



## WILLOW CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT

# MAKING RIPPLES REMIX

**MIKE BREAU**

**2/5-6/05**

*God tells us that he has plans for our lives; he wants to give us a hope and a future. But all too often, we lose sight of the reality of our destiny-maker and elect instead to float around through life kind of accidental-like. We grab hold of a 'whatever' philosophy that says there is not absolute truth, no absolute right or wrong; and that way of thinking can sink us into a mire of desperation and stuckness. What God has in mind for us is a life where we splash down and create God-ordained ripples that touch someone else's life, and then that life touches another life, and that life touches yet another life—and the ripples just keep on going and going and going.*

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## WILLOW CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH

### MAKING RIPPLES REMIX

2/5-6/05 – M0506

Mike Breaux

Jeremiah 29:11  
Ephesians 1:4

Ephesians 2:10  
Philippians 1:6

Mark 8:35

(The song *Live Like You Were Dying* by Tim McGraw was sung just prior to the message.)  
You know the first time I ever heard that song was about, I don't know, six months ago driving down Algonquin Road. I thought, Man, that's what I want to do. I have no interest in riding the bull named Fu Man Chu like in the song, but I want to live like I'm dying. I want to live my life in such a way that I'm living like I know I'll die tomorrow, but I'll die knowing I'll live forever. I want to live like that, don't you?

I love the scene from *Braveheart*, where William Wallace, played by Mel Gibson, says, "All men die, but only a few ever really live."

I love movies, don't you? I love movies. This is Oscar time. You just had the Golden Globes, and you got the Screen Actors Guild coming along here in just like a week or so. I love going to movies. And just real quick, turn to someone around you, and give them your top three movies of all times.

I know you didn't ask for this but I'm going to give it to you anyway. My top five movies of all time—now there's a little argument about each one of them for me because I like a whole lot of movies—but number five for me would be *Braveheart*; I just liked *Braveheart*. It was a real cool movie. I just love it when they ask Mel Gibson's character, "Where are you going?" He says, "I'm going to pick a fight." And Scotland is free. It's just a great movie.

And there's a tie for number five with the movie *Hoosiers*. I liked that basketball movie with the little underdog school; it's a cool movie, too.

Number four for me, probably on nobody else's list, but I loved it: *The Fugitive*. It was shot in Chicago, and there's a great scene with Tommy Lee Jones chasing Harrison Ford, the fugitive. I used to watch the show on TV when I was a kid. The fugitive was always looking for the one-armed man that killed his wife. And in the movie, Tommy Lee Jones is chasing Harrison Ford down through this little tunnel thing, and Harrison Ford picks up Tommy Lee Jones' gun and he's shaking and he says, "I didn't kill my wife." And Tommy Lee Jones says, "I don't care." And then Harrison Ford turns around and he jumps down this dam and I go "Whooooa, what a movie." I just love that movie.

It's that and *Dumb and Dumber*, probably number four for me.

Number three for me is a stupid movie, goofy movie, a real quirky movie, but I love it: *Princess Bride*. You ever see that movie? It's a really dumb movie, but I just love the movie. It's so stupid, you know, "My name is Inigo Montoya, you killed my father, prepare to die." It's just a great movie.

And number two for me is also a stupid movie, but I love watching this movie. It's *What About Bob?* Seen this movie? This is the movie with Bill Murray where he drives his psychiatrist crazy. You know, he's this really funny guy. There's this one scene where he's got all the psychiatrists in a room and he's cracking jokes with them, cracking them up. He says things like, "Roses are red, violets are blue; I'm schizophrenic and so am I." It's just a funny movie. He's funny in that movie. I love the movie.

Probably my number one movie—and I wouldn't endorse the whole thing, but I walked out of the movie thinking it was the most creative, well put together, clever, thought-provoking movie I think I've ever seen in my life—*Forrest Gump*. And I learned three very profound things when I watched this movie. The first thing I learned was, "Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get." And I learned that, "Stupid is as stupid does," and that stupid has nothing to do with your IQ but everything to do with your discernment, your decision-making ability, your promise-keeping ability.

