



Message Transcript

The Next Generation

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Our Father in heaven, we give you glory, honor and praise because you and you alone are the only one who is worthy of it. God, today we gather in your presence believing that when we open your Word, and Your Word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that you speak to us. That you created us, you know us, that we're fearfully and wonderfully made. And right now we're inviting you, Lord, speak for we are ready to hear. Lord, would you do a transformational work by your Spirit to magnify the resurrected Christ so that Father, you would be honored in and through each one of us.

And so now for all those who have gathered, who desire to hear the Lord 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.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. Every four years the Olympics take place. And when it's the Summer Olympics, one of the events I like to see more than any is track and field. Because when it comes to track and field, you really can't hide. You either can do what you think you can do or you can't. But one of my favorite events is the sprint relays. And the reason I enjoy watching the sprint relays is because these people can run at a rate of

speed that I can only dream about. But one of the reason I like the relays is it's not just how fast you are. There's a passing of the baton that takes place during that race. So not only do you have to train for four years to be one of the fastest people in the world, but you have to be able to pass the baton. You have to be able to receive the baton in order to be able to compete and win at the highest level.

Even though, oftentimes the anchor is the last person who is the fastest person, if at any point in time the baton is dropped, or fumbled, or anything like that, that team that has been practicing for four years, all their dreams go to waste. Do you know that the same is true spiritually? That God desires to take what He's invested in those of us who know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and pass it on to the next generation? That there's a spiritual baton that God wants us to pass on to the next? That He doesn't want us to fumble, that He doesn't want us to drop, that He doesn't want us to lose because He believes that if the next generation could take that baton that they are capable of running at an incredible rate.

Now, why is this so important? Because we live in a culture that thinks that sharing the Gospel is the end rather than the beginning. For many of you who are here, if I said, "Hey, over the next three years we'd like to see 500 people come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, that they would believe that God the Father, sent his Son to be the Savior of the world, that they would believe that Jesus Christ died for their sins and paid for all of them on the cross. And they would also believe that He rose from the dead, and that through repentance and faith, they would have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And we at BRAVE Church would like to see

500 people over the next three years do that."

Most of us would say, "Well, we can do that. We should see that at Christmas this year and just one day." But if I said to you, "What I'd like to see is those same 500 people within a year of their life, walking in the fullness of Christ, knowing how to manage their money, knowing how to study the Word, knowing how to pray, knowing how to worship, knowing how to walk out all the values of the faith in such a way that they're showing other people how to walk the values out into faith and they're transferring that and they're actually passing the baton." How many are up for that?

Congregation:

We are.

Pastor Jeff:

How many are up for that? All right. I'm glad we are. We got more than a golf clap on that. That was good. But even people that are saying, "Yeah, I want to see other people do that," rather than recognizing that God wants to do that through you, that God wants you to be the one that passes the spiritual baton, starting first in your family and then spreading it out to those who are growing in the faith.

There's always been from the Old Testament all the way into the New, from those older mentoring those who are younger. And it doesn't just mean when you get older, here's what you do. It means, "Let me teach you right now how this works. Let me teach you right now how this looks." And why is this so important? Because if you study any survey of what's going on in the church in North America, you'll see statistics

that look something like this. About 70% of students that graduate from high school leave the church, and very few ever come back. 70%, this is 70% that grew up in the church that would say, "My mom and dad like church, or I went to church, or church is okay, or it was nice people that went there. I think they believe in God, and I think they pray for me. But when it comes to my life, I see absolutely nothing of any value that will be of any benefit to me as I continue to walk on." And that's the majority of what's happening in our culture.

And that's not what God wants to see, and that's not what we want to see. And if you're in a place that you would say, "I want to know how I can make a difference, how we can pass that baton on to the next generation so that they not only go where we're at, but they can go further than we can go?" Then God has a word for you. And here's why we need that. Because we say things like this, if you came from a good family and you have a good dad, we as sons will say sometimes something like this, "If I could just be half the man my dad was." Well, if your son says the same thing you're saying, he's going to be half the man you are. He's going to be a quarter of a man by the time we get to him, and then his son's going to be an eighth of a man. That's about as far as my math goes.

But the point is, we don't want the next generation to be half of what we are. We want them to go beyond us. We believe that while we see the culture going in a different way, we believe that the same God we read about in the Bible is the same God that can turn history. And what difference can we make in multiplying disciples in such a way that they're fire breathers for the Lord and the next generation actually

changes the culture? Amen. That's why we're here. We see that all throughout the Scripture. We see in 1 Timothy 4:12 where Paul is talking to a young Timothy and he says this, he says, "Do not let them look down on you because you're young, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity show yourself as an example to those who believe."

In other words, the Bible knows nothing about youth not being able to participate fully in the things of God. If you're young, you set the example. You can have the fullness of the Spirit of God in your life at any point in time that you want to pursue Him. And we want to see that. That's why we have kids ministry. That's why we have student ministry, not because it's babysitting services so we can come to church. It's because we believe that the next generation can change the world. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Paul says this in 2 Timothy 2:2, to Timothy. "These things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to those faithful men who will be able to teach others also." In other words, you see this pattern of teach others, train others, let them live it so that they can own it and take it to the next generation. Isn't this what the resurrected Christ told all of us after He rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples? In Matthew 28 He said, "All authority in heaven and on the earth has been given to me. Therefore ..." What? "Go, make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I've commanded them. And I will be with you always to the very end of the age."

