

Gains | Play to Your Training

Petie Kinder | 2 Timothy 3

What's good, you all? How are we doing today? Good, good. Across all of our campuses welcome. Glad to have you with us. My name's Petie. I'm one of the pastors around here.

If this is your first time with us, we are thrilled to have you. I know that it is super hard and super weird to come to church for the very first time and so I just want to thank you for overcoming that and spending some time with us. I hope this service is a blessing to you. I hope it's not the last time we get to see your beautiful face here.

Our church mission is real simple. We want to remove unnecessary barriers that keep people from Jesus, and we've just seen that our culture—sometimes it's how we were raised; sometimes it's even the church that has put up some unnecessary barriers that have kept many of us from even giving Jesus a chance in our lives, and so we just want to remove those barriers and get you to Jesus because we believe once you get to Jesus, everything can change because everything changed for us once we got to Jesus.

Once you get there, that's kind of the starting point. We want to help you grow in your faith. We want to cheer you on in your spiritual growth, give you a path to follow, give you some tools and cheer you on. We can't do spiritual growth for you, but we want to give you a path to follow, and that's largely what *Growth Track* is.

Growth Track happens after every service at every campus, a 30-minute class, a great way for you to get connected and start growing here. That's super important—to get connected here and to be involved because church is so much better when it's not just something you observe, but when it's something that you're really a part of and you're really on mission with, and so that's our desire for you.

But you need to know that we're a church that celebrates with those who celebrate and we grieve with those who grieve. I feel like it would be amiss if we didn't grieve with some people who are grieving today: My fellow Kentucky Wildcat fans across every campus. We're growing in number. Blue gets in everywhere.

And our fellow Purdue fans grieving. Can we just put our arms around each other and just hug? It's a sad day. We were robbed! We were robbed of what could've been an epic Final Four matchup between Kentucky and Purdue. We were robbed of that!

So if you're sad today, I'm sad with you, but the way my family grieves, the way we console each other, is with a simple little phrase. It's called *at least Duke lost too*. Can I get an amen from the congregation? If you're a Duke fan, I am not sorry in the slightest.

We're in a series called *Gains*. We're trying to get some of those spiritual gains to become the strong men and women that God created us to be, to maximize our impact, to make the biggest difference we possibly can with this one life we've been given.

The way we're doing that is we're going through this book called 2 Timothy. It's a letter that the greatest missionary ever, the apostle Paul, wrote to a young, up-and-coming leader named Timothy. He's given Timothy everything he's got to say: Timothy, I want you to maximize your impact. I want you to become the leader and the man that you were created to be.

So we're coming alongside this letter. We're going chapter by chapter. We're learning from that today to see how we can grow and get the kind of gains that Paul wanted Timothy to get.

Go ahead and grab a Bible, get to 2 Timothy chapter 3. If you have a device, you can find 2 Timothy chapter 3. That's where we're going to be today.

While you're turning there, let me give you a little snapshot of where we're going. Oftentimes when we have a goal in mind, when we have a purpose, when we're trying to be the people we know we ought to be and make the difference we know we ought to make with our lives, some things get in the way of that. Some things distract us from that.

Sometimes it's the desires of the moment. If you've ever had a goal in mind, isn't it so interesting that sometimes you have a goal and you know who you should be, you know what you should do, but your desires in the moment run completely counter to those values, run completely counter to that plan? So sometimes it's the desires in the moment.

Other times, it's our surroundings. It's our environment. It's the people and the places where we put ourselves. We may want to be this kind of person, we may want to make this kind of a difference with our lives, but our surroundings sometimes make us turn into different people and cause us to not be the people we know we ought to be.

One NCAA coach recently put it like this when he was asked how he was going to prepare his team for the tournament. He said, "I'm trying to get my players to not play to the moment and not play to their surroundings."

If you play to the moment, the moment may be so big that it just overtakes you. The lights are too bright. The pressure's too intense and you end up playing in a way that you never wanted to play, so don't play to the moment.

