

Good morning everyone, we're so glad that you have chosen to worship with our church this morning. April 2015 is proving to be a big month for us here at Fellowship Dallas. We started the month with Easter Sunday, we're ending it next week with Fellowship Serves and smack in the middle of those two days in the life of our church are a couple of sermons that tie a bow on the series we've been journeying through over the last several months, *Life Worth Giving*.

When we began the series, our hope was that the Fellowship Dallas Family would be inspired to discover their unique calling from God. Our hope is that every single person in our church could take steps over the next months and years to grow in their understanding of who they are and how God has uniquely made them – that they would take a sober self-assessment of their current reality and take steps to grow closer to the person that Christ has called them to be. After all, you can't really talk about your calling unless you talk about the One who calls.

But not only have we desired that each individual would understand their calling in Christ, our hope was to also gain some clarification on what our calling is as a church. As we seek to lead people in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, in our unique time and place in history, what is God's will for us, as a church?

Last week, Gary spoke about the differences of the Attractional church that is tempted to depart from values so they can get people in the door. They are so concerned with getting people into their church, they are tempted to downplay the truth that God desires for us to grow and that growth is often unpleasant. Gary also spoke about other churches who are tempted to set up ways of living that can border on legalism. They are so adamant that you fall in line and under their authority as to be exclusive. We can't be an exclusive church. However, we also can't be a church that refuses to challenge one another to be better; to be stronger in the faith. Differently put, to be more like Jesus, Himself.

Gary spoke about his dream that Fellowship Dallas continue to grow as an *Intentional* church. Certainly, we want to be attractive to all people from our community who are interested in growing spiritually, but we also want to challenge believers in a healthy way. We must be intentional in our challenge, while remaining inviting.

If we can find a healthy balance, as a church, between being inviting and being challenging, we believe that we will build a community full of people who can discover their *Life Worth Giving*. A group of people who aren't only content to *live* life, but have an intense desire to *give* life.

As I think upon last week's sermon by Gary, the one thing that really stuck out to me was a video he showed produced by a department store about giving. Some employees went around and invited people to find another shopper in the store and give that shopper whatever they were looking to buy. So the employees basically gave some random people

money to go spend on someone else in the store. And it was great. There were some awesome moments in the video of people receiving a pair of shoes that they weren't sure they could afford. Another lady had a sofa given to her and she mentioned that she had never received a gift like that. One guy was even able to buy an engagement ring for his girlfriend. And in each situation, there was a random individual who had the joy of *giving* the gift.

Gary asked us before and after the video to pay attention to what was going on inside of us. He wanted us to reflect upon how much it resonates within us when we saw someone *give* something to someone else. The point Gary was making is that a *Life Worth Giving* is so supremely enjoyable, that nothing else can compare.

Why is that? Why do we resonate so strongly with the notion of giving? Of sacrifice? Why do we resonate with the soldier who gives his life on the battlefield? Why do we feel so strongly for teachers who give so much of themselves for so little compensation? What's going on in us when we see a viral video of a police officer buying a meal for a homeless person? Why do we find ourselves getting emotional when a couple of random ladies simply give another woman a coat that she had her eye on in a department store? Why are we so impacted by *giving*?

I think it's because we serve a God who gives. Our God is a God of love, of giving, of sacrifice. And here's the key: we are made in His image. You are made in the image of God. And when you give – when you live a life that is characterized by giving – you are tapping into the core of who you are created to be. Because you're tapping into the image of God, Himself.

Jesus gives us insight into His view of giving in the book of Matthew. In the twentieth chapter of Matthew, Jesus is addressing His disciples. As they are talking, the disciples bring up the subject of what Jesus' hierarchy will look like when He ascends His throne, as King. Who will be His most valued subjects? Who will be set to be in power and in control in the kingdom? The disciples were expecting an exchange of governmental power, that Jesus would be their King really soon, but Jesus took their notion of power and turned everything on its head. He shows how the power structure for Christians is completely upside down, relative to the rest of the world.

Jesus explains to them, beginning in verse 25: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Did you see that last part there? Look at verse 28 again: "even as the Son of Man came not to *be served* but to *serve*, and to ***give his life*** as a ransom for many." [emphasis added]. Jesus sums up the purpose behind His entire ministry – His entire life – in one simple sentence. He came not to be served, but to serve and to *give His life*.

The reason we are so impacted by a video that shows random people giving is that it resonates with our deepest nature, our deepest selves. When we see that video, we realize the things they're doing, we should be doing. The things they're feeling, we should be feeling. The things they're thinking we should be thinking.

That's why when we've spoken about finding your calling in life; we've always said that you have to start with God before you go anywhere else. If you've reduced your calling to a question of occupation, you've missed the point. If you've reduced your calling to a question of a hobby, you've missed the point. You need to start with the Caller and His design. The question of calling lies not in what makes you happy, the question of calling is one where you ask, how will I give my life away? *That's* the greatest. *THAT'S* the greatest. When you realize that everything you are is designed not to be served, but to serve and to *give your life*.

