

Trust Issues | With Organized Religion

Petie Kinder | Matthew 23

Well, what's up church? How are we doing? Good to see you all. Good to be with you. Welcome if it's your first time. Man, if you're here at our Northwest campus, if you're at North, Downtown, West, if you watching online, if it's your first time with us we're thrilled to have you. Church, let's put our hands together and welcome anybody who is here for the first time. That's a big step to walk into church for the first time, man. We're thrilled to have you.

My name is Petie. I'm one of the pastors around here. I'm just excited to be with you guys today. Before jumping into the message, we've got to celebrate something that you were a part of last weekend and you may not have even fully understood how much you were a part of it. We get to do some pretty cool things around here, like start churches all across the world. Last weekend we got to celebrate the launch of a church in Santa Barbara, California. One of our very own, Jake Barker, who was a pastor here, got this church up and running.

I got to be there last weekend at their opening services. They had over 200 people there to start the church off, which was incredible. Super exciting—we can celebrate that. Jake did a great job, you know with his beautiful, fiery red hair and just doing his thing, man, doing his thing. That was possible because of your generosity.

See, when you give sacrificially like you do—and this is an incredibly generous church—we're able to start churches in the city and churches all around the world. Studies show, time and time again, that the best way to reach people with the gospel is to start new churches and new campuses. So thank you for being generous. Thank you on behalf of Jake and on behalf of everyone here for continuing in that generosity so that we can keep doing stuff like that.

Now I know, though, that even that notion, that idea, of giving money so that more churches can get started is a point of contention for many of you in the room today at every campus, because you're not entirely sure that the world needs more churches. In fact, many of you may be coming from a perspective that would say that more churches would actually create more problems in the world, because you've got some trust issues.

And it's a perfect segue to what we are talking about because this series, *Trust Issues*, is dealing with that. We've all got trust issues with something or someone. See, these trust issues, we're not born with them but we develop them. We develop them because life happens, because people let us down, people disappoint us, people frustrate us, things frustrate us. So we develop these trust issues.

But the problem we've discovered in this series is that if we don't address these trust issues, there are some pretty negative consequences for us. Primarily, if we don't address these trust issues we're going to develop some cynicism in our hearts.

I love how our lead pastor, Aaron, defines cynicism. He said it's when you let past hurt, past failure, past rejection, past frustrations and project them onto future opportunities and future relationships.

What that means for us is that if we don't deal with our trust issues, we may miss out on something in the future that we shouldn't miss out on. We may miss out on something really good in our lives. But if we don't work through our trust issues it will hold us back.

And today we're not talking about trust issues with like a person, we're talking about trust issues with a group of people. We're talking about having trust issues with organized religion, alright? Trust issues with organized religion.

If you're new to church, if you've just been coming in the past few months, this is one that you probably had on your mind, like, "I'm not sure I can trust this place and trust organized religion in general," because, honestly, it's not hard to build a case as to why you shouldn't trust organized religion. It's not hard.

All you've got to do is take a casual look at history and you can see some of the evils that have gone on in our world that have been in the name of God or the name of organized religion. Just look at slavery in America. Think about the amount of religious leaders who co-signed and even participated in the atrocities of slavery.

Think about the Civil Rights movement, think about how many religious leaders and religious people co-signed and participated and thought, "I actually think that people of color should not have equal rights." There were a large number of people who did that.

Go back to Nazi Germany. Think about the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was one of the only Christian pastors who stood up in the face of Hitler and said that he was evil and he shouldn't be in power while the rest blindly followed suit and didn't want to rock the boat.

I mean you could talk about the scandals in the Catholic Church, you could talk about the scandals of evangelical pastors who seem to be in the news every other month—there is no shortage of reasons to build your case as to why you shouldn't trust organized religion.

And that's just talking about the church leaders. We haven't even gotten to the church members yet, because if you've ever heard of a church that splits over something—you hear a co-worker say, "Yeah, our church is splitting," and you're like, "Oh, no. That's so sad. What happened?"

