



From Now On: Living Out Your Faith

Big Idea of the Series: When Jesus saves someone, he doesn't just turn around and leave them in their old lives. Instead, he calls them into a new life, an abundant life, shaped by his freedom, love, and grace. This five-week series for youth will study the Christian life according to Paul. It will look at five passages from the Epistles, in which he describes what a new life in Christ looks like.

Week 1

Text: Romans 5:1–11

Topic(s): God's Love, Justification, Security, Peace

Big Idea of the Message: God saves people on the basis of their faith, not their performance, and this brings us a new peace and security in our relationship with God.

Application Point: We don't have to ask Jesus into our heart every time we sin. If we've been saved by grace through faith, we now belong to him forever.

Sermon Ideas and Talking Points:

1. The Christian life (sanctification) has its foundation in our new acceptance before God (justification), and it's important we don't confuse the order. If we believe that God accepts us based on our good works and behavior, then we will strive to earn God's love but worry that we're not good enough. The good news of the gospel, however, is that we're not justified by our works but rather are "justified by faith," and this brings us a new "peace with God" (Romans 5:1). Notice that "Paul uses an aorist participle of the verb 'to justify,' thereby presenting justification as a completed act" (Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 225). Our justification has already been completed "through our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 1) if we trust in him. The symbol of Christianity is not a ladder, on which we climb up to God. Rather, the symbol of Christianity is a cross, showing that God came to us in Jesus Christ to offer full salvation.
2. High school students applying to colleges will be extremely focused on the various admissions requirements. Perhaps they need a specific GPA or a certain

amount of extracurricular activity. If a student doesn't quite meet the requirements, it's possible that a university will offer them a probational acceptance, which essentially means, "We'll let you in, but we'll be keeping a close eye on your grades. If you mess up at all, you're out of here." It's so easy for us to think of our Christian life as a probational acceptance. Maybe we realize that we've been accepted by God's grace. But now that we're in, we feel like we have to "keep up our grades" or we'll be kicked out. The good news of the gospel, though, is that our initial acceptance and our continued acceptance are not based upon our performance, but upon Jesus and his sacrifice. The cross is not just Christian kindergarten that we move on from; it's the A to Z of the Christian life. We never move on from total dependence on Christ.

3. In verses 9–11, Paul argues that since we have been justified, some extraordinary blessings follow. Notice that "This 'how much more' argument is one the apostle uses four times in this chapter (5:9, 10, 15, 17). It is the argument from the greater to the lesser" (Kruse, *Romans*, 236). If God loved us when we were his enemies, then we certainly don't need to worry about his love for us now that we've been "reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (v. 10). Whenever a Christian is struggling and worrying about God's love for them—perhaps because of a recent sin or a burdensome addiction—Paul encourages them to look back at what God did when they were a sinner and enemy of God: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (v. 8). If he did that when we were his enemies, how much more does he love us as his reconciled children! Even more than in his sacrificial death, Christ is still at work for us. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that "he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." Christ is currently interceding for believers, so whenever we sin, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).
4. Ken Berding, a theology professor at Biola University, recently adopted two young daughters (ages 5 and 6) from an orphanage in Los Angeles. As they met with him for the first time, they asked him with tears in their eyes, "Do you really want to be our dad?" And with a heart full of love, he told them, "Yes, I want you to be a part of our family." When they got home, the very first thing Ken did was remove all current family photos from the house (he already had two biological daughters). The next day, they got new family photos made and put them up everywhere. The message was clear, "You are part of this family now. You belong just as much as my other daughters. You never have to wonder about your status as my children." In a sense, we could say that we are now in God's family photos, and we know this because of the cross. Even when we mess up as Christians, we can trust in his current love for us because of his previous history of love for us, shown most strikingly on the cross.
5. As Christians, how can we have assurance that we truly are saved and belong to God? When we doubt our salvation, our temptation is to look at our behavior and performance to determine whether we're saved. However, that isn't the direction Paul points us. Instead of looking at ourselves, Paul tells us to look back at the cross and how God loved us when we were his enemies. The Bible prepares us for this inner self-condemnation (it doesn't catch God by surprise). In 1 John, the

apostle John states, “For whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart” (1 John 3:20). God’s love and power are greater than our self-condemnation. As the late R. C. Sproul says, “We are secure, not because we hold tightly to Jesus, but because He holds tightly to us” (R. C. Sproul [@RCSproul], Twitter, August 24, 2015, 1:00 p.m., <https://twitter.com/rcsproul/status/635889385918083072?s=21>).

