

**Message: “Game Changer: What’s Your Move? Part One”, presented by Reverend Kristen Lowe on 04-23-2017 at Crossroads United Methodist Church, Waunakee, WI.**

Jesus' own brother James tells us what believing in Jesus looks like. We live out our love for someone by the way we treat them. Jesus calls us to show our love to him by the way we treat and serve others. Do we treat even the least of those we encounter like they were the most important? Do we prove our belief and love for Jesus by seeing Jesus in others?

James 2:18

But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

John 12:26

If anyone serves me, they must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor that one.

Psalm 63:1 tells us that if we are to be truly satisfied in this life, there is really only one way. Our world is desolate and we are parched. Our spirit yearns to be filled by God. To commune with God means that we become God's hands and feet in the world. And, when we do that, our souls become satisfied.

Psalm 63:1

O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

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Telling the story of Paul/ Saul and Ananias.

God speaks to Ananias: “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen you in a vision.

Woah!!

“Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized.”

Acts 9 is the ONLY time that Ananias is EVER mentioned in Scripture. He might have been a decent Christian in his day, but hadn’t really done anything up until God called him to make a move... and the rest is history.

Now Ananias’ job was simple. All Ananias had to do was:

- Lay hands on Paul in order to heal him of his blindness.
- Tell Paul that he was being selected by God to take the gospel to people who weren’t Jewish.
- And then he was to challenge Paul to be baptized into Christ.

It was a simple job. You could have done it. I could have done it. But Ananias almost didn’t do it. Ananias ALMOST didn’t go down to Straight Street to meet this man and do all these things. Ananias decided to obey God - because God had asked him to make his move.

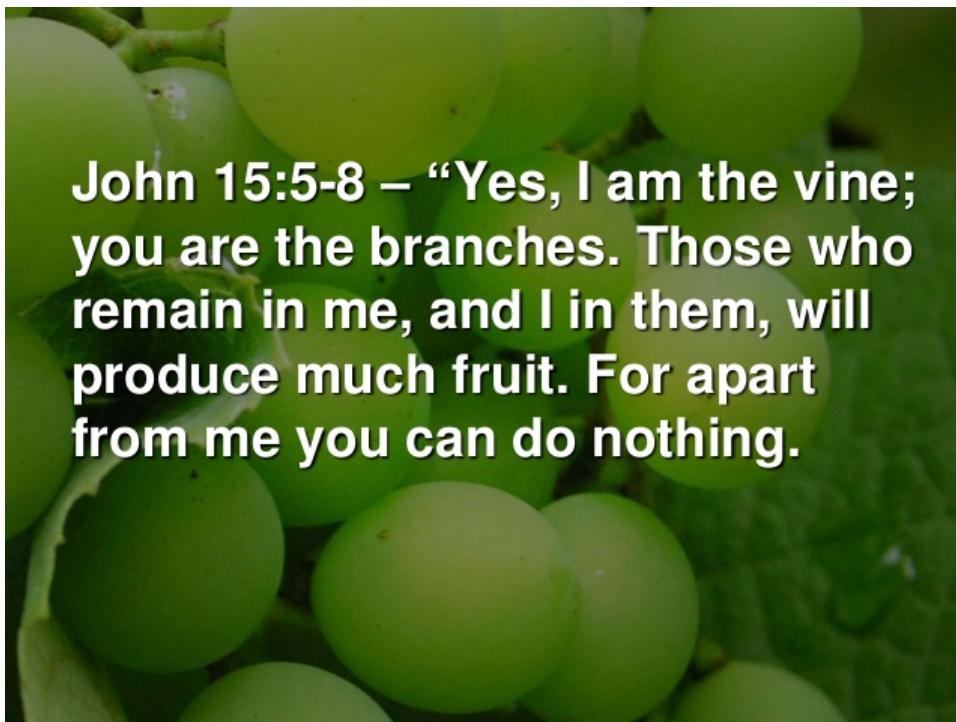
It wasn’t enough for Ananias to simply believe in God or the risen Christ. Maybe he worshiped regularly and read scripture. No... that wasn’t enough. God works through believers. God works through you and me. But we need to be willing to make our move.

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There's an old saying: The road to hell is filled with good intentions.

