

## Growth Track | Start

Aaron Brockett | Matthew 28:18-20

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How is everybody doing today? It's good to see you. I want to welcome you, if this is your first time at Traders Point. At all of our campuses, I want to give a big shout out. North, I'm talking to you. West, Downtown, our online crowd, wherever you are tuning in from around the world. And our Northwest campus you guys are looking good today. It's so, so good to see you.

Today, as you already heard, we are beginning a new, four-part series of messages called *Growth Track*, and our team has been working tirelessly behind the scenes for months and months and months getting ready for this series.

Every now and then I'll open our church App. You can actually flip through the old message series we have done for like the last decade. I don't know how I feel about that, but I looked different eight or nine years ago. Every so often I'll look back at the library of message series. I'll look at a couple and think, "You know what? God did something through that message series way bigger than I intended."

I have had the opposite of that too. There are some messages I cringe at and say, "I don't know what I was thinking when we did that." But for other message series I go, "God took that and changed our church through that series."

I don't want to overstate this, and I don't want to speculate about what God will do, but I want to anticipate that God might do something similar through this series we're starting today. If you are a brand new visitor, you've come on a really good day. If you've been here for a long, long time, you've come on a good day because we want to lay out some things about who we are as a church, why we do what we do, how you can get connected, and how you can grow.

I want to encourage you, if you consider Traders Point as your home, to make it a priority to be here all four weeks of this message series. If you're brand new, you might consider coming every single week because at the end of these four weeks you'll know as much about our church as anyone who has been here twenty years or more. There will be no such thing as a newbie, because you'll be in on all the content I want you to have to understand who we are as a church and what we're trying to accomplish.

So I want to kind of set the stage today for what *Growth Track* is by pointing us to a passage of Scripture in Matthew 28. If you have a Bible or a digital Bible, would you at all of our campuses meet me at Matthew 28? If you don't have a Bible, you can download our church App right now. There is a Bible on it. I'd love for you to follow along.

Matthew 28 is one of those passages that may be familiar to many of us. If it's not familiar to you, that's totally okay. But for many of you, you might look at it and go, "I'm familiar with this passage," and the temptation or the danger of being familiar with the passage is that we stop listening to it.

I get really nervous when people come up to me and say, "What are you preaching on this month," and I'm like, "The parable of the prodigal sons." And they are like, "I already know that. I'll probably be at the lake." What?

Or they go, "What are you preaching on this weekend?"

"John 3:16."

"I've heard so many sermons on that. There isn't anything you could possibly say to me from that passage."

The Bible describes itself as living and active. What that means is that the meaning of the passage does not change, but God has something fresh he wants to say to us from a passage whether you've heard it once or 1,000 times.

So Matthew 28 is one of those passages. If you've been around the church for a long time you are like, "I know what this says." That's fine. Are you listening though, because God's got something fresh he wants to see to us from it?

Let's look at this together. This is a foundational passage for who we are as a church. Jesus gathers up his remaining disciples after his resurrection, and he says this to them, "I have been given all **authority**," and another word for authority is power, "in heaven and on earth. Therefore, **go** and make **disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you." That's another way of saying, "Teach them how to grow." "And be sure of this: **I am with you always**, even to the end of the age."

So understand the setting here. Jesus gathers up his eleven remaining disciples, who have just failed him, by the way. They've messed up. If you study any of Jesus' three-year ministry on this earth, his disciples are following him around and they never get with the program. They just always seem to be several steps behind Jesus.

The night before Jesus is arrested and crucified, all he needs is some friends who will just stay awake with him and pray. They can't even do that. Then when the Roman soldiers arrest Jesus, they all flee. They deny they ever knew him. So now Jesus circles them back up.

I don't know if any of you have anyone in your life who reports to you. Maybe you have some employees at work, or you supervise a team. Maybe you hire someone to do some contract

work around your house. Maybe you give your kids some chores to do. If the people who answer to you fail at the task you've given them, do you give them more responsibility or less?

