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Thin Places Revisited

Deuteronomy 34; Exodus 3:2-4; Joshua 1:1-9

Pastor Tim Bohlke

(Josh introduction)
The early Celtic Christians used to speak of these times—these moments when God would show up and reveal Himself in real, tangible ways...times like maybe when a baby was born and you're staring at this incredible miracle, this infant right before you...or maybe these times when the words from an ancient song or a hymn deeply penetrate your heart...or maybe standing on a ridge or in your backyard and watching as the sun crests over and the sunrise shining over a sleepy world. They would often refer to these times as *thin places*, these moments when heaven and earth seem to collide. Over the last week we've asked you to take some time to quiet down and listen.

As I reflected on the times when God's met and spoken, revealed Himself to me, there's one time in this last year that really sticks out in my mind. We were in a room, just a typical room. There was a handful of other guys. I was frustrated in this season at the movement, at what seemed like the lack of movement happening around me, and I remember one of the leaders sharing. He opened up the Scriptures and shared through this story. [I was wrestling with this tension in my life—felt like maybe I just have to let it go, maybe I'm complacent; that's just how it is. But then I kept hearing the Spirit continue to challenge me with contentment in who God is, but not contentment to just let things be.] Now as the story unfolded through Scripture, at the end he just asked us to be quiet and listen, and it was at that moment where it felt like God kept challenging me to dream bigger dreams. Don't give up; don't let go. He's got incredible things ahead, and I want to be a part of those. And each one of us has different ways that God continues to make His Word, His truth come alive in our lives. This week we asked a few people from church to share some of those *thin moments*, those times when God showed up and revealed Himself, ad made the truth of Scripture come alive in their lives.

(Video)

(Tim)
I felt this build coming into this weekend—that there was going to be something special happening, and so much of that was because of interactions with you, all through this last week. This has been a blast—even this last year when we introduced this idea of *thin places*—these moments heaven and earth collide, and God shows up. We kind of opened this up last year. I'd be downtown and someone would yell across at me, "Hey, I had a *thin place* I want to tell you about!" It's been so much fun. And then this week as you all slowed down and shut off the exterior noise, and focused on God and listened, and to hear so many of those stories. Such a neat, amazing time! Capture those and let us know; let us hear some more what you have been hearing. I'd love that.

One of the *thin place moments* in the last year my wife had that was really impacting was in this old church that was built in the early 1800's on the edge of a national park in Tennessee, and we wandered into this place. [The last several months of 2017 were really hard months for us—some of the hardest in our lives, actually—and a deep level of sadness accompanied us through those months, sometimes even to the point of despair.] We were on a pre-planned trip in Tennessee when we came on this old church and as we wandered in—there were a few pews, an old piano—there were two girls in the church. We checked it out. My wife ended up sitting down in the pew, just

wanted to stay there awhile. My daughter and I went out and had a hike into the hills around that church, and we started hearing this piano starting to play this music. It was really cool—kind of captured us in a moment around those hills. The acoustics were really pretty, just perfect for it, and then this voice started singing a song that Marcia had never heard. She was eager to look it up afterward. She heard these words that went right to the heart.

(Song)
Are you hurting and broken within?
Overwhelmed by the weight of your sin?
Jesus is calling
Have you come to the end of yourself
Do you thirst for a drink from the well?
Jesus is calling
O come to the altar
The Father's arms are open wide
Forgiveness was bought with
The precious blood of Jesus Christ.

That became a defining moment for her in the midst of that year. For me, a few weeks after that, I headed out to California for one of our leadership events. It was a struggle to get there; so much energy and passion goes into those events but I made it through, but boy, at the heels of that I had very little left. I was sitting by the water in a familiar place and I was writing a little bit in my journal. I just want to read you a little bit of the words I wrote, and kind of what happened for me in the midst of that moment. As I sat at the water in this very familiar place, I was reminded of some words I had written when we first launched *Harbor Ministry* years ago—a time when I was ready to abandon these *Rhythm in Twenty* and *Rogue* events even before they started. The words: "God does not promise to spare us from heartbreak and struggle, and pursuing Him does not exempt us from disappointment and even traumatic events. But what He does promise is to walk through all of it with us—every moment, every high, every low, every turn." As my own words began to sink in, I was reminded again of Psalm 37, which was a psalm that became a true theme to me through the last several months. "*Do not fret...wait on God. Do not fret...rest in the Lord. Do not fret...it is His strength that comes with us in times of trouble."* As I continued to sit, the wind began to come back in my sails, and the words started to come. A book project that I'd been working on, that had stalled for months, I finished within hours, and I was overcome with this wave of thankfulness for being on this journey and seeing God show up time and time again in the lives of these men who had gathered from around the country. That night came the gift of a concert with my favorite artist, and hearing his words at the end of that concert—"that you never know how long you have, so make the most of it"—I came away with a renewed sense and determination that no matter the circumstances, to make the most of the days in front of me.

