

“Mission” // Noah, Genesis 6:5–8 // All-In, Message #1

We’re starting a new series today called “All-In” in which we’re going to look at 5 Old Testament characters who went “all-in” on the mission of God, because I want you to consider what it looks like for you to go “all-in” with the mission of God.

And I want to explain to you why I believe that we are at a very strategic time in the life of our church; one not altogether dissimilar from where each of these Old Testament figures found themselves, and so throughout this series I want to paint for you some of **where we are** as a church, where **we’ve been**, and where I believe **God wants to take** us—and then call you to go all-in for it.

I’ll lay my cards out right up front. **We have some unbelievably committed, generous, people here** at this church who are, in just about every way “all-in” on the mission of God. But there are a number of you who are only “halfway in” or “sort of in” in regards to the mission of God.

Here’s why I say that: about half of those who attend this church **aren’t involved in any kind of intentional ministry**, whether here at the church or in the community; about that same number aren’t in any kind of **biblical community**; about half of you are not even **covenant members** of the church;

- **We know that approximately 50% of the adults who attend here give next to nothing to kingdom work. And about half of those give nothing at all.**
- Folks, that’s not a financial issue. That is a spiritual issue.
- (And btw, I’m not talking to those of you who are new here—of course, it takes you a while to figure out if you want to be a part of this church and how to plug in—and furthermore I realize that it’s impossible for me to know everything you’re doing and

I’m not setting myself up to be your judge—but suffice it to say that there are a lot of people who are merely spectators in the church—church for them is more like an event they attend than a community they are a part of or a mission they are committed to. **They are more fans of Jesus than followers.**

And let me say right up front that one of the things we’re going to consider in this series is your financial commitment to the kingdom of God. That is certainly not the only factor, but it is one. Jesus said that money is the currency of our lives, and that how we spend our money indicates where our heart really is and where our true kingdom lies.

- A lot of people object whenever a pastor or a church talks about money... they say, “Why does it always have to be about money?” because I guess they assume that we teach this stuff because we want your money.
- But Jesus talked about money more than any other subject in the New Testament—he had more to say about money than heaven and hell combined—because money is usually the most accurate barometer of where your heart is. Where you spend your money shows where your real priorities lie; it shows what kingdom you really serve; it shows what God you really trust in.
- **This next statement is a little aggressive, but many people object to me talking about money precisely because how they spend their money indicates that their commitment to Christ is a sham.** They are religious, but they are not genuine disciples of Jesus, and what they do with their money shows that, and they don’t like me or anyone else pointing that out. You can talk a big game all day long, but your wallet betrays you!
 - Rarely do I have a truly generous person object when I talk about money.
- **But I say this anytime I talk about giving, and I’ll say it again:** if it really is a problem for you to hear this—because you really can’t get over the “the church just wants my money” piece, then I’d prefer you hear these messages and respond by giving somewhere else. I genuinely mean that. I’d rather you

become a generous person and give somewhere else than let your inability to trust us keep you from becoming a generous person in God's kingdom. I mean that. I'm more concerned with you becoming generous than with you giving here. Maybe one day we'll earn your trust, and when we do, you can give here. Until then, I'd be fine with you giving elsewhere. I really would.

- **So, yes, we're going to talk about your finances in this, but that is one part of a much larger whole.**
 - I've been challenging some of our leaders already about this. One of them wrote me a note explaining **7 ways his family was being challenged** a to go all-in, only 1 of which was financial. That's the goal here.
 - Because here's what I know: when you are all-in with the mission of God, all the resources we need to do what God is telling us to do will be there.
 - We're going to give you several "on-ramps" into the mission of God over the next several weeks.

Here is the question I want you to consider over the next several weeks, from multiple angles: *Are you all-in in the mission of God with your life?* Not just are you committed to the church on the weekend, but with the biggest parts of your life.

- A few weeks ago, I saw a statement by John Jenkins, the president of Notre Dame,¹ when they joined the ACC, (direct quote): "I just want to say emphatically and clearly, (football) aside, we're all-in in the ACC. ... We're deeply committed to the ACC."
 - You're all-in, except football? No offense... what else does Notre Dame bring to the sports table beside football? How could you possibly call yourself "all-in" and leave out football?
 - What is the football of your life? For some of you it's your money. And are you all-in with that?

¹ <http://sports.yahoo.com/news/notre-dame-acc-sports-football-180824967--ncaaf.html>

- Or think of it like this: If you have a breakfast of **bacon and eggs**, both the pig and the chicken contributed to your breakfast, but in different ways. The chicken made a contribution; the pig is "all-in."
 - Which better describes you?

