

Our Epic Quest (OSU)

Intro:

- ❖ **It** was one of those “high definition” **moments** of life.
- ❖ The kind of moment that gets stuck in your **head** as a picture of what life used to be like. An **idealized** moment in time that becomes a part of our great epic quest.
- ❖ The summer storm had dumped ponds of water teeming with **intrigue** for two fifth grade boys with nothing to do, and throwing rocks into the ditch just seemed **so 4th** grade.
- ❖ We were looking a greater adventure in this chapter of our **epic** journey of boyhood.
- ❖ Our eyes were drawn to the **toad** peeking above the edge of the muck. A pack of fire crackers from the corner store, stolen **matches** from my mom’s purse and we had the makings of a high **definition** moment.
- ❖ He had no hope, **hopping** back and forth between the bursting bombs lodged by those two giants that day.
- ❖ And as laughter turned to carelessness, upon lobbing my next **amphibian** attack, I tossed the firecracker too high and it ended up exploding on my shoulder, next to my ear.
- ❖ I still hear the **ringing** in my ear to this day. It reminds me, in high definition, of that forever moment that would come to symbolize the **best** of my late childhood, a day that will live in my heart **forever**.
- ❖ Before the world grew **dark** and complicated, before uncertainty and fear-do you remember the innocent, **carefree** days?
- ❖ Do you remember sitting on the floor, surrounded by **marbles** as the warm light from the spring **sun** passed through your window?
- ❖ The first time you could ride your **bike** around the block by yourself? Your first love **note**-check here if you love me, check here if no.
- ❖ Do you remember not knowing what time it was as you played with your **Cabbage Patch Kid**, **Gerber Baby**, or **Strawberry Shortcake**?
- ❖ Was there a time when you laid awake at night thinking about **Transformers**, Stretch Armstrong, or how to conquer the next level of **Zelda**?
- ❖ There is a place deep within us that longs for the **beginning** of the story.

We Are All a Part of a Great Epic Quest

- ❖ **We** are all a part of a great epic quest-a journey of **momentous** proportions, one that has heroines and **villains**, sorrow and consequences, beginnings and laughter.
- ❖ Our quest has bleak, seemingly **hopeless** moments as well.
- ❖ I believe we are in one of those chapters of the quest-a time when **darkness** seems to have already won the day.
- ❖ Thanks to globalization, **Gary** can pick up the phone and “mail order” forced prostitutes smuggled in from **Uzbekistan** on Wednesday and have them working in his Chicago-based night club on Friday as sex workers.
- ❖ Thanks to technology, **Tim**, an IT professional, alone in his room on an overnight business trip to Atlanta, can log on to **Craig’s** list and purchase a two hour block with two 15 year old girls, delivered to his room for a mere **two** hundred dollars.

- ❖ Do you remember the movie “The **Never** Ending Story?” Do you remember the creeping darkness, the **nothing** that threatened to swallow up the world and end the universe forever unless **Bastian** could finish his quest to end the darkness?
- ❖ There is this same kind of **wickedness** spreading across the globe tonight, threatening to consume the very soul of **humanity**.
- ❖ **The** sex slave industry is not just an attack on young boys, women, and children; it is an **attack** on the **fabric** of the human soul.
- ❖ By allowing the **commoditization** of people for profit and sexual gratification, we are allowing the darkness to overtake what it means to be preeminently human.
- ❖ We are a part of this great epic quest, the quest for innocence, the quest for freedom, for dignity, and for **joy**.
- ❖ This great quest is not merely a quest to end slavery, or to end the great injustices and suffering around us-that’s only the **beginning**.
- ❖ The **quest** of the modern day abolitionist movement is to not merely the quest to set slaves free but to see the downtrodden flourish in every way.
- ❖ We seek the **mental**, relational, financial, academic, and spiritual **flourishing** of the down-trodden.
- ❖ If the slave has been made in the image of God, how can we think that **she** who bears His image should be **worthy** of anything less than a life of grandeur, of wonder, of **flourishing**!
- ❖ We believe this problem of modern-day slavery to be **fundamentally** a spiritual problem.
- ❖ This week, during the Price of Life Invitational, we have confronted 21st Century Slavery from a **political** perspective, gathering state and federal lawmakers at our Town Hall meeting. We’ve confronted 21st Century Slavery from a **business** perspective in the school of business, from a **legal** perspective in the school of law, in the school of **Social** Work, in the faculty club, on the **streets** of Columbus in our **Parade** of Tears march but **ultimately** the problem of human trafficking stems from **deep seated** spiritual brokenness and that is the focus of our event tonight.
- ❖ Peace keepers in **Bosnia**, working to train Croat and Bosnian soldiers routinely bought children as young as **13** during their multi-year stations as sex servants.
- ❖ When the very authorities that we trust to help build a **safe** and better world are a part of the problem, we know that we’ve touched upon a problem of epic proportions, a spiritual problem that dollars and **euros**, **UN** treaties and peace keeping troops cannot change-the problem of the human **heart**.