When I was being raised in the Berlin United Methodist Church, my pastor approached me at the age of 16 to be on the Staff Parish Relations Committee. It seemed like an overwhelming request. But he reminded me that when I took my membership vows, I agreed to do more than just believe. I was called to get in the game. Pastor Clete said, “If you don’t follow your faith with actions, you die on the vine.”



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What does that mean, “die on the vine?” Well, in John 15:5 Jesus says: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Jesus was saying: being my disciple means doing something.

There's an old Gospel song that goes,  
“I wonder what kind of church would my church be if every member were just like me.  
How many souls would be saved today, if it all depended on what I say?  
How many prayers would my Lord have to answer if all that He heard came from me?  
What kind of church would my church be, if every member were just like me?  
How many times have I said “I’m a Christian” and turned a deaf ear to a need?  
How many time have I said “I love Jesus” – but never one soul did I lead.  
How many luxuries have I passed by to have more to give to the Lord.  
Jesus I promise as long as I live, from now on I’m gonna do more.”

Faith is about doing. Faith is action.



Now granted – Ananias had an excuse... and it was a pretty good one. Saul of Tarsus was a scary man... a dangerous man. Everybody in town knew why Saul had come to Damascus—to arrest every Christian he could find and lead them back to Jerusalem in chains. He was not a man any Christian would want to come into contact with. So, Ananias had pretty good excuse.

And you know... most of my excuses are pretty good too. And so are many of yours.

But if you'll notice God wasn't impressed with Ananias' excuse. And where would the church be today if people hadn't put God before their excuses. Where would the church be if every believer simply worshiped God and went home to their own interests.

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Now people come up with all kind of excuses why they shouldn't be doing something for Jesus. For example, some might say "I don't have the time." A friend of mine observed that time is something we create. "I MAKE time for things I want to do! If I want to watch TV, I'll make the time to watch it. If I want to eat, I'll make the time to eat. If I want to take a nap, I'll make the time to sleep. So, to say "I don't have the time" is to say "I'm not going to make that a priority."

It doesn't matter enough to me to set that time aside. I don't care enough to make time for that activity.



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Now, a new Christian might say “I’m too new in the faith to do much.”

A young man who had heard the Gospel was baptized into Christ. A little while after this, a Christian teacher asked him: “What have you done for Christ since you believed?”

The young man replied: “Oh, I’m just a learner.”

“Well,” said the teacher, “when you light a candle do you light it to make the candle more comfortable, or to have it give light?”

He replied, “To give light.”

“Do you expect it to give light after it is half burned, or when you first light it?”

He replied, “As soon as I light it.”

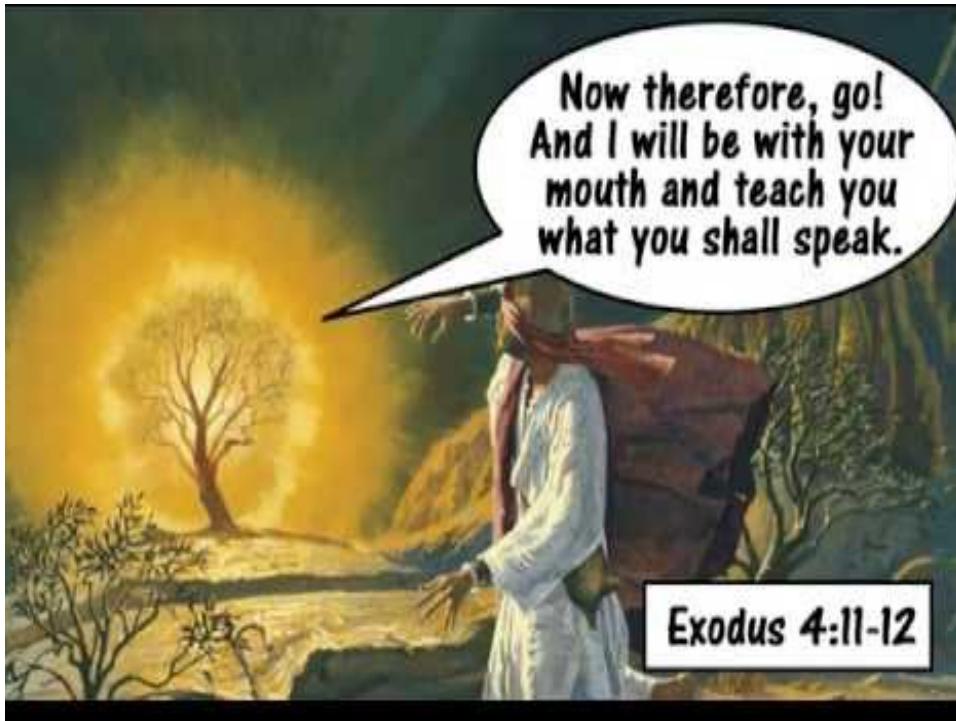
“Very well,” said the teacher, “go and do likewise; begin at once.”



