

## Stories that Change Everything | Present, Not Perfect

*Aaron Brockett | Luke 10:25-37*

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Thank you so much. That really means a lot. I love you guys and miss you guys. If we haven't had a chance to meet, I hope we do. My name is Aaron and I get to serve as one of the pastors around here. I absolutely love this church and this place.

I want to welcome all our guests and first time visitors at all of our campuses right now—North, Downtown, West, online, and those of you here at Northwest. It is so, so good to be with you. Let's show that same love to all our guests. It's good to have you. I love you guys.

I've been gone the last several weeks on what's called an annual study break. What I've learned, and I've had to learn this the hard way, is there is a real difference between working up a message to preach on the weekends because several thousand of you are going to show up and you're going to bring your friends and you expect something that is inspiring and life changing for me to bring every seven days—there is a difference between doing that and being able to speak out of the overflow of what God is going in my own heart and in my own personal connection and relationship with him. That just doesn't happen if I run 100 miles an hour 52 weeks out of the year.

And so our elders very wisely, when I arrived here 10 years ago, said, "Hey, by the way, you're going to take a study break in the summer." I said, "I've only been on the job three or four months. I don't think I deserve it." And they said, "It's not about what you deserve, it's a gift. So take it and work it into the rotation of your life." There's this thing called rhythm that is really important. God's word for it is Sabbath. So I would encourage you to do the same, because we are not made to run a million miles an hour.

I'm always ready to go on study break. I'm always ready to get back. I always know I'm ready to get back when I just like stand up at home and need to preach, and Lindsay and the kids don't want to hear it. So I just go back into the bedroom and shut the door, and I preach to those poor pillows. It's really, really good to be back with you.

Did you enjoy the teaching pastors this summer? Didn't they do a great job, every single one of them? And did you appreciate Petie? Hasn't Petie done such a great job? You'll be hearing more from Petie in the future. Petie is just as much fun to hang out with as you might imagine he would be. He's always yelling stuff, and it's just great.

So I am really excited about the next season of ministry we're heading into as a church. We're starting Sunday night services here in a few short weeks at Northwest, North, and Downtown. I want to encourage you to come to that, especially if you're a Saturday nighter or if you attend one of the services at one of those three campuses on Sunday morning that is quickly

approaching capacity. I want to encourage you to jump to Sunday night, and go one and serve one.

That's part of the problem with Saturday night. We only had one service, so if you did go one and serve one, you had to come back the next day and that is not ideal. I just want you to be actively engaged in what God is doing around here, not for us, but for you. And you'll really grow when you not only receive what happens in a worship service, but you contribute in the way of serving. So I want to encourage you to go one and serve one, go to the huddles, all that good stuff.

In August we're going to have a lot of fun and food on Sunday nights at those campuses, to make it a festive environment. So I'm really looking forward to seeing what God is going to do there.

But we are continuing on in our summer message series called *Stories That Change Everything*. So if you're brand new and just coming into this at any one of our campuses, we have been looking at, this summer, the stories Jesus told—and they are called parables—because Jesus knew that stories move us in ways that other teaching mediums cannot.

Stories can speak to our hearts in unexpected ways. Several years ago my wife went out and rented a movie on a Friday night. This was before the days of Netflix, may Blockbuster rest in peace. And she came home from Blockbuster with a movie, maybe you've heard of it, called *The Notebook*.

I was not into it. I was like, "Honey, I don't want to watch this." We sat down and started it about 9:00 at night. I don't know if you remember the opening scene of *The Notebook*, but it's a flock of geese flying over a lake at sunset with really sappy music. And that's the opening.

I looked at her and said, "You've got to be kidding me. This is killing me. I'm going to fall asleep within 10 minutes. I'm just telling you that so won't be disappointed." And I was wrong. Two hours later I'm sitting there with tissues all around. I've got tears streaming down my cheeks. She's cool as a cucumber. I'm the one that's a mess.

And I look over at her and I'm like, "I love you and tomorrow I'm going to buy a little black notebook and I'm going to start recording our love story, just in case you ever get the amnesia and I will read it and you'll come back to me."

