

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

YOU'VE GOT A ROLE TO PLAY | CHURCH IN THE WILD

AARON BROCKETT | OCTOBER 13, 2024

Video From Convoy of Hope

Hey Pastor Aaron and Traders Point Church family on behalf of Convoy of Hope, I just want to say thank you for your unbelievable generosity. Because of Traders Point we have been able to deliver now 2.4 million pounds of critical supplies: water, food, diapers, hygiene kits to over 124,000 individuals in 44 communities. You are literally helping us bring hope to those who have been most impacted by Hurricane Helene.

And now, with Hurricane Milton leaving a wake of disaster across Florida, 3,000,000 people without power, thousands of people displaced from their homes, that need continues to grow.

As you can imagine, responding to disasters from North Carolina all the way down to south Florida is no small task. But, because of you, we are able to be a channel for God's blessing to the hurting and the broken.

From the bottom of our hearts to you—thank you.

End Video

Aaron Brockett

Well, we love our partnership with Convoy of Hope. And if you are unfamiliar with who they are, they are boots on the ground immediately following any sort of natural disaster or crisis. They've been one of our partners over the last several years. We love what they do. And they, as well as another partner, Hope Force International—we just support them on an ongoing basis through your generosity.

And due to the recent hurricanes that swept through North Carolina and south Florida, we've given an additional \$35,000 to Convoy of Hope making the total so far for this year about \$100,000. So, I want to thank you guys for your ongoing generosity that helps us to pivot to be generous toward partners like that. You didn't cause that but you are a part of that. So, I want to thank you for all of that.

If you've got a Bible, go ahead and find 1 Corinthians, chapter 12. That's the chapter that we are going to be in together today. If you are just now joining us at any one of our locations or online, we've been in a message series since this summer in the book of 1 Corinthians called Church In The Wild.



Today we come to chapter 12. And I've got some good news for you because, if you've been here over the last several weeks, there has been really challenging, hard topics that we've sort of navigated through.

As we come to chapter 12, it's a bit of fresh air because it's not a very complicated, difficult passage but it is a critically important one. It's a very practical message that Paul has for us as he's explaining spiritual gifts: what they are, where they are from, and what they are for. So, I think you're going to find this a really helpful passage today.

I want you to know that next weekend—we've just got a couple of weeks left in this series—next week we have a very special guest who is going to be here. You do not want to miss it. And Kyle Riley is going to wrap this up the week after that.

Then, on November the 3rd I begin a brand-new series of messages that I'm very excited about. It may be the most important set of messages I preach all year. So, you don't want to miss out on that.

I don't know how many of you would relate to this, but sometimes the seasons of our spiritual walk can be captured in the evolution of the images of the Marvel super hero Thor. Alright? Go with me on this.

Seasons of the Christian life (Thor Style)

- Filled with optimism, wonder and hope (LONG HAIR THOR)
- Navigating a "desert" or difficult season (SHORT HAIR WITH SCAR THOR)
- Renewed hope and clarity, filled with the Spirit (LIGHTING EYES THOR)
- Thinking it's all about me, 15 Bible studies but not serving (FAT THOR)

Sometimes our spiritual walk seems a little bit like Thor with long hair, kind of filled with wisdom and courage. And maybe this is right after you come to know Jesus. You are just kind of ready to take on the world.

But then there are other seasons of our spiritual walk that are maybe a little bit more like Thor with short hair and a scar. You're just feeling a little bit beat up. This is what many of the church fathers would call the dark night of the soul, or maybe the desert experience that Jesus experienced Himself. The valleys of life. Those are difficult but they are oftentimes where the most fruit gets borne out in our lives.

There are other moments, these are maybe few and far between, when maybe you feel a little bit like Thor with lighting eyes. You just feel filled with the Holy Spirit and you are just like ready to charge hell with a water pistol. It's like 1,000 worship nights all stacked up into one. These mountaintop experiences and they are great.



But then there are a lot of times where maybe we feel a little bit like Thor like this—kind of like fat Thor. And maybe you just feel a little bit blah right now in your walk with Jesus.

