



The chasing for our well-being fell upon him, and by his encouraging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray.

Each of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him. Let us pray. Father, we desire to honor you today.

We desire to honor your son. It is appropriate for us, Lord, on this day to think somber thoughts, to worship with heavy hearts, because it was our sin that put him there.

It was your love that put him there. And Father, so as we sing, as we hear the word today, may you remind us of the gravity of our sin and the greatness of our Savior.

[ 9 : 39 ] We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. If you're able, please stand.

I'm going to sing a few here, so if you need to sit, feel free to sit as we go through. Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blood, to thee whose blood there cleanses each bottle, O Lamb of God, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am not tossed about, with many a conflict, many a doubt, fightings and fears within, with many a doubt, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thou will receive, will welcome, will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve, because I promise, I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come, I come, I come, I come, because I promise, I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come, I come, I come, I come, I come, I come, I come, I come, I come, Above all powers

[ 13 : 27 ] Above all kings Above all nature And all created things Above all wisdom And all the ways of man You were here before the world began Above all kingdoms Above all thrones Above all wonders The world has ever known Above all wealth And treasures of the earth There's no way to measure What you're worth Crucified And laid behind the stone

You lived to die Rejected and alone Like a rose Trapped on the ground You took the fall And bought me Above all Above all powers Above all kings Above all nature And all created things Above all wisdom And all the ways of man You were here You were here before the world began You were here before the world began Crucified Crucified And laid behind the stone You lived to die Rejected and alone Rejected and alone Rejected and alone Like a rose Trampled on the ground Trampled on the ground You took the fall You took the fallNING You took the fall and thought of me above all.

Like a rose trampled on the ground, You took the fall and thought of me above all.

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, The emblem of suffering and shame.

[ 17 : 38 ] And I love that old cross where the dearest and best For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, Till my trophies at last I lay down.

I will cling to the old rugged cross, And exchange it someday for a crown.

And exchange it someday for a crown.

And I will cling to the old rugged cross, And exchange it someday for a crown. To the old rugged cross, And exchange it someday for a crown.

[ 19 : 31 ] And exchange it someday for a crown. To the old rugged cross, I will ever be true, His shame and reproach gladly bear.

Then He'll call me someday, To my home far away, Where His glory forever I'll share.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, Till my trophies at last I lay down.

I will cling to the old rugged cross, And exchange it someday for a crown.

I will cling to the old rugged cross, And exchange it someday for a crown.

[ 21 : 02 ] And exchange it someday for a crown. I will sing the God of glory, Giving of His Son.

See the awesome depth of love, Home has done. See the tiny baby, On the hay so still, See Him take the cross, And climb up Calvary's lonely hill.

That hill that hill.

It was my sin that nailed in there. It was my cross yet to bear.

It was His blood that washed me clean. It was the greatest love this world has seen.

[ 22 : 46 ] He died for me. He washed me clean.

I am redeemed. Worship the King.

Hear the groaning thunder.

Hear the falling rain. See the King of glory bear bearable pain.

Dying brokenhearted, The self He would not save. See the King who died for me, Risen from the grave.

[ 24 : 03 ] My grave. My grave. My grave. It was my sin that nailed you there.

It was my cross that had to bear. Your precious blood has washed me clean.

No greater love has this world ever seen. You died for me. You died for me.

You washed me clean. You died for me. It was my sin that nailed you there.

It was my cross that had to bear. Your precious blood has washed me clean.

[ 25 : 18 ] I am redeemed. No greater love has this world ever seen. No greater love has this world ever seen. You died for me.

You washed me clean. I am redeemed.

Worship the King. Thank you.

You may be seated. Excuse me one moment.

Well, good Friday evening.

[ 26 : 45 ] I would like to start out tonight by reading Philippians 2 verses 1 through 10. And I would like to invite you to stand with me as we read this. And I believe the words are going to be up on the screen.

Or, well, I can't read the few Bibles so we'll just wait for the screens. I'll go ahead and start to read. So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant.

Being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, he humbled himself by being obedient, by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

[ 28 : 14 ] Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Would you join me in a word of prayer? Father God, we thank you for your rich mercy, for your incomparable and beautiful, peaceful living grace, for the way that you look upon us as your dear children.

Father God, I ask you tonight, and especially for that person that may be here tonight that is a little short on mercy, a little short on love, a little short on grace, a little short on power, a little short on anything, Lord, that you, that they may be filled by you.

In a small part through the testimony of one who has portrayed your son Jesus, but especially, and way much more importantly, that they be filled directly through your son Jesus.

Father, I ask that you would come by the power of your Holy Spirit and touch us all. Guide and bless these words that you would have, that you would say through me.

[ 29 : 32 ] Lord, I ask that you would have, that you would have, that you would have, that you would open all of our hearts to know that this is all, that this isn't about me. It's all about Jesus and what he did for and can do through each and every one of us.