That's the power of stories. And stories speak to all of us in ways that move our hearts. I sense it on the weekend. Sometimes I'll be up here preaching away. I'm enjoying myself way more than you're enjoying it. And I maybe get a little too content heavy. I can see it in the room. Eyes start to droop, and body language begins to change. That tells me you're not locked in—never this service. It's all the other ones. And all I've got to do in that moment is tell a story, and it's like I just waived smelling salts under all of your noses and you come right back to me.

Here's the thing Jesus knew: Content may or may not change your mind ... stories always change your heart.

And it's not that Jesus is not interested in your mind. Just read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. That is an incredible sermon filled with all kinds of good content that speaks to our mind. It's just that until this knowledge gets to our heart, our lives aren't likely to change. If you want your life to change, you've got to get it into your heart. If you want your relationships to change, you've got to get it into your heart. And Jesus knew this.

So Jesus would spend a whole bunch of time telling stories. In fact, think about it this way, he could perceive whether or not he could get through to you, and if he could not get through to you, he would tell a story.

The story we're going to look at today is found in Luke 10. So if you have a Bible or a digital Bible in front of you, go ahead and turn to Luke 10. If you have a Bible, just yell out, "I've got one!" Sweet, like eight of you. So we're going to look at the Good Samaritan. And the Good Samaritan is really a story about the way we treat people at its base level. Not only that, but Jesus is going to talk about the way we should treat people who are really nothing like us.

How many of you would agree that it's much more difficult to treat people in your life with love, dignity, and respect if you don't like them? It's hard to treat them well. Now if you like them, isn't it easier to treat them better? And the answer to that is of course.

We live in a society today that has never preached tolerance, love, and acceptance more than we do today, but nobody does it well. Nobody does it consistently, I don't care what side of the aisle or issue you are on, because we're dealing with the remnants of something that took place in the 80s and the 90s called the culture wars. In the culture wars there were two different sides of an issue—if you were on it you didn't just disagree with the other person, you were their enemy.

You sought to totally discredit them. If they saw things differently than you, you couldn't have any kind of interaction with them. We're dealing with the remnants of that today in the sense that we sort of have this ideology that says, "If you disagree with me, we can't be in a relationship. If you disagree with me, then you hate me. You don't love me." And that's just a bunch of nonsense.

My wife, I know she loves me. She disagrees with me all the time. It's actually her disagreement that shows me she loves me. She is courageous enough, bold enough, and kind enough to disagree with me well.

Some of my closest friends disagree with me all the time. It's the disagreements that show me they love me. The leadership team around here isn't just a bunch of yes-men and yes-women who tell me what I want to hear. They tell me what I don't want to hear so we get better.

Just because you disagree with someone does not mean they are an enemy. We've got to learn in our society and culture to disagree with each other well. Would you agree? We've got to disagree and then say, "Hey, you know what? I still love you. We can still be in a relationship. I still care for you. I can still serve you."

This happens all the time around here. We'll get an email or have a question come in from somebody who is new, or maybe somebody who has never been to church here, and they'll say this. "I want to know what you believe about this," or, "I want to hear Traders Point's stance on that." And we're always happy to have that conversation and talk about that, as long as it's a conversation and not a grenade over a keyboard.

And whenever we're beginning to have that conversation, oftentimes we'll say, "Well, why? Why is this so meaningful to you? Why does this matter so much?" And oftentimes they say, "I just want to know if I'll be accepted there. I just want to know if this is a church I can actually be a part of."

I totally get that. I totally understand where you're coming from. But what exactly are you looking for? Are you looking for us to agree on 100 percent of what you've already concluded? Because if that's the case you're never going to grow, you're never going to find it anywhere in the world and if you do you're never going to grow.

So Jesus is going to tell us a story today and say: I know it's hard to love people who you don't agree with. I know it's hard to love people who you don't feel you have anything in common with. But you are never more like Jesus than when you can love someone who is different than you. You are never more than Jesus than when you can lay down your life for someone with whom you don't think you have anything in common with.

So Jesus is going to tell this parable, but we need to understand the conversation that prompts it. So beginning in Luke 10:25 it says this, "One day an **expert** in religious law stood up to **test** Jesus by asking him this question: 'Teacher, what should I **do** to inherit eternal life?'"

