



Summer at Woodland Hills

Part 3 – Father’s Day

David Nasser

It’s ironic that I would get to be with you on Father’s Day and get to sing some of the songs that we were singing. I was backstage just a little while ago just singing these songs with you and just celebrating God’s reckless love and celebrating just how God is a Father who has built a place for us. Then to be here on a Father’s Day to point to him as the Father to the fatherless is ironic to me because I grew up not thinking those kinds of thoughts about God. I used to think that God was reckless, but not the good kind of reckless, not the wild abandonment and unfiltered and ungoverned love.

I used to think God was reckless in a very harmful way. I used to think that God was a pursuer, but not a pursuer who wanted to help me and hold me, but a pursuer who wanted to hurt me. When I was nine years old, I literally felt like God hated me. I know most nine-year-olds don’t think stuff like that. Most nine-year-olds don’t wake up and think *I hate God because he first hated me*. Most nine-year-olds think stuff like... I don’t know... *Should I eat this crayon?*

I was nine when I decided I hated God because he had reckless hatred towards me. I’m originally from the country Iran. In 1979, the Iranian revolution in my country... That’s when, through a lot of trauma, I had a lot of misconceptions, misgivings about who God the Father is. I remember those days. I remember when the Iranian revolution happened. My father was high ranked in the military in Iran and we lived in this army based.

The way it played out for a nine-year-old boy was I went to school about two weeks into the revolution and one morning, they called a school assembly. A thousand of us piled outside and a soldier stood in front of our school, read the names of three students, mine being the first one, and asked us to come to the front. I made my way to the front. This guy decided to lead worship not with a guitar in his hand or a microphone, but with a gun out of a holster. He pointed it at my head, quoted the Koran and said, “I was sent here by Allah (God) to take your life because of who your father is.”

When you’re nine years old and someone says that they represent God and the way that they want to lead worship, the way that they want to worship their God, the way they want to be obedient to God the Father is to take your life, you don’t think God is a loving Father who wants you.

I love that passage in scripture where it says in 1 John 3: 1 ***How great is the love of the Father that he would lavish his love on us so that we would be the children of God.*** I remember at that moment thinking, *This God is up there, and he is lavishing wrath down on me.*

The school principal got between me and the gun and begged them to come back another day. For all I cared, the brother didn't need to come back the next day.

I went home and told my dad. My dad is a tough military man, but I saw him tear up and he said, "Son, we're going to get out of this country; we're planning to escape." In my mind, we were escaping from a very bad father, a heavenly father that wanted to rain down hell on me and my family.

Before we could implement our escape plan, I remember soldiers coming to our military home in our army base and dragging my father out of our home. I'll never forget my mom begging the soldiers, "Just kill him quickly, just kill him quickly." I asked why she wanted my dad killed quickly and she explained, after they took my dad out, that the day before, my dad's best friend was taken to a park where they tied him to a tree and in public took a pair of pliers and decided they were going to slowly, torturously kill him. So, my first memory ever of prayer was my mom asking God that my dad would be killed quickly. So, when you're going through that kind of trauma as a nine-year-old little boy, the last thing you are associating with the word *father* is good.

That afternoon, he came home and obviously he wasn't killed, but he said, "We're planning our escape and we're putting it on the front burner." My mom was a bit of heart patient back then. She had heart issues and she had been going to see some doctors. So, we used that as our excuse out. We went to these doctors and we said, "Look, we gotta get out of Iran; can you help us use this paperwork that she's got already, this track record that she has already with her heart to get out?"

So, we paid them our home, our cars... everything. My dad gave them a bunch of money and they were in on the plan. The next day, my mom acted like her heart was bothering her. They took her into this back room in the hospital and they came out and said she needed bypass surgery in Europe and that the family should go along for support. So, we bought two-way airline ticket like we were going quickly for this operation and then coming right back. We got the homework assignment and the home sitter, but we weren't coming back.

As a little boy, I remember holding my dad's hand in the Iranian airport. His hand just kept shaking and he kept saying, "If they find out we're escaping, they're going to kill us right here on this spot."

When you look back on your testimony, I don't know how it is for you, but even sometimes, like in hindsight, in the reflection looking back, you realize that you completely got it wrong. I remember at that time thinking God was the one who was hurting us. But I look back now and see how even when we were going through the Iranian revolution, even when we were going through that airport, he was really holding us and getting us out of Iran.

