

Video

Building Slide (One Gospel Family slide maybe?)

Gratitude prayers

D46 Slide

Welcome to 4-6th graders! District 46 on Wednesday nights at 6.

Today and in all our sermons in the future- I'll give you some things to write down. to pay attention to. Shout "Hallelujah! when you hear Jesus"

No Slide

Im going to tell the the true stories of two different men. Both of them are named John.

The first John was born in 1725 in England.

His mother died two weeks before his 7th birthday.

When he was 11, he began his life as a sailor with his father.

When he was 18, he was forced into the British Navy.

He was caught trying to go abandon ship one day, so he was stripped to the waist, tied down in front of the crew, then beaten with 100 lashes.

Following the humiliating beating, he made a plan to kill the captain and take over the ship...but he was transferred to a different ship headed for Africa- a ship involved in slave trade.

Well, John didn't see eye to eye with the captain of that ship either. So that captain sold John into slavery in Africa.

In 1748, John was rescued by a search team that his father sent for him and returned to England.

But by that point, he had seen the financial profit of the slave industry...so John became a slave trader for the next 9 years of his life. Additionally, from some of the journals that he left, we know that he also treated women poorly and outwardly rejected any sort of moral authority in his life.

In short, John lived a hard life. A dark life...in a lot of ways... a wasted life.

[PAUSE] Now, I want to tell you about the other John.

He lived around the same time as the first John, also in England.

He married his childhood sweetheart, Mary.

Shortly after their marriage, John and Mary adopted his two orphaned nieces.

He eventually would go into the ministry, becoming an Anglican priest, where he was well known for his pastoral care and work among the poor.

Young people struggling with their faith sought his advice and would write him letters to which he would humbly respond...in fact, I have a collection of them on my shelf... his wisdom is incredible...his letters have ministered to thousands long after his death. Influential political figures would come to him with their moral dilemmas seeking his wisdom.

In 1788, he wrote a pamphlet that decried the evils of the slave trade and joined William Wilberforce in the movement to abolish slavery in England.

The law passed just before he died in 1807.

That's a beautiful story. It's a life-well lived. A man who did what was right and fought for what was good, right up until his death.

Two Johns. Two different people. One life wasted, one life well-lived.

But there's one more thing you need to know about these Johns.

He's the same person.

The John from the first story IS the John from the 2nd. Even though, in many respects, they are 2 completely different people.

But maybe that will help you have a deeper understanding for one of the most familiar songs in the world. A song the first John could never have written. But a song the second John could only write because he was the first John.

“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.”- John Newton

Let me ask you this— if you looked at John Newtown when he was 30 years old, making a fortune off human trafficking, using women as objects for his pleasure, denying he had any moral responsibility at all...could you have seen it? Could you believe it?

Would you really believe that he's the guy who would be faithful to his wife, adopt orphans, care for the poor, be a mouthpiece of the grace of God and fight to abolish slavery...all the way to his dying breath?

Title Slide

I gotta tell you...I don't know if I would have ever seen it coming. But that's what makes the grace of God so Amazing. That's WHY its so sweet...because it flows into such bitterness. When a wretch becomes a beauty...when a blind person sees...when forgiveness and redemption come to those who don't deserve it... well, that's when you really start to forget yourself and worship the God of Amazing Grace.

There was nothing about John Newton's early life that left him deserving of anything other than death. He was a despicable person.

But God had a better vision for John Newton than even John Newton could imagine for himself.

Here's the thing though, he didn't just wake up one morning and say "I think I'll be a better person."

In fact, his conversion was really a result of being plunged into darkness. It started when he was alone on a ship in a storm. When he prayed to God for mercy. When his life was finally out of his hands...when he lost control...is when he finally began to open his eyes to the grace of God.

Today, I want to show you what to look for in your own lives...and the lives of others when it comes to Amazing Grace. - 4 phases of the way God changes people from First Johns to Second Johns.

Its not exactly the same for everyone, but there are some versions of these 4 stages of God's grace in every life that Jesus changes.

