Craig // Good morning. Hey, let me just add my thank you to the volunteers. I am so grateful you are doing that. A good friend of mine, Chad Moore down at Sun Valley said something a couple of weeks ago that grabbed my attention. He said, the church is not a place we come to sit. It’s a mission we choose to be part of. Actually, he said it’s a movement – I changed it to mission. I guess that’s mine, actually. We are going to go with that. It’s not a place that we come to sit. It’s a mission we choose to be part of, and when you volunteer in the variety of ways we have opportunity to volunteer, what you are doing is being part of the mission of God. That’s what the church is. It’s the people on God on the mission of God, and I’m so, so grateful for you and all the ways you volunteer. If you are thinking, hey, I’m ready to volunteer, on the way out today you can actually, if you head out the main doors and turn right, there’s a little desk right there, and just say, hey, I’m interested in getting plugged in. Help me find a place to serve, and they would love to do that, so join the mission.

Before we dig into God’s word today, I want to highlight a couple of things. One, if you want to grab that worship card that you got when you came in, this Thursday, May 3rd is the National Day of Prayer. That is a day that our country has set aside for many years to pray for our government leaders, whether that’s national, state or local, and also to pray for the influence our church has in our community, so we’ll be doing that all day Thursday at the Littleton campus. If you can come from any of our campuses to join us here at Littleton, you can come any time throughout the day, and we have guides to help pray through the things we should be praying for on this Thursday, but we also have three special times we are going to do it as a group. You can come at 6:30 -- I’m going to be here at 6:30 a.m. I would really like not to be alone at 6:30 a.m. I would love for people to come join me on their way to work. Then there will be another group prayer time at 12:00 and another at 6:00. So really encourage you to come as you are able during the day at any time or to come during one of those times that we are able to pray together as a group.

Last thing I want to mention, but not the least thing by any stretch of the imagination. Last weekend was Compassion Weekend. Compassion International was here. They were sharing these packets. Each packet is for a particular child caught in a cycle of poverty, giving people an opportunity to rescue children from poverty by sponsorship. You should understand that Compassion International has been doing this for 50 years. They have kind of got it figured out. They have formulas, and they know that at any given time they need to bring this many packages to a church that’s appropriate to the size of the church and how many packets are going to get sponsored so they don’t run out.

They screwed up last week. You guys sponsored every single one of the 300 packets that they brought. That is awesome. I love that. If you sponsored a child last weekend, understand you didn’t just make a difference this that child’s life. I heard people going, “I love that I can make a difference in a child’s life.” You didn’t just make a difference, your gift literally breaks the cycle of poverty in their life, and it’s done in Jesus’ name. For a huge number of those kids, like, you didn’t just give them food, clothing, shelter, medicine, you gave them eternity. You gave them eternal life. That’s just awesome. I just love that. Thank you.

Hey, we are going to be picking up our study where we left off last week in the Book of Daniel, so if you want to go ahead and grab a Bible, I would love for you to turn to Daniel 4, and we are going to be picking up with kind of an interesting part in the Book of Daniel. That is it’s not a story about something that happened as much as it’s a story by someone it happened to. We have a unique person telling the story today. Verse 1 says this, King Nebuchadnezzar. That’s not to say anything about him. This is King Nebuchadnezzar identifying himself because he’s about to speak.

