



# Message **Transcript**

## Exhortations for a Thriving Church

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Well, thank you so much for choosing to worship with us this morning. Would you do me a favor? Would you welcome our Broomfield campus, who's worshipping along with us?

So great to have you. So great to be back in the pulpit after being away for a week celebrating my parents 50th wedding anniversary, which was awesome. And I hope you enjoyed my friend Adam when he was here. I know he enjoyed being here. And it is great to be back and continue our series in one corinthians.

And before we do that, let's go before the Lord. Let's make sure our hearts as we've been celebrating the Lord, praying to the Lord, let's just prepare our hearts to receive his living and active word this morning. Let's pray. Jesus, we give you all the glory, honor, and praise. Lord, we are here for one reason this morning.

We are here to worship you. We are here to celebrate you. We are here to listen to you. So, Lord, our prayer is. Speak.

Speak, Lord, for we're ready to hear. Lord, help us to put into practice the very things you show us. Help us to apply your word to our specific situation. Lord, if there's any known sin in our life, we confess that sin to you now, knowing that you're faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Open our ears, open our minds, open our hearts to the reality of who you are and your word.

Grow us in a relationship with you, Jesus, and we'll give you all the praise for all you're going to accomplish and all God's people this morning who are ready to hear God's word and receive it, agreed by very loudly saying, amen. Amen. I want to encourage you. Open your bible this morning to one Corinthians chapter 16. One Corinthians chapter 16.

If you don't have a copy, there's a copy under about every seat near you. You'll want to get your eyes on a copy of God's word this morning. And as we continue in your word this morning, there may be a title over this section in one corinthians 16 that says something like final instructions or instructions for the church. Oftentimes, these sections don't get preached because they're not the section that you would normally draw your eyes to. We are a church that believes wholeheartedly that all of God's word is inspired.

I'm a pastor that believes that all of God's word is inspired, so we don't skip over sections. I believe that God has a word from one corinthians 16 for us this morning as we take a look in those first twelve verses. And I've entitled this exhortations for a thriving church. What Paul is really doing now is after he's talked all of chapter 15, which we took four weeks to do, talking about the glorious resurrection of our bodies and the victory that we have in Jesus, and that one day is coming, where we will look and say, o death, where is your victory? Oh, death, where is your sting?

We have the victory in Christ Jesus. And Paul has reminded us of the victory we have in Christ. Now he's coming down and giving practical application or exhortation to the church. And I really see three things here. There's many things we could pull out of, principles that Paul wants the church in Corinth to do, which we need to do as well.

Now, let me tell you this before we get started this morning, this is going to be a challenging message, okay? This is going to be one that will hit you in the heart, because wherever you have done this, you can grow in this. Wherever you're not doing this, you'll feel this thing inside of you that says, oh, I need to be better at this. That's

okay. That's why God's word is given for us to be corrected, rebuked, admonished, to be who God wants us to be.

And this is not just for you individually. This is for us as a church. And let me tell you before I get started, there's not one of us, including your pastor, that's arrived in these things, okay? And so, as we look in God's word this morning, let's let God speak to us, and let's hear the word that God has for us this morning. Here's what he says in one corinthians, chapter 16, starting in verse one, he says, now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed to the churches of Galatia, so do you also, on the first day of every week, each one of you is to put aside and save as he may prosper, so that no collections be made.

When I come, here's the first exhortation for a thriving church. Ready? It's to regularly contribute generously to the needs of God's people. Regularly contribute generously to the needs of God's people. And I'll give you a little hint in your outline this morning.

The first word of every point is going to be regularly, okay? I mean, you can go

ahead and start writing that down. And the reason was, is because I wanted you to write it down three times so that you wouldn't say, well, I'm already doing this, or I've already done that in the past, regularly doing this. This is an ongoing part of who I am, that I'm ongoingly, generously contributing to the needs of the saints. Notice what he says now concerning the collection for the saints.

As I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also, Paul was collecting a contribution for the saints that were in Jerusalem. It took over a year to make this collection. And Paul was saying, for all the saints that are in Jerusalem, who are impoverished, who are struggling, who are having their needs difficult, being met with their needs, let's make a collection, and Paul is going to tell them how to give. There's a couple things we can take from this. Number one, your primary giving is through the church for God's people.

It's for the saints. The reason we give is for the saints. Now, there's obviously other reasons to give. We give to support our church. We give to support our pastors.

We give for other reasons, but we also give to support God's people, not only in

our church, but outside our church. Because giving for God's saints is not just for our local body. Giving to the church is for what? It's for the kingdom, it's for God's people. We can't be a church that says, well, as long as our needs are getting met, we don't care about those Christians out there.

If they were real Christians, they'd come to our church. No, we care about all God's people. And that primary giving in the church is for God's people and helping God's people. Right? That's why we give.

That's why we take special offerings at times. Our benevolence policy, one of the things our elders is working on, are working on now is because our benevolence policy is about seven years old when we were 200 people, right? It's not updated. And we're taking a look at how do we become more generous to our people and what do we need to do to be able to take care of people within our body that are genuinely having financial needs, and what does that look like, and how do we come along and disciple them? And that's Paul's heart here.

