

The “Will You Leave It?” Test

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Preacher: Tobin Miller

[0 : 00] I don't know if you've ever dreamed for something and see what happens five years ago or seven years ago, but we never really knew what was going to happen, and we just kind of dreamed, and we didn't know what God was going to allow to happen in the life of the church.

We knew we wanted to be about gospel, mission, and community. We knew we wanted to be a family. We knew we wanted to be outwardly focused and raw and real and authentic, but we didn't know what God was going to do.

We didn't know what it was going to look like five years later. We realized that sometimes things change, even things change beyond your ability to take control of them, and you don't know what's going to happen, but here we are.

Can I ask you a question? Have you guys ever had a dream that was so real that you woke up and you could have sworn that it really happened? You ever dream like that?

Okay, so I call those Christina dreams. So I'm going to get in trouble after this, okay? But that's what I call them, Christina dreams, because I didn't until I got married. Now, it's nothing about SCX because there's kids in here and all those things, and we're not talking about that.

[1 : 05] But so after the second month of being married, I was getting ready, and I got up early, and I'm more the morning person, and Christina's more the midnight person. There's a joke there.

Anyway, so I was getting ready, and I was getting my breakfast, and I was eating and doing things, and Christina walks out, and she's not happy. I mean, she is not happy, and I don't know what the heck's going on.

We've been married two months. I'm trying to figure out what's going on, and I could tell that she's actually physically angry at me. And so being the new young husband trying to be responsible, I look at her, and I say, Hey, how are you doing?

What's going on? And she goes, I just had this dream last night, and you were so mean to me, and I'm so angry with you. What do you, guys, what do you do when you're a guy and you hear that, right?

I mean, I'm like, okay, so I'll tell you what not to do because it's what I did. I said, Hey, you know it's just a dream. Get over it. It's not real.

[2 : 11] Snap back into reality. You do not want to do that. Newly married guys, do not do that. Write down on your little pad, do not do this when my wife has a Christina dream because it will only lead to pain and heartache and suffering.

After 18 years, this is what I learned to do. I say, Oh, honey, I'm so sorry that I was mean to you. Now, you can't say I was mean to you in a dream because they're going to think you're making fun of them because it's just a dream.

So you can't say that because I've tried that too. You just have to say, Honey, I'm so sorry that I was mean to you. I didn't mean it. Please forgive me. I love you. And for some reason, I don't understand, but for some reason, that works.

But that's a Christina dream. And we had them all the time. So it was Wednesday, and Wednesday is normally my... Hold on. You'll understand. It was Wednesday, and Wednesday is normally my sermon day, prep day.

And so I was working through a sermon and trying to figure out what to do. And all of a sudden, I realized that I had a lunch appointment in IFC Central, and I was going to be massively late. I mean, it was a really important appointment.

[3 : 20] I've been trying to get a hold of this guy forever, and I was going to be massively late. And so I ran out, got out, got my phone, and I'm running out the pathway of our flat, and two things happened at the same time, which is never a good thing for a guy, and especially for me.

But two things happened at the same time. The first thing that happened was my phone rang, and so I picked it up, and I started talking to the person on the phone. And then a taxi pulled up right as I got there. I mean, he pulled up immediately when I got there.

And so I jump in the taxi, and I'm talking to the person on the phone, and I say to the taxi guy, I'm going to be massively late. Can you drive as fast as you can?

And he just takes off driving. So he's driving, and I put my seatbelt on, and I'm thinking, okay, this is good. I'm going to get there in time, and everything is great, and no problems. I'm not going to miss my appointment whatsoever.

And I'm talking to the person on the phone, and then all of a sudden I just realize that we're going in the wrong direction. We're not going anywhere near Central.

[4 : 21] We're going towards Hong Kong Country Club and to Ocean Park. And so I'm going the exact opposite direction that I need to be going, and so I just hung up the phone and said, I'm sorry, I got to call you back.

Hung up the phone, and without trying to start an accident or a misunderstanding, I say, hey, do you know where you're going? And the guy goes, no.

But I'm going fast. And immediately, I woke up. It was a dream. But it impacted me so heavily in my heart, and I've been thinking about it these last couple weeks.