Isn't that what the Great Commission is? That we're to partner with what Jesus was doing when He was on the earth, that we're to do the same things and entrust the truths to the next generation so that the next generation actually owns the fullness of who the Holy Spirit is and what Jesus wants to see accomplished so that the nations will change? Isn't that why we're gathering here today? You see Jesus Christ didn't just save you so that you could get to heaven. If He'd saved you just so you can get to heaven, He would've taken you there at the moment that you believed. He saved you because He wanted to put you on a mission so that the next generation could love Him as much as you. And the way in which He grows you is what He uses in your life to grow the next generation.

Here's the problem. Many of us sit, and we wait, and we sit and we wait. And we say things like this, "Once I know everything there is to know about the Bible, and once I know how to do everything God requires of me, and once my marriage is perfect, and once my kids are perfect, and once I'm doing everything in my job for God, when I get to that place, I'll be ready to help others grow in their faith." Friends, you'll be dead first. I mean the reality is God uses us even in our brokenness as we take steps of faith to begin to share with others the step that we just took. And the more you can communicate it, and live it, and grow it, that's how you're going to grow spiritual muscles for the kingdom. And so He's telling us that this next generation is so

important.

If you really want to believe that today, I believe God has a word for you through Exodus 13, if you would turn there. And I'll just be honest as I read Exodus 13 over, and over, and over this week and was preparing the message, my first few runs through this were like, "Why are we talking about this again? Here we go, talking about sacrificing the firstborn animal and then trusting your firstborn to the Lord, and then celebrating this supper with unleavened bread. How many times, God, do you want to go over, and over, and over this?"

But the more I saw this, the more I saw verses eight and 14. When your sons ask you, "Dad, what does this mean?" And what God was painstakingly going through is not just delivering the people of Israel. He was saying, "Make sure you tell your sons. Make sure you tell your daughters. Make sure you pass it on to the next generation. Because if you don't, they won't understand the power that you just personally witnessed." And how true is it in our lives when we experience the power of God in our life, or we experience salvation in our life? We don't talk about it, we don't tell people about it. We don't show what God's done in our life in such a way that when people come to church they're like, "Yeah, they're good people. I just don't know that anything special is going on in them any different than anybody else that I'm talking to."

God wants us to be the models. God wants us to be the champions for what He's doing in His body and in the church. I'm going to talk about four needs today that we need to model and champion for the next generation.

The first is this, the next generation needs to see you giving God your best. The next generation needs to see that. They need to see you giving God your best. They need to see you living where God is primary and first place in your life. Notice what He says. This is right as He's bringing them out after the 10th plague, after all the firstborn of kids and animals have died and they're driven out of the land. "Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 'Sanctify to me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both man and beast.'" Why? "It belongs to me." What's it mean to sanctify something? It means to consecrate it. It means to set it apart. It means to be devoted to. It means to dedicate.

What are you called to do? Devote yourselves to and dedicate yourselves to God's best. Now here in the text He's talking about in the springtime when these animals would be born, all of them were small agricultural farmers. And so they understood that the farmer, when they had animals, that was their property. That was their way to earn income. And what was God saying? "I want the first of everything. I want the first of every animal that's born. You're going to sacrifice that to me. And every child firstborn that you have, I want you to dedicate that child to me because if you dedicate the firstborn to me, your family will be different. If your firstborn child gets me, your whole kids will get me. They'll understand me."

Now when I first read through this, obviously I knew that the first child was the most important, and God wanted to do something special with them. But upon further review, He was talking about just dedicating the first to Him. He wants us to give Him our first best in everything. What does that mean? It means when you think about your

life and all the choices that you have to make, how many of those choices does the Lord want to have a hand in?

Congregation:

In all.

Pastor Jeff:

He wants to have a hand in all of them. Now I would've said the same thing years ago, but I wouldn't have believed it in my heart. There are certain things, obviously spiritual things God wants His hand in. But when it comes to my job, or where I live, or whom I'm going to marry, or how I'm going to spend my money, that's my stuff. God has His stuff. The more I've walked with the Lord, I realize everything is God's stuff. All the things belong to God.

I went back to the University of Illinois about five years after I graduated and talked to a guy that was leading a ministry that said, "Had you been a part of our ministry, we would've prayed with you and found out where the Lord was leading you to live on campus." And I remember thinking at the time, "You pray about where you're going to live? Why would you do that? Can't you just choose where you're going to live?" Because to me at the time, it seemed like that that's going a little far in the faith if you're going to bring that everything to God. But the more I've walked with the Lord, the more I see, why wouldn't you do that? Why wouldn't you bring every single choice before the Lord and lay it out before Him?

If God is really the one who created you fearfully and wonderfully made, which

He is, and God is the one who wants to bless your life, which He does, and God is the one who can bring you the greatest fulfillment, which is true, then why wouldn't you want to come to Him with everything? Why wouldn't you want to bring your dating relationships to the one who wants to see you blessed in it? Why wouldn't you want to bring your marriage to Him? Why wouldn't you want to bring your finances to Him? Why wouldn't you want to bring your job to Him? See, for many of us in areas that we're struggling, and when I say struggling, I mean we're not finding fulfillment in and haven't been for a long time. Perhaps, just perhaps, it's because you've never invited the Lord to be Lord of that area.

