
What's good church? How are you? Doing alright? Good, good. Hey, I think before we jump into the sermon and all that jazz, I think we need to just do a couple of things.

One, I think we always need to... The reason that we really want to celebrate people who come for the first time—we can never lose sight of how difficult it is to walk into church for the first time. And so across all of our campuses can we just welcome all of our first-time visitors. Give it up for them. Let them know how grateful we are for them.

If you are new around here, our mission is very, very simple. We want to remove unnecessary barriers that keep people from Jesus. We just see that within our culture and within our own lives, with our upbringings and even within in our churches sometimes we put up some unnecessary barriers that maybe have prevented you from ever giving Jesus a chance in your life.

So we just want to remove all of those so that you can get to Jesus. Because we believe if you can get to Jesus he can change everything for you, because he's changed everything for us.

And then once you get to Jesus, that's kind of like the starting line, then we want to cheer you on in your spiritual growth and in your spiritual development.

We want to give you some tools and a path that you can follow to start growing and to get connected here. That's really the importance of Growth Track. Growth Track happens after every service at every campus.

Go out to the lobby and look for the signs for it. It is your best, next step to get connected and start growing here. That's super important because we believe that church works best, not when it's something that you just observe and attend, but when you're really invested and you're a part of what's going on—you're involved and you're on mission with Jesus. That's our hope for you.

And today, you picked a great Sunday to start tracking with us because we are starting a brand new teaching series called Gains, alright? Gains.

Now, if you're not a person who is familiar with weight lifting, which I clearly am... Why would you... I cannot believe you people laughed at that. They did first service too.

Gains is a weightlifting term, right? This is like you try to get swole, you try to get huge, all that work in the weight room is going to pay off and you're going to get big and strong and get some gains, right?

So this series we're going to do, we're going to take four weeks and we're going to go through a little book of the Bible called 2 Timothy. We're going to go chapter by chapter for four weeks and we're just going to unpack what it has to say to us.

And our hope and our prayer is that we will see some gains in our lives, spiritually. That we'd become more like the people who God created us to be.

I think this series is going to be really impactful for us in a couple of ways. One because I think that it's really going to help us center around our purpose and how do we really like make the most out of this life that we've been given.

And that's a really important question for all of us. It's actually a question that all of us ask— whether or not you've been following Jesus for a long time or you've just gotten started. Or maybe you're here and you wouldn't consider yourself yet a follower of Jesus. This series is even important for you in that regard because all of us are asking the question of purpose.

I think most of us have this fear in the back of our mind that we're going to get to the end of our life and we're going to look back and feel like we left something on the table or we've wasted our days somehow, someday.

I love how one preacher that I follow put it recently. He said that when you ask questions of purpose, when you ask questions of significance you almost always end up crashing into God. I think that the same thing can happen for many of you here today even if you wouldn't consider yourself yet to be a follower of Jesus.

So go ahead and grab a Bible and get to 2 Timothy, chapter 1. We're going to start with verse 1. Today is very simple, okay? Chapter 1 is going to lay out a simple formula for us to follow if we want to maximize the impact that we can make with our lives. Today is a very simple formula. If you want to make the most out of this one life you've been given follow 2 Timothy, chapter 1. It is a simple formula.

Now, remember I said simple—not easy. Simple can just be simple but it can be super hard and we're going to get into that today. So 2 Timothy, chapter 1, we start in verse 1.

If you're ready I need you to turn to your neighbor on your left or your right and say either: My bracket is busted, or, my bracket is not busted. Go.

You all know my bracket ain't busted yet. We were sweating it out. Big Blue Nation, my Kentucky Wildcats, were sweating it out but my bracket is ... Now, admittedly, I had a whole slew of jokes that I was going to open up with that are basketball related. My wife told me it was not appropriate to do so.

