

Session 8 Friday AM Gym

By Douglas Pennoyer

[Audio cut off] Interacted with Moses at the burning bush, there was a response to be given.

Moses said "I can't go." God said, "Take the staff, take Aaron, but go. Get moving." God came to Jeremiah and Jeremiah said, "I'm too young. I can't be a prophet." And God touched him. You see, every time God interacts with us, he expects a response. I was 14 years old. By the way, today is my birthday. Today is also the birthday of my 14 year old son. Thank you. I needed that. We share this birthday week and next week we're going to spring training next weekend for the Seattle Mariners. You see, because I have been called from the Seattle area to the LA area. But God is a mighty God, and when he calls you, you don't just say, hey, I don't want to go to inner city LA. You go.

I was minding my business up in the Seattle area when the call to Biola came. And it's funny, because I was reviewing my notes from a while back on a message, and I came across this point from an old missions conference that I had written. And one of the areas that I had put as an area that, Boy, if God calls you, you're really in trouble, was inner city LA. So where does he call me? He calls me to be a dean at Biola, which is close to inner city LA. But if God calls you, he gives you the grace and the strength to do it. And every time God calls, he expects a response. Jeremiah said I'm too young.

He touches his mouth and he puts the words in it. He gives him a vision in chapter one, and he interprets the vision. God doesn't want you to be in the dark today. If you're one of the people that made a response today, the good news, the joy, is that God will not leave you alone in the

dark. He will show you the way that you're to go. I was 14 years old, just like my son is this week, and I was in a bathtub. Has God ever spoken to you in a bathtub? Fourteen years old. I had a fever so high, it was 106 degrees. My parents had taken me to a hospital, and there at the hospital, they discovered that the only way they could get my temperature down was to put me in a bathtub and encased me with ice.

And I have to tell you that that day I said things to the nurses that I had to apologize later. I used all the street language that a 14 year old could muster to tell them I was not a happy camper. But it was there in that bathtub that I said to God, "Oh, God, if I live, I'll be a missionary." Now, God is not stupid, you see, because I was in the Philippines at the time, a captive of missionary parents. Not really. I was an MK. I'm in the Philippines already, and I figured, "Hey, God, I'll just step out of the bathtub and I'll be a missionary."

God said to me, "No." And the words of that old missionary song went through my mind. "I'll be what you want me to be, dear Lord." "I'll be what you want me to be." And some of you who responded and stood up in the last session, were you really saying, "I'll be what you want me to be"? Or were there some conditions that were placed upon that response?

God doesn't want conditions with the response. I'm too young, I'm too old, I'm too short, I'm too fat. He says, "I'll take you because it's not by your spirit, it's not by your might, it's not by your power, but it's my mind." He's very clear on the point that whenever God calls us, He expects a response. Abraham said, I'll go. I don't know where I'm going, but I'll go. And some of you who

stood up this last session, you don't know where you're going, do you? But you know that you stood up because the Spirit of God said to you, "You're going to go." And He'll take you there.

Now, if in that bathtub I had known what God had for my life, I probably would have screamed, "More ice. Just let me die." God had said, "Doug, you're going to be a cultural anthropologist.

You're going to be a pastor. You're going to direct a Native American social health agency with a million dollar budget for eight years. You're going to be a University Missions Institute director for another eight years. And by the way, in between your academic careers, I'm going to shuffle you in and out of planting churches and pastoring a church." More ice. I'll die. I can't do it.

There's no way I can do this, God.

You see, I'm speaking now with 38 years' worth of experience because I, like you, responded, only mine was a bathtub experience. You stood up last session, or maybe at one of the other sessions, and you said, "I'll go." But what you really need to say is, "I'll be what you want me to be, and I'll go where you want me to be." Jeremiah is my favorite prophet, as some of you know. And Jeremiah, in the book of Jeremiah 10, Jeremiah has a conviction that the Creator is in control of all. Jeremiah 10:6. I have three quick points as we close out this session: a conviction that the Creator is in control of all, a commitment to give our cause or case to Him, and a consistency to compete with His strength.

If you responded today, these three principles, you'll have to deal with them in some way. You'll have to deal with the fact that you stood up for service, and then you need a conviction that He's in control of your life. As I drove in this morning from Hacienda Heights, where we've moved,

the radio was playing. It was a talk thing and I just left it on. And all of a sudden this song came on the air and the words were "go to hell, go to hell, go to hell." I had the wrong radio station and the wrong song. I can't believe it, what was coming across the radio waves. And I'm saying to myself, people are going to hell in inner city LA or Amsterdam or around the world, and we're just flippantly, in our culture, singing about this as if God is not in control of anything.

