



Message **Transcript**

Unlikely Fighter

Greg Stier

Good morning.

Good morning.

How's everybody doing today? How many guys are praying for the Nazarenes to say yes? Give a yes. It is awesome to see, man. I tell you what, I love the name of this church. You guys win the award for coolest church name, BRAVE Church. This is an awesome church. I love Pastor Jeff. I remember listening to him on the radio and said, "I like this guy, because he makes me look tactful. I mean, he just lays it out. Lays out the word." Give the Lord a hand for blessing you with a pastor that's not afraid of preaching the truth.

I tell you, I love the gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ. It changes everything. That's really what the book's about. The full title of the book, it's long: Unlikely Fighter: The Story of How a Fatherless Street Kid Overcame Violence, Chaos, and Confusion To Become a Radical Christ Follower. It really is the story of my life growing up in North Denver. Now, they call it the Highlands today, the Highlands. You go there today, you're going to have skinny jeans and an organic salad, right? But back in the day, it was the highest crime rate area of the city. It was North Denver.

And the gospel came through my family like a flood and changed everything. And I got to let you know this. I don't come from a typical religious churchgoing pew-sitting, hymn-singing family. I come from a family filled with bodybuilding, tobacco-chewing, beer-drinking thugs. And that's just the women, sadly. My goodness. My family, three of my uncles were competitive bodybuilders. The fourth one was a bouncer at the

toughest bar in Denver. The fifth one was a Golden Gloves boxer, judo champion, and war hero. And I was a terrified little kid. I was like young Sheldon in the hood. I was a terrified little kid. The Denver mafia had a nickname for my uncles. They called them the Crazy Brothers.

So when the mafia thinks your family's dysfunctional, it's not good, right? My family was not organized crime, they were disorganized crime, and they just loved violence. I lived in a very violent home, and my toughest uncle, my Uncle Jack, we got a picture of Uncle Jack, just so you don't think I'm exaggerating, Uncle Jack was a bodybuilder. Uncle Jack only weighs 185 pounds in that picture, and 85 of those pounds are in that bicep, right? He looks a little like the Wolverine. But Uncle Jack, in and out of jail his whole life, once for choking two cops unconscious at the same time who were trying to arrest him on assault charges, a very, very dangerous man.

But then one day, somebody who was super unlikely, a hillbilly preacher from the deep South with a Southern drawl, whose nickname for some reason was Yankee, planted a church in Arvada, Colorado. And on a dare from a guy named Bob Daley who knew my Uncle Jack but was too afraid to share the gospel with him, on a dare from Bob Daley, he reached out to the city. Went to my Uncle Jack's house and knocked on his door. My Uncle Jack comes to the door, no shirt on, tats everywhere, two beer cans, one for drinking beer, one for spitting chew. He goes, "What do you want?" He goes, "My name is Yankee Arnold. I'm here on a dare from Bob Daley to tell you about Jesus." He goes, "Well, I don't know Jesus, I know Bob. I'll give you five minutes."

Invited him in, and Yankee sat down and explained not religion, but a relationship with Jesus Christ, that Jesus came to die for sinners just like Jack. And for the first time, my Uncle Jack heard the gospel and understood it. And Yankee looked at Jack and said, "Does that make sense?" And my Uncle Jack said, "Hell yeah." That was a sinner's prayer. It was, "Hell yeah." And have you ever met a new believer that doesn't know the rules about loving your enemies yet? That was Jack, because he started telling people about Jesus, and if they didn't take Jesus, he may give them Moses right upside their head.

One day he's in a sauna, sharing Christ with another bodybuilder. And there's another bodybuilder from a different religion that starts to interrupt and argue with my Uncle Jack. My Uncle Jack doesn't know the rules about loving your enemies yet. And he's in a sauna, so he's buck naked, right? This is buck naked evangelism, right? He's sharing Christ. The guy interrupts. My Uncle Jack, goes, "Hey, I'm trying to tell him about the love of Jesus. Why don't you shut your stinking mouth?" He continues to share the gospel. The guy interrupts again. He goes, "Yo, you interrupt me one more time, I'm taking you out." He continues to share the gospel. The guy interrupts again. Boom, Jack hits the guy. The guy falls to the ground, looks up and goes, "Jesus didn't go around hitting people like that." He goes, "Well, I ain't Jesus, I'm Jack."