A few weeks later at another *Rogue* event in Colorado, we received the news that Tom Petty—that artist—had died. It hit me hard. I was reminded of his words that night that *you never know how long you have and we need to enjoy the journey we're on and make the most of it.* Some of the circumstances in his death would not lend itself to a strong finish, but some would. He stayed true to the passion, true to himself and the passion for his music through all those decades, right up to the very end. Those events and others have caused me to start looking in my life and asking, "Who are some people in my life who have finished things well?"

One that came right to mind was my dad. I talked about him a little bit last week. He died at age 59; I was 26. It was just a sudden stunning event that changed all our lives in a moment—and

everything was different. Obviously he and no one else knew it was coming. There was nobody around him during that time, but over the decades since, I've heard so many stories of this farmer from central Nebraska who impacted so many people. There was no one around him that would have said he didn't finish well. He was doing things every day, even with that occurrence that ended everything, that changed things, and he finished well.

People tend to remember the finish, don't they? Our kids were active in sports and involved in lots of things, and we loved watching them compete and do all the different things they did. They all are really gifted in different ways but our youngest had a little bit of extra giftedness in the sports arena. He was recruited in high school, played college basketball, was involved in track, and hurdles were his thing. He actually qualified for the state track meet. He finished well his freshmen and sophomore years in high school, so he had a chance to do some really special things until injuries hit him, and as he ended that junior year, things changed. I loved watching him in hurdles. Hurdles is a great race and he had a great start, but he had an even better finish—those last two hurdles, when he would extend, even as a freshman, and finish beyond guys who were a lot older than him. He would push himself and I think that was the difference maybe. People remember the finish.

There was another race of his I remember pretty well. It was the first time he ran the 4 X 400, quarter mile relay at Doane. [I asked him if I could share this story by the way.] The coach inserted him into the third leg, and as the baton got to him, he was well behind the pack. He just grabbed that baton and rolled. I mean he passed by everybody, and around that third turn he was well in the lead. I'm thinking, "*This is sweet! He's been in the wrong event all along. This is his thing*." As he comes around the last turn to hand the baton to his friend Jordan, you could see it in his eyes. He's in an indoor track at Doane and, *"This track is half the length of my own track; I've got another lap to go."* It's like, *"Uh oh."* As he turned and realized he had to turn that next corner, he hit the wall, and everybody that he had passed started passing him, and by the time he crawled around to that last lap, he was well into last. Now I remember all that. I mean it was bad among many other track moments, and there were great memories! I remember the start and the finish, but I guarantee, people that didn't know him, remember that last leg. And that's the thing—we're all involved in finishing things, right? This day has a finish; this week, this year—we're halfway through. The seasons of our family's lives have a start and a finish, and we're all in the midst of looking at what that takes to really finish well. Next, we're six months away from 2019 and then the end of this decade. Can you believe it?

I don't know how many of you were around Lincoln Berean when we started this decade in 2010. That was a big moment around here. We launched *The Decade on Purpose* with several key initiatives that we wanted to give ourselves to as a church body. Retiring the debt, and we wanted several thousand people to launch into this decade and to live *on purpose*. We wanted to invest in young leaders here and around the country. There were so many things going, and the day to day was important to that, but now we are turning the corner at the end of that decade. It has a *finish*!

