

Hey everybody. Welcome to Christ Fellowship. I especially want to welcome all of you who are joining us for the first time. My name is Rick and I serve as the lead pastor here at Christ Fellowship. I also want to welcome all of you who are joining us for the first time at all of our campuses all across Dade County, as well as those who are joining us online. We believe that you have been brought here, not by accident, but you are here because of a divine providential act of God, because God wants to speak into your life and God always does that through His Word, through the Word of God. With that in mind, I would encourage you to open your Bibles, the Word of God, to the gospel of John. We are in a study of the Book of John, and if you don't have a Bible, don't worry about it. All of the text will come up on the screen and you can kind of follow along that way.

I want to begin by saying this. I went to see the movie "Noah" a few weeks back. How many of you have already seen that movie. Let me see your hands. I want to tell you, this film had the chance to be one of the all time great movies. That is because the story line itself is so great, and by that I mean that the story line is documented by God in the Word of God. God's story of Noah is a great story on steroids. I mean the plot, the conflict, the overcoming of conflict. It has all of the elements of a great story. Listen folks, all this film writer had to do was follow God's story of Noah. By that I mean don't write anything into God's story of Noah, and don't write anything out of God's story of Noah, and you have got an automatic blockbuster film.

By the way, I had heard from a Christian band that the film was actually loyal to the Biblical narrative and therefore was going to be a great, great story. But unfortunately, that really just wasn't the case. Rather than following God's story of Noah, the film writer chose to write stuff into the story that is not really in the story; and he wrote stuff out of the story, namely the conflict, out of the story that ought to be in the story, that should be in the story. For example, he writes into the story that Noah was some sort of a madman who wanted to murder his own grandchildren by stabbing them in the face with a knife. I looked at Rhonda and went, "Whaat?" He writes into the story that Noah was an environmentalist of some kind who only wanted to save the plants and the animals and stuff.

Beyond that, he wrote out of the story the main conflict, which was the conflict of the Nephilims. You remember: we talked about that: Half demon and half man. That was the reason behind the flood in the first place. That was written out of the story. Folks. my point is simply this: By writing stuff into the story and by writing events out of the story that should have been in the story, the film writer actually weakened the movie from the great Bible story that it is, kind of down to just another Hollywood flick. But, I'm not protesting movies. If you want to go see it, go see it. I'm just saying it could have been a great story, but it turned out not to be a great story.

Let me turn a corner and draw an analogy to all of that, because what an image of what we do to our own stories. You say, "Meaning what?" Meaning God is writing our story. God is writing your story. He is writing my story, just like He wrote Noah's story. God wants your story, and God wants my story to be a great story. But folks, so often we want God to write stuff out of our story that God says, "That's what makes your story great." In other words, just like the film writer wrote stuff out of the story of Noah and actually weakened that story, we want God to write stuff out of our story; that if God does write it out of our story, it would weaken our story. Folks, I'm talking mainly bout conflict. We are always saying, "God, write that conflict out of

my story. God, that is a bad part of my story; write it out. God is saying, “No, no, no. The conflict in your story is actually what makes your story a great story.

We are in a series we are calling “This is my Story”, because we all have a story, a story that sort of defines our life. In fact, our life is a story that we are living out every day. This is your story. This is my story, and we live that story out every day. What we are learning in this series is how to live a better story. In fact, we are learning how to live a great story, and we are learning that from the man who lived the greatest story ever. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 11. He said, “Truly I tell you that among of those born of women, there has not risen any anyone greater than John.” Translation, John lived the greatest story ever lived.

Here is my proposition. If we want to live a greater story, if you want to live a great story, then we need look at the identifying characteristics of John’s story. Because if we can mirror those characteristics, our story can go from mundane to great. Our story can go from just another Hollywood flick that is forgettable to a blockbuster story in the eyes of God. You say, “Well Rick, what did John do to live such a great story, and how can I mimic his life and live a great story as well? Well, we are going to find out as we go back to the gospel of John today. We are going to study the Book of John and we just began a few weeks back.