And don't play to your surroundings. We've seen plenty of teams in this tournament get knocked off because they played down to their competition. They played down to the level of those around them.

He's like, "I'm trying to get my players not to play to the moment, not play to their surroundings, but instead to play to their training."

Play to their training. At all of our campuses right now, turn to your neighbor and say, "Play to your training." Now turn to the neighbor that you didn't like as much and say, "Play to your training." You all can work that out later.

Play to your training. That's what we're going to talk about today. This is what Paul's going to get to Timothy: Timothy, if you're going to maximize your impact, you can't play to the moment and you can't play to your surroundings. You're going to have to play to your training.

Let's jump in, 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 1. Let's go. It says this. "You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful.

"They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure

rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly.”

Paul says: Timothy, here’s the deal. In the last days...

When I read that, I think like the movie trailer voice, “In the last days...” And we start thinking like post-apocalyptic zombie stuff, walking dead. We start thinking like doomsday bunkers.

By the way, if you’ve got a doomsday bunker, hit me up because I would love to see it. I’m like semi-interested and obsessed with doomsday bunkers. If you live next to somebody who has a doomsday bunker, you should for sure sell your house and move because that person is a psycho. You need to move. If you have one, though, hit me up because I want to see it.

But in the last days (*in the last days*), Paul says: Here’s what’s going to happen in the last days, Timothy. People are going to be ungrateful. People are going to disobey their parents. People are going to talk bad about each other behind their backs.

And you’re like, “Wait a minute, the last days! Paul, that sounds like my workplace. That sounds like my neighborhood. That sounds like my family. That sounds like me! Are you telling me we’re in the last days?”

Yes, actually Paul is saying to Timothy and to us that we are in the last days. The last days began when Jesus ascended to heaven, sent us his Holy Spirit, and put us on mission.

I know you’re thinking, “Okay, last days. That was like 2,000 years ago.” Well, the Bible says that to God 1,000 years is like a day, so to God it’s only been like a couple of days, but we’re in the last days.

Don’t get tripped up on the last days part. Don’t get tripped up on, “Oh my gosh, is the world going to come to an end?” No, no—get tripped up on how crazy familiar that list of behaviors is to us.

Get tripped up on how every single one of us finds ourselves in that list of behaviors because that list is what happens when we play to the moment or play to our surroundings. That’s exactly what happens.

Author David Platt did a commentary on 2 Timothy and in it he points out that Paul mentions three loves in this list of things that are going to happen. Three loves—what Platt calls the three misguided loves—and they’re exactly what happens when we play to the moment or we play to our surroundings.

In the moment, we’ve got some desires. We’d never speak them out loud because they’re awful. We’ve got some desires, right? The first one Paul mentions is narcissism. We’ve got some tendencies. He says that people will love themselves.

In the moment, we’ve got a space in our heart and nobody likes to talk about it. But come on, let’s cut through the spiritual stuff for a second and let’s just get real. There’s a space in our heart that sometimes, in our darkest moments, we overly obsess with our appearance. We overly obsess with our platform. We overly obsess with our power and our recognition and our fame. There’s this narcissistic side of us that in the moment can distract us from being the people we know we’re supposed to be.

Narcissism... “Love themselves”

The second one he mentions is materialism. It says that they’ll love their money. Again, no one wakes up and says, “I’m going to be materialistic today,” but there’s a dark place in our hearts, right? There’s this space in our hearts that when we get real honest and we’re by ourselves and we’re just thinking about life and we start to think about things like, “How am I going to have enough to retire?”

We start worrying about this stuff, and we start worrying about upgrading our standard of living. We obsess over the next pay raise and the next promotion. We’ve got this materialistic side where it’s just never enough, right? We love our stuff, and we’d never say it, but in the moment it’s there and it distracts us.

Materialism... “Love their money”

The third one he mentions is hedonism. It says that we will love pleasure more than God. I know when we hear that we often think of sexuality, right? And there’s certainly that space in our hearts that goes there, but hedonism and the love of pleasure is so much more than sexuality. It’s so much more than that.

