

# Levi's Banquet

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[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. So go with me, if you would, to Mark chapter 2 and verse 14.

We'll simply work our way through the passage of Scripture, and we'll look at what the Lord's saying there, and then you can take that, and you can pray through it, and you can apply and see how this works in your life.

Mark 2, 14, the Bible said, And as he, that's Jesus, passed by, he, Jesus, saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus. Levi is another name for Matthew.

That freaks some of the people out. Men, they're like, if his name is Levi, why do they call him Matthew? His name is Matthew, why do they call him Levi? Because you've got more than one name, too. My name happens to be William Austin Gardner, and I have never gone by William.

And I was at the doctor's office this week, and the lady came out and said, William, I've sat there. William, come on back, William. I said, I mean, there's other people in the room. I'm waiting on William to get up and go.

[ 0 : 57 ] William never moved. And she said, William Gardner. I said, oh, that must be me. I was walking down the street in Arequipa, or in Lima, I guess, one day, and a guy hollered, hey, Bill.

And I thought, that's amazing. That's an American accent, American name, American speech, and he's asking Bill. And I kept walking. He said, Bill, Billy, Will, Willie. And in Spanish, I used my name, Guillermo, which is William translated.

And finally, he said, Guillermo. And I turned around, and he said, do you not know what Guillermo translates as? I said, yeah, but in English, I am none of those names you just mentioned. None of them. This is Levi.

Levi is a Jewish name. Matthew is a name also that's used by him. It says, and Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom. He's a tax collector, and Jesus said unto him, follow me.

And Matthew arose and followed him. Father, I pray you would save somebody today. I pray you'd draw somebody to you that's not where they ought to be.

[ 2 : 00 ] I pray that you would motivate your own people to carry the gospel out of here to invite their friends. I pray you'd help us as a church to be prepared to receive people that other religious people would not want to receive.

And I pray, dear God, that your name would be glorified and magnified, and I'll give you glory and honor for all that you do. In Jesus' name, amen. So we got a man in the story. His name is Levi, also called Matthew.

And the blunt truth is we don't know hardly anything about him before this part of the story. We know what his job was, so we know what people thought of him based on his job.

But was he a wicked sinner? We really don't know if he was or not. Now, we know he was a sinner, just like I know you're a sinner. Because the Bible's clear that Romans chapter 3 and verse 10, there's none righteous, none perfect, none good, not a one.

The Bible says in Romans chapter 3 and verse 23, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. So we don't have any question about whether or not he was a sinner. He was. Now, he was a tax collector. So the next question is, did he cheat people?

[ 3 : 03 ] Because what happened, you know, there's certain jobs that you just don't really prefer to have. I don't know that I'd want to work for the IRS. Because any time I get mail from them, I don't like it.

So when I see a letter come from them, I'm like, all right, what's going on now? And so, but in this day and time, it was far worse. If you work for the IRS, I like you. Just don't like the IRS. But so, whoa, man, I messed up on that one, didn't I?

Don't be critical. And so, but in this day and time, these publicans were tax collectors that were Jews working for the oppressive ruling government, the Romans.

And so they were working with the enemy, taking money from their own people, and often they padded their pockets. So if you owe \$10 in tax, they might charge you \$15 in tax, and that way they turn into \$10 to keep \$5 for themselves or overcharge.

So did he cheap it? But we don't know. All we do know is this. Here's a man sitting at a table with a lot of money on the table, probably got employees helping him keep up with the records.

[ 4 : 08 ] He's collecting money from these Jewish people as they walk up to him, and along comes Jesus, and Jesus calls him. Look in your Bible, if you look at Mark 2 and verse 14.

The Bible said, And Jesus passed by, he passed by, and he saw Levi, the son of Alpha, sitting at the receipt of custom. So he's there, and he's working, receiving the taxes, and Jesus said, Follow me.

All he says to him is, Follow me. Now, to follow Jesus would mean that you would give up your own dreams, give up what you want, and you would follow him. Now, just think about this a second.

Put this in modern context. Let me drive by your place of business and walk in and say, Hey, follow me, let's go. And you just get up and walk away from your business, your money, your house, your dreams, your plans, and do that.

Well, you say, We'd never do that. You're just a man. Well, you know, just to be honest with you, looking at Jesus in those days and times, he didn't have a halo. But this guy knew. Matthew knew. He's not just a regular man.

