



Message **Transcript** Satisfying Service

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Father in heaven, we give you all the glory and all the honor and all the praise for who you are and for all you're doing. And Lord, we just ask that in these moments that we have together that you would speak through your word today. Lord, you created us. You are the one who put us together, formed us, fashioned us. And Lord, for those of you, for those of us that you've saved, you gifted us in special ways for your kingdom, service.

And Lord, we as a people believe that every time that your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you are spiritual, we believe you're about ready to speak to us. And so our prayer this morning is speak, Lord, for we are ready to hear. 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 tells you 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.

Have you ever experienced satisfying service? Maybe it's been at a restaurant, maybe it's been at a hotel, maybe it's been at an airport, maybe it's been at a department store where you just see somebody has gone over above and beyond and you're just grateful for their service. Just recently I was signing my son up for a

basketball camp. I noticed online they only had a few slots left. I called, it was after hours.

The gal that answered the phone said, I don't really do these kind of things. I was expecting her to hang up on me. She said, hold on 1 second, let me get my manager. She got her manager. She got back on the phone with me quickly.

She's like, I've already signed you up. I just need your credit card. She took my credit card. She said, you're all set to go. I'll follow up with you on an email, and if you have any questions, here's my personal number.

Feel free to call me back. And I told her at the time, I said, I talk to people on the phone all the time. You are really, really gifted at what you do. Thank you so much. Have you ever had an experience like that?

You're at a restaurant and somebody's serving you, but it's not just like they're doing a job. It's like they really are good at what they're doing. They tend to you in a

way that they know kind of what you need and when you need it and what it looks like and what they need to have and you're appreciative of that. And you've also had the opposite experience, too. And aren't those the ones that are more memorable, the ones that aren't satisfying service?

Like earlier this year when I took a flight out of town and I had a new assistant, and instead of checking a bag through, he checked a check on bag for me because we just hadn't spent enough time talking. And I told him, no big deal. We got to the airport and I went to check in my bag. They said, sorry, this is only checked as a carry on. You can't do this.

And I said, well, what do I do? They said, well, you need to get in that line. And I looked over and I was like, you have to be kidding me. I'm not going to make my flight. So I stood in the line.

I stood in the line. I was there about ten or 15 minutes. I was getting antsy. So I said to the lady, I said, what can I do? If I stand in this line, there's no way I make my flight.

She said, well, you can change it online. I said, great. So I called my assistant. I said, hey, would you make it a check through bag? Pay the difference.

I'll pay it, no problem. Let's check it through. So he did. He called me, said, done. So I went back to the kiosk and I punched in the number, and it said, you're too late.

You have to check in your bag. An hour before the flight. I was like, at 58 minutes before my flight. So I said to the woman, now what do I do? She said, well, you see that line over there?

You need to go stand in that line. I was about ready to lose my ever loving mind as I'm carting my bag through security, hoping they'll take it. Everything worked out. But while I was going, you know, I was like, I was thinking to myself as I was having conversation with the Lord and trying to remember I was a pastor in Denver and trying to stay calm and all these things that I was confirmed in my spirit, that this is the

airline, that if you haven't been born again, will transport you to hell when you die. You ever had service like that, and we remember those things.

And here's the truth. When you've been born again, when you've repented of your sin and believe that Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead, God not only saves you and makes you his own, but he indwells you with his spirit, and he gifts you according to how he sees you need to be gifted to build up his body and to advance the kingdom. Every single believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is gifted. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, I got good news for you today. You're a gift.

You're a gift to the body of Christ. As if Jesus Christ were making his appeal to his love for the world through you, for his love for the church through you. And the reality is, if you understand that, that the spirit of God is in you, it will change everything. That will change everything. Romans eight nine says, if the spirit of Christ is not in you, then you're not of Christ.

Everybody who's been born again, has been baptized into the family of God, has been indwelled with his spirit, and has been gifted according to how the Lord says, this

is how I gifted you. So it's not for you to look around and say, how come I didn't or can't, or how come she or he gets. It's how has the Lord gifted you? And the reality is, if you will put those gifts into practice that God's given you, you will be satisfied. You won't just be satisfying to other people.

You yourself will get joy from using the gifts that God's given you as you pour those gifts into the life of others. And that's why you're still here. And so today I want to talk about satisfying service. How can you experience it in a way where you know that the Lord is pouring streams of living water through you? How can you do it in a way where you're like, this is so satisfying?

How can you do it in a way where other people are being blessed by Jesus through you? And if you want to know how to do that, we're going to take a look in the book of one Timothy this morning. One Timothy, chapter four, verses 14, 15 and 16. Now this book really highlights what the structure of the church should be like, what men should be doing, what women should be doing, how the organization has been formed so that Christ can be exalted in and through his church and advance his kingdom. And specifically in this section, he's talking to Timothy.

Paul is writing to him who's pastoring the church in Ephesus, and he's talking to him about what it means to be a good pastor. How do you minister? Well, but there's carryovers for every single person in the body of Christ. If you'd like to learn more about this book, I believe I taught on it three years ago. It's on our website.

You can go watch all the messages. But today let me read these three verses to you. And then we'll unpack them so you can learn how to have supernatural and satisfying service unto the Lord. Here's what he says. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance, with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

Take pains with these things. Be absorbed in them so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching. Persevere in these things, for as you do, you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. So he's writing, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he's talking about what satisfying service looks like.

How can you experience the most of God in allowing God to use you? And how can it be the greatest benefit to others through the church? And I'll highlight three of these areas today. And the first is this. To have satisfying service, you must first discover and deploy your gifting.

You must discover, in other words, you must learn what your gifting is and then deploy it. Go put it into practice. You need to know what it is if you're going to put it into practice. But some people, even when they know their gift, they don't do anything with it. And that's why he's writing.

