

TALK IT OVER

ENGAGE SERIES

PART 1 | 18 JANUARY 2026

NOTES TO LEADERS

1. Please diarise our day of prayer and fasting on Tuesday, the 3rd of February. We will fast for breakfast and lunch, and then meet at 6pm to enjoy a meal, followed by our prayer and leaders' meeting at 7pm.
2. We're looking for people willing to lead a 6-week group for our upcoming "Reality Check" series. Consider who in your group you could encourage to step out and lead a group for 6 weeks.
3. At CityHill, we don't presume that everyone who attends on a Sunday is a member. We wait for people to let us know that they're choosing to belong. The way we do that is through a 'Looking In' time after the service, followed by our Intro Tea on a Tuesday night. It's an opportunity to hear some of the values, ask questions, and let us know this is your church home. If there are people in your group who haven't yet made that decision, encourage them to come through to our next Looking In time on Sunday, the 1st of March.

SCRIPTURES

ACTS 4:13

When they saw ... that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

START TALKING

1. What stood out to you from Vision 2026 or Sunday's message? What challenged you or encouraged you?
2. What has God been doing in your world - what can we celebrate?

START THINKING

1. Think back to a time when you made a *big* decision that ended up shaping a lot of smaller decisions in your life. What made it such a defining moment?
2. Jesus' invitation was repeatedly simple: "*Follow me.*" (Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21). What do you think following Jesus means beyond believing the right things?
3. In Acts 4:13, the disciples were described as "*unschooled, ordinary men*" who had "been with Jesus." What does this tell us about how God works through people who decide to follow Him wholeheartedly?

START SHARING

1. Which of the three decisions spoke most directly to you? Why do you think that is?
 - a. Following Jesus wholeheartedly
 - b. Spending regular time in the Word and prayer
 - c. Belonging to a local church
2. Steve spoke about moments when our will collides with God's will. Can you share a time when following Jesus required surrender or trust (i.e., yielding your will to His will)?
3. What does "no turning back" look like in your current season of life - not in theory, but in practice?

START PRAYING

1. Pray for wholehearted commitment to follow Jesus fully, trusting His leadership over our own plans.
2. Pray for faithfulness in Scripture, prayer, and deep belonging in the local church.

START DOING

1. Take time this week to write down the three statements:
 - I have decided to follow Jesus.
 - I have decided to spend regular time in the Word and in prayer.
 - I have decided to belong to a local church.Reflect honestly: which one needs fresh commitment?
2. Our Reality Check series is starting on the 8th of February. Who are you going to invite to join us?

TALK IT OVER

SUMMARY OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, Steve shared a powerful message in part one of our Engage series.

There is tremendous power in the decisions we make - for good or bad. A great big decision (good, wise, beneficial - the kind of decision that settles a lot of smaller debates in advance) in any area of our lives saves us from a thousand smaller decisions.

Over time, decisions create direction. And direction, over time, shapes destiny. When we come to the end of our lives and look back, we will see the cumulative impact of the great big decisions we made. And, we will also see the cumulative impact of the terrible big decisions we made.

If this is true of everyday things, how much more when it comes to matters of the soul - matters of spirituality, eternal life, and eternal death. So, the question is: where are you at with some of the great big spiritual decisions?

Over the next few weeks, we'll talk about five great big decisions. This Sunday, Steve focused on three of them. In the weeks ahead, we'll talk about two more great big decisions: practising Christian community, and bringing our tithes and offerings.

1. I have decided to follow Jesus

There is a deeply moving story behind the old hymn, 'I have decided to follow Jesus'.

About 150 years ago, missionaries went to the tribes in north-east India - primitive, aggressive head-hunting tribes - and to understate it, the missionaries were not welcomed. One family, however, came to faith: a man named Nokseng, his wife, and his two sons. His faith proved contagious, and many villagers began to accept Christianity.

Angry, the village chief summoned the people and demanded that the family publicly renounce their faith or face execution. Moved by the Holy Spirit, Nokseng replied: 'I have decided to follow Jesus.'

