

# **Jesus using our Lives and Communion**

## **Missions Conference 2006**

**By Paul Borthwick**

Because really everything we say this morning builds towards that, from singing about the sweetness of trusting in Jesus to the final celebration of the very fact of why we're here, the celebration of Jesus, the conqueror of death and the grave. Many times when I encourage people to get involved in a global mission or get involved in God's mission, whether it's across cultures or across the street, many of us will say simply, well, I'm not just too broken to make a difference, I'm too small to make a difference. I'm an insignificant individual. Especially when you consider the fact that there are 6 billion people on planet Earth. Each one of us becomes a little bit less significant when you think just in the shears in terms of the sheer numbers or even the United States is only 5% of the world's population, so we could even easily think of ourselves as being really small compared to the world of challenge out there ahead of us.

But this morning I want you to realize that in God's goodness, a message that sort of come out throughout the week is in God's goodness, He chooses to use us and to sort of frame our thinking along that. I'm going to talk about another meal, not this one, but a miracle meal.

And if you have your Bibles, I'll be reading from John's Gospel chapter six. John's Gospel, chapter six. Now this is the story of the feeding of the 5,000. I'm not going to be exegeting the passage per se, but I am going to use it as a framework to think about the fact that what really matters is not the size of your lunch, but rather whether you'll give it to Jesus. And John, chapter

six is one of the four places that this miracle appears. Actually, this is the only miracle outside of the Resurrection that appears in all four of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And as a result, it's significant that this would be listed.

And as a result, I've chosen the one that gives us the most detail. So let me read it and I'll make a few comments as we go down. Verse five. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, where shall we buy bread for these people to eat? He asked us only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Now, if you know anything about Middle Eastern culture, it's very common that when you have guests, you provide a meal for them. And another passage tells us that these guys had been with Jesus for quite a few days and they were probably hungry, they had run out of their own food. And Jesus says to Philip, Get these people something to eat. Philip answers verse seven, eight months wages would not buy enough bread for each one to even have a bite.

Now, Philip is not volunteering to go out and work for the money to feed these folks. What he's saying is what we usually say. We oftentimes will say when Jesus presents us with a challenge, you hear something about the Buddhist world or the Hindu world, the Muslim world, or you hear about the secular police, people at universities, or you hear about some great challenge of reaching out into the gay community or something like that. You say, like, Philip, Jesus, I'm sorry, we don't have the resources. It could be money or know how. I don't have an education that will help me to do that, Jesus, I'm sorry, we don't have the resources. Philip just says, Jesus,

nice assignment, but I can't do it, we can't do it. Jesus, interestingly, doesn't respond to Philip's objection. In other words, disciples, verse eight. Andrew Simon, Peter's brother, spoke up.

Now, Andrew might be a glimmer of faith here because he presents this little boy. He says, Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go amongst so many? Now, the Greek language for boy would actually be easily translated small man. So if you translate it that way, it reads here is a small man with five small barley loaves and two small fish. What's the operative word there? Small, insignificant.

And we don't know where this boy came from. I like to think maybe that he was like a Jesus groupie. He had gone around hanging out and he'd seen all these miracles and he hears this interchange between Jesus and the disciples. And maybe he's just tugging on Andrew's robe, saying, andrew, Andrew, give this to Jesus. Let's see what he can do with it. I've seen him do other miracles. Here's my lunch. Five small loaves and two small fish. And Andrew says, Jesus, here's this boy's lunch, and it's five small loaves and two small fish.

And Andrew says, sort of the adult mindset kicks in. How far will this go amongst so many? So if Philip says, we don't have the resources, Andrew says our resources are inadequate. We have some resources, to be sure, but they're too small, they're inadequate, they can't make a difference. Jesus doesn't respond to Andrew's objection either.

Verse ten: had the people sit down. There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about 50 of them. Matthew's Gospel tells us, besides women and children. So in other words, if each man had a wife and two kids, the crowd is now 20,000, which gives you an idea of

why the disciples might have been a little overwhelmed by it all. I mean, this is a big group of folks.

