

Ready – Set - Go

Ron Hafer

[Musical prelude to 00:08:30 - Not to Us and Give Thanks to the Lord - Chris Tomlin]

- Worship Lead

Dear Lord, thank You for a few moments, just to step back and worship You in the midst of this college search, and we pray that You would bless this day for these students and families. Some of them just starting out to consider what You might have for them the next few years and others just trying to get confirmation on what Your will would be these next few months? So just bless everything in this day and the tours and the class visits that they would get all their questions answered. And, and thank you again for this time for worship. In Your name, we pray. Amen,

Go ahead and be seated. Let's thank the worship team, too, for taking time out of their Monday morning.

[Applause]

Thanks again, guys. One of the favorite things of mine about going to chapels at Biola, it's always someone different doing worship. And I'm continually amazed at the blessings we have. Talented students who really genuinely want to worship the Lord and lead others in that. So it's my privilege to introduce to you our speaker today. Ron Hafer will be sharing from the word and blessing you guys. It's a great opportunity to really hear someone who has a big part in the

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ministry on this campus. He is our chaplain. He's basically spent a lifetime at Biola. I won't go into how long that goes back. But he was a student Biola, basketball player, has been on staff, I think about 30 years in the last 20 or so as chaplain. So it's a real privilege to have him here. And we call on the TMOOC, tannest man on campus and you'll see why in a second here, so come on up Ron.

[Applause]

- Ron Hafer

Well, one exciting thing about speaking in chapel is that you get introduced by different people. We will scratch that guy next time. Just kidding. I want you to imagine. I, I seriously doubt that all of you brought your Bibles. But if you did, you can turn to Luke, chapter six. If you did not. And you have it memorized. Then you're ahead of the game. If you don't have it memorized, you can do like the (indistinct) and check me out later to see if, in fact, I led you in truth. Luke, chapter six. Is uh, I heard the speaker who was going to be dry so I- (sets down cup)

Luke, chapter six is very early in the life of our Lord. I want you to imagine with me, I'm a grandfather. Now, it's not hard to imagine. Right? But when I have, I have little Ashton is only six months and she doesn't understand a word, but she smiles. And then little Megan. Three years. Who is her grandfather's pride, when I have them, I have Megan on my lap and Ashton in my arms. And I say, "Now, boys and girls, here's this story." I want you to imagine with me, boys and girls that we're two thousand years ago. We're in the land of Palestine. We're in Israel. We have been exposed to a lot of Levites and Publicans not Republicans. We've been exposed to

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a lot of dry religious people. Then on the planet, booms, thunders, the shaggy haired guy, that's kind of wearing a first century Tarzan outfit named John the Baptist. And, uh, and people are scared to death because after 400 years of silence, they know the Messiah is coming. And they see this guy? And they say, "No, please."

John the Baptist says "No." This is the Hafer-ized version. "When my cuz comes, when cousin Jesus comes, I won't be worthy to unlatch His sandals." Then Jesus came and I'm telling you, the world was never the same then and now. What they saw after 400 years, no prophets to kick around. No, uh, no direct word from God. (Muffled voice) "You're screwing up again." No. No miracles. Now, 400 years after. On the scene comes John saying, "The Messiah is here."

And people are thinking the knowing people are thinking, "If this is the Messiah of God, then there are two things that are going to happen. One, He's going to be a powerful proclaimer of truth." That's not easy to say. Powerful proclaimer of truth. "And secondly, there will be miracles that accompany His life." And immediately, Jesus steps on the scene. He begins to teach and preach and heal. He's in His own hometown. And He preaches the word of God and says, "The Messiah is in your midst."

He's in his own hometown. And while He's preaching, a demon stands up and begins to scream. I've had a number of experiences (coughs) in my preaching ministry, but I've never had that happen. Nor do I care for it to. No problem with Jesus. Jesus simply said to the demon, "Shut up and sit down." In fact, He said, "Shut up." And as soon as Jesus casts the demon out, the guy

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thrashes on the floor. And pretty soon the demon leaves because that's what demons do when Jesus speaks.

