And before we pray, some of you walked in this morning, and you can look back to a time in your life when you used to believe the best about what God believed about you. And time and experience and pain and maybe rejection, maybe failure has conditioned you to think less of that, to not put your faith out there, to not take the risk of believing that God really loves you and wants to heal you, bless you, take care of you, watch over you. There's something about our faith sometimes that we just play it safe and hold back and try not to make him mad. I want us as we start today to pray for a totally different mind set, just a shift in our thinking to how God really thinks and feels about his people.

So let's pray. Father thank you that healing is in your hands, that you desire to give that to every single one of us in this room. Doesn't matter our background, doesn't matter how much money we have or what we've accomplished in life, you just love your children. God help us to believe that, to rest in that, to stand strong and confident believing in the very best about what you believe about us as your creatures. You sent your son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Let us look at that cross and know you love us and that our healing is in that cross. We cling to it today, in Jesus' name, amen. You can be seated.

Well good morning Grace Hills! So I've got some exciting news to announce: We're moving. We're actually moving, and it's going to happen this time. We even printed it, it's public, it's out there. March 3rd, it's gonna happen. We're moving over, we're gonna open on that Sunday, and we're gonna make it, amen. We're gonna pray for that and work toward that. Now the funny thing about that is we don't yet have a certificate of occupancy, but I'm sure that'll work out. The chairs we're gonna sit in don't ship until February 25th, but I'm sure that's gonna work out. It's all gonna work out because we printed this. So we're gonna get there, we're gonna have a great time together. And I wanna ask you first of all, take some of these and give them away, and just share them with friends, neighbors, coworkers, whoever. Don't share them with people that are already plugged in somewhere, but if someone doesn't have a church family, say "I'd love for you to be part of mine, so come with me on this Sunday and enjoy this time with us."

And then I also wanted to just direct your attention to these. I know these are here every Sunday and we mention them a lot. These are our communication cards. But I wanna ask you to do something special with them today. We've done this just once or twice before in our history, and it's helped us grow leaps and bounds in terms of what we're able to do. But I want you to do something special with these today. We have as we move over, we've done a whole lot of calculating about which kids are gonna be in which rooms and all of that stuff, and we've kinda got this number in our head that we've got 32 volunteer spots to fill in kids ministry. Now that doesn't mean we need 32 people necessarily. It'd be great if we had like 60 or 80. But it means we've got 32 hours basically during a month that we need to fill.

So if you're not involved in kids, let me just say this. If you don't like kids, that's great you volunteer somewhere else. But even if you think, "Well kids aren't really my thing, that's not really my strong place," that's okay. There are lots of different things we do in kids areas. Sometimes we need greeters and security and people working with technology or music or different things. And so if you are not currently plugged into kids ministry, and you could help us as we move over, you could be one of those 32. Just write kids on their really big, just write kids. There's nothing to check, just write the word kids and put your name on it, drop it in the box, we'll follow up. So I think by the end of the day, we should have exactly 32 of those in the plates and in the boxes, and so I hope you'll consider doing that.
We’ve been in this series called Faith Forward, and it’s one of these series that flows out of what I think God’s been doing in my life lately in my life in the last year or two. What I’ve been studying, what I’ve been focused on, what I’ve been asking God to do in me. We are when we move over, starting in March on that first Sunday March 3rd, we’ll start a series called Healing, and it’ll be eight weeks, and it’s sort of foundational for us. It’s a series we did five years ago. We’re kind of repeating it and refreshing it, because it’s really core to who we are as a church. And it is about the fact that all of us are broken in one way or another, but that for all of us, there’s healing in Christ. We get to be born again, we get to start over, we get to build a new life, and we become a new creature.

Some of us come with terrible pain and experiences that are hard, things that are holding us back and weaknesses in our faith and our relationships and how do we find healing and Christ through all of that? So that’s what we’ll do then. But I want right now as we get prepared and ready to sort of move into a new season as Grace Hills and we change locations again, I want us to go with a big bold faith. And our model throughout this series is Joshua from the old testament, and we’re kind of building things around his life. We’re not necessarily looking at his life just from the book of Joshua. We’re starting way back in Numbers, but I want us to learn some big lessons about faith.

