



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Ephesians

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Remember Your Story

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What a joy to get to worship and praise our great and powerful God. It has been a tiring morning of worship because it has just been so good. It's like one of those good tireds where you're just drained because you've given a lot. At least I have.

Good morning, church. My name is Pastor Jeff. I'm one of the pastors here at the church, and I am going to ask you to get your Bibles open to Ephesians, chapter 2. We have been going through Ephesians together as a church. I love this book. I love it personally, individually, reading it, being reminded of who I am in Christ, what truths are for *me*, as a Christian, and then how I can live and respond to what God has done for me.

I love using it in counseling. All of our pastors do biblical counseling here, and I love walking through it with an individual and saying, "Hey, this is the stuff. Remember your identity in Christ, and stand on that promise so you can be different and so you can change." I have loved reading it just low and very slowly here, just going through it chapter by chapter, verse by verse, line by line, looking and seeing what it has to say for *us*, our identity in Christ and how we can respond to that in worship.

We are at a text where... Admittedly, this text was not highlighted in my Bible. Most of Ephesians is highlighted. This particular part of the text was not. God just has a funny way of working that out, where I will get a passage I need to preach and I have no thoughts on it whatsoever. That's just a blessing the Lord will give me.

I've had a lot of time to think about it now, and I'm excited to preach it with you. If you are at Ephesians 2, would you stand with me for the reading of God's Word? We are going to be going through verses 11-13, but we're going to start in verse 1 just because it's such a great reminder for us with what God has done for us. So we'll start in verse 1 of chapter 2.

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our

flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

God, we are so thankful for the opportunity we have to worship you, to know you, and for all that you've done for us. God, I want to lift up Pastor Steve to you as he's in India with a team ministering to pastors and missionaries over there. God, we want to lift up that country. We want to lift up all of the people. God, you have made so many people in that area of the world who are made in your image, and they are beautiful people, yet there are so many people over there who look like you but don't worship you.

I pray for the missionaries, the global partners we have on the ground, the teams we have that are going there, that are there right now, God, that you would give them gospel conversations even today and that people from India would come to faith in Christ. I pray that their eternities would change and that you would be with all of the people we have who love you who are there right now. God, give them strength, give them courage, give them hope in you, and give them the courage to share. We love you, Lord. In your name, amen.

What's *your* story? What makes you "you"? One of the things I get to do here at Canyon Hills is oversee the process for baptism. If you haven't been baptized, what's up? Let's hang out sometime. I'd love to have coffee with you. I'll tell you what. I'll buy the coffee and I'll dunk you. It'll be great. In fact, if it has been a while and you know you should have been baptized for a while, I will hold you under for three seconds for every year you should have been baptized. Even Stephen. We'll call it good.

One of the things we emphasize with people as they're going through the baptism process is really understanding their story. Who were you before Jesus? What did your life look like? What has Jesus done for you, and who are you now because of Jesus? That's the passage we're looking

at. It's really remembering who we were, what Jesus has done, and who we are now. That breaks out into three components.

"Before Christ I was [blank]..." This happened. There was a time in your life where you didn't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior. You might have known *about* him. You might have known people who knew him personally, but you didn't know him. You didn't believe in him. You didn't trust in him. You had not committed your life to him.

God knows this part of your story. He knows every bit of this part of your story, so don't sweep it under the rug. Don't celebrate it by any means, but don't ignore it. Acknowledge it. Be real about it. In your past you were scared. You were an addict. You were lost. You were dead. You were angry. You were a sinner. It's true.

"Before Christ I was [blank]..." The second part is "...but now..." I had to retake grammar in high school, senior year. We did this class after school before practice called "Grammar for Dummies." It was me and a bunch of other athletes trying to make it work. I don't know how much I picked up on that, but one of the things I have learned over time is that conjunctions are important things. These words, conjunctions, connect two thoughts together.

If I say *and*...[thought 1] *and* [thought 2]...I'm joining them together, and they complement each other. If I say *but*...[thought 1] *but* [thought 2]...I'm joining but contrasting two thoughts. Normally, when you use *but* you are emphasizing the second part of the statement. The second statement takes priority over the first.

