
Alright, what's up church family? How are we today? Good. Hey, I want to welcome everyone across all of our campuses, those of you tuning in online, and those of you in our p.m. services. We're really glad you are here. Happy Super Bowl Sunday.

How many of you are pulling for the Niners? Are there any Niners fans? Anywhere? Alright, alright. We love you. There is grace for you. How many of you are right with God, pulling for the Chiefs? There we go. How many of you are like, "I really don't care?" Awesome—regardless of who you're cheering for or if you care about the game, we're really glad you are here today.

You know, one thing you and I have in common is that we've all done some dumb stuff. Have you ever done some dumb stuff? I was trying to think through the list this past week to find some examples I could share. There's way too many. I only have 30 minutes to teach. But, I wanted to maybe share just one.

A few years ago, the door handle of my truck busted off. It wasn't all the way off. It was still fastened to the door, but half of it had come off. Instead of calling the dealership and setting up an appointment like any rational person would do, I was like, "I can fix that." So, I got some crazy glue and put it on the handle. I held it there for about 10 minutes, because it's crazy glue and it dries crazy fast.

I went inside, got up the next day, and there was a long line of dried super glue that had gone all the way down the side of the truck. It didn't matter how much I scrubbed at it, tried to buff it out, it wasn't coming out. So, I just traded the truck in. That's what you do when you make a dumb decision like that.

I've just done some really dumb stuff. I wish I could say all of them are sort of relegated to automotive failures, but that just wouldn't be true. I've done dumb stuff in my marriage. I've done dumb stuff as a dad. I've done dumb stuff with my friends. I've done dumb things with money and finances. I've done all kinds of dumb things here at the church. And you're like, "Yeah, we know. We know. We've noticed."

You and I, we have some things in common and we've just done some dumb stuff. Stuff we wish we could forget and stuff we wish we could take back. Stuff we hope nobody ever finds out about. There is money we should have never spent, time we should have never invested. There is that angry text we should have never sent. The old flame we never should have received the friend request from on social media.

There are the people we never intended to hurt. Relationships we should have never pursued. The job we should have never taken. The contract we should have never signed. Like dumb decisions we should have never made.

Have you ever looked back on a decision or set of decisions you made in your life, and you think to yourself, “What was I thinking?” I don’t know why I did that. I should have known better. If you have, and we all have, welcome to the human race. That’s like what it means to be human. It would be really difficult to get through this life without making some dumb decisions. In fact, it’s really difficult to get through the day.

One recent study showed we make about 35,000 decisions today, little ones and big ones and medium ones all the way from, “When am I going to get up,” to “What am I going to wear,” or “Where am I going to go today.” For 35,000 decisions, if that is the case, the odds are pretty high we’re not going to be batting 1,000 on them.

No, we’re going to get some of them wrong. Sometimes it’s a big deal, and sometimes it’s not. Sometimes these bad decisions only embarrass us, nothing more, and other times it feels like they can ruin us.

Some of these bad decisions we can forget over time. They just fade from memory. But others, like we’ll never forget. Right now, your life and my life, up to this point, is the result of your accumulated choices and decisions.

Your life is the result of your **accumulated** choices and decisions.

Now, that could be a good thing or a bad thing—for better and for worse. Can I just acknowledge this? That statement right there, that’s a lot of pressure. And maybe for some of us, we just need to take a deep breath. Maybe we just need to let ourselves off the hook.

Because, the weight of that statement, maybe it’s left you feeling a little bit apprehensive about making a decision of any kind. And when it comes to the choices that are in front of you right now today, you’re afraid of moving forward so you don’t know what to do. And you don’t know what to decide.

And you’re scared to death of making another wrong decision, because the last wrong decision hurt really bad. And it set you back. And it got you kicked out. And it caused your first marriage to unravel. And your second marriage is headed that way.

And it cost you your job, damaged your reputation, and you’re no longer on speaking terms with your kids. It landed you a permanent record. And maybe you’ve lost confidence in your ability to make a good decision. So, faced with a choice, your mind gets flooded with all these what ifs:

What if I choose the wrong thing?

What if I go to the wrong school?

What if I’ve chosen the wrong degree?

What if I go with the wrong color?

What if I choose the wrong sport, the wrong set of friends, the wrong career, the wrong exercise program?