And the third thing I learned was freeing for me as a speaker. It was that I didn't have to work so hard anymore on the conclusion to my messages, because when I got done I could say, "That's all I have to say about that." Be done, be gone, you know? It worked for him. *Forrest Gump* was one of those movies that just gripped my heart and made me think a lot about my life.

There's a scene at the end of this movie where Forrest's wife, Jenny, passes away at a very young age because she made so many wrong choices in her young life. In one scene Forrest is standing at his wife's gravesite and he ponders: "I don't know if Momma was right or if, if it's Lieutenant Dan. I don't know if we each have a destiny, or if we're all just floating around accidental—like a feather on a breeze ..." Which is it?

I look around our culture and I see so many people that really believe we just kind of show up accidental-like, and we just float around accidental-like, like a feather on a breeze. And I understand how a lot of people believe that; it's because we're taught at a very young age these days that we came from nothing and we're going to nothing. So basically everything in between is just kind of nothing, kind of accidental-like.

If there is no destiny, then there's no purpose. If there's no purpose, there's no truth. If there's no truth, there's no right, there's no wrong. We all just kind of show up accidental-like, and we float around kind of accidental-like, like a feather on a breeze, all the way through life.

No wonder Chuck Colson said, "In our culture today, we are governed by talk show truth."

You watch any of those talk shows, whether it be Ricky Lake or Jenny whatever? I like Montel myself. There're all different kinds of talk show hosts, but all these talk shows are the same. I was watching one time where this lady was seated on the stage and around her were five guys in

a semicircle. Then a little blue caption comes up on screen identifying what her deal was. And it was that this woman had an affair with all five of her husband's brothers. And it happened on this show like it happens on a lot of those shows, the host goes into the audience, gives the microphone some guy who stands up and says, "Hey, I think if they're cool with it and he's cool with it and she's cool with it, I say go for it." And everybody starts applauding.

And I'm going, Whoa. We're governed by talk show truth: Whatever. That's why sociologists have labeled this generation, the Whatever Generation. And I understand that because if we just show up accidental-like, and there is no destiny, there is no purpose, and there is no truth, there are no rules, and there is no right or wrong—then it is kind of a big 'whatever,' isn't it?

Now I was in shock when Josh McDowell Ministries surveyed American high school students and found that eighty percent of all high school students say they don't believe in such a thing as absolute truth; there is no absolute right or absolute wrong. Whatever you want it to be in the situation you're in is fine.

Sixty-seven percent of those same students say they regularly cheat on exams. Sixty-six percent said they regularly drank alcohol. Fifty-six percent said they regularly shop lift. Whatever.

When my daughter was in high school, she had a kid come up to her and he said, "Let me get this straight. Isn't it true, like, you Christians can't have sex until you're, like, eighteen?" And Jody went, "No, actually; God's design is when you get married." Whatever.

This week, I got on the Bureau of Justice Department website and looked up some of the current stats about violent crime. Good news: from 1994-2003, the violent crime rate has steadily declined. In fact, in 2003, the violent crime rate was the lowest ever. It's all the way down to 5,341,410 acts of violent crime for the year. Twenty-nine percent of those were done under the influence of drugs or alcohol, which takes 'whatever' to a whole new level.

Though the crime rate has gone down among adults, among kids ages 12 to 15, violent crime has skyrocketed in the past 20 years a 156 percent. I heard a story of one kid who was in a gang, and one of his buddies was indicted for murder. A 15-year-old kid indicted for murder. His buddies in the gang were incensed that the judge would set such an unrealistically high bail on their friend, and they were quoted as saying in the courtroom lobby, "We don't understand what the big deal is, people die every day." Whatever.