I think sometimes when it comes when it comes to the natural rhythms of our year—fall break would be a good one where I've kind of sensed this so far this weekend that we are all just kind of like in vacation mode, maybe kind of not. We're just sort of like, "I don't know. It doesn't feel like God is doing much of anything." Or, "Maybe I've been praying but it doesn't seem like He's answering or responding."

Or, another way to look at this (and I've certainly had seasons of my life like this) is when we resort our walk with Jesus to the spiritual content we consume. Now, please hear me. Don't misunderstand. Yes, it is important that we receive content, primarily daily Bible reading, the wisdom of God's word. Maybe it's good sermons. Or, if you're like me, a pod cast junkie, or you've got all kinds of books that you are reading. That's great. And we need that.

But it's not just about input, it's also about output. So, the analogy that I've used before is like a spiritual bib and a spiritual apron. The Christian needs both. If you only have a spiritual bib like, "Feed me, feed me, feed me. I'm in 15 different Bible studies, it's all about the content I can consume and the head knowledge that I grow," and you're not wearing a spiritual apron where you are serving others, then your spiritual metabolism gets out of whack.

Now, that said, if all you're wearing is a spiritual apron and you're only serving but you're never being ministered to, you're never getting content poured in, that's a recipe for burn out and, really, disaster.

We need both.

And chapter 12 helps us with this because Paul is writing to a group of believers who were filled with pride and division and he is talking to them about gifts because, as a believer in Jesus, you have been granted a gift for God to do something with. He wants to work in you for the purpose of working through you.

When Jesus ascended into heaven the last words that He gave us that are recorded in Matthew 28 were not great advice, were not the great last words, it was the Great Commission. And in that word is mission, which is battle language. We are in a battle, now, not with bombs and bullets, but against principalities and powers.

And what is at stake is the hearts and minds and the souls of men and women and children—we have an enemy who is actively advancing against us. And the church cannot just play defense. It has to play offense.

Jesus would say this in Matthew, chapter 11, verse 12.

“And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been,” say it out loud with me, “forcefully advancing, and violent people are attacking it.” (NLT)

So, Jesus would say to us, “If you are following after Me, you are a part of this Kingdom of God that is forcefully advancing against an enemy who is forcefully advancing against it.” And God had given you a spiritual gift to be used. So, we need to discover—in this passage—what are the gifts, where are they from, what are they for?

Paul speaks to this in chapter 12. Follow along with me beginning in verse 1. He says:

“Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don’t want you to misunderstand this. You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols. So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:1-3 (NLT)

So, there is a lot packed into those three verses. The first thing that I will just say is it’s very clear that the Corinthians had questions about these special abilities. And the Greek word that Paul uses for special abilities is the word:

Pneumatikon

which is a broad term that encompasses various ways the Holy Spirit seeks to work through followers of Jesus.

And the Holy Spirit fills us and grants us a gift. Now, you might be here today and are like, “I don’t know that I’ve ever had an experience where I’ve been filled with the Holy Spirit.” And I would say that if you call yourself a Christian, if you’ve received Jesus as Lord and Savior, then you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

For starters, there is no way that anyone can become a Christian by their own will. You didn’t just wake up one day and say, “You know what? I think I’m going to give my life to Christ one day.” That is all the result, even in the investigation, the questions that you pursued—all of that is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit pursuing you, wooing you. And then the day you gave your life to Jesus, He sealed you. He sealed your salvation. And that is what is called a filling of the Holy Spirit.

That doesn’t mean that you’re like electrified Thor all of the time. It could mean that there are these seasons where it just kind of feels like the spiritual doldrums, you’re wondering if God is there. But the Holy Spirit is still with you in that.

And then he says that if you’ve been filled with the Spirit, you cannot curse Jesus. That seems a little weird because you may be like, “I don’t know that I’ve ever cursed Jesus out.” That’s not what that means.

Cursing Jesus means to be against what he is for or to be for what He is against, which is happening all over society right now. Romans 1 calls it, "In the last days people will call good evil and evil good." And Paul says, "Don't be led astray and don't be swept along." And you need the Holy Spirit to help you discern if you are being led astray or swept along.

