

10 am Sutherland Hall

By Billy Ingram

Speaker 1:

The 10:00 session with Dr. Billy Ingram is going to be our speaker today. Just a brief introduction about him. He'll be more formally introduced later on tonight at the 07:00 session. But I've just had the privilege to meet with him on several occasions and to work with him. And I just thank God for that. So many times, I think about being in school and how busy I am. And then I think about him and it's like I have a long way to go. But I just really thank God for him and I just trust that you will enjoy what he speaks on today and we're going to bow for prayer right now.

Dear lord, I thank you for this day. Lord, I thank you for just another time and just the place to come together and to learn about your word and learn about just different issues. Lord, I just thank you right now for each and every one that's here. I pray that you will speak through Doctor Ingram and that he will be able to touch our lives, Lord, and that we will just be able to grow in the truth and the knowledge of your word. Lord, I just thank you for this day and all these things I ask in your name. Amen. Dr. Bill Ingram.

Billy Ingram:

Good morning. Good morning. How's everyone this morning? Can we stand together just for a moment, if that's okay. And I'd like for us to take just a few moments and worship the Lord. I always like to have my heart prepared so I can be in tune with God. And I'm hoping that we can all be in tune together. Amen. Yeah. It's okay to say, Amen. I love you, Lord.

[musical interlude]

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Just the young ladies. All the young ladies.

[musical interlude]

All right. All of the young men together

[musical interlude]

Everyone together one last time, worship Him and give him glory. I love you, Lord. And I lift my voice. To worship you, O my soul rejoice. Take joy my King in what you hear. May it be a sweet sweet sound in your ear. Our Father and our God. We're thankful to you for this conference. We're thankful for these students who are here today. We thank you for the opportunity of coming together, to lift our voices in praise, in thanksgiving and in adoration. We know this is the day that you have made. We rejoice and we are glad in it. We ask that this hour that we spend together before it passes permanently into the tomb of time, may it be revolutionary.

May it be radical. May it change our lives. For the glory of God we pray in Jesus name. Amen. You may be seated. God bless you. I am happy, very, very happy and honored to be here. It is always a thrill for me to come back to Biola. I graduated in 1975 and I like to bring you greetings from the Marinafa Community Church of West Los Angeles, which I am privileged pastor, and I'd like to bring you greetings from my wife, Marguerite, who is in, let's see. She is in Legos, Nigeria, now. She'll be leaving for Akra, Ghana this afternoon. And we're excited about what God is doing in our lives, in our ministry around the world, he's opened many, many doors of opportunity for us to proclaim the living word of God.

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And I'm also excited about some of the members of our church who are students here. God bless you. Good to see you. Lashana. Where is Kevin? You have not seen him. Tell him he is in trouble. There is an area of concern that is on my heart that I want to share with you over the next couple of days. And it involves what I believe is very very pertinent. A lot of people who go to Bible schools, who come for whatever reason, and they come out and they don't do anything with what they have learned. A lot of people don't do anything with the lives that they have, and they never tap into anything significant in terms of fulfilling a destiny, a calling, fulfilling a purpose. What is the reason why we're here? What's our purpose? Why are you in Biola? Is it because your parents or grandparents or a relative went to Biola and you want to keep the family tradition going?

Are you here because you want to be? Are you here because you want to know more about God or is it something you're just doing because it is the Christian thing to do? It is significant to me when I was a student here, I was amazed at some of the things I observed as a baby Christian. I think I had known the Lord probably three or four years when I began in 1974, and I was amazed at the what would you say, apathy in what should have been the most exciting time for people to be in an environment where they're getting nothing but God's word. You know what I observed. And I was shocked because I didn't grow up in a church in terms of knowing God. I didn't grow up in a Christian home.

And so when I came to know Christ, it was real to me. And when I came here, I was amazed that students didn't give a whooped. Hello? And there's a good chance that some of you have the same kind of attitude. You really don't care. I mean, you do your assignments, you do your

collateral reading, you fulfill your reports and you go to class. But in terms of really caring about God and about God's people and about your ministry, I noticed that it wasn't there and it shocked me. I couldn't believe that in this environment, people didn't really love God's word. And I'm not saying the whole student body. But I observed a lot of students who were basically goofing off. At a Christian school, goofing off, fooling around, wasting the Lord's time. You still with me? Would you like for me to talk about something else? Now, if you have your Bibles, I like for you to open them with me to Genesis the first chapter.

