

Testimony from Mike Scrivani

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Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] Good evening. It's good to see you all. I want to begin by reading to you my favorite Bible verse, which many people would like to wonder if you're calling potentially a pastor what their favorite is.

And it's going to go in line with everything that I have to share with you tonight. I could quote it to you by memory, but I'm going to go ahead and read to you. And it's Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. And many of you could quote along with me.

So tonight I want to share with you my testimony and share with you how God has directed my path, what all God has done in my life to lead me to this point.

And it really, my testimony begins with the testimony of my mom and dad. They are originally from Maryland. That's where they met.

My dad is a radio personality, a DJ up in Kansas City. He started in Maryland, went to Hawaii. And my mom must really be special because he left Hawaii to come back to marry her.

[1 : 31] And then they have been in Cincinnati, Chicago, and then Kansas City. My dad grew up Catholic. Scrivani is how you say my last name. That's Italian. He grew up Roman Catholic.

And my mom grew up in a Baptist church. And so when they got together, they, you know, didn't really go to church or anything like that.

They had my oldest sister, Angela, who lives in Piedmont, Oklahoma now, and she's a school teacher. And then they had my brother, Stevie. And Stevie was, and this was all when they had moved to Kansas City.

Stevie was perfectly healthy throughout his first, most of the first year of his life, but it was around his first birthday, that my mother realized that there was something wrong with him.

And come to find out that Stevie had spinal meningitis. And he ended up ultimately dying from that.

[2 : 32] And while my mom and dad were in the hospital with Stevie, they, now my sister, if you get to know her, she is the exuberant one.

She is the outgoing one. She is the one who does most of the talking when we're together. And she was like that as a kid. So as they're in the waiting room, she got to talking with an older lady there. While my dad was waiting with her and my mom was back with my brother, trying to figure out all that was going on. And so while they were doing this, an elderly gentleman came down, and that was his wife.

And so he got to talking to my sister as well, and then ultimately to my dad. And he wanted to know why they were there. And so my dad told him about the situation with my brother.

And so his name was Gail Milhoff, this man who I'm telling you about. He said to my dad, I go to a church that prays for people. Do you mind if my church prays for your son and for your family?

[3 : 35] And so again, my parents are distant from the Lord. And my dad is grateful that there would be a church that was willing to do that. So Gail got my dad's phone number, and he would call him every week.

And he wanted weekly updates on how my brother was doing. And so when my brother passed away, Gail Milhoff called.

And when my dad let him know the situation, Gail was there. And Gail invited them to come to church with them, and they did. And at first, my dad was really willing.

My mom, not so much. But God was working on her heart as well. I got some tissues in my pocket, so I may need to use them. But she would tell us about seeing Stevie just in a lot of pain.

And seeing him wrapped up to all these cords and all the different beeps and dings, and it was breaking her heart. And she knew that at this point in time, if he was going to survive, he was going to, it was going to be really hard for him.

[4 : 41] It was going to be really hard for them. And so my mom said she went to the chapel, and she got on her knees, and she prayed, you know, God, your will be done. I love my son. I want him to be healed.

But I want your will. And so if it means taking Stevie, then so be it. And right, she says, right as she finished that prayer and said amen, the code went off.

And my brother died. But as a result of that, my parents were back in church and have been in that church ever since.

I'm 30. I'll be 35 in November. So I was dedicated as a baby in that church, baptized later on as a young person, was actually even married in that church.

And so when it came time for me, when I actually became a senior pastor and my parents were wondering, well, maybe we'll be members at your church. And I said, well, that's great. But, you know, that's where they need you, guys.

[5 : 43] That's where you've been. That church is special. That church is important. It's a Nazarene church since that point in time. Obviously, we are Southern Baptists, and I've had conversations with my father about once saved, always saved.

And he's convinced that we are right because that's what the Bible says. But again, you know, he teaches Sunday school class. They're very active there in their church. And so as a result of my brother's life, very short, one year, basically, God was able to use that short amount of time to make his life count.

His life had a purpose. And so that purpose was to bring my parents back to him. And as a result of that, me and my sisters grew up in the church, and we got to attend Sunday school.

We were in youth group. We were very active in our church. And when I was 16 years old, we went to the Nazarene Youth Convention. And that is held every four years by the Nazarene denomination.

And they pick a major city, and they send all of their youth there. Now, this was before 9-11. And so we had a lot of freedom. More than I, now I think back, I'm like, how in the world did they let us get away with so much?

[6 : 57] Because we basically ran the town. We were in Toronto, Canada. And so I went there. Our youth group was kind of small at the time. We were going through a transition where I was the young kid with a bunch of the older kids.

And now the older kids had graduated, and I was really the only older boy. And there was a lot of younger ones in youth group with us. And so I didn't have a lot of guys my age in the youth group. And before I say that, now, I did not want to go to this convention. In fact, I tried everything I could to get out of it. I played baseball on a traveling team. And that weekend, or that week, was going to be the weekend of a major tournament for us, the Omaha Super Series.

And we had won the championship there the year before. I really wanted to go back. I wanted to be with my teammates. And I found, and so I told my mom and dad, you know, I know this is great. I know that you guys have been encouraging me to go to this. But I don't want to go. And so they told me, which I didn't realize, they said, well, you know, Michael, that's okay.

[8 : 04] But you, we didn't tell you, but somebody from our church has anonymously paid for your entire trip to go. \$800. And, you know, and this is when I was 16, so you do the math.

\$800 is a lot of money now for a kid to go on a trip. It was an awful lot of money to go then. And so they said, if you, it's your choice, if you don't go, he'll lose half of his money.