And then in verse 4 he says:

"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us." 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NLT)

So, he says God works in a variety of ways but He is the same God who is at work in each one of us, who is empowering us for His purposes. And you might be like, "I'm not sure that I have one of those gifts." Well, in verse 7 Paul speaks to that. He says:

"A spiritual gift is given to each of us," here's the purpose, "so we can help each other." (NLT)

A spiritual gift is granted to us by the Holy Spirit and these gifts are cultivated and stewarded but they are not of us, it's been something that has been placed upon us, not for self-promotion or to platform ourselves, but for the purpose of helping each other, or here's the phrase we'll use here in just a minute: building up the body of Christ.

And in verses 8 through 10 Paul provides us a short list of what some of these special abilities are:

Wise advice

Special knowledge

Great faith

Healing

Miracles

Prophecy

Discernment

Unknown language

Interpretation

So, the day that you gave your life to Jesus you joined team Jesus and His mission in this world. And not every Christian should go into full-time vocational ministry but every Christian should be involved in ministry, because you're saved from something for something. The Spirit of God has granted you a gift to be used to advance His Kingdom.



And the sooner you come to... Recognize a couple of things, "We are in a battle and God has gifted me and I need to figure out where to use my gifts," or your spiritual life will never be ignited. It will never come to life.

So, let me just share eight brief things. If you are taking some notes—eight things I want to share with you today and then the sermon will just end. I'll just be done. Alright? Here's the first one:

Jesus is still at work in the world through the gifts

I think one of the biggest surprises to me is that Jesus spent three years with His small group—the 12 disciples... And if any of you have ever tried to lead a small group that didn't go well, Jesus knows what that is like.

If any of you feel like you were leading a small group you were trying to herd cats, and you can't get everybody there at the same time, and somebody drops out or maybe somebody flakes, Jesus knows your pain because He led a small group for three years and in the biggest test of their lives to stay faithful to Him upon His arrest and crucifixion all of them bailed.

Now, Judas and Peter get a bad rap for that, but all of them walked out on Jesus. Now, if I'm Jesus (and clearly I'm not) but if I were Jesus and I came back from the dead I'd be like, "Alright, guys. Circle the wagons. We're going to run this back another three years. We need to figure out what went wrong."

But Jesus didn't do that. Before Jesus ascended into heaven He gave them the Great Commission, and then said, "Greater is He that is in you than for Me to be with you. It's better that the Holy Spirit be in you than for Me to be alongside of you."

And Jesus, right now, is still at work in the world through the gifts. So, whenever the Holy Spirit empowers you to do His work in the world, that is a spiritual gift.

Number two:

The Holy Spirit is the source of the spiritual gifts

Verse 11, once again, it says:

"It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have." (NLT)

So, I just need you to hear this. If you're a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit has given you a gift. And if you find that you can just naturally do something well and you're not quite sure how you can do that, very likely that is a gift that has been granted to you to help other people.

Number three:

The gifts can be a long-term or a temporary empowerment

I think the ambiguity of how Paul talks about the spiritual gifts in this chapter is really intentional because I think Paul is showing us that a spiritual gift could be something that is long term, meaning that you have it for the rest of your life and you just use it year after year, decade after decade, but you could actually be empowered by the Spirit for a moment and a moment only. And we need to be attuned to that as well.

Let me just give you an example of this. The gift of prophecy, for example, which is not predicting the future, the gift of prophecy is giving voice to what God wants said. Oftentimes we hear about prophecy and we think, “Well, that’s relegated to what I am doing right now—standing on a platform preaching a sermon.” But it goes way beyond that.

You can actually give voice to what God wants said in a coffee shop sitting across a table from your friend. And maybe God prompts you to say something to your friend and that is of the Holy Spirit.

Now, obviously you have to be very, very discerning with this because in all of my years of ministry some of the most dangerous people in the church are those who think they have the gift of prophecy when they do not. Oh, you’ve met them too? It’s like they feel like everything that they think or say comes from God. And that’s not necessarily the case.

