

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

WAKE UP! | AWAKEN

AARON BROCKETT | OCTOBER 8, 2023

Aaron's Video

I want to tell you a story. In the beginning was light. And this light illuminated the human heart. It was passed from generation to generation, restoring hope to broken people. For centuries the light was kept in a singular place, but it's since been dispersed through what we now call the church.

But no matter how bright this light was there has always been opposition. The tendency to lose focus and fall asleep to the needs of those for whom the light had been sent.

From the beginning the church was designed to be released, reviving cities, and making them better. Revivals from Ephesus to Corinth, L.A. to New York, the church has been God's design to restore hope to broken places.

These revivals or spiritually significant moments in time are often called great awakenings. In America the first Great Awakening was in the 1700s. The second was in the early 1800s. And the third at the end of the 1800s. The most recent Great Awakening, or the Jesus Movement as it is called, was in the 1970s. There have always been seasons of awakening, times to refocus, renew, and return to the calling that God has for His church.

In 1834, at the end of the second awakening, a group of men and women gathered in the Traders Point area of Indianapolis with a desire to know God's Word and to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to hurting people. It was this vision that has fueled the mission of Traders Point for 189 years.

Throughout its history, Traders Point has kept its focus. It's been about releasing the church, reviving the city, and restoring hope to the world.

As I think about the future of Traders Point and God's plan for our church, I've been reflecting on my own life, the seasons when I've been awake and the seasons when I've been asleep.

I'm 18 years old, a freshman at Bible College. I've never had a preaching class and they said, "Would you go preach at this church?" I drive to this little church in northwest Arkansas in a tiny little town. Literally, I think there were 35 people there that day. And I was scared out of my mind. I was there by myself. I was trembling. And they introduced me. I came up and I just looked down and read the sermon. I think I got done in like eight minutes flat.



Afterward there were three or four elders that actually asked to speak to me in a Sunday School room off the hallway. They pulled me into the room and they said, "Is that the first time you've ever preached?" And I said, "Yes." And they said, "We thought so."

And then they just said, "We just wanted you to know before you head back to campus, we really feel like God's called you to do this and there is an anointing on your life for this. And we just want to pray over you before you go back to campus."

To me it was as if God was speaking directly to me through them. And it jarred me. It woke me up like, this is real. And I remember walking back to my car. It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon. And I sat in my car in the quiet before I started it up and I just said, "God, okay. You've got my attention. I'm awake. That was the scariest thing I've ever done in my life. When can I do it again?" And it was just kind of a rocket ship ride at that point.

Seasons.

God, what is it that you want us to see? Wake us up to what you are doing.

As we were going multi-site and as we were reaching more and more people and developing leaders, we were riding just this massive wave of momentum as God was just doing all of these incredible things. And it was as if the wave just hit a wall. And it just kind of felt like everything just stopped.

I remember in the first couple of weeks of the pandemic arriving at the Northwest campus shooting an update video that would go out to our church. I remember getting done. It was raining that day, I got into my truck in the parking lot at Northwest and the rain was like hitting the windshield and I just sat there really quietly.

It just brought me back to that place where I was sitting in the car after preaching my first sermon all those years ago. And it wasn't sunny outside, it was raining. It was cloudy. And I just remember saying, "God, I can't hear you." It just felt very quiet. Just as when things were at their darkest, that's when we began to see some inklings of light.

I'm a student of history. As you look back through these historical moments, oftentimes you'll find these massive shifts in a short amount of time where things radically change in history and alter the future. And I think that we are living in one of those right now.

As we were coming down to the final days of the pandemic, I think that more and more of us, as a leadership, just began to ask this question, "God, what is it that You're wanting us to do? What is it that You are wanting us to see?"

And in the process of those questions and those prayers, He led us to a couple of passages of Scripture. One is found in Ephesians 5, and one is found in Revelation 3. They say very similar things but the language of waking up is in them. So we felt as if God was saying to us through His Scriptures, "Now is the time for you to be awakened to this new thing that I want you to do."



We don't want to be asleep at the wheel. We want to seize the very moment. So we need to be awakened to what it is that God desires to say, do, and speak in and through us. Now is the time to go, to put action to our faith.

There are three different aspects to this vision of *Awaken*. The first is what we're calling:

Release the Church

Now this would include all of our ongoing ministry as a church. We want to continue to enhance everything we do. Specifically we're looking to increase our investment into the next generation with a focus on improving our content to teach our kids (and you) who God is and improve their biblical literacy. This also includes upping our efforts to equip parents in discipling their kids at home.

We've also recognized the need to enhance environments for youth at all of our campuses. So part of *Awaken* will allow us to do that.

The last thing we can improve in releasing the church is a digital engagement pathway. We want to leverage digital tools to better disciple our people and this will enable us to do that.

The next part of the *Awaken* vision is called:

Revive the City

You know, we love our city because God has a heart for the city. When we see the New Testament church, those churches were started in cities: Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus. And God has planted us in the city of Indianapolis. We love our city. We love everything about our city and we want to reach people all over our city.