If you have talents, and you have gifts, and you have abilities, who in the world do you think gave them to you? He's not going to rob them from you. I used to think falsely by believing the devil's lie, "If I give God this that I enjoy, He's going to take it away from me." The only thing God would take away from you, if He's got something better to give you. He's good. He's not robbing you. He's not taking away what you're good at. Some of you remember the movie Chariots of Fire, which I think came out in the '80s. There was a future missionary, Eric. Was it Eric Liddell? Is that his name? That was running, and his sister wanted to come on the mission field now. And he said, "No, I want to run." She's like, "But there's so many people that need Jesus. You got to get on the mission field." He's like, "No, I want to run because when I run I feel God's pleasure."

What was he saying? "This is where God wants me to be right now. I want to do everything I do for His glory." Whatever you do, work at heartily as unto the Lord and

not unto men. What it means is this, do you give God your best in everything? Do you bring God your firsts in everything? Because we have a tendency even after coming to Christ to give God our scraps and our leftovers. Like, "Yeah, God can have this. I got some extra laying around God can have this time. I got a little extra laying around. God can have this money. I got a little extra laying around." God doesn't say that anywhere. God says all throughout the Scripture, "Bring me your first and bring me your best." Jesus says it this way in the New Testament in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

With where you know you're gifted, do you bring those before the Lord and say, "God, these are my gifts. These are my talents, and these are my abilities, and this is my influence." And do you say, "Lord, you can steward those any way you want? What's my next step?" Or how about money? What do you do with your money? God wants us to give Him our best. Now you're going to hear me talk about this Proverb later. These make a nice placard in your home. Proverbs 3:5-6. It says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding, in all your ways, acknowledge Him." That means to put Him first, "And He will make your path straight." And we love that. Don't trust yourself, trust God, He'll lead you.

But if you drop down a couple of more verses, this doesn't make as many plaques, but it's just as true. Proverb 3:9-10, "Honor the Lord from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce, so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine." What's He tell you to do? Hey, when you have resources

and money, give to God first. So how much? It's called a tithe. What did tithing look like in the Old Testament? If you add it all up, and we'll talk about this in the spring, it was about 23 and a third percent. If you were a member of the nation of Israel, with all the feasts, and festivals, and your tithe, and all that, about 23.3%, you gave to Israel.

You say, "Well, what's in the New Testament? We're New Testament Christian, we don't even have to tithe. I'd still go to heaven without tithing." Yes, you can go to heaven without tithing, okay? But think about the law for a second. Has anything changed in the law? Has God lowered His standards in any way from the Old Testament to the New? In the Old Testament it says, "Do not murder." And you're right. In the New Testament it says this, "Don't even have an evil thought about somebody in your head." Old Testament, "Do not commit adultery." New Testament, "Don't even lust after somebody that's not your spouse." Old Testament 23 and a third percent. New Testament, God owns it all, 100%. Should it be any less than it was in the Old Testament? That's why a tithe is a great place to start. What's a tithe? It's tenth. Was it off my gross or my net? Whatever you want it to be, tenth.

If you babysit and you have \$10, and you earn \$10 for babysitting. First of all, if you only earn \$10 for babysitting, talk to my wife and I. We'll hire you. But if you have \$10 from babysitting, or let's say you have \$40 from babysitting, and you get into the habits from a young age to take a tenth and give it to the church, you will see God bless that. God loves a cheerful giver. Not, "Oh, I have to." No, tithing is an act of spiritual maturity. That's why so few people do it. It's not a have to, it's, "I get to." She's crying about it too. But I'm telling you, it's actually good. And as I've done this for

about 28 plus years, I've seen God's favor on it. Like you cannot out give God. I've watched Him do it through hard times. I've watched Him do it through difficult times. I've watched Him do it when we have bills to pay. There has never been a time where I've not seen God provide for my needs ever since I started tithing. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

And it's true of everybody. Throughout the whole Old Testament you'll see, "Test me in this. Try me in this. See if I won't come through." Those of you who tithe know that I'm telling you the truth. And those who don't, here's a question. If you're struggling in your finances but you're not tithing, there's probably a reason that you're struggling in your finances, and you'll never have enough no matter how much you make. Now here's what I mean by that.

God does not need your money. BRAVE Church does not need your money. I'm not preaching so that we'll have more people give. But the Bible does say, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." I promise you this, if you give to God first and you tithe to your local church, your love for your church will grow. Your heart for your church will grow. Your service for your church will grow, and the kingdom will grow as a result of your spiritual maturity.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

So put God first. For some of you, you're asking today, "How can I grow closer to God?" Start tithing. It's awfully quiet in here, but I'm telling you that's one of the ways. And here's a question. So kids as you're listening to this, you can ask your parents these questions. Because as kids you want to know, "Why should I go to church when I grow up? And why should I keep going to church when I grow up?" Ask your parents questions like this. "How do you give God your best? How does what you do for a living align with what God's calling you to do? Do you tithe to BRAVE? Why do we live in Denver? Why does God want us here? How do you give God your best time?"

Students, if you can learn from a young age that it's not you who picked the school you go to, it's God that helps you pick the school He wants you to go to. If you can learn it's not the career you pick, it's God that'll help you pick the right career. If you can learn it's not you who picked your spouse, it's God that helps you pick your spouse. If you can move that direction, God will fully bless your life. There's the greatest glory for Him and the greatest joy for you. Do not believe the lie of the enemy that says, "If you give God your best, your life is over." I heard that lie my whole life

growing up. You can go to church, you can get close to church, just don't go all in because you'll be like one of those people and they're not very happy. That's how I felt. I'm here to tell you, if you go all in with God you will never be disappointed. There's the greatest return on investment to give your heart and life to Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. The next generation needs to see you give God your best. They need to see it, they need to own it. They need to be able to ask you about it.