I've loved studying leaders and great leaders over the years. One of the ones I focused on from the Bible is Moses because there is so much written about him and what he had done. I've taught from this stage on his life several times over the years, and just have loved investing in him and his leadership journey. There is probably more written about Moses than anybody else in the Old Testament. We get a great slice of his life. His life came in three segments really. The first forty years he was adopted into Pharaoh's family and lived an incredible life of privilege with the most powerful family in the world at that time. Then at the end of that forty years he saw a Hebrew slave mistreated and abused, and he snapped and killed the Egyptian that was doing it. As a result, Moses was banished to the desert for the next forty years, where he married and started running his father-

in-law's business of shepherding sheep out in the desert for forty years. Then at age eighty, just when you would think that he might be settled in— this is it; this is how my life's going to live out—he gets *the calling* of his life to go back to Egypt and lead a whole nation out of slavery. So the last forty years are that.

I thought it would be really cool this morning if we focused on literally the last moments of Moses' life—to get a little snapshot of what people were saying at the finish line. As we walk through these last literal moments with Moses—it comes out of Deuteronomy 34 if you want to follow along—let's check out Moses' last moments and those around him and what the finish of that particular chapter of his life was saying. Deuteronomy, Chapter 34:1:

> **Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan.** [Let's skip down to verse 4] **Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see *it* with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated.** [He finished well.] **So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses came to an end.**
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> **Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him;** [Moses finished well] **and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.** (*NASB, Deuteronomy 34:1, 4-12)

No other prophet ever like Moses—those were the last words written about him. What was it about Moses that people followed? What was so compelling about him that people would follow him anywhere? I wanted to look at a couple of those things. One is I think he remembered the *thin place moments* along the way. In those forty years, the thin place moments to find God, and heaven and earth collided and God showed up. He remembered and he didn't let other people forget. We know that because Moses was the primary writer of five books of the Bible. He captured the story. He obviously wrote them, remembered them, took them to heart for himself, didn't let himself forget, didn't let others forget—hasn't let others forget to this day. He remembered.

This is a passionate word for me, because I think great leaders *remember*. Men and women are difference makers in their families and in that context they remember the times God showed up. And I believe that Moses really remembered that first, maybe the most famous *thin place encounter* in the Old Testament, when God appeared and spoke to him in the midst of a burning bush on the side of a mountain—a moment that changed Moses' life, a moment that changed the history of the world. It's a moment that we're still dealing with today in terms of the consequences of what happened as he led the Jewish people out of slavery, leads them to the Promised Land. Let's look at that thin place moment. It's in Exodus 3. I want to read this for you:

An angel of the Lord appeared to Moses… (Vs. 2a)

Now keep in mind this is at the end of the second forty years, so Moses is in the desert. He's working the father-in-law's business; every day is like the one before: take the sheep up the mountain, keep them safe, get them fed, bring them down. Like I said, he's eighty now, so this is probably how he's thinking life is going to play out, and he's probably pretty good with it. He doesn't have the pressure of business ownership; he's got his father-in-law's business; he's running that, so he's probably in cruise control. Things changed though in this moment, right? So Exodus, chapter 3:2:

> **The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up." When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."** (Vs. 2-5)

To me, verse four in this passage is one of the most impacting and significant verses in the Bible, because it's so stunning! I mean, think about this for a moment now. Here this guy comes down; the bush is burning; he notices it, and in verse four God says, **when the Lord saw he turned aside to look; God called him from the midst of the bush.** That's amazing! It does give the feeling that God was waiting on him to get attentive, to get alert and to see what was happening around him. It's just incredible! He waited, and when the Lord saw Moses turn, He called him to the midst of the bush. What a moment! For all history changed, and certainly the trajectory of Moses' life does a complete 180—and he goes on from there. I think Moses remembered this moment and you see it in the practice of his leadership throughout the next forty years—that he stayed alert; he remembered; he listened to God, and then he acted. That was clear again and again. I think remembering helps us stay alert. That's one of the whys of why we come back to the *thin place* idea. In remembering those moments, you stay alert to where and how God is showing up in the future.