I want to give you three thoughts about how to live a better story. Remember I said if you want to live a greater story you have got to cast the right main character, and it is not us, It is Him. It’s God. He is the main character of the story. Secondly, we’ve got to play our supporting cast role as being the voice for God, and we learned last week about using our spiritual gifts. Now, I want to give you three more thought about how to live a better story.

How many of you have your listening guides? Hold those up. We like to take notes as some of you remember. I just want to warn you today that today is going to come across a lot more like teaching than preaching. We are going to have to navigate a lot of theology, so I want to encourage you to put your thinking caps on. So, here we go. How to live a better story, here is what you need to do. Number one, to live a better story, don’t write conflict out of your story. Don’t write your conflict out of your story. With that in mind, let’s pick it up. Let’s pick up the narrative beginning in verse 19. You follow with your eyes as I read.

“Now, this was John’s testimony with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem who sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. (23) John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet. “I am the voice of the one calling in the wilderness: “Make straight the way of the Lord.” Stop right there, because what a great start to a great story, right? I mean, John is out there preaching, and all of these people are coming to hear him preach, and he is preaching that Christ, the King, is at hand, that He is on the earth. In fact, John is the voice for the King. Remember I told you a few weeks ago about that program that is called “The Voice” on TV? How many of you have seen it?

John won the role. He was the voice for the King, but his story gets even more amazing. Look at chapter three, verse one of Matthew. Listen to this. It says, “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea.” What was his message? Here it is: “And saying, ‘Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’” Now, stop right there, because interestingly, that is the very same message that Jesus was preaching. In fact, listen to Matthew 4:17. It says, “From

that time on, Jesus began to preach.” And what was Jesus’ sermon? “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is come near.” Jesus’ first sermon was about the Kingdom, and everywhere Jesus went, He was preaching the Kingdom, the Kingdom, the Kingdom. You say, “What’s the big deal with the Kingdom? What is that?” Oh man! The Kingdom is what every believer in those days longed for. It is what we should long for, because the Kingdom will literally be heaven on the earth. That is the Kingdom. In fact, Jesus explained the Kingdom in the Lord’s Prayer. Here is what He said: Do you remember this? He said, “When you pray, here is how you pray: Óur Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.” Do you realize that every day you should pray, “God, your kingdom come. Your kingdom come: Your kingdom come:”

You say, “What is the Kingdom?” Jesus defined it in the very next sentence. Here is what the Kingdom is. Jesus said, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” I love that! Do you know what the Kingdom is? It will be the eternal time on this earth when God’s will is going to be done on this earth just like it is in heaven. You see, contrary to what a lot of people imagine, eternity for Christians is not going to be spent in heaven. Heaven is only temporary to hold your spirit when you die, but in the end at the consummation, we are going to live on the earth. We are going to live on a new earth that is literally going to be heaven on the earth. You are not going to spend eternity in heaven floating around on clouds, playing a harp. No, we are going to come back to this earth and you are going to have a body and you are going to live on this planet. That is called the Kingdom of heaven because it is literally going to be heaven on the earth.

Let me tell you something folks: Only one person can bring in the Kingdom on the earth, and that is the King. And who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords? It is Jesus. Check this out: What Jesus was offering to that generation at His first advent when He said, “Repent for the kingdom is at hand”, what he was offering was to establish the Kingdom on the earth in that generation. He was offering to set up the everlasting Kingdom on the earth then, at His first coming. The only condition was that they repent and receive the King. In other words, you can’t have a Kingdom unless you have the King. But folks, here is my point about John. John’s calling was to be the messenger of the King. John was to be the official messenger of the King of the Kingdom. You talk about living a great story. Can you imagine? In fact, check this out. John was inked for this great story four hundred years before he was even born. In fact, listen to what Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 11. Listen to this: “As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John. He is going to talk to them about John. What did He say about John? Verse 10: “This is the one. John is the one. About whom it is written. ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you’.”