I just think we should all be happy. I think we should all be happy, except for Butler fans. Man, there's next year. But for everybody else, we should all be happy. We're all still

dancing, Purdue—you all, what a win last night. What a day. You're still dancing. My Kentucky Wildcats are still dancing. The Hoosiers are still dancing—they're just at a different dance, it's a different dance.

I couldn't resist it, man. I tried so hard and I just couldn't guys. Don't hate me.

2 Timothy, chapter 1, we've got to get going, verse 1, let's do this. It says, "This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I have been sent out to tell others about the life he has promised through faith in Christ Jesus.

"I am writing to Timothy, my dear son. May God the father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace. Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did.

"Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again.

"I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you."

Now, pause for a second. There's some encouragement in there that we need to receive. I think that sometimes, when it comes to the New Testament we read—especially the letters of Paul—we read those first few verses and we just kind of like breeze by them because he opens up his letters, oftentimes, with a lot of similar language.

But there is some encouragement in there for us, especially if you find yourself being someone who is mentoring someone else in the faith or you're helping someone else, you're pouring your life into someone else and helping them come to know Jesus and grow up to be all that God created them to be—there's some encouragement in there.

This letter was written from Paul, this missionary, this great leader in the church to a young, up-and-coming leader named Timothy. And Paul is giving him everything that he has got because he wants to see him get these gains; he wants to see him become all that he was created to be.

Can you hear the sincerity in Paul's voice? He's loves Timothy so much he says: I think about you night and day. I think about you every time I pray for you. Every time I pray I'm thinking Timothy—I'm thinking about this young leader. He's so committed to him. He's so excited to see all of the ways that Timothy is growing.

In fact, he says I long to see you, which is really interesting considering the context of 2 Timothy because 2 Timothy was the last letter that we have written by the Apostle Paul.

Paul wrote this from a jail cell in Rome and not long after he would have his court hearing. He was in jail for refusing to stop talking about Jesus. And that court hearing? He would be sentenced to death and executed by the Roman Emperor, Nero in the fall of A.D. 67. This is the last letter we have from him.

So these are almost his dying words to us. And Paul knows that he is about to die. Paul knows that the writing is on the wall, it's not going to come as a surprise. He says: Timothy, I long to see you and it is going to give me great joy when I see you again. And he knows the next time he sees him is probably going to be in heaven.

He's just got this joy and this excitement to see this young leader develop. And I think that should be great encouragement to us. If you're leading a group, if you're a team leader here at church, if you're mentoring someone else, if you're helping someone else come to know Jesus, you need to know that it is worth it.

When you get to the end of your days, you're going to look back and the thing that is going to matter the most to you, the thing that you're going to look back on with the most fondness and the most joy in your life is not the experiences that you have or the stuff you have, it's going to be the people that you invested your life into.

I love that Paul doesn't just stop with his involvement in Timothy's life. He mentions two other people. He says: Timothy, you wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for your mom and your grandma. They passed their faith on to you. I love that, because isn't that so many of our stories?

So many of us would not be here today were it not for a faithful mother or a faithful grandma who was praying for us every single day, who would get our sorry butts to church. I'm telling you, it ain't Mother's Day but we need to celebrate the faithful moms out there. We need to celebrate some faithful grandmas.

I'm telling you, if you're a stay-at-home mom or if you're a working mom or if you're a grandma just taking time out of your schedule to go and invest in your grandkids, it is worth it. I firmly believe what Andy Stanley says. He says, "Your biggest contribution to the kingdom of God may not be something you do but someone you raise." Keep going. What you are doing matters.

Now Paul is going to pivot. He'd say: Timothy, you've been given this great foundation of faith now it's time to get some gain. Now it's time to get serious. And he's going to lay out this simple formula for you and me to follow if we want to maximize the impact that we were created to have with our lives.

Look at what he says in verse 6, "This is why," now remember he's talking about the previous section where he says you've been given this great foundation of faith by me, by your mom, by your grandma, and here's the deal. This is why, "I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear or timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."