Genesis 1. And I'm going to talk about our purpose for life, our purpose as Christians. I'm going to talk about our past, our present, and our potential. Now, as you well know, Genesis is the book of Beginnings. It is a book that depicts the masterful hand of God in creation. It opens with the presupposition that God exists. In the beginning, God. I love that statement because it settles the question as to who's in charge. In the beginning, God existed. God preexisted His creation. He preexisted time and eternity. And it says that God created the heavens and the earth. Now you well know. I'm sure you've read the account before that God spoke things into existence. He spoke the light into existence. He caused there to be a division between the firmament of the heaven and the earth. He spoke the living things into existence. He spoke the fruit bearing trees and all of the things on the earth that would be for the health and wellbeing of mankind.

But when we come to the creation of man, man being the apex of God's creation, God did something unique. We read in Genesis 1:26. And God said, Let us make man. How? Now? That's very good. God said, Let us make man in our image. Man being generic. Adam in the Hebrew, it is a generic term for mankind. In other words, God said, I want people to be in my

image. People. Now, that's important. It's important that we, as believers, grasped the fact that when God created the prototype of the human race, he desired for every other one that would ever come to be in his image. Man. That's radical. You know why? Because there are some people who have the idea they're the only ones in the image of God.

And the Scripture says, God said, Let us make man in our image, every kindred, every tongue, every people, every nation. Everybody in the image of God. Watch this. Let us make man in our image after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the Earth. And so God created man in his own image. In the image of God created he, him, male and female created he. Then the Hebrew says, Male, specifically a man and specifically a woman. It was Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. Now all of this hogwash and malarkey and bologna that we're being sold about people are normal. Men who love men is of the devil. Boy. Wish somebody could say, Amen.

That is insane. It is ridiculous. It's stupid. It's crazy. It has never been the order of God's plan for a man to be in love with another man, or for a woman to be in love with another woman. He made the man specifically a male and the woman, specifically a female. Both of them equally were created in the image of God. This shatters all of our myths because there is in our society this idea that women are less than men. I thought for sure I'd get an Amen from the ladies. But when God created them, initially, they were created with a parity. They were created with inequality. They both were given dominion. They both were commanded to be fruitful and multiply. Listen, a man can't multiply alone.

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They both were commanded to subdue the earth and to control it. They were terrain. How together? Together. Now I firmly believe that God knows exactly what He's doing, even though we don't think so sometimes. And sometimes we question God. In fact, I remember when I gave my heart and life to Jesus Christ, it was the most life changing experience I'd ever had. You see, when I was coming up, I was forced to go to church. We used to go to Tridestone Baptist Church. It's still there. In fact, a couple of weeks ago, I was speaking at a prayer breakfast. I saw the pastor's wife of the church I grew up in. And she was so proud of Billy Ingram. And she was telling everybody that her husband, the pastor of that church, baptized me. Now the insight that she didn't know until I spoke was when her husband baptized me eight years old, I went down into that water, a dry devil, and came up a wet, kicking demon.

I never had a conversion. I never knew Christ just through baptism. Baptism can't save a person. And so all of my spiritual and religious efforts were an attempt to please my parents and please the people around me. And I tell you what, when I got on my own, when I went away to college, to the University of Oregon, I said, Man, I ain't going to church. For what? Nobody is going to make me again go to church. I don't need it. I'm going to do my thing. You know what I did? I can remember I used to stay in Debusk dormitory on the University of Oregon, room 105. How I remember that? I don't know. But I remember it. And the very first night of this experience was just unbelievable. This guy walked into my dorm room and he had this funny looking thing. It wasn't really a cigarette, but it was rolled over and twisted on both ends. I didn't know what it was. I'd never been exposed to it.

