

Testimony Sunday

SPEAKER	Multiple
DATE	Sunday, February 25, 2024
PASSAGES	John 3; John 10; Acts 3; Philippians 1; Galatians 6; Ephesians 6; Hebrews 3
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:57:38 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Three people stood up and told the room how they first came to trust Jesus and why they still do. The circumstances could not have been less alike — a Baptist teen center in Port Arthur, a motorcycle headed nowhere good, a leg broken so badly it needed a rod through the bone — and the same Lord is in all three. He takes hold of people, and then he does not let go.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Glenn walked away from his own conversion for nine years. What he came back with was not shame but a picture: a hand holding him, and the Father's hand under it.
- ◆ The people God sends are rarely the ones you would pick. Glenn hid behind a Coke machine to avoid the man who ended up answering every question he had.
- ◆ Tully was not argued out of the occult. He was shown, in one sentence, which side he was actually on — and he refused to stay there.
- ◆ “All you have to do is die” sounded like good news to a man already looking for a way to die. Surrender is only terrifying to people still holding something back.
- ◆ Lisha heard the Lord tell her to dance, and then her leg broke. What he said in the middle of that was not an explanation. It was “trust me.”
- ◆ Answered prayer came a year late and by an ordinary route — a friend, a job posting. God is not a genie, and the waiting is where the armor gets worn.
- ◆ Story is not a break from teaching. Matt planned this service deliberately, because God uses testimony to show people the glory of Jesus.

► 0:57:38

Matt Ryniker introduced the morning briefly and then got out of the way. Hope was in the middle of a series in Hebrews, and it was Lent, but three people had been asked ahead of time to answer one question: why do you trust Jesus, and why do you still? “We are not here gathered to worship an old idea or practice ourselves into a vibe,” Matt said. “We worship a living God who is present with us, guiding our steps.” His assignment to the congregation was as specific as the one he had given the speakers: ask the Lord what he is saying to you in this.

Glenn: the hand you cannot be taken out of

► 0:59:58

Glenn Tompkins grew up in Port Arthur, Texas, in a neighborhood rough enough that a church three blocks down bought the house next door and turned it into a teen center — pool tables, ping pong, a big-screen television, board games, everything free but the snacks. There were two conditions: Sunday school once a month, and one church service every six months.

He was raised staunchly Roman Catholic in a very Italian family, and he had never set foot in another church. To this day he doubts his mother knows he went. But in one of those Sunday school sessions a man stood at a blackboard and explained being born again in terms Glenn had never heard: total yielding to Christ — your finances, your family, your vocation, your studies, all of it surrendered. Then the man asked whether they had done that. “No,” Glenn thought. “Not even close.”

► 1:03:39

A month later he was fulfilling the service requirement when the church did something he had never seen — an altar call. Every head bowed, and Glenn heard it as clearly as a voice in the room: *Glenn, get up and go forward*. He went. Then everyone opened their eyes and he was standing at the front of a church with a room full of people looking at him — and three people down the row was his sister, who he had not known was in the building, and who had given her life to Jesus that same day.

Walking out, his friends from the teen center went after him without mercy: you didn’t mean it, you’re not really going to be one of those Jesus freaks. He is not proud of what happened next. He fell away for nine years and lived, in his words, however he wanted.

► 1:06:07

Which is why the passage he read is one his wife has used on him more than once.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”

JOHN 10:27-29 ↗

The image Glenn takes from it is deliberately physical: you are held in the palm of Jesus’ hand, and then, to make it doubly sure, the Father’s hand comes underneath and holds them both. Through all nine years, he said, God kept putting some Christian in his path to straighten him out. He never got loose.

► 1:09:14

The proof arrived in 1982, at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii, when Glenn was moved to swing shift and warned about a dispatcher named Al — “if you ever see him you better run, because he’ll hit you with that Bible.” Glenn, taking this literally, hid behind the Coke machine on the back deck when the man walked through with a Bible in his hand. Standing back there, he heard it again. Three times: *Glenn, go talk with him*.