I love that passage in Isaiah 41. ***9 I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. 10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.***

I remember, when I was in that airport, thinking that God was hurting us with this wrathful left, but he was really holding us with his righteous right.

I remember we got up in the airplane and we landed in Switzerland and instead of going to the ambulance and going to the hospital, my dad took us to the American Consulate, and he pled our case. He told them that we needed to find political asylum because of what was happening in Iran, how the Iranians were burning the American flag, and how Iranians were going through this revolution with the Ayatollah Khomeini, and he told them how his life was in danger and his family's lives were in danger.

But at that time, nobody was allowing Iranians into the United States. People were watching every day how this revolution was playing out. The way that it had become so real for Americans was 54 American hostages were held in the American Embassy in Iran. So, every day, people would wake up and it wasn't something distant; it was something very personal. On the news every day, Dan Rather would begin, "Day 94 of the hostage situation... Day 95 of the hostage situation..." It was everything the two presidential candidates were talking about. It's all the whole presidency had become about. So, can you imagine the tension of that moment, and here we are an Iranian family trying to come to America.

So, for nine months we were stuck in Europe. We just couldn't get here until one day my mom got us together and she had what she called her American. She said, "Look, since we want to go to America, we ought to pray to America's God and ask him to let us into his country." My mom got us together and she showed us a picture of a man. She said, "This is Jesus Christ and he's an American..." I know some of y'all are laughing and some of y'all are wondering why everybody is laughing. Some of y'all think he was just a white American who's always on Hannity and Fox. He's not like some Duck Dynasty looking fella. Jim Caviezel with a mullet. He was more an original camel dynasty...

Anyway, my mom says, "This is Jesus, he's an American; let's ask him to let us into his country." I'm just telling you that's what happened. We held hands and my mom mentioned the name of Jesus out loud in a prayer and a week later, miraculously, the doors opened up. I remember thinking *I hate religion, but hey, Jesus, thank you for letting us into your country.*

My dad moved us to Killeen, Texas, y'all. Now you've got to understand. That's where the largest army base in the world is, right? My dad was a military guy. He was a flight trainer, an instruction pilot, so he thought *I'll just go there and be an instructor pilot.* Can you imagine, you move to Texas during the Iranian hostage situation to a military town. Can you say wedgie waiting to happen? So, we parachute in and I've got the wrong haircut, the wrong clothes, the wrong everything and people are like, "Bro, you are going to get beat up today after school." And that was me. I walked in and I heard every nickname every single day, every Seven Eleven joke, every turban joke... I got called bean dip and I'm not even Mexican. Every day, my nickname was bean dip. I was like "You're not even accurate in your racism," you know?

Here we had escaped halfway across the world, honestly, to unplug from one kind of terrorism... physical, right? And plug into a whole other kind of emotional terrorism. Their weapon of mass destruction was just abandonment, honestly. I remember going to class and every Friday there would be 15 kids in the classroom and there would be 14 invitations to the skating rink birthday party. I was

always the kid that wasn't invited because of where we were from. I was the kid that sat by himself everyday and ate his lunch alone. I was the kid that every day found out the way that people were going to treat me was they weren't going to get to know me just because of where I'm from and because that's unpopular. I was going to be insanely unpopular.

For years and years, that was me. Until the day my freshman year in high school was about to start. I was sitting in my room... By this time, we had moved to Alabama because of another army base where my father thought he would maybe get some traction. It was the same ole, same ole for me. I was sitting in my room and I was crying; my dad heard me and he came in and asked me what was wrong. I told him, "Dad, we've been here for years; nobody likes me and I don't like them. I get beat up like a pinata like once every couple of weeks. I said, "Can we just go back to Iran?"

He said, "You know we can't go back to Iran." By this time, we'd been in America long enough to know where to go when you're sad plus he had done really well for himself because of his hard work ethic. He goes, "Come with me." My dad drove me out to the mall and that afternoon, just to try to help me, he bought me new clothes, new haircut, new shoes, new everything. I went to the American high school... I walked in as a freshman the next day and instantly... I was the same insecure kid on the inside, but with a new makeover. I instantly went from geek to chic overnight. I walked in and I went from Abdul to Julio.