He says: Timothy, you were given this great foundation of faith, you've got people who have poured their lives into you. But not only that, you've got something more going on for you. And he would say the same thing to you today. Regardless of what your spiritual foundation looks like right now, you've got more going for you.

You were created with some gifts. Even if you are here and you don't believe in God, God created you with some gifts. The reason you're good at what you're good at is not because of you. It's because of God.

The reason that you are passionate about what you are passionate about, the reason you think the way you think is not because you're just that special, it's because that's how God made you. You were created with some gifts and some skills and some abilities.

But then when you start following Jesus, it goes to that next level and you get some spiritual gifts, you get some things like you didn't have before you started following Jesus. And now you've got them. You have been given some gifts.

And I love the way that Paul talks about them. He speaks of these gifts as if they are red hot with potential. He speaks of these gifts like they have world-changing capacity, because they do. I'm telling you, every single man and woman listening to this right now, at every campus, has got red hot potential with the gifts that God has given to him or her.

You can make a difference with the life that you have with the gifts you've been given. I know you may not believe it, but let me tell you, that gift that God gives of encouragement—some of you are the best encouragers in the world. I know that because I believe that this church is one of the most encouraging churches in the world.

Some of you have the gift of encouragement and the gift of mercy—you can meet someone where they are at and feel such sympathy and such love for them and you have a listening ear. I'm telling you, that gift of encouragement and mercy and a listening ear—whoa it has red hot potential because in a world that is medicating depression and doesn't know how to find courage—you can turn an entire workplace upside down with the gifts of encouragement and mercy.

And some of you all have the gift of hospitality. You can open your home and you can cook a meal and you can make someone who is a complete stranger feel welcome and at home and connected.

Let me tell you, in a world that is so lonely—we're more connected than ever, thanks to technology, but we're lonelier than ever—the gift of hospitality can take a neighborhood block and turn it upside down. That gift is red hot with potential.

Some of you all have the gift of giving. Let me rephrase that. Some of you have the gift of earning, which means that you could have the gift of giving. Some of you all have the ability to build a business and earn and get promotions and you can accrue wealth—and let me tell you, that's a gift. That is a gift that is red hot with potential because that means that you could give big. You can earn big and you could give big.

And let me tell you, God does not need your money. The kingdom of God will advance, but oftentimes the speed at which it advances is in correlation to the generosity of the people of God. And you've got potential to turn the world upside down. You've got potential to advance the kingdom like crazy, because you can earn big, which means you can give big.

You've got gifts that are red hot with potential. They could change the world. But Paul says: Here's the deal. Just because you have that gift does not mean that you will maximize the impact that you were created to make with your life. You've got to do something with it.

You've got these gifts and they're in a raw form. They are undeveloped. So you need to take those gifts and you need to fan them into flame. You need to develop them. That's the first half of the equation. If you want to maximize your impact, you've got to figure out what you are good at, your gifts, and you've got to develop them. You've got to work hard at them.

And this is why Growth Track is so important. This week of Growth Track will help you understand your gifts and then have some opportunities for using them, because that's what you've got to do. You've got to put your gifts to practice. You've got to start working on them. You've got to get better at the things that you are already somewhat good at. You've got to invite feedback. Let me tell you, that process is so brutal.

You've got to work hard to develop this gift. Paul compares it to a campfire. You need to fan that thing into flame. I'm not sure if you've ever built a fire, like at a campsite. It's hard work. You have these little twigs, rub them together. Feed a little bit of straw in there and then all of a sudden you're blowing on that thing, controlling the smoke.

I don't know how to make a fire. I don't know what I'm doing. I tried with that analogy for a minute. You don't want me at a campsite, alright. If you're camping, God bless you. I will go home to my house that I pay a mortgage for to provide a roof over my head and a bed to sleep in. Can I get an "Amen" from the homeowners? Homeowners unite. You all campers are crazy.

