

## Stories that Change Everything | Talents

*Petie Kinder | Matthew 25:14-30*

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Well, what's up, Church? How we doing? Good grief. Good to see all your beautiful faces. We're so glad that you're here today, at all of our campuses today. We need to just start by saying Happy Father's Day to all the dads out there. Let's celebrate them. Absolutely.

To my dad, the one and only George Kinder—he's watching right now—I love you, dad. You've been a great dad to me, even better grandad to our three kids, so love you, dad.

I know Father's Day is one of those days that's like Mother's Day in the sense that it brings out some celebratory, positive feelings and also some really painful feelings, depending on where you're at with your dad and the dad situation.

Maybe this is a time of year when you're mourning the fact that your dad's no longer with you and there's some pain with that. Or maybe you're a dad and your kids are grown and there's some regret that you're looking back on of how you did the whole parenting thing. Or maybe you grew up without a dad or maybe your dad was just not in the picture and there's just some pain that comes with this day.

Whatever you're feeling today, you need to know that your church is standing with you in that, but you also need to know more than anything on Father's Day that you have a heavenly father who loves you, who cares for you, who stands with you, and you can call him a good father, and that's worth celebrating every Father's Day. Absolutely.

I do always find it fascinating the difference between Father's Day and Mother's Day when it comes to church world. There is a difference, in most churches at least. In most churches, Mother's Day rolls around and mom gets the whole family to church, right? Because that's one thing you do to honor mom is to get to church because mom knows what's best for your family; it's to get your butt in church.

Father's Day rolls around and stereotypically, in most churches, it's like a day for dads to kind of like go do what they want, like get a round of golf in, sleep late, pretty much anything but church.

But I think that's one of the cool things that's happening right now in the life of our church across all of our campuses that you just see so many men who are growing in their faith, whether you're a father or a husband.

Our men are growing so much into these men who God created them to be, the kind of men they're going to be blessings to their family, the kind of men who are not going to have to be dragged to church by a God-fearing wife, but instead are actually passionate about the things of God.

So if you know a man right now at Traders Point—they don't have to be a father, they don't have to be a husband—if you know a man at Traders Point who is growing in their faith and becoming who God created them to be, can you encourage them right now and celebrate them? Come on. Love it!

There is this author that I used to read when I first started following Jesus. His name was John Eldredge. He had this quote that I want to kind of re-reference. It said this: "A man needs a much bigger orbit than a woman. He needs a mission, a life purpose, and he needs to know his name."

You know, that's not just true about men. This is for married folk in the room and single folk in the room. If you've been in a relationship, you know that we need something more than a significant other to complete us. We need something more than a spouse to fully capture what life is about. We need a mission. We need a purpose. We need to know who we are and why we're here, and that's why this story that we're going to unpack today that Jesus taught is so powerful, because he's going to touch on those two things: Who we are and why we're here.

Really, the heart of the story is how to get the most out of this small life that we've been given, so grab a Bible and get to Matthew chapter 25. Matthew 25 is where we're living today. While our page turners are getting there, turn to your neighbor, tell them they look good today, even if they don't.

You single guys out there, you were looking for the courage to talk to her and I just gave you the alley-oop. You're welcome, you're welcome.

Matthew 25. We're going to start in verse 14. Here's the story. Let's jump in. It says, "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story..." Now stop there. That's the idea of this whole series we're in: the *Stories that Change Everything*.

Jesus would tell stories that illustrate the Kingdom of God. It's like this story is how God works, okay? So this story is how God works. It's illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip, and he called together his servants and he entrusted his money to them while he was gone. He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last, dividing in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money, then he earned five more. The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and he earned two more, but the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money. All right, now pause.

If you're new to the Bible or maybe you're skeptical of the whole church thing and you're just kind of like in the early stages of tracking along with us here, you read the story and if you're like me, there's one detail that pops off the page in the intro to this story that Jesus tells, and it's the fact that if he's saying this is how God works, and you can assume God is kind of in the position of the master in this story, it kind of makes God look like an unfair Santa Claus, right? He gave one five bags of silver; he gave one two; he gave another one. This poor guy who just got one, I mean what did he do to deserve one? Why didn't he get the five, you know? Like is God just playing favorites here? What is the deal there?