I just found out something you already know. I found out that a whole lot of times, people care about the brand that you wear, the car that you drive, and I just learned how to play that game. Now you don't have to be from Iran to figure that out. I just learned how to play high school. I learned how to end up at the right lunchroom table. I learned how to be cold to people to be perceived as cool to certain people. I learned how to play high school.

You know where it says in the Bible in Romans 12 - ***2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*** I was the opposite. I was just like I'm tired of being alone. I'm always not conformed. I'm willing to conform. I will take any kind of friendship even if it's a fabricated kind. I'm just tired of being alone. On paper, it looked like things were better. On paper, it looked like *man, this kid is doing good. He's getting invited to the right parties, he's throwing the right parties.* My high school years became where I just completely sold out. I graduated from high school pretty popular, but I graduated with a 1.9 GPA, in Alabama, y'all. That's about as bad as it gets.

Can we just stop right now and say how they just introduced me as a Vice President of a college? That's pretty crazy. I didn't earn it; it was just completely grace.

So, I barely graduated and as soon as I graduated, about two months after high school, I'm in the car with the only buddy I have left who wasn't going off to college. He and I are sitting in front of my house, it's almost midnight, and to be really honest, we were smoking weed together. So, we're passing this joint back and forth and my buddy looked at me and he goes, "I can't believe you're so down tonight. Why are you so down?"

I said, "Man, all we did was hug the necks tonight of all of our buddies who are going off to this school or this school. Do you realize we're about to be completely alone? We've got like no... We built this thing up in high school and it all just went away as soon as we graduated."

He was like, "No, man, all these juniors think were cool. We'll go back down and hang..."

I was like, "I don't want to be that loser."

So, we're going back and forth and we're smoking weed and my buddy has this epiphany. He looks at me and goes, "Well, I've got an idea. In America, especially in the south, outside the high school, the next big social ground is the church youth group. You ought to come with me tomorrow to church."

I'm surprised that he's inviting me to church because he's literally handing me weed while asking me to come to church with him. I'm like (inhaling), "You go to church?!" He's like (inhaling), "I'm a Southern Baptist." I would have thought Methodist. I told him, "I'm not going to church" and he asked why not. I told him, "Because I hate religion. I saw it destroy my country. And when I was kid, we're kind of quasi Muslim, but at the same time... Man, I'm not interested in that."

He goes, "That's Islam. Come with me; Christianity is what I'm talking about." I had seen that on TV; I'd seen people on TBN with weird hair sitting around weirder furniture. I told him all the reasons why I didn't want to go and instead of complaining, he tries one last thing. He goes, "Let me just tell you who will be there tomorrow morning." And he names the five prettiest girls from my high school.

When he got to the fifth girl, I was like, "I am motivated to visit your church. But there is no way that my father is going to let me go to a Christian church." I said, "Like I told you, we're kind of anti-religious/Muslim and we're weird. My dad won't let me." He told me to go ask him. So, on a Saturday night, knowing my dad was going to say no, just to get my buddy off my back, I walked in my house and my buddy walked up to the door to make sure I'm going to ask him. I walked down the hallway and I knocked on my parents' bedroom door and I said, "Mom and Dad, I'm sorry to get you out of bed. Don't get out of bed. I know you're going to say no, but my friend wants to know if tomorrow I can go with him to a Christian church."

Instead of saying no, my dad goes, "What is the name of it?" What I didn't know was about two weeks before that night when I'm stoned, asking if I can go to church, my dad had struck up a friendship with this man named Aubrey Edwards.

My dad owned a four-star French Restaurant in Birmingham... I know that sounds confusing, but trust me. So, my dad owned this restaurant and this guy, Aubrey Edwards, who was the worship pastor of this church, and a couple of his members had come to eat at my dad's restaurant for lunch. While they were there, about two weeks before that Saturday night when I'm asking if I can go to church, they had seen how my dad, during lunch rush, was busy, so instead of complaining about the service, they got up and helped him during that lunch rush. Then they came back again and helped him. And then they'd just been helping my dad at his restaurant as free waiters and bus boys and all this different stuff. God, in his sovereignty, had used that to massage my dad's heart up to it.

So, on a Saturday night, I'm asking if I can go to church and instead of saying no, he goes, "What is the name of it?" I don't know the name of it, but my friend does and so, he yells down the hallway, "Shades!" And that happens to be the shorthand for Shades Mountain Baptist Church. Out of 1,100 churches in Birmingham, that was the exact same one as the people that had been helping my dad. So, my testimony is not about some Iranian kid that turned out okay. It's about a church that showed up.