He says they sat down, about 5000 of them men. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. And he did the same with the fish when they all had enough to eat. Another translation said, when they were all satisfied, or in other words, full. So it wasn't like they were taking a little tidbit. They were having a full lunch when they were all full. He said to his disciples, gather the pieces that are left over, let nothing be wasted. So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. I want to read that last verse just to remind you of something. I like to think of myself as being like one of the disciples.

The disciples really weren't that polished. They weren't theological types. They weren't really stained glass material people. These were sort of like the first century equivalent of hardcore construction, truck driver, blue collar workers. I mean these were rough guys who probably made dirty jokes around the campfire at night and Jesus had to just get by it.

And yet when the little boy comes forward, I can imagine these guys thinking like this here's five loaves and two fish. And I can imagine them thinking to themselves, those five loaves and two fish, they'll go nowhere amongst this crowd, but amongst the twelve of us, it would be a nice snack. I was thinking they probably were thinking about it for themselves. They're selfish guys, but they had to give it up to Jesus too.

And verse 13 reminds you that when you give up what you have to Jesus, you get taken care of in the process, but you have to let it go. They didn't see the twelve baskets come back until they distributed them. And all of it is a reminder of the fact that the issue at hand is not whether you're too small to make a difference, whether you have enough resources to make a difference, whether your resources are inadequate and can't really make a difference. What matters is the size of your Jesus, the size of the Lord that you're worshiping and the person you give yourself to. Because you can be a small boy with a small lunch and still feed 20,000 people if you give what you have to Jesus.

Now when I travel to other schools, I'm going to tell people I went to Biola and they have a big Jesus. Now I saw him, it was a little scary actually. It was kind of like the Biola equivalent of the praying hands at Oral Roberts University, you know. But I like that what matters is not your size. What matters is the size of your Lord.

What matters is will you give your lunch to Jesus? A small man with a small lunch given to a great Jesus is a great miracle. And so don't get so preoccupied with how small you are. Or as Murray reminded yesterday afternoon, how broken you are because Jesus delights in redeeming the broken, Jesus delights in miraculously expanding the small. And out of this conference, my prayer, my dream is that hundreds of you will grasp this concept and give whatever you have to Jesus and let Him take it wherever he wants to in the world so that maybe 50 years from now, you'll get together for a 50th reunion and you'll talk about this time when you said, I decided to give the little that I had to the great Jesus.

So what do you have to give Jesus? Let me give you some suggestions as sort of takeaways from this week. The first one, I understand you've already had a chapel about earlier in the month of March, but basically, you give Jesus your availability. That's exactly what the little boy demonstrates. The little boy doesn't say, Gee, I've calculated the size of the crowd, Jesus, and here's my lunch. Little boy just says, Jesus, I don't know what you can do with me or with my lunch, but here it is. He made himself available. That's the passage that you had earlier in the month in Isaiah, chapter six. Remember the availability prayer. Here I am, Lord, send me.

Now, sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that prayer is for full time ministers or missionaries. I've got news for you. That prayer is for every follower of Jesus Christ every day. Here I am, Lord, use me. Here I am, Lord, I'm available to you.

Remember the passage in Isaiah six? Isaiah has this awesome vision of God's holiness. God's awesomeness in the temple. His power is evident. There's like an earthquake going on. And Isaiah sees his own sinfulness, and he says, Whoa, whoa is me. Up to that point in Isaiah, he had said woe to you about six times because he was a prophet. Prophet said that, whoa, that's like condemnation. Not like you're really beautiful, like, whoa, that's condemnation. He would tell others, you're condemned.