We're excited to get Midtown and Fishers launched in their permanent locations and this part of the vision will help us do that. As we launch campuses seven and eight, we're looking toward the future as to where God would have us go and the difference that He would have us make.

You know, we've continued to see God bless our multi-site philosophy of ministry as a way to go where our people are so that they can be on mission where they live. Every time we launch a campus we deepen the bench, we reach more people, and we see more people developed in discipleship. And that's exciting to see.

Part of Reviving the City will also include refreshing our Northwest campus as it's the sending and resource location for all of our Traders Point locations around the city and all of our global efforts as we reach people online.

The last part of this vision initiative we're calling:

Restore Hope to the World.

And this would include everything that we do in local and global missions, with a focus of resourcing organizations that care for vulnerable children locally and globally.



You know, one of the things that we believe moves the needle on bringing hope to hurting places is launching brand new churches. So we will come alongside of a couple of different organizations to start what we're calling flagship churches. These are influential churches in urban centers throughout the country that are making a massive difference by reaching people nobody else is reaching. And we want to be a part of that.

As our foster and adoption ministry [FAM] continues to grow and impact our city, we need to upgrade our resource center as well as pour additional resources into this ministry. Right now, already, our FAM ministry is making a massive difference in our state—25 percent of our state's care communities come out of our church. That's phenomenal. So we just want to continue to see what God's going to do to bring hope to families and especially vulnerable children through our foster and adoption ministry.

As a church it's time for each one of us to wake up to all God wants to do in us and through us. Now is the time to put our faith into action.

Aaron

Wow. Our team sent me the rough cut of that video a couple of weeks ago and as I watched it for the first time it just sort of took my breath away. It kind of stirred some emotions in me that I wasn't expecting. And I hope that that stirred some things in you as well.

Today is really the culmination of a journey that we've been on for the last year-and-a-half or so, as we just came out of some of the challenges that entailed 2020 and 2021. And if you think back to those years, whatever it was you were navigating, whether it was your own personal life or maybe the life of your family or maybe you led a team at work, what was really challenging about navigating a crisis of that magnitude is that we didn't have a clear line of sight. We didn't have the ability to see through the crisis and it made it particularly difficult to do so.

That's why one of my favorite definitions of leadership is just simply this:

Providing clarity in the midst of uncertainty

So leadership doesn't mean you're the smartest person in the room. It doesn't mean that you have all of the answers. It doesn't even mean that you are certain, it means that you need to be clear. And clarity requires vision. So we just began to ask God, "God, would you please give us a vision for the immediate and long-term future of our church coming out of those challenging years?"

And much of those prayers resulted in this book that I want you to get your hands on. Our team is going to come down across all of our campuses and pass out these Awaken books to you. And as you are receiving this, basically what this book is is a more detailed version of everything that you just saw in that video. So I want to ask you to get your hands on this.



And I know if you are anything at all like me you're just going to immediately start flipping through it and reading it. And I'm going to ask you not to. Do that a little bit later today.

What I want to do is I want to walk you through the book together before we get going. And as you're waiting to get a book, Proverbs, chapter 29, verse 18 says this. It says:

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." Proverbs 29:18a (KJV)

We perish without a picture of the future to which we are going. And so we just began to pray to God about a year-and-a-half ago that verse. We were like, "God, would you give us a vision? We don't want to get too far in front of You. We don't want to fall too far behind you. God, we don't want to speculate what You might do. We do want to anticipate what You could do so that we can be fully alert to it and we can participate with You I it."

And a lot of those prayers God answered and they are found—it's our best effort to try to articulate this in the pages of this book. Now, once again, you can read through it later today.

Don't miss what I'm going to say. Let me just go ahead and tell you what's in it. The first is what I would call the vision pages. So a much more detailed version of everything you saw in the video. It's the initiatives of *Awaken*, the financial resources attached to them, and some helpful tools for our own generosity journey as we walk through this.

I want to be very, very upfront with this and tell you that we have two goals for the *Awaken* initiative. And the first goal, I'm going to spend the majority of my time on today—that God would awaken us, that God would speak to each one of us individually right where we are.

But the secondary goal is that God would make a massive difference through us, which requires financial resources. And the number that you'll see in the book is for the next two years—84 million. That's a huge number. And I just want us to let that sink in for a minute, not move past it too quickly.

It is not lost on me how huge of a responsibility and how awesome an opportunity it is to steward those kinds of resources. It's one that we take very, very seriously. And we want to handle it with the utmost integrity, character, and humility as we handle God's resources during this time.

Now, that seems like a huge number and it is but I want to provide a little bit of perspective. That is for the next two years, so between now and the end of 2025. It's a two-year initiative. And it includes our regular, normal giving. So when we look back at the past, the last two years, our church gave 50 million.

So a little bit of context, when I got here in 2007 our church's annual budget was just a little under three million. What that tells me is that, as we've trusted God with what He's



given to us, He's entrusted us with more. So now what we're asking for is another step of faith to go into this next season.

The second thing you'll find in the book through the vision pages, is you see a place to take notes. And I really want to encourage you to be here all six weeks of the series—all six weeks in a row. I know. That's so crazy. Some of you are like, "Man, there is no way we can be here all six weeks in a row." And I get it. Life is busy. But I want to challenge you to do everything you can to make it a priority to be here.

