

“Jesus Is the Answer”
By Chris Ulrich
Sunday, April 6th, 2014

If you would bow your heads with me for a moment. God, I thank you for this time we've had this morning. We thank You for what You've given us. Thank You for calling us. Thank You, Jesus, for You being the answer, God. I just ask that I would get out of the way, personally, God, and that You would anoint, God. Bless this time; bless this message bless us as a congregation. Strengthen us, uplift us, give us what we need, and not what we want, God. I just want to ask these things in Your name, Jesus Amen.

Thank God for what we have. Parrish, you stole just a little bit of my message. You mentioned how that the winter's over, and the birds are out there chirping, and I've got to say that that's one of my favorite sounds, especially springtime. When I heard it the other morning, I was like, "Oh my..." After this past winter, for those of you that weren't up here, not only was it the coldest, and the most snow, but it was the windiest.

We live in a time where it seems that Christianity is criticized and reviled and it seems like more and more people are searching and going in other directions. There are so many different religions, you've got atheism, you've got agnostics... A lot of times it just seems like there's not the respect that God desires, that God deserves. People are looking for answers; looking for hope, and looking for solutions. And yet for all the opposition, denouncing, and downright blasphemy, Jesus stands at the door and He knocks. He said that if any will open He will come in and sup with them (Revelation 3:18). He says that He is kind to the unthankful and the evil {Luke 6:35}. And He says that though our sins would be as scarlet, that they would be as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).

I know there was a time in my life when I was seeking for answers in a lot of different places and I think we can all relate to that. It doesn't matter where I looked though, or who I asked, or what I tried because I always came up empty-handed. Constantly looking but not finding. Still didn't find what I was looking for. I hope everyone can relate to that, too. It's not as though I hit rock bottom, I mean, I didn't have a terminal illness, I wasn't facing jail time, and I'm not criticizing those that do. We've all heard of death-bed repentance, and there's no such thing as an atheist in a fox hole. We've all heard those expressions, and those things are real when you're faced with a critical situation. Now, I'm not saying that every single person in the world is always going to turn to Christ. I'm not saying that's the case at all; sometimes, when it's too late... It's just a matter of, "I don't want to get to that point." I think we all can relate to that, too. Some have been in that boat, as far as facing really challenging situations, but, God's plan is that none would perish, but that all would come to eternal life, that all would come to the knowledge of the truth. There's a verse in Titus—we're not going to go to that—but it says that the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men (Titus 2:11). God is fair. I mean, I doesn't matter whether people say He's not, because, if He's given us all an opportunity; if He's given us all a chance, that's what we need. I'm not saying that whatever situation you were born into—and I realize that some have faced extreme hardship, and some have had a silver spoon, but you know what? we're all going to stand before God eventually. It doesn't matter what kind of background we came from, because we were all raised some way. I want to share that—and this is going to be the theme this month—"I am the way, the truth, and the life..." and you don't need to turn to it necessarily, but it's found in John 14:6.

John 14:6 *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

It's a matter of taking it seriously, and not getting complacent with it, and not looking at it like, "Okay, I've heard it all before," because a lot of times we do come in contact with people who say, "I've already heard that before, and it's not a new song and dance." It's a matter of taking it personally, so that when we are presented with that salvation plan, we set aside some of those things, those personal views in our life, the philosophies... It's not as though we forget who we are or where we're from or our background, or even our likes and our dislikes. I mean, if you like certain kind of cuisine, if we like a certain place to visit, if we like certain sports teams... I know a lot of you can relate to that. We have to adjust to having a relationship with God.