So, my dad goes, "I know those people; you can go there, but only there."

So, on a Sunday morning, I got up and I got to go to church. I put on my Chinos, I go to church, I walk in the room, and I'm telling you as soon as I walk in the room... There was a youth rally happening in the gym. As soon as I walk in the room, everybody was like, "That's the biggest partier of our school showing up." Can you imagine the guy at work who is the most vulgar, the lady in your office who always coming in with blood shot eyes and she's always country line dancing on a Tuesday night? You know the guy that's always telling the joke when you play golf with him. You know it's going to be the front nine and the back nine that he's going to say inappropriate things. Image the most blatant lost person, the vainest person... That was me and I just showed up. They're like, "Why is he here?"

They just decided, like missions come to town, and they were kind to me. They were gracious. At the end of the youth rally, they said, "Hey, come back tonight." And I had nothing to do but I was full of pride. They said, "That's okay if you don't come back tonight." Instead, they came to my house the next night. They had this thing called visitation. Lost people call it harassment. It's more aggressive than Amway friends, you know what I'm saying? I'm just telling you, we were the Iranians, but we got terrorized by a youth group for eight Monday nights in a row. For eight Monday nights in a row, they would come to my house and we're like, "Christians are coming, Christians are coming."

They would come in and they would share the gospel every time they would come in. They had the little bracelets that had the beads (predictable) and the tract that opened up into a cross (predictable), but I'm just telling you they would come in and they would tell me that same thing. One week it would be John :16 – "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son. That if you believe in him, David, you will not perish; you will have eternal life. Another week it would be John 14 – Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me." Another week it would be, "He who knew no sin became sin so that you could become the righteousness of God."

They were just different views into the same truth, right? Over and over again, they'd come up and open up their Bible and they'd share with me how God so loved David Nasser that God wanted to save David Nasser. Every time they would come over, I would laugh at them and go, "I'm sure he loves you; you're very good people, but I'm not very good." They were like, "We know, we know. We saw the posters for the keg parties, and we heard about..." Over and over again, I would just tell them, "I'm sure he loves you; you're good, religious people, and they kept tell me, "We're not religious; we're not interested in religion. We're interested in a relationship."

For eight weeks in a row, every Wednesday and every Sunday, I was at their church because love is a magnet, plus they dragged me there, I would hear the gospel.

One night I was at their church and the preacher was preaching... The preacher there was old school, not like Ted and cool. He was like comb over, King James only... That guy, alright? He's sweating out of glands that don't even exist on the human body. He shared the gospel, and he might not have been so cool, but he was so loving. He shared the gospel and he gave an invitation and he said, "If you want to give your life to Jesus, I want you to come here to the front." During the invitation, I remember thinking, *This is getting to me. I gotta get away from this place.* While everybody else was hitting the aisle, coming forward, I hit the aisle and went the other way. I got in the car and I went home. I thought, *I'm not letting them in my home anymore and I'm certainly not going to their church anymore because it's starting to get to me.*

But I realized something when I got home. God's not contained in church buildings and church gatherings. I love where it says, in Psalm 139, "Where can I go from your presence, O Lord. If I go the mountains, you are there. If I go to the valleys, you are there." It's God's omnipresence.

I remember on a Sunday night, after I'd gone to their church and I felt so scared. I went home and God's presence was thicker in my home when I walked into my house than anywhere else. All of these Christians kept bringing me Bibles. I had a stack of them on my dresser. Two hours later, at about midnight, I'd given my life over to Christ.

I love this verse in Galatians 2, ***20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith...*** Not religion, not works, but faith. ***...in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*** The old me died, the old me crucified, the old me died that night. I was eighteen and two months old and a whole new me was born again.

I remember that when I got saved, it just all of the sudden became conflict in my home. All of the sudden, my parents who weren't very devout Muslims, became very devout. "You can't be a Christian; we're Muslims." I was like, "We are?" It was just really a rub against everything that we already lost. We had lost our heritage, our pedigree, we lost all these things and now I was the prodigal kid that had given up our religion.