It’s the need to constantly be entertained. It’s the need to never be bored. Oh my goodness, if there’s something that we as Americans hate, it is to be bored! We want

to be constantly stimulated, constantly entertained because there's a place in our hearts that instead of being the people we should be, instead of making the difference we should make, let's just like binge watch Netflix for a little bit because there's a part of our heart that just loves it.

Hedonism... "Love pleasure"

That's what happens when you play to the moment. We have to admit we have some desires that run counter to the purpose that we were put here for. But even on good days, right? Like you have some good days where you're like, "All right, I can not live by those momentary desires," even on those days you live in a world where you're surrounded by the stuff. You live in a culture that is constantly pulling you toward these three misguided loves.

This is the way that every major marketing agency, every advertisement is playing off of these misguided loves.

Narcissism sounds like this: You need to be...

I mean, how many things do you get sold that say, "Oh man, if you could only be stronger, if you could only be skinnier, if you could only be healthier, if you could only be more disciplined, if you could only be more successful, more wealthy, then you'd be okay."

Narcissism says, "You need to be..."

Materialism says, "You need to have..."

Hedonism says, "You need to feel..."

Our world pulls us to these things. Our surroundings pull us to these things.

Materialism says you need to have... "If you could just have the latest technology; if you could have the latest fashion; if you could have the latest gluten-free, non-GMO, organic food, then your family would be healthy and they'd never get sick and they'd never die. Give us your money." Our world just pulls us to this stuff. If we think we don't have, we're not going to be okay.

Hedonism says you need to feel. Goodness, if you scroll through social media, the way some people act and the way that some people advertise this, it's as if—if our weekend doesn't look like what the fire festival should've looked like, we're missing out on life. Like if you're not sexually satisfied at all times, if you're not happy at all

times, if you're not traveling at all times... Like you need to feel. You need to experience, and until you do, you won't be okay.

You see, we can maybe conquer the in-the-moment desires we have sometimes, but then we get sucked into the world around us and the people around us and our surroundings prevent us from being the people who we know we ought to be and making the difference we know that we ought to make.

But not only are these misguided loves and this playing to the moment and playing to our surroundings, not only do they distract us from our purpose, they're actually destroying us. Look at most of the most horrific tragedies and horrific events and evils in our world. Almost all of them are tied to one of these misguided loves: The love of self. The love of power. The love of money. The love of pleasure. I mean, almost every evil out there is tied to one of those.

Think about your life personally. Think about the sadness you've experienced and think about how it's tied to playing to the moment and playing to your surroundings. Think about your divorce or your parents' divorce. Someone in that relationship had a misguided love. Someone in that relationship was playing to the moment or they were playing to their surroundings.

Think about when your addiction got out of control and the people who it hurt along the way. It was attached to one of these.

Think about when you burned out in your job. What motivated you to work that long and to just run yourself into the ground? It was a misguided love, and you looked around and it just seemed like that's what everybody was doing and secretly you kind of wanted to do it because you wanted to get the promotion.

We justify these things, but it's killing us. It's not just limiting our potential; it's destroying our lives. And the hard part about this, you all, is that we know the solutions.

You ever watch a basketball game—I apologize; I'm going to use more basketball analogies because I'm still mourning and grieving, okay? So if you don't like basketball, I apologize but this is what you get today. You ever watch a basketball game and your team's losing or they lose the game and you know exactly why they lost the game?

You're sitting on the couch like, "Oh my gosh! Don't turn the ball over and we win the game!"

Or the worst. The worst is free throws. "Free throws. They're called free! They're giving them to you! Just make them and we win the game!" We know the solution when we see it.

And the same is true here. We know the solutions to these things. We know that instead of living as narcissistic people that we ought to walk in humility. We know that. We know that what the world needs is people who will not think less of themselves, but just think of themselves less and look to other people first and consider others as just as important or more important than themselves and not have so much ego and so much pride.