Now folks, that is a direct quote of Malachi 3:1, which was written four hundred years before. In Malachi, chapter three, four hundred years before Christ ever came, here is what God said. “I will send my messenger who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to the temple.” I love it. That was a prophecy written four hundred years before Christ ever came, and the prophecy foretold that God was going to come to His temple, but before God came to His temple, there would come this messenger who would prepare the way for God. Jesus says to the people: He says, “I am the God of that prophecy. I am the Lord of that prophecy, and John the Baptist is the messenger of that prophecy. Folk, to put it another

way: John was inked all the way back in Malachi, chapter three, for this incredible story that he was to live.

But I want you to watch how this story unfolds. Listen to Matthew 11, verse 2. It says, “When John who was in prison.” You say, “Whoa, Rick, what’s up with John being thrown into prison? What’s up with that?” Well, if you know the rest of the story, the people of that generation rejected the King, and inexorably crucified the King and John who was the messenger of the King, got thrown into prison and was eventually beheaded, to which you might say, “Whoa! This is not a great story, Rick. This is a story gone south. This isn’t a great story. This is not even a good story. This is a bad story. This is an awful story. This is a sad story, because look at the conflict that John faced. But listen; If you think that, a great story is not the absence of conflict. In the culture that we live in, that is what people think. A great life, a great story is the absence of conflict. But the truth is a story without conflict is a boring story. Right? You think of the stories that you know. It is the conflict in those stories that make the stories great.

For example, one of my favorite stories now is the story “Brave Heart”. I had never seen that movie until we did the series on “Fight”. But now it is my favorite movie. I love to watch it. But it is the conflict in that story that makes that a great story, right? In fact, if you remove the conflict that William Wallace faced out of that story, William Wallace loses his greatness. As a matter of fact, if Brave Heart was a story of a man named William Wallace and the story IS that he lived this cushy life, and the whole movie is watching William Wallace riding around on his expensive horses, parking in his ten-car horse garage, laying around by the pool all day, just living on easy street, would you pay ten bucks and sit for two hours to watch that type of story? Of course not! It is the conflict that William Wallace faced, and the conflict that William Wallace overcame that makes his story great.

By the way, let me tell you something. The Bible is rife with conflict. I mean from Genesis to Revelation, it is just one conflict after another conflict, and that is what makes the Bible such a great read. For those of you who don’t read the Bible, you don’t know what you are missing. It is a great read. It is a great story. Think about this: What is the story of Noah without the conflict of the flood? What is the story of Moses, without the conflict of the Egyptians? What is the story of David without the conflict of the giant? What is the story of Daniel without the conflict of the lion’s den? What is the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego without the conflict of the fiery furnace? What is the story of John the Baptist without the conflict of prison? And what is your story without conflict? I’ll tell you what it is. Boring! Mundane! Not worth watching! And yet, we want God to write the conflict out, don’t we? We want God to write the very feature of our story, that God says makes our story great. We want God to write that conflict out.

Since I had the heart attack three years ago, for three years I’ve been saying, “God, write these heart issues out. God, this is not supposed to be part of the story. This is off the story. You are off the story, God. You are off the plot, God. Write the problems I am having out of the story. In fact, just two weeks ago, between two of the services I was about to come over when all of a sudden, pow, just like that, I start pouring sweat and my blood pressure starts elevating and elevating. Folks, let me tell you something. I wasn’t scared of having a heart attack. I was frustrated, because I was not able to come over and preach which is what I was called to do. Instead, I had to go home, and when I got home I had a talk with God. I sat down in my rocking