And so I thought, well, you know, as selfish as I am as a teenager at that point in time, I couldn't, I couldn't have somebody do that who was so gracious with me. So I went.

And I, and I ran across a guy who was really, we had a really good mutual friend who played on my baseball team. This guy played somewhere else. And, and we became really good buddies and they went to a different church and they had a lot, it was a bigger youth group.

They had a lot of guys and girls my age. And so I really powered around with them all week long. And this was great for me because I hadn't really had anybody my age and, and were Christians to hang out with and have fun.

[9 : 08] So I was really having a great time. And, and I was really enjoying it. And, and each night was a different speaker. We had morning, afternoon, and evening sessions.

And it was really good. I mean, these people, you're talking about 10,000 teens in one place. And they did a really good job of, of speaking and keeping our attention. And I'll never forget one of the

speakers.

This was, this would have been on Friday, I believe. Gave the message and then encouraged us at the end.

And so we are in the Air Canada Center. If you know anything about basketball, where the Toronto Raptors play, where the Toronto Maple Leafs play, that's the arena we were in. And so the, the speaker there encouraged us to kneel down and to pray.

Because they were talking to us about our life. And, you know, making sure that you give God a priority, the say of, of how you spend your life, of what you do. You know, make sure that you are seeking God's will first for yourself.

[10:15] No big deal. Okay, I can do that. So I kneel down and pray. And it's hard to, to, it's really hard to describe. What happened to me in words.

Besides to say, if you've ever been in the, in the ocean before. And you know when the waves are coming and your back is to the waves and you get hit with the wave. And it's just, it just, boom. Nails you out of nowhere.

I was nailed by the Holy Spirit out of nowhere. It's hard to describe. But I knew that at that moment when I stood to my feet that God was calling me to ministry.

And I had a tear down my eye. And, of course, I'm with all my new friends. So I'm trying to, you know, wipe this stuff off. Or I don't want to be cool. Everything's calm. Everything's okay. But, I mean, I was scared.

I was scared to death. Because I had always believed in God. But at that moment in time, there was no doubting. There was no question. And for me, no matter what, and I tell people when I, when I share the gospel with them, I've told my friends, there is one thing I know for certain in this world is that God is and that Jesus Christ is his son.

[11:22] I know that. I'm utterly and completely and totally convinced. I cannot be convinced otherwise. And so from that moment, I went back to my hotel room.

And I was staying with my youth pastor and a couple other guys from another church. And I was really scared. I was bawling to him and telling him, I don't know what this means.

But I, you know, I was just not certain. This is not what I came for. You know, in fact, I didn't want to come at all. And so I prayed that night in the bathroom. I went to the bathroom and I knelt and the, the bathtub was my altar.

And I prayed and just said, you know, God, if this is what you want me to do, then you've got to make this absolutely clear. Absolutely clear.

Because I'm not, I don't want to mess around with this. I, you know, I, it's got to be crystal clear. And so the next day, which was the last day, the, the speaker there was encouraging everybody who had received a call to come forward.

[12:28] And so my excuse at the time is I'm not on the bottom row. I'm at the top. And so I, I did not go. But he had us, there was a little card you could sign.

And so I was like, well, at the very least I can sign the card. And I did it very discreetly. Uh, I slipped it in when nobody was really looking because I'm really not sure what's going on. And, uh, and then I thought, well, you know, is that really a sign?

Come on. This guy was going to do it anyways. I'm sure that was the plan. And, and it was great to see other kids going forward. But I just still was really uncertain. But I did call home and I did tell my dad.

I did tell my dad what had happened. And, uh, and so as we, uh, took the flight home and as we arrived back in Kansas City, I was convinced that God had not called me to the ministry.

That God was just wanting me to be more involved in my church. And, uh, and I had the, you know, I can't explain that experience, but just to say that, you know, God was, was pinning me down and making sure that I knew that he was God and that I, I belonged to him and that I needed to, to be a better Christian.

[13:38] And so, uh, I, I got back to the airport and me and my dad talked a little bit. He didn't, didn't say a whole lot about it. Just that, you know, how's everything going? And, uh, funny story is that a lot of us got piercings while we were there.

I don't know if that's funny, but, uh, we found out that you didn't have to be 18 to get piercings there. So a lot of Nazarene kids came back with piercings and a lot of Nazarene youth pastors got, uh, in a lot of trouble and some of them even lost their jobs.

So I think that he was so worried. He was so upset about that because my sister had her belly button ear, uh, uh, pierced. And I did have a, I did have a, my ear pierced. So no worries. It's long gone. Uh, and it's not coming back. I would look very weird. Uh, but anyhow, I think that was more on his mind because I was talking to him about getting two and he was like, well, if you get the second one, I'm going to rip it out.

So I knew I was lucky to get the one. And, uh, and I thought I was cool. Anyhow, um, so, so then we went home and, and that was, you know, they were just glad my mom and dad to have us back.

[14:42] My sister went with us, like I said. And I woke up that morning convinced that there was nothing to it. You know, I'm back home. I'm safe. Uh, not that many people know about what I had to say.

So, you know, maybe we can just pretend like none of this ever happened. And so, uh, I, I got down to the kitchen and my mom was there making breakfast and she said, uh, well, how was your trip? And, you know, I go through the whole spiel. Oh, it was good. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Completely left out the call to ministry part. And she's like, well, when were you, when are you going to tell me? And I said, well, tell you what?

And she said about you being called. And, uh, as I was about to go into my excuse for, you know, while that wasn't really what it was, uh, she turned and she looked at me and she said, Michael, I've known that you were going to be called to ministry ever since you were born.