But he said, Man, you try this and you will have the greatest experience of your life. I figured, what do I have to lose? You know what I did? I took a hit, and later I found out it was marijuana. You know what happened to me? It was true what that guy said. At that point in my life, it was the greatest experience ever. Instantly I just ruled in euphoria. I was thrilled. I was enthusiastic. I was excited about life. I couldn't believe that life could be so fantastic. Man, I laughed so hard, tears began to stream down my eyes. I got cramps in my side. I was rolling on the ground. This was wonderful I thought. The problem was that was my introduction to the trap of the devil. Nobody told me that when I was being introduced.

And so every other time I attempted to get high, I could never recapture the first experience, but I kept seeking for it. It's as though I was hooked. I couldn't get enough off of marijuana. So they said, we'll try some hashish and I tried it. Why not? I tried angel dust and I tried PCP and I tried cocaine. And I'm not saying any of this to gloat in my past, but only to bring out to you how I got so far away from the purpose for which I was created, thinking that this alternative was the answer. And on and on it went. Until one day it dawned on me. Man, you're too far. I was at a party and we were in this back room. And in this back room were the heavy weights. They were doing heroin. Something about peer pressure. You know anything about peer pressure?

Hello? In our church. When I say hello, the congregation says, Hi. Hello? That's very good. There's a lot of peer pressure on my life. I wanted to be accepted by people. And I figured, man, if I do this heroin for sure, I'll be a hit with the group. And they had it in a balloon. And they were passing it around. And I was watching these guys. And it was as though this chilling horror came over me. Man, you're really going down the tubes. Now, mind you, I was a star athlete on

my way to the NBA. Externally, I had everything in the world going from I was tall, I was dark. I was handsome. I mean, what else could I ask for? But inside, I was dying. Inside. I was dead. I was depressed every day. And the only way I could cope with life was to be loaded. And it was so horrible. There'd be times I'd be so loaded. I didn't even know who I was. That's a frightening thing to me, being a conversation with someone. And you don't even know who you are. And you don't know what you're talking about.

And the thing that people aren't being told about drugs is the horrible paranoia. I was always afraid someone was following me. So I'm walking along. There's no one around. The sun is shining and I'm afraid that people are watching me and following me all the time. That's the price you pay for cheap thrill. So in this room, as they're passing this heroin around, it is one person away from me. I'm standing against the wall and that the person on my left is doing it now. And the thought came to me, man, run for it. Run for it. Don't worry. If these people don't like you anymore, get out of here. I don't know where the voice came from. I don't know if it was a [inaudible] voice. All I can remember is standing against the wall.

And I just slowly crept towards the door and I split. I ran to my dorm and I was sweating. My heart was beating fast. I thought, man, had I taken heroin. You know what happens to people in heroin? That was a drug that always. I figured I can handle marijuana. I could handle cocaine. But heroin. I saw people, man, that were just in the gutter. You hear about people ODing on that stuff. And on and on it went. Finally, one day, the only way I can explain it. I went to church and I decided if God is real, if there's anything to this Jesus business, I don't have anything to lose. I want it in my life. I prayed a simple prayer, Lord, I need you at this point in my life. And if your

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real come and change my life and deliver me and then go through a 28 day detox program. No twelve step program. The power of God changed my life. And it's been 20 years. I haven't looked back. You know what I discovered?

I discovered then I was created in the image of God. I discovered that I have intrinsic worth. I discovered I am valuable to God just because God said I'm valuable. Just because. And the thing that really helped me was I learned that just the way I am is just the way God wants me. So I don't have to follow the crowd and keep up with folk and do things that everyone else is doing in order to be approved or accepted by them. My higher purpose, my higher calling is to find out what it is that God has designated for my life. And there's a possibility that some of you, you have low self-esteem and maybe your poor self-image doesn't lead you to use drugs. But maybe it is causing you to compromise in other areas of your life.

I know that you don't have a problem with sex and all that stuff on the campus here. But some of the secular schools out there in the world, man, they have serious problems with those kinds of things. So I'll just tell you this anyway. And you can tell somebody out there in the world. Okay? There are some people who have been told from their youth, young ladies, we didn't want you. We wanted a boy. We wanted a boy. And you're a girl. And they had been hearing and rehearsing that horrible rejection all of their lives. Or some people have been told you're nothing. You're not worth anything. You're just like your daddy. And because of this, it has wrecked their perception of themselves in light of how God perceives them. And people when they are not centered properly and God, they'll virtually do anything for love and do anything for acceptance and do anything for approval.