And then the man gets up, kind of brushes off his toga and sits down and Jesus says, "Where was I?" So it's a rather amazing era in the life of Israel. He's teaching. He's preaching, He-, you have you have words like they were amazed, they marveled, they wondered. Literally days before before Luke chapter six and at Talbot, they said that gives an indication that you're still on track, literally days before the incident we'll be looking at Jesus is, is in a home.

They homes didn't hold Him very long after this. Most of you know this story, so I'll just tell it anyway. Jesus is teaching, preaching. Guys, bring their buddy on the stretcher. The buddy on the stretcher couldn't come on his own. So thank God for the compassion of four guys that Bill McKee called Harley, Charlie, Farley and Claude, which is. It was no indication of scripture, but showed Bill had a good sense of humor. And they couldn't get in. Peters at the door, "Hey, (tapping) got our buddy could we-" "Yeah no, you can't, this place is packed." Obviously, Hafer is preaching. Jesus is preach. "The place is packed, can't get in." "Well, listen, I've got a buddy on a stretcher." "Then there's even less chance." So the went on the roof. (coughed) My feeling has always been that these guys were junior highers because they started tearing the roof off (laughs). God bless junior hires, who else will right?

And, uh, they let, they let the thing down through the roof. Here's a guy, you know, in the middle of the message. Maybe Jesus was preaching. "The Kingdom of God is like, whaaa-" And uh Peter, Peter and the others are probably thinking "That guy screwed up the message." That guy

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was the message. And Jesus, in the midst of the whole shootin' match, simply said to the man "Um, son," because He, He cut to the chase and He dealt with first things first. Now, what was the guy's greatest need besides the fact that his buddies owed them for a roof? His greatest need was for spiritual healing. You know, because you could be, you can be the healthiest guy on the planet and and go to a Christ-less eternity. So Jesus cut to the chase said, 'Son, you got some real problems, your sins are forgiven.' The guys that are there are thinking, "Yeah, big deal. How do we know his sins are forgiven?"

You know, the guy really had power. Jesus turned them because He reads thinking. I love that five times in the New Testament, I know. I did a paper on it at Talbot Seminary. It says that Jesus knew what they were thinking. In my youth, I used to speak to AH! junior hires and when they'd get pretty well out of control, I'd say, "By the way, God knows what you're thinking right now." (Squeals) And, you know, Jesus knew what they're thinking. So He said, "Up. But what would be easier for me to say? Your sins are forgiven. If I'm the Son of God and I am or rise, pick up your bed and walk." Before these guys could answer because they knew what He was going to do. He said to the man who sins were forgiven, "Rise. Pick up your bed and wal-" And it wasn't a miracle that he pushes this bed. It's just a little pallet. The miracles is that this man, who has no muscle coordination, no strength, no power in his own, now is empowered by God, the Holy Spirit by Jesus Himself.

Wooh! I get excited about that. If this was a charismatic place, it would be going nuts right now and the guy gets up and he can barely contain himself. And the message was, if this is the Son of God, He preaches with power and there are miracles that accompany His life. Which brings us to

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Luke, chapter six. They marveled. They wondered. They were amazed. So I'm telling you, when the word was out on the marquee in the front of the synagogue, "Jesus of Nazareth speaking today." They packed the place. There were only room for one hundred, you know, so you can't squeeze all those portly Jews or skinny Jews in, you know, you just can't do it. So they're packed in the place.

And they're thinking to the main rabbi, let's go with three or four services. You know, they hadn't invented that Jesus is there and it almost cheats you to hear from Luke, chapter six, verse six. (Coughs) It's, it's alright. That's the advantage of being an old guy. You can be dyin' right in the middle and just keep going. On another Sabbath, and this is when Jesus really got excited because the local religious people had said, "The Sabbath is for man. We have rules. You don't do anything on the Sabbath." Do you know where and when Jesus did three fourths of His miracles? You bet your sweet life. He cracked Peter in the ribs, said, "Put your toga on, Peter. What day is it?" "Well, it's the Sabbath, Lord." "We are going to work."

