

How My Story Shapes Our Network

Steve Morgan | February 2020 Small Group Leader Training at Vida Springs Church in Gainesville, Florida

1

1 ***Steve Morgan:***

2 [(0:00)]

3 Steve Morgan: Jesus, thank you. Thank you. We are so grateful. Constantly reminded as
4 we sing to you of the mercy you have shown us. Lord, we think all the time, where would
5 we be if you had not taken hold of us? If you had not loved us? If you had not forgiven
6 us? Lord, you are so good, so faithful. You have been merciful and kind. Thank you for
7 your mercy that we might have a healthy church family, a place to belong, a place to
8 serve you, a place to grow, a place to help others know you. Lord, thank you for such
9 kindness and mercy.

10 We remember your death, Lord. We remember your suffering in our place. Remember
11 your rising from the dead. Remember your promises that you will come again. We lift up
12 our eyes and hope in that day— that day when everything is made right; in the world
13 around us and within us, everything made right. Lord, we long for that day. Let it come
14 quickly, Jesus. Let it come quickly. And Lord, at the same time, we pray, give us time to
15 tell others about you. Lord, give us time that more would be saved. Give us time that our
16 family members and our brothers and sisters, our parents, our grandparents would come
17 to you. Give us time, Lord, that our neighbors and our classmates and coworkers would
18 come to you.

19 [(2:00)]

20 We pray for your Holy Spirit's power.

21 We pray for the effectiveness of our small groups. We pray, Lord, that you would draw in
22 people from Gainesville. You would draw them in and save them, Lord. We do not
23 presume that we could do it ourselves. We do not presume that we could pull it off. We
24 call on your name because you tell us to. You are a good father—so willing! Our hope is
25 in you. We offer our lives up to you that you would glorify your own name. We forget
26 about—lay aside—our old desires for our own glory, that you would glorify your own
27 name. We lay aside our own desires to be right, that you would be glorified.

28 [Brief silence]

29 Lord, I pray that by this time next year, the number of people that will be counted as core
30 group members would double. I pray for that, Lord. Let it double by this time next year.
31 Let their work in these coming 12 months be fruitful. Let it produce a result. I pray that
32 their hard work, their labor, their prayers, their weeping, that those around them would be
33 saved and would be fruitful. And by this time next year, the number of those in the core
34 of small groups would be doubled, Lord.

35 [Pause]

36 I thank you for the devotion of these men and women.

37 [(4:00)]

38 I ask that you would fill them. Have mercy on them. Give them grace. Encourage them.
39 Lord, we love you so much. Be close to us this afternoon. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

40 ***Retreat Members:***

41 Amen.

42 ***Steve:***

43 Hello, good afternoon! Good to be with you. I love coming over here. It has been a
44 couple of years since I have been here, but it is a lot of fun. We have been talking about
45 leading effective small groups and how to do that with the group leaders. I am really glad
46 that those of you, that are at the core in the small group you're a part of, can be here. We
47 are going to talk this afternoon some more about that. I am actually not teaching the Bible
48 this afternoon. I do not very often talk to a group of people and not teach the Bible, but
49 my intent's not preaching this afternoon. It is more training in small groups, and how to
50 be a part of that, and how that works, how you can be most effective. So, we are going to
51 be going through the ten things every group leader wishes their core members would do.

52 ***Retreat Members:***

53 [Faint laughter]

54 ***Steve:***

55 Okay, let me tell you first just a little bit about me. I think it affects what we do, and it
56 definitely affects what we are as a network. We can't help that our own story and
57 experience impacts it. I did not grow up as a Christian. So, my family were maybe what
58 you would call kind of nice on the outside, typical American pagans. I grew up in
59 northern Michigan.

60 [(6:00)]

61 You know, fun fact about Steve Morgan, where I grew up, all the people were white
62 people, and I did not meet anyone who was not Caucasian until after I was eighteen. Can
63 you imagine? See, my family never went on a vacation. We almost never left the small
64 2,500-person town that I grew up in. And so, it wasn't until I was eighteen when I finally
65 was out of there.

66 It is fascinating to me.

67 I tell you that not to say I am a backward, backwoods northerner. I tell you it just to say it
68 it's amazing what Jesus can do. It's amazing. It's amazing.

69 Somebody a great big, tall as me, but twice as wide across the shoulders as me, a strong
70 UT university professor, who's African American, came into Joshua Church and said,
71 "This is the most multi-ethnic thing in Austin, period." And I thought, "Really?"

