

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

LIVING WITH POWER | CHURCH IN THE WILD

KYLE RILEY | JULY 28, 2024

Alright. Traders Point, how are we feeling today? Love it. Great. Well, it's great to be with all of you. I want to welcome everybody at all of our campuses, everybody who is tuning in online. It's great to be here with you guys today.

Before we jump in I just want to remind us that this coming week we are actually kicking off our week of prayer and fasting.

And what we like to do as a church is we like to set aside two times a year where we essentially carve out time to go before God and to humble ourselves and say, "God, may we never get ahead of you. God, would you continue to humble us in our posture and our approach and our methods and all that we do?"

"God, we believe that you are still working in people's lives. And we just want to consecrate ourselves in order to be able to do that."

We put together a whole guide for you to be able to follow and some tips and some prayer prompts. Every single day we're going to be praying toward something different. There is some information on there that if you are new to fasting, it will allow you to be guided through that as well.

And this Thursday is the day that we start and we're kicking that off by opening up our campuses for an hour of prayer. So, from 12 to 1 p.m. if you are able to swing by and drop in and be led in prayer we would love to have you at any of our campuses.

And this is culminating on August 8th with our next worship night, which we are excited about. Yeah. Let's celebrate worship night. You all clapped for that but you didn't clap for the fasting part. And that's fine.

We are excited. So, I encourage you to mark your calendars. Visit the web page. And join us for this week of prayer. I do believe that God is going to move.

So, before we jump into the message, I just want to actually pray for our week of prayer and fasting. So would you, at all of our campuses join me as we pray?

God, we are thankful for who You are. God, we're thankful that You are holy and You are righteous and You're just. And in all of that, God, You love us. You love Your creation.

And You have given us a mission as a church. God, that mission is critical. That mission is important. That mission doesn't come without Your aid and Your guidance.



We never want to lose sight of that. We never want to get ahead of You, God. We want to stay humble before You. We want to be able to continue to look to You in all of Your grace in all of Your mercy and all of Your power. We want to say, "God, we need You."

So, as we enter into this week, where we consecrate ourselves and we sanctify ourselves before You, God, we just pray that You would empower us. We pray that Your Spirit would move in incredible ways.

We pray that if there are things people are needing in their lives, God, that You would show up.

And in no way is this an opportunity or an attempt to twist Your arm, to manipulate You into answering prayer. But, God, this is a way for us to put ourselves to the side and to fully and completely trust You and who You are and believe You for what You are doing and continuing to do in the lives of people around us.

And, God, we give it over to You. Would You move in a mighty way? We thank You and we love You. It's in Jesus' name that we pray. And the church says: Amen. Amen.

Hey, if you have a Bible, go ahead and turn with me to 1 Corinthians, chapter 4. 1 Corinthians, chapter 4, that's where we are going to be living today.

And if you are just joining us, we are in a series called Church In The Wild. If you are wondering why that title, I'm so glad that you asked.

This is actually a letter that we're going through right now called 1 Corinthians. And 1 Corinthians was written by a guy named Paul. And Paul used to hate Christians. He had this attempt to actually do everything he could to destroy Christians. He was persecuting them. He was having them killed. And he was actually trying to stop Christianity from spreading.

But then one day he had this radical encounter with Jesus and his life was completely flipped upside down. And this person came from persecuting Christians to actually telling anybody and everybody who would listen about the love of Jesus.

And he becomes this church planter. Paul goes from city to city telling people about Jesus, helping them get into community, and showing them what it looked like to follow after Jesus.

One of the cities that Paul finds himself in is called Corinth. Corinth was in modern day Greece. And can I just tell you, Corinth was a crazy city. Corinth was huge, it was vibrant, it was wealthy, and it was very successful.

It was a sex obsessed city. I mean, it was crazy. It would have made Vegas look like the Children's Museum. Some of you are like, "Sign me up."



