



Message Transcript

Growth in Godliness

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Lord Jesus, we give You all the glory, honor and praise for who You are. And Lord, we ask that during this time that You would speak directly to each one of us. Lord, that I would be accurate in the proclamation of the Word. And Lord, You be helpful to me in teaching and You would be helpful to us in hearing. And so now for all those gathered, who desire to hear the Word of the Lord, who will believe what Jesus says about you, and 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.

Personal development and personal growth are very important in all different aspects of our life. As a matter of fact, whether we're talking about relationships, or we're talking about marriage, or we're talking about parenting, or we're talking about our finances, there's all sorts of books that we can purchase, there's all sorts of seminars that we can attend, there's different people that can educate us so that we can begin to grow in different areas of our life. As a matter of fact, I find for many people about this time of year, they begin to think about New Year's resolutions and what are some of the areas next year that you want to grow? So we begin to write those things down and we study that and we do that. And that's great, because personal development and personal growth is very important. But wouldn't you know, that when it comes to your spiritual life, it's just the same? That God wants you to grow and your hunger and desire for Him. That God would like you to grow in your reverence for Him. And wouldn't you know, it's not automatic?

Have you ever wondered why it is that some people in the church just seem to have this devotion to Christ, this love for the Lord, this desire to serve Him, this passion

for worship, this love to getting the Word, this hunger for prayer, and yet, other people don't? I mean, have you ever been around somebody and like, "I wish I had what they had, I don't know how that happens. I just hope someday, it just automatically clicks for me. And then maybe I'll be as excited about Jesus as they are." If you've ever wanted to know how to grow in your faith, God has a good word for you today. He's got good news. Because God's desire is that each and every one of his children would grow in godliness.

That they would grow in their devotion to Him, and they would grow in their reverence for Him and their desire for Him and their hunger and thirst after righteousness and for His Word. And if you've ever wanted to know how to do that, that's what our message is on today. So I'm going to invite you to open your Bibles up to First Timothy chapter 6. We're going to take a look at the first 11 verses together. And really, we're going to take a look at four errors or pitfalls that we want to reject or avoid altogether if we're really going to grow into who God wants us to be as His servants. First Timothy chapter 6. I'll read verses 1 to 11 and then we'll unpack this together today.

He says, all those who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honors so that the name of our God and our doctrine will not be spoken against. Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and

preach these principles. If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing. But he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicion and constant friction between men of depraved mind and depraved of the truth who suppose that godliness is a means of game.

But godliness, actually, is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world so we cannot take anything out of it. If we have food and covering with these, we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil. And some, by longing for it, have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.

And here in this text, He teaches us how to grow in godliness. He's going to highlight four areas that we want to reject, four areas that we want to do away with if we are going to grow into the people that God wants us to be. If we're going to have a hunger and a reverence for God, this is it. And the first is this, growth in godliness rejects laziness and entitlement. Laziness and entitlement. As we've been going through this section of Scripture, in chapter 5, we took a look at different groups of people. We took a look at older men and younger men and how they're to be treated in the church. Older women, younger women, how they're to be treated in the church.

Widows, how they're to be treated in the church. Leadership, elders, how they are to be treated in the church.

Now we're going to take a look at what happens when you go outside the church and you're serving someone else, such as a boss, an employer, a supervisor, a coach, a teacher, someone that has authority over you. And we're going to take a look at two different groups of people, those of you that are serving those that aren't believers and those of you that are serving those who are. And the thing that you have to reject when you're serving someone else is laziness and entitlement. Notice what He says. He says, "All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against." Wherever you are serving in life right now and whoever you are serving under right now is been given to you by God Almighty. That's the charge that you serve.

And for many of you, you are serving under those who are not Christians. If you're not serving under those who are not Christians, blessings to you. But chances are, in your life, you're going to serve under somebody who's not a believer. You're going to have a non-Christian teacher, you're going to have a non-Christian coach, you're going to have a non-Christian boss, and what are you called to do when you serve someone like that? Here's what you do. You work hard and you serve them well. Let me say it again. You work hard and you serve them well. Because you need to realize it's not just them, it's the Lord Jesus Christ that you're serving. And why does He say to do that? So that your testimony won't be maligned. He tells us this, I mean, specifically, He says, so the name of God and our doctrine or our teaching will not be

spoken against or blasphemed.

Here's what He's saying. He says, serve in such a way that your non-Christian employer can't say of you, "Oh, they're a Christian that's why they act like that." They're a Christian that's why they're lazy. They're a student of mine, that's why they're lazy. They're Christian. They go to BRAVE Church. That's why they're lazy. All Christians are lazy. You say, "Well, who would say that about Christians?" Can I just tell you, I know a lot of business owners, I know a lot of people that serve Christian and non-Christian and some have told me privately, "I'll never hire another Christian again.

They're some of the laziest people I've ever hired." How tragic is that? Not at BRAVE Church, not at BRAVE Church. BRAVE Church should be the people that people are lining up to hire because of how well they serve and how hard they work. Because who invented work? God did, all the way back in the garden when He created Adam, before the fall. He put them in the garden to do what? Work. Work is noble. Serve well. Don't be lazy as a Christian in what you do. Serve those over you who are in charge.

What about if you have a believer who's a boss or a coach or teacher? Notice verse 2, "Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved." He says, "Teach and preach these principles." He says if you have a Christian boss, He goes, they're believers, they're

family, they're brothers. We share the same God. So especially to them, do good. Why? Because sometimes, when we have a Christian boss or a Christian employer, it's not laziness, it's entitlement. They understand we're all Christians. If I skip work, it's not a big deal. I'll make it up. He knows I'm a Christian. We forgive one another. No, no, no, no. We're called in Galatians 6 to do good and especially to those who are of the household of God.