So, actually here’s the way to do this. If you are sitting with your friend and maybe in the moment you just feel the Holy Spirit is prompting you to say something to them, here’s how you say it. You say, “Hey, listen. I just feel led to tell you this. And I don’t know if this is the Holy Spirit or this is the bad burrito that I ate last night. You need to prayerfully discern it.” That’s the way to do it.

I was in London last year and I met a British man who actually—it’s a long story—but he actually spoke a prophetic word over me while I was there. I didn’t know him very well. And as he was sharing this with me he got down to the end of it—he’s got a really thick British accent—and he says, “Aaron, I don’t know if this is of the Lord or if it’s just a bunch of rubbish,” (which is a great British word) “but if it is a bunch of rubbish, you can just disregard it. You need to discern if this is of God.” I was very open to what it was that he had to say.

A spiritual gift is when the Spirit of God comes upon you for the accomplishing of His purposes and you become, for whatever length of time, His hands or His feet or His mouthpiece.

Number 4:

Every Christian has one (or more)

Verses 11 through 12 say:

“He alone decides which gift each person should have. The human body,” so he’s using this analogy, “has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.” (NLT)

So, if you are a Christian, you are part of the body of Christ and God has given you something for the good of the entire body. If you have a gift, that’s not for you to use for yourself, it is for you to use for contribution to the body of Christ—the local church.

Which leads into number five:

When you aren’t using your gift, it impacts more people than you think

And you might just think, “Well, you know, me sitting this one out or not acting on my gift nobody is going to notice that.” But, actually, it’s a big, big deal. And Paul uses this really, really weird analogy starting in verse 15. Look at this. He says:

“If the foot says,”

Anybody notice something about those words? I’ve never had a conversation with my foot, “Paul, what are you smoking here, man?” Just go with me on this. I’m tripping out, if my foot starts talking and says:

“I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,”

Now why would a foot say that? I don’t know. Feet don’t get much respect. They are kind of smelly. They are covered up by shoes and socks. But a hand, oh man, we decorate the hand with rings. You see hands all the time. But if the foot would be like, “Oh, man, I’m not as visible as the hand, Paul would say:

“that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says,” we’ve got talking ears now, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye,” that’s a weird image, “how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?”

But now you know he’s not talking about our literal bodies. He’s talking about the body of Christ. Verse 18:

“But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it.”

Look at me. You are not an accident. You are not here by accident. God has ordained the days of your life and He’s granted you a gift. The question is: Do you recognize it and are you using it for the good of others? He says:

“How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you.’ The head can’t say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you.’”

Verse 27:

“All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.” (NLT)

Have you ever noticed that some of the smaller more insignificant parts of your body that you begin to really notice them whenever you injure them or they are inactive? You ever jammed a pinky, broken a toe? And it’s like your whole body can feel that pain. It affects the way that you walk. And he says, “In a very similar way, when there are parts of our body, our people, who are injured or hurt or missing in action, it affects everyone else.

Number six:

If you want to know God’s will for you, discover your gift

Every time we do an FAQ and we ask you to turn in questions this is always one of the ones that is at the top of the list, “How do I discover God’s will for my life? How do I discover what it is that He wants me to do?” It’s a really, really great question.

But very rarely do we ask or connect our giftedness to purpose. So, if God’s got a purpose for your life, doesn’t it stand to reason that in order to discover God’s purpose for your life you’ve got to look at the gift He’s given you and ask if you are using it?

So, if you acknowledge and understand your gift and you’re using your gift, that opens the doors for God to fulfill His purpose in your life. And the best practical counsel I can give you on this is, just get in there and just start trying a bunch of stuff and see what sticks. See what you are good at. See what other people affirm in you.

When I went to Bible college I knew that God was calling me to something. I didn’t know what that was, whether that was full-time ministry and if it was I didn’t know where. I just really didn’t know.

So, I’m a freshman at Bible college and I just start trying a bunch of stuff. And my junior high pastor at my home church called me one day and he asked if I would be willing to consider co-leading, with an older female, a seventh grade, girls Bible study. And I did it. And I learned that wasn’t my gift, “I’m out. I’m not good at this.” Now, God did use that because there was a seventh grade girl in my group and she had an older sister who one day I would eventually marry. So it all worked out. It worked out.

