



Hello Summer
Part 5 – Good-Bye Envy
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We are tying up a series today, so this is the last bit of *Hello Summer*. That means we're on the tail end of summer, to which all the students said boo and all the parents said amen. They're going back to school. Praise the Lord; schedule rhythm back in my life. Not only are we saying good-bye summer, we're also today saying *Hello Summer, Good-bye Envy*.

This week, I get to celebrate ten years of marriage with my beautiful bride. About half the people are clapping because some guys are like, "Try 50 years, you chump." Because some in our audience has been married a long time. "Ten years is nothing. When I was a kid, I walked up the hill both ways in the snow, try that one." Congratulation to those of you who have been married 40 years longer.

I'm proud of ten years, especially in today's culture. Can I get an amen? We'll be celebrating ten years of marriage. I'll never forget the time I asked my to be wife's dad for her hand in marriage. I wasn't very nervous proposing to her, but asking the man who only had one daughter... I was a nervous wreck. I didn't want her to know. We weren't discussing marriage. I wanted to guard her heart. I didn't want her to go there. He lived in Memphis and still does, and I lived in Kansas City at the time. I didn't want her to know I was going to meet with her dad, so I concocted this plan to where I was going to fly into Nashville, rent a car, drive to Memphis, and meet him for lunch. She had no idea I was even going to drive to Memphis. She thought I was going to Nashville because I did have friends there I was going to see.

I flew into Nashville, rented a car, and met him at Rendezvous Ribs, the best dry rib in America, downtown. He works downtown, he's built a lot of high rises in Downtown Memphis. He used to run a company called Naylor Construction. That's his name, Mark Naylor. He built a lot of stuff down by the river; The Pyramid, the Horizon Project... all these things. I'm going to go down there and buy him lunch.

We start lunch and I just freeze up. I can't even talk about it; I just want to talk sports with him. I'm thinking he's got to have an idea. I didn't travel all the way down here just to have lunch with him. So, we get to the end of the lunch and the ticket comes out. I try to grab the ticket and he says, "No, no."

I said, "Let me pay for this; I have a favor to ask you." He grabbed the ticket, hands it to the waiter and says, "I got this, but what's your favor?"

I said, "I want to marry your daughter."

He says, "Waiter!" He says, "That's not a favor; that's my daughter's hand." As soon as he gets that out of his mouth, he completely changes the subject. He says, "Come here, I want to show you some stuff. I want to show you some of the stuff I've been building in Downtown Memphis. He starts taking me around Downtown Memphis. At the time, he was building this 50-story high rise that was going to be a housing complex. They had a penthouse and a pool on the 50th floor that hadn't been finished yet, so it didn't have a railing.

He takes me to the very top of this building. I'm just kind of looking over the city like, *This is great*. I'm thinking the man is about to throw me off the top of this building. I'm freaking out. We're talking about anything and everything but his daughter. That's the whole reason I came down on this trip.

We get back to my rental car and his truck and we are about to leave. He says, "About your question... Let me get back to you." You want to talk about the three longest hours of driving in my entire life. I had already bought the ring, y'all. The ring is burning a hole in my pocket. With guys, once they buy the ring, you might as well that move that engagement date a whole lot earlier than was planned in their head; its coming.

So, I'm driving back to Nashville and I'm about 45 minutes out from Nashville when my phone rings and it's Mr. Naylor. I thought, *Oh perfect he's going to give me an answer*. I answer the phone and he says, "Hey, I just wanted to tell you I really enjoyed lunch and hanging out with you today. I wanted to make sure your drive is going okay. Hope you're doing great."

"Yeah, yeah, it's going great."

"Alright, I'll talk to you later, bye."

I'm antsy. He doesn't call me back the rest of the night. I found out later that what happened was my future mother-in-law said, "You haven't given him an answer yet?" He goes, "No, I didn't know what to say yet." She goes, "You need to go call him." So, he goes and calls me. She was saying you need to go call him and give him an answer. He just called me to check in on me. He comes back into the movie theater and she goes, "Did you call him." He goes, "Yeah, I called him."

I stayed the night in Nashville. I got a flight out early the next morning. I'm taking off to the airport and he calls me about 8:00 in the morning and says, "Hey, I want you to know I would be beyond blessed for you to marry my daughter and I want you to know the delay wasn't you. I wanted to make sure that I could let her go. I needed some time to pray to let her go. It had nothing to do with you."