72 That is so sad. This is just like the beginning. We are just barely started.

73 You think about it, I was a non-Christian, white kid, messed up like crazy, from northern
74 Michigan. You know, by the time I was eighteen, I was such a disaster because of my
75 parents not knowing how to be parents. Maybe I've already told the group leaders this
76 week and I can't remember, but by the time my dad was 23 and my mom was 22, they
77 had four kids. My mom was pregnant when she was 17, my dad was 18, she was a senior
78 in high school, they got married, and by the time she was 22, they had four kids.

79 [(8:00)]

80 We are all about 17 months apart. They were like little children. Broken, messed up kids
81 trying to raise kids.

82 Basically, growing up, it was a fend for yourself. If you want something, you have to
83 fight for it or you won't get it — and especially love. If you wanted love—actually, even
84 fighting for it didn't do any good... but we sure fought each other for it a lot. Competed
85 and fought and it was not easy. By the time I was 18, my life was just a mess. College did
86 not help that, and it got messier as I got older. And then when I was twenty-two and just
87 graduated from college, my dad was electrocuted at work. He was a lineman for an
88 electric company. He spent 10 days in the hospital. After massive amputations, they
89 removed both shoulder blades, all the muscle off his back, both his buttocks, amputated
90 his legs at the hip. He laid there for another six, seven days after the amputations, and
91 then he died.

92 Quite honestly, I did not know that was possible. It is funny how you can be alive and
93 blind. Like it should have been obvious to me that that was possible, but it had never
94 occurred to me that something like that could happen. As a messed up 22-year-old who
95 longed for his dad's love like crazy but could never get it and did not have a good
96 relationship with him, when he died and the possibility of ever getting it was gone, I
97 spiraled. My life was hopeless. The idea that there could be something good come out of
98 this was just unthinkable to me.

99 [(10:00)]

100 Yet, that pain, that despair, watching my mom who was just — my mom's a broken
101 woman. I think she loves Jesus, but she never matured if she is saved, and she just had to
102 have a man. That just drove her — and we did not know how much until my dad was

103 gone out of the picture. It was so painful to watch. She has Alzheimer's now. She is in her
104 late seventies, and it's sad to watch her life.

105 The pain of all of that was the very thing that God used to cut Steve Morgan open to see
106 his desperate need.

107 And when I was 25 years old, I was on Central Michigan University's campus taking a
108 class, and I found a book in the men's restroom sitting on the toilet paper roll called
109 "Mere Christianity" by C.S. Lewis. I took it home and started reading it. I would lay in
110 my apartment —

111 [heavy breathing]

112 I'd lay in my apartment in my bed reading this alone, and hearing what he had to say, this
113 former atheist British guy, who was a university professor and set out to disprove
114 Christianity, and in the process Jesus saved him. I think I am crying because I'm so
115 thankful for him. I am so thankful that he wrote what he wrote.

116 [(12:00)]

117 I laid there day after day. I'd read a little bit, read a little bit. And, somehow, when I got
118 to the part where he said that we should not say the really foolish things that some people
119 say, the kind of patronizing nonsense that Jesus was a great moral teacher, and then
120 talked about Him simply not leaving room for that by what He taught. And then a kind of
121 demanding remark, "You must make your choice. You must decide; you either spit at
122 him, call him evil, or you fall on your face and worship him."

123 When he explained about the cross and why He died, I do not know what happened, but I
124 was undone. I was undone. Somehow, I found myself believing Jesus. Not just believing
125 Jesus. That is not enough. I found myself in love with Jesus. Loving him was something
126 that I couldn't shake off, no matter what I tried to do.

127 I was obsessed with Jesus. He had rescued me.

128 And I do not even know how I knew, but I knew somehow, that all of the pain and the
129 despair and the brokenness of my life and growing up, and everything that happened, that
130 somehow, he was the one, Jesus was the one, who could help me. Who could deal with it.
131 For the first time that I ever remember in my life, I went to sleep with peace. Without
132 shame, without fear, without nightmares. For the first time in my life, it was as if I had
133 come home to a place I never belonged to before, but it was certainly, absolutely home.

134 It is so hard to describe it, because it wasn't something that I did.

135 Sorry, I am snotting everywhere.

136 ***Retreat Members:***

137 [Faint laughter]

138 **Steve:**

139 It wasn't something that I did.

140 [(14:00)]

141 We are way too obsessed with our own power and our thinking we can choose. It was not
142 something I did, it was something that happened to me. It was something He did, and I
143 found myself somehow rescued when I hadn't even known that was a possibility.