[ 5 : 09 ] And Matthew stood up, and Matthew followed him. Following him meant giving up your life. Following him meant taking up his life. Following him meant imitating him and living what he did.

And he left the money. If you read all the parallel passages, he just got up and walked away from the table. I wonder about the people standing in line. I wonder about the employees and what's going on. It meant he walked away from his security.

He obeyed. He obeyed. He immediately arose and followed Jesus. He gave up on himself. He turned his own life over to Jesus Christ, and he walked out to follow him.

Now, here's the interesting thing. Apparently, he's not saved. Apparently, he's a lost guy collecting taxes. And it's not like Jesus is going around and saying, Hey, we just voted on you to make you a deacon, and we're going to pick you as a deacon, so we're installing you tonight.

That's not exactly what happened at all there. It's just a guy sitting at the table of custom. Jesus walks by and calls him, and he gets up out of the seat and follows Jesus. Salvation.

[ 6 : 10 ] Salvation. But what I really like is immediate obedience, immediate living out what the Lord had in mind for him to do. Somehow, you and I kind of got it divided like this.

I need salvation so I don't go to hell. I need salvation so I got fire insurance. I need salvation so I don't spend eternity in hell. I want to go to heaven so I can be with my family.

Like Jesus is not even a part of that equation. And then we say somewhere along the line, maybe later on, the Lord will deal with me and I'll follow him. So we follow him, and then we follow him.

You ever notice that? Have you ever noticed what I'm talking about? It's like we even got it broken down into several steps. We criticize sometimes Pentecostals and say, You know, they got the second blessing. But it's like we got the second follow.

We follow, and then later on we follow again, and then later on maybe we follow again. Then we give an invitation. People follow again. So Matthew didn't do that. He just got up and obeyed God.

[ 7 : 07 ] I could stop right there. You were called to salvation. If you're sitting in this room this morning, and you've never been born again, right now he's calling you. Right now he invites you to be saved.

Right now he invites you to look at your life and realize that in and of yourself you have no peace with God. You have no peace of God. You can't be for sure you'd ever go to heaven. You can't be for sure you'd ever have your sins forgiven.

And you can buy all the stuff you want to buy. You can have all the money you want to have. You can do all the stuff you want to do. But you need something. Something's missing inside of you, and that's the Lord Jesus. And it's time to follow him and be saved.

But at the same time, that follow with Matthew was, Hey, he's going to be, he wrote a book of the Bible. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Matthew, Levi, that's Matthew. He got saved. He became an apostle.

He followed Jesus. He goes out into the ministry. How's your follow? How are you following? How many of you have decided, I want salvation, but I don't really want to follow.

[ 8 : 04 ] I want to be a follower that doesn't follow. I want to be a Christian that's not big on Christ. I want to be a Jesus lover that's not all that big on loving Jesus. See, in this story, that's not what happens with Mr. Matthew.

He had money. He had position. He could have been respected, at least in his profession. And that day and time, among Jewish people, he would not have been respected.

If you can imagine our country taken over and ruled by another country and you working for the other people, if you can imagine living in a country where everything is falling apart like it is right now in Venezuela, and you working for the dictator, you working for the people that are hurting everybody else.

So I'd like to ask you this. Would you stop and take inventory of your life right now? What do you think is really important in your life? What's missing? Has your success brought you the peace with God, the peace of God?

Has money been the answer for you? The truth is you know you need to follow Jesus. Are you being called to salvation today? Have you honestly, could you say, I'm not sure I'm saved?

[ 9 : 17 ] Now, I know one thing about you. I'm sure you're religious. And I'm sure you're a Christian in, in the quotation marks. You are because you're living in the southeast part of the United States of America.

Glory to God. That means you've got to be a Christian. I mean, what do you think? I am a Muslim? I'm a Christian. No, the truth is, the truth is, just because you were baptized as a baby, just because you're a member of a church, just because you attend church, that doesn't mean you're born again.

So it's time to look at yourself. Are you truly following Jesus Christ? Are you obeying him? Have you given your life to him? Will you acknowledge that you need Jesus Christ and the offer of salvation that he gives?

No, I ask Christians this. I really think it's a good question. I ask myself this. Am I obeying him? Am I following him? Am I thinking about him?

Is he a real part of my life and not just a religious tack-on I had on Sunday morning to get through the week? Go with me to Mark 2, verse 15. Second thing I want you to look at. So there's old Levi, and Levi followed Jesus.