This is all about you, Jesus. And this is our prayer in your name. Amen. Amen. You may be seated. Somebody told me years ago that when Satan gives you a curse, just turn around and give Satan a verse.

So I'm going to start out with a passage that means a whole lot to me. It's Philippians 4, 13. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And I need that right now.

This message is based in part on the experiences and highlights of portraying Jesus in a series of dramas through Lent that spanned eight years from 1991 through 1998.

I would like to share from my heart today some of those experiences. Some of them are very meaningful. Some of them very humbling. Some of them you might think they're ridiculously funny, but with great lessons learned.

[ 30 : 39 ] I want, I don't want to sound cliché or anything, especially with award shows and stuff on TV, but I really want to first thank Jesus for being able to serve him and portray him.

I know that my life, my life was and has been forever changed. And with the perspective of what I was so humbly blessed to see also has changed forever.

How I look at the whole season that encompasses Lent, Monday, Thursday, Good Friday and Easter, Resurrection Sunday. I pray that it is also through this message that all of you will also be blessed and encouraged to allow yourselves to be Jesus with skin on to others around you.

So this actually started late in 1990, sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas. I was living in Omaha at the time and I was asked by a friend to consider being part of some upcoming dramas through Lent that would, for the first time for our church, help people to visualize some of the events that took place at that time in history.

I was not informed ahead of time as to what part I was going to be portraying. Now I need to back up here to a very early age, like somewhere when I was like 6 or 7 or 8.

[ 32 : 02 ] And the church I was going to in Boulder, I was in the kids choir and we were going to sing on Sunday in church and the choir director was getting all the kids lined up and she asked for a volunteer to lead the kids in.

Well, I very enthusiastically threw my hand up, you know, and pick me, pick me, pick me. And she did pick me. So I got my way up to the front of the line.

I don't remember how many kids were in the choir. But the ushers opened up the doors to the sanctuary and the church was very traditional with pews on each side and a center aisle.

And on the back right was the organ. The center was where the altar was. And then the left side was like three pews, if I remember right, and that's where the adult choir would sit.

Well, in my enthusiasm to be the leader of the line, I totally missed the instructions of what we were supposed to be doing.

[ 33 : 05 ] So there I am. They opened the doors, start leading in, and I knew the rest of the choir was behind me. Well, I went up, turned left, turned right, sat down in the pew, up against the wall to give room.

And I immediately bowed my head to pray. Because I had seen adults when I was going to church that would sit down, it was like a silent prayer.

I don't know if I was modeling them, I don't remember if I was actually praying. But when I picked my head up and opened up my eyes, I very quickly realized I was by myself.

I kind of sheepishly looked over to my right, and there in the first two rows, because I missed the instructions, were the kids choir and the choir director. Now, I can tell you that after having to stand up and do what felt like to me at that age, to do a walk of shame, to go back to where the rest of the choir was seated, I actually remember, at that early age, vowing to never lead people in church again.

More on that vow later. I was also in school plays and musicals, from elementary grades through junior high into high school, I was never quite good enough, or had what it took, according to those who were judging the tryouts, to get a lead role.

[ 34 : 28 ] I tried out for several parts, but usually I ended up being part of the crowd scenes or behind the scenes. I was one that when the director would ask for the crowd to mingle, I was in the background, walking back and forth, saying, and we were taught to say this, mingle, mingle, mingle.

Mingle, mingle, mingle. I'm for real. I'm for real. To look back on those times now, I have seen that God was beginning to prepare me for something else, even though at those times, I couldn't see it. Through these and other divine opportunities, God was beginning to define for me what it meant to be humble. So I still went to the initial drama meeting and listened as the entire list was being read aloud with the name of the person being portrayed, followed by the name of the person that was assigned to be the portrayer.

As almost the entire list was read, except for one part, and with not hearing my name called, I was wondering and even doubting why I was there.

Until the name of Jesus was read, followed with my name. A humbling lesson learned. I was physically listed as last on the list, but God again did that to continue molding me and to teach me patience and how to be a servant.

[ 36 : 00 ] In Mark 9, book of Mark, chapter 9, verse 34, 35, he says, and he sat down and called the twelve. He said to them, if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.

Now I've learned over my years that God has kind of a, you know, some of you might agree with this, kind of a sense of humor when he wants to teach somebody patience.

I can see some heads nodding. He doesn't just give more patience. He gives us opportunities to learn patience. However, there was a slight problem.

There was something physically at that point in my life that would have made it a little more difficult to portray the part of Christ. That being, don't panic, but that being, I couldn't grow a beard.

And it certainly wasn't for lack of trying because for two years prior to the dramas, I tried, but my beard would only come in really splotchy. Some guys I used to work with at a former job even nicknamed me Patches because of how uneven it was.