He says, do not neglect the spiritual gift within you. Here's what he's telling to the church. Every single believer is gifted. Don't neglect it. Don't let it sit on the sidelines.

Don't wait for an invitation. Don't shelf it. Don't say, well, I'm not that important. One of the lies of the enemy that you'll hear once you are born again is I really don't have that much to offer. A lot of people come into church every single week believing that they're born again, have repented, have believed, know that they're saved to the full.

But deep down in their heart, they're like, I'm lousy. I'm no good. I really have nothing to contribute and offer. I'm not a preacher. I can't sing or play an instrument.

I guess there's nothing for me. That's a lie. The reality is God gifted you just the way he wanted to gift you for service to the body of Christ for the purpose of advancing the kingdom. And here's just a clear word on gifting. God gifted you for who, he didn't gift you for you.

He didn't gift you for your own prosperity. He didn't gift you for your own advancement. He gifted you for the church. He gifted you for the purpose of serving others. He gifted you for believers because by using your gift and blessing believers, it strengthens the body so that the body can do what?

Go out into the world and advance the kingdom. And so it's important for us to discover our gift. If we're not going to neglect it, we better discover it now, how do I discover my gift? How do I know? Pastor?

I've heard I'm gifted. I don't see it anywhere. How do I do that? There's several different ways you can do it. One is a spiritual gift inventory.

That's one way. That's a way. Sometimes when you take a spiritual gifts inventory test, it will highlight some of the things that are supernatural for you, things that come easy for you. A spiritual gift comes so natural and so easy for you that you're doing it. Whether you realize that you're doing it or not, that's what a spiritual gift is.

You're not really even trying. It just happens. If you have the spiritual gift of encouragement, you encourage people. You probably don't even know that you encourage people. You just encourage people.

And if somebody told you, man, you're so encouraging, you'd be like, I didn't know that. Thanks. You're such a wonderful person because you're encouraging.

That's what you do with everybody. No matter who you are, those things just flow out of you.

So a spiritual gifts inventory can be helpful because it can highlight, hey, these are some of the areas that you tend to bleed into. These are some of the areas that seem to be supernatural for you that come out. A second way that you can do that is you can, you know, you learn your temperaments and things like that, but that's not really a supernatural gift. But God uses your temperament, too. God uses who you are, too.

I mean, think about Peter. Peter was a loud mouthed, outspoken man prior to getting saved, wasn't he? But he never really said anything of value that we read about until after he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then he was a loudmouth, outspoken, spirit filled believer who, when he spoke, God used to save people. So God can use your natural temperament, too.

And by the way, God doesn't change your natural temperament just because you're born again. If you were extroverted before you were born again, you'll be

extroverted after. If you're introverted before, you'll be introverted after. If you were probably a speaker before, you'll probably speak. I mean, there's certain natural tendencies you have, but spiritual gifts are supernatural supercharged, holy Spirit driven.

That just happen in such a way that you're like, wow, that was God. Now, here's the reality. Here's the best way to discover your spiritual gift in the body of Christ. Get in a small group, get in a cadre. Get with other people.

Because here's the reality. They'll notice your gift before you even notice your gift. So many times we wonder, what's my gift? What's my gift? Just find a place, start serving.

Everybody will tell you what your gift is. I've told you this story before. When I was a youth pastor, I used to try to recruit as many parents as I could to be part of our student ministry. And they would ask me, what do you want me to do? I said, just come be part of our cafe team for two weeks.

Here's your responsibility. Just show up on time. We have some food we're going to serve. Just make sure it gets set out. Serve the kids, be nice to them, all that kind of stuff.

We'll talk after the meeting. Because I knew by doing that, I could learn what their spiritual gift was very, very quickly. And inevitably, here's the kind of things that happen. I remember one guy came up to me one night and he was like, in tears. He's like, hey, do you care if I go out with those kids?

This is before the meeting started. They're out there smoking in the parking lot. They clearly don't know Jesus. They need somebody to go tell them about the love of Jesus. And I just love those kids that are far from God.

I'm like, yeah, that's why we're here. And I'm like, okay. He's got the gift of evangelism. He's a magnet for those kind of kids. And then inevitably, somebody would catch up with me afterwards, and our heart would be broken, and they'd be like, hey, you know that gal in your youth ministries is a sophomore and her parents just got

divorced.

And, man, she's talking about suicide, and she's talking about how nobody really loves her. Could I please get her number so I could call her this week? I don't want to wait until next week. I'm like, yeah, you have the gift of mercy and compassion.

Absolutely.

You can have her number. And then there'd be those people that would come to me afterwards and say, pastor Jeff, have you ever seen what's back behind the counter back there when we're serving food and how unorganized it is? You know, if we got containers and we put everything in order, it would be super helpful. As we distributed the food. I'm like, okay, gifts of administration.

And then there were some that had to get to leadership and they would come and tell me, hey, who brings the food? Who buys the food? Hey, do you realize if we got every small group in the church to start contributing food, we could have different people come through, they could see the ministry. Everybody would be more involved in this. I can set that up.

I can make that happen. And then there'd be somebody that would come to me and you say, you know what? I don't even know why I'm here. There's not much I did. But I just want to tell you something.

Just being here tonight and setting up chairs and mopping this floor and just being here watching everything that's going on, it's amazing to see God at work. Thanks for letting me be a part. I'm like, okay, gift of helps. Very rarely did anybody even serve food because their spiritual gift comes pouring out. And the reality is, when you're in a community and you're in a cadre and you're with people, they see those gifts.

When you're around encouragers, you feel encouraged. When you're around compassionate people, you want to pour your heart out to them. When you're around prophetic people. Yeah, I like it. They tell the truth, just not all the time.