And he's telling the Corinthians, hey, giving is for the saints. And notice what he

says. He says, on the first day of every week, each one of you is to put aside as he may prosper. Now, notice this word. Each one.

That's two words, actually, but each one, okay, let me tell you seven different ways you can give this morning. Talk about giving, just for a second. Number one is we give regularly. Paul says, on the first day of every week. Let's not be legalistic about this.

I realize some of you don't get paid every single week. Some of you that are in sales might get paid every three months. Some of you might make money and then lose money. I mean, I realize everybody's different, but there's this regular, ongoing giving that Paul was telling his people, hey, give regularly. Make it a part of your life.

Why? Because Jesus Christ was generous, right? I mean, Jesus Christ laid down his entire life for what? The church. So each one of us is to give regularly, right?

That's how we're called to give. It's an ongoing thing. We should never say, well,



I've already given to church, or I've already given enough, or I gave last week, or I already gave here. No, there's this ongoing, regular giving. I'm always setting aside and notice what he says.

Give individually as well. Give regularly. Give individually. Each one of you. Sometimes.

When it comes to generosity, here's what we begin to think. That's for other people that have more money. It's not for me. I really can't give a lot. No, each one of us is called to give.

We're not called to give the same amount, but we're all called to be generous. Generosity looks different for different people. Okay. The greatest giver in the entire New Testament was a widow that gave two small copper coins worth less than a penny. Means she didn't have a husband providing for, which means she had no other means, which means all she had were those two coins.

And Jesus is watching all the rich people put their offering in. And when she clinks her two little coins in the offering bucket, guess what he says he calls his disciples. He said, that's what I'm talking about. She, out of her poverty, put in everything, all she had to live on. Now, what's the application?

The application is each one of you are called to be generous. Middle schooler, are you listening to me? You're called to be generous with the things of God. Well, I don't even have a job. Let me just time out here, okay?

If you take a look at where we live in our world, I don't care where you live in our city, okay? The fact that you live in our country, let me let you in on a little secret. In light of the global perspective, every single one of you listening to me is rich. Did you hear what I said, rich. You're like, I'm not rich.

I don't even really have anything. Some of you paying for a CD or buying an album on iTunes is more money than some families make every single month in some parts of the world, you're rich. Don't say, I can't. Here's what you should be saying.

How can I contribute something?

And if you'll get into habit now, when you don't have a lot, like maybe you say, well, I just have a babysitting job, and we get babysitters. I know how much you make. And listen, you gotta babysit. Start being faithful with your giving. If you're faithful with little, you'll be faithful with much.

The lie is, when I make more, I'll give more. Here's the answer. No, you will not. You will not. I promise you, you won't.

If you're not faithful with what you have now, you will not be faithful with what you have in the future. And all of us are called to be generous, each one not in the same way. That's why as a pastor, I don't go look at all the giving and saying, well, that's generous. And that's not generous. How would I know if I would have seen the widow's gift?

Jesus would have said, that's the most generous gift in the entire church. And I

would be like, it's not even a penny, right? How do I know? Generosity is towards God. You would give this way.

Now, here's how we do. We not only give regularly, we give individually, we give sacrificially. We give sacrificially. That's what it means to be generous. If you flip over in your bible to second corinthians, the very next book, chapter eight, Paul talks about in verses one through five, this offering that he was collecting.

And I'll read the first three verses there. In two corinthians eight, he says, now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God, which has been given in the churches of Macedonia that in great ordeal of affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord. How'd they give? They gave sacrificially.

They gave sacrificially. Right? Now, Macedonia. Just think about this. I didn't bring a map, but if you have all of Greece, okay, Macedonia is northern Greece.

They're like the Yankees of Greece. And Achaia is southern Greece. They're like the southerners. All right. Paul went through Macedonia.

Macedonia was like Philippi, Thessalonica, those cities that were in the north. Achaia was where Corinth was, and Paul was collecting this offering throughout Greece so that he could take it to Jerusalem. And here's what he was saying about the people. He's like, Macedonia, they don't have anything. They're poor.

But guess how they gave. They gave sacrificially above and beyond their means. How else do they give that means? They gave generously. They gave lavishly.

That's another way to give. Not only sacrificially, but generously. If Jesus has given all of his life to you, how do you give your life to them? Give generously. That's how God calls you to be.

Right. And how else did they do it? They did it willingly. They did it willingly. Can I just tell you something about giving?

This is my personal belief in studying the Bible for about 30 years. I don't see in the New Testament tithing being biblical. I just don't see it. That's just me. Now.

What I do see is I see in the Old Testament, the law, and that the law is good. In the Old Testament, the law said, do not murder. I still think that's appropriate. But in the New Testament, it says, do not even think that your brother is an idiot in your heart, or you've committed murder in your heart. Old Testament, do not commit adultery.

I still think that's valid. New Testament, do not even look lustfully upon a woman, or you've committed adultery in your heart. Old Testament, God calls for the tithe. The tithe is way more than 10%, just so you know. I mean, if you calculate the three different feasts they had a year, and everything they had to give, it was more like 23% that they were gonna give.