I think difference makers—men and women that have a weightiness—the strength of them that's different is they *remember*. There's a gentleman who is active at Berean, in the YAH's class, that I've known for thirty years. I greatly admire this guy for how he has run his business and how he has lived life and how he's invested in others. We've become really good friends. He's been involved in ministries and organizations I've led through the years as well. We've just gotten really close. Many times through the last three decades he has told me how his business started. When they started, and they felt God was moving in the midst of trying to get this thing going and launched, they had incurred a significant amount of debt. It got to a point where they knew they were in trouble and knew they weren't going to make it—and so almost before they started, they were about to be done. The banker they were working with called them in—these two young guys—and had a meeting with them and said, "We're going to forgive your debt." And with no real explanation, "We believe in you guys; we want you to get started; we're going to forgive this debt, so get going from there." What happened from that point on was to build a successful business. Through the years they expanded to several states. As a result, he kept God at the center of this thing all the way through. And every time he's told me that story—which is several times through the years—he isn't able to tell it

without tearing up. He remembers. I mean he remembers God was the center and the base of what they were about and what they were doing. That was the difference maker!

For me, a moment last year was remembering in the midst of one of the *Rhythm in Twenty* events we were doing with these guys out in Colorado, a guy named John Friesner was giving his testimony and talking about what God was doing in his life. This was the third year of a three-year journey—so at the finish line and a pretty emotional time for all of us as we walked through this. John's story was incredible. He came into *Rhythm*; he had two kids who were about five and three at the time. He just came out of that first year feeling like, "Part of my identity is fighting for those who can't fight for themselves, fight for the oppressed, fight for the hurting." He was a businessman, a church planter up north of Minneapolis. He embraced that. Through the course of the next year he got an opportunity, he and his wife, to adopt three kids from an extended family that were in really traumatic circumstances—two near teenagers and another one who had just been through it. So they ended up adopting these three kids into their family—just an incredible story about ways God was showing up and working through that. He was unpacking that story to us, and talking about how fear had gripped him, and he looked straight at me in the midst of that and said, "Fear and worry will take you out. If you succumb to fear, you'll pull back and never go where God wants you to go." He looked straight at me, and, man, those were the two words I'd been struggling with for months—fear and worry—things that I couldn't control. They neutralized me and, man, it was really hard. He looked right at me and said it. That was a defining and changing moment that I will never forget. It's given me the fuel to keep going in the months since. You're going to see in a few minutes here the story of John on the video that we captured of him and his impact. I just wanted to tell you a little bit about that defining moment.

What else about Moses now? He remembered; he *listened*. He listened for sure; he listened well. He listened to God in that moment at the burning bush and responded. We see that throughout the next forty years time and time and time again. Moses listened; he listened to God and he listened to others.

Now I've just got to share this story with you quick because it's so great. I mean, think about this ninety-year-old dude that's leading the Hebrew people by the hundreds of thousands into the wilderness, and God has called him to do this. He gets to this place where he's not keeping up. Think about what it would be like for a ninety-year-old to have his father-in-law come in and say, "You've got to square this up; you're not doing this right." Now that's what happens in this passage, right? And he listens and he adjusts. Pretty crazy! It's out of Exodus 18. Moses' father-in-law comes to him and says in Exodus 18: "*Why do you sit alone as judge, Moses?"* and Moses says, *"Because the people come to me and inquire of God; when they have a dispute they come to me."* And Moses' father-in-law said to him:

> **"The thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people, the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do this alone."** (Exodus 18:17)

And what happens is his father-in-law maps out a plan and a structure for how he can handle and manage what's in front of him with all these people. And Moses listens, hears, responds, and does it. He had an active sense of listening to others and not just making things by himself, all the way to the finish line. That made him distinguished and different.

What else? What else about Moses made him different...made him the kind of leader that was so compelling and had such weightiness to him that people would do anything for him? His core team stayed with him that whole forty years. Forty years of wandering in the desert, still saying, "God's promised it; it's going to come. It's going to come!" They hung with him. Why? What else about him made him so compelling that when the Hebrew people were in conflict, as long as Moses stood on a rock with his arms raised, the people would advance in victory and be inspired by his presence so much? When his hands would lower, they would retreat and so the text says he literally had people come up and stand under his arms to hold him up. What about him was so compelling that it inspired people at that level to do that?

