane, there is a story that God was moving in their life in all kinds of different directions in order to inspire them and incline them to get on that airplane.

And then you think about the generosity of Providence that allows us to partner with 35 different churches around the world. You can see where the churches are at right here. It is a remarkable thing that God has done. And it's only fitting, even if our emotional state is not quite up for it, to study his works and to praise him.

And so today, what we're doing is we're choosing to trust God enough to rejoice in what we can see that he is doing, and then to prepare in hope for what he might just do.

So, let me pray for us, okay?

Father in Heaven, we love you. We thank you for your grace, your kindness, your mercy. You have been so good to us. And as we look now at Titus, chapter three, in the last several verses, we pray, God, that you would give us understanding. Would you do a miracle in our hearts?

For those in the room that are just emotionally wound up right now, I pray, God, that you would soothe their soul, that they would be able to hear you say, "I love you." I pray for those in the room that are dealing with depression, or those that are dealing with loss of death. I pray, God, that you would be gracious. Be gracious to us. Open up our eyes, and help us to see beautiful things within your Word. Would you speak through weakness and through so many distractions that we've brought into this room? And we pray that in all things Jesus alone will be glorified. And we pray this in his name. Amen.

In your Bible, I would love for you to turn to the third chapter of Titus. If you don't have one, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. And if you don't have one at home, take that home as a gift.

But this is the seventh message, just to sort of work through this little book this summer. It's called Titus. Paul wrote it; and his buddy Titus, who was sort of his mentee in the faith, a young Greek man. Paul began to mentor him. And eventually, he wrote him this letter. And what we've looked at is that Titus was really written in the hope that God Almighty, he desperately ... I say "desperately". He, in a very passionate way, he loves us so much that he wants people to know that his Son can save them. And the way that he's chosen to communicate that his Son can save them from their sin is through the works, and through the words, through the deeds, through the lives, through the witness of people he has already saved. That would be those who have trusted Christ as Savior and as Lord.

And I just love the fact that when you look at the Bible, and what God reminds us over and over, and it gives me so much comfort, and that is that the power is not bound up in me to be able to convince or to persuade anybody; that all the power is of the Lord's. And yet, that it's not supposed to lead his people into paralysis or laziness, but know we're supposed to prepare.

And this is what we find at the end of Titus. We also find it in other places of the Bible, like Proverbs 21:31. It says that "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord." In other words, whether or not we win or lose is ultimately up to the Lord. However, God's people have a responsibility to prepare the horse for battle, to make it light, and sleek, and clean; so that it's rested, and it's energized, and it's fed; so that it's ready for the battle. And then, once we've done our faithfulness, we say, "God, it's up to you. Do with it as you will." And ultimately, that is exactly what Paul has in mind at the end of his letter. He's looking back at what God has done in their lives, and it's propelling hope for how the Gospel is going to now mobilize these people, these believers, to do good works.

So, let's read it. We're going to back up just a little bit to verse four for context. He says, "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us. Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy. By the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, so that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Now, here's where we're going to pick up: "This saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for all people. But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, all dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for the person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful. He is self-condemned. When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me, for I have decided to winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way. See that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need and not be unfruitful. All who are with me send greetings to you, and greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all."

Now, what we've seen throughout these last seven weeks are different things that God's grace does within our lives in order to propel us, and protect us, and care for us so that we can do good works. And I want to show you three more today.

The first is this, is that "God's grace insists on the pathway for good works." It's an interesting word that he uses there in verse eight: "persistently insistent". It's a fierceness. There's a strong determination of what he's saying, that's he's instilling in Titus, who's seeking to give order to the churches on the island of Crete. He says, "This saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things."

So, what are we supposed to insist upon within the church? What does Paul have in mind? What are these things that he's talking about? And what he's doing is he's going back to verse three: "That we were once". And he begins telling us what we were like before Christ. We were foolish, and we were enslaved; and he says that we were disobedient. It says that we were led astray. It was a perilous time.

You see, God created every single one of us with the capacity for good works. I hope you know that. You have been endowed; you have been made by God like a crystal, right? Or like a prism. That's why it's been in that video for seven weeks. You don't have the light, but when light, when God's light shines upon you, you have the capacity. And it's been created this way for you to be able to shine all kinds of different color, all kinds of different good works, all kinds of godliness upon the wall and on this world so that people can see. But you don't have the light, and neither do I. We can't make ourselves shine. We can only wait for God to shine his light upon us.

