

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW | FAITHFULNESS

JAKE BARKER | JULY 17, 2022

Aaron Brockett

Hey, what's up, family? Good to see you guys. Man, I hope you are having an incredible summer. I've missed you so much. I can't wait to be back in a few weeks to kick off our fall message series.

But today I wanted to be here because I wanted to introduce our guest speaker. And this man for many of you needs no introduction, but for others of you who may not know, Jake Barker is here to deliver the message. Jake served on our staff team for 12 years. And in 2017 we sent him, with his wife Trudy, to plant a church in the mission field that is Santa Barbara, California.

He did an amazing job there. The church is still there doing really, really well. But about a year ago, they moved just up the road to Anaheim where Jake is a campus pastor at East Side Christian Church, a great church very similar to Traders Point.

You know, Jake... many of you know that he is just a great leader, phenomenal communicator, just a really, really good friend. And, honestly, I was thinking this last week about the impact that Jake made on our church. I know for many of you, Jake made a personal impact. Maybe he baptized you, maybe it was one of his messages that encouraged you or brought you to the Lord.

But as I was thinking collectively of our church at large, Jake served as a student pastor when I got here and then he was a teaching pastor and an executive pastor for a while. I remember going into his office one day and saying, "Man, we've got to get our heads around what it looks like to be one church in multiple locations."

And Jake volunteered for that role and honestly did so much of the leg work, the research, and developing infrastructure for us to be the kind of church we are today, one church in multiple locations. So if you are a part of another campus, you have Jake Barker to thank for that because Jake really blazed the trail to lead us to where we are.

Jake and his wife Trudy have four beautiful kids. They are all here this weekend and it's just a joy to have them back. So would you please, across all of our campuses, put your hands together and give a warm, homecoming welcome to our very own Jake Barker.

Jake

Thanks, bro. I appreciate it.



Alright, well what is up, Traders Point? It is so good to be with you. Like Aaron said, my name is Jake. I have been married to my wife, Trudy, for 15 years. We celebrated 15 years a couple of weeks ago. Yeah, that round of applause is for her, alright? It's for her. Not for me. She's done it.

When we left Traders Point we had three kids. And as of three months ago, we now have four children. If anyone can explain to me how this keeps happening, that would be great. I could use a lesson.

This is her. Her name is Cozetta. We call her Coze for short. And I thought that we could spend the next 30 minutes or so admiring her, if you don't mind. That's what I would like to do. I guess we could do something else. That's okay. Our family is doing great, and it means the world to us to be here at Traders Point. It's so great.

In May of 2005, I took what I thought was going to be a three-month summer internship in the Student Ministry of Traders Point. I showed up on the first night and I walked into a gymnasium and I met the most stunning adult volunteer and now she is my wife. We had three kids at IU North Hospital and the first twelve years of our family we spent here. And it was truly, truly amazing.

I preached my very first message to adults in a building just off Lafayette Road. It was approximately 16 minutes long. And it was probably Biblical. Probably. I can't exactly remember. I think all evidence has been destroyed for good reason.

For the next decade I got to lead and grow and try things. And you, as a church, were so gracious and loving and forgiving. And I needed a lot of forgiveness. This is the kind of place that would allow someone like me to learn a whole lot of stuff in front of you.

So, if you're new around here and you're just trying to figure out if this is the place for you, I hope you'll make it your home because it is a place that you want to be, a place that can forgive and love and be gracious. It's the kind of church that you want to belong to and contribute to.

So I hope that you will do that because I know from my time on staff alone, there are now leaders who are leading churches from Florida to Colorado to California and everywhere in between, a long legacy of the impact for the kingdom of God that Traders Point has had.

There is going to be a day in heaven when we're going to gather in one of those gigantic football stadiums, because we will still play football in heaven, do not worry, okay? And we're going to tell all of the stories of the lives that were impacted here at Traders Point. And I will be on the front row, because I love this place and I always will. Always will.

I would also like to take a moment just to honor and celebrate and appreciate my friend and your lead pastor, Aaron Brockett.