Okay. And that's good. That's a good starting place. Here's the new Testament. Everything you have belongs to God.

How do you steward that? For him, a tithe is a good place to start. A 10th is a good place to start. That's great. But there's no mandate.

There's no guilt. If you're giving 4%, there's no guilt. If you're giving 5%, there's no guilt. There's no back tithing. Like, well, I didn't know I was supposed to tithe.

All these years I've been a Christian. Do I have to back tithe now? No. Giving is an opportunity to show God, how grateful we are for what he's done and how to give back to him. So we give willingly, and we give.

How. We give joyfully. Joyfully. In this next chapter in second corinthians. I'm in two corinthians still.

Second Corinthians nine, six. He says this now. I say this. He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. And he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

I'll come back to that. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion. There's your willingly part. There's your generous part. There's your sacrificial part.

And here's it. Look at not begrudgingly or under compulsion. For God loves a what? He loves a cheerful giver. Give joyfully.

Joyfully. When I went to church and it came time for the offering, it's when everybody had gloom on their face. Oh, the offering. Nobody talked about money. I'm not afraid to talk about money.

It is a joy to be able to support the ongoing work of Jesus is what you were



created for. To give is a joyous thing. The reason that we clap for the offering in our church, even though people tell me all the time, why do you do that? That annoys me. Here's why.

Because I want to remind us every single time, whether we're giving weekly or whether we give online regularly, or however we do it, that when I'm in the service doing this, I am clapping because I'm reminded of the fact how generous Jesus Christ has been to me, how he's given me everything. And whatever little bit I'm giving back to him makes me feel good in my heart. And I'm excited to be part of a church that's excited to support what Jesus cares about. Amen. That's why we cheer.

Right? So when it comes time for the offering, it shouldn't be like a golf clap, right? Like, oh, offering. You know, it's not that it's cheering. Joyfully.

I get to do this. Do you realize that everything you have, every dime you have, every penny you have, every dollar you have, every house you have, every car you have, every article of clothing you have has been given to you by your father? It's all his. You're just taking a little bit and giving it back to him to say, thank you so much that

you're allowing me to participate in your work. Isn't that awesome?

Joyfully. Joyfully. God loves a cheerful giver. And then how do we give? We give expectantly.

We give expectantly. Notice what he says in verse eight. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed he just got done, saying, he who sows sparingly will reap sparingly. He who sows generously will reap generously. And now he says, you'll have everything you need.

Now these get taken out of context sometimes by prosperity teachers who falsely teach that the purpose of giving is to make you rich, that the purpose of giving is about you. That's wrong. But here's the truth about giving. He who sows generously will reap generously, right? It means this.

When you sow to the things of God, you will always have an abundance of

sufficiency in everything you need to accomplish, everything God put you on the earth to do. You'll never run out of what you need to do, what God wants you to do. Now, you may run out if you decide to spend more than you have. Cause you think you need certain things. But if you're living in alignment with God and you're generous to the things of God, God will always meet your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

And the more faithful you are, the more seed that you'll have to sow and be generous. And in our culture, right? In our culture, it shouldn't be, hey, give more money so that you can get rich in our culture. Some of us need to start thinking about where do we cap our lifestyle? At what point do we say this is enough?

So that even if I make a million or 2 million or 5 million or 20 million more, that's all going to Jesus and his church, because this is all I really need to live off of. What's that look like? We don't think like that. We think of bigger and better and more and this and that more. For what reason?

For the abundance of liberality, for the things of God. That's why God blesses

us. God blesses us with gifts so that we can bless his church, not so that we personally prosper, so that it's all about us. The Bible's not about us. The Bible is about Jesus Christ.

And that's why when Paul is raising money for the saints, nobody's saying, well, we don't have anything. How come they get stuff? People are saying, if there's a need, if saints have a need, I'm going to meet it. Which means for your giving, there's going to be times where you give to our church, and our church is working really, really hard to do what we can to meet the needs of everybody. And there should be regular giving there.

But guess what? You may be in a small group, you may be at work, you may be at school, and you see another saint that has a need. You don't say, well, I already gave to my church. No, you go above and beyond and you meet their need, too. And then you don't say, well, I'm meeting their needs, so I'm not giving to the church.

No, that's not generosity. Generosity is not calculated. Generosity is, I get the privilege to meet as many needs as God will allow me the opportunity to do. Amen.

That's what it looks like.

And this is why it's so important to give. Jesus said, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. If you're generous with the things of God, if you give to the things of God, that's where your heart will be. I promise you. You give lavishly to this church.

You will love this church. You will love this church. You will fight for this church. You will stick around in this church. Why?

Because your heart will be in it. You won't be able to tolerate people that gossip about it. You won't be able to handle people that speak bad about it. Why? Because your heart's in it.

You're contributing. You're giving. God's called all of us to be givers. God's called all of us to be generous. It's who we are.

Now, let me just say a word on this, because I know when I teach about stuff like this, here's what tends to happen. Some of you are hearing this, like, this is get to point too fast. I'm tired of this giving thing. This one hurts. Okay?