[ 37 : 17 ] They even teased me at one time because on one side of my mouth, I don't remember which side, there was a line of like baby soft skin where nothing would grow.

They were teasing me and saying that at night while I was asleep, it was a spot where I must have been drooling a bit. You get the idea. However, the year I was chosen for the part, God graciously allowed for the full beard to grow and for each of the, excuse me, each of the following years, God gave me physically, he began to give me physically all that I needed to portray his son.

Psalms 37 says, trust in the Lord, delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. I really wanted to grow a beard.

Now it would obviously take a whole lot more than physical appearance and preparation. It would obviously also take a tremendous amount of spiritual preparation by God.

I have to confess that when I was first asked to take a part, take the part in the dramas, I didn't quite take the opportunity I had available to properly prepare.

[ 38 : 27 ] I had no idea of the impact it was going to have on my own life, much less the lives of others. Throughout the years, the preparation grew in intensity because it was my heart's desire that those coming to see the dramas through the power of the Holy Spirit would not see me, but indeed see Jesus.

This came through a process of praying, some fasting, reading some books, prayer, and a lot of prayer. And did I mention a whole lot of prayer?

My life at the time was so busy with everything else. It's just kind of like nowadays, just normal family, job, which was outside of church, just everything that happens in life. And besides now, having to really make time to portray Christ and prepare by memorizing lines.

Memorizing lines is really hard for me. I'm just going to tell you that. But which, by the way, when you're memorizing lines and they're straight from the Word of God, is the very words Jesus said, no matter if it's for the purpose of witnessing to others or for dramas.

You just don't want to mess them up. With being so busy for whatever the reason, when I wasn't able at times to give the amount of, excuse me, the amount of time I should have or needed to give, God would still use people and or events through the week to give me a quick spiritual lesson.

[ 40 : 03 ] So that would allow me to get more into the mind of Christ. Romans 8, 28, I think most everybody is familiar with, and it's one of the most, it can be one of the most misquoted verses from the Bible.

Because everybody kind of quotes the first half and then they cut it off. The first half says, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. And they leave it.

But the rest of it says, for those who have been called according to His purpose. And we know, I'll just repeat it, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who have been called according to His purpose.

On Palm Sunday, 1994, between one of the morning processions showing God's or Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the director of children's ministry at the time asked if I would come down to the lower level, what they called the Promised Land area, to be part of their own Palm Sunday celebration.

I went there dressed as Jesus as I was doing for the worship services upstairs. I need to describe the physical characteristics of the hallway where this was taking place.

[ 41 : 19 ] The hall was only about eight feet wide and about seven feet high, and it was also pretty long. There were like two classrooms on each side. If you will picture this with me, the kids, ages from pre-K to first or second grade, were all lined up on both sides of this long, narrow hallway.

The lines extended into a large open room that was in the back, where they formed a circle from one side of the door frame, looped around to the other side.

There were so many kids that they were lined up two and three deep in places. I believe, as I'm describing this to you, that you just might be able to hear the noise level.

It was pretty intense. They were all yelling, Hosanna and praise God and we love you, Jesus, while at the same time, waving handmade palms that were made out of newspaper.

I'll tell you, any flies or bugs in the area just didn't stand a chance with all that paper waving back and forth. I walked down the hall into the big room, following the lines of kids, and back out to the hallway.

[ 42 : 30 ] In the midst of this joyful noise, which again was very loud because of the size of the hall, the noise suddenly became very muffled, except for the single voice of a little boy that was on my right.

And I can still see him. I quickly looked in the direction of where the voice came from and when our eyes met, we both smiled at each other.

He then said, I pray to you every day. I remember reaching down and momentarily placing my hand on his head.

At that moment, as suddenly as all the sound had been muffled, it all came back full strength. It was as if God had hit a mute button of sorts.

Things will just touch you in a way like no other. Do you agree? God has such a special place of using them in his plan. Matthew 19 verses 14 and 15 says, but Jesus said, let the little children, excuse me, let the little children come to me and do not hinder them.

[ 43 : 39 ] For to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them and went away. The year after 1995, by this time I was working full time for the church as a building manager at the new building.

During one of the rehearsals for Maundy Thursday scene, we wanted the drama to include the scenes where Jesus was arrested. There was some debate, some mild, godly debate on how to portray that scene.

This was the first year that we had done the arrest scene, which was to come later after the scene depicting the Lord's Supper. Then after the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was praying.

And a few of the disciples kept falling asleep. Do you remember? We wanted to show a part of the arrest scene without, excuse me, the use of words.

But still convey a strong message of the willingness that Jesus had even then as he was being arrested. I remember as the person portraying Jesus went to rush the guard.

[ 44 : 47 ] I put my arm up to stop him and physically hold him back. There was a short freeze frame where no one moved. And then I turned forward, raising my hands and arms together so that the soldier could tie him up with the rope and lead me away.