Because what I’ve felt a desire for lately and given a lot of attention to lately in my life is God, how can I believe bigger in what you want to do on this planet? How can I trust and believe more and increase my faith that God really is who he claims to be in scripture? That he really will do what he promises to do. That God is faithful, that God is good, that God is on the move, that God is reaching people and saving people. And whatever happens in the news and the culture and between nations, that behind all of that, God is always working in people’s lives. And I want to have the faith to see it and to believe great things about what God is up to. So it’s way more than just wishful positive thinking. This is a series about believing the truth about God.

So last week we started off with a message about God's blessing. And I'm gonna come back to that in a second. But today I wanna talk to you about a message with this title. "Burn the ships! There's no turning back!" "Burn the ships! There's no turning back!" That may not make a lot of sense to you yet. I hope it will in a moment. But I need to go back and review something I said at the beginning of last week that I felt was not a new truth by any means, but for some of us, something that we have not focused on or concentrated on in our Christian life. What we've may be given attention to other things, but we have been reserved about saying this because we've got all kinds of reasons for being reserved about it.

But the truth that I shared with you last week was God wants to bless you. Remember we said that God wants to bless you, and that it's hard for us to say that because for some of us we're thinking of people that say it, not necessarily with a biblical context, and they go on TV and they say things, and they make lots of promises that aren't necessarily rooted in truth, and we go, "I don't want to be like that. And so I don't want to use that kind of language." We might hold back from saying this because I don't want to put myself out there. It feels risky to say God wants to bless me, and then what if he doesn't? What if I don't experience that? What will that do to my faith? What will it do to the people watching?

And so for reasons rooted in fear or reactions to bad theology, we avoid saying things like this, but I took it a step further and just said, hey without apology, not only will I say that God wants to bless you, but we also said God wants to bless you massively. God wants to bless you massively. In other words, the scriptures say that your mind, your imagination does not have the capacity to measure the kind of blessing that a good and powerful and holy God wants to give to you, wants to bring about in your life.

Burn the Ships! There's No Going Back! (Completed 02/12/19)  
Transcript by Rev.com
We also said a lot of us miss it because we assume blessing are only happy positive things and that that isn't true. That sometimes blessing comes in the form of pain, loss, grief. Sometimes it's a pruning. Sometimes it's waiting. Sometimes it's growing in a difficult season.

So when we talk about God's blessing, I want to be super clear. I'm not saying God wants you to be happy and fulfilled and in good circumstances all the time. No, the new testament is really clear that sometimes when you follow Christ, you invite persecution. You will walk through suffering that you would not have otherwise gone through in your life for following him. You'll take up a cross. And so when I talk about God's blessing, I'm not talking about just happy feelings or happy situations and that you'll never face any challenges. No God's blessing is a whole lot bigger and deeper than that. It's a whole lot bigger and deeper than that. The truth I want to get across to you today is a little bit different. I want to talk about obedience. I want to talk about action, about believing and deciding to do whatever God calls us to do.

And the reason why I want to go there is because of what Jesus said in Luke 11:28 Jesus said this: "Even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice." Now that's not the verse that we're going to expound on, that comes in a minute. But I want you to understand that people were coming to Jesus and they wish they could be closer to him, and so they say things to him like, "Oh blessed is your mom. She gets to be close to you. Blessed are your siblings because they get to hang around you a lot. Blessed are those people that we can see from the outside. Their lives look blessed, so blessed are they." And Jesus is correcting them and saying, "No, no, no, no. Let me tell you who's really blessed: Those who hear the word of God and put it into practice. Those who take action to obey what I've revealed about my will. Those who align themselves are those who inherit blessing." If you want God's massive blessing for your life, you're going to have to take massive action to obey all of God's will. In other words, it takes this step. I can't just stay where I am spiritually today and remain very comfortable and not stretched my faith and not try to grow, just do my thing stay in the routine, don't upset God too much and just make it to death, and you'll be okay. That's where a lot of us are living life. We accept medium speed, a mediocre quality. We just live at this place of just survive and try not to mess it up. And some of us struggle even with that. But the reality is that if God wants to bless you and he wants to bless you massively, Jesus made it clear that the pathway to that is radical obedience. It's obeying what God says about your life. It's obeying his will. It's aligning with his purposes, with his will. It's saying, "Here I am God. I want to be obedient."

Now let me make a theological statement that's really important. Your obedience does not earn the blessing of God. Doing things does not earn the favor of God on your life. The scriptures make it very clear that his salvation, his blessing, his protection, all of that is a gift given to us purely by grace. My life will never merit the goodness that God shows to me. I will never earn the favor that God wants to show to me. So what I mean when I say obedience as the pathway to God's blessing, here's what I mean. If you want to be correctly positioned for God to do great things in your life, he gives you the pattern and the framework to follow. He gives us the guard rails. He gives us his standards, his expectations, his desires.