And you want to see 'whatever' taken to a whole new level? I want to encourage you parents to click on MTV *Spring Break* when it comes on television in a few weeks. You want to see 'whatever' in a whole new realm? And as you watch it, recognize that what you're watching has been edited for television. If you allow your students to go there, they're going to be in the middle of 'whatever'—the danger of passing HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, all kinds of stuff.

But you know what, it's not a big deal as long as we all just kind of show up accidental-like and float around accidental-like, like a feather on a breeze. If it is all a big 'whatever,' well then, whatever.

Friends, you need to know that's not the way God set up this world. It's not the way he set up this life. You can float around accidental-like if you want to, but you cannot float around the consequences of that kind of life.

I went to preach in Alaska several years ago. I flew into Anchorage and was driving down with a host to the Kenai Peninsula, a beautiful area. And as we drove along the Cook Inlet, I saw this huge warning sign on this black beach. I asked the guy who was with me, "What's the deal with the sign on the beach and the 'Stay Out' and stuff? That looks beautiful." And he goes, "Oh, that's glacial silt; you don't want to get in that stuff. It's like quicksand. You sink in that, and it wraps around you and you can't get out of that stuff. So they put up these big warning signs."

And he told me a story of a honeymooning couple who had rented some ATV four-wheel drive dune buggy type things. They were driving all over the place. And they ignored the sign and drove into that stuff. She did anyway. She jumped off the ATV into this stuff and sank to her knees. The husband started laughing at her. People on the road saw it and were waving at him to get out, not to go in it. And they went to get help.

Well, the tide was coming in, and she cannot get out. She's up to her knees; she's stuck in this glacial silt. The fire department comes and they take pressure hoses, trying to get her out, but they can't get her unstuck. The tide's coming in, more silt's coming up; now she's stuck even deeper in the stuff. They brought in a helicopter—and I don't mean to be graphic here, but it's just the story he told me. They lowered a harness. She put the harness on and they tried to pull her up; but she was so stuck, it began to, like, separate her upper body and they had to stop. The tide just kept coming in; and that poor girl, in spite of the efforts of everybody, drowned at Cook Inlet.

Friends, I know too many people whose lives spiritually speaking and emotionally speaking are that stuck. And they're drowning that deep and that desperate, all because they ignored the loving warning signs of God, the boundaries of God; and they lived life like you just show up accidental-like and float around like a feather on a breeze.

The good news is, there is a God that can rescue you from that stuckness. And he's not a 'whatever' kind of God. He's the destiny maker and he wants your life. Read with me some Scripture from God's Word, Jeremiah 29:11. *'For I know the plans I have,' declares the Lord. 'Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you a hope and a future.'*

Look at Ephesians 1:4. Let's read that out loud. *Long before He laid down earth's foundations, He had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of His love, to be made whole and holy by His love.*

That doesn't sound like a 'whatever' to me. Does it you?

Look at Ephesians 2:10, *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

And now look at Philippians 1:6, *And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.*

Friends, you've got a choice. You can float around accidental-like, like a feather on the breeze, all your life if you want to, or you can put your life in the hands of the destiny maker that has a plan for your life, a good God who says, My plans for you are to give you hope, give you a future; I want your life.

When I was seventeen years old, I was one of those float-around guys. And I started being interested in this girl named Debbie. She was hot, and I was interested; I was not much, but she got interested anyway. She was just so real; I was so phony. I mean, I went to church, but I didn't have a clue what it meant to be in love with God. I didn't have a clue what it meant to have God lead your life, be in your life, make your life full of purpose and passion. I didn't know that.

But it felt like she did. She was just real, she was authentic; and she really loved God. And I said, "God, I want that in my life. And I'd like her, too, if I could. But God, I want what she's got."