And the Bible tells us, at the very beginning in the Garden, that humanity chose power over relationship. We said, "God, I want to be like you more than I want to be with you." And what happened is we learned at that moment that there is absolutely no power for good works apart from relationship. And suddenly, all the lights went out. Oh, we were still the same thing that God created: endowed with the capacity for love, and kindness, and mercy, and generosity, and compassion, and all kinds of wonderful things. And yet there was no light coming into it, and therefore there was no reflection of good works coming from it.

Verse four: "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God, our Savior, appeared, he saved us."

So, what are we insisting upon? What does God's grace insist upon? Well, it's the pathway for good works. You see, what we're supposed to insist on is this: it's clear that we did not come to God, he came to us. We're supposed to insist on that. We supposed to insist on the fact that we are saved by grace through faith, and it's not of our own doing. He says in verse five, he says that "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his mercy." We're supposed to insist on the fact that godliness flows out of a heart that's been changed by grace, and not the other way around.

And the word "insist", it is, it's a strong language. But it's not as strong as Paul uses in another place when he said that we must insist on something. In Galatians, chapter one, verse eight, it says, "Look, if we or an angel from Heaven should preach to you a Gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed." What does that mean? In the English language, that's about as kind a way you can say, "Let him spend forever in Hell."

It is serious business. He said, "We must insist on these things: that godliness flows from a heart that's been changed by grace, and it's not the other way around." And you see, if you and I, if we as a church family can think about the importance of getting first things first, the most important things are the most important things, then it's going to change the way that we even try to engage the world with the Gospel.

And this is how: the vast majority of our attempts to lead someone to faith in Christ is to point out their sin. We have to point at something, don't we? And so, we point, and we point there, and we point there, and we point there, and we say, "You know what? You should stop doing that. If you stop doing that, and if you trust Christ, then you'll be saved."

But here's the problem with that: we're actually declaring a Gospel that we are saying that the Bible is saying is not a Gospel at all. Jesus said this: he said, "The Kingdom of God is like a man who walked into a field, and he saw and found a great treasure in the field. And then he left; he sold everything that he had, came back, bought the field, and then he had the treasure." Now, here's the order. If people do not see the treasure first, and that is Jesus Christ, they're not inclined to go buy that field. But once you see Jesus Christ, once God opens up your eyes to see who he is, that he is the supreme treasure in life, now all of the sudden the heart becomes inclined over time to say "no" to sin.

You see, we have to be a people of God that point people to Jesus instead of point out their sin. If they love him, he will change their hearts. And so, let's insist. Why? So that believers may devote themselves to good works.

So, application. Let's mobilize by holding fast to the Gospel. I think it's amazing, the very first thing that we find in this passage of how we mobilize for another year of ministry is we say, "Let's get one thing right, and that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let's hold fast to the very thing that is holding fast to us." And that is grace.

For some of you in the room, you're listening to this, and you're thinking, "I have never trusted Christ." In fact, some of you, you came in here, and you have a guilt problem. You have a shame problem. There may have been a season of your life, or there may have been one particular day, or there may be one particular act, and every time you think about that, just this overwhelming wave of shame just falls and crashes over you. And you're looking for something that's going to take that away.

And here's the most amazing thing: Jesus Christ, he recognized that every single person on this earth had that exact same problem. And out of his amazing love for us, even after we sinned, he came to this earth. He didn't wait for us to do enough, to try to scale a mountain. No, he came down the mountain. He came down to this earth, and he lived a righteous life. He lived without sin. And then he took everything that you've done that has caused that guilt and shame, and he took it to a cross; and there he died for all of it. He was buried in a grave, and three days later he rose from the dead. And he says, "If you will trust me, I will forgive you of all of your sin."

The Bible uses the word, it's the word "commit". The word "commit" literally means "lay upon". If I have a bed out here in front of me, and I'm not certain if it's going to hold me up, right? I may hang some ropes from the ceiling to take most of my weight, then I'm going to try to put a little bit on it just to see.

No, this is what commit looks like: it literally means to plop down upon the bed. You're putting all of your hope, all of your trust, all of your security upon the work and accomplishment of Jesus Christ. You're not reserving it, just in case that Savior falls, for another savior. And how we do this is the first thing we have to admit.

It's really repentance. But the one sin you have to repent of when you trust Jesus Christ is the sin that says you can save yourself. It's where we say, "God, right now there's a lot of my life I don't know quite, but this I know: I cannot do enough good works in order to save myself." And I'm trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of my sin, for all of my sin, and I confess you as Lord of my life.

So, if you've never trusted Christ, we urge you, I urge you, I beg of you today to trust Christ, and he will deal with your guilt problem, with your soul problem. And for the rest of us, listen, for those of us who have trusted Christ, one thing we have to do: we have to hold fast to the Gospel this next year. True? True.