When you're studying the Bible and you're reading the Bible, you've got to understand context is king. You've got to understand that the best thing you can do when you read the Bible is to work through and think through what would Jesus' original audience have heard and thought when he told this story.

Really the question we've got to answer is how much silver is in those bags? Are we talking like a few coins to go buy a soda? Are we talking something more? And if you've read the story in other translations, you know that this is often referred to as the Parable of the Talents. This translation says a bag of silver and in other translations it says a talent.

A talent was a certain amount of money, and scholars debate on the exact amount, but it's somewhere between the range of, for one bag of silver or one talent, somewhere in the range of 30 years to a full lifetime's worth of wages. So we're not talking about going to buy a soda. We're talking about an incredibly large amount of money.

So that's why when Jesus' original audience would have heard this, their first thought would not have been to question the fairness of God. Their first thought would've been, "Oh my gosh! What in the world is this guy doing giving his people that much money!" Whether it's one or three or five, that is way more than you would ever expect a master to entrust to his servants. So their first thought would have been, "I can't believe the amount of value he's given them!"

That's really the first thing we have to think through. That's the first thing we've got to process in our hearts if we're going to let this story change us the way that I believe God wants it to change us. It's simply that you've been given incredible value. You've been given incredible value. And you don't even necessarily fully realize it. You don't even really know it, how valuable you are.

When I was growing up, I had a weird uncle. I think everybody has a weird uncle. If you don't have a weird uncle, you might be the weird uncle. It's a real great self-awareness test, okay? But everybody's got a weird uncle.

So I had this weird uncle. Then I didn't have a weird uncle because he and my aunt got divorced. It was this nasty divorce. You know, all the family drama stuff. But the one good thing that came out of this weird uncle and this nasty divorce was that I ended up with a killer hunting knife. I think my aunt was trying to get back at my uncle so she took a bunch of his stuff and started divvying it out to the family members. It got weird. All I know is I ended up with a cool hunting knife. It was the coolest, manliest thing I've ever owned.

I'm not a hunter. I don't know how to use it, but I thought it was super-cool, so I put it in my bedside table in my teenage years and I have kept that thing in my bedside table all the way up now into my married years. I keep telling myself that if an intruder comes in my home, this hunting knife is going to get put to use. I'm going to defend my family's honor.

But truthfully it's never been used. It's just gathered dust and we've moved it from house to house and place to place. I actually thought about throwing it away on this last move when we moved to downtown Indy a few years ago. I really thought about it because it's not getting used at all; it's just gathering dust.

We had a contractor who was in our home working on some repairs and he saw this moving box and there was the hunting knife lying on top of the box. He said, "Hey, would you ever be interested in selling that knife?"

In the spirit of Father's Day, you need to know my daddy taught me everything is always for sale for the right price. Everything. Everything. So I said, "Sure. What are you willing to give me for it?" Thinking he'd say 20 or 30 bucks and I'd say, "Have at it, man. I'll take the cash." I was not prepared for this man to look at me and say, "I don't know. How's \$300 sound?"

Uhhhhhh! I about had a heart attack. Goodbye hunting knife. Goodbye memories of my uncle. Goodbye ability to defend my family's honor. I don't care. I'm taking the money and I'm running. I had no idea that I was sitting on something that valuable.

I just wonder if maybe that's true of some of you today. Maybe you're just sitting there and you have no idea the incredible value that God has given you. You see, as preachers, we get this unique perspective of getting to see kind of a wide breadth of people who come in our church. It's amazing to me at every campus the amount of skill, talent, and ability that comes in and sits in these seats every week.

We have some of the most amazing, brilliant doctors, surgeons. I mean, we've got some of the best business men and women. We've got some of the best leaders. We've got some of the best marketplace leaders. We've got some software developers. We've got the most creative artists. We've got some of the best parents, some of the best educators, some of the most brave law enforcement officers. I mean, we have so much talent and so many skills and so many abilities that come and sit in these seats every week. It is incredible to see what God has collected!

