

I. Introduction

- A. *Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal. 31 He followed the instructions that Moses the LORD's servant had written in the Book of the Law: "Make me an altar from stones that are uncut and have not been shaped with iron tools." Then on the altar they presented burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD. 32 And as the Israelites watched, Joshua copied the Law of Moses onto the stones of the altar. 33 Then all the Israelites—foreigners and citizens alike—along with the leaders, officers, and judges, were divided into two groups. One group stood at the foot of Mount Gerizim, the other at the foot of Mount Ebal. Each group faced the other, and between them stood the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the LORD's covenant. This was all done according to the instructions Moses, the servant of the LORD, had given for blessing the people of Israel. 34 Joshua then read to them all the blessings and curses Moses had written in the Book of the Law. 35 Every command Moses had ever given was read to the entire assembly, including the women and children and the foreigners who lived among the Israelites (Joshua 8:30-35, NLT).*

II. Getting Lost

- A. Today I'd like to speak with you on the topic, resetting true north.
- B. What's the most lost you've ever been? One day, a friend and I drove from Chicago to the Mississippi River. We wanted to hang out at a state park along the river. On the way home, we decided to do some sightseeing, so we got onto some dirt roads. We figured it would be easy to find our way back and that there couldn't be too many roads, so we just headed in.
- C. We figured wrong. Normally I have a pretty good sense of direction, but not here. I couldn't figure north from south. No stores. No gas stations. No maps. No street signs. No sunset. No GPS—just a network of dirt roads, and every once in a while, a lonely looking cabin.
- D. So, I found this study that said men spend more time driving lost than women. The average American male drives lost 276 miles per year. Ladies, don't get all proud, because you drive lost 256 miles per year, only twenty miles better.
- E. But where you really beat us is that you stop and ask for help sooner, so while our miles are about the same, your lost minutes are a lot fewer than ours.
- F. So there we were driving around some lagoon of the mighty Mississippi after dark. We were so turned around, we didn't have a clue—after about 45 minutes, I agreed to knock on a door and ask for help.
- G. But I was nervous. A) Because it was dark and spooky. B) Because every house looked like whoever opened the door would be pointing a shotgun in my general direction.
- H. Finally, I pulled in front of an old shack; knocked, and waited. A man in a tank top answered, and was actually very nice. He gave me directions, and while I was listening, I realized I should have been writing them down, because they were so complicated. Go two streets up, turn left, find the rusty tractor, turn right...
- I. He's talking, I'm nodding my head, but it's all going in one ear and out the other. I nodded and said thank you. I got in the car and my friend said, got it? And I said, heck no.
- J. So we drove on to the next house, and SHE got out, with a pen and paper, and actually drew a map to get us out of there.
- K. That same study says that when men do ask for directions, 40% of the time they don't follow them because they think the directions are wrong.

III. Joshua

- A. Some time ago, as a church, we began a series called Birthright, It's Yours, Take it Back. It's based on the premise that when you receive Jesus, you become an heir of God. You have an inheritance from God. This inheritance collects all kinds of good stuff into one package deal: you have an identity in Christ, you have a new nature, you have the presence of God in a new way, you have promises from God both for this life and the next, you have new strength, you have all kinds of supernatural divine resources so you can live up to your full inheritance in Christ. You have a birthright.
- B. So how do you experience your birthright?
- C. God knew you would ask that question, so He put a whole book in the Bible about it. The book is called Joshua. Some time ago, we began studying it, but we didn't finish.
- D. So I want to return until we start our Christmas series. There are a few more lessons in here that I think are crucial for the journey of our lives.
- E. Like this little paragraph I just read.
- F. Here are people who just lost a war, and then won a war. In the next chapter they get deceived, and in the chapter after that, they face another war.
- G. You could say they have a lot of turmoil in their lives, just like us today: financial turmoil, emotional turmoil, political, relational, and marital.
- H. So in Joshua 8:30-35, their leader, Joshua, hits the pause button. He creates a break in the action. In that break, Joshua says; let's make sure we don't get lost.
1. Let's remember who we are.
 2. Let's remember whose we are.
 3. Let's remember where we're going.
 4. Let's remember how to get there.
 5. Let's remember where we put the map.
- I. It's really important that as you go on with God, you regularly pause and take your bearings. This chapter shows how to reset true north, in three beautiful, interrelated parts.