So on the Sabbath, Jesus could barely contain Himself to get out there and let people know that Jesus made the Sabbath. And He's controlling the whole shootin' match. So on another Sabbath, you kind of have the flow of what's been going on. Um, Jesus entered the synagogue and was teaching, but not like this.

Not like (indistinct, speaker steps away from microphone) In fact, in the synagogue, if you went seven minutes and I know because I read Josephus because I had to at Talbot. And you, and you didn't ask a question. No sweat because the local (voice cracks) synagogue leader, (lower voice)

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synagogue leader would ask the question. So there was a lot of give and take. They, and they loved it because Jesus, the statement about our Lord was that He taught not as the scribes and Pharisees.

I love that. What were the scribes? And they were nice guys, but you know what they memorized verses. And they had no power they didn't know God when He stood in front of them. I have been around people who've had a lot of wisdom, a lot of input, a lot of knowledge, but they haven't connected it spiritually. And that's the way these poor guys were. So they taught. He taught not as the scribes and Pharisees, but with power and authority and.

As Jesus was teaching any question they asked, He answered. Well, wouldn't that be great? I've often said to our students, wouldn't you like to have Jesus as your, as your chapel speaker, but it's a low budget program, folks. So, you know, I know Jesus. So I'll tell you about Him, alright? Jesus taught with power. No, no question was beyond Him. If they were asked in the synagogue, which often they were a question, Rabbi Goldfarb would just quote Rabbi Goldstein and Rabbi Goldstein would quote Rabbi Goldberg. And they just went around in a circle.

But if Jesus was asked, "What's heaven like?" Jesus would say, "Oh, good question. Heaven, that's My home. Heaven is a wonderful place filled with glory and go-" I mean, it, He cou-, He, He can describe it. He didn't give them the whole shooting match or they'd be right to go right now. "What about the angels, Jesus?" The other rabbis would say, "Oh, that's a difficult question." Jesus would say, "Well, there are the good and the bad. And, you know, when God, My Father and I, when We created the angels, here's what We had in mind."

These people are thinking (perplexed noise) and they're turning to one another and saying, "He never misses a beat." And the people are saying to one another, "Whoa, this guy really seems to know His Bible." (Giggles) He's the living word. I used to carry a red letter edition when Jesus spoke, it was always red letter. Every word was the word of God! I get so excited about that, thinking that then and now, in spite of the speakers we have, when we open the word, the word of God can enter our lives and change our lives.

That is only the first verse. I plan to go a little further than that. So we entered the synagogue and you got the idea. He's got them in the palm of His hand.

(Coughs) He was teaching a lot of give and take. There was a man there whose right hand was withered. Who cared? Dr. Luke, who's writing it. He's a doctor. He goes gives you the bedside approach and the right, the man who's right, who's withered, cared because he had heard that Jesus preached and taught and healed. And he's thinking, "Maybe He'll be healing today."

Who else was there? I'm glad you asked. The scribes and Pharisees were watching Him closely to see if He might heal on the Sabbath so they could fall on their faces before Him and say, "The Messiah of God is here!" No. So that they might find right reason to accuse Him. They're thinking, "Buddy, you just mess up in one little area and we'll nail you." (Sniffs) And He's thinking, "I know what you're thinking." (Giggles) Is that classic? In fact, Luke tells us. "But He knew what they were thinking." Frequently when they were thinking, He read their minds and said it out loud.

John tells us twice that they're planning to kill iHm and he's teaching, "The kingdom of God is like, excuse me, why are you guys over here? The third row, plenty to kill Me." And they'd go, "That's impossible, oh, wah-". And then He, He says, "That's, you know, that's not very kind at all. Shame on you."