I remember leaving the house as a brand-new believer and five months after I was a Christian. One night, my sister called me on the phone, weeping. My sister is four years older than me. She called me, weeping. Through campus crusade at her campus, she had become a Christian. Five months after that, my mom, who the night I went to get baptized, was like, "Please don't do this; you've been brainwashed." My mom calls me 10 months after I was Christian. She was loud on the phone, "Tonight I become Christian." I asked her why she was yelling, and she was like, "I want your father to hear." Ten months after I was a Christian, my mom starts putting Bible verses in my dad's food, in his Rogaine; she's just going after my dad.

Then five months after that, 15 months after I became a Christian, five months after my mom became a Christian, my brother, Benjamin, who is Down syndrome, God saved him. One by one, God was saving someone in my family. It took 21 months past that and then God saved my dad. One by one, I've seen the reckless love of God. Just a pursuit of God. So, those songs aren't just pretty; they're real to me. I have skin in the game on that.

People hear my story and they always go, "Boy, it must have been tough for the Iranians to come to Jesus," and I always go, "Not half as tough as it for my day job."

I work at the most religious place in the world. The Liberty's Convocation is insanely Christian. They are about as right wing on every angle that you can possibly get, on everything that's Christian. Last year, we saw over 700 of our students come to Christ. Most of them came in and they knew every Chris Tomlin song, they had been to Disciple Now, disciple later, see you at the polls, see you at the sprinkler; they had all the right answers. We got good, religious kids that show up. People always say, "Boy, it must have been touch for you," and I'll go, "Not half as tough as it is for these good kids who come in." They believe everything we tell them about Jesus. They believe it, they agree with it, they sing about it, and they'll go serve in missions, but a lot of them close their eyes and pray more to a black void than a Christ that they know intimately. For me and my family, it was very black and white. For them, it's shades of gray.

My wife was that way. My wife grew up in the church. My wife's story is the opposite of mine. Mine was just a bunch of rebellion, hers was a bunch of religion. My wife was 16 years old when they put her on the pastor search committee. My wife never missed a tithe check growing up. Her dad was a deacon, she was this good girl. Worst thing she did growing up was read under a dim light or take a tag off the pillow. My wife never cussed until she married me. My wife is good, she's moral. My wife was an 18-year-old teenager at the Bama Theater in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, as the head counselor, with a counselor badge on and a counselor pen and breath mint, ready to lead someone to Jesus. My wife walked an aisle when she was 18 years old. She took off her counselor badge, handed it to her pastor and said, "I need to be saved right now," and her pastor said, "You're the leader of this youth group." She said, "You're right, I'm a leader, but it's always been about doing; it's never been about trusting; it's never been about being."

People always here my story and they go, "Boy, it must have been tough for the rebellious Iranian..." I always go, "No half as tough as it is for the really, really good girl who has always been about being good and never been about being his."

I'm just telling you that to say the irony of it would be that God would send me to the buckle of the Bible belt, Branson, Missouri, y'all, come on. If God would send someone from Iran as a missionary to stand here and say, "Hey, on Father's Day, have you ever given your life to the Father who has given you everything, including his son?" I know you chose to be here on Father's Day. If you're a dad... A lot of dads are bailing and what they want for Father's Day is to be left alone and go play golf. The last thing they want to do is be in this room, blah, blah, blah.

Maybe you're here and you're hearing that and you're like, "I'm already here, bro. I've already drank the Kool-Aid." I'm not asking you if you go to church. I'm not even asking you if you have a relationship with Jesus. I'm asking you what kind of relationship is it? Is he your behavior police because that would make him religious? Or is he your God? Is he the pathway for you to be adopted into the family of God and to have him, God the Father, not as the one who is always looking at how you're supposed to have behavior modification, but identity change forever?

Can I get you to pray with me just wherever you are? Can I just ask you to bow your heads with me? Can I just ask you a really simple question this morning? Not do you go to church, again. I know you do because you're here. Not do you find yourself hospitable to the gospel. I know you're not hostile to the gospel because you're here. You didn't get up and walk out while we were singing the gospel a few minutes ago. But has there ever been moment in your life...? Not even have you asked him into your heart. But have you given him your life? When you say the heart is the front door... I want all of this right here to belong to you.

