

So welcome to week five of our seven week series, Let Me Tell You About Jesus. Do you have the book? Lift up the book if you've got it.

So, a lot of people, if you don't have a physical book, there's still some more at the pathways desk, and there's also a digital version on the website. So, I give you permission to use your phone in the sermon.

You don't get that very often, but head to our website and you can find the book there. We're in week five of our series, Let Me Tell You About Jesus. And throughout this series, we have tried to demonstrate that God is real.

God is good. This world is broken and sin is a problem. That Jesus lived a perfect life.

He died for our sins on the cross and he rose again from the dead. And that the invitation requires a response. Page 73 in your book, study 13, the verse at the top is Romans 10 verse 9.

It says this, If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

You might remember, we looked at this verse two weeks ago, and this idea that fundamental to responding to Jesus, the way he invites us to, are these two aspects of believing in your heart, that Jesus rose again from the dead.

He's not just a good teacher, though he is a good teacher. He's not just a moral example, although he is a moral example, but that Jesus rose from the dead. And then the second part is declaring with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.

So, I want to ask you, have you made a decision to follow Jesus? Have you said yes to Jesus? Have you, do you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead?

And have you declared with your mouth that Jesus is Lord?

The Bible says, page 73, the Bible says in probably one of the most famous and well-known Bible verses of all time, John 3 verse 16, God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him, that means trusts in him,

depends on him, shall not perish but have eternal life. When we say, let me tell you about Jesus, that's what we're telling you about, that our God loved us so much that he didn't want to leave us to the consequence of our sin, which is death, but he

became one of us in Jesus and he lived and died and rose again, that we might not perish but have eternal life. So have you responded to the good news? The invitation requires a response. Have you said yes to Jesus?

You might be, you know, after four weeks of this series, and we have three to go, including this week, you might still be sitting on the fence of faith, sort of evaluating the words Jesus said and the historical evidence and whether God is real or

not. And if you are sitting on the fence, you're so welcome here. Yeah, faith is not opposed to doubt. It's not opposed to questions.

But I want to invite you to make a decision. If you're sitting on the fence, dig into who Jesus is and make a decision. Two weeks ago, you might remember I told the story of my wife and I catching a train from London to Paris.

And on this train, I was immersed in a book, so I wasn't paying attention to what was going on outside the train, until I finally looked up and noticed the cars were driving on the wrong side of the road, and all the signs were in French.

And so, at some point, this train had crossed the border from the UK into France, and I wasn't aware of it until I looked out the window.

And I told that story two weeks ago, to make the point that coming to faith in Jesus is a little bit like that train. The train is our life, and we're just kind of doing what we're doing, work and study and marriage and life and stuff.

And then at some point in our heart, we can cross the border into the land of faith, and we're actually not consciously aware of it until we look out the window and realise we actually believe Jesus died and rose again, and we have to declare that Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord.

So today, in week five of our series, I'd like to keep the story going, the story of this train.

The truth is, this train from London to Paris that somehow mysteriously crossed the border from UK into France, eventually it arrived at Gare du Nord station in Paris.

And we stepped off the train and we entered a new city, a new language, new culture, new laws, new, not, I was going to say new king, new president, the new president of France. And we were extremely disoriented.

We had spent two weeks in London and the UK speaking English, which we're really good at speaking English, my wife and I. And I, at least, was just not mentally prepared for the language and the culture shock.

So we stepped out of the train into Gare du Nord station, and everything's in French and all the people speak French and it's different. And it was extremely disorienting. And we had this feeling of thinking, we're in Paris now.

Now what? We are in Paris. Now what?

What does it mean to live as an Australian in Paris? And I think for this week, faith is a bit like that too. That having made the decision to follow Jesus, the Bible says you are a new creation.

The Bible says the old you is gone and the new you has come to life with Jesus. Having made that decision, you are welcomed into the community of faith as a brother or a sister. And that comes with new language.

We call it Christianese sometimes. Words like grace and faith and these sorts of Christian words. There's new language.

There's new culture. There's new practices. There is a new king and a new kingdom.

So, what does it mean to live with Jesus as Lord in Sydney in 2025? The train of faith has arrived at the station, and you get out into this land of faith, what does it mean to say yes to Jesus and to live this life of faith?