[Laughter]

Let's see now. Or something like that. He knew what they were thinking. What were they thinking? They were thinking, "We don't care who You are. We don't care what You say. We don't care what You do. Because our mindset is that we will not have You as the Messiah of God." But the word of God changes hearts and lives. If I took. Actually, I have with my disciples, as you might have guessed, I've used this passage.

If I took five principles out of this passage this morning, I would be thrilled. But you weren't, wouldn't because we don't have time. So if I took three principles, yea verily, even two, here's what they might be. That the word of God, when spoken in the power of God, has tremendous power and authority to change my life and others. I love that. In my early years here, my friend mentioned only 30 years, I've been there thirty five, and during an era called the Free Speech Movement of the 60s, tell your grandparents about this. We took a group of students over to UCLA, and I was, I'll never forget the day that a college freshman guy stood up on the free speech platform. You just you had three minutes, but all you had to do was say your name (cough) and you had to cough and then you had to declare like your affiliation.

So if the guy was communist, a lot of them were, or whatever New Age, whatever, hooplah, you just say that and then your three minutes. And if they liked ya, they cheer. If they didn't, they'd boo. More often than not, they booed the guy before this kid was a communist. This kid stood up and said, "I'm Joe, whatever, and I'm a Christian." And they booed right away. And then he just quoted every scripture he knew.

And I'll never forget it, nor will he, because for three minutes the crowd just got, it was like the Holy Spirit of God says, "You just listen up, this is not your time. This is My time." And I'm not saying that at the end of his three minutes of quoting scripture, some of them over and over again, that they cheered. But I'm telling you, they were quiet during that time because the word of God changes lives.

Sanni was a high school junior and the pagan of her school. I don't mean San-, Sanni was a rowdy kid. I'm talkin major, big time, pagan. Worst home situation you can imagine. Mother slept around. Men came into the home and, uh, and you couldn't have been worse. So Sanni knew nothing about God.

Kids from young people from a nearby church went to camp, I love camps, gave their lives to Christ, said "Lord, give us a challenge." He said, "Reach out to the unlovely." They said, "We'll do it, Lord." Lord said, "Talk to Sanni." They said, "Give us another challenge, Lord." Sanni, Sanni decked people. I mean, Sanni was what you'd call a striker. I mean, they were scared to death, but they did.

They witness to her. She laughed. She cursed at them. But to make a short story long, they took Sanni to a weekend camp. They were amazed that she went. You know why? Because she got out of her home. That's why she went. She got out of that place, got up in the mountains in Colorado, heard about Jesus Christ. And of course, she gave her life to Christ. What I tell this story, otherwise? There are thousands that don't, but Sanni did. Now this wild pagan is a brand new believer. And she gets back. She goes to church, Kenny Port, Hume Lake says, "Walking into a garage doesn't make your car and walking into church doesn't make you a Christian," you know? But Sanni went to church because that's what the Christians were. First testimony, she stood up and said, "I am so bleep, bleeping happy. God save me from bleep bleep." And people are saying, "Oh, yes, thank you, God. I think, woah, you know."

[Laughter]

Sanni made a pledge before her youth group that she would they, her youth director, challenged them to do something remarkable for God, that if, if it happened, it would only be because God did the work. A challenge bigger than yourself. So she stood before her youth groups just about two months old in Jesus. And she said, by the way, (coughs) Sanni, the school that she went to was about seven miles from Columbine.

So I think often of Littleton and Englewood and South Denver. When I think of Sanni. Sanni said, "God giving me the strength. I'm going to share my faith in Jesus Christ with every student in my high school. Eleven hundred."

Her youth director said, "You know, why don't you just say I'm going to be a witness?" She said, "No, that's, that's what I'm, that's what I'd like to do." So halfway through her junior year, Sanni had-, was a miserable failure. She had only personally witnessed to about 300 young people at that school. The reason I know is that I was a youth pastor across town. I can't even take credit. She wasn't even in my youth group. The youth group grew from about 20 timid youth to about 50 and 60 and 80 and 90. And then on Sunday night youth, that's when the old timers used to, they had to kick the oldsters out of the regular worship center because it wasn't room for the teenagers and it was very exciting. But halfway through her junior year, Sanni felt she was a miserable failure because she's way behind and she's never going to reach them.

