



GUIA DE ESTUDO

You don't have to grow up in church to find faith

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A Gospel Trial With a Better Ending

Pastor Mike Spiegel frames faith like a courtroom scene: there is a trial, witnesses, evidence, opening and closing arguments, deliberation, and a verdict. His startling claim is that the verdict for all of us is guilty, but that is not the climax of the gospel. The real hope is the sentencing—Jesus taking the sentence so believers are not condemned, but moved toward life, grace, and peace.



The climax of the gospel is not the verdict. The climax of the gospel is the sentencing.

— Pastor Mike on the gospel's climax

Guilty—but not abandoned

He insists that Scripture does not hide the seriousness of judgment. Even Jesus says in Matthew that every idle word will have to be accounted for. In that courtroom picture, the evidence is enough to convict every person—"guilty for you, and guilty for me all day, every day." Yet he does not stop at condemnation. He moves the listener to Romans 8:1 and the "spiritual sentencing guidelines," where those in Christ are no longer headed for death but for life. This is where grace enters: not denying the verdict, but changing the sentence through Jesus.

PARA REFLEXÃO

Discuss the courtroom image

How does the sermon's courtroom picture help you understand both the seriousness of sin and the hope of grace?

PARA REFLEXÃO

Discuss the role of Jesus

Why does Pastor Mike say the gospel's climax is the sentencing rather than the verdict, and what does that reveal about Jesus' work for believers?

REFLEXÃO

Facing the verdict honestly

Where do you tend to minimize sin, avoid judgment language, or assume you can manage your own standing before God? What would it look like to face the verdict honestly without losing sight of Jesus' mercy?

APLICAÇÃO PRÁTICA

Hold on for the sentencing

When life feels like "trying to find a job," "dealing with some kinda divorce issue," "dealing with some kinda health issue," or "just trying to pay rent," practice repeating the sermon's refrain: hold on for the sentencing. Let Romans 8:1 and Romans 6:23 shape your response to pressure, shame, and fear.



Hold on for the sentencing. Hold on for the sentencing.

— Pastor Mike to the suffering

Jesus endured the worst of it

He connects the believer's hope to Jesus' own suffering: rejected by people, convicted, given permission to be put on the cross, preparing in Gethsemane, abandoned by followers, crowned with thorns, and bearing sins. Even so, the climax was not the cross but the resurrection. Pastor Mike uses that story to teach that believers can endure their own hard season because Jesus already endured the hardest part and rose in victory.

PARA REFLEXÃO

Why the resurrection matters here

How does Pastor Mike's insistence that the climax was the resurrection deepen the comfort of Romans 8:1 and Romans 6:23?

REFLEXÃO

From death to life

Where in your life do things currently look like death, delay, or loss? What would it mean to trust that God is still producing life there?

APLICAÇÃO PRÁTICA

A life sentence in Christ

Instead of imagining God's final word over you as punishment, hear the sermon's hope: when you are sentenced, you are sentenced to life. Sit with the contrast between "the wages of sin is death" and "the gift of God is eternal life" until it changes how you pray, repent, and hope.



God's favor isn't fair because he really is he does what he wants, and it doesn't always level the playing field, but his love is always the same.

— Pastor Mike on grace and favor

An unlikely candidate

Mike tells the story of growing up in Stockton, California, with a police officer father, a nurse mother, and an older brother who became a fireman. He had no church background, only a few sporadic visits to his Seventh-day Adventist grandmother's church. He saw himself as a practical, car-loving, sports-loving young man who worked seven days a week, first in parks and recreation and a restaurant, then in an auto parts store, and finally in Gary and Meat Company in Lodi. Looking back, he sees God's favor in getting that job even though his friend Big John had wanted it for years. The point is not that Mike deserved it, but that God was already at work before he understood it.

PARA REFLEXÃO

Grace before awareness

What parts of Mike's early life show God's care before Mike recognized it? How does that change the way you interpret your own story?

REFLEXÃO

The power of a stable story

Mike says his story felt ordinary compared with dramatic conversion stories. Do you ever assume your story is too normal to matter? Why or why not?

APLICAÇÃO PRÁTICA

Name the ordinary graces

Write down three "ordinary" places where God has been faithful to you—work, family, a friendship like Neil, or a season when you were simply held together. Do not dismiss stability as unspiritual; thank God for it as part of his favor.