What if I pick the wrong spouse.

What if I mess it all up again, because last time I was wrong and that thing blew up in my face.

If you can relate to any of this in any way, and by the way I can relate to all of it, I believe God is going to use the next four weeks to speak into your life and into my life in a profound way. Like I really believe that.

Today we're starting a new four-week series of messages called *FOBO*. Maybe you've heard of FOMO, which is fear of missing out. Fear of missing out has become more of a thing with social media. You might be at home on a Saturday night scrolling through social media. You see all your friends at that hot new rooftop restaurant downtown, and you're not there. You are at home on a Saturday night in your jammies with the feet in them. FOMO, fear of missing out.

We're talking about *FOBO* or *Fear of Better Options*.

This is the idea that we have so many options in front of us. We love our options, but there are so many options that are available to us through the internet. And because you know we customize everything, too many options can cause us to feel a little bit locked down. It leads us to this debilitating fear of making the wrong choice.

As a result, and not all of us have this problem but many of us do, we overthink or overanalyze to the point where we find it extremely difficult to choose at all. Studies are showing us that it's just leading to greater and greater worry, fear, and apprehension that we'll make the wrong choice. So, we stay in this zone of indecision.

Psychologist Barry Schwartz coined the phrase *paradox of choice* to describe the consistent findings that, while we like options, too many of them just lead to indecision, paralysis, and dissatisfaction. It's actually becoming a real thing.

Maybe many of you have heard this phrase before— paralysis by analysis. It's a real thing. Here is the definition:

"...when an individual overanalyzes or overthinks a situation, causing forward motion or decision-making to become 'paralyzed' to the point that no solution or course of action is decided upon."

And so, we look at that and see all these options in front of us. We don't know what to do. It's another way of saying we can get into our head too much. We have these imaginary conversations. And we run out these scenarios in our head over and over again. We find it

really difficult to move ahead in that relationship, our career, to launch that thing, to maybe take a risk of some kind. We feel stuck.

I love how the Message paraphrases Proverbs 3:5-6, which is the wisdom literature of God's Word. It just simply encourages us with this:

"Trust GOD from the bottom of your heart; **don't try to figure out everything on your own**. Listen for GOD's voice in **everything** you do, **everywhere** you go; he's the one who will keep you **on track**."

And, that sounds so great, but the question you might have as you read or listen to verses like that is, "How do we do that? How do I trust God in everything I do? I don't want to figure out everything on my own, but how do I trust God in everything I do?"

I'm trying so hard right now to be just like Carey Underwood and let Jesus take the wheel, but every time I let Jesus take the wheel I don't like the road he turns us down. And I feel like he needs to speed up a little bit or slow down, so I start off saying, "Jesus, you take the wheel," but it doesn't take long for me to start saying, "Jesus, pull over. I'm taking the wheel." And it works for a little while, until it doesn't. And we get stuck in traffic and turn the wrong way on a one-way road. We end up in a ditch again.

So, I believe in Proverbs 3:5-6, but what does that look like? How do you do that practically? What does it look like to listen to God's voice in everything I do because when I'm trying to make a decision oftentimes all I can hear is the critical self-talk or the condemning voice of others in my head?

It's all the head trash, "If they only knew." "I tried this once, it didn't work out." "You're damaged goods. Nobody loves you. You're stupid." "This won't work out." "You're a failure." "This is all you'll ever be."

So, over the course of the next four weeks we're going to look at God's word and we're going to invite him into that head trash and let him sort it out, and allow him to help us discern what is truth and what is simply a lie. For this purpose, God's word wants to give you the confidence and the direction you need to make a decision when you're feeling the pressure and facing the fears, just like all of us, of making the wrong one.

So, to get us started today I want to look at a passage of Scripture out of the book of James. If you have a Bible or a device with a Bible on it, go ahead and get to James 1. If you're new to Bible study, one of the most practical books in the Bible is James. If you're looking for some practical, hands-on, real life application, James is your book.

And, in chapter 1 verse 1, he takes one verse to introduce himself to us, and then he jumps right into verse 2 with what's on his mind. He says this, "Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity."

I think that troubles of any kind come to us at all times every day. I think that's part of those 35,000 decisions we have to make. And I don't know about you, but when troubles of any kind come into my life I'm trying to do everything I can to avoid them, navigate around them, minimize them.