Well you probably give them less responsibility until they can prove themselves again. Jesus comes to these guys who just failed him in what he has asked them to do and he actually gives them more responsibility, not less. He gathers them up on this mountain in Galilee because mountains are inspirational.

How many of you, when you get a vacation, are like, "We are heading to the mountains." Anybody? At all of our campuses, are you mountain people? There are a few scattered around the room. The reason why is because we live in Indiana—it is flat. How many of you are beach people? "We're heading to the beach." Far more, far more—the reason why is because we live in Indiana. It is very, very cold here. So Jesus is both. Jesus is a beach guy and a mountain guy, because he restores Peter at a beach, and now he is going to restore these disciples on a mountain.

And he says to them, "I've actually got more I'm going to entrust to you." Jesus says to these 11 guys, filled with all their faults and failures. He gives them a task that Jesus himself never did when he was here on earth.

You are like, "Aaron, what are you talking about?" Well Jesus asks these guys to go global. He says: I want you to take this mission and this message, this gospel message; I want you to take it all around the world. And they hadn't even been faithful with it where they were.

Jesus had never done that. Did you know Jesus never traveled to a foreign country while he was here? Jesus never preached through an interpreter. He never went on a short-term mission trip with his church, unless you count going from heaven to earth. I guess that qualifies as a pretty significant mission trip.

But Jesus asked these guys to go and take this message global. And he says, "By the way, I'll be with you when you do it." He tells them to do four things. I want to look at these four things, pull them out of the passage:

1. Go and make disciples...
2. Baptizing them...
3. Teach them how to grow...
4. Know that I am with you always...

I was looking at this during this past week and thought, "This seems a little out of order to me." If I'm in Jesus' situation and talking to these disciples I think I would have worded it this way:

1. Know that I am with you...
2. Baptize them...
3. Teach them how to grow...

#### 4. So that disciples will be made...

That seems to me to be the logical progression of things Jesus would ask them to do. But Jesus begins with make disciples first, and then baptize them. I think the reason why Jesus orders this the way he does is because he is giving us a clue as to who disciples are, what disciples do, and who disciples do it for.

If you are brand new to the church and hear that word disciple, or even if you're not and you've been in church a long time, when you hear that word disciple you may wonder, "What does that mean?" I grew up in church and for the longest time my impression of a disciple was a super-Christian. Is anybody with me on that?

A disciple was somebody that I maybe aspire to be, but I'll never be that because that is a graduate level Christian. They read their Bible five hours a day they pray for three hours a day and they can speak the Bible in the original languages. They are like the avengers of the Christian faith.

That's not what a disciple is. A disciple is what Jesus has called all of us to. You can be a disciple the day you start following after Jesus. Let me give you the definition of a disciple in its plainest description: A disciple is somebody who chooses to trust Jesus more than their own logic, feelings, and emotions and begins to follow after him by spending daily time with him in his word.

You read a passage of Scripture, and I don't care if it is one verse... In fact, I would rather you read one verse, and ask God what it is he needs you to apply to your life from that one verse, than to read a whole chapter and daydream through it.

Have any of you ever done that? I've done that. Like in Bible reading plans, I've got to get through the Bible in a year. So I just start reading all these chapters, and I'm just trying to get through it so I can check the box, and none of it got into me. I maybe knew some things but it didn't get down to my heart.

I'd rather you would read one verse and stop and say, "God, what is it that you want to reveal from me from this one verse? How do you want me to apply this truth to my marriage, my parenting, my finances, my career?" And here is the key question many of us fail to get to, "God, here is what I'm going to do with it."

"God, what are you saying to me from your word? How is this going to change things in my life? And when am I going to do it?" You just start doing that every single day, and you'll grow. Did you know the most common analogy used in the Scriptures for your relationship with Jesus is a walk? Not a flight, not a sprint, but just a walk.