“We got in a big fight over the carpet color. Carpet color was a big thing for us.” And you’re like, “Oh, okay. Okay, great.” Or the style of the music, “I hate that style. We’re splitting over the style of music.” And you’re like, “Man, if that’s what church is all about...” Some of you are like, “I believe in God. I’m cool with Jesus. But I’ll pass on the organized religion part.”

And that’s not even getting to the real thing that gives me trust issues, cheesy church signs. I’m talking about a church, I see some of these signs and I can’t trust you. Throw up that first one for me:

God answers knee mail.

It’s not even funny. It’s not even funny.

Go to the next one:

Can’t take the heat outside the church, this church is prayer conditioned.

You get it, it rhymes with air conditioned. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha—got ‘em.

Next one:

Give Satan an edge and he’ll become your ruler.

You see, with this one there’s a double meaning of the word *ruler* that they’ve done here. It’s an interesting joke that they’ve taken—like, I can’t trust you. If you think that’s funny, I can’t trust you, man.

Now this next church has one that I actually trust. I would totally go to this church. Go ahead and bring it to me:

Blah, blah, blah just come to church.

They get it. They are so with it. They have full self-awareness, alright? Blah, blah, blah just come to church.

But there is no shortage of reasons as to why you shouldn’t trust organized religion. And so if you’re here today and you would say, “Man, I’ve got trust issues with organized religion,” I want to tell you something that maybe you didn’t expect to hear today. You’re actually in very good company, because so did Jesus. So did Jesus.

Grab a Bible if you have one. If you have a Bible app on your phone get to Matthew, chapter 23. We’re in Matthew 23 today. And we’re going to see that Jesus has issues. He had trust issues, man. He had trust issues with organized religion. And we’re going to hear some of Jesus’ most feisty, fiery words that ever came out of his mouth. I’m talking it’s like hot-take central today.

Jesus is going to come out just I mean roaring and raging. And it's aimed at the leaders of organized religion. So what we're going to see today is that Jesus actually never came to start another organized religion. Jesus came to start something entirely different and way better. So we're going to learn the difference between organized religion and what Jesus actually came to start. Because Jesus—yes he had issues with organized religion but he had no trust issues, no doubts about the kind of church that he came to start.

See, in Matthew 16 Jesus says this about the kind of church he came to start. He says, "...upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.

He's got no doubts about the kind of church he came to start but he had all kinds of doubts, all kinds of trust issues with organized religion. So we're going to learn the difference between the two and what we can do together, collectively. What can we tangibly do to build the kind of church that's actually worth trusting, alright?

Matthew, chapter 23—we're going to start in verse 1. If you're ready, I want you to turn to your neighbor and say, "It's on like Donkey Kong." Got to keep the fun, man, Brockett gave me the one on organized religion, alright? Got to keep it fun. Got to keep it fresh. I'm kidding.

Here we go. Verse 1, it says this, "Then Jesus said to the crowds and his disciples," pause for a second. Can't go any further, eight words in we've got to stop. Jesus the crowds and the disciples, it's so important to understand. He's about to level some harsh critiques against organized religion, but I want you to realize who he is talking to—the crowds and his disciples.

What's interesting about that is that if you fast-forward a few years the people who he is talking to would soon become the church leaders and the church members in the first church of Jesus followers. So who he's really talking to here, he's talking to future church leaders and future church members.

And, keep in mind, he throws them all together. He doesn't have like a second meeting for the leaders and then a meeting for the church members. No, he says: All of you all together. Just gather around and we're going to talk about something. Everyone together, I want everyone on the same page.

Here's what he says. Next verse, "The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses. So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don't follow their example. They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden. Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels.

"And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues. They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called 'Rabbi.' Don't let anyone call you 'Rabbi.' for you have only one teacher,"

And here it is, "...and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters." Remember that, "...all of you are equal as brothers and sisters." Future church leaders, future church members, "...all of you are equal as brothers and sisters. And don't address anyone here on earth as 'Father' for only God in heaven is your Father. And don't let anyone call you 'Teacher,' for you have only one teacher, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be a servant. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Jesus says: these Pharisees, these leaders of organized religion, listen to what they say because they know what to say just don't follow their example. Don't follow their example because they ain't practicing what they preach. They look like they've got it all together, but their hearts are far from me. Don't follow their example.

