

# LAUNCH: Strategies for Launching Your Career & Family

## Overcoming Your Past to Fulfill Your Calling

Edited Transcript

Featured Speaker: Chris Mikkelson, Chris Mikkelson Evangelistic Ministries

Patrick Morley: Good morning, men. To any of you who are visiting with us this morning for the first time, we'd like to extend a very warm Man in the Mirror welcome to you. We are in a six-week series called Launch What we've done is we have invited six extremely interesting people to come in and tell their stories, strategies about how they have coped with difficulties and how they are doing now.

We usually begin by doing a couple of shout outs. Our first shout out today goes to a group called **GPS: Recalculating the Journey**. Rocca Rosa is the leader. They're in Fergus, Ontario, Canada, 10 to 15 men. They've been meeting for nine years on Friday mornings at Lakeside Church. They use the video Bible study. They're journeying through life and defining what God's purpose is for each of us. We want to welcome them here in a moment. Then, today we're going to give a shout out to an area director, which we also do each time. These are men who are scattered around the United States, so far in 36 states, helping churches disciple men more effectively. Today, Don Allen, who is the area director in Illinois.

I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm, rousing Man in the Mirror welcome to Don Allen and to GPS. One, two, three, hoorah. Welcome, men. We're honored to have you as part of the Bible study. Don, thank you for your service as well. Today our speaker is Chris Mikkelson. Chris is going to be telling his personal story. His resume, though, would be that he began his career in ministry at Christ for the Nations, headquartered in Dallas, Texas. He was the executive assistant to Daniel Kolenda, who is now the principal evangelist and the heir to the ministry of Reinhard Bonnke. Chris was then promoted from that position to be the director of US crusades for Reinhard Bonnke. Some of you, how many of you have heard of the name Reinhard Bonnke before? Many of you have. Some of you have not.

His ministry was primarily in the country of Africa. I guess Daniel Kolenda's ministry is primarily in Africa. Chris felt led to start a work of his own, and so he is now in I'm just going to say a principally Muslim country. Then, Chris can tell you what he wants to say about that. Chris, on a regular basis, speaks to crowds of several hundreds of thousands of people and has many thousands of people coming to faith in Christ in the work that he does, but it didn't get started there, and so he's going to talk about that. Chris is married to Amanda, who is not only

his wife but is truly and genuinely his best friend. I wonder if you join me and let's give a very warm welcome to... By the way, Chris attends our Bible study. He's a regular. He sits back here at Fred Mateer's table. Fred, raise your hand. Now you know where Chris is when he's not overseas on one of his crusades. Would you join me in giving a very warm welcome to Chris Mikkelson?

Chris Mikkelson:

Praise the Lord. It's good to see you guys this morning. I'm really excited to be here. Pat, thank you so much. It's an honor, Pat, to be here and to be invited to speak and just honor you and Brett and all you guys are doing. Can we give them a big God bless you? Thank you, Pat. Well, I'm excited to be here. As Pat said, I'm a crusade evangelist. I focus on doing gospel crusades in unreached parts of the world. That's our heart, is really to go where other people are not going and to go to places where people don't even like to go. It's my joy to go to those places. Before I get into my story, I'm just going to kind of let you guys know we do have a product table in the back where we're selling some t-shirts that say, "Jesus saves," on them, some other shirts that talk about the Great Commission. All the proceeds for these shirts go to our gospel crusades. Make sure you guys make that available to yourself.

On average, it costs our ministry only about 79 cents to see one person come to faith in Jesus Christ at our crusades in Pakistan. You can't even buy a McDonald's cheeseburger for 79 cents anymore. All the proceeds, every dollar that you spend over there on the product table will help us greatly to continue to do the work that we're doing. Make sure you guys make that available. How many of you would like to get a shirt? How many of you would like a shirt? Amen. Praise the Lord. You buy them back at the table. They're \$20. No, I'm just kidding. Who really wants one for free today? How about this man right here? All right. Good catch. Amen. For those that are watching online, you can also make that available to yourself on our website at [ChrisMikkelson.com](http://ChrisMikkelson.com).