Our Epic Quest Begins with a Longing for Home

- ❖ **Why** do we care? **What** is it about this issue that has brought us together across religious lines and political lines and racial lines and socioeconomic lines?
- ❖ **See**, I believe that **we remember**, in high definition, what it was like to be a child and what it is like to have lost that. We so **long** to restore for ourselves and for others that sense of wonder and **innocence**.
- ❖ **Dina’s** life in Laos was modest by our standards.
- ❖ Like us, she **dreamed** of a better life; of world travel, luxury and indulgence.

- ❖ When she met **Allissa**, she seemed so sophisticated and content. Her boyfriend bought her everything, took her everywhere, or so Allissa said.
- ❖ One day Allissa suggested they go away with her **boyfriend** for an unforgettable weekend.
- ❖ Though Dina knew of the **dangers**, she trusted Allissa and went on the “all-expense paid” trip.
- ❖ When Dina arrived at their **five-star hotel** that night late, weary from travel, she was given her own room and retired for the night.
- ❖ The next morning, Dina woke only to find Allissa gone. When she checked with the front desk, they had no record of Allissa but said that Dina was responsible for the hotel bill, over **\$1000**.
- ❖ Not having the money, the manager threatened to call local authorities or “work something out.”
- ❖ Later that morning, Dina met with a **trafficker** who began to explain how she could earn her way out.
- ❖ She refused and tried to leave, and that is when it started. The man stood up and said, “**Allissa** said you might be a problem,” and hit her so hard she, began to **vomit**.
- ❖ The man further explained that he knew where Dina’s parents and younger **siblings** lived, that this was the only way to keep them safe.
- ❖ I don’t know what went through Dina’s head when she was being raped for pay for the first time. Did she find that **happy** place in her mind, a time when her mother held her tight to read her favorite **book** to her, stroking her long **black** hair just as the **sticky john** was doing to her then?
- ❖ What would she have given to go back to **innocence**, to safety, to the care free moments?
- ❖ Stories like Dina’s cause something in us to rise up, to boil-it causes great **indignation**.
- ❖ **Indignation** is that “strong **displeasure** at something considered unjust, it is righteous anger.”
- ❖ There is something holy about righteous **indignation**-it brings out the **best** in humanity.
- ❖ **Emerson wrote**, “A good indignation brings out all one's powers.”
- ❖ In our great epic, we all have the **potential** to be villains or **super heroes**.
- ❖ Evil **monsters** like Allisa and her boyfriend, or **heroes** for justice, with our own super powers battling against that creeping darkness.
- ❖ Some have **literary** genius, others **networking** savvy, still others **scientific** and **medical** gifts-what is your super power and **how will you** use it to re-color the world around you?
- ❖ We **long** for home, not only for ourselves but for the world and others as well.
- ❖ We long for wholeness for the **earth**, for peace between **countries**, for the healing of the **heart**, for safety for **children**.
- ❖ We are longing for the garden of **Eden**, for the **Kingdom** of God, for another **world**, call it **Heaven** or whatever you’d like, but what we are longing for most is-joy and your super powers, your gifts and education play a part in helping us all get there.