To the nations and peoples of every language, who live in all the earth: May you prosper greatly. It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are His signs? How great are His wonders? His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; His dominion endures from generation to generation. Now, if this is your first time being introduced to Nebuchadnezzar, if you are joining us for the first time, you might hear that and hear his praise of God and go wow, this is clearly a very spiritual man. He’s like a Christian king. That’s awesome. If you have been here all along, you are going to realize this is a new Nebuchadnezzar. This is an abrupt shift. This is not the Nebuchadnezzar we have seen up to this point. Up to this point in the Book of Daniel, we have seen an incredibly arrogant man. We saw the same man last week basically say to Daniel and Daniel’s friends as he’s throwing them into the fiery furnace, what God can save you from my hand? Now he’s like, I know. That God. The real God. The Most High God. Something dramatic has happened in this man’s life. The question is, what? What has happened to change this man so deeply? Verse 4 says Nebuchadnezzar was home in my palace contented and prosperous. That’s a really important statement because it sets the stage for everything else that’s going to happen in this passage.
One of the things that's interesting is the word he chooses when he says he was "prosperous." This particular word can certainly mean prosperous. It can talk about financial prosperity. It can talk about prosperity in terms of power and influence and those kinds of things, but it's often a word used in the Bible to talk about a tree flourishing. It describes a tree that is flourishing so it spreads its branches really far out. Every time we have that language of a tree spreading its branches, flourishing by extending its branches, there's always this idea that there is a benefit to the creatures that live under the branches, so the flourishing is good for all kinds of others. It's interesting that Nebuchadnezzar chooses this kind of word because it hints at the reason God grants prosperity. It's the reason God grants power. It's so we can do good for other people. But interestingly enough, he also says "I was at home in my palace. I was at home in my palace."

That could also be translated "I was at ease." What he's saying is, my feet were kicked up. The La-Z-Boy was fully reclined. I was chilling out. I was contented. There is a disconnect here between these two concepts. What he's saying on the one hand, I had all of this prosperity God intended me to use to bless others, but on the other hand he's saying, I wasn't working very hard at doing that. That's not what I was doing with my prosperity, with my flourishing, and that's the core problem. He says, I had a dream. It made me afraid. As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me, so I commanded that all of the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me.

When the magicians and chanters and astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me. Finally, Daniel came into my presence, and I told him the dream. (He is called Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.) I said Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me. These are the visions I saw while lying in bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. It's height was enormous. The tree grew large and strong, and it's top touched the sky. It was visible to the ends of the Earth. It's leaves were beautiful. It's fruit abundant, and on it was food for all.

Under it, the wild animals found shelter, and the birds lived in its branches. From it, every creature was fed. You know, I said Nebuchadnezzar chose an interesting word to talk about his prosperity. He talked about a word that is often used to describe a tree that spreads its branches out, right? Here we see the image of that tree, don't we? It's a tree that spreads out its branches. Notice what he says. He says, on it was food for all and from it every creature was fed. That's provision. One of the reasons God gives power, so that we can provide for others. The other thing he says is, under it all of the wild animals found shelter, and the birds lived in its branches. That's protection. That's protection. We have the idea that God gives prosperity so that we can provide and protect, so we can care for others. That's the ideal. That's what this tree is supposed to be doing, but that's not what Nebuchadnezzar has been doing.

So, in the visions I saw while lying in bed, I looked, and there before me was a holy one, a messenger, an angel coming down from heaven. He called in a loud voice, cut down the tree and trim off its branches. Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it, and the birds from its branches. But let the stump and its roots bound with iron and bronze remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. There is a judgment that's happening. If you haven't figured it out yet, Nebuchadnezzar is the tree. Nebuchadnezzar is seeing an image. He's seeing a picture that shows him what he's supposed to be, why God has granted him all of this power and authority, but there is a judgment coming, because he's not doing what he's supposed to be doing. The ideal is not reality. We see that shift happening in the next verse. He shifts from talking about the tree. He's like, Nebuchadnezzar, in case you missed it, I'm talking about you, dude. He shifts to him now. He says let him -- not let the tree, let him be drenched with the due of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the Earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal till seven times pass by for him. The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms of the earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.

This may be the most important part of this chapter, because it's the heart of the lesson that we are supposed to learn. There are three lessons being given here about the nature of power, about the nature of authority, about the nature of influence, about the nature of prosperity, about why God gives it to anybody. Three lessons. I think it's interesting that he starts off by saying, let the living know. The verdict is coming so that the living may know. I think that's interesting. Why do you think he says I want the living to know this? Because the dead don't need to be reminded. These lessons he's about to teach, the dead of God. Yep. No question about it. The dead have come into this place where they realize the reality of who God is. They have learned these lessons about power. Maybe they know these lessons to their rejoicing, and maybe they learn the lessons to their sorrow because of how they have lived. They don't need to be reminded, but you and I do.