In the simplest words possible, I believe, now what? That's the title of our message. I believe, now what?

I want to suggest three things that to, that now you believe in Jesus, there is a cross to carry, there is a kingdom to come, and there is a course to keep. The alliteration is beautiful on those words.

Now you believe in Jesus, there's a cross to carry, a kingdom to come and a course to keep. That's what it means to follow Jesus in Sydney in 2025.

Now, before we jump into these points and what the Bible has to say, we're gonna hear a real life story of what it means to follow Jesus in Sydney in 2025. So please welcome Tristan to the platform as he shares part of his story.

Good morning, everyone. So like Ben said, my name is Tristan, and this year has been very transforming for me and my family. And this is not a testimony of how I came to faith, but rather how God just made this redirect in the course of my life.

So my story of 2025 actually stems from a small remark my grandmother made to me when I was 12. It was 2014. I just came to faith in Christ and I was baptized.

And she said, Tristan, one day you are going to be a pastor. I know. At the time, I didn't make anything of it.

But over the years, growing up in the church, that statement became bigger and more prevalent in my life. Fast forward to January 2025, my parents and I moved here to Australia and made Northern Life our spiritual home in February.

A new beginning, a completely fresh start. And for me, I get this new, shiny corporate job in the city, working for a financial payment company. And things didn't go as planned.

Every day on the job, I was faced with worldly values, secular mindsets, and I really wasn't used to that at all. I came home angry and frustrated every single day, and my parents did not deserve that. I was out of place.

I was uncomfortable. And after two months, I felt I needed to stand on the truth that I based my whole life on, and I resigned. Two weeks later, I was fortunate to land another job, this time a marketing firm for charities.

Sounds good enough, right? Well, once again, it wasn't. I was asked to represent a charity that stood on a direct contradiction to what I believe in as a Christian.

And so once again, I was put in this position where my faith was tested. It was then that I questioned what God had planned for me in my life because I was faced with that same tension in my previous job. And I was faced with the same two options.

Do I just keep my head down and push through and face worldly values, accepting society so I can just get a decent paycheck at the end of the week? Or do I decide to make a stand for Christ and accept the cost of losing my job in the process?

In the month of June, I was interested in doing the preaching farm. And for context, at the previous church that I was involved in, I was involved in the leadership team for youth ministry.

And that involved doing the talks, running games, and having general conversation with the youth, and I loved every second of it.

So after going through two jobs, I felt very excited to dedicate most of my time to this preaching farm, which I highly recommend, by the way. And through God's grace and love, it revived this desire to serve in ministry once again.

But not just to serve, but to do more.

So after chatting with Ben, and after chatting with my discipleship mentor back in South Africa, and with this thought that my grandmother said in the back of my mind, 11 years ago, I decided that I needed to spend a week of praying and fasting, and

really wrestle with whether I'm being called into ministry or not. And throughout that week, my goal that I was praying for is that I'll get clarity on that thought that was always in the back of my mind, going through all these tough situations this

year. And after all that took place this year, with God saying no and closing doors, my faith being tested in the workplace, and accepting the outwardly negative outcomes of being obedient to God, and leaving both jobs, I firmly believe that God is

calling me into pastoral ministry, and I said yes again to God's plan in my life. And I will be attending Moreland College next year on a full time basis.

And my prayer for the coming years at NorthernLife is that more people, whether it be at school or at work, will continue to declare Jesus is Lord, and being obedient to God no matter the outcome. Thank you for listening.

Thank you, Tristan.

12:16

A Cross to Carry

Now you believe in Jesus. There is a cross to carry, a kingdom to come, and a course to keep. Firstly, there's a cross to carry.

At the start of the four gospels is this scene of Jesus calling his four disciples. We read, this is what Alex read for us in Matthew chapter four.

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake because they were fishermen.

Come, follow me, Jesus said, and I will send you out to fish for people. At once, they left their nets and followed him. Come, follow me, Jesus says.

The invitation to his would-be disciples to eat what Jesus eats, go where Jesus goes, sleep where Jesus sleeps, and do what Jesus does.

Sometime later in Matthew 16, Jesus said to his disciples, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

I imagine that these disciples who once left everything behind to follow Jesus, hear him and they're like, well, hang on, did you say cross? Take up your cross?