I was thinking about that. I wasn't even mad at him... As I was thinking about that and we're talking about this today, there are few people in this world that I have no problem with envy. I struggle with envy. We're going to talk today about what I call the rotten EGG in Christianity. I think there are three struggles or sins that we just don't ever talk about: envy, gossip, and gluttony. We'll look at sexual immorality or pornography or drugs and addictions in this different light than we look at envy, gossip, or gluttony.

The Apostle Paul and Jesus don't look at those sins any differently as they separate us from God equally. These rotten EGGs envy: gossip, and gluttony – we're going to focus on envy today – I think are kind of the ones we don't look at because they look okay on the outside, but really destroy us on the inside. So, as he didn't give me a timely answer about marrying his daughter, I was thinking how I do not envy dads of daughters. I love you, I praise you. We don't have daughters. My wife wants one. I said, "If God wanted us to have one, we'd have one. We have two energetic boys. I give you all the awards in the world..." I just think that would be so hard, giving away your daughter. It's just tough. This dude does not trust that dude as far as he can throw him. [picture of daughter introducing a young man to her dad] You can see it in his eyes. That is the toughest thing.

I don't envy LeBron James' fans. That's an expensive fanship to follow. First you buy a Cleveland jersey and you burn it. You buy a Heat jersey and you get rid of it. You buy another Cleveland jersey and you burn it. Now you buy a Laker's jersey. I miss the day when we were just fans of teams and not of players. Can I get an amen? Following all these people is ridiculous. Lakers already have a big enough band wagon; don't jump on that too, LeBron.

I don't envy Alaskans in the winter. Praise and kudos to you, but they get about four hours of sunlight. I need my Vitamin E. I need some of that melanin in my skin to keep a pep in my step. I don't envy metropolitan commuters. [picture of a traffic jam] You visitors today are like, "What are you talking about? Have you ever driven down the strip?" No, knuckle heads, we know secrets. We know back roads. We have Yellow Routes, Blue Routes. I have my own little Green Route where there are no stops. No, I'm not going to tell you what it is or it's not going to be a Green Route anymore. We'll just keep letting you figure out the roundabout and keep our shortcuts to ourselves. I told my wife this is why we'll never live in a metropolitan city. I don't sit still very well; you guys know that. I do not envy you that face this every single day. I would lose my mind.

I don't envy US presidents, regardless of what party. There are pictures. You can go online and look. From the beginning of a presidency to the end of a presidency and how much they age. I don't envy that. I live a pretty stress-free life. I love Jesus, I love my family, and I'm good. I don't need the weight of the world on my shoulders. I will say, however, regardless if you agree with the president or not, we are called to pray for them. There is no greater weight on a man's shoulders than the ruler of the free world. I think the healthier thing, rather than complaining or being frustrated with whatever, is to pray for the man. Pray for the next president. An easy reminder for me (you see these all over) is any time I see a penny... By the way, every currency we have still says, "In God We Trust." Every little penny or nickel I pick up, that's a prayer for the current president. I pick it up and put it in my pocket and I just say a prayer for the president for wisdom, discernment as they lead.

Now, I'm not perfect and let me be transparent with you guys this morning. There are people I try not to envy, where I wrestle with envy. One instance is my friends with Dude Perfect. They basically get paid a lot of money to be frat boys all the time. That's all they do. If you're not familiar with Dude Perfect, Grandma and Grandpa, go back and YouTube it and you'll be hooked the rest of the day. They have plenty of videos for you to watch.

I try not to envy people with a resting happy face. Some of you are laughing because you know I have a resting jerk face or an intense face. My six-year-old will ask me all the time, "Daddy, what's the matter?" This is my resting face. I'm not mad. I'm not angry. Ted will tell you we joke all the time. I have an intense resting face and so sometimes people feel like I'm unapproachable. I wish I could just have a resting happy face so people would approach me more. I love it when people approach me. My face just doesn't say that. You know what I'm saying? So, I apologize.