Can I tell you this, as somebody who's been a Christian and served in the church for about 30 years? Sometimes, and this is not true at BRAVE Church, but sometimes people use ministry positions as a place of laziness and entitlement. And some church staffs are filled with laziness and entitlement. And some people believe, because they got a job at a church 30 years ago, that they're entitled to that job for the rest of their life, even if they don't do any work and even if they're not growing. Friends, that's wrong and it's sinful. God never calls us to laziness and God never calls us to entitlement. It means this, if you're going to be a witness for Christ in whatever you do, work hard and serve well so that your testimony won't be maligned, so that people can't say, "Oh, the reason they're that way is because they're Christians. You know, Christians, they're lazy and entitled people." No, sir. No, ma'am. That is not who we are. And why? Because we understand who it is that we're serving.

Notice what it says in Colossians chapter 3. In Colossians chapter 3 and verses 23 and 24, He says this, "Slaves and all things, obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those merely to please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord." He goes on to say, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily

as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord, you will receive the reward of the inheritance." It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. Not everybody in the world is called to "vocational" ministry. That's a good thing. But every single person is called to ministry. You may take your paycheck from IBM, you may take your paycheck from Amazon, you may take your paycheck as a doctor, a dentist, a lawyer, wherever you take your paycheck, not a problem, but you're just a missionary in those clothes doing the work of the Lord however you're doing it. Did you know that? And that your work matters to the Lord, and you're working for the Lord, not for the people. You're serving the Lord. It's the Lord that you serve.

Every single time that you go for wherever you're employed, whether you're the boss or the employee, you are serving the Lord and your reward comes from Him. And why is this important? Because sometimes, when we're serving others, we think they owe us. And that they don't give us what we need when we want, we get mad at them. God is saying He has you sovereignly in the position that you're in right now. It doesn't mean you shouldn't pray that you get out of it. It doesn't mean you shouldn't pray that you get another job. But as long as you're there, as long as you're in that place, you serve the Lord and you serve Him well, because it's about the testimony of Jesus Christ for which you serve. And I'm telling you, there are times in your life, I've lived long enough where God is going to design circumstances in your life you're not going to like and it's not even about you, it's about him. And it's about growing you in godliness.

You said you wanted to grow, so God designed circumstances. I learned this my senior year in college. My senior year in college, as we went into spring practice, I

thought I was going to be the starter or the backup for our football team. After one week of practice, our coaching staff sat me down and said, "Because we're building for the future, not only are you not going to start, but you're going to be the lowest on the depth chart and the freshman that we recruited, we're going to bring him in and put him ahead of you," after five years. So I quit. And I told the coach, "That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard." And he was a Christian coach, still a friend of mine to this day. I said, "What you did is wrong. Show me on film where I'm not the guy." I was crushed. I was angry with the Lord, too, because for five years, I thought the Lord was leading me to lead the University of Illinois so that one day I would be on TV, and I promised God when we won the national championship, I would give Him credit for what He did in my life. And I thought that was a really good deal.

And so we had this partnership together and it wasn't working. So I was mad at the Lord and I went home and I said, "Lord, I can't believe this. And fine, you got me. I know you want me to go into ministry and I'll do it." And I was mad. And after about a week of being upset with the Lord and hearing the Lord, I heard the Lord speak to my heart. He said, "Jeff, I'm not asking you to quit. I'm just wondering if you'll be my servant on the team." And I remember saying, "I'll be on the scout team as a fifth year senior, I said, "Lord, that will be humiliating and embarrassing."

And the Lord said to me, "I know how humiliating and embarrassing feels. Will you be my servant on the team?" Well, He had me. So I called up my coach and I said to him, "Coach, I'm sorry for what I said. If you'll have me back, I will come back to the team and I promise you this, I'll never say a bad thing about you, I'll never say a bad

thing about the coaching staff, I'll never say anything other than just serve any way you want." And they had a little meeting and they voted unanimously to have me come back and I came back and I never said a word negative.

But every day before I went to the stadium, I had to pray. Do you know why? Because this text is not about behavioral modification. This text is if the Lord doesn't change your heart, you can't do it. And every day I will go before the Lord before I went to the stadium, "Lord, I hate doing what You're calling me to do and I don't want to be a part of this team, but I don't want the testimony of You to be maligned. So You're going to have to teach me how to endure this today." I did that all season long. It was during that season of absolute misery on the outside that the Lord was growing my heart for Him. I led more people to the Lord that year than I did in any of the other years combined. I grew in my faith that year more than I'd ever seen. I saw God answered prayers. I was leading Bible Studies all over the campuses and I still wasn't seeing that God was using me that way.

It really wasn't till years later where I realized God wasn't just crushing an idol of sports, God was crushing a specific idol that I had in my life at the University of Illinois that I thought that that was what my life was going to be all about. And He took it all away and I praise Him for it. But at the time, it was painful. What am I saying to you? No matter where you go and no matter who you serve, there's going to be times where it doesn't go your way and it's not them being bad to you, it's God growing your character. It's God doing something in you. He's crushing you so that you can be more

effective for him. And you don't like it, but God loves it. He loves it. And it's true that your testimony grows and it's true that your witness grows. And here's what God says, laziness and entitlement are right out. I was never lazy and I was never entitled. I served all the way to the end.

And there's several different examples I can give, but all of us have this tendency in our flesh to want to be lazy or entitled because we're not getting what we want. He says not for the testimony of Jesus. You work hard and you serve well. Reject that air of laziness and entitlement. You serve the Lord. By the way, for some of you that are your own boss and you say, "Well, I don't really have a chance for anybody over me," hey, I got an idea. This Christmas, when you go out to shop or you go to a restaurant, treat people the way Jesus would want you to treat them. Because you'll have every opportunity not to. I mean just go wait in long lines.