And James actually wants us to see this with a little bit of a different set of lenses. He says: I want you to actually see them as an opportunity for great joy. At this point I'm like, "James, like you know, what kind of meds are you on?" Because I don't consider trouble to be an opportunity for joy. I mean, joy is the absence of trouble in my life. That's why I go on vacation, to escape the trouble that is coming my way.

But he goes on in verse 3, and he says this, "For you know that when your **faith** is **tested**, your **endurance** has a chance to **grow**."

Faith is anything you put your trust or confidence in. That can be a person. That can be a thing. That can be your own ability. By the way, it doesn't matter what you believe about God. Every single one of us is living by faith, because you can't predict the future. You don't have 100 percent on anything.

So, he says: Whatever you put your trust or confidence in, whenever that gets tested, and it will, he says, "...your endurance has a chance to grow."

So, he's actually equating this to what I might call resistance training. It's this idea that anytime you go in for a workout of some kind, it's hard, it's painful. You break a sweat and your heart rate gets elevated. Your physical body is screaming at you to stop. What are you doing? You're putting it under resistance because you know that when you endure through that you grow.

He said, the same thing is true spiritually. A problem-free life isn't necessarily the best life. He says whenever your faith gets tested it's an opportunity for joy because your endurance has a chance to grow.

So, he says this in verse 4, and I love this, "So, let it grow, for when your **endurance** is **fully developed**, you will be **perfect** and **complete**, needing nothing."

Now that doesn't mean you've got it all together, that you are flawless. It just means you've finally got your sea legs underneath you, that life isn't cutting you at the knees like it once did.

And then he says, in verse 5, "If you need **wisdom**, ask our **generous** God, and **he will give it to you**. He will not rebuke you for asking."

Wisdom is not the same thing as information. You can get information by reading a book. You can get information by going online. You can get information by looking it up. Wisdom is different. Wisdom is information applied, and it doesn't come quickly. You can't microwave wisdom. It comes through experience. It comes through lots and lots of hurt.

You give me a person who is wise and I'll show you his scars. And he says: Listen, the one prayer God loves to hear is when you ask for wisdom, he will generously give it to you. God says: I want to give you wisdom. Just ask me for it.

And then we go on to the next verse in verse 6, "But when you ask him, be sure that your **faith** is in **God alone**. Do not **waver**, for a person with divided loyalty is as **unsettled** as a wave of the sea that is **blown** and **tossed** by the wind."

So, for some of us today, we hear that verse and listen to it and say, "We hear you, but I've got a problem with this for any number of reasons."

For some of you, you hear put your faith in God alone, but you are like, "Aaron, I don't even know that I believe in God, so how can I put my trust and confidence in him." That is a great question. Some of you would be like, "I'm not necessarily a religious person, so I don't know what that looks like." Good question.

Others of you might be a lot like me. There are times when you go, "I think I put my faith in God, but I still don't know," and "I thought I had this like mountain-top experience with God but I'm still unsettled, I'm still blown and tossed by the wind." Or, "I come in here on Sunday and I sing and get all this clarity.

"But, by the time I get to my car in the parking lot I'm unsettled, blown and tossed again." So, how do I do this? How do I apply this to my life? I thought that I was doing this. I think many of us think, "I'll just be as cool as a cucumber, and we just say, "I've got this," but that's not what that means.

You see, when you put your faith in God, I want to give you three things that I think that means today.

God can **still work** through my **poor decisions**

That's the first place we've got to begin. And this should be freeing for you. I think so many of us go through our lives and we're thinking, "I've got to either choose this or this, and one of them is right and one of them is wrong. If I get the wrong one, God is going to punish me."

It's kind of like, how many of you remember growing up playing that game Operation? I remember going over to my grandparents' house. My grandma had this closet full of board games. I would go and I'd pull that out. We'd play Life, Sorry, and Monopoly, but my favorite one was Operation. I don't know why, because it pretty much caused a low-grade anxiety followed by cardiac arrest.

If you're not familiar with the game, it's a board with this pear-shaped naked dude on it. And he's got all of these places where you can put a little bone or a heart, or whatever you've got to operate on.

You've got these little metal tweezers hooked up to this electronic thing—it sounds super-awesome. You're trying to operate on him, but you've got to have a really steady hand. If the tweezers hit the side of the little opening, it would go EEEE. His nose would light up, and you just felt like the worst, a failure.