They're not always fun to be around. Right. No matter what the gift is, you see it

in others. And when you see the gift in others, you need to speak it and say, you're really good at that. You're really good at that.

You should be doing more of that. And the problem is we think we need to have all the gifts and we don't. We don't have all the gifts. That's why God put us all together in the body of Christ. But if you will take your gift and deploy your gift and use your gift, you'll be satisfied in your gift.

If your gift is with kids and building them up and pouring into them, you will be energized by being in our kids ministry. If it's not, it will terrify you by being in our kids ministry. Right. If your gift is discipling people and bringing them around and drawing things out, you'll love it. If it's not, it'll scare you to death.

I mean, whatever your gifting is, that's what God wants to pour out in and through you to use. And here's the reality. There's more opportunities for you to use your gift than you could have ever possibly imagined. That's why at all of our doors, on all of our campuses, pretty much, if you want to get involved, if you want to deploy your gift, if you say, where can I serve? We will help you do that.

Just go talk to somebody, say, sign me up, I want to help. And as you learn your gifting, then you can begin to deploy your gifting. That's how it works for everybody. It's not as if God just sends a messenger in your ear and says, here's what it is. Another way to think about your gifting and what you're gifted at is if you've been a believer for a while, look backwards, measure backwards, kind of see what are the things that since being saved, have come natural to me.

I know when I first got saved, I started sharing the gospel with everybody because I knew I was completely different. I went home from the camp that I was in where I'd heard the gospel, responded to Jesus. I knew I was different. I did not know how to explain it. I didn't totally understand what had happened to me.

I knew I was different. And I was talking to my sister at the time. I was 18, she was 16. And I told her, hey, something happened to me at this camp and Jesus changed my life. And she's like, well, Jesus has changed my life too, because we grew up in a church that if you just believe the facts, you were saved.

I'm like, no, you don't believe in the Jesus I believe in. She's like, well, what do you mean? I started explaining it. She's like, I don't even know how to get what you get. I'm like, I don't even know how to tell you.

She's like, well, how do I get it? I said, you gotta go back to camp with me next year and get it. So she went back to camp and she trusted Jesus Christ there too. Since that time, I've learned I could have told her, I just didn't know. I just knew something had changed.

But I found in my life, even when I wasn't walking in obedience to the Lord, I was always sharing the Lord with everybody. So natural for me. What are the things that are so natural for you that you're automatically doing? I remember I would get asked to speak all the time after I got saved. I didn't ask to speak.

Somebody would say, hey, Jeff, would you give your testimony? Jeff, would you give your testimony? Would you tell people about what Jesus? Yeah, I'll do that. I remember the first time I shared my testimony.

I was in a church at about 50 people on a week night went there when I was at the University of Illinois, shared my testimony, didn't think anything of it. Walking out of the church. And my campus crusade director introduced me to a guy, said, hey, jeff, this guy gave his life to Christ tonight after he heard your testimony. And I said, oh, that's cool, way to go. And I found that every time I shared the gospel, people always gave their lives to Christ.

I thought that was normal. It's not. Some of you are seed sowers. You've shared the gospel. You could share the gospel.

You could share the gospel. And God uses seeds. Some of you water it. But if you're a harvester, when you share the gospel, you're expecting people to get saved. On Easter, I expect people to get saved.

On Christmas, I expect people to get saved. I know they're going to get saved

because I've watched it my whole christian life. What have you watched God do? I mean, what are the things in your life? You're like, that's automatic for me.

And then there's supernatural ones, like wisdom, like where you can see things before they happen, where you're talking to somebody like, you do that, it's going to go bad for you and it goes bad for you. Hey, you go this way, it's going to go, okay. That's wisdom. Sometimes you have a word of knowledge for somebody. There's different ways that these things can be expressed.

And the reality is, whatever you're called to do, you've pretty much always been doing. Like, if you try to fight it and say, well, I've never really preached before, but one day I'm going to preach, probably not, because if you're called to preach, you'd probably be preaching from the first moment that you got saved. You couldn't help it. If you have compassion, you can't help it. I've watched certain people that are so gifted at the bedside of somebody that's in hospice, that's sitting there with them and the family as that person leaves this world to go into the next, that's loving that person and loving the whole family around them, that's so gentle and kind and compassionate and spirit filled.

I'm like, man, that was so incredibly gifted. If I'm dying, that's who I want with me, right? That's just your gift. And in the body of Christ, God has arranged all the people and the gifting just the way he wanted. When you got saved, he made a measure of gift.

He made so you might have a teaching gift that's this great, this little whatever. You might have a gift that uses teaching in big groups, small, doesn't matter. What is your gift in and who is your gift for, and then how do you go deploy it? What is it that brings the spirit's joy in and through you as you do that? And everybody in the body of Christ is different.

That's because your temperament and your spiritual gifting and your experience and your background is different than any other person that's ever walked the planet. So while there's some crossover in how they can be deployed, you're unique and you need to deploy your gifting in a unique way. And that's why here at brave as you go through membership and learn about our church, we have what's called the core. Core, c o r p s. That's champions of real people serving.

That's opportunities for you to take your gifts and to deploy them into our church. Because if everybody took their gift and deployed them into our church, God could meet all the needs that we have. And do you know why that's so important? I watch it on Sunday from my office when people are walking in. I see parking teams out there.

I see greeting teams. I watch ushers, I watch people that are answering questions. I have a worship team on the platform. We have production in the back. There's all these things going on.

And here's what I know, and I know it from my own experience when I go visit a church. If you're here visiting today, most people make their decision as to whether they're ever coming back to visit a church. Long before they ever sit in here. They come here, they're like, am I going to be loved? Is it going to be clear?