1. Sometimes, "Jesus Is the Answer" Is Just for Us

That might sound a little selfish, that Jesus is the answer for just me, but we're going to get to another point here in a little bit. We all have relationships in this life and we all have people that we care about and that care about us. God doesn't want us to live like hermits or ostracize ourselves from the rest of society. He wants us to interact. But it's a personal walk with God and that's something that nobody can change that or interfere with that. We have to look at it like we're all going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ as individuals. It's not going to be as a family; it's not going to be as a part of a business, or even as part of a church! I mean, that is an important thing to remember. Yes, it's something that we hear it, and it's something that we take seriously. I want to ask you a question: So, is our walk with God that personal? Is it that personal that we'll hear that still small voice? Is it that personal that we know that we have to save ourselves from this untoward generation? (Acts 2:40) These are some of the things that we learn along the way. We don't understand everything right out of the box. Our resolve needs to be that we're going to make it and, pardon the expression, come hell or high water. And our resolve has nothing to do with talking big and making promises we can't keep. We've all heard that, too. I mean, people that can talk a good game, and give a good song and dance, can entice crowds, can basically slay audiences, as they say, but, anybody can do that. It has to do with believing with every fiber of our being that Jesus is the answer and that our plan is to endure to the end regardless of how anyone else chooses to live.

John 3:16-19 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

There's nothing fancy about this account and nothing we haven't heard before. I think, in a lot of ways, this is probably one of the most popular passages in the Bible. But I don't want to ever grow cold and complacent to God's touch and take it for granted. Knowing that Jesus is the answer transcends the routine and the things of this life. It gives us a ray of hope in what is becoming a more and more corrupt world. We read that last passage, where it says men loved darkness rather than light. You know what? that's not comfortable. That's something where it's like, "Oh, yeah! I feel that way!" we have to acknowledge that, we all have to acknowledge that we're all in this life, we're all in the flesh, and we have to have the spiritual man take control. It comes down to, each and every one of us has a soul, and it really comes down to, what is stronger? Is it our spiritual man or our fleshly man, or woman? That's the thing, because we have to look at it like, "Okay, if I love darkness rather than light," that's not a pleasant acknowledgement, but it is an acknowledgement. So, it's just a matter of how do I submit myself to the power of God, to be able to have the power to overcome the things of this life, because

that's what a lot of this is about, to be able to overcome. That is the part, where I think a lot of people feel like this it's not fair. How many people have heard that expression, "Life's not fair?" Pretty much everybody. Well if you haven't heard it, then you'll probably hear it at some point. It comes down to, it has to be a personal walk with God. It has to be something that we acknowledge that Jesus is the answer. And, again, it's not a matter of, we're going out and fighting against anybody, but, when Christ said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me,*" that's a pretty strong line drawn in the sand. It's one of those things where there's plenty of religions and beliefs out there that hate that. They look at it like they despise it... There's a movie out there called, "Noah." I haven't seen it; I've talked to some people who have. Some people say it's pretty far out there; I've read some reviews... What I'm going to say, though, there's a verse in Genesis 6, that simply says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." (Genesis 6:8) So, whatever the exaggerated, or the dramatics, or whatever the case might be—I'm not up here saying people should or shouldn't see it—I'm just saying, what's the Biblical perspective? Noah found grace in the eyes of God, and God said, I'm going to destroy the earth because of the violence, because corruption had pervaded upon the face of the earth, and that's the truth. That's the Biblical account; it's not a matter of, "Oh, trust what they say," or "Trust what the movie says." There's good movies out there; I've got a reference I'm going to make a little bit later on in the message...

2. Sometimes "Jesus Is the Answer" For Someone Else.

That might sound a little strange, too, but it doesn't mean we put our own relationship with God on the shelf, it means that we share with others. Do we carry a burden for lost souls? Do we pray and seek for opportunities to share our faith? Do we pray for wisdom in order to help explain the plan of salvation or any other important biblical topic? These are things that people are looking for and we'll get into that we'll run into plenty of opposition, or people who aren't interested. That's a fact, and I want to address that in a minute. I'm not talking about being a religious extremist and trying to force feed people the gospel but we shouldn't be ashamed and we shouldn't try to hide it.