But this is where Paul finds himself, in a city like Corinth surrounded by all types of things and the church is started here. And we've been saying that if the gospel can take root in a city like Corinth, it can change lives wherever. And the gospel can change our city.

And we want to be the people who take the gospel message to the desperate parts of our city. To the hurt and the broken and the people who are in need of the hope and help of Jesus. We want to be a church in the wild. We want God to use us as we do that. Amen? Amen.

I'm glad you all agree. Let me tell you something. I come from a country called the black church. Okay? And what that means is that this is not a monologue. This is a dialogue. You are welcome to talk back to me. You are welcome to clap. You are welcome to say: Amen.

What we believe is that we have been called to be a church in the wild. And if we believe that, we need to know that it is not going to be easy. We need to know that it is going to be complex. It's going to be messy. It's going to be hard. It's going to require some sacrifice. It's going to require us getting into proximity with people who don't look like us or even agree with what we believe in. But we believe that it is going to be worth it.

Paul found himself in a very similar predicament. And as he was taking this gospel message to a city like Corinth, he found it hard, and complex and discouraging. To the point where God, Himself, had to remind Paul of the mission that he was on and had to encourage him.

We actually get a glimpse of this in Acts, chapter 18. And I want us to take a look at the way Paul needs God's encouragement. It says this in verse 9:

"...Many others in Corinth also heard Paul, became believers, and were baptized. One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, 'Don't be afraid! Speak out! Don't be silent! For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you, for many people in this city belong to me.'" Acts 18:8b-10 (NLT)

God had to remind Paul that he was on this mission and there were people in the city of Corinth who actually belonged to God, Paul just didn't know it. And He says, "Don't be afraid because the mission and the reward of the mission is worth it."

So, Paul didn't run away. He didn't treat this as some sort of vacation. It wasn't like some little, short-term mission trip for him. No, he actually planted himself in this city. So much so that we actually get a glimpse of it in the next verse. Look at what it says in verse 11:

"So Paul stayed there for the next," how long? Everybody say, "year and a half,"

He was there for a year and a half. My man was there for 18 months doing life with these people. He was there sharing with them, encouraging them.

He was there saying, “Hey, I know what you’ve been through. I know that you have never heard about this guy named Jesus before. I know that you’ve have experienced this life of sin that you once found so attractive.

“I know that you are coming from a life where people are looking at you and have pushed you to the margins of society. They have outcast you. They have looked down on you. And that you’ve been through some very hard things.

“But can I just tell you about this man named Jesus? Can I tell you about this love that He has for you? Can I tell you about who I once was? Can I tell you about the life I came from when I had this radical encounter with Jesus and He changed me from the inside out? And He wants to do the very same thing for you.”

This is what Paul did. And I say that because 1 Corinthians is a letter that Paul is writing years later to these people. And imagine that as Paul is penning these words, he is imagining the faces of the people he did life with. He’s seeing the people who he once knew.

He’s seeing their stories. He’s remembering where they came from. He’s remembering the lives that they once lived. He’s remembering the laughs that they shared, the tears that they cried together. He had earned their trust over that 18 months.

And that’s important. It’s important because we need to know that Paul had lived with the people of Corinth. He had:

Relational Equity

He had this relational equity with them. And just as a side note, relational equity is time and value that you invest into relationships. And if you want to know one of the most effective forms of discipleship it is actually through relational equity. It’s through building relationships with people, getting to know their lives. Getting to know their stories. Getting to know where they come from, why they think the way that they think.

Rarely does arguing people into the faith ever work. Okay? Just look at the comment section on social media and see people who are keyboard warriors for Jesus. It’s not working. Okay? It requires proximity to people. It requires getting up close and personal to their messiness and asking questions and being curious.

I just want to throw that out there. If we want to be effective disciple makers, if we want to be a church in the wild, it’s going to require us getting close and personal to the people who we know. Maybe even the people who we don’t. And getting really, really curious and developing a trust and rapport with them and hopefully it will lead to a bridge that allows us to share the gospel with them.

