

*We Have Missed the Most Important Thing About God.  
Finding It Changes Everything.*

THE  
GOSPEL  
OF  
YES

MIKE GLENN

*Following Jesus Comes Down  
to What You Do, Not What You Don't*

THE  
GOSPEL  
OF  
YES

MIKE GLENN



WATERBROOK  
P R E S S

THE GOSPEL OF YES  
PUBLISHED BY WATERBROOK PRESS  
12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200  
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com). Scripture quotations marked (HCSB) are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Holman CSB®, and HCSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers. Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are taken from the King James Version. Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

ISBN 978-0-307-73047-3  
ISBN 978-0-307-73048-0 (electronic)

Copyright © 2012 by Brentwood Baptist Church

Cover design by **[to come]**

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published in the United States by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House Inc., New York.

WATERBROOK and its deer colophon are registered trademarks of Random House Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
**[to come]**

Printed in the United States of America  
2012—First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

#### SPECIAL SALES

Most WaterBrook Multnomah books are available at special quantity discounts when purchased in bulk by corporations, organizations, and special-interest groups. Custom imprinting or excerpting can also be done to fit special needs. For information, please e-mail [SpecialMarkets@WaterBrookMultnomah.com](mailto:SpecialMarkets@WaterBrookMultnomah.com) or call 1-800-603-7051.

*To my teachers: Bill Leonard, Hardy Clemons,  
Wade Rowatt, and David Garland*



*Because you lived your “yes,” I was able to find mine.*

# CONTENTS

Foreword by Scot McKnight .....	ix
Acknowledgments .....	xi
Introduction: Our Desperate Need to Hear God's "Yes" .....	1
1 Does God Have a Favorite Word? .....	9
2 The Problem of Living with "No" .....	21
3 The "Yes" of Creation .....	35
4 God Says "Yes" a Lot .....	49
5 The "Yes" of the Cross .....	63
6 The "Yes" of the Resurrection .....	75
7 The Mess Before the "Yes" .....	89
8 The "Yes" of Forgiving Others .....	101
9 Surprised by "Yes" .....	113
10 The "Yes" of You .....	127
11 The "Yes" of Destiny .....	141
12 The "Yes" of Authentic Relationships .....	157
13 The "Yes" of Simplicity .....	169

14	One “Yes” Does Not Fit All .....	183
15	Finding “Yes” in It All .....	197
	Discussion Questions: Going Deeper with God’s Yes .....	211
	Notes .....	219

# FOREWORD

Text to come  
to come Text to come  
come Text to come  
Text to come Text to come Text to come Text to come Text to come Text to come  
to come Text to come  
come Text to come Text to come Text to come Text to come

Text to come Text to come Text to come Text to come Text to come  
Text to come Text to come Text to come Text to come Text to come Text to come  
to come Text to come Text to come Text to come Text to come

—Scot McKnight  
Chicago, Illinois, December 2011

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No project like this is the work of one person. Many people had a hand in shaping the thoughts contained in the following pages. My parents, John and Barbara Glenn, raised me in a home of faith and love. My wife, Jeannie, who is always my greatest supporter, loved and encouraged me through some of my toughest days. My sons, Chris and Craig, did their best to raise their father well.

The believers who make up the Brentwood Baptist Church support and encourage my ministry. Few pastors have the privilege of working with a congregation that has the commitment and abilities of the people of BBC. I love being your pastor and friend. To the young men and women who make Kairos, thank you. I have learned so much from you. To the staff of BBC, you do great work and allowed me the time to write this book. Diane Mayfield, my administrative assistant, kept me on time and focused...well, as much as she could. Mark Sweeney, my literary agent, made sure somebody besides the two of us knew about the book. Ron Lee and the WaterBrook team have made this a much better book, and I am grateful for their efforts. Any flaws that remain are totally mine.

I offer this book to anyone who will read it, and I pray that Christ may use it to open lives to the “yes” of living “for,” which we can find only in him.

---

## Introduction

---

# Our Desperate Need to Hear God's "Yes"

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

—JOHN 3:17

**T**he lesson that changed my life came out of a crisis. I had been the pastor of my current church for slightly more than a year when I learned a longtime staff member was having an affair. The affair had been going on for nearly three years, but none of us knew about it.