But I just kind of stumbled on to a bunch of stuff that I wasn’t very good at. And, in fact, (many of you have heard me tell my story before) I was more of an introvert as a kid. I wasn’t really good at speech and I did not like speaking in front of people—not ever doing this. This never came to mind. But I felt like God was prompting me toward this

and I kind of went kicking and screaming and I did it really badly a bunch of times. And occasionally still badly. Alright?

But what happened is as I began to kind of get in there and as I would lead devos on the dorm floor, other people would come to me later and they would affirm it. They would say, "Hey, I feel like God is using you in that like that's an anointing on you. Whenever you explain that we understand it and we can apply it."

See, this is another reason why you need to be in a small group or you need to be connected with others, to allow others the opportunity to bless you with their affirmation, for them to be able to see your giftedness in action and then to call it out.

I think a really helpful tool is this Vin diagram of:

Affinity, ability, affirmation

If you are trying to discover God's giftedness in your life, then look at your abilities, what are you just sort of naturally good at? Because God gave you those too. And then what is your affinity? What are you really, really passionate about? And then the third piece is affirmation. What do other people in the church say to you about the gift? And then where those three circles converge, typically you'll find your spiritual gift.

And affirmation, by the way, is really, really important because there is nothing worse than thinking you have a gift that nobody else thinks you have.

As a tool, the inventories, I think, are a good place to start. They are not everything because I took one of those inventories of what you should do for a living when I was in high school and it told me that the only thing that I could do was to be a mailman. And a mailman is a very profound occupation but that was the only thing it told me that I could go after. So, the inventories are just a tool. This is a place for you to start. And you can go there and you can fill it out. Maybe it will get the juices flowing and you just ask yourself, "What am I good at? What am I passionate about? And, what are people saying in my life?"

Here's the seventh thing:

The gifts are for service, not for show

And that is so important for us to understand. Verse 7:

"A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other." (NLT)

A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other, not promote ourselves. And one of the problems in the Corinthian church that we've seen over the last few weeks is that they were filled with pride and division.

Last week we read that they were dividing themselves over communion. And now this week, as we come to chapter 12, what was apparently happening is that some of them

were gifted in something so they were kind of creating two categories, like the superior gifts and the inferior gifts or the upfront gifts and the behind the scenes gifts and it was creating division in the church.

And Paul just shakes his head at that and he goes, “What do you have to be proud of when it comes to a gift? A gift is a gift. It’s something that is given to you.” So, a boxing glove doesn’t boast about its ability to punch hard, no the power comes from the hand inside the glove. All of us are just gloves. And God chooses to do a work in us to do a work through us. That is something we hold onto loosely. We don’t boast about it and we realize that the gift has been given not to advance ourselves but the Kingdom of God and to help other people.

The last thing I’ll say is this:

God works in your life through the gifts of others

God works in your life through the gifts of others and then vice versa. In verse 25 Paul urges all of us in the body to care for one another. And I think that many times, and I’m not saying this is true all of the time, I’m saying many times when God seems distant or silent—maybe you’ve been praying for a need or you’ve been praying for an open door or you’ve been praying for your marriage or something financial or a health thing, whatever it may be—and it doesn’t feel like God is answering you. You’ve got to stop and you’ve got to ask yourself, “What are the ways that God can answer prayer?”

Going back to the analogy of the body, if I cut myself shaving my brain just doesn’t automatically zap power to the cut and cut off the bleeding. The first thing that it does is it sends a message to my hand and I grab a tissue and I apply pressure to stop the bleeding.

So, I’m just saying that there are times when you’ve been praying and praying and praying asking God to intervene or come through in your life and I’m just wondering if there is this possibility that God might say to you through His Spirit, “Hey, I’ve actually granted you the wisdom and I’ve granted you the resources, and I’ve granted you the encouragement through others, through the body of Christ.

“There are people with that gift. But you are not connected to the body of Christ. You are not connected to the portal of My power. And I want to be an answer to that prayer but you’ve disconnected yourself from the church.”