My hope today is that you recognize these in yourself- as a testimony of what God has done and is doing in your life...or that you will see them happen very soon.

So now, lets look at the most dramatic life change in the Scripture. A change so dramatic- that the writers of Scripture didn't even let him keep the same name- as you see how confusing that can be.

Lets look at what happened when the Amazing Grace of Jesus changed Saul the murderer into the Paul the Apostle.

D46- Are my 4th-6th graders with me? pg #

Acts 9:1-19

Now Saul was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the high priest

2 and requested letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3 As he traveled and was nearing Damascus, a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. 4 Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? "

5 "Who are you, Lord? " Saul said.

"I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "But get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the sound but seeing no one. 8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing. So they took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. 9 He was unable to see for three days and did not eat or drink.

10 There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias."

"Here I am, Lord," he replied.

11 "Get up and go to the street called Straight," the Lord said to him, "to the house of Judas, and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, since he is praying there. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and placing his hands on him so that he may regain his sight."

13 “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard from many people about this man, how much harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. 14 And he has authority here from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for this man is my chosen instrument to take my name to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

17 Ananias went and entered the house. He placed his hands on him and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road you were traveling, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

18 At once something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. 19 And after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul was with the disciples in Damascus for some time.

Transition: Today marks a big change for our church. A new building. In many ways, a fresh start.

In honor of that, over the next 2 Sundays, I want to remind you of what we're about at City Church...what we *won't* lose in this fresh start, but what I am praying the Holy Spirit Renews in us and stokes the embers into a flame.

In 2016- we saw what God was doing in our church- and we committed ourselves to this mission statement:

City Church will Multiply Gospel Change. For Broken People. On Purpose.

Next week- We're going focus on "Multiply & On Purpose"

Today- through this text, we're going to focus on gospel change for broken people.

And tonight- at our celebration cookout, our baptism trough will be filled with water.- I'm praying that many of you will hear the call of God this morning, in this service. and at the end of this service you will start a new life with Jesus- and like Saul in this text- you will answer Jesus' call and be baptized tonight.

First- lets see the way Jesus changes you and see if you recognize God's Amazing Grace coming for you, the way it came for John Newton and for Saul. I'm giving you 4 of these. *District 46'ers- you can write down Crash, Darkness, Embrace, and Overflow. Those are 4 stages of how Jesus changes us. When I get to each of these points in the sermon- you can say "Amen!" or "I hear ya!" and then right that point down in your notes.*

Let's try it out.

1) When Jesus changes you- it starts with a Crash.

Later on in the book of Acts, Saul (who later becomes Paul) gives a first person testimony of his encounter with the Resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Listen to this

Acts 26:14

We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice speaking to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

A “goad” is a long stick that farmers would use to prod oxen when plowing a field. When the oxen would stop, or want to go in the wrong direction the goad would bother them and get them moving.

Pic

So here's what the Resurrected Jesus was saying to Saul when he met him on the road to Damascus.

Acts 26:14

He's saying- “Saul, all along- as you have been persecuting and murdering people who are following me- I have been bringing things into your life to have you reconsider your life...and reconsider me. Little things to slow you down...or stop you. I've been bothering you- to change your direction. To save your life. and you've been kicking me away, like all I am is a bother to you.”

Also, notice he calls him “Saul” twice. To say someone's name twice before you address them means it's a heartfelt address.

Jesus later would talk to one of his good friends who was missing the point of his presence- she thought Jesus wanted her to be busy serving him, but he wanted her to sit down and be with him. And he got her attention by saying “Martha, Martha”

When his heart was breaking for the people of Jerusalem, he called out “Jerusalem, Jerusalem”

And when he died on the cross, he cried out “My God, My God”

its a way to call somebody you are in deep relationship with...someone you love very much- Its a way for them to hear your desperation.

Let’s talk about what may have been bothering Saul...and what might be bothering you today.

Just before Saul meets Jesus, he is a part of killing Stephen, a young servant of the early church. Here’s that account.

Acts 7:58-8:1a

They dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. And the witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 While they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! ” 60 He knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them! ” And after saying this, he fell asleep.