But now he stands in front of God and he says, I'm condemned. If you know the Old Testament, you know that he what he was saying was, I've seen God. I'm going to die. I'm going to die now. But he doesn't die. And God in his graciousness sends an angel and cleanses Him and cleans up

his mouth and cleanses his whole body. And then he's a worshiper that's broken, yet forgiven. Then he hears God's voice, whom shall I send? Who will go for me? Here I am, send me.

Do you ever see the movie Shrek? How many of you have seen Shrek? All right. I love donkey. Donkey is kind of a character. And when I first read this passage, I used to think to myself, when Isaiah said, here I am, send me, he said it with great humility. You know what I'm saying? Here I am, Lord, send me. Well, then I saw Shrek. Remember, there's a scene where Shrek is looking for a volunteer to make the trip with him, and Donkeys, like, bouncing off the wall, you know, you're like, Pick me, pick me, pick me. Like that. I think that's the way Isaiah responded. He says, Oh, God, I'm not dead. You didn't consume me. I'm forgiven now. Here I am, Lord. Send me. I'm yours. That's what salvation is about, brothers and sisters.

No matter how much you have that brokenness, no matter how much you're in that junior fog or whatever the word was that Marie used, you know, that whole idea of being uncertain what's going on? You're forgiven, you're loved. God knows your name and he doesn't abandon you. No matter how we feel, we always know that we are his. And we could say, Pick me. Here I am, Lord.

The tradition that I was raised in you mean in Christian tradition, I got to tell you, we never raised our hands. You know what I'm talking about, in worship. We just didn't unless we had, like a question or something like that. I mean, we would sing songs. I lift up my hands in my name, right in the pockets. They go it's like no. Because we had what I call Pentecostal Phobia. We were afraid that if we raised our hands, something else might happen, I suppose. But you

know, when you go around the world, this is worship from Plymouth Brethren to Pentecostals. Because worship is what you're saying is in light of everything you've done, God, in light of who you are, in light of the forgiveness within Jesus, I'm open handed. Worship has given ourselves back to God because he gave himself for us. Worship is saying, God, I don't understand everything that's happening, but here I am, Lord, I'm available.

You never see people worshiping like this. You know what I mean? Half to Jesus, I surrender. You don't see it like that. You don't see it like this. Jesus, I'll give you all of myself, except I really want a cottage in Laguna Beach. Actually, I do, but I'm not going to ask. But open handed. Here I am, Lord. I mean, we have other worship things. We're taking this city for Jesus, that kind of thing. But most worship is open handedness. When you take the communion table today, that's what I'm asking you to think about. Not that you know exactly what God is going to do, but you're just open. Here I am, Lord. I'm available. I'm yours.

My wife works in a microbiology laboratory. She goes in on a Monday morning and she walks around the microscopes and prays over each of the stations, lord, I'm available. I'm available to these coworkers. She's got five Gujarati Hindus she's working with who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ until she talked to them. Here I am, Lord, I'm available.

High school kid told me he walks into his high school on a Monday morning and just gets there a little early prays over all the lockers of his friends. Here I am, Lord, I'm available. Here I am, I'm available. The availability prayer. You got a job off campus. On your way to the job, pray lord,



I'm available. You're working at Starbucks. I'm available. Lord, guide me in a conversation, maybe with some customers today that I can give a witness. Here I am, Lord, I'm available.

Lady at our church, well into her 70s, she made herself available to the Lord. She said, Lord, I'm broken. Her husband was legally blind. They didn't have any ability to get around town except by walking. And she said, Lord, I really want to give more to what you're doing, but we're living on a fixed income she said, But, Lord, I'm available. She felt like the Lord spoke to her, and the Lord said, look down. They were walking around town. The Lord spoke to walk down. She looked down, there was a quarter on the pavement. She said, what is this, a joke? And God said, no, pick it up. And she has now a ministry she calls Looking Down Ministries, because she just said, Lord, I'm available. And she looks down and she walks around town with her husband on her arm. She just goes out and says, I'm available and she asks God to guide her to loose change, and whatever she finds goes to work in the Muslim world. So I asked her, I said, her name is Ethel. I said, Ethel? I said, do you keep track? She goes, Oh, yeah. Every time it hits \$10, we write a check. I said, that's cool. I said, what's the biggest thing you ever found? She said, One time we found a \$10 bill, but most of its quarters nickels, dimes, pennies. But I said, do you keep a cumulative track? Oh, yeah. She said, I've been doing this now for about eight years. We're right about \$4,000 raised. You'll be looking down now, eh?