Christ is our standard. He gave His life away so that many might live. It's one of the clearest pictures of Christ's divinity in all of the gospels; that through His death, many would live. Only God could accomplish such a task. And God has given to you, so that you could give. If you are a believer, He has given you life. If you have placed your trust in Him, He has given you resources, spiritual gifts, which are meant to be given, not hoarded, for the sake of His kingdom.

If you want to discover *Life Worth Giving*, you have to give away your life. *To discover Life Worth Giving, give away your life*. Many of you have wondered what do I need to do to discover this Life Worth Giving? And it's one of those things that you can't learn without doing something. There's no class, there's no book, there's no seminar or conference. You can know a lot, but you'll never find *Life Worth Giving* until you start doing something to give away your life. The Bible is clear – faith without works is _____. Dead. Faith without works is dead. To discover *Life Worth Giving*, give away your life.

At Fellowship Dallas, we always talk about our Home Depot approach to church, You can do it, we can help. You can do it, we can help. It's one thing for us to encourage you to give your life away, but it's another thing for us to help you. And that's what the rest of this morning will be about: demonstrating the tools that we, as a church, are offering you to help you live a *Life Worth Giving*.

As we continue to pray through how we, as a church, can lead people in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ that results in a *Life Worth Giving*, we've arrived at three essentials for your growth. We believe that holding up Worship, Community and Service as essential in your life will help you give your life away, as you seek to serve God and others. Let's focus on these one at a time:

Worship.

Let's talk first about worship. The object of your worship reveals and shapes your heart. Christian worship is essential to your spiritual growth. Now, often, when we talk about

worship, the first thing that pops into our head is Sunday morning church services, but the worship I'm talking about is not simply an event, it's an every day state of mind.

There's a classic Christian devotional titled *My Utmost for His Highest* by a guy named Oswald Chambers. In the daily devotional, he has an excellent entry all about worship that I think is appropriate to mention here. I really like his definition of Christian worship. I've edited it down a little for the sake of time, but listen to what he has to say about worship:

Worship is giving God the best that He has given you. Be careful what you do with the best you have. Whenever you get a blessing from God, give it back to Him as a love-gift. Take time to meditate before God and offer the blessing back to Him in a deliberate act of worship. God will never allow you to keep a spiritual blessing completely for yourself. It must be given back to Him so that He can make it a blessing to others.

Rushing in and out of worship is wrong every time— there is always plenty of time to worship God. That is why we must always have quiet times with Him, however noisy our times with the world may be. It is a discipline that must be developed; it will not happen overnight.

Some of us, as we think on our lives, need to invest in Christian Worship.

Community

The second essential I want to speak about is *community*. Christian community. Christian community is essential to your spiritual growth. The reason it's so essential is that we were made for community with others. In the beginning, when God said "It is not good for man to be alone" He wasn't just referring to a marital relationship, He was referring to man's need for community. Our need to be with others is grounded in the nature of God, Himself, who has eternally been in community as the Trinity. The Christian God is one God who is precisely three persons. Not three gods as three persons, not one god who plays three different roles, but one God who is precisely three persons. And God in three persons has existed in eternity past and will exist in eternity future *as community*.

Just as God has existed eternally in community, so we are created to live in community with others. We were never meant to live the Christian life in isolation. We must work together as a body. Everything we do at Fellowship Dallas encourages Christian community. In this service, we sing together, we pray together, we listen together and we encourage one another. One of my favorite things is when a service is over and pockets of people stick around and pray with one another or chat with one another in the worship center. Others connect a little deeper and spend time in Christian community in groups during the week. They gather, reflect on scripture and care for one another.

Service

So we have worship, community and the third essential is service. Christian service often goes unnoticed as a way to grow spiritually. We sometimes think about service only as a product of the Christian faith when, in reality, God uses service to grow us. If I've heard it

once, I've heard it a million times: someone chooses to go on a mission trip, serve somewhere in the church, lead a community group, and they come back and say that the person who got the most out of the experience was the *server*, not the one being served.

It's the whole point of the video I referenced earlier. When we serve others, when we give our lives away in Christian service, everyone wins. We serve someone, they gain the love we have to give and God gets the glory. Last week, Gary shared a phrase that we've used multiple times over the past few years: we want to be a church full of people who are planting trees under whose shade they will not sit. We want to be a church full of people who are planting trees under whose shade they will not sit.

By the way, there is no age minimum for this to occur. Young adults – certainly you should be enjoying the shade of trees planted by previous generations, but there's nothing stopping you from stepping up to plant trees for those younger than you. If you're in your thirties, how are you planting trees for those in their 20s? If you're in your 20s, how are you planting trees for those still in school? If you're in High School, how are you serving your younger brothers and sisters? There is no age limit on service.

