



Sermon Transcription • 2 Thessalonians 1:2-10 (NIV)

Four Reasons I Thank God for You

Pastor Jeff Bucknam

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

I spent this summer with my family, as many of you did. I had the whole summer off for reasons that will become apparent in just a minute. But this summer I made a determined effort to make sure that my children could each hear from me specifically on how I think God is moving in their lives. I know that sounds a little bit weird, but you know like most of our lives we just kinda pass each other. And you're getting activities that happen during the school year and you know, you're running from one thing to the next, you don't actually ever have an opportunity to just stop and to affirm your kids and say, "Listen, I just see God moving in your life here or in that your life here..." Words of affirmation can be really powerful. So this summer I sat my kids down in different locations at different times and told them how I felt about them and how I see God moving in their lives. And you know, different people respond in different ways to that. My oldest son Ethan if I tell him like that, this is total catnip to him, he just loves to hear affirmation. He's really warm-hearted kid, loves people and this really connects with him. So he'll smile, and put his hand on me and "Thanks Papa. Thanks Papa..." he'll say. My little girl Sophie, she'll climb up on my lap and be like, "Tell me more..." you know. But my son Micah, my 16 year old son Micah, even since he was a little kid, he just does not have a lot of time for the mushy sweetness right? And so, when he was a little kid, we used to say "Micah, I just want you to know that I love you." And he'd say, <upset voice> "I know, Dad." and then you'd just be like, "Micah no, seriously, I love you." "I know, Dad." And then he'd walk away. He just can't be bothered. So I sat him down this summer, and I was looking at him, we actually travelled to Georgia for some baseball stuff. And I was talking to him about it, and he was on his phone, [looking at phone] "Micah I'm trying to tell you something important about how God's moving in your life." "Uh huh. How long is this gonna take, Dad?" you know. Goodness. But I keep telling him, right? It's what you do, you keep telling your kids because you know that words of affirmation are enormously powerful. Maybe someday when he's 50 he'll appreciate it. And think "Oh my dad liked me for a short period of time there." Anyway...

But words of affirmation are motivational. They move your kids. When you tell your children that kind of thing, not just to praise them for what they've done in the past, because yeah that's important, but also to motivate them to say "Man let's keep—keep doing that. Fan into flame that, that gift. You've shown evidence of God moving in your life here, in the days to come let's see even more...evidence of it." If you've ever been involved in sports or coached or taught, you know that you can produce what you want out of a student or out of a player by yelling at them, you can. You can scream at them "<angry gibberish>", you know. Out of fear, just sheer fear and terror they will produce for you. They'll



do it out of duty, and not delight. If you want delight, if you want them to be motivated to do the thing out of delight, to continue to produce it, you are gonna have to praise them. You're gonna have to affirm them.

When you go into the New Testament, the scriptures. One of the things you notice when Paul's writing these letters to these churches. So Paul would go and he'll plant these churches and he would leave, and he'd leave people in charge there, and then he would correspond with those churches by letters. Sometimes they would be having really big problems. And they'd ask him questions or he would hear about those churches, and hear about the challenges they're having and he would volunteer to just write these letters and steer them in the right direction. But he never started with a <yelling> "You guys need to figure this stuff out!"—very rarely in fact; Galatians is the only one he does that with. But in all the letters that he writes, he starts with praise for them. "Here's where I see God moving in your life", and so you find that in 1 Thessalonians 1:2. Just listen to the way he praises this church. He says, 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10,

"We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. [Every time I pray, I'm talking about you guys] We remember [in our prayers] before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you [and there's evidences that God has chosen you. I can see his choosing of you working itself out in your lives. Like you're genuine believers. And he tells you how], because [verse five] our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction [it wasn't just a surface-y feeling "Yeah yeah I believe. But no, really deep down inside you genuinely believed]. You know how we lived among you for your sake. [Verse six] You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit [Like you didn't need to buy into this! I mean it was gonna cost you something to become a Christian. Meant that, you know, the culture at large was not gonna like you. And in some cases it was gonna cost you some of your lives. But you still believed]. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in [those two provinces] Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere [everywhere we go, people are talking about you Thessalonians]. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves [new places that we go where we go to preach the gospel, **they themselves**] report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath."