I shared that at one church. And at the end of the service, people lean forward to pray. And the guy in the first row, all the change squared out of his pocket into the second row, and the guy in the second row came and said, I think this is God's, you know?

But Ethel, she's on a mission now. Last time I saw her, she was walking around parking meters, so she's really looking for it. But my point is, she's broken, but she's available.

The second thing that everybody can do is say, Lord, I'm available. Use my major, use my experiences, use my background, use my knowledge of languages, use my ethnicity, lord, use my history, my family, all these things. You see, it in the scriptures that God is sovereignly at work in his people, guiding them even before they become devoted followers of Jesus, and he's preparing them. Remember in the Old Testament, King David, he wanted to be a soldier, but God made him into a shepherd boy. Do you ever have that experience of being someplace where you don't want to be and you're saying to God, I want to be someplace else? David would say that, God, I don't want to be a shepherd boy. I want to be a soldier. My brothers are at the war. I want to be at the war. But God says this is where you're supposed to be. Because God was sovereignly training him. Training him to be the shepherd king of Israel. Training him with experiences that would enable him to write the greatest of all the psalms, the Lord is my shepherd. He didn't learn that by being a soldier. What I'm saying is: this your past is not a waste. God isn't interested in redeeming your hobbies, your interests, your desires, your skills, the job experiences you might have had the majors that you're in.

I was a business management major when I went to university and I didn't exactly know why God had me there I at least thought I was going into ministry. But as a result of that business management major I was able to organize short term mission trips better than anybody else in our church. So it became my responsibility because God sovereignly had guided me to be a management major so I can learn how to do organization. Now I find myself in my fifties and

working with people who are doing micro enterprise development because of some background that I never knew exactly God's purposes. You see, when we present ourselves to God, we say, Here I am, Lord. I'm available.

Maids, as in domestic workers in the Philippines have made themselves available to God. They said, Here we are, Lord. How do you want to use our domestic skills? How do you want to use our ability to be maids? And God has sent them off. They are now, many of them, maids in the Middle East taking care of the children of Shayks and Imams and rich people in the Gulf States evangelizing their children by being maids and nannies. They're available to God.

One guy said, I wanted to make myself available to God and I thought he wanted me to be a missionary. He says, I thought God wanted me to be a missionary. But I said, God, how do you want to use my ability as an industrial designer? And he ended up being in charge of a team of people designing the trade center for the Shake of Kuwait because he made himself available.

One lady came to me one morning. She says, at church, she goes, how can God use me? I said, what's your background? She said, I'm a hydrogeologist. So I said, Help me out. What's a hydrogeologist? She said, I know how to find wells, right? Get it? Hydro, water, geology, rocks, finding wells. She said, I'm a diviner with a degree. That's a farming joke. You probably don't get it. But anyhow, she says, I'm available because God ended up sending her with a group like the Peace Corps into Burkina Fossil where she worked with these villages, helping them find fresh drinking water. If 80% of the world's poorest people are sick because of bad drinking water. Finding good wells is a good thing.

Even making yourself available to God right where you are. Take a walk around wherever you go out for coffee off campus, maybe you want to start talking to people. One person, he had told me that until she started looking, she didn't realize how many Turkish speaking people there were in the area. Start looking, you'll find some of those Persian or Iranian people that I talked about yesterday. When you start making yourself available right where you are, using your experiences, even as a Biola student, here I am, Lord, I'm available. When you combine availability with your experiences, what you're saying is, Lord, how do you want to use my family background? How do you want to use my growing up experiences, my education, my life background, my hobbies?