It's a dream. And I realized that that is so much like us in Hong Kong, that many of us here in this room, we're going 100 miles an hour, fast, fast, fast, fast, fast, fast, fast, fast, fast, fast.

And we're busy, busy, busy, busy, busy, busy, busy, busy, busy, busy. And we're busy, busy, busy, and we're fast, fast, fast. And after a while, we start doing those things, and we forget where we're going.

[5 : 39] Sometimes we're so fast and we're so busy, we forget what we're all about. Sometimes we're so fast and we're so fast. Sometimes we're so fast and we're so busy that we forget why we're here.

And when I realized that that is true of me, and it's true of all of us, if we're honest. And it's true of the church sometimes.

When you think about it, students, you guys are so eager to get out of school. You're so eager to pass your class. You're so eager just to get to the next grade.

You're so eager to get out of the teacher's strains. And you're doing all these things because you're busy, busy, busy, fast, fast, fast. But you don't realize that maybe the reason God has you in school is because there's a classmate right next to you who needs to hear about Jesus.

And you're so busy, busy, busy, busy, fast, fast, fast, fast, that you missed this amazing opportunity. And it might be the reason why God has you in that class. Singles.

[6 : 45] Hong Kong singles. Busy, busy, busy, busy, fast, fast, fast, fast. You're trying to seal that next deal. You're trying to get your first apartment so you can get 2.5 apartments or three apartments so you can rent out two of them and live off the third one.

That's the Hong Kong dream. And you're doing it, and you're fast, fast, fast, fast, fast. You're trying to get married because you don't want to be single anymore because that's wrong. I don't know where you've heard that, but that's what you've heard. And trust me, there's a lot worse things than not being married, and one of them is being married to the wrong person.

And it's true. I do that counseling all the time. But you're single, and you're fast, fast, fast. You're trying to move, and you're trying to do these things. You're trying to move up the ladder. And you miss why God has you here.

And you don't realize that maybe the reason God has kept you single is because there's other people that you can reach out to and share with them the love of Christ. And their lives are falling apart.

And maybe that person that God wants you to share to you, maybe that person is going to be the next person who's the evangelist of Hong Kong. And they're going to use their gifting, and they're going to reach thousands of people for the gospel.

[7 : 47] But we're so busy, busy, busy, busy, busy that we just don't think about that next step. We don't think about why we're here. We just think about doing parents, work, life, meetings.

Busy, busy, busy, busy, fast, fast, fast, urgent, urgent, urgent. You just keep doing things over and over and over again. And you're trying to get to the end so that one day you can retire and you can do what you really want to do and start an NGO or whatever you want to do.

Because you just hurry and you're busy and you're fast and you just do it in the middle of all this busyness. You forget the purpose that you're here. You forget the reason why God has you here. You forget those kids that you're hugging right now. You forget those kids that you're investing in their lives. You forget the mission that God's going to send them on. You're going to forget the opportunity that you're going to have to share with them and open up their lives and do amazing, incredible things.

But you're so busy and you're so fast and you're so urgent that we lose our purpose and our focus. [8 : 59] And the passage today, and I was told I only got 10 minutes to talk on it, so I'm in trouble. We're going to come back to it. But the passage today is all about busy, busy, busy, focus, focus, focus, purpose, purpose, purpose.

And what you see in this passage in Luke 5, and I think it's really interesting because it's one of my favorite passages. And we've talked through Luke for three years, but we didn't talk about this passage.

And maybe it's because God wants us to talk about this passage today on our fifth birthday. But this passage is all about these group of fishermen and they're so busy doing what they want to do. And so busy focused on what the urgent thing is and what's the important thing.

That Jesus is there and there's this massive crowd preaching and they're not even focusing on those things. They're just focusing on cleaning their nets and putting things up and getting ready to do the next day of business.

And Jesus has to come into their life and Jesus has to come into your and my life. And sometimes he needs to break up the busyness and sometimes he needs to break up the urgency. And sometimes he needs to break it up and help us focus on things that are really important.

[10 : 01] And you see it in this story. Now normally we have somebody read it, but you have the passage in front of you. And in the time I have left, I just want to share with you three things I've learned from this passage and that we as a church must continue to learn.

Guys, five years is the, like, that's the strategic time. Churches have to decide, are they going to be a church that builds a huge staff team? Are they going to be a church that allows people to use their gifts and their talents to reach the Lord and reach people for the Lord?