chair and I said, “You know God, I’m not tired of the conflict.” I said, “God, since birth it has been one conflict after another to where we are, and I started cataloguing to God my conflicts. I said, “God, when I was born I faced the conflict of a father who didn’t see me until I was two and a half. God, when he did show up when I was a kid, he was alcoholic. He had abandoned us. I faced that conflict. Then God, when you called me into the ministry, I ended up having to work two jobs to support a family while carrying a full bachelor’s/masters and PHD load, and God, nobody helped me financially. My church didn’t send me a dime. My family didn’t send me any money. God, it nearly killed me. And then God, remember the time the house got stolen from me. My house got stolen, God, and I was in a conflict of being financially broke. Remember that one? Then God, you called me to Miami and the first thing one of the pastors said to me when I got here was, ‘Rick, you need to get the hell out of Miami.’ Really? Why? Because Satan owns this place, and it’s just going to be a battle. He wants this city, and God, do you know what? It’s been one conflict after another conflict after another conflict.” And I’m just sitting there rocking and telling God all this.

Now, listen, don’t get me wrong. You can recite even greater conflicts, but I’m just saying that conflict has been part of my story too. Folks, here is what I’m learning. Conflict is our story. Conflict is your story. Put another way: Conflict is not your story gone off plot. Conflict is not your story gone astray. No, conflict is your story. This is my story. It’s like the song we sing: “This is my story, this is my song.” Conflict is my story, and folks, what I am telling you is that I don’t want to run from a conflict any more, because in the eyes of God, conflict can make your story great. Remember the definition I gave you of a great story by Donald Miller in his book “Blue Light Gas”? A story consists of a character who wants something and overcomes conflict to get it. Let me say that again. A great story consists of a character, you, who wants something and overcomes conflict to get it.

Folks, with that in mind, let’s go back to the story of John, because as conflict enters into John’s story, I want you to notice his initial response to it. Watch what he does. Matthew 11:12: “When John, who was in prison, now he is sitting in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask him “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else.” Translation: John was saying, “This is not what I expected.” Let me give you another word for what is going on here. It is called doubt. As John was sitting in that prison, Satan began to whisper in his ear. “Hey, you are in prison. Maybe he is not the Christ. Maybe he is not the one. Maybe he is not the Messiah.” You say, “Meaning what?” Meaning this folks, the man who lived the greatest story ever lived faced a time when he doubted God. The man who lived the greatest story ever lived faced a time when he doubted God.

Here is what you and I need to know. Conflict can trigger doubt. Think about it folks: John was expecting Jesus to set up the kingdom on the earth: A kingdom in which he would be the official messenger of the King. You know the story, don’t you? They rejected the King, and when they rejected the King they forfeited the Kingdom. In fact, listen to what Jesus said to that generation. He said this. Matthew 21:43. Jesus said, “Therefore I tell you. (He is talking to that generation.) The kingdom of God will be taken away from you. I offered to set up the kingdom and you rejected the king, so I am taking the kingdom of God away from you, that generation, and given to a generation who will produce its fruits.” So opposed to establishing the

Kingdom in John's generation, Jesus postpones the Kingdom, suspends the Kingdom until His Second Coming to the earth.

In fact, I want you to listen to this description of the Second Coming of Christ. Listen to this. Revelation 19:11 says this: "I saw a heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True." Who is that? It is Jesus. It is Jesus at His Second Advent. Verse 16: "And on his robe and on his thigh he had this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords." That is Christ, the King, coming back to earth to set up His Kingdom on this earth and what is that Kingdom going to look like; what will it be like. Listen to Revelation 21:1. Here is what the Kingdom is going to look like, and by the way this is what John was expecting Jesus to set up back then. Here is what the Kingdom is going to look like.

"Then I saw a new universe, and a new earth, for the first universe and the first earth had passed away. Verse 3: And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying 'Look, God's dwelling place, heaven, is now among the people. Heaven has come to earth. And he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. And here is my favorite part. And he that is God will wipe every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death and no more mourning and no more crying and no more pain. Why? For the old order of things has passed away.'" Folks, that is the Kingdom of God.

