**LOBBY AT YELLOW BOX**

**Traveling Introduction**

Hello Community! I’m just getting ready to take a trip over to our new Downers Grove location and I thought I’d have you join me!

Even though I’m sure many of you are sick of traveling by now. Quick show of hands so everyone around you at your location can see – how many of you did some traveling over the holidays? To family? Friends? Had to get yourself off the couch? (show of hands?)

Now one of the nice things about traveling these days is you always have this with you (phone) – with a built in GPS to tell you exactly how to get whereever you want to go.

Now I remember back in pre-historic times you had to use a thing called a “map.” For anyone under 18 a map is a piece of paper that had streets and highways labeled on it to help guide you places! ☺

**GO TO CAR**

**INSIDE CAR**

**Story of Sue throwing out the directions**

I don’t really like maps. Maybe this is why…

It was about this time of year that Sue and I were invited over to some people’s house for dinner. We had never been to these people’s home so we called them and they gave us directions that we wrote out on a piece of scrap paper - a map. Got there just fine…

We had dinner. It was time to leave so we thanked them and said good-bye.

So we get in the car to go home. I’m driving. Sue has the written out directions. And now we had to reverse them in order to find our way back home. It’s dark out by now.

And we both like being in charge; but Sue has the directions and is doing the navigating. We are driving for awhile and nothing is looking familiar. Now, I’m convinced we are lost. I’m feeling like the navigator is not doing her job!

So, I decide to take charge and I say to her, “Give me the directions!” And I reach over to try and snatch the directions from her. She pulls them away from me.

That seems to tick off the navigator. She shows me the directions, wads them up in a ball. Rolls down the window and then throws directions out of the car!

That is why I don’t like maps!

Now, let’s see if I can get to Downers Grove without getting lost!

**DGR B-ROLL as car leaves and arrives at DGR**

**Story of Belgian woman getting lost**

**GETTING OUT OF CAR AT DGR**

Truth is, you can get lost using this thing too! (phone) Read a crazy story this week about a Belgian woman, Sabine Moreau who was driving to a friends house about an hour and half away. She puts her friends address into her phone but because a GPS error, she ended up lost…more than 900 miles lost — in Croatia! Her route took her across 5 international borders; she stopped for gas several times; even took a quick nap in her car on the side of the road. But it wasn’t till she hit the capital of Croatia, 2 days later – that it hit her she was lost! It was then she said, “I told myself I need to turn around.”

When we hear those kind of stories and we can clearly see someone else is lost, we want to yell, “Turn around!!!” **(might be cool to do a camera move here where we actually turn you around)**It just seems so obvious to us, right?... Well hold on that…

**LOBBY IN DGR**

**Make Room Series**

As we begin a new year we are also starting a new series called, “Make Room.” It’s all about learning intentional spiritual practices that will make room for God in 2020. And we will not only LEARN but also challenge you to DO these spiritual practices like fasting, prayer, and sabbath rest.

But the practice I want to challenge all of you with today has to do with the direction of your life. We shake our heads at the story of the Belgum women who ends up lost in Croatia! But it’s also easy for us in our own lives to just keep heading in the same direction day after day, even year after year and eventually end up somewhere we never intended to be!

**Detours & Drifiting**

Sometimes it is caused by a big “detour” or a “wrong turn” in life and we end up lost.

But other times we end up off-course through small incremental decisions. It’s more like we drift. And drifting just a little can make a big difference. Consider this…

* If you're going somewhere and you're off course by just one degree, after one foot, you'll miss your target by 0.2 inches. No big deal, right? But what about as you get farther out?
* After 100 yards, you'll be off by 5 feet. Again not huge, but noticeable.
* After a mile, you'll be off by almost 100 feet. One degree off is starting to make a difference.
* If you are traveling from San Francisco to L.A., you'll be off by 6 miles. You could end up in the ocean!
* And if you were flying from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., you'll end up on the other side of Baltimore, 43 miles away.

Over time, drifting just one-degree off course makes a huge difference! The same is true in life!

* The choice to stay late at the office again…down the road you can end up with a broken relationships.
* The choice of just one more drink… down the road you can end up with an addiction.
* The choice to prioritize other things over church and spiritual things…you end up far from God.