Well, our church group was going on this retreat up in Minnesota. I found out that she was going, so I signed up. And while I was there, God got a hold of my heart. And as I told you before, on the banks on this lake in northern Minnesota, I just raised my hands to God as this exhausted, tired, phony teenager, going, "God, I don't want to live this way anymore. I want to give up." I said, "God, wherever you want to take me in this life, I'm signing on tonight. I'm just giving you my life tonight. I want to put my life in your hands. I'm tired of living like this."

And you might say that night was the night I kind of moved from 'whatever' to 'wherever.' I can't begin to tell you what a ride my life has been since that day I surrendered to Jesus Christ to lead my life. I mean, I've done many things I never imagined I would get to do. Most of my friends back home, they're shocked that I'm doing what I'm doing today. They can't believe how the grace of God has changed the guy that they knew into the guy they now know.

How does God do that in a person's life? Friends, I want to tell you, the best thing you can ever do is to put your life in the hands of the destiny maker.

I meet so many bored people just doing the same stuff everyday. It never changes; it's just that same old life. You get up at the same old time, shut off the same old alarm clock, walk in the same old bathroom, look at the same old face in the same old mirror, get in the same old shower, dry off with the same old towel, put on the same old clothes, walk down to the same old kitchen, get out the same old bowl, pour the same old cereal, eat the same old cereal with the same old spoon, drink the same old coffee, read the same old paper, kiss the same old wife, get in the same old car, drive the same old way to the same old job, sit at the same old desk, laugh at the same old jokes the same old boss is telling the same old way, clock out at the same old time, get back in the same old car, drive down the same old street, into the same old garage, walk back in the same old kitchen, sit down and eat the same old dinner, walk to the family room and sit in the same old recliner, watch the same old *Wheel of Fortune*, fall asleep in the same old chair, get up

and go the same old bed, ask the same old wife the same old question, get the same old answer, roll over, hit the same old alarm clock, and get up and do the same old thing over again.

And that's the way a lot of people live; that's their life. Man, I don't want the same-old, do you? We've got one shot at this deal. I want to live like I'm dying. I want to live with passion surging through my veins. I want to live with a sense of purpose about my life.

They got a group of 95-year-olds together and surveyed them. I don't know how they got them together, but they did. And they asked them: If you had it to do all over again, what would you do differently? You know how they responded? First response was, "What was the question?" But then once they got it, they responded in these three ways. "If we had to live life all over again," they said, "first of all, we would reflect more. We'd slow down, we would savor more sunsets. We would enjoy life more. We would soak in more moments, special moments. We wouldn't work so fast and so feverishly."

Second thing they said, "We'd risk more. We'd take more chances. We would live life like it's an adventure in which you cannot pick the fruit unless you're out on a limb somewhere."

Thirdly, they said, "If we had it to do all over again, we would live our life in such a way that we would do something with it that would live on long after we're dead and gone."

Friends, I don't know about you, but I don't want to wait until I'm 95 to say those things. I want to reflect now. I want to risk now. I want to do something right now with my life that's going to live on long after I'm gone.

It's like getting into a pool. I know how some of you get into a pool. You're a toe dipper, aren't you? You stick a toe in, you go, Wheeew, that is cold. And then your ankles. Wheeew, that's cold. Then your calves. That's cold. Wheeew; thighs; wheeew; wheeew. All the way in. You're getting in this pool and it's just miserable. That's no way to get in the pool.

How do you get in the pool? Yeah, you take a running start and you do a cannonball. You tuck your knees up, and you hit that water; and the water goes flying and the ripples go out and hit the side and they come back in, they go back out and they come back in. They go back out and they come back in. They go back out. And if you're really big, they come back in again and they go back out.

And if the sides of that pool weren't there, they would just keep going and going and going and going and going, long after you made your initial splash.

And I think that's what God had in mind for us. He said, I want to give you a life where you make some ripples with your life, where you touch someone's life, and they touch someone's life, and they touch someone's life—and long after you're dead and gone, the ripples will still be going.