Week 2

Text: Romans 6:1–23

Topic(s): Union with Christ, Freedom, Obedience

Big Idea of the Message: Becoming a Christian means being united to Christ and set free from the power of sin. Continuing in sin would contradict the Christian’s new identity in Christ.

Application Point: Our culture may think freedom means getting to do whatever we want. On the contrary, the Bible calls that slavery. True freedom is found in knowing and obeying God.

Sermon Ideas and Talking Points:

1. If someone has read Romans 1–5 correctly up to this point, a natural conclusion might be, “If God saves us based on his grace and not our behavior, does that mean we can live however we want?” Paul acknowledges that while it may sound this way, it couldn’t be farther from the truth. He refutes this idea by teaching about the Christian’s new identity in Christ. We have been “baptized into his death” (Romans 6:3) and “buried ... with him,” and we share in his resurrection life (v. 4). All of this is summed up in the idea of “union with Christ.” Christians have a new identity now, and this new identity is incompatible with sin. He states, “Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life” (v. 13). Kruse explains, “This verb ‘to present’ is used here to mean ‘to place at someone’s disposal’” (Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary 225 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 269). Instead of placing ourselves at the disposal of sin, we offer ourselves to God. This whole idea of being united to Christ and living for him is what Paul would consider true freedom: “For one who has died has been set free from sin” (v. 7).
2. If you were to go to the local public middle or high school and ask the question, “What is freedom?” you would probably get an answer along the lines of this: “Freedom means I get to do what I want. No one tells me what to do.” In the classic cartoon *Scooby-Doo*, each episode climaxes when the gang finally catches the bad guy who’s been disguised the whole time. [As they unmask the culprit](#), the villain always says something along the lines of, “I would have gotten away with it, if it wasn’t for you meddling kids!” The Bible also loves to do a lot of unmasking. In this case, the Bible approaches the cultural definition of freedom and unmasks it as slavery. In addition to Paul’s words here in Romans 6, Jesus says in John 8:34 that “everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.” Fulfilling our fallen inclinations and desires (“getting to do whatever we want”) isn’t freedom

but slavery. True freedom means being united to Christ by faith and presenting our lives to him in obedience.

3. Our modern culture loves to preach messages about being true to ourselves. They may say things like, “Relax, you were born that way,” or “Stop trying to be something you’re not. Be the real you.” Upon first hearing these statements, they may sound off base. But actually, they are stumbling on something biblical. Kevin DeYoung states, “If I had to summarize New Testament ethics in one sentence, here’s how I would put it: *be who you are*” (Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 100). The key to his statement, though, is that DeYoung is talking about the new you who is united to Christ, not the old you. The Christian has a new identity, he or she is now “in Christ” and belongs to Christ. Christ lives in the believer. All of the Bible’s commands could be summarized as “Live according to who you are now—in Christ.”
4. DeYoung also provides a helpful illustration about how union with Christ changes our relationship to sin: “Union with Christ is like being released from a nasty prison. You used to curl up in your bed when someone walked by because you didn’t want to get beaten. You would pass dirty magazines through the wall. You would threaten and intimidate people to get first in line for the grub. But once you are out, you don’t act like that anymore. You are in a different world now” (DeYoung, *Hole in our Holiness*, 104). To take his analogy even further, a Christian committing a sin is the equivalent of going back to that old jail cell and putting chains back on. We have been fully set free, yet we choose to go back to our old life of slavery.
5. The character Brooks Hatlen from the movie *The Shawshank Redemption* (directed by Frank Darabont [Columbia Pictures, 1994]) illustrates this principle. He spent his whole life in prison and had grown accustomed to its ways. At the very end of his life, he’s released, but he can’t adjust to the freedom. He writes a letter back to his friends in prison, expressing how he’s living in constant fear and wishes he could return to his life in jail. He fantasizes about committing a crime so he can be sent back. Eventually, he takes his own life. Sin can often feel like this to the Christian. It feels familiar, and we may long to go back to our old, enslaved lives. However, we must preach to ourselves that we aren’t slaves anymore. We’ve been set free by the gospel, and our new life in Christ is infinitely better than our previous lives in slavery.
6. What does the Christian’s new union with Christ mean for our lives? So what? The Christian tradition has always talked about the relationship between union and communion with Christ. Think of it like a marriage. Once you’ve gone through the wedding, you can’t be more or less married, but you can have a healthy or weak marriage. In the same way, we can’t be more or less united to Christ, but we can have healthy or weak communion with him. Union leads to communion. As John Calvin states, “Not only does [Christ] cleave to us by an indivisible bond of fellowship, but with a wonderful communion, day by day, he grows more and more into one body with us, until he becomes completely one with us” (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006], 3.2.24). How do we grow in communion with Christ? We do so by reading his Word, learning more

