

## Ambassador

Petie Kinder | 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

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What's up church? How are we doing?

Happy Labor Day weekend. Man, I feel like—come on you all, Labor Day is like one of the most under-celebrated, under-appreciated holidays out there, alright? You get a day off of work, for most of us. It's incredible.

I feel like we don't give Labor Day the respect that it deserves. So I think right now, at all of our campuses, we should put our hands together to thank Grover Cleveland, the man who signed this thing into law back in the day that gives you Labor day! I'll bet you've never clapped for Grover Cleveland in your life. You did today.

Hey, we're thrilled to have you here this weekend. My name is Petie. I'm one of the pastors here. And if this is your first time, we are pumped that you have joined us. We'd like to invite you to come back next weekend.

Next weekend we are starting a brand new teaching series throughout the month of September called *Trust Issues*. So we're going to be talking about the concept of trust and how trust is this fragile thing—it's hard to earn and it's easy to lose. And then we're going to talk about how many of us have trust issues with other people, with organized religion, and even with God, himself. So it's going to be a series that you do not want to miss. So be here for that.

If you have a Bible or a Bible app on your phone, go ahead and grab it and get to 2 Corinthians, chapter 5—2 Corinthians 5 is where we are going to be. And if you're here and you're new to the Bible, let me kind of help you there. If you just go to the very back of the book and then start turning backward a little bit.

It's toward the end. I know when I first started following Jesus, and when the preacher would say, "Hey, turn to this book and this chapter," it'd take me about a year to find it. I was doing the Table of Contents for that thing. So no shame in that game, let me just help you. Go to the end and then go backward a little bit.

We're going to take a little bit of time to celebrate today because we are coming out of a huge month in the life of our church. You know, we prayed toward this *Growth Track* series—that God would do something incredible with it and that it would be a real turning point. And it was that and more because we had so many people... These numbers I am about to share with you are staggering. They are like revival kinds of numbers that we are celebrating big time.

For instance, we had 237 people in the month of August who gave their lives to Jesus and got baptized, which is absolutely incredible. Awesome. The clap train will continue though because we had 2,100 people who signed up for a group in the month of August, which is awesome. We had 850 people who decided to give financially to the mission for the first time, which is unreal! Absolutely. And then this last one will end the clap train, okay? We had over 1,000 people who signed up last weekend to join a serving team here at Traders Point, which is unreal—unreal. So cool.

Now, here's the thing. I share those numbers and we don't shy away from those numbers, but I want you to know that the reason we don't shy away from those numbers is not because we are really that enamored with big numbers, the reason we share those numbers and we get excited about them is because every number represents an individual. Every number represents a person who has decided to courageously take a step of growth.

So we're excited about that and chances are that you are excited about that. Just think about those numbers for a second in the context of our whole church. That means that chances are the vast majority of us at every campus right now are starting something new as of this month.

For some of you, the whole thing is brand new. You took every step of growth in August and the whole thing is new to you. For some of you, maybe you just took one of the steps of growth. But for the vast majority of us, we're all starting something new. There is something different about the way that we are following Jesus. There is a step of growth that we have taken. And that's exciting.

I don't know about you but sometimes I leave Sundays and I am so excited I can barely go to sleep on Sunday night because of all that God is doing in our church and because of all that he is doing in my life, personally. I am so excited.

But then the thing happens to us, right? For all of us—we all share this one thing in common. We can leave Sunday excited and the same thing happens to all of us and it's called Monday. Monday hits and all of the excitement that you had, all the anticipation that you had, all of a sudden starts to be drained out. This world has a way of discouraging us and deflating us.

And by the time we get to Wednesday, it's like, "Oh, man. That step of growth that I thought I was going to take, all of a sudden just seems way harder than I thought it was going to be. Sunday it seemed like it was so within reach and so easy and now Wednesday it's like I can barely think about me actually following Jesus the way that I said I wanted to."

And then you add on top of that, not only are we struggling to follow Jesus personally, but when we think about the mission that God has given us—because, oh, by the way all of those steps of growth we took in August... Your personal growth is not really for you. Your personal growth is to set you up to live on mission. By Wednesday we can barely follow Jesus sometimes much less think about living out the mission.