1 Corinthians 9:16-22 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

Are we able to relate to people? Find a common hobby or interest? Spend some time trying to be a stranger's friend? There's a lot of different evangelism techniques, or ways of relating to people, or just whatever ways we can relate to people. Again, that's one of the biggest functions of being in a society and, again, we're in the world, but we're not of the world (John 15:19), so it's not a matter of we become more worldly in order to win somebody to the Gospel. There's plenty of good, clean fun—there really is—I mean, this isn't a matter of looking at it like, "Okay, well, the only place where I can find some fun is in a club," or, whatever activity is out there, I mean, that just seems to be a very prominent

one, just because of everything that's involved. One of the biggest messages we need to share, is being honest and telling it like it is, that there is a reality in God. Are we trying to be compelling and convincing of the gospel or are we indifferent about it? I don't ask that and act as though I'm never felt some indifference myself. Not indifferent in my conviction to live for God myself—and I want to make this point, I've been at points in my life where I thought, "I really don't care what they think. I'm tired of the rejection of the Gospel"—not the rejection of me, but, it's the kind of thing where it's like you try to talk to people, you come up with every single way, whether it's family, friends, people you work with or somebody at a gas station, somebody at a coffee shop, and sometimes there seems to be a very, very little amount of interest, but, what it really comes down to is, God had to really deal with me about that. He had to soften my heart, because I was like, "I don't care! I'm tired of it; I'm sick of it!" Not that I felt, at that point, that I was never going to share with anybody ever again, but it's just the kind of thing—Christ said it, Himself, He said, "If they reject you, wipe of your feet as a testimony against them." (Matthew 10:14) He also talked about, "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that rejecteth you rejecteth Me." So, it's not a matter of, okay, taking it personally, but I have to say that was taking it a little bit personally. Nobody wants to be embarrassed, nobody wants to be humiliated, nobody wants to be like shunned or criticized, and it's like, look, I mean, we all have plenty of things in life, work-related things, family-related things, that, if people want to take a special interest in being critical, or in being spiteful, I look at it like, "Well, I can't take it personally." I have to look at it like, if they want to look at it like that, it's between them and God. I believe God gives us wisdom on how to shun people at times—I'm not talking about just outright making ourselves enemies of other people, because, really, what's going to happen is people are going to make themselves enemies of us. It's a matter of, you know what? you shared last week or last time, Jesse, about that friend that you had in the military, that you guys had plans to go to Italy, and you were going to open up some restaurants, or this and that, but, when he found that your plans had changed, in that you had become a Christian, he spread all kinds of gossip and all kinds of lies, and, by the time you arrived at that duty station, it was a matter of, now you've got all this mess to clean up. It sounds like God really blessed getting you interest with people, or, I should say, gave you support. People saw what you were doing that you weren't some religious nut. That's the other thing: It's not a matter of like trying to be some religious extremist. I know that when Rod Williams was up here, and he shared one of those things about the people that were there when he first got baptized, when he first came to the knowledge of the truth. I know there's a song that is called, "I Am A Life That Was Changed," I'm not sure of the exact title [editor's note: the exact title is, "[Thank You For Giving to the Lord](#)"], but there's a lyric in there that just says, "I'm so glad you gave to the Lord." It's one of those things that, going back to sometimes Jesus is the answer for someone else, it's not an easy thing to convey that, because sometimes people interpret that as being force-fed. But, they're never going to know if we don't care. I remember when I first came out; Kirk Orelup was one of the ones that invited me out. I was with a group of people and I was in the military at the time. I remember seriously searching; searching for some answers. Not knowing which way to go; I had had an experience with God that was very unforgettable, but I was walking around on the military base, and I was accosted by this group, and they seemed pretty harmless, pretty friendly. Kirk said something about hacky-sack, and I'm like, "Okay, he's harmless." But, I remember that I got invited out; really saw a big difference, and, you know what? it wasn't anything glamorous. When I came out to that church, it was what they call a 'store-front church,' it was down there... There was a big, big difference between them and some other church groups that I had spent some time with. I remember Howard Larson; he was working in the shipyard at the time, and my ship was in, what they call, dry-dock. Howard was a little bit colorful, even back then. It was good, because it was important to see different people of different ages and different backgrounds... He used to come over to my ship and look me up; this was like for a couple of months. I appreciate that. John Hoffman was another guy that—a lot of people know him, he's from Virginia—I remember they had some apartments, and they invited me to stay over,

and I remember going over, and I was like, "What are these guys? Is this going to be some kind of religious cult?" That's just the kind of thing... But, I remember, John was like, "You want to look at some pictures?" and I was thinking, "Sure!" because I was really kind of surprised that they're down to earth. They have interests, they have a routine, they have a lifestyle, just like anybody else. It made a big difference, because it wasn't like, "Let's have another Bible study." "Let's have another Bible study." "Let's have another Bible study." Those things are needful, but there has to be a balance; we have to have a balance between a spiritual life and—you could call it recreation. I'm not talking about leaning too far one way, for sure; there has to be a good, healthy balance. I'm going to read a passage, and this is going to wrap up this point:

