

## **Before You Say 'Yes' to Jesus**

"Beyond the Honeymoon"

September 6-7

### **Introduction**

Hey everyone! I'm Mark and I want to welcome you to our service. Today we conclude our series, *Before You Say 'Yes' to Jesus*. We've covered, what we believe to be, the most foundational building blocks to starting a lifelong relationship with Jesus.

We started the conversation by looking at what saying 'Yes' to Jesus is *not*. Saying 'Yes' to Jesus is not subscribing to a new religion, securing your "get-out-of-hell-free" card, or earning your way to eternal life. To say 'Yes' to Jesus is to enter into a sacred and binding relationship established by God for a shared purpose. God initiates this covenant relationship with us, not merely to bring blessing *to* us, but also to bless the world *through* us.

Then Pastor Glenn showed us that, like any loving relationship, our relationship with Jesus must be built on communication. Everyone who says 'Yes' to Jesus has the ability to communicate with God and must learn to recognize His voice.

In his book, *Sacred Marriage*, author Gary Thomas asks the question, "What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?" What if happiness is a byproduct of holiness? So in the same way that marriage is designed to change us, Pastor Theresa showed us how our relationship with God transforms us and sanctifies us for our God-given purpose.

And finally, last week, Pastor Lori taught us that walking out our 'Yes' to Jesus must be done in community. The Christian life is not meant to be done in isolation. Will not be able to walk out our 'Yes' to Jesus alone — we must do it together.

### **Baptism**

Last weekend we celebrated a number of brothers and sisters in our Church who said, 'Yes' to Jesus and made a public declaration in the waters of Baptism. But one of the most beautiful things about this past baptism was that there were a number of other Churches gathered at the park celebrating those who have said 'Yes' to Jesus, so between all of the Churches there were probably a dozen or so who got baptized!

And it was an awesome time of testimony, celebration, and victory but as I was driving home, this weird heaviness came over me. I had a very sobering thought. The question I couldn't shake was, "Are these guys ready to walk out their 'Yes' to Jesus?" And I wasn't trying to take away from what took place but it's a very real question.

### **Wedding vs. Marriage**

It's sort of like the feeling you get at a wedding when you've been married for some time. And you're watching the young couple standing at the altar without a care in the world. Their bright shining faces, so full of hope and optimism. And as they're reading their vows to one another, "I swear to always do the dishes and put away my laundry. I will always take responsibility and apologize when I am wrong" part of you is really happy for them and then there's another voice in the back of your head that says, "We'll see." I'm not proud of that! I wish I could only have joyous optimism but I've lived too long. Because today it's flowers, and dancing, you're surrounded by your closest friends and family, and what could possibly go wrong? But to quote the comedian Dustin Nickerson, "That's not a marriage, that's a wedding, those are different things. The marriage is the next day when they get to the airport and she says, "I forgot my passport. Now you're married! [At the wedding] it's "Till death do as part", now it's "I guess I'm going to Mexico alone, you had one job!"

Baptism is a beautiful celebration! You're surrounded by friends and family, it was a beautiful day at the beach. I'm not trying to take anything away from that. That was the wedding, and now comes the marriage! And I just prayed for everyone who got baptized because I know the weight of what saying 'Yes' to Jesus represents. It's for better or worse, till death do you part.

There are going to be days when the wedding bells aren't ringing, when the sun isn't shining, so how do we not only say 'Yes' to Jesus but *stay* 'Yes' to Jesus. How do we stay in it when our heart and our head isn't in it?

Daniel Berrigan, a Jesuit Priest, was once asked, "Father, where does your faith reside? Your head or your heart?" And Father Daniel responded, "Ma'am, faith is rarely where your head is at. And faith is even less rarely where your heart is at. Faith is where your [butt] is at." Anyone who is going to remain in any commitment knows that there are going to be days when your head isn't in it, and your heart isn't in it, but you're in it. Your butt Ain't moving!

Like Peter and the disciples after Jesus had delivered a hard teaching and all the crowds left. And Jesus said, "Are you going to leave also?" And Peter essentially said, "Well, I can't wrap my head around it, and my heart certainly isn't it. But my butt ain't leaving!" Even though Peter didn't get it and he wasn't feeling it, yet he knew he couldn't leave because Jesus possessed the words of life. That's where enduring faith resides!

### **Ring Exchange**

After a couple recites their vows at the altar they exchange rings as a token of that bond and commitment. Rings are a symbol of our endless love. A ring is a perfect circle, no beginning and no end. It is endless and eternal. In that spirit, we tell couples to let their rings serve as a token reminder of the vows that they pledged. I always say, "Let these rings serve as a reminder that we must never redefine our vows for one another based on our circumstances, but we must always reframe our circumstances based on our vows." Because there are going to be days when your head and your heart aren't in it. Don't redefine your love and your commitment based on your circumstances, always redefine your circumstances based on the love and commitment you share with one another. In other words, when you face a challenge you can say, "I know this person loves me and is committed to me, therefore this challenge can be overcome."

### **Pastor's Panel**

1. **Personal Experience**
  - Can you share a time in your own walk with Jesus when the "honeymoon phase" ended and faith became more of a choice than a feeling? How did you push through?
2. **Habits that Sustain Faith**
  - What are some daily or weekly practices that have kept your "Yes" to Jesus strong, especially when your emotions or circumstances weren't lined up?
3. **Community & Accountability**
  - How has being connected to others—whether through small groups, mentors, or friendships—helped you stay faithful when it would've been easier to drift?
4. **Reframing Circumstances**
  - Mark shared the ring analogy: *don't redefine your vows by your circumstances, reframe your circumstances by your vows*. How has this truth played out in your own faith journey?
5. **Spiritual Dry Seasons**
  - We all face times when God feels silent or distant. What do you personally do in those seasons to keep your "Yes" steady?

6. **Resilience in Temptation/Trials**

- When life tests your commitment—through temptation, hardship, or disappointment—what helps you remember that God’s covenant love hasn’t changed?

7. **Encouragement for the Newly Baptized**

- If you could give one piece of advice to someone who just got baptized and is full of joy and excitement, but who hasn’t yet faced the “real life” part of following Jesus—what would you tell them?