But it looks hard—starting a campfire at a campsite looks hard. And that's what Paul is trying to get at. If you're going to develop your gifts, it's going to be hard work. If you want to maximize the potential of what you've been given, you are going to have to work hard at it and practice it.

And so many of us, we may feel like we are good at something, and we may have this thing that is a dream inside of us, something we could do with our lives, but so many of us just sit on those gifts and we never put them out there for anyone to see and we never really use them and we never really try to get better at them—primarily because we're scared. And this is what Paul says. He says: Hey, you've been given gifts. You've got to fan them into flame. You've not been given a spirit of fear and timidity. You've not been given that spirit.

I know that some of you are like, "Oh, what if I'm not that good at it?" or, "What will people think of me when I put my gift out there? Can I really receive the feedback? Am I really strong enough to handle that? What if I face failure and rejection?"

You weren't given a spirit of fear. You don't need to walk in fear. You were given a spirit of power, of love, of self-discipline. You were given the same spirit that raised a dead man back to life on his own volition, of his own decision. Jesus came back to life and that's the spirit that is in you.

I feel like somebody needs to hear that right now. Somebody at one of our campuses—the dream that is inside you, the gift that is in you that you feel like, "This is the difference I was supposed to make with my life, but I'm just so scared," the world needs your gift. The world needs your dream.

The way that you know that you were created to make the biggest... I'm telling you, the world is waiting on it. You can't let fear and timidity keep you down. No! You were created for more than that. You've got to step out in power and in love and in self-discipline and the confidence that Jesus gave you when he died on a cross and rose from the dead. That's the hard work of developing your gift.

Now, that's one half of the equation. And I actually think that that part of the equation is the easiest part. You're like, "Oh, no. That's the easy part. Come on now."

No, I actually think that that is the easy part because I think we live in a culture of development. I mean, come on, whatever you're good at, whatever you're interested in, you can find a bajillion social media accounts to give you little tweets of wisdom all day about it.

You can find a book, a blog, a podcast or you can find a conference, a seminar, you can find a life coach who, for a certain amount of money, will help you throughout the whole thing. We love development as a culture.

I think most of us can get over that part of it. I think we can get over the fear and we can walk in some power and some love and some self-discipline and we can develop our gift.

But Paul says that's just half of it. If you really want to maximize the impact that you were created to make with your life, Paul says it's not just about how you develop your gift, it's about how you deliver your gift.

Read with me in verse 8. He says this, "So," so is the connecting word, he's talking about the previous passage here, he's linking these together, "So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News.

"For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserve it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus.

"And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News."

I'm going to read those words again and we're going to respond like the people of God ought to, alright?

"...he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News."

Come on now! That's life changing! Eternity changing news! And Paul says if you want to maximize the impact that you were created to make with your life, you develop your gift; you get as good at that thing that you are good at as you possibly can, but then you deliver it wrapped in a certain message.

All good gifts come wrapped in something. If you show up to a birthday party with a gift for somebody and it's not wrapped, it just kind of loses its oomph, you know?

You show up to a birthday party and you're like, "Hey, I got you this ice scraper." He's going to do the fake, "Oh, thank you," but in the back of his mind he's saying, "We're not friends. You're not invited next year."

But then you take that ice scraper and you wrap that sucker up or put it in a gift bag and it looks all nice and neat and hand it to him and he opens it he's like, "Oh my gosh. Did you notice that I didn't have an ice scraper? These Indiana winters are horrible, thank you so much."

How you wrap a gift and deliver it matters. Oftentimes that sets the tone for how it's received. My wife is always telling me this. She actually told me several years ago, she

said, “Hey, if you really want to show love and affection to me, when it comes to Christmas and birthday time wrap my gifts very nice and neat. Do a good job on wrapping my gifts. That’s a way that you can love me.”

And I’m like, “Man, that’s amazing.” My wife told me, practically, what to do to show her love. Men in the room you know like that never happens—school of hard knocks style, just figure it out, man.