For instance, I come home from work and it has been a long day and I give Ashley a big kiss on the lips and say, "I love you, babe," and she goes, "I love you, but your breath is awful." The first statement matters, but the second statement takes priority. Do you see what I did there? "But now" means your past is actually in the past. There is something newer. There is something better that is now here present for you.

"Before Christ I was [blank], but now..." Third part: "...in Christ I am [blank]." You are fundamentally different than who you used to be. You are completely new, and you get to *be* new, and we should know that. We should celebrate that. We should worship in response to that. But notice the qualifier. "...but now *in Christ*..." Really, none of this has to do with you or me.

We have to get this in our heads because it's easy to forget this. We are not the stars of our stories. It's all about Jesus. He's champion. He's Lord. He's King. He gets everything. We're just privileged to get to be connected with him. That's what Paul is getting at in this passage. He says "in Christ." This is the thirteenth time he has said "in Christ," "by Christ," "through Christ" so far in the letter. He is trying to emphasize this over and over and over again.

These are all truths that are so important for you, as a Christian, but it's always qualified "with Christ." There is never a time when Jesus isn't central, absolutely the bull's-eye of your story. So, your story, my story... It's not about us; it's about *him*. We are called to remember our story. You

have a unique story God has given *you*, and you want to know it, you want to celebrate it, and you want to share it.

Who you were before Christ matters because it highlights God's grace, and who you are *now* in Christ is significant because it trumps everything about your past. So what's *your* story? We have about another half hour together, and I want you to think critically about that. What is your story? "Before Christ I was [blank], but now in Christ I am [blank]." From this passage we have three examples of remembering who we once were and celebrating who we are now.

1. "*Before Christ I was an outcast.*" This has to do with who you were as an identity. You and I had no business spending time with God. Look at verse 11. Paul writes:

"Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

Paul is saying, "Hey, guys, remember who you were: second class, unclean, separated, aliens, strangers, rejects, losers, outcasts." Paul is saying, "These are the facts. You were not Israelites. You were far from us. We hated you. You were worthless." He's saying, "Don't dismiss the past. Don't sweep it under the rug. Acknowledge it, like, 'This is true.'" Have you ever felt like *you* don't belong, like you're lost and not wanted, undervalued? Maybe that's a true word for your life.

Maybe you were an outcast because of where you were born. Paul says to these guys, "You were Gentiles in the flesh." He's talking about skin color. He's talking about nationality. He's talking about people group. Maybe you were born in a different part of the world and you moved over here. Maybe you were born in *this* part of the world and moved somewhere else, and all of a sudden you're like, "Wow, I feel very different than everyone else."

Maybe you've felt like an outcast because of your upbringing. Paul says they were strangers to the covenant of promise. I have a good friend who is in my Life Group, and he will say from time to time... We'll be talking about Scripture, and he'll say, "Man, everything you're saying sounds awesome. I just don't get it. I wasn't raised this way. I wasn't raised in a perfect Christian home," assuming that *I* was raised in a perfect Christian home.

He's like, "I just don't get it. This is foreign to me. This is all new stuff. I'm trying hard to understand it. It's not familiar." So maybe you were an outcast because of how you were raised and how you were brought up. Maybe you were an outcast because of choices you made. Paul says it's like you were in the world. You made choices that separated you, that distanced you. Again, maybe it's decisions you made.

Yesterday, my family and I went on the ferry to Whidbey Island. My brother lives over there, so we went to go visit him. We were heading back. We're on the ferry, and my wife and all of the kids except for my daughter Brady comes down. I have a 3-year-old, Brady. She's almost 4.

We're holding hands and walking to go down the stairs to get to the car. We turn the corner, and I see walking straight toward me, in full costume, a professional clown. Come on now. We're talking white makeup, orange hair, the suit.

He sees a business opportunity, so he starts walking faster, and I start walking faster too. He's like, "Hey, here's my business card." I'm like, "Thank you very much." He's like, "Have your daughter look at the card." I'm like, "I am terrified of you. I don't want to be anywhere near you." There might be choices you make where people just want to get away from you as fast as they can. If you are a professional clown, I just want to say in love...please stop. You are terrifying my kids and you're terrifying me. Okay? We're going to have people up here in the front after the service. Seriously. You can change. In Christ you can be different.