Is it going to be understandable? Am I going to like it? Is it going to be all right? And if they meet loving people who love them, even if the sermon stinks, it's like, well, the people are nice. The pastor's not very good, I'll be back.

But if somebody walks into an environment where they're looking to drop their kids off and it looks kind of sketchy down there and nobody's there to talk to them, like, yeah, just go down the stairs and they walk into the worship center and like, where do I sit? I don't know. Just find a place. I mean, long before I would ever stand with the priest, they've already made their decision. If they haven't got up and left already, I don't think I'm ever coming back here.

Why? Because the body alive and on fire for Christ is what connects people. And every single one of us has been gifted in the body to build one another up. So don't neglect your gift. Here's what he says about Timothy.

Don't neglect the spiritual gift within you which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. That's the elders. So clearly, the elders laid hands on him and called out what they saw his gifting in.

Timothy, you're a pastor. Don't let your age be a bother.

Don't live in fear. You're a pastor. You're going to do the work of evangelism. We see that in you. We've watched that in you, notice that in you.

And we're speaking that over you on behalf of God, because we see and believe what you don't even see and believe. And it's important we have other people in our lives speaking those things into our life. We just do. I taught at a camp one summer back in 1998. I knew I had to get to evangelism, but I didn't think I was a very good teacher.

And I remember at the end of every week, we would fill out these cards, about 25 kids each week for the camp and leaders, and we would write down what we saw as gifts in the other people. So everybody get a list of about 25 things. And I got one every single week. And it was amazing how many people on there wrote teacher, teacher, teacher, teacher. And I remember at the end of the summer thinking, I'm not a teacher.

I'm not that good. I'm not really a teacher. I know, good teacher. I'm not a teacher. And I remember talking to one of the leaders at the end of the summer, and

her and her mom were there, and she's like, you're an awesome teacher.

And I'm like, I'm not. Why do people keep saying that? I'm not teaching. I'm an evangelist. I'm not really a teacher.

She's like, no, no, no. So I've watched people teach the material. They're teaching the way you teach it. People connect to you. They get it.

They understand it. It makes sense. They want to go do something with, you're a teacher. And even at the time, in 1998, I'm like, nah, I don't think so. That's not who I am.

God had to take me through a season to show me, no, that is a gift that he's given me, and I'm energized by it. And I love teaching and being clear on what the word of God says. And if that's helpful to the body of Christ, I want to continue to do it. What's your gift? It doesn't have to be up in front of people.

As a matter of fact, the greatest gifts you have will usually be done in anonymity, and nobody will know but you and God. But discover what your gift is and then deploy it. And in our core, here's what I'd encourage you. Hey, serve willingly. This is not a burden.

It's a joy to you to serve. If you're serving in the right area, if you find the place that you're good, it's incredible joy. I love when I watch high five or I see certain kid things. Jackie, that's on our team. You see these little four minute dramas we do, like on Easter and different things, and all the kids are barking out scripture and jumping up and down, and it's all totally choreographed.

And I'm sitting over there crying. I'm like, Jackie, you're incredible with kids. If you gave me the entire summer to put a drama together with the kids, it would never look like that. Because she's good. Certain people are good at certain things.

Find out what you're good at and start doing more of it. Amen. That's what he's

talking about here. Serve willingly. Serve regularly.

Serve regularly. What's that mean? As often as you can. I realize in the body of Christ, there's vacation time. There's time for refreshment, there's weddings, there's funeral.

I get all that. But if you have the attitude of, hey, I'll just wake up on Sunday, I'll check it out. You know, maybe I'll go, maybe I won't. Then you don't understand church, because it's not just about you receiving. It's about you contributing to the body of Christ.

And what does that look like? Serve regularly. Serve joyfully. Serve joyfully. Serve excited.

Like, the God of the universe says that he's gonna allow me to serve on his behalf today because he's in heaven and I'm here, and he wants me to do this. And

then serve expectantly in your gift area, you can expect that God is going to do some things, and you may never. You won't see the majority of what he does every now and again. He'll give you glimpses of it every now and again. He may show you a little thing to encourage you, but he won't show you everything he's doing because he doesn't want you to become arrogant.

But if you enjoy what the Lord is doing, do it. I'm going to give you some scriptures just to write down. We don't have time to walk through all these today. But in Romans chapter twelve, verses six through eight, Romans chapter twelve, verses six through eight talks about some of the different gifts. First Corinthians chapter twelve, verses four through eleven, talks about some other gifts that you may or may not have and makes it very clear that God's the one that gives them, God's the one that does them, God's the one that uses them.

And God may use you in any given instance to do that. But chances are you have one or two that just are primary, that this is the way in which God works through me. And then Ephesians 4:11-12, where he talks about how God appointed some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, some teachers. To do what? To equip God's saints for the work of ministry.

That's talking about the office of a ministry for the sake of the body. But here's what you need to walk away with today. You're gifted. God gifted you. God wants to deploy you into his service because he wants to use you in this generation, because while he is in heaven, his spirit is here working in and through you.

So discover and deploy your gifting. Number two is this, cultivate and be consumed in your gifting. Cultivate it, grow it, be consumed in your gifting. Notice when he says, don't neglect the spiritual gift. In the next verse, verse 15, he says, take pains with these things, be absorbed in them so that your progress will be evident to all.

In other words, there's got to be progress in these gifts. It's not like God gifted you and that you're oh, look at me, I'm so gifted. It's take pains with them. Whatever your gift is, grow in your gift, become better in your gift. Get really good at your gift.

Learn how to be better for the Lord in your gift so that what the body of Christ will say, wow, that's good. Because if we ever get to the place where we think I'm

gifted, God gifted me, I know I'm not going to get any better. I'm not working at this.

I'm awesome. That's a bad place to be.