And, okay. And so she said, when, when your father and I found out that we were going to have another son, we were so happy. And I prayed and I thanked God and, and I know that he put it on my heart that he said you would be in ministry.

[15:50] And she kept that for, you know, till I was 16 years old. So now I had the proof that I was looking for, right? How do you argue with mom? And so I said, okay. And I got, I did get involved in my, my youth group.

My youth pastor would, you know, he, he tried to take me under his wing, but I was 16, 17, 18 years old. And I wasn't ready for the responsibility that he wanted to give to me.

And so, uh, and so that, that didn't go as well. I was still, I was still resisting God's call to my life. But I did go to, uh, Mid-American Nazarene University.

And, uh, and I, I wanted to play baseball in college. I, I had a few schools that were interested, but they were, they were the most interested. And so it was just a natural fit.

That's where my parents had been wanting me to go to school forever. So there was already that in the background. And I really liked the coach and I knew a guy who was playing there. And so, uh, and I went and I was a religion major.

[16:49] And I really enjoyed playing baseball. And so much so that I forgot that the purpose of me going to school was to go to school, not to play baseball.

And so I did well my first semester, not so good my second semester. And, uh, and anyhow, um, I also met some other guys on the team. One of them did the, the play-by-play radio, uh, for our basketball team and our football team, our men and women basketball team and our football team. And he knew that, you know, my dad was in radio. He actually taught one of the classes out there. And he, he said, hey, would you ever be, I need somebody to be my color man. That's the guy who, who, uh, doesn't do the play-by-play but adds in all of the facts and tries to make things interesting. And so I said, yeah, I'd really like to do that. And I fell in love with it. I really enjoyed it. And so much so that I thought, you know what, this would be a great thing for me to do with the rest of my life. And so as a sophomore, I made that call home and I said, mom and dad, I am, and I think I changed my major without them even knowing because I knew they probably wouldn't be happy.

[18:01] But I said, I've changed my major from religion to communications and silence, silence. And then my dad finally talked and he's like, well, you know, why do you want to do that?

And so I gave him my reason why, you know, hey, I can still go into ministry later on. It's just, wouldn't it be great if I had a degree in something else? What if something happened with me in ministry and I needed something else to fall back on?

And so, um, you know, they're basically, their point was, you know, it's, it's your life and this is your decision. And we'll allow you to make it. But they knew all along that God is really the one who is in control and that God had called me to ministry.

I would be in ministry. And so, uh, while they knew that, I found out later on that that really broke their hearts. So they're happy now because, you know, God did get his way.

So I went that, I went that route. And, um, and it was, uh, and also I've got to say that, you know, you go to a Christian school, not everybody who goes to a Christian school is a Christian.

[19 : 03] I think many of you know that. And so what we found at Mid-America was there were Nazarenes. And then there were people who came to the school to play sports for the Nazarenes.

And so I was a little mixture of both. But I, I found myself running with a lot of guys from the baseball team. They were my friends. A lot of them weren't Christians. A lot of them partied. And, uh, and so I got in with them.

And, uh, and I developed for myself a very bad reputation, which I didn't even realize until I met my wife. And so, uh, we have time.

She's not going to like this story, but I'm going to share it anyways. Uh, because she loves me and she'll forgive me later. Uh, but I really liked her. Freshman year, she, she caught my eye.

And, uh, and I, I liked her. And, uh, and so there was a class. We had the same class. Just I had it. I had it after she had it.

[20 : 01] And there was a building that the class was in. And there was the door where the students walk in and walk out. So I knew every day I'm going to see her at this time. And I'm going to say hi.

And I probably should have said more to hi, more than hi. But, you know, I was nervous and I was shy. So hi was all I could get out when I saw her. And so I'd say hi. And she'd say hi back. And, you know, my heart would be a flutter.

And I'd go sit in my classroom. And then one day, uh, she says she didn't hear me. And I believe her now because I know that she wouldn't lie to me. But we were pretty close.

And maybe she just, her mind was somewhere else. But I said, I said hi to her. And she was pretty close. And she just kept on walking by. Oh, I was crushed. I couldn't believe it. I was like, she's not interested. And so flash forward to a couple years later.

And we were hanging out. She had an apartment with a friend in the same complex as a couple of my friends on the baseball team. And her friend knew one of my friends. And so they came over.

[21 : 01] And we saw each other. And she said, I didn't know that you still went to our school. And, uh, yeah, I've been here this whole time.

And so, uh, and so we got to talking. And, uh, long story short, we started dating. But it was, it was her that God used to really help me to see how far away I'd been.

Because she was afraid to date me. Because I've had bad of a reputation I had at that point in time. And I realized, man, the choices that I'm making now are starting to mess up my life.

And so, uh, you know, after a while I convinced her that, you know, I wasn't really that person. I was far from God. And I wanted that to change. And, uh, God really used her in a way.

I kind of compare her to Jonah's big fish, you know, that she came and swallowed me up and spit me back out on the right spot. And so maybe that's not a good, that's not a good illustration.

[22 : 02] But she knows what I mean. Um, but God used her in my life to redirect my path. Um, but it was too late. As far as school went, I had gone to the point where, uh, I needed to get out of college.

I was there longer than I, than I should have been. People, I was one of those kids where the other kids were looking like, why hasn't this guy graduated yet? And so, uh, and so I had, I had gone so, um, so far with, with mass communications and media relations that I, I was going to complete that. But I remember going back to church with my parents, the same church where I had grown up and been dedicated as a baby and been baptized. And, uh, I just remember when everybody was praying, uh, and I normally don't do this, but I picked my head up and I just was kind of looking around and, and felt God saying, you know, what are you doing?