Hey I know the last two years have been kind of crazy for every single person. I've yet to talk to anyone who said, "You know what the best two years of my life has been? The last two years." No one says that because it's been chaotic, it's thrown everything into a loop just for a moment.

Let me say this. Can you just imagine being the leader of a church the size and the impact and the diversity of Traders Point over the last two years? All of the different perspectives and opinions and beliefs and upbringing.... And we ask these leaders to thread the tiniest of needles in some of the most complicated ministry challenges that we've ever seen. I'm talking a pandemic and protests, elections, and the economy.

And then he had to navigate the Facebook comments section. I don't know if you knew this but the devil invented the Facebook comment section, alright? You can look it up. There is no good in there. Get out. Get out now. It's not doing any good.

And my friend, Aaron, has led with integrity and courage and patience and I can tell you, I can tell you absolutely we can keep clapping—we're going to do it all day long, I can tell you that a couple of weeks ago he and I got to hang out in Wyoming. Way far away from here. None of you were around to hear what he had to say.

And he told me that he loves this place and he believes in you and he knows that the best is yet to come. So, one more time at all of the campuses will you help me appreciate and honor your lead pastor, Aaron Brockett? Alright. I've been nice enough. It's making me uncomfortable.

Here we go. I get the honor of contributing to a series that you've been in for the last few weeks called *What the World Needs Now*. And as I was thinking about that I thought, "Man, that's a million dollar question." Isn't it? Because if I knew that I would invent it and then make a ton of money. But what does the world need now?

Honestly, it's probably clearer to me what the world does not need any more of. I don't think the world really needs any more celebrity endorsements, okay? Can we find somebody better to listen to? I know Bezos can take you in space and Elon can tell you where to invest your money. And The Rock can tell you how to work out. And Kim can tell you what leggings to wear. But is it really working? Are we better for this? Maybe we could find some different people to listen to.

The world probably does not need your social media expertise. I don't know about your feed. It's been this weird thing over the last couple of years. There are people who apparently I'm friends with who have all of a sudden become experts in every single current event that is happening right now. They know the answers to all of it. It's amazing.

They knew everything about infectious diseases and vaccines' effectiveness and gun control and reproductive rights and judicial precedence. Everything they knew and I was

like, “Man, I don’t know any of that. It’s amazing that you’re so smart.” But maybe, I’m just saying maybe, the world doesn’t need your social media hot takes anymore.

Is it possible, and even probable, and what my proposition to you today is definite, the world definitely needs a group of people who take God seriously and who believe Jesus at His word. And if the watching world could really see a group of people who live out what they believe, it changes everything. The city is never the same. The generations are never the same. Families are never the same. And is it possible that God always wanted to do that in our lives? To have an impact on the people around us.

You know, over the last few weeks you’ve been talking about this thing called the fruit of the Spirit. And I love the way that Ryan described it a couple of weeks ago. He said:

The fruit of the Spirit is God producing His character in us.

That’s a great way of understanding it. When God gets inside—and He wants to do this—to get inside, He wants to remove some things that don’t need to be there anymore and He wants to rewire some things that have become disconnected, and then He wants to reorder some things, some priorities in our lives.

And when we start following Jesus, that’s going to be the process. There are certain things that only God can do in our lives. And the fruit of the Spirit is one of them.

Now, if you are new to all of this, and maybe you are just considering Jesus right here in this moment, I want you to know that you can 1000 percent receive the gift of grace right here and right now. You don’t have to figure out any more answers. You don’t have to get your act together. The gift of grace is available and free for you to receive right here in this moment.

But I want to let you know that receiving the gift of grace and becoming a follower of Jesus is actually the starting line not the finishing line. It is the beginning of something not the finishing of something. Sometimes we come to the conclusion that, “Okay. I’m in. And I believe the right things. Now I’m done.”