Second, they need to see this. The next generation needs to see you keeping God's standards. They need to see you keeping God's standards. Notice verse three, chapter 13, Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery. For by a powerful hand, the Lord brought you out of this place and nothing leavened shall be eaten." It's interesting to me that Lord's like, "Remember this day."

They've been slaves for 430 years. They've watched 10 plagues come in now over the last seven months, the last one being the death of Pharaoh's son and every firstborn where the doorposts weren't painted in blood, and every animal where the doorposts weren't painted in blood, they all died. They got driven out of the land. And as they're being driven out after 430 years, God's like, "Hey, remember this day?" And

you would think, "How in the world could they ever forget it? How could they ever forget this day?" Because they're just like you and me. We forget everything. We forget how good God is. We experience Him here and He's so good, and then we keep walking and we forget that He's so good. And that's why the enemy can lie and say, "If your God's so good, then why are you here?"

Remember it. God's going to set up a baton that needs to get passed, on remembering God's goodness by keeping His commandments. It's not painful to keep His commandments. It's not burdensome to keep His commandments. It's a blessing to keep His commandments. John 14 says, "If you love me, you'll keep my word. If you do not love me, you won't keep my word." You can tell who loves Jesus and who doesn't love Jesus by who keeps His word. It's a simple litmus test. Some people say, well, they say they love God. I can tell that this person loves God because they want to live for God. That's what it is. Are you keeping God's standards? How are you going after Him? It's interesting that God's telling them to remember this day. Don't ever forget this day.

He says this, "On this day in the month of Abib, you are about to go forth. It shall be when the Lord brings you out to the land of the Canaanite, Hittite, Amorite, Hivite, and Jebusite, which He swore to your fathers to give you a land flowing with milk and honey that you shall observe this right in this month. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there should be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall not be eaten throughout the seven days and nothing loving shall

be seen among you nor any leaven be seen among all your borders. You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.' And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth. For with a powerful hand, the Lord brought you out of Egypt."

What's he saying? We've been through chapter 12. Do you remember last week for those of you that were here? We talked about the unleavened bread and leavened bread, ad nauseam. Like why? Because God didn't want any sin in the camp. And now what's He telling people to do? He's teaching parents to pass on to their kids that living a life of sin does not build a legacy that you want to have. He's telling them, "Pass on the baton of keeping God's commandments." They're saying, "Watch the way that I go after God, and watch the way that I live for Him. And then you do what I do."

We're quick to say, "Do what I say, not what I do." That doesn't transform a life. People always do what they see done. It's why for some of you that are now grown up and you said these words when you were a kid, "I know when I get up I will never ever say what my parents said here. I will never, ever act like this." And then you catch yourself doing the exact same thing your parents said, why? Because they modeled it for you. It wasn't what they said, it was what they did. When it comes to Christianity, one of the ways we pass the baton is by keeping God's commandments, and by stewarding His law, and by living that way, and letting others see the benefits of doing it God's way. There's always benefits of doing it God's way.

Even though the world will say it's a lame to do it God's way, there's always

benefits on doing it God's way. Let me give you an example. Let's talk about morality for just a second. Here's what the schools tell you. Here's what you're learning as a kid. "You can be whatever gender you want. You can be as immoral as you want, and as it is impossible for you to remain moral until you're married. So go ahead and have sex as often as you want, with whomever you want, and it's okay." Now, the Bible says just the opposite of that. The Bible says God created two genders, male and female, and that sexual intimacy was to be reserved between husband and wife in covenant marriage. And that's the only way you can get satisfaction. Why? Because God's the one that designed it that way.

But here's what I even hear parents, Christian parents tell their kids. "Yeah, you know what? It wasn't possible for your mother and I, or it wasn't possible for your dad and I. So we don't expect you to do that either. Just go live your life. We'll pray for you." No, let me tell you young people, because of the Holy Spirit and the power of God, it is possible for you to remain moral until you're married and remain moral after you're married. The world will tell you, "You cannot be a virgin until you're married." And the world will also tell you, "If you are, there's certainly nobody else out there. So you can't marry one." That's a lie from the pit of hell. It's just a lie.

How do you know? Well, I believe in the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is a nine sectioned fruit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and what was that final one?

Congregation:

Self-control.

Pastor Jeff:

Self-control. The Holy Spirit can govern yourself if you submit your life to Him. You think about all of you that play sports, or all of you that go after academic prowess, and all the things you sacrifice so that you can see something great down the road. Can you not sacrifice immorality now so you can experience blessing later in your marriage? It's worth it.

And here's the reality, I'm not going to make you raise your hands and you don't even have to nod. You'll sit there like stone. I know you will, but I'm here to tell you it doesn't behoove you, which means it doesn't help you and you don't get better at marriage by experimenting a lot before you get married. It actually hurts you and will cause significant amounts of pain. So do it God's way. That's just an example of keeping God's standard. There's blessing doing it His way. There's problems not doing it His way. And everybody that's transgressed one of His ways, they can tell you, "He's right. He's telling the truth."

Now here's the beauty of the Gospel that even if you haven't gone God's way, what will He do? In the moment if you want to live for God from this moment on, He'll wash you clean from this moment on. He'll let you live that way as if you've never sinned because He's that good and that gracious, amen.

Congregation:

Amen. Hallelujah.

Pastor Jeff:

But that's not an excuse to sin. It just means when you don't live up to the standards, which none of us have lived up to all the standards, it means we start right where we're at and say, "God, from this moment on, I'm living out the standard."