~~Narcissism~~ Humility

Can you just for a second envision a world with everyone walking in humility? Phew! It's like all of the tension and all of the drama and all of the evil, they all just start to like... If everyone were walking in humility, can you imagine?

It's so beautiful because Jesus embodied it. I mean, Jesus was the perfect picture of humility. I love how Paul writes it. Paul says that Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be grasped or leveraged. Jesus was God in the flesh, but he didn't consider equality with God something to be grasped or leveraged. No, no—he humbled himself and became like a servant to all. It's amazing. Jesus was the perfect picture of humility.

We know that instead of living in materialism, we need to walk in generosity. We know that's the solution. Right? We know it! We know that we should not be always concerned with just padding our standard of living, with padding our 401K's. We know that we should walk in generosity and help meet the needs of people who are less fortunate than us, that we should be generous with our time, generous with our money, all of that. We know that.

~~Materialism~~ Generosity

Again, can you imagine what the world would be like? Can you imagine how much poverty would be alleviated if we all walked in generosity? If we all lived it out? If we all looked to give first instead of to get? Can you just imagine? Can you imagine for a

second how amazing the world would be and how much less suffering we would see in the world?

Jesus modeled it. Oh, Jesus was so generous! Jesus always had a heart for the poor. Think about the concept that Jesus had all of the riches of heaven at his disposal; yet he left it all. He bankrupted the vault of heaven to show you and me love.

And when you and I needed grace, he didn't give us just a little bit of grace, he gave us all the grace we could ever need and more when he stretched out his arms and he died on the cross. He said: I love you so much. I'm going to love you more than you ever even need to be loved. I'm going to love you so much that it'll never run out. I'm that generous. It's amazing!

And we know. We know the solution, that we should not live in hedonism. We should not let the pleasures of the moment make us do things that we regret. No—we should walk in integrity. We know that.

~~Hedonism~~ Integrity

We know that we should be the same person through and through. We should live by the same code of ethics no matter what's going on. We should have the same values. We should be one man or one woman. No two-faced stuff going on. We should do the right thing when no one's watching. We know that.

And again, just think about your workplace for a second. Think about your school for a second. How much different, how much better would the world be if everyone walked with integrity? It'd be amazing! It'd be incredible!

Jesus was the perfect example of it. The word tells us that Jesus was tempted in every way, tempted in every possible way that you and I could ever be tempted, yet he never sinned. He never veered off course. He stayed true and faithful to his heavenly Father.

Aren't you grateful that the God we serve, that Jesus, the one who this whole thing is founded on, who we come to sing about every single week, is the perfect embodiment of the kind of leader that this world needs? That Jesus is the perfect embodiment of all the solutions that would make this world a much better place?

Aren't you grateful that Jesus loves us that much that he said: I'm going to give you an example to follow: I'm going to give you everything you need. That if you'll just come to me, I've got all the solutions. He's the perfect picture of it. There's nobody like him. There's nobody like him.

I think at times we just need to stop and appreciate that. Find me one other person in the world who is perfectly humble, perfectly generous, and full of integrity. There are none like him. He's unmatched.

If we want to not play to the moment and not play to our surroundings, we're going to have to get some of those gains. We're going to have become humble people, generous people, and people full of integrity. We're going to have to be more like Jesus because we don't roll out of bed doing those things, you know? Those things don't come easy. You've got to train for those things.

Go back to the basketball thing for a second. If I'm sitting on the couch like, "Make your free throws!" Very easy to say, but if you put me in that moment, like they call a timeout and say, "Hey, we've got this guy who's coming in hot from Indiana and he is not happy about the free throws. We're going to put him on the line and put the jersey on him and see how he does."

All of a sudden I'm there, front end of a one-and-one, trip to the Final Four on the line. I got pee running down my leg. I mean, I'm not ready for this! Are you kidding me? I was just on the couch! It's because I didn't train for it, right? I didn't train.