One day driving down the street on a Sunday morning, he got the itch. And before Christ, the itch was to get in a fight. After Christ, the itch was to tell somebody about Jesus. He's driving down the street on a Sunday morning. He goes, "Where do people need Jesus? Where's somebody? I got the itch." He drives past the Mormon

church. He goes, "Oh, they're in there," and he pulls in to the parking lot. He goes in, asks where the newcomer Sunday school class is. Down the hallway to the right. He goes down the hallway to the right, 25 new Mormons getting trained in Mormonism.

Jack says, "I want to share my story." They think he's a new Mormon. "Well, come on down." He came down and he shared his story and he shared the gospel, the true gospel of Jesus Christ of everyday saints. Laid the gospel out, gave an invitation, and 18 of the 25 new Mormons became new Christians that day. Boom.

So I'm a little kid in North Denver. I see my toughest uncle come to Christ. My Uncle Bob ends up fully coming to Christ in the back of a squad car after he beat a guy to death. One by one by one by one, my entire family comes to Christ because of a very unlikely hillbilly preacher nicknamed Yankee who was brave enough to share the gospel. I think of unlikely, I think of Yankee. I think of David in the Old Testament. He was an unlikely fighter. For those of you who've not read the story of David and Goliath, sit down this week with 1 Samuel 17 and read it slowly. It is an awesome passage. I'll recap it for you.

There's a battle between the Israelites and between the Philistines. It's in the Valley of Elah. The Israelites are on one side, the Philistines are on the other. And every day for 40 days and 40 nights, the Philistines sent out their champion, Goliath, a giant, to taunt the armies of the Israelites. "Send out your toughest guy to fight me." And every morning and every night when he comes out, all the Israelites soldiers flee in fear. But one day David, a shepherd boy, who's too young to fight in the war, you got

to be at least 20 years old, he's probably 14 or 15 years of age, he's delivering cheese and crackers to his older brothers in the war.

And he overhears Goliath and his defiance of the armies of the Israelites. He goes, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God? I'll fight the dude." That's a loose translation of the Hebrew. So they take him to Saul, and Saul tries to put his arm around him. It doesn't fit. He goes, "You know what? I'm going to go like who God made me. I am a shepherd." You know what shepherds have? They have a stick and they have a sling. He grabs five rocks from the brook. He goes out to face Goliath. Goliath comes out, and he focuses his eyes and he sees it's a kid with a stick and a sling, and he's insulted. He goes, "What am I, a dog that you come at me with sticks? Come here, kid. Today I want to give your carcass to the beasts of the field and the birds of the air."

And that's when David delivers the best Old Testament comeback. He says, "You come against me with a sword and a spear and a javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord God almighty. Today I'm going to kill you. I'm going to cut off your head, and I'm going to give the carcasses of the entire Philistine army to the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. And this day, the world will know there is a God in Israel. Let's get it on." He didn't say that last part, but he should have.

And he runs toward this giant. He reaches in and grabs a stone, swings that sling, throws that stone. That stone drills into Goliath's giant skull, and he falls to the ground, dead on his feet. And the Israelites catapult out of their foxholes with a shout, they chase the Philistines down, and God brings about a mighty victory through an

unlikely fighter that day.

That is our passage for this morning, and here is our big idea, our thesis, the thing I want you to walk away with. God uses unlikely fighters to face unbeatable giants, so He can accomplish an unimaginable victory. Unlikely fighters, the Bible's full of them. God used a novice boat builder named Noah, an elderly patriarch named Abraham, a stuttering shepherd named Moses, a teen queen named Esther, a confident senior citizen named Caleb, a God-fearing prostitute named Rahab, a young dreamer named Daniel, a fig-picking prophet named Amos, a girl-crazy warrior named Samson, a prejudiced preacher named Jonah, a determined cup bearer named Nehemiah, a cricket-eating, camel fur-wearing, water-drenched madman named John the Baptist. God loves to use unlikely fighters.