And now, if you can believe it, these are actually not the harsh words that I was talking about. This is the set up. Jesus is about to go in here. He's about to go in on them. And instead of just talking to the crowds, he now aims it and talks specifically to the leaders of organized religion and he is just spitting hot fire here.

Jump down to verse 23. Look at what he says. He says, "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things. Blind guides! You strain your water so you won't accidentally swallow a gnat, but you swallow a camel!

"What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! You blind Pharisees! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too.

"What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness."

Tell us what's on your mind, Jesus. Put them on notice, man—good grief. I love Jesus so much. I would pay so much money if I could be a fly on the wall when he delivered this. Can you just imagine the look on people's faces as he's talking and saying this? I just envision the vast majority of people are like wide-eyed and, "Oooh, this is awkward." And, "Why did I choose today to come to church?"

I just imagine all of the disciples of Jesus are like holding each other back. Like they're on the bench in the NBA like, "Oh, no. He didn't"

“Yeah, he did.” Eat is Pharisees. He’s just hyping them up, man. Whitewashed tombs—you’re pretty on the outside but man you are filthy on the inside. It’s all a show.

Man, if that in a nutshell doesn’t wrap up and really capture the trust issues that we have with organized religion I don’t know what does. See Jesus had them too. Jesus looked at organized religion and was like: Yep, I don’t really want to have anything to do with that. That’s why we said that Jesus didn’t come to start another organized religion. He came to start something entirely different and way better.

See, even the phrase itself, *organized religion*, is problematic for Jesus. Not so much the organized part but the religion part. You see religion is defined as this. Religion is: man’s effort to get to God.

So like, you can look at every world religion out there, excluding the way of Jesus, every other world religion out there—and you can kind of sum them up, boil them down, to basically the same elements. There is a God, he exists, you’ve got to please him, right? If you don’t please him there are going to be some consequences in the end.

And the way that you please him is all based upon your performance. You’ve got to do xyz and you’ve got to not do abc. Make sure that whatever you do, you do xyz and you don’t do abc. And how well you can adhere to that, how well you can perform based upon those standards will determine whether or not you are accepted by God and accepted in this organized religion. This is how most religions are.

So, what happens when you organize people around performance? Well, what you do is when you organize people around performance you put your top performers at the top, right? So, who’s going to lead the thing? Well, you’ve got to put the people at the top who seem to be the best at pleasing God, who seem to be the best at knowing what it takes to please God the best, at sticking to the rules, and playing by the book.

So you put your top performers at the top and that’s where your church leaders go. You see, within organized religion it almost always looking like a triangle, bring the triangle picture up for me. Almost every organized religion looks like this. The church leaders at the top, the church members at the bottom, and then it’s kind of a sliding scale for you as to where you fit and it’s all based upon your performance—all based upon your ability to adhere to the rules. That will determine how far up you are on this thing.

Now this is how almost every organized religion ends up functioning. And there is a fundamental problem with this and Jesus saw it. There is a fundamental problem with this and the Bible actually gets to this. It’s a verse that we’ve been talking about in this series.

Jeremiah, chapter 17—the fundamental flaw—it says this, “The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?”

See, it's this truth that every single one of us, whether you are a church leader or a church member or somewhere in between, we've all got a desperately wicked heart that is capable of doing things that directly violate our ethics, that directly violate our moral code, that we would say is wrong in somebody else but we're more than happy to do it ourselves. That's how wicked our hearts are.

So, that's a big problem in organized religion. If you're organizing everyone around performance and you put your top performers at the top and everyone's acceptance is based upon their performance, what happens when—not if—when you don't perform? What happens when you fail? What happens when you screw up? What happens when you don't hit the mark?