We're really excited to be here this morning. I'm just going to share my story, and I wonder if we could turn to the Word. If you have your Bibles, open with me to Psalm chapter 103. I'm going to read verses one through five. You know I'm an evangelist. I just can't help myself. I love to talk about Jesus. You know, for three years, I was a lifeguard. Do we have any former lifeguards in here? Amen. Amen. Yeah, several guys. You know, I was a lifeguard, but I just can't help myself because I actually got fired after three years because every time I saw somebody out on the water waving their hands at me, I said, "Yes, I see that hand. I see that hand. Is there another?" I'm just an evangelist at heart, and I just can't help myself. I love to talk about Jesus, and I love seeing people come to Christ. Amen.

Psalm 103 verses one through five, it says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." There we go. "Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; whom redeems." Somebody say, "Redeems." "Who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfies your mouth with good things;

so that your youth is renewed as the eagle." Today, I am talking on this topic of redemption. You know, God wants to redeem us. He wants to set us free. We're going to be kind of sharing our story. I'm going to be sharing my story of how I came to Christ, how God redeemed me, how God can redeem you, and how he can use you to redeem others as well in Jesus' name.

Before I get into my story, I want to share a little bit about what's happening right now, kind of set the stage. For the last four years, we've been doing gospel crusades all over Asia. We've been all over the country of India. We've been up in the mountains of Sri Lanka. We've been to villages that are 0% Christianity and done crusades and planted churches in those villages from our crusades. For the last number of years now, we've been focusing on the nation of Pakistan. An opportunity a couple of years ago opened up for me to go to Pakistan to start doing gospel crusades. To be quite honest with you, I didn't want to go. A friend of mine was inviting me to come with him to Pakistan. I told him no. Then, he asked me if I'd go again. I said no again.

Then, he said, "Will you please come with me because no one else wants to go with me?" I said, "Well, that's your problem. Nobody wants to go to Pakistan," but finally he kept bugging me about it, and I said, "Listen, I'll pray about it." I was sure that God would say no, and then I would just blame it on God that I couldn't come to the trip. Well, when I prayed, the Holy Spirit spoke very clearly to my heart and said, "Go. You need to go." We started going to Pakistan. As soon as I got there, I saw such a hunger. You know, a lot of times when we think about nations like Pakistan, we think of all the bad things. We think about all the bad people. We think about suicide bombings. We think about all of these types of things. It's true. Those things do happen there quite a bit. There's a lot of persecution against the church, but what is interesting is there is also a really ripe, rich harvest.

The people of Pakistan, the majority of them, are not radical people. They are nominal in their faith. They are secular at best in their faith and in their practice of their religion. What we've found is they are very, very open to the gospel. Because of the persecution that has happened in their country by radicals, they have been marginalized. As a result, I think a lot of them really question the faith that they were born into. When we come with the gospel, and we tell them about the love of God and the power of God, and we talk to them about how Jesus can save them and how they can have eternal salvation, things that are not guaranteed in their religion that they were born into, what we're seeing is that hundreds of thousands of people are coming to faith in Jesus Christ. This last trip, I just got back about a week ago. My wife and I were there. On this last crusade alone, we saw 157,600 people receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior for the very first time. Amen.

That crusade put us over a million souls that we've seen now in the last four years of our ministry come to faith in Christ. We are really excited about what's happening. I wanted to take all of you with me to Pakistan, but Pat said he wouldn't let me take you with to... No, I'm just kidding, but we're really excited.

I would love to take all of you with me to Pakistan. I don't know if any of you would actually want to go with, but I thought I'd bring Pakistan to you by way of video so that you can see what God is doing. We're going to play a video here in just a second, but what I want you to notice is that in this video when I make the altar call for salvation, I tell the people, "If you've never received Jesus before, I want to give you the opportunity to. Today, when I count to three, if you've never done that before, I want you to stand." You'll see the response there, and then I'll come back right after the video plays and continue to minister.