That's what Paul did. And so, the reason I share that, the reason why it's important is because Paul, in 1 Corinthians is actually going to share a lot of hard truths. He's going to share a lot of correction. He's been hearing about the way that the church in Corinth has been living, how they've strayed from the gospel.

Word gets back to Paul and he's like, "Ah, this isn't the way that I showed you guys. But remember as I share these words of correction, as I share this hard truth with you, I want you to know that I love you. Remember I have this relationship with you and it's coming from a good place.

I think after we hear the words today, and we apply them to our lives we need to remember that God has a relationship with us as well and He wants us to know that it is coming from a good place. Alright?

So, with that as a backdrop, I believe we are ready to jump in to 1 Corinthians, chapter 4. We're actually going to start in verse 20. This is what it says. It says:

"For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power." (NLT)

That will preach. Amen. We can call the worship team back up now at this moment. We can go about our day.

No, but that's true. Potentially. God's way is not just mere talk, but it's living an empowered life. If we want to be a church in the wild, we can't just be all talk. We can't just be people who talk about Jesus. We can't just talk about what it looks like to follow Him.

We actually have to believe that we have been given the very Spirit of God and that the Spirit of God empowers us to live our daily lives. We believe that we need the Spirit of God. Why? Because life be life-n. We need God's power in order to live in a way that He has taught us to be, not the way that we once were. Right?

So, Paul is saying, "Hey, listen. Don't forget that the kingdom of God, this way of living, is not just about talk. It is living an empowered life."

The Corinthian church had forgotten this. And Paul could tell because they had become two things: they essentially became prideful and they had become very comfortable. And Paul had some words to say to them and maybe even to us about what that looks like. So, let's back up to verse 5 and let's see what Paul says. He says:

"So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due" (NLT)

So, Paul is talking to them about judging others. And this is important because the Corinthian church had become very, very critical. They had become critical to the point where they not only thought of judging people around them, but they started judging a

lot of their leaders, people who had helped establish this church. People like Paul and another guy named Apollos.

And they began forming, actually, these little camps and these clicks according to who they liked and who they didn't like. The judgement became very, very critical. And Paul is writing back to them, "Hey, I've gotten word, I know that you all are talking about me, but you all can't be out here judging people."

And we can easily read something like that and be like, "Yep, doesn't apply to me. I don't judge nobody." You're lying. We judge. We judge. We may not like to admit it. We may not like the fact that we do it. But we do.

We judge people's decisions. We sometimes judge their choices. We judge their outfit selections. We judge their interests, their hobbies, or lack thereof.

Every week I'm judged over the fact that I don't play pickle ball. And I don't get it. I'm just like, "I don't plan on it. Stop asking."

We judge people's performances. Right? It's the Olympics, you all. If you ain't judging performances, you ain't doing it right.

My wife and I were watching synchronized diving last night and we were there. You would think that we should have had score cards with us the way that we were calling out the small imperfections. We are sitting on the couch judging the top athletes of the world. They aren't really synchronized. A little too much splash there.

I've had my performance judged before, as a preacher. I was a guest preaching one time and I got down off of the stage and this sweet old woman comes up to me. She's making her way up. She has a smile on her face.

She says, "Young man I just want you to know that your sermon was better than I thought it would be." I was like, "Thank you, sister Gertrude. I don't know what to do with that. Praise the Lord." I felt judged.

We judge people. And it may not be God's intention for us. That's why we need the very Spirit of God and the power of God.

But Paul is talking about a very different type of judgment here. The Corinthian church wasn't just judging to be judging, they had made an art form out judging. They were the gold medal winners of judging. And it came to cause some division within the church. They were becoming critical and judgmental, not only over people's actions but over their heart and their motive behind what they were doing.