Because there is something about the world that we live in that tends to obscure these fundamental truths about power. Here are the three lessons. Lesson number one. God is 100% in charge of every kingdom. That's your first lesson; God is 100% in charge of every kingdom. He says the Most High is sovereign over all of the kingdoms on earth. Sovereign just means in charge. It means he has the ultimate authority. He's 100% in charge over every kingdom. Here's the thing. Sometimes we hear the word kingdom, and he's talking about kings, presidents and rulers, maybe even governors, but it's political. It's nations and that kind of thing. Here's something I want you to try to grab a hold of today. We all have a kingdom. Every one of us actually has a kingdom.

Because here's the way I think about a kingdom. A kingdom is any place I have the recognized authority to change how things are in that place. Do you hear me? It's any place where you and I have the recognized authority to change how things are in that place. We can change things in
places we don’t have recognized authority, but we'll set that aside. Every one of us has places where we are the recognized authority. We have the ability to change how things are in that place. Maybe you are the CEO of a corporation. That's your kingdom. It's a place where you can change how things are. Maybe you are a manager of a division. That's the place you can change how things are in that place. Maybe you are a mom or a dad. You can change how things are in that family. Maybe you are a five-year-old kid, and your kingdom is the dog, right? You are in charge of the dog, or the cat – well, okay, nobody's in charge of cats, you know what I'm saying? Or maybe it's your room. The room is the place you are in charge. You are the recognized authority.

Some of the parents are like, hang on a second. Did you just tell my kid that he's in charge of his room? Yeah, I did, but understand, it's not an absolute authority. Any kid in charge of his room, he's in charge over his room but under the authority of who? His parents. Any parent who has authority over their family is ultimately exercising that authority over their family but under the authority of who? Of God. Because who is 100% in charge? God. That's your first lesson. God is 100% in charge of every kingdom, however big, however small, however literal, however figurative. We all have kingdoms, but God is 100% in charge of every kingdom on earth. That's the first lesson. Second lesson is this. Any authority we have we, and any place or sphere of influence, it's on loan from God. If God can give it out, what can he do? He can also take it back. What he says is this. The Most High is over all kingdoms of earth, and he gives them to anyone he wishes. If he gives them, he can also take them back.

Any authority we have is on loan from God. Again, I want to push on that word "authority." There is something about that word that makes us think we are talking about government officials, those kinds of people. But listen, authority is just a kind of influence. Authority is the ability to make things different. Influence is something we all have. Every one of us has influence. Sometimes it's formal. Sometimes it's informal. We all have influence. So, here's what we really need to be thinking. This principal basically says, any influence I have is just on loan from God. Whether it's influence in my corporation, in my division, in my family, in my room, over the dog, over the turtle -- whatever. You have influence over friends. They pay attention to what you do. You lead by example. You have influence in your neighborhood. Every moment of every day, we all exert a certain amount of influence. We can choose to use it for good. We can choose to use it for negative, but we have influence. What we have to understand, any influence we have is on loan from God. It's not ours. It's not intrinsic to us. It's on loan from God. The God who can give us influence can also choose to take it back.

That leads us to the third thing we need to understand, and that is that God loans us influence so that we can do for others. There is a reason why God gives us influence; it is so that we can do good for others. See what he says? He says he gives kingdoms to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people. It's a really interesting statement. He set over them the lowliest of people. That's messed up, right? Because the way we think about power in our world, is no, no, no. The people over kingdoms are the people over the most power. They are the most exalted positions, right? Yeah, not in God's economy. In God’s economy, the highest level of ruler in any particular kingdom is actually the greatest servant in that particular kingdom. What he's saying is, Nebuchadnezzar, you need to get this straight. You might have the most exalted position. You might have authority over this whole kingdom and all of the people in it, but the reason you are supposed to do it is so you can serve every single one of them. You are the lowliest because you serve the largest number of people.