If I told you today this is the best that I'll ever preach, I'm never going to get better. I'm not going to work at it. You wouldn't want to be here anymore. I mean, sometimes when I'm driving in the car, I have the unfortunate experience of hearing myself preach.

And usually it's from, like, two or three years ago. And as I'm listening to it, I'm like, yeah, that's true, but you could have said it better. You could have done this. Look at you. Because why?

Because I'm growing in my ability. And hopefully when I look back three years from now, I'll say the same thing. Why? Because I want to grow, and I want to immerse myself in the word. And I want to learn how to communicate better and learn how to be more clear and learn how to help the body so that we can, because I want to grow in it, because that's how he's gifted me.

When I graduated from the University of Illinois, I remember having a conversation with my mother, who said, now, jeff, you can go get your masters, and you can do this. And I remember very candidly telling my mom, mom, I just. That was the last class I'll ever take in my entire life. I didn't even go to my graduation ceremony because I was so sick of school. I said, mail me my diploma.

I don't even want to celebrate it. And sure enough, as God started calling me to ministry, he called me to seminary, which I knew was the Lord, because I never wanted to go. And when I went, I invested myself in, gave myself, and poured myself in to a place where I was wondering, what am I doing here? I want to be out with people. I want to share the gospel.

I want to preach. And here I am just dusting off library books and reading. This isn't helping anybody. And then one day when I was jogging, I heard a sermon from Chuck Swindoll. And Chuck Swindall was talking about how when he went to Dallas seminary, how he was going through the same experience and really wanting to be out ministering to people and was stuck in an academic environment.

But upon looking back, he said there was no other time in his life that he could have devoted that much time and attention to the word of God and learned it in such a way that has helped him all these years. And I remember as I was listening to that message, it was ministering to me. I'm like, okay, I'll endure this. I'm not an academic by nature, but I'll do whatever God if this is going to help me. And it certainly helped me.

And so while I told my mom I'd never go to school again, I was only ten years off right by the time I got done. Why? Why did I go to school? Why did I earn a doctor? Why did I.

Because I wanted to be faithful in the word, and I wanted to be able to open it up in any place and be able to expound it and clearly explain it to people. And I wanted to give God more to work with. What's your gift? If you're an encourager, write more notes. If you're an encourager, spend more time with people.

If you're compassionate, look for opportunities to demonstrate more compassion. If you're a giver, look for more opportunities to give. Because whatever your gift is, it will thrill your heart. When you get more and more opportunities to do the very thing you're called to do. It won't be a have to.

It will be. I can't believe I get to do this. And that's what God wants you to do in your life. And everybody's gift is different. So take pains with the things, grow in them, learn, develop.

And as you do the things that you're gifted in, you'll understand more intuitively about how God wants to use you in that area. Another way to discover your gift is look at the things in the church. I've said this before. What frustrates you that you could do better? What frustrates you that you could do better?

It's amazing to me. I never thought about it that way, but I remember being a kid in church growing up, I'm like, I don't understand what the heck they're talking about. Like, if they're trying to tell me something, I don't even get it. It frustrated me to go to church because I never understood what the word meant. Nobody taught it to me.

I didn't realize that God was building a passion in me to one day teach it. What frustrates you here? What would you say? I can totally do that better than get involved and do it and cultivate it and be consumed in it. And you know what your gift is, too, when it's just passion that comes out.

Like, you know what it is like for some of you. Missions, missions, missions. Where are we going? When are we going? How long are we going?

Where are we going? Where are we going to be? When are we going to deploy? How? Missions.

Some people, it's evangelism. Hey, when are we doing more prayer walks? When can we go share the gospel? When are we going to do more evangelism classes? When can we get everybody out of right?

Kids, kids, kids. Why don't we do more? Kids, why don't we have more kids programs, more kids ministry, more kids choirs, more kids kids kids, kids, kids. Whatever your gift is, you're gonna wish we did more of it. How come we're not blank, blank and blank?

That's your gift coming out of you. And the answer is probably because people like you have not come forward to do those things. So be used of the Lord. It's an invitation of the Lord to use your gifts for him. And then he's saying this, take pains with it, be absorbed in it.

That means, go all in with your gifting. Listen, one day, we're all gonna appear before the bema seat of Christ for the Christian. You're not gonna be judged for your sin. Your sin was judged at the cross. If you've been born again, God's not judging you again.

You're gonna be judged according to how well you served him while you were still on this planet. You're gonna give an account for what you did. So how God's gifted

you needs to be done first and foremost for him in his church and then anything else you do outside. I got really offended one time when I went to a conference after college, and the guy was saying, hey, whatever your gift is, find out what a person in ministry makes. Take that as your salary.

And if you're still called to go out there and be a doctor or a lawyer, then go do that. But just find out what God really wants you to do and serve his church first. And I was offended. You know why? Because all I cared about was money.

I care about money more than mission, money more than calling. But when you start highlighting what God's called you to do, you realize the more you serve his church, the greater return of investment. For some of you, I know your gift is prayer. It's intercession. Every time we open our doors for prayer, Saturday mornings, first Tuesday, you're here, you're praying.

When we have prayer for the prodigals on Sunday night, it's like, oh, an extra time to pray. I'll wait 2 hours to pray with people that have kids that are where. Cause it gives me goosebumps to be able to pray God's blessing over people. I love that I

wake up at three in the morning. All I want to do is pray.

That's how you know your gift. It's what you're thinking about. It's what you're consumed with. So go all in. If your gift is prayer, learn how to pray more effectively.

Get around people that pray more effectively. Read books on prayer, on how to pray more effectively. Grow in your gifting. Amen. So cultivate it, consume it.