And that’s actually not true. When we start following Jesus it triggers this process called:

Sanctification

Sanctification. It’s a fancy word basically saying that God’s going to grow some things in you. He’s going to reorder. He’s going to rewire. He’s going to remove and He wants His character to start showing up in your life over and over and over again. And I’m telling you, it is a game changer. It’s an absolute game changer when God starts growing His character in us.

Now, I want you to know that there is actually not a version of following Jesus that does not include radical character change. It’s part of it. When God gets access to our hearts,

when God gets access to our minds, to our souls, He's going to change some things. And you're going to notice. And then people around you are going to notice, "Man. It's different. There's something going on."

So I'm here just to lovingly say that if you are currently considering yourself a follower of Jesus, but you cannot point to any character change and no one in your life can point to any difference in the way that you act and in the way that you treat people, I'd like to lovingly say that it may not be Jesus that you are following. It may be yourself. It may be someone else. But following Jesus always includes radical character change.

So we talked about the fruit already of love and joy, patience, kindness and gentleness. And today we're going to look at the fruit of faithfulness. The fruit of:

Faithfulness

The fruit of faithfulness. So, faithfulness as compared to all of the other fruit of the Spirit is unique in one particular distinction. Faithfulness takes time. You can be loving in a moment, in your interactions. You can be patient in a moment. You can be joyful in a moment. But faithfulness, by definition, takes time. It's going to require perspective and some hindsight to see how God is growing faithfulness in your life.

And when it comes to significant life-change, time is the one thing that we don't want to give. We want things to happen immediately. It's the reason that no one falls for a get rich slow scheme. No one has ever fallen for one of those. We fall for get rich quick schemes. We want it to happen immediately.

Now, in my life, in different seasons, I have had varying levels of dedication to physical fitness. There have been moments where I was really dedicated and I was really locked in and other moments when I wanted nothing to do with it and I didn't try at all.

And then there was this one season where I was somewhere in between those two extremes. I wanted to be fit. But I really didn't want to put any work into it, okay? Does that sound familiar to anybody else?

So, I wanted maximum results with minimal effort. And I didn't feel like I was asking all that much, okay? That's what I wanted to do. And so, because of that feeling, it led to probably the most embarrassing gift request I have ever asked for in my entire life.

Now, before I tell you what I asked for, I just want to establish something really quickly, some common ground. This is a place of grace, okay? This is a no judgment zone, okay? I just want to make sure that we are all on the same page.

I wanted maximum physical results with minimal effort so one Christmas I asked for a Shake Weight, alright? A Shake Weight. You said you wouldn't judge me, okay? I wanted a Shake Weight. And the reason why is because on the box it says, "Only six minutes a day, I would look like that guy [a picture of a physically fit man on the box]." Alright?

That's what it says. This is perfect. This is perfect. Maximum results, minimal effort. I'm all in. I'm all in.

But the problem is that the movement of the Shake Weight is humiliating. So I would wait until everyone went to bed, I would draw all of the curtains to make sure the neighbors couldn't see. And then basically wiggle this thing back and forth for six minutes and then you look like that guy. I'm here to testify it does not work, okay? It did not work at all. It did not give me any of the muscles. It did take my dignity. So that was fun. That was fun.

This is kind of the deal, I'm just here to tell you as your friend, the change that actually matters and the change that really lasts and the change that God wants to do, I'm lovingly telling you, it's going to take time. And I know that we would like to microwave sanctification and snap our fingers and Amazon Prime two-day delivery give me all of the results that I want.

And I'm telling you it's going to take time but I'm here to say that it's worth it if you will be patient and if you will trust. And if you really believe that God is leading you somewhere you're going to someday look back in hindsight and say, "This is better than I ever thought it would be. I can't believe, God, what You've done in my life and I can't believe the things that You let me be a part of, but if I had quit when I wanted to quit, I never would have experienced this." So let us take our time and really allow God to do His thing.

Today we have two questions to answer. Number one, I want to ask:

How is God faithful?

What's God's definition? What's God's version of faithfulness? I know what you might say. I know what Webster's Dictionary might say. I'm saying, "Let's see what God says about faithfulness."