Some of her friends said, "Sanni, (coughs) why don't you, uh, run for a school office and you'll have a chance to to speak before-" She says, "I don't do that, I just want to be a witness." They said, "Well, there's a speech that you give." "Ah, who's there?" They said, "Well, the whole high school is there. And," they said, "they even release the (screams) junior highers on that day and they come as well."

Saudi prayed about it, "Yes!" I was there. I'll never forget this. Hope you don't. In that message, she only had about two minutes. All the others are saying, "Uh, vote for me. I'll put soda pop in the water fountain and bring a candy for you. We'll can all the lousy teachers." (coughs) Sanni stood up and said, "Many of you know that I've changed. That's because last summer, winter, whenever I went to camp and I, and I became a Christian."

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And then Sanni got real specific. She said, "I don't mean I became religious." She said, "I mean, I invited Jesus Christ into my heart as my Savior and Lord. And I promised Him I'd tell all of you." She said, "Isn't this neat? You're all here."

And they all sat there thinking and I was sitting next to Mr. Quintness, the principal who is whispering, "She can't do this." But she did. (Giggles) I said, "Yeah, shame on her, shame on her."

[Laughter]

Then at the end of her message, Sanni said. She said, "I have to sit down now," because the guy who held up sit down, you know, she said, "Before I do, I want to say something." Sanni was not beautiful physically. You know, a lot of us aren't. But I'm telling you, she's radiant at that moment. She said, "I want to tell you something. A lot of you are embarrassed. You probably won't talk with me again. That's no problem." She said, "I'm the greatest friend you will ever have." She went and sat down. They didn't know what to do. So they gave Jesus a standing ovation. Quite paradoxically, two days later, they found out that she had lost the election and the guy called her and said, "You lost the election." And Sanni said, "What? What do you election? Who cares?" You know what? That was thirty five years ago, that generation, the (screams) junior highers their little brothers and sisters and now parents and grandparents still tell the story. I know 'cause I go to my high school reunions and they've forgotten her name, but they stand and say, "There was a girl who had this guts to stand and declare her faith before the whole world." The word of God is powerful and that power and source of authority is ours.

Meanwhile, back in the synagogue, the guys who were not believing were thinking, "He knows what we're thinking." And Jesus decided principle number two, and principle number one is that we have the resources of God at our fingertips if Christ as Savior and Lord. Principle number two and I won't have time to develop this. So invite your youth. No. Have your grandmother and grandfather invite me to their Bible Study and I'll dis-, develop principle number two, which basically out of Luke six is that Jesus always ministered to the area of greatest need.

So I ask you, Bible scholars, what was the area of greatest need? Hmm, you say why? It's that dude in the back row with the withered right hand. He's not the greatest need. He's the visual aid. (Chuckles)

Who's the greatest need? All of those people that were there to hear the word of God. Well, that's true. But the greatest need were the people who knew the truth and didn't respond. (sniffs) And you know what? If I went from preaching to meddling, which I shall do at this moment, I'll say, I'll say, isn't it true on occasion that believers, not us because we're all wonderful. But other believers hear the truth, but for some reason, decide not to grab onto it and not to declare Christ will be the Lord of my life and lose the Spirit of God in their lives? So there sat these men who had Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus (yelling) memorized in the Hebrew. And they didn't know Jesus when He stood before 'em.

