

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

## MOTHER'S DAY AT TRADERS POINT

TARA HOMAN & AARON BROCKETT | MAY 14, 2023

Aaron

Hey. Would you join with me in welcoming Tara. Tara thank you. Such a powerful story. Every time I watch your video it just touches me so much. So thank you for being willing to just kind of open up your life to share with the rest of us.

And Happy Mother's Day.

Tara

Thank you.

Aaron

So good to have you with us. And I know that your story is going to touch us and really challenge us, it challenges me. It will just encourage us regardless of who we are.

So, I'd really like to get things kicked off by just hearing a little bit more about your boys. We see a brief snapshot of them at the very end of your video, but tell us a little bit about your boys.

Tara

Yeah. This is every mom's dream to talk about her kids. They are probably squirming in their seats right now. I have two boys, Evan and Cole.

Evan is my 16-year-old. He is a sophomore at Westfield High School. A new driver in the house. You probably know what that is like. He is a competitive rock climber. He competes on both the youth circuit and the men's circuit. We're actually leaving in three days for the World Cup. So he is going to be competing against the best of the best in the world.

Aaron

From what I understand, he climbs that rock wall in like six seconds.



Tara

So, his TR right now is five point eight seconds.

Aaron

Five point eight seconds. It would take me like 20 minutes.

Tara

I did try it one time just to see. It took me a minute and a half and I still didn't finish.

Aaron

That's impressive.

Tara

It is impressive. It's impressive.

Evan has the best characteristics of both Jeff and I. I would say, for me, he gets this strength and this drive and this work ethic that is unmatched. And then from his dad he is so humble and gentle and has this quiet leadership. And I'm really, really proud of him.

And then Cole is my fourteen-year-old. He's an eighth grader at Westfield Middle School. And he also is a competitive rock climber. He just got back, 11:30 last night, from Cleveland. He was in the regional championships. He was able to advance. He'll be competing in the divisional championships coming up. This is Cole.

Cole also has the best characteristics of both Jeff and I. He has this will power and mental fortitude. He and I were born of the same cloth. If you tell us not to do something, we're going to do it twice and take pictures. So, your strong-willed children—that was me, that is Cole. These are the kids who are going to save the world. Right? And he has the heart of his dad. That is his most defining characteristic. We love to talk about Jeff and his heart, and that is Cole. He has his dad's heart and he loves really hard, really deep. And his sense of humor and quick wit is just... And his graciousness—he is just so grateful for anything that you do for him.

Aaron

I love that.



Tara

Thank you for letting me talk about my boys.

Aaron

Evan and Cole, thanks for sharing your mom with us. I know that's not an easy thing to have your pictures plastered all over a screen. We really appreciate that. And we're pulling for you guys.

And, from what I understand, they are being baptized next hour.

Tara

Yeah. They are both being baptized next hour. And you know, I just have to say that this has been an emotional week for me. Not only just preparing to be here, but just knowing what we've been through and as children what they have carried—the weight of the world on their shoulders, what most children will never have to bear. And still they say, "God, You are good. God, I trust you. God, I don't understand but I'm all in."

Ahh, as a mom, I'm just so proud. So proud.

Aaron

That's amazing.

Well what I want all of you to know is that Tara is not just an outside guest speaker. She's family. They have been part of our church for a long time.

Tara

Yeah. Sixteen almost 17 years. I would sit way up in the balcony with a baby. Your very first—can we call it your trial around here, maybe?

Aaron

Yeah. I try to block it out.

So, it's been amazing to have you here. And I know that Mother's Day can be a mixed bag of emotions for all of us for a wide variety of reasons. We want to make sure that we celebrate our moms because they deserve it. And yet, I also know that at the same



time this is a heavy day for a lot of people grieving for any number of reasons. I know this is your first Mother's Day without Jeff. So I want to thank you for sharing it with us.

Talk to us a little bit, what does Mother's Day mean for you and what was it like for you prior to Jeff's diagnosis and now that Jeff is no longer with us. What's it like?

Tara

Evan and Cole were eight and 10 when the diagnosis came in. They were babies.