David was an unlikely fighter. He was too unknown. He was a shepherd. He was too inexperienced. He was a worshiper, not a warrior. He was a shepherd, not a soldier. He was too young. He's the youngest of eight, again, probably 14 or 15 years of age. And I'm going to pause in my sermon, and I'm just going to say this really quick. Listen, never think teenagers are too young to shake the world for Jesus Christ. Every major spiritual awakening in the history of the United States has had teenagers on the leading edge of that awakening. Do not underestimate young people. Matter of fact, I believe Jesus was a youth leader. If you look in Matthew 17:24-27, Peter, Jesus, and the disciples all go into Capernaum, but only Peter and Jesus pay the temple tax, which is kind of weird until you cross reference that with Exodus 30:14 and realize the temple tax was only for those 20 years old and older.

All the disciples are there, but only Peter and Jesus pay. If I'm reading that right, Jesus was a youth leader with one adult sponsor and one rotten kid named Judas and no budget. And with that youth group, He changed the world. Let me tell you something. I believe what God is doing here through Pastor Josh and the student ministry here at BRAVE can change the world. We need to train, equip, and mobilize these young people. That's what I do at Dare 2 Share. All across the world, we're mobilizing a generation of young people to shake their cities with the gospel of Christ. Teens come to Christ quicker. They spread the gospel faster and farther than adults. With one TikTok video, a teenager could reach more than Billy Graham. On my goodness. It's a whole new generation of unmobilized young people, that if we can mobilize them, we can see this world shaken and taken with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

David was an unlikely fighter. I was too. Raised in North Denver, this wimpy little kid, family full of bodybuilders and street tough guys. They worried about me. They whispered about me. One day at a Christmas party celebration at my grandparents', all the families are there, uncles, cousins, aunts, everybody, everybody's opening presents, about to have lunch. We're wrapping up, and that's when my Uncle Dave, who's a war hero, judo champion, Golden Gloves boxer, war hero, five bullet holes. We're in Parisi's, the Italian restaurant, couple years back, he's like, "Oh yeah, I got shot five times." He's showing us all the bullet holes in his body, which is awkward. And he goes, "Oh yeah, I got bayoneted." He lifts up his shirt, shows us a five-inch bayonet

scar.

Let me tell you, never argue with a guy that has got a bayonet scar that he not only survived, but he killed the guy that gave it to him. I mean, one of the toughest guys I've ever seen in my life. He goes, "I got one more present. It's for little Greg." Nobody had ever called me out like that. So my large family's there. They go, "Open your present." So I walk across the room. He gives me my present. For the first time, I feel a sense of pride. I got some six-year-old swagger. Everybody's looking at me. I open the present up, and it's a girl's doll, and I thought it was a mistake. I go, "It's a girl's doll." He goes, "Yeah, I figured you don't have a dad, so you like to play with dolls like a little girl."

I shoved it in his stomach and I go, "I ain't no girl." All my uncles were like, "Yeah, you see the temper on him? Maybe he's one of us after all." Let me just tell you something. Right then I realized I had to fight. I realized I was in a fight, and my fight from the time I was six years old was a fight for identity. Who am I and how did I get in this family and why am I here? You're an unlikely fighter too. And God has a penchant to use the unlikely. God specializes in it. If you feel unusable, God can use you. If you feel like you're not special, God has a special place for you. If you feel like you're too poor or too weak or too sinful or too unpopular or too whatever, He's more than too excited to use you. Why? Because when He does, He gets all the glory. God loves using unlikely fighters to face unbeatable giants.

Now, David's giants seemed unbeatable. 1 Samuel 17:4, "A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits

and a span." Let me translate that for you, nine foot six inches tall. I mean, he'd make Shaq look like a toddler. He couldn't play basketball, because his head would get stuck in the net. He's a champion, which mean he'd killed hundreds if not thousands in the course of war. He seemed unbeatable. The giants we face may seem unbeatable.