I met a guy at a conference a few months ago. He's training Palestinians and Israelis to play baseball together. God's taking his love for baseball, and he's using it now as a reconciliation tool in the West Bank. Even in my own house, if you came into my house, there's a bookshelf right as you're sort of like going out the front door, but there's a bookshelf there that has a collection of all of our bird watching books. You have to get to be, like, 50 years old before you'll admit to anybody that you're a bird watcher.

But we are, and we have this one book here. It's called The Guide to the Birds of Nepal. Nepal is where is it? Right up here, the one with the triangles on it. Nepal is a Hindu country, like we talked about in one of the earlier sessions. And in the 1950s, it was absolutely illegal for anybody to go be a missionary to Nepal. But these Christians made themselves available to God using their backgrounds in ornithology. You're saying, Oh, man, dentists. Now, that would be orthodontics. All right? Ornithology is the study of birds. Like, they know the Latin name of the

bird. That's what I always say. They went and they've written and it's on my shelf the definitive Guide to the Birds of Nepal. But they went there as bird watchers so that they could write this book and bear witness to Jesus in the process. Make yourself available to God.

Just as curiosity. How many of you here speak English? Okay. A vast number. Murray, just follow up on this. A vast number. Do you realize, if you said, lord, how do you want to use my ability to speak English for some summer or sometime after you graduate, maybe before you start into your career? English teaching is one of the main entry roads for the world's largest unreached country, namely China. You know, if you can do conversational English, you could be at least a short term or working in China saying, Lord, here I am. How do you want to use my ability to speak English. There are English language classes in other parts of the world, too, but China especially is interested. USA Today said that in the United States, about 24,000 students are taking Chinese. In China, 200 million Chinese are taking English. It's an awesome opportunity to use something that you probably already know, mostly know. Okay, well, you think you know. And if you're an English major, if you're an English major, you can become a supervisor of a whole band of teachers. Availability plus experiences.

The third thing that all of us can do is say, lord, how do you want to use my prayers? Expand my prayers. I hope that as a result of this week, at least one nation has been added to your prayer list besides our own. Maybe you want to pray for one ruler in the world or one specific issue in the world, HIV AIDS or something like that, but just to expand your prayers, because there is no country on earth that's closed to your prayers. Do you realize that? You can go right into the throne room of the new president of Iran? Sort of a wild card guy that everybody expects is

going to maybe detonate the first nuclear weapons since World War II? He's just a wild man, but you can lobby God on his behalf to pray for him.

Ever since September 11, I've been challenging people to pray for Osama bin Laden to become a Christian, because some people are praying for bin Laden. Yeah, take them out, Jesus, take them out. All right. Good American prayer, not a biblical prayer. Bless our enemies, lord, reveal yourself to him. Wouldn't it be awesome if he comes out of the cave out of one of those caves, not out of the grave, that's this guy. If Osama bin Laden came out of a cave and said, I've had visions of Jesus, I'm turning my life over to Jesus. I'm telling all the Taliban to turn their lives over to Jesus. I mean, I believe that could happen. You know why? Because 2000 years ago, there was a guy who thought he was serving God by killing Christians, and he became Paul the Apostle. So if you want to pray for bin Laden, pray for bin Laden. To be like Paul the Apostle wouldn't be awesome? The whole Taliban becomes missionaries. (Audience claps)

We're already pretty sure that they're willing to die for their cause. And imagine like, the whole Taliban, all followers of Issa now going into Mecca during the Hodge, preaching Jesus until they were killed. Pray some big prayers, brothers and sisters, because you've got a big God who can take five loaves and two fish and feed 200 people and have leftovers. Pray some big prayers. Start praying.

I started praying a few years ago from Bhutan. I picked Bhutan because it was just kind of like an exotic place. It's way up in the Himalayas, Tibetan Buddhism, kind of locked away from really any kind of significant Christian witness, although there are Christians that go in and out

from Nepal and India into Bhutan now. But I started praying, and when you start praying for these places, god brings them into your attention.