Man, where we go, people are talking about the Thessalonian church! Everywhere we go people are talking about the faith that you have. That you turned away from your idols, and you genuinely believed. Now the Thessalonians have a lot of trouble. They did. But Paul didn't start with the trouble, he starts with the praise. The church in Corinth was even more trouble. Like you read first and second Corinthians, you realize that Paul and them didn't always get along. They questioned whether he was an apostle, they had all sorts of issues with Paul, and he would correspond with them and saying "Yes



I am an apostle. And this is the way you're capitulating to your culture, you're giving in places that you shouldn't. And God is calling you to be separate and different." But even with *that* church, here's how he begins, 1 Corinthians 1:4-6,

"I *always* thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For *in him* you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you."

See, I know God has confirmed to us the reality that you believed because I can see it evidenced in your speech and knowledge. Even though I have a lot of things to say to you people, I want to start by talking about how I see the spirit of God moving in your lives. See, there is a deep power when pastors of churches tell the people in those churches why they thank God for them. So that's what I'm gonna do.

Some of you, this is gonna be really awkward for you, some of you are gonna be like my oldest son Ethan and be like "Aww.. that's great." My daughter saying, "Say more. We'll stay." Some of you are gonna be like my son Micah here and go, [looking down and around] "This is really awkward. He keeps looking at us, and talking about how he loves us...So how long is this gonna last? <gruffy voice> I know, Dad. </voice>" But here, four reasons that I thank God for you, Northview. Four reasons I thank God for you:

[You're Generous]

Number one: you're generous. Deeply so. There's a passage in 2 Corinthians 8, Paul is going around and he's trying to get a collection for the church in Jerusalem which just had a famine. They don't have any money. So he's gone to all the other churches and he goes to the churches and he says, "would you guys give some money for this collection, for the church in Jerusalem?" Some of those churches respond with eager giving, generosity, so Paul has come to the Corinthian church and he is going to say to them, "I want you to give money to this collection, but before you do, you need to know what happened when I went to the [pointing behind] Macedonian churches, cause they gave a lot." You can imagine this happening, "When I was in Calgary, they gave a lot of money! So what are you gonna do, Abbotsford" you know? This is his motivational technique. So here's how he goes about it, 2 Corinthians 8:1,

"And now, brothers and sisters [in Corinth], we want *you* to know about the grace that God has given the [Calgary] Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial [I mean they live in Calgary! Sorry...**In the midst of a very severe trial**], their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity [They don't have anything! But they gave, when I came and asked them. They're poor. But they gave]. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people."



We didn't need to say, "With this, you'll get a set of steak knives!" You know, we came to them presented before them, and they're like "I'm in!" Didn't matter what their circumstances were, "I'm in!" Now I read that to you because you're not with me when I go to other churches sometimes to preach or I talk to other pastors and you don't hear me talk about you. But the way that I talk about you is the way Paul talked about the Macedonians. I say things like, "Man, you guys...you should hear about my church. And the generosity of the people of my church." So I tell them stories. Here's one of the stories I tell.

When I first started preaching here, I was the Young Adults pastor. We used to have these disgusting salmon pews around here. And I remember sitting in the very front row, on the salmon pews, I was preaching actually two weeks in a row. And, cause I was the Young Adults pastor, we didn't have a lead pastor at the time. So I was preaching a couple weeks in a row. I remember sitting in the pew, coming up here, and I started talking about, middle of my sermon, I told a story about how it is that I'm not very good at building things. In fact, I have a hammer I said, but it's like a Little Tikes hammer—no kidding—it was. It was like a little tiny, it's the hammer that you get when you're 16, and your father's like "At some point you're gonna need a hammer. So I'm gonna start you off with this baby hammer so you don't hurt anything." I kept the baby hammer. At this point I'm in my mid 30s at that point, and I had the baby hammer—that's all I ever had, was the baby hammer. I talked about this baby hammer isn't good, and my wife makes fun of me about it, "You're not a real man." You know. And so...anyway. The next week I showed up...I showed up, and I came to the front pew, and in the front pew was a bag, and in the bag was a big boy hammer. [audience laughs]. Like it was like, graphite hammer. With a big hammer head on it. And I held that hammer in the front like "Oh my word...This is amazing." So I put it back in the bag, I brought it up to the front and said, "Do you guys know last week I talked about I didn't have a hammer. And somebody left me a real hammer in the front here! You know what else I don't have? A BMW!" [audience laughs].

So the story's not over. The next week I was walking around in the hallway, I don't know, preaching this time. So I was just walking around the hallway. And this guy comes up to me, he was an Eastern European guy, sounded Russian to me, and I'm an American I grew up not to trust the Russians for any reason at all right? And so he came up to me and he said <Russian accent> "Hey you, come, come, come. Come with me." And I thought, "Oh... great. He's gonna take me out to the back and nuke me or something, right" you know... <Russian accent> "Come, come, come." I walked around the building, <Russian accent> "Come, come, come." Walked out the back. And he, like, Vanna White, [gestures, opens arms wide] <Russian accent> "Look!" He said to me, and there, sitting on the curb was a BMW. And I laughed, and I said, "Oh.. that's funny. Thank you. That's funny." And he said, <Russian accent> "No, no, no. It's yours. Here. Take the keys. Take the keys. Take the keys. They're yours." And he opened my hand up [opens hands up] and he put the keys to the BMW in my hand. Oh I didn't take it. Stop it. I didn't take it. Cause you know, that would be... wrong. But I remember thinking to myself, I put it back, I remember walking back down the hall, going "Oh my word.. What kind of crazy church is this? You have to be really careful about the kinds of things you say in front of them that you don't have! You know, like a holiday home....[looks at the audience]" [audience laughs].



You know that generosity though when I tell the story. That generosity, that is like.. that's not abnormal here. And people don't always offer you, me, big gifts... If I ask you to give, you're like the Macedonians. You're like, "Okay! Where?" There's an excitement that comes upon people. Last year we started talking about multiplication and about how we want to see a gospel renewal in Canada through the local church. We want to train pastors and multiply churches throughout Canada so that every community in Canada has a gospel-proclaiming local church that will be there, by God's grace for years and decades to come. That's our vision. That's our desire. To multiply that all across our country. So I talked about this, and say "It's gonna take money. To train people. Money to plant those churches." So we started talking about multiplication. Anyway, this girl she sent to the office here, she actually handed upstairs to this office, she was a young girl, she came in and she gave an envelope. And inside the envelope were a few coins, and a few paper bills. And on the front, [shows an envelope] it's her little note, and I've kept it. It says "Money for church plantings. Smiley face, heart. Raised at my birthday party." Now, who does that? Well Northview kids do that. It's part of the culture of the place. I remember a family last year, hearing about them, they didn't broadcast it, but they said that "We're not gonna go on a holiday this spring break. But the money that we were gonna take to go to the holiday we've already saved. So instead of going to the holiday we're going to go to the church so churches can be planted around Canada." Who does that? Northview does that! I got so many stories that I could share with you.

And your generosity is not just limited to money. It's also in your kindness, you're equally generous with your kindness. You know sometimes people come along to our church, they're kinda new, and they show up, on occasion after a sermon, some people will spontaneously clap for the sermon. I've had people say to me, in the hallway, after that "I don't like that at all. That bothers me. I think it's terrible. What is this? A big show? And we're clapping for the performer in front of us?" And I've corrected them and said, "Listen I've been here long enough to know that nobody's clapping for the performer, cause the performers wasn't that great. But I will tell you what they are clapping for. The people in this church are so generous with their kindness that they don't know how to show it, we tend to have a background that's non-Charismatic so we don't 'Amen! Amen! Amen!'. What do we do instead? Well after it's done, we're like, 'Gotta express...something..' We're gonna sing in a minute, but I have to express something and so...[claps hands] we clap. And it means 'Thank you! Out of my generous heart I want to kindly thank you for bringing the word to us today.' It's not a sign of sin, it's a sign of graciousness and generosity."

I have a drawer upstairs next to my desk, and in it I have a whole pile of letters. They're all the kind letters. I sometimes get non kind letters, I file them somewhere else. It's a circle. They come and take it away every week. It's great. But in this drawer of kind emails, or kind mail, I have a whole bunch of letters. I just grabbed one before I came. [Shows a card] And on the front you can see it's written in a very young person writing. "Pastor Jeff." On the front, in it, I'll just read you the first line. It says, "To Jeff. I am sorry to hear all the unkind online comments that you get. So I just wanted to say that I look forward to every Saturday to hear you preach." So that's generosity. Generosity with words and with kindness.



I said earlier that I took this summer off. There's a reason for that. The end of last year I was a bit of a mess. I struggle with emotional challenges. I struggle with depression, I probably have, for most of my life. I just didn't know it. But in the last little while, I've been diagnosed and talked to by friends and others, who say "Yeah, I think this might be something that, you know, you're plagued with in your life. And..." So at the end of last year, I was just done. Emotionally just fried. Didn't know if I was gonna continue to go on. I went and got some medication. And that's been really helpful. And I'm talking to these counsellors and stuff. And that's awesome. It's just kind of the thing that I have to bear. Everybody, everybody's got something to bear. Some of you have diabetes, so this is just my... I got mental challenges. I've actually enjoyed telling people who say to me, "Where were you all summer? Did you not work at all?" And I've enjoyed saying to them, "No. I was just dealing with my mental illness... So..." [audience laughs] Anyway, when I went to the elders of our church, and I told them, "Listen, I'm... this is my situation. This is my challenge." You know I was a little bit worried. But what I found, what I always found at Northview, is that there's a group of men who were saying to me, "Uh Jeff, you do whatever you need. We are on your side and we are with you and we are behind you. And we want to see you flourish and grow. We're in this together. We want to run with you, Jeff. And so let's figure out a way that we can give you some time to have some reflection and get some of this stuff addressed so that you can move forward in wholeness instead of constantly lurching from, you know, strength to weakness, to strength to weakness all the time." I know pastors who if they went to their elder board in their church and said that, they would be fired. I know pastors who would not, they might have been given it, but it would've been hesitating. But at Northview, that's not the case. It's never been the case, because you're generous. I cannot thank you enough. Not just the elder board, but all of you. I can't thank you enough for your generous hearts. It's remarkable. It's a real sign that the Spirit's at move among you.

[You're Committed to Developing Leaders]

Second one: I thank God for you because you're committed to developing leaders. There's a passage in 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy is a book that the Apostle Paul writes when he's on his deathbed. Okay, so in your mind, whenever you read 2 Timothy, you should probably be in this voice <old raspy voice>, "Okay Timothy..." You know, like <old raspy voice> "Here's some things you need to know.." you know... He's about to pass on. So, in it he's giving his heart to Timothy. What are the things that really matter. These are my last words to you, Timothy. Dear Pastor...how should you lead from now going forward. And so here's what he says in 2 Timothy 2:1-2,

"You then, [*<old raspy voice>* **You then**] my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."

Timothy, I'm dying. Someday you will die. So here's what I want you to do. Take what it is that you've heard from me [pause], embrace it, pass it on to reliable people who'll then pass it on to others. What do you think the others is supposed to do? Well find some others! And others and others and others and others. You are always supposed to be looking for key leaders as missionaries to be sent into the



future—that’s what he’s saying. One of the fundamental things of the church going forward is finding young leaders who are going to push forward. Love the fact that this church is onto that.

This summer I was asked to actually by the church where I preached my first sermon at, in Eastern Washington. I was asked to come back twenty five years later. And I came back and was with my brother in law, who is a missionary from that church. And so we went there, 80 people, middle of the wheat fields, you drive 8 hours to get out there. So I get there, and sees a number a people, lots of hugs, and I stand up, in this hot afternoon, or hot morning. There’s 80 people standing there, and I’ll tell you what I told them. The first words out of my mouth was “I have to apologize to you. I have to apologize to you dear Onecho Bible Church because you had to suffer through my first sermon. And it was horrible.” And they were like, “Not really...” I said, “No, no, no. Let me recount what happened in my first sermon.” So here’s what happened.

I was mentored by a very large black man. And I thought that the way you’re supposed to preach whenever you preach to us, like a very large Charismatic black man. This congregation of course was in the middle of the wheat fields, and let’s just say black people were infrequent visitors there. Farmers with their wrangler jeans and their cowboy boots, some of them had the hats on, you know, the straw comin’ out... Like, then they would come to church. And so when I came, I found this big double breasted suit, right? Cause that’s what you wear... with the big long and baggy pants. And I was walking down the middle, and I sat in the front row, and put my arms out like this and cross my legs. [arms open wide, crossing legs] <loud voice> “Amen!!!” I kept saying in this church. Now, they’ve never heard that before ever, right? So... I was the youth pastor—like, who is this guy? I came up to the pulpit and the way, how you used to do it, the way the guy mentored me, he used to do it. He used to stand behind the pulpit you know. [Steps backwards] And when it was time to preach, he’d tuck his Bible under his arm [tucks Bible under the arms and marches to the pulpit] and he start—he just... <growls>, you know? And so I did this, in front of these people right? Marched into the pulpit. And whenever I wanted—whenever I made a really good point or one that I thought I made... I would say, <passionately> “Mmmmm.... I like that.” [audience laughs]. “God is faithful! Mmmmm.... I like that.” You know? One hour and ten minutes later, the sermon was over. Like, four people were still...still awake you know? Through all my “Mmm... I like that”.

So I said, “I apologize to you for that sermon alone.” Lady in the back said “It wasn’t *that* bad right?” And I was like, “Afraid it’s God for you, sister.” It was horrible! It was terrible. But I told them, I told them, “But I gotta tell you, you were patient with me. You gave me more opportunities. I started my ministry with you. So your impact, little church, this little church out in the wheat field. Your impact far outweighs your size because you have joyfully invested in future leaders. I would not be where I am today. I would not be doing the ministry I am today, had I not been allowed to preach an hour and ten trash message to Onecho Bible Church. I would not.”

And they’re not the only church. And they’re not the only church. We’re like that—you know that, we’re like that. We love to see young leaders cutting their teeth. This summer we had an opportunity to have



some of our pastoral interns preach. I was over in East Abbotsford actually and one of our pastoral interns was preaching over there. And um, somebody came up to me after the sermon, and he said, “Can I talk to you for a minute?” I said, “Yeah.” He pulled me to the side and he said, “So I gotta just tell you. That when he first stood up there, I thought ‘Oh this is gonna be horrible.’” Right? It was Fredy. [audience laughs]. “This is gonna be horrible. And then like a minute into it I was like, ‘Okay... this isn’t horrible.’ And then like five minutes,” well he said “It felt like five minutes, and I looked up the clock it was like 20 minutes have gone by and I realized, ‘this guy is really good at this.’” And then he said, “I just gotta tell you,” he said, “at the end, I had tears in my eyes. Because it’s so exciting to see young guy like that learning and growing. Whatever you guys are doing, keep doing it.”

I love that heart. I love the fact that’s not just one person in our church, right? It’s everybody. Like, we were like “Okay...you know. We’re gonna send missionaries into the future. We’re gonna see the kingdom of God flourish and the gospel go forward in Canada and our part to play in the present moment, is to help these people grow and learn and develop.”

One of our pastoral interns, she did the denominational credentialing, where she goes and takes a bunch of theological tests and stuff. Her answers were so good, so erudite, so capable, that the denominational leader called me on the phone and said, “Hey can we put her on our national uh... board of theology?” I was like, “Dude, she’s just a student. Pump the breaks. Let’s get her through the classes.” But that’s the quality of person that you’re building here.

All because you’re willing. All because you say, “No, no, no. What we have heard we’re gonna pass on so they can pass it on and pass it on and pass it on.” And so we’re doing this, guys. So I’m so excited about it. We’re building pastoral training centres in North India in partnership with Multiply upstairs. We’re training pastors in Northern Thailand in a building that we’ve already built and paid for. So they’re going out into Laos. And genuinely seeing revival take place there among the Kamoo people. We’re developing a network of like minded churches that are going to be planting churches together and training leaders together for the next while. Listen, it is a very real possibility that the next 20-30 years, there will not be a community in Canada, that is not influenced by a pastor or a church that found its genesis in what we’re doing now. And I love the fact that Northview Community Church, when I talk about this stuff, like “Yeah... More! More!” So cool. I thank God for you for that. You guys are gonna have to listen a lot quicker than what you’re doing.

[You Want to Hear from God Even if it’s Hard]

Here we go, number three: you want to hear from God. I love the fact that you want to hear from God even when it’s hard. I thank God for this. That you want to hear from God even when it’s hard. 2 Timothy, same book right? 2 Timothy 3:16, a little further on. So... you can, Paul’s voice <more raspy voice> a little more gravelly </voice>, closer to his deathbed here. 2 Timothy 3:16-17,



“All Scripture [he says] is God-breathed and is useful [Notice what it’s useful for] for teaching, rebuking [Scripture is useful for rebuking], correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

That word ‘training’ is actually a word that has a special background. It’s a word that has built into it, the idea of training of children. In fact, the word ‘child’, the Greek word for ‘child’ is *in* the word. So what he’s saying is, the Scriptures are going to rebuke you, they’re going to correct you, they’re going to teach you, and then they’re going to train you like you train your kids.

Recently I’ve been in the process of training my son, my 16 year old one, learn how to drive. Um...which has been devastating for me, he’s actually been pretty good at it. Before I started teaching my kids how to drive, I did not realize what that handle bar was for [pointing to the top], on the passenger side, you know... And you’re driving, and you’re young, you’re like “Why did they put a handlebar over there?” But now, I’m like, two handed on that handlebar. [holds the handlebar] “Oh God... oh God.. Give this boy more wisdom than he’s shown.” You know... Actually one hand on there, your hand on the front, right? [one hand at the top, one hand in front] That’s what you do. Cause you’re bracing yourself. You’re denying physics here, but you’re like, “I’m gonna stop this car by sheer will.” And then sometimes you add into the foot stomp with it [starts stomping foot]. Cause you think there’s a brake there <engine noises>. He said to me one time, “What are you doing Dad? What—Why are you dancing?” <nervous voice> “Mmm... I’m not dancing...I’m not...” And there are times when your kids are driving like that and they’re going into, they don’t check.. “Check your blind spots.” “My—my what?” [looks around] You know.. like, “Oh....what are you doing...” They start steering over this way, cause they’re looking “Ooh.. Dad, [drives and pointing somewhere else] did you notice there’s a house over—“ “Look at the road!” And they’re going in here, and you grab the wheel, and you pull. Finally, you’re like pull. [grabs the wheel]

And that’s what Scripture does. It does. Sometimes it pulls. You’re going that way, you’re going to hit things! It’s going to ruin you. Pull! [pulls with hand] It *rebukes*, it *corrects*. It *trains*. And people don’t like that, you know that? Kid who is sitting in the car does not like it when you pull. “Why are you doing it, Dad? Don’t you trust me?” <whispers> “No...” And people act that way with Scripture. “I don’t like being rebuked. I don’t like being corrected. Certainly don’t like being trained like I’m a child...” And so they come up with clever ways to get around what the Bible clearly says. <pretentious voice> “Well, if you look at the historical background of this obscure word in the corner here, you realize that one third century author said, that it means this other thing. So now... the Bible means exactly opposite of what it’s saying.... Ta-Da....” </voice> Or you do it the way Thomas Jefferson did, he just cut out pieces of the Bible. [finger scissors] “Well, some of it is authoritative, and other pieces are not...Jesus is authoritative but Paul, not authoritative. Who’s Paul anyway?” And you get people cutting out portions of scripture. Literally, Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of the American Republic. He cut out portions of his Bible, right? It was a very “Holy” Bible. [audience laughs]. I’m a dad, right? So...He used to cut them out. He used to cut portions of the Bible out. What he came out with, was a palatable one, one that he liked. People respond this way to the Bible when it corrects and trains you.



You know what I love about Northview is that you don't do this. You don't. In all my time here, you don't do this. Last year we went through Romans 9-11. A friend of mine on the phone, who's another pastor, who's been a pastor for 20 years or whatever, he said "You're doing... what?" "Romans 9 to 11"

"Yeah dude, that's the pastor's graveyard. You should just skip that one. And Just go to Romans 12, and go 'Ooh.. we just forgot to do 9 through 11.'"

I said "No, why would we possibly do that? Why would I do that?"

After we went through it, he called me and said, "How did it go?" And I said, "Actually amazing. You know I went through it, and I shared what I thought the passages meant. Some people responded poorly in the sense that they're frustrated about it. But all of the conversations I had were about the text. They were always about the Bible. People going home and debating and thinking about it and considering it." I remember one guy was upset with me and he finally said it in the end, "Okay. I can see your point. I don't agree with you. But I appreciate that you stuck to the text." And that's Northview.

I remember preaching, I preached on David and Bathsheba one time. If you know the story of David and Bathsheba right, it's about sexual sin. The end I was talking about how we need to repent and believe the gospel, all of us, cause most of us are sexual sinners some level of another. And so I remember, he came up front. This guy came up front afterwards. And he stood before me, he says, "So if I hear you right, um... what you're saying is, I currently cohabit with my girlfriend and we have a lot of sex. And what you're saying to me is, either I need to get married to her or I need to stop living with her and stop having sex with her if I want to call myself a believer in the Lord Jesus." Now I gotta tell you, in these moments, I want people to keep coming to the church like anybody else does. I want them to stay. And there's a temptation deep in my heart where I want to say <obscure voice> "Well actually...there's this obscure passage and historical background and this passage if you did understood Bathsheba was actually different than an actual woman..." Like honestly... You want to cause you want the guy to keep coming. But I just said to him "Actually yeah. That's basically what I'm saying." "Well," he said, "I don't like that. I have to think about it. But I appreciate you being honest."

Like even when people disagree with me here. What they really like, that I tell it, hopefully straight. We could disagree, but at least we're disagreeing about what the Bible says. There's a heart in this church of people who want to hear from God even if it's hard. And I see the Spirit moving among you with that impulse.

[You Love a Risky Idea]

Here's the last one okay? Number four: I love the fact that you love a risky idea. So the people of Israel are on the edge of the Promised Land. They were supposed to go forward right? Do you remember the story? And they sent spies. God said, "Go forward take the land!" Right? "Delivered you from Egypt, I delivered you so you can take the land. Go forward! Take the land! And I'm with you." "Oh we're gonna send 10 spies in—or 12 spies in." They sent 12 spies in, 10 of them come back and say,



“Have you seen the size of the people in the land? Have you seen the size of the walls? There’s no way we can actually go in there and conquer it.” Two of the guys, Caleb and Joshua came back and said, “What are you talking about? God just split the Red Sea! He’s provided for us through the desert. Let’s just go man! We’ll see the Lord move. Let’s take the risk on God!” What happened? Well, the majority won. Ten were bad, two were good. And they didn’t go. And God said, “Well because you’re not willing to risk on me, then you will all die on the desert except for Caleb and Joshua.” And the moral to the story, there’s lots and lots of them. But the moral to the story is that, risk in the name of God, for the sake of his kingdom, risk is right.

And you find that in the New Testament. Jesus tells a story about a parable. I share all the time, the Parable of the Talents. He says, “There’s a landowner, he goes away. And he leaves three guys in charge. And he gives one of them five million dollars, the other two millions dollars, and the third one one million dollars. And says, ‘I’m gonna come back and hold you to account for what you’ve done with the money.’ And he comes back a long while later. He shows up, lines them up ‘Hey five million dollar guy, how’d you do?’ ‘I doubled it. Took your five, made another five.’ The master says, ‘Well join the joy of your master! Well done good and faithful servant. Two million dollar guy, what did you do?’ ‘I doubled it too.’ ‘Well done good and faithful servant. Welcome to the joy of your master! One million dollar guy, what did you do?’ ‘Well... you know... It’s a lot of risk involved...So I just went back and I buried it so that you wouldn’t lose any of what you have. Look, I have all of it. I didn’t lose any of it. I mean I didn’t take any risk with it either, but here.’ ‘You wicked, lazy servant.’ Kicks him out of the house.”

What’s the moral to the story? What does it mean? Well Jesus has been resurrected, and he ascended into heaven, and he will return. And in the meantime we’ve been left here and God has blessed each and every one of us with something. Money, talent, gifts, that you’re to use to double the master’s money. He will hold you to account for it. And risk is right. I love the fact that this church believes that. That risking is right.

And I can see that you believe it because we had an opportunity to go up to Mission and there was a church that was struggling there, but we needed to take on debt in order to replant it, you’re like, “Yeah. Let’s do that.” And we did, and now there are 500 people worshipping the Lord this morning in Mission. And then a little while later we had an opportunity in Port Coquitlam to do the same thing. And nobody said, “Well that’s dumb idea.” They were like, “No! Let’s do it.” “Well, we’re gonna have to take on debt.” “Nah, we’ll take care of it.” And now there are 500 people worshipping the Lord in Port Coquitlam. And the last year, we said, “Listen why don’t we plan something in East Abbotsford.” And 700 of some of our best people, some of our most committed people, all left here, went over to East



Abbotsford and there's 700 people worshipping the Lord in East Abbotsford today. And you didn't hesitate once about it. Like I said, I gotta be careful what I ask you to do, because you're like "Okay. We're in." And it's remarkable as a pastor to be part of that.

I just gotta tell you, as I finish here. Listen, I get approached by other churches from time to time. And they say, "Would you come and consider being our pastor." And I listen to what they have to say, and then halfway through the conversation, in my mind I start thinking to myself "Okay, if I go to that church, and I start doing that, will there be as many Caleb's and Joshua's as there are at Northview?" And the answer's probably not.

So as for me and my house, I'll run with you. When I first came to Northview, and if you told me that 13 years later you'll be standing in front of these people and saying words like this, I would've said, "You're a fool." Cause it was awkward for me at the beginning, alright? I came to Canada, the only thought. We didn't have a lead pastor here...I was like, "I'm only going to be here three years. There's no way I'm gonna stick around. Cause...everything so tenuous, had a hard time getting used to Canada. 'Sorry, sorry, sorry'. Right? It was hard." And then you guys got crazy, and you asked me to be the lead pastor of your church. I was like, 35 years old—, talk about a risk. "I don't know.. give him the keys. How bad could it be?" And here we are. I gotta tell you, somewhere between that moment and this moment, I don't know. We started to love each other.

So I thank God for you. When I sat in my quiet moments in my chair, looking at the summer. Sun setting in the distance, I think, "I'm so thankful to God that he has given me you. And you me. And I'll run with you." So let me pray for you.

Father I'm so thankful for your grace. I'm thankful for your Word. And I'm thankful for the overwhelming joy that you've put in my heart for these people, if they could only know how much, how full my heart is for them. And I know, standing up in front of them and sharing your heart with them is awkward sometimes you know. We just don't do it very often. But I pray Father that they would see it as a genuine heart of love from a pastor who is deeply thankful for them. We have big days ahead, but we know Father by the power of your Spirit that will produce a unity in us in the days to come. We will see great things happen. So your kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.