I think oftentimes we feel that life is that way. So, it's like, "Should I date that person?"

"Well, I don't know."

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"Should I go to that college? I really had no idea there were like a jillion colleges out there, and I'm not sure whether I should declare my degree. I'm afraid I'm going to get three years into this four-year degree and I'm going to realize:

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"I chose the wrong one, and my life is ruined."

Or, "Should we take that job and relocate on the other side of the country. Like I really don't know. It seems like a good opportunity, but we'll be leaving our support system. We've got to sell the house. And I'm not quite sure."

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And we go through life like that. And I just want you to know that many times it is not that black and white. There are times when we've got to remember that God can and he still works through your failures and imperfections. You just need to let yourself off the hook a little bit. God can work through whatever decision you end up making.

Here is why. God isn't nearly as concerned about making your circumstances completely work out in a picture-perfect way. God is trying to develop your character and your heart, which by the way requires poor decisions.

I don't know about you, but I've grown way more through bad decisions than good ones. And in those moments when I've thought, "God, I've got to lean on you here, because I don't know where to go from this point forward," that's when my character gets developed.

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul is actually bringing us in on some of the issues he is wrestling with. He describes those things as a thorn in the flesh: "Three different times I begged the Lord to **take it away**. Each time he said, 'My *grace* is all you need. My power *works best* in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the **power of Christ** can **work through me**."

Listen, God is at his absolute best when I am not. He can redeem anything. It's what he does. In fact, you go through the Bible and God always works through people who made dumb decisions. It's kind of like a requirement. And it looked like maybe they were blowing their lives up, and God said, "Watch this," and he flexes and works through their indecision, their poor decision making, their sin, and their mess ups.

Joseph was arrogant. Noah got drunk. David slept with another man's wife, and then had him killed. Rahab was a prostitute. Moses lost his temper. Peter betrayed Jesus when everything was on the line.

So, now it comes to you and me:

Even if you shouldn't have taken the job, God can still work through that. He'll still redeem it to show you what you should do next. And I bet you he did some stuff to your character in the process.

Even if you've gotten into too much debt, it's not too late. It's not the end of your story. God can still work through that.

Even if your choices have contributed to a relationship falling apart or your marriage coming to an end, God can still work through that. You are not defined by your failures.

Even if you fell back into that addiction, lost your temper again, neglected the people in your life who matter the most, God hasn't counted you out yet. You shouldn't either.

Your value as a human being is not directly connected to your ability to make right choices 100 percent of the time. God loves you, and even if you find yourself at rock-bottom right now, it's a pretty good place to find some solid ground underneath your feet. It's a good foundation from which to build again.

Here's the second thing:

If I wait until I **feel ready**, I'll *always be waiting*.

And I know there are some of you who hate to hear that. Because you're like a perfectionist, and you want to have all the categories nice and buttoned up. You want all the information in. When you're facing a critical decision, it's really easy to get stuck and start overthinking and over analyzing. And it is perpetual indecision.

The reality is, you're probably not going to get 100 percent certainty on anything. If you wait for 100 percent certainty, you've probably waited too long. And walking by faith is saying, "I don't really have all the information, but God I'm going to take a step and trust you."

So, last week, if you were here, our elders and all of you just very graciously honored our family with being here 12 years. It was a really powerful and amazing moment in our lives. We

gave a fair number of you cardiac arrest, because you thought we were leaving. It is nice to be loved.

One of the things John Shubat, the chairman of our elders said, and I don't know if you caught this or not, when they initially reached out to see if I'd consider coming to Traders Point, which was one of the major decisions of my life, I initially told them no.

But he didn't tell you why I told them no. The why behind that was because I didn't feel ready. I was 31 years old. I'd never been in a church like Traders Point. I'd never been in this position and was largely unproven. There were a lot of doubts that flooded into my mind.

I remember contemplating this decision. I didn't want to relocate my family again, especially if this was the wrong move. I didn't want to get here and cause the church to nose-dive into the ground. I was afraid.

So, I go to lunch with an older man in my life. He was probably in his late 50s, early 60s. And we sit down for lunch, and I bring him in on it. I said, "Hey, I've got this decision in front of me I'm thinking about."