These guys train for it all year long and the moment still overtakes them. You see, you're not going to get these kinds of gains if you don't train for it. It's going to take hard work.

Paul would write to Timothy in his first letter to Timothy that you ought to train yourself for godliness. "...train yourself to be godly. Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come."

If we're going to get these kinds of gains, it's going to take training. It's going to take hard work, and so what is the training that Paul's going to prescribe to us? Jump down with me to verse 10. In verse 10, he's going to lay out the training that Timothy has been following.

See, Timothy has been in this training for awhile and so Timothy is actually ready to step into his purpose and be the man who God created him to be, but this is the training that you and I need to really take a close look at.

It says this in verse 10. "But you, Timothy, certainly know what I teach, and how I live, and what my purpose in life is. You know my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance." You've seen it, right? "You know how much persecution and suffering I have endured. You know all about how I was persecuted in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra—but the Lord rescued me from all of it. Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil people and impostors will flourish. They will deceive others and will themselves be deceived."

But here's the deal, Timothy. "But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God..." One translation says it's God breathed "...and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work."

Now, we just read a whole bunch of verses. Let me condense it for you. Paul is saying to Timothy: Timothy, you know the training you followed. Your training is very simple. You had an example to watch and a guide to follow.

An example to watch and a guide to follow.

That was your training, Timothy. So, Timothy, you had an example to watch; you had me (Paul says) and you watched me. You saw how I carried myself in moments of intense persecution. You saw how I carried myself when all the spotlight was on me. You saw how I carried myself when I was all alone. You watched my example, and now, as you go out to live for Jesus and to make the difference you were created to make, you need to remember what you saw.

It's one thing to be told what to do; it's another thing to see what to do. And Timothy, you had an example to watch, but Timothy, you also had a guide to follow. Timothy, you've been taught the Bible from a young age. You've got it in you. You've obsessed over it. You've internalized it. You love the word and you know that it's not just like an

ancient textbook. You know that it's the very breath of God, the inspired word of God, and it's powerful. It's going to show you exactly what you need to do.

One verse says that the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, that it'll pierce through and reveal the motives of your heart. And it's such a powerful thing, Timothy, and you've got to depend on it. You've got to depend on it. It's where your power is going to come from. You've got to stick with the guide to follow.

That's the training. You had an example to watch and a guide to follow. An example to watch and a guide to follow. Back and forth, back and forth, and that produced the kind of gains that Paul knew Timothy needed.

The same is true for us. This is the training. If we want to train ourselves for godliness, we need an example to watch and a guide to follow. You and I need someone to watch. We need someone who's a little farther down the road than us in spiritual maturity to observe, to take notes on, to say, "Oh, that's how you follow Jesus. Okay." We need an example to watch. We need to see what it looks like to live the faith out in the 21st century.

I'm not talking about finding someone who's just older than you. It's not necessarily about age. Paul would write to Timothy in his previous letter that you should let no one look down on you because you are young, but you should set a...what? Set an example. Set an example for all of the believers in the way you live and your speech and your life and your faith. It's not really about an age thing; it's about a spiritual maturity thing.

You and I, no matter how long we've been following Jesus or how short we've been following Jesus, we need to humble ourselves to come up under someone and say, "Hey, you're further along in this than me. I want to watch you and I want to learn from you. I want to be taught by you. I want to be disciplined by you."

We need an example to watch as part of our spiritual formation. We need to be disciplined by somebody. We need to be led by somebody. This is why it's so important for you to get on *Growth Track*. We would love to help you get connected to a group leader with plenty of examples that you can start to watch and start to get to know and start to grow alongside. That's part of the reason *Growth Track* is so beautiful, but you need it!

You need an example to watch, but you need to follow the guide. You need to obsess over the Bible. If you want the kind of gains that we're talking about, they don't come if you are not just consumed with God's word. I have never met someone who is a strong Jesus follower who's making a difference with their life who isn't also consumed with the word of God.