IV. EveryONE Counts

- A. Before we look at that—I do want to pause and celebrate what God has done through you in our EveryONE Counts project.
- B. I'm so grateful—our governing board met on Friday and we recalibrated our hearts to what God is doing, and I'm so encouraged.
- C. So here's where we stand.
1. God keeps sending more and more people for us to care for, love, and lead to Jesus. Even last weekend, we're so excited for 44 men and women and kids who said they stepped into the arms of Jesus through faith. God keeps entrusting more and more people to our care.

2. We simply lack the space to effectively care for all the people who are coming to Christ and being made whole. Kid ministry space, worship auditorium space, parking space in some services, youth ministry, classrooms—we're hurting for space.
 3. So, we'd like to finish building out our 17 acre property. Our dream is to build a serviceable, but beautiful children's ministry space and worship center.
 4. So far, we've done preliminary drawings, clearing, and a building pad. I know it doesn't look like much, but it has been 3 years to get to this point.
 5. All of this is paid in full. Our church has no debt. Thank you so much for your faithful giving.
- D. So where do we go from here?
1. The next step is to finalize the construction drawings, and acquire the next batch of permits, and then send it out to bid and lock in prices. And I'm really happy to say that we have cash in hand to accomplish this next phase.
 2. After that construction can begin.
 3. We've now had two opportunities to give and to pledge toward this project. And I want to say a big thank you—for every gift, big and small. To me, the heartfelt giving has been more encouraging than anything else. Examples:
 - (1) "I couldn't think of anything to sell so I played my keyboard three times at nursing homes and earned \$xx.xx. To God be the glory!"
 - (2) "My grandmother went home to be with the Lord. These opal-sapphire-diamond rings were hers. They just sit in my dresser. I never wear them. I suppose I have just kept them because I wanted to hold onto something of Grandma's. My grandma and I shared a love for opals. I remember even at jewelry stores when we looked at opals, we commented on the 'fire' in them when the light would reflect. I couldn't help but think of the fire that some will encounter if they don't have a chance to meet Jesus. Everyone counts! I am not sure how much these rings will bring in. I know it will do more good than sitting in my dresser. In His name."
 - (3) "Cancelled subscription to NBA sports package for building fund."
 - (4) "This is actually a gift of valuables—gold—glad to give for others to meet Jesus."
 - (5) "I sold my (God's) Xbox with games. It hadn't been used in years!"
 - (6) "Dear Neighborhood Church family, please accepts this tanzanite ring as an offering. This tanzanite and diamond ring belonged to my mother. It's over 5 carats and should appraise between \$5,000-\$8,000. Even with all she had she died an unhappy woman, disconnected from her family. Saved right near the end of her life, I always believed I'd sell her jewelry or auction it at my fundraisers to use the money to help facilitate bringing the joy of Jesus to others. NCR does that every day right now so it seems fitting that the first piece goes to you! Thank you all for demonstrating the love and grace of Jesus and not just talking about it!"
 - (7) "Thank you for creating a safe, nurturing, educating and enhancing place for my family and me. We appreciate the prayer team, worship team, message team, Celebrate Recovery Ministries, children's ministries, care ministries and opportunities to serve. This has been a healing place for us, and I pray for Neighborhood's people daily and will continue to do so. God bless you in this expansion endeavor."
 - (8) "I am a single mother of 3. I know I need this for my children, but I have faith God will continue to bless us. Thank you for being here for us."
 - (9) "Last week I contemplated the one day's pay. I had just gotten hired at a "daily labor" business so I am able to tithe my 10%. I knew a day's pay would be tricky. I put my trust in Him and wrote a check for a day's pay. After the service, I found a paycheck in my car that I had forgotten to deposit. Have faith, He will provide."
 - (10) "Father, change lives and eternities with this like you have changed me."
 - (11) "We joyfully give one day's pay to grow the kingdom of God. Thank you, God, for this joy in our hearts."
 - (12) "May the chairs of Neighborhood Church continue to be the scene of the salvation miracle for years to come!"
 4. So thank you to everyone who gives.
 5. So here's where we stand. We're kind of like the people in Joshua, on the border of the Promised Land—we look in and see obstacles, and we wonder how God's gonna get us there.
 6. In our EveryONE counts project, you pledged another \$63,000 dollars and gave another \$100,000 to the project.
 7. That means the total pledges add up to \$3.1 million.
 8. Of that, \$1.7 million has already come in—in this economy, that's awesome. Did you know that over that last two years, in this economy, everyone joined hands and together we have given over \$1.7 million dollars above and beyond our regular giving to our ministries? That is a miracle of grace.
 9. Now we need our next miracle.
 10. There is still \$1.45 million pledged to come in this year and the year after that. Now, you gotta understand that all these numbers are variable, and the banks we work with change every day, and construction prices are variables. But as it stands now, when about 2/3 of that money comes in, we will actually build. In the mean time, we'll go ahead with building designs and drawings.
 11. All of this to say this: God did this before in our past and God hasn't brought us this far to let us down now.
 12. In this passage in Joshua, the people pause to reset their true north. How?