What are you doing? And, uh, and, and just saying, it's time, it's time. And so I, I told Danny, I was like, all right, you know, I got to figure stuff out with, uh, with seminary and it's time.

Once we get married, it's time. I need to go pursue that. Well, while I was in college, I was working for a company who does a really boring stuff. They clear, uh, shipments from China to the United States.

[23 : 24] And so I worked in their warehouse in college and I drove a forklift and I unloaded and loaded semis with things and just did a lot of work. I, I, I enjoyed it. It was a great college job.

In fact, I was even arguing with the, with the Lord, you know, Hey, if I can, if I can, I will drive this forklift to the glory of God for the rest of my life. If that's what you want me to do. But anyhow, uh,

when they realized that or when they found out I was graduating from college, they, they wanted to keep me employed.

So they moved me into the office. And, uh, I was doing customs brokerage and they, uh, they were looking at me as possibly being, um, somebody like my boss, be another broker.

And then, you know, you had to go get your license and go through some, take a test and all these things. And that was the plan. And, you know, and I saw how, how well my boss seemed to be doing.

And I thought, well, that's not too bad. You know, maybe this is what I'll do this. And then ministry later on. Sorry, I'm messing with the, I need to stop looking over there. But, uh, I'll, I'll do, I'll do this ministry later on.

[24 : 31] And I was miserable in that job. I had my little cubicle. I had my files. I had my computer. And I was just suffering.

It wasn't what I was supposed to be doing with my life. And, uh, and it just so happened that we moved out to North Kansas City to be closer to where we were because Danny worked for the same company.

And we were just down the street from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. And Danny's joke to me would be, hey, maybe you'll end up at seminary there.

And, you know, we'd kind of laugh about it. But I realized I'm suffering in this job. I'm not where God wants me to be. And I'm going to continue to be miserable. And still I start doing what he's called me to do.

And so in looking at seminaries, I looked at Midwestern and really liked it. And my thought was, well, maybe I'll go here for a semester and, and see, uh, see what I think.

[25 : 27] Not too sure. I've got this Nazarene background. I don't know how that fits with Southern Baptists or what they're going to think of me. And so anyhow, uh, uh, I was, I, I, I remember the day that I had to go in and tell my boss that I was leaving to go to seminary because I was going to go full time.

And I sat down in his office and all, I was so afraid. You know, you know, you ever feel like dying? Those moments where you just wish that you were dead. And I sat down in his office and I wished that I was dead.

And I told him, uh, Kevin, I'm going back to school to get my master's. And he said, oh, that's great. I have my MBA. You know, you can knock it out. And I said, no, I'm going back. I'm going to get my master's in divinity.

And he kind of looked at me puzzled. And I said, yeah, I'm going to seminary. And he was, uh, he was not a Christian. He didn't really know what to say. He was taken aback by that.

And then he, he, but he was very, he was very kind. He said, well, if that's what you feel like, uh, you need to do, then I think that that's what you should do. So I went to seminary and I was terrified of seminary because I hadn't been a very good student in college because I, you know, thought that baseball was going to work out for me.

[26 : 46] And, uh, and it became clear to me that that wasn't going to happen, but I'd spent a lot more time on the field practicing and things when I should have been studying. And so I was afraid of how I was going to do at seminary.

I went to seminary and, you know, God's just gracious. I enjoyed it. I loved going to seminary. I had the best grades that I ever got in my life. And my parents were thrilled, you know, because, uh, they knew that the potential was there, but now it was starting to be realized.

And, uh, from there I, I took a job. Uh, my first job in ministry was the house of prayer rescue mission in Chillicothe, Missouri. And we, uh, would feed, um, some of the, the, uh, underprivileged there on Tuesdays and Thursdays that come in, we'd share a devotion with them.

We'd, we'd, uh, do a lot of, uh, evangelism on Sundays, going out in the neighborhood and, and talking to people. My job was to develop a community garden. And so I spent a lot of time gardening and, uh, and that was a lot of fun.

So what Danny and I would do is I, I would work there three days a week. I worked, uh, so I quit the job, but I eventually went back doing the same thing that I was doing in the warehouse. So I would do that a couple of days a week, go out to Chillicothe the other days.

[27 : 57] And then Danny and I would pack up on Friday and we would go out and spend, uh, Friday night all day, Saturday and Sunday there in Chillicothe. And, you know, it was great, uh, uh, the, the guy that I worked with there was a really good, uh, friend.

He, he taught me a lot. Very humble, very hardworking. He loved the Lord and he loved those people. And it was clear, um, you know, that, that he did. And so we still have a good relationship. In fact, he was one of the references that I, that I used. And so, uh, once that was job was over, I knew that I wanted to continue in ministry, but there weren't many things that I was qualified to do at that point in time at about a semester under my belt in seminary.

And so, uh, the one thing that I never wanted to do was to be a youth pastor, but I realized that I was qualified for it and nothing really else.

And so, um, so, you know, sent out some applications and, uh, the one that I got, uh, heard from first was a church in Stillwell that was a United Methodist church.

[29 : 09] I know nothing really about United Methodists at the time. I just, you know, I, I, I, they brought me in and I met the, the committee there and, um, I should have known better on some things, uh, but I didn't, I needed a job.

And so I took it and it was really hard there for three years. They, they were a lot more liberal than I am, had some, uh, some battles there, uh, with some parents about the issue of homosexuality, about abortion.