[ 10 : 25 ] He was called to salvation and ministry at the same time. And the next thing he does, immediately after getting saved, or real shortly thereafter, he does this crazy thing, and he has a big banquet.

Look at Mark 2, verse 15. It came to pass that as Jesus sat at meat in his house. See, Jesus is at supper. That's just an old-fashioned way of saying we're fixing to eat. So they're sitting down to eat, and they're at Matthew's house, and many publicans, many tax collectors, and many sinners were there with Jesus and his disciples, and there were a bunch of them, and they followed him.

So here's the story. We're going to read it again in Luke chapter 5 in just a second. So here's the story. Matthew got up and left. You've got to admit, man, everybody's looking at Twitter to find out what happened. Why did Levi leave the table?

Why did Matthew get up and walk away and miss taxes? They're all checking out Facebook to see where his next selfie's coming up. They don't know what happened to him. So Matthew sends a word around and says, Hey, guys, I need you to come to the house. I'm going to tell you what's going on.

I'm going to tell you what's happening. I'm going to tell you what the next stage of my life is. Y'all need to come to my house. And so all these tax collectors and all these people he ran around with. Now, you've got to understand who Matthew would be running around with.

[ 11 : 34 ] Regular Jewish people don't like publicans. Regular Jewish people don't like tax collectors. I mean, it'd be like them Georgia hillbillies that were running moonshine.

And here come the revenueurs or the tax collectors. And they wouldn't have liked those guys. And so there's a click. Matthew's running around. Levi's running around with all these people that he knows.

Other publicans or tax collectors. And other people of less good reputation. That's who he's running around with. And so he's invited them all over to his house. And the house is full of people.

And in a minute, Jesus is going to talk. And Jesus is going to share the gospel with them. And people are going to get saved. And evidently, people are going to follow. Look with me at Luke chapter 5, verse 29.

Now, those of you who study the Bible, it's called a parallel passage. It's another part of the Bible. It tells the same story. It might give me some more details. The Bible says in Luke 5, 29, And Levi made a great feast in his house, his own house.

[ 12 : 33 ] And there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with him. So Matthew, Levi is so excited about what God has done in his life that he wants to share his decision with his friends.

He's not ashamed. He's not embarrassed. He's not saying, this is a personal decision. It's just between me and the Lord. Let's keep it quiet. Don't put this on Facebook. Don't tell anybody about this. I'll get saved.

I'll follow Jesus, but I wouldn't want nobody to know. That's not what he's doing. He's not ashamed. Let me ask you, how do you feel about your faith? Isn't it amazing that most Christians spend the week as 007 secret agent Christians?

You know, you wouldn't carry a Bible. You wouldn't mention Jesus. You wouldn't mention church. You wouldn't mention God. Because you know who talks about that? That's in Pentecostals. In Pentecostals, they'll advertise their Christians.

Baptists, we are sly. We don't want to look like a Christian. We don't want to act like a Christian. We want to fit in with the world. Come Sunday morning, we find our old Bible, dust it off, and go out to church.

[ 13 : 34 ] That's not how Matthew took it. How are you dealing with your loving and following Jesus? Matthew prepares a special banquet. Can you imagine the food, the music, the decorations, and all that he did when he's going to have a party?

They all knew each other. They all hung out together. These are the guys going to the bar after work together. These are the people he's been running around with. And so he invited, he makes a list of all of his friends and he invites them.

And he prays for them. Can you not imagine what he's doing? He's like, I have been hanging out with these guys all my life. I mean, nobody else liked me in the town because I was a tax collector.

And nobody likes tax collectors. So my tax collector buddies, thank the Lord they like me. And these sinners, these other people that nobody else likes in society, they're my buddies. And I am so excited about knowing Jesus.

And I've got to have them over to the house. I'm going to have a banquet. I'm going to throw a party. Now, Matthew's a rich guy, just to be blunt, honest with you. He's probably a corrupt, probably. We don't know for sure, but he's probably a corrupt tax collector.

[ 14 : 33 ] He's been making money. He throws a party and he invites them over there. I believe he prayed for them. Because in just a little while when they get to the house, he's going to say, hey guys, what's going on? Everybody's walking around drinking and eating snacks.

And they got some peanuts over here and some raisins over here. I don't know about that. No ham sandwiches, I promise you. And there was no pig outside because they're Jews, even though they're publicans and tax collectors.