If you want God to work in your life, you’ve got to be a part of the church. Now, I know that’s a little bit of... I’m on thin ice with some of you because, number one, this is not a commercial for our church because it doesn’t need to be this one. You’re like, “I don’t know if this is the church for me.” That’s fine. Go find a church that is for you that is making much of Jesus, has got their Bibles open, and is advancing the Kingdom of God. Get plugged in there.



Others of you say, “Well, this is my church.” Then I would just simply ask you: Have you gotten connected to the body? Because when you disconnect yourself from the church, you disconnect yourself from the power of God. So, very lovingly could I say this? Stop asking God to work powerfully in your life if you’re not putting yourself in the portal of His power.

We’ve got a problem in western Christianity where we have a tendency to view our faith as private. So, we say things like this, “My faith is really important to me. I just don’t ever really talk about it that much.”

And it’s so weird in this sense. In what other area of your life if something is important to you that you don’t talk about? “Oh, man. My marriage is so important to me. You’re just not going to find me talking about it that very much.”

Guys, we watched an amazing show on Netflix we’re talking about it. Like a lot. And here’s what’s happened. In this autonomy, this sort of independence, that we have, we’ve reduced our faith to this, “It’s me and God. It’s private. I just consume content. God knows where my heart is. I don’t have to live it out or talk about it.” Can I just very lovingly say, “That is a foreign concept to the New Testament.”

Now your faith is personal, but private? No way. And I’m not saying that your salvation is tied to church attendance, I am saying that your growth is, because you need other people in your life to grow. Now, that comes with risks. And some of you know this full well because you did jump in. You did get involved. You did get into that group. And you got hurt.

That’s why church hurt has become such a big thing. It’s a real thing. And all of us are susceptible to it. Even Jesus, Himself. It is not reason to disconnect yourself permanently from the body of Christ, which is why you’ll hear me say this a lot. If you’re coming here to recover, by all means. You come and stay anonymous and recover. You just use this as a hospital bed to get well.

But eventually we want you to reconnect to the body of Christ and use your gift and be involved in the lives of other people because... By the way, church hurt isn’t just relegated to church, it’s anywhere you find people because people are messy and broken and hurtful

Man, I love our church. I love how I see God moving in and through our people. But just as what is true of many churches in the west, we’ve got a fair number in our church of what I might call ninja Christians. You’re a Christian. You’re a follower of Jesus. You’ve received Him. But you’ve really never gotten connected and for whatever reason—you may have many good reasons for this—you slide in late and slip out early. You’re a ninja.

Like I did the preaching and I say: Amen. And the service isn’t over yet. But you thought I would have yelled, “Fire,” because there are a whole bunch of people leaving. I’m like,



“The service isn’t over yet. In fact, this is the most important time of the service where the Spirit of God is moving and there might be somebody who is ready to make some sort of a decision, but quite possibly, you’re distracting them as you leave.

Please hear me. I know that there may be very good reasons for you leaving. Maybe you’ve got to go to the bathroom. I don’t know. But what I am saying is, if you’re just trying to get out of the parking lot earlier, can I just say, “Hey, you’re actually excusing yourself, quite possibly, from the most critical moment of our time together.”

You just kind of slip in and you slip out and as a result you never get to know anybody and you never get involved and you’re not really sure if my name is Ryan, Kyle, or that Hugh Jackman looking guy. You don’t really know.

Every time I sit on a plane next to somebody and they tell me that they are a Christian and that they go to a church, I always ask them, “What’s your pastor’s name?” And it’s really interesting because if they can’t tell me what their pastor’s name is, then I know that they’ve not gotten connected.

Now, I say that not because it’s important that you know my name or the pastor’s name. I am saying it’s just kind of a given that if you don’t know the one guy who is talking up front, his name, you probably haven’t gotten to know the other people around you either. And I know, by the way, that’s a big knock on big churches, “I went to that church and nobody knew my name.” And I would say that I hate that. I grieve that if that’s you.

Do you know the best way for others to get to know your name? For you to actually get to know theirs. And you know the best way to do this is to begin to serve. To man your station. Find a place. And here’s just a little hack. When you start serving you get a name tag. You put it right here [left side of your chest] and it’s amazing. Right? All of a sudden everybody knows your name.