I thought we were leaving behind fishing nets, and now you're calling us to a cross, but come follow me, Jesus says. Sometime later, it becomes, I think, perfectly clear what Jesus meant by take up your cross and follow me.

When the Son of Man and Son of God was being crucified, Jesus dying on the cross, and the disciples who had actually abandoned him by this point, but when they look at Jesus on the cross, they realized that that was the life that he was calling them

to. Come follow me, Jesus says. Then three days later, when Jesus rises again from the dead, he appears to his disciples by teleporting through walls, which is pretty cool. He says, come follow me again.

The life of discipleship to Jesus is saying yes and yes and yes to his invitation to come follow me. And when you do that, there is a cross to carry. Jesus says, come take up your cross and follow me.

So now that the train of faith, the train of your life has crossed the border into the land of faith, there is a cross to carry. Now, a very important question that you might be asking is, didn't Jesus die so that I don't have to die?

Isn't that the whole point of the good news that Jesus takes my death? So then when Jesus says, take up your cross and follow me, what cross is there for us to bear that Jesus has not already borne for us? That's a very important question.

I think the answer from Scripture is the cross that we must bear, the cross that we are invited to carry, is the constant putting to death of our old self in order that our new self might be transformed and come to life in God.

The question of paying for sin has been comprehensively dealt with in Jesus' death on the cross.

We do not literally get crucified with Jesus on the cross, but we constantly put our old self to death in order that the new self that God is transforming us into might come to life in Him.

Paul says in Galatians 2 verse 20, I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. This life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Again, Paul is obviously not saying that he was literally crucified next to Jesus on the cross, but he is pointing to something profound, that at the heart of what it means to follow Jesus is that when we trust in him, we spiritually participate in

his life, his death and his resurrection. And so when Jesus dies, we die with him. When Jesus rises again, we rise with him. The language that the Bible uses is union, to be united with Christ, to be in Christ.

His death is our death, his life is our life. We are united with Jesus in the same way that a first-time skydiver is united to their instructor. Has anyone gone skydiving here?

Were you strapped to an instructor, David or Vera? You're strapped to an instructor. Was it a man or a woman?

A man. When the man jumped out of the plane, did you jump too? You had no choice.

When the man screamed as he was falling to his death, did you scream too? When the man pulled the parachute and was saved and floated gracefully to the ground, did you float gracefully too? That's what it means to be united with Christ.

His death is our death. His resurrection is our resurrection. When Christians do this thing called baptism, we do it different ways.

Sometimes with a little sprinkle, sometimes as good Baptists with a full immersion in the pool. It's a embodied symbol enacting our union with Christ in His death.

That just as Jesus died, when we baptize someone, we hold them under the water and we hold them under for three days, just like Jesus was. And then just as Jesus rose again, we pull you out of the water and dry you off.

Union with Christ is what it means to be a Christian. Paul says in Romans chapter 6, that's not a very good plug for baptism. I promise we don't hold you under for three days.

Paul says in Romans chapter 6 verse 5, for if we have been united with him, this language of union, united with Jesus in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

For we know that our old self, the old me was crucified with Jesus, so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with that we should no longer be slaves to sin. Paul says our old self was crucified with Jesus.

Spiritually participating in his death, that's what it means to carry your cross. Our old self was crucified. Notice the past tense.

When we believed in Jesus, we were united with him in Christ. Our old self was crucified. And yet, if you've been a Christian for five minutes, you know that that old self has a way of kind of coming back as a zombie and kind of messing up your life.

Martin Luther, the reformer of the Protestant Reformation in 1517, he wrote these words in Latin, *Simul iustus et peccator*, simultaneously saint and sinner.

This is the tension that Paul wrestles with in Romans chapter seven, that somehow I am a new creation, but I want to do good, but I can't, I do the thing that I don't want to do, and the thing that I want to do, I don't do.

He's wrestling with this, these lovely words in Latin, that we are simultaneously the old self and the new self at the same time.

And so, the calling for Christians is to constantly put to death the old self, crucify it with Christ on the cross, in order that the new self might come to life in Him. Think of Tristan's story. Think of what it means to carry your cross.