Now during rehearsals for this scene, I had to encourage the soldiers to be rough with me, to be real.

I can also remember the look that I gave to Peter as I stopped him, as I'm sure Jesus did. A look that lovingly said, Peter, you don't understand now what's going on, but you'll get it later at some point.

That's when I put my hands together to be tied. And please, all of you understand here, that Jesus willingly went to the cross for each and every one of us.

I pray that each of you know that this was no measly accident that just happened. Some of you may not have known or even understood it.

[ 45 : 59 ] But at that point in his ministry, God's word tells us that Jesus resolutely set his sights on Jerusalem. He knew what he needed to do. We all need to realize this, that Jesus would rather have gone through hell for each and every one of us than to go to heaven without us.

John 3, 16 and 17 says, And also in Luke, Luke 19, verse 10, it says, Now, another Maundy Thursday, called Thursday night, and I grew up in the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod.

So on another Maundy Thursday, to go back to like 1993 or 1994, we were still in the original early 1960s building.

I was in my robes outside the sanctuary in the hallway, getting ready to depict the Last Supper scene. The nursery director came up to me in a mild panic.

She had a wonderful heart, but she was in a mild panic, stating that she couldn't find anyone else to help her. I kind of glanced down at my bare feet and the robes that were white as white could be except for the purple overlay, and even thought, well, time was kind of short because of it almost being the time in the service for the drama to begin.

[ 47 : 53 ] But I turned and went with her. She really needed the situation to be taken care of, so I followed her down the hallway.

I can picture this in my mind. Flowing robes and all, not knowing what was on the other end. We walked into the nursery area, and there she explained that their only very small toilet was plugged. For whatever the reason, it was really plugged. I won't go into what that probably was, but I think you can imagine it on your own.

So, I picked up the toilet plunger, and there I was. In my robes, dressed as Jesus, plunging the toilet, trying to free whatever it was that was plugging it up.

Now, you all, thankfully, oh, yeah, one good note here. Thankfully, the effort paid off. The toilet began working as designed. And we all may laugh, and that's okay, and it's kind of funny and all, and yet it's a very true picture of what Jesus came to do and deal with in our lives.

[ 49 : 06 ] Except being much worse than what's plugged up in a toilet, the sin that we have in our lives apart from Christ would have kept us forever away from heaven if it wouldn't have been for Him coming to earth, hanging on, and dying on the cross, dealing with the sin, the junk, the garbage, the you-know-what of our lives, you pick the words, so that he could declare to God that we were washed clean and that we were going to heaven.

Now, I've got to tell you, I'll throw this in real quick. One of the Good Friday dress rehearsals, I was being nailed to the cross. The cross had already been picked up and put on the base, and I already had my hands up on the crossbar.

Well, one of the soldiers, one of the guards, was getting ready to put the nail in my feet, and he would put the nail between, he'd kind of pull my feet together and just kind of put it together, and there was a hole in the cross that was pre-drilled, and he'd pound it in.

And he was pounding it in using a small sledgehammer, which happened to be my hammer. I still have it. As a matter of fact, it's a family heirloom. He nails through my feet, but at one point, the hammer glances off the head of the nail and hits my lower shin.

Now, he's not doing, like, full swings, you know, into the middle of the next week. He was trying to be nice. But he looked up at me and quietly said, I am so sorry.

[ 50 : 45 ] Now, this is just rehearsal, so you could kind of have those moments. Now, I looked back down at him to whisper in pretty intense pain, I forgive you.

Now, remember, I had coached them to be rough and real, but this was a little bit more than I was expecting. So, another example of a similar plunger story was in 1997.

The church had moved to a new building in late 1994. It was a rather warm, humid Good Friday in Omaha. I was still the building manager at the time. This meant it was my responsibility to make sure the people were comfortable when they came to the building, as in, not too hot or not too cold, which is, by the way, the number one and number two complaints for a building manager, depending on which time of the year it is.

It was about 3 p.m. in the afternoon, and I was supposed to be getting bruised up. Now, it sounds way worse than it really was.

There was a small group of people that, thankfully, only with the use of makeup, they applied bruises, cuts with stage blood, etc., to make things look as real as possible.

[ 52 : 04 ] I can tell you that even the two gals that were painting the stripes of the whip marks on my back were deeply touched to tears, realizing that it was their sins and ours that put those stripes on Jesus' back.

The Bible says that by His stripes, we are healed. So because of the heat and humidity fighting each other for top billing, I went down to start up the chiller.

Now, the chiller had the capacity to very efficiently cool about 250 houses. I started it up, and about 30 seconds later, it shut right back down.

I tried the startup process a few more times, but each with the same result. And I was in the large basement of this former manufacturing building that was six acres in size, alone, with no one to talk to, and they didn't have cell phones then.