Nobody else in the kingdom is responsible for serving as many people as you are. You are a servant of all. Jesus said something along those lines, didn't he? He didn't just say it. He demonstrated it. Paraphrasing, he said this, he said I didn't come to be served. I came to serve, to give my life as the ransom for many. Do you understand what that's saying? That the King of Kings, The Lord of Lords, the One who created a universe so vast we can't even wrap our heads around the outside edges of it, whose power and majesty is on display every time we take a breath, every time we glance at creation, every time we see the front range or look to the stars, we see how great and mighty and powerful he is, that King came to earth to be one of us. He was born in a barn. He washed his disciple's feet. He got in there between the toes, and he got the gunk and the grime out. You're like, no, no, no. That's too much. Not for my King it's not. Not for my servant King.

Then of course, ultimately, he demonstrated his willingness to serve us by doing what, by going to the cross, and dying in our place. He served us. We have this phrase in Christian circles. We talk about it a lot. Maybe you have heard it. It's called servant leadership. Have you ever heard that phrase? What I have come to understand, like I understand the point it's trying to make, but here's the thing. The idea of a servant leader is a redundant phrase. Because in God’s economy, there is no such thing as a leader who is not a servant. A servant leader is really a servant, servant. We have a word for leaders who are not servants. You know what it is? It's tyrant. People who take their positions, their God-loaned influence and authority and use it for their purposes, and let's face it. We all do that from time to time, don't we?

We use our positions. We use our privileges. We use our prosperity. We use our influence, to benefit us not those we serve. We do it in our families. Moms and dads, we do it. Kids, we do it. CEOs and managers, we do it, but our King came not to be served but to serve. That's my King. That's our King, right? The greatest among you is the lowest. The greatest among you is the one that serves the largest number of people. That's the third lesson. God loans out influence so we can do good things for others, because here's the thing, power shouldn't be used to lord it over others, but to lift them up. Power shouldn't be used to lord it over others, but to lift them up. That's the purpose we are given it. That's the reason we are given authority. That's the reason we are given influence so that we can lift others up so that we can do good for others. That's not how Nebuchadnezzar understood his power. This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar had, so now Belteshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me, but you can because the spirit of the holy gods is in you. And then Daniel, also called Belteshazzar, was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you.
Belshazzar answered, my lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies, and its meaning to your adversaries. The tree you saw which grew large and strong with its top touching the sky visible to the whole earth with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the wild animals, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds. Your Majesty, you are that tree. You have become great and strong. Your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky. You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth. Your Majesty saw a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven and saying cut down the tree. Destroy it but leave the stump bound with iron and bronze in the grass of the field while the roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live with the wild animals until seven times or seven years pass by for him. This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king.

Why? Why a decree? Why a judgment? Because the ideal isn't reality. The purpose is not what's actually happening. Nebuchadnezzar is not using his loaned power and authority and influences for the purposes it was loaned to him, so a judgment is coming. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times -- seven years will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth -- that's lesson number one. Until you learn it, he gives them to anyone he wishes. That's lesson number two. The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that heaven rules. When you learn lesson number one and lesson number two, then and only then will your kingdom be restored. Therefore, Your Majesty, be please today accept my advice. Renounce your sins by doing what is right. Learn lesson number three. Renounce your wickedness by doing what? By being kind to the oppressed. Lesson number three.

Use your greatness to do good. It may be then that your prosperity will continue, when and only when you use it for what it was intended. Nebuchadnezzar didn't learn the lesson. I don't know what he thought when the end of the vision was over, when Daniel's interpretation was done, but what we know in the next verse is this, all of this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. 12 months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said is not the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty. Oh boy, right? Like you did not just say that. Like he violated all three lessons, right? Is this not what I built as my royal residence? Like this is a testimony to my greatness. Who is in charge? I am. How have I done it? I have done it by my power, and my majesty. There is no realization that it has been loaned to him by God. And no understanding of the purpose, again, it's his residence. I have done it for me. God goes, no you haven't.