Jesus says: Would you just discern the next step you need to take? Would you just walk with me for a while? Would you just apply what I am saying to you from my word? I know you're hearing it, but are you listening to it and applying it to your life?

You know what will happen if you start doing that? As imperfectly as you will day after day after day after day, you'll wake up three months, six months, or a year from now and look back and say, "I grew. Look how far God has taken me."

God can do amazing things through average people who give him full access to their lives. Does anybody believe me? Is anybody with me? He will. He will do amazing things if you'll just give him access. The key word is application. And I think the reason Jesus words things and orders things the way he does in the great commission is because he wants us to know not only how to grow, but why we grow. That's so important for us to understand.

We grow by spending time in his word, applying his word to our lives, spending time in prayer and talking to him through spiritual disciplines. All that is great, but if you don't know why you are growing eventually your growth will turn into something very, very toxic. I call it the disease of me. I have been in seasons of my life where I got way too caught up thinking that my personal spiritual growth was all about me, and it got really toxic.

I grew up in church. I went to a private Christian high school. I went to a Bible College. I have been in so many different discipleship groups, in so many different Bible studies. I have books and books and books on theology in my office. And yet there have been times when my Bible knowledge actually got ahead of my obedience. I became educated far beyond my level of obedience. I knew a whole bunch of stuff, but it didn't change the way I was loving broken and hurting people in my life.

Jesus says: Listen, I want you to grow and in your spiritual, personal growth with me there are some things in there for you, but it is not about you. It is about taking things God is doing in your life and actually helping other people get to the Jesus you know and met. Because there are a whole bunch of people in this world who do not get it, they think it is a religion.

Here's the thing. How many of you have ever had toddlers at home? Do any of you have little kids at home right now? Raise your hands. We want to pray for you right now. How many of you have nieces or nephews or are grandparents who have toddlers in your family?

Have you gone out to eat with little kids? Isn't that so much fun? You've got the diaper bags and you get the high chair. They seat you off in the corner where you can be nowhere near anyone else? Your toddler is there and they are in the high chair. Here is the issue. Who eats first? Those little kids eat first. Mom and dad are like, "We're going to feed your first. We'll make sure your tummy is full; make sure your diaper has been changed." Then maybe mom and dad can eat.

Why? Because that's what mature people do. Mature people say, "I'm going to let you eat first. How can I help feed you?" Growing, healthy people say, "It's not about me. It's about others who are far from God who I'm going to get to God."

The same is true in the church. And I'm not saying that, Jesus is saying that. We just came through a series where we talked about a bunch of stories and parables Jesus told. Did you know Jesus tells three stories in a row in Luke 15 and he is making the same point? That tells me that after the first story he said: You don't get it yet. Let me tell you another story. You still don't get it yet. Let me tell you a third story.

And in these stories Jesus tells about things that are lost. He says: Hey, there is a lost coin, a lost sheep, and a lost son." Each of those things increase in value, and Jesus says the owners of these three things lose them and they become distracted by what was lost until they can find it. That's all they can think of. They are like: We've got to find the thing we have lost.

And through those stories, Jesus is saying we serve a God who is distracted by what he lost. He is doing everything he can to get to you. We serve a God who leaves found things to go after lost things. That's the purpose of Jesus.

Have you ever lost something valuable to you? I have. Have you ever lost car keys? That will ruin your day, trying to remember all the keys on the keychain. Have any of you ever lost a wedding ring? I'm on number three right now. How many of you have ever lost a kid. I have—at home.

It was years ago and my son was a little toddler. Lindsay needed a girls' night out. She leaves and my son is in the back bedroom playing with some toys. I got distracted doing some other stuff. I noticed he was not in his room anymore. I called his name and went back to his room. He wasn't there. I searched every square inch of that small house we lived in and he wasn't anywhere. He was not under that roof. And I panicked.