So I just want to help you for a second. How many here, by show of hands and how many in Broomfield, by show of hands, have done something stupid with money at some point in their lifetime? I was waiting for you to raise your hand, Tom. Thank you. All of us have.

We believe the lie that money is for us. We believe the lie that money is going to do something for us. All of us have done something stupid with money. Some of us, some of our stupidity has caused us to go into debt. Here's a simple truth from your pastor.

Here's the way ready? Spend less than what you make.

Spend less than what you make. Godliness with contentment is great gain, right? Spend less than what you make now some of you, because you're in debt, and you hear about generosity, you're like, oh, my gosh, he's asking for my money, and so are all the debt collectors. And what do I do? You listen to the Lord, and you be generous with where God tells you to be generous.

And what's that look like? But here's the thing for you. Listen, listen, listen, listen. If you're in debt, here's a noble thing. You can do ready?

Work.

But I am working. Then work some more. Like, there's nothing wrong with hard work. Did you know that? I mean, before the fall, when Adam was placed in the garden, what was he called to do?

Work. Tend the garden. After the fall, what was he called to do? Work. It's just gonna get really hard now.

But you still work. Work is noble. There's nothing wrong. So maybe you need to work a little harder. Maybe you need to spend a little less so that you can get yourself out of debt, so you can be generous to the things of God.

This is what Paul consistently writes and what God's word teaches. I'll have you write down a couple scriptures just to meditate on. Not to shame you, but just to meditate on. In two Thessalonians, chapter three, verses seven through ten, Paul talks about his example when he went to the thessalonians. Here's what he said for you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor do we eat anyone's bread without paying for it.

But with labor and hardship, we kept working night and day so we would not be a burden to any of you. Not because we do not have the right to do this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you so you would follow our example. For even when



we were with you, we used to give you this order. Listen to this. If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat either.

In other words, the church is not designed to give handouts to people that aren't willing to work. There are certain people who physically can't work. There are certain people who are in situations that are beyond their ability. But majority of situations, if you're in debt, you're in debt because of bad choices that you made. And that's okay.

We've all done dumb things. So then the question becomes, how do we start making good choices and start living in a way so that debt goes behind us, so that we can live in the way God wants us. So that we can be generous to the things of God. A word to you young people out here. I'm just telling you, you do not need credit cards.

You do not need to go into massive debt to get your education. You do not need to put yourself under the burden of something like that. Right? You don't be wise, follow the Lord, spend less than you make, go where he leads you, and continue to be generous with the things of God. Why?

Because it's important for us to do what God wants us to do. Listen to this verse in one Timothy five eight. Doesn't get much play, it says, but if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those in his own household, in other words, if you don't take care of your wife and your kids, here's what the Bible says about you. He has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. You talk about an indicting statement.

And in our culture, we have a lot of people who live like that. We have a lot of the people with the name of Christ that live like that. There's nothing wrong with you working to get out of debt. There's just nothing wrong with it. It's a very noble thing.

Take extra jobs, work harder, do what you need to do so that for the purpose, not so that you make more money, but for the purpose, so that you can be generous to the things of God. God wants you to do that. It's in your heart. I mean, think about it like this. Sometimes you go to a funeral and, you know, there'll be like a fund set up, a memorial fund set up in loving memory of so and so you can make a check out, too.

And maybe it's the red cross or maybe it's a ministry, or maybe it's their church,

right? In loving memory, because it's what they cared about the most. Can I tell you what Jesus Christ cared about the most? He cared about his church the most and his people the most. That's who he cares about the most.

So when you're giving gifts to a local church, here's what you're saying. In loving memory of Jesus Christ, who happens to be alive because he rose from the dead, and because he cares about his church, I am offering this to him because this is what he cares about. That's what giving looks like, right? That's what it is. That's what Paul's telling the church, hey, regularly put aside as you prosper, it means you continue to store up.

Not for you. You store up for the purpose of contributing to the needs of God's people. And then he says this in verse three, when I arrive, I'm back in chapter 16 of one corinthians. Verse three, when I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem. In other words, Paul is going to make record of what they brought in.

It means this. There's financial responsibility for stewardship. One of the reasons

we have status with the Evangelical Council of Financial Accountability. One of the reasons we do an audit and pay auditors outside our church that don't know anything about our church to come in and audit every dollar and dime is because we want to be so above board on everything we do. That if we say, here's what we're spending the money on, then that's what we're spending the money on.

And we have always been faithful as a group of people to do that. Amen. And that's what Paul's saying, which is why I think he puts verse four in there. And if it's fitting for me to go also, they will go with me. In other words, if your offering is worthwhile given to the saints, I'll go too.

But I'm not going to take some chintzy offering to the saints in Jerusalem. If it's a good offering, then I'll go with you. If not, I'm probably going to stick around here. You can take the offering and I'll tell them what you came up with. Right?

I mean, Paul's telling him to be generous. It's his way of doing that. Regularly contribute. It's ongoing contribution. It's how are you doing in this?

I think a question between you and the Lord is God, how can I be my best? What's it look like for me or for me and my family to be generous to you in this season, in my life? And it's something that's always changing and something we always need to take a look at. Number two, is this exhortations for a thriving church? Number two, here's.