I want you to understand that they guy is an expert in religious law. So he knows a whole bunch of stuff up here. And he comes to Jesus to test him. Jesus is in public, and he is trying to discredit Jesus. And so he asks a question, and it's a really good question but his motivation is bad. He wants to know what he should do to inherit eternal life.

So right off the bat we see this guy is being combative. This guy is someone who would be difficult for Jesus to love. Jesus teaches us lesson number one. Does anyone have anybody in your life who is hard to love? Raise up those hands. Are they with you right now?

Maybe you work with somebody. You live next door to somebody. Somebody in your family is really, really hard to love. What do you do when they come at you hard, like they are combative? Usually we get defensive. Usually we serve it right back at them. We make a statement or an accusation. What does that do? It just inflames the situation.

Here's what Jesus does. Jesus doesn't make a statement or an accusation. He just simply asks a question in verse 26, "Jesus replied, 'What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?'" What is your opinion? "The man answered, 'You must **love the Lord** your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, '**Love your neighbor** as yourself.'" And I love this. "'Right!' Jesus told him. 'Do this and you will live!'"

So right here what the guy is saying is this is something he would have learned as a young man in Rabbi school. It was something called the Shema and it comes out of Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19. It's basically the summary of all the Old Testament laws. Jesus would even affirm this in the gospels. The summary is: Love God and love people.

Notice here that this guy asks what he needs to do to inherit eternal life. Did anybody notice what Jesus didn't say. Jesus said nothing about belief. He said nothing about repentance. He said nothing about baptism. Isn't that interesting?

Why? because that's not the way of eternal life? No, no, no. What about this? If you could perfectly love God and perfectly love people there maybe wouldn't be a need for faith, repentance, and baptism because you're perfect. And we're not.

How many of you love God? Good, but maybe not as enthusiastic as I hoped, we've got some work to do. How many of you love people? You love people. How many of you love God and people in your life perfectly, consistently every day? Nobody—or if you did, we all need to learn from you. I'll give you the mic right now.

My wife is my favorite person on the planet. We just celebrated our 19<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary last month. She is amazing. Clap for her. She is the one you need to pray for. She is absolutely gorgeous on the outside. Do not look directly at her. And she is even more gorgeous on the inside. She is my favorite person on the planet, yet I cannot love her perfectly and consistently. I've not gone one hour loving her perfectly and consistently. So what hope do I have to love you that way?

This is what this guy understands here. And Jesus answers him. He says: Yeah, do that and you'll live. And this guy realizes: I can't do that. So instead of being humble about it, instead of being teachable about it, he chooses to get even more combative. Look at what he says in verse 29, "The man wanted to **justify** his actions," don't we all? "...so he asked Jesus, 'And, who is my **neighbor?**'"

Understand what just happened here. This guy thinks he has just thrown Jesus an intellectual and theological haymaker. And all Jesus did was he dodged it and did one of these Samurai pressure point moves and dropped the dude to his knees.

And the guy is not happy about it. It's made him look a little silly in front of his peers. So he gets more combative and he goes: Well then, tell me Mr. Know-it-all who is my neighbor? But

understand this. To a Jew living in the first century, a neighbor would have just been another Jew who talked like them, acted like them, and looked like them. That's my neighbor. A Gentile would have said, "My neighbor is another Gentile who looks like me and talks like me." We see the world the same way. A Samaritan—his neighbor would have been another Samaritan.

He wants to define the neighborhood here. And this is what prompts the story. And this is the story Jesus tells in verse 30, "Jesus replied with **a story**: 'A **Jewish** man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits.'"

So this is a fictional story but understand it's got real life details. In other words, it's a made-up story but Jerusalem and Jericho were real places. And the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a real road. It's called the Jericho road. It's there today. You could travel it today if you wanted to.

Jerusalem was about 2,500 feet above sea level. Jericho is about 800 feet below it. I'm not very good at geometry, but I think the angle of that is this. And it was a dangerous road. There was a certain section called the pass of blood because there were hillsides and caves that people could hide out in. They would often times jump people and rob them.