I opened the front door and started running down the street, calling out his name thinking he had somehow gotten out. I was just yelling for him. He was lost for about seven or eight minutes, but it felt like seven or eight hours. I eventually found him in the garage. He was hiding in a cardboard box. So, the dad of the year award right there.

Here is the thing. During those moments when he was lost, he was all I could think about. I might have been hungry, but there was no way I was stopping and making myself a sandwich. If somebody would have rung the doorbell and said, "Do you want to hang out for a little bit?" It would have been like, "My son is lost."

"I'm sure he'll turn up." Their apathy would have made me angry. I was distracted by the fact he was lost and I was going to do everything I could to find him.

Do you know that is the exact same terminology, the strong terms Jesus uses for those in the world today who are far from God? He says: Listen, time is short. How many of you have noticed how quickly time is going? You look in the mirror and say, "I can't believe time is going by so quickly and eternity is so long."

Jesus says: I'm distracted by what is lost and those of you who have come to know me, those of you who are growing in their awareness of me, I want you to get in the game and help others come to meet the Jesus you know.

If you get to this place in your life where you are like, "I just need to go to new levels of depth," maybe you do. But maybe you just need to start loving people better. The analogy that I use is everybody needs a bib and everybody needs an apron. If you're not wearing one of those, your spiritual metabolism is going to be off.

You need to be feeding and growing, and I can't do all the feeding and growing from this stage on a weekend. Our church cannot possibly give you all the things you need to grow. You're going to have to learn how to self feed at some point. You're going to have to learn to grow by wearing a bib and you're going to have to put on an apron and begin to serve others. If all you're doing is feeding, you're going to get fat. If all you're doing is serving, you're going to not have the nutrients to go.

So let me tell you what growth track is all about. That was my introduction, by the way. I'll actually move through the rest of this really quickly, but I needed to set the stage for all that. Matthew 28 is our mission statement as a church. We say it differently. We say we want to remove unnecessary barriers that keep people from Jesus. If you've been here for a while, you've heard us say that.

I don't want you to think that is a gimmick, because it's not a gimmick. It's the gospel. I don't want you to think it's just about us trying to lower the bar to get people to Jesus. It means growing people remove barriers that keep people from Jesus. That's why we grow. And Jesus himself would say some things that were not very popular with the crowds. The gospel message itself may be a stumbling block to many.

I'm not talking about removing necessary barriers. I'm talking about removing the unnecessary manmade, religious barriers. There are a whole bunch of them. Maybe we have some here today who would consider themselves and atheist or agnostic. If you are here today, I'm so glad you are. But I think for the vast majority of the people in the world, so many believe in God but don't know what to believe about God or what their next step is.

So many people are saying, "I haven't been in church in years. I don't know what I would wear. I don't know if people are going to look at me. I don't know if they are going to make me stand up and introduce myself. I don't know if I know the words to the songs."

This happens to me every summer on break, especially if we're out of town, when I decide what church we're going to go to. It always amazes me how fear and insecurity floods back into my life when I think about being a new person in a new place. And that's why we've got to be on mission to help as many people come to know Jesus as we possibly can.

So here is what *Growth Track* is. For the next four weekends what I want to do is help us answer these two questions you might possibly be asking.

Why does TPCC do what we do, the way we do it?

And I want to be really, really clear that every Bible teaching, Jesus centered church in our city has the same mission. It is Matthew 28. We might phrase it differently, but that's our mission. Now the difference between churches is the way we seek to accomplish Matthew 28. That would be methodology. That would be programs. That would be philosophy of ministry.

Contrary to popular belief, or maybe what you might think about churches, we are not in competition with other churches in our city. We are not in competition with Connection Point Church. We are not in competition with iTown, Northview, and a host of others. In fact, the pastors of those churches are some of my very best friends. I love those guys. I love their heart. I love what God is doing in and through their churches. And I am cheering them on. I want them to win. I want them to grow. I want them to be healthy. Why? Because when the tide rises, all ships ride with the tide.