I wrestle sometimes with envying people with boys that are a whole lot less energetic and can sit still. I love my boys, but if I could bottle their energy, I would put Red Bull out of business. Now all the husbands are going to hate me for saying this and all the wives are going to love me for saying this. My wife is currently on a five-day girl trip to San Diego. I have the six-year-old and the three-year-old all to myself in the middle of the busiest time of my summer. If you want to have a deep appreciation for your wife, send her on a five-day girl trip. And all the wives said... amen. And all the husbands said, "Zip your lip, preacher!" My boys will not sit still. I'm not kidding you. They ran a quarter of a mile up a hill yesterday because they wanted to, with two-pound weights in their hands. I'm not making this up.

I sometimes envy vacationers. It's just the idea that my summers have been spent at camp and doing missions and then people post vacation pictures and I'm like, *Ugh... that looks awesome right now. That looks great.* So, I have to battle that sometimes.

Sometimes, we have to be careful when we post stuff, trying to drive out envy of others. We do that sometimes. Or we say things in conversation trying to drive out envy of others. Later, I'm going to talk about how we sometimes lead them into a stumbling block.

The last thing I sometimes struggle with envy with is 20 somethings. Not because of the generation you are in, but because, 20 somethings, millennials, gen-Zers, you have no idea how much free time you have on your hands. I envy that sometimes. If I could bottle up some of that free time. I know you think you're busy... Try paying bills, taking care of a house, taking care of a wife, taking care of kids, taking care of a dog. And all the parents said... Amen. I love you, 20 somethings, but I envy the amount of time you have on your hands.

So, if you weren't here last week, Alex Himaya gave a phenomenal message. Amen? He ended it talking about how Jesus came and reinstated Peter. If you didn't see the sermon, go back and watch it online. He ended with how Jesus came and reinstated Peter. Not only did he reinstate Peter... He asked Peter three times, "Do you know that I love you?" That's because Peter denied him three times. It was interesting that he asked him three times and he reinstates him and gives him hope.

After he reinstates him, they are walking along the beach in John 21 and we see this. ***20 Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved...*** It's the Apostle John that is writing this. So, he's referring to himself. If you look throughout the gospels, there's this tension between Peter and John like they had a competition for Jesus' affection. They were competing for Jesus' love. So, John is writing this and he's saying Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved... This is John; he's writing in the third person. How narcissistic can you be, John? He said, ***20 Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them.***

So, you can picture Jesus and Peter are walking along the beach and Peter looks back and he sees tag along John eavesdropping to see what the conversation is they're having because he doesn't want to be left out. ***(This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?")*** So, John is the one who asked this question at supper, so he's saying it was the same one who did this (still speaking in the third person). ***21 When Peter saw him...*** They are walking along the beach and Peter looks back and sees John and then looks to Jesus. ***...he asked, "Lord, what about him?"*** Jesus had told Peter that he was going to die in a way that he didn't want to. He was prophesying a crucifixion upside down which is how Peter died.

22 Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?" In other words, he's saying, "Peter, what does it matter? Why are you worried about John? Why are you worried about him? Worry about you. Worry about the calling I have on your life. Don't worry about what he's going to do; worry about the lane I have you running in."

We do that all the time, don't we? Rather than just running in the lane that God has for us, we're like "What about that person?" "Why doesn't that person have to suffer?" "Why doesn't that person get diagnosed with cancer?" "Why doesn't that person have a struggling family?" And the Lord says, "I have something uniquely for you. Don't worry about John, Peter." ***"You must follow me."*** "You just follow me. You just be faithful to follow me. Don't worry about everybody else." We say that to our kids all the time. "Aiden, don't worry about Anders; worry about Aiden. I'll deal with Anders." If a mom had a quarter for every time she said that to her kids, right?

So, don't worry about John, Peter, worry about yourself. ***23 Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die...*** John did die on the island of Patmos where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Even though attempts were made on his life as a martyr, they were unsuccessful because God had other plans for him.

...he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?" That's so powerful in this passage. Right after he reinstates Peter, after he denied him three times, he says, "Peter, run in your lane. Don't envy John's life. Don't worry about John's life. Don't worry about your neighbor's life. This is the calling I have specifically on your life and I want you to run in it and run in it well."