about him, spending time with him in prayer, and fellowshiping with other believers. All these things help us grow in our affection for Christ so we might obey him more freely.

Week 3

Text: Galatians 5:16–26

Topic(s): Spirit, Flesh, Fruit, Love

Big Idea of the Message: We can expect a constant battle in the Christian life. On the one hand, our old, fleshly selves are pulling us toward sin. On the other, the Holy Spirit who lives in us is producing his fruit in our lives.

Application Point: Instead of giving ourselves over to the flesh, which leads to death, Paul calls us to walk in the Spirit so he can do his work in us.

Sermon Ideas and Talking Points:

1. Paul writes that when a Christian is saved, they enter into a sort of boxing match. Imagine the famous ring announcer Michael Buffer as you read this passage, “Fighting out of this corner: the flesh! And out of this corner: the Spirit!” When someone meets Jesus and becomes his follower, they find themselves in the middle of this boxing ring. Inside, the flesh is pulling them toward sin. But as we give ourselves to the Spirit, he empowers us to fight sin and kill it. John Owen famously wrote, “Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you” (John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2004], 9). Paul explains that the desires of the flesh are opposed to the desires of the Spirit (Galatians 5:17), and Christians are called to “walk by the Spirit” (v. 16), be “led by the Spirit” (v. 18), and “live by the Spirit” (v. 25).
2. In his memoir, Ernest Gordon recalls his experiences as a prisoner of war in World War 2 at a Japanese prison camp. He was forced to work long days on a railroad project, and for every mile of track that was laid, about 350 men were lost due to starvation and disease. About a year into it, he was still alive, but very sick. He had contracted four or five illnesses all at once and felt like it was only a matter of time before he died too. He was an agnostic, hostile to the Christian faith. But as he lay in the death house, he was visited by a fellow prisoner, Dusty. Dusty would spend hours with him, cleaning his sores and caring for him. Ernest couldn’t understand where this love and compassion was coming from. Dusty shared the gospel with Ernest, and over time, Ernest began to see Christ in the midst of darkness. After he was changed by the gospel, he was asked to lead a Bible study. This began a spiritual awakening in the camp. Instead of people being characterized by selfishness, they began to serve others. These new Christians would care for the sick and cook meals for them. They heard Jesus’s words to love their enemies, so they began returning love toward the Japanese soldiers’ hate. As they got right with God and others, they had a hunger for knowledge, so they started something called “Jungle University.” After their labor, they would study philosophy, the Bible, Greek, and Hebrew. One small spark started a spiritual fire that spread through the camp (Ernest Gordon, *To End All Wars* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002]). Jungle University is a picture of what

happens in the Christian life, as described here in Galatians. Sin and the flesh are replaced with love and service.