Just go have people tell you to be patient because things aren't going your way and then treat them the way you would want to treat them if Jesus was actually the one that was serving you, amen. Doesn't matter whether the person is a believer or a non-believer, don't malign the Word of God be used of him. I mean even the Son of Man, it says, did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Philippians 2 says consider others more important than yourselves. That's what it means. It's not about your success, it's about the glory of God through the Gospel that God is trying to grow you, amen? So don't give in to laziness or entitlement.

Number two is this, growth in godliness rejects false teaching through prideful

teachers. Growth in godliness rejects false teaching through prideful teachers. If you want to grow, you can't listen to false teaching through prideful teachers. Notice what He says in verse 3, "If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of the Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing." You say, "Well, what is that?" Sound words are healthy words. Well, what are sound words? This book. This is where you get all your health. This is where you get spiritual vitality. It's from the Word of God. If anybody is teaching anything apart from the Word of God, and you're hearing somebody talk, and you say to yourself, "I have no idea where they're getting that. I don't see it in my Bible anywhere," that's not of the Lord.

He says, "And those of the Lord Jesus Christ." What were the words of Lord Jesus Christ? That's the Gospel. That Christ died according to the Scriptures, that He was buried and He was raised according to the Scriptures. And through repentance, which is turning from our sin, and through faith in Jesus, which is belief that He's the only way, we can have life and have life in His name. It's the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He says, if anybody doesn't have the Word of God and they don't have the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and number three, teaching or doctrine that conforms to godliness, meaning that the purpose, the end game, the goal is that God wants all of his people to grow in godliness. Well, what's godliness? Godliness is that hunger and desire that grows your reverence for the Lord.

The purpose of good Bible teaching is not just so you say, "I like the teacher." Good Bible teaching is so that you're growing in godliness, you're growing in reverence

to the Lord, you're hungry for the things of God. If you turn back to chapter 1 of this book, in First Timothy, we told you what the goal of good teaching is, but the goal of our instruction is what? Love. First Timothy 1:5. Good Bible teaching translates into your greater love for the Lord and greater love for others, which grows your hunger and your reverence for the Lord. If you've been coming to BRAVE for a period of time, hearing the unadulterated Word of God, and putting into practice what He shows you, I promise you, you're not the same person you were when you first got here. You may have been a Christian when you came and you may not have been a Christian when you came, but you're not in the same place that you used to be. And once you get a steady diet of the Word that translates into love and godliness, you hunger for it and you won't tolerate any less, amen? Because God is growing you through that. He says, that's what's important.

He says, now if anyone doesn't teach like that, notice what he says about him. He says they are, what? Conceited and understands nothing. Conceited means to be puffed up. It's a windbag. Understands nothing. They don't know anything. If they're not teaching the Gospel, they're not teaching the Word of God and they're not growing to congregation and godliness, they're conceited and they're prideful and they don't know anything. I mean, the best illustration I heard this week when I was reading the commentary was a guy that called them "conceited ignoramus," right. We have a lot of people that stand behind pulpits that are no more than just a conceited ignoramus. You say, "Well, how do I know what one of those looks like?" He tells you, he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words out of which arise envy

and strife, abusive language, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of depraved mind and depraved of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of great game.

Instead of teaching the Word, instead of teaching the Gospel, instead of growing people in holiness, here's what they're interested in. Morbid interest about controversial question and disputing words. These are the people that won't just read the Word and say, "Here's what it says. Here's what it means." They'll read Word and they'll read Genesis 1, for instance, and they'll say, "You know what, God created two genders but that's not what it means. That was so old-fashioned back then. There's more than that and we got to understand gender identity." No. A preacher that knows the Word says, "God created two genders, male and female, you're one or the other and you always will be whatever God created you."

You get to Genesis 2. And in Genesis 2, you read about marriage and how marriage is between one man and one woman for life. But no, no, no, those that want to be controversy about words say, "Well, that's what it used to be, but you got to understand now, love is what really matters." No, it matters, because there is no other kind of marriage, right? You read Genesis 1 and you see that God created the world in six days, but not these ignoramuses? No. They want to tell you, "You don't have seven PhD's and all the different languages so you really don't understand what a day is."

But we just read the Word and say we know a day means 24 hours so we actually know what a day is and so we're going to teach the Word of God. Do you see

the difference? And when you see people that aren't opening the Word or are questioning the Word, that's what He's talking about. And some people never open the Word at all when they teach. And I'm going to talk about technology. I think you can use iPad. I'm getting older, I may have to go that way someday and increase font size. I'm not talking about technology. I'm talking about using the Word of God to teach God's people. That's important.

Some people that you see in churches, some people you see on TV are doing the right things. Other people, it's just their own cotton-picking opinion about what they think people need to hear and then they patch a Bible verse on it here and there to make you think they're spiritual. It's wrong every single time, amen? It's wrong. He says, no, He goes, "Don't listen to them." Because here's what you're going to notice about these men and, unfortunately, I know some of them and I've met some of them. And because they're not teaching the Gospel or the Word of God, and because they're not wanting people to grow in godliness, they're filled with all these things. They're filled with envy. You get to know some of these men, they're filled with envy. That means that they're jealous of the attention and popularity of another leader or teacher. You'll hear it in them. They built a platform for themselves. And if you were to tell them, "I like this guy teaching over there better," that would hurt their feelings.

Listen, if you're hearing somebody else other than me and they're teaching you the pure, unadulterated Word of God, and you're growing in Christ, I praise God for those preachers. We're on the same team, amen? I'm not jealous of that, I'm not envious of them. I'm not competing with them. I'm not trying to come up with cool new

series and looking hip or dyeing my hair a different color because I can't do it. I mean, that's just not me. I want to teach the Word of God and I'm for anybody that's teaching the Word of God and the Gospel of God, and churches that are growing in godliness as a result of that. Praise God, we're for them. They're on our same team. They're brothers in Christ. Not these guys, they're envious. They're known by their strife, which is their discord and dissension. There's a lack of unity for the Gospel of Christ.