Here is what I want you to understand. John expected Jesus to set that up. That was what John expected Jesus to do, but check this out. That is not what Jesus delivered. So, there was a gap between what John expected God to do and what God actually delivered. There was a gap. Have you ever been there? You expect God to fix your marriage and He doesn't. You expect God to heal your cancer, to heal your disease, to heal your Mom, to heal your child and He doesn't. You expect God to repair your finances and He doesn't. Whatever it is that you expect there, you expect God to do this but God doesn't deliver what you expected, and now there is this gap between what you expect God to do and what God actually delivers.

Let me tell you folks, here is the conflict that you are facing at such a moment. You have to decide what you going to put in the gap. And you really only have two choices. The first choice is, you can put doubt into the gap which is exactly what Satan wants you to put there and leave there; and he will begin to whisper in your ears that if God loved you He would deliver you from this disease. If God loved you He would deliver your marriage. If God loved you He would deliver your child. If God loved you He would put in that gap what you need, if He loved you. You begin to doubt God to the point that you walk away from God, and you become estranged from a God that you once knew but now a God that you no longer understand and a God that you no longer trust. Satan just shepherds you away from God. That is what he wants you to put in that gap and leave in the gap.

But there is another option, and that is you can put trust in the gap. You can put trust in that gap. Here is what you need to know. Listen: When you stand in the gap between doubt and trust, when you stand in that gap, you are standing in the place of the greatest conflict. And I am talking about the conflict between good and evil, between righteousness and unrighteousness; between God and Satan. Make no mistake about it: God and Satan have been at it a long time, and the conflict is always, always, always over your trust. If God wants to have a relationship

with you, you can't have a relationship with somebody you don't trust. Satan is always trying to break that relationship. So Satan is pulling your mind toward doubt and God is pulling you toward trust and that gap is a difficult place to live in.

But here is what I want you to understand. It is in this gap that the greatest stories are born. It's in this gap that the greatest stories are born, because, get it: the greatest story is not when we trust God after he puts in the gap what we expected Him to put in the gap. When He puts in the gap what we wanted Him to put in the gap, that's no conflict. No, the greatest story is when we trust God when He doesn't put in the gap what we wanted. When we trust Him when He doesn't put into the gap what we expected Him to put in there. That is the greatest story. You see, folks, Satan is the great accuser. In fact, his name originally was Lucifer. God changed his name to Satan which means accuser. Do you know what Satan always accuses us of? He accuses us before God and he says, "God, the only reason they love you is because you put in the gap what they want. The only reason they serve you God is because you always put in the gap what they want. That is why they trust you. It is because you put in the gap what they want. God, take all the goodies out of the gap and let's see what they do then.

Isn't that what Satan said about Job? Satan came to God and he said, "God, do you know why Job serves you? It's because you put all the goodies in the gap. He's got everything he wants. Who wouldn't serve you, God? Let's take all of the stuff out of the gap for Job and let's then see if he loves you. So God says to Satan, "Take everything out of the gap: his health, his money, take it all out.' After everything was taken out of the gap, Job, lying in ashes with sores and boils and cancer all over him, he stood up and he said, "Even if God slays me, I will trust God, because my God knows the way for me." That is a great story, and Child of God, I'm telling you, when you are in that gap, you are in the conflict of the ages between God and Satan. A great story is not the absence of conflict. A great story is overcoming the conflict by trusting God.

You say, "Rick, how can I trust God when Satan is whispering doubt, doubt, in my ears all the time?" Well, the way you trust God is the same way John the Baptist trusted God. The same way Jesus helped John. Watch what Jesus does for John. John sends his disciples and says, "I don't think I am sure you are the Messiah. I'm doubting you. Listen to verse 4: "Jesus got angry with John and decided never to speak to John again." Is that what it said when John doubted? The same is true with you when you doubt. He just wants to help you when you doubt. Jesus replied: "Go back and report." In other word, take this word to John. Here is the word I want you to give him. (5) "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." Listen: When John was in the conflict of doubt, the force that Jesus sent him to overcome the doubt and to shore up his trust was Jesus sent him his Word, the Word of God.