Give me a Good News Club and a Good News teacher who tells me that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Keep it simple, folks. So Jesus wanting to illustrate His power, decided He'd

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cut to the chase. They said at Talbot, "Close your Bible. It builds false hope (giggles) and gives you five or ten more minutes." Jesus calls the guy in the back row because if the word of God can become powerful in our lives, yours and mine, the next thing we'll do. We'll take it to the area of greatest need. I don't know what that area is for you. For my friend Shelly Cook, it was for years, Quito, Ecuador. And from for some of you that I saw earlier, it's Lodi, California. It's where you live and who you are and who you're close to. You take it to the area of greatest need. But by far the most powerful principle that jumps out of this passage happens at the end of the message in the synagogue on another Sabbath day. Jesus always I, I guarantee, always stretches your faith and mine. He always challenges us to step out of the boat in deep water where our faith can really be stretched.

So I promise you this, if you've not experienced it already, and I'll bet you have. But for those that haven't, I promise you this, you get serious about Jesus Christ wherever you attend school, and we'll be praying for you that God will give you wisdom in that. Wherever you are, if you decide you're going to go for it spiritually if this is the terminal generation and who knows? I've read all nine of The Left Behind books, you know, what's left? You know, even so, come quick. If this is it, isn't it time to go for it? I'm telling you, if you do, Jesus is gonna stretch you waaay beyond your comfort zone.

"You, you in the back row." No, I'm talking about synagogue. "Yeah, now, you uh you buddy with a withered arm. The right weathered arm." Guy looks down the row, "Yeah? I'm the only one with an arm, yeah?" I am not at my size and age in shape, I make fun of no human being. He says, "Yep, that's me." Jesus says, "Stand up and come up here." Was Jesus smiling? Well, my

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wife says, "Stay with the text honey." My wife says, "Ron, Jesus isn't nearly as funny as you think He is." Will, I think Jesus is pretty darn funny. I think He's smiling because you know why? Because He knew how the story is going to end. He's getting excited.

And the guy with the withered arm, what's going on in his heart and mind? He's thinking (mimics heartbeat) "Maybe, maybe I'll get healed. Maybe I get to go. 'Not just praise the Lord, but praise the Lord, you know, give me a high five!'" You know? So he stands there, then Jesus, He didn't speak to the man. He declared to the people who knew truth and weren't receiving it. He just gave them a little a little principle and He said, "Well, here's the deal." Hafer-ized version, not yet on the market. (Coughs) Let me give you a question there, their rules were no healing on Sabbath. The guy in John chapter nine. I just preached on him yesterday morning over in Bellflower, OK, so you were there. The guy in John chapter nine. They felt that Jesus, when Jesus spat in the mud and pop the clay mud balls on his eyes, that the sin was that He spat because you, spitting was work on the Sabbath. (Elongated) Stuuupid. They said, "Don't eat an egg on the Sabbath, if you eat and egg, an egg on the Sabbath." Do you know literally what the rules said? You kill the chicken! Don't kill the messenger. So chickens are praying. No eggs on the Sabbath. That's so stupid. The stupid rules! They knew that they were caught in a catch 22 because Jesus was a miracle worker and He knew that they didn't believe.

So He said, "Well, here, I'll give you a question. You like question and answer? Yeah, good. I'll give you one. Should I heal him or should I not? Here he stands. You got your rules. There's a man. What do you think?" Mark says that they form little, they say holy, unholy huddles. To, we had a skit on this at junior high. At Hume Lake, the kids came back with a skit and they said

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gotten a little huddle and they said, "Two, four, six, eight. Whom shall we assassinate?" I mean, because that's the, that was the plan. They went to get rid of. They came back and. And Jesus said to them, "Well, now what's your answer?" Well, in the groups they had decided, "Wait a minute. Let's tell Him our rules. Yeah." One guy says, "Yeah, Fred, this guy didn't listen. He, he just heals. He doesn't listen to our rules. He seems to be working with another set of rules." The Bible, you know. "So we better not give Him that. Well, let's just tell Him, 'Listen, we'll cut You a little slack.' We'll just say, 'Well ok, get on this one particular case, then you can go ahead?'" "Oh, no, no, no, He- He knows our rules. He's gonna say, 'You hypocrites. Why did you say that? If you don't mean it. You know, you don't speak the truth. Israeli speak forked-.'"

