



Message Transcript

Fight for the Next Generation

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Pastor Jeff:

Father in heaven, we prepare our hearts right now before you because Lord, we believe that every time your word is faithfully and is accurately proclaimed that you speak directly to us. We believe, Lord, that when our ears are attentive and open that we can hear your voice. And so our prayer this morning is, Lord, speak. We are ready to hear what it is that you have to say. And so now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak directly to you, who will believe what he says and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word, Amen? Amen. I love watching the Olympic Games. I love watching athletes perform at their peak performance and highest. But the Olympics is unique because for Olympic athletes, they spend at least four years, if not longer, maybe their entirety of their lives training for just a short period of time.

To run the 100-meter dash, I mean, you train four years or longer and it's over that fast, right? But it's interesting because when you watch these athletes and see all the time they put in with their body and their diet and their dedication. There's one event that always stands out to me and it's the relay race, like the 4 X 100. Because even if you've done everything that you can to prepare it, even if you're the fastest in the world, even if you have the four fastest people on your team, you're only as good as the baton pass. And stories are legendary about some of the greatest relay teams that have been ready to run, that have going to dominate the sport, only to see somebody bobble the baton or drop it. And when you see them drop it, you watch four

plus years just go out in their face knowing no matter what happens now, we won't even place. All that time, all that dedication, all hinges on handing the baton from one person to the next.

We've been in a series called *Waging War Against Our Enemy*. We've talked about how it is that we battle and how to stay in the fight and how to armor up and how to pray. And then we've been talking about what it is we're to fight for and how we're to fight for the church because the church, the local church is the hope of the world. This is God's vehicle where he builds his saints to send out. And then we talked about fighting for the kingdom, which is God's idea of what the world should look like. It's his comprehensive rule over every area of life. But I'm here to tell you, if we fail to pass the baton to the next generation, we fail. And so today what I want to do is I want to talk to you about how to fight for the next generation.

I want to teach you how to fight for the next generation because the great commission makes it clear that we're to go into all the world and make disciples, but if we don't pass the baton to the next generation, we are going to fail as a church. And so the question becomes how well is it that we are passing the spiritual baton? How well is it that this next generation that's going to become our next generation of leaders knows how to lead for the Lord Jesus Christ? And whose responsibility is it to pass the baton to the next generation? It's yours and it's mine. It's everybody's responsibility. And so often we think, "Well, it'll just happen. I hope it goes well." But if you really love the Lord Jesus Christ, you want to live your life in such a way that you know long after

you're gone that there are still ripple effects of the kingdom through what you invested while you were on this side of heaven.

And if you've ever wanted to know what the next generation is looking for or how to make a clean pass of that baton, I believe God has a word for you today. And I want to invite you to open up your Bibles to second Timothy, second Timothy chapter two, and we're going to be in verses one to eight. Second Timothy, chapter two, verses one to eight. And while you're turning there, let me just set up why this is so important. Let me set up why God thinks this is so important. Meaning it says in Psalm 145 verse one, it says, "One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts." The psalmist writes, "I want to be able to pass the baton of your praise, that what I'm experiencing in my generation with the Lord and as good as he is, I want to see that next generation experience it in the same way."

Even one Psalmist writes in Psalm 71 verse 18, "And even when I am old and gray," I identify that with that more and more each day. "And even when I'm old and gray, oh Lord, do not forsake me until I declare your strength to this generation, your power to all who are to come." He says, even when I'm old, don't take me home until I've had the opportunity of declaring your truth to this generation so that the generations to come will know that you are the Lord. Lord, that's my desire. It's not only for where I'm at now, my desire is for all the future generations that are out there, all that are coming, to know you. And why is this so important? Because when that's not a passion of your heart and that's not a focus of your ministry, we miss.

One of my favorite books in the entire Old Testament is the book of Joshua. It's

a book on conquest. I mean, after disobeying the Lord and having to wait 40 years to enter the promised land, Joshua and Caleb were the only two out of that generation that were allowed to enter because those were the only two men that had stood on the banks 40 years earlier and said, "God told us to go, we need to go." Everybody else made up all the excuses as to why they couldn't, so God punished them with a 40-year camping trip. And at the end of that, everybody had died out except for Joshua and Caleb, and they get ready to take people into the promised land and they do exactly what God says. And the book of Joshua is all about the conquest that God had always promised to do to any generation that would've been willing to do what he wanted them to do.

And so the book of Joshua ends where Joshua is telling the people, "Hey, you get to decide who you're going to serve. You get to decide what God you want to serve, but as for me in my house, we will serve the Lord." It was a great generation, a generation of conquest, a generation of seeing God's delight, a generation of giving him praise. But it doesn't take more than about a turn of the page until you get to the book of Judges where you see what happens to that generation. That great generation of people that have been serving the Lord for so long and they're at the end of their life. And in Judges chapter two, in verse 10 it says, "All that generation also," that's Joshua's generation, Caleb's generation, "Were gathered to their fathers." That means they died. "And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord nor yet the work which he had done for Israel."