First story: The Story of Noah // Genesis 6:5-8

[5] The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. [6] And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. [7] So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."

He would do so through a flood.

- By the way, it's always been amazing to me that kids' books use Noah as a cute bedtime story... with the little bunnies and the furry animals... in come the animals two by two.
- But this is a terrifying story of God's judgment; massive destruction; dead bodies everywhere.
- Plus, this man Noah was trapped on a wooden boat for several months with all these animals... doesn't sound to me like there's anything fun about that.

[8] But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

Now, real quick, people encounter stories of judgment in the Bible like this and they ask, "Was this really necessary?"

- Verse 5 says that God saw that every intention of the human heart was only evil continually (6:5; again in [8:21](#)).
 - There is an interesting wordplay in Hebrew: The word used to describe human wickedness in vvs. 12-13 is the same word used to describe what God does to the wicked. "**mash-heet**," and means "destruction." Sinful humans are destroying God's good creation; so God is going to destroy the destroyers.

- He does so out of **holiness and love**, the same way that if you love someone who is being eaten up with **cancer** you hate the cancer destroying the body and go to radical measures (like chemotherapy) to eradicate them from the cancer.
- Verse 6 says that human wickedness **grieved God “to his heart.”** The word for “grieved” there is the same word used elsewhere in the OT to describe what an abandoned wife feels (Isaiah 54:6).² A soul-wrenching, despairing grief.
- So a holy God of perfect love cleansed the earth of sin. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord—undeserved kindness—and he preserved Noah and his family as a representative of the human race through him he would repopulate the earth.
- **Now you say, “Well, was this solution effective?”**
 - Short answer, “no.”
 - Noah screws up his own family within one chapter of being off of the ark. By the end of chapter 9, his family looks like an episode of the Jerry Springer show.
 - In **8:21**, the author repeats that the intentions of the human heart were still only evil continually, which tells you that a greater kind of salvation would be necessary, **one that would go to the core of the human heart**, which is the real meaning of this story that we’ll get to in a minute.

But let me first draw out 4 points about Noah I want you to see:

1. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord

- *What was special about Noah?* Nothing. He simply heard the voice of God and he responded.
- Vs. 9 tells you he was a righteous man. *Why was he righteous?* Because he responded to God’s offer of salvation. Period. That was it.

² “You were a wife married young, only to be deserted, and your spirit was filled with **pain.**” From Tim Keller sermon, “Lord of the Storm,” on Gen 6.

2. Noah was chosen to be a channel of salvation to others.

- Noah was chosen not only for salvation; but to build an ark what would be a vehicle of salvation to whoever would listen.
- That would end up being only his family, but the **point is that God’s grace toward him** was not intended for him only. He was to be a channel of grace toward others.

3. Noah had to dramatically rearrange his priorities in light of God’s grace toward him

- After this announcement, he could not go on with “life as normal.”
- Imagine the difference from this point on in how Noah saw the world: Every person he saw was headed for destruction.
 - The house he had built wouldn’t be there for very long.
 - The things he created would soon be gone.
 - Everybody he knew would either be saved on the ark or destroyed in the flood.

4. Noah was grateful

- If you fast-forward the story to the end, after God has sent the flood and saved Noah and his family, Noah exits the ark and when he does the first thing he does is offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God.
- Now, little interesting not here: this is the first thing Noah does that is not a direct response to a command of God.
 - Throughout this story, what characterizes Noah and God’s interaction is **God commands** and **Noah does**. God commands him to build the ark; he tells him how big to make it; he tells him when to get on, and when to get off.
- The sacrifice, however, was Noah’s idea; his initiative—he overflows with gratefulness and wants to say thank you to God. God, why did you choose me to show grace to? Why did you save my family?