So in 2 Corinthians, 5 look at how Paul words the mission—f or those of us who are wondering what our task is as Christians, look at verse 18. Go halfway down through verse 18. He says this, “And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.” Here it is, “So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘Come back to God!’ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.”

Paul says that your task—the mission that you’ve been given—is to be an ambassador of Jesus. Where ever you go: your classroom, your school, your place of employment, your family, your neighborhood; every room that you step into you are called and appointed by God to be an ambassador, to be an official representative of Jesus.

Now, I’m not just talking about, and Paul’s just not talking about, #teamJesus like just wearing a jersey that says Jesus on it, right? You’ve probably seen grown men who make the fashion choice to wear a basketball jersey. And it’s an interesting choice—I’m not saying it’s bad—I’m just used to, in Kentucky, some red-neck brothers who’ve got the big ole beer gut wearing Kentucky basketball jerseys with 18-year-old boys on their back. It’s just an odd choice, very odd choice—it’s wrong. It’s just odd.

If you have a Shaq jersey or a Colby jersey or a LeBron jersey, that’s cool but nobody is confusing you with those guys, alright? Nobody thinks you’re Colby, nobody thinks that you’re Shaq, no one thinks that you’re LeBron—you clearly lack the swag in your step, the height, the muscle—you’re not one of them and we all know that. You’re just a fan boy. And that’s cool, but we’re not talking about...

When Paul says that you need to be an ambassador for Jesus, he’s not saying to be a fan boy. He’s not saying to be like, “Yeah, I support Jesus. I’m a big fan of Jesus. Nobody would confuse me with him.” What he’s saying is that you’re called to represent Jesus—to be an ambassador of his so that when you’re in the room, people actually get a little confused. It feels like Jesus, himself, is in the building.

And I don’t know about you, but that task is just a little bit intimidating. That’s a tall order. I feel like Andrew Luck has just paused the game, fourth quarter, game winning drive on the line and he’s kind of like handing you the ball and saying: Hey, get in there and call the shots and run the play. We’re not ready for this! We’re not capable of doing this.

It seems so daunting and so intimidating and that’s why today is so important, because today is Paul giving us the words to help us understand how we are to be ambassadors and how we are to live this thing out in such a way to represent Jesus. To rep him well, the way that he ought to be.

Now if you're here and you wouldn't consider yourself a follower of Jesus, this message should still, absolutely, be engaging you. Your ears should be perking up because chances are you know a Christian, you work with a Christian, you maybe live next door to a Christian and if we Christians can get this message right, this thing right that Paul is telling us about, it'll change your experience in life. Your experiences with Christians will actually get better because of us living out what Paul says today.

Chances are that if you're here and you wouldn't consider yourself a follower of Jesus—the reason that that is the case and the reason that it was hard for you to come to church today, the reason that you had to like really convince yourself to overcome all of the barriers that stand in your way to get here, the reason that that is the case is probably because you had a bad experience with a Christian. You probably had an experience with a Christian who did not rep Jesus very well, who wasn't a very good ambassador. Or maybe you've seen in the media some examples of Christians who did not rep Jesus very well.

And so today there is a lot on the line for all of us. But in order to get there, we need to read Paul's words. But we're not going to read what he said after the verse I just read you. We're going to back it up a little bit and read before what we read. We're going to read how he set up this task.

Look with me at verse 14 of chapter 5 because Paul sets this up in a really interesting way. Before he says that we should be ambassadors of Jesus, you'd think that he would give us like a to-do list, right? Like if you want to represent Jesus, do x, y, z. If you want to rep Jesus, do 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and then you'll be good. But no, no, no—he actually doesn't say a whole lot about what we do. Instead Paul focuses on who we are, who we are.

Take a look at verse 14. It says this, "Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ."

Now pause for a second. At every campus we just made the same mistake that almost all of us make when we read the Bible. We did what I call fly-by Bible. We flew by that thing—fly-by Bible reading. You just read and you read and read until you find something that makes sense.

You know, this is the experience that most of us have when we read the Bible. We read so many words and so many concepts and so many phrases that just don't make sense to us. And because we are educated adults, we don't like feeling stupid. So we just keep reading until we find something that makes sense.