Here's what a lot of churches in North America do. They're like, "I know who I'm talking to. Nobody's really kept the standards. Let's lower the bar and lower, lower and lower just to make sure everybody feels good when they leave church." That's not what the Scripture teaches. The Scripture teaches Jesus Christ is the bar. Raise the cotton picking bar, show people they can live it. Show them the blood of Jesus and the power of the Spirit that shows them they can live out God's standards if they pursue them with their whole heart. That's what we're doing here. Amen

And your kids need to see that. Not perfectly, not perfectly. I was asking one of my kids, "Hey, do you see this in me?" They said, "Well, you've yelled a lot at me last week." So not perfectly, but increasingly, increasingly. As a general rule, are you growing in this? Kids ask your parents, "Hey, how do you hunger to keep the Word of the Lord? What choices have you made that have been hard for you in your life where you needed to honor God but it was going against the grain of what people thought? Hey, what are some of the blessings that you've seen in your life doing things God's way?" Ask your parents that. Ask your parents that. Now why am I having kids ask their parents? Because parents, it's your responsibility to model this.

And number two, parents, you don't have to be perfect at any of this. Parents let

me tell you, none of you are perfect at any of it. We're increasing in it. And by the way, it's when people start asking us questions about our spiritual life that we begin to grow. When I became a youth pastor at the age of 24, I didn't know anything about the Bible. I knew John 3:16. I knew a couple of other verses that I memorized. I knew nothing, totally unqualified. BRAVE Church would not have hired me. I was in a church of about a 100 people, and everybody started asking me questions about me. I realized really quick, "God, you either have to change me and grow me, or I can't lead this group of people." And guess what He did? He started changing me and growing me.

The way you grow in your faith is not sitting in an ivory tower simply reading the Bible. It's engaging in relationship with God and other people so that they can engage with you, and that's how you grow. That's why for us, relationships are vital. This is not the end game, this is the start of it. And then getting into groups with people that you can stay on mission with that can help you grow and push you, is what it's all about. And I'm telling you, kids are looking to see, "Is it really worth keeping God's standards, or are you just saying that because I'm going to embarrass you if I don't keep them?" And that's how a lot of young people feel. Don't date, don't smoke, don't chew, don't date girls that do all that kind of stuff. And then they get out of the house and it had no value to me, because I'm watching all my friends and they're getting married. They seem happy, and they're getting jobs, and nothing's happening for me.

Friends, I'm here to tell you if you go God's way, it could be lonely at times for sure, but God's presence will be powerful and He will take you through that season and bring you into a season of blessing. That's what He does. He said, "Well, where

can I learn these standards?" Study God's Word. We're going to get to Exodus 20 where God brings the law through Moses to the people, where the law was not burdensome and it was not like, "Keep all these so you can get saved. It was because you have been delivered from slavery, live these. There's blessing in them. Keep His standards of righteousness." So give God your best, keep God's standards.

Number three is this. The next generation needs to see you experiencing God's power. They need to see you experiencing God's power. For so many people that come to church, they don't see any power. They see a few songs getting sung. They see an old man reading from a book, and telling stories, and that's about all they see. But when they read their Bible, they see this God that was powerful enough to deliver people out of slavery and take a nation of two million people out. They see people who were healed. They see people who were raised from the dead. They see people who couldn't see, that could see. But when they come into the church then they hear, "Well, that's different now. God doesn't do that stuff anymore." Friends, I'm here to tell you our God is the same yesterday, today and forever. And the same powerful God you read about is the same powerful God that can work in your life.

Listen to what He says in verse 11. "Now when the Lord brings you to the land of the Canaanite, which means He is going to fulfill His promise and He will bring you there. As He swore to you and your fathers and gives it to you, you shall devote to the Lord the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own. The males belong to the Lord." This is what we read about at the beginning. Consecrate your children and offer a sacrifice of your firstborn. He says in verse 13,

"But redeem every first offspring of a donkey, you shall redeem with a lamb. But if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And every firstborn of man among your sons, you shall redeem." And you say what? Simply put, and we could talk a lot about this.

A donkey was an unclean animal. And what did the donkey need? The donkey needed the shed blood of a clean animal to cover that unclean animal. In layman's terms, how are we viewed in the Bible? We're viewed as those who are unclean that need blood to cleanse us. The blood that we need is the blood of Jesus. God was establishing that blood covenant all the way back from Genesis 3, all the way until now, that the blood is important to cover sin. That's what He was talking about. And then we get down to this next verse in verse 14, "And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come." Do your kids ask you about your faith? Is your faith noticeable enough that your kids will ask you what your faith is?

Your faith should be so primary in your life that your kids can't help but ask, "Why do you do what you do? How is it that you do what you do?" When your sons ask you saying, "What is this?" Then you shall say to him, "With a powerful hand, the Lord brought us up out of Egypt from the house of slavery. It came about when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go that the Lord killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the Lord, the males, the first offspring of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem. So it shall be a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead. For with a powerful hand, the Lord brought us up out of Egypt."

What's he saying? When your kids ask, "Dad, why do we do this meal?" Because inevitably if God's going to talk about it this much, and we see in Israel's history that they practice the Passover every year, and they have the Feast of Unleavened Bread every year, that if you grew up in an Israelite home and you're a Jew, every single year, Passover, every single year Feast of Unleavened Bread. There's going to be a time. "Why are we doing this, dad? What's going on?" Then you tell him what you saw me do. You tell him your personal testimony about what you saw. Don't just tell him about what God did in the Bible. You tell him what He's done in your life. You tell him, "With a powerful hand, He led us. I was part of that. Here's what God's done in my life."