144 I was in grad school at the time. I finished the masters I was doing. I did not know
145 another Christian yet. I could not find any. If they were there, they were hiding. They
146 were real quiet. I finished the masters, and — it fascinates me when I say these things,
147 because it seems so absurd — I felt like Jesus told me. I was a baby Christian born on the
148 sidewalk alone.

149 **Retreat Members:**

150 [Affirmative laughter]

151 **Steve:**

152 I didn't have anybody helping me, and I felt like Jesus told me, I was to go on and get a
153 PhD. I thought, "Why? I hate school..." but I did. I moved to southern Illinois because
154 SIU accepted me and gave me a full ride in the speech communication program. So, I
155 moved there to do school having no idea what Jesus had in mind.

156 I got in my first church home, in Southern Illinois. And I had to look a long time. I did
157 not — I thought, man, if Jesus is real, it should be super easy to find a church that makes
158 sense. But growing up not a Christian, there were a lot of things that were intuitive to me
159 that: a person should be able *to* come into a church *and* — that to Christians, they didn't
160 see somehow.

161 [(16:00)]

162 I would go into some, and they were so formal and stiff. So stiff. I grew up, I did not
163 think a tie was a useful piece of clothing. I thought that is the stupidest piece of clothing
164 in the world. I still will not wear a tie. Unless maybe you die.

165 **Retreat Members:**

166 [laughter]

167 **Steve:**

168 If I'm coming to your funeral, I might. It takes a lot to get me to wear a tie. I just, it is a
169 dumb piece of clothing.

170 I would go into these churches, and everybody was so stiff. They talked to each other,
171 and I did not know what to do. I just, growing up not a Christian, I just could not do it. I
172 would walk away saying, "Lord, what's wrong? What happened to 'em?"

173 There were other churches I would go to.

174 I had read the Bible in those first couple of years I was a Christian — the New Testament
175 twice, the Bible all the way through once, and I didn't have — it's not like I had some
176 deep profound understanding of it, but I read it and it made sense to me. I believed it.

177 I would go into churches... one particular church I went into where, when I first went in,
178 I thought, "Oh, these people are interesting." They were just a little eccentric. They just
179 felt a little... odd. And I thought, "Well, you know, give them a chance. Be kind." I sit
180 down. All through the worship, I wanted to leave because there was this drummer, it was
181 a woman drummer, beating the drums during worship, and it was so loud, I thought my
182 head was going to explode.

183 She was sitting like five feet from me, banging the drums like crazy. It was just irritating.
184 I thought, "Well, I can endure it, but it was super painful." Well, then worship finally
185 ended, and I was so glad it was over. Then, this guy got up front and said, "Everybody
186 pray in the Spirit," and the place just erupted with tongues, just people shouting.

187 [(18:00)]

188 I just thought, "Okay, I'm just a backwoods punk kid from northern Michigan, but I read
189 1st Corinthians once, and it said, "If you do that, and some new person comes among
190 you, they're going to say you're out of your mind." I mean, again, I was not a theologian.
191 I was just like, "I think you all are crazy. I understand 1st Corinthians." That, if it is to be
192 done, has to be done very carefully, and, according to 1st Corinthians, *only if* there is an
193 interpretation, a right one, a biblical one — and I thought, "I've got to get out of here. I
194 can't do this." So, I got up.

195 I did not even make it through the teaching. I got up to leave. Then one of the deacons
196 stepped in front of me and blocked the door and said, "You can't reject Jesus because of
197 tongues," and I thought, I mean, I was not as sanctified as I am now. I said, "I'm not
198 rejecting Jesus. I'm just rejecting you."

199 I walked around and went out the door and left. I thought, "I can't do this." I had almost
200 given up hope that there was a church where a young man who was unchurched could
201 come in and be a part of it and it makes sense.

202 I had almost given up hope. I stumbled into a little storefront church of about 30 people
203 in southern Illinois one day. There was a man about 20 years older than me named Larry
204 who came up to me and said, "Hi."

205 [(20:00)]

206 He was the most normal person, one of the most normal people I had ever met. It was a
207 weird thing because I felt like from the first time he talked to me, he cared about me. I
208 thought, "What is this?" It really, I think I told them this morning when we were talking,
209 it felt like he cared about me more than my dad ever cared about me, in just a moment. I
210 had just met him. "What is this?"

211 In my suspicion, you know, northerners are terribly suspicious of everybody. In my
212 suspicion, I thought, "What does he want?" He was just so disarming, so real.