We can travel a long long time before we realize we have drifted far off course.That’s why when Jesus came to this world and walked among us, at the heart of his message was a call to “Turn around!” Jesus’ call to “turn around” sounded like this… **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” - Matthew 4:17**

**AUDITORIUM IN DGR**

**What Repentance IS NOT**

And that is the first spiritual practice for you to make room for God in your life in 2020 – “**REPENTANCE**.” If we don’t get this one, none of the others matter!

Now, let’s start by talking about **What** **Repentance Is NOT**. *Repentance* is not a word that gives us warm, fuzzy feelings. We much prefer words like *faith*, *hope*, and *love*. You don’t tend to see the word *repent* printed on t-shirts or coffee mugs.

Let me ask you… how many of you, when you hear the word *repentance*, automatically think about sin? *(Raise your hand)* I’m guessing most of us do. *Repentance* sounds like a religious word meant to remind me that I’m a screw up and I should feel bad about myself.

* *Repentance* makes me feel like I should stand in the corner and think about what I’ve done.
* *Repentance* makes me feel like I’m wearing the cone of shame.
* *Repentance* makes me feel like I disappointed God.

But what if I told you that repentance is NOT really about what you FEEL at all?

Theologian N.T. Wright says: “The trouble with [the word *repentance*] is that people have often not understood it. They have thought it means ‘feeling bad about yourself’. It doesn’t. It means ‘change direction’; ‘turn round and go the other way;’ or ‘stop what you’re doing and do the opposite instead’. How you feel about it isn’t the really important thing. It’s what you do that matters.” -N.T. Wright

When Jesus calls us to *repent*, he is NOT telling us to beat ourselves up with regret and shame; he’s inviting us to turn around and start moving in a different and better direction.

**What Repentance IS**

So, let’s talk about **What Repentance IS.** Let me give you a simple way to think about repentance. Humor me for a minute and everybody stand up… go ahead, stand up. *(Wait a few moments)* Now, everyone turn to your right. (**🡨**) Don’t worry, I’m not going to make you do that creepy exercise where you give a shoulder massage to your neighbor. What I want you to do is on the count of three, take three steps forward and keep facing to the right. Ready? 1, 2, 3… *(Pause)* Alright, what I’m going to ask you to next is a picture of repentance. On the count of three, I want you to turn around and take three steps in the opposite direction. Ready? 1, 2, 3… *(Pause)* That’s it! Repentance is turning around and moving in a different direction. OK, go ahead and have a seat. *(Pause)*

Repentance involves changing the direction you are currently heading, turning around, and starting off in a new, much better direction.

Here’s another way to think about it… Let’s say you are traveling on the interstate on route to an amazing vacation destination when suddenly you realize you’re driving in the wrong direction. What do you do? You immediately start looking for an exit and an off-ramp, don’t you? You want to turn around and head in the right direction. If you don’t, you’re going to just get more and more lost…and miss something awesome!

Repentance is about finding the off-ramp so you can turn around and start going the right way.

**Prodigal Son Story**

Probably the best illustration about repentance is a story Jesus told about a father and his two sons.

The story starts out with the younger son doing the unthinkable. He goes to the father and asks for his share of his father’s estate. Just like today, it’s understood that you don’t get an inheritance until your parents are gone. So, in essence, this is the son telling his father, “I wish you were dead. Can we just pretend you are dead so that I can have what’s coming to me?”

Though he’s brokenhearted, the father doesn’t protest. He divides his property between his two sons. Gives it to them.

But things do not go well for this younger son. He goes off and squanders all his new found wealth on wild living until he finds himself penniless, hungry, and alone. Lost!

And then comes the critical moment in his story. Jesus tells the story like this: **“When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ So he got up and went to his father.” -Luke 15:17-20**

The younger son comes to his senses. He finally recognizes that his life is totally headed in the wrong direction! So, the son finds an off-ramp and turns around and starts heading in the right direction…back to his father.

And notice something -- when the son returns home, the son FEELS really, really bad. He’s ready to stand in the corner and wear the cone of shame. He knows how much he’s disappointed the father. But the father isn’t interested in any of his FEELING BAD. The father has no desire to see his son grovel. Instead, his dad is ready to celebrate! He puts a ring on his son’s finger and sandals on his feet; clothes on his back and orders his servants to prepare a feast! He wants to have a party! All that matters to the father is that his son turned around and came back to him.