Our traditional Mother's Day, we would come to Traders Point and then our traditional brunch together. And I love getting my flower pots ready for spring. But, I have to be honest. Moms of moms really do a lot of the work. So my mom would always come over and she is the one who did all of the planting. She's the one who took care of all of the flowers for me. But I always enjoyed that process.

But for any major holiday, milestone events... Our family is really active. So we would spend time either on a hike, bike ride, run—we just packed the kids in. So that's traditionally how we would spend even Mother's Day.

And I have to say that last year was very, very different for me. I was five years into ALS and each year I just put on a smile and hid the pain and just went about the day. Last year was different. We came home from Traders Point. I went into my room. Shut the door. Closed the blinds. Turned off the lights and I went to bed. I was sad. I felt sorry for myself. I was sad for me. I was sad for Jeff. I was sad for the boys. And I just took time to grieve. I spent a couple of hours.

So I just want to say to you today, take the time to grieve. Mother's Day can bring all kinds of emotions, you know, from loss of a child, a mom, estranged relationships, inability to have a child. And single moms, even widows, and maybe even you're a mom today who is going through the unimaginable life-changing diagnosis yourself. And I just want to say that I acknowledge that.

I think one of the most beautiful things, one of the most beautiful text messages or phone calls that I ever received throughout ALS was someone just saying, "Hey, Tara. I see you. I see your pain." Or even, "I see how hard you are working. And I know that it's difficult." Just that acknowledgment. It didn't take away the pain but it helped me meet it. So, I just want to acknowledge that and encourage you and hope that you can participate in an activity today that honors what you've been through and then grieve if you need to grieve.

Aaron



Yeah. That is so good.

And it reminds me a lot about what Paul writes to us in 2 Corinthians 12. It says that there was this thorn in his flesh. And he's asking God, "Would you please take it away?" And God says, "No." Or He stayed silent on it. And then He says, "My power is made perfect in that weakness."

I love that verse and I hate that verse all at the same time. You know, there is this thing, "If I've got a thorn in my flesh, God, remove it." And you want God to remove it. And then He just says, "My power gets displayed in the midst of that weakness."

We see a lot of that. And I think even now it is at work in your life and through this season. And allowing God to take something that... I think part of your story is, you know, this kind of news is devastating. And I think a lot of us, as I'm watching the video, I'm thinking to myself, "How would I have responded? How would I have reacted in the midst of that kind of news? You were allowing God to work in your life in that season. And I don't want to say that you are beyond it. I just want to say that you are in a different season.

Tara

Right. I think Jeff's concern was, "My suffering is almost over. And your suffering will continue." And, you know, Christ's power has been able to be seen all throughout ALS. I think, as a mom, throughout ALS I felt inadequate—inadequate as a mom, as a wife, and as a care giver. And what the Lord taught me was that He wasn't looking for my strength, my natural abilities, or even my bravery. He wanted me to depend on Him.

And this deep and complete dependence on Him just led to profound worship and a deeper relationship than we ever would have known without pain. And, you know, our strength... God gives us both strengths and weaknesses, but it's our weaknesses that, if we give them to Him, His power just... I mean it's absolutely remarkable what He has done throughout ALS.

I think so many people have told us, "You are the strongest person I know." Or, "I would not have been able to do what you did with your family." Or, even looking at Jeff, he became the weakest person I knew, and yet he was the strongest man I've ever known. And that's the power of Christ. There was nothing that we did, it was His power that sustained us.

Aaron



Yeah. And I would imagine that when people said that to you, did you feel like the strongest person?

Tara

Oh, no. No.

Aaron

Yeah. I wouldn't think so.

But your outlook is inspiring. I know you mentioned it really briefly in the video. We've talked about it individually. Especially like the national parks trip, in the summer of 2021. Twenty one national parks.

Tara

Twenty one national parks.

Aaron

I told you earlier this week that in the summer of 2021 I was at home feeling sorry for myself. And you're out hiking Half Dome with your boys and your husband. And that is just an incredible outlook, I think, to have in the midst of all of that. I think when a lot of people go through really trying circumstances, it's easy to sort of go to the opposite and to lean a little bit more into those feelings and emotions that we have of weakness.

