



Pursuing the Gospel Intro

EXCERPT

by Mitchell Johnson

THE YEAR 2017 WOULD PROVE TO BE A DIFFICULT ONE FOR ME. With confidence, I can say it was one of the hardest seasons of my life. I'd been in youth ministry for three years and had recently been given a great opportunity at a reputable church. My eyes were wide open with vision and possibility as this was the chance of a young minister's lifetime. I was exactly where I wanted, and frankly, where I felt I deserved to be. In my time there, I was very successful in my role. My youth ministry was growing, and I was building healthy relationships with the members of the church. I never thought it would come to an unexpected halt. During the first week back after the new year, it happened. The church was entering a season of leadership transition. Our church was ready for whatever that looked like. As my new pastor called me into his office that Wednesday morning, I didn't expect that I would drive away hurt, angry and utterly broken only a short half-hour later. He released me from my position with little conversation or explanation. I was so hurt and confused. I wanted answers, but unfortunately, I never got them. I was in a brand-new city, without a job or family nearby. I did the only logical thing I could think of; I moved back home. Two months later, I took a part-time staff position at a church in my hometown. I was still bitter, angry, and on a mission to prove to everyone that I wasn't a failure. My heart just wasn't healthy. The Lord placed me in the arms of a community of people who provided the healing I desperately needed. I became a

Pursuing the Gospel Intro

member of a family who graciously allowed me to see that I was pursuing things that carried no eternal weight. Numbers, status, and position aren't as valuable in our callings as pursuing the heart of God, and those are the things I was after. It was rough and emotional, but it was a monumental year of transformation. It's the year I grasped what it meant to pursue the Gospel. Pursue has been my favorite word to use during my journey over the past couple of years. A question that I often realign myself with is, "What am I pursuing?" It's been a humbling thought-provoker that has allowed me to keep my motives pure. Pursue, according to Webster, is to "follow someone or something to catch or attack." When I hear this word, I think of a lion's pursuit of catching his prey. When a lion wakes, he knows his number one priority is to protect and provide for his family. As he seeks for food, he must be strategic in finding and making a kill worth eating. He stalks, hunts and waits for the perfect time to strike. If you have watched an episode of Animal Planet, this scene is familiar to you. What those tv shows don't show you is his relentlessness in waking up the next morning, just to do it all over again. The Gospel isn't something that we catch just once. We must pursue it to catch it daily. The good news of Jesus impacts our lives every day. If we don't pursue it, it's easy to slip back into the motives of the flesh. We must pursue the Gospel because it's a love story worth always catching. After a lion makes the kill, he doesn't leave it there for the buzzards to devour. He takes it back to his pride and they feast. If he were to go back home with nothing, his family would wonder if he caught anything to begin with. He knows what he has caught will bring sustenance to his family. So, he values it, and he shares it. I wrote this book hoping you will become like the lion in his daily pursuit; to catch and share. There are many misconceptions about the Gospel and why Jesus died. We will explore many of these areas and some practicalities you can use to share the Gospel with more confidence. If you feel you haven't quite caught the Gospel or lack the equipping needed to share your story, this book is for you! I wouldn't be as enthusiastic to share it with you if it didn't transform my life first. I offer my words and experience to you as a response to His gift of grace in my life.