Regularly do this. Regularly seek opportunities to serve one another. Regularly seek opportunities to serve one another. You were not only created to be generous, you were created to serve. It's how God made you.

How do you know this? It says, for even the son of man did not come to serve or to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. If you say you're a follower of Jesus, you're a servant first and foremost. I mean, the New Testament word is doulos. It doesn't even mean servant.

Here's what it means, slave. Servants get to choose what they do in some

sense. Slaves don't have any say slaves. Just say, yes, sir, no, sir, do this. Yes, sir, don't do this.

Yes, sir. You know, I mean, that's what we all are. We're servants or slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ. So serve. Notice this.

But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia. That's northern Greece, for I am going through Macedonia. Paul's saying this. I mean, here's a principle. You can say, Paul is listening and watching for where the Lord's going to lead him.

There was a book written years ago, and in the book it said, find out where God is at work and go join him. I think the name of the book was experiencing God. Find out where God's work. If you want to serve, hey, listen, pray God, where can I serve God? How have you gifted me, Lord?

Where's their opportunity? Opportunity to give my best and then listen for that.

Watch for that and do that. Paul's saying, hey, listen, I'm in Macedonia right now. This is where God has me.

This is where I'm going to serve. This is where he's led me. This is what I'm going to do. Verse six, he says, this, and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter so that you may send me on my way wherever I go. The second thing I would say about serving is he's open and flexible to how the Lord wants him to serve.

Perhaps I'll come to you. Perhaps I'll stay with you a little longer, and then you can send me wherever God's going to go. I don't know what God has for my life. Guess what? None of us do.

But in this season, here's what I'm listening for. Here's what I'm sensing. I'm flexible to how God's going to have me. I've been in ministry since I was 24. I've been a Christian for nearly 30 years.

I believe very strongly in this season that this could be the place that God has me

for the rest of my life, to serve him, to call up pastors, to pastor a church, to send people out all over the world. That's what I'm thinking. It is. But can I tell you this? Here's how I hold it like this, open hand.

If God came to me tonight and said, you're moving to Kenya with your family and you're going in two months, guess what I'm doing. I'm moving with my family to Kenya in two months. Why? Because I serve at the Lord's pleasure. I'm his slave, not your slave.

What was Paul saying? He goes, I'm looking for opportunities and I'm listening to the Lord. But. But I'm open and I'm flexible to however the Lord may lead me. Notice verses seven and eight, for I do not wish to see you just now in passing, for I hope to remain with you for some time if the Lord permits.

Do you hear his heart for the people? He loves them. I don't just want to come to a flyby. I want to come stay with you. This wasn't in a day where you booked a flight and landed in the morning, spent 12 hours and went home.



I mean, this is a long time. You're going to travel for days to get there. You're going to have to figure out who you're staying with so that you have food. And I mean, this is a big deal. And Paul's like, I want to come spend time with you.

Notice verse eight. But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost. In other words, he's going to stay where he's at because of the opportunity he has. Here's a principle I think you can pull out from that. Finish well where you're at.

You don't need to bounce around from ministry to ministry to ministry. God told me to move. God told me to move. God told me to move. God told me.

He probably didn't tell you as much as you think he's telling you. Just because it's uncomfortable for you doesn't mean it's time to move on. Sometimes when it's uncomfortable for you, that's the time to hunker down and remain. Cause that's exactly where God has you. Finish well.

How you leave a ministry in one place will be how you enter it in the next. If you leave a ministry by deserting people and tearing it up and gossiping about them, you won't be fruitful in your next ministry, right? When you leave, finish well. Know that the Lord's done with your season there. When we're recruiting people and we're telling them, hey, where are you at?

Can you leave now? Can I talk to your boss? Who are you working for? Did you leave well, where you're at, were you faithful to your calling? Were you good to the people that you were serving?

If their answer is no, it's, you need to go fix that first before you're coming with us because we don't want to drag your baggage in here, Paul saying, I'm going to finish well. And notice this. Finally. It's a great principle. He says, for a wide door, for effective service is open to me.

And there are many adversaries. I mean, he sees the opportunity. He's listening. There's a wide door. But notice this, the greater the opportunity, the greater the

opposition.

Nobody, amen to that. So I got to say it again, the greater the opportunity, the greater the opposition. The higher you want to rise to serve the Lord, the more spiritual attack you will endure. Fact, right? It's not less, it's more.

You don't ascend beyond spiritual attack. You ascend towards it. It's like if you were put, the closer you get on the front lines of battle, the more bullets are going to go whizzing by your head. Right? That's what he's saying.

And just know that. I mean, because for some of us here, like, I want to serve, but I want to serve in that role. I want to serve in this position. I want to get there. Here, let me just give you a word.

If you can't serve, you can't lead. Like, where are you serving? I mean, it's like the guy that makes no money for ten years, but he's like, quote unquote, holding out for a management position. I mean, just go serve somewhere. I mean, the greatest

accelerant to leadership is finding a place to be a humble servant.

You want to accelerate your witness for the Lord? Serve faithfully when nobody knows who you are. Because God sees. God sees you. Don't start at the top and form some ministry.