Um, and, and, you know, I know that some of them, when it was time for me to go, they were happy to see me go, but I was there for three years. And I told that committee when they were looking to hire somebody, how long do you want to be here?

And so I was like, well, what sounds good? Three years. I could be here at least three years. And so God held me that to that commitment. I sent out a lot of resumes. I realized early on, I'm not, you know, doctrinally, theologically, this is not where I'm at.

And the more I went to Midwestern, the more I realized this is really not where I'm at. But God held me to that commitment. And I will say that, you know, God did a lot of good things, uh, while we were in Stillwell, we still have a strong relationship with a lot of those teenagers.

[30 : 28] And, um, and we were able to write their path, a lot of them as well. And able to see, because I, I, I thought while I was there, you know, God, why in the world this place?

Why couldn't you have prevented me from, from coming here? And, um, you got to realize, you know, I say liberal and I, I mean it when I say that with their theology and with their doctrine.

You know, God, why, why this place? But now looking back on it, what it's helped me to see is the way that some churches are in the United States of America.

You know, you know, the way that they are, they really, you know, the word is nothing really special to them. It's just another book of suggestions, right?

But they don't treat it as the inerrant word of God. And it helped me to see how a lot of people, uh, in the United States of America go to church. It's like a country club.

[31 : 25] And there's not much, uh, there's not much urgency to share the gospel and to reach people because they are starting to develop the thought that all roads lead to heaven.

And so that was a difficult three years. And as I'm, as I'm there and as I'm going to seminary, uh, the other thing I thought I'd never wanted to be was a senior pastor.

And, uh, I wanted to be, I knew that God had called me to ministry. I think, well, where's my, where's my fit Lord in ministry? And so, uh, I wanted to be a chaplain. I, I was at my parents' house and they had, uh, I can't remember the title of the magazine, but it was a Christian magazine.

I was looking through it and there was an advertisement, this beautiful little white chapel. Uh, and in the background was the beach in the ocean and it was in Hawaii.

And it, you know, like the sign said, come be a chaplain. And I was like, yes, I want, I will come be a chaplain.

[32 : 31] But, you know, in, in, in seminary, everybody, you have that introduction, that awkward introduction. What's your name? Where are you at in ministry? What are your plans for being here? So I had to have something because I didn't like to bring out the United Methodist thing because a lot of them would already, you know, look at me like, what are you, what are you doing here?

Or something like that. So I'd say, my name is Mike and, uh, and I'm, I'm going to be a chaplain. So that was my, that was my introduction thing. And, uh, and that was my plan.

But I was really frustrated there. I was, uh, I was, towards the, I was approaching my last semester at Midwestern. And I have already described how things were going, uh, at church.

I knew that the pastor and I were getting to a point where it just wasn't healthy for me to continue there. And, and I didn't want to be disrespectful to him. And I never was, you know, the conversations we had were, were me and him in his office.

And he was my supervisor. He was the pastor of the church. I wasn't, I always had a lot of respect for him. We still have a good relationship today. If I saw him at Walmart, I wouldn't turn around and run the other way.

[33 : 36] I would go shake his hand. So we had a really good relationship. But I knew it wasn't the right place for me. And I knew, obviously, if I'm going to go on in ministry and be a chaplain, something has to change.

So I say all that to say, also, if you know anything about being a chaplain, you've got to be endorsed by the denomination. So here is my issue. I grew up Nazarene. Did not belong to Nazarene church anymore in their eyes and did not go to one of their seminaries.

So they said no. United Methodist was not a member of their church, worked in the church, but did not go to one of their seminaries. And so they said no. And then Southern Baptists were along the same boat.

You know, well, we want you to be a member of our, of one of our churches before. We can endorse you for that. And so the problem was I had this job. I couldn't go be a member of the United, Southern Baptist Church and still work at where I was working.

So I was really upset because I thought, you know, I've really messed this all up. I've messed it up. I should have been better prepared for that. I should have understood that.

[34 : 43] So this endorsement thing worked out. And so I was at a really low point in my life at that point in time. I want to pause there and talk some more about some other things.

The one, whenever I get down, and I was down, and I was questioning my call to ministry, God always had a way to redirect my focus, to know that I was on the path that he wanted me to take. First time was, that I think I can remember, was with Danny. And I shared that. But you know what Danny, what she thought my name was? People called me Scrav in college.

That was just, you know, a play on my last name, Scrav. And so she didn't even know my first name. A lot of people didn't. They just knew me as this guy named Scrav. And so when I told her my name, because we were dating, and I was like, hey, you know, I'd like you to call me by my real name.

And so she said, well, you know, my name is Mike. And she said, I always thought your name was Steve, my brother Stevie. And I was like, oh, that's strange.

[35 : 50] Even after we were married, and her dad, who, there's some issues there with him as well. But he called and left a voice message and wanted to know how she was doing, and wanted to know how Steve was doing.

And he knew my name was Mike. Another time, another time in the church I was at, where we were putting together a breakfast for our graduates, and I was really upset, again, at the way things were going, and not knowing why God would ever call me and what in the world I was doing.

One of the kids there, her sisters were in our youth group. She knew who I was. And I was cutting bagels or donuts or something. I don't know why you cut donuts, so I must have been cutting bagels. But she said, Mom, can I help Steve do that?

And she looked at her and was like, Steve? Who's Steve? And she said, Mike, you know Mike. And so that was another time. That's strange. And then probably one of the weirdest times was I was in my office at the United Methodist Church, and I was working late on one of my seminary papers. I didn't have enough money to have my own computer. Either that or it wasn't working. I don't remember the case, but I was staying late to work on one of my papers, and so our custodian was in.