Second thing: "God's grace protects us to do good works." This is why we have to hold fast so deeply and so strongly; and it's because we have within us and we have around us things that threaten our capacity to do good works.

I trust it's the same to you. But I love the Bible. I don't what it is. Just grace. But I hold my Bible, and it is ... This is one of ... I mean, my family and this. That's all I'm running into the house for if it's burning. I love this book. And when we sit under this book, the Word of God, together, there are things that God has intended should take place when we leave.

If we do this right, we're supposed to leave this room, or any room, or even your own personal study, with a sense of awe for who Jesus is. We're supposed to leave that moment with a sense of feeling like we've been examined. We're supposed to leave feeling like a sense of contrition, that we've fallen short of the glory that we've seen in the pages of Scripture in the person of Jesus.

But not only are we supposed to feel contrite, we're supposed to feel forgiven. Because God's Word is going to tell us that if we confess our sin, where we've fallen short, he's going to forgive us of all of our sin and all of our unrighteousness. And we're supposed to leave feeling loved, and leave feeling inspired for a mission.

But let me tell you something: we have within us and around us the capacity to be in the Bible and to miss all of this. It is absolutely possible to sit in a life group, utterly defiled by sin, and talk for an hour about theological nuance. Our family can be falling apart, our marriage can be falling apart, our heart can be as cold as a block of ice, and we can talk about things in the Bible and about the Bible for an hour, and leave totally unchanged. And that is not his plan.

And that's why he says, in verse nine ... What does he say? He says, "Avoid foolish controversies." Things within the Word that just cause ... And you know they've been arguing about this for 2000 years. "Let's join the argument." No! We don't need to do that. [inaudible 00:25:07], genealogies. That's not saying, "Hey, in Matthew 1 there's a genealogy that tells us about Jesus and all of his ancestors. We should throw that out." No! We shouldn't throw that out. What's happening here is the Jews actually invented something where they looked and they tried to find allegorical interpretations, to find some secret meaning through numbers and through counting different names and different letters to see if we could find some mystical understanding. Things that cause dissension, arguments about the law. He says, "Avoid all of these things."

You see, in ... It was either the second or the third week of this series, I talked about ingredients: that ingredients are added into the bowl, and the ingredients of ideas, of truth, of falsehood. When we allow them to be stirred into our mind, they don't just sit there. They have an effect. They go into the cake, into we oven; we pull them out of the oven, they look different, they may smell different, they may feel different, and yet they're all there. What we allow ourself to chew on and swallow. And we know this because 2 Timothy 2:16 says it. He says, "Avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness." You fill your heart and your mind with the truth of the Gospel, and it propels you towards godliness. You fill your heart with irreverent babble, and you will find ungodliness springing up in your life.

Then he goes on, and he says now, "And as for the person who stirs up division ..." Now, the word here is the exact same word where we get the word "heretic". [Foreign language 00:26:53]. And that's really what he's talking about here is the heretic. And one of the things we have to be so careful at Providence is in calling people heretics. It's the fast way to discount something that we don't know all about.

There are true teachers that say something on accident that's wrong, but they're not heretics. There are some people who are true teachers, who love the Gospel, and they may even teach something that they really believe is true with an open Bible; and yet it's not the cleanest. It's not the best version.

How do we know this? Well, in Acts, chapter 18, there's a guy named Apollos. And he gets saved, and he's one of the most amazing preachers in the whole New Testament. And this is what it says of him: it says, "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila ..." This is a husband and wife duo. "... heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." You know what that means? It's when he was teaching, he was speaking less accurately. But he wasn't a heretic, and this is why: because when someone opened up the Bible and showed him a better way, he quickly repented.

Heretics don't repent. And the reason they don't is because they believe that they have received some special revelation from God, and therefore they're not accountable to anybody. And that's why he says ... What do we do with them? He says you don't just throw them out. No, he says you warn them once, and then you warn them twice. Because if there's still no repentance, he says then have nothing to do with them, knowing that this person is warped, and sinful, and self-condemned.

And so, I wanted to just go back to one other thing that I told you a few weeks ago since we're on it again, this is what you look for. I can't pinpoint every single heretic in the world for you. And so, what should we look for? What's the litmus test?

There's always first a false authority. A foreign authority. The authority of the Gospel is the Word of God. If someone's teaching from something else, it's not true.

Second thing, there's a foreign salvation. There's something other than "by grace, through faith" that we're saved.

Third is there's a foreign savior. "Oh, Jesus, he did a great job. He got the ball almost to the top. But now what we need to do is add the law, we need to add good works, we need to add the power of positive thinking, we need to contribute in some way." And there's a foreign savior.