The interesting twist in this is that most of the time those who would actually rob the travelers, it was Samaritans robbing the Jews. It is really interesting, the details Jesus gives in this story. As he tells this, people go, "Oh, I know this stretch of road. That road is sketchy. I had a camel break down there one time and we didn't think we would make it out with our lives." So people would have understood the road. They would have understood the scenario.

He said this guy got jumped, "They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. By chance a **priest**," this is a pastor. This is somebody who should have helped. This is what they do for a living "...a **priest** came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the **other side** of the road and passed him by."

So it is very easy to be hard on this guy and look down on him, to judge the priest for not stopping. But if you and I were honest, we've all done it at least once in our lives. We see somebody who maybe needs some help—somebody on the side of the road or wherever it is. We want to help, but we justify it, don't we? Like, "How do I really know if they are in need? I don't really know what their motives are. I'm really in a rush. I've got to go help some other people." So we say a quick prayer, go around them, and go on about our day.

I'd like to give this guy the benefit of the doubt. Here's what I think is going through the priest's mind. He is on his way to Jericho, quite possibly to conduct religious services, which means he would have had to go through a seven day purification process in order to lead the service. We don't do that anymore today, thankfully. I did jump in the shower before I headed over here today, so you are welcome.

But I've not been in a purification process for seven days. That would be a long, long time. I wonder if, as he sees this guy, he thinks to himself: If I stop and help him, this could be a trap

and I could get mugged myself. Then I can't go help those people in Jericho. If I stop and help this guy and he dies on me, I'm considered impure because I've touched a dead body. I'll have to go back to Jerusalem, go through the seven day purification process again and I'll miss the 11:00 service. I think that's maybe what he is thinking. So he thinks: I'm going to bypass the one, and I'm going to go help a whole bunch of other people in Jericho.

Then it says right after that in verse 32, "A Temple assistant [**Levite**] walked over and **looked at him** lying there, but he also passed by on the other side." So understand who a Levite was. A Levite was sort of like the JV team. Levites were the mall cops of the day. They weren't as important as the priest. So likely he was following at a distance, but he can still see the priest up ahead of him.

He sees the priest, his leader, go around the guy. So he says: Well, if my leader is going around, then I'll do as my leader does. If it is too dangerous for him, it's too dangerous for me, too inconvenient for him, too inconvenient for me, too expensive for him, too expensive for me. I'm living on a Levite salary. I can't help the guy.

What Jesus says next would have shocked everybody listening to this. He says this in verse 33, "Then a **despised Samaritan** came along..." The reason why Samaritans were so despised—and maybe you've heard that before if you've been in church but maybe you didn't know why they were despised.

About eight centuries before Jesus, the Assyrians attacked and captured the Jews living in the Northern Kingdom and they occupied territory together. So it didn't take long for the Assyrians and the Jews to intermarry. Many of them, their offspring became known as Samaritans. It was considered an impure race. It was considered an impure religious form in their culture.

As a result, the Jews despised the Samaritans, and the Samaritans were happy to return the favor. They hated each other. The Samaritans would often hide out on that road from Jerusalem to Jericho. They would jump the Jews and rob and beat them.

Jesus says this: "Then a **despised Samaritan** came along and when he saw the man, he **felt compassion** for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The **next day** he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'"

This is absolutely stunning. What I want you to see here—Jesus tells the story backwards from the way I would tell it if I were in his situation. If I had a Jewish expert in the law saying to me, "Aaron, who is my neighbor," I would tell it like this. "Let me tell you this story. There is a Samaritan who gets jumped in the road and he is lying in the ditch, and a Jew comes along. You should stop and you should serve him."



That would have been the way I would have told the story. I think it would have registered with his mind, and it would have stayed there. He would have thought, “Okay, that makes sense.” But it would have bounced off because it didn’t get to his heart.

But Jesus knew he had to communicate something to this guy’s heart. So here is how he tells the story. He says: No, actually I want you to identify with the person lying in the ditch. You are the one who is laying there bleeding out. You are the one who is in need. You look up and who do you see? It’s your enemy walking down the road. Now what do you want him to do for you? Would you want your enemy to be your neighbor in that moment?”