So in spite of all the great things that God did through Israel, that generation

failed to pass the baton. That generation failed to tell them all that God had done. That generation failed to tell them about how the Lord had delivered them out of Egypt or made it a big deal. That generation failed to talk about how the Lord had parted the Jordan River and let them walk onto the other side. That generation forgot to tell them how they gave them victory over Jericho and all of the other cities, that generation, even though they did it all, they forgot to tell how important it was. And notice the very next verse of Judges, what starts the most tragic book in the Old Testament. Right after we learn that this generation died and they didn't pass the baton, well, notice what it says in Judges 2:11, "Then the Sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and serve the Baals."

They served other gods. What happened? When you don't pass the baton, it has eternal consequences. When you don't pass the baton, it has consequences in the very next generation. When you don't pass the baton, evil flourishes. When you don't pass the baton, people don't know the Lord and there is no hope for their future. Passing the baton is essential in this fight. It's not just fighting for the church now. And it's not just fighting for the kingdom now, it's fighting for the church and the kingdom for the generations as long as it takes until Jesus Christ gets back. Amen. And that's what God calls us to do. Because if we don't, we fail. If we all are Christian and we all arrive in heaven and we're with Jesus, but the generation we leave behind is living in evil and living apart from Christ and all those we failed, our job is to raise up the next generation.

Our job is to show the next generation why the church is the most important institution on the planet and why the kingdom is the most important vehicle and how to live out God's comprehensive rule in all areas of life. That's our responsibility. And so to do that today, that's what we're going to look at in two Timothy chapter two verses one through eight, and really this is Paul's last will and testament as he's writing to Timothy, his protege in the faith. This is not his biological son, this is his spiritual son in the faith, and here's what he writes in second Timothy chapter two verses one to eight, I'll read them and then we'll unpack them together.

He says, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to receive the share of his crops. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything."

And there's a lot of passages I could have launched this message from today, but I chose this because I think the apostle Paul embodies what I'm trying to say. And really what I'm going to highlight for you today are three truths that the next generation needs. Three things that the next generation is looking for. Three things the next generation is looking for from you and from me. And the first is this, the next generation

needs people worthy of following.

The next generation needs people worthy of following. Notice how Paul writes to him. He says, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Now, Timothy, as you know, was not Paul's son, right? We know his mother and his grandmother, Lois and Eunice, they invested in him. These women had a huge investment in him knowing the scriptures from the time he was young and painting a picture as to who the Lord was and all these different things. But it wasn't until the apostle Paul came along and painted a picture of a man that was worthy to follow that Timothy started following the Lord wholeheartedly. We are looking for people to follow. The next generation is looking for people to follow.

Who is worthy to follow? Who is someone you can entrust your life to? Who is someone that young people can look at and say, "That woman, that man, I want to be just like them." And where they should find those people all over the place is in the church. Not perfect people because there's nobody perfect except Jesus. Not perfect people. People that are going after God that are worthy of being followed. And notice how he talks to him. "Timothy, my son." He's endearing to him, he's encouraging to him. And what does he tell them to do? Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The same grace that saves is the same grace that sustains.

Be strong in that. Be strong in the Lord, because I'm strong in the Lord. That's what you've seen in me. And notice what he says next. "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who

will be able to teach others also." What has he heard? He's heard everything that the apostle Paul has said, the way in which he's talked, the way in which he's done it. He's saying, you've watched me. You've heard me now go tell somebody else about what I've done. Entrust what I've told you to other faithful men who will then be able to teach others.

And do you know what you see here? You see four generations of gospel proclamation. You see Paul telling Timothy to take what he's learned and entrust it to faithful men, which is generation three, who are going to be able to go do what? Tell others. That's four generations of the gospel. That is what the gospel is. Let me just tell you something. When you got saved, the gospel is not just entrance into the kingdom. That's called new birth, that is called new life. That is super important. We don't want to downplay that, that God the Father sent his son to be the savior of the world, that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world. He died in your place so that through repentance and faith you could live. He rose from the dead. You can have life in His name if you repent and believe that Jesus is the Christ, it's the greatest news on the planet and you can enter his kingdom.

But that's the beginning. That's not the end. Too many Christians talk about it as that's the end, you're in. What else is there? I don't know. Just hang in there until you get to heaven. Am I really saved? I think so. Just hang in there until you get to heaven. That's not the gospel. The gospel is entrance into the kingdom. It's the gospel of the kingdom, which is what Jesus talked. Now that you're in, go live it fully for him. Be part of the local church, grow in all your gifting, and then take the kingdom out into the world

with everything that you have. And that's what Paul was telling Timothy. He goes, this is what I'm entrusting to you. I'm entrusting to you a new way of living. I'm entrusting to you a life. And everything you've seen and heard in me, go tell others and live that way.