I went over with my wife and I to visit some friends who were working as dorm parents at Wellesley College. That's not too far from where I live. And it's a school famous for women's education, especially people like Hillary Clinton went there and Madeline Albright, former Secretary of State. And so there's a lot of influential people that go there. And they said, Come to have dinner. We'll meet in the dormitory. You can meet with some of the Christian students, but we're sitting in the dormitory cafeteria having a lunch or dinner. And they said, before we sit down, we know you want to meet someone. I said, who's that? So they brought me over to this young lady. She's sitting there, very quiet, pretty shy, actually. And they said, this is Chimi Wangchuk. I said, Okay, nice to meet you, Chimi. How's things going? We thought you'd like to meet her because Chimi is from Bhutan. This is the first Bhutanese person I had ever met. And then we sat down and my Christian friends told me, we thought you'd like to pray for Chimi.

Chimi is the Princess of Bhutan. She's studying here in this country. And if she's reached with the Gospel, she could influence the entire country. See, God starts to work through our prayers and does things that you never thought possible. That's why I'd like to believe that the guy who made my shirt, I might meet him in heaven because I pray for the guy who makes my shirt.

And some Indonesian Muslim guy wouldn't be awesome. You meet some guy in heaven. Hi, I'm Abdul Abdullah, and I checked the history books of heaven, and the Holy Spirit began his work in my life. The day you prayed for the guy who made your shirt, God does that.

One more testimony to that fact about God using our prayers. I was visiting a church in Indianapolis not too long ago. Actually, it was October. And this church, like many churches, has adopted a hidden people group, or an unreached people group. We're going to hear about that a little bit more during communion. About people who, like I said yesterday, have no opportunity, had no opportunity to hear the Gospel. They adopted a people group from South China called the Miao People. Miao. The Miao People. And so that's their people group. They have posters around the church, pray for the Miao people. And they had a picture of them in traditional attire, and they said, Pray for the Miao people.

So I'm walking down the hallway at this church for a Saturday night international student banquet. And there's a Chinese guy standing in front of this poster, and he's looking at it and he says, Are you from this church? I said, no. He says, well, neither am I. I'm just a visitor here today for this international students. I've never been to a church before, he says. I'm at the University of Indiana here, and I'm invited to this banquet for tonight. But this and he points at the poster is most amazing, he says. I said, Why is that? He goes, I am a Miao. This church in Indianapolis had begun to pray for the Miao over in South China. God brought a Meow person to their church to hear the gospel. God works through our prayers.

Two more things real quick. God works number four through our pain. This is the most difficult one. No one really wants to talk about it, but Murray really introduced it yesterday. God works even through our pain. When you have pain in your life, emotional pain, maybe the family background, relational pain, your girlfriend boyfriend broke up with you or hates you now.



You're financially broke, financial pain, you're physically in pain, or some of the pain, what's the first thing every person prays when you're in pain?

Come on, take it away. Take it away. No one says, Come on, God, bring it on. Your first thing you pray is take it away. Just like Jesus did. Just like Jesus did in the garden of Gethsemane. Oh, God, take it away. I wish I didn't have to face this. I wish I didn't have this besetting sin in my life, Lord. I wish I didn't have this family background. As Murray said yesterday. I wish my parents weren't breaking up. I wish I had a better relationship with my dad. I wish...

But sometimes God doesn't heal our pain in the way we want them to. So then you need to pray the prayer that Jesus prayed. Not my will, Lord, but yours be done. Or another way to say it is God. If you're not going to heal my pain, then please use my pain. Use my pain, use my own dysfunctional family situation to help me care for others who are going through the same pain. Why do you think it is that people who have suffered from drug or alcohol addiction are usually the best counselors for those who are coming out of it themselves? Why do you think it is that those who have suffered under emotional or physical abuse from a parent are oftentimes leaders of support groups for those that are coming out of the same realization?