You know what? I think you would. If Jesus was physically with us today and he decided to retell this parable to bring it into the modern era, what two groups of people do you think he would put in the parable? It’s very simple. Who is your enemy? Who do you have little in common with? Who do you argue with on social media? Who do you say, “Man, I hope I never have to be in a car with that individual on a road trip. That would blow my mind.”

I think Jesus would put a Democrat and a Republican in the parable today. He would put a liberal and a conservative in the parable today. He would put a pro-lifer and a pro-choicer. You take any social issue we are divided on, just turn on any news channel right now and the two groups who are arguing would be the two groups of people Jesus would put in this parable.

Have you noticed on the news channels that nobody acts with humility? Nobody is like, “You make a really valid point. I still disagree with you, but I love you. Let’s go to dinner.” That never happens.

Do you see in this parable Jesus say: I would choose the person you are the most uncomfortable talking with and actually interacting with. That’s the person I would put in the parable.

And then Jesus concludes in verse 36 and he says this to the guy, “Now which of these three would you say was a **neighbor** to the man who was attacked by bandits?’ Jesus asked. The man replied,” and he can’t even say the word Samaritan, “‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Then Jesus said, ‘Yes, now go and do the same.’”

This is the application for every single one of us: Go and do the same. Don’t just hear the story, don’t just mentally agree with it, but let this message get down into your heart and say, “I need to go and do the same.”

Here is a question I have for all of us at all of our campuses right now. How many of you would agree that we live in a really messed-up, broken world? Every hand should go up. We should all agree with that. We see it all the time.

Maybe you have great anxiety over that. Maybe you say, “I don’t know what kind of world my kids are going to grow up in,” but we are all in the same boat when it comes to this. It doesn’t



matter what side of the issue you are on, whatever it is. It doesn't matter what political persuasion you have, we all agree this world is messed up. We can agree on that.

Here's the other thing we can agree on. I think we can agree on the fact that if I can manage to love others better, and when I say love others better I don't mean to agree to disagree or just be really nice. I mean, "Even though I disagree with you, I'm not going to gossip about you, I'm not going to malign you, I'm not going to attack you. I'm going to actually show you dignity, love, and respect."

If I could love others better and others could love you better, we could at least move the needle on making this world a better place. Could we at least agree on that? About 30 percent of the room. Why don't we?

And I think there are maybe three questions I want us to consider here. I think the first one is maybe this: Am I afraid?

Who are you afraid to love? For what reason? Maybe it drives you out of your comfort zone. Maybe you are like, "Man, I don't want them to get the wrong idea. My reputation is on the line."

If the priest and the Levite were here today and they could defend themselves, I think they would say: I had every good intention of helping the guy. I saw the guy, but I was afraid. I didn't know if this was a trap. If I stopped, maybe I would get attacked. I didn't know what others would say about me. Listen, whoever it is that you are afraid of loving and serving, Jesus would say: I would be right smack dab in the middle of that. I would be right there.

Here is the second question: Am I distracted?

I think the priest and the Levite would say: I had every good intention of helping this guy. I was on my way to do something really important. I had a whole bunch of things to do. For many of us, our schedule is so full that even if God told us he wanted us to do something, even if God were speaking into our lives, we wouldn't be able to hear him because we are too distracted.

Maybe we need to declutter some things out of our lives, create some margin in our lives so that way we can hear from God. Here is one prayer God will always answer 100 percent of the time, "God, place somebody in my path I can love well." He will answer that 100 percent of the time. You may not like who he puts in your path, but he will always answer it.

Here's the third question. This is maybe the scariest of them all, because maybe you do see somebody in need, maybe you do see somebody God has put in your path but you're just not moved by it. I think what motivated this Samaritan to serve this guy was he thought to himself: If I were in the ditch, I'd want somebody to stop and help me.

And this is exactly the point Jesus is making to us. We need to see others not as we see them, but as Jesus sees them. If you can see others the way that Jesus sees them, it will change the way you treat them every single time.