That was only 1997. Wow. I only could talk to God. I asked Him to show me where the problem was.

[ 53 : 16 ] I also gently reminded Him, now, as if I really needed to remind Him of something that He was already very well aware of, that I was now about 30 minutes late for my bruising time.

I went outside to what is called a cooling tower. No water was flowing through, and that was the cause of the chiller kicking itself off so quickly.

It's a safety feature, actually. So with no water flowing through, I opened the side door to investigate further. The huge cooling tower had been made into, over time, a home by a huge flock of pigeons. I actually had to get into the tower because the birds had left it plugged up with feathers, their own calling cards, yes, I mean pigeon poop, and even a couple of dead pigeons.

So there I was again, even more late, yes, upset, no. But scooping out feathers, poop, and dead birds, all so that people could be comfortable that night.

[ 54 : 28 ] And if anyone had been driving by, just seeing an open access door on the side of the cooling tower, not seeing a person inside, and seeing all those shovelfuls of stuff flying out of there, it probably would have been quite a sight.

I went back into the basement, and the chiller started up right away with no further issues. All this to have to go through, but now 90 minutes late, and yet God still moved in an incredible way, as I'll describe next.

That was the year, the night, Good Friday, 1997, that the Lord literally reached in and grabbed a whole lot of hearts, including mine. There were so many moved and convicted during the dramas, I was told later that after the second service, people were coming back into the worship center. For quite a long time, there was crying, there was weeping, people recognizing personally, in their own hearts, what their own sin caused Christ to want and need to do for them by dying on the cross.

And yet at the same time, to be filled with great thankfulness that He was willing to do it. That was an incredible year that I will never forget. As the drama for the second service began and as I was carrying in the whole cross into the worship center, the last thing I said to God was, God, I need you to take over now.

[ 55 : 59 ] I can't do this without you. There was almost an indescribable being or existence that had taken over not only me, but others in the drama and those watching as well.

We went through the drama pretty much as we had just done before for the earlier service. And we usually did two services for each of the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The earlier services on those nights were always very good as well, but they seemed almost like more of a formal dress rehearsal.

So we went through the drama pretty much the same as before, except as I got to the last line hanging on the cross, which was to tell us die.

Say it with me. To tell us die. That means it is finished. The words that I were saying was, it is finished.

Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. And I bowed my head to die. As that happened, the soloist began singing.

[ 57 : 08 ] I immediately realized that I was beginning to actually and quickly lose feelings in my arms. And it just started.

Now there was no ropes around the crossbar in my arms to help support my arms. The only things I was hanging on to were the nails that were between my middle and ring fingers of each hand, kind of like this.

That's all I had to hang on to. Now, this was not your normal everyday when you've been sitting for too long fall asleep stuff either.

There was no feeling whatsoever. I was thinking, oh Lord, I'm in trouble now. I was beginning to panic and yet at the same time I was having this conversation with God even though I was visually dead.

I'm sure that while Jesus was on the cross, at least maybe in his heart and his mind, he may have been having other conversations with God too. I don't know how he couldn't have. Other than the words that had been recorded in the Bible, I then remembered and reclaimed the prayer I had spoken at the beginning of the drama that night and also personally claimed this passage for this exact moment in time.

[ 58 : 34 ] But he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast, in this case it meant humbly admit, all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me for the sake of Christ then I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities.

For when I am weak then he is strong. 2 Corinthians 12, 9 and 10. I recommitted to God understanding the purpose of what I was doing for him and asked him to again take over. Well, he certainly answered. I can tell you that. because right at that moment I lost all the feeling in both of my legs.

Again, I still remember the soloist that was singing while this numbness was happening. And the song, you may ask, was titled, What Held You on the Cross?

Okay, so there I was not feeling anything in my arms and legs, not knowing, even though I really did, kind of, sort of not, but not knowing specifically what was holding me up as the soloist continued.

[ 59 : 58 ] Of course and obviously the soloist was asking the question of Jesus and not me. I was in this state hanging on the cross for over 30 minutes with no feelings in my legs and in my arms.

It is mind-boggling to me to know that it certainly wasn't me holding me on the cross, especially for that long. And yet to know it was a God thing. And yet in a different way, of course, it was the same thing holding Jesus to the cross that was holding me to the cross.

That being God's incredible, perfect, never-ending love for us. We've all heard and read that it was nails that held Jesus to the cross in a physical way.

But it was God's love for us that really held His Son to the cross. Now you might be wondering as to why this went on for so long with me on the cross for 30 to 40 minutes.

I obviously couldn't see all that was going on and I certainly couldn't just pick my head up and look around with being dead. But I was somewhat and somehow aware of something that was going on and yet there were many people that were receiving healing directly from God.