V. Joshua

- A. First, they built an altar. What do we know about it?
1. Uncut stones, v. 31. Burnt offering, v. 32. Peace offering, v. 32.
 2. Let's break this down.
 - a) An altar was a place of sacrifice. The sacrifice made possible their connection with God and every time they built an altar it was about reconnecting with God, rebonding with God, returning their hearts to God—resetting true north.
 - b) The uncut stones were important. They symbolized grace. Your connection with God is not about you pulling out your tool belt and hacking things to make them fit.
 - (1) It is about taking what God has given you and putting things together the way He told you. Uncut stones symbolize grace.
 - c) There were five key kinds of sacrifices, and here they offer two. The burnt offering symbolizes Jesus Christ, who would one day offer up Himself to God. A bullock (or goat or sheep) was sacrificed, and the blood sprinkled around the altar. Then the animal was burnt on the altar, the whole sacrifice, wholly consumed.
 - (1) Here's what that symbolizes. One day, a Savior will come who will offer Himself perfectly and entirely and without reservation to God.
 - (2) The key idea of the burnt offering is one word: DEDICATION: The dedication of the Lord Jesus to death and the dedication of His followers to never forget His sacrifice.
 - d) The peace offering was different. An animal was sacrificed, and only the inedible parts were burned. The rest of it was cooked and eaten as a sign of partnership and community and fellowship. For the burnt offering the one word would be dedication. For the peace offering, the one word would be JOY.
 3. What was Joshua doing? He was doing exactly what we did today when we took the Lord's Supper.
 4. He was reminding them of their deepest truths: Never forget your Savior. Never forget your salvation. Never forget the altar, the place of sacrifice, which for us today means the Cross. And never forget Jesus. He died to offer Himself to God that He might create a new community of people—we, the church—joined together in life and mission in this life, and in service and celebration in the life to come.
 5. After the altar comes the Word.
- B. Joshua wrote the Word of God.
1. *32 And as the Israelites watched, Joshua copied the Law of Moses onto the stones of the altar.*
 2. Again, he was recalibrating their lives—resetting their compass.
 3. We're headed for a full life in Christ and the Bible is our map. There is no other map. There is no substitute for the Bible.
 4. Some scholars think that Joshua put plaster on the altar, or built another wall. I'm not sure.
 5. But here's the leader, holding up the Bible as they had it, for everyone to see. He pauses to remind them of the priority of Scripture.
 6. Church, there will never be a substitute for Scripture. Not just head knowledge, but heart knowledge. Not just knowing it, but living it, applying it. You cannot experience all that God has for you without a growing knowledge of the perfect, inspired Word of God.
 7. When you hold a Bible, you hold the living, perfect, complete message of God to humankind. And when you take in the Bible, you don't just get information, you also get power. You don't just get facts, you also get healing. You don't just get truth, you also get sanctification.
 8. There are two opposite errors when it comes to how Christians use their Bibles.
 - a) One is like it's a fact book, and we can see how many facts we cram into our heads, like little professors, and still display nothing of the character of Christ.
 - b) The other error is to treat the Bible like a semi-optional buffet. Pick what you like, skip what you don't like.
 9. It takes a whole Bible to make a whole Christian. Joshua read the whole Bible—at that point, the first five books—the whole thing. Verse 35 says he didn't skip a word.
 10. When you're lost, you need your map; you need the Bible. You need to pause. To ask, what has God already said in His Word?
 11. Jesus said of the Scriptures—these are the books which speak of ME. The Bible is your portal to Jesus. Just like Joshua drew it. The altar was Jesus and His work and on it, Joshua wrote the Law of Moses—the portal to Jesus and His work.
 12. This is how you reset true north. How you reorient yourself: the Bible as it points you to Jesus and all He did for you and now lives to do through you.
 - a) Do you know that we have GrowU to help fill your mind and heart with God's Word? Especially if you are new in Jesus—if you're one of those who lifted your eyes and made eye contact with me, we have a special group for you, and it's fun and encouraging.
 - b) I so encourage you to be part of GrowU a week from Sunday—it really weaves together all the things we're talking about today: The altar and the Word.
 13. And then there was a third element.
- C. The people recited God's truth to each other.
1. Three essential elements: all working together, dancing together—The Altar, the Word, and the Community.
 2. It had to be really cool—there in a valley, half the nation rising up on one slope; half the nation on the opposite slope. And they are to recite to each other the blessings and the cursing of the Word.
 3. There is a place for solitude in your life with God.