When the news began to leak out, some people in the church questioned if my leadership could be trusted in such a critical matter. I hadn't been on board long enough to earn their confidence. What's more, I didn't know whom I could trust. Who had the ear of the doubters? Whose advice should I listen to? While I didn't have all the answers, I did know that one way or another, the church and I would get through this. We had no other choice.

And we did get through it. The church stayed together, and by the grace of God, both families affected by the affair stayed intact. By the time the church began to recover, however, I was coming close to losing it. I was wrung out, drained dry, beyond exhaustion. There was nothing left inside me.

I cried. I cried a lot. I prayed a lot. I told God how angry I was at the

way things had gone. How could a trusted member of the pastoral staff have done something like that? Some of the church's members would never get over it. Innocent families were still trying to work through the pain of betrayal and humiliation. Because of the actions of two people, a church and its future ministry were now in doubt.

I wasn't the only one who was angry. People were angry at me, as well as the minister involved and the person with whom he had the affair. I was one of the few people who knew all the details. What one person hadn't told me, somebody else had. Sometimes knowing things you don't want to know about other people is an exhausting burden. This was not the way I had seen my ministry working out, but this was the way it was going.

### SOMETIMES GOD SHOWS UP

Still drained and running on empty, I had to prepare for a planning week with the pastoral staff. Leading up to it, I got away to my parents' house on a lake in north Alabama to pray and work through the plan. As I spread my resource materials across a large table in the kitchen, it hit me that I might not be around to preach the sermons I was about to plan for the coming year. Too much had happened at the church, and when you work through a crisis like this one, sometimes you become a daily reminder of the pain everyone has suffered. Like Moses, some pastors can get you to the River Jordan but not into the Promised Land. Maybe God had brought me to this church to get everyone through the crisis, but now, having gotten them through it, I would have to be replaced by someone else who could lead the church into its future.

I can't tell you how betrayed I felt. I had thought I was coming to a creative and energetic congregation where I had a chance to make a real difference. Now that dream was being buried in the rubble of lies and betrayal. My anger kept burning. Why should my ministry end prematurely because I had to protect innocent people from the details of all that had happened?

Everything I had been holding inside for months erupted at the lake house. I came apart. I prayed, but if you had been there, you might not have called it prayer. You would have called it screaming. God had betrayed me. He had kept things from me. Why didn't he warn me in advance what things were like? Why did he send me there, knowing I'd walk into a firestorm of someone else's making?

I demanded answers. I really wanted God to come there, to the lake house, and put up an honest fight. I was ready to exhaust myself wrestling with God, just as Jacob had.<sup>1</sup> I'd hang in there all night if I had to, and I was willing to walk away with a limp if that was what it took. At that moment, in light of what I was facing back at my church, the limp seemed as if it would be sweet relief.

But God did not come.

The next morning I sat in a rocking chair on the back porch. God hadn't answered, and I told him I couldn't go on like this. I made it known that I wasn't leaving the chair until something changed. I didn't whisper that prayer out of boldness or even great faith. It was nothing that noble. Either something would change, or I would give in to complete despair.

I sat on the porch all day.

At dusk suddenly the air felt different. I can't explain it other than to say I knew God was coming, and he was coming close. Just as suddenly, I was terrified. The God I had been so bold with in demanding that he show up was now approaching. What was I going to do? I was afraid he would blow me off the planet. While moments before I had been defiant in my refusal to move, now I was too scared to move. I found myself holding my breath and bracing for whatever was next.

In the silence I heard two sentences. The first was "Why don't you let the church relax and be who I made her to be?" The second was "Why don't you relax and be who I made you to be?" That was it. As fast as the moment had come, it was over.

I began to cry again. Other than the first moment when I knew I was

forgiven and accepted by God, when I was seven years old, I had never heard more liberating words. How simple. How profound. How consistent with all that I knew about God and his love for me. If God had indeed created me, then why didn't I trust how God intended to use me? Doesn't it make sense that with God, the Ultimate Designer, form and function would be totally aligned?