But that's not how you should read the Bible. See, if you really want to get the most out of God's word, if you really want to understand how to apply it, you've got to s l o w j a m the Bible (if there was music behind me right now that would be too much). You've got to slow your roll. You've got to slow down and really unpack it. There's no shame in reading a couple of verses and getting as much out of them as you possibly can. That's how the Bible is best read.

So let's go back and let's slow it down a sec—just a bit—because there are some truths in here that Paul is trying to get us to understand. In fact, there are two truths about our identity, about who we are, that we absolutely have to understand if we're going to be ambassadors of Jesus.

Back up with me to verse 14. Let's read that passage again. It says this, "Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves." *Will* is a key word. "...they will not longer live for themselves. Instead, they will," there it is again, "...will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them."

See, Paul is trying to get at this concept, this idea that you and I used to— prior to following Jesus—we used to live for ourselves. I know that is true of me. Before I started following Jesus, I lived for three people: me, myself, and I. It was all about my wants, my needs, my desires. And you know what? I did whatever I wanted and most of my choices weren't very good.

Now, if you're on the other end of the spectrum—maybe you were more of a rule follower and you actually were kind of a morally outstanding person before you followed Jesus, still you've got to ask yourself the question: Who was that for?

See if you search down and dig through that you understand that you were actually still living for yourself. You were propping up your sense of accomplishment, your sense of duty and obligation; you were living in such a way so that you could sleep easy at night. You were still living for yourself, whether you were moral or immoral—you were still out for you.

But now that we've started following Jesus Paul says that something has changed. You're going to step into a process and it's a process where you will—that word is so key, because *will* is like a futuristic thing, right? You will eventually—it's going to take a while. It's going to take some work. And it's a process but you will live not for yourself anymore—you're going to progressively stop that and instead you will turn and you will live for Jesus who died and was raised from the dead for your sake.

See, Paul is trying to get us to see something about our identity. You're going somewhere. You are on a journey. God is growing you. God is changing you. You have stepped into this process where you will no longer live for yourself. You will live instead for Jesus. See Paul wants us to understand, at the core of our being, who we truly are on the inside. Our identity is wrapped up in this:

You aren't who you will be.

You aren't who you will be. You're not... Right now is not the same you that's going to be down the road. God's taking you somewhere. God's growing you into someone right now. God's shaping you, he's molding you. You're on a track toward growth and God is going to keep taking you there. You aren't who you will be one day. You're making progress. See, I think that we all just need to hear that.

About a year ago, I started dabbling—now I use the word dabble very loosely, okay? I started dabbling in the work out phenomenon that has swept the country known as CrossFit. I was dabbling. Okay. And when I started dabbling, I'll never forget one of the first few workouts I did—I was trying to learn all of the movements and the motions and kind of like get the hang of it.

And I'll never forget that one of the coaches came up to me and he was a real young guy, he was like second year college. He was like 19 or 20 years old. His name is Luke. And Luke comes up and he was kind of correcting some of my form and my technique and teaching me stuff. And then he said something to me that was the most encouraging thing that I've ever had someone say to me. He said, "Petie, fix this. Fix that. Change this. Change that. But Petie, you've already got some strength."

I was like, "It's about time somebody noticed."

"You've already got some strength. Now if you'll work on your form and you'll stay at it and you'll keep working on this, you're going to be throwing up some serious weight pretty soon. I can see it in your future. You're on your way. You're doing great. Keep going." And I was like, "You're right I'm about to throw up some serious weight. I'm going to keep rolling. I'm going to keep working hard."

I went straight home and said, "Babe, you will not believe what this coach said to me today." She was like, "Who's the coach?" I was like, "His name is Luke. He's 20 years old and he was encouraging me in my workout." And she was like, "You're getting encouraged by someone who is 13 years younger than you."

Okay, I get that. I get that. I know that he was just out of high school but he was telling me how to work out and it was great. You see, for students who are in... Age doesn't always mean wisdom. Sometimes age just means age. Okay, I was 13 years on him. He was schooling me. But I was so encouraged by him because he was pointing out this truth about me that I was heading somewhere and he could see it. I think sometimes we need to have someone say the same thing to us: You're going somewhere and you're making progress and you aren't who you will be one day.

You see, the devil would love to convince you right now that you are stuck. The devil would love to convince you that you are stuck, that who you are right now is who you will always be,

because he knows if he can convince you that you're stuck... Stuck people are usually hopeless people. And hopeless people are usually helpless people. And helpless people are very easy to target.