And then number two:

How can we be faithful like God?

It's His character in us. How is that going to impact the way that we live? How is that going to impact the way we treat people? How is it going to impact the way that we finish our time here on earth?

So let's start with the first question. How is God faithful? Well according to Deuteronomy here's what it says. It says:

"He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." Deuteronomy 32:4 (NIV)

And if you're the type of person who likes to really lock in on one Bible verse a week or maybe you like to meditate or memorize, can I suggest that one? Deuteronomy 32:4, it is so encouraging to me to read that description of God. It says that He is perfect, He's a rock, and He doesn't change, and He doesn't move, and He's a firm foundation. He's just. He does no wrong. He's upright. That is the kind of God we follow. He never changes.

Then, in Romans, chapter 3 the Apostle Paul is kind of addressing an issue that is going on in the church and he says this:

"True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they were unfaithful, does that mean God will be unfaithful? Of course not! Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true." Romans 3:3-4 (NLT)

Paul is addressing the age-old issue of the fact that there are some people in our world, some people that you probably even know, who claim to follow God, claim to love Jesus, and they do it very poorly and very publicly.

Isn't that frustrating? Man, you see them in your social media feed. You see them on the news. They say that they are representing God in all of the different areas in which they speak. And you look at them and are like, "Hold on. I don't think that is what God says. And I see the way that you are really mean and really rude and really angry with people who disagree with you, and that's just not how Jesus did it. He said hard things to people all of the time and somehow they loved Him more because of it. I'm not quite sure that you're representing God very well."

And Paul is saying, "Even if all of us, even if everyone out there became a liar, God is still true." Our unfaithfulness, our lack of consistency, doesn't make God less consistent. He is always true. He never changes—firm foundation.

And then finally, the author of Hebrews puts it as clearly as we can possibly read it:

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Hebrews 13:8 (NIV)

There has not been a single moment ever where the character of God shifted—never. It is eternal. It is rock-solid. It is the firm foundation. Jesus has been loving yesterday and today and forever. He has been gracious yesterday, today, and forever. And Jesus Christ has been faithful yesterday, today, and forever.

The Word of God is incredibly clear: God never changes. So how is that good news? That's the big question. How is that good news? You and I, we live in this culture where change has become the ultimate value. Change is no longer the exception, it's the expectation. We don't expect anything to stay the same for longer than three months. Things are always changing.

Think about the way that technology has advanced just in your lifetime alone. If you are under the age of 30, this isn't going to make a lot of sense. But phones used to be attached to the wall, alright? And there was this cord that limited your mobility. And it could wrap around you. And it could suffocate you, okay? That is how that worked.

And as a kid, if you wanted to invite your friend to come play with you, you had to call their home number and anyone in the house could answer the phone. And sometimes when you wanted to talk to your friend, your friend's parents would pick up and you would have to make small talk with your friend's dad before you could talk to your friend.

Gen Z, you could never. You are not strong like us. You don't know what it's like. You've never made small talk with Mr. Collins. You don't know. You don't know. Direct message, no! Call your friend's dad to talk to your friend. See how you like it then.

You remember how TVs used to be the size of a mobile home? You remember how if you wanted to watch a movie you had to go to this place called Blockbuster? That seems so ancient. But it really wasn't that long ago.

But, friends, it's not just technology that has changed rapidly in our lifetime. Often it's our culture's values and principles and even ethics. It's our culture's understanding of what's good and what is loving that has undergone drastic change. And it seems more and more rapid every single day.

It seems like justice, it seems like race and politics and gender and sex and love—all of these things have gone under major redefinitions over the last few years. And frankly, it can be hard to keep up, "Okay. Hold on. What's in today and what's out today? What are we affirming? What are we not affirming? Hold on, I thought we were celebrating that thing, but I guess we're now condemning that thing."