And why? It says, let others see your progress. So your progress will be evident to all. Why? Because if you're growing in your gift, everybody's going to see it.

People will see it. Now this is not about look at me and how gifted I am. It's if you're doing the things of the Lord, other people will see it and say, you know what? The spirit of God is really using that woman. Spirit of God is really using that man.

I see their progress. I see their growth. You can't show off your talents from the bench and you can't highlight your gifts from home. You can't highlight your gifts from home. Now we have an online platform.

Online. We're glad that you're here, tuning in from all over the world. And some of you are recovering from an illness and some of you are healing and you can't be here. You're too far to get to a church or there's not a Bible centered church in your area. Great, welcome.

But here's the reality. If you're close enough to a local church, you are robbing the church and you're robbing yourself. If you're not part of a local church, serving the Lord with everything that you have, you can't serve from a distance. The gospel is not created for you, so you know Christ and then separate yourself. It's knowing Christ and being part of the body so you can grow in your gifting and grow in the Lord while you're in community.

That's the way God set up his church. Amen. That's what it's for. So that your progress will be evident to all. And here's what it says.

It means the church should be able to see what you're gifted at. You ever been in churches where somebody is up front singing and it sounds like a sick cow, but instead of telling that person, I think the Lord has another place where you would be a ten. We say things like this, oh, good job. You tried really hard, which encourages them to stay in an ungifted area. And some people stay in those areas for months, weeks and years and it doesn't bless the body.

But if you're not good in this, you're probably good in that and nobody's good everywhere. And the more you can say not good here, not good there, I'm not good here, I'm not good there, the more you're going to start aligning yourself with what you are good at and it's hard to say you're not good there. But you start getting around people in the body of Christ, you realize, I'll never be as good as they are. I'll never be as good as they are. I'll never be as good as they are.

That's why they're doing this now. Amen. That's what God wants. And here's the other thing. I've heard this all the time.

See, if you've heard this before, don't go to church. Just be the church. If you've heard that, could you just raise your hand? Don't go to church. Just be the church.

And what they're saying is this. I mean, the argument is, in the Old Testament, God dwelled in the wilderness, in the tabernacle with the people of Israel. And then as they situated and they built the temple, God dwelled in the temple. And then we read in the New Testament in one corinthians, where does God dwell now? Well, he dwells in us, and you are his temple.

We are his temple. That's where he's dwelling. But some people take that to me. Well, since he's in me, I'll just go wherever I want. That's not the point.

God was with the people in the wilderness. God was with the people in the temple. And you need to be with the people in church, because we collectively are his temple, not you, to go do whatever you want. And, oh, by the way, if everybody approached church the way you do, how would it work? I mean, what would it be like if, like, I don't know, 17 Sundays a year, I woke up on a Sunday and said, I just don't

feel like it.

I think I'm just gonna watch pregame for the broncos and go do that. This is kind of what I feel like. And there was just nobody here to preach, or we only had, like, two worship leaders, or there was no songs, or there was no kids ministry. When you were to drop your kids off, you would be frustrated. You'd go to another place.

Then how is it that everybody in the church can't see that they're contributing in that way? Like, if you're not here, you are not experiencing the full satisfaction of what God has, and you're robbing the body of Christ from the gifts that you have? And isn't it true sometimes, even in the lobby when we're out there after service and we're talking to different people, that different things happen in ministering to one another so that we're encouraged before we even go home. God wants you in a body in a local church somewhere all the time. Exception being times of vacation, times of rest, weddings, funeral, totally get it.

But your main concern should be, I want to be here to worship the Lord, and I want to be here to use my gifts on Sunday morning, and I want to use them all

throughout the week for his glory. Amen. That's what God wants. And the reality is, just take a baby step. You don't have to start big.

You start really, really small. I remember my venues for preaching when I got started. Teeny, we had four youth in our youth ministry. When I got started, we didn't have enough people to preach, so we put together a youth program so we'd have about 20, so I'd have people to preach to. And before we even had that, as I was feeling compelled, I would be doing my devotions and I would open up my bible and I would preach to all my furniture because it was an attentive audience, because that's someone that would listen.

And I was in a small church and only had about 100 people on a weekend, and it was just the pastor and I that were on staff. And sometimes when he was gone and there was nobody in the building, I would go stand in that chapel and I would stand there and I would just preach unprepared messages. I'd love to have a video of that now. But I was, it was coming out of me, and I even remember when I was doing it. Ministry.

This is an example. One time I was called to do this huge youth rally, two to 300 people in a city in Illinois that was 2 hours away. And I left my wife and my daughter at the time, who had been born, drove 2 hours to this place. And I'm like, I'm there, and I get there and I can't find anybody. Like, the parking lot's empty.

And I walk in and there's only ten people there. There's five leaders and five kids. And I'm like, maybe I'm early. And after about five minutes of uncomfortability, the people told me, we're really, really sorry our promotion didn't go well. This is all that's here.

Like, okay. And they said, so you don't have to preach. You can just go home. I'm like, are you kidding me right now? Sit down.

And I put five there. And I put five there. I'm like, I just drove 2 hours. I prepared the message. You're going to hear it.

And I preached to ten, right? Because if you're gifted. You want to use what God gave you for whoever. It doesn't matter who's watching, because God's watching.

Amen.

And it energizes you, and it's exciting because you get the privilege of serving on the Lord's behalf. What is it for you that helps the body of Christ? And everybody's is different and everybody's is unique, but everyone's needs to be unleashed. And what would happen if instead of having 20% of the people doing 80% of the work and 20% of the 80% of the giving coming from 20% of the people, and 80% of the service coming from 20% of the people, if everybody said, I'm a believer, I'm giving God everything I have. Because just if you don't have the gift of giving, it doesn't mean you don't give.