This morning I'm going to ask you to identify your giant. Maybe it's an illness. Maybe it's a financial crisis, a strained marriage, a wayward son or daughter, a job that you hate, an addiction that you can't seem to overcome, or a sin that you can't seem to stop. Name your giant in your heart. Why is it important to name your giant? Because you cannot crucify what you refuse to identify. Identify that giant. For some of you, it's a giant sin, could be a porn addiction, alcohol or drug addiction, gossip or slander, bitterness towards someone who hurt you. Whatever it is, we must remember Paul's words in Romans 6:12, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires."

Maybe it's a giant problem in your marriage. 25 years ago, I was a pastor at Grace Church in Arvada, Colorado, a church that my buddy and I had planted. Doing Dare 2 Share, traveling the nation training students how to share the gospel. And I was busy, gone every night, gone almost every weekend, preaching at church, come back home exhausted. And my wife had had enough. Now, my wife is the sweetest person, but she's also a redhead, and she had hit her limit.

And one night on the way to a Bible study, we get into a raging argument. I know that's never happened to you. Didn't happen this morning on the way to church,

anything like that. It happened to us, and we are arguing. We pull up, and I go, "Put on a happy face. We got to go in." So we go in. Thank the Lord, I'm not leading the Bible study that night. Pastor Green is, the associate pastor. We're sitting in the Bible study circle. My wife has got a smile on her face, but she is mad. Pastor Green, of all the nights, goes, "You know what? Tonight instead of going through the Bible study, let's go around the circle and just get real and raw and honest, talk about our lives and our marriages. And let's just get it out there." I'm like, "Oh no. Oh no."

So they finally get to me. He goes, "Pastor Stier, how's it going?" I go, "You know, it's been a struggle. I'm trying to really find the ministry-life balance." And I'm spinning it like a politician, right? Gets to my wife, and you got to know my wife to appreciate this. She's got no natural predators. Everybody loves her, right? She does not like to speak in public or pray in public, let alone fight in public. So he gets to my wife. He goes, "Debbie, how's it going?" She goes, "Not good."

And everybody looked up. He said, "What's going on?" She goes, "My husband is gone every weekend. He's gone every night. When he is finally home, he's got nothing left for me. I can't take it. I can't fake it anymore. My husband is a jerk." I go, "Yeah, you want to do this right now in front of God and everyone? Well, let's get it on." And so we start arguing. Now everybody in the Bible study circle, they think it's a skit. It ain't no skit. We are arguing.

And Pastor Green makes the mistake of interrupting the argument. He goes, "Let me tell you something, Greg. I don't care if you pastor the largest church in America, I don't care if Dare 2 Share reaches every teen everywhere. If you don't take care of

business at home, you're nothing." Well listen, this guy had been ticking me off in staff meeting anyway. I stand up. I'm like, if I'm going to get fired, I'm going to go out in style. I go, "Yeah? You may be right, Pastor Green, but I'm taking you out. Woo." And I just started running across the circle. Everybody in the Bible study circle needed popcorn. They're like, "I love this church. What is happening? What is happening?"

And I get right in the middle of the Bible study circle, and I hit my giant. Because I realized he was right and she was right and I was wrong. And I collapsed and I began not to cry, but to weep, weep and wail... No, for 30 minutes. You just cursed in church. My Uncle Jack didn't know any better. Anyway, and I began to weep and wail, and it was the most humiliating moment of my life to this day. And it saved my marriage, because the cat was out of the bag. The jerk was out of the bag. Everybody knew, to the point where I tied it into my sermon the next Sunday morning. Perhaps you heard through the prayer chain about my meltdown. You're like, "Yeah, we know you have a bad marriage, pastor." I'm like, okay. Thank the Lord for Grace Church. They were full of grace. They came around us. They restored our marriage. We've been married for 31 years now. Love my wife. But I had to face the giant in the middle of that Bible study circle.