We are in a place similar to Noah

1. We as a church have been selected for grace

- I don't know why, but the evidences of that grace are everywhere. Over the last 3 weeks God allowed us to baptize...
 - **414 people.** "414 people" is not just a stat. It's made up of people like this:
 - Letter from **NC State guy**
 - Letter from **homosexual guy** (that's not a guy impressed and entertained by an engaging speaker. That's a guy who has encountered the dynamic power of the living God.)
 - For the last 4 years we've been in the **top 25 fastest growing churches** in the nation. We've grown by nearly 1000 people each year for the past 4 years, made up of many people like this.
 - **And God has allowed us not just to reach them, but to train up and send them out.** You've heard me say often that the team of people we just sent to plant churches in Malaysia, a team of 8, were all people who came to Christ when they moved here and got involved in our church. They were saved here at our church and are not taking the gospel around the world.
 - Mike M tells me that as we gather this weekend to worship, there's 7000 of us—while we gather, over 2000 people are worshipping in churches we've planted around the country, places like Murfreesboro, Greensboro, Denver.
 - **Bryan Barley, one of the guys we sent out...** In other words, Summit, you have grandkids. And I've heard that **grandkids** are more fun than kids...
 - Our influence in the city just keeps multiplying.
 - **This fall we had 19 schools have contacted this fall about launching mentoring & tutoring programs.** Summit members are actually going into the public schools during the school day to serve at-risk students and their teachers on a weekly basis.
 - **This summer we put 2500 vols on the street to serve our city:** Most fulfilling to me.

- *What was special about Noah?* Nothing. He just listened to God and did what God said.
- *What is special about us?* Nothing. We've just believed God and taken him at his word, that Jesus really did not desire that any should perish. And he's using us, and we've just scratched the surface, we believe, of what God wants to use us to do.

2. We've been given a very clear mission

- Like Noah, we've been given a very clear mission.
- Jesus' summarized our mission in Matthew 28:18, 'Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded of you.' We believe that means 3 primary areas for us.
 - **Our families.** Our families are our first mission field and we are committed to discipling those we win to Jesus, starting with our families, to growing up strong in God's kingdom.
 - This is very personal to me. In 1975 Lynn and Carol Greear moved to...
 - **The nations.** The 6645 UPG's without a church.
 - This also is very personal to me. God's calling of me to ministry was first a call to the mission field, and he's never relinquished that call on my life.
 - **Why I love RDU.** I didn't want to be here...
 - **Our neighbors.** Our presence in this city is not incidental. We love our city; and we are committed to her.
 - We love our college campuses—they provide a lot of challenges (I was looking over our attendance growth records the other day... there's a very clear time period when all our students started to come)
 - Our work places; our neighborhoods; our schools.
 - Especially the broken parts. We've identified 5 areas...

- **Like Noah, we've been given something to build**
 - Noah was told to build an ark. When Jesus left he said, "Build my church."
 - You'll see this throughout the series, but whenever God wants to do something on earth, he gives people something very specific he wants them to build. **He didn't say to Noah:** "OK, Noah, I'm going to send a flood. Now you figure out a good way to avoid it." He told Noah to build an Ark and gave him very precise instructions."
 - **The church is the New Testament equivalent of the ark. "You will build my church." I don't want to overstate this, but:**
 - God left one institution on earth (Acts 1–2)
 - You could summarize the Apostles' approach in Acts as going to strategic cities and planting churches.
 - They didn't start soup kitchens; they planted churches. Local churches would do the evangelistic crusades and the soup kitchens but in a healthy, holistic way
 - So our strategy is to plant churches. Yes, we do a lot of soup kitchens and evangelistic initiatives, but they are always part of a church planting strategy—either en route to a church plant or assisting a local church in her mission.
 - Throughout the book of Acts the local church was the center and focal point of ministry and giving. **Acts 4:34** says, *"There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. Acts 4:34–35*
 - Please don't misinterpret... there is nothing wrong with giving elsewhere... Veronica and I do, but we know that the focal point of our ministry and our giving is the local church.
 - In the NT, the local church is like an **aircraft carrier**. The battles an aircraft carrier wages are not supposed to happen on the aircraft carrier. If that does it's a problem! The battles happen out there. Planes are equipped and sent out.
 - How do you see your church? Cruise-ship? Battleship? Or aircraft carrier?
 - Summit Church, like Noah, we know that God's selection of us was not simply to save us, but to make us a channel of salvation to our community.
 - I found out something earlier this year... *"Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. [3] For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities." Isa 54:2–3*
 - I asked, "Why that verse?" This church was never to be an end to itself, but to reach out and bring salvation to its city and the nations. That's our heritage, Summit.
 - And that has informed our mission for the past 10 years.
 - We are **minimalists** on buildings. Why? Because God didn't call us to erect a big monument to him in the Triangle. We are here to disciple our families, win and bless our neighbors, and train up people and send them out. I'm not anti-building, but buildings are tools. I love the word "facilities." They facilitate. We're not building a cruise-ship for Christians; we're an aircraft carriers for believers who are sent.
 - **Our decision to go multi-site** was done in pursuit of that mission
 - **We feel like he is telling us that, again.**
- 3. This mission requires a radical reorientation of our priorities.**
- Noah's adjustment was not a slight adjustment. Whole new way of looking at the world.