I'm under no illusion that our church is going to fulfill the Great Commission by ourselves. That would be silly. There are so many people in our city who are far from God, that if they decided to come to church next weekend we wouldn't have enough seats in all the buildings that exist around Indy to seat all of them.

We need every church to be healthy and on mission. So I'm cheering those guys on. I love to take a weekend and just kind of sneak over, just kind of worship with them and see what they are doing. I love to walk up to people and start talking to them and help them find a seat. They kind of give me a strange look like, "You look familiar. Are you the pastor at Traders Point?"

"Well, yeah."

"We used to go there."

"Let me help you find a seat."

It's not about competition. I want them to do well. The difference is in how we seek to accomplish it. It's a good thing. It takes all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people.

Here's the story of our church. Our church got started in 1834. That's a really long time ago. I did the math. It's nearly 200 years ago. People are always amazed at that, because they think



our church is a relatively new church. But it's a church that's been around for a really long time. Here is what is amazing about the fact we are about 185 years old. Statistically speaking, the average church in America has a 40 year lifespan.

What I mean by that is that a church gets started and has effective ministry and grows for about 40 years. Somewhere around the 40 year mark it plateaus and begins to decline, which could be another 40 years, and eventually the church closes its doors. Over 3,000 churches in the United States close their doors for the last time every single year, which is why we are so passionate about church planting.

So, our church is about 200 years old, which means our lifecycle has kicked over about five times in our history. What I mean by that is that the group of men and women who gathered in our church realized it was for them but it wasn't about them. And they said, "We've got to do everything we can to reach the next generation or we're going to plateau, decline, and eventually die."

Our church began with men and women who understood the **mission** and the **methods** and didn't confuse the two. And that is so important for us to understand in the day and age in which we live. We've got to understand our mission, and then we need to understand the methods to help us accomplish our mission and realize that the mission stays the same but the methods always change. And they need to change.

We see God say something very similar in Isaiah 43:19, "For I am about to do something **new**. See, I have already begun!" In other words, God didn't wait for us. He just started. "Do you not see it?" Are you going to wake up and catch up to what it is I am doing in and through the world, or are you going to stay hijacked by your nostalgia? And by the traditions of the past which, by the way, are not bad. But God says: Listen, I need to continue to press in to reach people who are far from me.

I love what it says in 1 Chronicles 12:32, "From the tribe of Issachar, there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. All these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take."

And God has called us in our day, our age, and our culture to discern where we go next and how we can continue to reach people. What this means is that if you've been a part of our church for the last 20 years there is a whole lot that has changed. This is not the same church that hired me 11 years ago. We're not even the same church we were a year ago.

Now our mission hasn't changed. What we believe about God and Jesus and salvation will never change. But the methods always change. We are married to our mission, not the methods.

And if you don't understand that, this church is going to frustrate the snot out of you. And I've done it. I've been guilty of it. I confuse these all the time—mission and methods. Why? Maybe because there was a method that was used I really loved. There was a song I sang that really

compelled me. There was a class I took that drew me closer to Jesus. Why don't we do that anymore, it was so meaningful in my life?

It was a method. The mission stays the same, but God is a God who does new things and changes the methods so he can continue to reach people in this next generation who are far from God.

And so here is the next question you may be asking: How do you get connected and grow spiritually in a church this big?

"Aaron, I heard what you are saying about reaching people. So what about my connection? What about my growth?" And that is a fair question. I do not want to just amass a big crowd of people on the weekends who are spectators of a service. I want you to become participants in what God wants to do in your life and around the world. I don't want you to just become a consumer of religious goods and services. I want you to be a contributor to what God is doing around the world.

So *Growth Track* is our carefully thought out response to try to help everybody, regardless of where you are on your spiritual journey, to know what your next step is. It's a walk. What is your next step of spiritual growth and connection in our church and throughout our city?