You can say to somebody, “I don’t know if I agree with you. I don’t know that I understand you. And the jury is still out on if I like you. But I love you, even if the sole motivation is that Jesus loves you.”

Understand this. Jesus represents the Samaritan in the parable. This isn’t just a parable about being nice to each other. This parable is the gospel. Jesus is the Samaritan and he chose to come down our path of destruction. He saw you and me lying in the ditch bleeding out. He didn’t walk around us, but he actually said: This is going to be costly. This is going to be dangerous. I’m going to go out of my way, but I’m actually going to give my very life so you can be restored once again.

And now he has opened up an account in his name with God the Father. He says: By the way, if they need additional grace just go ahead and charge it to my account. That’s the parable. And Jesus says: If you are unmoved by that in the way you treat others, then you don’t understand it because that Spirit of God should be alive and well within you.

Somewhere along the line we’ve gotten this idea: If I am nice to people I disagree with, they will think I am okay with their lifestyle. Where in the world did we get that idea? Not Jesus, because if Jesus would have thought that he would never have had dinner with tax collectors and prostitutes.

Jesus would have never saved us from our sin. Do you know what the Bible says about us prior to his grace? We were his enemies. We were his enemies due to our sin. The Bible says that while we were still dead in his sins, Jesus gave his life for us.

Do you know what it says in 1 Peter? God’s kindness is what led us to repentance, his kindness—not his anger, not his wrath. Those are real things, but they’re not directed at you, they are directed at your sin. It was God’s kindness that led us to repentance. And he says: If that Spirit saved you from the ditch and that Spirit is living within you, yet you can’t love other people you disagree with well, then you’ve got to ask yourself, “Am I really in tune with the Spirit?”

You see, when we are afraid to rub shoulders with people who are really different from us, who we don’t have anything in common with, what that shows is a lack of confidence in the Spirit of God. And we are afraid of that person’s sin. We’re afraid of that person’s choices. We’re afraid of that person’s lifestyle.

Instead, God says: If my Spirit is living within you and I want to get up close and personal with those people, how do you think I’m going to do it? I’m going to do it through you. If my Spirit

lives in you, then I want you to get into close proximity with them so I can love them and influence them and show them God is a God of kindness, grace, and mercy.

Do any of you know what the Golden Rule is? Did your mama teach you the Golden Rule—all eight of you again. You guys are locked in with me. It's amazing. So the Golden Rule, let's say it out loud together: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

How many of you have heard of the Platinum Rule? Have any of you heard of the Platinum Rule? It's right here in Ephesians 4:32 and is way better than the Golden Rule. It is: Do unto others as Jesus has done unto you—and that's different.

If you can manage to do unto others as Jesus has done unto you, it will change your grace capacity. It'll change the way you love other people. You don't have to be perfect to do this; you just need to be present.

I think that's the big takeaway for all of us. We need to be present to what God desires to do in and through our world through each one of us and the church. Present people are not perfect people. Present people are people who are in tune enough with the Spirit of God who is alive and well within them that God says: I want you to move. I want you to go over there and love that person.

Present people are kind people. Present people are not just spectators at church, present people are contributors. Present people don't just kind of file in here and go through the motions. Present people worship with passion, not because it's hype, but because it's hope.

Present people don't just sit through a message, but they actively lean in and engage because they think, "That's an imperfect vessel up there saying some words. Some of them don't make a lot of sense to me, but I know God is going to say at least one thing to me and I don't want to miss it. Present people know there is a mission God has called them too, and it's a movement of God in this world.

There are two different mindsets of people. There are the people who say, "The world is going to hell in a handbasket and things are really bad. It's really horrible," or there are those who say this, "God chose me to live in this time and in this place for a reason."

Not to run from the world, not to flee from the world, not to judge the world, but to lean in. And to say, "You know what? When there is the greatest number of people in our culture, that is the greatest opportunity for God to flex." Who's he going to do it through? He is going to do it through surrendered people who are willing enough to say, "God, use me. I'll go love the people who are really difficult to love. I'll go serve the people who I have nothing in common with."

I'm going to invite the worship team to come out here. I've still got a bunch to say. I want you to know what kind of church we are striving to be. It's the middle of the summer and I know

many of us have been in vacation mode. I know the natural flow of any church is complacency. The natural flow of my life is complacency, to just kind of go through the motions or focus on my problems.