I have even misquoted this quote from Theodore Roosevelt and I'm going to clear it up today. There is a quote that some people think is scripture and it's not. "Comparison is a thief of joy." That's actually not true. I've been doing a lot of research the last few weeks. Comparison is not a thief of joy. As a matter of fact, I want to talk to you guys about the difference between comparison and envy. I think envy is the thief of joy and comparison can actually be extremely helpful. Let me explain. Here are the definitions.

Comparison – The considering of two things with regard to some characteristic that is common to both as the likening of a hero to a lion in courage.

Abigail Dodds said this: "Comparison is a fundamental part of being human, because it's how we acquaint ourselves with reality."

The very first thing Adam does when God creates Eve out of his rib is he looks at her and says, "Wait a minute. She's kind of like me, but she's not. I need to call her something different. I'm going to call her woman." He instantly made a comparison.

The opposite of that is envy where we see Cain and Abel. Cain envies Abel because God likes his offering and it builds jealousy. Comparison shouldn't breed jealousy. Comparison could breed healthy things.

Let me read some things out of this article where I actually got this quote from Abigail Dodds. It's from *Desiring God*. The title of it is actually *Comparison is not the Thief of Joy*. Moms, I think this will be really encouraging to you.

"What if, rather than pretending not to notice that our friend is excelling in homemaking and parenting (while we're scraping by), we honored her by giving thanks to God for her obedience, her diligence, and her example of Christ that we can follow? What if we started observing her more closely, making more comparisons rather than less, so that we could tease out the principles of godliness present in her life and do likewise?"

What if, rather than smugly disdaining the mom who can't get her act together, we offered her a better way? What if we actually said with Paul, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ," not because we think we're better than she is, but because God has really done something profound in us and we're confident he can do it in her, too (1 Corinthians 11:1)?"

Leading our comparisons in the right direction — away from envy, pride, covetousness, and self-pity — and toward Christlike imitation and the fear of God — will turn us into better parents, mentors, and friends."

As a matter of fact, Jesus makes comparisons in his very first sermon in Sermon on the Mount. He says, "You've heard it said, but I say..." He's comparing this to this and this is how we should live. Paul makes comparisons in 1 Thessalonians 4: 3-8, when he says, **3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified...** Then he talks about the sexual immoral and he says those who act this way are like the heathens who do not know God. He's making a comparison to sexual immorality and those who do not know God.

He also makes a comparison in 1 Corinthians 9: 25. He says, about those who compete in athletics, **They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.** He's making healthy comparisons.

Granted, when we do healthy comparisons, it's healthy for our soul, but we can also make unhealthy comparisons. Let me give you an example. Amy Cunningham is a freak of nature when it comes to hospitality. It is her gift off the charts. They had us over for dinner not too long ago and my wife and I were just blown away. We were driving away and my wife said, "Do you wish I was better at hosting people like that?" I said, "Absolutely not. That is Amy Cunningham's gift."

I don't know very many people who are as good at hosting people as she is. She's a freak of nature. That's a compliment, Amy, if you're seeing this. I promise, that's a compliment. That's an unhealthy

comparison because you're comparing a God-given gift that was given to Amy and not perhaps my wife. My wife has other unique special gifts.

Where is a healthy comparison, Amy Cunningham is also a freak of nature when it come to being a lover of people. She loves people extremely well. That is something my wife can compare to in a healthy way because that's the greatest commandment, to love God and then love others. -Mark 12: 29-30. That's a healthy comparison, wives. An unhealthy comparison would be if a husband very foolishly compared his wife to another wife. That is a stupid comparison. You're not changing your wife. Wives, a foolish comparison is to compare your husband to another husband. You're not changing your husband. Those are foolish comparisons.

Christ-like character and Christ-like obedience are healthy comparisons. I learned very quickly up here that the dumbest thing I could ever do was to have an unhealthy comparison of myself to Ted Cunningham. That brother is gifted in bringing truth with comedy unlike I've ever seen. That's not my gift, and I'm okay with that because God has given me a different gift and passions that are different. I can walk in that skin and be okay with it. But, there are also character qualities of Ted that I love. The way he honors his wife. The way he raises his children. The way he does those things that I can look at and compare in a healthy way and say, "I can do better in that area. I can grow up into maturity in that area as I watch him lead." Now I don't need to compare him to me as a fisherman. I've never touched a rod and he spends countless hours doing that. I don't need to make that comparison.