And I wonder if the enemy has lured you and tricked you into believing that you can find love and acceptance no matter what it takes. Can I ask you a personal question? Hello? May I ask you a personal question? Thank you. What do you want to do with your life? What do you want to be? What do you want to do with your life? Where do you want to go? Talk to me. You want to make a difference for God. Wonderful. God bless you. You want to serve God. Now, listen. Believe me, I'm not looking for any special answers, so you don't have to. I'm not saying that you are, but you don't have to impress me with spiritual plateaus or some quixotic ideas about delusions of grandeur. Just be yourself.

So what else? What do you want to do? Who is that? God bless you. You want to be a teacher? We need good Christian teachers that care. Excuse me? You want to church plant? God bless you. Where are you from? Kenya Jambo. Good to see you. You want to plant churches? That's wonderful. So I'm assuming that the rest of you have no dreams, no goal, no aspirations. My preaching style is conversation. I don't yell and scream as typically as thought of black minister. I talk to people and I try to communicate with them right where they are. And so the congregation talks to me. It's a conversation. That's the way Jesus did. He met people where they were. So what about some of the rest of you? What do you want to do with your life?

What is it that's top on your list? Yes. Whoa. Heavy. Heavy physics professor. Wonderful. Yes. Jewish evangelism. Wonderful. God bless you. Ministry of Mormons. Excellent. Excellent. Yes. Raise a family. Wow. We don't hear a whole lot of that these days. Will God bless you with a whole lot of children, if that's your desire. Someone else. What is it that you want to do with your life? Yes, ma'am. Oh, you're just stretching. Okay. That's okay. Yes. You want to counsel?

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God bless you. Yes, ma'am. You and me both. I've had a poor relationship with my mother for the last five years, and I'll be praying for you that that'll happen. Would you pray for me, boy, I'd do anything to have a great relationship with my mother. Anything in the world. I know exactly how you feel. Every day I exist, it just shatters me, we're not even on speaking terms, and I'm making every effort I can to reach out.

It's just difficult when it's so much pain God granted to you. Anyone else yes, sir. Ministry and counseling to the youth. Oh, man, do we need that? God bless you. Yes. Give birth to spiritual nations. Amen. Wonderful. Yes. All the way in the back, sir. I'm sorry. Oh, my prison ministry, man, you guys are on the cutting edge in some of the areas that you're interested in. That's what it's all about. Let me share something else with you. Turn to the book of Isaiah 43. And you remember the Prophet Isaiah speaking to Jacob and to Israel, gives some very fantastic promises to them. And in the context of this statement, I believe there is an eternal principle that applies to us regarding the purpose for which God created us. Isaiah 43 note this. Even everyone that is called by my name, for I have created him. Why? Didn't I say the verse? This is Biola, I expected you to know the verse.

Verse seven, even everyone that is called by my name, for I have created him. Why? Oh for my glory. Now, if you don't get anything else out of anything I say in the next couple of days, get this. That's why you were created. You were created for the glory of God. What does that mean? It means that you're worth something. Not because you're so special. And I think that's the real danger of people being talented. There's a man on TV. If I call his name, most of you have heard about him, have known him. He's in the religious field. This man is a genius. He went to

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Stanford, refused to take any classes, took the tests, and graduated with a PhD. He's that heavy, but his mind is so sharp and so advanced that it's to his demise and his destruction. Because he knows how to abuse grace and abuse God's word to his advantage.

And that's not for the glory of God. Listen, when it says that God created you for his glory. Listen, it means that you're special. Thanks for that one Amen. God bless you. It means that you're special. Not because there's something special about you. But there's something special about being touched by the hand of God. That's what makes you special. See, if a person is intellectual in and of themselves, then they can think that they are better than others because they're smarter than others. Or if a person is young lady is pretty and she looks at other young ladies who are not as pretty, then she can look down at them and roll her eyes at them. And all the other types of mental games that women play with each other. Amen young ladies. You know what I'm saying.