213 We could have a normal conversation. He was just dressed like a normal person. He
214 didn't make me feel bad for how I was dressed. Then later, I came back, and he
215 remembered my name. Just little things. He and his wife asked me to lunch, went to their
216 house, and I thought, "I think I can relate to this."

217 Now, do not get me wrong. That little 30-person church was not a healthy place. There
218 was a lot of brokenness and unhealth that they never dealt with. There was not really any
219 leadership there, but Larry and Carol were there, and they loved me. They took care of
220 me. They prayed for me. They talked to me. They asked me about my family and my
221 growing up. They asked me about my dad. We talked a lot about all that stuff.

222 They, one night, kicked a couple of demons out of me, which I did not know were there. I
223 did not like the idea very much that they were there, but they kicked them out, and I felt
224 much better than I had ever felt. I thought, "Whew, that's better."

225 [(22:00)]

226 Eventually, when I was finishing the PhD program, I — and again, I thought I was going
227 to be a college professor all my life — I was telling my students about Jesus. Some of my
228 students were being saved by Jesus and coming to that little church with me. My plan —
229 I had applications in the schools, and Jesus started speaking to me in various ways, some
230 dreams.

231 My pastor thought I was supposed to plant a church in Carbondale. I thought, "You're
232 kidding me. I just went through all this graduate school for what? For nothing?" It was
233 like, "You can just tear it up into teeny, little bits and flush it down the toilet." I thought,
234 "Lord, why did you even have me do it?" He did not bother to answer. I did not feel like
235 he had to answer to me. He just made clear what I was to do. So, it was terrifying. I was
236 learning in those days just simple obedience. He's God. I am not. He knows everything. I
237 know almost nothing by comparison.

238 I was learning just simple obedience. Sometimes it would be — I would be driving down
239 the street and I would pass somebody, I would just feel up my heart, "Help them," and I'd
240 just say, "What? So inconvenient." "Stop the car, pull over, and go talk to them? They're
241 thinking you are weird? Help them?" I was just learning basic obedience. "Give them this
242 gift."

243 Through the process of that, when I came across something like, "Withdraw your
244 application. Stay in Carbondale. I want you to plant a church where people who wouldn't
245 typically go into church can come in and hear clearly about Jesus from the Bible." Oh —
246 and so I did.

247 [(24:00)]

248 The chair of my committee at SIU was ticked at me because I had withdrawn all my
249 applications. I remember the day I ran into her in the department, and she said, "Oh,
250 Steve, so good to see you. How is your job search going?" I am like, "Ah, well, it's one of
251 those moments when you're a Christian and Jesus kind of pushed you up against the wall
252 where you have to say something and blow your cover, and you're like, "Ah." I told her,
253 "Well, actually, I withdrew all my applications and I'm going to stay here in Carbondale
254 and start a new church." Just to make it sound somewhat sane, I said, "Maybe I can get a
255 job here in the department." She laughed at me. Not a fun, "You're my friend" laugh, but
256 a "You are ridiculous" laugh. Then she said to me, "You will never get a job in this
257 department," and walked away.

258 I thought, "Whoa, thank you, Jesus. This feels great. This is wonderful."

259 ***Retreat Members:***

260 [laughter]

261 ***Steve:***

262 It was agonizing, and yet Jesus was teaching me just basic discipleship. Follow Him. Do
263 what He says. Risk. Be faithful. Be reliable.

264 I struggled through that, and eventually, amazingly to me, the department hired me to
265 teach. It was after I had been whining and wailing a lot to Jesus about how He's unfair
266 and how can I do this, and I wanted to marry the woman that's not my wife, and I didn't
267 have any money, and all I had was a lot of debt, and I can't get a job. If you ever whined
268 and then looked ridiculous because you whined like crazy, but He was there all along,
269 and He was faithful, and He answered you? That is what it was like.

270 [(26:00)]

271 So, six of us, myself, my new wife, Larry and Carol, who were from that little church, I
272 remember the day they said, “We felt like Jesus, so we are supposed to go with you to
273 plant this new church. Can we come?” I am thinking, “Can you come?”

274 ***Retreat Members:***

275 [laughter]

276 ***Steve:***

277 “Yeah, come on.”

278 Then two young guys, one that had just graduated from SIU and one that was a heating
279 and air technician that lived there locally, and that was Vine Church.

280 We did not know what we were doing. We did not have any help. We were simply going
281 to the Bible and saying, “Well, what’s a church? What is the book say?”