Yes, there is a real hell and people are going there. There is a real heaven and we're going to be there someday, worshiping with the Lord our God. Amen. We're going to be standing there on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ and his body, which was nailed to the cross for us. But we're going to need in our response to God, a conviction that the Creator is in control of all.

Jeremiah 10:6. "No one is like you, O Lord. You are great and Your name is mighty." Verse 12.

"But the Lord made the heavens by His power. He stretched out, He found it." Our great God, who is the creator of the universe, is in charge of your life. He's the one who says, "Come to me, I call you." You respond, and it's His doing in your life. You know,

in our culture we've lost the military thing. I really believe this. And we've lost the idea of the command and so on. Don't get me off on the military. But we need to recapture, in Christian living, the fact that we report to the Creator God. He's in control of everything. We click our heels and we say, "God, what do you want me to do? Yes, sir, yes, sir, yes, sir, yes, sir." It's not multiple choice with God. You don't sit there and say, "Okay, well, I just think I want to do this. I'll just think I'll obey him today."

All of our speakers in this conference, all of them, if you listen very carefully, have said basically the same thing: obedience. Obedience. Are you going to obey? Today is a start for you. Today is my birthday. But today is a birthday for you, a spiritual rebirth as you commit your life to continue to be faithful to Him. But you need a conviction that the Creator God is in control of all. Second of all, you need a commitment to give your case or your cause to Him, because He cares about you and He's just. If you turn your life over to Him for missionary service, He cares about you. And I want to tell you the joy of serving the Lord in different contexts around the world. I've been in tribal situations where I was raised and then I went back and studied with the tribe. Our God is a miraculous God right now. Let's just celebrate the joy of serving and the protection that comes alongside of you.

Story is told of a missionary, of a pastor, a local pastor on an island in the Philippines. Fruitful ministry and the National People's Army didn't like the fact that--the communist wing--didn't like the fact that his church was growing, that the young people were coming and that things were happening. And so they grabbed him out of a service and they took him to the jungle and they had him dig his own grave. And he stood there waiting for the shots to come.

And all of a sudden, a loud noise occurred off to the right in the jungle. The sound of troops coming, the sounds of armament, the sounds that soldiers were on their way and the NPA left and they ran and he jumped down into his would-be grave and it became a foxhole. And he peaked his head out to see where the government troops were.

They never came. They never were there. Because, you see, God is a miraculous God. Now, it's true that we suffer and martyred them as well, but God will protect you at times in your life. You may lose your life, but God's protective hand will also be there. Let's celebrate the protection that God will give you as you've made that response, because He will.

Many times in my own life, I've been saved from near death. As a foolish young anthropologist studying a tribe, so that the missionaries would understand it better, I decided to go across the island of Mindoro through unexplored--it's marked unexplored on the map. I hacked my way through with a companion. We crossed through mountains and river gorges, and one night we found ourselves in a deep river gorge. And it was during the rainy season, and I was very foolish to be traveling through the river gorge in the rainy season.

A flash flood came down and we heard the sounds of the water. It had been raining up there and the water came down. We looked and we climbed higher and higher on the river gorge till we came to a ledge and we said, "Oh, God," just like Jeremiah, "You promised to protect us." I want to tell you, that night I had a spiritual rebirth again. It wasn't the bathtub, it was the water coming up higher and higher. And it came right up to the ledge and stayed there for about a day or two till we got real hungry. And then the Lord decided, "hey, he's had enough. Take them off the ledge." And the water went down again. You're going to experience the joys of being rescued when you commit your life to a Creator who is in control of all. But you've got to give your cause or your case to Him. Jeremiah 11:20. "But O Lord Almighty, you who judge righteously and test the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance upon them. For to you I have committed my cause."

In the service of our Lord, there are going to be people that you don't get along with. Let's just say it right now. Is there anybody here that gets along totally with everybody at Biola? Of course not. There are going to be people that rub you the wrong way. There are going to be people that mistreat you. There are going to be people that just rub you so wrong in the wrong way that you just get bundled up with energy. Angry would be another word.

And maybe you will be done some horrible things in your life. But God says, "That's My case." "Vengeance is mine," said the Lord. And in your service, as you go out there into the inner city of LA or to the jungles or the business workplace, God is going to say to you, "Don't get sidetracked by the personalities. Don't get sidetracked by the things that people do to you, because I will take care of you. Vengeance is mine."