I can tell you, one of the reasons it's taken a little bit longer to negotiate some of these deals with church-building so that we can grow is because of this very reason, because we love the pastors and we love the leadership and we love those churches. And we've sat down until both those churches, this is not a win for you, it's not a win for us. If this us moving into your building would hurt your church, it's not what the Lord would have because we at BRAVE Church love you and we love your ministry and we want it to flourish. And if we can help do that, then we're doing it together. This is not a business deal, this is a kingdom deal, amen? Because we're on the same team. We're on the same team. But that's not what you hear from these guys. Their strife, it's all about them, it's all about their ministry. There's abusive language. That there's abusive language that accompanies people that have left the Word of God.

People will be slandered, defamed, reviled, verbally abused in the most wretched way. I've heard this. I hear a pastor talk down about another pastor, another church, I know they're on this track and I hate it. Never, we talked about it last week, you never do that. You don't talk that way about other people. But see, when you're trying to build your own platform, you do. Let me just be crystal clear, and I've said this from

this pulpit many times before, but it bears repeating. You don't need me. BRAVE Church doesn't need me. Jesus Christ has appointed me in this season to serve Him.

But if I wasn't here, BRAVE Church can still flourish and be phenomenal. And to the extent, I'm trying my best every week to preach the Word of God accurately and in a healthy way, in a God-honoring way. But I would tell you this, if I'm ever off, believe the Word. The Word is what you need. You're not dependent upon me. You're never dependent upon another Christian. You're never dependent upon a personality. We're dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His word. That's who you're dependent upon. Do you get that?

And God can use me in your life in the same way that he's using you in my life and we're mutually growing one another, but we're not dependent upon each other, we're dependent upon the Lord. Not these guys. They talk bad about other people. Be leery when you hear people talk bad about other Christians. And there's evil suspicions. What's that mean? They're paranoid.

See, when you're not building a platform for the Lord, then you're paranoid because you wonder, "Are people still liking me? Are people still going to come? Do people still think I'm pretty good?" They're paranoid about everything. They see themselves as a victim. Anything that goes wrong, they'll tell you, "This has been the hardest ministry year, you got to be here for me, you got to be here for my wife. It's been so hard. Everybody's so hard on me." Victim, victim paranoid. And here's what you see in them. When people do kind acts for them, they're often met with suspicion.

Like, "Why are you doing that? Are you trying to get in with me? Are you trying to do something nice to me so that you can kind of earn your way?"

And they're defensive. Any word of warning will be received with defensiveness. "Hey, Pastor, you need to be careful about ... I see this in your life." "Hey, who are you to tell me?" They're paranoid. There's evil suspicion lurking everywhere. That's how they're marked. That's how false teachers are marked. He's telling, Timothy, that it's amazing to me this was written 2,000 years ago. And there's constant friction between men. There's this perpetual quarreling, constant bickering and arguing, violent contention. We're always sizing ourselves up to see where our church is compared to other church and how big we are compared to how they are and none of that stuff matters. What matters is the word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen? And it finalizes the statement with their motivation. They believe godliness is a means for game.

Now, we talked about this last week a little bit, that elders, especially those who give themselves to preaching and teaching, are worthy of double honor, that it's okay to pay your pastor and be generous to your pastor, but these guys take it one step further. Here's what they really think. They really think, "You need me. Because I'm really gifted compared to a lot of other people out there. And I'm using my platform to personally benefit financially from you." Friends, you'll see this in churches and you'll see it on TV. And it's sick and it's horrible and it's wrong. No platform for the Lord Jesus Christ should be used for personal extortion and gain from God's people. You hear me? That's what He says. He said that's how you know that you're listening to a

prideful, ignorant man. Now, some people start this way and some people end up this way, right?

When I'm reading this this week, I mean, I'm thinking about people I know and I can tell you their names personally. And after I stopped doing that, because when I'm teaching the Word, getting ready to teach, and the Lord speaking to me, I started asking myself, "What keeps me from ever becoming that?" Like, that's a better question. Because it's really hard because these men are no longer on a mission to glorify God and evangelize and make more worshipers. Instead, they're working on how to use their own personal platform for their own personal gain. May it never be. I mean, I'm going to see some ... I just want to finish well. Wherever that is, I want to know that I did what God wanted me to do. I want to finish ... What keeps me from that?

I had a friend in Iowa that invited me out to a Bible conference this last August to speak and I spoke at it. And we were doing a podcast when I was out there. And as he was doing the podcast, he was telling me about me compared to some of the other speakers that had come. And he said this to me, he's like, "Jeff, you know, when you come out, you don't demand anything. You don't tell me what you need to do. You don't have all these things." And he goes, "Why is that?" He goes, "You just come across really humble."

And I started telling him why. I said, because I've been crushed time and time and time again in ministry. I mean, my whole ministry has been things I thought were going to happen and they never happen. And I said, by the time I planted the church

when I was 40, I knew it had nothing to do with me. If I would have planted when I was 26 and things would have grown, I would have thought, in the back of my mind, "Maybe it's a little bit because of me." But God took me on a 14-year journey to crush every part of me to show me that He doesn't need me at all and I firmly believe that.

He sent me the podcast about two weeks ago, and I usually don't listen to myself talk or do this. But as I was listening to it, I was agreeing with what I said, but I'm like, "No, there's more than that." There's more than that. Because pride is a lot like bad breath, isn't it? I woke up with bad breath this morning. How about you? I had to take care of that this morning before I left. And I realized, if I don't take care of bad breath every single day, I'm going to have bad breath. And God gave me children that sometimes come into my room in the morning before I leave for work to remind me. Like, "Hey, Dad, before you go today, you might want to remember to brush your teeth. You're not going to have any friends." They love me enough. And while all the things I told him were true, it was a reminder to me, it's an everyday deal. Because if you just say, "Well, I used to have pride and now I don't," you're on a trajectory to be prideful again. Every day, it needs to be washed new.