Well, if it's all based upon performance, the same thing happens in every organized religion. When you fail, you hide it. Oh, you hide it, because, man, if someone found—if someone found out about what you're struggling with your acceptance would drop, your status would drop, your authority, your power—so we hide it.

Whether you are a church leader or you're a church member or wherever you are in between, in organized religion we always hide our flaws and that is ultimately why Jesus is so opposed to organized religion. Organized religion is a breeding for this word right here: hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy is simply pretending you're better than you really are. And organized religion breeds this. It encourages it, actually. Because if it's all based upon your performance, what do you do when you mess up? Well, just put on your Sunday best. Put the smile on. Make sure that nobody knows what's going on because they may look at you differently.

This is ultimately why Jesus is so opposed to this—there is nothing that God hates more than hypocrisy. If you're here and you've never given church a chance until now because you thought the church was full of hypocrites, guess what? You're on the same page with God. He can't stand hypocrisy. He can't stand it. That's why Jesus never came to start another organized religion. He knew it would just go down this route.

No, no, no he came to start something entirely different and way better. And the way that he did it is so fascinating. I'm telling you all you could study Jesus for the rest of your life—everything about him—and you would never run out of things to be amazed about: amazing preacher; amazing teacher; amazing, caring friend; a brilliant strategist; a brilliant leader.

And one of the decisions he made at the very beginning of starting to build this church that he talked about—he made this important decision early on as to who he was going to put into leadership. See Jesus didn't go the route that everyone else was going when they chose leaders. See, Jesus chose guys like—guys like Peter.

Peter was this guy who was a disciple who left his career to follow Jesus and he seemed to be so passionate about Jesus and he loved Jesus so much and he was all about Jesus. He was a very

vocal, very outspoken follower of Jesus until Jesus was crucified. When Jesus was crucified, Peter abandoned him. In Jesus' moment of greatest need, Peter left him high and dry.

In fact, the night that Jesus was murdered Peter was asked three different times: Hey, aren't you the guy who was hanging with Jesus... Aren't you the guy who was one of his closest dudes? And Peter's response three different times on the night that Jesus was murdered was: Jesus? Never heard of him. He abandoned Jesus. He was a coward. And Jesus says: him. I want him to lead. I want him to be a leader in the church.

Jesus would go to Paul. Paul, this guy who murdered Christians for a sport, his goal was to get as many Christians as he could to off them so he could stop the movement. And Jesus says: him. I want the guy who is killing my followers to actually come in and lead the thing.

Such a brilliant move because what Jesus was doing is Jesus was making the models real people. Jesus was making the ones we are supposed to look to real people with real issues. Very contrary to what current fashion does, right? Like all the models you see in magazines—they don't look like real people.

And now it's gotten even worse. Now even in stores, the manikins don't even look like real people, alright? I go into some clothing store like Target or something and the manikin is like six five, chiseled, washboard abs, huge biceps—I'm like, there ain't no way that that's going to look like that on me, alright? Can I please, for the love of everything, have a dad bod manikin? I'm just trying to see what that thing is going to look like when I get home, man. I'm trying not to come back here.

Jesus made sure that the models were real people—real people with real issues. And everyone knew about Peter's issues. Everyone knew about Paul's issues.

And everyone is like: Peter? The guy you abandoned you? He's going to lead the thing? Okay, Jesus. I guess that means that anybody could do it. Paul, the guy who killed Christians, he was killing us! He's leading? Alright, Jesus, that's an interesting move. I guess any of us could do it.

See, what Jesus was doing is Jesus was leveling the playing field. You're all equal as brothers... You're all in this thing together. You see, whereas organized religion typically looks like a triangle where the church leaders are at the top and the church members are at the bottom and it's a sliding scale based upon your performance, Jesus started something entirely different.

It looks more like this triangle. Jesus is at the top, church leaders and church members are down here—we're all together. The only person we lift up, the only person we elevate, the only person we say is the most important, the role model to look to is Jesus. It's none of us. It's all about Jesus. He came and he leveled the playing field. There is ground level at the foot of the cross. Church leaders, church members—we're all in this thing together.