Now I know when I say that you're probably thinking, "Well that's great for those people you're talking about, but if you came to my work, you'd see I'm like kind of middle of the pack. I'm not all that skilled. I'm super-average, okay?"

And if that's you, okay. I still think you're valuable because you've been given something else that's incredibly valuable, and that is your time. We say it—it's kind of cliché but it's true—that every day you get is a gift from God, but it's true. The most valuable thing you have in your life is your time.

Could you imagine how much money you would make if you could sell time? You would get that shark tank deal every time. They would invest everything they have if you could somehow sell people more time.

Every day you get is a gift and it's a precious resource that you cannot renew. It's this incredibly valuable thing that you have. But, again, I know when I say that, there are some people out there who go either, "I'm older and I don't have many years left so I don't have much time left," or "I look back on my life and the time that I've spent. I feel like I've wasted it and so I'm not really valuable there either."

Okay. If that's you I still think you're valuable. You are still valuable because you've been given something else. If you've given your life to Jesus and you're following him, you have been given something so valuable and that is your story.

Your story is so valuable. You were once blind but now you see. You were once hopeless, helpless, and headed to hell, but now you are saved and redeemed. You were once lost, but now you're found and you have a story of things that you have overcome in your life. You have a story of obstacles that God took you through to get you to a place where you are so confident of your eternity and you're confident that he loves you right here right now, and you've got a story.

Here's the deal. That story is not just powerful and valuable because it saved you, that story is powerful and valuable because it can actually lead to someone else getting saved. It can actually lead to someone else, the entire trajectory of their lives changing.

We could have a little experiment right now, and we won't but we could. At every campus right now, I could say, "Hey, I want us to stand up one by one and I want us to share our deepest, darkest struggle that God has taken you through," and all the first-timers in the room are like, "Oh, please, God, no. What church did I go to?" We're not going to do that to you.

But if I did, and that were to happen, you were to get up and share the worst thing you've gone through, you know what would happen? You would have multiple people in every room at every campus who would stand up and say, "Oh, I've been there. I've been there." You'd have multiple people at every campus who would stand up and say, "I'm currently going through that, so I'd love to talk to you about what happened there, like how did God lead you through that?"

See, your story, if you'd be willing to share it and open up about it, it has tremendous power and tremendous value and it can alter the course of someone's eternity. You are so valuable. You are not *just* anything. I hate that phrase. You are not just a teacher. You are not just a mom. You are not just a dad. You are not just a nurse. You are not just a kid's ministry volunteer. You are not just anything. You were created in the very image of God. We are the only creation that he made where he said: I'm going to make them in my own likeness.

Parents in the room, have you ever had that freaky moment where you look down at your kids and you're like, "Oh my gosh, that looks just like me. Oh that is weird. Oh gosh. Ugh. It's like weird."

God has that moment every day with all of us! He looks at us and he's like: Whoa, that's like me! That's amazing!

You are so valuable. You are so loved. You were created with great intentionality, with great purpose, beautifully designed by God. You have incredible value, and I'm telling you, you're going to need to hold onto it. You're going to need to grasp onto that truth that you are valuable and you've been given incredible value because the rest of this story that Jesus tells is about to get buck wild.

He takes this story in such a strange direction, you are going to need to remember that you are valuable and that you have value to give if you're going to actually let the rest of this story do what it needs to do in your hearts. Let's look at the very next verse that happened in verse 19.

It says, "After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.' The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!' The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.' The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'" Cheers! "Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, 'Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate.'" Verse 25 says, "'I was afraid...' "I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back."

Now, this is the turning point of the whole story. This is like what it all hinges on, what Jesus' response is going to be to the one who didn't do anything with it but just brought it back to him.

Now, again, that's the key to remember here. He didn't squander it. I mean, it's not like he went and lost the money. He brought it back to him. You would think, if I'm guessing here, that the master's response would be: Hey, maybe not going to throw a party, but hey, a little pat on the butt, attaboy, good job, fist bump, nice work.