And here's why. I already know, in all six of these messages, what I'm going to say. They are the six most important messages I think that I could ever deliver to you. Now, I'm not saying they are the best messages, so don't clap too quickly. But I am saying that they are the most important messages that you could ever hear. I don't want you to miss them.

I do believe that this is a season that God has been preparing us for in the life of our church. I feel it in my bones. And I don't want you to miss this season of what God might do, even if you don't care anything at all about our church and you're here visiting and hearing it, I think there is an awakening that God wants to do in your life. So I want you to be here all six weeks of this series.

Bring the book back with you each week. And if you are a note taker, you're going to have so much fun because there are all kinds of places to take notes. If you are not a note taker, I want to challenge you to experience a conversion and become a note taker. Some of you are like, "There's not a chance." Well, just draw pictures or something. Anything that will help you remember.

Here's why it is so important. I want you to come in here fully expecting God to say something to you. And when you fully expect God to say something to you here's the amazing thing. He will. Not every part of the message may be applicable to you, but there's going to be something, some sort of nugget of truth, something that God wants to say to just stir you up and move you on. I want you to be ready for it and I want you to come ready to write that down.

I like to say this. No pain, no gain. You will get out of this series what you invest into it. And there is a QR code at the end of every section. Our team has put together some videos and some additional resources to help you in your study.

Third is the group content. We really want everybody to experience a group. We believe that that is a way to make a big church small. We believe that's the way to get involved in relationship and to grow.

And I am so encouraged by this guys, because 1,000 of you who were not previously in a group signed up to be in a six-week *Awaken* group—1,000 of you. That's worth celebrating. That's incredible. I can't even imagine getting 1,000 people to do anything. That's incredible.



Some of you are not currently in a group. I want you to be in a group. You don't have to be in a group forever—just six weeks. We've got about 100 spots left. If you are not in a group and would like to be in one you can stop by the *Awaken* hub on your way out and get signed up. We've only got about 100 spots left though. So you can get into a group or get on a waiting list. I would love to see that fully stocked up—1,100 people in groups.

Lastly is you'll find in the book this commitment card. Now I don't want you to do anything with this at all except live with it for a while. Here's what I mean by this. I want you to put this in a prominent place where you're going to see it every day: on your nightstand, in your Bible, where you drink your coffee—anyplace where you do your best thinking. I just want you to live with this and to use it as a tool, and I want you to pray this prayer, "God, what does awakened generosity mean for me?"

Now, the reason why I'm framing it that way is because for many of you you've already trusted God in this area of your life a long, long time ago. And you could stand and you could testify to God's faithfulness in this area. And what I mean by trusting God in this area is that you chose to see your time, your talent, and your treasure, not as something that you own, but as something that you steward. It's something that you temporarily manage for His glory and His kingdom.

Here's how God says He wants you to manage it. He goes, "I want you to trust Me by bringing 10 percent back to me, I want you to save 10 percent of it for the future, and I want you to live off and even enjoy the rest of the 80 percent. That's just how I want you to handle it.

Many of you, you jumped into that, you began to trust God in that area, and you can testify to amazing things that He has done. However, if you were to be honest you would say, "Yeah, but that decision was made 20 years ago and we've not done anything since." And you've just kind of flatlined in your area of trust in that department. My prayer for you is that you would say, "God, what does this look like for me in this season?"

Others of you, you've never trusted God in this area of your life and it's part of the reason why money is the number one thing that stresses you out. You've never invited God into it. And the way that you invite God into it is through openhanded generosity. So, I want you to use this as a tool to see...

Lindsay and I are using this as a tool in our own personal lives. On November 12th we'll come together as a celebration as a church, we're calling it Commitment Sunday, to see what God will do.

Now, with all of that introductory, I just need to acknowledge this, as your pastor, because it's not lost on me that in a crowd this size and the number of people who are watching online, chances are I'm talking to somebody right now and this is brushing up against some wounds because you had a bad church experience in which this was



mishandled. And I just want to acknowledge it. I'm so sorry you had that experience. I know that that is real.

I've actually been on the other side of that, not as a pastor, experiencing and being the recipient of that. I know what that can be like. And I've been thinking very specifically about you knowing that this series was coming/ And, whoever you are, I just want to say very specifically to you that I hate that that is your experience and I'm so sorry that somebody's lack of integrity or lack of tact caused you to have a bad experience and it turned you off and sort of closed you off to what God wants to say in this area of your life.

I just want you to know that our team has spent hours and hours of prayer about this and we want to take this so seriously. We know what is at stake. And we want to handle this with the utmost integrity and humility as we handle God's resources and God's Word during this season.

Again, I lovingly say this to you. Don't miss this. Don't let somebody's lack of integrity or lack of tact rob you from an experience of God's blessing in this area of your life.

The reason Jesus talked about treasure so much, which is the Bible's word for money, is because He knows that there is an invisible fishing line wire connected from your treasure to your heart. And He wants your heart, not your treasure. But He knows wherever your treasure goes there your heart follows.