It's why Peter would say things like this in 1 Peter. He'd write these words, "...you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple." Every single one of us is a stone that God is using to build this church, none of them more important than the other. He extends it. He says, "What's more, you are his holy priests."

He wasn't talking to church leaders. He was talking to everybody. There is no segment of people who are holier than thou people. No, no, no you've been saved and rescued by Jesus because of what he did on the cross, you're a priest, you are holy, you are set apart, you are called to live out a specific life that lives on mission for him. There's no separation. We're all in this together.

That's why Paul would say things like: The church is the body of Christ. And the body parts we have in a body—none of them are more important than the other. The hand can't say to the nose, "I don't need you." The eyes can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." We're all in this thing together.

Yes, there are different roles. Yes, there are different responsibilities. And yes, some of those roles come with a microphone. And some of those roles or responsibilities come with skinny jeans a V-neck and a guitar—worship leader joke, got to crack one when I can. But that doesn't make any of those roles more important. That doesn't make any of them more elevated in the eyes of God. No, no, no we're all in this thing together.

And you may say, "But, Petie, what about all of the verses that say that there are requirements for church eldership? Like the type of person you should be if you want to be an elder or a pastor—absolutely. Let's go there and read that, because nowhere in that list will you find perfection.

What you find when the Bible says the type of person who should be a pastor or an elder is someone who is faithful and faithful does not mean perfect. Faithful means, when you fail you get up and you keep going. When you get knocked down, you stand up, you brush the dirt off of your shoulders, you own your mistakes, you ask God for help and you keep going. Faithful just means that you're not going to stop. Faithful means that there is nothing that can stop you.

See, we are all in this together. We're all in it together. There is not supposed to be this massive separation between church leaders and church members because, ultimately, this is not another religion. It is not another religion. Religion is about man's effort to get to God, Christianity is entirely different. It's what separates itself from the pack because it's not about man's efforts to get to God; it's about God's effort to get to man.

It's about God sending Jesus as his one and only Son to die on the cross so our sins could be forgiven—to live the life that we could never live, to die the death that we should have died. And it's all about Jesus. Everything we do is about Jesus in the good times we praise Jesus—thank you Jesus. In the bad times we cry out to Jesus—Jesus we need you.

He's the alpha the omega the beginning and the end and it all hinges around him. He's the only one we focus everything on. I'm telling you, when you can build a church like that, when you can build a church that is solely focused on Jesus and it's not about us, it's not about you and me, it's not about the leaders, it's not about the members, it's about Jesus—when you can build that kind of church, the very powers of hell can't stand against it. It's unstoppable.

Now, I know that that sounds like something we'd all like to be a part of. I mean, very few people have issues with Jesus. We've got issues with each other. Very few have issues with Jesus. So if we could make it all about Jesus, that'd be great. But come on now history has proven that's pretty hard. It's pretty hard to build a church that's truly all about Jesus.

Because the truth is that church leaders can screw this thing up. This whole thing could get sideways with church leaders who are hypocritical, who are not vulnerable, who are unwilling to listen to feedback, or who are isolated from others, who are arrogant and prideful and power hungry, who minimize their personal sin, who are over-controlling, lazy, greedy, attention hungry—I could keep going. Church leaders like that could ruin this thing real quick. This thing could get sideways.

And, likewise, church members who are cynical, stubborn, selfish, unwilling to change, hung up on personal preferences, who make mountains out of molehills, who hide their sinful lifestyles and behaviors, who have no joy, who hold back all encouragement, who never get fully engaged in the mission for selfish reasons—I could keep going. Church members like that can bring the whole thing down. It just got real quiet in here.

Let's just call it what it is. This is hard. This is really, really hard. The bigger part of a church—in keeping it all about Jesus and not about ourselves is incredibly hard.

I had a mentor who, right before we started the Downtown campus, there was a pastor who I got connected to. His name was Brian. He actually, recently passed away. Brian had been a pastor for a long time and really never gave up doing ministry. He retired, but he never stopped doing ministry.