I want to ask you a question. Will you face your giant right now in the middle of church? Face it, name it, because God uses unlikely fighters to face unbeatable giants so that He can accomplish an unimaginable victory, the unimaginable victory that comes through his name. Now, my last name is Stier, but my family's last name was Matthias. And those raised in and around North Denver in the '60s and '70s knew my

family name, the Matthiases. The small dons, the Denver mafia knew my family name, the Matthiases. People would mess with me until they realized I was associated with that name. They weren't afraid of me, they were afraid of the name.

There's something about a name. What David says in 1 Samuel 17:45 to Goliath, "You come against me with a sword and a spear and a javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you who have defied." Jesus, you make the darkness tremble. There's something about the name of Christ, the victory that comes through his name, that flowed from his shame. Hebrews 12:2, "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus was shame. Here's the creator of the universe who spoke everything into existence, who lowered Himself to become one of us, who was beaten. He was stripped of his clothes. He was beaten beyond human recognition, nailed to a cross naked and twisted and dying and shamed.

But our victory comes through his shame. And here is the unlikely twist in the story of David and Goliath. The unlikely twist is, the story of David and Goliath ultimately is really not about David versus Goliath. Ultimately, it's not about you and I facing our giants. Ultimately, it points to Jesus, who's often nicknamed the son of David, who 2,000 years ago became the most unlikely fighter of all. He became one of us, and he had a battle with a giant, not in the Valley of Elah, but on a hill called Calvary.

And on a hill called Calvary, when Jesus hung on that cross, He screamed out the words, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Because in that moment, God the Father took all of his wrath and all of his hatred for all of your sin and all of my sin and He poured out in full measure on the body, the spirit, and the soul of Jesus. And Jesus died in our place, suffering God's wrath in our stead. And then He said the words that would change the course of humanity, "It is finished." And He bowed his head and He died. And the giant of sin fell.

I love 1 Corinthians 15:54 and 57, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" I love that Paul is taunting death. But thank God, He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. I don't know what giant you're facing, but we have victory over every giant through our Lord Jesus Christ. And those who don't know Christ don't have that victory and they need that victory.

I wanted my ma to know that victory. My mom is the one female in a family full of bodybuilders, the one sister. I got a picture of my mom. I love that picture. Do you see the smirk on her face? You're like, "You're doing okay? You need some water? Because I will take you out right now." Right? I was five years old, North Denver, playing with a plastic bat on the porch. Ma wouldn't let me stray too far from the porch because of the gang activity. Brand new car pulls up, dude sitting in the car. I recognize him. It's a guy my mom had married months earlier who had left us. We had no idea where he was.

I yell inside, "Ma, one of my daddies is here." She's doing the dishes, smoking a cigarette, looks out the window. She goes, "Paul, that blanking jerk. Where's the bat?" I had the plastic bat. I go, "Here, mommy." She didn't want the plastic bat. She reaches behind the door, grabs a Louisville Slugger, and cursing like a sailor runs out toward this car. He's still sitting in the car, and in one fell swoop knocks out his front windshield, takes out his headlights, takes off the side mirror, and then starts doing body damage on the car. I'm traumatized yet somehow proud of my mom. I'm like, "You go, Mom, you go." Because she's whaling on this car.

And then he makes a tactical mistake. He got out of the car, and she lit him up. He eventually gets back to the car, bloodied and bruised, drives off. For some strange reason, we never saw him again. And I'll never forget my mom walking up that sidewalk to our house with a broken, bloodied, splintered bat, thinking three things to myself. Number one, I will never disobey my mommy again. Number two, how did that cigarette stay in her mouth the whole time? And number three, why is my ma so mad?

See, my ma had a shame-fueled rage. I found out when I was 12 when my grandma sat me down and told me the story. My ma had met my biological father at a party. They partied, she got pregnant. He found out, he got transferred 2,000 miles away. He was in the army. She didn't want to stand before her strict Baptist parents, so she got in the car and drove from Denver to Boston to have an illegal abortion. It was before Roe v. Wade. While there, she stayed with my Uncle Tommy and Aunt Carol, who talked her out of the abortion. She came back. She had me in shame. And oftentimes as a kid, she would look at me and just burst out in tears.