And I'll never forget what he said. He looked at me across the table and he goes, "You're not seriously considering it, are you?" I was like, "No, just making conversation."

I said, "Yeah, that's part of the reason I wanted to talk to you. I'm looking for some wisdom, some insight."

I don't know where this guy's heart was at the time, and I want to be gracious with him. But I'll never forget. He looked back at me and said, "Well, I don't get it. I don't even know why you would entertain that. Aaron, I'm 25 years older than you. I feel like I'm in over my head all the time. There is no way I would even consider that. You're 31. What in the world makes you think you're ready?"

I was like, "Let me finish my mac and cheese and applesauce, and then I'll give you and answer." I'm ordering off the kids' menu.

And I remember walking out being really rattled. Man, maybe he is right. I don't know. So, I ended up calling another mentor of mine who had known me for a really long time. And I just said, "Hey, I just have to ask you," and I was probably at that point 80 percent toward saying no, "you know me better than anybody. Do you think I'm not ready for this?"

And he goes, "Absolutely, you're not ready."

I was like, "What is this? Beat up on Aaron day? Could I have a hug?"

I'll never forget what he said next, because it changed the whole trajectory of my life. He said, "But Aaron, God is not looking for people who are ready. God is looking for people who are available."

And he said, “God will make you adequate as you go.”

That has never been truer. Now listen, that’s my story, but maybe not yours. But right now, I bet you, there is a decision you’re contemplating right now that you need a ton of courage to make the decision. And maybe you’ve got a few Debbie-downers in your life. What are you thinking? How could you do that? You’re not ready. Could I just loan you some courage to say, “God will make you adequate as you put one foot in front of the other.”

And I would have loved it if God would have spelled it all out for me and said, “This is what you’re getting ready to enter into,” but God gives it to us in pieces. And right now, what are you contemplating in your life? What is God prompting you to do right now in your life, but indecision has paralyzed you?

Can I just encourage you to take a step? That’s all I’m asking you to do. Just take one little step. Stop overanalyzing and do something. Like, do anything. And if it doesn’t work out, that’s great. It doesn’t mean you chose wrong. It doesn’t mean God isn’t in it. But actually, God is most likely at work behind the scenes developing some things within you that would have never taken shape if you hadn’t taken the step.

So, right now, today, maybe one of the most spiritual things you can do is go home and make the phone call. Fill out the application. Start the business. Accept the role. Get into the group. Invest in the friendship. Go on a mission trip. Ask her out, for crying out loud. She’s been waiting. Do something that scares you a little bit. Do something that requires faith. Do something so big that if God wasn’t in it, it would fail.

James Clear is the author of *Atomic Habits*. I love what he says when he talks about giving us advice for overcoming paralysis and taking action towards your goals. He writes this:

You’re bound to feel uncertain, unprepared, and unqualified. But let me assure you of this: what you have right now is enough. You can plan, delay, and revise all you want, but trust me, what you have now is enough to start. It doesn’t matter if you’re trying to start a business, lose weight, write a book, or achieve any number of goals... who you are, what you have, and what you know right now is good enough to get going.

The last thing that I would share with you for what it means to put our trust in God alone is simply this:

When you declare **who you are**, then it brings clarity **to your decisions**.

It’s the question of identity. I think oftentimes we’re saying, “What should I do? What should I do? What should I do?” and then my success at what I do informs who I am. And it’s the exact opposite.

You see, if it’s out of your identity, then you begin to make decisions based out of that. So, instead of saying, “What am I going to do?” start with “Who am I going to be?” And when you

get the answer to that question it brings all kinds of clarity to your everyday decisions. You start weeding out that 35,000 decisions every day because you say, “Does this support who I am or who I’m becoming, or not?”

And so, if it doesn’t I’m not going to do it. If it does, I’m going to take a step. And so, in Ephesians 3:12, I love this passage here because it speaks to our identity and who you can be in Christ. Paul writes these words, “Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come **boldly** and **confidently** into God’s presence.”

And I love that. You don’t come sheepishly. You don’t come ashamed of yourself. You don’t come feeling guilty. Because of what Jesus did for you on a cross, he declared your worth, your value, your love, and your identity. So, now you can walk boldly into the presence of God and you can have confidence in that.