And here's what I'm going to do. I've never seen that work, because that's not what God prospers. You find a place which is a few people, and you serve faithfully. And if it's your gifting and if it's God's calling, fruit will be produced to a place where you will accelerate. The cream always rises to the top.

You were created to serve, he says, serve well. Serve well. And we're regularly seeking opportunities to serve in the same way we're regularly seeking opportunities to be generous with our resources. It's how God made us. Right?

And this is tough. I know this is tough because we live in a world that says, my

money's mine and my time is mine. And I don't like somebody telling me that neither of those two things are mine. I'm your pastor. I'm telling you neither of those two things are yours.

Your money's not yours. Your time's not yours. God's given you every allotment of time. He's given you every ability you have. He's given you every resource you have, and he's given it to you for himself.

Okay? And then Paul finally goes to this place here where his final exhortation is to do this regularly, regularly encourage ministry leaders. Regularly encourage ministry leaders in their service to the Lord. Notice what he says in verse ten. Now, if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am.

Isn't it interesting? Every time Paul talks about Timothy, he always talks about Timothy being afraid. I mean, two Timothy, one seven. It says, for God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of sound mind. Why?

Because Timothy was a fearful guy. Paul's saying, hey, when he comes to you, Corinth, when he comes into your church, don't let him be afraid. He's always telling Timothy, don't let them look down on you because you're young. Don't be afraid. When he sends him to the Philippians, he's like, I have no one else of kindred spirit like him.

For all else, seek their own interest. But not Timothy. He has served alongside of me in the gospel like a son to his father. Paul loved Timothy like nobody else that he loved. He mentored Timothy like nobody else he mentored.

And he's telling the church, don't make it hard for him. Don't make him afraid. Don't let him be intimidated by you. Verse eleven, so that no one will despise him. That means don't look down on him, don't reject him, but send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me, for I expect him with the brethren.

In other words, take care of God's servants that I send to you. Okay? Now, I hope you know that when I'm preaching the word, I am not preaching this this morning to be self serving in any way. But you need to be aware of this. Some of you need to

be aware of this, because you won't be at brave church in Denver, Colorado, for the rest of your life.

You're going to serve under other pastors and be in other churches. And for those of you who are going to stay here, you're going to go be part of other churches while we go plant them. You need to understand the heart. And I'll tell you this, there's nothing harder than doing full time ministry, nothing. If you don't believe me, up your service.

You don't think it's hard to lead a small group? Lead one. You don't think it's hard to oversee them? Oversee them. You don't think it's hard to serve in kids ministry?

Go try it. You don't think it's hard to serve with our students? Go do it. You don't think it's hard to serve in twenties? Go be part of twenties.

I mean, wherever you up your service, you will find it gets really difficult really

fast. Right? And so what Paul is saying is, encourage people that are serving you. Encourage those that are bringing God's word to you. Encourage those who are regularly caring for you.

Don't make their life harder, make it easier for them. He says the same thing about Apollos in verse twelve. Apollos was probably the greatest speaker in the first century, it says, but concerning Apollos, our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren. And it looks at this, and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity. How about this?

Give your ministry leaders a break. I told Apollos, I told him I was encouraging him to come. He said he didn't want to come. Now respect that. It means we respect it in your life.

I mean, serving is not a you better or else, or you have to or you're bad. If you don't, I'll respect it. Different seasons happen in different people's lives at different times, right? I mean, there's certain seasons where you just have more time to serve in a certain way. And you know what?



We'll respect that here. But if your season's five years, it's too long of a season to take off. I mean, sometimes there's a season to get back. Sometimes there's a season to recalibrate the family. Sometimes there's a season to really formulate some things in your heart, but then there's a season to get back involved.

We'll respect that. But the ongoing regular service needs to be part of who you are as a Christian and be good to your ministry leaders. If you're in a small group, encourage them. When was the last time you encouraged them? When was the last time you took one of them out for dinner?

When's the last time you said, hey, thanks for opening your home? Hey, when's the last time you said, thanks for opening the word and caring about me? Thanks for praying for me? When's the last time that happened? Encourage them.

Why? Because christian service is hard and nobody gets enough encouragement in. Now, last night what I did was I shared this slide, which I'll share with you too. It

came out of strategic renewal. Daniel Henderson, that preaches for me from time to time.

Put this up, and I looked at these statistics, and if you just look at those statistics, they're a little bit shocking when it comes to pastors. I mean, I look at these statistics and 97% of pastors have been betrayed, falsely accused or hurt by their trusted friends. And I'm like, yeah, maybe. I think that number is a little low, perhaps for first year people. I think it's 100% personally.

Okay, 70% of pastors battle depression every single year. I didn't even know what depression was until I started ministering. 7000 churches. Think about this. Not 7000 people, 7000 churches close each year, 1500 pastors, okay?

Quit every single month. Not one church with 1500 people, 1500 pastors quit. Not to be like, hey, I'm going to take some time off. I mean, I'm never going back to ministry again. 10% will retire as a pastor.

That's a high number. I've seen more like 4%. 80% of pastors feel discouraged, 94% of pastors family feel the pressure of ministry, 78% of pastors have no close friends, and 90% of pastors work reporting working 55 to 75 hours a week. Basically what it's saying is pastors are overworked. Now, most people say, well, pastors, you just work on Sunday morning, I'd love your job.