Let's go ahead, and let's go to Pakistan. [from video -*My friends, tonight is your night. He wants you. God wants you. I pray tonight you'll receive his salvation. Jesus didn't come for the big men of God. Jesus came for those that were sinful and those who were sinful and need salvation. In fact, he loves all of us. This is why he came into the world, to show us his love and to show us God's love. In the name of Jesus, all sickness gone in Jesus. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. If you've never received Jesus, and you want Jesus to forgive you, I'm going to count to three, and if that's you, I want you to stand. One, two, three. Stand to your feet. He died for your sin and for my sin. He paid for your debt and for my debt. The Bible says that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.*]

Praise the Lord. It's amazing what God has been doing there in Pakistan the last several years, and we're really excited about what God is doing. How many of you know we're not born Christian? Some of us have had a journey, and I've had a long journey coming to this place. My life wasn't always this way. You see, I grew up in a good home, a good Christian family. I knew all about the Lord Jesus growing up and was following the Lord even in high school to a certain degree, but I wasn't very grounded in my faith. I didn't have any men around me to really prop my arms up, to hold me up, to hold me accountable and to be there for me. As a result, my senior year of high school, I started drinking. I started partying, hanging out with the wrong crowd. I decided that I wasn't sure what I wanted to go to school for, so I decided I wanted to go to college just to get my generals done.

My first year of college, I found myself in the party scene even more, drinking almost every night. It really became a problem. Some people introduced me to marijuana. I started smoking weed. I'm just going to be very transparent with you this morning. Is that all right? Started smoking weed, started getting into that drug scene a little bit. I decided to leave that college and go to another college to pursue law enforcement. I decided I was going to be a police officer. When I joined the police academy, one of the best police academies in the country, which is in Alexandria, Minnesota. I joined the police academy, and I found myself selling drugs to a lot of the people that I was going to school with. After one year, I decided this probably wasn't the best career path, to be a drug dealer and a police officer. Amazingly, I made the wrong decision of dropping out of college and pursuing my drug career rather than pursuing my police career.

My life was really just spinning out of control. How many of you know that sin never satisfies? It's never enough. When you begin to go into sin, when you begin to embrace something sinful in your life, typically you'll find that it never satisfies. You want to continue to do it more and more and more. Well, that was exactly my lifestyle. I just continued to go into that sort of thing. The rabbit hole just kept getting deeper and deeper and deeper. Over several years, after one year of college for law enforcement, I dropped out. I continued down this lifestyle, drugs, alcohol, parties, women, fast motorcycles, racing them, going over 100 miles an hour on one tire, going over 160 miles an hour with my girlfriend, who is now my wife, who was my girlfriend at the time, going over 160 miles an hour with her on the back of my bike.

Just living for the moment, trying to do whatever it was that could satisfy me in that moment, whatever it was, whether it was adrenaline, whether it was drugs or parties or clubs or whatever it was. I was trying to whatever I could to try to satisfy that hole in my heart, that longing that we all have for satisfaction. As I continued to go down that lifestyle, I found myself in a pit. One day, I was sitting at a coffee shop with several friends of mine. We all had these crotch rocket motorcycles. We were sitting there at this coffee shop. One day, a guy drives by on a motorcycle similar to ours, and so he kind of waves at us. We kind of wave at him. He decides to pull in on his motorcycle. He gets off his motorcycle. He introduces himself to us. Instantly, we embraced him because he was like us. He had the similar type of motorcycle. Now, we were all in our early 20s. Some of us were only in our late teens. This guy was in his mid 30s, so he didn't quite fit in in terms of age.

He was married. He had kids. He had a job. He had his own business, but the guy had a motorcycle, so we thought he was cool. He liked to do wheelies. We liked to do wheelies. We embraced him. Over the course of a couple of days, a couple of weeks, actually, he started a relationship with me. We became friends. After about two weeks of knowing this guy, he started talking to me about Jesus. I like to call him the undercover evangelist. You see, when he was driving by, and he saw those young kids on the side of the road at the coffee shop smoking and partying and living wild and talking dirty and all these things, he, as a Christian, when he drove by, he didn't see them just as a bunch of heathens that are going to hell. What he saw was a harvest.