Are they just going to be a club? Are they going to be a church that's going to multiply and reach other people who aren't in church already? That's the mark where we have to decide. And that's where churches either stay where they're at or they expand and they plant and they do other things. Reaching people that aren't in church. And so the passage talks about Jesus coming into these guys' lives. And Jesus does some awesome things in their lives.

And the first thing that you need to see in this passage is that when Jesus comes in, he's trying to get them to focus on something besides himself. Now, the passage is not about you leaving your work and going to work for Christ.

[11 : 12] The passage is not about you leaving your parents and going to be a missionary. The passage is not about you loving Jesus with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your body.

The purpose of this passage is asking the question to the disciples and to us, is Jesus enough? Is Jesus enough?

In the midst of the busyness, in the midst of the craziness, is Christ enough? And it's so incredible because Peter is sitting there.

And Peter is just this, he's just a seasoned fisherman. He knows everything. He's done everything. He knows every part of the lake. He knows when to fish. He knows where to fish. He knows where to catch fish. And for that whole night, he caught nothing.

And so he's not even listening to Jesus. He's just frustrated and angry and trying to think about what he's going to do next. And then Jesus says, hey, let's get in your boat. I want to take you someplace. And, you know, if you think about it, it's kind of crazy.

[12 : 13] It'd be like me, you know, after you've had a terrible day at work, maybe you're a stock trader or something like that, and your whole portfolio is falling apart, and everything's just, Oscar knows what I'm talking about. We've talked about this all the time with the crazy market.

Everything's just falling apart. And all of a sudden, I come into your office, and I say, hey, I got a great stock for you. I want you to buy all this stock. Change all your things, liquidate all your assets, and buy this stock. What would you think about me?

You think, well, you're the pastor. What are you doing here? I know what I need to do. I know how to do it. And that's the story that we all struggle with. We all struggle with the story of busy, busy, busy.

I know what to do. I know how to do it. And we don't have room for Christ to come in and take control. We don't have room to trust him. We don't have room to believe in him.

We don't have room to give our lives to him. In the midst of this passage, something incredible happens. Because when Jesus does this miracle, Peter looks at him, and he says, get away from me. I'm a sinful person.

[13:11] And I've been thinking about that for a long time. Because usually, if you know God is right near you, you want to grab onto God. Because you need God. But he realizes that he's broken. And he realizes that he's selfish.

And he realizes that he's prideful. And he realizes that he's self-centered. In the passage, he said, that's just where God wants you. Because until you realize that, until you realize your brokenness, until you realize your need, until you realize your self-centeredness, you're never going to know Christ.

You're never going to know grace. You're never going to know mercy. You're never going to know mercy. So Peter meets Christ. And Christ shows him that he isn't enough. That only Christ is enough.

The second thing this story tells us is that after they bring in this huge catch, I mean, it is a massive catch. It's like you at your work. And all of a sudden, you've been working all this time. And all of a sudden, your payday comes in. I don't know what your payday is.

I've talked to people over and over in Hong Kong. Some guys tell me it's \$2 million. And then they can leave for the rest of their life. Some guys tell me it's \$5 million. And they can leave the rest of their life. Some guys tell me it's \$10 million U.S. And then they can leave the rest of their life.

[14:14] And really follow Jesus. I don't know what your payday is. But their payday comes in. Everything comes in. And they stay there. And what do they do with that payday? They leave it.

Because they realize they've met something greater than money. They realize they've met something greater than their payday. They've met God. And they've decided to leave those things behind and to follow him.

And that's the second message of this story. And the story tells us this. That as we go on this journey, we're going to face things that we're going to be asked before the Lord. Are we willing to give these things up or are we not?

And what we see in the passage is that sometimes following God means that we give things up. Because there's something so much greater that he wants to give us.

I don't know what God is asking you to give up. Maybe it's nothing. Maybe it's nothing. But I know that in our life, as we go on this journey, things pop up in our life.

[15:20] And the Holy Spirit shows us, hey, you really love this more than you love God. You need to consider, do you want to cling to this or do you want to cling to God? I don't know what that thing is that you're clinging. But if you're a Christian and you're on this journey sometime in your life, you're going to come to this place where you have to decide, am I going to leave it behind?