282 “What does a church do? What’s the book say? How are we supposed to be?”

283 Some of it was a reaction to the things that were not healthy in that little 30-person
284 church. The Bible lays out pretty clear what we are supposed to be doing. Sometimes
285 people will think I should be more sophisticated or more complicated in understanding
286 that, but quite honestly, I think the message of the Bible is simple and repetitive. I think
287 the job of the church is really, really simple and very clear. It is simply: make disciples
288 for Jesus. It’s multi-ethnic disciples by the very nature of the commandment. And it is
289 disciples who *actually* do, live, what Jesus says. The whole idea of going to church and
290 not living out what the Bible says, to me, is a complete absurdity.

291 It is unthinkable that that would be the case, or be okay, or people would somehow go to
292 a church and be comfortable with that.

293 [(28:00)]

294 You hang around one of the churches in our network, and after a while you will say, “I
295 don’t want to do what Jesus said, so I think I’m kind of out of here.”

296 You know? Or you decide, “I want Jesus bad. I’m going to learn to follow Him.”

297 Shouldn’t it be that way? Isn’t that just the clear, simple, plain of the Bible?

298 And so, we are planting this church. And it was fascinating to me, the process. Jesus
299 would lead along the way. One morning I am waking up. I feel like He said, “Go find
300 Sándor Paull and ask him if he’d like to do the things Jesus did.”

301 He was an acquaintance of mine, a young guy, nine years younger than me, that I had met
302 on campus. And I knew he worked at an apartment store, so I go there. I looked like such
303 a fool. Walked up to the men's fragrance counter where he was working, and I did not
304 know what else to say, but I said what I felt like Jesus said, "How would you like to do
305 the things that Jesus did?"

306 He looks at me. He was a Baptist kid who was not following Jesus. He looks at me.
307 "Yeah, sure." I thought, "Oh, what do I do now?" I did not think about that.

308 So, I said, "I'm starting a new small group this Thursday. Why don't you come?" And he
309 came. God moved in him. It was wonderful, crazy how Jesus worked in him. And later,
310 he became the next pastor at Vine church, and eventually led that church. And you think,
311 it's wonderful. Jesus was just leading along. The first fifteen people or so that Jesus saved
312 at Vine church were all Chinese from Taiwan, in Carbondale, Illinois. Can you imagine?
313 It was crazy. They were crazy days. I literally would be doing a small group, leading a
314 discussion, and one of them would start bawling and repenting in the middle of the
315 discussion. I am like, "Wait, wait, wait, wait. We are not done yet. Let's finish first."

316 [(30:00)]

317 ***Retreat Members:***

318 [Laughter]

319 ***Steve:***

320 And they are like, "No, I can't wait. I'm so sorry." And they are bawling. And Jesus saved
321 them.

322 They were wonderful days when the stuff of the Bible was happening. Day in, day out, in
323 our homes, in our apartments, out and about, in small group, when we got together on
324 Sunday.

325 Now, do not misunderstand. It was not like super easy glory days. Sometimes you can
326 look back or hear somebody tell a story and think, "Oh, that was so much nicer than
327 now."

328 You all are a pretty good-looking group of people. This feels like a healthy church. I'd
329 take this church and plant a church any day. We started with 6 people. It took us a year to
330 get to 12 or 18, something like that. It took us another year to get to thirty. Then another
331 year to get to 60. It was slow. You all have only been going 3 and a half years. You look
332 at it and you think — It wasn't that it was easy, but man, it was fun. It was fun. We did
333 not even know what a bigger church was.

334 I had never been in a church bigger than thirty people. But it was like, "Okay, what's
335 next, Lord? What do we do now?" All along, what we knew is, we have to make disciples
336 for Jesus. No big deal. People who give their life to follow Him because Jesus gave His
337 life to save them. We knew that. Not religious. Not put on. Not hyped up. With integrity
338 and honesty. Where people could really experience Jesus. They could really learn the
339 Bible, in a language they could understand, like, simple words. Clarity. Explaining what
340 the Bible said.

341 [(32:00)]

342 You look at it now, and you think, "What did He do? Who is this Jesus we serve?" That
343 one church has become, as of this summer, twenty-six churches.

344 We are sending this summer, church plant, from Joshua Church and Blue Sky, half the
345 team from Joshua Church, half the team from Blue Sky, to England. How did that
346 happen? That is a different story. I do not have time to tell you. It rocked my world. I
347 thought, "Lord, you're kidding me! You are kidding me!" Our overseers were bawling
348 their eyes out, the day Jesus did that. Big, strong, grown, tough business guys, who have
349 never seen cry, bawling their eyes out, over Jesus' power and leading for that.