He went in. The dispatch center at that hour is a wall of ringing phones, aircraft to fuel, people to juggle. That night the phone never rang once. Glenn opened with, “I don’t want your opinion — can you

tell me what God says about it?” For two hours Al turned pages and answered every question he had. On Sunday Glenn went with him to Maranatha Church, where a guest speaker gave an altar call, and Glenn walked up alone, in full view, and said he wanted to commit his life to Jesus and not walk away this time.

Tully: finding out which side he was on

► 1:15:04

Tully Rose warned the room up front that he is an engineer and would not be as funny as Glenn. He was a teenager in the sixties with everything that implies. Drugs started in junior high and had become the whole shape of his life by the end of high school. He came in at the trailing edge of that scene, past Timothy Leary and Ken Kesey, into the earth-spirit material — peyote, mushrooms, and a spirit guide he could make other people hear if he got them high enough. That was how he got his standing among his peers.

A county attorney made a strong suggestion that he join the military, and he did. What he noticed in the Navy were the long stretches of enforced sobriety — and that the spirit kept showing up anyway, on eight-hour watches in the dark, talking to him when he was alone and entirely straight. The subject was always power: you only get one life, and you have to be great in it.

► 1:18:07

Then it asked for something. He had been baptized at thirteen in a mainline church, and the voice told him he needed to publicly renounce that baptism if he wanted to go on in power.

Tully’s church had not taught him much about salvation. He still remembers a children’s class where the teacher told the story of Peter and John going up to pray and healing the lame man at the gate, and when he asked why they didn’t go out and do that, he was told all of that ended when the last apostle died. What he heard was: this used to be true, and now we have a club about it. He filed Christianity next to Rotary and the Lions, and his baptism next to a Boy Scout ceremony.

So the demand made no sense. If it means nothing, why renounce it? He pushed, the voice insisted, and the light came on: *you don’t like this baptism thing. You don’t like Jesus.* And it left. “There is actually something going on in this world,” he realized, “and I’m on the wrong side.”

► 1:21:06

He had never been taught repentance, so he worked it out with the tools he had: he would not live as an enemy of God, and you only get to die once, so he would go find a good way to do it. He took a month of leave, got on his motorcycle and started across the country. On a back road in Texas, helmet down and face shield closed, he passed a Volkswagen and something told him he knew those people. He looked

back; they were already pulling over. It was an old friend from the drug years and his wife, who somehow knew it was him — and who had no idea he owned a motorcycle. The friend's first line was, "What you need is the power of God in your life." His second, when Tully asked how: "All you have to do is die." The wife said "What?" Tully thought, *I was planning to do that anyway*. He gave his life to Christ that evening, and was set free of the spirits and the drugs at once.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

PHILIPPIANS 1:21 ↗

That verse is how he answered the question of why he still trusts Jesus. "I was someone else then and I'm someone else now, and I always will be, because my life is in him. There's really nothing to go back to. I know what's waiting out there, and it's nothing I want." Whatever he does is the Lord's to do; whatever he chooses is the Lord's choice. Then, having said everything, he stopped — which he noted is a good idea.

Lisha: "Trust me"

► 1:27:11

Lisha said plainly that standing up was a big step for her and that she would probably cry. She grew up on Bible stories at bedtime — Daniel in the lions' den, David and Goliath. What decided things was hearing at school about David Livingstone, the missionary who fell in love with Africa and its people and died there on his knees praying. Those who found him removed his heart and buried it in Africa under a tree before sending his body home. A seven-year-old understood that as a picture of Christ: sent by the Father, giving his heart, giving everything. She kept asking her mother about Jesus, and then one Sunday, at an altar call, she heard him say *follow me, give me your heart*, and she walked up and told the pastor she wanted to.

► 1:33:12

At thirteen, worshiping at Hope Chapel and looking at a banner with the Lamb on it, she heard the Lord say he wanted her to dance for him. Dance leaders invited her into March for Jesus. She wanted to say yes; she said no and walked off. Not long after, at a homeschool co-op, her right knee locked mid-run — something turning, something spinning — and then, playing basketball, a pop loud enough that everyone around her told her not to move. She looked down and her leg was facing the wrong way.