[ 61 : 14 ] No one could have known what God was going to do or had done even with all the planning, the rehearsals, the creative ideas and then there's that temptation that's easy to fall into.

That being, let's see if we can top last year mentality. something like this you can't plan for. It was if God really did take me away so that He could do some powerful healing.

I was told later that people were kneeling, weeping, sobbing and really seeking the Lord. I can also tell you that for every Good Friday service there were heavy tears that were streaming non-stop down my face and falling onto the base of the cross.

Now finally, because of the time I'd been on the cross there was a great concern for some including a friend of mine at the time because they all realized and were troubled because they couldn't see me breathing.

The Bible says that on the cross Jesus Jesus gave up His last breath and died. He who always was and is and always will be could no longer breathe because He had fully paid the sacrifice for our sin.

[ 62 : 42 ] Most of you as parents know what it's like. You're briefly and suddenly overcome with a sense to go look at your sleeping baby almost stopping your own breathing just to make sure that you can see the baby's lungs and chest are moving, right?

But while Jesus was on the cross God the Father turned His back on His only Son and allowed Him to give up His last breath and death a horrible excruciatingly painful death that you and I deserved in order that you and I would live forever in His presence in His kingdom.

Understand? So what troubled several people was that they couldn't see if I was breathing. The friend said that she called my name four times before I woke up.

Several of the other cast members helped me down off the cross and as soon as I tried to step onto the platform floor I collapsed right at the base of the cross.

I felt like I had no arms and no legs except that I could still see Him. I had no control over Him.

There was a time of ministering that God wanted me to receive from Him.

[ 64 : 04 ] It was another 25 to 30 minutes before I even began to get any feeling back in my arms and legs. Now you all remember what pins and needles feel like when feeling starts coming back like a single foot or a hand goes to sleep yeah uh-huh both legs both arms pins and needles.

Now a little stage secret here is part of what I had learned through the years was to lock one of my legs in a straight position at the knee to strategically try to help support myself before dying. Somehow that year I unknowingly forgot to do that so both legs stayed bent for the entire time of being on the cross. Now remember we didn't aim for this but just as we thought it couldn't get any better then came Good Friday of 1998.

I wanted to more that year than any other learn something new about Jesus. I also knew from between the two Good Friday services the year before in 1997 that 1998 was going to be my last

year there to portray Jesus.

I can't really explain it I just knew. I had learned how compassionate Jesus was while on earth and is right now for all of us.

[ 65 : 28 ] He longs for the day when we will be seated with him at the table that he has gone ahead of us to prepare for us. Even those recorded times that Jesus was angry he was still motivated with and by compassion.

I realized that I have the same father that Jesus does. All of you have the same father that Jesus does.

I received a touch of God's compassion like I had never experienced before in the previous seven years. So during the Good Friday drama that night while on the cross God told me to look out at all the people.

Now for some reason I didn't want to. I don't know why. He gently nudged me again. He didn't mean to look at all the other people that were in the drama.

He meant the people that were seated in the worship center. The worship center that year had extra chairs because of the services so there were about a thousand people that were in that one service.

[ 66 : 34 ] All the house lights were off very similar to this. Combined with the way that the stage lights were aimed there was actually quite a glare that made it extremely difficult to see anyone specifically much less recognize them.

Kind of like this but a lot more. Just picture what it's like late at night as you're driving and someone approaching from the other direction has their brights on.

You can't see for a relatively brief moment if you look at the headlights that are coming towards you until they go past. Now magnify that many times over for this glare that just wasn't going to end.

I remember even with that glare finally scanning the worship center and as I did I could see faces as if they were briefly being lit up.

It wasn't like flashes. It was like over here and then over here, over there these faces were full of a lot of pain and hurt.

[ 67 : 46 ] Again, I couldn't recognize, I couldn't see really who they were. I just saw the hurt and the pain. While on the cross, God told me I did this for them.

After that drama was over and the sound of the earthquake was being made from a keyboard exactly like this one over here, all at once three things happened.

I felt the cross that I was nailed to shake. I shuddered like I had never shuddered before and then for a brief moment I was flushed from head to toe with all I know is that for that brief moment I got extremely hot.

No one has ever been able to explain or help me understand what that was about. I was told after being taken down and carried off the stage on one of the soldiers' shoulders that while being carried a child stood up and with strong conviction quietly but firmly said, by Jesus.

If you would allow me to share something with you. This is a very personal letter that was written to me and it was played by the guard who had his ear cut off by Peter in the drama.

[ 69 : 11 ] And he was also the guard that was wielding the hammer that hit my shin. So, but it goes much deeper than that. This was written Thursday, April 9th of 1998.

Dan, this evening, I think that my life was changed and I need to let you know how. I am sure it was a God thing. I might just need to give you some background here and fill you in on some back history.