What I'm going to do is I want to wave some smelling salts in front of our noses in this church to say, "To whom much has been given, much is required." I think God is saying to us, Traders Point Christian Church, at all of our locations: There is a mess out in the world and you are the solution to it. I actually want to use you to make an impact in the world.

So we are a church that mobilizes each and every one of us to be active participants in what God is doing in this world, not spectators who just show up on the weekend and take in a religious show. We are a church that is passionate, but we are authentic. We will be expressive, but not showy. Maybe you like the show *The Walking Dead*, but that should not describe the church.

We should not file in here like a bunch of spiritual zombies going through the motions, enduring it or focusing only on our problems. We should be expressive because of what Jesus has done for us. We are alive. There should be an electricity at all of our campuses because the Spirit of God is alive and in this place.

What that means practically is that some of us need to remind our faces that our souls got saved. We are a church that will be known more for who we love than what we are against, more for what we're for, than what we oppose. We are a church that will love people even if they criticize us, misunderstand us, write mean and nasty things about us online, or only give us one star on Google Reviews. I know who you are.

We are a church that doesn't condemn the world. We don't run from the world. We don't blend into the world. But we engage the world one person at a time. All eight of those people are standing up. They've been with me all the way through it. We are a church that removes unnecessary barriers that keep people from Jesus. That is not a gimmick, that's the gospel.

It doesn't mean we water it down. It doesn't mean we lower the bar. It means simply this. The primary way we grow as disciples is not by filling our head with a bunch of knowledge, but it's being good Samaritans to people who are lying in the ditch and they need to get to Jesus. So we're going to remove those barriers so they can get to him.

We are a church that gets over it when our personal preferences aren't granted or that thing we really like goes away or gets changed. Not because it's not important, not because you don't have an opinion about it and you're not entitled to express it, but because we have an enemy who would like to distract us with petty disagreements over secondary issues that won't matter six months from now when people are dying and going to hell next week.

We are a church that gets on mission, because our mission is a message. That message is life changing, relevant, and it's more than just attending church on the weekend. It's that Jesus is

alive and well, and he wants you and me to be a part of it. Do you want to be a part of a church like that, because I do?

And all this requires is for you to simply be present. When you show up on the weekends, your mentality isn't, "What am I going to get out of it?" Your mentality is, "Who can I serve?"

You want to know what makes a really good weekend? It's not how on point the worship team is, although they are always on point. It's not how good the sermon is. It's not if your kids enjoyed the Kids' Ministry or not. We care about all that stuff. Do you know what makes a good weekend for you? It's when you get connected with at least one person and you were actually the hands and feet, arms and legs of Jesus to them. And you say, "I'm going to look for somebody to serve. I'm going to look for somebody to love," knowing that's what makes a great weekend. You are a part of this mission and it requires you to be present, not perfect.

I want us at all of our campuses to get on our feet. I'm going to pray, then I want us to worship like we mean it. I want you to worship in a way that draws you out of your comfort zone, because the Spirit of God is in this place and we want to ask him to do something in our lives and in this city.

Father God, we come to you right now. Lord, I want to be a part of a movement of your Spirit. I'm tired of talking heads on TV who think they've got solutions through politics and debate, when the answer is your Spirit and the Word and the person of Jesus Christ. We've got it.

So God, I pray that we let it move from our heads, to our hearts, to our hands, and to our mouths in the way we serve and love others, that others would come here and say, "I don't understand this. I don't even know if I believe what you believe but I know you believe it and I believe God is doing something significant here."

God, I pray that in these next few moments that you would look down on our church and be pleased with what you see. As we worship you, as we've heard from you, that we could actually lift our voices up to you and thank you for not leaving us in the ditch. By your grace you pulled us out of it. Now that same Spirit of gratitude is living within us, and we need to reach as many people as we possibly can.

Thank you, Jesus, for your love. Thank you for your willingness to give your life for us. May we worship now like we mean it. May we worship like a movement. In Jesus' name. And the church says, "Amen."