I returned to Tennessee to the staff meeting where we planned the sermon schedule. God had asked me why I didn't just relax and be who he made me to be and why I would try to do anything other than let the church be who he created her to be. I took his words to heart and began talking about how God had created us to work together in ministry.

Our congregation is unique in a lot of ways. We would never be comfortable following fads or trends, no matter how successful they might be somewhere else. The people who had been drawn to our church already knew who God had called us to be. The church had heard its "yes" from God.

Now I needed to ask myself some questions:

"Why me?"

"Why here?"

"Why now?"

Who had God created me to be? Honestly, I didn't know. I had just endured the most horrendous year of my life, leading a congregation of hurting people through the aftermath of a leader's sexual infidelity. Why had I been required to suffer the brunt of the reaction to all that?

God knew, and he had given me the freedom to relax and be who he made me to be. I am a firstborn, type A perfectionist. In years past, success for me involved making everyone happy. I lived to please my parents, my teachers, and the people in my congregations. I thrived on those moments when I surpassed the expectations I perceived others had placed on me. It's no wonder I reached a point of desperation after the crisis.

I was leading others, but I had never thought through my own life. I had never discovered who I was and did not understand the purpose for

which I was created. I knew God had a plan for me. But oddly enough, it had not occurred to me that God had created me as a person whose gifts and temperament are in line with his purpose for me. I'd always thought God would grab me, ill suited as I was, and start hammering me into whatever plan he had decided on.

This next thing will sound strange, and as I write this, I admit that I regret it took me so long to gain this insight. It had never occurred to me that God might want me to enjoy my life! How could I have missed that truth?

I'd always been taught to be suspicious if things got too easy or if I felt too happy. Feeling good was suspect, and feeling bad was thought to be evidence that a person was faithfully following God. And I was far from being the only one who believed this. A friend told me that he thought at one time he was supposed to be in the ministry. He felt God's will had been confirmed when—and these are his exact words—“I was sufficiently miserable.”

Sufficiently miserable. Why do Christians think God would spend time making plans for them that are guaranteed to ruin their lives? Stating it like that makes it sound absurd, I know. But it captures my former assumptions about God and about life. The idea that I might actually *like* the plan God had for my life had never crossed my mind.

## THE JOURNEY OF “YES”

After reaching a point of desperation and demanding that God show up and provide some direction, my eyes were opened. God wanted me to relax. He wanted me to be me, using gifts he had given me. He wanted me to concentrate on doing things I was good at, things that utilized the best of who I was. He wanted me to enjoy my life and my work for him. So I began to pay attention to the way I was wired. What was I created to do, and what had I been trying to do for which I had no real talent or gifts?

Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12 that every believer has been given gifts to serve the body of Christ. He also reminds us that no one person has all the gifts. This way the members of the body learn to synchronize their abilities in the synergy of the Spirit. This was true for me as well. I had some of the gifts but not all of them. So what did that mean for me and for the congregation I led?

I was affirmed in preaching and teaching. I was affirmed in seeing where our church should be going and how we should best respond to changing opportunities. In pastoral care I was passable, but I lacked the clinical training to do much beyond traditional caring ministries. And as for administration, well, I was horrible. One of my friends (and he still is my friend) turned to me in a meeting and said, “Mike, you not only don’t help the church when you attend administrative meetings; you hurt the church.” Yes, that observation stung, but I knew it was true.

We began to rework my job description so I could spend more time doing what I do best. Sure, that process was painful, but in the end it was joyously liberating. Remember, God wants us to relax and be who he made us to be. He wants us to enjoy what we do.

The next thing I did was resign from all the civic groups I had joined. It’s great to be involved in local service organizations, but that doesn’t mean you have to serve on committees or go to all the meetings. I am not good at meetings. I lack the time, and, honestly, I lack the patience. That’s not right or wrong; it’s just me. Since I resigned from the civic groups, everyone is happier. I am, and so are the people who used to be in meetings with me.