SO: *you can do it, we can help.* How do we hope to help you? Inside your worship guide is a little handout that most of you have already discovered, but if you haven't looked through it, let me encourage you to grab that handout right now. Take a look at the three panels inside, you'll see one for Worship, Community and Service. I've just spoken about these three essentials, but I want us to do right now is spend 30 seconds to a minute, or so, and consider which of these three essentials in which you need to invest at this point in your life. So I'll give you a minute to think about it. ***Selah.***

Now that you've thought about it, turn the handout to the back and write down the essential in which you want to invest. So, on the back of your form, write down either "Worship," "Community," or "Service" – whichever area you would like to see spiritual growth during the next weeks and months.

No matter which essential you've chosen, we have a few tools for you. You can do it, we can help. If you look at worship, you'll notice the tools we offer to help you. Firstly, we have a daily prayer guide that can help you place each day in the proper perspective. This guide gives you a daily opportunity to read some scripture and to talk with God about what's going on in your life and what His desire is for you for that day. You'll also see that we have a corporate worship service each Sunday. I know it sounds silly, because we're all sitting in this place right now, but one of the tools we offer you is a place where you can come together with the corporate body of Christ and worship. If you feel like worship is an area in which you would like to invest, let me ask that you not simply arrive here each Sunday as if this setting were an event to witness, but as an environment for growth. Value this time each week, not as an hour of your life, but as an introduction to your week. Place a priority on Sunday mornings. Schedule your vacations around meeting with your spiritual family. Make it a point to be here, no matter how beautiful the weather is or how good that brunch might be. If you want to prioritize worship, your week begins at 9:30 each Sunday morning and ends at 9:29 the following Sunday. Finally, we have Home Point – a place where you

can go to find resources to worship as a family each and every day of the week. It's downstairs near the South Entrance to the building. If you would like to check out some resources the church offers to lead worship in your home, Home Point is the place for you. These are just three tools our church offers to help you worship. If you want to invest in worship, you don't have to use these tools, but we have made them available to you.

If you have chosen to invest in Community, let me invite you to consider the three tools listed at the bottom of that panel in the handout. The first tool for anyone interested in community is to have a one-on-one conversation with someone in our connecting team. You can find our connecting team downstairs in the Hub after each service every Sunday. Another tool we offer is to search for community opportunities in The City. The City is the online place where Fellowship Dallas goes to connect to each other, community and to service. If you've never heard of The City or if you've never taken the steps to set up your profile on The City, you're in luck because we have a help desk for The City right outside these doors. One of the greatest uses for The City is the ability to search for communities from the comfort of your own home. Go online at your computer – you can't use the app for the search function – and see if there's a community that fits your needs. Lastly, we have invitation cards that you can use to invite people to our church. I know this isn't rocket science, but one of the best ways to connect to community, is to build community yourself. Invite co-workers, family members, friends, neighbors or even strangers to our church. We have a card you can use to invite people you meet to our church. If you want to take advantage of this tool, you can pick some up at the back of the worship center. These are just three tools our church offers to help you connect to community. If you want to invest in community, you don't have to use these tools, but we have made them available to you.

If you have chosen to invest in Service, let me invite you to consider the three tools listed at the bottom of that panel in the handout. The first tool for anyone investing in service is to, again, meet with the connecting team downstairs in the Hub. Not only do they help people connect to community, they also help them connect to service. Have a one-on-one conversation with someone downstairs about ongoing opportunities for you to serve. The second tool we offer for those interested in serving more at the church is The City. We are really excited about this aspect of The City and today we're actually debuting this section of The City to the church. For the first time, we have built a one-stop place for you to investigate all of the opportunities that exist at the church. Since it's so brand new, I'd like to show you how to find them on The City, so let me use this little computer over here . . .

[Demonstration of The City]

Lastly, perhaps the best tool we could offer you to enhance your service is to lead out in a community group. Of all of the needs posted in The City, this is, perhaps, our greatest need. I'd ask you to consider praying about whether or not God would want you to consider leading a community here at Fellowship Dallas. These are just three tools our church offers to help you connect to service. If you want to invest in Christian service, you don't have to use these tools, but we have made them available to you.

Now that I've listed these tools that you can use to find spiritual growth at our church. Our prayer is that God uses your effort and these tools to grow you more into the likeness of Jesus. On the back of the handout, I'd like to take a few seconds for you to consider what tool or tools you will use to invest here at Fellowship Dallas. You've picked one essential in your life in which to invest. Now write down *how* you will invest in the area. You can use one of the tools we offer, or simply write down what your next steps are to invest in one of the essentials of Christian growth. Let's write that down now . . .

Remember what Christ said to His disciples: "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life." Christ came to give His life so that we could have life – but not just any life. There is a thief who comes to steal, kill and destroy. It is his mission to take life away, but Christ? He came that we might have life to the full. That our life would overflow into everyone around us, that we would live a *Life Worth Giving*.

Imagine all of the stories of giving that would arise out from our church if everyone took the steps to invest in Worship, Community and Service. Discovering our calling, discovering a Life Worth Giving isn't a theoretical idea, it's a possibility that is just begging for you to take steps of faith. If you want to live a Life Worth Giving, you must give away your life. You can do it, we can help.