And then the last thing is there's always a foreign appeal. In other words, instead of anchoring our appeal for someone to believe on God's trustworthy character, we have to throw in a ski boat and a lake house. It's just not true. Jesus Christ alone will always be the treasure of the redeemed.

And so, let's mobilize by growing in our discernment. So, the first application is mobilize by holding fast to the Gospel. And second is let's mobilize by growing in our discernment. And this is not just to who you're listening to, though that's true; it's also who you're reading. Be careful! Be careful what you see with your eyes. Be careful what you permit within your heart.

The third thing is this, is "God's grace moves us to do good works." I love what he does here: he starts listing all of these people, and he says, "Look, there's Artemas, Zenas, and there's Apollos." And what we know is that Titus actually did leave the island. We know that because in 2 Timothy, chapter four, he says that Titus did come to Paul; and then Paul sent him off to another city. And so, there's a lot of movement. And this is what we need to see. Instead of just discounting verses 12 on, "Oh, he's saying "hi" to a bunch of buddies, and sort of what they did. This was their travel log, and it really has nothing to do with us." No, it has everything to do with us, and this is why: are you ready? These people were just like you and they were just like me. They were average people that were filled with the Holy Spirit. God had given them gifts, and now they're all moving around for the mission.

Some people are going, some people are sending, some people are giving to people who have urgent need; but everybody has a part. Everybody is playing a role. There's nobody there who's saying, "But this is my community. Titus is my pastor. You can't disrupt my community." There's people dying and going to Hell. For real. Heaven will be a wonderful place for permanent community. But right now, we move for the mission.

Sometimes for us, what does that mean? It means moving from one side of the lobby to another because we see someone we've not ever met. Maybe it's just simply to turn in your seat. You sit down, all of a sudden, there's a family right behind you. You've never met them. Turn around before the service starts, or afterward, and meet them. We move for the mission. It may be that you need to go on a mission trip. It may mean that you need to become a missionary. Everybody is playing a role.

And so, two applications, then I'm want to show you a video.

The first is this, is let's mobilize by identifying our next step, whatever it is. We all have one. You see, Providence, we exist to glorify God by introducing all peoples to Jesus Christ, and growing them up to love and worship him. And this is our mission. And the way that we accomplish this mission is following Jesus. We look around today, and you know what we see Jesus doing? We see him connecting with people, and connecting people to his people. We see him growing people in truth and love. We see him serving people. People inside the church and outside of the church. We see him going to people, not only in our city, but around the world, to get the Gospel to where they're at. And the good news is this, is that if we will follow Christ, then people in spiritual need will be introduced to Christ, and they will be grown to love and worship him.

So, my question is what is your next step? Some of you, you've connected to Christ, but you've not connected to the church in a meaningful way. Some of you, you have connected, but you're not involved in a life group. Some of you are in a life group, but you've not yet used your own gifts to be able to serve other people within this church or beyond. Some of you, you're serving, but you've never thought, "Hey, I wonder if I could go somewhere else and tell somebody who's never heard the Gospel about Jesus Christ?"

My question is what is your next step?

And the last is this, is let's mobilize by seeing the value of one. Now, I know that that may not make a whole lot of sense. So, let me explain: every single one of us knows that seeds have potential. You can plant one seed, and eventually, through different generations of that seed, you're going to have an orchard. But you know what? The farmer, male or female, cannot see without potential. And he or she will not plant that seed.

And sometimes the magnitude is paralyzing. We see all of these numbers of thousands and millions of people, and we thought, "How am I going to ... Three billion people? What am I going to do with that?" Let me tell you what you're going to do: you're going to reach one. One.

The value of one: one person, one Gospel conversation, one act of service. The Kingdom of God grows one soul at a time, and people leave this earth one at a time. Oh, there may be a huge accident where there's lots of people, all at the same time. And yet in that one individual life there's an accountability before God. 6316 people will die while we're in this room, and every one of those matter.

And so, what I want to show you is a little video of someone here at Providence who has changed because people saw the value of one. Okay? Watch this.

Courtney: I was raised as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. And a lot of people don't know about what that religion is based off of, but it's very much a fear-based religion. You are taught to believe that the end of times could come at any moment. So, whatever your last action was is what you will be based off of. And it's definitely a works-based religion. You're not allowed to question the faith no matter what, or what anybody in the religion is doing. It really made me start to question the religion, and eventually I left.

I moved out of the state, I got married, and the day that I went into labor with my first child was the day that I realized that the person I married was mentally ill. So, when I had a six month old and a two year old was the first time that my husband physically abused me. I was holding the baby, and he threw me down a flight of stairs, and that was kind of the last straw. So, I moved out, went through a expensive court battle, and in 2018 I was ... At the beginning of 2018, I was divorced officially.