But no, she told me. And when she told me that I was like, “You married the wrong dude.” I can’t do it.

I’m the worst gift wrapper in the world. I can’t figure how much paper to cut. It’s my one problem. I either cut too little and there’s that strip on the box at the bottom that is not covered. I just hide that on the bottom.

Or I cut too much. You know what happens when you cut too much. You’ve got to jam all of that stuff on one end and just shove it. You’ve got one crappy end of the box and you try to hide that thing—can’t do it.

But I get it because her gifts to me are wrapped—I mean, she’s like a gift-wrapping ninja. It’s amazing. All of my gifts—I don’t care what’s inside. I don’t want to open them. They are like works of art. But it does, it shows a great level ... It changes how I receive the gift.

Paul says that if you want to maximize the impact of the gift that you’ve been given, you have to wrap that gift and deliver it in the message of Jesus, in the message of the one who gave you the gift to begin with. In the message of the one who broke the power of death and he illuminated the way for you to have life to the full now and forever. You’ve got to wrap your gift in that message if you want to maximize the impact.

The problem for us, though, is that’s not the way we usually wrap our gifts. That’s usually not the message that we wrap them up and deliver them with.

I think most of us sometimes fall prey to wrapping our gifts and delivering them in the message of self-promotion. You develop your gift and you get really good at it and then guess what? When you start to get really good at you start using it out in the world and people are blessed by it.

People are going to ask you about it. Like, “How did you get so good at that? What led you to that? Man, it’s so cool that you do that. Where did you learn that?” Or like, “Why do you do what you do?”

And in that moment, I think some of us wrap that gift up and we deliver it with a message that focuses on us, “Well, it’s just what I’m good at. You know? I’ve got a business I’m working on and it’s just my way of contributing.”

That's kind of like self-promoting. You're trying to build the brand of yourself, trying to get a few more followers, trying to get a few more clients. You're building yourself up.

Or maybe sometimes we wrap our gift, not in the message of self-promotion but of hard work. I'm often guilty of this. People are like, "Hey, you're good at x y z." And I'm like, "Well, I've been working for years on it. You don't know what I did back when I was preaching to a room full of 20 middle schoolers and they looked at me like I was an idiot."

That's the forge—the fire that preachers are forged in is student ministry. If you don't know a youth minister, you need to pray for a youth minister.

And all that does is point to you. You're like, "Oh well, I'm good at what I do because of hard work," or, "Because my mama taught me," or, "My daddy raised me." Hard work, okay?

That's not wrong. It's not wrong. You worked hard at what you're good at but that just not the message that will maximize the impact of your gift.

I think what most of us fall prey to is we wrap our gift up and if someone asks us about it we deliver it in the message of morality. "Man, I'm just trying to be a good person, just trying to spread love, make the world a little bit better place—leave it better than I found it."

You know, that's not a wrong or evil thing to say it just neutralizes the power of the gift you've been given, and it minimizes the effectiveness of it.

See, if you are a teacher you don't have incredible patience with students, with young kids, or with teenagers and you don't spend hour after hour with them during the day and then hour after hour grading their papers because you get summers off. That's not why you do what you do.

Let me tell you teachers, you work way too long; and you're not paid nearly enough for a summer off to be your reason for your existence. That's not why you do what you do. All of the teachers in the room just self-identified. I love it.

No, no, no—you are patient with them and you want to develop a relationship with your students and you invest in them and develop them because that's a reflection of the patience that you received from God and the way that he loves you and the relationship that he wants to develop with you. You're trying to show them what God is like.

See, the reason that you're so good at encouragement, the reason you want to sit with people and listened to their problems, really help them, is because God sits with you. God encourages you and that helps you through your problems. You're just passing on what you received from God.