But it's not about that. Listen, my dear, you're not special because you're pretty. And you are not unspecial, because according to society standards, you're ugly. The whole thing is a joke. There are so many women who have complexes because they don't look like models on TV or models in the magazines. Because they're not considered to be a ten. You know something? When God created you, he created you a 100. And if you knew the behind the scenes lifestyle of those women who starve themselves to death to remain a certain size, the unhappiness that they have with all of this fame and all of this glory and all of this wealth, they have no joy and no peace and no purpose other than the flock. They're skinny behind down a runway somewhere.

Now you know what I'm saying? I'm acting like I'm at home. I say what's on my mind in my church. Okay? Why settle for that when God created you for His glory. He created you the best you could possibly be. To try and be a ten is to accept 90% less of how God created you. It's not about society's standards. It's about God's standards. God said you had intrinsic worth and intrinsic value. God said you are redeemable, though society has rejected you. That's why it does not disturb me. If people don't like me, don't like what I say. Like the way I look, like the way I dress. I know I'm a king in the eyes of God. That's all that matters. What you think of me doesn't mean anything. It's what God thinks. And you see, it must be what God thinks of you that will then enable you to find your niche and fulfill your purpose for life.

So you want to be a physicist professor? Do it for the glory of God. You want to counsel youth, do it for the glory of God. You want to work in prison for the glory of God. You want to teach in school for the glory of God. Not for yourself, not for your own recognition. For God's glory. The Hebrew word glory suggests literally to be heavy. It was said of Jacob that his eyes grew dim because they were heavy. He was tired. Heavy in the sense that one is then worth their weight in gold. So that when God places you on his balance and he weighs you against His glory, the scale shouldn't tilt. I was downtown Los Angeles one day, and I'm always looking for a bargain for a good deal. And there was this guy looking sleazy and sneaky, but I didn't think anything. And so out of curiosity, I turned to see what he had to say, and he opened this case. And there was all of these gold rings and watches and necklaces. And then they just glittered and they sparkled. And I said, Nah, Nah, Nah.

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I kept walking, and I turned it on it again, and I was amazed. So I said, how much do you want for it? He said, so much. So I said, That's too much. And the police came by and this guy took out running. That should have alerted me that something was up. But no, I'm looking for a deal. He comes back, and finally we negotiate. I bought the 20 inch gold necklace. And man, this thing sparkled, sparkled. I couldn't believe the deal I got on this. I mean, I just walked away laughing. I couldn't believe it. And that night, as normal, I'd take a bath or a shower. I rushed into bed. The next morning. I took a shower and I looked in the mirror. And this thing wasn't shining anymore. Yeah, it was green. You got it. An ugly green. I realized then that weight wasn't, I mean, that gold wasn't worth its weight. It was cheap gold. It was fake gold. There's a whole lot of Christians like that.

Fakes. Pretenders. Not worth their weight in gold. Pretending to be spiritual, pretending to be interested in the things of God, pretending to pray, pretending to want to win people for Christ because they know that's the Christian thing to do. But when their lives are weighed against the glory of God, the scales will tilt because a lot of what they've been doing has been for themselves. Self-interest, self-seeking. And don't tell me that Christian people in a Christian environment on a Christian campus can't get caught up in that type of nonsense. They can. That's why Paul wrote to the Philippian Church. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory. So it means that we've got to evaluate. I mean, as simple as why am I sitting in this room listening to this stranger?

Why am I going to Biola? You need to have it clear. Why? When I came here, there was one reason why I came. I wanted to know God's word. It was a struggle for me. A serious struggle.

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I'm not ashamed to admit it, because my life is about being honest with people and transparent. So hopefully, what I've gone through, it can help someone. But I was the kind of person I've been a very intelligent person all my life. And that doesn't mean anything. I'm just saying to you what happened to me. And as an athlete, I wasn't challenged to use my intellect and my mind and my skills only what I could perform on the court. So they didn't require me to take any foreign languages all through high school. Not one. And it is a requirement to intern to many of the universities around the world. Not one. Why? Because we want him to perform. They didn't make me go to class.