And Paul is like, "Wait a minute. You don't know people's motives. You don't know why they do what they do. Only God does. So be careful while making judgments about people and their motives." In other words, God wants them to know and He wants us to know too, that we need God's power in order to be gracious.

WE NEED GOD'S POWER TO LIVE GRACIOUSLY

Why? Because everything in us causes us to default to the opposite. To be critical. To be judgmental. To be questioning why people do what they do. And Paul is like, "No, if you are going to be a follower of Jesus you need to be gracious. You need to be humble. You need His Spirit in order to be able to do that."

Now it doesn't mean that we don't call out sin. It doesn't mean that people aren't held accountable, especially leaders in the church. No, we need accountability. It doesn't mean that your critical feedback within the church isn't welcome, unless it's about this sermon. Then you can keep it to yourself.

Kidding. You can always email it to rbramlett@tppc.org.

No, but what it does mean is it means that we won't form toxic narratives around issues or people in the church. What it does mean is that we won't gossip, saying things behind people's back.

So, if you find yourself on a serving team or in a ministry or in a small group, man, if you want to sow something that is contrary to God's unifying power, just start gossiping.

That's not the way of God. We need to be unified in what we do. So, we have to always be mindful of the conversations that we are having. We never want to be divisive in our conversations. It means that we won't attribute people's actions to their motive or to their character.

These things are not what the Spirit of God or the power of God leads us to do. Instead, if you want to live graciously, here are just a couple of ways that the power of God can help us.

I actually took these from our staff values here at Traders Point. We try to use these as a way to model humility and to be gracious toward others. But I believe that they apply to our daily lives, our church lives, our work relationships. You take what you can and you apply this to us. The first thing that we need to do to be gracious is we first need to:

EMBRACE OUR OWN BROKENNESS

We need to look at our own sin in light of the cross. Jesus would say, "Hey, before you pull out the speck in somebody else's eye, look at the plank in your own." Right? So, we need to always be reminded of what God has saved us from.

You just got saved yesterday and you're out there calling out sin in everybody else. You need to be reminded of the grace that God has shown you and that He is still sanctifying you. You are still a work in progress as well. So, always be anchored in that before you go calling out things in other people and judging their heart and judging their motives.

The second thing is that you need to trust that God's strength is working in all of our weaknesses. Right? Although we're broken, although we are weak, although we make mistakes, although we have flaws we need to trust that God is going to do His work in them as well as in you.

The first thing we need to do is to embrace our own brokenness, and then here's another thing that we need to do. We need to:

STAY CURIOUS

We need to just kind of stay curious. Here's what I mean by that. It's very easy after something happens, after a conversation, after a meeting, after an event for you to walk away and if you don't agree with something you start forming your own narrative about it, you start questioning, you start wondering, and you start attributing people's worst intentions toward that thing.

But if you stay curious, it actually changes your heart posture to say, "No, I'm actually going to ask a few questions. I'm going to seek understanding.

So, rather than making an assumption, rather than judging people's motives like Paul is talking about here, maybe we go to that person, maybe go to that friend, maybe go to that family member, maybe you go to that boss or the person who is in charge of leading that thing and say, "Hey, can you help me to understand? I've got some questions about this. I'm actually forming this narrative in my head and it's probably not true, but I want to process it with you. Can we talk about this?"

It's a very different posture than forming an assumption.

I loved how Pastor Aaron always encourages us as staff. There will be a time where we have a meeting and a decision is made.

You leave that meeting, and maybe you don't agree with it. It is very easy for you to make an assumption, very easy for you to start going and talking about it, gossiping about it. But instead he says, "No. Go straight to that person."

What happens is, you leave out of that meeting you leave out of that conversation and you have a question mark. Something in your head that you don't agree with. But if you let time go by too long, if you let your own narrative form that question mark can turn into a hook.