You see, in my childhood and growing up years, there was a lot of abuse by men in my life. I was sexually abused by a male cousin for three years from the age of five to eight.

And then was physically and verbally abused by my father and sexually abused by my mother. So my life as a child was to say the least, not a good one.

I have told my story many times and I have been through lots of therapy. I was a victim. I have been a believer in God and have had what I thought was a strong faith.

[ 70 : 17 ] But I had a tough time seeing Jesus as a man that loved me. Tonight as I sat there on the stage and felt you touch me to heal my ear, I felt and saw Jesus in your eyes and felt him in your touch.

I have tried to understand for so long what was blocking my path to letting Jesus love me. I just could not get over that hump and feel his love.

Dan, tonight for the first time I felt that love of Jesus and now I understand why I have blocked it out for so long. There were men in my life that abused me and I had that same image of Jesus.

That he was filled with the law and just couldn't get past that. I am a very visual person and I need to see it and touch it.

Tonight I feel that I have touched Jesus. He is real and I will someday sit in heaven with him and you will be there also and we will all sing songs to his glory and be able to sit on his lap and feel his love for real.

[ 71 : 35 ] Tomorrow night I am the soldier that nails you to the cross. This has been a tough thing to handle because in reality in that day, on that day, this was the last man to touch Jesus before he died.

Then I also realized that I'm the one that nailed him there anyways. For he died for my sins. I nailed him up there. Just like what we just sang.

On Wednesday night after rehearsal, I told you I would pray for you and I found myself lying in bed just doing that until around two in the morning.

God was there also. All I could see was your eyes. I saw Jesus in your eyes. I saw the Jesus that could love me.

I cried uncontrollably for about an hour. These were tears that needed to clean away, cleanse away many years of hurt and pain.

[ 72 : 38 ] Years of being able, years of being unable to love Jesus or let him love me. Now I can put hurts and abuse behind me and not look back.

I will cherish in my heart for as long as I remain here on earth looking into your eyes and seeing those of Jesus looking back and feeling that hug, feeling that safe hug.

A hug that was safe now, not one that was painful and with conditions and being abused. Dan, I hope that our Lord and Savior will bless you this holy week.

I can't imagine the pain and hurt and emotions that God has filled you with. What an honor.

Remember when I told you about the vow I had made at such an early age to never lead people in church again?

Well, now I've experienced being part of these dramas by portraying Jesus and also being a worship leader, leading people in church. By his calling and his will, certainly not mine, at least from that early age.

[ 73 : 54 ] But beyond being part of those dramas, please understand that even as a worship leader at several churches over the years, standing up here in front of you when I have this perspective of seeing most of your faces and some of you here now, I'm beginning to know well and some not so well yet.

But at times there is such an overwhelming sense of the love and compassion from God that it's hard to speak, much less sing. Not knowing specifically what your struggles are or may be, but knowing that we all have them as we've been learning from Bill and in the book of James.

Knowing we all have some type of hurt and pain and seeing your faces, your eyes, especially during praise and worship. There are times that I'm praying while I'm singing and playing those keys that there was some way that God would bless all of you and would let you know how much it is that he really does love you.

And that the Holy Spirit would allow you to receive what God desires to give all of you because of Jesus' sacrifice. To close this, please allow me to read something that's real short that I wrote back in 1998.

This was written looking back on those eight years. I had several kids coming up after each of the Easter celebration services were over asking with deep care and concern, how did they nail you to the cross?

[ 75 : 28 ] Now that would be something a child would want to know, right? I showed any and all kids, I took the time, I loved doing this, who asked how they did it using their hands instead of mine.

I would hold their hands up and like put my finger and I told them, I would tell them to grab tight. That's what I would demonstrate to them. There were several kids that were positively sure that Dan had been killed.

As I look back in 1998 and now again in 2023, I realized that parts of me actually have been continuing to be dying.

Parts that God would not need then and he certainly doesn't need them now. You've heard Bill talk about the process of sanctification. There is no conceivable way, at least in my heart and mind, to portray this person named Jesus for eight years and remain unchanged from the person I was then and now 25 years ago.

Most of my entire day, except for sleeping, I need to wear glasses. I believe mom told me that I've worn glasses since I was 18 months old.

[ 76 : 48 ] I hated glasses at certain times. But for the dramas, I had to take them off to be able to see in the dramas more through Jesus' eyes than mine.

Seeing the world through the eyes of Jesus requires us that we take our glasses off. It requires us to look at the world in a different way than the normal way we would look at the world.

Jesus looks through the faults to see the needs. It's my prayer that all of you would be willing to take your glasses off, willing to look at others as Jesus looks to us.

And to be Jesus with skin on, especially to those who don't know him and who think they don't have any hope. Ephesians 1.18 says, I pray that having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, in order that you may know what is the real hope to which he has called you.