The surgeon called it a difficult repair: benign tumors in the bone, in the tibia and fibula, a break bad enough to require a rod six or seven inches long set against the bone so it would grow back straight. Dan Davis and his wife Vicki, and others across the church, prayed her through it. "Lord, why did this

happen?” she asked. “You’re telling me you want me to dance, and then this.” What he said back was not an explanation. He whispered *trust me*. “Okay,” she said. “I’ll try and trust you.”

► 1:40:59

She learned to walk again on crutches, had a second surgery to take the rod out — and more of the tumor with it — and learned to walk again after that. The doctor told her that if he did not see the knee bend to ninety degrees, he would force it. She told him he would not, and started ballet to strengthen the muscle. She found out it had worked on an exercise bike in a Walmart aisle, and she went into the appointment swinging her legs. The doctor said he would start telling patients with broken legs to take ballet. And she danced in March for Jesus.

► 1:43:34

The second story was smaller and took longer. A job far south of where she lived, a commute she dreaded, a workplace she described as heavy, and a prayer she kept praying: let me work from home. Her mother’s answer on the phone, every time, was the same verse.

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

GALATIANS 6:9 ↗

And then, before hanging up: *Are you dressed?* Yes, Mom. *Are you dressed?*

“Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace; in all circumstances take up the shield of faith... And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

EPHESIANS 6:14–17 ↗

So she put it on out loud in the car on the way in, piece by piece, and went to work praying and worshipping through it. One morning her mother drove her and said that as she watched Lisha walk toward the building, the Lord showed her the whole armor of God being put on her as she went. A year later a friend pointed her to a job posting; she applied, got it, and has been working from home since. “Sometimes we want to treat Jesus like he’s a genie — give me three wishes and I’ll be fine. That don’t work.” The hymn that carried her is the old one: *I’m so glad I learned to trust him, precious Jesus, Savior, friend; and I know that he is with me, will be with me to the end.*

Same Lord

► 1:48:56

Matt thanked all three for the honesty — the good, the bad and the funny — and then turned the room back on itself. There is something better than hearing about God moving in someone else's life, he said, and it is yielding to the Lord of glory yourself. He took the invitation straight out of the series the church was already in: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

"Different people, different stories, different circumstances, different problems — same Lord, who is trustworthy."

It is right to yield to him even when the details are fuzzy, Matt said, because the Lord himself is clear. The prayer teams came forward, and the service ended with an open invitation: come and be prayed with, or say yes where you are, even if you have no other words.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [John 3:3](#)
- [John 10:27–29](#)
- [Acts 3:1–8](#)
- [Philippians 1:21](#)
- [Galatians 6:9](#)
- [Ephesians 6:14–17](#)
- [Hebrews 3:15](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Glenn walked away for nine years and was never let go of. Where in your own story can you see God keeping hold of you while you were not holding on to him?
2. Glenn hid from the man God had sent him. Who is the person you have been avoiding, and what might be waiting on the other side of that conversation?
3. Tully realized he was on the wrong side without anyone arguing him there. What has shown you where you actually stand?
4. Lisha asked why and heard “trust me” instead of an answer. What are you currently asking why about, and what would trusting look like without the answer?
5. Lisha’s mother asked, every single morning, “Are you dressed?” What would it change this week to put the armor on out loud before you walk into the hardest room you enter?

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Glenn Tompkins grew up Roman Catholic in Port Arthur, Texas, came to Christ at a Baptist teen center there, and recommitted his life while stationed with the Air Force in Hawaii. Tully Rose is an engineer and the son of an engineer, a Navy veteran who came out of the late-sixties drug and occult scene. Lisha gave her heart to Jesus at seven, was told at thirteen to dance for the Lord, and now works from home after a year of praying for it. All three were asked ahead of time by pastor Matt Ryniker to say why they trust Jesus.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqr0MOrARMI&t=3458s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.