Upon first hearing this idea, you might think that finding and living in your “yes” would be limiting, even constricting. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it has been the most liberating experience of my life. I am free to throw my full energy into the things I am gifted to do—and without any guilt or hesitation. I don’t waste time trying to get better at things I’m not good at. And it no longer bothers me to say, “I’m really not good at that. Someone else should do it.” I am free to be

who I was created to be, and I am comfortable with the limits God has lined out for me. Garrison Keillor, in his book *Lake Wobegon Days*, says it this way:

Some luck lies in not getting what you thought you wanted but getting what you have, which once you have got it you may be smart enough to see is what you would have wanted had you known.<sup>2</sup>

He's right, you know. Once you find the "yes" of God, you discover it's the very thing you would have wanted if only you had been smart enough to ask for it. Fortunately, we don't have to look hard to find it. God is eager to show us, but we do need to ask.

# Does God Have a Favorite Word?

*The good news could rightly  
be called “the gospel of yes”*

“How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.” Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.”

—JOHN 1:48–50

If you're serving Jesus, it's not supposed to be about happiness, right? The goal of submitting to Christ is not to assure your own sense of satisfaction.

That's true, as far as the statement goes. Serving God *is* about faithfulness and obedience, not about seeking personal happiness. But serving God and others in ways you were created and gifted for brings a natural sense of joy and soul satisfaction. These feelings come from the synergy of your life connected to God's Spirit and involved in a realm of Kingdom missions work that you were designed and equipped for. These things come to you from living within God's plan and design.

But if this is true, why are so many Christians convinced that if they aren't miserable, they must have drifted outside God's will? My best guess is that we were taught this from an early age in church. Or at least we were taught things that led us to reach this conclusion.

Think about it. We knew we were sinners, and we lived in fear of God's judgment. The object was to avoid hell, and we were willing to be miserable on earth if that improved our chances of gaining an eternal reward. Yes, we heard about God's grace and love, but the amazing truth of that reality didn't sink in. What did come through and leave a lasting impression was communicated between the lines: "Whatever you do, don't do anything wrong." Your experience might be similar to mine. I attended a church where I was told what *not* to do. Not doing things took on a sheen of righteousness. My friends and I would get together on Sunday and praise God that we hadn't done anything all week. We were convinced that scrupulous inactivity was what God preferred.

Beyond that, we were schooled on what we opposed. We were against dancing, drinking, cursing, smoking, and several other things I must have blocked out of my memory. I don't take self-destructive behavior lightly, and I don't endorse sin. God did not design us to do things that would destroy us. Yet following Jesus is much more than being careful not to do wrong. When you look at Jesus's life and study what guided him, it had nothing to do with following rules or meeting anyone's expectations. From the start he kept moving forward to accomplish his mission. He came to earth to seek and to save that which was lost,<sup>1</sup> and every day he took steps in that direction. He overcame sin for all of us, and never once did he accept avoidance as an appropriate action.

A Christian is one who follows Christ, and based on the example he set, we know that following him involves much more than just being against sin and anything else we find objectionable. Living against things is far too limiting. Defining your life by what you oppose makes your life small, and it can fuel anger and bitterness. But Christ showed us a different way. He opposed sin and evil once and for all. But notice

how he did it. He sacrificed himself and offered his life, which was his “yes” to the Father’s will as the solution to the problem of sin. The “yes” of Jesus, even to the point of death, was the only thing that could conquer sin.

Jesus was not “attacking the opposition” as most Christians understand that phrase today. Instead, he moved steadily toward the cross because he understood that was where his “yes” was taking him. Saying “yes” in obedience to the cross also meant saying “yes” to the life of the resurrection—for himself and all who would follow. There is no greater joy and soul satisfaction than this.

The Bible teaches us to “overcome evil with good.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus’s life shows us how to win people, not how to pound them into submission. Jesus is the perfect example of a life lived *for*, not against. We are called to live for Christ, not against the world. Yes, following Christ often will place us in conflict with the world. But such conflict is not something we originate; it is a natural consequence of following Jesus. The biblical directive for all Christians is to follow Christ, not just to oppose the world.

You can’t live a life of substance by living against.

### SERVING THE GOD OF “YES”

I got my first hint of this truth when I was struck by a verse in the Sermon on the Mount. “All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”<sup>3</sup> If you grew up attending church, as I did, you know that this was the proof text most often cited to forbid cursing. Christians were not to invoke anything other than their honest intention to follow through on what they said they would do. We were to live in such a way that our word was indeed our bond. Casual use of the Lord’s name was not tolerated. Say “yes” or say “no.”