350 We think, "Wow. How did that happen?" Sometimes people think that Steve knows
351 what's going on, and what's next. I don't. I don't. We are just following Jesus. We are just
352 trying to keep up. Literally. I am just trying to keep up.

353 A lot of times, I say, "Lord, aren't you going a little fast? Could you slow down a little?
354 Your stride is too long for me." You know?

355 We just live with this fundamental belief. The Bible is true. God is real. Jesus came and
356 died in the place of sinners, so that those who believe in him would not die. He rose from
357 the dead, and he sent his Holy Spirit into the church. The church was given orders from
358 Jesus that stand until he comes again. Which has not happened yet.

359 [(34:00)]

360 So, the orders still stand. "Make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of
361 the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe *everything* that I
362 have commanded you. I am with you always, to the end of the age."

363 Guys, this is what we are. And, as part of Vida Springs Church, as core small group
364 members, you have been entrusted with a job that has eternal consequences for people.
365 People like I was. People who don't know him. People who are desperately caught in
366 their sin, in darkness, and by evil.

367 You have been given a responsibility, a kind of solemn trust from Jesus, until he comes.
368 That you will give your life, whatever is necessary, so that other people would know him,

369 and have a healthy local church in which to devote themselves to him. So that they then
370 can turn around and do the same thing with other people. It is what we are. It is biblically
371 what the church is supposed to be.

372 Why we get off doing all kinds of other things, I do not have a clue. Because the Bible is
373 clear about what the job is, and we have no right to change it.

374 [(36:00)]

375 So, small groups, we talked with the group leaders about already this weekend, are the
376 basic, fundamental mechanism in the churches we are a part of for making disciples.

377 There is a reason for that. One is because in the Bible, you see the first church in Acts
378 meeting in large groups together to worship and for the apostles to teach. I am sure they
379 prayed, just knowing what they were like. Then you see them meeting in each other's
380 homes. That whole process was necessary to make disciples.

381 I do not know, some of you probably are from megachurch backgrounds, but the concept
382 is so foreign to me. I do not know. It puzzles me.

383 You want to draw so many people in one room and then have a superstar pastor that is
384 just amazing, and some of them are truly amazing. One in ten million is what they are
385 like. You want those people to not have any friends, not have anybody to confess their sin
386 to, not have anybody that they feel like these are the dearest people in the world to me,
387 but just to come and watch the show? I do not know how to do what the Bible says that
388 way. Now, don't get me wrong, I am not criticizing them too harshly. We don't do
389 everything right, but this one thing about — how are you — Look at how the Bible talks
390 about making disciples.

391 We went through it this morning, so I am talking about love, and the number of times we
392 are commanded... it is by the very nature of what we do: Relationship. Like, people
393 ought to come into Vida Springs, and the first week ought to feel like, "Wow, these
394 people are something. Why do I feel like they like me? They don't even know me."

395 [(38:00)]

396 That is what they ought to feel like. People ought to come in and feel the sense of, "God's
397 here." One of our young guys that came into Joshua Church a year and a half or
398 something ago, he had moved to Austin for his work. He did not grow up as a Christian.
399 He was lonely, like people are when they finish college and go off to a new town just for
400 a job. He thought, "I need to find out if God's real," out of his loneliness. So, he started
401 going to churches. He went to three churches, and every day when he left those churches,
402 he said, "God is not real." I thought, "Whoa. That's a crazy statement from a non-
403 Christian going into a church." And he, at the end of the third one, gave up. He said,

404 “There's no help there. God's not real.” A friend from work invited him to a Super Bowl
405 party. That friend had just visited Joshua Church like two times.

406 The Super Bowl party was a party of a group of friends from Joshua Church, and he
407 shows up there at the party, and after a while in the night, he finally says, “Why is
408 everybody here from Seattle?” Brian, one of our young guys that is a pastor, but he did
409 not know he was a pastor, Brian said, “Didn't anybody tell you? We are planting a church
410 together here.” He goes, “What?” The rest of the night he sat there. Everyone said,
411 “Silent.” He says, “All I could think was, I have to go to this church.” He was out of town
412 the next weekend. Did not show up. Everybody was crushed. He did not show up. He was
413 out of town.

414 ***Retreat Members:***

415 [Laughter]

416 ***Steve:***

417 The next weekend, he came.

418 [(40:00)]

419 [End of recording]