The reason that you earn big so that you can give big is not just so you can make the world a better place, it's because you're trying to show people how much God has given and you can never out-give God, you can never out-give him. He's given way too much. He gave his whole life for us.

The reason you're hospitable, the reason you open up your home and you cook a good meal is not because of people or because you're a relational person or that's what your family did. No, no, no—when you open up your home to people and you cook a meal for them, you are showing them the very heart of God because there's always room at the table in the kingdom of God. And when you trust your life to Jesus there is a feast that is prepared for you.

I'm telling you, you are communicating to people the very nature of God with your gift. See your gift, if you want to maximize the impact, you develop that thing, you are hard at it, and then when it comes to delivering it and giving people a reason for why you are the way you are and why you do what you do—you wrap that thing in the message of Jesus. You wrap that thing in the message of the only one who can actually change anyone. That's the way you maximize your gift.

Now, that's simple. Raise your hand if you think that sounds easy. I think we can do the develop part, but the deliver part I mean, come on. As soon as Paul says, "So never be," what's the word he uses in verse 8? It says, so we should never be—everybody say the word out loud at all of our campuses, never be "ashamed..."

Paul knew what Timothy was going to struggle with and he knew what you and I were going to struggle with. We can develop it all day, we can be good at it, but when it comes to that point where we've actually got to speak the name of Jesus and tell someone about him and give a reason for all that's happening in our lives, we feel that hot feeling where our neck starts to get red and our tongues get swollen and how are we going to say the words? All of a sudden we forgot English—he knew, he knew.

You know, I remember when I started following Jesus. I came to Christ at seventeen years old. And so I didn't grow up in church. I didn't get the Bible stories. I wasn't used to preaching. I'd never really heard that many sermons before.

So I remember the first several sermons I heard on the topic of evangelism in my first few years of following Jesus. And I always just thought the message was really weird. The guys I was listening to, the preachers that I was listening to were just like—I didn't think they got it.

Because the messages I heard on evangelism and telling others about Jesus almost always went something like this:

You like movies, right?

Yeah.

You like food, right?

Yeah.

Well, you have no problem recommending the latest summer block buster movie that you saw and you have no problem recommending the latest taco joint that you saw—well, isn't Jesus better than movies and tacos?

I was like, "Did we really just go there?"

It was like you should talk about Jesus as easily and freely as you talk about all of these other things in life because he deserves it. He's way better.

And I was like, "Okay, hold on. Hold on. Hold on. These two conversations are nothing alike. I mean, come on. We're talking one is like tacos and movies—inconsequential. Maybe you waste two hours of your life. The other is talking about heaven and hell and eternity and it's a weighty conversation.

I just came to the conclusion that most of these preachers never told anyone about Jesus outside of a church building—very possible. Or, they just may be the most socially inept people in all of the world—also possible.

It just doesn't make any sense. So I just want to level with you. If you feel like ashamed or nervous about talking about Jesus, like outside of the church building, you're not crazy. It's hard.

And there's a reason that Paul said this to this young, up-and-coming leader. He said, "Don't be ashamed." He knew what we were going to be feeling in that moment. But to maximize our impact we have to be unashamed, and that is so hard.

But Paul's path to becoming unashamed, oh my goodness, it's not what you would think. For me, I would think, "Okay, Paul. If you don't want me to be ashamed, what do I do? Do I memorize a sales pitch? Memorize a few verses of Scripture? Get me an accountability partner? Role play like, 'You act like the person who doesn't know Jesus and I'll talk and we'll switch.'"

No, no—that's not what he says. He actually says something very different. Look at verse 12. He explains how he overcame that fear and that shame.

Verse 12, it says, "That is why I am suffering here in prison." Meaning the message of Jesus and being unashamed for it, that's why I am suffering in prison, "But I am not ashamed of it," here it is, "for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return."

Paul said, "...I am not ashamed..." I'll tell anyone about Jesus. I'll point my entire life to him. But it's not a sales pitch that I memorized. The reason I'm not ashamed anymore is because, "...I know the one in whom I trust," Jesus, and I know "that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him."