Here's the truth. He met with God. That was the difference maker—simple and profound! Moses met with God; he met with God time and time and time again, and we see the model through those forty years that's unwavering. God knew him face-to-face. Multiple times it's referenced throughout the Old Testament, "*God knew him face-to-face; He knew him by name."* Moses met with God; that was the difference...that was the difference maker. Exodus 24:12 says—and this is right at the front end as Moses has led the people out—that they came to the mountain of God, and Moses was waiting because he doesn't know what to do next. He needs God's direction. So he brought all the people in, and Exodus 24:12 says,

> **Now the Lord said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there…"**

A very powerful moment in the passage—"*Go up to the mountain and stay there*." Not a lot of instruction beyond that, and so Moses does it. He goes up and waits six days, and then God speaks to him on the seventh day, and says, "*Go farther up the mountain,"* and we see the testament of the people saying, "Moses kind of disappeared in the clouds at the top of that mountain, and waited on God for forty days, in which time God gave him the Ten Commandments and the game plan from there to go forward." Forty-six days he waited! We know Moses met with God again and again and again. Moses' slow walks with God through those forty years were the difference makers. That's what helped him be ready. When the time came to pass the baton to Joshua, when his time was up, Moses was ready. He was ready because of all those long slow walks with God. That was the difference maker.

I want to swing back before we close to that passage again in the finish—Deuteronomy 34. Go back to that with me if you'd like, and read this one more time. It said:

> **Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land.** [Let's skip down to verse 4.] **Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see *it* with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated.** (Vs. 1-7)

I've got to admit to you, when I've read this passage over the years and have known this story and tried to learn from it, I've struggled with this passage because part of me was like, seriously? I mean, look at what Moses has done. He has been God's man to do all that. For the most part, he's

done everything God said, although he disobeyed Him and he's paying the consequences of that now.

He disobeyed Him a couple times in that desert wandering, but for the most part he stayed true, and for forty years he led a bunch of whining, complaining, forgetful people through the desert. And now God takes him up to the mountain and says, "There is the land you're going to, but you're not going in." That just struck me as really tough—hard to swallow, almost cruel in a way. It felt like, as I read through that, struggled with that, that Promised Land he's not going to get to actually go into and lead the people across—until I started seeing that story for what it is and the relational context of the story—then the whole thing changed for me. The narrative and the moments of what this story was, totally changed. I mean, remember this is God who interacts with Moses as a face-to-face person for the last forty years. He knows him by name. When you look at that as a relationship, the whole feel of that story changes.

Now this is just me talking, but this is kind of how I've felt that story played out. As God and Moses walk up that mountain as people that know each other face-to-face, as people who have met time and time and time again through the years, and they walk up that mountain, God lays it out. "From this coast to that, that's the Promised Land, Moses. That's what I've been promising to people for generations. That promise is what got generations through slavery—because they knew I promised it to them, and it was coming. And they stayed faithful to remember that that was going to be the Promised Land. That's it! Moses, you did it. You got them here...you got them here! You got through all the obstacles. Well done! You're not going to go in; you disobeyed Me back here. You're not going to go in, but you and I are going to be up here, and we're going to enjoy this moment. Joshua is going to lead the people across. But well done!" I think in that moment, I believe Moses knew because we don't see him resist or struggle. We don't see any context of that. He knew in that moment, God was enough...that God was enough! He didn't need to cross; it didn't matter. God was enough in that moment, and I think that is a piercing great question for you and me to ask with things we're facing. "Is God enough?"

So what do we do from here? How do we go from here? I have loved being with you these last two weeks, exploring this, and I think what I would challenge us to do is: *Remember*. You hear it from me a lot; it's in another handout in the bulletin you got as you came in. Remember those *thin place God moments*. Tell somebody. I love the story of the young man that was at camp this week talking about how God showed up. So cool! I mean, there were a lot of kids at camp. If you're a parent of one of those kids, listen well. Listen well to the stories they tell, as things happened there. It was a really cool time. Remember. Don't forget.

And then: *Listen*. I think we can listen and take that practice of listening forward from here. We talked about two thirty-minute sessions this last week. What would it look like the rest of this year to take an hour, in addition to the other spiritual disciplines we're involved in? Take God's Word and quiet down and just let Him speak to us for an hour a week. Could we do that? That would be a great challenge, a big challenge I know. But think about that kind of a finish to 2018, if we were to just take an hour a week, shut off the external noise and just listen to what God has for us in the moment.