I was a kid when I first heard this verse, and I understood that using bad language was wrong. But I also thought that saying only “yes” and “no” would be pretty boring. Plus, was anything beyond “yes” and “no”

*really* demonic? That seemed to go a little overboard to me. Why would Jesus issue such an extreme warning?

I had to be missing something. Sometimes reading one of Jesus's teachings is like looking at a body of water. Just by looking at the surface, you can tell a lot. Rivers and lakes, ponds and oceans all look different. But you will never know how deep the water is until you wade into it. The same is true with Jesus's teachings. You read them and say, "I know what that means." But if you sit with them, holding his words in your mind and heart, the words will reveal an entirely new depth. The words of Matthew 5:37 are a good example of this. Simply let your word "yes" be "yes," and your "no" be "no."

This verse is about integrity. *Integrity* means "trustworthiness" or "consistency." A steel beam has integrity when it can be trusted to hold up a roof even when the roof is blanketed by two feet of heavy, wet snow or is pounded by gale-force winds. In the same way, our lives have integrity when our values, decisions, words, and actions hold up under pressure.

Circumstances will change, but the character of people of integrity doesn't change. They live their "yes" in Christ—who they are in him. Every other decision flows from these essential wellsprings of the soul. Jesus confirmed this in the gospel of Matthew: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."<sup>4</sup>

## THE GOSPEL OF "YES"

When you accept the "yes" of Christ's redemptive grace and respond with the "yes" of faith, everything finds its rightful place. Your life finds order, meaning, and the right fit in your community. Finally you can relax in who God created you to be.

If a decision before you doesn't serve your "yes" in Christ, then the response is "no." You throw it out. Looked at in this light, your "yes" is indeed "yes," and your "no" is "no." Anything other than that is out of

bounds. Since only your “yes” in Christ serves your purpose in life, anything else is not of God. It is demonic.

In Philippians, Paul wrote of his longing to know Christ and nothing else:

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.<sup>5</sup>

For Paul, the only thing that mattered was to know Christ. Everything else—even his own life—he considered disposable. “I will let everything else go,” Paul said, “if I can just get a tighter grip on Jesus.” This is the yes-and-no focus of life that I believe Jesus was pointing to. Paul got it. Few of us do.

Paul brought up two important points. First, he knew what he was *for*. He was for getting as close to Jesus as he could. That was his all-consuming vision. Paul had said “yes” to Christ as fully as he knew how, and that meant everything else was a “no.”

Contrast that with the way most Christians live today. They can’t tell you what they are for. But they can describe in great detail what they oppose. Paul took the opposite approach. He introduced much of the known world to the gospel, an achievement made possible because of a powerful positive vision. He wasn’t waging war against the pagan religions that held sway in the Roman Empire. He was taking the “yes” of God to people who were needy and unaware of God.

Fear and anger are sometimes necessary motivators (Get out of the burning building!), but they can’t inspire a person for a lifetime. Fear

turns to despair (nothing matters anyway; we'll never get out alive). Anger turns to bitterness (the whole world is against me). But a vision that pulls us toward a positive and meaningful future can sustain us through all kinds of hardships. Athletes push themselves beyond their physical limits and musicians practice uncounted hours in the single-minded pursuit of the elusive moment of perfection. The same principle applies to each of us, however pedestrian our lives may seem. If we understand who we are created to be in Christ, we realize we have an all-consuming calling. Our calling—our “yes” in Christ—is what focuses our lives and determines how we invest our lives.

### THE FOCUS OF “YES”

If you know your “yes,” then you can simply let go of all the things that don't help you get closer to Christ. I suppose we'll always need sermons that warn listeners about the dangers of the world. Yet I'm convinced most of us need something far more effective: a consuming vision of Christ that centers our lives and drives us in a positive way. Sermons would accomplish much more, I believe, if they stirred our imagination and fired our passion with God's “yes.”

I know there are objections to this idea. I hear them often whenever I suggest a focus on “yes”:

- But isn't this too tight a focus? So tight it limits our lives?
- Doesn't doing what you are suggesting cut us off from all kinds of options and possibilities?
- Wouldn't we be likely to overlook what needs to be corrected because all we can see is what you're calling “yes”?
- Don't you think we need to be warned of the dangers of the world so we'll know what to avoid?