Still others will say, “I have already done my time.” I want to sit back now and retire. Let someone else do it. Doing time? I have a colleague who challenged someone by saying, “I didn’t know being Christ’s disciple was like prison for you.”

There are Christians who do what they do in church because they view it as an obligation. A burden. Something to endured until they’ve put in enough time to justify sitting in the pew for the rest of their lives. But if exhaustion is the case, maybe it’s time to make a different move. Perhaps God is directing your ministry in a different direction. Perhaps you’ll be fed by trying a different ministry. I guarantee God isn’t saying, “Don’t worry about it. I really can’t use you anyway.”

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Other great leaders in the Bible had excellent excuses to not make a move:

Moses stuttered.  
Abraham was too old.  
David was too young.  
The Apostle John tended to be self-righteous.  
Jeremiah got depressed.  
Gideon and Thomas both doubted God at one point.  
Timothy had ulcers.  
Naomi was a widow.  
Peter was afraid of death.  
And Lazarus WAS dead.

Despite his hesitancy, and excellent excuses, Ananias made his move... and he gave it all he had, and God honored him. God named HIM in his book. The name of Ananias is immortal because when God called on him, he acted.

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There's a young woman in our community named Isabelle Dunai. Isabelle is a Waunakee Warrior class of 2018. Who is battling multiple chronic illnesses. Isabelle's fight began just a little over a year ago and she's spent probably more of that time at Children's hospital than not. Before Christmas she was sent home on hospice. Isabelle has every excuse to be inward-focused and feel bitter. Isabelle could very easily not do another thing for another person and there would be no one who would fault her.

What's so striking about this young woman of faith is that in spite of her pain, multiple surgeries, and constant medical disappointments, she speaks out boldly in our community and beyond about faith and hope. She encourages others to stay positive. She blogs about the joys she finds in life and how God continues to fill her spirit. Even on her worst days, she shares her story to the world to help others find hope and peace.

Isabelle has excuses. More than you and I may ever have. But she makes her move. Every. Single. Day.

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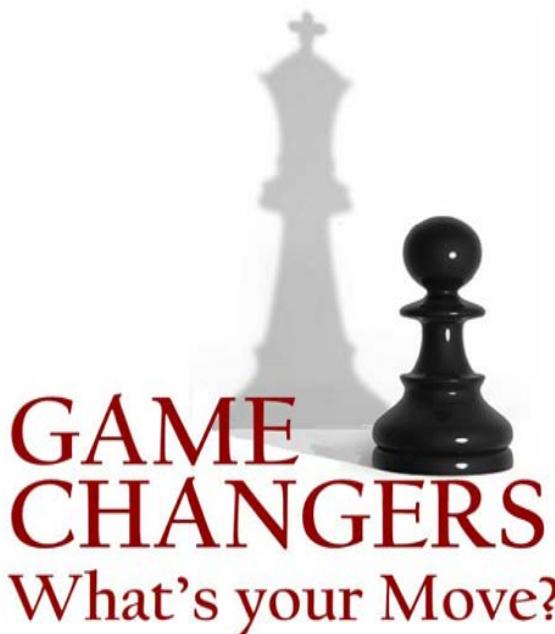
Easter excerpt from:  
[Isabellesfight.com](http://Isabellesfight.com)

*“...I am so thankful for this day... our Jesus Christ rose from the dead to grant us the biggest gift, eternal life. When times are hard, I find true peace knowing that once life on this earth is done, I begin my eternal life. He gave us the gift of watching our loved ones forever. Amen.*

*To those that can't eat much, I hope you enjoy some crafts or playing games. Here is to the gift of forever.”*

Ultimately, Ananias did what he did because he knew God believed in him. And because he understood what it meant to serve God.

Ephesians 2:10 says “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”



God believes in YOU. He has created things for you to do and has given you the gifts and graces to do them. And now He's asking you to go. Make your move!