3. Notice the list that Paul provides for the “works of the flesh” in verses 19–21. He includes sexual immorality, idolatry, jealousy, anger, rivalries, drunkenness, and others. This sounds a lot like high school! Also notice Paul’s chilling warning at the end of the list: “Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” While sometimes Paul uses “kingdom” to mean the present dimension of God’s reign, here he “refers to the end-time kingdom” (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010], 348). A believer’s disengagement from these vices is of utmost importance, as “Paul warns the Galatians that those who make a practice of doing such will not inherit the eschatological kingdom” (Schreiner, *Galatians*, 348).
4. Paul then contrasts the vice list with a virtue list. These godly qualities are the fruit of the Spirit. Interestingly, here the word for fruit (*karpos*) is singular. One possible interpretation is that there is one fruit of the Spirit, love, and that the rest of the list are the various ways that love refracts throughout the soul. This translation would look like, “The fruit of the Spirit is love: joy, peace, patience...” Regardless of how the passage is translated, Paul’s key concern here is teaching that this new way of life is supernatural, meaning that it stems from the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.
5. The story of the two wolves is a popular legend commonly attributed to the Cherokee people. “An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. ‘A fight is going on inside me,’ he said to the boy. ‘It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil—he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.’ He continued, ‘The other is good—he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you—and inside every other person, too.’ The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, ‘Which wolf will win?’ The old Cherokee simply replied, ‘The one you feed’” (“Two Wolves: A Cherokee Legend,” First People, <https://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/TwoWolves-Cherokee.html>). In the Christian life, we are called to starve the flesh and give ourselves over to the Spirit. As we do, the Spirit will fill us and take up greater influence in our hearts.
6. How do we “walk by the Spirit” so that we “will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (v. 16)? We walk by the Spirit by giving ourselves to spiritual practices that connect us to God. Consider the tree imagery from this passage. A tree doesn’t have to strain to produce healthy fruit. Rather, the way to get healthy fruit is to have a healthy tree that is well rooted and well nourished. Walking in the Spirit means being rooted and nourished in Jesus through his Word, prayer, and fellowship with other believers.

Week 4

Text: 1 Corinthians 6:12–20

Topic(s): Holiness, Purity, Sexual Immorality

Big Idea of the Message: Christians are called to be sexually pure in a culture that loves sexual immorality.

Application Point: Since we belong to God, we must be quick to flee sexual immorality and be willing to look a lot different from our classmates.

Sermon Ideas and Talking Points:

1. In an interview with *Vogue* in 2019, Justin Bieber opened up about his new desire to follow Jesus and how he and his wife Hailey Baldwin had saved sex for marriage out of an obedience to God. He stated, “[God] doesn’t ask us not to have sex for him because he wants rules and stuff. He’s like, I’m trying to protect you from hurt and pain. I think sex can cause a lot of pain. Sometimes people have sex because they don’t feel good enough. Because they lack self-worth. Women do that, and guys do that. I wanted to rededicate myself to God in that way because I really felt it was better for the condition of my soul” (Rob Haskell, “Justin and Hailey Bieber Open Up about Their Passionate, Not-Always-Easy but Absolutely All-In Romance,” *Vogue*, February 7, 2019, <https://www.vogue.com/article/justin-bieber-hailey-bieber-cover-interview>). As one might expect, the surrounding culture blasted him for his beliefs about sex. Rebecca Reid, writer for the UK’s *Telegraph* [stated about this article](#), “Celibacy before marriage is a terrible idea—Justin Bieber shouldn’t preach it to his fans.” She argues that sex before marriage is important and is just like test-driving a car. From these articles, we can see the world’s way and God’s way on display. From the world’s perspective, there are few rules about sex and it is really all about our own personal fulfillment. As the creator of sex, God gives us boundaries out of love. You are precious to him, and he wants to protect you. Imagine your family gets a new puppy. Would you let it out the door, free to wander wherever it wants? Of course not! You would put up a fence because you love the dog and want to protect it.
2. The central part of this passage comes in verse 18: “Flee from sexual immorality.” This raises the question, “What exactly is sexual immorality?” The Greek word here is *porneia* (from which we get our English word *pornography*), and it refers to any sexual activity outside of God’s blueprint for sex—outside of marriage. Kevin DeYoung offers a helpful definition: “The simplest way to understand *porneia* is to think about the things that would make you furious and heartbroken if you found out someone was doing them with your husband or wife” (Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 110). Elsewhere in Paul’s writings, he makes clear that a central element of sanctification is abstaining from sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3).
3. Everyone loves a fireplace. Why is that? It offers warmth. It makes the room cozy. The crackling sounds and fiery glow make a great aesthetic. Imagine that your friend comes over to your house on a cold day and you’re hanging out in your living room. They ask you, “Hey, is it okay if I start a fire?” You tell them that