He reveals it in his word, and he says, "Listen, the pathway to the maturity, and the growth, and the kind of faith that you desired, the pathway to all the things that you really want and desire to experience from God, that comes as you step by step, line up with God's purposes for your life as you obey his instructions. It's kind of like if I take my kids to a park somewhere and there's a pond nearby, and I say,
"You guys will have a lot of fun. You're going to enjoy this place unless you step into that 30 degree water." And in fact, this just suddenly reminds me of a totally unplanned story, which doesn't always go well, but here it is.

We were at the mall one day, the Promenade where we used to meet by the movie theater. And I've got my kids, and we're out there at the fountain, and it's about 35-40 degrees. We had friends in town and this was when Sam was really little. And so I'm talking to my friend and they're in the play area. There's a fence all the way around the play area. So you're good. All you gotta do as a dad is just stand in the opening and they'll be fine, right? And then I hear over my shoulder, this mom say, "Whose child is this?" And for a split second, "Well that's surely not mine. I mean I've been keeping good watch." But I look around and there is my drenched soaking child who got in the water fountain. Now funny thing is I managed to grab him, throw him in the car, drive home, change him and get back before Angie was done shopping.

So now the thing is you can say, "I want God's blessing on my life." Well that means staying in the area, staying within the pattern, within the revealed will of God that we find in the word of God. And so it is not that my obedience impresses God or earns anything from God. It is not that at all. It's that my obedience creates the position, the life, the capacity. It puts my life in shape for God to continue to work and to bless, and for me to enjoy all that God wants to have. And so people might come and they say, "Listen, I'm in a relationship, I'm living with somebody I'm not married to, we're doing things outside of marriage, but God's not blessing me." And I'm going, "Well it's because you're outside the pattern." Or someone might say, "I'm sort of live in life pretty recklessly, I'm making decisions that are unhealthy, and they're destructive to me and to people around me. And why won't God fix it?"

Well, sometimes you're going to have to make some decisions that align your life with God's will where he says, "I want to bless you here. I want to bless you in alignment with my purposes for you." So if you want God's massive blessing on your life, you got to take massive action in your life, big decisions, big bold steps of faith to align with God's will. And I want us to read the story of Joshua at a moment in his life when he did this. We're going to read out of Numbers chapters 13 and 14, and we're going to read quite a few verses. And we're not going to read all of both chapters. So we're going to skip through a little bit. There'll be on the screen, You can open your bibles. But I want us to read this story, and I want us to understand just how radical the decision is that Joshua has to make in this particular scenario.

The Bible says: The Lord said to Moses, "Send out men to explore the land of Canaan. The land I'm giving the Israelites. Send one leader from each of the 12 ancestral tribes." Moses gave the men these instructions as he sent them out to explore the land. Here's the instructions, and you got to pay attention. Here is what God said to do. This is very important. We're saying today that if you want God's blessing, you got to do what God says to do, and don't do what he didn't say to do. Makes Sense? So here's the instructions. Go North through the Negev into the hill country. See what the land is like. Find out whether the people living there are strong or weak. Few or many. See what kind of land they live in. Is it good or poor? Are there many trees? Do your best to bring samples of the crops you see. It just happened to be the the season for harvesting the first ripe grapes and let's stop for a second.

The instruction from God is go and sneak across the border, across the Jordan. Look at the land, spy out the land, and come back and here is what your assignment is: See what the land is like. Is it good or bad? Now do you think God didn't know what the land was like? No. God obviously knows what the land is
like. He made the land, he makes the land what it is, and so God knows. He wants them to see the land. He wants them to go across the Jordan and see the potential of this place. He wants them to go and come back with mouths watering for the blessing and the goodness of the land that is to come.

You're going to see a flowing with milk and honey. They bring back some grapes that are on Poles between their shoulders, these enormous clusters of grapes. They see the fertility of the land. They see how great it's going to be to farm the land. He never instructs them to make a decision about whether they are going or not. That was not in the instructions. The instructions say, look at the land, measure it, catch a vision for it. Think about how great it's going to be to experience it and come back and tell everybody else how great the land is. So that's what happens so far. Let's keep reading. After exploring the land 40 days, lots of things in the Bible happened over 40 days, you notice that? So explored for 40 days. The men returned to Moses and Aaron and the whole community of Israel Kadesh and the wilderness of Paran. They reported the whole community, what they'd seen and showed them the fruit they had taken from the land, and this was their report.