See, you aren't stuck. You're making progress. And I know what you are probably thinking right now no matter what campus that you are at. There are some people in the room right now who are thinking, "Petie, if you knew that I'm sitting in church right now with a hangover."

"Petie, if I knew what it was like for me to get my kids dressed and out the door, man I was at church 10 minutes late. I dropped my kids off in Kids' Ministry and as I watched them walk in I noticed that their pants were on backwards. This is a bad day, Petie. I don't feel like I am making any progress."

Can I just tell you something? You're doing way better than you think you are. You're doing better than you think you are, because here's the deal. If you're listening to this right now whether you're watching online, whether you are at one of our campuses, or whether you're watching this via podcast weeks down the road because you're a few weeks late... What are you doing right now? You're at church. You're investing in your spiritual growth. You made it here. You're doing way better than you think you are. You need to give yourself a little bit of grace because God is growing you. He's taking you somewhere. You're making progress. You're here!

See, I can stand here and say that so confidently, that you are going somewhere and that you are not who you will be. But I can't say that confidently because I know you. I don't know all of you. I don't know your personal stories. But I say that confidently because of God's word because God's word actually promises this stuff.

Look at what Paul writes in Philippians 1, verse 6. He says it like this, "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."

I love that verse. God who began the good work in you—he started it—God's going to continue it and God's going to finish it. The pressure is off. You are going to grow. You are going to mature. God's going to do this in you. It's a guarantee. You aren't who you will be one day. You're not stuck. And sometimes we just need to be reminded of that. We've got to keep going. I can sit there all day.

Verse 17, there's another part of this that some of you all are going to be even more thankful for. Some of you all are sitting there thinking, "Okay, it's great that I'm not who I'm going to be but what about this other thing I'm carrying? What about my past?"

Look what Paul says. Jump down to verse 17, "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ."

You see, whereas before Paul is trying to convince us that we are being made new—like you are in this process of growth, you are being made new—he comes right back around and he says: Oh, and, by the way: You are new. You already have been made new. Who you are right now—the minute you started following Jesus, the minute you came out of that baptistery and raised your arms in the air—you are a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come.

Your past no longer defines you. You're sins are wiped clean. You're slate is erased. You stand before God fully justified, fully loved, fully forgiven. You are not defined by your past. You are not disqualified by your past. You see the enemy would love to get you caught up in that. The enemy would love to convince you that who you were in the past is who you are now. Who you were in the past actually disqualifies you from a future. That who you were in the past is actually going to prevent you from moving forward.

And the way that he does this is just by reminding us. See, the devil has a way of just reminding us about our past. You know that. You've experienced it. And then when you're reminded of your past, you get weighed down with guilt and shame and discouragement and that's a burden. It's a burden you weren't meant to carry.

The devil knows that if he can weigh you down with enough shame and enough guilt and enough heartache, enough regret, enough remorse—if he can burden you with all of that and get you to just live in your past all of the time it will prevent you, it will weigh you down so heavily that you will never be able to step into the future that God prepared for you. Like you're stuck back there.

Paul lets you know that, yes, you aren't who you will be one day but you also aren't who you used to be. You're not that person anymore. But, man, the enemy is screaming at you, screaming it in your head that you are who you used to be, that your past defines you.

This happens to me every time I preach. Every time I preach I am battling with that truth right there. I will tell you, the most recent time I preached was the end of July. And the end of July, I'll never forget it—this happens very regularly but it happened in a real specific way at the end of the July.

I was down here in the front row at our Northwest campus. I was worshipping. It was the song right before the message, the song right before I'm getting ready to come up and preach. So I'm trying to focus on God. I've got my hands lifted. I'm just telling him how thankful I am for him and for all he's done in my life and for all he's done in my marriage and my family and all he's doing here at the church and thanking him for what he has rescued me from.

Then I'm asking him to fill me up and to use me, to give me the sound mind to recall the message that's he's prepared in my heart and to give me the passion and the courage and the boldness ... And I'm—at the same time I'm trying not to worry about what other people might

be thinking of me because I don't want to rob God of anything that he deserves. I'm just trying to worship him with everything I've got.