sounds like a great idea. You then walk away to the kitchen for a moment and, when you get back, you find your friend starting a fire ... on your couch! What would you say? You'd be confused, angry, and very concerned. Why? Because fire belongs in the fireplace, not on the couch. Fire is an amazing thing when it is in the right place. When it is in the wrong place, it causes destruction. Sex is the same way. In the right place, it's a beautiful gift that God created. When it's taken out of marriage, it causes destruction.

4. Why is sexual immorality so destructive? Paul explains this in verses 16–18. Sexual union is a matter of great consequence because the two become one body. He quotes Genesis 2:24: “The two will become one flesh” (1 Corinthians 6:16). Thomas Schreiner says, “Paul is not claiming that every sexual union constitutes marriage, but he does suggest that sexual relations forge a profound relationship between two people. ... There is a profound psycho-physical union in sex” (Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2018], 128). Our culture wants to reduce sexual immorality to just a physical act, but God designed us in such a way that it goes beyond physicality. It connects the two people in a deep, profound way. Justin Bieber was onto something when he said that God's rules are meant to protect us from hurt and pain.
5. How do we actually flee sexual immorality? Paul explains that it is of utmost importance that Christians pursue sexual purity, but how do we do it? We start by recognizing that, because of the cross, we are already fully forgiven for all of our sin. We were “bought with a price” and we now belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:20). Even if we may experience guilt and shame, the gospel speaks a new word over us—one of love, belonging, and cleansing for all the wrong we've done. From this starting point of full forgiveness, we are now free by the power of the Holy Spirit to begin weeding out any sexual sin that is in our life. Stop being sexually intimate with your boyfriend or girlfriend. Remove all pornography from your life. Get rid of your smartphone if you need to. Fight against lustful thoughts (not to be confused with attraction, which is not sinful) as they enter your mind, reminding yourself of the dignity and worth of the person for whom you are tempted to lust. Memorize Scriptures, like today's passage, to recite in times of temptation. Perhaps most importantly, get an accountability partner who can help keep you accountable as you pursue purity in Christ.
6. In 2008, the British Safari Park owner Michael Hodge took a newborn lion cub as his pet. He named the lion Shamba, and he hand-reared and bottle-fed Shamba from birth. Michael loved his pet lion and developed a deep loving relationship with her. As the lion grew, their companionship did as well—until one day in 2018, when the lion was ten years old. Seemingly out of nowhere, Shamba attacked and mauled Hodge. Thankfully he recovered from the attack, but the safari was forced to put Shamba down (Debora Patta, “Dramatic Video Shows Owner of Animal Sanctuary Dragged Away by Lion,” *CBS News*, May 1, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/dramatic-video-shows-shamba-the-lion-mauling-animal-sanctuary-owner-in-south-africa/>). As Christians, we can too easily treat our sin like Hodge treated Shamba. We can get comfortable with it and let it grow

in our lives. But one day, as with the lion, it will destroy us. Let us heed Paul's words to "flee from sexual immorality" before we end up in pain and destruction.

Week 5

Text: Ephesians 4:1–16

Topic(s): Church, Fellowship, Spiritual Maturity

Big Idea of the Message: The Christian church is the context for our growth into spiritual maturity. When God saves us, he saves us into a new family.

Application Point: The church isn't optional for a Christian. We need the church, and the church needs us.