You know, one of the things I really appreciate about you, you guys have written a book. We actually have it available at all of our campuses. I love the title, *Finish Well*. And I can see that that is Jeff's handwriting.

Tara

That is Jeff's handwriting.

Aaron

That is just so good. Talk to us a little bit about the book. What was the inspiration behind it? Who is it for? How did you guys write it?

Tara

So, six months after diagnosis some friends gifted us a trip, some time away together. So Jeff and I sat pool-side for four days and we just started drafting notes, letters, even guidance to our boys. And this was just something that we started. It wasn't intended to be published. It was meant for two copies. One for Evan and one for Cole.

And, you know, we knew that Jeff's presence would be missing from a significant portion of their lives as they navigated some crucial milestones. Going through their dating years, marriage, what their responsibility would be as a husband and as a father. And then even just the importance of faith and family and their relationship with the Lord.

So, like I mentioned in the video, we didn't want our boys to say, "My dad had ALS." And that's the end of their story. And you know, it's easy to look back on our lives and see all that we've accomplished, and we didn't want them to say, "My parents are amazing." We wanted them to see who showed up. We want them to see who sustained us during our darkest hour. We want them to see answered and unanswered prayers. Everything. The good. The bad. The ugly. And even just some vulnerable, broken moments. So that was the purpose of the book.

I remember a sermon you preached years ago and you said something along the lines of, "Your life is a story that will be told one day. Just make sure that the story is worth telling." And so, that's what we did. We wanted to live our life in such a way... "This is our life, we don't understand it, we're hurting deeply," but we wanted to live well, suffer well, and then, ultimately, to finish well.

Aaron

Yeah. And I love that.

I love that phrase. You've mentioned it multiple times. Obviously in the title of the book, live well. We're all going to live. We're going to live well. We're all going to suffer, that's just inevitable, so we want to suffer well, and then we want to finish well, which comes right out of the book of James.

So, as you're in the midst of ALS, talk to us about what that looked like and then, now that you are in this different season, what does it look like now? To live well, suffer well, finish well.

Tara

So, with live well, we first needed to define what that meant—to live well within our circumstances. And Jeff and I had coined this phrase that we actually had printed and

hung in our bathroom so that we could look at it every single day. And it simply says, "Was I faithful today with what I've been given?" So ALS was what we had been given. Everyone is going to be given something different. Whether that's abundance, or... For us it was ALS. So how do we live our lives now, under these circumstances?

You know, like most families we worked hard, played hard, went on trips, and those are all really, really good and important things. We poured into our children and their sporting events, traveling with my boys all across the nation, and now, hopefully, across the world.

And, even in just preparing for this this week, I read this statistic that said, "Point zero two percent of the population will ever play a professional sport, and yet 100 percent of us will stand before a holy God." And that just really put things into perspective. So, now when I have that perspective, I'm still going to pursue sports with my children, I'm still going to follow them around the world, but now I'm looking at it through a different lens, different priorities, and perspective.

And so, there was nothing really extraordinary about our lives, but we lived the ordinary very, very well. And I think for most of us, we're not going to be called to anything extraordinary, but to live faithfully in our circumstances.

You know, when we leave this earth, we're going to leave something behind. We have no choice. And so, we wanted to live in such a way that it had eternal impact. So, really focusing on our relationships with our friends, with our family, and most importantly, our relationship with the Lord. That's what it meant for us to live well.

Aaron

Yeah. Absolutely.

And I think that one of the things that... I think that you probably see what happened to Jeff as a gift in some aspects, from the sense of a point of clarity.

Tara

Right.

Aaron

I had a friend who was diagnosed with cancer several years ago. And he was saying, "Everybody was coming up to me saying, 'I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.'" And he was like, "Look, we're all going to die. I've just been given a little bit of clarity." Most of us can't



see the edge of the cliff, but you get a diagnosis like this, you can see it. It puts everything in perspective. So you're not necessarily living life on auto pilot, but you're being really, really intentional, which is what I hear you saying.

Tara

Yeah.

Aaron

So, living well. Making the most of every opportunity in front of us, because we're not guaranteed another minute of life here.