Maybe you feel like an outcast because you have a past that's embarrassing. It has brought consequences you still feel today. God has turned it around for good, and that's an amazing thing, but you still deal with the effect and the residue of your sin. When you add it all up, when you look at it... Maybe it was where I was from, maybe it was how I was raised, maybe it was the stuff and the choices I've made, but when you add it all up the deck is stacked against you and me. We just have to look and say, "Man, I've never been good enough, I've never been rich enough, I've never been cool enough to be accepted by God. I am an outcast."

"Before Christ I was an outcast, but now in Christ I am family." See the change there? At the beginning of the book of Ephesians, Paul says... First verse of the whole thing. Chapter 1, verse 1: **"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus..."** Paul is writing to saints. He doesn't say at some point, "Okay, now I'm going to transition and write to people who aren't Christians. You guys are Gentiles in the flesh," and all of this stuff.

He's writing to people who are already Christians. These are people who have been brought from death to life by the grace of God and by the work of Jesus. He's saying, "Hey, listen. You *were* this, but now you are something different." Instead of being second class, you are now a child of God. You are in God's family, and you can't get better than that. I was a loser with no value, but now I have eternal value in Christ.

Tim Chester, an author, wrote this book *A Meal with Jesus*, and he says, "Jesus has come for losers, people on the margins, people who've made a mess of their lives, people who are ordinary. Jesus has come for you. The only people left out are those who think they don't need God: the self-righteous and the self-important."

"Before Christ I was an outcast, but now in Christ I'm family." Do you need that truth today? This truth matters if you are in a position where you think you are better than other people. Being reminded of who you are leads us to graciousness and love for people who are struggling, even struggling with sin. We had no worth before God. He saved us, though, and he gives us worth in him, but he doesn't give us more worth than other people. We aren't better than others, and we have to remember who we *were* so we can love people where they are today.

You might need this truth because right now you feel like you're worthless. There are two sides to the pride coin. One side is, "I am better than everyone else." The other side of the pride coin is, "I am worse than everyone else. I have no value, so you have to pay attention to me." You tend to wallow in your sins, and you don't think you can do anything for God. "I'm broken. I have no value. I can't change. I can't do anything. Woe is me. This is impossible. This is too hard. I can't be anything."

Your story has a "but now." You are not defined by your past sins and suffering; you are defined by who you are in Jesus. In Christ you are new. You're free. You have the fullness of God. You have redemption. You have overwhelming grace. In Christ you have victory. You are resurrected to new life, and you have eternity you're looking forward to. You *were* an outcast, but now you're family.

2. "*Before Christ I was far from God.*" The first point had to do with who you *were*; the second has to do with where you stand because of what you do. Our sin makes us far from God. It separates us from community with him. It creates a barrier between us. This morning there are two types of people who are sitting in this room. The first are people who know and admit they have problems, and then the second are people who try to cover up their problems.

If you think you don't have any problems, what are you doing here? The church is a place for people who have issues, man. We have problems. That's why we come here, not because we think we're good enough or we've figured it out or we have put on enough good works to make ourselves look fine. We do it because we found Christ, we found the solution, we found the only answer to all of our problems and messes.

Before that we were far from God and we needed something. Paul says in two different places the distance between us and God before Christ. Verse 12 says we were without God. "**...having no hope and without God in the world.**" That's far. Then in verse 13 it says, "**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off...**" You and I were far away from God. *Far.*

Some of you are thinking, "Hey, Jeff, I know that; I understand that, but you haven't met my wife" or "You haven't met my husband" or "You haven't met my kids" or "You haven't met my cousin," "You haven't met my boss," or whatever that might look like. I say, "Absolutely. You're right. I haven't met him, but do you know who I *have* met? I've met myself."

I've looked in the mirror. I know what I've thought. I know what I've let rest in my heart. I know what I've wanted. I know the things that have come out of my mouth. I know the things I've done with my hands, the people I've hurt, the people I've sinned against, the ways I have challenged God. I know who I am. I know myself the best, so I can say humbly and honestly, "I'm the worst." I can say I'm the worst because I know all of my stuff. I don't know *your* stuff, but *you* know your stuff.