Well, what did Paul entrust Jesus with? Everything. He trusted him with everything—his whole life. I mean Paul's career was heading down a path, he was born into and trained up and educated to be a Jewish, religious professional. He was heading down that road and because of Jesus, everything changed.

So he trusted Jesus with a complete career shift. And not only just a career shift, an entire relationship shift. I mean, he had to leave the people who he had been so accustomed to working with—people who were opposed to Christianity.

And now Paul has to trust Jesus and go start making friends with people in the church, the people he was just trying to kill. He had to trust Jesus with his career, with his relationships, with his money. I mean, Paul became a tent maker on the side to fund his preaching ministry.

Paul had to trust Jesus with everything. He had to trust him with his marital status, Paul was single and celibate. He had to trust Jesus with that. He had to trust Jesus all the way up until now, where we read these words when he is about to die. And even in death he trusted Jesus.

At one point he would say that to live is Christ and to die is gain—I don't just trust Jesus with my life, I trust him with my death. He trusted him completely. Paul knew that if you want to talk more you've got to trust more.

If you want to increase and get these gains and be able to talk about Jesus unashamed—you've actually got to trust Jesus more. Your talking game will always match your trusting game. You need to increase the weight that you are putting on Jesus to trust him with it.

This is so similar to working out. Back when I was working out—I always use the "was" tense of the verb—back when I was working out I was in this gym and there was this instructor who was teaching a class. And I remember he was teaching me all of the motions: deadlift, squat, snatch—huge.

And by the time I learned the motion, I put a little bit of weight on the bar and I felt good about it—just about the time I was feeling good he was like, "Hey, you need to load the bar up a little more. Increase the weight."

I was like, "Would you back off of me? I'm feeling good right now, okay? I'm not sweating as profusely. This is going better." No, no, no—if you want to get stronger, you've got to load the bar. You've got to increase the weight. You're not going to get bigger if you don't put more weight on the bar, if you don't load that bar some more. So

you need to load the bar.

So I'd load the bar and I'd be sweating profusely for a few more weeks and about a month later I'd be getting a little bit more comfortable with it, not sweating as profusely and he'd say, "Alright, you're doing great. Load the bar again." That's true when it comes to building muscle; if you want to get bigger you've got to increase the weight. You've got to load the bar.

The same principle works here. And that's what Paul is trying to get us to see. If you want to talk more about Jesus, if you want to grow and get some gain and be unashamed to talk about Jesus, the secret is not found in a sales pitch, the secret is found in loading the bar and trusting him with more, not trusting yourself.

I'm not talking about loading the bar with more for you to lift to prove how strong you are, I'm talking about trusting Jesus with more of your life.

Let's just think through this for a second. So many of us are ashamed to talk about Jesus, but just look at your life for a second. What have you trusted him with? If you've only trusted him to show up at church a few times a month and sing a few songs, man, no wonder you're not going to be talking about him. You've not trusted him with much.

You've not trusted him with your finances yet. And I'm not talking about just giving to the church. I'm talking about being a wise steward of your money like the Bible teaches. Man, if you would trust Jesus with that, load the bar with that weight—just see if he can handle it. See if he can handle the weight that you put on there.

See if he can handle the weight of your schedule. You know, I think so many of us... When you ask someone how he is doing, what's the first word to come out of his mouth? "Busy."

Busy—what if you trusted Jesus and loaded the bar with your time? What if you said, "Hey, I'm going to sacrifice 30 minutes of my morning, I'm going to wake up a little earlier."? Or, "I'm going to get to work a little later. I'm going to sacrifice 30 minutes of my day to read God's word and to pray and try to figure out how to pray and how to understand the Bible when it's going to be hard—I don't know if it's going to be great.