Talk to us a little bit more just of the idea of finishing well. What's that look like?

Tara

Well, if I could touch on suffer well just before we head into finish well, because the suffering piece, that's probably one thing that most people don't look at. I mean, who wants to suffer? And then how do you suffer well?

I first want to say that there were many days we got that wrong. And we would go to bed at night, kiss each other goodnight with apologies on our lips. Our hearts were just shattered by the sheer hardness of the day. And we'd just make a vow to try again in the morning.

If you talk to any family in crisis, they will tell you a million stories of how they thought they couldn't get out of bed in the morning. And yet there are beautiful examples that have come as a result of ALS and it is not lost on me, the life experiences, the travels, the outfit that I'm wearing today, were afforded to us because of our circumstances. So it's this joy and pain (right?) that collides. And just to suffer, that type of suffering, how do you suffer well?

And it's our hope that as people saw how we responded to trial and tragedy that they saw Christ. That when they saw Jeff and me, our relationship as a husband and wife, and how I was a caregiver and how he received that, or our relationship with our children—that they saw Christ.

And you know persevering faith leaves its mark on those around us. So when a watching world sees that you get a *no* from God and yet your faith still remains strong, you still endure until the end, they take note of that and it sends this clear message of



hope. And that doesn't take away your pain, I'm still hurting and I will hurt this side of eternity.

Jeff and I decided to look at what the Bible says about who God is? God is holy. God is just. God is faithful. And then what does the Bible say about His promises? God promises He is near to the broken hearted. God promises to be faithful. God promises He hears us when we call. He promises that there is purpose in our pain.

So we longed to have this faith that wasn't contingent upon our circumstances, but based upon what we know to be true about our God and Father. And so, if we believe that God is who He says He is, and if we believe the Bible to be true, then we must believe that God is writing a better story than we ever could.

I would be a terrible God. I would be like, "You get a car, and you get a car, and you get a car."

That was our desperate prayer. Please take this from us. And we got a *no*. But we've seen so much beauty through it. That was the suffer piece.

And then the finish well portion, you know, anyone can finish well. I'm a fitness instructor. So I use this analogy with my clients all of the time as they come in. Anyone can put on a pair of shoes, grab a dumbbell, get on a treadmill, put on some boxing gloves and start well. You've got high energy. You're strong. Most of us want to be there, maybe, at the start of the work out, but what does it look like the last two minutes when you're tired, when you are weak, when you want to stop? So, it's this finish. The finish is what's most important. Look at the thief on the cross. He had a bad start in life, but he finished well.

One of my favorite verses is in 2 Timothy 4. It says, "I have fought the fight. I've finished the race. I've kept the faith." And, you know, that's how we wanted to parent in those circumstances imagining you're in this race, it's like the race of your life. You're coming around the track, the finish line is in sight, full sprint. Most of us are probably going to be crawling or limping in this world as we make our way to the finish. Eyes on the finish. The crown of righteousness awaits.

And so that's how we wanted to parent, because keeping the end in mind and knowing that when we cross that finish, we will receive a crown of righteousness. And parenting in such a way that maybe we shift and say, "What did I do today," or, "What did I do this week that will matter in eternity?" And nothing else matters.

Aaron



Yeah. That's right. That's so good.

And I appreciate you saying that. I appreciate you using the sports analogy. I think Paul was an athlete or he was a *want to be* athlete. He used so many analogies around that. And there is a marked difference between working out by yourself and working out with others. We're cheering each other on. We're kind of looking out of the corner of your eye to see what somebody else is doing.

It kind of pushes you and props you. But I think there are a lot of parallels to that when it comes to faith and the community of faith. I just want to say to somebody right now, you may be limping or on your knees, or on the sidelines and a big part of life as we gather every week is to stir each other up, to keep going, to get on your feet, lean on me, you continue to move. I think that's great.

I want to shift gears just a little bit to talk about the role of community in your life, because I know that a natural reaction for so many of us, I'd include myself in this, is that when we're hurting, when we go through crisis, there's a very natural reaction that we all have. It's human. And that is to withdraw. I hear that from people a lot. As we've gone through whatever we've gone through in the last three years—you're going through a personal crisis in your life, "I'm just going to withdraw." You stop coming to church or you stop showing up to group, or whatever it may be.