Saul agreed with putting him to death.

Imagine being Saul, agreeing to put Stephen to death, but Stephen, instead of cursing or crying out about his own mistreatment- preaches the longest sermon in the book of Acts. He shares about Jesus' love and what Jesus did on the cross and what he's inviting everyone to in his Resurrection...and then he dies just as Jesus did. Entrusting himself to Jesus- and praying for the forgiveness of his enemies.

Think about how that must have haunted Saul.

But day after day, after he left that event- he had to quiet the voice that said, "Saul, Saul, you have to reconsider. Did you see the way that man who followed Jesus died? Did you hear what he said about Jesus being the promised Messiah? The one you say you are looking for? Did you hear the way he said that you were resisting the Holy Spirit? Did you hear him say that you think you've been keeping the law, but all along you've been breaking it?

As a Jewish zealot, Saul was meticulous about his law keeping. He will go on later in a letter to the Church at Corinth to talk about just how good he was at keeping up appearances.

How good he was at covering up his sin. Ignoring the call of Jesus to confess his sin and turn around.

But until he crashes into Jesus on the Damascus road...he just kicks against the goads

He finds ways to ignore all the little bothers...so Jesus brings him to a crash.

9:3-4

He literally knocks him to the ground. He has ignored the goads. He has ignored the not so gentle nudges from Jesus- and so Jesus puts him on his rear.

And directly confronts him about his sin.

Back to 1)

All of us have a status quo.

All of us have what a regular day looks like.

Get up. Get ready for work or school.

Eat breakfast. Listen to the teacher. Joke around with friends. Roll your eyes at the boss. Get a few things done.

Come home. Figure out dinner. Watch some TV. Text a friend.

The truth is that when God is bringing spiritual renewal to you, he comes to bother your status quo. To break up the monotony of your life.

It often starts with little moments- where you start asking questions like “Is this all there is?” “What does my life even mean?” “Why do I feel so empty when I’ve finally made it to the top?” “Why can’t ever seem to be happy?” “Why can’t I shake the shame and guilt of the stuff I did 10, 20, 30 years ago?” “Why can’t I seem to forgive?” “Why do my relationships always toxic?”

Maybe you’ve had a friend, a neighbor, a family member, a movie, a song, a book- that has pointed you to search for truth.

But you realize- that's going to require you to abandon your status quo. Your life will have to change. And change is scary. Even the things that we know are bad for us... sometimes they bring us more comfort than the solution to our problems because at least the pain, is familiar. while the change- well...its scary to hope. Faith- is not easy... especially when people or things you trusted have let you down in the past.

So often- when God goads us, we kick against those questions that call us into deeper waters- because its just more comfortable to stay with what we know...the status quo.

The 3 most popular ways to ignore God- Rebellion, Religion, & Numbing.

In Rebellion- when God goads you- you just turn it up a notch- "I'll sleep with as many people as I can. I'll fight with people. I'll be a bully. I'll gamble. I'll get high. I'll do what I've always been told not to." You dig your heels in and say- "Nobody's gonna tell me what to do!"

With Religion- you ignore God by obeying his rules- to drown out his call to you. You get lost and stay lost in the status quo of going to church. Singing the songs. Saying the words...all in an effort to keep God satisfied or at least your Xian friends satisfied so that leave you alone. You give off the appearance of knowing God- but you are actually kicking him away with Religion.

Then- there's numbing. This is a commitment to turn up the music as loud as you can. Binge another TV show. Get lost in another no-brainer novel. Eat more. Drink more. Build another house. Buy another car. Shop some more. Get some more Amazon packages. Anything- to get a quick rush that tells you "Life is ok. No need to change".

The fact is- you can get so used to your day-in-day-out status quo that kicking away the goads of Jesus becoming second nature.

There's always another tournament, another client, another homework assignment that you can give your attention to.

But a crash is coming. Your status quo is going to be broken. Stop kicking against the goads- and listen to Jesus.