And I've had people say to me before, and I know what they mean when they say it, like, "Hey, Pastor, I'm just praying for you to stay humble." Thanks. I mean, like how do I do that? I can't even keep myself humble. But I know what you mean. I mean, you've seen enough people that have, in pride, blown up a church. So what a proactive things. I mean, here's two proactive things I think I can do and that you can do every

day to ensure you from being prideful. And then the men that I know that are prideful, they don't do these two things and they lost them a long time ago. And the first is this, is to model a devotional or prayer life on a daily basis. It's the pursuit of the Lord. Do you have a pursuit of the Lord? Many people make the false assumption that all pastors read their Bible and pray. I'm here to tell you, that's not true.

Some of the men that I've known that used to be good Bible teachers that have gone prideful, or guys that are just prideful, they don't have a devotional life. They don't spend time in the presence of Jesus. What I've discovered is, if I'll spend time in the presence of Jesus, and I'll ask Him, "Lord, search me and try me and know me and see what wicked way is in me and lead me in the way everlasting." God's Holy Spirit has a way of convicting me of sin, righteousness and judgment. He's never stopped. He's never just said, "Hey, Jeff, I'm just telling you, compared to everybody else I'm talking to, you're awesome, don't even worry about it." That has never happened in my devotional life ever. I find that God's more concerned about me than anybody else that I ever pray about. One is having a devotional life where you're pursuing the Lord.

And the second is this. The second is this. We tell all of our pastors that we send out through BRAVE Global this, it's inviting invasive accountability. Inviting invasive accountability. In other words, who do you have in your life that you will allow to speak into your life about anything in your life at any time in your life? Because the people I know that are prideful, they've had people speak into their life but they don't listen. They stopped listening a long, long time ago. Who do you have in your life? Do you have people that can regularly come up to you and say, "Hey, I've seen this in you, and

I love you enough, and you're not going to like this, but I'm telling you this."

It's not an invitation for everybody in the world. None of us can hear it from everybody. It's not like we put an ad in the Denver Post and saying, "Hey, if there's anybody in Denver that's seen anything in my life they don't like, please line up." That's not what it means. But who are a few people in your life that know you, that love you, that want to see you flourish for the Lord in your life? They care about you enough that can speak the hard thing, that you'll actually listen to. Because none of us are beyond rebuke. Did you know that? None of us.

We never get to a place where we can say, "Who are you to tell me?" Never. And what I find in prideful people, they lost those two things a long, long time ago. They stopped pursuing the Lord and being in front of Him, and they didn't have other people in their life that they would ever listen to. Friends, we have to reject that. We have to reject false teaching that comes from prideful teachers. And we got to reject laziness and entitlement. And the third thing that we need to reject is the love of money. It's getting easier, ain't it? I'm telling you, teaching the book of First Timothy has not been for the faint of heart, I can tell you. If you're going to grow on godliness, you have to reject the love of money. Notice what He says. He says in verse 6, but godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. Do you hear that?

It's not about getting more money that makes you great. It's godliness that's combined with contentment. You don't know what contentment is, do you? Most Americans don't know what the word content means. I actually had to look it up, so I'm

going to tell you what it is. Contentment means that you're satisfied with what you are and what you have. It's not wanting more or anything else. It's satisfied with what you have and who you are if nothing changes. That's contentment. And some of you are looking at me saying, "Can I even be an American and believe that way?" Contentment means I have everything I need right now and if I never got anything else, I'm totally content in that. And I'm content with who I am and I'm content with what God's given me. And if he chooses to do something else, that's great, but I'm content. And what I'm really concerned about is growing in godliness.

Because for most of us, when it comes to why do you want to go to college, why do you want to get a job, why do you want to do the things you do, you know what the answer is? Because I want more. I want more stuff. I want a better house. I want a nicer car. I want better clothes. I want greater friendship. I want more. I want more. I want more. God says, here's what's really good, when you're content with who you are and you're growing in your godliness, there's great gain in that. That's what it looks like. We need to be free from the love of money. It means we need to be content and generous. Notice what He goes on to say. He makes three arguments here. He says, "For we have brought nothing into the world, so we can take nothing out of it either." He says some people, the reason that they're not content is they have a lack of vision. That's number one. Some of us lack vision.

You say, "Well, I have tons of vision. I have all these things I want to accomplish in the world." You didn't bring anything into the world, you ain't taking anything out. You

came into the world in your birthday suit, that's what you're going home in. That's it. I mean, you've heard people talk about they've never seen a hearse with a U-Haul behind it, right? I mean, you're not taking stuff with you. The stuff you have is just going to be stuff that your poor kids have to go through that they don't want either.

So get rid of it now. Nobody wants what you have. All the stuff you're accumulating that you think is so important, nobody else needs and nobody else wants, and you really don't want it either. We have a lack of vision. And the vision is we're thinking too much about this world and not the world to come. And we don't realize that our resources and all that God has given us is so that we can be content with Christ here and advance his kingdom through the church with the Gospel. That's why God resources us. God resources us for His purpose and not for ours. We lack vision.

Second is this, we lack gratitude. Notice what he says in verse 8. "If we have food and covering, with these, we shall be content." We're not thankful for what we do have. Now I know some of you were saying, "Well, I'm not rich." That's for the people, a section over, I know them, they're rich. No. Let me tell you something. Compared to 90% of the world, you're rich. Most of you are not worried about how you're going to eat today. Most of you are not worried about where you're going to find clothes to wear tomorrow. Most of you are not worried about how you're going to find a shelter.

And hey, even if you come to BRAVE, and I know some of you that come to BRAVE are homeless, we'll help you too. We can get you a meal, we can get you covering for a night, we can get you some different things that you need, you're rich. We're all rich. And we're not nearly thankful enough for what we have. We're always

asking God for the next thing. God, I need this and, God, I need that. And, God, I want it better. And, God, I want it bigger. And, God, I need this. Versus, Lord, thank You for what I do have. Thank You for what You have provided.