I mean, you know this. If you've ever had a friend who has asked for money, like, "Hey, can I borrow 20 bucks?" The only way you're saying yes to that is if you really don't care if you get it back. Because chances are you're not getting it back. And if you do get it back, it's like, "Oh, what a good person! You gave me money back!"

This guy, he brought it back to him, so you'd think the response would be like, "Okay, great! Thanks!"

That is not what the response was. Verse 26. Look at what Jesus says in this story. Again, this is illustrating how God works. Remember that. It says, "But the master replied, 'You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.' Then he ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

I told y'all. I told y'all he was going to go crazy with this one. I mean, that is harsh language! It's not just like a little slap on the wrist. He's saying like exclusion from the Kingdom of God. For those who do nothing with the value that they've been given, he uses language that he often uses to reference hell.

Now, if you've been tracking with us for awhile and you've been hearing us preach this message of salvation by grace through faith—you've heard that phrase *salvation by grace through faith*—what that means is the love of God, for you to be in good standing with God, for you to be saved, it is something that is a free gift. That's what we call grace. There's nothing you could do to earn it. God loves you so much and you can't earn his love. It is a free gift and all you have to do is believe. That's it.

Now, if you've been tracking with us and you hear that message, your radar should be going off right now, like contradiction alert, because this story makes it sound like maybe admission's free, maybe like it's free to get in, but once I'm in I gotta earn my keep. I gotta kinda earn my place. Maybe it was free to get in, but I gotta actually work to earn and stay in God's love. It'd be natural to think that.



Now you're right in the sense that salvation is a free gift. Don't confuse that message. Salvation is a free gift. All you have to do is believe. You don't have to have your life cleaned up. You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to know everything about the Bible. No way. It is a free gift. All you have to do is believe.

It is all about what Jesus has done for you on the cross, and it's the most beautiful message ever. But that doesn't mean that how you live your life and what you do with the value you've been given is meaningless.

James, the brother of Jesus, would put it like this. He said, "Now someone may argue, 'Some people have faith; others have good deeds.' But I say, 'How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.' You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?"

What we're saying here is that yes, salvation's a free gift from God, and your good deeds, what you do with the value that God has given you, it does not earn you God's love. It is the evidence of God's love. It is the evidence of your salvation. It's the thing that shows the world that you have been saved because here's the deal: When you say yes to Jesus and you say yes to him forgiving all of your sins and wiping your slate clean and then setting you apart for a purpose in your life, and you wake up every day with that crazy realization that the God who created the heavens and the earth loves you and wants to use you, when you're in on that, you will have good deeds. You will have something to show for it, that saving faith always produces good deeds in your life, and so this is why the story changes everything, y'all. This is why the story changes everything. Because this is Jesus putting us on notice once and for all that because of this story you and I, we can't play it safe anymore.

You can't play it safe anymore. What we know now is that a safe bet actually doesn't just not get rewarded, a safe bet actually gets punished. You can't play it safe anymore. You've got to do something with the value that you've been given. And you can't play it safe anymore.

Coming to church every week and sitting in a seat and maybe, if you're really good, dropping a check in the offering box, which is what we've equated most of our lives with being on mission and being in the church, that's actually not going to cut it because that's not taking the value that God gave you and doing something with it.

You can't play it safe anymore because here's the deal, y'all. One day every single one of us is going to have to stand before God, our maker. Either the day we die or the day Jesus comes back, we're going to have to stand before him, and according to this story, we're going to have to give an account for what we did with the value he's given us, and I just think we forget that. I think we forget that.

You know, Luke, if you read the Gospel of Luke, where this same story is told through Luke's perspective and his account of it, he actually includes a little detail in there that's really fascinating. He says that Jesus told this story to correct the impression that the Kingdom of God would begin soon.