Now here's the question. Here's the question. This is rhetorical. Are you worthy of being followed? Are you worthy of being followed? Here's another question that's rhetorical. If everybody took the church of Jesus Christ and Christ's kingdom as seriously as you, what would the next generation of the church and the kingdom look like? I mean, that's the question because isn't that the gospel? I mean, when Jesus called his disciples, here's what he said. He didn't say, "I'm going to die for you. Pray this prayer and ask me into your heart." He said, "Follow me. I'll put you on mission. I'll make you fishers of men." Jesus Christ was so compelling that these men dropped their nets, they left their fishing boats, they left their income, they left their dad, they left their families, and they went and did what? They followed him. Now you might argue, well, Jesus had an advantage.

He's the son of God and he's perfect, and I would say he did. But what did the apostle Paul say? One Corinthians 11:1, be imitators of me or follow me in the same way that I follow Christ, imitate me in the same way I imitate Christ, follow me in the same way I follow Christ. And even when Paul wrote to the Philippians, one of the most encouraging books in the New Testament, as he tells them how to pray and what to think about, he says in Philippians chapter four and verse nine, the things which you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. In other words, everything you've watched me do, everything you've heard me say, every situation we've ever

been in, practice these things, and guess what? The God of peace will be with you.

Don't just do what I say. Do what I do. Live like I live. If you'll live like I live, the next generation will be just fine. Can we say that? Can we say that? Because every single person in here should be able to say a resounding yes. No, I'm not perfect, but I'm growing in that and I'm inviting people to scrutinize my life and watch me and ask me questions so that I'm living for the Lord in such a way that I'm an example that's worthy to follow. Because if you say, no, I'm not that and no I don't want to be that, then what hope does the next generation have? Because they're going to find somebody to follow.

There's people out there all the time, whether it's politicians, athletes, artists or whatever, that are saying, "Follow me, I got what it takes. Follow me." And young people are flocking to them, right? Athletes are flocking to them. I mean, Taylor Swift has got like a million Swifties all over the planet, right? And I'm not saying she's not good. She's got good music. And sometimes when I preach a bad sermon I shake it off, you know what I'm saying? But if your only hope for eternity and for the next generation is following her, you've missed the mark. God wants us to stand up and God wants us to be the leaders that people can look to and say there's something different about him and there's something different about her.

Jesus said follow me. Paul said follow me. Would you say follow me? I'm going to ask it again. What would the mission of Jesus, the local church and the advancement of his kingdom look like, if everybody just replicated? You and if you're

disappointed with that answer, then it's time to repent and ask God to change your heart, because I'm telling you on the authority of God's word, when you were born again, he gave you a new identity which makes you worthy to follow. And the question is, will you align your lifestyle with your identity so that God can use you in that way?

I mean, this is just not about personal faith. I mean, I know today if I die, I go to heaven. I know today no matter how long I live, if I die, I go to heaven. That was settled when I was 18. I mean, that's settled for me. But if that's all that there is to the gospel, then I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing. I want to see the next generation know the Lord. I want to see lots of people know the Lord. I want to know that when Brave Church, when all of us who are hearing my voice are in heaven, if Jesus Christ hasn't returned yet, that we're still hearing about souls being saved and kingdom being advance and churches being planted because of what God did through us while we were here.

That's why the church is so important. That's why the kingdom's so important. It's all about community. And man, can I just talk to you for a second? I mean, I have to. I'm passionate about this and if I get charged up, I'm sorry. No, I'm not sorry. If I get charged up about this, I'm not sorry. So go the men, so goes the church, and so goes the church, so goes the world. I'm just telling you, you can't read through the New Testament and say that only men are called to be elders and pastors and then puff yourself up and say, "Well, we're men and we're this," that means this. That means we know we have the spiritual responsibility to pass the baton to the next generation. It's up to us. Church is not a women's creation. Church is Jesus Christ's thought. And to all

you wonderful women at Brave, love you, love you, love you. But I'm telling you men, it's time to step up because there's nothing in your life that will bring a greater return on investment than serving the Lord Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. Amen.

Let me just give you a couple of scriptures because I could spend all day on this, but I'll just give you a couple. How about Deuteronomy 32 verse seven, where Moses says, "Remember the days of old. Consider the years of all generations. Ask your father and he will inform you, your elders, and they will tell you. You want to know what God's like? Ask the men, they'll tell you. They'll be able to tell of all the wonderful deeds of God. They'll be able to tell you about God's word. They'll be able to tell you how God works. What guys that love the Lord do." Or how about Exodus chapter 13 after the final plague where the oldest child was killed, where they didn't paint blood on the doorposts. "And it shall be when your son asks," and it's talking about fathers in that context, "When a son asks of fathers, you in time to come saying, what is this? Then you shall say to him, dads, with a powerful hand, the Lord brought us out of Egypt from the house of slavery."

You got questions, kids, about what God's like? Ask your daddies. It's their job to tell you. It's their job to show you. Or how about in Joshua chapter four? You remember when they had been through the Red Sea? Now they're standing on the banks of the Jordan and God's going to part that one too and 2 million people are going to cross. And when they cross the Jordan, Joshua tells them, go put a stone in there from every single tribe. 12 stones, stack them tall as a monument in memorial to what this day is about. And then he says this and he said to the sons of Israel, "When

your children ask their fathers in time to come saying, what are these stones? Then you, fathers, shall inform your children. Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground."