Because some people falsely think, "Well, when I make more money, then I'll be better with my things. I'll be more generous to God." No, you won't. You'll be just as generous as you are right now. If you're not faithful a little, you will not be faithful with much. That's what the Bible teach you. Be thankful for what you do have. There's a lot of people that would love what you have. Be thankful for it, be grateful. Every good and perfect gift that you have comes from the Lord. We lack vision, we lack gratitude. And then third is this, we lack discernment. Notice verse 9, "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge men into ruin and destruction." You need to realize that the more you have the greater the temptations are that follow those things.

You didn't hear me? Most people watch infomercials late at night and what do they promise? If you take our product, if you do our thing, you're going to have financial independence. You won't need anybody else. You'll be on your own. The more you have, the more you have to insure, the more money that's going to cost. The more you have, the more you have to protect. The more you have, the more freedom you have to isolate yourself from godly people in your life. The more you have, there's all sorts of temptations that come along with it. Having more does not promise godliness. Having more brings with it future temptations. And by the way, just so we can be clear, it's not how much you have, it's not how much money you have, it's how much money has you.

It's not how much stuff you have, it's how much does your stuff have you.

I know people that are millionaires that are not greedy at all. And I know poor people that are super greedy. And I know rich people that are very greedy. And I know poor people that are very generous. It's not the amount of stuff or money that you have, it's an attitude of your heart. Because often when money is taught on at church, people start looking around like, "He's talking to him. I wish my cousin could have been here today." No, I'm talking to you. I'm talking to you. Because where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. All of us have been given things to steward and God wants us to be good with what we have. And he doesn't want us to lack vision or gratitude or discernment. Because when we lack discernment, we can pierce ourselves with many griefs.

Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 1 says it this way, "He who separates himself seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom." You say, "What does that have to do with money?" Simple. The more money you have the more isolated you can become and the more isolated you become the less wisdom you have in your life and you separate yourself from all sound judgment. Having more doesn't make you more godly, just so you know. It brings with it all sorts of challenges. Listen, all throughout the Bible, God gives us an antidote to greed. Do you know what it is? Not just contentment. Let me give you another word, generosity. Generosity. You say, what's generosity? Generosity is the lavish giving of resources, time and energy that doesn't even make sense. Generosity is living so generous that when you're that

generous, it wouldn't make sense to you or anybody else as to why you're being that generous with your money, your time or your energy. That's what it means to be lavish.

I mean, think about these two stories in the New Testament. One story is about a widow. It's in Mark chapter 12. And in Mark chapter 12, verses 41 to 44, we read about this widow. And notice what happens. Jesus is watching the wealthy put money into the treasury. And he sat down opposite the treasury and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury. And many rich people were putting in large sums. So, a lot of money is going into the treasury, and Jesus is watching it all. And a poor widow came in and put in two small copper coins, which amounted to a cent. And calling to His disciples, He said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury for they put it out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owed, all she had to live on."

What was he saying? I see all the wealth people are putting in, and I don't care, because I don't need your money. What I want is your heart. And where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. And notice that widow, she put in two small copper coins worth a penny or less than a penny. And I'm telling you, she put in more than all the other rich people combined because she, out of her poverty, put in everything, all that she had to live on. And he stands up and tells the disciples, "That's what I'm talking about." Well, what's that? That's a lavish giving of resources in a way that doesn't make sense.

Let me tell you another story. Two chapters over in Mark chapter 14, Jesus is at a man's house named Simon the Leper. And in verse 3, he's reclining at the table, and

there came a woman with an alabaster vial of costly perfume of pure nard and she broke the vial and poured it over his head. But some were indignant, remarking to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted?" Notice what it says, "For this perfume might have been sold for over 300 denarii, and the money given to the poor and they scolded her." This woman comes in, 300 denarii ... A denarii was a day's wage, so almost an entire year's wage. Think about what you make in a year. That's what she was taking, that's all she had. She takes the oil out, she pours it over Jesus's head, and everybody watching this lavish, generous gift was saying, "What a waste." I mean, we could have sold that and given it to the poor.

By the way, take note of this, oftentimes, when people are saying "We should be doing that and giving to the poor" are people that never do anything for the poor and expect other people to do it for the poor. You weren't giving anything to the poor, why do you want this woman to give to the poor? It's just a smokescreen to say "I don't like lavish giving." Jesus says what she has done is a great deed. What she's done is lavish. Notice what he says, "Let her alone. Why do you bother her? She's done a good deed for me. For you will always have the poor with you and whenever you wish, you can go do good to them. But you do not always have me. She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for the burial. Truly I say to you, wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will be spoken up in memory of her." We're still talking about her 2,000 years later because of her generosity.

You know what the next verse says? "Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the

12, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them." That's when Judas had had enough. Lavish generosity bothers religious people. And what did Judas want to do? He wanted the money to go to the poor. He doesn't think the money should go to Jesus. And so what does he do the next verse? "They were glad when they heard this and promised to give him money." "I don't like the way she spent her money, so I'm going to sell Jesus out so I can get money." You see that?

Now, here's what some of you are thinking. Well, what's lavish look like for me then? See, that's not generous, that's calculated. That's saying how much can I give, how much can I get away with? That's not generosity. Generosity is going before the Lord and saying, Lord, what does it look like for me to be generous with my finances? What does it look like for me to be generous with my time? What's it look like for me to be generous with all my energy and time and resources? Lord, whatever that looks like, I want to be lavish to you. Show me.

Now, if you're brave enough and bold enough to pray that prayer, don't be shocked when he shows you. Because he'll show you. Because we like to tell God how we're generous. And God, I'm already doing this for you. God, I'm getting better at that. But if you really ask God and say, "God, what's it look like," it could be for some of you that here's what he says, "I want you to give up your salary next year and give all that to the church and just trust that I'm going to take care of you."