Have you ever really given everything that you are, every bit of you to him and said, "Jesus, I know you're the son of God. I know you lived the perfect life 2,000 years ago. Then after having lived a perfect life, you died a sinners' death. You died on my behalf. You stepped in as the substitution and you paid the penalty for my sinful nature by dying on a cross and satisfying God's perfect standard. Because of that, I want to receive the greatest Father's Day gift of all: The Son of God, as my savior." Have you ever done that?

If you've never done that, wouldn't it be amazing that on this day of all days, Father's Day, you would become the daughter of the Great Father, you would become the son of the Great Father? By the way, it's not just the greatest gift you could give God by receiving; it's the greatest gift you could give God's people around you. Some of you, as fathers, you want to be the provider for your family and you'll always be stunted in that. You'll never get to really provide for your family until you first belong to God. Some of you want to be the best husband, but you'll never be God's husband for your family until you give your life to him. So, could it be that today, long before the foundation of the earth, God had predestined this moment as your homecoming, this moment for you to come... Here's an even greater irony, that an Iranian, a former Muslim, would come here and share his "I once was lost, but now I'm found" to remind you that maybe today it's time to come home.

If that's you and you've never truly given your life to Jesus, I want to pray just a confession, a prayer of surrender right now, and I would ask you, if you believe this prayer to be true, just say it to him. I'll say a sentence and if you really believe it, if you agree with it and you've never truly given your life under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, just repeat after me and say this to God.

God, I know you're the good Father. God, I know that I don't deserve your love. God, I know that I'm a sinner. I'm this kid who has never been worthy of your love, worthy of your mercy, worthy of your grace, but it's not about earning it, it's not about being someone who does what's right in order to get your... it's about receiving. So, I thank you that you sent your Son Jesus to die on a cross for me and I receive that as the only gift of salvation that I have, the only way where the sacrificial lamb, your Son Jesus would do for me what I couldn't do for myself.

I receive what he did on the cross as the only way where my sins can be wiped clean, where everything I've ever committed and everything I'll ever commit will be paid for in full. I receive that as the gift of salvation so that I could become a child of God, so that I could become a family member into your family.

I thank you that Jesus not only died on the cross, but that three days later, when they went to check on his body in the tomb and he was not there because death couldn't hold him. Just as Jesus died, I'm dying to the old self today. I'm dying of religion, I'm dying of excuses, I'm dying of trying. I'm coming to trust. I'm giving myself to you, but just as Jesus died and resurrected, I'm not just dying to the old me, I'm resurrecting as a new person. The old dies. The old passes away now and a whole new me starts walking around, raising up out of this room in this moment to a newness of life. I thank you for this gift, I receive this gift, not just from my heart, but with everything that I am.

With your heads bowed, if you prayed that prayer for the first time for real today, the beauty of this church is that they have these prayer partners, this prayer team that as soon as church service is over in a gathering like this... They just kind of hang out in the front, and they would love to hear that you gave your life to Jesus today, that you surrendered your body and your soul and your mind and everything that you are over to him. They'd love to hug your neck and welcome you home and celebrate with you the work of God and really ask you, "What's the next step that we can kind of walk in serving you and growing in your new relationship."

Here in just a second I was told that I can dismiss you here, but before I dismiss you, I want to say if you, today, prayed that prayer, thanks for this, but now let us celebrate it with you. Come up in just a little while and tell someone from our prayer team so that not only can we celebrate, but that we can just kind of walk out of here and walk in community with you and what your doing. Maybe your going, "I think people around here already think I'm saved." You have to get over the hurdle of what people are going to think. You might be surprised by who is not surprised. This is that moment, let's celebrate it together. Christianity is always personal, but it should never be private, so let's do that together. Amen?

Thank you for letting me a part of this Sunday. I love your church. I love your pastor. It's been amazing. Again, the prayer team will be up here towards the front and we'd love to meet you. The rest of you, can we do this... This is what we do at Liberty. I only dismiss thousands strong. I know it feels Catholic, but we'll do it anyway. If you feel comfortable, put your hands out like this, like you're receiving. You always say, "Man, they're always trying to get me to give at church." They're not, man, they're trying to get you to receive. Let me just bless you.

May the Lord bless you today. By the way, you might not see what's happening as a blessing. Like how come I didn't get the promotion? How come their doing this...? Sometimes, we have an obstructive view and what feels like a curse is really a blessing. May the Lord bless you today and may he keep you today and may he shine his face on you today. May you just be a reflection of who he is. Amen.