

# Church Weekend Away

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Preacher: Adrian Holloway

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Adrian is going to come and preach to us now. I'd like to introduce him to you. I first came across, I've not met Adrian before, but I first came across Adrian, what must have been 25, 26 years ago, about 13, read this little yellow book that he wrote called The Shock of Your Life that my youth would have put in my hands.

I think he was expecting me, he gave it to me on a Sunday morning and he was expecting me to read it slowly and I go back to that email having devoured it and shaken by this story that Adrian had written about a number of young people who in one way or another face death and then have to encounter Jesus and what happens to them as a result.

It was part of my story of becoming a Christian when I'd grown up in church. Adrian is an evangelist, he leads Beacon Church in Canberra, which is part of our commission family. We really want to commend him to you, kind of listen eagerly to all he has to share with us as he teaches us more about how to share Jesus with others and this wonderful gospel that we have to share.

Can we welcome him? Make some noise. Well, thank you so much for that wonderful introduction and can I just say I'm really looking forward to being back with you guys in December for your carol service.

That's partly why I'm here in case you haven't worked it out yet. So I'm coming back in December for your carol service. I'll be speaking then and that's partly why I'm getting to know you guys here this morning in this lovely place on a hot summer's day.

[ 1 : 3 9 ]     I thought maybe I'll begin if that's okay with you the funny story. Would that be okay? Good, good. Well folks, one year after my wife Julia and I got married, I invited her out for a wedding anniversary meal.

So this was a romantic occasion at a local Italian restaurant and the evening was going really well. In fact, the evening was going so well that I actually plucked up the courage to ask my wife Julia a question that I had never, ever asked her before.

I asked her, why did you marry me? And she answered, well, I could see that you needed help.

I was like, what do you mean? She said, you weren't normal. She said, you needed sorting out.

And she wasn't kidding, folks, because for the three years before I married Julia, I only ate tinned meat. I had four tins that I used to rotate, Sainsbury's Julie Konkani, Sainsbury's Chicken Madras, Sainsbury's Chicken Korma, and in my opinion, the prince of Sainsbury's Tinned Meat Range, Chicken Supreme.

[ 3 : 0 5 ]     In fact, Julia looked me in the eye once and she said, I know dogs that have got a more varied diet in me. Five years later, we were living in Birmingham and I sat down our two eldest daughters, Esther, who was aged four at the time, Bethany, who was aged two at the time, and I told them both the big news that we as a family were moving from Birmingham to London.

Esther thought about this for a moment. And then she asked me an excellent question. She said, Daddy, when we move to London, we'll have new neighbours, won't we?

I said, yes, Esther, we will. She said, Daddy, they won't like you. I asked, why?

Why won't they like me? She said, well, she said, you've got no hair. But nevertheless, despite my baldness, we were able to make friends with our new neighbours in London and we helped plant a new church.

Five years later, I met a woman who lived in our street and I told her that Julia and I now had four daughters. She says to me, oh, she said, that'll be pricey.

[ 4 : 31 ] I said, pardon? She said, that'll be pricey. I said, what do you mean? She said, well, did you know that the average cost of a wedding in the UK is now £15,000?

She said, factoring in inflation. Factoring in inflation, she said, that means you're probably going to have to stump up £70,000 to marry them all off. I said, well, I haven't got £70,000.

She said, well, she said, you're going to have to rob a bank. I said, I can't rob a bank. I'm a Christian. She said, oh, how very inconvenient.

But we then had a really good conversation. Because I was able to tell her that when I did put my trust in Christ, it was actually the most fantastic. It was the most brilliant experience for me.

And I began to tell her about the benefits that I received when I put my trust in Christ. And this morning I was thinking maybe we could look at some of those benefits.

[ 5 : 39 ] Maybe we could look at some of the fringe benefits that you and I receive when we share the good news about Jesus with other people.

Now, obviously, we don't share the good news about Jesus with other people for our benefits. But it just so happens that there are actually some fringe benefits for us when we do.

So let's look for the next few minutes at some of those incidental fringe benefits that we receive. And there's a handout for this on the chairs if you're interested to follow along.

So the more that we focus on unconvinced or we focus on, if you like, unreached people, let's look at five benefits. Benefit number one, there'll be more joy in our lives.

I was talking to a woman in our church in London called Heather. And maybe I could tell you the story of Heather's friendship with two sisters. These sisters were called Anna and Sarah.

[ 6 : 45 ] Now, neither Anna nor Sarah would have called themselves Christians. And Heather, who's friends with these two sisters, she invites both of them along to our Alpha Launch party. This is an event where they're going to encourage people to come back the following Wednesday and join our Alpha course where they can find out more about the Christian faith.

So the invitation was made. Heather invites Sarah, the older of the two sisters. Why don't you come along to our Alpha launch party next week? The following morning after this invitation was issued, Sarah, who at the time was a trainee lawyer, she's at work.

It's the end of the working day. And her boss says to her, I'm giving you some documents now, Sarah. And I just ask you, please, you can take them back to your flat overnight, but please, could you take them to the courthouse tomorrow morning for a trial?

And just so you know, the boss says, just so you know, Sarah, this particular trial, Sarah, can't start until there's bits of paper I'm giving you now a ride in the courthouse tomorrow morning.

Sarah thinks to herself, don't panic. I'll just set my alarm earlier than I normally would. In fact, she thinks she'll set two alarms. Sarah even arranges for her friend to phone her just in case her two alarms fail.

[ 8 : 02 ] The following morning, everything's fine. A bit like the cock crowing now. She wakes up on time. Everything's great. And she gets to the end of her road and she gets to the main road. And when she arrives at the main road, she finds that overnight, the council have combed off the entire bus line.

There's a sign up saying there are no buses running on that road today. There's a sign up saying that the council are replacing the Victorian sewers. Sarah thinks to herself, don't panic.

I will simply walk to the underground train station. She walks to the underground train station. When she arrives there, the gates are locked. There's a whiteboard sign up which says, London Underground regrets to inform you that the northern line is part suspended today.

She thinks, don't panic. I will simply walk to the overland train station. This is quite a long walk. So she walks to the overland train station. When she arrives at the overland train station, her heart sinks.

People are queuing to get in to the overland train station. She joins the end of the queue. She queues into the station. She queues through the ticket barrier.

[ 9 : 15 ] She queues down the steps. Even when she's on the platform, she has to queue on the platform as the trains arrive. People get on the train. Eventually, she gets to the front of the platform. She's definitely going to catch the next train.

She looks at the board to see when it's going to arrive. She looks at the time that it says it's going to arrive. And she starts to get really worried. She thinks to herself, I don't know whether a train arriving here at that time is going to get these bits of paper to the courthouse before the advertised start time of this trial.

And she thinks, what would my Christian friend, Heather, do? What would Heather do if Heather were in this situation?

She thinks Heather would pray to God. Now, Sarah has never actually prayed a prayer to God as an adult ever before.

But she thinks, you know what? I'm going to do that. So she starts to pray on the platform. There are hundreds of people on this platform. Not out loud, but kind of in her mind.

[ 10 : 23 ] She closes her eyes and she begins to pray. Hello, God. It's me, Sarah. Yes. I guess you probably know that.

Yeah. So I would be really grateful, God, if somehow you could help me out because I'm in a bit of a pickle here, as you probably know. And so if there's any way, God, that you could somehow get these bits of paper that I'm holding now to the courthouse before the advertised start time of the trial, I'd be really, really, really grateful if you could help me out.

I can't particularly see right now how you would do that. But if you could help me out, I'd be really, really grateful. So thank you very much. Yours sincerely.

Over and out. Amen, she prays. She opens her eyes. And she looks at the man who's standing next to her on the platform.

The man who is standing next to her on the platform is the barrister. The barrister who she's supposed to give the papers to at the courthouse is staying next to her on the platform.

[ 11 : 41 ] And she's so surprised that she doesn't actually say anything to him. And she just hands over the pieces of paper.

The barrister is standing there minding his own business, suddenly giving these bits of paper, opens the folder. He recognizes the case. And he says, oh, what a marvelous service.

I'm really very impressed. This is really rather good. Now I can prepare on the train. This is really very good. Do pass on my thanks to the partners of your firm.

This is their very good service. That's what prepare on the train. Thank you very much indeed. So the train arrives. The barrister gets on the train with the documents. And Sarah's left on the platform.

And she thinks to herself, now come on. I mean, what are the chances? I mean, statistically, there's like 8 million people in this city. What are the chances that the first time that I ever pray a prayer to God as an adult, that at that moment, the person on the planet who could most easily have solved my problem would, by chance, happen to be standing right next to me at that moment.

[ 12 : 53 ] What are the chances? And so you might not be surprised to hear that the following Wednesday, Sarah turned up at our Alpha launch party with her sister, Anna, who Heather had invited these two.

And they actually said yes. They came back the following Wednesday for week one of Alpha. And they came back every week for Alpha. On week eight, they agreed to go on the Holy Spirit weekend away, which actually was not far from here, funnily enough.

And on that weekend away, both Sarah and Anna made the decision to follow Jesus Christ. They then came on our 10-week follow-up course, which was called Beta.

And then after that, both Sarah and Anna both were baptized at our church. And in fact, after that, both Sarah and Anna, they both actually married young men in our church.

They didn't marry the same young man. That would be a completely bizarre end of the story. No, they married different young men. But looking back at what happened, I went back to Heather.

[ 13 : 55 ] Do you remember Heather at the start of the story? She was the young woman in our church who invited these two sisters along. And I said to Heather, hey, it's amazing what's happened to Sarah and Anna, don't you think?

And what Heather said back to me in reply was so memorable that I wrote it down. This is what Heather said. She said, the more that I prayed for Sarah to know Christ, I found myself thinking about how amazing it would be for Sarah to have eternal life.

And praying regularly for Sarah brought the wonder of my own salvation front and center in a new way. Heather said, focusing on unconvinced people has reminded me that all of my own problems are in the context of me being guaranteed certain of a place in heaven.

Heather said, I found it hard to stay offended and stay upset about things when I'm continually having my mind flooded with the fact, I'm going to be spending most of my time in heaven.

Thinking evangelistically, she said, has built in my mind a mountain of gratitude for my own salvation. Heather said, it's hard for the seeds of bitterness and disappointment to take root in a thankful heart.

[ 15 : 23 ] Folks, Colossians 1.27 says that Christ in you is the hope of glory. And this is such an exciting, empowering verse because it shows how much God is with you.

How you and Christ are now part of the same team. Can you see how important you are? Can you see how valuable you are?

You are the kingdom of God. When your alarm goes off on a Monday morning, when you hit the shower, Christ in you is up. And the kingdom of darkness is not happy about that.

You see, the devil would be delighted if all Christians were to live in cozy Christian ghettos. The devil would be delighted if there were no Christians in business, no Christians in teaching, no Christians in local government, no Christians in the media, no Christians in sport.

The devil would be delighted if all Christians were living in these cozy Christian ghettos. Why? Because the devil knows that in John 17, verse 15, Jesus didn't pray. Oh, Father, please take the nice Christians out of the nasty world.

[ 16 : 34 ] No, the devil knows that in John 17, Jesus prayed. Father, keep the Christians in the world. Because you are the kingdom of God. Wherever you go, God goes.

Wherever you are working now, God is working. When you enter your workplace, Christ in you arrives. Jesus is going to work on Monday through you.

Second benefit. We will live with a greater sense of our value, dignity, and purpose.

The Bible says that we are therefore now Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal to us. At the gym, my friend Chris asked me, what have you been up to, Adrian, this week?

I said, Chris, preparing a talk to help Christians reach unconvinced seekers with the good news about Jesus.

[ 17 : 48 ] He said, Adrian, can I give you some advice? I said, yes, Chris, please do. He said, tell them to bear in mind, Adrian, that people like me are cynical about religion.

I said, Chris, many people I meet are cynical about religion. Many people I meet are turned off by religion, but they're positive about relationships. Many people I meet, Chris, are cynical about religion, but they actually have quite a high opinion of Jesus as a person.

I said, Chris, most people I meet have a high view of Jesus as a person. I said, Chris, the great thing is that what is on offer is not religion.

I said, Chris, what is on offer is a relationship with Jesus that goes on forever. He said, oh, he said, I can see how that could be appealing.

I said, Chris, do you believe in God? He said, wow, that depends. I said, on what?

[ 19 : 03 ] He said, on where I am. I said, what do you mean? He said, wow, when I get on my bike and I'm cycling out into the countryside and I can see the grass and the trees and the flowers and I can see all the, you know, all of the countryside.

He said, I cannot bring myself to believe that it's all just a total accident. I then asked Chris my favorite question.

I said, Chris, do you believe that you're alive for a reason? He said, yes, but I have absolutely no idea what it is.

And I felt honored. I felt privileged to be in the room for the conversation which followed.

We are therefore now Christ's ambassadors as though God was making his appeal to us.

[ 20 : 15 ] Folks, you have been appointed as an ambassador for Christ. God is on your side and all the resources of heaven have been placed at our disposal.

We have been promised that when we do speak up on his behalf, God is going to back us up. We will be amazed to see how much the Holy Spirit will help us. Okay, benefit number three.

We will see ourselves making a difference. Now, you love this. You love it when the God of the Bible, when the God who is there, you love it when God's love breaks into somebody else's life through you.

You love that. And it's as we go that Jesus says, I will be with you always, even to the very end of the age. Jesus said, look, I haven't come to call the righteous, but sinners.

Jesus said, look, it's actually not the healthy who need a doctor. It's the sick. The apostle Paul said, Christ Jesus came into the world. Why? To save sinners.

[ 21 : 23 ] Sinners. Jesus said of himself, I have come to seek and to save the lost. We need to remember that Jesus made a conscious decision to hang out with unbelieving people.

His reputation was that he was a friend of sinners. People said, oh yeah, we've all heard of Jesus of Nazareth. Everybody's talking about him. Here's what we've heard about him. Jesus of Nazareth, yeah, he's a glutton. Jesus of Nazareth, yeah, he's a winebibber.

Yeah, he's a friend of tax collectors and sinners. And people said that about Jesus because he did make a habit of deliberately spending time with irreligious people.

So as soon as we even start praying regularly for that skeptical person, we're pointing ourselves in the direction that Jesus pointed himself.

We are lining ourselves up with the mission that Jesus lined himself up with. And so when we prioritize unconvinced people, all the resources of heaven swing in behind us and God himself is cheering us on.

[ 22 : 34 ] It's just as clear when Jesus says to his followers in John 20 verse 21, As the Father has sent me, Jesus says, I am sending you. I remember when I became a Christian, it was so amazing to think that God the Father had sent this human being, Jesus the Son.

But what a delicious, marvelous, sumptuous thing it is for us to see in the same way that God the Father sent Jesus the Son, in the same way Jesus is now sending you and me.

Jesus says as much when we overhear Jesus praying to his Father for you. This is Jesus praying to his Father about you in John 17, 18.

Jesus says, as you have sent me into the world, Father, I have sent them into the world. Amazing. In the same way and to the same extent that God the Father sent Jesus the Son, now Jesus has sent you into your friendship circle of those you know who are not yet Christians, whether that be in your office, amongst your neighbors, amongst your family, whoever it is that you're connected to at the moment who doesn't yet know Christ.

As much as the Father was with Jesus, Jesus is now with you. Amazing. Okay, let's look at the fourth of our five benefits.

[ 23 : 58 ] Benefits. Benefit number four, which is you will become a stronger person with a fuller understanding of Christ. Philemon verse 6 says that it's actually through sharing our faith that we get a fuller understanding of how great our inheritance in Christ really is.

We learn things about God and the gospel by obeying that gospel, by sharing it. That's how Philemon verse 6 works. For example, here's a story about a couple who were in our church in Rygate.

This is some years ago. So I was in this church for nine years. This is a church in Rygate in Surrey where I met my wife Julia some years ago. And this is a story about a couple in our church in Rygate.

They're called Richard and Jill. And Jill is a nurse at East Surrey Hospital where Esther was born. And anyway, this couple, Richard and Jill in our church, they were active in sharing their faith with a couple called Paul and Helena Hanley.

Now, neither Paul or Helena, neither of them would have called themselves Christians. Paul was a 35-year-old atheist. He was an insurance broker in the city of London. Helena's a nurse like Jill at East Surrey Hospital.

[ 25 : 15 ] And Paul is one of those people that you occasionally sometimes come across in life. Someone who's actually opposed, kind of outspokenly opposed against Christianity.

He's one of those kind of people. Now, today, both Paul and Helena are Christians. In fact, Paul has been serving as the pastor of a church in Cornwall. And this is actually the second church that Paul and Helena have led.

And so if you are anything like me, you kind of wonder, how does that happen? I mean, like when you're 35 and you're married with kids, how do you become a Christian?

But how does it happen? Well, here's how it happened. One day, Paul and Helena were going for a walk in the park in Caterham in Surrey where they live.

And as they were walking along the path, they saw this couple, Richard and Jill, that I just mentioned, who are sitting on the grass over there. Now, I told you earlier that both of these women work at East Surrey Hospital.

[ 26 : 22 ] So they're friends. And so what's happened is that Jill from our church, she has been active in sharing her place in Christ with her friend Helena. That's Paul's wife. And so Paul is aware, as he's walking along the path with Helena, he is aware this is the Christian couple.

So what Paul decides to do is to blank them. He decides to deliberately not look at them and just keep looking straight down the path. But, oh, there's been too much eye contact.

Oh, man. So he has to do that thing. He's walking along. He has to go, oh, almost walked straight by. He didn't see you there. How are you doing? It's great to see you, Paul says.

He looks down and sees that Richard and Jill are having a picnic. The thing is that Paul and Helena are holding picnic boxes. And so the social rules of Surrey dictate that Paul and Helena have to go and sit down with Richard and Jill and have their picnic with Richard and Jill.

And Paul is thinking, oh, how did this happen? I'm stuck with the Christians. But he thinks, do you know what? I'll just have some fun with them. Because if they do bring up, I don't know, whatever it is that the Christians talk about.

[ 27 : 39 ] What do they talk about? God and Jesus and the Bible and whatever that stuff is. Paul thinks, I'll just be able to point out the factual errors, the logical inconsistencies. I'll be able to tie them up in their own words.

And so they sit down, the four of them. And wouldn't you know, two minutes into the conversation, Paul's wife Helena asks Jill from our church a question about Jill's Christian faith.

And for the next hour and a half, the four of them have this full on, no holds barred discussion about God and Jesus and the Bible and such things.

And you know, at the end of this 90 minute conversation, Paul's going back to the car with Helena with the empty picnic boxes. And he remembers thinking to himself, you know, I knew that it would be easy to win as Paul sees it, to win the conversation against the Christians as Paul sees it.

But Paul remembers thinking, you know, it was even easier than I thought it would be. He gets to the car. He says, I opened up the boot.

[ 28 : 45 ] He said, I put the empty picnic boxes in the boot. I closed the boot. I went to the driver's position. He says, I put my key in the ignition.

And then I heard myself say these words. Helena, darling, you know that credit card bill that I told you yesterday was this much?

Actually, darling, I lied. It was much more. It was actually this much. Well, they've been for the full and frank exchange of views between the married couple.

This dies down. Paul drives home thinking, what was that? He pulls up onto his gravel drive in his house in Caterham. And he feels this compelling urge to go into his study.

And he gets out a blank piece of paper. And he just starts writing a list of everything that he can think of that he has ever done that he thinks was wrong.

[ 29 : 52 ] And when I met Paul, I did ask him about this. He said, Adrian, it took me three days. I said, why did it take me three days? He said, I have 35 years of stuff to write down.

Anyway, you guys already know the end of this story. Because I told you at the start, both Paul and Helena both become Christians. And I told you that they went on to leave this church in Cornwall.

And I told you it was actually the second church they've led. The first time that I ever met Paul and Helena Hanley was on their first Sunday at our church.

So I was standing. I was part of the welcome team. Yeah, I'm standing on the door. And I'm looking at people coming in. And I'm looking at this couple with their three sons walking up the drive. And I'm thinking, I don't think I've ever seen these people before.

So they come in. I introduce myself. They introduce themselves. I said, oh, well, do you know anyone here at our church? They said, oh, yes, we know Richard and Jill. Oh, I know Richard and Jill. I said, so do you mind me asking, Paul, is this your first time at our church?

[ 30 : 52 ] He said, oh, yes, it's our first time at any church. We've just become Christians earlier this week. I thought, what a great answer. Anyway, I then said, Paul, do you mind me asking how that happened?

And he told me the story that I just told you. And as you can imagine, as Paul is telling the story, he's getting towards the end. Like you, I'm wondering, Paul, what was it?

I asked him, Paul, what was it that Richard and Jill said to you that afternoon in the park over the picnic? What did they say to you, Paul, that made you want to confess about the credit card bill, that made you want to spend three days in your study writing down a list of everything that you'd ever thought that you've done that's wrong?

Why was it, or what did they say to you? What did they say to you, Paul, in the park that made you want to leave atheism and become a Christian?

What did they say? And he replied, oh, he said, it wasn't anything they say. I said, well, what was it then? He said, oh, he said, it was them.

[ 31 : 59 ] It was something about them. Paul would now say it was Christ in them. Do you know the funny thing about telling you the story?

At this point, Paul Hanley has been at our church for 10 minutes. It's his first Sunday. Nine years later, Paul Hanley was the pastor of our church.

Paul says that what happened was that he felt this desire suddenly that he never felt before. He just wanted to be clean. He wanted to be washed. He wanted to be purged.

He wanted to be forgiven. He wanted to start over. He'd never felt any of this before. He was totally happy as he was. But suddenly, he feels this thing happening. And his whole life changes.

Paul and Hanley discovered that summer that there's more to life than being happy. They actually said there's more to life than being married with kids. I remember them saying that. They discovered there's a real God who really loves you.

[ 33 : 05 ] And Paul and Heather's life was changed. They went on to lead our church and they led this other church, as I mentioned, in Cornwall. But folks, can I ask you just to think about what happened from Richard and Jill's point of view?

Let's imagine that Jill drove here to the farm this morning. Imagine Jill's been sitting on the back row this whole talk.

And now she comes up and she's given the microphone. Here's what Jill would say. Jill would say, Philemon verse 6 is true.

Through being active in sharing my faith with my friend Helena, I now have a fuller understanding of every good thing that I have in Christ. Because I've learned how the Holy Spirit convicts people of sin.



That there is this supernatural power that is real. And this supernatural power, God, the reality of God, speaks to people's hearts and does stuff in people's hearts that makes them leave atheism and become Christians.

[ 34 : 09 ] It's amazing, Jill would say. Through being active in sharing my faith, Jill says, I now have a fuller, greater understanding of every good thing that I have in Christ.

Okay, we've made it to the last benefit. Benefit number five, which is that we'll become more like Jesus. How so? Well, Jesus drew people to God in lots of different ways.

I'm sure you'd agree. One way that Jesus drew people to God was by telling stories. Yeah? Parables and such.