And it changes over and over and over again at lightning speed. And if we allow our culture's definition, our culture's values, and our culture's principles and ethics to become the foundation, it is shifting sand that will never stop moving because, get this, here we go, if the definition changed yesterday, there is a pretty good chance that it will change again tomorrow. If what we care about changed yesterday, there's a pretty good chance it's going to change again.

So if we make our identity to be fully accepted by this current moment, guess what? We will be out of date in like three years. It will change. It's hard to keep up. And the good news is that God never changes.

Hey, if you are a student right now, if you are in middle school, high school, college can I just get your attention really quick? Really quick. I will make this shorter than a TikTok. I promise I've got you. I've got you.

Hey, I want you to know that I fully appreciate that the moment in which you are growing up is more complicated and more challenging than anything any of us ever experienced. And I know that the conversations that you have in the hallways and in the lunch room and online, are sometimes really, really confusing. And I know believing God and trusting His Word is becoming more and more challenging every day that goes by.

I just want you to know that I know that and I see that. And the reason I know is that I have a 13-year-old daughter who comes home every day and tells me all of the stuff she heard and all of the stuff she talked about. I get it and I see it. And I just want you to know that I know that it is really hard.

And I also want you to know that one of the joys of being part of a church is that you don't have to do this alone. There are so many people who would love to pray with you, they'd love to encourage you, they'd love to give you space to ask your questions and wrestle out your doubts. You don't have to figure this all out on your own. I know they are old. And sometimes they are uncool. But, man, they have lived through some stuff. And it matters. I just want you to know that we have your back and we love you and we care about you.

So, right now, at all of our campuses, if you are an adult will you give our students some love who are really, really trying to go for this? Trying to stay committed. Trying to stay faithful. Man. It's important. We've got your back, okay?

Hey, sometimes what happens in every generation is we look at what is going on around us and think, "Man. I can't believe that this has happened. This has definitely never happened before." And then you read just a little bit of history and you're like, "Absolutely. You guys have been down this road." In fact, when you read Scripture, you're going to find that humans have kind of been humans forever and we've had a lot the same struggles and a lot of the same temptations.

So we're going to reread that verse in Hebrews and find out that they were wrestling with very similar stuff that we are wrestling with today. Hebrews 13 says:

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Watch this. It says: "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so."
Hebrews 13:8-9 (NIV)

So this author is saying, "Hey, by the way there are always strange and new ideas that often confuse people who are trying to follow Jesus. Back in that day there was a rumor going around that if you ate the right ceremonial foods it would strengthen your faith. So food and faith had a direct correlation. And the author of Hebrews is saying, "You don't need all of that business. The strength that you have comes from the grace of God alone."

Every once in a while you will see new podcasts pop up with new worldviews. There will be a new social media trend that says, “This is not what we are celebrating.” Strange and new ideas are not new to the experience of following Jesus.

But I love the way that the author put it when he said:

“Do not be carried away,”

Don’t be carried away.

Like I said, we’ve got four kids. We live in California. Sometimes we end up at the beach. So we’ll throw down the chairs and we’ll lay out the towels and we’ll lather kids up with sunscreen. And then they’ll just dive head first into the freezing cold Pacific Ocean because kids don’t feel anything. So they’ll be playing and splashing and surfing.

Then about 20 minutes later, I’ll look up and our children have faded down the coast about 100 yards. They stood no chance against the current. So I’ll look over at Trudy and say, “Hey, your kids are like way down there.” And then she’ll give me that look that apparently it’s my responsibility. So I’ll go over there and I’ll yell at them and I’ll get them back. And then I will show them, “Did you realize that we are way over there and you faded so far?”

And the scariest part, as a parent, is that they have no idea. They have no idea. As far as they are concerned, they’ve never moved. As far as they are concerned, they are in the exact same place where they entered the water, because the current was innocuous. They didn’t feel it. They didn’t feel the fight. They didn’t feel like they were losing ground. It just gently carried them away.

Friends, in the absence of an anchor in the absence of a firm foundation the cultural current will carry us away because the strange and new ideas are not poorly packaged. They are actually really well packaged. They seem nice. They seem loving. They seem like the kind thing to extend to our fellow human beings.