Or am I going to cling to it and keep it the rest of my life? And the problem is when you cling to those things, we think we're clinging to life. But what it actually is is this anchor that's around your neck. And it actually ends up drowning you.

And so the disciples come to this decision of faith. And they realize that what they've seen, Jesus, is worth it. And Jesus can take care of them. And he's all they need. And so they just leave it all behind. The last thing I want us to see as a church, as we go on this journey for the next five years, and guys, I am so impressed by where we're at.

It's so humbling. It has nothing to do with the staff. It has nothing to do with the elders. All we've been doing is praying, praying, praying. And God doing something. I don't know what he's doing. We're still trying to pray, God, what do you want us to do in this whole process? But I realize this. If we want to be on the mission that Jesus wants us on, if we want to do what Christ has called us to do, if we want to make sure that we don't go in the wrong direction on this journey, if we want to make sure that we're following Christ, then we have to have the same mission that Christ has.

[16:37] And the passage says that the mission that Christ had is reaching people who aren't in church. That's the mission that Christ came for.

Luke 19 says, Christ said he came to seek and save lost people. And if we, as a church, want to be on this same path, if we want to make sure that we're going in the right direction the next five years, if we want to make sure that we're not deviating and going someplace where we don't need to be going, we need to make sure that we have the same mission that Christ has.

And his mission is people who aren't in church. And so you're going to hear things today about why we spend our money the way we spend it. We spend a lot of money that doesn't come back to you guys.

We spend a lot of money that's outreach and focused on ministries, and we're going to support more ministries. And these are the things that we keep doing. And we realize we do it because we want to be obedient as a church family. We want to be on the same mission that God has us on, and we want to be faithful at the end when we get to see him in heaven.

And so there are going to be things you're going to hear, experiences, and you're going to go, well, I didn't even know we did those things. And you know, there are a lot of things this church does you don't even know about. And some people say, well, if I knew about all those things, I'd give more money.

[17:53] And I'm like, that's the wrong reason to tithe. The reason you give your finances is because you realize that all that you have is God's.

All that you have is God's. And you understand the gospel, and in that process of understanding the gospel and loving the Lord, you give back to him what is already his.

There are going to be a lot of things that we're going to do as a church, and you're not going to receive the benefits of those things. We want to make a great nursery because we have all these kids coming in. I think there's nine pregnant women again. So there's something about the coffee or the food or something around here.

But every time I turn around, there's just more pregnant women walking around, which is awesome. But we have like 18 little kids now in the nursery. And we're like, okay, we need to make a great nursery.

Well, some of you singles aren't going to ever see a nursery yet. You want one when you get married, but the money is going to go to that. We invest a lot in the college students. You know, college students, and I'm sorry, guys, but college students, if you do a cost-based analysis, you guys just are not a good cost-based.

[18:57] You just are not, right? College students just don't give back. They don't tithe. They don't serve. And usually they're here for like three years, and then they go, or four years, and they go. Or if you're like my wife, seven years, and then you go.

Five and a half. Okay, whatever. Whatever. But I just try to say is that we invest in the university ministry, guys, because we believe that the university students are going to be the next leaders of Hong Kong and all the other countries they go back to, and that's why we give money to that, because we want to be a part of that.

And, you know, there are going to be people they touch and influence and reach out to and minister to and share the gospel, and you're never going to know about it until you get to heaven.

Someone's going to come up to you and say, you know, I'm here because of what you did in investing in these students, and they invested in me.

Thank you so much for what you've done. So the story is that we need to be careful, because we can lose direction, and we can lose focus.

We can go off on the wrong tangent if we don't keep these things in focus, and the focus is Jesus, a relationship with him. It's all about him. In the end, we're not going to ask you how you did this, well, how did this. We're going to ask you, how did you love Christ?

[20:09] Did people see the love of Christ in your life? In the end, we're going to ask, hey, were there things in your life that God gave up? Yeah, we gave up these things. Well, what was the return?

Something so much more incredible. Did you invest your life in people who don't know him? That's why the church is here. And we believe that as we keep doing this for the next five years, that God will find us faithful, and Watermark will have an amazing impact in Hong Kong and beyond.