Enraged, the chief ordered the archers to shoot down the two boys. As they lay dying, the chief demanded again: 'Will you deny your faith? You have lost both your children. You are about to lose your wife.' The man replied: 'Though no one joins me, still I will follow.'

The chief then ordered his wife to be killed. In a moment, she joined her children in death. For the last time, the chief demanded that the man deny his faith. Nokseng replied: 'The cross before me, the world behind me - no turning back.' And he was killed as well.

But something remarkable happened. The chief began to wonder what it was about 'the man from Galilee' that this family would die for Him. The chief himself became a follower of Jesus Christ, and when he told the village, almost the entire village put their faith in Christ.

So, what does it mean to follow Jesus? When Jesus walked the earth and called the first disciples, one of His primary invitations was simple: 'Follow me.' (Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21).

One of the most interesting stories for me in the Bible is the story of the first disciples of Jesus. *When they saw ... that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.* Acts 4:13. Men and women who decide to follow Jesus wholeheartedly become world changers - not because that's what they set out to do, but because God uses them for His glory.

Many of us are happy to begin following Jesus - sins forgiven, Jesus on the cross in our place, eternal life, a changed destiny. But then Jesus keeps saying: 'Follow me.' And along the way, there are moments where our will collides with His will. That is a crisis point: will we continue to follow wholeheartedly, or choose our own path?

At that point, it's possible to still call ourselves Christian, but if you drill down into our hearts, we're not truly following Christ - we're doing our own thing, building our own little kingdoms, and then asking Jesus to bless our thing. But the amazing teaching of the Bible is this: Christ is not as interested in blessing our little kingdom as He is in calling us to follow Him, as He builds His great and glorious kingdom.

Most of us rebel at the idea of following Him 100% - because there's a little idol on the throne of the human heart called 'me'. And part of the reason we hold back is that we doubt He knows best.

But think about it: if we believe He was good enough, kind enough and merciful enough to die for us, why on earth would we not believe He is good enough, kind enough and merciful enough to lead us in the paths that are right for us and for His glory?

Following Jesus wholeheartedly starts with a decision He will not force. It takes us drawing a line, like building a brick wall of decision: 'That's who I am. I'm not someone who occasionally follows Christ - I am a Christ follower. No turning back.'

So, have you made an unequivocal decision for yourself to follow Christ - 100%? Not 'my spouse carries the faith in our family'... not 'I grew up around church'... but: 'I have decided to follow Jesus.'

2. I have decided to spend regular time in the Word and in prayer

This is not just a belief - it's a practice. Jesus says in John 15:4: Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. Being connected to Christ is something we practise.

2 Timothy 3:16 says: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

The Bible is not a random collection of religious ideas - it is God speaking, forming, correcting, strengthening, and guiding His people.

One of the most common reasons people give for not reading the Bible and praying regularly is: 'I don't have enough time.' But often the real issue is not time; it's priority. We make time to eat and drink because we know our bodies need fuel. Jesus said we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

If you already have a habit of reading Scripture and praying, don't take it for granted. Don't let it become a ritual. Let the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit flow into you as you read and as you pray.

3. I have decided to belong in a local church

Many followers of Christ treat belonging to a local church as an optional extra. But that belief system isn't Biblical. Christ is the Head; the church is His Body. If you love the Head, how can you not want to be connected to the Body?

Jesus said in Matthew 16:18: *'I will build my church.'* Ephesians 1:22-23 says, *'And God ... appointed [Jesus] to be head over everything for the church.'* And Ephesians 3:10 says *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known ...*

There is a massive difference between ATTENDING and deciding to BELONG. You can attend (even online), get the message, worship here and there - but that's not the same as choosing to belong. Belonging usually doesn't start with a feeling. It starts with a decision - and over time it becomes a deep sense of family. And like any family, we don't always agree on everything. But we work things out while still belonging.

One great big decision saves you from a thousand smaller ones. And our decisions determine our destiny.

- I have decided to follow Jesus.
- I have decided to spend regular time in the Word and in prayer.
- I have decided to belong in a local church.