So, let’s just say, hypothetically, that here today you come over to my house for the Superbowl. And, you just like let yourself right in. You walk right in the front door. And you raid my fridge. You plop down on the couch next to me, grab the remote, and turn it up.

We’re going to have a problem. It’s not that I don’t love you. It’s not that you wouldn’t be welcomed. It’s sort of like your posture is all wrong. You’re walking in with boldness and confidence that I didn’t necessarily give to you just yet.

However, my four kids, they don’t need to ring the doorbell. And they don’t need to say, “Hey dad, I’m hungry. Can I look in the fridge?” And they don’t need to say, “Is that seat next to you taken because I’d like to sit down?”

They do need to ask me for the remote. That’s where the analogy breaks down. They don’t have to ask for an invitation, they’ve got it. They don’t have to wait for permission, they’ve got it. Why? Because they have an identity. They’re my kids. So, they can come boldly and confidently.

In fact, one of the things I’ve had to learn as a dad is not to make every decision for them. I so badly want to. When they’re faced with a crisis, when they’ve got a fork in the road and they are trying to decide what to do, I so badly want to just say, “Here’s what I think you should do.”

As a parent, I’ve just had to take a step back and say, “What do you think? Make a call. Go this way, or that way. I’ve got your back either way. And you know what? You’ll grow through both paths.”

In a very, very similar sense, God’s not just going to swoop down like that magic eight-ball and give you the answer you want. Sometimes he can move that way. Most of the time he wants you to lean on him. Most of the time he’s more concerned about the development of your character and your heart. He won’t lay all your circumstances out plainly because it’s as you go through the difficult times that your endurance begins to grow.

But here is the thing you fall back on every single day. I have an identity as one of God's kids. So, I can come boldly and confidently to him. Well, how do you get that? All you do is respond to it. Jesus went to a cross to declare how much he loved you. And you just respond to the identity that Jesus has laid out, that is available to anyone and everyone regardless of who you are today.

So, for many of you today, I can't think of a better way to start a series on choices and decision making than to give you an opportunity to make the best decision of your life and claim who you are in Christ Jesus.

I want to be very clear. I'm not asking you today what you believe, because many of you believe in God, but that doesn't mean you claimed your identity in Christ. I'm not asking you how you were raised because many of you were raised in church. But that doesn't mean you've claimed your identity in Christ.

I'm not asking if you're religious. Many of you may be religious, but it doesn't mean you've claimed your identity in Christ. You might say, "What's the difference?" Well, one is you're trying to earn your way to heaven, and Jesus has already done it for you. It's through a relationship.

I want to give you the opportunity to respond to God's grace that comes through Jesus alone and to boldly declare, "I'm a child of God." You get that decision right, and it will begin to bring clarity to all your decisions.

So, if you you've been around here for a while, you know my story. I grew up in church. I was baptized at six years old. I have very hazy, foggy memories of that time. It was 1982. It was a rough year.

That was a joke, a bad one.

I remember being in my dad's office. The pastor of the church came to meet with me. We sat down across the table and I just remember him asking me half-a-dozen questions. These were like Sunday school questions.

Do you believe in God? Did he create the universe? Is Jesus his son?

I was like nodding the whole time. I'm not even saying any of that was bad. It just sort of felt like a test rather than the start of a relationship. I guess I answered all the questions right, because that Sunday night I got baptized.

I remember walking out of the church that night with my hair still wet. I remember thinking to myself, "Well, I guess I did it. I checked the box. I'm a Christian." And that set me up on a nice, long road of lukewarm spirituality for most of my adolescence.

I went to church every Sunday, but my heart was rarely stirred. And I was in Bible studies, but it didn't mean my heart was growing softer toward God and people. It just made me a little more judgmental.

I was on the way. I was on the way into my 20s hitting burnout and walking away from God altogether. But I'll never forget my high school senior year. I was 17 years old and I was scared out of my mind. I didn't want anybody to know it. I tried to play it cool and confident. But it felt like my world got turned upside down.

Here's why. Everybody kept asking me what I was going to do. "You graduate next May. What are you going to do?"

"I have no idea."

I didn't know where to go to college. I didn't know what degree I was going to major in. I felt like all my plans were beginning to fall apart. My girlfriend had just broken up with me. My plans to play Division 1 college basketball fell through. I know, looking at me you would be like, "You were a shoe-in," but others didn't see it that way.