So, I want to just ask you to be sort of openhanded, come all six weeks, listen to all six messages before you come to any conclusions and just see if God might give you a fresh experience in this area of your life.

Now, I want to pray. And I want to pray for not only the *Awaken* season, I also want to pray acknowledging what just happened as we got up yesterday morning and turned on the news and saw the conflict in Israel. So we want to lift up the people of Israel, the nation of Israel and what is going on over there and acknowledge God's sovereignty over this. So, let's pray.

Father, we come to You right now and it is an awesome privilege to steward what it is that You have temporarily entrusted us with so that we can expand eternity in the lives of people. So, Lord, I just ask that You would move. I pray that You would speak.

I've prepared a message today that I pray that I would get out of the way and that You would say what needs to be said and that we would listen. That we would be awakened to the movement of Your Holy Spirit in this season of our lives.

God, would you please do a work, primarily in each one of us. And then the secondary thing, because of that work that has been done, You can do an awesome work through us. But we don't want to move too fast past that first primary goal. So, Father, we just consecrate ourselves before You. We ask that You would speak. God, please wake us up. We want to be alert and awakened to the movement of Your Spirit.



God, we recognize how urgent this is as we just got one more reminder of how broken our world is. An example of that would be the attacks in Israel that have taken place over the last 48 hours. So, God, we lift up those people, people who have lost their lives, the people whose lives have been taken captive, and we just ask that Your hand of control would be all over that. We know that this did not take You by surprise. You are sovereign. You are in control. We've asked this to be faithful and to be expectant of what it is that You desire to do.

We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody said: Amen.

I don't know about you guys, but the older I get the more I enjoy early mornings. And I know that this is the 11 o'clock crowd so you just threw up in your mouth a little bit. You're just like, "You know that ain't me." I said that to the 8 o'clock and they all lost their minds cheering because those are my people.

But I love early mornings. Here's the thing. It didn't always used to be that way. I used to be an awake at the crack of noon kind of a guy. But something has changed. The older I've gotten I just really enjoy getting up before the sun comes up and just the quietness of the house.

Here's the thing. It's not easy for me to get up. It's never been easy for me to get up. But once my feet hit the floor, I get some coffee in my system, get a work out in, I am the most awake and alive that I will ever be all throughout the day. In fact, my most productive time of the day is in the morning. I just kind of lay it all out there.

But then, as the day goes on, and especially as 8 or 9 o'clock at night rolls around, I'm just like a pile of goo. I'm just ready to hit the sack. My wife makes fun of me because she says that I fall asleep so fast, she's like, "You fall asleep before your head hits the pillow. You're just breathing heavy." It's because I'm just laying it all on the line during the day.

Now, for some of you, you don't have that problem. Some of you, your most awake and alive time is about the time I'm going to bed at night. You're not an early bird, you're a night owl. And you know what? There is nothing wrong with that. All of us have been wired up differently. The main thing is that we recognize at what point of the day our most awake and alive time is and then we recognize that can be some of our most productive hours of the day.

Now, I say all of this to say this. There is nothing worse than sort of being upright but your body is shutting down and you're falling asleep. Whether that's like you're on a long international flight and you're suffering from jet lag and different time zones...

My favorite story of this is a buddy of mine getting ready to go on a long international flight. The plane is sitting on the tarmac, it hasn't taken off. And He was like, "I'm going to get some sleep." So he pops an Ambien. And then they canceled the flight. And he's walking around the airport trying to stay awake, trying to rebook his flight. Man, there is just nothing worse than that.

And what I kind of want to just throw out to you today is that the only thing worse than that is to be spiritually sleepwalking. Meaning that you've had a conversion experience, you've given your life to Jesus, but you've sort of hit a plateau spiritually. And you're not really doing anything bad, but you're not really doing anything good.

It's not that you're not listening to God and you're not attending church and not reading the Scriptures, it's just that you're not really fully awakened to what it is that He desires to do in you and through you. You're not maximizing the gifts and the opportunities that God has placed in front of you. In fact, if you were being really honest, you would say, "You know what? I'm kind of squandering them. I'm sort of wasting them."

Now there is this narrative about the Christian life that has developed in the western world over the last several decades that is not entirely wrong but it's not entirely right either. And I think it's contributing to this. It's this idea of separating our lives into segments or dualism. So it's spiritual life over here, personal life over here. Church life over here, work life over here. My bank account over here, my walk with God over here.

So it's this idea... We didn't get this from the New Testament; we got this in a different era in history. Some of this is going to sound familiar to some of you, especially if grew up in church. Your idea of a Christian life is that you recognize that you are a sinner, Jesus died on the cross for your sins, you acknowledge that He is Lord and Savior, you pray a sinner's prayer, you are baptized, and then He becomes your personal Lord and Savior, Now you're saved.

So you just kind of live your life and one day when you die or when Jesus comes back He's going to ship you off to heaven Star Trek style. Does that sound familiar to anybody? That's what I grew up hearing. Now, I'm not saying that's entirely wrong, I am saying that it's not entirely right. A lot of those ideas we did not get out of the New Testament.