So they're having this banquet. And in just a little while, he's going to say, I've got to introduce you to somebody. So I'd like to ask you next week, we're going to do everything we can to reach your friend with the gospel. I'm going to preach a straight out salvation message.

I'm going to ask you to bring your lost friends. I'm going to ask you to bring people that are away from the Lord, grown cold on God. I want to ask you to bring them and we're going to do everything we can to close the net and see them come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

His friends would have known him. And they came because of a personal invitation. I invite you because it's a personal invitation. It's not like we're going out and tagging somebody's door.

[ 15 : 35 ] It's not like we're sending out a blanket email. He went and said, hey, you're the guys I hang out with. Come to the house. I'm going to go, this is a news flash for all of you. He didn't use Facebook to invite people to the party.

You say, how do you know that? Because they didn't have Facebook. Catch up. What will you do to get the gospel to your friends? It'll have to be done on purpose.

It'll mean more than just mentioning it or hoping they'll come. It'll mean working at trying to get people to come. Now, his party was a success because a lot of people met Jesus and followed him according to Mark.

See, Levi couldn't just walk away from his old life, his family and friends, without them knowing about Jesus and salvation. Can you imagine how he introduced Jesus at the party?

I just want you to picture this. By the way, I've been in tons of Peruvian homes where I was the only person. They didn't know other Christians except religious Christians, people that were in the state church at the time.

[ 16 : 43 ] And people would invite over. I taught this story. And they'd say, instead of doing that at church, you mind coming to my house? And so they'd fix a party. They'd have all these people come over. And there'd be this one gringo with his wife there.

This one white boy in the brown crowd. And we'd be sitting there. And everybody's coming around meeting me. And he'd say, yes, my friend, Austin. And the truth is, in just a few minutes, I'm going to pull out my hidden sword and shoot them with the gospel gun.

And so they all come in the room. And then in a minute, Jorge says to them, you know, you know, I've got this nice house. It's a three-story house. That was something to brag about.

Most people only got a one-story house. Some people got a two-story house. He had a three-story house. Not only was it a three-story house, he never touched one brick. He paid to have it built. He let me know that.

I mean, there's ways to let people know you are who you are. So all these people are sitting in the house there. And then he would say, and I was wanting him to tell you what happened in my life. You see, I have trusted Christ.

[ 17 : 42 ] And Guillermo, Austin's going to tell you about that. Can you imagine Matthew? Hey, guys, you know, we've been hanging out for a long time. We've been going to parties. We've been hanging out with y'all are my friends, man.

Y'all are the guys I hang with. And I'm glad you're here, but something happened this week. This guy, Jesus, came walking by, and he told me to follow him.

Now, you might not know what that means, but no matter how much money I had and no matter how many good friends like you I had, there was something missing in me. I needed something I didn't have. And when he said, follow me, God got a hold of my heart.

And I know me and you, we don't really get along with them Pharisees and Sadducees and judgmental Jewish leaders. But I got saved. Lord changed my life.

I'm going to be following Jesus Christ. If y'all don't mind, I'd like the guy who changed my life to say a word to you. Here's Jesus. And Jesus stepped up. Now, we can't do that here.

[ 18 : 39 ] Because Jesus ain't coming to church here except in us, in the Holy Spirit. So, but we can have that party. We can invite people to come and we can try to share the gospel with them. Go with me, if you would, to Mark chapter 2 and verse 16.

What happened next? In Mark chapter 2 and verse 16, the religious crowd, you know, religious people are sickening. I mean, it's just ridiculous.

So, look what happens in Mark 2, 16. When the scribes and the Pharisees saw Jesus, him, eat with publicans and sinners, tax collectors and sinners, they said unto Jesus' disciples.

Of course, they wouldn't talk straight to the Lord. How is it that he eats and drinks with publicans and sinners? So, here's the first thing the Jewish leaders think. Can you understand what's happening here?

There's a preacher in the middle of a bunch of tax collectors that never go to temple, that never go to tabernacle, that never hear the gospel. There's a preacher there, Jesus, God in human flesh, and he's fixing to share the gospel with them.

[ 19 : 37 ] And the religious people are like, well, I wouldn't go there. I ain't going where them people are. If they ain't good people, I ain't talking to them. If they don't do right, I ain't talking to them. If they don't give their money and tithe, if they don't show up at the tabernacle, if they don't comb their hair like I comb my hair, if they got a tattoo, bless God, I ain't going.