I'm sure it would have been so much easier just to stay in those jobs, just to take the paycheck and go home at the end of the week, and to think that I'm doing a lot of good church work on Sunday, so my not so good work Monday to Friday kind of

balances it out. It would have been so much easier for Tristan to do that, but he carried his cross.

He accepted the cost that his old self with its desire for comfort and money and stability has to die in order that the new self that God is transforming him into might come to life. Jesus says, come follow me. And there is a cross to carry.

That means for you and I that there is a limit on our desire. Our limitless and misdirected desires have to die with Christ in order that we might have new desires birthed in us. Remember Grace's story from a few weeks ago.

She said part of what happened to her when she met Jesus was she wanted different things than she used to want. Suddenly, having met Jesus, those old desires, she didn't feel them in it. She wanted new things.

That's what it means for the old self with its desires to pass away, that the new self might come to life. There is a limit on desire. Now, desire is not a bad thing.

Christianity is different from a lot of other religions and world views. A lot of religions and world views say that desire is the problem.

If only we human beings could not desire anything, we could be sort of amorphous, non-opinionated, non-desiring blobs, then we would have the good life. Christianity, the Bible never says that. It never says that desire itself is bad.

The story of the Bible is that we just have desired the wrong thing and to the wrong amount.

And so, to carry your cross is to put to death those misdirected desires in order that God might bring about desires for him and for his goodness in your life. Page 75 in your book.

Study 14, Colossians 3 says this, since then you have been raised with Christ. Again, this is union with Christ. Set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. So when Christ, who is your life, appears, you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, this is carrying your cross language. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to the old self, to the earthly nature, and that is sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

He goes on to add a pretty long list of the things that we should be putting to death. And then he gives a lovely list of the things that we should be putting on. So there's a negative and a positive.

Now that you believe in Jesus, there is a cross to carry. And that might be news for you. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor in the time of World War II, said, when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.

And it's no better for a woman. When Christ calls a person, the invitation is to come and die. How's that for a thing to preach to people?

Let me tell you about Jesus. Come and die. But that's what Jesus says.

He says, die to yourself, your misdirected limitless desire in order that his desire for love and joy and peace might come to life in you. Now you follow Jesus, there is a cross to carry. But you know what comes after the cross?

The resurrection. And there is new life when we give our lives away. Now you believe in Jesus.

23:27

A Kingdom to Come

There is a cross to carry and there is a kingdom to come. Here's some trivia. Don't shout out the answer, just think it in your head.

What was the main topic that Jesus spoke about in the four gospels? The main idea that he was on about? Was it sin or death?

Was it money? Was it even eternal life or forgiveness? When you read the four gospels, the main thing that Jesus was on about, the main topic that he was talking about was the kingdom of God.

Sometimes called in the gospel of Matthew, the kingdom of heaven. That was the main thing Jesus spoke about.

In Mark chapter 1, we read that after John was put in prison, that's John the Baptist, Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God. The time has come, he said, the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news.

The kingdom of God has come near. That was the message of Jesus. The rule and reign of God has come near.

Kingdom of God means the place where what God wants done is done. When I teach teenagers about what the kingdom of God means, I tell the story of the first time I got my own bedroom.

When I was 15 years old, I'd shared a bedroom with my younger brother or my older brother when he wasn't born for 15 years. And it was not my kingdom. Half of it was my kingdom.

And you better bet that I had my posters on the wall in my half of the kingdom. But the whole bedroom was not my kingdom until I was 15 and I got my own bedroom. And that was my kingdom with my posters and my mess all over the floor.

Not that God's kingdom is a messy child's bedroom, but the kingdom of God is the place where what God wants to happen happens. It's the rule and reign of God. And Jesus believes that he was bringing that kingdom to earth, on earth as it is in heaven.

So when my wife and I arrived by train in Paris, and we left the train, we were in a new city, new culture, new president, I forgot again, new laws, a new kingdom, if you will.

Now, of course, Paris is not that different to Sydney or London or New York. But the kingdom of God is, when you become a Christian, you enter the kingdom of God that is upside down. We often use this language, the upside down kingdom.

I actually think it's probably better to say the right side up kingdom, because it is this world which is upside down. Now, you believe in Jesus, there is a kingdom to come.