And Brian agreed to meet with me a few times and just kind of give me some wisdom about his experience. He had been a part of a lot of growing churches. So I was just meeting with him and gleaning wisdom from him.

I'll never forget one of the things that Brian said to me. He said, "Petie, being part of a growing church is like riding a tiger." He said, "It's adventurous, it's exhilarating, it's exhausting, it's super dangerous, and if you aren't careful, you'll end up the tiger's lunch. This thing will chew you up and swallow you whole. So you've just got to wake up and pray every day that you're not the tiger's lunch."

And man, I'm telling you those words are ringing in my head day after day after day because I can attest to them. There are times we sit back, our elders, our staff, our leaders—we all sit around and take these deep breaths like, whoosh. I mean like this thing is hard.

And I know it's not just the leaders who feel the weight. I know that it's all of us together. I know that there are so many of you in the room at every campus who are working hard, who are serving with everything you've got who are trying to be the best witnesses that you can be in your workplace, you're doing everything you can to build this church to be the church that Jesus wants it to be. And it's heavy and it's hard.

We just got call it the way it is. We're all in this together riding a tiger. And we've got to fight to make sure that we keep it what Jesus wants it to be and not just another organized religion.

I believe there are a couple of things we can do based upon the passage that we read to be so far away from where the Pharisees were that we can make sure that this is the church that Jesus came to build and not just another organized religion. So if you're the note taking type, I'm telling you, they're super simple—would love for you to talk about them in your groups this week.

They're super simple and I feel like this is part of it. The Pharisees complicated things—we're going to keep it really simple. So it's not going to blow your mind but simple is not always easy. Sometimes simple is just simple.

The first thing I think we can do to really build a church that is worth trusting is just too simply get real. We've got to get real. We've got to stop pretending that we are better than we really are—that's hypocrisy. We've got to stop that. We've got to get honest about what we're actually questioning, what we're doubting, what we're struggling through, what's really going on in our lives and we've got to start putting our worst foot forward and not always putting our best foot forward.

The Pharisees couldn't do it. The Pharisees could not get honest about what was going on in their hearts. And, man, can you think back to some of the evils that you've seen come out of organized religion? How much of it could have been avoided if someone in there was getting real.

See, sin—we've said this from the stage before, sin will take you further than you ever wanted to go and cost you more than you ever wanted to pay, unless you get real about it, you get honest about it. And I believe it starts with leaders.

And I'm not just talking about leaders on the stage. I'm talking about leaders all over our church. If you're responsible for anyone but yourself, if you are in worship, production, if you're on Connections, if you're in Kids' Ministry, if you're in Student Ministry, if you're responsible for anyone other than you—you're a leader. And I believe it starts with you. I believe it starts with us.

See, if you want to continue to act like your only issue is a slight anger problem, 'cause you stubbed your toe one time and said, "Gosh darn it," I mean, that's cool if you want to do that. Just know that you're not going the way of Jesus.

Just know that you're going to breed hypocrisy in the ranks of whatever you're leading, because, let me tell you, you're dealing with more than that and the people you're leading are dealing with more than that. And leaders have to go first. Leaders have to pave the way for honesty. They have to pave the way to transparency and vulnerability. We've got to get real.

Again, I know, I know, I know that this is not common in the church. I know it's not common in the church. I know it's not common in the church because of some of the reactions that Aaron and I get when we get vulnerable on stage—when we talk about our struggles.

You know, the vast majority of people... Anytime Aaron or I get up here to talk about what we're dealing with, the overwhelming majority of the reaction we get is super positive, super encouraging. You all are one of the most encouraging churches to be a preacher at. I mean it's unbelievable how loving and kind and encouraging you guys are.

But there are always a few that I'm like, "Huh, that was an interesting one." And I understand it. Like, recently I had a really sweet lady, one of my favorite ladies in the whole church, she is so sweet and she came up to me and I knew her heart and I knew what she meant. She said, "Petie, when you're getting real and you're sharing about your past and even like your current struggles, you make yourself sound like a bad person. And you're not a bad person."