And we see this in the life of Jeremiah. "He cares about me and he is just. You righteously test the heart and You see the vengeance that will come upon them." It's God's vengeance. "To You, I have committed my cause." And Jeremiah was saying that because he had been beaten, he had been put in stocks, and he knows that the Lord will take his case and listen. As you report for military Christian service and say "Yes, sir" to our commander. Don't get sidetracked by personalities. Don't get sidetracked by cases or causes. Stay with the cross and the message.

One thing that I've always remembered about Billy Graham was the story in 1949 when he was struggling with what his message was going to be. And he prayed a long time, he consulted with friends, and finally he came up with the phrase, "the Bible says." And anytime you listen to Billy Graham, it's "the Bible says." The word of God is important. It's not the people, it's not the

personalities. It's what God says and wants to do in your life. A commitment to give our cause, our case to Him, to stay faithful.

And then third from the life of Jeremiah, we learn about missionary service, a consistency to compete with His strength and not ours. I don't know how many times in my life that God has made this point. It is not about Doug Pennoyer. It's about Him. Changing careers that many times in my life, I've been humbled so many times. But God has shown me that it's not about what I can do, but it's about what He does through me. It's not about you, it's about him. And as you respond for missionary service, as you respond to the call of God on your heart to get involved around the world, no matter where it is, it's not about your strengths, it's not about your skills. It's about your spiritual giftedness and you're willing to be used by God.

I guess I had a good model, as I told the group yesterday, my parents. I've looked to them for years as that model. Dad just barely graduated from high school when he was called in that great post-World War II movement out across the Pacific. They were a young couple. Actually. They had scraped and saved, and they owned some properties, and there were two homes, but they were very young. No Bible school training. And God called them to the mission field.

Fortunately, today on Biola's campus, you have one of the greatest schools in intercultural training. Now, I just happened to be the dean, so I can say that, but it's true. My parents didn't have that. They didn't have that. They had common sense and a little bit of biblical knowledge. And I remember we reported to New Tribes Missionary Training Camp in Modesto, California. I was five years old, and one thing I hated was sweet potatoes. And so, to practice for the tribe,

they had taken all the food out of the cabins, and they had put a three day supply of sweet potatoes.

As a five year old, I took those three bags. While everybody else was busy, I took them out, and there was a small cliff behind the cabin, and I rolled them, just rolled them. Sweet potatoes gone down the cliff. I hated sweet potatoes. Guess where God called us? To the Negrito Pygmy Tribe. Guess what the staple food is? Say it. Sweet potatoes.

You know, God has a sense of humor. He wants us to learn the lesson that we have to get beyond our weaknesses, the things that we hate. We have to get beyond the doldrums of what we consider just the ordinary and look at what He's going to do in our lives. Actually, to this day, sweet potatoes aren't my favorite. But you know what? For one month, we didn't have any food up there on Mount Pinatubo. My village is gone, by the way. It just went when the mountain went. One month, no food, except sweet potatoes. So I've learned to eat sweet potatoes.

There are things you're going to learn in His strength, not your own. You're going to learn that it takes the discipline of daily Bible reading, that it takes all the things that we know to be the very ABC's of our spiritual existence. When we're involved in a ministry, in a missionary service, a consistency to compete with His strength, not ours. And, you know, He does give us the strength.

Floyd McClung just got through saying in an earlier session, "Face my fear and trust God to give me the strength." Face your fear and trust God to give you the strength. And that's what it's about. It's facing those fears that come in our lives. The things that you're saying to yourself, "I

stood up, I'm responding, but I have fears." We need to take a look at what God has for us through the eyes of faith and not fear. The eyes of faith are not centered on I or me. The eyes of faith are centered on Him. It's not what we can do. It's what He can do through us. It's what God can accomplish by His spirit.

I had just graduated with a PhD in anthropology and I thought God was going to make me a cultural anthropologist. No jobs. I took a job with the Native American Social and Health Organization as a grant writer because I had been successful in graduate school. I thought it was a temporary job. Three years later, I was executive director with a staff of 30, working with 23 small tribes in the states of Washington and Oregon.

Why? Because I'm brilliant? No. Because I said, "I will report for duty and I'll be what You want me to be." You see, you have to say, I'll be what you want me to be. And then you have to live it out, and you have to have the conviction that he's in control of all. And you need to give your cases and your causes to Him. That roommate that you're struggling with, or that person in your life that seems to sidetrack you from your heavenly vision, you've got to turn that over to Him.