Here's what God is inviting us into—a radical transformation of who we are. Actually what it is is a re-imaging of who God made us to be because sin de-images the image of God within us. Sin deconstructs the image of God that is in us.

So, when Jesus walked out of a grave, that wasn't a cool trick that God did that said, "Hey, Jesus defeated death now so you can defeat death as well. No, when Jesus walked out of the grave, He was inaugurating the kingdom of God to earth. And He was now living out how He taught us to pray in the Lord's prayer, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

And so when we give our lives to Christ this is not like an eternal life insurance card that we tuck into our back pocket, "Nobody is perfect. I'm going to do the best I can. I'm going to attend when I can, serve when I can, give when I can. And eventually, I've got a personal relationship, I'll go to heaven when I die. I don't really talk much about my faith, but that's okay. God knows where my heart is."

No, actually this is a revolutionary thing where Jesus is inviting you to be a part of His kingdom coming. Meaning that we are agents of His kingdom in this watching world. God has invited us to be a part of a new thing, which requires an awakened church and an awakened people.

This is what Paul is driving at in the passage in Ephesians that I referenced in the video and I actually want to pick up in verse 14. This is what he says. He says:

“Awake,” that’s where we got the name of this vision for the next two to five years that we’re going to be in. Awaken comes directly out of verse 14.

“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise...”

The most common analogy the Scriptures use to describe our personal relationship with Jesus is a walk. So he says, “Be careful how you walk. Don’t be unwise but be wise.” Why should we? Well he tells us in the very next part of this sentence:

“making the best use of the time...”

That’s convicting in and of itself. How many of you have wasted any time? Today. It’s like how many of you find yourself just mindlessly pulling out your phone, popping open Instagram. You’re scrolling and 20 minutes go by. And it’s like, “What in the world have I just been doing for the last 20 minutes watching cat videos. What am I doing?”

This is the idea of... It’s not necessarily bad or wrong. It’s not necessarily the best use of your time. And he goes, “Here’s why:”

“because the days are evil.”

I’m going to talk about that in here in just a minute, what does he mean by the days are evil?

“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Ephesians 5:14b-17 (ESV)

Understand—that implies that we are alert and awake to what it is that God wants to say.

So, I want to point out a couple of things in this passage. If you are taking notes, here’s the first thing to write down (or if you’re drawing pictures):

To be awakened, we must first realize we’re asleep

I know some of you are like, “Did you study for that all week?” Yes, I did. I did. Aren’t you impressed with that nugget of wisdom? But, actually, it’s more profound and it’s actually true. This idea of... Here’s the thing. I very rarely ever remember the precise moment that I fell asleep. And oftentimes I don’t even know I’m asleep until I wake up. The same thing is true spiritually.

Have you ever just kind of lured yourself to sleep? Maybe you were on a public bus, you were starting to drift off. You were watching a movie, you're drifting off. You're listening to somebody talk, like I'm talking right now, and you're drifting off.

Some of you are asleep right now. BLAAH. I just caused you to realize that you were drifting off.

You've had somebody kind of nudge you or you woke up and you realized, "I've been asleep. I didn't realize it."

And the same thing is true spiritually. That's what Jesus is saying in Revelation 3 to the church in Sardis. He's saying, "You have the reputation for being alive," that's another word for having a reputation for being awake, "but you are dead," that's another word for asleep.

So, Jesus is not shaming them. Jesus isn't condemning them. He's admonishing them, which, as we learned, is the most loving thing that you can do. The most loving thing that can be done is for somebody to gently nudge you awake when you've fallen asleep to the voice of God.

Can I ask you this question today? And this is only for you to answer for yourself. Are you sleepwalking spiritually? Only you can answer that question. Have you sort of gone on auto pilot when it comes to God?

For many of us, the pandemic, all of the challenges that came out of 2020 and 2021 lured us to sleep. Another word for that is numbing. We just became numb. We became addicted. We became riddled with fear and anxiety. Some of us, it was anger.

So, are you just sleepwalking? Is there any area of your life right now and you know that you really need to deal with it, but you haven't really dealt with it. There's that relationship and it needs the best of your energy. Your marriage is hanging on by a thread and your spouse needs you to invest. But you know that you've just been sort of coasting.

Maybe you just need to take better care of yourself physically but you've just been sort of putting that off. You know you need to get your finances in order, but Amazon Prime keeps messing that up. Is there any area of your life where you've just sort of fallen asleep and you're coasting?

What I want you to know is that this isn't a passive thing, there is a very active enemy advancing against you. And a sleepful person is a defenseless person. You can't defend yourself when you are asleep. Here's what Jesus says about our enemy in John 10:10. He says:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy." John 10:10a (ESV)

That's Satan's intention for you and those you love. And I just want you to know that his tactics are refined and he has centuries of experience. You and I are no match for him;

we cannot face off with him by ourselves. So this is why sleepy Christians—not a threat to him.

Corrie Ten Boom said it this way, “If Satan can’t make you bad, he’ll make you busy.”

And I would add to that: distracted, distant, fearful, anxious, bitter, selfish, and numb. If he can’t get you to deny God, he’ll just lure you to sleep with all of those other things.