From the very beginning, man was created before woman was created, even though they were created on day six, man was given the responsibility to bring the word. Man was given the responsibility to be the spiritual leader. Man, you are still the responsibility. If you look at our world and say it's going to hell in a hand basket, it's the godly men that are not passing the baton. That's the number one problem we have in our culture. Amen. And I'm telling you this because I love you and I'm telling you this because we have a ton of godly men.

As a matter of fact, yesterday in my hometown of Castle Rock, there was an LGTBQ deal that was going on and over 100 guys showed up with shirts in silent protest and on the front it said, "Standing for our children." And on the back it said, "Jesus loves you and so do I." And they stood there for over an hour where all that nonsense was going on in silence, being called every single name in the book and not retaliating in any way, but just to show them that Jesus Christ is Lord and they will stand for what is true and that's what it takes. Amen. That's what it looks like. Men, I'm telling you, the most important investment you can make is in your local church. I don't care what calling you have outside the church, the most important investment you can make is in the church.

Because I know there's even women listening to me today that say, "Well, our family doesn't have a father right now." And what are men called to do? They're called

to stand in the gap for those families and be the man that should have been there that's not there right now for whatever reason that that is. So go the men, so goes the church, so goes the church, so goes the world. It's just a fact. So if you're like, "The church is totally weak." If I ever hear another guy say that, I mean, I'm going to lose my ever-loving mind. Every time I hear a guy say that, I'm saying, well, what are you doing to make a difference? And the answer is always the same. "Very little, very little. I'd rather stand on the sideline and complain." That's what football games are for. But the church, there is no sideline. Get in the game, make a difference. All right?

Now I'm telling you this because I love you and because I'm getting charged up, I'm going to say one other thing. Single guys, listen to me. Single guys, listen to me, listen and listen hard. If you are called to celibacy, it means this. You have no sexual desire whatsoever in your life, which means this. Don't hang out with women ever. It means don't look at porn ever. It means that you're not missing out on anything ever. And you're thankful because you can devote even more time in the church than married guys can. So up your game. Now, if you're not, and I've only met two guys in my 52 years that have been called to celibacy. One has three doctoral degrees and the other one's a missionary overseas and had to learn one of the hardest languages in the world.

And both those guys I believe, because they give 12 to 15 hours a day to serve the Lord, but I've only met two. So here's what I'm going to say to you young guys. If you're of an age where you can, then here's the deal, get married, have kids, and build a family. It's the most godly thing you can do. Genesis chapter one, the first command

in the Bible is be fruitful and multiply, and there's a marriage so they can be fruitful and multiply. God cares about the family. If you as a single guy say, "I'm going to build my ladder on this wall of success and my career and I'm going to make a lot of money and then I'm going to have a lot of stuff and then I'm going to do a lot of things and then one day maybe I'll get married," you're building your ladder against the wrong wall. Get married. And I understand what you're going to say. There's no perfect woman out there. I know. I already married her. She's right here. She's gone. There is no others, right?

All kidding aside, if you think you're going to try to find a perfect woman, look in the mirror a little longer and bring some friends over because they can point some things out. There are no perfect guys. There are no perfect girls, but find someone that aligns in godliness, that has character. Get married, have a family. Invest in the next generation because your family is the greatest thing that you can do on this side of heaven. Amen. And if you say, I'm getting golf claps, I know ladies, guys, listen to me. Some of you're like, where am I going to find a girl like that? There's hundreds of gals like that right here that would say, "I'm looking for a guy like that when you get your priorities right."

I mean, I'm telling you guys, this whole thing, wait until you're 40 to get married and all this kind of stuff, it's nonsense. It's not even biblical. Or I'm going to date till I find the right person. Where do you find that in your Bible? Be a godly man. Find some gal that's a godly woman. Get married, only have eyes for her and then make a great family and disciple them and go to your church and advance the kingdom and that's

what God's all about. And have as many kids as you possibly can. Amen. That's the Bible because children are a blessing and inheritance from the Lord. That's the truth.

And if you think, well, that's an inconvenience or that's hard or that's whatever, it's because you're not a man. It's that simple. We're not even doing men's ministry. You should come to our men's conference in the spring. You'll love it. All right. But think about this. Does Jesus care about family? Does Jesus care about kids? I mean, Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me." The disciples were like, "We don't have time for kids. We're men. We got to do men's stuff." Little kids are coming, climbing all over Jesus. They're trying to shoo them away. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me. Do not hinder them. The kingdom of heaven belongs to ones like these." You know what else he says? Listen to this. This is Jesus talking. I'll let Jesus do more talking here. Matthew chapter 18 and verse six, "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

That's what Jesus says. You know what the stumble means? Stumble means to cause to sin. Well, what's the first commandment? To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind. Anyone that would cause one of these little ones who would believe in me to not love me with their whole heart, it would be better for you to tie a cement cinder around your neck and drown yourself than to keep on living, because I'm for the next generation. Amen. I'm for the kids. I'm for who they are. I'm for what they do. Children are a blessing. They're not a burden. The world thinks they're a burden. Even people that have them are like, "Only have two, because that's too much." Have

as many as you want. Have a quiverfull, the Bible says. I'm 52. I'm kind of done, I think, but we'll see.