And when I was 12, I found out why. She felt guilty for almost aborting me. But when I was 12, I was also trained by Yankee to share the gospel. So guess who was number one on my list? Ma. I went and I started telling her about Christ. She goes, "You don't know the things I've done wrong." I did, because Grandma had told me everything. I was like, "It don't matter." She said, "God can never forgive me." I told her from the time I was 12, 13, 14, 15 years of age, finally I said, "Ma, I don't want you to go to hell, and I'm tired of you living through this hell. You need Jesus." I didn't normally talk that bluntly to my mom for my own safety's sake.

But she listened and I explained the gospel. She's smoking a cigarette. She goes, "You mean to tell me that Jesus died for all my sins, even the bad ones?" I go, "Yeah." She took a drag. She goes, "You mean to tell me that all I have to do is believe I'm a sinner and put my faith in Jesus to save me? That's it?" I go, "That's what Jesus said. He says in John 6:47, 'I tell you the truth. You trust in Me, you have everlasting life.'" She took another drag. She goes, "I'm in."

When my family said they're in, they're in. I said, "Where are you going to go when you die?" Ma, she goes, "I'm going to heaven, cigarettes and all." I go, "Yeah, yeah. Heaven's non-smoking, but yes, you will be there." Put her faith in Christ. 18 years ago this month she went to be with the Lord. She's with God. A few years later, somebody asked me, they didn't know that she had passed, they said, "How's your mom doing?" I go, "She's great. She stopped smoking, best shape of her life, worshiping all the time. She's dead." And they're like, "Oh." I go, "But she's alive. She's

in heaven."

Let me ask you this question. We're not finished with the sermon yet, but I want to pause here. Do you know that your sins are forgiven? Do you know you're going to go to heaven when you die? If you don't, I just want to share this with you right now, the same illustration that Yankee shared with my Uncle Jack, that I shared with my ma. Pretend like this hand is you and me and everybody in the world. Pretend like this is God. Pretend like this Apple phone is sin. Now Apple is a great thing to represent sin, because literally the logo is an apple with a bite taken out of it. It represents forbidden fruit. All you Droid users are like, "Yes, that's exactly why I use a Droid."

So God created us to be with Him. He loves us. He cares about us. But our sins, they separate us from God. Our sins separate us from God, because He's a pure and holy God. He loves us, but He hates our sin. As a result, we're condemned to die forever in hell, suffer the wrath of God. Religion says, well, do good, live a good life, let's say this is everything we do good. It may cover up our sin. It doesn't get rid of it, just covers it up. Religious people, it's like putting white frosting on a burnt cake. We're all headed to hell.

But 2,000 years ago, the unimaginable victory took place. God sent his son Jesus, who was without sin, who lived the perfect life we could never live. And then Jesus died on the cross and He took all of our sin upon Himself. He paid the price for our sin, past, present, and future, and if He took all of our sin, how much is left for us to pay for? None, zero, nada. It's gone. Jesus paid the price with his own life and death on the cross, and then He rose from the dead, victorious over the giant of sin.

And He says this: "For God so loved the world that He gave his only son. Whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life."

Listen, that word "believe" means to trust. Doesn't just mean believing that Jesus died on the cross, it's that, and you're trusting in Jesus to forgive you for all your sins and to give you eternal life. And as soon as you do that, that life with Jesus starts now and lasts forever. You know, my biological father abandoned me before I was even born, but don't feel sorry for me, because I got another Father. He will never leave me or forsake me. And if you've put your faith in Jesus, He's your Father too. And if you've not put your faith in Jesus, He can become your Father today in this adoption ceremony opportunity.

So if you've never trusted in Jesus, the Bible says today is the day of salvation. Again, we're not finished with the sermon yet, but I want you to bow your heads and close your eyes. Everybody. Every head bowed, every eye closed, no one looking around. If you've never put your faith in Jesus and you're ready to do that, would you say this silent prayer in your heart to God? Dear God, I'm a sinner. I can't be good enough to be in your perfect heaven, but I believe that Jesus died for my sins and that He rose from the dead. And I trust in Him alone to forgive me for my sins and to give me eternal life.