I never dreamed that I'd be a pastor/preacher/teacher guy—never. I never dreamed I'd be doing it in Las Vegas either. But one day I got a phone call from a guy named Gene Appel. He said,

“Listen, our church is going to plant a new church on the other side of town, fastest growing city in the nation and the fastest growing part of the fastest growing city of the nation. And there’s not a church over there. We’ve just been praying, and we think you’re the guy to do it.”

I said, “Me?” I’m a Kentucky boy. What would I do in Vegas, you know? I got all kinds of mixed things going on in my head about a Vegas church, just a lot of weird images coming up.

I told him we’d pray about it, but I really wasn’t going to. I’m just being honest. Oh, you’ve all said what, too.

But we did pray about it, and we went to Vegas to check it out. And we just felt like God was asking us to get out of our comfort zone and live and take a chance, take a risk, and go there to Sin City, so to speak, and plant a church. Now Gene and I will both tell you, we never called it Sin City. We called it the City of Grace because the Bible says where sin abounds, grace abounds that much more.

We saw all kinds of broken hurting people get their lives put back together. It was probably the greatest experience in my entire life working there in Las Vegas. It was an awesome ride.

And I don’t know whether I rippled a lot of people but I do know I got one guy. His name is Jeff. Jeff and I were playing basketball together at the YMCA where our church met. We were playing a pickup game, and Jeff pulled me aside and said, “Man, I know we’re coming here like three days a week and playing pickup ball and stuff, but I’ve got to let you know I’ve been coming to the church that you got going on here. It’s pretty cool.”

He goes, “Can I talk to you a minute?” I said, “Sure.” He goes, “I’ve had a drinking problem and a gambling problem for a long time, and the gambling is getting way out of control. You know, I’ve been lying to my wife every night. I stay after work,”—he has his own business—“and I want to tell you, just so you don’t think I’m crazy, I have a degree in physics.”

He said, “I’m a very smart guy, was an All-American quarterback in a small college in California, I mean, I’m kind of one of those guys who’s got it all together—but I don’t have it all together. It’s coming unraveled. When I come to your church, I keep thinking there might be some hope for me.”

He goes, “Mike, I’m sitting in casinos every night putting quarter after quarter, dollar after dollar in these video poker machines. The other night, I ran out to my car and I started searching like a mad man through the cushions to see if I could find some change in my car to come back in and play some more. This has got to stop.”

He said, “I think maybe God’s the answer.” I said, “I think so.”

So we started meeting and talking, and to make a long story short, Jeff did the same thing I did when I was 17. He asked Jesus Christ, the destiny maker, to start leading his life. Jeff just did this 180 turn-around. He’s one of the most dynamic, fired-up Christian guys I’ve ever met in my life. He’s kind of a guy’s guy, too.



Well, I got a phone call one night from this lady in St. Louis who said, “I got a 21-year-old son; he’s got a drinking problem and a gambling problem. We think he’s heading to Vegas. We heard you have a church out there; could you keep an eye out for him?”

Keep an eye out for him? Thirty million people come to Vegas every year. I won’t find your kid.

Well, if you don’t know by now, God is a relentless pursuer of your soul, and he tracked that young man down. Got a call from the mom about an hour later saying, “He’s in Vegas, we found him. He was passed out in a parking lot of this little hotel, and the hotel manager put him up for the night. Here’s the address. Here’s where he’s at.”

I thought, Wow, what are we gonna do? I thought of Jeff. I called up Jeff and said, “Hey, I’ve got a guy for you.” Jeff goes, “All right; where’s he at?” I said, “This little sleazy hotel down behind the strip. Go get him.” He goes, “All right, I’ll go get him.”

Now Jeff was on our early morning set-up team. Because we were a portable church, a brand new church, we had to set up chairs and everything for Sunday morning; and Jeff was a part of that set up crew. We set up at 6 o’clock. So Jeff goes down at 5:30 in the morning and knocks on this door in this little hotel on the strip. This guy, Gary, is huge; he’s 6-4, 250, a mountain of a guy. Swings open the door; sleep, hung over, vomit on the shirt. He goes, “Yeah?”