I've met people who read the Bible a lot and it doesn't always result in life change. Let's make sure that we clarify that. Just because you read the Bible a bunch doesn't mean that you're going to become a world changer. Some people read the Bible a lot and they're heathens, crazy people. If you want to be a world changer, the common denominator is always that you have a deep passion and a love for God's word.

King David in Psalm 119 says, "I've hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." I'm going to hide your word in my heart, God. I'm going to treat it as holy. I'm going to treat it as sacred. I'm going to obsess over it. I'm going to trust that it's not just an ancient textbook, that it is literally your words to me, God, and I'm going to consume it day and night.

I had one mentor that used to say Bible before breakfast and Bible before bed. I'm just going to consume it all day long. I'm going to hide it in my heart that I might not sin against you, that when I do that it's going to result in fruit in my life.

You need an example to watch and you need to be consumed with the Bible. We can help you with that with our Daily Bible reading—we'd love to get you connected to that—but this is what it takes. This is the training.

tpcc.org/dailybiblereading

I stand before you today as a testimony to this training. This is largely my story. I was blessed with an example to watch. I'd been following Jesus for about four years. I had just gotten into full-time ministry. My first boss was a guy named David. David is now a church planter in North Carolina, and David is like Paul to me. He is like a hero of the faith to me.

When I first got to know David, my wife and I started following him and his wife around. We were like little nerds following them around with like pen and paper, just taking notes on their life, like just following them really closely. When they'd stop, I'd like run into them.

I was watching every move they'd make, like, "Okay, this is what it looks like to raise kids to know Jesus. Okay. I don't have kids yet, but I'm going to take notes on that." Much of our parenting now reflects the parenting that I saw in David and Kelly and how they raised kids.

I'm taking notes on them. "Okay, this is what a godly marriage looks like. Okay, this is what it looks like to put your wife first and to prioritize your relationship with her and to treat her as the bride of Christ and be willing to sacrifice everything for her. Okay, I'm taking notes on that."

You talk about humility—one of the things that's going to help us be who we were created to be—oh man, I took notes on how David did humility. I took notes on how when he detected pride in his heart, he would call it out, set it on the table, talk about it, and confess it and, in effect, kill it. I said, "Okay, okay, that's how you stay humble. This is how you think about others first."

Generosity: Oh man, everything I learned about generosity I learned from David. I watched a guy who wasn't making a ton of money as a pastor and I watched him stretch that money out and be such a wise steward of his money, never wasted a dime, but stretched it out, so much so that he was able to support his family. He was able to tithe and then even had margin to give above and beyond that when God called him to. I was like, "Okay, okay, this is what generosity looks like."

I saw him and his wife open their home up to people. Oh, they'd just open their home up wide to people and said, "Come on in. We'll take you in. We'll make you dinner. We'll make you feel at home." Okay, this is what it looks like to be generous with my home and with my time. Okay, I'm going to take notes.

And you want to talk about integrity, phew! Everything I learned about integrity I learned from David. I saw him when he wasn't living with integrity and I saw what it did to his life and I saw everything change for him as he became a man full of integrity. I saw a man who was saying to Kelly, his wife, "Hey, you can check my phone at all times. You have complete access to my phone. You have complete access to my social media. Complete access. There is nothing hidden."

I saw a man who every time he would sin against someone he was bringing it out and confessing it. The man was always confessing sin. Living with complete integrity. See, integrity is not being perfect; integrity is owning it when you're not perfect.

I just took notes on it left and right. I'm telling you, who I am today is in large part because of the example I had in David. It's weird sometimes. I'll catch myself like saying something or doing something and I'm like, "Whoa, that's David. What in the world is happening?" But that's how powerful it is when you have a good example to watch, a follower of Jesus.

I'll tell you when you know you've really got a good example to watch. It's when they, in your worst moments, point you back to the guide that you're supposed to follow. That's what Paul did to Timothy. He's like: Hey, Timothy, you watched me, but you also need to be consumed with the guide, and that's what David did for me in my worst moment.