Do you hear Him calling your name? Saul, Saul. David, David. Ben, Ben. Anna, Anna. Sidney, Sidney? He's bothering you. He's calling you, because he loves you.

Maybe the crash already hit you. Sometimes its an actual CAR CRASH that hits you. For John Newton, it was a storm in a ship. For Saul, it was the Resurrected Jesus that just stepped in front of him on the way to Damascus.

Sometimes its a crash from the addictions that have gripped you, Jesus steps in between you and your rebellion, or religion, or numbing device of choice. Sometimes the crash is the job that you have been so hard at work at...that you have developed your entire identity around- is suddenly ripped away from you.

Maybe some of you are on the other side of that crash- and you feel like you are groping in the darkness for whats next.

That brings us to the second thing that happens in a conversion.

2) Jesus changes you through Darkness.

When Jesus finally gets your attention- there is some period of darkness that follows.

Take a look at Saul after he met Jesus.

9:8-9

Things literally go dark for Saul. He's blind for 3 days.

There's a couple of things going on here for Saul.

First- Saul has been spending his life climbing the ladder of the Pharisees. He's become a well respected religious leader. But blindness was a category of disability that would have represented a kind of religious uncleanness- which would have excluded him from temple worship. Which means- his reputation is ruined. All that he has built over his life- in a moment- is gone.

Second- Saul has moved from a guy who would have led others- to a guy who now has to be led by the hand... completely dependent on someone else for survival. He's been the boss- now Jesus is saying- "I'm telling you what to do."

So this darkness he's been plunged into has forced him to do 2 things.

Re-think who he is. And Re-think who God is.

He's built his life on religious standards. That's now gone.

He's built his life on the certainty of knowing how one is supposed to relate to God.

9:5-6

Now, in this darkness- he is asking- "WHO ARE YOU, LORD?"...and the Lord is saying- "I'm going to show you who I am- and through that show you who you are."

In the letter that Saul eventually wrote to the Romans- we get a peak into what was likely some of his thinking during this period of darkness. The stuff he was wrestling with. Listen to this- see if it sounds like any wrestling you've ever done?

Romans 7:15-24

For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17 So now I am no longer the one doing it, but it is sin living in me. 18 For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. 19 For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one that does it, but it is the sin that lives in me. 21 So I discover this law: When I want to do what is good, evil is present with me.

22 For in my inner self I delight in God's law, 23 but I see a different law in the parts of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin in the parts of my body. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

In the darkness- Saul wrestles with the fact that the more he tried to do the right thing- keep the law- the more he read and thought about the standard of God- the more he realized he couldn't live up to that standard. In the darkness- he realized he was a hypocrite.

Back to 2)

There are 2 things you do in the darkness that follows the crash that show you that God is pursuing you.

You start to look more deeply into yourself. You start to become honest with God about yourself. Like Paul in Romans 7- instead of pretending he didn't have sin...or distracting himself from it with Religion or numbing...he finally admits just how nasty he is on the inside.

But you don't stop there. Jesus never wants you to take an honest look at yourself just so you get depressed about what you find.

The other thing that happens, is you start to crave the truth about God.

In Romans 7- Paul is re-thinking the way he looked at God's law. He moves it from some external standard to live up to... and he takes it down to the inward level.

Same Slide

Matthew 5:21-22a (end at judgment) & Matthew 5:27-28

It's what Jesus does in the sermon on the mount. He says "You keep looking at external actions. And those are important. But God is interested in your heart and your actions. He doesn't just want you to not murder...he wants you to deeply love others.

"He doesn't just want you to not commit adultery. He wants you to honor and respect everyone through the way you think about them...the thoughts that nobody ever sees or hears."

And you know what happens when in the dark you get down to that level? It can get really scary. Because every single one of us knows how dark our thoughts are sometimes.

You realize the monsters lurking in the dark aren't outside of you- you realize you're the monster.

Romans 7:24

— that's exactly what Saul realizes about himself.

But in the darkness your focus isn't only yourself. In fact, that's not where God wants you to end up at all.