Does that make sense? I don't know if I went over. I'm going to ask Kirby and Ryan to come up. So Kirby, come on up, guys. So Kirby and Ryan are some friends of ours, and they've been in Watermark now for a little while.

And I've just kind of asked them to come and share their story. And I usually ask questions that I don't tell them ahead of time, but I promised to them I wouldn't.

So I can just stand up here. So guys, thanks for... Ryan, you want to introduce yourself? You guys. [21 : 17] Hey, good morning, everybody. My name is Ryan Jip, and this is my lovely wife, Kirby Jip. Son is somewhere outside. Xavier Jip. And so as we thought about you guys, you guys are one of the worst parts about our church, I think, is that people come and go and come and go.

And so you guys are going, right? I hope that's common knowledge, and everybody knows that. It is now. It is now, yes, that's right. So we won't put the video online yet.

And so, Ryan, I thought maybe you could just share a little bit about your story, like how you guys found Watermark, and not just maybe even physically, but just where you were at on this journey in your spiritual life, and what happened.

Okay. So we're both from small-town Iowa in the USA. So in my opinion, Iowa's got nicer people, more cows, better food than Texas.

I don't know. So Texas is bigger. It was supposed to be a birthday celebration. Happy thoughts. Happy thoughts. So debate at number one and two, number two at Texas. So we'll see. So the interesting thing about where we're from is everyone there is very religious.

[22 : 29] We both grew up in a very Christian household. She was a Catholic, so very different than what my upbringing was. I was kind of evangelical free.

The interesting thing was in our town, almost everybody went to church. So it didn't matter if you were actually religious or not. You just went to church. If you asked on a survey what your religion was, you checked Christian, and that was what the situation was.

But it was more kind of culturally religious. Not a lot of people were true relationship with God so much, especially in the Catholic church. It was pretty much, here's the list of things you need to do to be confirmed, and here's what you have to do.

And it was a lot more regulation and documentation. It was a little bit strange. And actually, it was kind of clicky as well, too. Her church and my church were kind of warring feuds against each other. I was part of an Awanas program, and her church said that my Awanas program was the devil and leading people away from Christ. And yeah, it was kind of interesting.

[23 : 29] So I guess we're kind of Romeo and Julia. Of Iowa. From Iowa. Of Iowa. Someplace romantic.

Yeah. So my upbringing actually was, I would say, pretty strong in learning about God.

With the Awanas program, I even did crazy stuff like Bible quizzing and memorization and stuff like that. So I got a lot of knowledge about Christianity, and I would say I know a decent amount, but never really found such a spiritual connection when I was a kid.

When we were both young, both of our dads passed away kind of at different times. So those were very challenging. For me, it was a very big repression moment.

For you, it was a very emotional moment. So I think both of that helped us to kind of help you repress some a little bit to control and to me to learn to bring some of that back out again.

[24 : 30] And we both found a very kind of religious connection in that as well, too. Both kind of helped point our ways towards Christ a little bit more. Right. So even moving forward into, I guess, kind of college and things like that, we still stayed relatively Christian, but kind of a cyclical motion of going back and forth.

Like you said, life moves fast. You lose God. You kind of lose your focus on Christianity so much.

And then when we got out into kind of the real world, we decided we needed to find a church.

And we got hooked up with this very big mega church in Milwaukee. Seven church services, and you can go any day of the week, any time you want. And we didn't really find a connection in that.

It helped us to grow a little bit, but just not so much of a good connection with Christianity. So when we moved to Hong Kong about three years ago, my boss told us to go to Island ECC.

So we went there and again kind of fell into, it's more of a mega church, didn't really meet so many people, kind of slipped in and then stopped going. And then actually we were sitting in a cafe de corral, and there was some hairy dude sitting next to us with a big beard, Eric.

[25 : 43] Eric. So we're the only white people in this cafe de corral for some reason. When we came here, we didn't know anybody. We had no friends.

We were kind of sad and lonely. I was up in China most of the time, and she was down here by herself. So we met Eric, and Eric said, well, why don't you come try Watermark?

And then when we came here, we got attacked. Day one, we didn't have name tags, I think. So everyone just came in and said, hey, what's going on?

How are you guys? That's a secret. Don't tell anybody that. If they don't have a name tag, you get pounced on, right? So it was just crazy, and it was awesome. We just got attacked and loved and made too many friends, and it's just been really good since then.