But then something happened. It was like in a moment all of that went away. It was like this heavy burden came upon me—whoosh—all of a sudden my hands go down and I was like frozen. It was like I couldn't move. Eyes wide open, just kind of looking forward. But in my head all kinds of stuff was happening.

In my head, right before I got up to preach, all I could hear was: If they knew who you used to be they'd boo you off that stage. If they knew how bad you were, if they knew how messed up you were, they'd never let you preach again. You're a fraud. You're a failure. In fact, you're getting ready to step up on that stage and you're going to preach a crappy sermon and it might be the last time that you preach because it's going to be so bad.

I mean, that stuff is just screaming in my head. Spiritual warfare is real. You try to tell me the enemy is not real, the devil is not real, because I know that's just not true for preachers—that's true for all of us. When you are in your workplace, when you are at home, when you're trying to do the thing that God wants you to do, when you're trying to have that intentional conversation with a co-worker, when you're trying to love your spouse the way she ought to be loved, when you're trying to raise your kids right, when you're trying to represent Jesus wherever you are, there's that voice in your head that says: Who do you think you are? Who do you think you are? Your past disqualifies you from that.

I'm just here to tell you, every time I preach I have to reject that as a lie and I'm telling you all, every time you wake up every day—we all have to reject that as a lie. We have to reject it. It's not true! Jesus died so that you wouldn't have to be burdened with that! Jesus died so that you can be set free from your guilt, set free from your shame, you're a new creation! You aren't who you used to be because of Jesus!

You see, you aren't who you will be and you aren't who you used to be. And sometimes we just need to like breathe that in. We need to sit in that for a second. In fact, right now at all of our campuses take a big, deep breath right now.

Our lives are so fast-paced it's insane. I'm still waiting on the interaction that I have with someone at one of our campuses where I say, "So, how's life going for you?" And they respond with, "Pretty slow. Not a lot going on. Could really use some more activity in my life."

Nobody says that anymore. I mean, come on. It's like the standard answer, instead of like, "I'm doing fine," people say, "busy." Everybody is busy. Our lives are so fast-paced. And what happens when your life is so fast-paced is that you often forget who you are. You lose sight of your identity.

So it's important for us to sit back and to have time in our day and time in our week to just remember who we are and what God has done for us because, oh, by the way, who we are—our identity—informs our activity. It informs our practice. Who we are shapes what we do.

To put it a little bit better, one of my favorite pastors, Craig Rochelle, says it like this. He says, "When you know who you are, you'll know what to do." When you know who you are, you'll know what to do.

The reason Paul started with identity before he got to the task of being an ambassador is that this is actually the key. If you want to know how to be an ambassador, you've got to sit in who you are because when you know who you are, you will know what to do. It will become just like second nature to you. You don't need a handbook of all of the how-tos of being an ambassador, you just remember who you are.

For instance, when you know who you are—you know that you're a work in progress and that God's taking you somewhere and you're not just defined by your past and all of that amazing gift of grace—when you know who you are, you know and you understand: It's okay to not be okay.

It's okay. You can just be you. You don't have to put up a spiritual front. You don't have to put on this mask that pretends like you're doing better than you really are. You don't have to do that. God's growing you. You're in process. And, yes, if you're not perfect right now, that's okay. You're going to be one day. God's growing you. You've been forgiven of your sins. You've been forgiven. It's okay to not be okay. You can just be authentic—real. You can be vulnerable.

Can I just say this? If there is one thing that America does not need any more of, it's Christians who are pretending to be better than they really are. We don't need that. We've got plenty of those examples, alright? They are out there in droves. What this world is craving, what it needs, is people who believe in Jesus who will say, "I'm not okay. I'm messed up." Because guess what? When you're willing to be honest about that, it's attractive to people. People actually want to follow that. People actually want to be around that. And then you're able to be a better ambassador for Jesus.

Let me take it a step further and maybe state it even stronger because I think when you start living this out and you understand who you are you understand that not only is okay to not be okay, but actually, as an ambassador **weakness is a strength**. Weakness is a strength.

One of the questions that people often have when they are thinking about representing Jesus or having conversations with people about Jesus—there's this fear that looms over all of us of like: What if they ask me a question that I don't know the answer to? That keeps us from having these conversations.