And then I think, take the other side of that card, and struggle with this question. Be honest, because it's an ongoing question for me, "Is God enough?" In the circumstances that I'm facing, is God alone enough? If you're in a season of peacefulness, a sweet season with your family or in your life and things are going well—and that's awesome...really! Is, in the midst of that kind of season, is God enough? If you're in a season of struggle and facing some giants, some obstacles,

some pain and disappointment, is God enough through that? We must keep asking ourselves that question.

I want to end with a few verses as a prayer similar to that that Joshua had as he took the baton from Moses and began to take the responsibility of leading this nation of people across to the Promised Land. He saw the model of a relational, engaged man, a leader that met with God regularly again and again and again. And now he was doing it himself, in the feel of a face-to-face, very relational, conversational prayer that God was having with Joshua to get him ready. So I wanted to close with this, and let this be our prayer. Don't necessarily look it up; just listen to the words of Joshua 1. As I close in prayer together, I believe these words were not just written for Joshua. They were written for you and me as we sit here this morning.

> *In the same way I was with Moses, I will be with you. I won't give up on you. I won't leave you. So take strength, courage. You're going to lead the people to inherit the land I promised them, to give to their ancestors. Give it everything you have, your heart and soul. Make sure you carry out the revelation that Moses commanded you—every bit of it. Don't get off track, either left or right, so as to make sure you get to where you're going. And don't for a minute let the book of Revelation be out of mind. Ponder it; meditate on it day and night. Make sure you practice everything written in it. Then you'll get to where you're going; then you'll succeed. Haven't I commanded you? Strength...courage...don't be timid; don't get discouraged. God, your God, is with you every step you take. To that I say, Amen!*

(Video testimony of John Friesner):

John: So I came into Rhythm prideful, walled up a little bit. The weight of the last thirty years, at that point I just fell apart. I just cried. It was so great to be able to be in the small group of guys that's just like, "Let's be real." The challenge that God placed on me that first year was, "You need to go home and be vulnerable with your wife."

John's wife: It was more just this reality that he had these walls built up—and we'd been talking about the walls for years. That was not a surprise that there were walls built up.

John: I did not really anticipate or realize the totality of what was coming, what God was preparing me for. What I believe Rhythm—how it came about in my life—and why God placed it there, was we were going to have the opportunity to adopt three kids. That was really neat just to feel that confirmation from God. It was just like, "I'm here with you, and this last year that you've been working on this vulnerability is not by accident." When we got them, we in many ways had no idea what we were doing. We had never raised teenagers. We got a thirteen-year-old, a twelve-year-old, and a seven-year-old.

When things would happen in our home, it's like almost shocking. They were shocking to us. My initial reaction is anger; it's frustration, anxiety, fear. I learned to try to just lean into love and lean into vulnerability. And I remember several times where we have had a completely out of control kid, self-destructive behaviors, and I would just go and I would sit in the corner of their room, and I would read out of my journal from Rhythm. Things I had written to them and about

them. And I remember on one of those occasions, my oldest just came and sat next to me and put her head on my shoulder, and she just started to just weep.

The investment of Rhythm has definitely not returned void in my life. It has been forever changed. It's not just my life that's been changed; my family tree has been changed. My kids are going to grow up having been fathered by somebody completely different than they previously were. My wife has a husband that she never had before.

John's wife: It goes back to that Scripture that even when we are not faithful, He remains faithful. And I think I've just seen that a lot in John over the last couple of years. God is really at work doing some things that I had thought maybe weren't going to happen.

John: As the years unfolded with Rhythm, it wasn't just vulnerability. Like every year, it's like God is chiseling away, and forming and creating something new in me. There's just a lot of sacrifice in the gospel, within the midst of it, that we're naturally not drawn to. It's just been so neat to see that truth of the Bible unfolding in my life, that God's passions are quickly becoming my passions. I want to leave a legacy for my kids that is beautiful, of wanting to help, to be there for the broken, to be a part of the broken, to be the hands and feet and the living gospel in people's lives, whatever that looks like. There are passions God has given my kids individually, and I want to see that lived out in their lives. And I think we're going to; I believe we're going to!

Come to the Altar
CCLI Song # 7051511
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