And then, every once in a while, if we don’t look up and if we never set our anchor down, we end up in a place where we never thought we would be. We’ve let go of things that we believed a long time ago. We’ve exited a community that used to really matter to us. We’re living a life that we never really intended.

God never changes. He is our firm foundation. He is our anchor. And that’s really good news.

Now, I just want to be honest. I really believe in being honest. I never want to sell you something that I’m not fully forthcoming about. The faithfulness of God in very particular seasons of our life can be really hard to believe. Usually it’s in a season where we have lost something or we’re in the midst of extreme pain or where we’re trying to wrestle through some real disappointment.

And it's in those moments when it's really easy to look at God and say, "Hey, God. Are You sure You didn't change? Because it used to be easy and now it's hard. I used to get things that I wanted and now I don't."

This picture here is my friend, Chad. It's on his wedding day. And one of the cool things about being a pastor is that sometimes your friends ask you to do things for them. So I got to officiate his wedding. This is his beautiful bride, Mieterà. She's from Sao Paulo, Brazil. She's the sweetest. And this is a day that is really special to me.

Chad and I grew up together. We met each other in elementary school and grew up all the way through high school. And Chad was the kid in your class that had too much DJ equipment. He would play music in the basements with all of the teenagers.

And he became the friend with the coolest job. He was a Disney imagineer. He built roller coasters for a living. He built the Iron Man ride in Hong Kong. He built the Millennium Falcolm in Star Wars Land in Disney World. So next time you're down there, that's my buddy. He built that.

About four years ago Chad called me and said he had gone to the hospital for some stomach pain. And he's thinking appendicitis or something. And he went home with the diagnosis that he had stage 4 colon cancer. We were 35.

And I don't know if you know what to say to your friends when they call you with news like that. I didn't know. Man, I stumbled over my words and we cried together and I prayed and then we hung up.

A few weeks later one of our friends who we went to high school with put together this weekly prayer call where we would call in and we would hear all of the updates and we'd hear the prognosis and the plan and where he was and what treatment he was on. And then we told stories and we laughed. We did that every single week. And we prayed and we prayed and we prayed so hard. We prayed so hard.

This chair here, it doesn't mean anything to you but it means the world to me. It's on a campus at Santa Barbara City College where our church plant would gather. And one time during Chad's treatment he came to visit me. And he went to a service and we hung out during the afternoon. We talked about the small things and then eventually we got to some of the big things.

And sitting in this chair he turned to me and said, "Man, what would you do if you were me? With your life. What would you do?" And I don't know if you've had someone who is battling cancer ask you that question. I didn't know what to say. I tried a few things.

Then eventually I just got to the point where I said, "Man. If I were you, I would just make sure that everyone I love knows it. Make sure your wife knows. Make sure your parents know. Make sure your brother knows."

He said, "Man, that's a really good idea." So he swiveled in that chair and he looked at me and he said, "That's a good idea. I'm going to start with you." And I said, "Please do not. I am not emotionally mature enough to handle what you are about to say." And like any good friend, he didn't listen to me. He told me that he loved me and he was proud of me. I don't know if you've had someone dying of cancer tell you what you mean to them, it's not something you forget.

Chad passed away about two years ago. And I really miss my friend. I do. I don't know why God didn't heal him. I don't. I wish I could tell you. I wish I could explain it. I really do.

My guess is that you've got some story in your pocket where you lost someone you really, really loved and you probably prayed just as hard as I did and you were trying to do all of the right things. And you saw what God does for other people. And He didn't do it for you.

Those are the moments when we are tempted to look up at God and say, "Hold on. Did you change? Are You not the same guy? Are You not the same one who healed the person down the street, but You wouldn't heal the person I love?"

And you've got a choice on your hand. I just want to be honest with you. I can't do this for you. You have to decide between you and God, in those moments, what are you going to choose to believe? What are you going to choose to try?