It's at the Bitter moments of Our Quest that We Need Courage

- ❖ It's at the bitter moments of our quest that we need courage.
- ❖ In Kazuaki's Japanese film, "Casshern," a father pleads with his son not to go off to war where he would face an almost certain death. In beautiful Japanese anime fashion, white flower pedals blow diagonally across a surreal scene as the pan squares up the father's war-hardened face against his youthful son.
- ❖ The father says, "You have no idea what you will face by going off to this war."
- ❖ The son is silent for only a moment before responding, "Whatever is out there, it cannot be any worse then cowardice."
- ❖ Cowardice is a mortal sin.
- ❖ We celebrate courage and sacrifice for a reason. We champion the brave, even in the midst of defeat because it is in the heart of courage that we see hope for humanity.
- ❖ In the epic story of Jesus Christ, there were many instances where people tried to press him into cowardice, to accept the status quo and look the other way from the injustices and imbalances of his day and to settle for mere affluence and power.
- ❖ People of Jesus day had little regard for women, for the sick, for ethnic minorities, for the poor, for prisoners, and for children.
- ❖ At each point in the epic of Jesus, he confronted these very injustices and that is why this Jesus is so very different from the tamed blue eyed, blond haired plasticized Jesus that hangs in dusty dead churches across America.
- ❖ This Jesus marked his very life and mission around these issues.
- ❖ But when it came to children, Jesus was clear-they were the whole point of life.
- ❖ In a famous portion of the epic of Jesus we read these words, "People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth; anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them."
- ❖ Jesus expresses his holy indignation at those around him and their intolerance for children.
- ❖ Today, there is an all out war on children.
- ❖ From the Congo, children are pressed into bands of barbarous killers.
- ❖ In Sri Lanka, children are bought and sold to role cigarettes, bake bricks, and sow designer logos on clothes that they will never wear.
- ❖ In rural China, children place wheels on cars and blond haired heads on dolls that they will never play with themselves.
- ❖ In Burma, parents sell their children's virginity to sponsors in return for \$350 US.
- ❖ With this kind of wickedness that lurks in the human heart, we can understand the angry words of Jesus when he said, "If any one causes one of these little ones to sin, it would be better to have a large stone hung around his neck and to be thrown in the deepest of seas."

- ❖ This is a bitter moment in the quest. The **human spirit** is on **trial** the world over- what super powers do you have to go into this war, what will you do?
- ❖ In the story of Jesus, he saw anything that **prevented** children from coming to him, from receiving his blessing as an **injustice** and we see this from his holy indignation.
- ❖ This sense of indignation in us comes from God's **thumb** print on our hearts. We are all God's **daughters**, God's sons.
- ❖ This same thumb print that tells us that it is **wrong** to **murder**, to lie, to gossip, to cheat and steal, tells us that the **commoditization** of our bodies is also wrong. **[LAW of God]**
- ❖ In the sex trafficking industry, we see the **basest manifestation** of our soul sickness and while it is tempting to see the problem of that soul sickness as the problem only of the monsters and **villains** of the **epic**, we **too** must face our own **demons**.
- ❖ After great **crimes** and **disasters**, we always trot out the psychologists, counselors, sociologists to help us make sense of the evil, to portray it as "**alien**."
- ❖ The question comes, "What goes into the making of a monster like **Klebold**. How could that **mother** drown her own children in the bath tub?"
- ❖ **The** faces of the 19 men that changed **America forever** aren't the faces we initially imagined, are they? We expected **twisted** faces with hollow eyes, but these are normal faces."
- ❖ They were once children that played **soccer**, told **jokes**, had **nightmares** and cried for their **mommies**. They were not born of **hell** but that creeping darkness that comes for us all overtook them at some point making them tools for evil.
- ❖ It is this same creeping **darkness** in the heart of **each person** here today that fuels the trafficking industry and this is why slavery is **fundamentally** a **spiritual** problem. **[SIN]**
- ❖ **We** in the US are **complicit** in this spiritual problem.
- ❖ Through our **consumption** of internet pornography we provide the money to continue the abduction and **rape for pay** of hundreds of thousands as more and more, the women of pornography are actually slaves.
- ❖ We are complicit in the **commoditization** of people.
- ❖ We have stolen the innocence of girls like **Grace**, a 16 year old Philippine girl who lives in a **dog kennel** in the back of a grocery store but appears for \$18 month live nightly on your dorm room **laptop**.
- ❖ Whether it is the act of rape of the sex **tourist**, the abduction and commoditization of the **trafficker**, or the act of **remote consumption**, each of us has that creeping darkness to contend with but I believe we were meant for nobler things.