Jude 21-23 *Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*

So, God's asking us to show mercy. God's asking us to be patient, to be long-suffering with people, because people did that to us. That's something that I will always have to remember, that I was shown that mercy, I was shown that patience, I was shown that long-suffering. I get that life can get complicated; it can get clogged up with different activities, it can get clogged up with—I'm just going to say it like this—sin. You know, myself and Bob Heirtzler and I were driving yesterday, and we got to talking a little bit, and we got to talking about there's a passage that talks about the Pharisee and the sinner, and they were praying. It said the Pharisee said, "I thank God I'm not like this sinner; I thank God I do all these righteous things." It was like, the other man just said, "You know what? have mercy on me, God, I'm a sinner." (Luke 18:9-14) I said to Bob, "You know whose sin I know more than anybody else about? My own." I don't know about yours or yours or yours or yours or yours or yours or yours or yours or yours or yours or yours... I could go throughout the whole room, or anybody else, because the person that I know more about their sin, more than anybody else, is my own. That's not an easy pull to swallow, but I know I can go to God. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3;23), but we have forgiveness. That's the thing: sometimes we have to pick ourselves back up. It's not easy; sometimes there's going to be a lot of bumps in the road, there's going to be a lot of opposition, and we don't always know where it's going to come from. It might come from family; it might come from people we least expect, but sometimes those major blessings might come from people that we don't expect, either.

3. "Jesus Is The Answer" Is Always For Everyone.

I know that's not really a bold statement in the midst of fellow believers and hopefully it doesn't sound contradictory to the earlier points, but do we still believe, and practice what we believe, regardless of who's around? I think we all understand that most people don't want to be a Christian. I hate to think that, and to look at like that, but, you know what? we always have to give everybody a chance, because it comes down to the Bible says, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:14) and "...wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." (Matthew 7:13) So, we don't know when somebody's going to come from England, get baptized in Jesus' name, get serious about the Gospel. Yeah, Jeannette, I'm talking about you. You don't know! I mean, you don't know, sometimes like, who's going to take it seriously. Bianca and Nancy, I'm going to mention you two. I mean, I see that, and I'm like, I can see a seriousness in their life, and I'm like, "Thank God!" Thank God that there's people that—and, you know what? I didn't invite them out. I really don't know who did, and, at this

point, it's one of those things where it's like—it's a group effort. One man plants, one man waters, but God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

So, we know that Jesus is the answer, but I want to make mention of this: I'm not against different physical health or mental health programs or institutions. In fact, I believe there is a very serious need, and a place that meets needs that we can't meet as a body of believers. The church is a hospital for sinners, but if you're having a heart attack, don't come to church; right, Donna? Take them to a hospital. But in the big picture, in creation, in our soul, Heaven and Hell, and where do we stand? Yeah, Jesus is the answer. That's not going to change. There's not going to be something better that's going to come along, either. There's going to be things that are more enticing. There's going to be plenty of people who make up their own rules along the way; people that get a following. There will plenty of false prophets who will come to us looking good and sounding good and tell us what we want to hear and not what we need to hear.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

I wrestled about putting this in here, because I realize this isn't a pleasant passage, and I know that we're in the New Testament, and the Old Testament laws, as far as stoning them to death, or annihilating them, it doesn't apply, but here's one thing that does: When we hear enticement, or we hear false prophets, we turn away; we don't follow after them. We have to understand that, first of all, we're going to hear plenty of it. I made mention of this just recently: There was an organization out in California called the Crystal Cathedral. Very glamorous, very wealthy, and I think their peak was probably in the eighties or nineties, but, as it stands, they had built a church that was about fifty million dollars, which, at that time, I mean, even still, that's not cheap. But, they went bankrupt. I'm not saying—I don't know what they taught, but I know this much: If I'm looking for something that, "Oh, it's going to be glamorous; it's going to be what I want to hear, teach unto us smooth things..." It says in Isaiah that they will prophesy unto us lies (Isaiah 9:15). I don't want to teach that, and I don't want to hear that. But God takes His word very seriously and expects us to do the same. Sometimes it takes strong medicine to cure what ails.