My first thought was, "Girl, you don't know me." But secondarily, like I get it. I get it, because my mom has shared something similar before. My poor mom—my mom and dad live in Kentucky and so they will watch online all of the time. They often watch when I'm preaching—not that they don't watch when Brockett is preaching, they love Aaron but I'm just saying it's like a parenting thing, you know? Aaron, my parents love you, okay?

They're watching and I remember one sermon they came back and they were like... I called them that afternoon and they were like, "Oh, you did a great job. Awesome, but Patrick," she calls me Patrick because that's my real name, "Patrick, sometimes when you talk about your past and what you're struggling with it makes me feel like a bad mom." I'm like, "Oh, Mom. Bless your heart. But Momma, my sin ain't on you. My sin is on me."

And I want to be clear. When Aaron and I are vulnerable like man, we have experienced great victory in Jesus. I've experienced great victory in Jesus. Sin has been conquered in my life in many ways. What I struggle with now is not what I struggled with five years ago—not what I struggled with a year ago. God has grown me for sure. There is victory to be found in Jesus—absolutely.

However, however I've still got issues and there is still sin in my heart and there is still sin in my mind and there is still sin in my life that God is dealing with.

And I believe one of the first things we have to do if we're going to get real is we've got to get real about our sin. We've got to not minimize it, because let me tell you, yes my sin now is different than it was five years ago and your sin, if you've been following Jesus for years, is different than how you were before. You've grown in strength. But the sin that is still in your life, still in your heart, was bad enough that the very Son of God had to die to cover your sin. God doesn't minimize it.

My sin, right now, that's in my heart, is so bad that Jesus, himself, had to hang on a cross so that it could be forgiven. God doesn't minimize it. So you best believe that I'm not going to minimize it.

Let me tell you, if you did something that caused me to have to watch my son be murdered you must believe that I wouldn't minimize it. I'd treat it as the most heinous act the world has ever seen and it would break my heart.

We've got to get real about our sin. We've got to get real about what it really cost God to cover that and to forgive that. And then once you can finally get real about it, then you've got to deal with it. You've got to speak that out loud.

You've got to get real in your group. When you go to group this week, I want you to put your worst foot forward and talk about what you're really dealing with, talk about what you're really struggling with.

Man, when you go to work this week instead of talking about rainbows and butterflies in your life, talk about what's really going on. Share with people a little bit. When you start to get real, you start to verbalize it, it's this amazing thing that God does. God uses you getting real to heal. God uses your transparency, your willingness to share, to restore you and to strengthen you.

James would say it like this. He would say, "You should confess your sins to one another that you may be healed." See, you've got to get real and not only will it help you, not only will it heal your heart but you just watch what it does to other people. You watch when other people will start to follow you and want to learn more about you and be way more curious about you. You'll have way more opportunities to talk about Jesus when you get real.

I'm going to tell you, one of my favorite pastors put it like this, "People would always rather follow a leader who is real than a leader who is right." You've got to get real. Gone are the days when we can continue to let hypocrisy reign in our churches. We've got to get real—what's really going on in our lives.

The second thing is just as simple as the first, but it's just as difficult. You've got to get real and you've got to really love Jesus. I mean like really love him. Really love Jesus. Not just sing the

songs, not just go through the motions because, you know, the Pharisees did that. The Pharisees knew every worship song. And they knew when the chorus was coming and when the bridge was coming—they knew. They had it all figured out but their hearts were far from God.

No one can do this for you. It's on you. It's on me. If you really love Jesus... So I'm just saying church do whatever it takes for you personally to love Jesus with everything you've got. Jesus actually said that's the greatest commandment. Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, all of your strength. Love him with everything you've got. So man, whatever it takes for you to love Jesus—do it!

If for you you've got to get out in nature and walk and pray, then by all means schedule yourself a daily nature walk captain science. Get out there and love you some creation. If for you it's getting in the car and driving and just singing as loud as you can—can't be anybody else around because you don't like the sound of your voice—then my friend schedule a trip around 465, loop this city, sing your heart out if that's what it takes for you to love Jesus.