Invest in the next generation. Barnabas invested in Paul who was very unlovable when he was converted. Paul invested in Timothy. Timothy invested in everybody else. It's the transfer of the values of the kingdom. And who did Jesus pick? Who did Jesus look for when he came to earth to select his disciples? Teenage boys. That's who he went after. He says, if I'm going to entrust the entire world to any group of people, it's teenage boys, that's who I'm going to give my life to. Very few people think that. Jesus did. Why? Because he knew if he could engage their hearts from the time they're at that age and answer their questions and be a model, an example for him, guess what they would do? They'd die for him. They'd die for him.

And here's the problem. In the church, we have lowered the bar so much that we tell all these guys that have all this energy for all these things in the world, "Hey, the only thing we need from you is you need to pray this one prayer to trust Jesus. And then if you'll just come to church every now and again and pass out bulletins, we'd be so happy with you." And we wonder why people are leaving the church in droves. We're not going to lower the bar here. Jesus calls for your whole life. He calls for your everything. He wants you to give him all that you have and all are welcome to come and give him everything you have. And if you do, not only will there be a return on investment in this generation and the generations to come, but when you meet the Lord, you'll hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant. I'm still doing work through you

even though you're here in heaven with me."

That's what it looks like. I'm telling you this next generation is looking for people who are worthy of being followed. And women, listen to me. Timothy wouldn't have followed Paul if his mother and grandmother hadn't have been investing in the scriptures in his life from the time he was a little boy. Women are just as valuable to the kingdom as men. I'm just telling you that men have been given a spiritual responsibility to lead it and to elevate women in doing it. We need people that are worthy of following. Number two is this. We need expectations worthy of honor. We need expectations worthy of honor. We lower the bar too much. Notice what Paul says. Notice verse three, "Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

We need clear expectations of what it's going to be like as a Christian. What are God's expectations of me? What is this going to require of me? What does he expect me to do? Here's a good word for you. Suffer. Suffer. That's going to be part of the package. You want to trust Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, I promise you suffering is part of the package somehow, some way. Now in my Bible, I didn't see those words come off the page until more recent years, more recent decades. When I was younger I would read it, "Suffer? What's suffer? I don't know anything about it." Right? It's all over the New Testament. Suffering is when you're doing the Lord's will and things happen that are very extremely painful that you didn't plan on.

And anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. And he gives this example as a soldier. He said, "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so he may please the one who enlisted them."

What does a soldier do? A soldier serves and a soldier suffers. That's the calling. You're called to serve. And when you serve, you go where you're told to go and you do what you're told to do. And it's not always going to be pleasant. In talking to the men and women that have served in our military, none have come back and given a glowing review saying, "I got there and we changed everything when I got there. Bootcamp is no more. I didn't like that. I didn't like the haircuts. I didn't like the food. We just changed all that. They were really open to my opinion."

No. When you sign up for the military, they tell you what to do, where to go, when to sleep, when to shower, when to get dressed, where you're going to go fight what you're going to do when you get there. And here's your answer every time. "Yes sir." That's it. Jesus says, "You're going to follow me," it's going to be like being a soldier. And as much as I applaud the men and women that serve in our military and we should, you are a soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's even more valuable than that. And your answer to the Lord when you're serving is what? Yes sir. Yes sir. I want to serve. I want to serve. Because some of us have a false understanding that the church was designed for us.

We have the false understanding that church was designed so that we'd be comfortable. So we'd like the sermon, so that we'd like the music, so that there'd be plenty of people helping our kids, that our needs are always being met and there's plenty of people there that we can talk to and all that kind of stuff. You weren't called to be served. You were called to serve. God gifted you to serve others. When your focus changes and you walk into church and you're coming here to say, "How can I use

everything God's given me for others?" That's when everything begins to change.

And by the way, when you do, you will suffer. You will. Ask anybody who's up their serving if they've suffered more. I had a joy earlier this week meeting one of our young adults, a fine young lady. We were sitting over there and she was asking me questions and she was telling me about how she's in the last year or two really gone more in with the Lord. And she was asking me, "Pastor Jeff, when you go all in with the Lord, do you find it's harder?" And I say, "Well, what have you experienced?" And she started telling me, and inside I'm just laughing the whole time, like yes. I mean, every time we take a step of faith to go deeper, every time we expand to a new campus, every time we start a school, every time. The spiritual attack gets higher and higher and higher and it never stops.

And the more you serve, the more you'll suffer and sometimes you'll suffer from the very people that you're trying to serve. You don't believe me, be a cadre leader. You don't believe me, go down and serve kids. I'm just here for the kids, but they're not that nice back to me. I mean, that's part of service. Sometimes even when we serve each other in our marriage, it's not always easy. It's difficult. You have two sinners that are living together. Serve. A soldier serves and a soldier suffers. When you're fully yielded to Christ, you'll serve more and you'll suffer more. Those are the expectations. He also gives the example of an athlete. He said also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize. Unless he competes according to the rules, he can't cheat. So what's an athlete need? An athlete needs integrity and

discipline.