So they, so they came back. He says, "What's the deal? What shall I do?" They said, "We have no answer." He said, "Good. That was the idea." They didn't have the answer. So He said to the guy with the withered arm previously, "You set forth your arm." And the guy didn't say, "You mean the left?" No, no, no. He knew, he knew and he didn't say, "Well, I'd like to, but, you know, I've been trying but I- just doesn't work." Because what he heard Jesus saying was "Not in your power, but in My power, here's what I'm asking you to do." And I hope that it's 2,000 years later applicable today, I think it is. "You, whoever you are, whatever age stage you are, not in your power, but in Mine. If you decide to go for it, I'm going to ask you to do something way beyond your strength and ability, and you'll say 'I can't.' Or as Billy Graham would say, 'We can't!' But I'm going to say, well, I don't give you My power to do it. Stretch forth your arm." And the room was electric. And the ones who are open to God and His word and Jesus, the Messiah responded (coughs) with belief and the unbelievers just got more hardened because they would not receive truth.

Hey, you guys, what happens when people your age and stage, uh, decide to allow God, the Holy Spirit, to do a remarkable thing? Well, I've got a favorite story. You might have guessed that it involves a (screams) junior higher named Ralphie. I was at Camp Pine Summit a hundred years ago. 250 junior highers were there. Two hundred and forty nine were actually listening. But Ralphie and I was given them this great material, I was young then, I as good, you know? I was sincere. And when I'd say something incredibly funny, Ralphie would say, "That isn't, that isn't funny!" outloud or I tell some story and and Ralphie would say, "That isn't true. Is that true? That can't be true." And I mean, he was just really bugging me. In the counselor's meetings we actually considered (coughs) having Ralphie not come to the Bible session.

Then we thought, let's see, we got him here that don't know Jesus and then we don't let him hear the word. So that, that doesn't work. So we decided, let's pray. You know. It got to be Wednesday morning, it was a week long, and the guy had me I mean, that one little twerp had me. He was just destroying me. I'm praying, "Lord save him or take him somewhere."

I said Wednesday morning, because it camps the one thing that I've and I think maybe we're sensitive to this. The one thing I never liked I don't like it at church either is one at the end of a service, the preacher kind of traps you get you to raise your hand and not your preacher because they're swell guys. But so I was always really careful not to do that. So Wednesday morning I said, "Tonight, Wednesday night, those of you that are considering making a decision for Jesus Christ, I'm going ask you to do a very hard thing," Pine Summit in this beautiful chapel, it's one the prettiest that I've ever seen. "I'm gonna ask you to get up out of your seats and come down

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just like Billy Graham and stand in front of all these people because they're your friends. And I'm telling you this so you can be thinking ahead. So, OK, you be you guys be thinking and praying." Now I'm ready for the message. And from the third row, our hero, Ralphie, stood. He came up and he stood right in front of me.

I haven't told you that he was a littlest guy in the room, so I identify with him right way. Nor have I told you that Ralphie had a cleft palate, which is easily repaired and hardly anyone has them today. But in that era, there were a few that didn't. So a tear on the roof of his mouth, which affected his speech, it probably affected his entire personality. And so he didn't speak clearly at all. And so I might clip mic is here. So I just leaned over and in there stood Ralphie, it was a quiet moment. I thought, "Well, thank you, God. It's a quiet moment." I said, I thought, "Could it be?" I said, "Ralphie, why why are you standing here?" He said, "Well, you said if people wanted to receive God." I wanted to grab him by his little toga and say, "Not this morning!" You know?

But I thought, could it be that God has led him early? You know? So I said, "Ralphie, turn and face your friends. And answer these questions. Ralphie, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? That He died for your sins, that He was buried and rose again? (coughs) Do you believe, Ralphie, that you're a sinner?" His head went and two hundred and forty nine other heads went "Woo, woo! Yeah. Major. Big time!" "Right now. Ralphie, right now. Do you, do you invite Jesus Christ into your life as your Savior and Lord?" So he turned around and gave me a high five. I said, "Welcome to the family, Ralphie." What would you do for the rest of the service? You know? And they all clap because he was kind to the camp hero, you know. For the

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next two days, it was a miracle. Ralphie was quiet. Somebody gave him a Bible. He read it. And there was indication that God had saved him.