Right? It's not true. Now, last night I read a statement from a friend of mine from one of his sermons to his people because I didn't want to come across as self serving. But in praying through it last night, I thought, you know what? I could be vulnerable with you.

I could be vulnerable. What I've learned over the last almost eight years of being your pastor, and I've titled this what I wish I would have known. And this is not a rebuke, because I want to let you know something before I read this. I feel extremely encouraged to be your pastor. And I want to tell you something else.

I love every single one of you. I genuinely do. Okay? But these are things that I

wish I would have known before I became a pastor. I wish I would have known that being a pastor is for sure a calling and not a career, that God selected you.

And don't ever forget that if you're not called, you don't go into ministry, you will quit. And if you are called, never forget this. It means God put his hand on you and for whatever reason, he chooses the shameful things the world to confound the wise. Like, you're my boy and this is what you're doing. And don't you ever forget, no matter what anybody else says, I love you and I've called you to this.

I wish I would have known that. I wish I would have known this, that you will be constantly tempted to compare. Don't. Don't. You are unique pastors.

You're unique. Your church is unique. Your family, who you married, who your kids are, they're unique. And be who God called you to be because you can't be who everybody else wants you to be. You're unique, right?

I wish I would have known that. I wish I would have been told that being a faithful

preacher of the word is nearly impossible. Stay faithful. Stay faithful. Stay focused.

Don't worry about who will be offended. Don't worry about who will be leaving. Don't worry about who's going to stop giving to your church. Understand? This hate mail is normal.

It's normal. And it's just a sign that you're being faithful to the text of God's word. Stay rooted even in the text. Even when so few churches in our culture will do it. And even some of the churches that say, what a great pastor, what a great this, you'll listen to them.

They never open the Bible or they only open it up to reference their leadership talk that they want to have, which has absolutely nothing to do with what God is trying to say. Okay, sorry. I'm passionate about that. I wish I would have been told that challenging people to grow will not always be met with optimism. That when you're going to worship and teach people to raise their hands and celebrate Jesus, that not everybody will agree with, that.

When you're going to teach people that the word of God is more important than a pastor, not everybody will agree with that. When you're going to try to involve prayer and services because you believe that seeking the face of God is the most important thing to do, that you're going to lose people in your church because you're faithful with what God wants, I wish you would understand that challenging people in a counseling session, that sometimes you're going to care more about their walk with Christ than they are about their own. Wish somebody would have told me that. I wish somebody would have told me that spiritual attack is the norm. Expect it.

Expect it. Every Friday through Monday in my house, it's the exact same routine, isn't it every Friday in my house by about 06:00 on Friday night. I know that if Kim and I don't watch our words, one of us is going to get into an argument with the other. It's usually my fault, but it's going to happen or my kids are going to be wayward. And Saturdays it's better if we don't even hang out that much.

And then I'm going to come with the thrill and excitement of preaching God's word and the fear of who am I to present these wonderful truths of the Lord? And why am I even doing this? And does anybody even care? And then I'm going to preach it

and I'm going to feel totally excited about it until about two in the afternoon on Sunday, at which time I wish I had a do over for about five things that I said, wish I could repeat the message. And then on Monday I'm going to wake up and I'm going to hear that voice in my head that says, why don't you get a real job?

Nobody's listening to anything you say anyway. I mean, why don't you go do something with your life that counts? And I'm gonna wanna quit. That happens every single week unless I'm in veil with my family and I didn't feel it at all. It was awesome.

I wish somebody would told me that other people's opinions are endless. Listen to them, but don't sweat it. I wish people would have told me that there's insecure people that will come to you after being at one service with their verbal resume for everything that you need to change in your church, making them the expert. Kind of like people thinking they're a master mechanic because they own a car, or they're a doctor because they've been to the hospital, right? Or prideful people who refuse to ever serve unless ask, falsely believing that their busy schedule and other christian activities are more important than serving Christ in his church.

I wish somebody would have told me that. I wish somebody would have told me that your family will be the personal targets of satanic attack. Expect it. That your marriage will be significantly challenged. That your wife will receive unsolicited verbal abuse in the form of phone calls, emails, and face to face conversations from people that want their way and blame her for why things aren't going the way they needed to go.

Wish somebody would have told me that your kids will be the focus of attacks as well. That at times they'll come home in tears crying because somebody told them in kids ministry that they should know the answer because their daddy's the pastor. Wish somebody would have told me that. I wish somebody would have told me instead of being built up, many people in your church will seek to tear you down. So make sure some of your best christian friends are those who don't attend your church because you're always on.

Because no matter who you are, no matter what you talk to, church comes up every single time you talk to people. I wish somebody would have told me that fickle, unhappy people will falsely accuse you, gossip about you, and attempt to malign your character and understand when that happens. Those are God's blessings and that



you're called to not say anything, but to entrust yourself to the one who judges justly and to pray for them and pray favor on their life and blessing on their life and forgiveness for them until your heart aligns with what Jesus feels about them. I wish somebody would have told me that Matthew 5:11-12 would be one of your favorite verses. Blessed are you when people malign you and say all sorts of evil things about you.