Here’s a convicting question. Are you a threat to Satan? And if you’re not a threat to Satan, he’ll just let you sleep. He’s like, “Oh man. They are not a threat to my kingdom, just let them go to church when they can, let them serve when they can, let them read their Bible when they can, they are sleepy Christians, they are not a threat.”

If you are a threat, you get his attention. And what does he do? He advances against you. This answers at least part of the question of why bad things happen to good people. God gets the blame, but we need to recognize that for some, they are a threat to Satan in this realm.

So, the days are evil. What does that mean? That means that fallen things happen to redeemed and unredeemed people. And if you are a threat to Satan, then he throws everything that he has against you. So oftentimes, and I would never wish bad circumstances on any of you, but some of that, some of that is evidence that you’ve been awakened to the Holy Spirit and you’re a threat to his enemies.

That’s the question that is facing us today. And it’s a question that I want you to wrestle with. Here’s another way of phrasing it. Are you coasting spiritually?

In 2021 I was coasting. I’m confessing that to you. And a lot of that was because of just the impossible challenges of 2020. It was hard for everybody. Some of you know exactly what I’m talking about. It was like no matter what decision I made it always seemed that somebody was mad at me.

I’m a people pleaser and I’m an achiever so I hated that. You know? If I said something somebody would get upset, if I didn’t say something somebody would get upset. And I got to this place where I was running on fumes and just wanting to wave the white flag. I flirted with the idea of just quitting. It was either quit or coast.

I went on a three-month sabbatical in 2021. About six weeks into that sabbatical, I was traveling with my family. We were at an Airbnb, out of town. I got up early in the morning and I got a workout in. I’m on my way to a coffee shop to get some pastries and some coffee to bring back to my family and I’m listening to a leadership podcast.

In this podcast they are interviewing a Christian leader who has been in ministry for decades. He was about 10 years older than me. He was talking about a time of burnout in his life. And he said when he was just running on fumes, wanting to burn out, he was watching a documentary with his spouse on Buzz training for the Navy Seals in San Diego.

Immediately I kind of perked up. I'm listening to this. And he said, "Watching this, several of the guys who went through Buzz said that your mind will give out before your body." And so the goal is just to stay in it.

But it said that when you are freezing cold, swimming in freezing cold water, it's dark outside, you're carrying a log, you're running in sand, you're exhausted, you're sleep deprived, the first step before ringing the bell and tapping out of Buzz is to coast. And nobody really knows that you're not giving it your all. You're just kind of ratcheting it back. That's the first step in ringing the bell.

And this Christian leader on this podcast said, "I was 58 years old at the time. I had already served God for three or four decades. We built the ministry up. Lots and lots of momentum behind this ministry." And he said, "You know what? I was just a handful of years away from retirement and I could just coast and likely no one would ever know." And then he said, "But Jesus would know. And one day I would stand before Him and give an account for that."

Guys, can I tell you that those words wrecked me. I had to pull the car over and I was like, "God, I want to give up so badly." But giving up would be too destructive, so I thought about coasting. I looked around and I was like, "You know what? We're big enough. This is fine. I'm sure people will still get saved. I'll just show up and preach three points and a poem. Everybody will think everything is fine."

And I just thought, "God, can I coast another 15 or 20 years? Maybe nobody would ever know." But I don't think that is true. I think people would know. But most importantly, Jesus would know.

Now, that's my story. What's yours?

Is there any area of your life right now where you're just coasting and maybe it has led you into some pretty dark places? Maybe there is an area of your life right now where you are coasting and nobody knows. Not even your spouse. You know. And Jesus knows. And I just very lovingly say that you're in dangerous territory of not only tapping out but maybe even, potentially, doing something very foolish.

That's another meaning of the days are evil. Every single one of us is just one decision away from doing something stupid. We make our poorest decisions when we're burned out. That's how affairs happen. That's how misconduct happens. That's when unethical things happen. We didn't think that we would ever do that, but we're running on fumes and we burn out.

Jesus says that you've got an enemy who wants to steal from you, kill you, destroy you, especially if you are awake to the voice of the Holy Spirit and you are a threat to him.

Here's Jesus' intentions for you. It's the rest of verse 10. Jesus said:

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10b (ESV)

That's what God wants. If Jesus is God, and He is, and you ever want to know God's purpose and plan for your life—that's it. He wants you to have life and He wants you to have it abundantly.

Now that's not TV preacher health and wealth stuff. This is the idea, this is what Jesus has said, this is the idea of living an abundant life which goes beyond your bank account.

This is the idea, "I'm maximizing every ounce of this temporary life that I have here on earth. I'm not leaving anything back. I'm putting it all on the table, pushing all of the chips in. God, everything I have, all my time, my talent, my treasure it is all Yours. I'm going to open up my hands. I'm going entrust You with this." And watch what God might do.

God's plan of redemption is urgent.

And this is an urgent message right now because here's what is happening in our world. Our world—there is this crossroad, and we're going to miss it, as a church, if we don't maximize it.

Right now there are people around the world who are recognizing that everything that the secular script promised them, abundance and fulfillment, isn't panning out.