I mean, that's what's going on in the story here. These religious guys say, I ain't going. Why is he going? What's he doing with those people? Doesn't he know they don't dress right, talk right, and act right? A religious crowd couldn't believe what they were seeing and hearing.

A prominent religious leader meeting with untouchables, publicans, and sinners. You see, religion condemns and excludes while Jesus loves and invites.

Publicans were tax collectors despised for the way they took advantage of people. And Jesus met with them and said, I'd like to tell you the truth. If you'd have been living in Idy Keeper, Peru a long time ago, when we used to live there, you'd walk down the street and there'd be a newspaper stand, and on the newspaper stand they'd hang the front page of the newspaper, and the front page of the newspaper would be a woman who's basically nude with her backside.

All you see is a picture of her backside. And I mean, that's right on the front page. And I had people visiting me, and they're walking down the street, and they saw that, and they said, I couldn't live in this country. It's too ungodly. It's too wicked. I said, that's why I live here.

[ 20 : 59 ] I live here because you can't help them. Because they need somebody to share the gospel with them. They need somebody to tell them about Jesus. And sometimes church people that go to church, they don't want anybody to come to church that don't look like them.

They don't want somebody to come to church that doesn't know about Jesus. They don't want somebody to come to church that doesn't do right. They don't want somebody like that. But Jesus, Jesus met with them, and he explained the mercy of God, that God loved them.

It didn't matter how much they'd sinned. All of sin had come short of the glory of God. But God commended, proved, showed his love toward us that while we were still yet sinners, Christ died for us.

How many people feel like they might not be welcome at church? You know you have friends right now that say, I ain't going back to church. I went once. They had a nut for a preacher, and a nut for a deacon, and a nut for a Sunday school teacher.

They're just nuts. Just the other day, our training center students went to the funeral home. One of the funeral homes in town, they're learning how to do ministry.

[ 22 : 06 ] And so they went to the funeral home and let the funeral home director explain things. And this was amazing to me. Over 50% of their business is now cremation, not funerals, not burials. And then they said, and the millennial crowd, they don't want a funeral.

They don't even want a service. You can talk to Trent and get all the details. He's the one that took them. They don't want a service, they said. Because they've been to some service where they got hurt. They've been to some service where they've been mistreated.

They've been to some service that they didn't like. Are we going to let God and church and Christians like us stand in the way of them coming to know Jesus? Are we going to open the doors and say, y'all come and hear the gospel?

I'm not telling you to not live holy. I'm not telling you to not love Jesus. I'm not telling you not to protect your friends. But I'm telling you, or protect your children, I'm telling you let's share the gospel.

For how long have church people, religious people, been critical, condemning, and unwelcoming? Critical, condemning, and they come in, their skin color's the wrong color.

[ 23 : 08 ] They come in, they've got too many earrings. Their dress doesn't meet up to the standard. And the church will be like, ooh, let me look down on my religious nose at you.

I don't think y'all have done that. Not in 11 years we've been here. But it happens, and that's what they think is going to happen if they come here. So you're going to have to tell them, hey, we ain't like that. We ain't like that. So now let's go to the last verse, Mark 2, verse 17.

So Jesus explained why. So they said, what in the world are you doing letting all them, letting Jesus hang around with those publicans and sinners? Let me just say this.

There's a lot of these cool churches that use this verse, and they kind of tell Christian people they ought to go out and hang out with drunks and run with them and do what they do. That's not what this was about at all.

This wasn't about me smoking pot with you and getting a beer later with you. That's not what this was about. It was about me bringing my friends to hear about Jesus. That's what Matthew does. By the way, you know, after they meet Jesus, some of them are going to leave loving Jesus.

[ 24 : 08 ] Some of them are going to leave not loving Jesus. And most of them, you'll find out they're not really hitting Matthew's friends because as soon as he lets it know I'm following Jesus, a lot of them are going to walk away. But Matthew wanted to make sure they heard.

Matthew wanted to make sure they heard. Do they need to hear the gospel? Do they need to know Jesus died for them? Do they need to know they go to heaven when they die if they'll trust Christ? So look at Mark 2, 17. When Jesus heard it, he said unto them, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.

I came not to call the righteous but sinners to replenish. Jesus and true Christianity are so misunderstood. You want to hear a wild one? He didn't come for the good people.