Is God's “yes” too limiting? How could it be? It defines our purpose, our shape, and what we are best suited for in life. Asking God to focus your life is liberating. Here's an example. As I write this, my wife, Jeannie,

and I have just celebrated our thirty-first wedding anniversary. We've been together a long time, and let me be very clear: I do not feel deprived. I found my "yes" in Jeannie, and from that moment on, any possibilities related to some other romance were "no." Knowing your "yes" rescues you from untold hours of wavering back and forth over the countless options life uses to distract you. It's true we have far more options than any other generation. But most of the choices we are offered are irrelevant to our happiness. Does it matter what color your shirt is or whether your shoes are in style? Getting to know your "yes" allows you to ask one simple question of everything that comes along: does it help me get where I am going? If it does, then use choose it. If not, then drop it.

What makes life increasingly difficult is to know what you are against without knowing what you are for. Being against divorce doesn't make you *for* marriage. Being against poverty doesn't necessarily mean you're going to help the poor. Knowing what you are against doesn't mean you have the energy or conviction to drive toward a positive goal.

And this brings us to Paul's second point: It's not enough to live against. You have to live *for*! But saying it and living it are two different things. Start living for all the things you believe in, and you'll find the world does everything it can to shift your focus back to a negative setting. Negative pronouncements are used in political campaigns, fund-raising efforts (send in money to help us defeat the bad guys), and religious disputes (it's common to demonize those who hear God differently). The fact is, it's easier to tear down than to build, to point out a problem rather than come up with a solution.

Honestly, living against things requires less effort. You can point out a problem, criticize it, and feel as though you've done your duty. But when you say "yes," you bring with it the willingness to take initiative, to be creative, to apply your gifts and abilities to positive, proactive solutions. Most people assume that choosing "yes" will limit your life. It's just the opposite. Choosing "yes" opens your life to all kinds of possibilities, including unexpected breakthroughs and adventures.

## NO LIMITS

Jeannie and I have two sons. As they grew older, we learned that they felt completely free to pick up a phone and call us at any time. And even at home, when they were too young to be out running around with friends, they would invade our lives whenever the thought struck them. They are grown now and on their own, but we are still their parents and always will be. That's just the way it is.

There are similarities between the life of a parent and the life of "yes." Both lives are focused, available, and without limits. When artists say "yes" to their craft, they know that perfecting their skills will demand countless hours in the studio or seated with the instrument. Great artists are gifted individuals, but they pay a very high price. In his book *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell says that it takes about ten thousand hours of work in a discipline to be considered an expert.<sup>6</sup> You can find that level of commitment only in "yes."

Our world is phobic about commitment. We go to extraordinary lengths to avoid being pinned down. Couples live together without being married because they are afraid of the commitment. Church membership is down, but attendance is up. Why? People will go to a church, but they won't join. Memberships of all kinds are down—book clubs, bowling leagues—all because people have a growing wariness of commitment. People don't want to be put in a situation where others can ask them to do something that might prove difficult or even just inconvenient.

This avoidance extends to hesitation regarding a sold-out relationship with God. There are lots of things that might cause reluctance. For one, God might ask too much of us. He might demand that we give and give until we give ourselves away. Yes, you do give and give because, as Jesus taught, "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it."<sup>7</sup> Giving your life away is the only way to save it.

When Peter complained that he and the other disciples had left ev-

everything to follow Jesus, Jesus replied that in the coming age whatever anyone had forsaken for the cause of Christ would be paid back one hundred times.<sup>8</sup> Committing yourself to the “yes” of Christ isn’t losing everything but letting go of all the wrong things. In exchange you receive the good and eternal things Christ desires to give you. It’s in dying that you live and in giving that you receive. I know it sounds backward, but, in reality, saying “no” to everything but your “yes” in Christ gives you clarity and energy, the way focused light makes a laser. Saying “yes” allows you to focus on what matters and simply let everything else go.