It's interesting because what that means is that most of Jesus' followers early on were under the impression that the world was about to end. They thought it was all going to be over. The Kingdom would begin soon. Jesus would rule the whole world. "I got like two weeks left. What's the point in doing anything now?" All right? I mean, really what his earliest followers were thinking was "We're up by 20. There's only 30 seconds left on the clock. Might as well dribble this thing out. I'm not going to dunk on anybody now. It's kind of pointless." Right?

That's why they played it safe, but that's not our problem. We're not playing it safe because we think Jesus is coming back tomorrow; we're playing it safe because I think most of us aren't even sure if Jesus is coming back.

We play it safe not because we think that there's 30 seconds left on the clock and we can dribble this thing out. I think we play it safe because we're not even sure there's a game being played. Like has the ball been tipped? Is anyone keeping score? Is anyone watching?

And Jesus tells the story to say yes, yes! He's going to come back. And he's going to ask us to give an account. We're going to have to stand before him and show what we did with this incredible value that we've been given, and we can't play it safe anymore.

Now, this is where most sermons stop and most of us get stuck. See, most sermons stop here. "You're valuable! God loves you and he's going to hold you accountable to what you do. You gotta go do something. Amen. Have a great week." And all of us are like, "Uh, what do I do with that? Like are you saying I gotta go sell all my stuff and run an orphanage in Africa? Do I start passing tracts on the street to strangers? Like, what do I do with my hands? I don't know what to do."

How do we put this into practice? If you're like me, when I hear messages like this and I read stories like this, my mind immediately goes to the big life-changing decisions, right? Am I in the right career? Do I live in the right state? Should we grow our family? These huge life-changing decisions, like I need to do something huge in response to this.

It's interesting because it's not always that that's wrong—some of us need to make some big life-changing decisions—but oftentimes that way of thinking is actually what gets us stuck because we start thinking about all the reasons that we can't get to that thing or all the dominoes would have to fall in place before we could say yes to that big, life-changing decision, and we actually end up back at square one doing nothing and playing it safe.

Now, if you notice in the story that's actually not what the servants who brought back a return, that's not what they did. They actually just took what the master had given them and they started working. They started investing it, and they put one foot in front of the other, a day at a time, a day at a time.

You know, Jesus actually talked about this at one point. He said: Hey, don't worry about tomorrow—big life-changing decisions, big things you need to do in the future—don't worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow's got enough issues of its own. Instead, you should focus on...what? Today. Don't worry about tomorrow, just focus on today, and the reality is that there is the opportunity to take the value that we've been given and do something incredible with it and maximize it today and every day.

I think we need to start asking ourselves a different question. What if every day we started asking ourselves this simple question: What's the one thing that I know I'm supposed to do today?

What's the one thing I know I'm supposed to do today?

The interesting thing is just right now, when I asked that question, many of you in the room at every campus, you know the thing that you're supposed to do today because you've known you were supposed to do it for like 100 days and you've just been putting it off. You *know* the thing you're supposed to do today.

Isn't it interesting that we always get these little nudges and prompts to do stuff throughout our day? You can call it maybe you ate something weird for lunch, maybe it's God.

Isn't it interesting we get these little nudges and prompts to do something outside of ourselves? Like you see a coworker that's hanging their head low; you notice it. Isn't it interesting how you start to think like, "Man, I should encourage them or I should go buy them a cup of coffee or just like do something to brighten their day." Where does that come from?

You're on your drive home and you think about some random friend whom you haven't thought of in years. You think, "Man, I should call them and reconnect with them and just see how they're doing and let them know I love them." Where does that come from?

If you're like me, when I get those nudges and those prompts, I almost always talk myself out of it.

I've had a neighbor who moved onto our street about four months ago. It was towards the end of winter but still winter, still cold outside—it was like January or February they moved in—and I felt the nudge and the prompt, and I felt it pretty much every day since then, of just like going up and welcoming them to the neighborhood and meeting them and knocking on their door and introducing ourselves and saying, "Hey, welcome."

It's not like I had the nudge and the prompting to go like knock on his door and preach a sermon and see if I can baptize him in his bathtub or anything. I'm not talking going crazy here. Just like go meet the guy; be a friendly, decent person.