I had to take no chemistry, no biology. And this is in high school. None of the core requirements. They just kind of passed me through, and I not knowing what was going on figured. Hey, man, I'm going to play in the NBA. Who needs education? So I didn't read my first book cover to cover until my junior year in college. Why? I didn't have to. I could read. Didn't have to. The real tragedy is, there are countless numbers of young people like that today who are just getting by. And maybe you don't have the clout of being a jock on campus or a big man on campus as they called me. But maybe you're not using your mind and your gifts and your abilities for your best and you're doing just enough to get by. Just enough of the Bible to make the grade. Boy, I wish somebody could say Amen.

But the challenge of God upon us is that whether we eat as the apostle Paul said, or drink or whatever we do, do what? Do all for the glory of God. Now, listen, friend of mine, that's the purpose for which you were created. That's why you're here. So as a student in Biola, you're studying how? Now that's very good. We study for the glory of God. We're reading for the glory

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of God. We're singing for the glory of God. We're eating for the glory of God. We're laughing for the glory of God. All that we do must reflect God's glory. Or it's a waste. Or it's a waste. He says this people have I formed for myself. They show what? They shall show forth my praise. You know, the burden of my heart for my church and for the Christian church in America and the rest of the world is simply we have almost become a subculture. Talking to ourselves. You see, it's easy to let your light shine when there are believers around you with your light shining. It's easy for you to be a believer in the context of Biola.

It's easy because everybody else is believing what you're believing. They're serving the same God you're serving. They're going where you're going. But that's not the context in which God is to be glorified. God is not to be glorified among believers. God is to be glorified among the heathen, the pagan. And there's countless numbers of people out there in the world who've not heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, who need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. And listen, friend of mine, you have wasted your time up to this point. If all that you are doing is getting information so you can get a job, work nine to five, earn a living and live and die and not seek to reach people for Jesus Christ. That's why there's this hunger in my life. I can't explain it any other way than I want to know.

In fact, that's what I'm going to be talking about tonight, knowing God. In fact, I'm going to be bringing my band and choir tonight. You're in for a real experience. In fact, it's safe to come to my church. I invite you to come. I've been living in Los Angeles all my life, and I've never been mugged. I've never been robbed. I mean, nobody's ever burglarized my car. It's strains of thoughts that people have. And I was insulting not too long. We had, listen, we had a Missions

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Conference at our church. Five sessions, four nights, a Mission Conference. The theme was, you can touch the world. And my heart is to expose my congregation to missions' organizations so that if people are being called of God, they can plug in and then be sent out to touch the world.

We invited a very famous organization right here in Southern California, Huntington Beach, to be exact. They told us, we're afraid to come into your area. We're not going to come. Now, wait a minute. You're telling me you're afraid to come into Los Angeles, and yet you can go to war torn parts of the world disease infected parts of the world, but you won't come to where people have a hunger for God. People who have a desire to go into the. You won't come and help them. I was insulted to say the least, that that's the height of hypocrisy. Reminds me of Jonah. I mean, who are we to determine where we're going to go if God has sent us there? You see, what I've come to grips with is that if God has called my life, that I don't determine where I will and will not go. If God sends me, I must go.

I really feel that you, my white brothers and sisters, have been sorely deceived and deprived of a wonderful experience interacting with other cultures and churches. I sincerely believe that. You have something to offer us, and we have something to offer you, but we can't mix it up and sharpen each other if we are afraid to come together for whatever reason. Hey, listen, we don't have cooties. We're not disease. There's nothing wrong with us. We're people just like you created in the image of God. And we need to come off of our high horse about how special we are because we control the media and because we control this and that. In my opinion, this is my opinion, all of these pictures of Jesus Christ around the world in our churches need to be burned publicly.

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I didn't think I'd get an Amen on it, but it's still true. Jesus wasn't blue eyed and blonde hair. Where did they get this guy? I love being here today. It's just so wonderful. And they've invited me to speak tonight and tomorrow and on Friday, and it does get better, believe me. But I think that you sense that I'm speaking the truth in love. I'm here because I committed to being here. Believe me, I've got a lot of other things I need to be doing, like paying my bills, taking care of my kids and planning to go to London and Ghana and Africa. Sunday for three weeks. But I'm here not to impress you, but because I sense the call of God upon my life and my simple prayer doing these times is God touch someone's life through me.