I'm going to teach through this series and we're going to take the month of September to collect all the data we're going to get from you. Then in the beginning of October we're going to start *Growth Track*, which is just going to be a weekly gathering at all of our campuses every single Sunday. And you can jump in at any time to know what your next step is.

This effectively replaces our old membership process. If any of you were around when we did the membership process. It was a great thing for the season of life we were in. But I don't know if any of you grew up in church. When I grew up in church, membership meant a very, very different thing. Basically, if you showed up at church more than two Sundays in a row, your name mysteriously ended up on the membership list. You had no idea how it got there. You didn't fully know what it meant.

Typically, throughout our church past, the member role would be about three times the size of who showed up on Sunday mornings. In fact we had a whole bunch of members, not as many attenders. Then we would do a congregational meeting, and everybody would show up to vote something down they didn't like for the Sundays they were never there for.

Anyway, I'm not bitter.

The Bible doesn't talk very much about membership. When the Bible talks about membership, it talks about being engaged in a movement. You are the body of Christ. It is Jesus in you, and he's got some stuff to do through you. So membership for us is engagement. I just want you to

lean in, I want you to start following Jesus, and I want you to discover God's purpose for your life. I want you to begin to make a difference in this world for him.

Some of you right now may be going, "Aaron, what if I am already a member of this church? I've been here for 20 years. Do I need to go through *Growth Track* again? How in the world are you going to get all 9,000 of us across four campuses through *Growth Track*?"

Well you are sitting in week one of *Growth Track* right now. Surprise! And so that is why I want you, regardless of where you are in your spiritual journey—as Petie said here at Northwest, and as your campus pastor is instructing you—to take that card in your aisle, fill it out, and leave it with us on the way out. Some of you are not going to want to play. Some of you don't want to do this. I totally get it and would probably be like that if I were in your situation.

Please understand this. You are helping us to understand how we are doing. I don't want to amass a crowd. I want to help you know how to connect and grow spiritually. So here is where we're going over the course of the next four weeks together:

**Start** following Jesus and be baptized.

**Connect** with others and join a group.

**Grow** in your faith, in a group, and through daily spiritual disciplines.

**Go** discover your purpose, join a team, and make a difference.

And ultimately, at the end of the day, I want you to start following Jesus today. It is not as complicated as you think. You don't have to have all your questions answered. You don't need to know everything about the Bible.

Listen. Your life might be really messy right now. You might be in the middle of a painful divorce. There may be some things going on in your life and you say, "Man, this is not the right time for me to come to Jesus because everything is a mess"

Listen to me. That is the perfect time to come to Jesus. Welcome to the family. You don't have to have it all figured out. It is a relationship, not a religion. Do you know the difference between the two? A religion says, "Figure it all out. Figure out what you believe. Get all your questions answered, and then convert."

A relationship is very different. A relationship says, "Guess what? You're going to have questions the rest of your life. Guess what? You're going to have issues you're working through the rest of your life. Life is really hard but for the rest of your life you don't need to trust in your logic, feelings, and emotions. Put your trust in the one who does understand it all, and begin to follow after him." That's what it means.

So I want to give you that opportunity today. If you are already a follower of Jesus, but you're not locked into a local church somewhere, I want to help you discover over the next four weeks whether or not this is the church for you. And I understand that as I lay stuff out, what may

happen is you may gain some clarity and say, “This isn’t the church for me. Aaron, I hear everything you’re saying, but I’m in a different place. But what you’ve done for me is give me clarity on which church I should lock into.”

It may not be this one. And I’ll be sad to see you go. I might shed a tear. It might be awkward if I bump into you in an aisle in Meijer. But I would much rather you say, “I’ve got some clarity. I know where I can go and be fully engaged,” rather than for you to graze around from church to church.