But whoa, whoa, whoa—wait a minute. You're in process making progress. You aren't who you will be. God is growing you and that includes your mind, that includes your understanding. He's growing you and you're not defined by your past, that's okay.

So when someone asks you a question that you don't know the answer to, you know what you can say? "I don't know." And the roof doesn't collapse in. It's this interesting thing. You keep breathing. You keep living. It's okay. It's okay to not have all of the answers. In fact, the worst thing you can do is pretend to have all of the answers because you all know that when you talk to somebody and they actually don't know what they are talking about but they act like they do, it's like, "Oh, this guy. Cool. On to the next one."

You can say, "I don't know." But where the power is is if you follow up with, "Hey, I don't know but let's go together and find out. Let's find out together. Let's do some research. Let's go ask some questions. Let's read together. Let's try to figure this thing out together," because, oh, by the way, if you do that all of a sudden you've brought this person who doesn't know Jesus along with you for a little journey. It's almost like you guys are following Jesus together and oh my Lord, it's like you're being an ambassador. It's like you're helping people come to know Jesus. But that will only happen if you lean into your weaknesses.

Can I take it even a step further? It's the gospel at its core. If the message of Jesus, at its very heart, requires you to get honest about your sin before God, if the gospel requires someone to stand before God and say, "God, I've screwed it up. I'm sinful. I'm flawed and I need a Savior. I need forgiveness. I need rescuing," which, by the way, that's what the gospel requires, we all have to admit that we have sinned. We have messed this thing up. We have to repent. We have to accept this offer of forgiveness. If the gospel requires that, then wouldn't it follow that maybe the best way to help people see Jesus for who he is is for Christians to stand up and to be honest about their sin, for Christians to stand up and to get honest about their rebellion against God?

You see, when you put up a spiritual mask, when you put up a spiritual front, and you pretend that you are doing better than you really are, you are robbing yourself of the opportunity to point someone to Jesus. When you get very honest about your weaknesses, you can easily point to Jesus. "Yes, I messed up. Yes, I screwed up. But guess what? I'm not who I'm going to be one day. God's growing me. And guess what? I'm not who I used to be because Jesus died for my sins and forgave me. And guess what? The same thing can be true for you." You've got to lean into your weaknesses.

But again, all of this stuff just becomes second nature when you know who you are. When you know who you are, you'll know what to do. Some of you may ask the question, "Okay but, Petie, what do I do, what do I do when I'm the only Christian in the room?" "What do I do when I go to school and I'm the only Christian in my class?" "What do I do when I go to work and I'm the only person who believes in Jesus in the whole room?" "What do I do when I go to that party and I'm clearly the only person there who loves Jesus. What do I do then?"

Again, when you know who you are, you'll know what to do. See, when you know who you are, you always end up choosing **conviction over compromise**. And it's really not a tricky line to navigate. See, if you started your day before an almighty God and said, "God, thank you so much for dying on the cross for my sin, thank you for loving me, thank you for rescuing me, thank you for changing my eternity, thank you for everything you've done for me," if you start your day like that and then you go and roll up into some party and there are people acting crazy doing all kinds of things that are far from the heart of God, it's easy for you to not compromise.

There is no way that you are going to compromise. You're going to stand on your convictions because how could you disgrace what Jesus did for you on the cross? You started your day talking to God and being so thankful for him. So you say, "Why would I ever get give way to this stuff? I'm going to stand firm on my convictions."

At the same time, when you're at that party or at your workplace and you look around and people don't believe what you believe or people behave differently than you behave, you look around and you realize that you can't be judgmental, better than them. You're no better. All of a sudden you don't have to be weird anymore. It's this amazing thing. You start following Jesus and you know who you are, it enables you to stand firm on your convictions and to love people well.

When you know who you are, you'll know what to do.

Maybe the one thing that stands out to me, that is on my heart the most is this effect that when you know who you are and you know that not only is your past taken care of but your future on this earth is bright and God's growing you, when you look even further past that and you understand that your eternity is secure, it's amazing. Not just a lifetime, a million lifetimes are taken care of. God has secured it. When you understand that, it has this crazy effect of lifting your head up and getting you to look at the people all around you who that's not true for. Those who are far from God. Those who don't believe in Jesus. Those whose eternities are at risk.