He said, "There's people that God needs to redeem. There's young men there that they could die on these motorcycles at any moment and die and be separated from God forever. I need to go and bring the gospel to them. I need to tell them about Jesus," and so he did. He came in, and he started talking to me about the Lord. Something began to be re-birthed in my heart. There was a desire for God again at that moment. A couple of days later, my wife, who was my girlfriend at the time, she asked me if I'd go to church with her. She said, "You know, my sister apparently has become one of these born again Christians and has been inviting me to come to church. Would you ever go to church with me?" I said, "Yeah, sure. Why not?" She thought that was pretty crazy because I had never told her about my past lifestyle, growing up in a Christian home. All

she knew was the guy that got into fights in the bars and was partying and drinking and selling drugs.

I said, "Yeah, sure. Why not? Let's go to church." We went to church on a Sunday morning. Nothing special happened, but the pastor said something. He said, "Make sure you come back on Wednesday night for our midweek service." Well, that's what I heard. What the pastor actually said was, "On Wednesday night, we're having a special service for parents whose teenage children are dealing with drugs, alcohol, and sex outside of marriage. Make sure you come back on Wednesday night." All I heard was, "Come back on Wednesday night." Now, I hadn't been to church in years. For whatever reason, now I know it was the Holy Spirit drawing us, we decided to go to church on Wednesday night. Now, Amanda, my wife, and I, we were dating at the time. We were living together. I had a roommate. He was doing more drugs than I was.

The three of us lived in a little two bedroom apartment in one of the worst apartment complexes in Minneapolis, in the Twin Cities area. It was just a party central, this apartment was. We decided we were going to go to church Wednesday night. We put on the nicest clothes that we had, and we were about to leave and go out the door. As we were going out the door of our apartment, a couple of my friends were coming through the door with cases of beer underneath their arms, backpacks full of drugs, and they were coming into the apartment to party. They looked at me, and they said, "Hey, you're dressed real nice. Where are you going? Where is the party at?" I said, "We're not going to a party. We're just going out." He said, "No, no. Where are you going? Where is the party at? Don't leave us hanging. Where are you going?" I said, "Oh, no, no. We're not going anywhere. We're just going out."

He said, "Come on, bro. Tell me. Where are you going?" I said, "Fine. We're going to church." He said, "What? You don't go to church. What are you doing going to church?" I said, "Yeah, man. We're just going to go to church, and we'll see you later." He said, "Well, we're going to party here at your apartment with your roommate. Then, we're going out to the club. Why don't you meet us at the club after church?" I thought, "Well, that's a logical idea, go to the club after church." I said, "Yeah, we'll meet up with you later." We left that day. We went to this church service. When we got there, to our horror, we were at the wrong service, but we didn't want to be rude and leave. It was a big mega church, so we decided, "Let's stay here, and we'll sit in the very back of the church building. We'll let the parents sit up in the front. We'll just sneak out as soon as the service is over."

Well, all of a sudden, the pastor starts talking about these sin issues that we're currently dealing with, drugs, and alcohol, and partying, and all of these things. All of a sudden, I look over, and, I mean, I'm just feeling super convicted in my heart. I know God's got a better plan than this for my life. I look over at my girlfriend, who's now my wife. She's sitting next to me, and she's going like this. She's just sobbing, crying. There was no altar call for salvation because it wasn't that type of service, but we went out to our car that night, and we just knew the

life we were living was not the life that Jesus Christ died to give us. He had something better for us. He had a plan. He had a purpose for our life. We made a decision that night in our car by ourselves. We were going to start following Jesus.

There was no altar call. There was no pastor there. We just made a decision. You know what? We had a revelation that the life we were going down was not the life Jesus Christ wanted to give us. We decided, "You know what? We're going to start following Jesus." Well, we went back to our apartment. When we got into our apartment, we noticed everyone was gone. Nobody was there. As soon as I walked through the door, the aroma of booze and cigarettes overwhelmed me, which was normal in that time in our life. We walked into the apartment, and there were beer bottles and cups all over the floor. There were cigarettes put out on the carpet. There was booze spilled all over the countertop. There was blood splattered on the wall because my roommate got into a fight with somebody and broke somebody's nose, and blood splattered everywhere.