Look at where Saul ends up. Look how he answers the question- “Who will rescue me from this body of death? Who will rescue me from my wretched self?”

Romans 7:25a (End with “Lord!”) & Romans 8:1

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus...

When Jesus is pursuing you after the crash...when you finally pay attention and stop kicking against the goads— you will have a period of darkness because you’ll have to take an honest look at yourself— and that won’t be pretty.

But take heart— in all of that goading- when you kept wanting God to leave you alone. He wouldn’t. And in the darkness—> he still won’t leave you alone. But now- like Saul—> you don’t want him to.

Back to 2)

Very simply, the darkness after the crash has you reconsider yourself. You see your sin more clearly. You’re honest about it.

And it has you reconsider God. You realize that your only hope of being changed into something new- is if God forgives you and changes you. That is exactly what Jesus does. And when you realize that- that’s when the scales- the blinders finally come off.

In the darkness- the Bible starts to become more than a set of rules...or some ancient dusty book that is just a part of your tradition.

In the darkness- the Bible becomes a light to your path. It becomes food to your hunger. Drink to your thirst. In it- God reveals your sin- and more importantly- shows you a savior waiting to embrace you and make you his family.

Which leads you to the next phase- District 46ers- write this one down.

3) Jesus changes you by an Embrace.

One of the big mistakes people often make about faith in Jesus- is that we assume that its primarily an individual, private matter. But I want you to notice something that happens here with Saul.

9:4

During Saul's crash- when Jesus confronts him on the road to Damascus- Jesus asked a strange question. He says "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Now- Jesus had already died, Resurrected and ascended to heaven at this time.

Saul was no where near Jesus. He had not been persecuting Jesus. He had been persecuting Xians- the CHURCH.

9:5

He says it again in v 5- Jesus again says “when you persecuted the church- you were persecuting me.” And then he tells Saul to get up and go into the city. Why?

Well- because you can’t embrace Jesus. You can’t receive the love and forgiveness he has for you-without also embracing his people- the church.

That’s who Saul is going to meet in the City. Jesus doesn’t just do this private thing over in the corner with Saul. He takes him to his church.

Jesus is saying- “If you are ready to embrace me- you are ready to embrace my family.”

Now, lets look at the other side.

9:13-14

Look what Ananias says when Jesus tells him that Saul of Tarsus is on the way...and Ananias needs to embrace him, and bring him into the church.

He says, “Excuse me Jesus, I love you and you’re great and everything...but I just would like to make you aware that this man has been arresting and killing Xians. I don’t know if this is safe.”

9:15

Jesus says- “Trust me. You are looking at the Old Saul. I’m making him new. He will be my instrument to tell the world

the good news that I love them...and I'm here to embrace them too. So don't exclude him because of your fear."

9:17

So Ananias, when he sees Saul- calls him "brother".

He, embraces him, welcomes him into the family.

This is like a man that was taken captive on one of John Newton's slave ships coming back around to hug John Newton and call him brother.

Its remarkable. But how Jesus makes his love tangibly known to the world.

9:18

Notice- it is Ananias obedience to embrace Saul as family- that causes the scales to fall off of Saul's eyes. Its the embrace of the church- the love that says- "I love and forgive you, because Jesus loves and forgives you- that embrace is the end of Saul's darkness."

And that's what brings Saul to fully embrace following Jesus- which he marks with baptism.

Lets talk about baptism for a second.

Baptism is a marker. Its an outward sign of an inward reality. Its not what saved or changed Saul here.

But it is extremely important. See Baptism is a sign of a dual embrace.

Back to 3)

On one hand- for Saul- he is making a statement to the church. He is saying, "I'm following Jesus. The old me has died- like Christ died on the cross for my sin to forgive me. And the new me is rising to life- like Jesus resurrected to make a new family and start new creation- I am now a part of that family. I am embracing Jesus- fully- as much of me that goes under the water- thats how much of me that belongs to Jesus because I now see how he loves me.