Integrity and discipline. I mean, here's the calling and expectations of Jesus. If you go in with Jesus, he gives you plenty of commands all throughout the Bible for how you need to live. And then he wants you to align your life with those commands. He wants you to live his way. That's called integrity. How do you get there? Discipline. You don't just arrive there. You can't become a Christian and just hope, "Yeah, one day all my bad habits will go away because I'm a Christian and I have the Holy Spirit in my life." No, discipline is what takes them away. Learning to stop certain behaviors, learning to start other behaviors, doing certain behaviors in a different way. That's discipline. Discipline is the root word of disciple. You have to be disciplined. Well, one day I'll just know the word. How? It doesn't happen by osmosis. You can't just put the Bible on your head or under your pillow when you go to sleep and wake up the next day and be like, I totally know it now.

You have to study it. You have to ask questions about it. You have to peruse it. You have to meditate on it, memorize it, work it out. How does this work? That's how you know the word. That's how you learn to pray. That's how you learn to evangelize. It's how you learn to tithe. It's integrity. It's walking in the fullness of Christ and discipline. And when you yield fully to Christ, you'll need more integrity and discipline than you'd ever imagine. And then he talks about the farmer, and I come from a long line of farmers and I love farmers. He said, "The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to receive the share of the crops." If you could talk about a farmer in just a couple words, I would use hard work and trust. There's very few professions that work as

hard as farmers. I mean, you think you've had a hard day?

Most farmers are up by three or four in the morning. Most farmers are on their field till about dusk and no matter what happens, they're working all day long every day and nobody's watching. But you know what? Even if you do the work and you do everything that's expected of you and you plant at the right time and you fertilize at the right time and you pull weeds at the right time, you do all that, if the Lord doesn't provide the right rain and the right soil and all those things, all your best efforts don't work. So you have to trust that the Lord's going to come through. And here's the truth about being a Christian. The longer you walk with the Lord, it requires hard work. It requires hard work. God wants his servants to work. God put Adam in the garden to work.

Work is a noble thing. Trust and faith is a noble thing and this is why he gives us those examples, because sometimes I think we tell people, "Hey, hey, hey, I don't want you to go to hell. Would you please, please, please, please, please pray this prayer?" "Okay, I guess I'll do it. What do I have to pray?" "Well, just pray that you believe Jesus is God and that he died on the cross for your sins and rose from death. If you do that, you're going to heaven." So they pray the prayer and then they ask, "Did I do it right?" "Yeah." "Okay, cool. Now I'm going to go live my life any way I want it because I got my fire insurance." Friends, that is not the gospel. The gospel is I'm calling you to the gospel of the kingdom and it's going to require your entire life.

It's going to require you to serve and suffer. It's going to require integrity and discipline. It's going to require hard work and trust. But if you give your best to the

Lord, there's a great return on investment now and for the future and God will be with you always. Do you want that? That's what it means. Give people clear expectations. That's why when Jesus was walking around with his disciples, watch the questions he asks. You're not going to leave too, are you? Who do you say that I am? Are you still so dull? Why is it that you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say? What was he doing? He was telling them this is the bar. I'm not changing it. You can leave. I'm not going anywhere. And that's what we're calling people to. That's what Brave Church is calling people to. Not perfection, growing and increased likeness to Christ.

That's what young people are looking for. That's what the next generation's looking for. They're looking for people that'll give them clear expectations. If you sign up for the love boat and you get put on a military vehicle, it's going to make you pretty upset. I mean, you sign up for Carnival Cruise and you go to get on the ship and they take you to Baghdad or something like that and put a weapon in your hand like, "This isn't what I signed up for. Get me off." We don't tell people what's expected. We don't tell people how hard it's going to be. And I'm telling you this, it's not just in the big things. I think sometimes when you hear a message like this, you think, "Oh man, I know God wants to use me. I'm going to come do the big thing."

Here's what God says. If you're faithful with little, then you can be faithful with much. In other words, if you can't be entrusted with little, you can't be entrusted with much. Here's the question. Is there any job in the church that's beneath you? What if God needs you to clean toilets? I mean, would you do it or would you say that's

beneath me? I don't want to vacuum a floor. I don't want to clean toilets. I don't want to shake hands. I don't want to give out a bulletin. Do people know who I am? I mean, I can tell you as a pastor, and I say this in all sincerity, and I say this with kindness, I'm always a little leery of the person that comes to our church like week one and comes up and wants to give me their resume of all the things that they can do to help us. To which I want to say, you haven't even met our family yet. I haven't even seen you serve anybody here yet.

And if you're not willing to serve one of the least of these, why would I give you a platform to do even more? All you're wanting to do that for is yourself. Find somebody to serve, because millions of needs here. In kindness. Because we're the body of Christ. This is our family. When we started the church, I remember I did everything. I did everything. I made the bulletins. I picked font sizes for the bulletins. I picked art graphics for the bulletins with one of our pastors on Friday morning. I hated doing it then. I would hate doing it. Now, one beauty of COVID is we don't have bulletins anymore. Amen. But there were all sorts of things we had to do. And there's still all sorts of things. The church needs everybody carrying some form of weight so that we can continue to advance Christ's kingdom. And that's what he's calling you to. And if you're faithful in little, God will make you faithful in must. And here's what we say in membership, is be elite.