Jeff goes, “Hey, my name is Jeff from Canyon Ridge Church, man. I know all about you, man. You’ve got a drinking problem and a gambling problem. I used to have a drinking problem. I used to have a gambling problem, man. Come on, take a shower, let’s get in the car, and let’s go to church together.”

And Gary goes, “Excuse me?”

Jeff says, “Oh yeah, man, I’m sorry I’m talking so fast but I’m late because we set up at 6 o’clock, man. I’m sorry I’m here so early; but, man, you’re big, you can help us set up. What do you say? We’ll talk about it in the car.”

Gary goes, “OK.” Took a shower, got in the car with a total stranger, drove out to the high school where our church was meeting, helped us set up chairs, stayed for the service, and that day gave his life to Jesus Christ. God turned Gary completely around.

And when I left Las Vegas, Gary was rippling on the guy named Chris. And Chris was rippling on a guy named Darnell. And I just heard recently that Gary is, like, an associate pastor now somewhere now in Missouri.

You see the way it goes friends? One life touches a life, who touches a life, who touches a life, who touches a life, who touches a life—and on and on and on and on the ripples go, long after you make your splash.

I think about Rachel. Rachel came to me one time at the YMCA where we started our church. And she was crying. She was a beautiful girl; I mean, a stunningly gorgeous girl. She comes up to me and starts crying and she says, “I was going to have an abortion, but people talked me out of it. Now I’ve got this kid and this kid doesn’t like me. I’m a single mom, and I don’t know what to do. And he’s got colic. What do I do with a baby?”

I said, “I don’t have a clue either, but my wife, Debbie, she’s great with kids. Hang on a second.” I got Debbie, hooked her up with Rachel, and they just sat down and talked. Debbie invited Rachel over for dinner; and for the whole next year, every Sunday after church, Rachel and her little boy came to our house for dinner. Debbie just gently loved her, befriended her.

Now Rachel's occupation—she was what they called a wine goddess at Caesar’s Palace. She dressed in this really seductive Cleopatra-type outfit, and she made a lot of money doing what she was doing. We just loved her, and it was really pretty cool to watch her development. The more she grew to love God, she’d, like, sew another veil on her costume. It was God. It was just fun to watch her changing.

And one night she said, “Listen, Nick’s going to be a year old. I wondered if we could have a birthday party at your house. My apartment is a little small and I want to invite some friends. Could we come over to your house and do the party?” I said, “Sure, that’d be great.” She goes, “Would you take pictures?” I go, “Sure I’ll take pictures. Show me how to work your camera?”

So the doorbell rings at 7 o’clock, and she’d invited all these other wine goddesses from Caesar’s Palace. They come walking into my living room. I’m snapping pictures. Oh man. God, when I said wherever, thank you very much. It was, like, this is unbelievable. I never dreamed I’d be doing this, you know?

Rachel gave her life to Christ. She put her life in the hands of the destiny maker. She’s raising her two little boys now to love God. And she rippled on Lori who was there that night and who just loves God with all of her heart; in fact, she’s a part of Gene’s old church now. And they told me when I was in Las Vegas, “We’re working on a belly dancer now in the club. We’re trying to get her to come to church.”

And that’s the way it happens, friends. A life touches a life who touches a life who touches a life.

There was a time in my ministry when I really wanted to quit. Sometimes you just get tired, discouraged, and frustrated. It was one of those times in my life, about 20 years ago. Then these people in the church asked me, “Would you like start like a Sunday school class type of thing for young married couples?” I said, “Okay, I’ll do it.”

Well, I got energized about it. I started teaching the class. And there was a bunch of disinterested men in that class because their wives dragged them there. It was so cool to watch myself and to watch them all get engaged with God’s Word and start coming alive. All of us, including myself, started changing our attitudes; we started changing our behaviors and the way we related to our wives and each other. It was such a great experience for me.