So, we need to know this. There are healthy and unhealthy comparisons. We must pray for wisdom to know that difference. Usually, if it has to do with materialism or looks or online, it lead to unhealthy comparisons. When it's pointed to Christ-like character, people walking with Christ, that is a healthy comparison. That's why Paul says, once again in 1 Corinthians 11, ***1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*** You should look to older, godly men and women that are walking with Christ and say, "How can I do this better?" Those that are, don't act like you're better than them. Lovingly bring them along and show them a better way. Show them that Jesus enables you.

I love what Carolyn said last week from worship. She said she was just living in a Christ-like manner and they asked, "What is it that you have? What do you have that I don't have?" Just by the way she was loving them. What they instantly did in that moment. with Carolyn when she was sharing that story last week, was they compared their life to something she has. She didn't act like she was better than them. She loved on them, but they knew she had something different by the way she loved. That's a healthy comparison.

Here's the big difference between envy and comparison. So, let's not say comparison is the thief of joy anymore and let's stick to envy. Envy means a feeling of discontent or covetousness with regard to another's advantages, success, possessions, etc. It's the Hebrew word qana, which means to excite to jealous anger. It was that same qana that we saw in Cain. It's the same qana that we are seeing in social media and Facebook. That's envy; that's not comparison. Are you tracking with me?

Galatians 5 says this, ***25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*** I love that these two are put together.

So, you could provoke someone to envy and you know how to do it. You get a brand-new boat. You want everybody to know you have a brand-new boat, so you post it on social media. If you get to go to the Super bowl, you want everybody to know that you're at the Super bowl and they're not. I think you need to post on social media or even engage in conversations wisely. If your kid gets into a school, that's a conversation you probably don't need to be boasting about. Maybe other kids didn't get into a school. You get a promotion, or you get pregnant again and you don't know that there might be a mother in your presence that just had their third miscarriage. We need to be mindful of what we post and what we say that it doesn't invite our brothers and sisters in Christ into a stumbling block where it provokes them to envy.

If your incentive is to post something for the world to see so that it will drive jealousy or envy, woe is you. I love you, but woe is you. You're basically setting out a stumbling block for your brother or sister in Christ saying, "Look what I have and you don't." That's the unhealthy comparison. That's called envy and it's called provoking envy.

Now, granted, we have the other side of that coin. We need to guard our hearts against it. We don't need to chase materialism. We don't need to chase envy. We don't need to be jealous of those things. Once again, God has uniquely gifted you and put you in the lane that you're in for a reason. I'll get to that.

Envyng our brothers and sisters in Christ when God is using them hinders us from glorifying God.

Nothing irks me more than our inability to celebrate our brothers and sisters in Christ when God is using them. In reality, our envy wants us to be the ones being used. We're the ones that want those hundreds of thousands of followers. We're the ones that want to be on television. We're the ones that want those things. So, rather than saying good things and positive things and elevating our brothers and sisters in Christ for how God is using them, we have to say mean things.

Listen to me! We are brothers and sisters in Christ. There is a real enemy and we don't need to be that enemy. We don't need to be the one that is so critical and disdainful and putting them down. If God chooses to elevate our brother or sister in Christ, we should praise God, glorify God because he's the one using them, and he'll use them, or a donkey, or the rocks; it doesn't matter. And if you're the one being elevated by God, be humble enough to realize it's his doing anyway.

I have a friend who is really talented at music. As a matter of fact, he's won Grammys. I asked him if he thought he was the best in his lane. He says, "No. But it doesn't matter because God's doing this, not me. There are people way better than I am out there doing this, but God's the one behind this."

When we understand that, we glorify God. Of course people that are elevated have sin. There is not one Christian living that doesn't have sin and is perfect. But rather than pointing out the chinks in their armor, why don't we praise how God is using that person for more people to come to know his kingdom, for more people to know him, for people to ask questions about him. We should celebrate more and more our brothers and sisters in Christ because that's all we're going to be doing together when we're in heaven; we're going to be celebrating that we all made it by the grace of God.