So they were told to go look at the land, size it up, let their mouths water over it. But here's what they say. "We entered the land you send us to explore. It is indeed a bountiful country, a land flowing with milk and with honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces, and I was like, "Wow, there's oohs and Aahs from the audience, right? But the people living there are powerful and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak, the Amalekites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the termites live in the hill country. The Canaanites live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea along the Jordan Valley. So they're reporting how good the land is, but they're starting to sneak in this seed of doubt.

But the enemies, man you should see the towns we're going to have to go up against. You should see how threatening this place looks. Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once and take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it." So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites. This is what they go on to say. The land we traveled to, an explorer will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. We even saw the giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them, we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought too. I love that. He throws that in there. They thought we looked weak guys. That's what they thought too.

Then the whole community began weeping aloud and they cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. And then they say this. "If only we had died in Egypt or even here in the wilderness," they complained. So they're worried now that they might die when they get there. So they start wishing that they were dead long ago. That doesn't make a bit of sense at all. But the seeds of doubt and fear, and the intimidation of the process of claiming and moving into God's blessing is scary. And it's, "God I'm backing down," and they're afraid and they're worried. They've forgotten that God just said, "Look at the land I am about to give you." And they start doubting that, they start doubting in the darkness what God showed him in the light, right?

So then why has the Lord taken us in this country only for us to die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt? In other words, we're better as slaves. Now, this may sound crazy. We look at this when we go, "Who would think that way?" But we do this all the time. We do this in our Christian life all the time. God wants goodness for you, he wants you to come out of your shell and really believe in him and trusted him and take new ground, and do some things in your life that changed the game and the culture around you. Share your faith, live it
out. Take big, bold steps to to serve him and to do great things for him. And we go, "But life is intimidating and people won't like me and there's all kinds of threats and it's going to get uncomfortable and I just want to return to the way things used to be when I lived in slavery, when I didn't know Jesus, where things were easier because life was predictable and safe?"

And so we want to stay behind that line of predictable and safe. And then he says they plotted among themselves: "Let's choose a new leader and go back to Egypt." Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel. Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua, son of Nun, and Caleb, son of Jephunneh, toward their clothing. They said to all the people of Israel, so here comes the minority report. 2 out of the 12 say this: "The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land." And so far they agree. "And if the Lord is pleased with us," notice that if God is pleased with us, if we obey him, if we stay lined up with his will, if we do what God wants us to do, he will bring us safely into the land and give it to us.

It's a rich land flowing with milk and honey. Do not rebel against the Lord. Don't be afraid of the people of the land. They're only helpless prey to us. They have no protection, but the Lord is with us. Don't be afraid of them. And then look what happens. But the whole community began to talk about stoning Joshua and Caleb. Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to all the Israelites at the Tabernacle. This is the moment where we as believers, looking back on the story and understanding it go, "Oh it's on now." God just showed up to take care of the situation. And what I want you to notice, what I want you to see is that in their minority report, they're trying to get the people to obey God. But what's caught my attention about this story lately that I hadn't really thought about before is what leads up to this moment.

In other words, it's one thing for them to say, "Well God gave us the land and he wants us to go take it. So let's move in and let's move forward." I can understand that, like that part of it I get. But when I put myself in their shoes and I start thinking about the buildup to this moment, it gets fairly intimidating. 'Cause Joshua and Caleb are a part of a band of 12 spies who've been traveling. And so on the journey, they're probably talking and making observations. they're on their way back. There may be having that sort of pregame meeting. What are we going to say? What do we come out and say? And 10 out of the 12, so a majority of the group says, "Listen, here's what we're going to tell him. We're gonna tell them how good the land is. Yes, it's a great place, but it's not worth it. It's not worth the effort. It's scary. That's what we're going to report."

And you got Joshua and Caleb over there going, "We're going to differ with you here. We're going to go a different direction." And then when the majority begins to make their report, they do it in front of all the people. And they say to all the people, and remember there's anywhere from 600000 to 2 million people traveling through the wilderness, depending on which historical searches you really look at. And so up to a couple million people here and they're standing up there, and they're telling everybody, "This place is a threat. You're going to die if you go, it's going to be miserable. I know what God said that he would bless you. They give you the land, but trust us, it is way too scary."