So, talk a little bit, Tara, about the role of community in your life and how you sought that out. What did it look like during those really intense days with ALS and Jeff. What does it look like in your life now that he's gone on to be with the Lord?

Tara

Yeah.

This posture of surrender is very difficult. It's saying, "I can't do this on my own," and admitting that. "God, I need You." "Friends, I need you." And, you know, I felt like I just had outstretched hands. I had nothing to give, but to receive. And knowing that the only reason that we are thriving today is because of the generosity of others and not because of anything that I've done. It was really hard.

And it's almost like God was taking us by the shoulders and was like, "That's what I do best. This is a gospel story. This is a salvation story. This is a gift. But you have to receive it."

I had a really good friend of mine going through terminal cancer at the time. And she just said, "Hey, Tara. Do you have a meal train?" A simple meal train. I said, "No." We



were one month into diagnosis, I needed people for the long haul. And so I didn't want to wear people out. This was going to be a five, six year battle, perhaps. And she said, "Tara, I want you to hear something. You're going to lose. No matter what people do for you, you're still going to lose." And she said, "You're going to lose your husband. The boys are going to lose their dad. Let people help." I didn't cook a meal for five years.

And, you know, I think for me, if someone brought me something I felt like I needed to be busy. For me to sit down and have a tough conversation with my husband, or engage with my children when somebody was bringing me something. I was embarrassed by it. I felt like I needed to be busy.

And, you know, what I've learned through all of this is, I had to let go of control of things that I normally had control over. And, having meals come to my home or people running my kids to and from practice, cleaning my home, house maintenance, you name it—not being able to do those things didn't make me a bad mom. I'm still a good mom. And relying on others didn't change that. I'd be a supported mom. So the more that I was supported, I was able to engage with my husband and engage with my kids and to be able to grieve, I had time to grieve because of others.

You know, I still need help today. I'm a single mom and I can't do it alone.

I think the most important thing I ever heard Jeff say in his final weeks was, "Tara, I am not worried about you and the boys." You know, for a man to say that, someone who is the spiritual leader of your home, the financial leader of your home, for him to be able to leave this world knowing he's leaving this world, and he's like, "I'm not concerned because I've seen what God can do." So, whenever I get worried and nervous and scared, I remember that. I look back. Look at all that God has done for us and how He's just shown up.

And I still need help. Our neighbor called the other day and said, "Hey, I've got two bags of salt for your water softener. I told Jeff I would take care of you and the boys. And I meant it." We have a dear family friend who meets Evan every single week for his climbing practice, he mentors him, takes him out to dinner. God is still showing up. God is still filling in the gaps. And this book has countless examples of the same.

Aaron

Yeah. I love that.

So as you're navigating life I'm sure you probably never imagined a single mom. As you're navigating that, how has your perspective changed?

Tara

You know, pain has this way of shaping and refining you. And going through deep stuff, praying, you learn to appreciate true joy. So there's this joy in pain. And so now our life is fuller, our relationships stronger, and our faith is deeper all because of brokenness. And so, when you have known this deep despair, you learn to value and appreciate hope. So, joy in pain and hope in despair. Right?

But this eternal perspective is really what has changed for us. From the beginning *finish well* was kind of our family motto. And, you know, in the throes of ALS sometimes you can be so consumed with how hard things are. We couldn't see past our pain. It was so challenging that there were times where Jeff would say, "I don't want to live like this forever." And I had said the same, "I don't want to do this forever. "

And, you know, hindsight is 20/20. We're on the other side of that now. And while there is a different form of pain, for sure, it's almost like God was saying, "Tara, I wasn't asking you to live this way forever. I was asking you to endure for today." And that's not to minimize any pain at all. This is oftentimes... You know we can say pain is temporary, but doesn't feel like it. It doesn't feel like it.