I think that sometimes because of our limited vocabulary we're really just not sure how to talk about things like that. Things like my friend. Because sometimes we'll use phrases like: Someone lost their battle with cancer. Have you heard someone say that? I'm just telling you, my friend lost nothing. My friend did not lose.

Cancer did not win because every single week there was a group of people who hadn't talked in over a decade and we were reconnected and every single week we prayed and put our trust into the hands of our Creator God. Every single week I was reminded of the fragility and brevity of life. Every single week I was focused on someone else just for a moment. And that's really good for our soul.

That was not unfaithful. God was faithful. God didn't change. I did. God's character did not shift. It was my feelings that shifted. God's promises were not unkept. It was just my doubt that was creeping in.

And God, in His loving kindness reminded me that this is only the beginning. There is an eternity that is guaranteed. We do not mourn like those without hope. We can truly have joy even in the midst of our tears. It's okay to say that it is hard. It's okay to express our doubts. God does not change. We do. That's why we need, desperately need, a rock that never moves and never changes.

That leaves us with one last question. If we're going to be faithful, like God, then what would it look like? If God was really going to develop that in our character, how would it express itself? How would people even know? So here's how this is going to work. If you and I are going to be faithful like God then we will:

Be the same person everywhere with everyone.

That's what it means to be faithful like God. We will be the same person everywhere with everyone. Are you ready for that challenge? The same exact person no matter where you are.

Now some of you read that and you are like, "Hey, that's me. I'm taking it as I leave it. I call it as it is. Yeah, I never change." There can be the same jerk everywhere, okay?

I said be the same person. Bring the same love everywhere you go. Bring the same peace with everyone you're around. Instead of completely changing our identity and our character depending on our situation and our surroundings, we're the same person everywhere with everyone.

The word we can put on it is the word:

Integrity

For you math nerds out there you know that the root word of integrity is integer. It means a whole number. Complete. It's not a fraction.

So often in life, and I'm saying we, okay? Because I'm with you. It's really tempting to compartmentalize our faith expression depending upon the surroundings in which we find ourselves. So I can freely express my faith when I'm with her, but not with him. I can freely express my what I believe when I'm at work but definitely not in the neighborhood.

What we like to do is pick and choose our spots where we are the person who God created us to be and ultimately that is not consistent with the faithfulness of God. He never changes. He is always the same.

You see, the challenge for most of us in inviting a friend.... Here's how I know. Here's how I know that faithfulness might be the very fruit of the Spirit to change a community from the inside out. It's because you tell me what the most frequent reason that your friend tells you that they can't come to church with you is. You've been trying and you've been praying.

One time you even tricked one. You got him in the car. Told him you were going to a movie. You pulled into the parking lot. He jumped out of the moving car. He did the whole thing, okay? What is the reason that he didn't want to come to church? It's because church is full of hypocrites. You've heard it too.

And they are not wrong. Ultimately what they say is, “Why would I sit around with a bunch of people who say they believe one thing and then they treat people so poorly? Why would I want to hang out with a bunch of people who say they believe in a loving God but they are so mean. Why would I want to be around that?”

And ultimately, what we believe sometimes is that the antidote to hypocrisy is perfection. If I don’t want to be a hypocrite, then I have to be perfect in every way. Perfect all around. But that’s not actually what a person of integrity is:

A person of integrity is humble enough to admit their hypocrisy and courageous enough to address it.

That’s what a person of integrity does. We’re not asking you to be a perfect person everywhere you go, around everyone you’re around. That’s impossible. There is one perfect person and His name is Jesus. You are not Him, okay?

A person of integrity says, “You know what? I get it. You’re right.” When you are confronted about some area of your life that seems really inconsistent with what you believe, a person of integrity receives that and then he has the courage to say, “You know what? I’m going to address that. I’d like your help.”

Do you want to know the tell-tale sign of a hypocrite? It’s someone who believes that they are not one. That’s how you know a hypocrite. It’s when he is confronted or when something gets exposed about him, he gets defensive. He gets really explanatory. He can actually tell you that it’s not his fault, it’s your fault. That’s the sign of a hypocrite.