So I've had that nudge and that prompt, but man I've talked myself out of it so much. I've used all kinds of excuses too, like, you know, moving's so hard and it takes awhile to get settled in. I'll give him some time to get settled first.

I actually used weather as an excuse at one point. I was like, "Man, it's so cold outside. I just think it'd be a bad time to meet somebody. I mean, I don't want that for them. You know, I knock on the door. He opens it and he maybe doesn't feel comfortable to invite me inside and so it's this awkward thing where I'm on the porch and I'm freezing and he's standing there with the door open and he's worried about his heating bill because it's so cold. I'm not going to do that to him yet.

Now it's like June/July and I'm still using that excuse, like, "It's so hot. I really don't know that it's a good time to meet somebody. I mean, what if I knock on his door and he doesn't want to bring me in and it's that awkward situation. He's worried about his cooling bill. It's just a bad time."

Maybe not for you but at least for me God has been just pressing it on my heart the simple question of when am I going to stop talking myself out of the things that God's trying to talk me into? When am I going to stop listening... Yeah! Somebody else is with it!

When am I going to stop playing lawyer mode against God? God prompts me to do something. "Nah, nah, nah. I'm good. Here are all the reasons why not."

Those little nudges and those promptings, if it's not God speaking to you, then what is it? How can you explain feeling a completely abnormal, outside-of-yourself thought to do something for someone else that would bless them and show them kindness and love and grace and compassion, that does not serve you at all, how else can you explain that nudge and that prompting, if not for God speaking to you?

We've got to stop talking ourselves out of the things that God is actually trying to talk us into and just look at our lives and say, "God, what's the one thing today you want me to do, and God help me to say yes to it," because the collection of those little yesses every day, over the course of a lifetime? That's when you'll see the fruit. That's when you'll see God maximizing your value. It's not necessarily about the big life change; it's about the daily grind of saying yes to what God puts on your heart to do.

Now, again we could stop here and we could send you guys out, but that actually wouldn't solve the problem because there's still one more layer we've got to get to. There's still one more thing that stands in between us and making a difference with the value we've been given.

You see, we can understand that God has created us with value. We can understand he's going to hold us accountable to it. We cannot look too far to the future but just say, "Today I'm going to figure out what do I need to do today." We can do all that, but there's still something that gets in our way. It's actually a detail that Jesus included in the story.

Go back to verse 24 real quick. Verse 24. Look at what the man who just had the one bag of silver says. It says, "Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, 'Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate.'" Then here are the three key words: **"I was afraid..."**

**"I was afraid** I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back."

See, we can know that we've been created with value. We can know that we're valuable. We can know we're skilled and able, and we can know God's going to hold us accountable to what we do with that value, and we can actually identify the thing to do. And still not do it.

For most of us, we could go through all the reasons as to why. They almost all boil down to fear. "What if I say the wrong thing? What if I mess it up? What if I get rejected? What if people laugh at me? What if I actually make things worse by trying to help?"

What if... What if... What if... We *what if* ourselves into playing it safe out of fear.

I've told you I've got kids. I've got three kids and I can't get through a conversation with anybody without talking about my kids, and I certainly can't get through a sermon without talking about them. It's just part of the deal. I love being a dad. It's one of my greatest privileges in life.

Our two sons are the most opposite kids you could ever imagine. My wife and I have nicknames for them. We call them this behind their backs. Don't tell them. One is Kamikaze Kevin and the other is Cautious Carl. Yeah, Kamikaze Kevin and Cautious Carl.

So Kamikaze Kevin has a very high pain threshold and very low amount of fear. He sees the health insurance deductible as a goal to meet. And he meets it. Every year. It's part of the family budget now.

Now Cautious Carl, on the other hand, is a very different story. Cautious Carl is proficient in risk analysis. I'll never forget going to a park with him when he was younger and there was this really cool slide for him to go down. We were the only two

there, and I was like, "Hey, buddy, you want to go down the slide?" He was like, "Nooooo." I'm like, "Okay."