And it's a kingdom where the poor in spirit are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

A kingdom where the last will be first and the first will be last, where it's more blessed to give than to receive, where we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, where we do the right thing even when no one will see, when we don't

worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow is in our Father's hands, where we treat others the way we would be treated. That's the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, the right side up rule and reign of God that He brings to earth when we trust in

Jesus. That's the kingdom. And that's the kingdom that Jesus wants to bring into your life.

I had the honor with a few people here to go, when we were in Bible college, to a trip to Greece and Turkey to visit some of the places that the New Testament was written to.

And we got to go to ancient Corinth, which is where Paul wrote the letters of 1 and 2 Corinthians, to this church.

And we had, there were 5 of us, we had a free afternoon, and we wanted to go for a walk from ancient Corinth down to the lake, or the sea.

And so we're walking through these beautiful olive tree fields with the smell of fresh Greek olives and all these random native Greek plants, and I don't even know what they are.

And then we came over hill and under hill and somehow stumbled on a grove of eucalyptus trees. And I'm serious, we five Australians lost our minds at the taste of home in this foreign land.

There's nothing like walking among olive trees that look just different and weird, and then seeing a eucalyptus tree. We could almost smell the Vegemite and hear Waltzing Matilda. We were home, at home in a foreign land.

That's what the Kingdom of God is like. It is a taste of the future and present Kingdom of Heaven here on Earth. It's the type of place where the poor and spirit are the ones who are blessed, where everything is turned upside down.

That is the Kingdom of God coming on Earth. And Jesus says that his people, that is us, we are supposed to be a taste of that Kingdom, a eucalyptus grove in the middle of ancient Corinth on the other side of the world.

This is the Kingdom of God, Heaven on Earth. Take a second now to look around this room. Look, see if you can look, every person in the eyes.

In five seconds. What on Earth brings this group of people together? We are very different when you look around.

We look different, sound different, smell different, think different, talk different. What on Earth brings this group of 165 people together? The obvious answer is nothing on Earth brings us together.

But our adoption as children of our Father in Heaven. This community of faith right here is a eucalyptus grove on the other side of the planet.

It is a taste of heaven on Earth where we are brought together, not on the basis of our shared ethnic background or shared language, shared passions, shared anything apart from our citizenship in Heaven and our welcome as the children of God.

That's what the community of faith is supposed to be. Now, you know as well as I do that the church is not perfect.

This upside down kingdom where the poor are elevated to the top, where the last shall be first and the first shall be last, we don't perfectly live out the way of our King Jesus. It's been said that the church is not a museum of perfected saints.

It's more like a community of broken but forgiven people.

This church, this community and that church down the road, and the one that's over here and the hundreds, thousands, millions of churches across the globe are little outposts of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

When you believe in Jesus, there is a kingdom to come. So think again of Tristan's story. He carried his cross.

He crucified his desire for an easy life, for an easy paycheck.

And then God was gracious enough after him saying no to the world, God was gracious enough to call Tristan forward into something new, that Tristan might take more of a role in the kingdom of God. That same invitation is open to you.

The welcome into the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven is wanting, King Jesus is wanting to bring that kingdom into your life. So one practical step is to get a Bible.

You might have a physical one. You could get the YouVersion Bible app and read the sermon on the mount. Matthew 5, 6 and 7.

Read it and then start again and read it and then start again and then spend the rest of your life reading the sermon on the mount. But do it this week. Do it today, tonight.

And prayerfully ask God to give you a vision of the type of kingdom that Jesus is bringing into this world and where he is inviting you to partake in that kingdom coming in your life.

This is a kingdom where the poor in spirit are the ones who inherit the kingdom, where the meek, the meek inherit the earth, where those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are filled.

This is the right side up kingdom that Jesus talks about in the Sermon on the Mount. So read it, read the Sermon on the Mount and ask God to bring that kingdom into your life. Now you believe in Jesus.

31:18

A Course to Keep

There is a cross to carry, a kingdom to come, and finally, a course to keep. John chapter 15, Jesus says in verse 5, I am the vine, you are the branches. He's talking to his followers, his disciples.

If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers.

Such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

This is to my father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. What do you think is the key word in that paragraph? Remain, isn't it?

Remain. Jesus repeats that word so many times. Some translations of the Bible say abide.

I love that word. Abide in me, remain in me, persevere in me. Or if I could change the metaphor, keep the course.