He came for the bad. He didn't come for the healthy. He came for the sick. There are people that Jesus can't save. There are people that Jesus can't save and won't save.

But can I just tell you, when the religious crowd walked over there, you've got to remember who these guys are. They love for people to hear them talk about religion. They love to walk to the street corners and pray and everybody watch them pray.

[ 25 : 12 ] When they gave money to poor people, they were like, Hey, everybody, everybody, I'm fixing to give this lady \$5. Watch. Everybody watch. Everybody watch. If I'm \$5, I'm a good guy. Have \$5.

That's what the Bible says. Go to Matthew, read it. This religious crowd. That's how they're acting. Jesus said, Well, I didn't come for you guys.

I didn't come for people who are in good shape. Who goes to a doctor? You know who goes to a doctor? Somebody that's sick. You know who goes to a doctor? Somebody that realizes they've got a problem. Jesus said, I didn't come to help the good people.

I came to get lost people. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. But he can't save or heal those that have never heard, can he? You see, John 14, 6, No man comes to the Father but by me.

Jesus said, I'm the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me. There are people living in our community, your neighbor, your friend, that have never heard the gospel, and he's not going to save them.

[ 26 : 15 ] Not because he doesn't want to save them. Not because he couldn't save them. Not because he won't save them. But because they've never been told. Because our lips are sealed. Share the gospel.



Another group he won't save are those that refuse to accept the free gift. There are people that are like, hey, I'd like to trust Jesus, but I've got to get good enough. And they will not accept a free gift. It really bothers them.

They like the wages of sin. They say, well, if I go to hell, I earn it. If I go to heaven, I want it because I earn it. The Bible says the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. He won't save those that won't accept a free gift.

And he won't save those that won't admit they're sick. You see, he's not going to save you if you come to him and say, look, hey, I'm really good. I'm like 99.9%. And if you'd like to throw in 1%, one point of 1%, I'm with you.

But you need to know, I'll be doing you a favor if I get saved. He doesn't save people like that. You know what the problem is in a place like Alpharetta, Forsyth County, the 20th richest county in the United States?

[ 27 : 19 ] You know what the problem is? We're all good. We're rich. We're good looking. I mean, the rest of the world, poor people, we're county number 20 in the whole United States of America.

It just came out on the website this week or last week. So we're like, go talk to them downtown poor people. Go talk to them people that live like drugs and all that junk.

Go talk to them people. Jesus said, I can't help you then. Jesus was not embarrassed that he was with publicans and sinners because that's why he came to the earth.

And we should be more concerned about leading people to Christ and reaching the lost and helping them. It's more important that we reach out to people than that we keep this place clean and holy. We are about poor lost souls or rich lost souls.

We're about reaching people. A church that's not reaching out to its community is failing in its mission no matter how much we're doing around the world. So what can you be doing about it?

[ 28 : 24 ] You need right now to say, okay, the church, us, we as a group are going to have this special meeting next week. And the church is going to, you're going to bring some food to go along with it, but the church is going to provide a pig that we cook in the ground.

It's a very small pig. We're buying a bunch of them. I think they ordered like 30, 18, 18 pork butts. So there's going to be plenty of food for you to eat. And if the pig that's in the ground turns out good, we'll get a little bit more.

And if it don't turn out good, we'll let the guys that cook it eat it and die on the spot. Say amen. But we're going to have a meal. You're going to bring some trimmings. But more than anything, you're going to ask your friends to come because we can all eat.

I bet every one of us right now is going to go somewhere and get something to eat or go home and get something to eat. But mostly, I know I look like I hadn't missed a meal, but some of y'all do too. Huh? So we're going to eat.

It's not about a pig. It's not about a Hawaiian shirt. It's not about having a church activity. It's about probably I would be more expressive and explain the gospel better than you would unless you would really do it.

[ 29 : 31 ] Some of you just, let's be honest, you're a tad shallow in that part. That old Sam Wilson over there, he's like, I say it everywhere I go. But a lot of us aren't quite like that. But if you get them in here and we're all praying, we're praying that God will work, and we're praying for all the musicians.

We're praying for every Sunday school class. We're praying for the workers. And we're praying for everything that's going on in the service. And we're just begging God to do something. We might see our friends get saved.

We might see our workers that work with us get saved. So the whole point of having this next week isn't anything at all about we want a large attendance. If we want a large attendance, we have a Mize wedding.