Rejoice and be glad because you know your reward in heaven is great. I wish somebody would have told me that you'll want to quit, but don't. I wish somebody would have told me everything you attempt to pull. Well, everything that you do will attempt to pull you away from your priority of prayer in the ministry of the word. Don't lose your passion for Jesus.

I wish somebody told me that your schedule will not allow you to be there for everyone and that you're always going to let people down. Just accept that. Wish somebody would have told me that not everyone will make the journey with you. When you grow as a church, expect that it's okay. I wish somebody would have told me that people who are your good friends now will slowly disappear as you pursue the dreams that God has placed in your heart.

Some will do so graciously and others will leave people that have been close to you that will never even say goodbye or never do anything and just walk away. I wish somebody would have told you that the vision that you have in your heart will always go beyond what your present capacity is to accomplish it. Wish somebody would have told me that you will always be misunderstood. Wish somebody would have told me that regardless of how gifted you are in one area, people will poke at your weakness, in others falsely believing that you're supposed to be great at everything. And I wish somebody would have told me that the weight of ministry will always be there, that time away on vacation won't change that.

Because if you're called, you can't stop thinking about God's people. But in all that, that's what a calling is. If you're called by God, that's what you're getting into, right? And I'm grateful for the calling God's put on my life. And I'm not saying this to be self serving so that 30 of you send me emails and say, jeff, let's get dinner this week.

I didn't know. I'm not doing that. Right. I feel blessed by you and I love you. I'm just saying the weight of ministry is for real.

And that church you left and that pastor that you talked about, I wish somebody told me that when you come in and talk to me about your last pastor that you had, that it's only a matter of time until you're saying the same thing about me and my wife at somebody else's church. I wish I would have known that. I didn't know that. Like, I'm here for one reason and one reason only. To glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and to be faithful, to pray for his saints and preach the word, to build people up, to share the gospel, to see people saved and to see people grow.

That's why I'm here. Amen. And we're sanctification for one another. I get to put all my faults on display every single week. You get to see them all and say, we follow a flawed man who loves Jesus.

Cause you do. And I serve a flawed church that loves Jesus. I do. And that God would say, hey, I wish we told me this. Just keep loving your people and loving me and I'll take care of everything.

And during times, God then gives glimpses of greatness, right? He gives glimpses of greatness like 88 baptisms in one weekend. A brand new church building, a remodeled church building. A growing, thriving church. People getting saved.

Marriages getting put back together, children's ministry that starts thriving student ministry that's growing twenties ministry. People that did didn't know how to serve before that are now serving people that would say, I don't even know what you're talking about, that are now doing what they're doing. And they're like, I totally get it now. I started coming to brave church. I was so excited.

I met all these christian people. It was so great. And then I started serving and my life fell apart. Welcome. We tell every elder before we bring them on board.

Hey, listen, if this is what God's called you, to just know this, your life's gonna fall apart in some way. I just don't know how. And every time it's happened, either in business or family or kids or some way, that's what we're signing up for. Why? Because what we're doing as a church is a spiritual entity that is under attack by the enemy who hates, hates, hates what we do, and hates who's leading.

So here's the thing. You can't encourage. Your ministry leads too much. And I'll tell you the best way you can encourage me. It's not season tickets to the Broncos game.

Although if you want to do that, that's fine. Best way you can do it for me, and some of you do it is you pray for me, pray for me. I know so many of you do that. Sometimes you tell me how God's word has touched your life. That encourages me.

Sometimes you talk about how our church and people in our church are touching. That encourages me, encourage our pastors. I'm not talking about me, and I'm not just talking about our staff, and I'm not just talking about our elders. I'm talking about everybody who's serving here is serving because they love the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what Paul's saying.

He's like, if you're gonna be a thriving church, these are three things we wanna do regularly, ongoing. What do we wanna do? We wanna give generously to things of

God with our resources. We wanna serve generously to build up the kingdom of Christ.

And what do we wanna do?

We wanna regularly encourage our team who's doing it. Cause there's enough attack outside. Let's make sure we're the church that builds one another up. Amen.

And I just want to tell you this.

I mean, do not walk away from this message. I don't care if you're here in Inglewood. I don't care if you're in Broomfield. Do not walk away and say, I feel so beat up. No, you don't.

It's God showing you ways that you can grow and hear me as your pastor. I'm telling you, I prayed really hard before. I shared what I shared. I wanted to be vulnerable with you. I wanted you to hear my heart.

I love you. I love our church. I love the privilege I have. I don't feel needy. I feel

like God's taking.

Taking care of me. I feel like you take care of me. If there's any church I could pastor in the entire country, this would be the church I'd want to pastor. Amen. But let's continue to grow in these areas, and let's continue to let God do what he wants to do in building his church.

Amen. Would you stand with me? Lord, we do what we do because of who you are and what you've done for us. That you gave it all. That you took our place on the cross.

That we have life in you because of what you've done. Lord, help us us to expand that message and glorify your name. We give you all the praise, all the glory, and all the honor in Jesus name. Amen.