As I look in the mirror for *my* life, would you look in the mirror for *your* life? If you look honestly and add up all of the things you have done against God and against other people, how could you look at the person next to you or the person you sit by at work and say, "Well, I know

my stuff, but that person has to be better"? You don't have all of the facts. You have all of the facts with *you*, and I can say confidently that I am the worst and that I was far, far away from the Lord.

"Before Christ I was far from God, but now in Christ I am near to God." Verse 13 (I love this promise): **"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near..."** Isn't that what we want? Isn't that what we desire, to be known and to be close with someone? We can have that perfectly with God because of Jesus. Jesus promised it. We sang a song earlier this morning:

All the hurting and afraid
All the weary and ashamed
Call upon the highest name
Call on Jesus.

I was like, "Yes! Thank you, Lord." I'm so thankful that our team writes songs like that and that we can sing songs like that, because it comes straight out of Scripture. Jesus says that. He invites us. Matthew 11:28 says, **"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."**

Jesus is saying, "Just come to me. Come to me." He invites us to come to him. We can have that closeness with God, that intimacy with God that every single person is looking for. We can have that because God has forgiven us through Christ. This is a really familiar verse: 1 John 1:9. You guys are going to know it as soon as I start saying it. **"If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

We love that verse. We talk about the faithfulness of God and the forgiveness he gives us, but did you notice that it says if we confess our sins God is faithful and just? Faithful *and* just. How is that? How is he just in forgiving our sins? He is just in forgiving our sins because he has punished our sins. It's just that he punished his Son Jesus on the cross. How does he cleanse us from all unrighteousness? He cleanses us from all unrighteousness with the blood of his Son on your behalf, for what *you* did, for what *I* did.

Paul says in Ephesians 1:7, **"In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of [God's] grace..."** That is the gospel right there. That's the good news: that we have forgiveness through Jesus, that God sent his only Son to be hurt, to die for our sin so we could be new, so we could be forgiven. He covers our sin with the blood of Jesus so we can be close to him.

"Before Christ I was far from God, but now in Christ I am near to God." Do you need to remember that truth today? This truth matters because God calls you to be different. God calls you to change. Part of that change is the things you used to love you now hate. God wants you to hate your sin. Some of you are sitting right here, and instead of hating it you're holding onto it.

You're sitting here with that habit, that anger, that bitterness, that conflict, and you're holding to it so tightly and looking at it so closely you don't see the damage it's creating between your relationship with God. You're just getting farther and farther away from him, and you don't notice the destruction and all of the damage that's being caused to the people who are around you and who love you.

God is saying, "Look. I've brought you close to me. I've done it all. I've paid it all for you so you and I can be together and so we can be close," and when we hold onto our sin we just say, "I don't care. Thank you. I appreciate that, but I think I have something better here. In fact, I'm just going to go *this* way. In fact, as fast as I can and as far as I can I'm going to run from you because I want *this*."

God hates your sin. He punished his Son for your sin and for my sin. Why are you holding onto that sin? Remember how awful your sin is and the cost, that that sin affected Jesus so much, the price he had to pay for that. Hate your sin the way God hates your sin. Repent from that sin and move forward. Move near to God again. "Before Christ I was far from God, but now in Christ I am near to God." That happens through forgiveness.

3. "*Before Christ I was hopeless.*" This is kind of like the culmination of everything. Because I am far from God with who I am, my identity, and because of all the stuff I do, that adds up to I have zero hope. Before Jesus you'd put your hope in anything and everything, and it never seemed to work. Verse 12 says, "**...having no hope and without God in the world.**" Doesn't that kind of sound like the world today?

Watch a commercial sometime. Just trying desperately to find hope, inclusion, acceptance, community, friendship, purpose, and they're offering all of that at a price. "Buy this car, and you'll finally be a part of the 'in' crowd. Try this pill, and you'll finally start feeling happy again. Start following this person on Instagram, and you will find value and motivation and purpose. Start this business. Open this website. Start a blog," whatever that might be, "and then you will finally have all of the things you have hoped for in this life."