Because I remember the countless numbers of times I sat right in that corner over there listening to a great warrior, a great champion who's now retiring. Dr. Curtis Mitchell, and that man touched my life in a great way. And this school is going to severely miss his presence and his ministry and his teaching. And that was all his dream, all his desire. Lord used me to touch someone's life. I'm one of those persons he touched. And I'm just trying to pay back the favor not to him but to God. And if I can touch you, pay back the favor, not to me but to God. Touch someone's life for the glory of God. That's what it's all about. Let's break down our stereotypes, our traditions. Let's remove the things that have been dividing us. And let's come together as the people of God as a marching army on fire for Jesus Christ.

Now you may remember Jesus said, now someone needs to tell me how much time I have because I'll just go on and on. Jesus said, Let your what? Light so shine before men. Why? You know something interesting? Watch this. You don't strike a match to see the sun. You know where your light is needed most. Not among those who are already in the sun and glowing in the

sun. It's among those who are decaying and dying and despondent and despairing out there in a lost world. They need your light. They need to see your good works. They need to see the fact that you are coming together, loving one another as Christ loved us. That glorifies God. And so the beloved apostle Peter said in I Peter 2:9 you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a Holy nation, a peculiar people.

You've been called out of darkness, that you may show forth his marvelous light. Listen, that's why we're here. Our purpose for being here is to glorify God. Dr. King used to say, If I can touch somebody, not the whole world, but just somebody as I travel on my journey through life, then all of my living would not have been in vain. That's what it's all about. Now, let me ask you a question. Do you know of people who have problems with their past? Do you know of anybody who's dealing with guilt? You know of anybody who has done things in their past and they're praying to God no one ever finds out about it? You know, anybody like that? You don't have to raise your hands. You don't have to nod. You don't have to say, man, are you dealing with anything like that?

I know a lot of people, a lot of Christians who get no further than the first step because they're hindered by their past. They're haunted by a past. God has a very special word about your past in light of your purpose. And that's what I'm going to be talking about tomorrow. All of my messages are like link sausages. You can cut them off anywhere. I'd like for us to pray right now. And I sincerely appreciate you listening. I appreciate you being here. Let's pray together. Father, touch someone's life today. Touch someone who's been discouraged. Touch someone who's depressed. Touch someone whose life has been derailed. Touch someone. Oh, God, whose vision

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has grown dim. Help them to say, Father, they are usable, that you want to use them for your glory, that they are created for your glory.

And I wish to pray in these remaining moments for any person under the south of my voice who is sick and tired of the life they're living. And they want to begin to live in fulfillment of their purpose. For the glory of God. You say, pastor, today marks the day for me. I want to live for the glory of God. I want to dedicate my talents, my skills, my gifts for God's glory not for my own, but for God's. Can I pray for you just between you and God?

And if I can pray for you and you have the courage to be different, I invite you to stand to your feet. God bless you. God bless you, Father. With and for these who stand, I come in agreement with them. Lord, I have resolved in my own life. I want to live not for myself but for the glory of God. And Father, these students are standing here now, many of them having no idea where their life is going to take them, what they're going to be doing as I did 15 years ago, wondering, why am I flunking out of Dr. Mitchell's difficult classes? Why is there so much homework? Why are there so much reading? Why does every professor think they're the only teacher in the school? O Father help them not to become weary nor discouraged, but strengthen them and encourage them and remind them during the difficult times, you will be with them.

You will help them. You will aid them. And use them, Father, for your glory. Take every gift you've given to them, every talent, every skill. Take all that they are and fine tune it so that they would shine as pure gold. Try them in the fires, Lord God, and get rid of the stuff that is unnecessary in their lives so that they are worth their weight in gold. Living for the glory of God.

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Bless this student body, Lord. Bless Dr. Cook, the President and all of the faculty and teachers and every person that has an integral part in working to mold and shape each one into the image of our wonderful Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank you, Father, and we praise you in Jesus name. Amen.