And that is unhealthy. Right? So, no matter what the situation is: personal relationships, work relationships, family, stay curious. Don't form judgments about people's motives. You don't know why they do what they do. You don't know why God is working in their heart the way that He is. But if we maintain this posture of curiosity, it breaks down that false narrative that Satan wants to use to divide us.

So, Paul's concern for the church in Corinth is that they had forgotten how to embrace their own brokenness and they began jumping to these conclusions and making judgments. And he's saying that there is a better way. Be gracious. Why? Because the mission of God is way too important for us to be prideful and judgmental and divisive. Amen? Amen.

Alright. Glad you all agree because we have a little bit more to say and it's not pretty. It's spicy. So buckle up.

She said, "Bring it on."

He's going to say that not only are you acting like some prideful and judging Christians, but in verse 8 he says:

"You think you already have everything you need. You think you are already rich. You have begun to reign in God's kingdom without us! I wish you really were reigning already, for then we would be reigning with you." (NLT)

If you can't tell, Paul is being sarcastic here and I love it. He's like, "Y'all are living like you've made it. Y'all are living like you've crossed the finish line into heaven and you've reached the mountaintop of your spiritual life."

Essentially the Corinthian church had gotten really, really comfortable and satisfied with their spirituality. And they kind of lost their hunger for the mission of God. And they said, "Look how we are doing." And they kind of kicked their lives into cruise control.

And Paul is saying, "Must be nice. I'm a little bit jealous, actually. I wish I was reigning with y'all. Y'all seem to have made it."

But as I was reading this, here's what my fear came to be. It's that Jesus, Himself, would look at our church and kind of wonder the same thing. That He would see us and see our heart posture and see how easy it is for us to kind of kick our lives into spiritual auto pilot. He's like, "That's not the mission that I have given you. Must be nice. Hope you're having fun. Hope you're enjoying it."

It can become a very dangerous heart posture for us to have. We need to have the power of God in order for us to combat that.

WE NEED GOD'S POWER TO LIVE INTENTIONALLY

And not only does the power of God help us to live graciously, but the power of God helps us to live very intentionally as well. To keep us on mission. To keep us knowledgeable about the mission that God has given us so that we don't veer off or so that we don't become comfortable, so that we don't become complacent.



If you don't know, we have been given a mission to go and to make, what? Disciples. Right. Good. Matthew 28, we have been given a commission to go and to make disciples. And I fear that many of us have forgotten that.

Maybe forgotten is the wrong word. I feel like maybe we have exchanged that. So instead of go and make, it's become come and consume. And that's a very dangerous place to be in as well. Because consumerism leads to complacency and it leads to comfort.

I'm preaching to myself right now. I had to do my own work as I was studying for this. How have I become complacent? How have I become comfortable? That's not what we are after.

You might have heard Pastor Aaron talk about this. We're not just interested in gathering large crowds here and yet the Spirit of God is not changing people from the inside out.

No. The goal is for us to gather together to be able to worship, to be filled up, and then to be empowered to go out and make a difference where we work, live, and play. For us to encounter people who aren't following Jesus. And they question, "Hey, why do they do what they do? Why do they live like that? Why do they make the decisions that they make? How can they be so generous?"

I loved the way that it was explained to me a while ago. Live in such a way that your life requires explanation. So that as people encounter you they are like, "Man, there is something different. They are authentic in the process. They are admitting their struggles and their shortcomings. They are not acting like they are perfect."

I mean, there is something different. "Explain to me why you live the way that you do." You would be surprised at the bridges that are available for us to connect the gospel of heaven to people's lives. And, actually, if you don't know, people are hungry for that.

So, we're not interested in gathering a crowd. We're not interested in coming and consuming and knowing a lot of things. We are very good at that. We live in an information age. There isn't a shortage of information out there. If you want to know it, you can find it.

But be on guard against consuming so much about God that you become ineffective for God. Right? We don't want to become theologically fat so that we are spiritually inactive.