That's what the world says. What did you search for before you had Christ? What did you try to place your hope in? What did you try to fill your life with? Now *with* Christ, praise God, you know that other stuff never fit, it never worked, it doesn't fulfill you. Medication won't satisfy. Money won't satisfy. Finding out your ancestry or your DNA history doesn't give you meaning. It doesn't define who you are anymore. You are defined by your relationship with Christ.

You are either in relationship with Christ or not in relationship with Christ. Everything else is a detail. Where we place our hope is with *him*. I get it. People around the world are desperately grabbing for anything. "I'll try *this*. Okay, that didn't work. Okay, I'll try *that*. Okay, I'll try this new thing. I'll try it again. I'll try it again." There's just nothing. It's like a firework blast on the Fourth of July. For a moment it's amazing and so cool, and then it's just gone. That's life without Jesus.

"Before Christ I was hopeless, but now in Christ I'm filled with real hope." Amazing change. You are filled with it. It's overflowing, never-stopping hope. It's real. It's complete. It's rock hard. It's secure. It's something you can build on. If you have been put into the family of God and if now you are near to God, you have hope that lasts forever, and you can build on that hope because it's found in the faithfulness of God.

It's found in his faithfulness and his character and the work of Jesus Christ. We know that because we know God was faithful to us yesterday. Yes, yesterday in our past... He has sustained us all the way up to this point, but even the last 24 hours God was faithful to you. I don't know what situation you've faced in the last 24 hours. I know I've faced a few, and God was faithful.

God is being faithful to you currently, right now, in this moment today. He is with you. He is present with you, and he is holding you fast. He promises that he gives you new mercies every day and he gives you enough for whatever you're facing right now. He says he will sustain you and build you up into the image of Christ.

God promises not only faithfulness in the past and right now but tomorrow. When you wake up in the morning tomorrow God will be faithful to you, as faithful as he has been today and as faithful as he has been yesterday. He *will* be faithful, and he will continue to be faithful the day after that and the day after that and the day after that, all the way into eternity.

He has promised and said, "Because of the faith you have in Jesus, I have secured you until the end." As Christians, we have hope for eternity. We are going to see God in heaven face-to-face, and we are going to worship him, and he is going to love us, and it's going to be amazing. We have hope in that. We worship with that, because we know God is faithful. He keeps his word. I am filled with real hope in Christ. Again, all of this is in Christ.

Without Christ you're lost, you're far away, you have no solutions, but with Christ you're found, you're brought near, you have overwhelming eternal hope. If you get this, what a life you can live. You can live a life of thankfulness and worship. Church all of a sudden becomes something you're looking forward to, and you can't get here soon enough. You're like, "Service at 8:00 a.m.? Let's start it at 7:30. I'm ready to go." (You guys are all the 11:00. We have an 8:00 service. I'm just going to let you know that.)

You will *want* to be here, and you will greet people, and you will rejoice in the Lord, and whether you know the songs or not you will sing as loudly as you can because you know, "You know what? That *was* me, but now in Christ *this* is who I am, and that *is* God. He *is* perfect, he *is* awesome, he *is* almighty, and I can praise him with all the confidence in the world because I know of what he has done for me in Christ."

Your prayer life can be amazing. I don't care what thing you're facing right now. You can get on your knees before the Lord and you can have hope in the midst of that situation. In the midst of that health crisis, in the midst of that relationship struggle, in the midst of you wanting to change from your sin, you have hope.

You can pray like that and just say, "God, I don't know what's going on right now, but I know I can trust you. God, I'm leaning everything I have on you for your faithfulness and your character, because you have always been the same and you promise you're going to be faithful to me." I hope you guys can have that kind of hope welling up inside you all the time. And you *can*, because God has given it to you with your story.

He has given you everything. He has given you his Word. He has given you salvation. He has given you your testimony so you can remember it on your worst of days, on your best of days, and say, "Man, that's awesome. It's amazing that God saved me." So remember it. You have a story. You were lost, but by God's grace he saved you, and now you have a story to share.