The plan of God that Jesus gives us a window into here in John 15 is that we should, by His grace, by the power of His Spirit, bear fruit for His glory.

The fruit of the Spirit, Paul says in Galatians chapter 5 is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

That is the fruit that the Spirit of God is wanting to bring out in our lives, the lives of these people in this community of faith. Now, I'm not a gardener, but any gardener knows that fruit only comes if you abide in the vine.

Fruit doesn't come overnight. It takes time and care to nurture it, that the Spirit of God would bear that fruit in our lives. To change metaphor again from the agricultural one to this European train metaphor.

The train arrived in Paris. We got out into a new culture, a new language and everything, and I started to learn a bit of French.

I learned that merci means thank you, that sortie means exit, which is really important when you get out in a train station and you don't know how to get out. Sortie means exit, so you go that way.

And I learned obviously that baguette means baguette. That hasn't changed. I started to get really good at French.

The problem was we left Paris and we haven't gone back. We were only there for four days. They say the best way to learn a language is to immerse yourself in it.

But I didn't keep the course. And so this Australian tourist was not transformed into a fluent Frenchman because they did not keep the course. The kingdom of God is like that.

Faith in Jesus is like that. It takes time to bear the fruit of the Spirit in your life. And we're called to remain in Jesus, to keep the course.

When we arrive in the land of faith, we have to persevere, to continue to keep the course, to learn this new culture, to learn the language, to learn the practices, or we lose it all.

And I can only remember three words in French now, and one of them is a word that we use all the time, baguette. Two weeks ago, we dove into the meaning of two really key words, repent and believe.

Mark chapter one, we quoted this passage two weeks ago and then earlier today. After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

The time has come, the kingdom of God has come near, and this is what we are to do, to partake in that kingdom. Jesus says two things, repent and believe.

And not to recap what we've already talked about, but this repent means to turn from my way, and believe means to trust in his way, turning and trusting. And both of these words are present tense, meaning ongoing continual process.

It's not turn once and believe once, and then in 10 years time, you're gonna have a bunch of fruit. Jesus says, continue repenting, continue believing, abide in him, and the Spirit of God will bear fruit in our lives.

This is the course that we are to keep. The course to keep as a follower of Jesus is constantly crucifying the old self in order that the new self might live, or repenting and believing. In this series, we've heard stories from two young men.

I wasn't sure they were gonna be here, but they both are, Pat and Trotty. And I met both of these guys when they first came to church three years ago and seven years ago, something like that. I met them when they were brand new Christians.

They had had, I mean, you've heard their stories, awesome kind of God moments outside of church, and then they come to church for the first time.

And both of them have a Catholic background, so they have some familiarity with God and the Bible and Jesus, but still lots of culture and language and practices that was unfamiliar.

And I'm sure, I mean, I wasn't the one to answer many or all of the questions, but your questions were answered, weren't they? Through community, through time, through keeping the course.

And now some years later, Pat is one of our passionate youth leaders passing on the gospel to the next generation, comforting other people with the comfort that he received in his dark moments.

Trotty is one of our faithful electric guitarists leading us in musical worship every week. Both of these young men powerfully and vulnerably shared their stories to 250 people over the course of this series. That only happens if you keep the course.

The fruit takes time to ripen and to bear in your life. Unfortunately, as awesome as Trotty and Pat's stories are, I know so, so, so many more people who came to church with some awesome story.

God Just Delivered Me From Alcoholism is one that I've heard a few times. And you think, oh sick, you're the next Trotty. In four years time, you're going to be sharing your story.

You're going to be passing on the gospel to the next generation. And we don't see them again. And please God, may they just think that we're just not the right church and they end up in the church down the road.

That's a win for the kingdom of God.

It doesn't have to be our church, but I have to assume that not all of the people who come with this passionate moment of coming to faith in Jesus, not all of them keep the course and end up with deep roots in faith.

The difference between Pat and Trotty and these people, as far as I can see, is the others did not keep the course. They did not remain in Jesus. They did not constantly repent from their way and trust Jesus' way.

Now, as a member of this church and more specifically as a pastor, it's discouraging when the kind of retention rate is so low because you pour everything into welcoming someone and being like, wow, you're the next Trotty.