Well, then I'm not praying that prayer, right? And He may not say that, but He wants to stretch you in such a way. Because here's the truth about generosity, the

more generous you are to the things of God, you'll realize you cannot outgive Almighty God because His whole nature is generous. He did not even spare His own Son, but gave Him up as a ransom for us all. He gave us all things. There's nothing you can give Him that's too lavish. If you give Him everything you have, you haven't given Him enough.

So "Pastor Jeff, now if I understand you correctly, what you're saying is I have to go home and sell everything." No. What I'm saying is if you want to be growing in godliness, you reject the love of money and you ask God how you can be generous to Him with everything you have. And then you're going to be obedient to that. You're going to be obedient to it. And here's the truth. When you're generous to God, He'll be generous to you. Think about this verse. You can write these two verses down, study it this week. Proverbs chapter 11, verses 23 and 24. "There is one who scatters and yet increases all the more and there's one who withholds what is justly do and yet it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous and he who waters will himself be watered."

Proverbs 11:24 and 25. What's he saying? If you're generous with what God gives you, He will resupply what you give. When you're generous to God, He'll be generous to you. Not so that you can bank more. When you're generous to God, He'll be generous to you so you can give more. That's the principle. And it's not just an Old Testament principle, it's a New Testament principle as well. If you have time this weekend, I encourage you to read Second Corinthians chapter 9, verses 6 through 11. It's the New Testament Companion that says the exact same thing. "Those who are

miserly, stingy, greedy, you'll never, ever have enough."

I read a story over a decade ago about people that made an income between \$20,000 and \$150,000. And they asked him, how much more would you need to feel secure? And it was interesting whether you made 20,000, 30,000, 80,000, 120,000, the answer was the same for everybody. If I had about 11,000 more, I'd be fine. What was it showing? How much more do you need? Here's your answer, "Just a little bit more." If I just had a little bit more, I could get through Christmas. If I just had a little bit more, I could get that house. If I just had a little bit more, we could get out of debt. If I just had a little bit more, I could pay my kid's school off. If I just had a little bit more ... Your flesh always wants a little bit more. Generosity and contentment are the care for that. Lord, I have everything that I need, I know you're going to provide, and you know what I need before I even ask, so I'm just going to be lavish with you, and you give me everything that I need, and I'm going to thank you for it.

If you live like that, life becomes a whole lot more free. Don't live for money. Be generous with it. Then life becomes fun. Then you can do your work not for money, you can do your work as heartedly unto the Lord. And trust that He's going to provide for every single one of your needs because that's what our awesome God does. When you're lavish with God, He will be lavish with you. If you're still asking the question, "Well, what's that look like for me," here's your answer. Go before the Lord and ask Him. Like I said, for some of you, it may be giving up a year's salary, for others of you, it may be two small copper coins. I don't know. I don't need to know. That's between you and the Lord. Be generous with the things of God. Notice what he says. He says in

verse 10, "For the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil. And some, by longing for it, have wandered away from the faith and it pierced themselves with many griefs."

He doesn't say money is the root of all evil. Money is how we buy and sell. Money is how we get health insurance. Money is how we get clothing. Money is how we get food. Money is not bad. The love of it, the greed of it, the thinking about it, "I need more, I need more, I need more." What's the cure? Contentment, give more away. Contentment and give more away. If you have a love for money, just say, "God, I just want to live off this. I'm going to give more away. I'm just going to give more away." You will find that your love for Jesus Christ grows. And I don't care what your income level is. I'm telling kids, you babysit, you make \$20, something like this. If you learn to be generous with the Lord first and say, "Lord, no matter what, you get the first fruits. I'm going to be generous with you. I'm going to trust you're going to take care of me."

Isn't it interesting if you talk about kids money? Like 20 bucks, and we tell them, hey, if you just give, like, \$2 out of that and tithe it to the church, and maybe you just save \$2 and put it in the bank and never touch it, maybe something better than a bank, and you take 16 to spend all you want. You're going to teach them to spend a lot. Or what if they got \$100 for Christmas and you tell them, hey, take 10 and give it to the Lord and take 10 in savings. Spend \$80 any way you want. Well, that's a lot of money just to spend on frivolous things. Well, what's it going to look like when they make \$40,000 or \$80,000 or \$320,000 or a million dollars? If they're living by the same principles, not only will they do that, they'll say, "I don't even need all this stuff. I'll give

over above and beyond that." The reason we have a hard time giving is because we've never been training giving. We've been training getting.

I mean when we grew up as kids, for most of us, me included, it wasn't about what I was going to give at Christmas, it was the Christmas list. We didn't have internet, we have like a JCPenney catalog. I had to go through and I'd write down the page numbers and what I wanted, I made a huge list. I'd give it to my mom and dad, I'd take it to Santa, I'd show everybody. There was nothing in my mindset about who am I going to give stuff to. It was like, "Hey, this is the list, y'all. Super important for me to have at least majority of everything on it."

That's how we've been trained. God says, no, you want to grow in godliness. Do just the opposite. Be content with what you have and find ways to be more generous than you've ever been in your life. Everything you own, your house, your cars, your clothing, everything you look at in your bank statements, none of it belongs to you. It's all the Lord's. And I don't care if you have a little or a lot, you're going to give an answer for every bit of it. Every single one of us, so am I. It's convicting, isn't it? It's convicting. But if we're going to grow in godliness, we need to grow away from our love of money. We need to reject that.