I know I’m being a little bit facetious. It’s my spiritual gift. But I always feel a little bit bad when I meet somebody, I’m walking through the lobby and they are serving and I see their name tag. I glance at it really quickly and I walk up and I call them by name, like, “Hey, Clark. Good to see you.” And he’s like, “You know my name.” And I’m like, “Oh, man. I don’t have the heart to tell you I read your nametag, but it’s helping me know your name so that way the next time I don’t have to rely on your nametag.”

Can I just tell you this? I shared this with you a few weeks ago. If you’re here and you call yourself a Christian and you would say that this is your church, we have five expectations for you. And this is not something we want from you; this is something we want for you. Here they are:

1. Come ready (weekend worship)
2. Man your station (make a difference)

3. Find your crew (get in a group)
4. Give your first and best (time, talent, treasure)
5. Invest and invite (build intentional relationships)

Number 1, come ready every single week you are on the balls of your feet. Here's what I mean by come ready. It doesn't mean that you have to be in a good mood. It doesn't mean that you didn't have a bad week. It doesn't mean that you need to pretend to be joyful when you're not.

It does mean, "I'm walking in here anticipating to have an encounter with God. I'm walking in here, "I know that God has something for me and I don't want to miss it." I'm walking in realizing, "It is not just about me and God, there are others who actually need my gift and I'm ready."

Number 2, man your station. Find a place to serve on the battleship and make a difference.

Number 3, find your crew. Get into a group. Jump into Rooted. This is just a big church filled with lots of smaller churches we call groups.

Number 4, give your first and your best: your time, your talent, and your treasure.

And then lastly, invest and invite. Build intentional relationships with people so they know you care and then, eventually, invite them. And, by the way, don't just invite them generically to church, invite them to come sit with you. And when you get that specific, that actually lowers some of the defenses and takes away some of the fear of them coming to the church.

Can I just say this? Returning guests consistently tell us that the reason they came back had nothing to do with the worship or the preaching. It was the joyfulness and helpfulness of the people who serve. They are like, "I could just see Jesus through them." And it moved them to return.

It's the difference between having a cruise ship mentality and a battleship mentality. And this church is what it is because of a couple of thousand difference makers who are manning their station on the battleship because they've discovered their gift and they are using their gift.

I'm thinking about a guy named Rick who recently changed a guest's flat tire during church while she attended church.

I'm thinking about some ladies at our Downtown campus like Marguerita who serves coffee. She knows the first time guests and she offers to sit with them and invite them to serve along side of her. Cherise at the Downtown campus serves on the parking lot team. She has a big heart for the homeless community around that campus. And she

makes sure they are seen, noticed, and valued. Ann, a greeter at our Downtown campus found out recently that a guest didn't have anything for her new baby so she is currently planning a surprise baby shower for her.

Ian, who meets guests at their cars at our Midtown campus in the pouring rain with umbrellas to walk them in so they can stay dry.

A small group at our Fishers campus who, because our Fishers campus has portable chairs, helps reset the auditorium every week between mid-week and Sunday morning.

Chase and Katie drive from Lafayette to serve at our 8 a.m. service here at Northwest because they found out that was the service that had a need.

Gabby, who is faithfully serving our growing Hispanic community here at our Northwest campus.

Melissa, who makes sure that no student sits alone.

I am so grateful for these difference makers who make this church what it is.

So, the church is not where we just come and watch paid staff do Christianity as professionals. There is no such thing as a peanut gallery in church. We are an active part of the body and each of us has a role to play.

Some of you might be like, "Aaron, I may not be serving in the church but I volunteer in the community." "I serve at my kids' school." "I coach Little League baseball." And I would say, "That's amazing. And you need to do that. And way to go. That's actually called being a good citizen. And it's necessary. Salt and light. It is not the same thing as being part of the body of Christ and using your gift to build up the body."

Listen. There are lots of worthy causes that you can and should be involved in. but those two things are not mutually exclusive. There is only one who is pushing back the forces of hell and advancing the Kingdom of God. There is only one who is eternal. There is only one who has the power to change lives, save marriages, free people from the bondage of addiction and bring healing to the hurting. And that is the body of Christ. And there is nothing that will help you grow in your relationship more than helping somebody else grow in theirs.