With heads bowed and eyes closed, if you said that prayer and truly trusted in Jesus, you are saved, not because you said a prayer, but because you put your faith in Christ, and I want to know who you are so I can pray for you. So with heads bowed

and eyes closed, if that made sense for the first time and you're saying yes, I trust in Jesus, can you simply raise your hand up and put it right back down. If you're trusting in Him, God bless you and you. God bless you and you and you and you. So many. If you're trusting in Jesus, just raise up your hand and put it right back down. God bless you and you and you. So many of you.

Let's give God a hand for these who've indicated faith in Christ. Listen, those of you who put your faith in Christ, you're not just forgiven for your sins, you're given a new identity as a child of God, a new family, the people of God, and a new purpose, the mission of God to share this good news with others. Welcome to the family of God. Let somebody know at this church that today you put your faith in Jesus.

The unimaginable victory that comes through his name, that flowed from his shame, and that results in his fame. Why did David kill Goliath? So that the world will know there is a God in Israel. That's what David said. The reason David killed Goliath is he wanted everyone to believe in the true God. This is Old Testament evangelism. When we share with others the unimaginable victory we have through Christ, let me ask you this. Believer at BRAVE Church, are you brave enough to share the gospel with your friends, with your family members, with your neighbors?

There's a thing called Easter coming up. It's a great opportunity for you guys to invite people out to Bandimere, where they can hear the gospel preached clearly. I'm going to give you a simple way at the end of this service to share the gospel with those around you, this week, though. And I'm asking you, are you brave enough to do it?

And while you contemplate that, I want to share with you one last story about the most unlikely fighter I've ever met. His name is Doug. Doug was a troubled kid in Denver, came from a broken home, had a lot of struggles. In the '70s they didn't call learning disabilities, learning disabilities. They just called you dumb. And Doug was mocked relentlessly, because he struggled with basic thought processes. He also had epilepsy, and kids could be ruthless, and they were ruthless to Doug, because he could have a grand mal seizure any time of the day or night.

Doug was no wimp. He'd fought back to the kids that mocked him. He was starting to get expelled from school, starting to get in trouble with the law. His life was in a downward spiral. But then he had a head on collision with the Lord Jesus Christ and everything changed. He experienced the unimaginable victory through Christ, and he began to share the gospel with everyone, sometimes awkwardly. Somebody said, "Boy, it's hot in here." He said, "It's hot in hell too. Let me tell you about Jesus." And just boom.

One day early on a Saturday morning, he goes, "We need to go tell somebody about Jesus." And so I go, "It's kind of early." He goes, "Man, people need the Lord." How do you say no to that? So we're at out looking for someone to talk to. He goes, "Where is everyone?" I go, "They're still sleeping." We go to a park. We see what looks to be about an eight-year-old boy playing on a jungle gym about a hundred yards away. Doug goes, "There's one," and starts running at this kid, screaming, "Hey kid, where you going to go when you die?" And the kid was like, "Home," and ran as fast as he could. I'm like Doug, "You scared that kid to death." He goes, "I didn't mean to

scare that kid. I want that kid to know Jesus."

Doug saved up his money, bought a bicycle, took that bicycle all over the city streets of Denver, talking to pedestrians, people at bus stops, hitchhikers, sharing with them the love of Christ. Pulled up to a stoplight. Car full of guys pulls up next to him at a red light. He thinks they need Jesus. Knocks on their window. They roll down the window. He begins to share the gospel. They're listening, but the light turns green halfway through. They say, "We got to go, dude." He goes, "Well, I'm not done yet, so go ahead and go." He holds onto the handle. The car takes off, 10, 20, 30, 45 miles an hour. Doug's balancing himself, sharing the gospel, finally says, "I hope you believe," and he peels off to safety.