See, when you know who you are, you understand that **urgency is required**. It's not an option. And it's not something that you have to muster up the will-power to do. It just makes sense. You look at people differently. This is what Paul meant in verse 16. The one verse that we didn't slow jam was verse 16. This is what he meant by it.

He says this, "So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now!" We don't even look at people the same way anymore. When we know who we are we realize there are only two groups of people in the world. Before, we evaluated people with human categories. We'd say: they're black, they're white, they're brown, they're rich, they're poor, they're young, they're old, they're republican or democrat—we had our categories. But now, as a follower of Jesus, we understand that there are only two categories of people. There are people who have been rescued and there are people who need to be rescued. And that's it.

And all of a sudden your head is lifted up and you can no longer go to your kid's soccer game and bury your nose in your phone and scroll through social media because you lift your head up and realize that there are families all around that if you don't interrupt the flow of their lives and get them to Jesus, they may not get there.

You go to school and you sit in your class and you can no longer just kind of tend to your things and take care of your stuff. No, you've got to lift your head up because there are people in your class that if you don't interrupt the flow of their lives nobody will. Their eternity is at risk.

You can't walk in your workplace anymore—you can't walk into Lilly anymore and just do you. You walk in there and you understand that there are people who... The flow of their lives must be interrupted in order for them to understand who Jesus is or else their eternity is at risk.

One of my favorite stories that just happened recently is about a staff member, his name is Kyle Riley. He's our groups minister at the Downtown campus. Go ahead and throw up that picture of Kyle. It just looks like a normal picture, right? You've got Kyle here talking to two guys. But the story behind this picture is beautiful.

The story behind this picture is that the Downtown staff is getting ready to go out for lunch and they are all walking out the door and all piling into a car to head out. But Kyle didn't get in the car. Kyle just kept walking straight past the car, straight to the house next door where there were a couple of workers in the yard.

And they are all saying, "What is Kyle doing?" And Kyle just strikes up a conversation with these chaps and then you see Kyle pull out two invite cards from his pocket and he invites them to church and then he comes back, hops into the car, and closes the door and just sits there. And they were like, "Soooo, what happened? What was that?" And he was like, "I mean, there are two guys over there that I haven't met yet and I figured they've got a pulse so they need to hear about Jesus. And here I am. Somebody has got to go tell them. So I went and told them." It was like, "Okay, let's go to lunch."

That's what it is. He didn't have to force that. It was just second nature to him. He walked out the door and because his identity... Because he knows who he is—he's been spending time with the Lord—he's got this right. He walks out and his head is on this swivel looking for people, like, "If you've got a pulse you need to be rescued. If you've got a pulse you need to hear about Jesus."

We could keep going on and on with all of the different ways that this impacts us but that's the point. You don't need another to-do list. You don't need a handbook on how to be an ambassador. You need to understand who you are because when you know who you are, you'll know what to do.

And so can I just reframe what we said at the beginning for a second? Just kind of reframe how we started this thing. We said that this mission of being ambassadors of Jesus was daunting and overwhelming and seemed impossible. Can we just flip it for a second?

You know who you are, and so you know what to do. You have what it takes because you are what it takes. Jesus has changed your identity. You're a new person and now you have what it takes. You are made for moments like these. You were made to walk into your school and to represent Jesus. You were made to walk down your street and represent Jesus. You were made to go into your workplace and represent Jesus like never before. You were created for this. You can do it. But you've got to reconnect to your identity. You've got to sit in who you are. You've got to understand who you are.

So, right now, the best thing we can do is go to God and do that. Just to spend some time in prayer with him and thank him for the new identity he's given us, to reconnect us to who we are so that we know what to do.

Let's pray together:

Jesus, we love you. We're grateful for you. We can't believe what you have done for us. It's so amazing. We thank you for the fact that we are going somewhere, that you are growing us, you are sanctifying us, you're making us more and more like you. We also thank you that you've forgiven us; you've wiped our slate clean.

And, God, right now I ask that you meet us in these moments. Help us to stand firm in our identity, who you created us to be and let that inform the way that we love this world. May the city of Indianapolis feel it this week. May people feel a difference as we represent you the way we ought to. It's in Jesus' name the church prays together. Amen.