

STARTING POINT (FINALE) “THE GREAT INVITATION!”

Scripture used: Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47 (NLT)

OVERVIEW

This sermon is the culmination of our 6-week series called Starting Point. As a church, we have considered the most important questions of faith. This helped us all remember the key ideas that shape our identities as followers of Jesus. These sermons happened at a time when the country is being rocked by horrible events: devastating hurricanes; mass shootings; and raging wildfires. But these crises are precisely why we need God. They can help us find meaning, refuge, and strength. Don't forget that the worst catastrophe in history - the crucifixion of Jesus - was necessary for His glorious resurrection! God always has the last word, in the world and in our lives. Now He is inviting us to do two things: dive deeper into our community of Jesus followers; and create a plan to grow our faith.

KEY POINTS

- 1) **Now is the time for faith.** God can use all the uncertainty in the world. Nothing is so broken that He cannot use it to fulfill His plan. Every crisis is actually an invitation to come to know God better. And this invitation is open to everyone!
- 2) **Faith is about relationship.** The goal of every Jesus follower is to know Him. Unfortunately, an intellectual faith is not enough to get you there. It's not enough to read and recite the scriptures like a robot. We have to study them with the intent of understanding God's deep love for us. Psalms 46:1-2 (NKJV) highlights how we should relate to God during crises.
 - a. **God is our refuge.** Once we have a relationship, we can confidently turn toward Him in times of trouble.
 - b. **God is our strength.** Once we have a relationship, we can keep moving forward no matter the challenge.
- 3) **We can nurture our faith within community.** God did not make Man to be alone. “We” and “Our” are much better than “I” and “My”. That requires each of us to turn away from selfish desires, as described by Luke in Acts 2:38 (NLT). A community of believers is critical for consistent faith. A group lets its members help sustain each other as they go through the struggles of life. When you are being challenged, others will help you. And when others are being challenged, you will step up.
- 4) **We can grow our faith with a plan.** God wants us to choose Him instead of the world. Carve out time to pray, to fast, to fellowship, for devotionals, for Bible study, to serve in the church, to serve in the community, to tithe, and any other activity motivated by love of God and man. These are concrete actions to demonstrate to God that He is not just our savior, He is also our Lord!
- 5) **It's time to commit to shared public...**
 - a. **Prayer.** Record an encouraging word to share with those suffering in the world.
 - b. **Generosity.** Learn to give whatever you can to those in need.
 - c. **Time.** Gather with other followers of Christ.
 - d. **Serve.** Help the community around the church according to its need.
 - e. **Joy.** Do everything with a smile on your face!

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** – Following Jesus is not a religion, a building, or a set of rules. Following Jesus means building a relationship with Him. Ask yourself “Do I know Jesus for myself?”
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** – Each of us struggles at different times in our lives. No one can stand alone, no matter how strong they appear. When your faith is challenged, to whom do you turn?
- 3) **DO** – Even a community is not enough to grow as a Christian. We also have to build and follow a plan. Please check out [the Starting Point booklet](#), pages 39-41, for options to build a custom plan that works for you. Pastor Hurmon closed his sermon by challenging us to affirm the statement “I will take the next step of faith!”