I'm just being really real with you because I feel like we need to hear it, and I feel like there's some guys here that need to hear it. When we walked into that setting, normally I would have been a part of that mess. Normally, I would have been one of the people that was making that mess, but now, for the first time in many years, I was sober. I was in my right mind. I'd just met Jesus. I'd just had this encounter with Jesus. All of a sudden, I walk into my mess, in my situation. All of a sudden, I had this revelation that this is my life. This is what my sin has gotten me to. This is what my desires have gotten me to. It's this mess, drugs and alcohol and booze and hopelessness. All of a sudden, I realized I can't live this way anymore. I need to follow Jesus with my whole heart.

For several months, I was kind of in between. I call it kind of an in between Christian, kind of a halfway Christian. I was trying to follow Jesus, and yet there was this pull back into the world. For a couple of months, I was saying to myself, "Well, I'm not going to drink as much because I'm a Christian now. I'll only drink a little bit. I'm not going to do as many drugs as I used to do because I'm a Christian now." How many of you know God doesn't want us to be lukewarm? He wants us to be hot. God was calling me out of that lifestyle. For a couple of months, I was this halfway Christian. I was this halfway in the church, halfway in the world. Finally, there came a moment where I was sitting in my car, and I said, "Oh, God, I'm tired, and I'm done. I've lived for myself all these years. It's gotten me nowhere. I'm tired of living for me, Jesus. I want to live 100% for you."

In that moment, everything broke. Everything changed. I never did drugs again. I never got drunk again. God completely delivered me. I was smoking a pack and a half of cigarettes every day. God delivered me overnight. Now, that's not to say that there wasn't desires to go back to those things, but God literally took that desire out and gave me peace. Even when those desires came, he gave me the power to overcome. Amen. God wants to deliver us. He wants to redeem us. The word redeem in the Greek is the word *lutroo*. It literally means to release

on receipt of ransom, to buy back, to deliver, or to purchase. The Bible tells us that we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We've all sinned. We've all fallen short. We've all made mistakes. We all need Jesus, and he came to die for our sins.

Now, I have a long message here, and I really don't have time to get into the whole thing, but God wants to redeem you guys. He wants to redeem all of us. The Bible tells us that on the cross of Calvary, Jesus Christ paid for our sins with his own blood. He died to save us. He died to redeem us, and he has already made the purchase for your soul. He's already paid the payment to save us, but there comes a moment in all of our lives where we have to say, "Okay, God. I know about you. I know you have done that, but I know I'm not living that lifestyle that you have for me." There comes a moment where you need to be redeemed, where you need to receive the gift that God has given you, the gift of salvation.

The Bible tells us that we can all receive that gift. We can all be delivered and redeemed. You know, when you come to Christ, he doesn't just come to you and fix you up. He doesn't just come and make you better. He doesn't just come and change you. Actually, he comes, and he replaces you. You become a new creation. Jesus said, "The old things will pass away. Behold, all things will become new." When you come to Christ, he will make you a new creation. The Bible says in Jeremiah 31:34 that our sins and our lawless deeds God will remember no more. Your sin and your lawless deeds, when you come to Christ, he doesn't even remember them. He washes them completely away. My friends, God wants to redeem us, but we have to choose this morning. We've got to choose and say yes to Jesus, say, "You know what? I know I'm not living for God."

Today, maybe there's somebody here, you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Maybe you know all about him. I knew all about him, but I wasn't serving him. My heart wasn't right. My life wasn't right. Today you can receive that forgiveness of sins. Today he can save you and forgive you, wash away all of your sins, and make you a new creation in Christ. Then, I believe today, as we leave, the other thing that God wants us to do, the other thing that God has for us is that we would redeem others. The Big Idea this morning is **I have been redeemed that I might redeem others**. I have been redeemed that I might redeem others. You know, when you get saved, it's amazing that God doesn't just rapture us up out of this godforsaken world immediately.

Why does he not just rapture us away immediately? Because there are other people that you know that need Jesus. There are other people that you know who need salvation. There are people that you work with. There are people that maybe it's your barber, your mechanic. Maybe it's your lawyer. How many of you know a lawyer or two that need Jesus? There are people that are around all of us. Amen, David. There are people that are around all of us that need Jesus, and God redeems us so that we could also redeem others. Yes, he wants us to

come to him and begin this relationship with him and redeem us and restore us back to a relationship with him, but he redeems you also to redeem others.