"And you know what? I'm going to sacrifice one night of my week, and Jesus, I'm going to load the bar with more weight, I'm going to give you a night of my week. I'm going to be part of a group where I get to sit around with some people who are struggling with the same things I'm struggling with and talk about my feelings and talk about what God's teaching me. That's going to be weird but I'm going to trust you with it. I'm going to load the bar."

And watch what he does. Because he is able to guard what you entrust to him. He is able to handle that weight. I'm telling you what will happen. You will get three, four, five weeks into it and you will go, "Oh my gosh. I may have less free time, I may have less

available nights in my week, but the rest of my week is so much different because of that time that I sacrificed to the Lord.

“Because of that time I gave to him I’m more joyful. I’m more at peace. Everything has changed, and I don’t feel like I’m running around like a chicken with my head cut off anymore. This is amazing.”

And then guess what? You trusted God with that. You saw that he was faithful. And the next time someone says they are busy, you won’t be able to stop talking about him. You won’t be able to stop sharing the story, “Oh, I felt that same way recently. But you know what I did? I started trusting God with my time, I started doing x y z. Everything has changed for me.”

And all of a sudden, you don’t have to figure out a sales pitch. It’s coming from a place of authentic life transformation, which is where the best communication comes from.

I’m telling you all. Some of you need to trust Jesus. You need to load the bar right now with your marriage; with your dating life. Some of you all are in a relationship right now where you aren’t married yet, you’re not engaged yet but it’s heading that way and you need to load the bar, you need to put that weight on Jesus.

You need to listen to that still, small voice in your head that is saying, “Hey, they may be fine but they ain’t walking with the Lord so I don’t need to walk down the aisle to them. So I’m going to trust you with it. It’s painful, and I don’t know if you can handle it, Jesus.” But watch him. Watch him handle it.

See, if you want to talk more, you’ve got to trust more. You’ve got to put more of the weight of your life onto Jesus and see his faithfulness and his strength. And then the words and the courage and the boldness will flow from there.

Now, I know some of you all are thinking like, “Alright, Petie. You ain’t getting me now. You ain’t getting me with this because I see what you’re doing Petie. I see what you’re doing. You’re trying to get me to get all of myself to God.

“I mean, you’re talking about my skills and my abilities and like if I want to maximize the impact I make with my life, I’ve got to tell people about Jesus. If I’m going to tell people about Jesus, then I’ve got to trust Jesus with all of my circumstances. You’re trying to get me to give all of myself to God.”

I ain’t trying to get you to do it. He’s trying to get you to do it. God’s not out to get half of your life. God’s not out to get half of your heart. God’s not out to just help you get better at your job.

No—he wants you to love him with all of your heart, and your soul, and your mind, and your strength. He wants to invade every area of your life. He wants you wholly and fully surrendered to him like Paul, like Paul in that prison cell getting ready to die and saying:

I trust you, Jesus, in life or in death. Wholly surrendered.

God wants a church full of people wholly surrendered letting him take our lives, letting him rule every aspect of our lives, putting the full weight of our lives on the bar knowing that he can handle it.

I don't know what it is for you. I don't know what area of your life that you need to entrust to him. That's a conversation between you and God. That's the best thing we can do right now, is just pray and talk to God about it.

Let me pray for you and then spend some time with him.

Jesus, we love you. We thank you that you bore the weight of our sin that all of these circumstances that we are struggling to trust you with right now—they pale in comparison to the weight that you lifted from us when you took on the burden of our sin and you stretched out your arms and you died on the cross for us. God, help us never to lose sight of that. Let that be the primary thing that fuels us to courageously tell people about you.

God, right now I pray, in addition to that, that you would meet us right now in this place and that you would search our hearts and you would search our minds and you would help us see what areas of our life we're not trusting you with and you would help us, in courage, to load the bar with that, give it to you and see your faithfulness at work, to see your strength at work.

God, we love you. Meet us in this moment. Speak to us. In Jesus name we pray:
Amen.