Why do you think it is that Johnny Ericson Tata is living in her wheelchair testifying to God's grace as a quadriplegic, even though Jesus has never healed her in the way that she asked? Jesus didn't raise her up out of the chair. She's still in that wheelchair now, more than 35 years after the accident. But she's the world's leading Christian spokesman for God's concern for the paralyzed and for the handicapped, because she's allowed God to use her pain.

When I turned 40 years old, that would be the twelve years ago now, I was diagnosed as an insulin dependent diabetic. Juvenile diabetes, it's called. My wife says, you've got juvenile diabetes at age 40 because you're immature, which is probably true, but I don't think that's the only reason. It's now called type one, but I have to take four shots a day. I take blood tests throughout the day. It kind of stays with me all the time. The first thing I did when I got diabetes was I called up Marie. This is my last talk, right? I called up all my Pentecostal friends. I don't call up my Baptist friends because my Baptist friends will: Lord, teach him through this, right? Lord, really help make your presence known in this my Pentecostal friends: heal him, Jesus, heal him. That's what I wanted. You know, I wasn't asking God to refine me. I actually told God, I said, if you're going to use this to make me into a deeper man, I choose shallowness. I mean, I was just honest before God. I didn't want this. I was traveling all over the place. The last thing I wanted to do would be carrying bags and needles into Columbia. It demands too much explanation. And, oh, man, we had this one prayer meeting. They anointed me with oil. We were praying, and if faith alone could heal brothers and sisters, I would have been healed and my hair would have grown back. I mean, it would have been like, unbelievable. I was expecting to stand up with no diabetes and just a sprout of hair going right up straight. But God didn't heal that, and he still hasn't healed it. Not in the way I prayed, but so then I said, and this can take two or three years to pray this prayer. Just say FYI. I said, well, then, Lord, use this pain. Help me to overcome my bitterness. Not knowing why you've done this, use it now.

A few years ago, I was at a conference in Holland and speaking, and in a workshop, I mentioned the same story. And this young lady came up to me and she was crying her eyes out. She said,

I'm 17 years old. I really believe God was calling me to go overseas into a cross cultural setting. But I was just diagnosed as an insulin dependent diabetic. Your story has given me courage that God can still use me. God's taken me into medical clinics and into doctors that never would have heard the Gospel without a traveling diabetic telling them about the church around the world. My Jewish doctor knows more about the church in Afghanistan than most Christians in my church from talking to me.

So in other words, you say, Lord, use my pain. Use my pain. Some of you know the story about a missionary from Belgium about 100 years ago who made himself available to God. And he was a very compassionate, caregiving person, but he was also a religious professional and he made himself available to God and God sent him to Hawaii. Now I know some of you are saying aloha Jesus, I'm willing, here am I. But you know, he didn't go to be a tourist and he didn't go to learn his surfing or get his surfing better on the north shore of Oahu. He actually went to Malakai. He went to Malakai to care for leprosy patients. We call it the Hanson's disease people, people who had been socially isolated by the government so they could just rot and die isolated in this leprosy colony. And the story of his life goes that every Sunday he would speak to his small congregation, and he said, he was basically saying I love you, Jesus loves you. I'm here to tell you that Jesus loves you. But he would start off by saying my dear lepers, my dear lepers. He wanted them to know that the society had rejected them, but he didn't.

The historians say that everything changed about his ministry though. On the Sunday that he got up and said something a little different, he got up in front of his congregation and he said my fellow lepers sustained exposure to the disease. He had now contracted it. Now he couldn't leave.

Now he was in the leprosy colony. He was one of them. And God would use his pain to cause many of the lepers to come to know Jesus because now they could understand that he still had the hope that was in Jesus now that he knew what they had been going through.