We’ve got so many great churches around Indianapolis. If I wasn’t the pastor of this one, there are several I would jump into next weekend and be a part of the mission there because I believe in what they are doing. And you know what? They do things differently than the way we would do it, but I would still jump in there.

The challenge of having so many great churches around Indy is it’s almost like cattle, we just kind of graze around from one church to the next. “I really like the teaching there. I really like the worship there. I really like what they offer over here.” Listen, I want you to lock in and be fully there because no church is perfect. And I want you to lock in and be on mission somewhere.

Well, I want to encourage you to start following Jesus today. I want you to know that how it works is always through a relationship and an invitation. I want to read a passage out of John that actually describes how some of the very first followers started following after him. Listen to what it says.

“The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, ‘Look! There is the Lamb of God!’ When John’s two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. Jesus looked around and saw them following. ‘What do you want?’ he asked them. They replied, ‘Rabbi’ (which means “Teacher”), ‘where are you staying?’ ‘Come and see,’ he said.”

Going on to the next verse, “Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, ‘We have found the Messiah’. Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus.”

“The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘Come, follow me.’ Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter’s hometown. Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, ‘We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.’ ‘Nazareth!’ exclaimed Nathanael. ‘Can anything good come from Nazareth?’ ‘Come and see for yourself,’ Philip replied.”

What I want you to see here is that all of these initial followers of Jesus, they didn’t have their questions fully answered. They didn’t have their beliefs locked down. It was a simple invitation

to start following. And the same is true for you and me today. It's this understanding that you and I are far from God in our sin. You feel that, don't you?

But maybe you've been trusting in your own logic or you've been trusting in your own feelings. And you've been trusting in your own emotions to sort through this thing called life. Can I just ask you? How is that going for you? Is it working? Maybe sometimes, but I'm guessing at the end of the day there are so many times when you're like, "There's got to be more to this." And Jesus comes along and he says: Hey man, would you just trust me? Would you just follow after me?

And for many of us, we're just sitting back waiting for enough proof. We're waiting for enough answers to our questions. And Jesus says: Actually, you're not going to get any answers to your questions and your beliefs are going to remain fuzzy until you take a step and until you start walking with me.

The first place you begin to walk is right into the baptistery because Jesus knew we needed something tangible to do in order to solidify the emotions we feel. All day long I can sit there and say, "I really need to start a diet. I'm going to start a diet. I really need to be on a diet." But until the day I actually do something I haven't really done anything.

I might say, "I really need to work out," but until the day I pick up some weights I haven't really done anything. Until I start moving I haven't done anything. We've got to do something tangible.

And Jesus says: I want you to come down into the waters of baptism, which symbolizes death to your old self, resurrection to your new self in me, and just begin to follow. And you don't need to be perfect. You don't need to have it all figured out. In fact, if you do this isn't for you. If you don't, welcome to the family.

I want to pray a prayer and then at all our campuses I'm going to turn it over to the campus pastors to provide some direction to those of you who are willing to go all in. So far today we've had somewhere between 40 and 50 baptisms. It's only shortly before noon. We've got services the rest of the day. It's amazing to see what God might do.

Let me just pray over us.

Father, we come to you right now and I just pray today that if there are some in the room right now, at all of our campuses, who are ready to start following you, and maybe they've never had it put into those terms. Maybe they have, but it hasn't really clicked for them. That what you've invited them into is not a religion, where they come and figure out what they believe in and then convert.

It's a relationship, where you start following and as you follow you begin to grow as a disciple of Jesus. There might be some things for us in that growth, but our growth is never about us. It's always about what it is you are seeking to do in and through this world.

God, the first step for us is to start following you right into the waters of the baptistery. God I pray today that your Spirit would be alive and moving at all of our campuses right now. If some are feeling that conviction, they would have the courage to step out, to turn that conviction into courage. And to say, "I'll be willing to step forward. I'll be willing to begin that very public walk of following after Jesus."

Thank you, God, for who you are and what you've done. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.