Proverbs 14: **30 A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.** Envy makes the bones rot, but a tranquil, a peaceful... Satisfied in who you are in Christ. The reality is if you walked in here today and you don't have a personal relationship with Christ, there's a good chance that your heart is uneasy. It is just stir crazy, not satisfied, not tranquil, not peaceful. But for those who are secure in Jesus Christ, there is a tranquil heart.

Those of you who know me know that I do a lot of work with 13 – 22 year olds, 340 days a year. And the amount of envy that I am seeing bones rot is unbelievable, and it goes directly to this. Look at this slide. I've been doing this research for five years. I've been saying this, Woodland Hills, for five years. Here's the problem. The problem with social media is that young people are going to try to be known behind a device and they weren't created to be known behind a device. They were created to be known first by God – a vertical relationship – and then known by others – a horizontal relationship. That's called *yada*. It's the Hebrew word which means to be known. They were created to be known, but they're not, so they are getting behind this device.

We have seen this huge rise in the use of social media in the last seven years. So, five years ago, I started saying this was going to trend towards anxiety, depression, and suicide because they are not created to be known this way. Synonymously with the rise in social media, we're seeing a rise, higher than the history of humanity, in anxiety, depression, and suicide amongst 13 – 22 year olds. It's the highest its ever been in the history of humanity. And now all the secular research is starting to jump on board with what I've been saying for five years.

Listen to Bloomberg from May 14, 2018 – "Depression is affecting more young people than ever." CBS News Health Section – "Gen Z and Millennials are the loneliest generation." May 3, 2018 Vogue – "Millennials are the most anxious generation in history." So, finally, they are starting to tie a direct correlation to social media and the rise of anxiety, depression, and suicide. You can throw Facebook in that list too. Why? We're getting on there and we begin to envy, and envy is the hot coals that set afire anxiety, depression, and suicide. You weren't created to run in someone else's lane. When you do that unhealthy comparison or that unhealthy envy where you want to try to run in someone else's lane, it's not healthy and it's going to drive discontentment, anxiety, and depression.

I've been praying for my younger brother for the last three days. He's in a serious bout of depression. He's 23 years old. It's right in line with this. I just talked to him on the phone last night. He was just crying his eyes out. I tried to process with him and tell him what's going on. I told him to just put his phone aside for two weeks and watch the joy he experiences. Stop trying to live up to somebody you don't have to be. You get to be who God created you to be and you are the only you you can be and that is beautiful.

That goes for every single one of us in here. Psalm 139 is the first chapter I've had my six-year-old memorize. He's like two verses away. Verses 13 – 15 says **13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.** God uniquely designed every single one of us in here and you get to be you because he uniquely designed you for you and the calling

he has on your life. And guess what? God has a calling on the life of every single one of you, and he has a great calling on your life because John 10: 10 says, ***“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*** He didn’t come for you to be bored, he didn’t come for you to exist, he didn’t come for you to take up oxygen, he came because he has a plan for your life and this is robbing that plan. So many of our young people and even some of our older people are getting addicted to Facebook. Do you see why I’m so passionate about this? I see the detriment it’s doing in our young people’s lives and even marriages and even older people.

Proverbs 23 - ***17 Do not let your heart envy sinners...*** Guard your heart against that. I love a saying that Ted always uses. The grass is greener on the other side because there is usually a septic tank. If you want your grass to be greener, water the grass that’s on your side. See what He has to say about you, not the rest of the world. See how beautiful He thinks you are, not what the world says. See how strong He says you are in him and not the rest of the world. ***...but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord.*** Another way of saying that is, have a reverential awe for the Lord, continually keeping your eyes on him and not everything else.

We don’t determine the size of our platform, we determine the size of our faithfulness. So many people try to make videos that go viral. We did that and it’s not worth it, I promise. They try to make videos that go viral, they try to get all these followers, they try to elevate their platform, they try to make it all about them. I’m sorry to tell you, but it’s not all about you. It’s always been, always will be, and will never stop being about Jesus. Worry about elevating him and watch what happens.

1 Peter 5: ***6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*** Don’t worry about the size of your platform, worry about the consistency in your faithfulness. And if God elevates someone and gives them the platform, pray that they would be faithful.