But its a statement from the church. This is why, as much as its possible- I think its a very good thing to be baptized in front of other Christians. Because you have another Christian baptizing you- you can't baptize yourself- and the church witnesses this to say like Ananias- "Yes. Amen. We see what Jesus has done for you- we see your embrace of Jesus- and now we love and forgive and embrace you."

So hold onto this question for a minute.- Since the time you embraced Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin- have you been baptized publicly? IF not- I wonder if Jesus is calling you to do that today?

Ok- D-46ers heres the last point today you can write down. This is the phase of conversion that Jesus gets you to the more you trust him.

4) Jesus changes you to Overflow.

Often, when we think about Jesus- we think about what he saves us FROM.

We say truth and good things like “Jesus died to save me FROM my sin.”

Because of Jesus, “I don’t have to be separated from God forever.”

But that’s only half of it.

Jesus also saves us TO something.

He didn’t just FORGIVE John Newton of his womanizing and slave trading...he saved him TO be an abolitionist, and to be faithful to his wife, and to adopt children, and to mentor others to follow Jesus.

And he does the same thing with Saul.

9:15 & 20

Jesus tell Ananias, “I have chosen Saul, to become Paul. He will be my chosen instrument to take my name to people who haven’t heard the good news about my love and forgiveness.”

And indeed- after Saul is baptized- he immediately starts going around to places where other Jews worship- the ones he taught to persecute Xians- and he says “I had it all wrong. Jesus is the Son of God. Look what he did for me!”

And this cost Saul a lot. All that he had built his life on- was gone. But to Saul- because of what he knew Jesus did- it

was all worth it. To let go of his old life- and to become a mouthpiece of the gospel to others.

Think of like this.

If you spent your whole life thirsty. Unsure from day to day if you could ever find water. When you found a little bit of water- you'd put it in your cup....drink it up...and you'd try to keep other people from finding your source. Because you would never be sure when that water source would dry up.

But imagine- you discovered a river- a massive fresh water-water fall. All of sudden, your attitude would change. Since you knew that this water source wasn't drying up- you'd not only return to it over and over to drink- you'd be telling every thirsty person where it was. Because you knew- there was more than enough to go around.

You'd fill your cup up and go pour it out to others. And say- "You like this? I can show you where it comes from. You'd let your cup overflow to others- because you would never worry about running out."

In Jesus- God's grace- his undeserved love and favor is poured out on you like a waterfall. You cannot find its end.

Which means- when you have embraced that truth- God will cause you to overflow.

In 4 main ways- that I'll give you quickly- D46ers- write these down.

1) Wonder at God's grace

“Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.” - John Newton

Sometimes- we struggle with the idea that we have embraced the gospel-we are following Jesus-yet sin still keeps popping up in our lives.

But in that

2) Transparency

Instead of hypocrisy- that Saul was practicing before where he would try to look as good on the outside as he could while inside he looked down on people and hated people. Jesus made him one of the most honest people about his own sin- and the grace of God. He didn't hide himself or his sin away.

1 Timothy 1:15-16

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” — and I am the worst of them. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life

3) Generosity

When you know that money, or power, or position, or a job, or a reputation will never bring you salvation, will never

satisfy that deep brownness...that deep longing within you to be whole- when you know only Jesus can do that..and that he freely gives you his love and forgiveness- guess what? You don't have to be stingy with anything anymore.

You can give away your time, your money, your efforts- to help other people know God's love- because you are no longer using those things for yourself. You don't have to save yourself by becoming important or rich or famous.

When the God of the universe sees you at your very worst- and says "I love you and forgive you"- well- you open your hands up to all the things you used to put your trust in and you start to use those things to love others and spread the good news about Jesus.

And finally- I'll give you a little homework

4) Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

This afternoon- go read this passage in Galatians about the fruit of the spirit. Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and self-control. Take a journal and write each of those down- and go searching for what each one means. When Jesus saves you- he gives you his Holy Spirit, that produces these things in you as you let Jesus have control in your life- and as you keep coming back to think about how much he loves you.

9:18

Invitation to baptism.

He's calling your name twice. Like he called Saul. Are you ready? You are if he's calling you.