Meaning this, friends, if you've been saved for more than about five minutes, you should have some story about God's powerful deliverance in your life. Because if you've been saved for five minutes, here's what He's done. He's delivered you from the penalty of sin. He's delivered you from the devil. He's delivered you from death. Meaning when you die, you will never die. You'll be translated in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have a powerful story to tell, even if you've been saved for five minutes.

But as you continue to walk with the Lord, there should be other stories that God begins to show you, that God works in your life powerfully. Against all odds when you see God show up where you can tell that story, and tell the next generation, "Hey, God really does what He says He does." I believe that God does what He says He does.

When you read it in the Word, you can hold God to His Word because God is always faithful to His promise. That's what He's saying. And it's interesting because if you read this final verse, verse 16 as well as verse nine, he's talking about, "This sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth. For with a powerful hand, the Lord led you out of Egypt." And you see this word phylactery. Phylactery was like a little box that had Hebrew scriptures in them.

If you go to Israel this day, some of the devout Jews still have boxes on their head tied around with what looks like a rubber band, and some of them on their arm as a reminder that God's law should be on their head and on their arm. Why on their head and not on their arm? Why on their head and on their hand? Because the head reminds us of our mind and that our mind should be focused on the lordship of Christ. And our hand reminds us of our place of strength that everything we do, we do in the power of God, and our voice is what we speak about God. So the phylacteries are a reminder to the Jewish men in their mind and in their strength that they should be putting God first.

But what's the principle? I don't believe God's calling us and applying it to all of us wearing phylacteries on our head when we go to work or school tomorrow. I think what He's saying is, "You should have Christ on the forefront of your mind, and you should know that His powerful power is available in every single thing that you do." Whether you're in school or in your job, God can show up in power, have Him on your mind. It's interesting to me that because the devil's a counterfeit and we read about it in the Book of Revelation. We read about the mark of the beast when there's going to

be this world dictator called the Antichrist. He's going to have everybody take a mark. Where is he going to have everybody take the mark? On their forehead or on the back of their hand? Why? Because he's going to be the counterfeit God. He's going to tell the world, "You need to worship me and think about me. You're going to need to see my strength and power, my counterfeit strength and power."

And guess what? If your mind is not set on the Lord now and your hand is not set on the strength of the Lord now, you will go that way. So speak about Him. Put Him on your mind, put Him in everything you do. Because for so many kids they watch church and that's the thing we do for an hour a weekend, or if you come to BRAVE, it's an hour and a half. But that's all we do. And then when I go out in the world, "What can God do when I'm shooting hoops, or what can God do when I'm playing sports, or what does God do when I'm taking a math test?" The same God you read about in the Bible is the same God that can show up with the same amount of power no matter what you do. And if you put Him first and you keep His commandments, you can expect His power to show up when you need it.

I've seen God do amazing things. In walking with the Lord for 30 some years, I've watched God heal people that were going to die on this side of heaven. I've watched God deliver people from demonic influence in their life on this side of heaven. Some of you say, "Well Pastor Jeff, if that's true and you have that gifting, then how come you don't pray for every person that's sick?" Can I just tell you I pray for sick people who believe on healing this side of heaven like I do that have died and are in the presence of the Lord? Can I tell you, I prayed for people that have been oppressed by

demonic influence that never really got out of it on this side of heaven? I don't have any power. God has power.

Do I believe His power? Yes. Do I believe we can see more of His power? Yes. Do I believe everything that Jesus did and taught can still be done and taught today? Yes. Does that mean He does it on demand every time I ask? No, because His ways are higher than my ways, and His thoughts are higher than my thoughts. He gets to choose what He's going to do, when He's going to do it. But I can ask, because of God's great compassion for us. So if you're a young person, you ask me, "Does God hold my future?" Yes. Can God bring me the right spouse? Yes. Can God provide me with the right kind of income so I can do everything He wants me to do? Absolutely. If I go after God, will God use all my gifts for His glory? 100%. I mean that's what we want to see God do.

He's done it in my life. I know He can do it in yours. I want to see you walk in the fullness and in the power of the Holy Spirit. He does all those things today. And God wants you to experience His power, and God wants you to keep His standards. One of the challenges that we have is sometimes when we hear the Lord speak directly to us, we get a little frustrated with God. Because God begins to show us something that He wants us to change that may not be universal for anybody else to change, but He wants it in our lives to change.

I remember when I was a youth pastor. I love sports. I love watching sports. I was doing my Bible study one time and it really felt like the Lord spoke to my heart and

told me to get rid of cable TV. And I was thinking, "I know that wasn't God. God doesn't speak to people about stuff like that." I called the cable guy. And if you've ever called cable people, if you worked for the cable company, I'm sure it wasn't you, but they don't show up very much on time. I remember I called and called and called and finally this person came out, and they installed my cable and I was like, "Good, it's installed now. Now I don't have to listen to God anymore."

Do you know every single time I had a quiet time in the morning, all I heard the Lord say was, "Get rid of your TV." I couldn't focus on anything else. I thought it was the stupidest thing. I said, "Lord, if this is you, when I call the cable company, I want you to make sure they pick up on the first ring." So I called and before it rang the person's like, "Whatever cable company." And I about bit my tongue. I said, "Yeah, I need you to take my cable away." They said, "Well, we just put it in two days ago." I said, "I know, but I need it gone." They said, "Okay, it's done." I started having Bible studies and that went away. About two months later, I thought, "That's the stupidest thing I've ever done in my life. There's no way that was the Lord." So I called the cable company and installed it again.