Let me tell you something, Child of God. When you are facing conflict, when you are in that gap, that same force that God sends you is the force of His Word. When you are facing doubt, nothing will shore up your confidence, nothing will raise your trust like God's Word. The Bible is God's Word from Genesis to Revelation, from cover to cover. It is like a letter that has been mailed from God. It's like He opened your mailbox and shoved it in there and said, 'This is from me to you.' II Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture (how much scripture – all of it) is given by inspiration of God," The Greek word there is theopneustos. It means the breath of God. It means

every word, every jot and every tittle in that book you have there in your lap has been given and authored by God Himself, and it is the force that will shore up your faith and your trust. That is why you need to read it. That is why you need to hide it in your heart. By the way, it is why we go through books of the Bible here. People will sometimes ask me: “Rick, do we have to go through another book of the Bible? Can’t you just talk about some subjects and topics?” No! You don’t need to hear from me. You don’t need to hear what I think. You don’t need to hear my politics, my philosophy, or my commentary. You can read the newspaper. Who you need to hear from is God, and that is why we stay with the Word of God in this church, because it is the force that shores up our faith.

I want to give you one more thing. When you go through conflict, God is watching your story. Let’s go back to the birth of John. Listen to Luke 1:13: “The angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zachariah. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you are to call him John.: (This is John the Baptist) (15) “He will be great in the eyes of people; in the eyes of the world. The world didn’t care much about him. The world wasn’t even watching. “He will be great in the eyes of the Lord.” Translation: God was watching John’s story, and Child of God, God is watching your story, especially when you are going through conflict. Let me tell you, if you are going through conflict today you need to understand that you are special at that time when you are in the gap, because God is watching your story, and watching with great interest. God is not only watching, but His Presence is with you. I’ve said this before but I’ll say it again: Peace of mind is not the absence of conflict. Peace of mind is knowing the Presence of God in the conflict. Let me say that again: Peace of mind is knowing the Presence of God in the conflict.

I want to remind you of one more great truth. Listen to this verse. When you are going through conflict you need to remember the end. Listen to this. Revelation 3:11. Jesus says, “Behold I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown.” God wants to give you a crown for overcoming. Listen to what He says: “Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more out. And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven, heaven to earth, from my God.” “And I will write upon him my new name.” God is going to reward you for your faithfulness. One day you will stand before God because you overcame, because you hung in there and you said, “Though you slay me, yet will I trust him.” God is going to call you by name and you are going to ascend this elevated platform called the Bema, and the Son of God will put a crown on you. He is going to say, “This is from me to you. Well done, good and faithful servant.” That is a great story.

You see, when we look at our conflict just by itself, it is like a piece of a puzzle. It just doesn’t make any sense. But when you take your conflict, the story of your conflict, and you take your story of your conflict and you place it into His story, all of a sudden the story of your conflict makes sense. And because you overcame, and you said, “God, even if you slay me, I will trust you” you give glory to your God, which is what you were created to do. God takes your story and makes it into a blockbuster story. God is not the cause of your conflict. God is not the author of your conflict, but God has an amazing way of writing your conflict into His story so that your story one day will be broadcast before the universe as a great story, as God rewards you.

I want us to read a little pledge, and then I want to talk to you one final time. I want us to read this before God. Will you read it with me:. Let's read it together. "God, this is my story. Conflict is not my story gone wrong. Conflict is a part of my story. God, help me to overcome the conflict through faith so that I might live a great story in your eyes. Lead me where my faith is without borders. Amen."