[37 : 07] And we have, you know, I've been here now. This was about three years. She knows me well. I know her well. And she's vacuuming in the office, and she goes by my office, and I hear her yell over her shoulder as she goes by, Hey, Steve, how's it going?

And then she turned off the vacuum, and she poked her head in my office, and she said, Mike, I have no idea why in the world I just called you Steve.

God works in mysterious ways, you know? And that's very weird for me, even to repeat it to you now, because I hope that you know I'm not making this stuff up. But why in the world do I really, I don't know, do I look like a Steve?

I've had somebody else even in my church. I've shared that story, and they said, you know, I almost wanted to call you Pastor Steve when I first met you. Weird stuff, but not just to say that, you know, God has a way of, God is weird.

The Bible is weird. Weird in a cool way. Weird in an awesome way. And God has a way of knowing what we need at the time to be able to give us the encouragement that we need to continue on.

[38 : 12] And in each and every one of those moments, doesn't really ever happen anymore, ever happen that I know of, but it needed to happen at those moments. It was God just to say as a reminder to me, trust me.

I know what I'm doing. I know what I'm doing. I've called you to this. I know what I'm doing. Yes, it looks like a mess, but I've got a plan, and you've just got to trust me.

So back to the point where I was really frustrated with everything, going to graduate in a semester, not being able to get that endorsement, not knowing what was going to happen, telling Danny, you know, I guess what it's going to end up having, you know, we know we've got to leave the church we're at.

I will go stock shelves somewhere, and we'll join a good Southern Baptist church in town, and we'll just be patient, and we'll work our way towards chaplaincy.

And I was really bummed about that, though. And I loved being in ministry. Ministry is what I wanted to do. Even in the difficult times, I still really enjoyed doing what I was doing.

[39 : 17] And so I was at the computer lab getting ready to go to a class, and just really at a really low point. Low on myself, you've messed this up.

And low with God, you know, why in the world? All this stress. You know, what's the point? Why couldn't it be easier? And I had a classmate who was in my preaching class, and you get to know your classmates in preaching class pretty well because you're pretty brutal with one another, but in a loving, godly kind of way.

And so he came over, and he's like, what's wrong? And I told him, I was like, I just, in as brief a way as I could, you know, I'm messed.

This is messed up. I don't know what I'm doing. You know, I'm not, I'm just really down. And I explained everything to him. And what's cool about seminary is you're going to school with other men whom God has called, and to be pastors.

And I loved my days in seminary, and I wish, you know, I could go back and repeat them, which is weird because I really hated school. But I really, I really enjoyed my time there because, you know, you develop some really good relationships with some of your classmates.

[40 : 37] And so there in the computer lab, in the library, everybody around us, he said, I'm going to pray for you. And so he knelt down beside me, and he prayed for me.

And you know that feeling when, and we're to intercede on each other's behalf. We're to bear one another's burdens. And have you ever had that feeling where you had a heavy burden to bear, and somebody came and prayed for you, and the situation hadn't been rectified or solved, but you just knew that things were going to be okay.

That burden was lifted off. And so after he said amen, I just felt that burden was gone. You know, God, I know that this is where you want me to be. This seems like an awful mess to me, but you're bigger than all of this, and I know that you can sort it all out.

So I went to class, and I came back to the computer lab, and I had an email from Pastor Blaine Fye. And there's a Baptist church out in Leavenworth, and they were looking for a youth pastor, part-time.

And so he was interested in interviewing me, so I went, and I interviewed on my birthday, and went to the church, and I was concerned.

[41 : 52] It was a much smaller building-wise church than the one that I had come from. In the world's eyes, this would have seemed like a lateral movement. In fact, they might have even thought, this is going down.

But I knew I just had a good feeling from him, and I had a good feeling from the church, and I had a good feeling, most importantly from God, that this is where he wanted me to be. And I remember, you know, we got to meet the teens, and even though I didn't really want to continue on in youth ministry, I know that I still wanted to be in ministry, and I told him, even after I was hired, I said, you know, Pastor Blaine, this is part-time.

I'd like to see if I could do something with the reserves part-time, and he was really encouraging of that. And then he told me also, he said, by the way, I'm going to retire at the end of the year. So I was like, okay, well, you know, we can be honest with one another.

That's a good start. And so that was my intention of going out to Leavenworth, that that's what was going to happen. And I had been wounded by my experiences, like I'd said, those three years there at Stillwell, and there were some other things that had happened with me in the church that I grew up in.

And so I was really kind of discouraged by my past couple church families. And these people really took great care of us.

[43 : 08] They have loved us. They gave me opportunities that I never had. Our pastor at the Methodist Church never let me preach, and I think I know why, because he's probably afraid, what I might say.

But it would all have been very loving and gracious, but, you know, he just never gave me that opportunity. He never saw me being able to do that. And so when I came to Calvary, Blaine said, I'm going to be, you'll be here for two weeks, and then I'm going to go, I'm going to go on vacation for two weeks, and you're going to preach for me both of those weeks.

I was like, okay, this is awesome. You know, opportunity, right? Finally getting that opportunity, being very scared, though, because I'd never really preached in church before, and I got those two opportunities, and from that point on, it really, people in the church saw me as more than just a youth pastor.

They saw me as somebody who was more like an associate pastor. So when I graduated from seminary, they asked me to become the associate pastor, and they asked me to work full time. And at that point in time, God had done really a lot in my life to see, you know, especially through Pastor Blaine, that, you know, being a pastor can be really enjoyable.