There is a point to why we study. There is a point to why we get into groups. There is a point to why we learn. Alright? So, if we want to be effective we can't just make it about talking about Jesus, we actually have to live with the power of Jesus.

One of the best ways that we can do that is to put ourselves in uncomfortable situations that require the Holy Spirit to work. You want to know how to grow? Put yourself in an

uncomfortable situation and ask God to show up. You want to know how to grow? Get yourself outside of yourself and actually pour into some other people.

I love the way that pastor and author JD Greear puts it. He says:

One of the best ways to deepen your relationship with Jesus is to help other people discover theirs.

Why? Because that gets the light off of you. That then begins to allow yourself to get outside of yourself and help other people come to know the Jesus that you know.

So, the question that I have for each and every one of us is: if you are a Christ follower, how are you intentionally living out the mission of God around you? That's an opportunity for us to wrestle with that, "If I call myself a follower of Jesus Christ, what does it look like to intentionally live out the mission of God around me?"

"How can I help somebody else discover the beauty of following Jesus? How can I get into community where I am encouraging other people, while I'm being encouraged but I'm also pouring out into them?"

There have been some of us who have been talking about signing up for Rooted for months, yet we haven't done it. Now, the opportunity is here. I encourage you, if you haven't done so to do it because it's powerful. You get to be around people. You get to share stories. You get to encourage and empower one another. You get to pour out.

So, we have to be very intentional because there is a mission and Paul is saying, "Hey, don't lose focus. Don't lose sight of the purpose. Live intentionally."

But he also says, "It's going to cost you. You want to know how I know? Just look at my life." I love what he goes on to say in verse 9. He says:

"Instead, I sometimes think God has put us apostles on display, like prisoners of war at the end of a victor's parade, condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire world—to people and angels alike.

"Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools, but you claim to be so wise in Christ!" That's kind of how I read it as I was studying [sarcastic emphasis].

"We are weak, but you are so powerful! You are honored, but we are ridiculed. Even now we go hungry and thirsty, and we don't have enough clothes to keep warm.

"We are often beaten and have no home. We work wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us.

"We appeal gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated like the world's garbage, like everybody's trash—right up to the present moment." 1 Corinthians 4:9-13 (NLT)

You know what Paul is saying here? He's saying that following Jesus is costly. That it costs us something. And he's telling the people in Corinth, "Not only have you all forgotten how to be gracious, not only have you forgotten the mission, you've forgotten the cost that comes with following Jesus."

He's talking to Christ followers here. So, if you wouldn't consider yourself a follower of Jesus, you might get something out of this but it doesn't necessarily, fully apply to you.

But if you have committed your life to Jesus, He says, "I believe that Jesus is not just my Savior, but my Lord. And you need to know that it comes with a cost. Jesus, Himself said, 'If anybody wants to come after me, let them deny themselves, pick up their cross daily and follow Me.'"

So, if it's not costing us something then we actually need to do a self-evaluation and ask ourselves, "What really is it costing?"

And Paul kind of like gives them some correction here. He says, "You're so wise. You guys have become so intelligent. You know so much. You have more degrees than a thermometer. What are you doing with that? How are you using it effectively for God's kingdom? Or are you using it to point people to just how much you know?"

He says, "You're powerful. You've gotten this authority. Now you feel like you're somebody. Maybe you are in charge of some people, but you aren't stewarding that power, that authority, in a healthy way, in a way that shows people the love of Jesus."

He says, "Your honor may be looked up to. Maybe you're in a high position where people are looking to you and they are admiring you and you have all of this influence. But what are you doing with that influence? Is it being used in a way that points people to the love of Jesus?"

He says, "You've gotten all of these things but it has caused you to become comfortable and you are no longer sacrificing yourself for the mission of Jesus."

He said, "Me? I'm none of those things." He said, "I wish I was. But instead following Jesus has cost me something. It is costing me my life. I've been persecuted. I've been beaten. I'm hungry right now. I nearly lost my life for the sake of the gospel."