Kirby, how would you say that the church's family has helped you, just like on your spiritual journey? What are the things that you would say just helped you take the next step in that process? Yeah, so as Ryan said, when we came into Watermark the first day, we met so many people, and we were just overwhelmed, and within that week, I wasn't working, and I was here by myself, and I think I attended about two or three Watermark events between the Women of Watermark group, meeting with, I think I met with Cindy and Kelvin.

[27 : 01] Shen, they've already left here, but they were the first ones to reach out to me and then several other women from that group I had lunch with, so within that week, we were just overcome with community and meeting people, and through that, I think as Ryan said, we always went to church, but we never became involved, and so we had church, and we had our own community, but they were never two, or never one, and here, our community is now our church, and so by having that, it's really helped us to bring God into our life.

Before, we kind of just went down the path of life, and we thought we were making our own choices for ourselves, and now we really see that God has a plan. We came here. We were going to be here for two years.

No kids. No dog. Now we're leaving three years later. One kid, one dog, and when we made our pros and cons list, so staying here for another year last year, Watermark and the community that we had here were really on the top of the list.

It wasn't jobs. It wasn't house. It wasn't anything of that. It was the people we've met here and the friends that we've made. We've had holidays here. We've had our baby dedicated here. It's really become our family, and it's really hard to think about anything.

No one ever cries up here, so don't worry about that. That's great. So we just, we pray when we go back that we find a community like we have here, and that we just can continue to love people and grow in God and know that he always has a plan, and I think when we came here, we thought this is our plan, this is our choice, and now we realize that it's not.

[28 : 42] Amen. That's great. So you guys, as you think about now you're heading out soon, right, not to make more tears come or anything like that, but what are some words of encouragement would you say, because I'm sure there are people in this family right now who are kind of where you were three years ago or two years ago and you're coming in and they're being attacked or maybe they're trying not to be attacked.

Would there anything that you would encourage anybody here as you leave? What would be your words for us? I think I would say my hardest thing about coming here was I didn't want to reach out to anybody.

You know, people invited me to go and do stuff and I just, it was easier for me to not do that, and so if anybody's new here or has been coming here a few times but just hasn't gone to anything, you know, take that invitation, go to coffee with that person that's invited you, go to that community group that somebody said, hey, come join us for one night.

I know it sounds uncomfortable to begin with but everybody here, all the members here, all the community here, they really are genuine in wanting to love you and bring Christ into your life and to have you be a part of this amazing family here.

So don't think it's a superficial thing when somebody says, yeah, we should get together. I know in Hong Kong that's all the time it happens but when somebody here says it, they really mean it. And when they say, I'm praying for you, they really mean it.

[29 : 57] And it's just, be a part of the family. Don't just come and leave. This family here is really genuine. They want to be a part of your life. And I just say quickly to get involved.

Like in the last churches we were at, the mega churches and things like that, I wasn't really involved in anything that was going on and Eric's pushed me to be part of the kids ministry which has been fun. I'm not qualified or know what I'm doing but it's, they've taught me a lot and I've learned a lot about the kids and dealing with them.

And then even, I've been sometimes counting offering and that's been a huge challenge to me to give more myself and to be more dedicated on tithing and things like that.

So, just get involved with the church. Get involved with the things that are around you. It's not just helping so much other people. It actually helps yourself quite a bit and helps you grow and meet new people and have new experiences and just have a fun time.

Amen. So I'm going to pray for you guys. Can I pray for you? Sure. Okay. Father, we just thank you for this day. We pray for this precious family and we, Father, you know three years ago when you brought them here that they had become a part of this family and we pray for their next journey that you would bring them into another family that would love them and encourage them and challenge them to be a part of this, your family.

[31 : 15] And Father, I just thank you for the awesome son. It's amazing to see him even just grow up and turn into a little man, a little person. And I pray, Lord, that he would come to know you at an early age and he would do mighty things for your kingdom, even in Iowa, that he would do mighty things and people's lives to be changed because of how much he loves Jesus.

So I thank you for this precious family and pray that you would guard them and watch over them and just always make their home a place of peace and mercy and grace. And we love you and we pray these things for your son Jesus' name.

Amen. Thanks, guys. Ti NATIONAL Goddamn God