And I saw somebody who was enjoying what they were doing, same difficulties, but loving every moment of what he was doing. And he gave me a lot of opportunities.

[44 : 32] He would take me under his wing. He would take me on hospital visits. He really taught me and showed me what a pastor does. He taught me the practical side. You go to seminary, and you learn all the stuff, the theology and the doctrine, the book stuff, which is essential and important.

But with him, I got to see really what a pastor does and how a pastor interacts with his people. And so he really taught me a lot to the point where, as he was nearing his retirement, he said, you know what?

Maybe you'll do this. And it was amazing because I was like, you know what? I would. I would. I really enjoy where I'm at, and I really enjoy what I'm doing.

Never thought that I'd be a senior pastor. Never thought that that'd be something that I would do. And so he said, well, we'll just pray about it. You know, it's up to the church. Really, I can't make that decision for them.

But, you know, I've given you opportunity. You've done well. And I think that, you know, we'll see what God does. So as a matter of fact, almost instantaneously, he announced his retirement to our deacons, and then they were down in my office, chairman of the deacon board, and said, with another, and he said, we want to know what your interest is.

[45 : 41] Pastor Blaine's retiring. We want to know what your interest is. And I said, I said, yeah, I'm interested. You know, and you're, I'm getting up in front of you and talking.

I'm very, by nature, I'm introverted. I don't talk. Especially, there were days, I remember my first days at Stillwell, the United Methodist Church, where I had to make an announcement, and just shaking the microphone, and trying to say what I had to say, and stumbling over every word.

So in another way, you see how God's gracious. He's able to take very weak people, and not to say that I'm strong, but you know, that was definitely a weakness for me, and now I can get up.

I still get emotional, but you know, it's not because I'm nervous anymore, as much as just my heart is being touched. so that happened, and in the church was in agreement, and no pressure, but they, it was a unanimous vote, and no pressure.

Maybe I shouldn't have said that. I don't know. Can't take it back now. So anyhow, you just, again, it was God directing my path, and I knew, once again, that this is where God wanted me to be, and it's been really good.

[46 : 50] It was six years that, been at Calvary, and the people have been very good to us. The church experienced some growth. We're in a, we're limited by the size of our building.

That's always going to be an issue there, and we're also limited because it is a military community, so we have people coming every year, and leaving every year, so we have times where our church attendance has been up above 200, and usually we stay around, you know, the 160s, 170s. It's, and I don't know, it's tight when we get them in there, but anyhow, I have a desire and a passion as I've gone along.

I want to reach the community. I want to transform the community, and the whole time I've been telling our church, you know, what I hope happens here is that if our church was to all of a sudden not exist anymore, that our community's heart would be broken, that they'd really miss us, and I don't think that that's the case, and so I think that we've gotten to the point where, there, where, I mean, I'm telling you, just honestly, there was a time where I was convinced that this is where I would spend the rest of my ministry, and I would tell the Lord, you know, God, if this is where you want me to be, I'll be here 25, 30, however many years, until the day I die, but again, you just get a sense from God over the past year, that that wasn't his plan, and so at first, you wrestle with that, okay, you know, kind of like I did with that call to ministry, you know, are you serious about that, is that something that, you know, you really want, but then as you go along, just more and more, you know, how God is able to, he speaks to us through his word, he speaks to us through each other, and he speaks to us, and just been feeling that the time was coming, and that we were growing in different directions,

I don't like to manage the status quo, you heard the sermon I preached this morning, you know that that's where I'm at, you know, let's get those opportunities, let's find them, let's create them, let's risk, let's go for it, and I believe that that's what God wants us to do, Matthew 28, go therefore, right, go make disciples, how much clearer does it need to be, you know, we're to be active, in what we've been called to do, I want to take back ground from the enemy, right, I want to see God doing amazing things, and why shouldn't we want that, why should we be afraid of that happening, and so I think we need to put ourselves out there, but just to explain, you know, why I'm here, and looking to make a change, is because, I've come to the realization that, that's not where they're at, and we're growing in different directions, I feel like they're pleased, with how things are, and I love them to death, if you guys decide, you know, that, that I'm not God's being for you,

[50 : 00] I will go back, and I will say, okay, Lord, you know, we'll, we'll go back, and we'll try to motivate, and change, you know, and hope that you are the one, ultimately will change their minds, but that's, that's what I think that they want, somebody who will manage the status quo, somebody who won't, you know, who will just come preach a good sermon on Sunday, I think that, that's really what they are wanting in a pastor, and I want much more than that, and I think also for me, it's gotten easy there, it's gotten comfortable there, and I don't like that, because I think it feels easy and comfortable for the wrong reasons, and I, I, I, like I said, I preached, you know, I talk about Matthew 25, and preaching that parable, and that's just not where I'm at, that's not what God is, I feel like called me to do, to be a manager of the status quo, that's great for, you know, some people that's, that's what they are called to do, but not me, and, and I can't explain it besides, you know, it's God the one, is the one who's doing it for me,

I would be content to, to be a manager of the status quo, if that's what he wanted, but I don't feel like it is, and so, as Danny and I have talked about it, you know, what's interesting is that we have come to the same decision together, and I think whenever, as a pastor, it's not just God who's the one, putting it on your heart, but he's also putting it on the heart of your spouse, then you've really got to start paying attention to what God is saying, and so we've been praying about it, and, and, for some reason, you know, I've just thought about Oklahoma, and I've thought, you know, Danny's from here, I have some family here, but again, I want to be stretched, I want to be challenged, I've grown up around my, where I grew up in Shawnee, I've never really been more than 30 or 40 minutes outside of that location, and I feel like for me, as a pastor, to grow as a minister, I need to be away from what's comfortable for me, now, not to say that Oklahoma's all that different from Kansas, but it is a little bit, and I think for the better, amen, right, amen, there we go, but I've really enjoyed, you know, and obviously,