The Dude Perfects are good friends of mine and they are the real deal, just in case you’re wondering. Those brothers love Jesus. I pray with them consistently and they served with me on the mission field in the Bahamas this last February. My prayer for them, as I was with them, I said, “God, I pray you never make their platform larger than their faithfulness.” I pray the same for my life. I pray the same for Ted. I pray that my platform would never grow larger than my faithfulness to him. He knows what I can handle better than I do.

Don’t worry about how much of a following you have or how many people like you or how many Facebook friends you have, whatever the case may be. Don’t worry about the size of your platform, just worry about being faithful. Luke 16 says, ***10 “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?”*** Worry about your obedience and faithfulness, not the size of our platform.

Ecclesiastes 4 says this. It’s one of Ted’s favorite books. ***4 And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person’s envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*** They got a boat, so we have to get a boat. They got a new house, so we have to get a new house. They have five kids, we’ll stick with two kids. It’s a striving after the wind to compare yourself to your neighbor.

Some dads are built to have seven kids and I admire you like crazy. Some women are built differently, literally, physically differently with hips that can have lots of kids. Some women aren't built that way. Everybody is built differently. You don't need to be like. "Well we need to have more kids because they have more kids." You worry about your family. You worry about you, don't worry about envying your neighbor. That's vanity and a chasing after the wind. Have you ever tried to catch the wind? The wind came through last night and I felt it, but I wasn't catching it. It came and went. It wasn't worth following because here's the reality.

Envy cultivates a heart of taking, and takers are never happy because takers never have enough. Be a giver. What did I say at the very beginning when we did the offering. 2 Corinthians 9: 7 says God loves a cheerful giver. The one person that ever walked this earth that could have been a taker, gave. As a matter of fact, Matthew 20: 28 says "**...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**"

The most joyful people I know in this world are the biggest givers. Ted Cunningham is one of them. Joe White is another one. Those guys give and give because they know there is never going to be a U-Haul following a hearse to a funeral. You've never seen it. Give. Takers are never happy. I'm trying to teach my six-year-old and three-year-old this now. Give.

Again, in scripture, in 1 Corinthians 13, which is often misquoted at weddings. If you use it in your wedding, great. I'm saying he talks about marriage in 1 Corinthians 6 and 7. This is specifically one individual to another individual. This is the believer. We're called to love. **3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.** And then he defines what love is for fellow believers, not just for your spouse. **4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast...** Remember I told you boasting can drive envy and once again it's crazy that Paul puts those in conjunction with one another. **...it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.**

So, if love is absent of envy and followers of Christ are to be known by their love for others, it is safe to say those filled with envy aren't following Jesus, but rather the world. Just taking an equation from scripture. If love is absent of envy... The two can't go together is what we just read. And we are called to love others as followers of Christ, so those go together. It is safe to say those filled with bitterness, envy, rage, jealousy, and hate are not following Jesus, they are following the world. They are letting the world fuel their heart and not Jesus.

Let me close with this parable. It's one of my favorite parables in Matthew 25: 14 – 30. It's a phenomenal parable. If you haven't read it, go home and read it today. It's a parable about Jesus being the giving master, the one who gives gifts. What happens in this parable is this master gives out gifts. He comes over here and he gives this individual five gifts and he says, "Here's your five gifts." And then he comes over here and says, "Here's your two gifts." And then he comes over here and says, "Here's you're one gift." He tells them to steward those gifts well.

He says, "Now those five are unique for you. You don't worry about this one I gave over here. These are your gifts, your talents, you walk with them, you thrive in them." "Now these two gifts over here, you take care of them." "And this one gets one over here."

The master goes away and then he comes back. He walks up to the one who he had given five gifts. This isn't about money; it's about unique spiritual gifts he has given each and every single one of you sitting in here. We all have gifts. Nobody is without a gift. God doesn't withhold anything good from those he loves. He gives gifts.

The master comes to the one with five gifts and he says, "What did you do with my five that I gave you?"

He said, "I made five more."

And the most beautiful words you and I will ever hear when we walk into the presence of Jesus were said, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Way to use your gift. Way not to envy the gifts of the person over here. Way not to worry about how this person was going to do it. Way to just focus on the gifts I gave you and use your gifts for my glory, my kingdom. Here's five more. Enter into the joy of your master." Oh, those words are going to be so beautiful, Woodland Hills. "Enter into the joy of your master."