If you are here today and you have never trusted the King as your Savior, your story is isolated from God's story now, and without the King, your story will always remain eternally separated from God's story. But I've got good news for you. If you are here today and you are not a Christian, you've never trusted Christ as Savior, and you are kind of listening to this and you say, "Wow!" Let me tell you something. God wants to take your story, even your conflict, and write it into His everlasting story and make it His story, and give you everlasting life. But you have to accept the King before you can go into the Kingdom, and you can do that today. You can leave here with your story written into the Book of Life.

Let's bow for a word of prayer. Would you join me? While our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed, while no one is looking around, I want to ask you a question. The question is very simple. Is your story a part of God's story? Let me put it to you another way. Is your story a part of God's eternal story? In other words, if you died today, do you know that you would go to heaven; that you are going to that Kingdom? If you know that beyond any shadow of a doubt, you say, "Rick, if I died right now, I know that I am headed for the Kingdom of God. If that is your testimony, while no one is looking around would you just slip up your hand and say, "Rick, I know that as sure as if I were already there. You can put your hands down. God bless you.

You know, when I ask that question, I always notice that there are people who don't raise their hands. Maybe that was you, and you are saying, "Rick, the reason I didn't raise my hand is because I don't know that I have everlasting life. I don't know that if I died I would go into the Kingdom of God. I don't know that my story is a part of His story." But listen: maybe at the same time you are wishing that you did know that. You are wishing that you did know that you were a part of God's story. So, I want to pray for you, and while nobody is looking around, if you say, "Rick, I don't know that I have eternal life; I don't know that I am a part of God's story, but I wish I did", and you want me to pray for you. If that is your prayer, while nobody is looking around, and I promise you, nobody will bother you, but I want to pray for you. Would you just slip up your hand, all over the building. Say, "Rick, pray for me. I need what you are talking about." God bless you! Many hands are going up. Thank you. God bless you. Many hands are up all over the auditorium and at all of our campuses across Dade County. Raise your hand. Say, "Rick, I need what you are talking about." God bless you. You can put your hands down.

Listen, you can leave this building different than when you came in. You came in with your story written out of God's story. You can leave this building with your story in God's story. You can leave this building today knowing, not hoping, not thinking, but knowing that you have everlasting life. You say, "Rick, how do I get eternal life? How do I do that?" Well, the Bible puts it this way. Listen, the Bible says, "Everyone". Who does that mean? It means you. Everyone! It says "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." So how do you get saved? He didn't say everyone who joins a church. He didn't say everyone that gets baptized.

He didn't say everyone who gets sprinkled, or everyone who signs a commitment. He didn't say that at all. It is personal between you and God. He says that everyone who calls on Him will be saved.

So, how do you get saved? How do you get your story in His story? It is so simple that a child can do it. All you have to do is ask. It is that simple. If you have found what I'm talking about complicated in the past, it's because men like me have complicated it, and Jesus wants to uncomplicate it. He says all you have to do is call on Him. So why don't you do that in the quiet of this moment. It is personal. It is between you and God. God is not calling you to religion. Religion is a ritual. Religion is you trying to do something to be saved. Jesus wants to have a relationship with you, and it is totally different.

If you are not sure what to say, then let me lead you in a prayer. You pray this prayer to God, not to me. You pray it to Him. It is unscripted, so you pray it from your heart, quietly in your heart. He will hear you as you pray this prayer. "Dear heavenly Father, I know that my story has not really been a part of your story. My story has been out of your story. God, I know that if I would die in the state I'm in, my story would be forever out of your story. So Lord, today as best as I know how to do this, I ask you to become my Savior. I open the door to my life. I open the door to my heart, and I invite you in as my Lord, as the King, as my Savior. I ask you to wash away all of my sins, my past sins, the sins that I came here with today, and even the sins I haven't even committed yet. I ask you to wash all of them away and cleanse every one of them, and to give me everlasting life. Thank you. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for becoming my King and my Savior. Help me spend the rest of my days loving you and being loved by you. I pray this in your precious name. Amen."

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