It's a very different Christianity than what we know today. And praise God that we live in a country where our lives are not on the line for following Jesus. Thankful for the liberties that we can have to be able to express our freedom.

But it doesn't mean that following Jesus costs us nothing. It means that there are things in our lives that we all can evaluate and say, "What is it costing me. Is it costing me anything? Or, have I compartmentalized my life in such a way where I say, 'Okay, I'm going to keep this over here, but Jesus You can have this.'"

And can I just tell you that the Holy Spirit took me to the mat on this this week? I started evaluating all of this, there was this question that just kind of came to my mind. And I just want to put it out there in front of all of us. I had to ask myself this:

Has following Jesus cost me anything lately?

And I'm ashamed to say that my answer to that was: No. As I looked at my life this past season, it's kind of been comfortable. It's kind of been good. I haven't had to put myself in uncomfortable conversations or been worried about seeming as weird or awkward. I haven't really sacrificed anything for the gospel lately.

Can I just say that it brought me to my knees? Where I had to ask God, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry that I just kind of kicked my life into spiritual cruise control. I'm on autopilot right now. It's not costing me anything."

I did some more evaluation and God asked me, "Why? Why have you gotten comfortable? Why haven't you taken a step outside of your comfort zone for Me?"

Pride came to mind. And comfort came to mind. But if I'm honest, it was also a little bit of fear. Fear of how I'd be looked at. Fear of how I'll be judged. Fear of how I'll be perceived for being a follower of Jesus and speaking out for Him.

And the Holy Spirit did what He does best; He came and reminded me that, "Fear, Kyle? I have not given you a spirit of fear. I've given you a spirit of power and of love and a sound mind. You have nothing to be afraid of."

WE NEED GOD'S POWER TO LIVE SACRIFICIALLY

Which reminds me, if we are claiming to be followers of Jesus, we need His power to live sacrificially. Not just graciously, not just intentionally, but to live sacrificially. The Spirit of God is who gives us the power to say, "Okay, God. My life is not my own. To You I belong. I give myself completely to you. What do you want me to sacrifice for You?"

But, it's important to know that we don't do this in order to earn God's love. Amen? We already have it. The moment that Jesus went to the cross and died for our sins and rose from the grave we have been saved. And His love is available to each and every one of us.

So, I'm not sacrificing saying, "God, do You see what I'm doing down here? You see how uncomfortable I am. Do you love me yet?"

No. His love is sealed on the cross. It's very different to live for God's love instead from God's love. So, if this is the truth of the gospel, Jesus has done this for each and every one of us, if we embrace that, man, that should change what we're willing to sacrifice.



It should change how we approach life. It should change what we're willing to give up for the sake of the gospel. "There is nothing I can do to pay You back, Jesus. But, what I can do is I can die to myself each and every day and say, 'No, Jesus, You are worth it.'"

This is the life that God has called us to live, to be sacrificial. And it comes with a cost. So, the question is: what is it costing you? Romans, 12:1 says, "I encourage you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice." Each and every day is an opportunity to say, "Alright, God. I'm grateful for who You are. God, I love You. I thank You for what You have given me. God, would you help me to live on mission for You? And would You help me to be a living sacrifice?"

"So, if there is anything that tries to creep up in my life that does not look like You, help me to sacrifice that. The things in my life that I want to hold onto that don't represent You well, God, help me to sacrifice them. The things that are causing me to stay comfortable in my life, God, help me to sacrifice them. I need to experience discomfort in order to be reliant on Your power."

We need to be filled with His power in order to live the sacrificial life, a life that says, "God, my life is Yours. Do with it as you would please."