4. But there is a greater place for community in your life with God. You need friends to echo God's word back to you.
 - a) When you're discouraged, or when you're ready to do great things, your friends echo the blessings of God's promises.
 - b) And when you're being a jerk, or an idiot, or sinning, they echo the warnings and threats and curses of God's promises.
5. Jesus said I will build my church—not my individuals off doing their own thing. I will build my church.
6. There are over 52 one-another's in the Bible—love one another, encourage one another, admonish one another, care for one another—over 52, and almost none of them can really happen on Sunday.
7. That's why we work so hard to form communities, small groups, that serve, that learn, that help out, that hang out, that pray, that do life together—Community.

VI . Conclusion

- A. The community looks to the Word, and the Word points to Jesus—His mission, His Cross, His life, His presence among His people.
- B. Here's how this looks:
 1. A couple weeks ago, Jon told you about a woman in our church who had a check coming in, figuring it would be maybe \$150. She decided she'd give the whole check to the EveryONE counts project.
 2. Well, the check came in, and it was \$850.00. We call that inner turmoil. She struggled and decided to still give the whole check.
 3. Right after that, her car broke down—this is a single mom, not rich, or anything like that. She went to a mechanic, all worried about what it would cost.
 4. The mechanic estimated somewhere between \$50 and \$500, and he'd take a look at it. When he came back, he said, "Good news, it was closer to \$50, but I went ahead and fixed it, and fixed some other stuff too. And I don't ever do this, but for some weird reason I feel that God wanted me to do this job for free."
 5. You can't out-give God, right?
 6. But it gets better, because the next week, a member of our church family who wishes to remain unnamed, came to our office, and said, "I heard the story about the woman who gave her \$850 check. And I have a check for her." He handed over a check for \$1,000.00 for us to give to this woman.
 7. We invited her to come in, and on this past Friday, we were able to give her \$1,000.00. There were a lot of tears.
 8. And I'm not saying that every time you give God money, He gives you more money in return—that's actually a lie.
 9. But whatever you give to God, God gives you back in things that money can't buy. And I guarantee you that that woman experienced God in a way that was worth way more than \$1,000.00.
- C. What is Neighborhood Church?
- D. A community of people—living through the power of Jesus for one another and the world—by the Word of God, in its riches, its fullness and its depth; The whole Word for whole Christians—telling our friends and neighbors and the whole world of a Savior who loved us and gave His life for us.

VII . Invitation

- A. Altar—do you have Jesus?
- B. Word—do you read your Bible?
- C. Community—are you connecting with people?
 1. Will you move forward today?
 - a) GrowU—Nov 14, afternoon