You don't tell them that because they don't know who Trotty is. Or maybe they do because he's the guitarist up the front. It's hard.

Jesus told a story in Matthew 13 that God sows the seed of the word. He sows it and it has different responses. Some of it gets choked out, some of it gets stolen, some of it has no root, but some of it bears, what did he say?

30, 60 or 100-fold fruit what was sown. That's Trotty and Pat's life. If you keep the course, keep turning from your way, keep trusting God's way, he will bear fruit in your life.

This is the course that we are to keep. And it's a daily decision. A daily decision to keep turning and trusting in him.

When my daughter Esther was born six weeks ago, I lost my regular habit of Bible reading and coffee and prayer in the morning, obviously, because having a child is like life turned upside down.

And I replaced it with new habits, and those habits were watching TV at 2 a.m. when I'm trying to get her to sleep and she won't sleep. And so I lost good habits and I gained too many not-so-good habits.

And after three weeks of living in this new kind of habit structure, life architecture, I had this moment of realizing that my heart was different. It was like building up plaque or whatever, precipitates a heart attack.

That kind of, my heart, it was just, I still trust Jesus, still love Him, still preaching, still leading worship, but my inputs and outputs in life were wrong. And I had this realization that I have deviated off course.

And I felt the gracious invitation of God to repent, to turn, to realize what I have made of my life that, oh God, I'm sorry, I've been, my habits are messed up. Repent and turn and trust in Him again.

So if you're a brand new Christian this morning, if you have been following Jesus for seconds or minutes or hours or days or weeks, you probably haven't been following Jesus for long enough to get significantly, significantly off course.

And so this is an awesome opportunity for you to establish those habits, to find those practices that will sustain your faith and enable you to keep the course.

And if that's you, please come back next week, because next week we're talking about three essential practices in the life of every follower of Jesus that helps you keep the course.

But if you have been a Christian for a long time, like I have been, maybe this morning is a moment where you realize you have wandered.

You still love God, you still believe the gospel, you still believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, you still declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, but you've just wandered. You find yourself off course.

It's a daily decision to turn from my way and trust in his way. Jesus says to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2, You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you, Jesus said.

You have forsaken the love that you had at first. Consider how far you've fallen. Calculate the course correction that you need to make.

Consider how far you've fallen. Repent, turn and do the things you did at first. That might be a word for you this morning.

To correct your course. To realize that even though you still believe in Jesus, you're still fully on board, you have forsaken the love you had at first. The Father is graciously welcoming us home again to give our lives to Him.

There's so much fruit that comes in a person's life. Jesus said a hundredfold what was sown. When we keep the course, when we abide in the vine, the fruit of the Spirit comes to life in our heart.

So keep the course. Now that you believe in Jesus, there is a cross to carry, a kingdom to come and a course to keep.

There's a cross to carry, a kingdom to come and a course to keep. So you believe, I hope. And if you don't, please make a decision.

Don't die on this fence, unsure which way you go. The train has arrived in the land of faith. There's new culture, new language, new laws, new king, new kingdom.

There's a cross to carry, a kingdom to come and a course to keep. Jesus says, come follow me. So let's follow him together.

And we do that now through prayer and through singing together. So would you pray with me?
Lord Jesus, we thank you that you have done absolutely everything.

You reconciled us to the Father by your death on the cross. You took away the enmity that was in our hearts against God. God, we did not contribute a single thing to that work of grace.

You have saved us by your grace and your grace alone. And so we receive that this morning again, Lord. We receive your mercy and your welcome into your house.

But God, we know that you called us to follow you. Jesus, you called us to follow you. And so as we do so, would you show us what it means for us in our individual lives here in Hornsby to carry our cross?

Show us, Lord, the desires that you are calling us to put to death with Jesus in order that we might be transformed and have new desires. God, we want to see your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

That's the way our Lord taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer. So show us, Father, where your kingdom is ready to burst through into our lives, our marriages, our families, our workplace, our studies, our friendships.

Help us, Lord, to have the soft hearts required to repent and to believe, to turn from our way and to trust your way. And Lord, we also pray that you would help us to keep the course. Father, we thank you that no one can snatch us out of your hand.

And yet, you also call us to persevere and to remain. So help us do that, Lord. Our heart is that you would bear much fruit for your glory.

And in the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen