

Series: It's Hard to Believe

Date: October 15, 2023

Speaker: Pastor Spence Shelton, Lead Pastor

Text: 1 Corinthians 6.12-20

Kingdom City Church - Joseph Anderson Announcement

Hey Mercy Church! I'm standing here with Pastor Joseph Anderson & his wife Kaylon who we all know and love. As you probably know by now, they are in the preparation phase for church planting. We are SO excited for them. It is a dream of ours to be a church planting church. And there's no question the Andersons represent Mercy's best. Today I have them here because we are announcing the location of their church plant, the name, and the upcoming interest meeting. Next Year Joseph & Kaylon will be planting Kingdom City Church in the heart of Atlanta GA!

Here's how you can help. You gotta pray. Unless the Lord builds the house... Secondly, these are the kinds of moments where you see your generosity in action. Mercy is going to get behind

Kingdom City by providing a residency for Joseph so he can fully focus on planting. Ya'll these next few months are vital for his focus and your generosity affords us the ability to allow Joseph to transition to being a church planting resident. He'll do that fully in January and yes we already have hired our next campus pastor for MNE. Your generosity also allows us to help fund Kingdom City's budget in its first few years. Generosity fuels the mission. And this is a great example of why you give. Some of you are going to be called to give above and beyond your tithe directly to this work and you should!! Lastly listen - some of you God is going to call to pack your bags and move to ATL with the Andersons. 30 people moved from Raleigh-Durham & Greensboro 8 years ago to start Mercy Church. And this is where we are now. I believe God will call some of you to the same kind of step of faith.

Interest Meeting - Oct 29 + Nov 1. Come hear the vision God has laid on their hearts for this new work. Gonna be awesome.

(SLIDE FOR INTEREST MEETING)

PRAY

Sermon Intro

We are in week 5 of our 6 part series called "It's Hard to Believe," and in this series we are talking about 6 of the common topics or discussions that are roadblocks or barriers



that our friends, family, neighbors, & coworkers feel make it hard to believe in the Christian message. Our LAST two weeks we are going to talk about one of the main Gods of the age - The Cultural Ideology of Sexuality.

PARENTS! We sent an email but I know that doesn't always get out to everyone. FEAR NOT! I'm going to create an off ramp for you if you need it ok. In a minute I'm going to pray for us. And that is your queue to avail yourself of our wonderful kids ministry. If you need my help deciding on kids ministry - I consider this a PG-13 sermon.

Here's the two week breakdown - Today we'll talk about what I'm going to call the sexual revolution. Now you may know that term and you may not. That term has been used by some as a means to spew venom in the name of God, and its been used by others as a rallying cry for rebelling against God. I'm not trying to do either. My goal in the term *revolution* is to emphasize just how impactful the ideas of this movement have been on our society. My hope is this will help us see the more loving way of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What I am talking about is the movement that began in America in the 60s that believed uninhibited self expression, particularly in the area of sexuality, was the chief value that would lead to human flourishing. And it revolutionized the culture we live in.

Some historians say more than even the American or industrial revolutions.

Next week we'll talk about Gender Dysphoria and the transgender movement. These two are watershed topics. It's sensitive, and has been the area where alot of confusion and pain exists. Today and next week I hope to provide you with, if nothing else, a clear and loving explanation of the Bible's take on sexuality. To help equip you to walk faithfully with Christ and to help others do so as well.

Ok, so here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to walk you through the Bible's vision for sexuality FIRST. To do that we are going to look at 1 Corinthians 6. Starting in verse 18. I'll show you what God says and THEN I'll explain two tenets of the sexual revolution and how empty it is compared to God's rich beautiful vision of sexuality. **But first let's pray.** And while normally prayer is for prayer, parents you have an exception and nobody will think a thing about you moving about during prayer. **PRAY**

18 "Flee sexual immorality!"

Ok, so we start out with a pretty clear command here. Flee sexual immorality. Let's talk about it. First let's define sexual immorality. We gotta know what God is telling us to flee FROM.



Our English translators have chosen to translate one Greek word into two English words. The Greek word is “pornea” where we get the word pornography from. This one is important because it sets the terms of the biblical sexual ethic. Paul says flee pornea. This one term is kind of a junk drawer word in that it represents all sexual expressions possible outside of the sexual relationship between a man and a woman in marriage. That’s it. That’s the two categories of sexual expression in the bible. There is husband and wife sexual expression and there is pornea. Or sexual immorality. So you ask yeah but does that include....Ok listen the answer is yes. It includes THAT. Whatever you are thinking, it includes that. “What about engaged couples or people planning to get married? Outside of marriage between a man and a woman—porneia. Well how about if you don’t go all the way? ANY sexual expression. Let’s just call it like it is - Groping, masturbating, taking and sending nude or sexualized pics. Sending sexualized texts and DMs. ANY sexual expression. Outside of the marriage commitment there is to be no intercourse, no outer-course, no upper-course, lower- course, —no coursing of any kind.

Welcome to Mercy Church. I’m not sorry. We gotta talk about what we are dealing with in the world and stop pretending like we are too sanitized to deal with the realities facing us and our

children. THAT list is pornea. And to that list the author says one word “FLEE!”

Some of you are like yeah **BUT WHERE IS THE LINE?** And first I’m like come on man. The command is flee. Not toe the line. So instead of talking about a line let’s talk about it this way. You know what a **bottle rocket** is? Firework you light and it explodes. When you light a bottle rocket, it does what its supposed to. It flies up for a couple of seconds and explodes. If you don’t want the rocket to go off, don’t LIGHT THE FUSE. What you don’t do is light the fuse and then ask where is the line on the fuse that you should go try and STOP the thing from going off? Get what I’m sayin? FLEE anything that’s gonna light the fuse.

Young men and women especially, allow your pastor to admonish you here. FLEE! The world’s understanding of sexuality is broken, twisted, and constantly attacking itself. Also, it is devouring itself and cancel culture is out to take one mistake and destroy you for forever for it. That’s not the gospel its anti-gospel and it is FIRE that you do not want to play with. FLEE.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.



Listen, this is one crystal clear example of how different the Word is from the World. The World says the person who satisfies whatever desire he has, is to be praised! It says you are doing a morally GOOD and RIGHT deed by gratifying your desire. And the bible says the opposite. That you are sinning against your OWN BODY...not even talking about others yet just talking about you. When you engage in sexual immorality YOU are sinning against yourSELF. You are harming YOURSELF. And this right here is the thing I don't think anybody believes. We believe if it feels GOOD and doesn't hurt anybody what's the big deal?

And the WORD says actually, momentary pleasure may not be the best way to judge "good." There is a better way. You were created for better sex than the bill of goods the world is selling you. This is a classic example of word v world and you will have to choose. And I PROMISE YOU the way of the world leads to pain and dissatisfaction and the way of Jesus leads to flourishing. We'll unpack more in a minute how damaging sexual immorality is but suffice it to say you are sinning against yourself. How? Well, if you look back up to the previous verses you see how. You unite yourself with something other than Christ. And spiritually that's tearing you apart.

"Don't you know that your bodies are a part of Christ's body? So should I take a part of Christ's body and make it part of a prostitute? Absolutely not!" 1 Corinthians 6:15

Sexual sin is in some sense, according to Paul, the worst sin you can commit on yourself. Now you may say, "wait, all sins are equal right?" Yes. We've said before: while all sins are equal before God, not all sins have equal effects. There is a way that sexual sin imprints itself onto you and it stays with you. You know this to be true. Whenever someone comes to tell me their deep dark secret they've been living with, it almost always involves some form of pornea. It's amazing the shame and guilt and brokenness this causes. But listen, what makes it even worse, what makes it so uniquely tragic to you is that it is the only sin that can create a union with something. The drunk doesn't unite himself with alcohol. The glutton doesn't unite himself with food. They use it in excess. But the sexually immoral person takes his or her union with Christ...that spiritual body...and damages it by uniting it with false lovers. The way one scholar said it...Paul is saying sex with a prostitute...sabotages your union with Christ. Same with all pornea.

Now in this moment...let me pause and say something. You might be tempted after all of that to think - Oh NO, I've ruined myself. There's no hope for me. Mercy is not a house of perfect people. All of us have sinned. In fact, to help illustrate the



point....saw a pastor do this recently was really impactful. Remember that list I told you about that is PORNEA? All the things that fall under the umbrella of sexual immorality? Lemme talk to the adults. Middle school and high school students you don't have to participate - I want you to be led by your church fam here. If you have ever at one point in your life...talking to all people at all 3 of our campuses and online...if you have ever at one point in your life fallen short of God's standard for sexuality - God's standard is Matthew 5.27-28 - if you have ever looked at a woman lustfully you have already committed adultery. In other words not just our sexually immoral behaviors fall short of God's standards but our sexually immoral desires are sinful as well.

If you have fallen short of God's standards EVEN ONCE IN YOUR LIFE I want you to raise your hand and I will participate. (Sinners and Liars)

My point - we are not here to make you feel ashamed. We are here to expose the destructive lies of the ideology of the sexual revolution and offer you a better way. Remember - not good people telling bad people how to live. We are redeemed people telling all people about the love of Jesus and the better way he offers.

And that's EXACTLY what Paul says next.

19 Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body."

Oh man here's the better vision, the better worldview about YOU than anything the world can offer. **In Christ you are a Sacred Redeemed Child of God.**

Your body is a temple...a sacred house...for the Holy Spirit. Your body is not just flesh and blood. You are not just a physical being. You are a spiritual being. And when God saves you from your sin...he comes and makes his home in you to guide you the rest of the days of your life. You are a temple now. A SACRED HOUSE. The temple was where God dwelt in the Old Testament. A sacred space that was so holy the room where God dwelt was called the holy OF holies. And He says what Jesus did was tear the curtain down between the holy of holies and the people of God. God left that space and came INTO his people. You see how sacred YOU are?

And you are redeemed. The Gospel says when you were dead in your sin Jesus DID NOT CANCEL YOU. Culture says if you violate its ethical code, you must pay forever for what you did. You ARE YOUR SIN. But the gospel has a better way. Jesus says your sin is worse than you thought. It separated you from



God for eternity. But you are also more loved than you could imagine. Because instead of God making you pay forever, he says what? YOU WERE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE.

The price of sin is death - not just in this life but eternal separation from God. And Jesus PAID the price of your sin by shedding his blood on the cross. He PURCHASED your life so you could be reconciled to God. You belong to God now.

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain but He washed it white as snow. God. Loves. You.

Some of you hate yourself because of what you did or what you are doing or your attractions. And you've been identifying yourself by that thing. And you feel trapped in it. I want to help you RESET where your identity comes from. I want to help you reset WHO YOU ARE. YOU are NOT that. Scripture says before Jesus you WERE prone to that. But NOW... no you are not that. Look at verse 11 of 1 Corinthians 6.

“Some of you USED TO BE like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

In Christ you are a sacred redeemed child of God. THAT is your identity. You are not your sexual sin, you are not your divorce, you are not your abortion, you are not your addiction, you are not your eating disorder. NONE OF THOSE get to have their

say over you. But in Christ...you are a sacred redeemed child of God. Will you receive that as fresh air in your lungs today? Will you lay those other labels down at the feet of Christ and receive the truer status that you are a sacred, redeemed child of God. And if you are like Pastor Spence you've repeated yourself a lot...You better believe it. The world is repeating it's label over you thousands of times so you better believe I'm gonna repeat over you what God says. So He says glorify God in your body. Instead of pornea choose glory. Don't choose the lesser shallow destructive pornea, choose glory.

In fact, that leads me to the 2 lies of the Sexual Revolution. 2 lies. One we've really dealt with so I'll be quick here.

Sexual Revolution Lie #1: Your desires are your identity

Desire does not equal identity. BUT, the power of the Sexual Revolution is to get you to think it does. For example - It doesn't say you experience same sex attraction, it says you ARE gay. That's a very important distinction. It's the distinction between experience & identity. Because listen, if they can get you to accept this as your identity, then they can control your behavior. BUT THE PROBLEM IS - your desires change constantly. AND the culture is constantly changing in telling you what desires are morally acceptable.



Keller Illustration about Scottish Warrior in 1880. He has two desires. He has deep feelings of violence and anger. And secondly, he is sexually attracted to men. Now, in that culture at that time, a shame and honor culture...his feelings of violence and aggression were honored. And his same sex attraction was shamed. So he would be encouraged to act on one but suppress the other. Well, you place that same man in uptown Charlotte today. Today his same sex attraction will be celebrated and affirmed. But his anger and violence will be suppressed. He will go to anger management to try and rid himself of that desire because it is so disliked in culture. WHY did he change? Because everyone has a grid they filter their behaviors and decisions through. And if you don't have something SUPERNATURAL, some ultimate authority like scripture, then you will ALWAYS do what culture tells you to do. Scripture says "you belong to God, you are not your own." And if you are like NO I BELONG TO ME, I'm telling you, you can either serve God or serve culture. But you WILL serve something.

And what we are saying today is your sexual desires are a TERRIBLE thing to determine your identity. They change all the time they intensify in one season and subside the next. The better voice to speak your identity is the unchanging voice of God and he has said in Christ you are a sacred, redeemed child of God.

Sexual Revolution Lie #1: Your sexual desires are your core identity

God's Better Truth: In Christ you are a sacred, redeemed child of God

Your Propensity is NOT your Identity. Your Desire is NOT your Definition

Brings me to something I need to say. Some of you here experience Same Sex Attraction. And no one is shouting louder in our current cultural moment that you ARE your desires than the PRIDE community. The world wants to define you by your inclinations & desires. They want to say that is who you are and then they want you to be PROUD of it.

And because of the volume and intensity of that message in our world right now, AND if you have experienced some kind of church hurt related to your same sex attraction, you can feel a little lost between two worlds. **There's a community who rejects God but seemingly affirms you, and a community that affirms God but you fear may reject you.** And that's an awful feeling. First I want you to know you are not alone. 3 members of our church who experience SSA shared their experience with me this week. All 3 echoed that feeling. And All 3 said in powerful moving words that through faith in Jesus they've found identity stronger and more soul satisfying than sexuality could ever give them. And in walking with the Holy Spirit, submitted to God, they've found security and intimacy in Him



and all of them are praying for our church to be a place where you can take your next step following Jesus. I was given permission to share with you and I want to share just a little from one of them.

“The gospel has shaped everything about how I view my sexuality today. Because Jesus is Lord and Savior, the Bible is the ultimate authority of my life. It clearly defines how God designed relationships and regardless of my desires and attractions, I want to follow what God says is good, not what I or society says is good. Because of Jesus’s love for me, I am able to pursue His plan for my life. As I grow in the deepening love of Christ for me, I also grow in the understanding of just how big my brokenness and my need for a Savior are. The gospel tells us that I’m not the only one that’s broken, but everyone is broken and that brokenness includes our sexualities. Everyone’s sexualities are broken and in need of redemption. Being attracted to men isn’t why I am in need of a Savior. It’s my brokenness....

The gospel roots our identities in Christ. My identity isn’t reduced to my attractions. I know there are others like us at Mercy but they are fearful of being that vulnerable. I know how terrifying it is and just how amplified that fear is in isolation. I want a space to connect with them, care for them and give them that same message that they are not alone....We are not

defined by our attractions. Finding our identity in Christ is ultimately what defines us. We are Christians.”

Propensity is not Identity. Desire is not Definition. Sexuality is not Salvation. **WE ARE CHRISTIANS.** I hope you will feel like you have a home here where you can take a next step in following JESUS. And if this is your story, these 3 want to be a resource and I’m happy to connect you. Email pastorspence@mercycharlotte.com.

So listen church - the world out there will hear that testimony and crucify that man for not defining himself by their definition. Will we do the same? I hope not.

The world says to the church- you are either AFFIRMING or NON AFFIRMING. What they are really saying is we must either AFFIRM the desire or REJECT the person. And can we just agree we are not buying that? LOVE and AFFIRMATION are NOT the same thing. Any parent will tell you that is true.

The WORD says something way better. **God’s Better Truth: In Christ you are a sacred, redeemed child of God** LOVE the person made in the image of God and Titus 2 - deny **all** worldly lusts. Because we were BOUGHT WITH A PRICE! **So we will never be a Church that affirms sin - of any kind - but we will always strive to be a Church that welcomes sinners of every kind.** Cause that’s who we were. But now, we are Christians.



Leads me to the second lie of the ideology promoted by the sexual revolution:

Sexual Revolution Lie #2: Fulfillment is found in unrestricted sexual expression

The Bible says flee sexual immorality. Flee pornea. But the world says that kind of instruction is RESTRICTIVE. YOU ARE RESTRICTING YOUR HAPPINESS. So here's what you have to decide...again its the word or the world. Who will you follow?

Word: God created sex as a pleasurable gift for unifying a husband and wife and for multiplying the human race.

That's Genesis 1. God created sex. You understand that right? He didn't have to make sex the means of procreation. Like he could have made people by having our thumbs pop off, get planted in the ground and then a new human grows out of the ground. But he didn't. Instead he made sex! And he made it in a way that is an enjoyable gift for a husband and wife. It's for way more than procreation. It's the celebration of the gift of marriage and there isn't anything like it. IN FACT there is a whole book of the Bible called Song of Solomon that expresses the sensual power of sex. And right here in 1 Corinthians, our next verses Paul says to christian husbands and wives

“But because sexual immorality is so common, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman should have sexual relations with her own husband. A

husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband. A wife does not have the right over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, a husband does not have the right over his own body, but his wife does.” 1 Corinthians 7:2-4 CSB

Quick aside to married couples here: In other words, because the draw of pornea doesn't end when you say I DO, and because its a gift from God meant to unify you and keep you unified, married christian couples should be having sex regularly. Now this isn't a marriage sermon but this part of the sermon is. I'm not going to define **regular** for you. But you two need to agree on what it is. And if there is something keeping you from that, that's when you step out and get help. Like if you, husband, read that and were like “REPORTING FOR DUTY!” “Sermon over pastor.” Slow down soldier. Don't forget your body belongs to her. And she may not have the same desire for your body that you do for hers. My point here is - this verse and the whole act of sex - is about serving not taking. In fact the Song of Solomon is a love story where the woman feels so pursued, loved, safe, secure, AND desired before they ever consummate the marriage. Her man has cultivated an environment she can flourish in. And she responds.

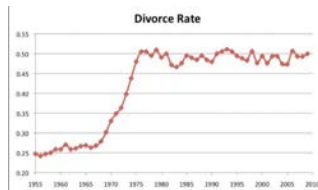
Ok that is the word's view. Let's talk about the world's view. The world says fulfillment is found in unrestricted sexual expression.



But IS IT? Listen God's word should be enough to tell you that it isn't. That it will fail you. BUT, some of you need more. So for you let me give you some statistics. I got most of these from pastor Josh Howerton who pulled these together from a number of sources and posted them a while back. Very powerful.¹

The generally accepted starting point for the sexual revolution is the 1960s. While the ideology goes WAY back further, it hit the states in the 60s and we started seeing big changes there. Sociologists report that happiness levels have been declining since the 1960s. Gen Z is on record as the angriest, loneliest, most depressed generation ever on record.

The sexual revolution promised freedom that could lead to happier relationships. But what is actually true? **FIRST GRAPH.**



Divorce rates have doubled since the 1960s..

¹ Pastor Josh Howerton from Lakepoint Church included this research in his sermon "Jesus and the Sexual Revolution" in May 2023, which can be found [here](#). He has also posted additional relevant research on a large twitter thread linked [here](#).

Cohabitation is shown by non-Christian sociologists to increase your likelihood of divorce by 50%.

The Wall Street Journal reported that religious people who marry young without ever having lived together have the lowest likelihood of divorce in America.

Americans who cohabit before marriage are less likely to be happily married and more likely to break up.²

You live together before marriage you aren't training for marriage you are training for divorce.

SR says Ok but what about harmless things like pornography? That's not hurting anyone is it?

- 80 to 90% of all teenagers will be exposed to pornography use with the average age of first exposure being the age of 11.
- One in three underage teenagers report having seen non-consensually shared nudes of other minors. (Oh, by the way, that's child pornography.)
- **All research shows a correlation between sex trafficking, violence toward women, rape culture, and pornography.**
- Sexual abuse is at its highest rate in our nation's history. **One in four women will be victims of sexual abuse by the age of 18.**

THE REVOLUTION ISN'T PROGRESSING US ITS HURTING US.

² <https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-surprising-case-for-marrying-young>



Sexual revolution says marriage is an archaic institution that traps you in commitment which will lead to a tired, hard life. But it isn't REALITY

Data consistently shows that the more sexual partners a person has in their life, the lower their sexual satisfaction is likely to be.

- Center for families study - By far, the highest rate of satisfaction is among people who have one sexual partner for their lifetime. [2nd Chart](#)



- The General Social Survey did a study on happiness in Americans and found the happiest MEN in America are married men with kids. And the happiest women in America are married women with kids.
- That's NOT me knocking the single brothers and sisters in christ. Don't hear it that way. Hear it as me trying to help you see the LIE we've been sold for 3 generations and that we need to stop buying it.

Louise Perry - Case Against Sexual Revolution - Secular British Progressive Feminist

"The task for practically minded feminists, then, is to deter men from cad mode. Our current sexual culture does not do that,

but it could. In order to change the incentive structure, we would need a technology that discourages short-termism in male sexual behavior, protects the economic interests of women and mothers, and creates a stable environment for the raising of children. And we do already have such a technology even if it's old clunky and prone to periodic failure. It's called monogamous marriage."

Ya'll upstream the prophets of the world are even saying...it didn't work. A few headlines for you:

- [The Critic](#) - The Sexual Revolution has Failed Generation X Women
- [Washington Post](#) - Consent is not enough. We need a new sexual ethic.
 - "As long as it's two consenting adults' does not work as a sexual ethic."
- [Washington Post](#) - Too Risky to Wed In your Twenties? Not if you avoid cohabitating.
- [The Times](#) - Women have been betrayed by a culture of porn gone wild. ([Alternate Link](#))
- [The Atlantic](#) - Consent was never enough
 - "A generation of Americans have tried a new form of sexual morality and haven't just found it wanting, they found it profoundly harmful."
- [NY Times](#) - Dating is Broken, Going Retro Could Fix It

My point in all of this is just to show you the Data & the experience is telling you what the Bible has been telling us all



along. Don't buy the lie that fulfillment is found in unrestricted sexual expression.

Sexual Revolution Lie #2: Fulfillment is found in unrestricted sexual expression

Gospel Truth: Fulfillment is found in relationship with Christ and submission to his ways for all of life.

I don't know how all of this lands on you guys. I hope you hear it all with grace. The idea behind this whole series is helping to give answers, filled with both truth and love, to the big questions of our day. Let's talk about where we go from here today. Next steps in following Jesus. But I'm going to go ahead and tell you most of them will involve letting other people in to help. And that's scary.

Some of you need to take a step to get help for where "pornea" is dominating your life. You aren't your sin and you CAN get victory over it. We have a ministry called Proven Men and Proven Women where you can get help. LISTEN TO ME - There is this great verse in Isaiah that Matthew quotes about people encountering Jesus. He says "those walking in darkness have seen a great light and for those living in the land of the shadow of death, light has dawned." You might be in darkness, but there is hope for you. There is LIGHT for you. The grace of God is greater than all our sin and he invites you to walk in that light

and find healing. We are not good people telling bad people how to behave. We are redeemed people telling all people that in Christ you are a sacred, redeemed Child of God.

Some of you need a friend to help you walk through following Jesus when you experience SSA. You need the church to be the family scripture calls it to be. We want to help you. If you email me at pastorspence@mercycharlotte.com - me and my assistant see that email and I've asked her not to check it this week so it will be you and I. Happy to make introductions for you.

Many of us simply need to repent from where we've treated casually something God created and made holy.

Pray for the Lord to protect us & make us a holy people

Here's what we are going to do - we are going to have a time of prayer and during that time, the altar is going to be open. Pastors & Prayer team will be available but the altar will be open. And man we just need to cry out to God. God save our marriages from this evil. God save our children from these lies. God save our church. God save our pastors & elders. God save our friends. I've watched too many lives injured to pretend this ain't real y'all. Men maybe you need to lead your wives starting RIGHT NOW by saying let's go pray and ask God for help.



Maybe you are the friend who needs to just go with another friend or two and pray for God's help. I'll open the time of prayer and then you come as God leads you. Our band will play and in a couple of minutes they will lead us in song.

PRAY