Paul the Apostle says in two Corinthians, God comforts us in our affliction so that we can comfort others with the same comfort that we've received from God. When you celebrate the Lord's Supper today, remember that you're celebrating the fact that Jesus, our Lord and Savior, allowed God to use his pain. He allowed God to use his pain so that we might benefit. The challenge that we might face is God, how do you want to use my pain so that someone else might benefit?

The final thing that I want you to take with you as a takeaway for this week is that God can use your faith. God can use you as you take steps of faith. Next steps, not that all of you are just going to sign up immediately and go to some most difficult place on earth.

The next step might be you ask God, how can you use computer science for your kingdom purposes? God, your next step might be lord, how can you use my biology degree to help me become a veterinary doctor to be able to do something that might help poor people in some other part of the world? Lord, how do you use me praying for the country and the label of my clothes so that I could use my business degree to become an executive with Nike Corporation to make sure those sweatshops give free treatment to the workers. Your step of faith might be like Ethel, to pray that God's going to help you raise \$10,000 by looking at quarters and dimes and nickels, or that God is going to use you to lead your Gujarati Hindu microbiologist coworker to Christ like my wife praise. The question is, where do you need to take a step of faith?

It means taking a risk. I don't know what the risk is for you this week but taking the next step risk. Taking the risk. Hudson Taylor, famous missionary to China, said it this way unless there is an element of risk in our exploits for God, there's no need for faith. If you're not stepping out of the boat, you don't know that Jesus can hold you up on the water. You have to take the step.

Lord, I don't know where the money's going to come from, but I'm going this direction. Lord, I don't know how do you want to use this, but I'm going to sign up to be a maid for Christ in Saudi Arabia. Lord, I don't know how you want to use my civil engineering skills, but I think maybe it might be to do something with Habitat for Humanity. You take a step and another little step.

As a result of this week, let me close with a Biblical challenge. My challenge is that you would read this weekend's Hebrews Chapter Eleven. Many of you read it. It's the hall of Fame of Faith. It's classic in terms of what it's been talking about because it talks about all those people in the procession and it talks about all their brokenness. I mean, if you know the characters, there's some pretty good screw ups in that chapter, but God used them by faith. And here's the challenge. By Sunday night, write your verse. See, I don't think Hebrews eleven is done yet because you haven't written your verse. Your verse isn't in there yet.

What's God want to do through faith? Through you. Something bigger than you could ever imagine. By faith. A little boy gives his lunch and all four of the Gospels tell the story about him. By faith, Stephen testifies to the point of death, and Paul the Apostle becomes a Christian. By faith, Paul the apostle testifies. And you and I sit here today because he got the church to go out into the gentiles. By faith, Ethel Sullivan is supporting missionaries in North Africa by quarters,

nickels, dimes and pennies around parking meters. By faith. What does God want to do through you? What does God want to do through you? What's your verse? The issue is not the size of your lunch and the issue is not the size of the crowd. The issue is the greatness of Jesus.

I'm going to ask you to stand with me right now. I'm going to lead us in prayer and then we're going to transition into the communion service. Yesterday, Eric from the band sort of encouraged us to reach our hands out like God would be feeding. I'm just going to encourage you sort of in response or in preparation for communion, I'm just going to invite you as I lead us in prayer to physically make that statement before God, I'm available. God, I'm available. I'm open handed. Don't do it just because everybody else is.

Do it as a statement to Him and let God use it to prepare your heart for this communion table. Here we are to worship. Lord, here we are to say back to you. Thank you for loving us and all of our brokenness. Here we are to say thank you for using us. As small as we are. Here we are, lord, we're open handed and we're saying, Lord, send us into the community. Send us to the homeless. Send us into the business world. Send us as bird watches to Nepali. We're just here. Lord, we're open handed because of what You've done for us, because you opened Your arms on the cross for us. We open our arms now and say we're available. In all of our brokenness and all of our pain, in all of our fears, we say by faith, Lord, we ask you, use us in Jesus name. Amen.