If you don't have the gift of serving, it doesn't mean when there's tables and chairs to be moved like, oh, I can't do that. I do not have the gift of serving. That's not what it means. It just means if you're supernaturally wired, it will give you great energy for that. And that's what God wants us to do.

He wants you to just take a baby step and build each other up and encourage one another so that we can advance his kingdom. And let me give you this final one. Satisfying service requires that you persist and prevail in your gifting, that you persist and prevail in your gifting. Notice what he says. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching.

He's telling, Timothy, better watch yourself, and you better watch what you're saying. Persevere in these things, for as you do, you will ensure salvation for both yourself and for those who hear you. Now, clearly, we can't save anybody. So he's not saying, timothy, if you do your job, you'll save people. But what he does say is, if you pay attention to yourself and what you're teaching, if you pay attention to yourself and how you're serving, it will ensure the salvation.

It will encourage people all the more to continue to take steps of Jesus until they meet him. You know, why? Why does he pay attention to yourself first? Because so often I watch people in the ministry, their gifting outweighs their character, and bad things happen. Super good preacher, bad character, bad things happen.

Super good worship leader, bad character, bad things happen. So pay attention to yourself first. Watch your own life. Ask God to speak to you about you and what you need to change and what you need to grow. And maybe even ask God.

God, don't let the scope of my ministry ever exceed my competency in you, my character in you. Don't ever let it go beyond that. Don't let my capacity ever, ever exceed my character. I don't want that. Just keep me right where I need to be, because so often in our culture, oh, look at how famous, look at how good, look at how give.

But there's no attention paid to the internal. So let me give you three ways that you can pay attention to yourself. First is this. Pursue Christ. Pursue Christ.

Fall more in love with Jesus every single day. Be thankful more for the gospel every single day. Grow in Christ every single day. Don't lose your first love. If you never did anything.

Hold on to Christ. I'm almost 54 years old, and after watching the things that have gone on in the news in the last three months, I'm like, lord, just let me finish. Well, let me finish with my character and my wife and my kids, and I don't care about anything. Speak to me about me. Don't let me fail in my own life.

Pursue Christ. Be grateful for what Christ has done in your life. Thank him for saving you from your sins. Remind him of how great he is. Honor him.

Pursue Christ. Number two. Preference, your family preference, your family. Husbands preference. Your wife.

Lay down your life for her wives. Honor your husbands in everything. If your parents love your kids, bring them up in the knowledge of the Lord. Kids, honor your mom and dad. Then it may go well with you.

I mean, that's what it means. Now, here's the thing. We give ourselves very

subjective scores. I'm a pretty good husband. I'm a pretty good dad.

So here's what you need to do. Ask your spouse. They have a much more objective number for you between services. I learned this. I mean, you go to your spouse, I ask, how am I doing?

What can I do better they know. And how do you put them ahead? Because one of the tragedies in ministry that I see in my profession is a bunch of guys that do really well, and the church loves them. And at the end of their ministry, their wife can't stand them. The kids can't stand them.

They don't even want to go to church because their dad was never around. It may never be. Here's the third thing. As you pursue Christ and you preference your family, here's the third one. That's great.

And this is why you need to be in church and not just online. Practice ongoing forgiveness. Practice ongoing forgiveness. Now, if you don't know what I'm talking

about, it's just because you haven't served yet. Once you get involved in the lives of other people, you will need to practice ongoing forgiveness.

Because everybody here is a sinner. I'm a sinner, you're a sinner, which means nobody here does it perfect. And at times, other people may need to forgive you, and at times you're going to need to forgive them. You have this heart to heart every single time. It means in the quietness of your own spirit before Lord, Lord, I forgive them.

They don't even know what they're doing, Lord, I just forgive them. I forgive them. I forgive them. You say, well, where am I gonna get opportunities like that? They're all over the place.

If you start serving, once you start serving, you're gonna realize, man, there's plenty of opportunities for forgiveness here. Once you get married, try to serve your partner, there's gonna be plenty of opportunities for forgiveness there. Once you have kids, there's gonna be plenty of opportunities for forgiveness there. I mean, once you get engaged in the things of God, there's always opportunity and practice ongoing forgiveness. Cause here's what happens to a lot of people in church.

A lot of people in church are like, I don't like what happened to me there. That's a bad church. That's a no good church. They're not practicing forgiveness. So then they exit to another church and they find the same thing happened there.

So they exit that church and find things that happen there. And then after about three churches, like, the church is just messed up, never going to church again. No, you don't know how to practice ongoing forgiveness, and you're not loving the church the way Jesus Christ loved you, because if you did, you would preference what he preferences, which is his church. Amen. So we practice ongoing forgiveness.

That's how we check ourselves. That's how we persist in this. That's how we prevail in this. And what these things do is it presents, prevents us from pride. Pride is the idea of, look at how gifted I am.

If the church doesn't know how gifted I am, I'm out of this church. They need to

see us. That's pride. Humility says, lord, if you want to use me, I'll be used by you. I don't care if I'm noticed.

I don't care if I have a badge. I don't care if I have a name tag. I don't care if anybody even knows this is the way you've called me to serve, and I'm gonna serve in this way. And may you use my service in a way that's glorifying to you. Those are the people that God wants to use.

And then he says to watch your teaching. Now, not all of us are teachers. Not all of us should be called teachers. There's a higher judgment on those that are teachers. But no matter what you do, let me give you five truths even as you're serving that you should keep in mind.

One is the authority of God's word. There's no way you should serve that goes outside the bounds of the word of God. This is true and lasting in every single way. If you're teaching anything that needs to come out of this book, yes, there are motivational principles and leadership techniques, and those are somewhat helpful. They're not enduring and they're not eternal.