Would you join me in a word of prayer, please? Father God, Abba Daddy, please would you help us, each of us here, to know the reality of while I was portraying something in a drama, even though it was someone very special, portraying your son Jesus in this drama, this really happened.

[ 78 : 17 ] Father God, it's not something that's hidden in a fictional book somewhere on a library shelf that was just made up. This true story is the very history and reality of this world.

History itself belongs to your son, Jesus. It's history, his story. And Jesus, you're coming back one day.

You didn't do all this never to see us again. You didn't do all this not to see all of those who would be called according to your name and would call your name Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

You didn't do all this so we wouldn't live with you forever. We are going to live with you forever. all who know you, all who believe in you. So Lord, thank you for that promise.

Thank you that you're going to come again and we're going to be able to see you face to face. The real face of Christ, not an artist's interpretation, not a portrayal in a drama or a movie.

[ 79 : 27 ] We won't even need the light of the sun or the sun because it says you will be the light in the city. We won't need anything that we need now, God.

Nothing will get in the way like it does now. Lord Jesus, if there is anyone here tonight that doesn't know that this is for real and it's for them. I pray that right now in their own heart, they would recognize this is really the truth.

And in the quietness of their heart, they could say, Jesus, please forgive me. I've sinned. Oh God, my sin is bad. I've really messed up. It was my sin that sent you, Jesus, to the cross.

And so Lord, I need you. I want you in my life. I need your forgiveness and I want your promise of everlasting life. So please forgive my sin.

Give me a new heart like your word says you will. Create in me a new clean heart, oh God. I receive your gift of love, your gift of grace, your gift of salvation, your gift of forgiveness.

[ 80 : 38 ] Holy Spirit, help us all to daily ask, how can we live our lives in such a way that others may see you in us?

And unlike all those things that are of the world that bring distraction and keep us separated from you, Lord, help us to think of those things that are true of you and make those things true of us.

Father God, your word says in Acts, repent, therefore, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Lord, we are here, Jesus, in your presence this evening.

As we receive your forgiveness, refresh us and renew us, touch all of our hearts as we remember and contemplate and acknowledge in our innermost beings as to why and what you went through for each and every one of us.

Thank you for all you have done, for all you are doing right now at this exact moment in time and for all that you have yet to do, all because of the sacrifice you made for us, because of your mercy and your love for us.

[ 81 : 51 ] Amen. I promise I just have one more thing to share.

I just want you all to remember this, that on the cross, God treated Jesus as if he had lived your life. And he did this so that he could treat you as if though you had lived Jesus' life.

I'm going to say that again. Listen to me. On the cross, God treated Jesus as if he had lived your life. And he did this so that he could treat you as though you had lived Jesus' life.

See, he was dying there for our sins. And in Isaiah 45, 22, God makes an interesting statement. He says, Look to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other.

Look to me and be saved. So if you really think about it, we really have a choice as we think about the cross. We can look and live, or we can look and leave.

[ 83 : 10 ] Look and live, or look and leave. Imagine yourselves over 2,000 years ago standing there and watching Jesus die like that.

What would you have done? Would you have said, Wow, that's a really sad, horrible day. Let's go home. Or would you have said, I believe right now.

And you know what? It's really your choice because he will not force his way into any life. He waits for our invitation. But I have a question to ask all of you through this last song.

Oh, that's a really sad song.

Is there any way you could say no?

[ 84 : 47 ] To this man? To this man. If Christ himself was standing here, his face full of glory, and yet his eyes full of tears, And he held out his arms, And his male pierced hands, Is there any way you could say no?

To this man? How could you look in his tear-stained eyes, Knowing it's you he's thinking of? Could you tell him you're not ready To give him your life? Could you say you don't think you need his love?

Jesus is here, With his arms open wide, You could see him with your heart, If you'll stop looking with your eyes, He's left it up to you, He's done all that he can, He's done all that he can, Is there any way you could say no?

To this man? How could you look in his tear-stained eyes, Knowing it's you he's thinking of?

[ 86 : 48 ] Could you tell him you're not ready, To give him your life? Could you say you don't think you need his love?

The fool runs on his head, Your life in his hands, Is there any way you could say no?

To this man? Is there any way you could say no? To this man?

Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you?

[ 88 : 08 ] Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Is there anything better for you? Thank you, brother.

Thank you, brother. And Mark and I were interviewing Dan and Linda for membership.

He shared some of this story, so I asked him if he'd be willing to share it with us. And thank you. I'm glad I did.

Before we close, I'd like us just to spend a moment in silence.

Ask the Lord to apply this to you in whatever way he will. And then I'll close. Take a moment.

[ 89 : 28 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you, Father, for your love for us.

Thank you, Jesus, for your immeasurable gift.

Thank you, Holy Spirit, to awaken us. Now may the God of peace, who brought up again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, may he equip you with everything good, that you may do his will, by working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.