From reluctant attendance to a real encounter

His first exposure to church was awkward and sporadic: Friday night drop-offs at his grandmother's house, Saturday church in a classroom with kids who already knew each other, and later a clumsy attempt to identify as Christian because he believed Jesus was a real person. As an adult, his girlfriend Jill wanted to return to church, which he tried to manage by assigning Saturday for him and Sunday for her. But a co-worker named Neil began giving him literature, and eventually Mike entered an old stone church with massive doors, a rose marking him as the visitor, and a seat on the aisle near both exits because he planned to leave quickly after the service.

PARA REFLEXÃO

What drew him in?

Why do you think Mike resisted church at first, and what changed when he started hearing and seeing real Christian community through Neil, Jill, and the church itself?

REFLEXÃO

Where are your exits?

Mike sat near the exits and planned his escape. In what ways do you still keep spiritual escape routes open when God gets too close?

APLICAÇÃO PRÁTICA

Stay through the service

If you have been treating church, prayer, or Scripture like something to endure until you can leave, try Mike's next-step posture instead: stay in the room, listen, ask questions, and let God interrupt your plans. His story shows that grace often meets us in the place we were trying to avoid.



you're never too ordinary.

— Pastor Mike on ordinary stories

Adoption into a new family

As Mike moved from casual curiosity into serious faith, he found himself surrounded by a new community: Neil, another co-worker; a small group of men on the same shift; and an older German couple who invited them for lunch after church. That mattered deeply because he was a skinny young man living away from home, needing both food and belonging. In this part of the sermon, adoption is not a formal doctrine but a lived reality: God places the outsider into a family, gives him a table, and slowly gives him a new identity.

PARA REFLEXÃO**Family and belonging**

How do the lunch table, Bible studies, and shared church life show the difference between merely attending church and being welcomed into a family?

REFLEXÃO**Receiving a new identity**

What is harder for you: asking for help or accepting that God may have already placed people around you as part of his care?

APLICAÇÃO PRÁTICA**Practice adopted life**

Make room at your table the way the German couple did for Mike: invite someone over, feed them, and ask about their story. If you are the one on the outside, let yourself receive hospitality instead of hiding.

Grace over black-and-white religion

Mike says that early teaching gave him a very black-and-white view of faith: truth mattered most, and Christianity became mostly about being right and behaving correctly. He admits it was years into pastoring before he began to understand grace. That confession matters because it shows how easily a believer can reduce faith to rules without peace. The sermon pushes in the opposite direction: grace is not moral laziness, but the new way God forms a person from the inside out.

PARA REFLEXÃO**Law or grace?**

What is the difference between using truth to control behavior and receiving truth as a place where God can transform you?

REFLEXÃO**Learning grace slowly**

Where are you still tempted to live by strict categories, self-approval, or fear of getting it wrong? What would it look like to let grace be more central than control?

APLICAÇÃO PRÁTICA**Receive what you did not earn**

Think of one area where you act like you must prove yourself to God—church involvement, morality, family reputation, or spiritual consistency. Name it honestly in prayer and ask God to teach you the same grace that Mike says took him years to understand.

Forgiveness, peace, and a life after loss

When Jill broke up with him after a serious relationship, Mike describes a painful shift from having a plan to feeling lifeless and adrift. In that moment he prayed to a God he barely knew and started asking bigger questions about purpose and life. This is where forgiveness and peace enter the study of his story: not because everything was instantly fixed, but because disappointment opened him to God's direction. He found companionship in a small group of men going to church together and discovered that God was guiding him step by step.

PARA REFLEXÃO**Pain as a doorway**

How did heartbreak become a turning point rather than simply an ending in Mike's story?

REFLEXÃO

When plans collapse

What questions rise in you when a relationship, dream, or plan falls apart? Do those questions move you toward God or away from him?

APLICAÇÃO PRÁTICA

Pray before you understand

If you are in a season like Mike's after Jill, pray honestly even if you do not yet know what you believe. Ask God for purpose, peace, and the next faithful step rather than demanding the full map.

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A prayer for guilty people with hope

Lord Jesus, thank you that the gospel does not end with our guilt. Thank you that you endured rejection, shame, the cross, and death, and that you rose again so the final word over those in Christ is life. Teach us to hold on for the sentencing, to receive your grace, to rest in forgiveness, and to live in peace as your adopted people. Help us see that our stories matter, whether they are dramatic or ordinary, and use our lives to point others to hope. Amen.