And then Joshua and Caleb decide to disagree with the 10. They decide to disagree with the 2 million. They decide to disagree with the spirit that has swept over this crowd. They decide to go a different way, and two guys decide to stand alone and try to march forward. That's the kind of faith I believe that we need in our lives. It's the kind of faith that a lot of us, if we're really honest, started out with a long time ago. When we first follow Jesus, and I knew that I was a sinner and I was condemned and I didn't.
deserve to know him or to go to heaven. But by His grace he allowed his son Jesus to die on the cross to pay for my sins. And so I trusted Jesus and I was saved and I was made brand new, and I've got this new life and all this hope.

And I'm looking around and going, "Life is different now. Everything seems different because the Holy Spirit, the power, the presence of God has moved into me. He's taken up permanent residence inside me. I've got God's word, I've got God's people, I've got God's spirit. I have the confidence of my faith in him." Everything looks bright in that moment. And then time starts to take its toll and the economy changes and life moves around and people hurt us and give up on us. And the people that we thought would always be there for us, they walk away. And people question what we're all about, and people don't like our decisions when we're trying to obey God. And people don't like the stands that were taken and they don't like the steps that were taken. And it all gets so discouraging. And for so many of us, the tendency is just to blend in with the crowd.

Everybody seems to think that this is really hard. And so our faith begins to diminish. Our faith diminishes in the middle of that. But God wants our faith to grow. So the day I got saved, it was not the day that's supposed to be the most faith I ever have. That's for all intents and purposes. That's supposed to be the beginning, the infancy of my faith, God's plan, God's desires, that my faith actually grows over time, that my trust in him actually expands, that I get stronger in my faith. But for a lot of us, man we look back and we go, "Remember the good old days when I first met Jesus and I really had a lot of faith in, man I wish things were like that again."

We'll make it like that. Here's the message out of all this that I want us to have is that what we learned from Joshua here, what we learned from a whole lot of characters in scripture, what we learned from the disciples and from Jesus is that there are moments in my life where in order to have God's very best blessing, I need to take a stand, take a step, make a decision in which I cross a line, and there's no going back. And I say, "I'm obey and God, no matter what, I'm obeying God no matter what, I'm going to do it because I believe God will bless." He will bless.

Now let me make a few observations about what happens when you make that kind of decision. First of all, I just need to observe, very few people do that. Very few people do that. It's become a point of discouragement in me and even sort of a self check as I look around at the mass of humanity and then maybe even zero in on the people of faith that called themselves Christians. And I go out of all of those millions of people who claim to be followers of Christ, who claim his name and wear the label proudly Christian. Out of all those people, how many people really go for it? God has this great blessing in mind and I'm going to walk by faith. I'm going to do this. I'm going to stand boldly for love and truth and grace. I'm going to be about the life of Jesus. I'm going to live like him even when it's hard, when the criticism comes, when all those things I'm going to do that.

And so this just observation is that very few people get to experience the fullness of the massive blessings of God because we are addicted to comfort and convenience and making sure that things feel safe and not too risky and not too uncomfortable. Here's another observation. When you make this kind of decision. Some people won't like it. It's guaranteed. When you decide that you're going to do what honors God, there will be moments in your life where that costs you. It costs you the allegiance of some friends. It costs you a relationship with someone that doesn't understand why you're doing what you're doing. When you take a big bold step of faith and you take this kind of massive action of obedience to God's will, there will be people who don't understand it.
Now, let me issue a word of caution. Sometimes God sends wise advisors into our lives to give us caution about things. I am not telling you to ignore everyone who ever questions you. I think that's dangerous. There are times you especially need to listen to people who are your elders in the faith who have proven in their lives that you can do this, that you can take these big steps. When they come along and say, "What's you're about to do is maybe a little crazy and weird and not necessarily God's will. I think you got to weigh that, you got to listen to the wisdom of counsel from elders in the faith, absolutely. And by elders, I don't mean people older than you. Sometimes it's somebody that's just walked with Jesus longer than you and they've understood this by experience. You got to listen to that.

But when people whose lives evidence, that they have settled for mediocrity because they don't pursue God with an all out white hot passion, and they come along and say, "That's a nice dream, but good luck with that. You may as well just give up now." Reject those voices, reject those. They are not from God. When someone tries to urge you to not obey God's will and plan for your life, especially when you know it's clearly revealed in his word. When people try to get you and provoke you to do something that is in disobedience to what God has said, what he's revealed in his word, you can reject that advice immediately and go, "I know I got to walk forward here. I got to take this big, bold step, this action in my life."