In baptism I tell every person that one of the hopes we have for them is that their baptism would be a great testimony for the people they love who don't know Jesus yet...to your coworker, to your friend, or to your parent who doesn't know the Lord yet, to your kid who doesn't know the Lord yet, that they would hear your testimony and say, "Wow! Jesus really is everything to this person. They really have found everything in him. I wonder if *I* could find everything in him."

We actually have a few people who are getting baptized later this month. They know *their* story. As you're thinking about *your* story, I want you to hear them tell theirs.

[Video]

Male: Before Christ I was scared.

Male: Before Christ I was looking for anything to save me.

Male: Before Christ I was spiritually dead.

Male: Before Christ I was selfish and self-centered.

Female: After finding Christ I am spiritually at peace.

Female: With Christ I feel like I have somebody walking with me all the way, and he's accepting me for who I am.

Male: Now with Christ I have my Savior.

Male: Now with Christ I'm alive and purposefully alive.

Male: Now with Christ I am in a whole other family, and I feel like I care about a lot of other people.

Male: After accepting Jesus in my life, all the emptiness has turned into joy and happiness.

Male: After Christ I feel confident, and I have a peace and a joy about my life.

[End of video]

What's *your* story? You've gotten to hear these other people who are going to get baptized on November 25. I'm super excited to get to do that with them. They have shared *their* story. What's yours? The reason I ask you to remember your story is because people need to hear your story. We currently have a thing going on within our Life Groups where this fall we have asked people to pray individually for two people in their lives who they know, who they interact with regularly, who don't know Jesus.

Right now we actually have a banner in the Life Group area in our main lobby with all of these stickers of different first names we have of people we're praying for. Right now there are over 1,500 names. We're praying that these people would find hope in Jesus. Those are 1,500 souls who are represented in those stickers and with those names. Many of you are in a Life Group, and you are currently praying for people to come to faith in Christ.

Hear me when I say this: you need to tell your story to the two people you put on that board. God has put them in your life on purpose by his wisdom, by his will, so you could share hope with them. So please remember your story, because your friends need to hear your story so they can hear about Jesus. I would ask you guys to commit to know your story. It's very simple. "Before Christ I was *this*. Now with Christ I am *this*."

That is simple enough to where you could explain it to your kid, to your spouse, to your friend on the way home today. "Before Christ I was *this*, but now with Christ I am *this*." I would hope and pray that you would say it with enough joy and thankfulness and conviction to when you share that with someone they would want to say, "Tell me more. I want to hear more about this."

I also fully realize that though many people in here are Christians there are some people who don't have a personal relationship with Jesus. You're sitting here, and you have known *about* Jesus, you know people who love him intimately, but you don't have a personal relationship with him. You're sitting here right now, and your story doesn't have a "but now."

So the things we have talked about matter to you. You currently are an outcast, you currently are far from God, and you currently are hopeless. That's a scary place to be, but now, because of Christ, you can have hope. You can be part of the family of God. You can have a relationship with Jesus as your Lord and Savior. I pray that you would do that today.

We are not guaranteed anything other than today, and God is faithful to offer you salvation today. You can be part of the family. You can be near to God. You can have eternal hope in him

today. We're going to have some people who will be up here to pray with you, and they would love to talk with you about that.

If you admit and you just know that in your life "I am a sinner. I *do* need Jesus. I believe in him. I believe in his life and his death and resurrection" or "I want to know more because I need him to be the Lord of my life," we would be honored and privileged to do that with you today. In fact, let's just go into a time of prayer together.

God, we come before you very thankful because we just remember who you are and who you've been, who you promised to be. God, I know that before I had faith in you I was far gone. God, you know every bit of it, yet you love me and you saved me. I'm so thankful for that. I just pray for my friends here who don't know you yet, God, that today would be the day where they enter into a relationship with you.

God, I pray that you'd save them from their sins. Lord, they have a past, and that past might be embarrassing, that past might be really tough, but, God, I know you can redeem it because you've redeemed me. God, I pray for the people who are here who think they're good enough on their own and that they don't need you.

I pray that you'd break them of their pride and show them how bad they really are and that from that bad news you would give them the good news of your Son. God, help me to remember my story so I can love and care for other people who are around me. I love you so much, Lord. We ask these things in your name, amen.