Later on he tells me the story. I go, "Doug, you're an idiot." You could have got sucked under the tires, run over, and killed." He goes, "It'd be worth it. It'd be worth it for them to know Jesus." Doug finally graduated from high school with his GED at the age of 19 or 20, went to a Perkins restaurant to celebrate, saw a beautiful server there, but had a strict I will not date an unbeliever policy. So he led her to Christ on the spot and then asked her out. She said yes. Something like their first date, he goes, "I think this is going really well." Simpleminded Doug. "We should get married." First date. She's like, "Okay." She thought he was joking. He wasn't. Six months later, they got married. They moved to Ankeny, Iowa, where for 30 years, Doug was a custodian at a public school.

There's a picture of Doug. Can you see the love of Christ and the joy of Christ on

his face, in his smile? He would strip and wax floors and sing Christian songs. He'd share Christ with the kids and with the teachers and the administrators. And when they pulled him aside and said, "Doug, proselytizing is prohibited," he would think to himself, I have no idea what the word "proselytizing" means and "prohibited" sounds encouraged. Pro-hibited. And he continued to share Christ.

A few years ago, Doug had to retire early, because he got a early form of dementia, started forgetting stuff. But one thing Doug has not forgotten is Jesus, the unimaginable victory he's experienced through Christ. And once a week or so, I get a call from Doug, and oftentimes he's telling me the latest story of the latest person he shared the gospel with. And one day at the judgment seat of Christ, when Doug's name is called, there'll be thousands who stand and applaud, who were impacted by this unlikely fighter, this epileptic kid with learning disabilities, this custodian who had every reason to keep his mouth shut.

And I'm going to be one of the ones standing and applauding, because Doug is my big brother. He's seven years older than me. The reason I do Dare 2 Share today is because I knew growing up, if my big brother could do it, then I can do it, and if I can do it, others can do it. You can do it. God loves to use unlikely fighters to face unbeatable giants so He can accomplish an unimaginable victory. God wants to use you this week to start that gospel conversation, BRAVE Church.

Well, I don't have the power to do that. Yeah, you do. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witness, as Jesus said. If you've put your faith in Christ, you have the power, because you have the person of the

Holy Spirit dwelling inside you. And I want to give you a very specific way that you can share the gospel, and it's simple. I wrote the book *Unlikely Fighter* for two reasons. One, to encourage believers with the power of the gospel they can reach anyone anywhere any time. The stories of my family coming to Christ will inspire you as a believer.

The second reason I wrote it is so that you could give a copy of *Unlikely Fighter* to someone else who doesn't know Christ, and they can read it and clearly hear the gospel in story form. So I'm going to encourage you to pick up more than one copy, one for yourself and the others for other people that you know. I think of Dan in Portland. He actually bought two cases. I go, "Why are you buying two cases?" He goes, "I run a company. I want to give one to every employee so we can have these gospel conversations." I think of Kathleen. Her daughter gave her a copy of *Unlikely Fighter*. She read it and trusted Christ, and just a few months ago was baptized. By the way, she's 94 years old. Talk about cutting it close, but she's in. She's in. So I'm going to encourage you to pick up *Unlikely Fighter* and use it to reach others with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I'm going to encourage you to start this week.

I'm going to pray, but I'm going to ask you to keep your eyes open. We have a saying at Dare 2 Share, awkward is awesome. This can be awkward, because I want to look in your eyes and pray for you. Father, I pray for every one of these believers here at BRAVE Church. Would You fill them with divine power through your Holy Spirit to be brave enough to share the gospel? I pray, God, that they would face that unbeatable giant, realize that Lord, You have called them to be unlikely fighters so that

you can show your power in and through them. And Father, would you help them to walk in victory with holy swagger, victorious over sin and Satan through what your son did on the cross 2,000 years ago? Through his resurrection from the dead, may we walk in resurrected lifestyles.

And Father, I pray that they would be unashamed to share that unimaginable victory that You've given them through the cross, that they would boldly proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, that they would do it this week. And I pray, Lord, that Bandimere, those stands are filled with people that this church has impacted with the gospel. And I pray that those gospel conversations would not start on Easter, they'll start this week. So fill them and use them and unleash them, in Jesus's name. And all God's children said...

Amen.

... amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.