Here's another observation I think. When you take these kinds of actions, there's no turning back. So the title of the message was, "Burn the ships! There's no turning back!" What does burn the ships mean? Well, way back into your 1519, the explorer Cortez left the island of Cuba, and he headed for Mexico. And he got to Vera Cruz, and he's a conqueror by nature. Now when he got to Vera Cruz, it was inhabited by the Aztecs, and the Aztecs had a reputation. They loved visitors. They warmly welcomed them because they could use them as human sacrifices. So Cortez and his men, they land on the beach there in Vera Cruz and the Aztecs are there, and he gets off the ships, and the men are quivering with fear. "Cuba's nice, great cigars. Can we just go back?" I'm not recommending cigars. "Can we just go back to Cuba where it's comfortable?" And Cortez says "No, we got to go forward."

And they're looking at those mountains where a lot of us drink coffee from and that kind of thing. They're looking at the formidable obstacles ahead of them. And Cortez says,"We got to go. So burn the ships." What did he just say? Burn them, sink them. Now historians debate, did they burn them or do they just sink them? Doesn't matter. Cortez ordered, "Burn the ships, sink the ships. There is no going back. We're removing the safety net. We're either going to go forward and conquer or we're going to die." I think that when I look at Joshua and Caleb here, I think they just burn the ships. 2 million people don’t want to go anymore. 10 of the leaders don't want to go anymore. Moses and Aaron, they’re on their faces, which is probably the best spot for them. They're praying, right? "Oh God, we're desperate right now." But I think Joshua and Caleb were looking over and going, "Okay, we can't rely on them in this moment. There are a little broken. So what are we going to do? Me and you buddy. Well how are we going to handle this situation?"

And they stare those 10 spies in the face and those 2 million people and they said, "We are going to go because God said go. We got to obey." And what happens next? Those 2 million people decide to stone them to death, and then God shows up. There's the cloud and there's the fearsome awesome presence of a God who is very upset with the direction of this nation. And this is a tragic moment because as we mentioned last week, because of this evidence that they need to be taught some things, they will now spend 38 more years in the wilderness. It will be 40 years between Egypt and Jordan when they finally inherit. And that 40 years was the result of we'd rather settle. We'd rather be comfortable. We don't
want to face the challenges, we don't want to give up anything. We don't want to pay the cost, but I want to take action. Let's just keep wandering around. We're surviving. We just want to survive. And God's disappointment with that nation culminated in an entire generation of people dying off.

But I want us to look at Joshua and go, "I want to be like him. I want to take action in my life. I want to do this." This past week, every Wednesday our staff gets together. And so I was asking like, "Have you guys seen burn the ships, no turning back moments come up in your life?" And we were sharing about that. And it's really awesome to hear the stories of people who have obeyed God or done something crazy or thinking about our own lives, and steps we've taken that are scary. And so I listened, as among our staff. For some it was, it was financial, it was, "I'm biting off something big here. I think it's what I'm supposed to do and I think it'll pay off. But man, it's scary. It's going to take a risk." And for others it was more personal. It was, "I'm going to have to come out of my shell. I'm sorta introvert. I'm gonna have to break out of that. This is uncomfortable."

For some of them it was becoming part of Grace Hills. It's like this weird guy from a church that meets in a movie theater called and wants us to work here, and I don't know about that. But yes, at the end of the day we're going to do that. We're gonna take this risk. And so we look back on those moments of action. Here's the thing that I want to caution us about though. Don't just have stories from your distant past about what it used to be like to really follow God. Make a story today. I asked last week, when did you stop believing? I'm not talking about being a Christian. I understand that many people still believe Jesus is the one and only source of our salvation and our redemption. That's true. But when it comes to what God wants for our lives, we still hold back and we stay behind the fence where mediocrity is and where comfort is. And we kind of stay there, when in reality, God wants us to do something totally new. And it doesn't have to be something giant, like moving across the ocean to a place where you know no one. It might be that. It might be signing up for kids' ministry. It might be doing something that's small in your own eyes that you think, "What is this really going to do?" It doesn't matter. If it challenges your comfort zone, if it breaks you out of the box, then it's a massive radical action.