When Jesus says: **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” (Matthew 4:17)** He’s telling us that with his coming, He is showing us a new way, a different way, a much better way of living in this world; a way of peace, joy, and freedom. A way full of love, purpose, and meaning that can be lived out in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and families. But in order to find that kind of life, Jesus says, we have to repent. We have to turn around. We have to come back to God!

**Repent – Pick something!**

And here is what I’m asking you to do today - repent. Not just learn about repentance, but to do repentance! Turn around. This is how you will make room for God in 2020!

And I don’t want you to pick something. I want you to ask God to pick something. In a moment I’m going to say a prayer and then we are going to sing a song that will challenge us to Make Room for what God wants in our life. As we sing it, I want this to be a spiritual moment where God asks you to repent (not feel bad) but yes, get your life headed in the right direction regarding a particular issue, in a specific relationship, in this one area – turn around!

I’m going to keep it real. Cause for some of us – you are headed in a direction today that will totally detour your life. You are headed for lost-ness. (slow)

* Might be relationship that you know is destructive.
* Might be business-related decision you need make right.
* Might be an addictive sin that you’ve hidden.

And the direction you are headed is pulling you away from God and every good thing He wants to do in your life! What you need is to repent! And I’m telling you – if you do, this day will be a pivotal day you will celebrate for the rest of your life!

Now for others of us, repentance is more subtle than that…

* It might mean reprogramming the way we think – turning away from negativity.
* It might mean realigning our priorities – putting God first with our resources.
* It might mean restructuring our time. Confession? That’s where I need repentance. I’m realizing that “If Satan can’t make you bad, he will make you busy.” I need to repent of some of my busyness!

What about you? When Jesus calls us to *repent*, he’s telling us to turn around and reorient everything about our lives in a new direction so that we don’t miss out on the party!

**Make Room Song Intro**

Repentance is at the heart of the Community Music song, “Make Room” that we will sing in just a moment.

I’d like for the band to come on the stage at this time to lead us. This is one of my very favorite songs these days. I love the refrain: “Here is where I lay it down. You are all I'm chasing now. This is my surrender. (Chorus) And I will make room for you. To do whatever you want to. Do whatever you want to.”

As I lead us in prayer and we sing that song I’m challenging you to repent. Ask God, “What part of my life do you want me to turn around? What area do you want me to realign with you? Where do you want me to change direction?”

And I don’t want you to pick something. I want you to ask God to pick something. What is it for you?

**REPTANCE PRAYER**

**MAKE ROOM SONG
COMMUNION**

**AUDITORIUM AT DGR**

**21 Days of Prayer & Fasting**

As we begin this New Year, I want all of us to make room for God to break through. If you don’t DO this first practice of repentance none of these others will matter. So it starts there!

But I want to give you a heads up about the next spiritual practice we want to teach and DO! Prayer and fasting. As a church we are going to enter into a 21-days of prayer and fasting where we ask God for a personal breakthrough (January 6th-26th).

I want you to begin thinking now about how you will participate in this 21 days of prayer and fasting.

I will be doing a fast from food – part of the time it will be a complete fast and part of it will be a sunrise to sunset fast from food. What about you?

We will be doing everything we can to support you during those 21 days.

* We’ll be reading through the book of John together as a way to focus on Jesus during the fast (sign up for the Bible Reading Plan).
* We’ll have a Facebook group where you can hear from a Community staff member each day on that day’s passage from John and interact with others who are on this journey of prayer and fasting.
* Kids City – “Fill up” & “Give up” Challenge.

As an encouragement, I wanted you to hear from someone who saw God really breakthrough during our 21 days and prayer and fasting last year. I’ve asked our Downers Grove Community Pastor Ted Conairis to join me…

**AUDITORIUM AT DGR**

**Ted Conairis (interview)**

**Q -** Last year you had a very specific breakthrough prayer during our 21 days and prayer and fasting. Would you tell us about it.

**Q-** How did God breakthrough?

**Q -** What challenge would you give to our people about being a part of this 21 days and prayer and fasting?

Let’s ALL make room for God in 2020! It starts with repentance, turning our lives around. Next week it continues with fasting.

**WALK OUT OF DGR**