- The mission Jesus called us to is not a slight adjustment in our lifestyle. It's a whole new way of looking at our world.
 - For years I've told you this story... **Bridge illus.**
- The mission is urgent.
 - Paul in Romans 9 said he was in anguish "every day." He saw the world the way Noah saw his.
- **Do you see the world that way?** I know you say you believe the gospel, but do you really believe it? Does the urgency that dominates your lifestyle demonstrate that you believe it?
- I know that your mouth says you believe the gospel, but does what do your priorities, your lifestyle, your giving show that you believe it?
- Summit, the urgency of this mission demands that we not huddle up in a conclave and sing God-songs and just watch the world go to hell around us. Jesus shed his blood and offered us the power of his Spirit so that we could make a difference; so that we could reverse the tide; so that we could see the salvation of Jesus extend onto our college campuses; into our places of business; into our schools, our neighborhoods and our homes; into our ghettos and brothels.

4. We do so with a grateful heart

- Noah was so grateful that when he got off the boat he offered a sacrifice of his own volition.
- Well, I explained to you earlier that the Ark pointed beyond itself because it really was ineffective at wiping out sin.
- This story, as all Old Testament stories, points beyond itself to Jesus.
 - Jesus was the ark we were pulled into that kept us safe from the destroying rain of God's wrath. Jesus drowned in the sea of God's wrath so that we could be lifted safely above it. He shielded us.
 - When Noah got out of the boat he commenced a new creation. When Jesus was resurrected from the dead he began a new creation, but his new creation was total. Not just new families of people, but new kinds

of people. Those whose hearts had been transformed by Jesus' resurrection spirit.

- If Noah was grateful for the salvation provided by his Ark, how much more should we, who have been saved from God's wrath by Jesus our Ark, spontaneously erupt in gratitude and sacrifices of thankfulness for what God has done for us?

In light of all of these things I just share, for the next few weeks I want to introduce to you an initiative called "**all-in.**" In light of the fact that **our mission is urgent**, that **our local church is the primary vehicle** for that mission, I want to call you to go all-in for both.

And one of the things we're doing is introducing a new approach to giving. **Let me explain it to you:** In the past, we have asked people to give in 3 different ways.

- Budget... then we'd ask people for a **gift "above and beyond" their normal giving to raise the funds to move the mission forward.**

But here's the problem:

- ***I told you that about 50% don't give in any significant way to the kingdom of God.*** Question: What happens when you ask someone who gives nothing or who gives very minimally to give a gift "above and beyond their normal giving?" For many of these people, they automatically tune out. They don't have normal giving. So **we have historically based our 'ask' on an assumption that feels exclusive to them**—and thus, they don't participate. They assume it must be **for "others"** and they don't take the opportunity to grow spiritually in their generosity as a result of this challenge we put forward.
- ***The other thing that happens when we do an "above and beyond" giving ask is that we tend to de-emphasize the general, everyday, incredible ministry that goes on here at the church.*** Money that gets given here on the weekend goes into what we call "general ministry," which is anything but general! This money goes to pay for our vibrant children's

ministry, our student ministries, our adult discipleship opportunities, our college ministry, our church planting center, community ministry, creative arts, counseling ministry, benevolence. This is discipleship. Why on earth would we want to de-emphasize those elements in our giving and imply that it's only the "extra" that is missional? **Everything we do here is mission-critical or else we wouldn't be doing it.** And every dollar that gets given to Summit is vital, or else we wouldn't be challenging one another to give it.

So we want to do it differently this time. One fund which represents the full scope of the mission that God has given to us as a church. And we want you to go all-in with it.

- I want to put everyone on the same baseline: no "above and beyond" ask.
- I want you to consider (in one, kind of, lump figure) what your financial commitment to the mission of God looks like?
- **I want you to consider what level of giving represents a total, radical, sacrificial commitment of generosity to the mission of God through the Summit?**

Here's how it breaks down. We're thinking about it in a 2-year block. (You'll get a book that explains this when you leave):

- **For our family: 16.8 million**
- **For our neighbors: 5 million**
- **For our world: 4.2 million** (did you ever think you'd be part of a church that gave away 4.2 million dollars?)

We are asking the Lord for \$26 million in generosity commitments over the next two years.

LET ME SHOW YOU: **ALL-IN VIDEO**

This is the largest thing we've ever attempted as a church.