I decided at that point I really needed to get a foundation for my children. So, I bought a house, and the day that I closed on my house was the first time I prayed to God.

So, I had a friend of mine that I asked about her church she was attending, and she invited me to Providence. She's like, "You've just got to come and see." And came to Providence, and the sermon series was about choosing wise companions. I think it was Proverbs 27:5-10. And God, very lovingly, started showing me that I needed to choose wise companions, and that I wasn't choosing wise companions. And my friend said that "If you come to Providence, you have to join the life group. You've got to do the full experience if you're going to do it." So, I went to a life group. And during that life group, somebody in the group prayed for me out loud and said my name to God. And that was the first time anybody's ever done that.

I had a pamphlet and heard about the divorce care class that's offered. And I started joining the divorce care group, and this was the first time that I heard the words that God offers us grace and mercy. I didn't have that in my vocabulary. I wasn't ever taught that: that God offers us grace. It's pretty huge.

I realized that the Bible that I was reading was rewritten to support a false teaching. So, I joined a Bible study fellowship group to help me get some new tools so I could study the Bible for myself, and accept it for myself, and really dive deeper into it, and have more of a understanding of his Word.

In October of last year, during one of the sermons, one of the pastors asked if ... Started talking about accepting Jesus as your Savior. And I really realized that I hadn't ever done that. So, I had the prayer, and accepted Jesus as my Savior fully at that day. And I had more than one person suggest that I join the starting point group that Providence offers.

And so, I learned ... I was very slowly learning to listen to God's path, and joined the starting point group. And this was a group that allowed me to ask questions, really hard questions about religion, and God, and the Bible. And I started reading the daily Bible reading that Providence provides, where you just read a couple Scriptures a day, and you leave a couple notes. And in January of 2019, I wrote down ... Reading through one of the Scriptures about baptism, I kind of wrote the word "baptism", and a question mark. Just really learning to pray and listen to God's path.

I was baptized as a follower of Jesus Christ on April 21st.

All it took was the courage for one person to invite me to Providence, and look at how much my life has changed from that. All it took was one person to say my name during a prayer, out loud, and look at how much that my life has changed from it. All it took was one person to invite me to divorce care, or invite me to the starting point class. Those one little things, you never know who's listening and what that moment in their life that they are going to need to hear that.

So, keep planting the seeds, and be that one person. And I'm looking forward to ... I'm always looking for that one person that I can constantly invite.

Brian Frost: Isn't that awesome? Praise God!

So, first of all, thank Courtney. You're in the room, and I just want to say thank you for saying "yes" to share your story with us, and for those that invested in her life one at a time. I'm just so grateful for you.

I want to just encourage each one of us to be thinking about that, all right? Every single person, one at a time.

And so, I hope that Titus has been incredibly encouraging to you. Our next study will be in Philippians. It's a series that's called I Found Joy. We're going to start it next Sunday, and it will take us through the end of November. And the fact is every single one of us, we all crave joy, and we make most of our decisions on the basis of it. And yet, for the vast amount of people on the earth, ourselves included, joy is oftentimes pretty elusive.

So, what we want to do is to look at what God has done. I just love what God does and what he's said in his Word, because not only does his love propel us, or him, to actually send his son, it also propelled him to give us Philippians. And what Philippians will do, if we'll sit under it, is really three very specific things. And so, I want you to think about this not only for you, but maybe for a friend that you might know who needs to hear about one of these things.

The first thing it does is it points us. It points us to the true source of joy. It removes all doubt as to where joy can be found.

The second thing it does is it empathizes with every single one of us with just how painful life can be and how life's pains can be a tremendous hurdle to our joy.

But then the third thing that it will do for us and anyone that we might know who's dealing with heartache in life is it demonstrates how to experience joy in the midst of that pain.

So, I want to encourage you to come. But I also want to encourage you to be thinking about who's somebody that you know who's in need of joy. Maybe over the next few months you can invite that person, okay?

So, let's pray together.

Father in Heaven, we love you. We thank you for what you've done in our life through the Book of Titus. We thank you that you have provided it for us. We thank you, God, that you've given us the Gospel, and we want to hold fast to it. And so, as think about mobilizing, we also, Lord, want to think about the past year. You've been good to us. And your goodness yesterday, it gives us hope for tomorrow. And that's why we can mobilize.

And so, I pray, God, that as we sing to you now, out of a full heart, and as we give out of resources that you have first given to us, we pray that you would take this, these meager aspects of our worship, and that you would transform them into fuel that more people would be able to hear that Jesus saves.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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