Then these other families show up and these other kids start going down the slide and he's just sitting there watching it. I'm like, "He's thinking is that thing structurally sound? Could I die if I'm going down that thing? Okay, a few other of these chumps went first. I'll go now." Then he went down the slide. It was like he's not doing anything without watching somebody else do it first.

That level of caution and that fear and that anxiety is something that we've been really trying to shepherd his heart and kind of guide him through because he's got it in multiple situations.

When he started kindergarten, the tears and the anxiety that just kept building up day after day of him being fearful of starting school and fearful what it's going to be like and walking down the hallways. I mean, just consoling him day after day.

It happened with basketball. We started him in a basketball league. And it's not for lack of skills and abilities, all right? He's growing up in a Kentucky basketball home. He's had basketball bred in and through him from day one, and I will say completely unbiased and objectively the kid's a baller. He's got a mad crossover, great jump shot. It's great. He plays at home all the time.

Put him on the basketball court though? His first four or five games, he wouldn't play. He just melted down, cried his eyes out, would not play. He'd come home and say, "Dad, what if I break a rule? Or what if I miss a shot? Or what if I don't know what to do? Or what if a defender steals the ball away from me?" and I said, "Buddy, don't worry about that. They're kindergarteners. They can't play defense. They're not good basketball players! Okay? If you just dribble the ball and stick your shoulder out and just run over people, the ref won't call it; you'll have a clear path to the basket and you'll score every time!"

And apparently that's not helpful. Apparently putting that kind of pressure on my child and my coaching was not what he needed. I learned that from my wife later on.

You know what was helpful? Not my coaching. What was helpful was the Word of God in his life. We started working early on with him when we saw that he was dealing with a lot of anxiety. We memorized a verse with him, and it's 2 Timothy 1:7.

And 2 Timothy 1:6 I want to read to you as well, but 2 Timothy 1:7 is the one we memorized.

Now this is the apostle Paul, a seasoned leader, speaking to a young leader named Timothy and trying to help him maximize the value he's been given, maximize the gifts he's been given. Look what he says. He says, "This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you..." I mean it's right there. God has given you gifts. And we're supposed to fan them into flames to make the most of them. So fan into flames the spiritual gift that God gave you "when I laid my hands on you."

Here it is. Here's the verse we memorized together. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."

And we'd say it over and over. "For God...For God has not given us...has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity...of fear and timidity, but one of power, love, and self-discipline...one of power, love,..." and we'd say it over and over and over until we memorized it and it became a thing. We'd say, "Hey, we're not just going to memorize it, we're going to put it into use." so I'd say, "Hey, buddy, anytime you're feeling nervous or anxious, let us know and we'll say the verse out loud."

So we came up with this little system. We'd be walking into kindergarten class and walking down the halls and the system was if he squeezes my hand it's time to say the verse out loud. So here you go. He'd squeeze my hand and there are two Kinder men walking down the hallway, out loud saying, "For God did not give us a spirit of fear and timidity, but one of power, love, and self-discipline."

He'd squeeze it again. "For God did not give us a spirit of fear and timidity, but one of power, love, and self-discipline."

You'd best believe on the way to a basketball game we were saying it on the car ride. "For God did not give us a spirit of fear and timidity, but one of power, love, and self-discipline."

You know what? We believe the Word of God is active and alive and powerful. It is not just a 2,000-year-old ancient document for us to study history. It's breathing. It's alive. It's useful for what we're dealing with right now. And you know what? It worked. It's working! In this little boy's heart, it is working. Because he has mustered up the courage. He has overcome his fear. I mean, in kindergarten he was like a pro at it by the end of this thing. No worries. Basketball court? You should see him out there.



One time a little first-grade girl was guarding him and he gave her the patented Kinder shake-and-bake, drove right past her to the hole. Buckets! All day!

It's working. But here's the thing. There's no sweeter prayer to me and no sweeter moment as a dad than to hear my son pray out loud on nights like that when he overcame his fear, for him to actually say out loud, "Jesus, thank you for helping me overcome my fear, and Jesus, thank you for giving me a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline."