And elite, it doesn't mean compare yourself to other people and be better than them. It means when you serve, serve the best that you can possibly serve. If you're serving in a cadre, serve the best that you can possibly serve in a cadre. If you're

serving with kids, be the best servant with kids. If you serving as a greeter, be the best greeter you can ever be. There's a guy in our church, I won't mention him by name because he'd be embarrassed if I do, but there's a guy in our church that's here about four in the morning every single Sunday making breakfast for everybody. He's out there. I see him outside my office blowing leaves and making sure everything's perfectly clean in here. He doesn't even have a title in our church. All he does is serve. And you know who sees him?

I mean, I happen to see some of what he does, but you know who sees him? Jesus. And I can tell you Jesus is very proud of that man because he just serves. He's here to serve. For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as ransom for many. If our motto that we're following is one that says he was here to serve us, what should our motto be? I'm here to serve you. We're here to serve others. That's why we're here. We're here to use whatever gifts God has given us for the benefit of other people. And I'm telling you, suffering and service, integrity and discipline, hard work and trust. That's more than just passion. I love passion. I love that we get fired up about the message or worship or all that. That's passion. That's good. But it takes more than that, doesn't it?

If you realize you had a brain hemorrhage and you went to see a brain surgeon that was going to take care of that for you, who would you want to sit across from? Somebody that studied for the last 20 years and performed hundreds of different operations and super skilled in what they do and other people speak highly and is consistently learning and is disciplined and hardworking, or would you want to sit

across from somebody that's like never done this before, but I'm so passionate about the brain? Have you ever used a scalpel? "No. But I'm so passionate about trying on you." Why would the church be any less? Why would we lower our standards? Why wouldn't we elevate them and call people up? And oh, by the way, however you're gifted, your gift is not too great to be used in the church.

God can use you. God wants to use you. And we at Brave want to help you to do that. The next generation needs people worthy of following, expectations worthy of honor. And finally, they need opportunities worthy of consideration. Notice what the apostle says, he said, "Consider what I'm saying, for the Lord will give you understanding into everything." I would say that to you. Hey, consider what I'm saying. I mean, think about this. 100 years from now, none of us are going to be standing here. We're not going to be here. We're not going to be around, right? For those of us who know the Lord, will be in heaven. For those of you who don't, have never repented, you'll be apart from Christ forever in Hell. We won't be here. But here's the deal. In time and space, we have an opportunity to make a difference.

And what I'm telling you about is the most important work on the planet, the work that lasts for eternity. Souls are hanging in the balance about what I'm talking about. Generations are hanging in the balance. The next generation of moms and dads, the next generation of grandparents that are hanging in the balance of what we're going to do, our culture in our country and around the world, hanging in the balance by what we can do. And here's what the Lord says. "I'm inviting you. Would you come? Would you come?" And here's what most young people do. Here's how we talk to most young

people. "Hey, what are you studying? Hey, what do you want to be when you grow up? Hey, what do you want to do?" And then we're kind of like this. "If nothing works out, you can always try the church. They'll take anybody."

I'm not joking. My view of the church growing up was if you weren't an athlete or you weren't in drama or you couldn't do reader's theater and the Glee Club kicked you out, you should go to church. They'll take anybody there. You feel welcome. But there was never this raising up of I have gifts and I want to use them for the Lord. So I'm telling you on the authority of Christ that he wants to use whatever you have. So young people, why not think like this? I'm going to serve the Lord in his church first and foremost, unless he calls me to do something else. And if he does, I'm going to use that something else to serve his church and advance his kingdom. But first and foremost, I'm serving Jesus in his church and whatever that looks like and whatever he calls me to, he's more worthy of anything or anyone I could ever give my time to.

That's what it would look like. And we need to have those kinds of opportunities for people. What would it look like if you helped change the next generation, the next four generations of people? The church needs and demands the greatest leaders in the world. Jesus' invitation is, "Come change the world with me." That's what he says. "Come follow me. I'll make you fishers and men come die with me. We'll do something great together." The God of the universe that you say you serve is calling you out to be a part of that. And here's the deal. If you're over 30 years old, you should be looking at somebody at least a decade younger than you that you're pouring time into. And if

you're 40 years old, maybe two decades, and you get how the math works. You should always be looking in the younger generation.

And discipling kids, can I just tell you, especially guys, because I've been on you all day, it doesn't mean changing diapers. We don't have guys change diapers here. That's a good thing. That's not how you're going to disciple the next generation. Invest in them, be there for them. Why is it in most churches, most kids don't even see a grownup man living for the Lord until they get into big church when they're in high school? It's ridiculous. It's ridiculous. Why not give the Lord everything? God wants us to bless the next generation. There's so many scriptures about that. Deuteronomy eight speaks of what the next generation needs to look like. But I love this. I love the Aaronic blessing in Numbers chapter six verses 24 and following. You'll know this, "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you his peace."