I'll never forget the hardest conversation I had with David. I remember where I was. I remember the table we were sitting at. It was at a little restaurant in central Kentucky called Ramsey's. Some of the best down-home country cooking you'll ever get. It's that place that makes every vegetable lose all nutritional value because it's fried that much, which is how a vegetable ought to be prepared.

And though the food was good, the conversation was hard. I remember I came into him that day and I was just being honest. I was like, "Man, I'm in one of the worst spots of my life."

I was going through my first wave of depression. I'd never dealt with that before. I had just lost my job as an associate pastor at a church in Seattle and I'd moved back to Kentucky with my tail tucked between my legs. My marriage wasn't doing great. And, honestly, I just didn't feel a thing. I didn't feel like following God. I didn't feel like being married. I didn't feel like being in ministry. I just felt like giving up on everything.

I remember sitting across the table from him and saying, "So what do I do now? What do I do now that I don't hear God's voice? I don't feel God's presence? I have no desire to keep going? I just want to give up on it all and start over. What do I do?"

I'll never forget what he said to me. He said, "Petie, I don't have great answers that are what you're going to want to hear. The only answer I have for you is that you need to get alone with God and you need to go back to the Bible. You need to just pour yourself into it. You need to get alone with him and you need to let him speak to you through his word. You need to read his word over and over."

I'm telling you, I did not want to hear that. I felt like that was just like a Sunday-school answer. But it was right because let me tell you, when I finally came to embrace that and I started getting alone with God again and I started reading his word—not for a sermon, not for a job, not for any of that, but just because I wanted to get to know him—God started to rebuild me. He started to rebuild my faith. He started to rebuild my marriage. He started to rebuild my ministry. Everything began to change because I got consumed with the word of God. It became everything to me. It was all I cared about.

That combination of an example to watch and a guide to follow, it picked me up out of a mess and set me back on solid ground. I'm just here to tell somebody today at one of our campuses that's going through a mess right now that hope is still alive.

If you'll follow this training, it'll strengthen you. If you'll follow this training, it'll pick you up and put you back on solid ground. If you'll follow this training, it'll give you strength to overcome things that you honestly right now don't think you'll ever be able to overcome. It's the power of this training.

I know what you're thinking. I know what you're thinking because I'm thinking the same thing. "An example to watch? That's what you want me to do, Petie? An example to watch? I've watched examples before and they failed me."

I know some of you all are here and you've got an example in mind of someone who said they were a follower of Jesus and when you really got to know them you saw they were a complete fraud. I mean, one of the biggest criticisms of the Church is it's full of hypocrites.

So like, "You want me to watch an example? I've had examples that have failed me." I recognize that and I affirm your pain and I've been there before. I've seen that. And there are some examples that are complete frauds.

I'm here to break some bad news to you and some good news. The bad news is you're never going to find a perfect example. There are none. They're all flawed. They're all messed up. But the good news is you don't need a perfect example. You need an example that when they succeed their eyes are fixed on Jesus and when they fail their eyes are fixed on Jesus. You need an example that when they hit rock bottom they apply the Gospel to themselves.

See, it's so important for you to understand that a flawed example does not disprove the Gospel; it proves the need for the Gospel. You need to understand that there is so much power in seeing someone fail and then seeing them apply forgiveness and grace to their own lives.

You need an example that's going to look to Jesus, fix their eyes on him no matter what happens, in victory and in failure, in success and in defeat—fixed on Jesus. This is what Paul would say. Paul would say: Follow me as I follow Christ.

Now Paul was not perfect. This is the same Paul who would say things like, "What I want to do I don't do. What I don't want to do I do." Dude was messed up! And he still said: follow me as I follow Christ, because he knew that even in failure if you're coming the way I'm going, if you're looking at what I'm looking at, you're going to end up looking at Jesus. You're going to fix your eyes on him, and that's where the strength comes from.