I had no clue and I was tired of people asking me. I remember, having no answers. I sat down on a park bench one afternoon and I started reading through the book of Romans. I got into chapter 5, where it says this. "No one would give their lives for a good person. For an especially good person someone might consider giving up their life."

What it said next was as if it were being said directly to me. "But Aaron, when you were still in your rebellion, your pride, and your sin, and your indecisions, Jesus died for you. You were worth it."

I remember right then and there dropping to my knees and saying, "God, I think I've just been going through the motions up until this point. I don't even know how this goes forward, but today I'm claiming the identity you died for me to have."

It was super-scary to tell all my friends, because they all gave me that weird look like, "We already thought you were a Christian." It was super-scary to tell my mom and dad. They asked, "Do you really think this is necessary?" because I got baptized again in front of all my friends.

I wish I could tell you today that after that the sea opened up, all this clarity, I knew where to go to school, the girl of my dreams you know, we started dating the very next day...and we came to Traders Point. I'd love to tell you that. Nope. Here's what my story is. It was just one fearful, courageous step after another.

By the way, lots of spiritual sprained ankles, lots of moments when I fell on my face, lots of moments when I thought, "This is it. I've messed it up too badly." And God began to work.

I want to give you that opportunity today. Maybe some of you are facing all kinds of indecision and you don't know what to decide. I want to ask you to simply make the one decision that really matters.

That is simply this:

Who are you? Have you claimed the identity that Jesus died for you to have?

And I want to give you that opportunity today across all of our campuses, to respond to Jesus and then to publicly be baptized, to be immersed. That's what baptism is. It is a public declaration of your identity in Christ. You're not ashamed of it, and you're going all in. You're going public with that.

I'm going to pray, and at all of our campuses I'll let the campus pastors take it and provide some instruction. I'll do that here. Let me just pray today. If you'll just bow your heads and close your eyes. We've backloaded the worship. We're in no rush to get out of here, and we're going to worship together.

Right now, if there is somebody today who wants to claim that identity that Jesus died for you to have, I just want you to make this prayer your own.

Father, I come to you today and I have so many questions and not enough answers. I put my trust in you. I want to receive Jesus as my Savior and my Lord. I know what that is, it's a step. It's a step of faith, and I'm going to put my trust in you today.

I'm going to acknowledge my sin, acknowledge my pride, acknowledge my rebellion, and I'm just going to claim the gift that Jesus died for me to have right now, today, where I am. I don't know what else I'm going to do with my life, but I know today I'm going to make that decision with courage and clarity.

So, Father, would you meet me right where I am as I boldly declare I'm not ashamed of the gospel. I don't want to just be religious. I don't want to just say I grew up in church. I don't want to just go through the motions. I want to be in a relationship with you. I ask this in Jesus' name.

Just with your head bowed and eyes closed, I want to give you an opportunity to respond today. For some of you today, your story is not identical to mine, but there is some overlap because many of you, maybe you were baptized as a little kid and you don't remember it. Or you were sprinkled because your grandparents or parents put you into a ceremony where that happened.

And I'm not saying that is wrong. In fact, I'm saying that was a good thing. The problem with it is you don't have any memory of it. And a relationship works best when you make the decision for yourself. They laid a foundation for you, now I'm just asking you build upon it.

Maybe for some of you today, you've been resisting following God for all kinds of reasons. I simply want to ask you to just get to this place of surrender where you would place your trust in Jesus Christ and invite him in.

And baptism, all it is, is an outward expression of an internal decision you make. And you're being lowered into the waters of baptism, that's why we immerse, and you're being resurrected as a new creation in Christ. And God will meet you in that moment. And so, I'm trusting that many of you will claim your identity in Christ by going public in baptism today.

So, if that's you and you prayed that prayer and think, "God is working me over right now," I want to encourage you to respond. We're going to stand to our feet and sing in just a moment. You can go out those double doors where the exit sign is. There will be people out there to meet you, pray with you, talk with you. We've got everything you need, a change of clothes for you to be baptized.

I'm going to jump back in the tank. I would love to meet you, and I would be honored to baptize you today.

Can we put our hands together and celebrate the people who have made the decision and give them the courage? Give them the courage to get up out of their seats and take a step as they go all in?