That's a blessing. It's not a blessing for you. It's a blessing for the next generation. And that's what God wants to do. He wants to bless the next generation. So I want to do something a little bit different today. I want to be able to pray prayers, a blessing over different groups of you. I don't think we can just have a message like this and say, "Okay, that was good." For some of you, you're hearing God stirring your heart of how do I get involved in, who do I need to get involved in with and what does that look like? And I'm here to tell you right now, if you don't even know where to go, I promise you there's probably 10 people within a short radius of you right now that would say, "If you'd be willing just to tell me that I have some value in my life and I'm

worth something or know what next steps to take, I'd totally appreciate that."

I know I need it. I know you need it. And sometimes we're waiting until, "I need more mentors and I need this." Why don't you just turn around and start mentoring other people and God will fill that vacuum and void? I'm going to do something a little bit different today as we end. I'm going to talk you about three different groups of people that we're going to pray a blessing over. The first group of people is this. College students. Anybody that's graduated from high school, that's in trade school, anybody that's graduated from high school that's doing their own job or career, young adults that aren't quite married yet. I'm just going to invite you to stand right now and we're going to applaud you because I'm going to tell you that we love you and I'm going to pray a prayer of blessing over you. We love you. Look at all of you. That's awesome. Amen.

We love you. If you're in college, we hope that these years that you're in college, that God invests in your heart in such a way that you would love Jesus more, love his church more and love his kingdom more, and that you give serious consideration to going all in with Jesus. Let me pray a prayer blessing over all of you. Father, we pray for this group of people. Lord, so many represented in this group are asking these kinds of questions. How should I spend my life? What should I do with it? Where should I invest my time? Whom should I date? Who should I marry? What's my life going to look like? Where are you going to lead me? How am I going to live? Lord, I just pray that you'd reach out from heaven today and just touch them in their hearts and let them know that you love them and that you value them and you've got purpose for

them, that you've got a whole future for them, a blessing and hope.

And that even if the world says it's not going to be good for you, that Lord, you would say, I got great purpose and plans in your life. Continue to follow after the Lord and do what He wants and he'll lead you to places you've never been. God, I bless you for all these people. In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Can we give him some appreciation? You may be seated. I got another group of people. This is our middle school and high school students that attend Brave. I know some of our middle school students are in middle school ministry right now, but if you're a middle school student or high school student, would you stand up right now? It's like sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, 10th, 11th, 12th. I love you too. Amen.

I think we have another 100 in our middle school ministry too, so they're going to receive the blessing of this prayer. But let me pray over you. Father in heaven, Lord, here's a group of people that you deeply love. Some of them are in really good environments and some of them in really hostile environments. And they're asking questions like, what am I going to do when I grow up? And how's the Lord going to use me? And why did God give me the parents he gave me? And how does all this stuff fit together? And is there any hope in this world?

Father, I pray that you'd reach down right now and remind them that Jesus Christ is Lord, that he would be the Lord of their life, that they would walk with him all the days of their life. That they would seek first the kingdom of heaven and that all these things would be added unto them. Father, that we'd be a church that would champion

high school and middle school students. That we would see that they are the church right now, and that you would use them to lead their friends to Christ, that they would have joy for mission and that would use them greatly, not only in the future, but right now where they are. And they'd experience hope and blessing and favor in new and fresh ways. In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Amen. All right.

Now I got another group that's making their way, and these are our kids. This is kids' ministry. They're coming in today, so can we give them some appreciation? We got a lot of kids. Love that. And they keep on coming. Amen. We love you guys. We love these kids. Amen. We love you. We love all those that are serving our kids, love all those that are serving our kids. I'm going to pray a prayer blessing over them. And if you do this, do me a favor, if you'd just extend a hand as we pray a blessing over our kids, because I want you to look at these kids.

Two decades from now, these are your moms and dads. These are your future governmental leaders. These are your future church leaders, business leaders, coaches, teachers, athletic directors, salesmen, police force, military. They're all right here. And we've been praying as a church that God would use them mightily. So would you join me in praying for these kids? Father in heaven, we love these kids, just seeing each one of their smiling faces. The older we get, we realize how quickly time goes. We just pray blessing over each and every one of these children. Lord, all of them come from different environments. All of them have different struggles and challenges, but Lord, we know this. You created each one in their mother's womb. You have purpose and direction and hope for each child here.

Father, I pray that the fullness of everything that you've invested in their hearts would come to fruition. Father, that we would see the leaders come out of Brave Church in a way that we've never seen before. That this would be a generation of kids that would lead the next generation, who would lead the next generation and they would blaze a trail for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Father, that they would know that they're loved and they're cherished and appreciated by us as adults, and that one day they would know in their hearts and their depths, they're loved and appreciated by the Lord Jesus Christ, with everything they have. God, we love these kids. We give you praise for them. We honor you for them. They are a blessing and inheritance from the Lord, and it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen and amen. Amen. All right, we love you. We love you.