And then you need a consistency to compete with his strength. He has the power. I was walking on the streets of Iloilo in the Philippines in 1983. I had a Fulbright to teach anthropology and sociology at the University of the Philippines on that island. And I was doing follow-up research on the Tawbuid tribe. And I was working on a book on spiritual warfare and folklore about the tribe.

I was walking on my way to class when out of the corner of my eye, across the street I saw this person wearing a t-shirt. And because of that, I knew it was a woman. But that's the only thing. The hair was all the way down to the ground. And she looked like a bodybuilder, so strong. And something within my heart says, "Lord, keep that person over there, not here." And I'm walking along, and I began praying, just praying about the blood and Christ sacrificed on the cross because I knew that on the other side of the street, instinctively there was someone there who was from the other kingdom, controlled by the other kingdom.

And as I'm walking on the way to class, she starts to take an angle to me coming closer, coming closer. I turn around. She grabs me by the throat and starts to strangle me. And I go up like this to break the stranglehold. And nothing would break the hold. And I just mumbled "Jesus." And her hands fell to her side. You see, it's His power. It's His power. It's not our power. Did I go to the university gym and practice weightlifting so I could get through that encounter? No. There's power in the name of Jesus. There's power in the cross, in the blood. There's power in the sacrifice of Jesus and we have to appropriate it in our lives by depending on Him. His strength, not our own. It's not what you can do, but it's what God can do through you as you report for missionary service.

The call to follow Jesus is the only thing that can save us today. Our speaker said in the earlier session, the call to follow Jesus is the only thing that can save us today. And I believe that. I believe that if you don't respond today to God and then follow through with that response, you're going to miss the joys of the miracles. Filipino pastor once handed me his card in Seattle,

Washington. I looked at the card, it had his name, and down below it said Miracle Worker. And I'm thinking, what? Do we put that on business cards?

No. Have you ever seen a business card that says Miracle Worker? So I got to know him, and we began to pray together. We began prayer partners. And he said, "I'm going to the Philippines, and I'm going to set up a Bible school, but I have enough money to get there. I don't have money to build the buildings." I looked at his business card, Miracle Worker. Bit of skepticism. But since I was praying with him, you can't be skeptical about your prayers.

He goes to the island. He has money for transportation. The people are there. Their students are coming. They're all lined up to come. Within a couple of months, he gets down on that property that's next to a river, and he prays. And he prays and he prays. He believes in the God of miracles. He believes with a conviction that the Creator is in control of all. He believes that he can give his cause to God and God will take it. And he believes that it's by his strength and not his own. He prays. And it rains and it floods 5 miles up the stream.

If you're following me in this story, it's a saw mill. The worst rain that ever hit that island hit in the next ten days the saw mill is flooded, the lumber is all stacked up, and suddenly the water begins to rise in the lumber mill. In the yard. It comes up higher and higher, and the boards start to go out, and they reach the river, and they go down the river, and he's standing there on his house on the banks, and he says, "Thank you, Jesus. There's the building." So they built the first building.

Two months later, it rains again. Now, I don't know what this saw mill, they hadn't learned their lesson, but that's the Lord. To make a very long story short, they built that on salvaged lumber. Because, you see, God is a God of miracles. So I want to say to you today you who responded, God is the God of miracles. But you need to let His strength and by His Spirit operate through you. You need not to quench the Holy Spirit. You need to stay in the basic disciplines of the Word, because our enemy is a roaring lion seeking who may devour.

A conviction that the Creator is in control of all, a commitment to give our cause or case to Him, and a consistency to compete with His strength. Jeremiah 9:23-24. This is what the Lord says. 9:23-24. "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom, or the strong man boast of his strength, or the rich man boast of his riches. Let him who boasts, boast about this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, and exercises kindness and justice and righteousness on the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."

Let us learn those lessons as we report for missionary service. As you have responded to the call of God, let us stay biblically based. Let us move forward in the Spirit, and you're going to have the joy of seeing God work the miracles in your lives. Let's come now to the table. Let's see, is there something? Okay.

All right, we're going to sing a few songs and then we're going to come to the communion table. Would you prepare your hearts as you consider the cross, the sacrifice of Jesus, the blood of Christ that was shed for you, his body broken, that we might have new life? And if you need to repent of anything, would you consider, "Oh God, what are my sins? What would prevent me

from serving you?" Maybe be I've responded, but I'm holding on to something. You need to let that go. You need to let that sin go in your life. And today would be a great day to do it. By His blood and His body, we are resurrected to new life.