And fourth is this. If we're going to grow in godliness, we need to reject unethical practices. We need to reject unethical practices. Notice what he says, "But flee from these things, you man of God." What's fleeing? It means get away, it means run away. It means skedaddle. It means giddy-up. It means get out. All these things we've been

talking about. You can't play with them. You can't play with the love of money. You can't play around with laziness and entitlement. You can't play around with false teachers and prideful teachers. Get away from them. Why? Because you're a man of God. He's talking to Timothy. What does that mean? It means that he belong to God. If you're a woman here, it means you belong to God. If you're a man here, you belong to God. It means you have His favor, His love, His blessing, and He's calling on your life. You have a destiny to fulfill in your sphere of influence that only you can fulfill. Only you can do it.

God's not dependent upon anybody else to get done what He needs. If God was dependent upon a person, He would've let people live for a lot longer. If God needed the greatest preachers in the world, Charles Spurgeon, John Wesley, John Calvin, they'd all still be alive today preaching. He doesn't need them. He doesn't need me. He, in our generation, gives us opportunity for as long as we have breath to do something special that only we can do. And it's not just pastors, it's every one of us. God's calling us to a mission that's far greater than ourselves, and He's invited us all into it so that we can say, in our generation, we were partnering with the Holy Spirit to do everything we could to reach the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and we honor the Lord by doing that, amen?

He said, flee from these things that keep you from godliness, woman of God, man of God, you belong to God, you have a much higher calling than that. And he says, there's some things that we need to pursue. What does he say? He says, "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness." What

does pursue mean? It means give the intentionality and focus of all of your best time, energy and resources to these things. You want to grow in godliness, you say, "I really want to be godly, I want to grow the way God wants me to grow." He goes, "Give all your time, effort and energy to these six things."

Righteousness, give your time, effort and energy to righteousness. It means your conduct reflects the righteousness that you've already been clothed with in Christ. When you come to Christ, He robes you in His righteousness, He declares you righteous, and then you pursue so that your life reflects the righteousness for what you've already been clothed in. You already have that identity, now you're going to grow in it. Pursue that. Ask the Lord. Say, "Lord, I want to be righteous. I want to live out the righteous requirements that you've designed for me. Show me what that looks like."

How about godliness? Pursue godliness. That's that inner hunger and desire that translates into a reverence for God. Tell the Lord, "Lord, I want to honor you more. I want to revere you more. I want to learn how to be a worshipper of you. I want to love your Word. I want to love prayer. I'm not there yet, Lord. Take me on a journey. Help me get there. Bring people into my life. I care about them." How about pursue faith? Faith is trust that's demonstrated through obedience. I don't know what your next step of faith is and I don't know the area the Lord wants you to take it, but you can't grow in faith without taking a step of faith. You can't grow in your financial giving by not giving.

You can't grow in your spiritual growth by not reading, not studying, not being in church. I mean, there's things you're going to have to take a step in. Where's the Lord

calling you to take a step? In relationship, some of you prayed about getting married for a long, long time. What's the step of faith He's calling you to do? For some He's calling you get yourself out there, start meeting people. For others, He's saying, "You've been out there way too much, you need to shut it down and trust me to bring the right person." I don't know what the step of faith is for you. But what's the step of faith that requires you to trust God through obedience for Him to do and then throw you what he needs?

How about pursue love? Pursuing love is the desire to honor the Lord and love other people better. Lord, I want to be known as a person that gives adoration to you. I want to adore the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And I want to be a person that when I'm spending time with people, they know they're loved when they're around me. How about perseverance? Pursue that. Perseverance means enduring or stay in power to remain under trials. For some of you, you're about to go through one of the biggest trials you've ever been through. I don't know who you are and I don't know what the trial is.

And for some of you, 2022 is going to be a year of trial and the Lord is going to take you through that and you need to pursue perseverance. Because you're going to want to get out from under that trial and make life go back to the way it was and it's never going back to the way it was, but you're going to remain under that. You're like, God, give me the discipline and endurance to remain under this. And this is so hard and I would have never chosen this but you chose this for me. And there's a curriculum in

this. And there's something that you want me to learn. So, help me persevere through this. Help me get through this. Help me honor you in and through this.

And then He gives this one, too. Gentleness. Gentleness. And all these things, the people that are pursuing the Lord, He throws this one in. That's a temperament that counters agitators and cantankerous people. We're not just called to blast people with the truth, we're called to do it with gentleness. They will know we are Christians by our love. It's gentleness. Lord, if you give me [inaudible 00:57:21], I'm going to be gentle with people, especially those that aren't kind back. That's what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount. Love your enemies and do what? Pray for those who persecute you.

Be gentle with them. They don't get it. Be gentle with other believers that aren't quite as mature as you. They don't get it. Did Jesus show gentleness at all in His ministry when He was reviled? He did not revile back but entrusted Himself to the One who judge justly. And on the cross, He said what? "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." Boldness, perseverance, but what? Gentleness. Even loving the thieves on the cross that we're making fun of them, one that eventually turned to Him at the end of the day and one that never did. Gentleness.

Friends, we can grow in godliness and, like anything else, sometimes in life, it's pretty clear what God's asking of me, but it's really hard to. And we can't do it apart from His Spirit, but I have good news for you today. God made a deposit of His Holy Spirit in every single one of us who have turned to Him and believed in His name. And because of that, everything that I'm telling you about today is possible. If you want to

grow in your godliness, it doesn't matter if you're 8 or you're 80, or anywhere in between, or older or younger than that, God can grow you in your godliness. He loves you with an unconditional love. He wants to do things in your life that only He can do for, in and through you. And He wants you to know it's because of Him that you have life and have life in His name.

So the way that I wanted to end our service today is by taking communion. As you walked in here today, hopefully you picked up the elements. As you hold these in your hand and as you open them up during the singing of this song, I want you to be reminded of the fact that all of these things are possible because of what Jesus Christ has done for you. As you hold these in your hand, I want you to be reminded of all that God's forgiven in your life and all the hope that you have in and through Him. And then after the singing of the song, I'll come up here, Pastor Justin will come up in Broomfield, and we will take the elements together as a family. So let's hear the Word of the Lord sung over us today as we prepare our hearts for communion.