So the sexual revolution, financial independence, all the promises of science and technology, a lot of those things can be really, really good things but they are not producing the fulfillment and abundance that we thought. So the world is freaking out. People are looking right now.

We just look around and we see the revival that took place at Asbury earlier this year, we see that when a football player had a cardiac arrest on the football field that there was somebody on ESPN who taught us how to pray. And he actually said, I could get fired for doing this, but I'm going to teach you how to pray. And people were open to it.

We see these little awakenings, these little glimpses of what is happening around the world. Massive spontaneous baptisms on college campuses. I think the world is looking around saying, "Okay, this isn't giving us what we thought. We're looking for something more."

And if the world looks at the church and the church is asleep or they just see a bunch of legalistic, religious people, we will miss it. What we have to do is we have to be awakened to the voice of God to recognize that:

Now is the time!

Now is the time for us to say individually, "God, everything I have is Yours. And I'm just going to live openhandedly. I'm just going to live in light of eternity, because I recognize that You are the giver of life and You want to work through me to actually bring Your kingdom coming to the world."



God's plan of redemption is urgent. And Now is the time!

There is this little book that I would love for you to get if you don't already have it. It's written by a guy by the name of Randy Alcorn. It's called *The Treasure Principle*. A tiny little book. You can read it multiple times in a week. It would be a great thing to have as supplemental to this series. And in it, Alcorn says this. He goes:

You might think of life [your 80 to 90 years on this planet, plus or minus] like this: our life on earth is represented by a dot, because it goes so fast. It's such a short thing. You're born and then you grow up. You think life is so long, and the more you age, the faster you realize that it's going by, and it's just a little dot.

Now, I love what he does here because he gives us this visual that our life, our 80 to 90 years plus, is represented by a dot. And when you're young, that dot is all consuming. You are like, "Man, I've got tons and tons of life left. When I turn 30 years old, I'll be so old and gray." And then you hit 30 and you realize, "Man, I've got so much left. I'm still so young. I'm still trying to figure this out."

I love it when I talk to 80 or 90-year-old people and they are like, "Man, I'm still learning. God has me on this journey."

Time goes by so fast. It's just a dot. Now, here's the thing. Randy Alcorn talks about in light of eternity, so the line coming after the dot... Because you're an eternal being, that line represents all of eternity. So 80 to 90 years seems so consuming, but it's just a little dot in light of eternity.

Here's what I'm driving at. You steward your time and your talent and your treasure, not just for the dot, but for the line. And you recognize, "I'm going to live in light of eternity."

Now, this fundamentally changes everything. So instead of just enjoying the resources, saving the resources for the future—some of us, we're kind of living for the age of 60, 65, 70 when we can retire and be financially independent. Then we won't have any responsibilities and can play golf and spend time with the grandkids.

Please do not misunderstand me. There is nothing wrong with retiring early. There is nothing wrong with a good round of golf. And there is nothing wrong with having grandkids. Can I get a good amen?

There is nothing wrong with any of those things, just don't live for them because, man, you live for the line, not the dot. You recognize that you are here to make an eternal difference.

And what I want to say to our church is that:

**God has uniquely positioned and prepared us as a church for this moment in time.
DON'T MISS IT!**

There is a reason why you are here. There is a reason why you exist in this generation.

That was a turning point in the pandemic for me. I was on a Zoom call. There was a pastor who looked out to the rest of us. We gave him the final word. And he said, "Hey,

guys. I know these are some dark days. There are some challenging crises, but you know what? God has ordained it that you would be leading His church in 2020. Not Charles Spurgeon, not Elizabeth Elliot, not John Wesley—you.”

And I would say the same thing to you. These are scary days. We see what happened in Israel, we see earthquakes going on, we see the war in the Ukraine, we see the economy and we're just like, "Oh, man. This is so fearful." You know what? God has chosen and ordained that you would be His representative in this time. So we live by the power of His Spirit and we lean into that.

So, let me close with this. In Luke, chapter 16, verse 9, Jesus says something that when you read it at first you kind of scratch your head and you say, "What did He just say?" And I think Jesus loved doing that. Here's what He said. He goes:

"I tell you, use worldly wealth," all of the wealth you acquire in the dot, "to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone," because eventually it will be, it will go to somebody else, "you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." Luke 16:9 (NIV)

I think that is a little bit of a confusing verse, "Jesus, are You telling us to use worldly wealth to bribe people?" No, that's not what He is saying. Here's what He is saying, He's saying, "I want you to use your worldly wealth, at least a certain segment of it, I want you to use it to change somebody's eternal future." And there will come a day in heaven where somebody will walk up to you and say, "It was your generosity that paved the way for me to meet Jesus. Thank you."

Many of you know the story of how we got the Downtown campus. I don't have time to unpack the whole story but the very short version is that we felt like God was calling us to start a campus downtown in the heart of our city. And we felt like we needed to have land to do that, to say to the city that we are here to stay.

And there was a building that was a former Jehovah's Witness Hall. They were selling it for 2.8 million dollars. Way too much money for us to go into debt on. The elders very wisely said, "No." And man, I was heartbroken because I really wanted us to be downtown. I honored that decision though. And we were like, "Okay, we're not going to move on it." So we started our Carmel campus.