So as Jesus makes you increasingly more like him, don't be surprised if you find that you get more and more pleasure through storytelling.

People love to listen to Jesus' stories. The common people, the Bible says, the common people heard him gladly. Somebody could hear that and say, yeah, I get that.

[ 35 : 12 ] I get the importance of storytelling in our culture. In fact, I get the importance of storytelling in ancient cultures, you know, the oral culture, the parables and whatnot. But somebody might say, here's the bit I think you might be missing.

Somebody might say, I don't really have a story. Somebody might say, I don't have like a dramatic story. Like some people do have dramatic stories about before I was a Christian, you know, dramatic things.

And then suddenly drama. I've become a Christian. Huge change. Somebody might say, I don't really have a testimony. Kind of before and after. Somebody might say, look, the truth is, I was brought up in a Christian home.

And I was actually only eight years old when I became a Christian. So, you know, if you were to say, what was my before story? I said, well, you know, I went to a church in a primary school in Guildford.

That's my before. That's how dramatic it was, somebody might say. Now, my wife, Julia, it just so happens that she is the most effective personal evangelist I know.

[ 36 : 15 ] Julia has led more of her friends to Christ than anyone else I know. Yet Julia grew up in the most wonderful, loving Christian family at Caterham Baptist Church.

Julia, of all people, could so easily say, I don't really have a testimony. So what does she do?

Does she make one up? Does she say, yeah, I was abandoned by my parents at birth. And I was raised by a pack of wolves. And it was when I was running with the wolves, that's when I first learned to hunt and kill with my bare hands.

It was about that stage in my life that I first discovered voodoo. Is that what she said? No, that's not what she said. The truth is that Julia did not grow up in the Bronx.

She never saw action in Vietnam. Before she came to Christ, she attended Croydon High School for Girls. And about the most rebellious thing that my wife has ever done was once when she handed in her Latin homework late.

[ 37 : 26 ] So what is her 45 second faith story? This is what she says. She says, as a child, I worried a lot. Even though really, I had nothing to worry about.

She says, like many people, she says, I was a born worrier. She says, my parents brought me up to believe the Bible. I became a Christian aged 12 and I was baptised aged 13.

She says, but when I was 17 years old, I got glandular fever and I missed a lot of school. I could have got really worried. But I felt God's presence.

And I learned not to get worried about things. I felt this amazing sense of peace. I went to university.

I could easily have turned my back on Jesus. But I found that I didn't want to. God had done something real in my life. I was a born worrier.

[ 38 : 29 ] But God gave me peace. Maybe the band would like to come and join me. In fact, maybe we could stand up together. Let's stand, shall we?

The Bible says that one day there will be so many people in heaven that no one will be able to count them. That there will be an uncountably large number of people in heaven.

By that stage, there will be at least one person from every tribe and every language and every nation around the throne of God in heaven. That means, folks, that between today and that day, it must be the case that millions and millions and millions of people are going to meet Jesus and come to know him personally.

You and I get to be part of seeing that happen. We get to play our part in the most wonderful thing that will ever happen in the future history of our world.

And we can have the time of our lives in the process. We get to enjoy that journey. Right now, we are already in the most glorious adventure.

[ 39 : 41 ] Father, I pray. Lord, as we come to worship you now. Oh, Lord, let us join with that uncountably large number of people around your throne.

From every tribe and every tongue and every language and every nation. We thank you for the success of your great commission. We thank you that Jesus, through your blood, you have purchased men and women for God.

From out of every nation on earth. Thank you, Lord. For those who will meet you here in Hampshire and will go and take that good news to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Thank you, Lord, that through Harvest Church Alton, you will fulfill your great commission. Thank you, Lord, that those of us in this tent this morning on this sunny day are part of the greatest thing that will ever happen in the future history of our world.

As Jesus will be the Lord. As Jesus will meet his bride. As the nations will be evangelized. As the church will marry Jesus. And glory will come to you. We thank you for it.

[ 40 : 50 ] In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.