The word of God is so center on the authority of God's word. Number two, center on prayer. Be praying for the ministry God calls you to do. Why? Because my father's house will be called the house of prayer.

Jesus said, pray about what you're doing. I spend more time praying than I do studying as I preach every week because I want to be more connected with Jesus and what he's saying through the word and all that. And I find that the longer I spend praying, the more wisdom I get in what I'm going to teach. Pray, make it centered on the gospel that not everybody that you're ministering to is saved. They're not.

Even if they're here every single week, it doesn't mean that they're saved. It means, keep in mind that everybody needs to repent and believe the good news that Christ died for them and rose from the dead. And most people would say, I've done that. I've done that. Okay, when did the change happen for your life?

When did you really go all in with Jesus? What does that look like? Make the

church prominent. Jesus said, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Where should your greatest gifts be deployed?

In the local church. I'm not against parachurch. A radio ministry is a parachurch. A school is a parachurch. It's okay to have parachurch.

But if it's not centered in the local church, God doesn't promise to bless it. He promises to bless his church. And the reality is, if the church did everything the church was supposed to do, there wouldn't be a need for parachurch ministries. And I'm not against them. I think they're good because they're doing things the church isn't doing.

At the end of the day, what if everybody that called themselves by the name of Christ deployed all their gifts through the church and then the return of Christ? Like, if you don't believe what I believe about the return of Christ and every nuance I have, you're wrong. But that's okay. Here's what you need to believe, that Jesus Christ is coming back fully bodily and physically, and he's coming back soon. That's what you need to know.

Can we agree on that? That's where we agree. And because of that, and because as believers, we're not going to be judged to hell. We're not going to be judged for our sin. That was taken care of at Calvary on the cross.

We're gonna be judged for our works. I'm just encouraging you as your pastor, the more you invest in the kingdom of God, there's divine math of what happens. You don't even realize what happens. And one day, even if you say, well, I've never even been used to share the gospel. I never led one person to Christ.

I promise you, if you've been faithful sharing the gospel, you're gonna be in heaven, and there's gonna be scores of people that are there, and God's gonna say, when you planted that seed and you planted that seed, and you planted that seed and you planted that seed, this evangelist came along down the road, called him home. He got to see the fruit. But you're the one that did all the work. Praise God for what he did through you. Well done, good and faithful servant.

So it's about faithfulness to your calling, and there's no greater thing you can do. There's nothing more important you can do than to invest in your calling. Amen. I mean, we look at politics and sports. We think, you know, if you run for office or whoever's president, that's really, really important.

It's not as important as what you do for the church. You're an ambassador of Christ. You're called of God to serve the most important vehicle in the world, the church. Way more important. Way more important than who's the starting quarterback for the Broncos next year?

Way more important than who's the starting center for the Nuggets next year. Way more important than the Rockies. Goes without saying. Right?

More important than whoever's filling stadiums with entertainment. Way more important what God called you to do. Way more important because you're called by God to serve what he considers the most important vehicle in your generation. And here's what he says. Pay close attention to yourself and your hearers so you ensure both salvation for yourself and those who hear you when you're a mature saint.

For those of you that are mature saints, if and when I ever fell, which I pray to God I never would, but if I ever did, mature saints would say something like this. Man, Pastor Jeff was stupid. He did something dumb. I still love Jesus, but, man, that was really dumb, what he did. We'll find another church and continue to grow.

But you know what young or immature believers say, everything he said was a lie. I don't even know if I believe in Jesus anymore. I'm kind of spooked by the whole thing. I don't even know if I want to go back to it. That's what happens.

So pay close attention to yourself as much as your service, because it will ensure salvation both for yourself that you're on the right path and for those who are listening to you and for those that you're serving, both are equally important. One is not more important than the other. Grow in your character and grow in your gift, and here's your impact. It is the most important job. I'll tell you this.

It's also the most oppressed job opposed job is what I should say. Most opposed

job. You start serving the Lord, you get all fired. I'm going to do it. You will have opposition, I promise.

But I'll tell you this, it's the most glorious job because you have the potential. If you're faithful to one day, hear the Lord face to face, eyeball to eyeball, as he saved your life. See, you put his hands on your face and say, well done, good and faithful servant. Look what I was able to do with you. I poured streams of living water through you in ways you didn't even know that I did, because if I had let you know, you would have got prideful.

But I was using you because you were faithful to me. And the great thing is, that's the opportunity every single one of us gets. Don't compare yourself to other people. Don't ask, well, why do they get to do that? How come this, how come that?

Nobody knows. Doesn't matter. It's going before the Lord and saying, lord, what's my next step? How can I know who I am? How can I discover my gifting?

How can I grow in it, cultivate it, deploy it, use it for your service? How can I endure in it and persist in it? Because no matter what, like even preaching here, there's times where I'm like, it's hard. Like, why do I want to keep doing. Because I love the Lord and because I love you.

And if in any way this benefits your growth in the Lord to take the next step. So you love Jesus more than it's worth everything. Amen. And here's the reality. There's people waiting out there for you to deploy your gift because God wants to use you to grow their faith in Christ as well.

Amen. Would you stand with me, our Father in heaven? I just pray for everybody here that they'd experience satisfying service, the type of service that brings you great joy, which in turn brings them great joy, which in turn builds the body so that we can go advance the kingdom. Lord, work in and through our hearts this day. Show us the next step we need to take.

And for those of you who are here to say, I'm ungifted. I've never even trusted

Christ. I don't even know what you're talking about. I got great news for you. Jesus Christ died on the cross for all your sins.

He's asking you to repent. That means turn from your sin today and trust him as your personal lord and savior. He will come into your life, indwell you and use you for great things. Lord, help us all to take the next step of faith. For your glory.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen. And amen. Can we praise God today for his word?