Sermon Ideas and Talking Points:

1. There are a lot of misconceptions about the church, so it's important to get back to a biblical vision of the church. Sometimes people treat the church like a movie theater, where they attend in order to be entertained. Sometimes people treat the church like a vitamin, taking it as a supplement to their actual lives. They think it might be helpful to get a little Jesus into their life, but it's nothing more than an add-on. Sometimes people treat the church like a grocery store, where they browse the items and take the things they like, without ever feeling a sense of responsibility toward the church. Here in Ephesians, Paul introduces a better metaphor for the church. He calls the church "one body" that is united by "one Spirit" (Ephesians 4:4). This body is to "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (v. 15), and it is "joined and held together by every joint" (v. 16). Paul paints a picture of the church all working together to grow up into spiritual maturity.
2. Why do we need the church? One reason is found in verses 11–12. God gave the church leaders for the benefit of Christians: "He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." While there is some debate about what exactly Paul has in mind with each role, there is some agreement that the first three (apostle, prophet, evangelist) refer to traveling leaders, whereas the last two (shepherd, teacher) refer to leaders who stay put in one congregation. This last group named as shepherds (*poimenes*) has a grammatical construction "that suggests that they are in some way closely related to the 'teachers' (*didaskaloi*). ... Some interpreters suggest that Paul is identifying pastors and teachers and thereby presenting them as one and the same ministry function in the local church" (Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2010], 260). The idea Paul has in view here is that Christians need shepherds. On our own, we aren't able to steer and guide our lives. We need godly leadership to teach us, direct us, and care for our souls.
3. One beautiful hymn that has found its way into popularity among churches today is "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing." One reason it has become so popular is because of the lines, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love" (Robert Robinson, 1758). All of us can relate to that line. All of us have the

sheeplike tendency to wander away from the shepherd and the flock. Let's think through the sheep metaphor in Scripture even further. Sheep are notorious for lacking direction, being unable to protect themselves from predators, and needing someone else to lead them everywhere. To be a sheep is to confess that you are helpless and have no idea where you're going in life unless someone else leads you. And what metaphor does the Bible use the most when referring to Christians? Sheep. By recognizing our utter need as sheep, we will be drawn to the church, where God has placed his under-shepherds (1 Peter 5:1) to care for us. We need the church.

4. In addition to our need for the church, the church also needs us. Paul writes that "when each part is working properly," this "makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love" (Ephesians 4:16). Additionally, "grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (v. 7). God has given each of us as Christians a part to play in building up the church. Arnold says, "The end result is a dynamic image of the individual members of the body receiving nourishment from Christ, and they, in turn, serve other parts of the body with the strength and grace they have received from Christ" (Arnold, *Ephesians*, 270). Sanctification is a lot more like basketball than golf: it's a team sport, not an individual one. There's no such thing as a Rambo Christian (the warrior who charges the battle alone). [As the wise man Zac Efron once said](#), "We're all in this together."
5. The book *The Boys in the Boat* tells the story of nine working-class boys coming out of the Depression era who made up the University of Washington's rowing team. This unlikely group showed what true grit really meant as they went on to defeat the elite teams of the world in the 1936 Olympics. One of the people in the book, George Yeoman Pocock, explains how to succeed in rowing: "To be of championship caliber, a crew must have total confidence in each other, able to drive with abandon, confident that no man will get the full weight of the pull. ... When you get the full rhythm in an eight, it's pure pleasure to be in it. It's not hard work when the rhythm comes—that 'swing' as they call it. I've heard men shriek out in delight when the swing came into an eight; it's a thing they'll never forget as long as they live" (Daniel James Brown, *The Boys in the Boat* [London: Penguin Books, 2014], 305). Pocock's vision of rowing is also a perfect vision of the church. Pursuing the "swing" in the church, when we're all working together, sharing the burden equally, trusting each other, is what Paul is calling us to when he says to "attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (4:13). The church needs us to get in the boat and join in the rowing, so we can together grow deeper into spiritual maturity.
6. How do we grow in our commitment to Christ's church? First, we have to be willing to prioritize church in our lives. Church is more important than time with our friends or our sports teams. What would it look like to do your homework early so you'll be free to attend church? Or to ask your boss to not schedule you to work when church is meeting? Second, we need to have the mindset of serving and not consuming while we're at church. We all have a role to play. Maybe that means helping set up or tear down. It could mean focusing on newcomers as a welcomer or watching the babies in the nursery. Christian

service is also very relational, so this could look like meeting and praying with other students. If we come with a heart to serve, there will always be areas of need we can fill.

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