Now fast forward 20 years to last week. A kid named Garrett passed away last week. He was a friend of ours in our youth ministry in Southland Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky, where I came from. Seventeen years old; fell asleep at the wheel on his way home from his girlfriend's house. Hit a tree and died instantly. He was a wonderful kid, full of life; he loved God so much. In fact, he rippled on his mom. His mom has been a Christ-follower for about a month now, and she got up and talked at his funeral. She talked about how she had found his prayer journal in his bedroom. And she actually photocopied a page from his journal and put it on the back of his memorial service program.

Let me read it to you. This is what this 17-year-old kid wrote months ago in a time of prayer. He loved God so much. He said, "Dear Father, I'm writing you this letter from here on earth. It's been great so far. I had some trouble getting adjusted at first, but your letter and some new friends from back home have really helped me. I can't wait to come home. But until then, I will enjoy my time here. Hopefully, Father, some more friends can come with me. Thanks again for all the gifts. Forgiveness of sins is awesome and the great Counselor has really come in handy in this world. Until I come home, your son and servant, Garrett. I'm out of here."

That kid is with Jesus Christ now—because his brother, Travis, rippled on him. And Wes, a high school kid, rippled on Travis. And their small group leader was a guy named John Sawyer, one of those disinterested men in that class 20 years ago who gave his life to Christ and is now their small group leader mentor. And he's the one who did the funeral. He's an attorney in Lexington.

See, friends, it's just a life touching a life touching a life.

When I think about ripples, I can't help but think about Nanny. She was our 103-year-old grandma; passed away several years ago. She was a trip. She was sharp up until the day she died. A hundred and three years old—that's old. And she's the first person I ever heard say, "When you get to be a hundred, don't buy green bananas." That's a great quote. Nanny was just that way; she was so funny.

When we had her hundredth birthday party, I watched Nanny as she sat in her chair, same chair she sat in everyday. She sat in this chair and all these people, literally hundreds of people, came by her little house to say thank you to this little woman of faith. This little, wrinkled woman of faith who never ever learned to drive, never went to college, never had any money in her savings account, raised six girls in this little bitty house—and all these people came through to say thank you for the way she'd touched their lives.

You see, what Nanny did, she rippled on the six girls that she raised in that little house with one bathroom. And those six girls had three or four kids a piece. And they rippled on those kids and now those kids have rippled on other kids. And one those girls that Nanny raised was a girl named Molly who had this daughter named Debbie who was really hot and I went to Minnesota—and you see how it goes?

We have a daughter named Jody, and she's now got two little girls. It's just neat to watch her interact with those little girls and know what a difference she's going to make, just like Nanny did, in their lives.

I know many of you have heard this story of how Jody, when she was in high school as a junior, she just kind of lost track of God, or maybe she was just trying to find him in a lot of different ways. There were some destructive things going on with her. She was a float-around kind of girl for a while. Well, the good news is she finally put her life in the hands of the destiny maker.

When she graduated from high school she said, “Listen, I want to make my life count. I don’t think I want to go to school right away.” We had gone on this short-term mission trip down to Haiti, and Jody said, “And I’d like to go to Haiti and work for a year, just work in that medical mission.”

I said, “Haiti, Jody? That’s the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. It’s AIDS-infested; it’s voodoo-controlled. Why would you want to go to Haiti? It’s all a crazy place.”

She goes, “I love those kids we met down there. I want to give a year of my life to do that.” I said okay; but one of the hardest things I ever did was put that girl on a plane and say, “See you.”

That year, the three greatest words to Debbie and me were, You got mail. That was the only way we could communicate with Jody. She couldn’t pick up a phone and call us, but the e-mail kind of bounced off of ham radio signals. I’m sure they have better technology now, but a few years ago it was just kind of goofy. Sometimes the e-mail would come all the way through; sometimes it was kind of jumbled and stuff. But we were so excited whenever we got a note from Jody.