I've shared the story before about when I first started preaching, and I felt like God was calling me to preach, and that I knew on a certain day. And so I decided I got to tell somebody what God has called me to do. So seven months later I finally told someone. I had these sort of conversations with Angie along the way. But as far as like announcing it, like saying to someone that publicly, this is what God wants me to do because now there's accountability, now there's the expectation, now I got to do this. It's this scary moment. And then pastor Danny, who's the one I told. He went and told the church that I was supposed to preach. And then he said something like, "And he's going to preach next week," or something. I don't remember how many weeks it was, but I thought "Well you weren't supposed to make this so real."

And here I stand. My life isn't perfect. I've shared about brokenness that I've experienced the last decade or two of my life. All of us walk through brokenness, but I wouldn't trade this life for anything. I love being a pastor at Grace Hills church. I love where my family's at. I love my life. I'm thankful. I believe I'm enjoying this massive blessing from God. And I can look back over 21 years, and I can see lots of things I've done wrong. I'll share those with you in the healing series. But I can also see that this step of obedience led to this step of obedience, which led to this step of obedience. And life becomes a
pathway, a trajectory where you learn a pattern of obeying and obeying and obeying, and every time you act to obey, it leads you one step further into God's massive blessing for your life.

So here's the question. What is it you've been putting off, holding off, ignoring? What decision or commitment or action is it that you know you need to take to obey God, and you've been waiting and you've been holding back? And maybe it's the dream of something that you're starting. Maybe it's a decision in a relationship where you've got to recommit. Maybe it's having a hard conversation of forgiveness that someone you don't want to forgive. Maybe it's giving in some way to someone that needs help and you don't want to release the grip on what you've got. I don't know, it's going to be different all across. But what is it that you know, "I need to do this to obey God?"

Or if you can't come up with anything, that's okay. Look at your life and go, "Am I prone to action? And if not, maybe I can grow in that way so that when the time comes, I'm ready. That I just decided to have a posture of obedience before God. That I positioned myself and say, God I'm going to commit myself to be one who obeys you, so when the next moment comes, I'm ready. I'm leaning toward obeying you already because that's the direction I'll probably fall, is leaning into obey." What is it in your life that you need to do or get ready to do? Some of you, maybe it's trusting Jesus for the very first time. It's a hard decision. I don't want you to think it's easy. I mean the decision itself, on the surface, it's simple, but it's not easy. Does that make sense? It's not complicated. It's a matter of releasing your own grip on your life, turning from your sins, trusting in Jesus, receiving him as savior.

It's simple, but it's not easy. It's not easy in the sense that it has a cost associated with it, that everything's going to change. My whole identity is about to change. When I trust in Jesus, I'm giving up an old life. I'm an embracing a new life, and now I'm going to need to live like Jesus around me and take up my cross and follow him and all of that. And so it might be that that's the decision, and it's not complicated, but there's a lot of weight to it, and I understand that. For some of you, the weight maybe is less in the decision that you need to make. But you got to make the decision, you got to obey because obeying is the pathway to blessing. Very simple. You Walk out of here and somebody asks you on Tuesday, "What did you learn about in church today?" Very simple. Massive obedience is what leads to the enjoyment of massive blessing. Not that obedience earns it, but that obedience makes the pathway possible.

So what do you gotta do today to obey? Let's bow our heads. Some of you, maybe you're right here, right now. You know, "I need to trust in Jesus as my savior. I got to cross that line, I got to make that decision, I need to ask him to be my savior and the Lord of who I am, to give my life to him to turn from my sins." And if that's you, it's a declaration from your heart. It's a declaration from your heart. There's no magic formula. It's not magic words that we say. It is an expression of faith from you by which you say to God, "I believe in you. I believe in you. I believe that you are real, that you had a son named Jesus, that he died on a cross to pay the penalty of my sins, and I receive Jesus today. I believe he is alive. He rose from the dead. I will follow him and there is no turning back. I will trust him, and I won't look back. I receive you."

For some of you, your believers in here. And again, God may have prompted your heart about an act of forgiveness, an act of generosity, an act of kindness, an act of commitment, an act of starting something that doesn't exist yet in your life, and God's been dealing with you about it. You've been holding back because it's more comfortable to stay where you are, but he keeps nudging you forward. Would you just say, "God helped me to take this step. I want to go all in. I want to be committed. I want to live the
fullness of your purpose for my life so that I can enjoy the fullness of your blessing." God, we praise you, in Jesus' name, amen.