So... here are our very specific GOALS for this season:

- *I'll start with what I believe is the secondary goal. **The secondary goal is that God provides us with the resources to do what we feel like God has called us to do in discipling our families and our neighbors and the nations.** And I believe God has given us a great position of influence in the Kingdom and in the world.*
- *But do you know what my first hope is for this season? **That our entire congregation would go all-in with Jesus and his mission.** THAT is my real hope for this season. How could I be a pastor and not think that way? I want you to be all-in for the mission of God because that's what it means to be a disciple of Jesus! And, with God's help, I believe this "all-in" initiative may bring us closer to that point.*

Calibration:

So here's my question: **Are you all-in?**

- Stand there with Noah, looking out at your doorway... what does he see? A city he loves. Neighbors he loves, playing with their kids, going to work, going about their everyday life. They just don't know! How can he do nothing?
- **Think about how horrendous this was:** the elderly and sick would have died first. Strong, young men would have climbed high up in the trees. The only thing worse than the screams of people dying would have been the **total silence** that followed when the waters covered the last mountain peak!
- This is not pleasant to talk about, and we Americans love comfort and the "you're ok and I'm ok"/**power-of-positive thinking/It's a wonderful life**" sermons, and a lot of people would prefer I stand up here and say that there **isn't any reason for urgency**; that there isn't anything to worry about. You want me to tell you that with a little more time, with the right politics, everything will be alright!
- I can't do that! If this is a true gospel, this is a real mission that demands urgent attention and radical commitment."³
- **People's lives depend on it. Their eternity depends on it.**

³ Mark Driscoll.

- So here's my question, again: **I know most of you say you believe the gospel—that Jesus is the savior and the only hope for people all over the world—but does what you are doing with your life and your money show that you believe it?**
 - What would you have said to Noah if he claimed to believe what God said about the flood but was making no effort to build the Ark or warn people to get onto it?
 - Does the urgency you talk with your kids about these things show you believe the gospel?
 - Does how you spend your money show you that believe the gospel?
 - **Your mouth says you believe the gospel. What does your life say?**

I have here a letter that Adoniram Judson wrote to his perspective father-in-law: First American missionary... He believed God had called him to Burma. He had just fallen in love with a girl named Ann Hasseltine, and he wrote this letter to her father, asking for her hand in marriage:

"I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world? Whether you can consent to her departure to a heathen land, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life? Whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death? Can you consent to all this, for the sake of Him who left His heavenly home and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of Zion and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with a crown of righteousness brightened by the acclamations of praise which shall resound to

her Saviour from the many Burmese saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?"⁴

- Is the mission worth it to you? Do you believe it and are you taking it seriously? If so, it won't be business as usual. It will be a radical reorientation of your life toward the mission.

Conclusion:

What to do:

When you leave today, I want all of you to get **A BOOK** that will guide you through this series over the next several weeks. **It's great.**

- Devotionals.
- A place for sermon notes. I want you to bring it back every week. It's got a place for you to explore and record what God teaches you during this season.
- It's got a section in it that small groups will be going through (great chance to get in a small group; we have that opportunity for all of you at your campuses).
- It's also got some great pictures; great stats; great info about what specifically what we think God is leading us to do over the next two years.
- A section of word searches; coloring by numbers; where's Waldo section where you try to find me in a crowd of people. Just kidding about that part.
- But it is great. **So get one. Write your name in it, start the devotionals and bring it back with you each week for the next 5 weeks.**

Finally, take this prayer card and use it... Verses and places to write out a prayer. Discuss with your spouse.

⁴ Letter to Mr. Hasseltine asking for his daughter's hand in marriage by Adoniram Judson.
http://www.jdgrear.com/my_weblog/2012/02/adoniram-judson-to-his-prospective-father-in-law.html

- I want us to do the first one together. Write out a prayer in response to John 12:24–25...

Missional Blessing (Campus Pastors)

(Hold up the card, signifying you are all in or at least willing to take this journey to let Jesus challenge you on it.)

Last, I want to give you some homework - take back out that card J.D. directed your attention to at the end. He had you do the first verse. Take some time this week to fill the rest of it out. It will be a great exercise for you and your family.

Now, I want you, if you will, to stand up, and hold this card up as a sign that you are willing to go all-in with the mission of God, and are willing to explore what God would have that look like over the next few weeks. Or maybe you are not so sure about all this, but you are willing to let God speak to you about going all-in with his mission. The raised card indicates you are willing for God to speak to you.

As you hold them up, let me pray over us: "God, as we leave today, our prayer is that you would show us how we can be All-In for your mission this week. Lead us to respond to the generosity that has been displayed for us in the gospel.

Summit, you are sent.