The Momentous Stakes of Our Quest Require a Change

- ❖ **The** **momentous** stakes of our quest require a change.
- ❖ In the **vision** of Jesus, Jesus said, "**Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.**"
- ❖ God's "**forever after**," his Kingdom only has room for people who are willing to embrace childhood again.
- ❖ Why do we **retreat** from that?

- ❖ In one of **my forever moments**, I recall in high definition the day my dad came home high on cocaine determined to continue his **multi-day** binge by liquidating what little family assets we had.
- ❖ We were living in an **abandoned home** at the time and had managed to smuggle all of our earthly possessions into that **cold**, barren two bedroom **duplex**.
- ❖ He came home in a rage and so I and my mother and two younger **brothers hid** in the neighbor's bathtub across the street.
- ❖ We watched through the dirty window as he **threw things** out the front door, onto the ground before piling them into his late '70's Grand Prix and **screeching** off.
- ❖ When we were sure he was gone, we ventured back into the house.
- ❖ Everything was **gone**. He even took the few dollars I had placed inside a **jar**, saving up to buy him a Christmas **present**.
- ❖ It was the first time in my life when it **suddenly** dawned on me that my dad was not there to protect me and that I was not safe around him, that he had, indeed, become a **villain** in my epic.
- ❖ I closed my heart that day. Closed it to trust. I bolted the door of love and said, "I'll **never** be **victimized** by anyone ever again."
- ❖ **Much of my epic journey** has revolved around trying to come to terms with that and other high definition moments of **brokenness** and pain.
- ❖ **I share** that with you because I **believe** many have done the same. **You've** bolted the door to God's **love**, to faith and trust.
- ❖ Perhaps this is why you feel such **indignation** at the injustices suffered by others- because you know their loss.
- ❖ A **rape**, **molestation**, betrayal, disappointment-you've thrown away the **key**.
- ❖ This **week**, as you've focused on bringing **justice** and hope to others, could it be that God is doing a work of power and **transformation** in your heart?
- ❖ Could it be that God's **call** to you as daughter, as son, has **cut** right through your heart as you have sought to join him in his mission of **establishing** the Kingdom?
- ❖ The call of God you **sense** to do good in the world, to **become** the good you long to see in this epic quest is the same call God desires to use to **deal** with your own bondage, your own **slavery to sin**.
- ❖ **In** story about Jesus it says, "**And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them.**"
- ❖ People were **bringing** their children to be **blessed** by Jesus.
- ❖ You see, because **Jesus**, the **epic's hero**, came into this world without that creeping darkness in his heart, he was able to bless and to heal. He was able to receive the children, to **appropriately** place his hands on them in a loving and pure fashion and **bless** them with the **words** of his mouth. **[RIGHTEOUSNESS SON]**
- ❖ **You** know, I'm **glad** that there is a **hell**. I didn't grow up religious, in fact when I was growing up we had a sign on the front of our home that read, "The **Moore's**, The Atheists," and we had a barrel on the side for burning **Bibles** and other religious propaganda.
- ❖ I went to the **U of M** and was one of those angry atheist **philosophy** students who persecuted Christians.
- ❖ When I became a **Christian**, I had a hard time with the idea of hell. How can a loving God send people to **hell**?

- ❖ When we see what the **creeping darkness** does to the human soul, when we look a monster in the face as we've done today, the question should be, "**How can there not be a hell.**"
- ❖ How can God not bring an **end** to the suffering and punish those who are either primary or complicit in such a **rape** of humanity? **[DEATH AND HELL]**