Do you know that every day from that moment onward, all I heard in my quiet time was to get rid of my TV? And all I did was argue with God about why that wasn't a big deal and how I could handle it. So guess what I had to do two months later? I had to call the cable company back, and this time the person said, "Well, it looks like we've installed it twice and you had it taken away." I'm like, "I'm fine. I'm done. Take it away." And the voices went, "I didn't have cable." This was during the Chicago Bulls

6P. I had to go to other people's house to watch. God never said you can't watch TV. He said, "I just don't want you to have it."

Fast forward some years, now I have a family. Now I got TV in my house, I start hearing the same thing. Now I got to convince my wife that I heard the Lord. We finally got rid of it. It's been gone. I'm not doing it. I still watch sports. I just have to go to somebody else's house, or some restaurant, or whatever to watch it, because I know I can't handle it. Does that mean cable's wrong? No. Does that mean you can't have it? No, you should and you should invite me over to your house to watch with you. What it means is God knows for me there's some reason that I can't.

What are the things that He speaks to you about? What are the standards that you're trying to keep? I remember telling the Lord last time, "If you do this, you got to make my preaching better. I got to see something that's good in my life as a result of this." What's He telling you? One of the reasons we don't experience God's power is because we're not being obedient to Him in the small things. What are the small things God wants you to be obedient to Him in so you can experience His power?

So that when your kids are saying, "Dad, it's tough to get in this school." You can say, "You know what? If you do things God's way, God will favor you. And if He wants you there, you'll get in." If He wants you to marry that person, you'll marry him. And here's what I do know. If it's not them, He's got somebody better for you. Listen to Him. He'll take you in the way you need to go. And isn't it interesting that God has a way for each of us to go, which is why we get into our fourth point.

Not only do we need to give God our best, and not only do we need to keep God's standards and experience God's power, but finally about, how about this one? How about trusting God's ways? Trusting God's ways, that means the direction and way in which He's going to lead you.

Because as soon as He gets them out, it says this in verse 17, this is amazing verse to me. "Now, when Pharaoh had let the people go," this is after 430 years, they're finally delivered. "When Pharaoh would let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines even though it was near. For God said, 'The people might change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.'" So here's two things God says, "When I take you the way I'm going to take you, I'm not going to take you the shortest way. I'm not going to take you in the way you think you need to go."

Could you raise your hand here if you've been a Christian for at least 10 years? Keep your hand up if God's ever led you in a way that's different than the way that you wanted to go. Thank you for participating. Isn't it interesting that God has a way and what does He say? "I'm not taking you the short way. If I take you the short way, you're going to have war with the Philistines and you're not ready for that yet. You're not mature enough for that yet. And you'll turn around and guess what you'll want to do? After 430 years of being a slave, after watching God miraculously deliver you yesterday, if I take you that way, you will turn around and go back and ask to be a slave in Egypt again. Are you kidding me?"

But isn't that just like us? Isn't that just like us when we come to Christ, that when we come to Christ we're still tempted to go back and live the same sinful patterns that we once had and not continue to move forward? So what's God do? He leads us in a way that's different than the way that we'd want to go. He always does that. We learn in school, if you pass kindergarten, you go to first grade. First grade, second grade, you pass middle school and you go to high school, pass high school, you go to college. Pass college, then you just have a lot of debt and nothing. Sometimes, sometimes. But no, then I'll get a job and then I'll get married and then I'll do this.

And we tend to think at certain ages there's certain things that are supposed to be happening for us. And if they don't happen the way the world says they're supposed to happen, then there's something wrong with us. I'm supposed to graduate high school around 18, college around 22, advanced degree around 25, have my dream job by 35. I should be married in my 20s. I should have about three or four kids in my 30s, and everything should just work out great.

But here's the truth, if someone 39 says that you are fearfully and wonderfully made, and Acts 17 says, "God chose to put you here in this time period and there's no one else like you in the entire globe." Then why would you think that your life needs to look like everybody else's life? Could it be that your life looks really unique? That the way you do school looks different than everybody else? And when you get married looks different than anybody else? How you have kids looks different than anybody. Why wouldn't you want that? Why would you wouldn't you want the God of the universe to direct your steps? If you really trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean on

your own understanding and in all your ways put Him first place, He will make your path straight.

He doesn't say He will do what everybody else is getting done. It says enter through what? The narrow gate. Why? Because wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction. If you're going the way everybody else is going, chances are you're not on God's road. But when you enter through the narrow gate and you stay on the narrow road, God has a way of taking you different than He's taken anybody else in your life.

Which means Christians when we counsel people that are other Christians, their life looks different than your life. They don't need to be at a certain place. They're right exactly where God wants him to be right now, to give Him the glory He wants Him to have. And how many would say when God leads you in His way, even if that's not the way you wanted to go, and even that's a path you wouldn't have chosen or somebody else chose for you, and now you're picking up the pieces and all that, that through that God made you stronger. And through that God gave you eyes to see things you wouldn't have otherwise seen. And through that, God wants to use that for a ministry which is a service in another person's life that nobody else can understand the way you understand it, because you're the one that's been through that pain. You're the one that's been through that hard time. You're the one that's seen that. It's trusting God's ways, it's trusting God's ways.