A person of integrity, a person of faithfulness is willing to admit, “You know what? I’ve got a lot of work to do. There are significant areas of my life that are deeply inconsistent with what I believe and I want to address those. I want to grow in that.”

And I’m not just saying this at you. I’m saying this with you. There are parts of my life: what I think, how I feel, how I treat other people that are deeply inconsistent with what I believe. If I really believe that God has once and for all settled my identity and called me a much loved son of His, then the opinions of you, about what I’m doing right now wouldn’t matter. And I’m here to tell you they do. The way you think about me, the way you feel about me, it affects me.

There are certain things about marriage that God said about how I’m supposed to love my wife, and I don’t do it perfectly every single time and I’ve got work to do. All of us have deep inconsistencies and work to do. And someone who is truly brave, a person of integrity is willing to pray a prayer like this. Psalm 139. He would pray:

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV)

You want to pray a prayer that God will definitely answer this week? It's right here. You invite God to show you the inconsistencies, if you invite God to show you the offensive ways that are inside of you, get out a notepad. He's ready. Start with number one. Then get to number two. Get to number three. That is a prayer that God will definitely answer.

So I just wonder, is it possible that it's time for you to finally admit that you're not a very trustworthy friend? Basically, everybody in your life knows the very minute that they share anything with you, five other people are going to know within seconds. You like having information. Gossip is kind of fun. But unfortunately that's deeply inconsistent with the way God treats people. Jesus didn't treat people like that. And it's time to courageously admit it and then address it.

Maybe you find that you are hyper aware at all times of how you look and who you are around. Vanity reigns supreme in your image. And you want to make sure that you have the perfectly filtered thing for everybody to see. And, unfortunately, Jesus said that when you're throwing a party you're actually supposed to invite all of the people that no one else has invited. And when you love people, you supposed to love them in such a way that they could never pay you back.

The way people see you is not your identity. It's inconsistent with what God says.

Maybe you've got this long list of people in your life that somehow keep getting offended with the way that you treat them. Your tone is so harsh. And even though you're right, they can't hear you. You are mean. And you blame them for being so sensitive. It's time for you to adopt the way of Jesus. Jesus was always saying hard things to people, but He did it in a manner of love. It's time to admit it and address it.

Or maybe you've become so sensitive that people in your life know that they can't share anything with you. If they told you the real truth about who you are, you would melt down. So they are walking on eggshells, on pins and needles just trying not to offend you. That's inconsistent with what God says, because He said your identity is settled. You are already loved. You are already forgiven. You are already promised eternity. This is no longer in doubt. You don't have to melt down anytime someone gives you some helpful feedback.

All of us have major inconsistencies that are just our opportunity to say, "I admit it and I'm willing to address it." When God grows His faithfulness in us that will be the end result.

So right now at all of our campuses I'd love for you to stand to your feet. Today we are going to sing a new song. And it is just going to celebrate the faithfulness of God. And what I hope that you will do is that you will hear these words and maybe you'll even belt them out at the top of your lungs, because there are some powerful messages in this song.

And we're going to celebrate, celebrate that in the midst of a culture that is always changing, God never does. And in the midst of a bunch of relationships that often fail us, God never does. And in the midst of a lot of conditional love, God promises His unconditional love every single time. And in the midst of place that fails us left and right, God never fails, never changes, never misses. He is a firm foundation.

Let me pray for you, church.

Father, we are so grateful. Grateful that Your words never change and Your character never changes and Your love never changes and Your promises never change. And our hope never changes. And our joy never changes. You never change. We need that because it is so uncertain out there. And it's scary and it's changing, and we want to rely on You, anchor ourselves in who You are and who You say we are.

Father, for those of us right now who are struggling to find our footing or feel ourselves less and less, let this be the reminder that we can trust, let this be a reminder of who You are and give us the courage to face another day knowing that it is You we trust, not ourselves. It's in Your Son's good name I pray. Amen.