I know what you're thinking about the Bible. Again, let's just cut through the spiritual junk for a second. When I say if you want to become the man or woman God created you to be you've got to become obsessed with the Bible, I know what you're thinking because I'm thinking the same thing. The Bible is hard to understand and it's boring!

"He can't say that in church." Yes, we can.

It's hard to understand at times, but there are answers. You've got to push through. Nothing worthwhile in this life comes easy. You've got to commit yourself to being a student of the word and finding the answers that you're looking for to understand what you don't understand. I'm telling you, the answers are out there.

And if you get bored with the Bible, that says nothing about the Bible and says everything about you. I get bored with the Bible. I get bored with Netflix. Do you understand how crazy that is? These studios are spending millions of dollars to entertain me for 90 minutes. I put on a movie after the kids go to bed and 30 minutes in I'm like [yawn], "Ready to go to bed? This is boring." It says nothing about the movie; it says everything about how our attention spans are tiny.

What I find is that when I read the Bible and I get bored it's because I'm not reading the Bible with the right purpose in mind. I think sometimes when I get bored reading the Bible, I start to think that it's a book of history; I start to think that it's a book full of like fortune-cookie wisdom. Man, the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and every

book in between has one purpose and it is to fix your eyes on Jesus. That's the goal of the Bible is to get you to know Jesus, to get you to see how amazing he is, to get you to love Jesus. It's all about fixing your eyes on Jesus.

When you read the Bible with that purpose in mind, oh my goodness, come on now! The words will pop off the page. Meaning will pop off the page. You'll be so excited to read the Bible because you know it's going to lead you to Jesus. That's how you start to read the Bible and really see this training make sense.

I'm telling you, that's why this training is effective. This training works and will make you into a strong man or woman of God because it will fix your eyes on Jesus. An example to watch—fix your eyes on Jesus. A guide to follow—fix your eyes on Jesus.

Jesus is the one who's going to get you the gains. Jesus is the one who is going to strengthen you. Jesus is the one who's going to grow you. You can't change your heart. You can't change who you are. You can't make yourself anymore mature than you are. You've got to look to Jesus and say, "Jesus, I open myself up to you and I ask you to give me the strength that I need, to change me from the inside out." When you'll fix your eyes on him, strength is on the way.

I want to give you a chance to ask him for that strength today. I want to give you a chance to respond to him in this moment. Would you, at all of our campuses, stand to your feet? With every head bowed, every eye closed across all of our campuses, I want to give you a moment just to talk to God about this.

If you're here at any one of our campuses and you feel like you've been playing to the moment, you've been letting the desires and temptations that you're facing in the moment make you do things that you know you were never created to do and prevent you from becoming the man or woman that you know you're supposed to be, if that's you right now, I want you to raise your hand as an act of confession between you and God. This moment's for you, not for anybody else.

Put your hand down.

If you're here and you found yourself maybe not playing to the moment but playing to your surroundings and you've been letting the people that you hang out with or the culture at large mold you and form you into someone that you know you're not supposed to be and do things that you know you're not supposed to do and prevent

you from fulfilling your purpose, if you've been playing to your surroundings right now, I want you to raise your hand as an act of confession between you and God.

Put your hands down.

Let's pray together and ask Jesus for strength in this moment.

Jesus, we come before you and we're begging you for strength. We're confessing our weaknesses before you and we're fixing our eyes on you.

Jesus, your word says that you are the author, the perfecter, and the finisher of our faith and for the joy set before you, you endured the cross. Jesus, would you give us that kind of strength? Would you give us the kind of endurance and strength that you had, that enabled you to stay focused?

Jesus, you never played to the moment. Jesus, you never played to your surroundings. If you had, you never would have gone to the cross, but you did and we're forever grateful. We're forever changed and we're asking you for that kind of strength right now, Lord. We ask you to meet us in our circumstances, meet us in our weaknesses. Give us the strength that only you can give. Change us from the inside out.

Ask him for it right now. Ask him for what you need. Believe that he can do it.

We trust you, Jesus. We love you, Jesus. It's in your name we pray. Amen.