We had over 300 in this room yesterday. Because when you bring the Mizes in, they're famous worldwide, or they have a large family. And we're trying to figure out which one it is. For those of you visiting, that didn't mean a thing to you.

Sorry. Cut that out of this promotion. But just bring some people. We're not about trying to get numbers. We want to see people saved. So we need people ready to share the gospel next Sunday.

[ 30 : 37 ] We need people willing to be friendly. We need people that when people walk in and they don't look like they belong in church, we're going to let them know, oh, you do belong.

This is the church for you. Amen. Can I get an amen right there? Come on. They should walk in here and say, man, this is the most welcoming, receiving place I've ever been. Nobody cared about anything except me.

They didn't care how I was dressed. They didn't care what I looked like. They didn't care how much money I had. They were just loving on me. That ought to be the way we act. Could I get an amen right there? And then you ought to pray. Man, use Austin and help him not to mess up.

Sometimes the young men pray with me before church. They'll say, God, help him preach something out of the Bible. I'm like, Lord, help me. I do that every week. I've been doing 11 years. Could you stop praying? I'm going to preach out of the Bible. And then they say, Lord, help him say it clear.

I'm like, okay, you can say that part. Pray for me. Pray that the Lord will use the message and somebody will get saved. Pray they get connected to a Sunday school class. This is what you need to know.

[ 31 : 35 ] For God so loved the world. Let me explain to you what he meant by world. Everybody, everywhere, rich and poor, black and white and purple and green, he loves people.

He wants them saved. For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son, and whosoever believed in him should not perish but have everlasting life. We ought to be trying to carry the gospel message. Levi, what did you do?

Oh, I was sitting there one day, and Jesus walked by, and he said, follow me. And I got up and followed him. Well, what did you do next? Well, man, I know everybody's wondering what I was doing.

And I didn't just want to disappear off the scene. And I didn't want to say I took another job. I wanted to tell them what happened. So I got them over to the house, shared my testimony with them, and then I said, Jesus, you preach a while.

And the story says many followed him. Go read Mark 2, the last verse in our little text. Many followed him. I don't know how many people, one family that we dealt with like that, probably five preachers came out of that family.

[ 32 : 45 ] The first time we went over there, they were like looking at us. But he kept having us over, and he'd say, y'all all come back. I'll have him back over. So we was having church in his house.

He had 30, 40 people in his house, all family members. They started getting saved. That's happening everywhere down there. So we could do this. You won't see people saved.

Do you care about your friends? If you don't care about your friends, you need to come up here and get on your knees and say, God, forgive me for being so selfish and egotistical. If all you want to see go to heaven is you and your family, you need to get on your knees and say, God, forgive me.

If you think church is about a preacher who entertains you and music that touches your little heart and entertains you, and you get to go home and it's just about happy that you have a better week, you need to get up here and get right with God about that.

It's about us taking the gospel message of Jesus Christ to the entire world. That's what we're going to work on next week. I've got two questions. Who in the room would say, I'm not saved?

[ 33 : 46 ] I heard you talking about all this, but I am not sure I'd go to heaven if I died. Let me explain to you what it takes. It takes you realizing you have sinned against the holy God. You know that. Nobody has to tell you, but the Bible's clear. We all sinned.

And it takes you understanding that sin has consequence, and that consequence is being separated from God in a place called hell, a place of eternal punishment that God never made for humans.

He made it for angels, demons that rebelled against him, not for us. And to know that Jesus died for you. He took all your sin debt. He paid all your debt.

He fixed everything so you could be saved. All you need to do is trust him. You could be saved today. In just a second, there'll be some men sitting at the back. We won't embarrass you. We won't hurt your feelings. We won't do anything to look at you, but you can step right back to the back, and one of those men or women will take the word of God, and they will open their Bible, and they'll answer your question to show you how to go to heaven.

That's the first question. Are you saved? If you're not, if you're not born again, if you don't know you go to heaven, if you don't know your sins are forgiven, if you're not following Jesus, now is the time. And the other question is, Christians, will you follow him?

[ 34 : 50 ] Will you follow him? If we follow Jesus, would we want somebody to show up next week? If we follow Jesus, will we be praying for people to come? If we follow Jesus, we pray all week long, God brings some lost people next week.

I think we would. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information, log on to [www.visionbaptist.com](http://www.visionbaptist.com), where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.

Thanks.