You know, we wanted to have this eternal mindset. And that really solidified for us. I'll never forget Jeff's final moments when his heart stopped beating and mine continued. And I realized in that moment it was the greatest day of his life and the worst day of mine. But I was so thankful that his body was healed from this disease and that he is ultimately where I want to be—with his heavenly Father. Right? But how often do we think about that? How often do we think about heaven? So before ALS, I would have told you, "Absolutely I want to go to heaven, but that's after. Life is good here. My marriage is good. Our space was great. I want to spend time with my children. I want to see my children grow up and have children. I want to see my children have payback with their children. Right? I mean...

Aaron

Amen.

Tara

And ALS shifted that mindset very, very quickly. I'm ready now. If I could be honest, if it could be like in two years so I don't have to pay college tuition, that would be great.

Aaron



Yeah. That would be amazing.

Tara

But, you know, I think the best way I can put this into perspective is, say you come home from Traders Point today and you say, "We're going to do a new church plant, but it's across the world, in Yemen. Right? So you come home and you tell Lindsay, "We're moving to Yemen." So imagine the moving truck comes, cargo ships are loaded. You get into the car and you're headed to the airport. And imagine you both look at each other and say, "What do you know about Yemen?" And imagine you shrugging your shoulders and saying, "I don't know. We'll figure it out when we get there." That's absurd. Like, this is where you're going to spend the rest of your life, and you didn't research it? You didn't google it.

I think that is what we do about heaven. This is where we're going to spend millions, and millions, and millions of years and we're so focused on this life here.

Aaron

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's such a good word. That's such a good word.

You know, as we begin to kind of wrap up our conversation, I want you to speak, maybe in particular, to any women listening to this today and they are grieving. And there could be any number of reasons: they are in pain, they are in crisis, they're grieving. What word of encouragement would you say to them today?

Tara

Oh, to moms with a broken heart, I just want to say this is not the life you wanted, you did not have in your future plans loss, inability to conceive, even that the love of your life would walk out the door and leave you to parent alone. You didn't know just how hard it would be to parent a medically fragile child, autism, ADHD, CP. And life is very, very challenging. Perhaps you lost a mom. Disease, accidents... I just want to say that I am so sorry and that you are loved, you are adored, and you are not alone—although you most definitely that way.

If I could just offer a few pieces of advice it would be, one: take time to grieve, say all of your, "It's not fair," because it's not. And then wash your face and live well. Number two would be: ask for help. God never sent anyone out on a solo mission. We need each other. So ask for help. I'd also say be gentle with yourself. Give yourself grace. You're grieving. So really be kind to yourself, especially in this season. Don't do this alone.

I would say, get together with other people who have similar circumstances, someone who can say, "Me too," But even if it's not that, just someone who can sit with you in your pain and show empathy and kindness and compassion. And then, finally, listen to God's voice, because He's listening. He wants you to rely on Him, keep your eyes on the finish, and finish well.

Aaron

I love that. Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

Well, Tara. I can't believe our time is already up. That went by so fast. I just want to thank you for being willing to just be so vulnerable to share your story with us and just encourage us in this way. I think the ripple effects of this conversation are going to be really significant for so many people, for such a long time. So, thank you for that. Can we give it up for Tara one more time?

And we have limited numbers of copies of these at every campus, so grab one of these on your way out. Tara, I know you don't have the opportunity to be at each of our campuses physically, but campus pastors will be there. There will be people to pray with you and meet with you. Here at Northwest Tara has just agreed to meet down front just to be available. So, if there is anybody who would like to speak with her, pray with her, she'll be down front for a period of time between services.

Tara, would you do the honor to pray for us?

Tara

I would love to.

Father, we love You. You are so, so good. God, that doesn't mean that we won't go through pain in this life. In fact, You told us we will have pain in this world. But we surrender to You. God, please help us to know that this is not our final story.

And to the women who are hurting, Lord, would You please draw near. Would You bring other people into their life to help carry their burdens. And may they know that they are not a burden, they have a burden. And, by definition, burdens are heavy and they need help.

God, for all of us, keep our eyes on the finish. Eternity is right in front of us. Help us to live well, to suffer well, and to finish well for Your glory.



God, we are so excited for heaven. And until then we are called to be ambassadors of Your kingdom.

Lord, we love You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