### PREACHING “YES”

A few years ago my church decided to start a Tuesday-night worship service for young adults.<sup>9</sup> We called it Kairos, the Greek word for “time.” We have an extended worship period, an unhurried time of prayer, and then I teach. There is nothing unusual or dramatic about the service, and yet it has become one of the best things I do. I love Kairos because of the relationship I have with thousands of young adults.

I have been surprised by how eager young adults are to talk to someone about their lives. While the worship services usually last about an hour and a half, the after-service conversations often last longer. I can’t get over how willing people are to wait when it means they can have a deep conversation. For some, their stories have to be told. Someone has to hear about their journey. For others, confession has to be spoken. And others are looking for insight to clear up the confusion they feel.

Sometimes they begin by telling me how bad they feel about a decision they made. They feel trapped by the consequences of past choices and don’t see a future for themselves. Others are confused by the myriad choices available to them. People can become paralyzed when they face too many options. Choices about jobs, graduate school, and careers are difficult to make when you also are facing the questions of how to pay this month’s rent or why your girlfriend hasn’t called in a week.

No matter what the challenge or struggle, I ask the same question: “Tell me about your ‘yes.’” People who just the moment before were struggling with the complexity and difficulty of a situation they are facing suddenly will stop and think. Often their faces wrinkle in concentration. For many, the question about “yes” is perplexing. It’s one they had never thought about.

“What do you mean?” they will ask.

“What’s your ‘yes’?” I will say again. “Jesus said, ‘Let your yes be yes,’ so what is your ‘yes’? If you know your ‘yes,’ then all the ‘nos’ will take care of themselves. So have you found your ‘yes’?”

Life will run you ragged, and if you don’t find the right focus for your life, just sorting through all the choices and decisions will exhaust you. So here are four basic questions you need to ask and answer:

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- Do I have a purpose, and if so, how do I find it?
- Is there meaning in life, or is all of this just some kind of cosmic crapshoot?

When I talk about how God created the universe for the purpose of relationships and how each of us is part of the delight that the Father has in his creation, that captures their attention. What if, as the story of Adam tells us, we were created to be stewards of God’s universe? If that’s true, then each of us has a role to play in the Divine Plan. Each of us is uniquely gifted and wired to be in relationship with God, and part of that relationship is working with him to redeem—to pull back—the portion of the universe that has been lost to sin. Sure, I know this will be finished only when Christ returns, but God is always working to reclaim his creation. He will not cede one bit of it to the powers of darkness. That means his people are always aligned with and working to fulfill his mission.

When people grasp this idea, the wheels in their heads begin to spin another way. Suddenly a new world opens up with the asking of one question: “What if?”

- What if I really am created in the image of God, and what if that reality has a special meaning for me that is different from other people?
- What if God did create me on purpose, *for* a purpose?
- What if I am the way I am, not because of a random combination of genetic material, but to fill a particular need and role in God's plan?
- What if we could find a way to understand the reason for which we were born?

Then the questions begin to pop up right and left:

- Okay, then what was I made for?
- If God put me together in a particular way, then what do I naturally like and what don't I like?
- When am I the happiest—doing what and investing myself in what way?
- Could the answers be clues to the question of how to live, how to direct my life?

Athletes talk about being in the zone. The zone is a state of concentration, an alignment of emotional, mental, and physical abilities where the game seems to slow down and the play becomes almost effortless. I believe we were called to live more in the zone than out of it. Being aligned with God's Spirit, riding the Divine Current, makes whatever we are doing more impactful, more elegant, and more joyful.

Paul made this point to the Christians in Colossae when he wrote, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."<sup>10</sup> In this statement Paul ordained work as an act of worship. Whether we are planting crops, paving a road, teaching a class, or filing documents, we should do everything as if we were doing it for Jesus himself. One of the things we lost in the Fall—meaningful work—Jesus has restored in the gospel.

When you understand your life's "yes," you can focus on what matters in and for your life. Being able to say "yes" to God's "yes" in you

means you already have answered the majority of life's most important questions. With these answers confirmed by God's Spirit in the deepest places of your soul, you can move forward with confidence and power.

I believe God wants us to live in that zone, experiencing a lifetime of moments where identity, destiny, and opportunity come together in a resounding "yes" of meaning and joy. This book is about finding your "yes"—and having the guts to live it.