But, every time I would take my wife on a date downtown, I would take a detour and I would drive past that building on Delaware. I would slow down and I would just look at the building and I would hold my hand out and I would say, "God, would you please give us that building?" My wife was like, "What are you doing?" I was like, "I don't know. God just give us the building."

Two years go by. Long story short, there was a family in our church who came to me and said, "We really want to help move the needle around here. What can we do? What can we contribute to?" And I said, "What do you have in mind?" And they said, "What do you have?" And I was like, "Well..."



So we went down to that building. It was still for sale. And the real estate agent came up to us. I'm with the gentlemen in the parking lot. He said, "Hey, two things Aaron. Number one the Jehovah's Witnesses, they don't like you because you've been here looking through this several times. They don't think you are serious." I was like, "Well, I don't like them."

But anyway, they said, "Your chances aren't good. Secondly, somebody just put a letter of intent on the building." And my heart dropped. I'm like, "Oh man, you've got to be kidding me. Two years of praying and this is going to happen."

So we walked through the building. We look at it. We get done. Agent walks away. And I look at the man. We're in the parking lot. Beautiful sunny day downtown. And he goes, "Aaron, I love everything about this building. We need to make this happen." And I go, "I know we do, but you heard what he said."

And he goes, "I heard what he said. Aaron, we'll offer 2.825 million cash. And if you get into a bidding war with someone we authorize you to go up to 3.3 million." And he goes, "Tell me how it goes." Patted me on the shoulder. Hopped in his Porsche. Drove off.

And I'm sitting there like, "Wow!"

We made that offer. They ended up accepting it. That's how we got the Downtown campus. God gave it to us.

Now, let me tell you this. We have had, since that time, nearly 300,000 thousand adult foot traffic through that building, over 500 baptisms, thousands of people come to that campus, 1,200 students were at student night at that campus—that is a piece of real estate where God is changing lives. And it was because of the generosity of that family.

Now, let me just very quickly ask you right now, across all of our campuses, if you met Jesus in our church just simply lift up your hand. If you gave your life to Christ in our church just hold up your hand. There we go.

How many of you got reacquainted or reintroduced to Jesus after walking away through our church? Just lift up your hand. How many of you have had a spiritual significant moment, a life altering moment through the ministry of our church? Just lift up your hand.

There are hands that have gone up in every single service across all of our campuses and that is amazing. And I simply want to say to you:

You are the recipient of someone else's generosity

You are the recipient of somebody else's generosity because somebody chose to live for the line, not just the dot.

Now, I want to wrap up with this. Here is the danger of me sharing with you the story of how we got the Downtown campus. And it's something I wrestle with every time I tell the story. I think those numbers are so astronomical and so big that you let yourself off



of the hook. And you go, "Well, Aaron. If I ever had that much money I'd buy the church a building too. You said he drove off in a Porsche, I think they're doing just fine. I don't even think they missed it."

Here's the thing. If you think that, and I would totally understand why you would think that, I think I would think that, you'd be missing the point. We have a tendency to compare other's external purchases from a distance with our internal bank account and we say, "That's not fair." And we let ourselves off the hook. And we say, "You know what? I think that they were born with a silver spoon in their mouth." Or, "They are trust fund babies. It's just unfair that they've got that."

When in reality, you have no idea how they came into those resources. You have no idea the journey that they've been on. And I know a lot of people who are doing relatively well with worldly wealth, and part of the reason why is because they trusted God with little and He entrusted them with more over the decades. They are faithful with it.

2 Corinthians 9, which is a passage we're going to unpack in this series later, simply says this:

"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion..." 2 Corinthians 2: 9a (NIV)

Do you know what that means? Through every season of life. And for many of us, what we do is we say, "Well, one day when I sell the business." "One day when I retire." "One day when the kids graduate from college and we finally have enough, then we'll be generous with what we've reaped."

But here's the principle of sowing and reaping that you missed. You've got to sow something to reap something. If I was to walk out to a farmer and he's staring at a field and say, "What are you doing?" And he's like, "I'm just waiting for my harvest."

"Oh. What did you plant?" And he says, "Nothing." I'm like, "Well, that's crazy." But we do that all of the time when it comes to resources for the kingdom. We say, "What have you sown?"

So, I just want you to know God is asking, whatever season of life that you are in, for you to take a step of faith in this area of openhanded generosity.

Now, in the next several weeks together, we're going to come together and challenge some of your assumptions. These are some of the most important messages that I could preach to you to awaken us to what God desires to do in and through us, because:

Now is the time!

Let me pray:

Father, we come to You right now and we're so grateful for who You are and what You've done and the fact that You've invited us into this special season of time. These are the



days that You have ordained us to live in. So, God, we want to be fully awakened to how You want to move in and through us as a church.

One day, when we look back: five, 10, 15, 20 years from now, that we would see that some of the best, transformational work that You did in the life of our church came in these years. And we were a part of it.

God, thank You for what You have done on our behalf. May we never forget it. May it never end with us. We don't want to just live for the dot, we want to live for the line. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