I pray that maybe some of you would say today, "You know what? There's those people that I know that aren't following Jesus. Maybe I could be the undercover evangelist. Maybe I could be that guy that reaches out to those kids that are smoking pot in my neighborhood or those kids that are doing this bad stuff. Maybe I could reach out to them and say, 'Hey, why don't we meet up? Why don't we get together?'" Maybe you could go to them and talk to them about Jesus. Listen, I'm telling you right now kids are not closed off to Jesus. We close them off in our mind. We say, "Oh, they're kids. They don't want to talk about that stuff." You know how many young people I've led to the Lord on the streets of Orlando? Hundreds, maybe thousands of young people. They're open. They just want somebody to care, and they need men. Most of them are fatherless, and we need to rise up and be the men of God who will bring the gospel to them. Amen.

The three phases of redemption are this. I was redeemed. I was redeemed on the cross of Calvary when Jesus paid for my sins. I am redeemed because I've given my life to Jesus. Maybe you haven't done that today. I want to give you an opportunity to do that. Thirdly, I will redeem, and I will go and bring the gospel to those who are around me. This morning, I want to just close with this. If you are here this morning, maybe you know all about Jesus, but you find that you're not right in your heart with God. You're stuck in sin. You're in bondage to sin, and you know you need Jesus. My friends, God loves you so much that he would send his only Son to die for your sin so that he could redeem you back to him.

Don't leave this place this morning without giving him the opportunity to save you, to forgive you, and to make you brand new. Let me just pray for you guys. Every head bowed and every eye closed. Father, I thank you for this group of men. I thank you, God, that there are men in this group this morning who you are going to raise up, God, to change their world, to reach out to young people, to reach out to old people, to reach out to anyone around them, God, and they are going to be men who are going to stand for Jesus. They are going to be men that you use to see other people come to faith in Christ. They are going to be men who are going to disciple the next generation.

Father, I thank you right now that you're going to use each and every one of them. Lord, I pray that if there's anyone here this morning who doesn't know you, who is lost, who is like I was, they know all about Jesus, but they're not following him, they've not been serving him, they're a backslider or maybe they've never given their life to Jesus before, God, I pray that right now they would give you an opportunity to save them, to set them free. If that's you, with every head bowed and every eye closed, you've never received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, I'm going to count to three. When I count to three, if you want Jesus to save you and forgive you this morning, you've never done that before or maybe you did a long time ago, and you're a backslider, and you know you're not right with God, today you can get right with God.

When I count to three, if that's you, you fall into either one of those categories, I want you to raise your hand. If you know today, "Man, I don't know if I died, I don't know if I'd go to heaven," I want you as well, if you want Jesus, to raise your hand on the count of three. One, two, three. Raise your hand if that's you this morning. Amen. Amen. Hallelujah. I see those hands. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Let's do this. Let's all stand. There were a couple of guys that you raised your hand. I want you guys to just be bold enough to raise your hand one more time. If that was you, you raised your hand, just raise your hand again. Just raise it. There. Where else? Here. I wonder if we can, as men, just gather around these men and just begin to pray. Here's what we're going to pray. The Bible says, "Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Today, when we pray, if you mean it from your heart, and you say, "God, I know I need salvation. Forgive me," today he will save you, and you will be saved in Jesus' name. Let's go ahead and just put our hands on those if you're around those two guys. Anyone else, you know you should have raised your hand? Anyone else, you know you should have raised your hand? Amen. Let's just pray. Just pray this prayer. Just repeat after me. Mean it with all of your heart. Say, "Jesus, I come to you today a sinner in need of salvation. Forgive me of my sin. Fill me with your Holy Spirit. From this day forward, I choose to follow you for the rest of my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen." Amen. Come on. Let's put our hands together for the Lord. Amen. Pat.

Patrick Morley:

Okay. You may be seated. Let's put our hands together for Chris Mikkelson. First of all, Chris, we would like to say to you, on behalf of all of the regulars here, we're very proud of you and what God is doing in and through you. We're glad you're on our side. You're one of us. I think we would all agree that Pakistan is in very good hands, so thank you for your faithfulness over there.