The thing about this real quick. Moses was 40 years old, had been kicked out of Egypt, and he goes to tend sheep for 40 years. He's 80 now. He thought his life was done. He's 80 years old, he's retired with a 401k and doing great. He's playing golf, collecting sea shells. He's good. "I don't need to use my gifts anymore; this is perfect. I'm out here by myself, not bothering anybody. I don't speak well so that's great."

Then God knocks on the door. "Hey, Moses, I know you think you're 80 and retired. You're wrong. I have a plan for your life still. I'm not done with you. You've used four of your gifts; I've got one more I need you to use. You're going to deliver these people out of Israel."

"What!?"

"You're going to Egypt. You're going to deliver them to Israel."

I love you, but I don't care how old you are in here today. God wasn't done with Moses when he was 80 and he wasn't done with Sarah when she was above 90. He's still using you. Here's the truth: the man of God or the woman of God doing the work of God is immortal until God says otherwise. And he has you're still here for a purpose and a plan.

And then he goes up to the one with two gifts and he says, "What about you? What did you do with the gifts I gave you, the unique gifts I specifically gave you?"

"Here, I made two more, I doubled it."

“Praise you. Well done good and faithful servant. You didn’t worry about envy and the gifts of somebody else. You didn’t worry about the talents of somebody else. You just focused on the gifts I gave you. Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master.” The most beautiful words we’ll ever hear.

Then he goes to the one with one gift. It’s just one gift. Some people are more gifted than others and that’s okay. You just have to worry about the gift you’ve been given.

He goes up to this person with the one gift and he says, “What did you do with the gift I gave you?”

“Umm, well, I knew you were a hard man to please.” What? No where in the text does it say this master was hard to please. As a matter of fact, Jesus isn’t hard to please at all. He had conjured this up in his mind. Why? His eyes were on the world. His eyes were fixated on envy. He was like, “Well I only got one and they got more so it doesn’t matter, Jesus doesn’t need me.” WRONG! He was focused on the wrong thing.

He said, “I knew you were a hard man to please, so I was afraid.” What? No! 1 John 4: 18 says perfect love, which is that agape love from Christ, drives out fear. He wasn’t experiencing the love of the master, he was experiencing the false love of the world, the lust of the world.

He said, “I was afraid, and I went and buried my gift that you gave me. I was too worried about what everybody else had.”

Now these are the worst words you’ll every hear. “You wicked and slothful servant. Take him to where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Take his talent and give it to the one who has ten.”

Here me. Every single one of you have a unique gift. You get to be you. You don’t need to envy your neighbor’s wife. You don’t need to envy the homemaker mom that just slays it and can cook after taking care of eight kids all day. You don’t need to envy materialistic things. You don’t need to be like anybody else because God’s not calling you to be like anybody else. God is calling you to be you because you are who the perfect God created you to be. That’s the only person you have to be. And that person is special. And that person is unique. And that person was crafted by God. If you're still breathing and you still have life, it’s because God wants to use you for his kingdom and his glory and he is not done with you. The man or woman of God doing the work of God is immortal until God says otherwise.

Don’t walk out of here thinking you’re not good enough. Don’t walk out of here thinking you don’t compare to somebody else. Look at the character of other people that you can learn from and do better and excel still more. Understand who God has created you to be and walk in that. You’ll have more freedom than you even realize.

Father God, thank you so much for the way you have uniquely crafted, formed, created this entire body at Woodland Hills. God, thank you that my gifts don’t have to be John’s gifts, or they don’t have to be Ted’s gifts, or they don’t have to be Travis’ gifts. Thank you that my gifts are unique to me and that your gifts are unique to everybody sitting in here.

To Matts, to Katies, to Mesas, to Stephanies, thank you that your gifts are unique for those people and that's what makes the body of Christ so beautiful. God, guard our hearts from envy, guard us from coveting things that you didn't call us to. May we enter into the joy of our Master, knowing that you have uniquely created us to be us and that we don't have to be anyone else.

God, have your spirit help pull out those strengths in those gifts and those unique qualities within us. I pray that as they leave today, they would walk in that confidence that you have a calling on their life, and that they are special because they are created by you.

It is in your high and holy, powerful and pure, mighty and matchless name we pray, Jesus. And all God's people said... Amen.