I love what Paul says next because he kind of gets into this gentle reminder that, "Yes, I've said a lot of hard things to you and it's a little difficult to swallow. But, please know that it is done out of love. It's not done to shame you." Look at what he says in verse 14. He says:

"I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. So I urge you to imitate me." 1 Corinthians 4:14-16 (NLT)

And I love this because Paul is saying, "Hey, yes there is a lot of correction I'm giving you guys right now. But please know that I am not trying to shame you. Please remember the 18 months that I spent with you, hearing your heart and getting to know you and the love that I have for you. Yes, it's a high calling, but we serve a high God who loves us incredibly. And I want to share with you out of love."

There is a difference between shame and conviction. Paul is like, "I'm not shaming you but I do kind of want to bring some holy conviction into your life."

Shame is from the enemy. Shame is from Satan. Conviction is from the Holy Spirit. It's a gentle warning. It's a gentle corrective type of love. Shame says, "You are your sin." Conviction says, "Your sin was paid for on the cross. Now, don't go back to it."

Shame says, "you are too far gone." Conviction says, "You can never go too far. Now, come back home. I'm waiting for you. I love you so much. And because I love you I have

this life for you that I want you to live. And it requires you to be gracious. It requires you to be intentional. It requires you to be sacrificial.”

So, maybe you’re here and you have yet to place your faith in Jesus. And you say, “I want that kind of love. To be empowered. Maybe you can keep the sacrifice off, but I’ll take everything else.” No. God wants all of you.

And if you’re here and you want to place your faith in Jesus, that opportunity is available. You need to know that He has this unconditional love for you. He left heaven and came to earth living a perfect and sinless life, a life that none of us could ever live.

He died the death that we deserved to die on the cross, was put into a grave, and then rose three days later proving that He wasn’t just another good prophet, He wasn’t just another teacher, but He was actually God.

And then He sent His very Spirit to empower us so that we don’t have to meander through life. We can actually live with the power of God in us. It’s a beautiful life that we get to live.

Maybe you’ve gotten to this place where you say, “Yeah, I’ve placed my faith in Jesus. But you know what, Kyle? I’ve kind of begun to stray from that. I’ve gotten comfortable. I’ve gotten complacent. I’ve lost the fire that I once had.”

Maybe it’s a time to recommit yourself to Him and say, “God, what are You asking me to sacrifice? How can I embrace the love that You have for me and to live from that, not for it.”

So, as we get to embrace that I want to ask at all of our campuses to go ahead and stand to our feet so that we can worship God in a way that truly embodies what it looks like to be gracious, intentional, and sacrificial.

You need to know that if you are ready to make any kind of decision, whether it is giving your life to Jesus for the very first time, or you just want to have a conversation or receive prayer about what it looks like to recommit your life to Him, we have people at all of our campuses who are willing and ready to receive you. Don’t leave here without talking to somebody.

As we get ready to worship, I just want to pray a prayer of blessing over us asking God’s Spirit to empower us to not just be people who talk but to live an empowered life. So, would you pray with me?

Father, we open ourselves to You. Father, we thank You for Your grace and for Your mercy. God, we thank you that You are our God who shows us unconditional love.

We thank You that that love was shown by Jesus on a cross. We thank You that there is nothing we can do to earn it. You’ve done all of the heavy lifting. All we have to do is to



receive it. And then we get to receive Your very Spirit who empowers us to live out the mission that You have given us.

God, we know that it is not easy. It's complex and it's hard and it's difficult. It requires some discomfort. And it requires us to sacrifice some things that we like. But, God, we are believing that You are worth it.

So, would You empower us to be a church in the wild? Would you empower us to go to the areas that You are calling us to go to? To be gracious toward people who need to hear about Your desperate love and Your unconditional grace that You are willing to show anybody and everybody.

Would you help us to be marked by gratitude and graciousness and intentionality and sacrifice? And may we know that the very Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead now lives within each and every one of us empowering us to live the life that You have called us to live. Help us Holy Spirit to be who You've called us to be.

We thank You and we love You. We ask this in Jesus' name. And the church says: Amen.