Our Quest Ends with a Return to Childhood

- ❖ **Again**, in the story of Jesus, he said, "**I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.**"
- ❖ The **forever** after of Jesus is for people who are ready to make a **change**.
- ❖ A change of heart about what the world is supposed to be like, a **change** of **heart** about **innocence** and **joy**, a change of heart about who is in **charge**.
- ❖ We all have super powers but they are not enough to bring a **lasting** change, we need the **hero** of the story to step in.
- ❖ In **Lewis'** re-telling of the epic of Jesus in, "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe," **Asland** lay slain by the witch as the battle raged on. The **citizens** all fought with all their might against the monsters threatening to consume the kingdom and cast it into a dark, **frozen** hell.
- ❖ They fought with all their **might**, with all their gifts, but it wasn't enough.
- ❖ **Asland** the Lion had to rise from the dead to finally conquer the witch and her minions.
- ❖ Lewis portrays **Jesus** as the **untamed** Lion, Asland, who was slain on **the alter** of the law in place of a **traitor**.
- ❖ It is an epic story, but one that is true for us today. Jesus **died** on the cross to bring an end to the **creeping darkness** in the world out there and in the world in here.
- ❖ Jesus went to that **cross**, **taking** all of the things we've done and all that we've left undone in order to **save** us from the **dark chapters** of our epic quest, to bring us back to the **beginning**, back to innocence, back to childhood. **[CROSS]**
- ❖ Just like Alsand, Jesus **rose** from the dead, **conquering** death and now runs to lead us into battle.
- ❖ Jesus is **alive** and **invites** us to join him in re-coloring the world around us under his charge. **[RESURRECTION]**
- ❖ In just a moment, I'm going to **invite** you to have that change of heart and become a true follower of this Jesus. **[REPENTANCE]**
- ❖ Tonight, I believe Christ is calling many of you to embrace the **childward** journey.
- ❖ Christ is calling you to become the **good** you long to see in the world by first coming to Him and allowing Him to **cleanse** your heart.
- ❖ Today can be your **high definition** moment, the moment you become a true follower of Jesus.
- ❖ Embracing the childward journey is where we **begin**. Tonight, we have been given **red** marbles and white/**clear** marbles.
- ❖ It is nothing more than another **symbol** of childhood, of **innocence** and joy but **tonight** we are going to use these marbles in a very different way.
- ❖ In just a moment, my friends are going to come and pass **jars** up and down the aisles and you are going to be given a decision. If you are ready to **begin** again, to

- embrace** the childward journey, as the jar passes by I'm going to ask you to drop your **red** marble into the jar to symbolize your desire to follow Jesus.
- ❖ Dropping this **red** marble is your way of saying, "I want to be **forgiven**, I want to turn away from a life of **jaded** skepticism and I want to follow the Jesus way."
 - ❖ Dropping the red marble is your way of saying, I need the **leadership** of Jesus, I want to follow the **path** of Jesus.
 - ❖ Dropping your red marble tonight is your way of **beginning a journey** with Jesus Christ, of becoming a Jesus **follower**, of embracing the **childward** journey.
 - ❖ You've also been given a **clear** marble. As the jars pass up and down the aisle, if you are willing to pledge your **super powers**, to take a real stand against human trafficking, to stand up for justice, I'm going to ask you to drop the clear marble.
 - ❖ You **may not know** what that looks like yet but we have friends from our partnering **organizations** here tonight that can help you figure that out.
 - ❖ If you want to **pledge** yourself to fight the injustices of the human trafficking industry, I'm going to ask you to drop the clear marble here tonight.
 - ❖ And that time is **now**...my friends are coming now. This is a **solemn** moment for hundreds and hundreds of faculty, students, staff, community members. As the jars are passed up and down the **aisles**, I am going to ask you to remain silent, to stay seated and respect this the **sanctity** of this moment.
 - ❖ I'm going to ask many of you to make the **decision** of your life, to begin again, to join Jesus in **re-coloring** the world out there and the world in here.

As jars pass [tarrying remarks]...

- ❖ If you want to **become** a true **follower** of Jesus, in just a moment I'm going to ask you to raise your hand-raise your **hand** to turn your life over to a new **King**, to become a follower of the true hero, to become his **subject**. **[LORDSHIP]**
- ❖ A marble is nothing more than a simple piece of glass but tonight this is our symbol of commitment, our **symbol** of decision to begin again and **return** to **embrace the childward journey**.
- ❖ When Jesus died, his **blood** and **sweat** and **tears achieved** far more than our good intentions could ever do, it provided the power to begin again, to embrace the gift of **childhood**.
- ❖ And by **placing** your trust in the **power** of his death and his life, you can embrace that gift today, the gift of a new **life**, and a **fresh start**.