And that's what we need. I mean I'm praying like crazy that this little practice for him is the thing that bakes into his character. I'm not worried about basketball. I'm not worried about kindergarten. I'm worried about when he's an adult, when he's in our seats, and he knows that God's asking him to do something and he feels fearful.

I'm praying this bakes into his character that anytime he sniffs fear that he knows to say out loud the powerful Word of God, that God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity. He gave us one of power. He gave us one of love and self-discipline.

And maybe that's what we need to do. When you know the thing you're supposed to do today, maybe it's a conversation with your spouse. You know you've got to have it to fight for your marriage, but you know that when you have that conversation you're not sure what's going to happen on the other end and you're scared of it.

But in that moment when you know what you're supposed to do, you know you're supposed to fight for your marriage, God didn't give you a spirit of fear and timidity. He gave you one of power, love, and self-discipline, you can have that conversation.

When you're out on your street or you're out checking your mail and you see a neighbor, like I'm in this situation, that you know you're supposed to meet, you know you're supposed to build a friendship with and a relationship with because, guess what, your story might be the thing that they're waiting on, you're story might be the thing that can change their eternity, but you're worried they're going to ask questions that you don't know the answers to, you're worried that you're going to fumble over your words, you're worried that you won't do it right. God didn't give you a spirit of fear and timidity. He gave you one of power and love and self-discipline. You can have that conversation. You can step into that.

When you know you're supposed to call somebody and encourage them, when you know you're supposed to do a thing God's put right in front of you today and you

know that all kinds of what ifs—what if, what if, what if—and you’re so scared, we need to say out loud and claim the truth that God didn’t give us a spirit of fear or timidity. He gave us one of power, love, and self-discipline.

It’s why as a church we’re not going to stop at where we are right now. It’s why when God calls us and the thing we know we ought to do is to add more services and start more campuses and reach more vulnerable kids in our city and all around the world and we start thinking, “What if, what if... How? How? We’re so scared.” We’re not going to let that happen because God didn’t give this church a spirit of fear and timidity. He gave us one of power, one of love, one of self-discipline, and so we’re going to keep going and keep reaching people and we’re going to maximize the value that this church has been given.

You know, God didn’t choose those words by accident. God didn’t just say: What do they need? Oh, they need some power, some love, and some self-discipline so let’s give them that. No, no, no. Power, love, and self-discipline, that spirit that he’s given us, is the Spirit of Christ. It’s the Spirit of Jesus in you.

You want to talk power, the same Spirit that was powerful enough to raise a man from the dead back to life, that power is in you. The same Spirit of love that stretched out his arms and was willing to be nailed to a cross with your name in mind, with my name in mind, that same Spirit of love is in you.

And self-discipline, good grief! This man was tempted in every way you and I are tempted, every way, yet never sinned, never veered off the course, stayed the path. The most self-disciplined. That same Spirit of self-discipline is alive and well in you. We’ve just got to lean into it. We’ve got to lean into it.

And the only proper response I think right now for us is just to go to God in prayer, ask him to compel us to know what we should do today and then pray for the courage to do it, so let’s go to him right now.

God, we love you. We’re so grateful that you’ve saved us, that you’ve rescued us. There’s nothing we could do to earn your love. We’re so grateful for that, God. We center our lives, we root everything we do in that Gospel, that Good News, but God we’re coming to you right now and we’re begging you like crazy to help us know what we’re supposed to do with the value you’ve given us.

God, I pray right now as a church across all of our campuses that you put it on the hearts of every person, what they are to do individually today.

God, I pray that your Spirit would remind us of that question throughout the week, what's the one thing we know we're supposed to do. God, we need your Spirit to guide us in that. We need your Spirit to direct us in this, but then, God, we need your Spirit more than anything to give us courage and boldness.

God, that Spirit that you've given us of Christ, the power, the love, and the self-discipline, we lean into it right now. We ask you to make us fearless.

Jesus, you overcame death, you resurrected from a grave, and because of that, we've got every reason to be fearless, so we ask in these moments right now, God, that you'd meet us and help us become fearless. It's in Jesus' name the Church prays together. Amen.