[Laughter]

Got to be Friday night. I said, "I'm not speaking tonight." (Mimics cheering) Yay! "But I'm going to have you share. So there's a microphone over here and over here, guys and girls. And, uh. What I'd like you to do is just share what God has done in your life." Two hundred and forty nine pairs of eyes memorizing the car, but nobody moving or look at it. But, Ralphie, you came right up to me with my microphone. Ralphie was a different kind of cat. I loved that, Ralphie. And he (chuckling) kind of wrestled my microphone from me.

And he said with his broken speech, "I'm going to sing a song." Ralphie was tone deaf. Raise you-, never mind, never mind, we heard the worship. No, I loved it, I loved it. And he got this gorgeous counselor gal, Ralphie was no dummy to play. And it was something like God is so Good, now is very simple. You can't screw it up. But it was, every note was off. And I thought, "Dear heavenly Father, this is the start of the conclusion. What are you do-? Whats? Lord?"

And as Ralphie began to sing, (singing off key) "God is so good." And not even pronouncing the words. We chuckled, but they didn't. It was like God's Spirit just covered the place. Oh! I will never. Oh, man. I got goosebumps telling it now. He butchered that song and there wasn't one chuckle. Everybody was just spellbound. It was like God saying, "This is Mey, this is not your time. This is Mine. Watch how I do it." So he finished. They began to yell and scream.

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(mimicking cheering) "Yay!" And I'm looking at the camp director, he's going (dismayed noise).

Ralphie said, "Should I sing again?" I said, "No, no, no."

[Laughter]

Two counselors rushed down threw Ralphie on their shoulder, ran him around that auditorium up the stairs, and they're yelling and screaming. There were chairs set up in the far back. So now the student stood on the chairs and are stomping on the metal chairs halfway around the first lap. They're yelling, "Ralphie, Ralphie!!" I don't know if somebody clued him in, but halfway around, Ralphie stuck up the one way sign and they changed it and started chanting, "Jesus, Jesus." And they were out of control by the time, Ralphie landed back.

I said, "Let's just sit down." And, you know, when when in doubt pray. And I thought, "Lord, what do You want to do next?" Then it got real quiet. And then I heard a girl where she was supposed to be at the mic where she used to say, (mimicking small girl voice) "Well, I've never stood before group, but, when Ralphie sang.." Fill in the Blank. And a guy here and a gal. At least an hour, I'm an evangelist. At least four hours, no. And there was not. The lines were long, lined up an hour later and they had to go back to their cabins and share what God had done. Of course, it was the work of Jesus. But (snapping) one life in tune with the S-, the power of the Spirit of God. One little twerp who decided "I'm going to go for it." And God, the Holy Spirit. "I wasn't going to do or say anything, but when Ralphie sang..." it just loosed the power of the Spirit of God, now.

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The challenge isn't to be more like Ralphie. God bless the Ralphies and the Sannis. That's you. The challenge is to have this (tapping Bible) word part of your life and mine where we're never the same. Take it to the area of greatest need. I don't know, you know, and allow God the Holy Spirit. This the part I like. To take your life and stretch you in remarkable ways and make you young miracles for God. You make that decision, God, the Holy Spirit will give you clear direction on the decision for schools. But if you have any question on schools, you can ask me, later.

(praying) Thank you, Father, for Your goodness in our lives. May we be more like Jesus in every way. In His strong name, we pray. And all God's people said?

- Audience

Amen!

Do I have the authority vested in me to lose 'em? Or are you guys?

- Unknown

(Distant) Yeah!

By the authority vested in me you are dismissed! Hug a neighbor.