This is the difference between if you were to go to a car dealership and walk in and they've got a brand-new Corvette sitting on the showroom floor and you get into that car and you sit in the driver's seat and without starting it up, you just sit there and you make vroom, vroom noises. It's fun for a while. But you're not going anywhere and you're not maximizing the real power under the hood. And eventually, you're going to get bored sitting there and you'll bounce. That's what happens all of the time with Christians who just rotate churches.



Instead, you discover your gift and start using it. That's like putting the key in the ignition and firing that baby up and getting it out of the showroom and ripping it on the open road. It is an adventure. There is so much more under the hood that you're missing if you're reducing Christianity to what I can consume because every single week what hangs in the balance is literally life and death.

Seven days ago at our Plainfield campus there was a couple who walked in—a dating couple—their names were Douda and Julian. Douda was a practicing Muslim and Julian has a couple of children, she checked them into the Kids' Ministry. He came somewhat apprehensively, primarily because he was an active Muslim.

They walked into the building in the auditorium and we had somebody being baptized last week. He immediately had some questions. So he leaves the service, goes back into the lobby, finds one of our difference makers—non-staff, just somebody who was manning his station out in the lobby—and he started asking questions. He said, "Hey, I'd love to answer your questions. Why don't you go back in and take in the service? Don't miss that and then afterward I can answer your questions." So he did.

And last week I preached from chapter 11 on head coverings and communion. That's awesome. Right? Awesome sermon for him to show up to, which just shows the power of God's word. Even in that chapter God can use it.

And I made one statement last week: You can come to Jesus just as you are. He'd never heard that. And he was like, "Well, that's good to know given who I am." He had all kinds of questions afterward. He went down front and talked to a guy named Tom who was making a difference as a response team member. And he said, "I just don't get it man. You guys are so kind and everybody who I've met is joyful."

And Tom had a chance to explain to him why and then told him the gospel message. And Douda said, "Can I receive that today?" And Tom said, "Absolutely." So, he did right then and then he said, "Can I be baptized today? I don't want to wait."

"Yes, you can."

And here's a really quick video of his baptism last week. This was after the service. Everybody had already left. So, what they did is they went and found as many people as they could, people from our facilities team, guest services, Kids' Ministry, worship people, leadership residents, gathered about 20 people in the room so when he went down in the baptistery he would say that it moved him that people would stay late to observe his baptism.

Afterward when he went back to the green room to get dressed, he didn't want to put his Muslim attire back on. He said, "I'm a Christian now." And he changed his name right there, "I no longer want to be known as Douda. And he changed his name to David.

And Michael Johnson, our Plainfield campus pastor, explained to him who David was in the Bible. He didn't know. And he said, "David wrote a lot of Psalms and David wrote this, 'Search my heart, O God.'" And Douda was blown away by that. He had no idea. So, he signed his new name, David, on the wall in the back.

Guys, can I just tell you this? He walked in a Muslim; he left a follower of Jesus. What we are doing here matters. We are not just playing church. We are not just trying to give you an experience or give you good content. I hope you have a great experience. I hope the content is good. There is much, much more that is happening here where people are literally moving from darkness to light. And you've got a role to play. God has given you a special gift. Don't sit out any longer. Jump in and be available for how God wants to move in you for the purposes of moving through you.

I just want us to spend a few moments praying together. If you would just please stand to your feet at all of our locations.

Father, we just come to You right now and we are grateful that You use people like us, broken, ordinary, fallen, imperfect people. And God, I just ask that we would not slip back into cruise ship mentality, but battleship mentality, recognizing that there is power that You have made available to us for the purposes of advancing Your Kingdom.

God, we know that there is so much hurt and despair in this world and that Your answer to that is Your advancing Kingdom that is coming. And we want to represent that well, we want to be on mission with You.

So, God, would You please ignite a movement in our church that begins by igniting a movement with each one of us individually. We ask this right now in the power of Jesus' name. And everybody says: Amen.