If it's coffee in the morning—if you've got to wake up 30 minutes early and just get some coffee and get your Bible on, then my friend get your coffee on and get your Bible on. Whatever it takes for you to love Jesus—do it. Do it! Because I'm telling you, it is the most effective thing, it's the most effective thing you can do to build the kind of church that Jesus wants to build.

What makes this church and any church special is not the preaching. It's not the worship. What makes a church special is when we can all come in here together as a group of people at every campus and we don't have to fake it. That makes a church special. When we are all coming in here and we just really love Jesus and it's just blowing out, it's just pouring out of us no one can doubt it. No one can paint on it. And everyone actually wants to be a part of it.

There is something attractive about it when we can come in here and all just genuinely love Jesus with everything we have, that's where the power is. That's the kind of church that Jesus said the very powers of hell can't even stand against. And I'm telling you, it's not a potential. It's not these goals we talk about in the future, like if we could be a church that does xyz but it never happens. This isn't potential, it's fact because it's already happened and it already is happening.

See, it already happened in the first century. The very first church that Jesus started, who got real and really loved him—when they all got organized and they all started going in the same direction it changed the entire Roman Empire. All throughout history you see it. We could do a history lesson in it. See, when the organized followers of Jesus get together and they really love him and they all start going in the same direction the world changes for the better.

Let me just bring you up to present day, the kind of church that Jesus is building right under our feet right now. When the followers of Jesus and the people who really love Jesus get together and we get organized and we all start going in the same direction, we do things like starting

hospitals in the Middle East to serve people who don't believe anything that we believe, which happened several years ago.

We do things like starting an orphanage in Nicaragua that serves kids with special needs, which we were able to come together and do. It does things like sponsoring thousands of kids in Peru and Brazil who didn't know where their next meal was coming from, who didn't know if they would ever get to go to school, and now they've got a hope and a future.

I mean we're rescuing girls from sex trafficking here in Indiana and all across the world. That's what happens when the followers of Jesus get organized and start going in the same direction.

We throw a prom for adults with special needs every year and it's the party of the year. You won't find a better party than the Special Needs Prom. That's what happens when followers of Jesus really love him and they get together and they just get organized and they start going in the same direction. It changes the world.

We've launched three campuses over the past few years that have reached thousands of people, hundreds of baptisms, that's people's eternities that are changed. That's alleviating spiritual poverty in our city.

You know spiritual poverty doesn't know economic bounds. Spiritual poverty affects the rich and the poor and everybody in between. And when we start a church, that's what we're doing.

And by God's grace we're going to make a dent in the orphan crises in our state. We're going to make a dent by providing more foster families, more safe families, more adoptive families so that there are no more fatherless in the state.

By God's grace we're going to keep launching churches all across the world and in the city. We're going to keep going by God's grace. I'm telling you, that kind of church, that's the kind of church I'm ready to be a part of. That's the kind of church I'm pleased and proud to be a part of.

And that's the kind of church that Jesus had no doubts about because that kind of church is the hope of the world. It's God's plan "A" and there ain't no plan "B". But that kind of church is only possible, we only keep that on the rails if we get real and we really love Jesus.

So let's just go to him right now and do that. Let's get real before God and ask him to point out what needs to change in us and to get real about our sin and to own it with him. And then just to tell him how much we love him.

Let's pray right now:

Jesus, we love you. We just ask that you would meet us in the room at every campus. We can't believe the way that you have loved us. We're amazed, God. And I pray that in these moments you would remind us of just what you did for us on the cross and just what it cost you for us to

even be able to talk to you right now. God let that well up within us gratitude and a love for you.

God, I pray that our church would never have to fake it. That you would just drive that spirit of the Pharisees that leaven of the Pharisees that attitude that they had out of here and that we would just come in here and be real, authentic, transparent, full hearts that just beat for you because we really love you, Jesus.

But we need you to come in and to change our hearts and to help us have hearts that break for the things that break yours to help us have hearts that beat for you God. I pray that you would meet us here in the next few moments. It's in Jesus' name the church prays together. Amen.