This one night, Jody wrote, “Mom, Dad, this was the most phenomenal night of my life.” And she began to tell us a story how she was called out to deliver a baby in this little hut. She said, “I got to this hut, and there’s this naked, screaming, pregnant woman lying on the dirt floor. And they called me because they knew I knew the nurse. But I don’t know how to deliver babies; I just kind of assisted in one. And I’m there in this hut by myself and I’m thinking, I’m 18 years old, I’ve got a flashlight, and I’ve got a screaming, naked, pregnant woman lying on the dirt floor of a hut—and I’ve never delivered a baby in my life. What am I doing here?”

She goes, “To make matters worse, this woman walked in the hut. She was dressed in the blue and red wardrobe of a voodoo witchdoctor.” She walked in the hut and began to chant some incantation thing. Stopped at the pregnant woman’s head, put something on her head, like a little oil or something. She walked around Jody and stopped at the woman’s belly, poured the oil on there, and made some little evil incantation thing on the belly. She walked back around again and stopped at the head of the woman, while Jody’s getting ready to deliver this baby.

Jody said, “This woman is staring a hole through me. It’s the most evil stare I’ve ever seen in my life. I’m thinking, I’m 18 years old, I’m in a third-world country, 3,000 miles away from home; I’m in a hut with a naked, screaming, pregnant woman lying on the floor. I’ve got a flashlight, and a voodoo woman staring a hole through me.”

She goes, “Mom, Dad, I didn’t know what to do. I just looked right back at her and I started singing: *Our God is an awesome God, / He reigns from heaven above / With wisdom, power and love, / Our God is an awesome God!*”

Jody said she knew the voodoo woman couldn't understand English, but that woman grabbed all of her stuff and ran out of the hut. She said, "Mom and Dad, I knew; I knew that night that that little baby was going to be born with the blessing of God and not the curse of Satan."

And I'm reading this e-mail as a dad ... granted, as a dad thinking, What are you doing in a hut with a voodoo woman? You get on a plane tomorrow and you come home. We've got pizza and ice cream and puppies. Come on home.

But in the next breath I thought, Way to go, Jody. Way to ripple, girl.

Because who knows who that little baby's going to grow into and whose life he's going to touch and whose life that one is going to touch and whose life will next be touched—all because one courageous 18-year-old girl said, I'm sick and tired of floating around accidental-like, like a feather on a breeze. I want to put my life in the hands of the destiny maker. I want to make some ripples with my life.

Friends, Jesus said in Mark 8:35, only those who are willing to throw away their lives for his sake will ever know what it means to really live.

You've got a choice tonight. You can leave this place and still float around accidental-like, like a feather on a breeze. Or you can put your life in the loving hands of the destiny maker, and you can make your life count. What do you say?

And that's all I have to say about that.

Let's stand and pray.

God, I'm so grateful to all the people in my life. If I traced it back, God, there would be a long, long line of ripples that finally got to me. I'm so grateful that it started on a cross 2,000 years ago, that ripple did. And it's rippled all the way to my life. I'm so grateful for that, God.

God, I pray that you would continue to use my life to maybe make a little splash here and there, just to offer some hope, offer some life to somebody else, God; and maybe they can do the same, and on and on. I can't help but think if all of us would live like we were going to die tomorrow, we would reflect and risk and take chances and do things with our lives that would last long after we're gone. God, I pray that you would stamp this in our heart tonight.

God, I pray for people right now, that they would open their hearts and say, Okay, God. I want to put up my hands and say I give up. I don't want to live like this anymore. I want to make my life count. Come into my life, forgive my sin. Lead my life from here on out. I pray people will move from 'whatever' to 'wherever.' Father, I pray that that happens in someone's heart tonight.

In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.