I think people in Oklahoma like me, because I've married my wife, and so she's from Oklahoma, and her family seems to like me, so, I think I have a way with Oklahomans, but anyhow, you know, and then when, when this, and I would look at Midwestern from time to time, and just see what was

available, and when the job posting came up, I checked out your church's website, and what I was pleased to see is that it's elder-led, that's very important, I saw, and read your, your, your bylaws, and, very well put together, you guys should be proud of, whomever was involved in putting that together, and, very well done, and so I saw, here is a church that's got a lot of the most important things, already together, because that's a conversation we've had at our church, it's deacon-led, they act more as elders, but, but in my reading of scripture and interpretation, I think that the way that it should be structured in a church, leadership-wise, is the way that you guys have it, so that was something that I was really pleased to see, and, and I saw where you guys are located, and, and thought, man, this is a wonderful, opportunity, and so I sent in my resume, and then I think, Johnny, was the one to email me, and then I got on the phone, and talked to the search committee, and that was really hard, because you can't see people's faces, and so, so I got off the phone, and, you know, Danny again wants to know how it goes, and, and kind of like with Melvin, I shared this morning, I said, I think it went okay, but maybe it didn't, I don't know, so, then I was pleased, to, to, to get some more communication, and just the way God works in my life, is he, you know, I need a lot of help, and God knows that, and so he, he's just, he, as much of a mess as I seem to make things, he does direct, he's directed my path, and he directs our paths, yours and mine, and so, even the way that this has worked out, because, where am I on time?

7.30? Okay. I was with, this past Thursday, our DOM, up in Kansas City, he takes us, pastors out, once a month to play golf, and so I was playing golf with him, and another one of my friends, who pastors a church, basically down the road from us, and we've become very close, and they're telling me, you know, that's really fast, this has gone really fast, and I said, yeah, it has gone really fast, and they were almost acting a little bit concerned, but I was like, but you know what guys, I've been praying, they've been praying, you know, what am I supposed to do, call them and say, well, I think we need to take a little bit more time here, you know, I won't talk to you for a month, we'll get back there, I don't know how that, but like, why, and so I think, like Lee has pointed it out, and some others have pointed it out, and me as well, is, why should we be surprised, when God answers prayer, you know, and so, and so I'm here today, and getting to meet you all,

[55 : 29] I think even more, that there is wonderful opportunity, and potential here, and I'm really surprised, you know, that, that you guys, aren't already having, and I know we've talked about your past, but having that kind of impact on your community, I just look at, I look at, everything else, but really what matters most, is the people within the church, and I see, within you all, and getting to interact with you, people who really love the Lord, people who really love the church, and people who, want to have that kind of impact, on their community, and I believe that it will happen, I believe that God wants to do great things, and I believe that we should, take risk, seize those opportunities, and do the most with what, God has given us, those talents, to invest them, into each other's lives, and into the lives of our neighbors, and I hope, that should you call me, to be your pastor, that this church, if it already isn't, would be that kind of church, that the community, looks to as being that, that shining city on a hill, that you know, man, we love that place, those people are awesome, those people care about one another, those people care about us, you know, those people, those people, there's something different about them, and what's different, is it's the gospel, it's what the Lord has done for us, it's the Holy Spirit, living inside of us, and so,

I'll conclude there, 730, does that give you plenty of time, but just to say, you know, I'm very thankful, that you guys have, brought us, here, thankful for your hospitality, you guys have, really impressed, Danny and I, and again, I can't, I think I know how, the search committee is going to vote, so you know that I'm not, buttering them up, but, but they've been very wonderful, in representing you all, and you should be, you should be very, proud of them, and I believe that you are, they've really done, an excellent job of, giving us an impression of, what Highland Park is, is all about, and so, you know, in fact, that first weekend we left, we were really impressed, we got to the hotel room, or, to the hotel, and we were checking in, and there was a gift basket there, and so, that really, that really impressed Danny, and me as well, well we got back to the, we got to the hotel room, well this is really, this is special, we feel special, so,

I thank you guys, for having us here, and, and, it's just been a pleasure, to get to know you, and, I will pray, and, leave it, leave it up to, to you, Paul, let's pray, Lord God, I know that, you have, done amazing things, in the lives of, each person in this room, that we could all, stand up, and share a testimony, of the amazing things, that you have done, in our lives, the things that you have done, that, that have, you have revealed yourself, to us, in ways that we know, that you are, God, that

Jesus Christ, is your son, that he in fact, is the way, the truth, and the life, and Lord, we are so thankful, to know, that you, do make our paths, straight, that even as I've shared, as much as I feel like, I can make a mess of things, as much as we feel like, we can make a mess of things, Lord, that you have a plan, that you have a will, and your will, will be done, and there is great peace, and hope, in that for us, and so if anything, Lord, I pray, that as we will dismiss, dismiss later tonight, that, that we would leave this place, encouraged to know, that the God, whom we serve, knows us, loves us, cares for us, the God, who holds, all of the universe, together, who created it all, he keeps our paths, straight, that you care enough, Lord, to show us the way, and to cause us to walk in it, and so God, we give you the glory, we give you the thanks, I pray for Highland Park, Lord, I pray for this church, that regardless of what happens tonight, that you would be glorified, and magnified, through these people, and in this place, in Jesus name, we pray, amen.
Amen.