Here's what I would say, you can't know God's ways unless you go God's way.

You can't learn God's ways from a book. If you're an athlete, they'll tell you this, that the way you get better is through reps. When I played football, basketball and baseball, they also say, you need more reps, you need more reps, you need more reps. You can't just study this stuff. It's good to study, but then you got to get out there and practice it. Apparently golf, you need more reps and I haven't had enough. You need more reps. When it comes to the ways of God, you need more reps. Reps isn't trying something once. It's doing it over and over and over and over and over again.

When I started tithing about 28 years ago, I did because I was like, "Okay, I'm convinced scripturally that if I'm being fed in a local church, and God's vehicle for the hope of the world is a local church, then I've got to give to my local church or go find some other local church that I can give to because God wants my heart in the local church." So I began to tithe. I've been doing it for 28 years. I know the ways of tithing. I know that there's no good thing that God will withhold from those who walk up rightly. I know that every single one of my needs has always been met in abundance. I know that. I know God's ways. I know God's ways do not always get planned out the way that I think they're going to get planned out.

Sometimes when I listen to young people, they'll come up to me and say, "Hey, here's what God's doing in my life." My ears start perking up. Because I want to know, "Are they talking about God's ways or they're talking about what they want to do?" And inevitably, when I listen to somebody younger talk about God's ways, they'll usually say something like this, they'll be very fired up about it and they'll be very encouraged about doing it God's way, and they want to do it God's way. But they'll say something

like this, "I have absolutely no idea how that's going to work out. I have absolutely no idea what the next step looks like, but I know God's in this." And I'm like, "Man, you are on the right path."

But when I listen to people give me their five year plan and what's going to happen every single month, day over day, year after year, I start feeling like quoting James. You can look it up. It's James 4:13-18. "You who say, we will do this tomorrow and we'll travel to this area, but well brother, you don't even know what a day's going to bring forth. Wouldn't it be better to say if the Lord wills it, here's what we're going to do?"

God's ways are never clear. He's a lamp into our feet. He's a light into our path. He's not a runway that lights up the next 30 years. He says, "Hey, just take a step here and then take a step here. And you're not going to go from A to B to C to D. You're going to step here and all your friends are going to go over here, and then I'm going to step you here and they're going to go that way. Quit looking at what everybody... Just keep stepping the way I want you to step. And eventually I will elevate what you're doing. I will put you in the exact right place."

God's ways are like riding a bike. Once you learn them and you grow in them, it doesn't mean you know exactly what God's going to do, but you know how to hear His voice and how to act. Most recently for me over the last two to five years, I've been praying about this next generation, and what we're going to do as a church and how to become alongside, and I've only got so many years to live and what can we do? And God's been putting on my heart, schools. I know nothing about running a school,

starting a school or making a school, but I am convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that BRAVE needs to start BRAVE academies, not only here in Denver, but all over the country. I just believe it.

So ask me this question, how? Ready? God knows and I don't. The way He's going to do it is us stepping in the right direction, step by step, day by day, month after month, year after year, believing that if we're faithful and we're obedient, and we put God first, that God cares so much about this next generation, that He'll fill in the gaps with what we don't know. We're not experts, we're not experts on church. I hope you know that. I'm not an expert on being a pastor. I hope you know that. I'm just trying to step faithfully, step by step, by step, by step.

And here's the beauty of this. God wants you to be the one who's used by His glory to disciple and pass the baton to the next generation. He didn't just save you so that when we gather around His throne one day, we all high five. That's going to be great. But God saved you because He's saying, "I gifted you uniquely. You have a unique lens that sees the world clearly the way I want you to see the world. And I want you to take the next step of faith to get involved and do this. Because if you do, and you invest this in the next generation, and you pass the baton, it's going to go far beyond anything that you've ever done."

See my goal is not to preach until I die and then hope that it's all over. My goal is to preach, and preach, and preach and build, and cast vision, and disciple, and see what God's going to build so that long after I'm gone, if Jesus waits to come back a

little bit, that there's fruitfulness taking place through the next generation. God wants you to do it. At BRAVE, we're serious about the Gospel. We want you to know Christ and love Christ and grow in Christ. But we're also just as serious about being used of Christ, and letting Christ work in and through you in a way that goes beyond anything that you've ever thought. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

God wants you to give Him your best. God wants you to keep His standards. God wants you to walk with Him and trust that He's going to bring you in. It's really interesting because at the end of this passage, when He begins to talk about how He's going to lead them. How does He lead them? He leads them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. What's God do? He gives the direction. And during the day He provides direction. In Israel, in the desert is hot. So what's He lead Him with a cloud to provide shelter. In Israel at night in the desert, what is it? It's cold. So what's God do? He leads them with fire. God is always going to lead you with what you need in the moment to get you to where He is going to take you. And God is always faithful to His promise. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

He's a good God. He's a good God. He loves you with an unconditional love. And God wants to use you to pass the baton to this next generation. Not because you're perfect, but because you're growing in those things, so that the next generation can see and experience the power of God in His direction and want everything that God would want for them. Amen. Amen. Would you stand with me as we pray?

Father in heaven, we long, we long to see you. We long to breathe the air of heaven. Lord, we long to worship your name. And Lord, until that time, Lord, let us walk with you all the days of our lives. Lord, glorify your name in and through us. Use us to pass the baton to this next generation. And God, we honor you, we praise you and we glorify you, the king of kings and the Lord of Lords, the name of Jesus. Amen and amen. Can we give God praise today for who He is?