Jesus is the answer might not be the most popular message but it sure is the most enduring. It might not be the most fun life to live, that's true, but it is the most fulfilling. And it might not be easiest way to go, but it's the only way to fly. God's going to reveal things along the way that—we'll hear things, and sometimes, you know, that's why it pays to keep reading the Bible. I'm going to make an analogy to that: There's a movie—I did say I was going to mention another movie—it came out a long time ago, it was about the Viet Nam war; it was called [Apocalypse Now](#). I watched it back in the eighties, and I'd watched it probably four or five times over the years, but I watched it again recently (Rob actually bought me a copy, so I appreciate that). So, I watched it again recently, and I thought that I'd seen everything—not like I was trying to memorize the dialog, but I just like it. It's got one of those on

the edge of your seat, at times, but, I swear, I missed this, now, some that saw it said, "Oh, I Yes, I saw that the very first time." Okay, that's great, that's great. Toward the end—it's a Navy boat, by the way, and they're going up this river to find this colonel that basically had gotten deranged, okay? That's just the plot, in a nutshell. As they enter this village—it's brief, I mean, it's only like two or three seconds—there's all these villagers, and people, and they've got this sign, and it just says, "Apocalypse Now," which just means, the end is now. I just saw that, and thought, "How could I have never seen that?" That's the kind of thing that—I'm not saying some new Gospel is going to come along—but, once we hear the truth of God, "**I am the way, the truth and the life...**" we hear about baptism in Jesus' name, we know about being born again, but God reveals different things along the way. God gives us strength along the way; God gives us health; God bring us different people along the way; God gives us different revelations along the way, so that we can understand what it takes to get through this life now. What does it take, at this point now, to go into what they call uncharted waters. Like, if you go out in a boat, and go into no-man's land, or uncharted waters, I guess is what the navigation term is... I think we all feel that way at times, that we're in uncharted waters. I mean, we look at it like, we live in a world where we feel like, sometimes, it feels like the world is trying to cave in. Where it's like we feel like our rights are being stripped, as Christians. We feel like—we hear different stories, and people here will share about our foreign missions, and, well, now it's against the law to be a Christian in Sri Lanka, and you hear these different things and it's like, how much longer before that's the case here in America? I mean, I hope it never happens, but, could it happen? sure it could happen. I want to ask one last question as we close, and I know not everybody in here has accepted Christ; I know that we're at varying stages of our walk with God, but the question I want to ask is—and I asked this in a Bible study recently—Do you like being a Christian? I'm talking about the kind of thing where it's like, you're in school, if you're on your job, maybe you're retired, do you like it? Because, if you don't, then we go back to, men loved darkness, rather than light. We've got to check ourselves. If you still don't like it, again, it's a matter of what do I think I'm expecting from God in this life? What do I think I'm expecting from God in eternity? What do I think I'm expecting from God along the way? Because if I really don't like it, and I say, "I hate it. I detest this," one thing I would say, my closest friends are here, they're in the faith. I have friends on the outside, but I look at it like, do I really want to throw that away? I mean, there's always going to be temptations along the way to just quit, to just recede back into the woodwork. That's why I'm using myself, because I think our emotions can be a roller-coaster ride. Day in and day out. One day it's like, "It's great!" and the next day, it's like the stock market. I mean, it just fluctuates. It's like the opinion of the president, "Oh, I don't like this guy, I liked that guy, I don't like the next guy." All right, those things we're not going to stand in judgment for. The things that matter, the things that we stand in judgment for, are going to be the things that we have here. Jesus said, "I am the answer." He said, "**I am the way, the truth and the life...**" and it's a matter of accepting that. I'm closing now.

I thank you for your time. I look forward to what we have for the rest of the month. I look forward to this theme. God bless.