So even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven. If this is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar, your royal authority has been taken away from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals. You will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth. He gives them to anyone he wishes. Immediately, what was said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

There are two kinds of people in the room today. Some of you going, it's in the Bible, so it's happened. Okay. That's great. Some of you are a little bit newer to the scripture, and you are like, okay, that's some crazy stuff. Like really, that happened? I mean this guy is in need of serious, serious personal grooming at this point, right? Like, really, he lost his mind, he lived like -- yeah, he really did. We actually have a fragment of cuneiform. It's an old tablet. It's written in the Babylonian language. It dates back into the B.C. period, that actually talks about the period that Nebuchadnezzar seems to have had some kind of a mental breakdown, and it even hints at the idea that he was absent from the throne for multiple years. Yeah. It really happened. When did it come back? When did it turn around? Verse 34. At the end of that time, I Nebuchadnezzar raised my eyes toward heaven. Got them off of himself, and he raised them to the God who is 100% in charge, and my sanity was restored and then I praised the Most High. I honored and glorified him who lives forever.

What we are going to see now, when what he says, he acknowledges each of those three lessons about power. These three drum beats we have seen over and over again. God is 100% in charge. God loans authority to others as He chooses, and He loans authority so that we can do good for others. Nebuchadnezzar is going to acknowledge each of them. Listen. His dominion is an eternal dominion. His kingdom endures from generation to generation. He's saying, I get it. God's in charge, not me. As powerful as my kingdom might be, it doesn't hold a candle to His. His dominion is an eternal -- it's going to be going on and on and on after mine is gone. My kingdom, impressive as it might be, it's destined for dust, but not His kingdom because he is so much higher. He is 100% in charge. He is King of Kings.

And all of the peoples of the earth, they are regarded as nothing. Understand, He's not saying that human beings have no value. No, no, God loves you. God loves you enough to send His Son to die for you. He didn't do that for somebody who has no value. You have incredible value to Him. When he says the peoples on earth are regarded as nothing, it's a relative thing, especially when it comes to power. None of our power, none of our ability holds a candle to God. A candle is the wrong way to think about it. It's like a birthday candle, you know the things you can't walk the birthday cake anywhere without them blowing out? Those weak, ineffective, inefficient flames? Compare that to the sun, and you will see what He's talking about. It might look impressive in a dark room, but held up to the sun, there's just nothing going on there. That's our authority. That's our power, and He, God, does as He pleases with the powers of heaven. He gives them as He chooses. That's lesson number two, right?

He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him what have you done? I get it, He says. Any authority we have, it's on loan from God. And then lesson number three, at the same time that my sanity was restored, my
honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. You might no, wait a minute. I thought lesson number three was that God loaned us influence so we can do good for others. He said his kingdom was restored for the glory of his kingdom. His might and power and splendor -- he’s backsliding already. No, no, no. He’s just had a fundamental change of what he understands his kingdom to be. His kingdom is no longer his royal residence. His kingdom is the people in his realm. He says, I was given back power and authority. I was given back all of this so I can care for my kingdom. I can care for the people, and so my advisers and nobles sought me out. I was restored to my throne, and I became even greater than before. Why? Because now he understands what that loaned power and influence is for. Now Nebuchadnezzar, I praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven because everything He does is right and all His ways are just. Those who walk in pride, He is able to humble.

Yes He is. And He will. He will. Three incredibly important truths. Three incredibly important lessons we need to understand. Lesson number one, God is 100% in charge, so humble yourself or be humiliated. It’s not a fun lesson, but it’s a really important one to get a hold of. God is 100% in charge. As much power and authority, you might have in whatever sphere God has allowed you to have it, your power and authority, it not only pales in comparison to His, but it is only because of His mercy and His grace that you have anything. God is 100% in charge, so humble yourself or be humiliated. One of the themes we have said over and over throughout this series that we see time and time again is the idea that God rebukes the arrogant, but He rewards the humble. In Nebuchadnezzar’s case, when he finally humbled himself, not only did he get back his power and authority, not only did he get back his influence, but he got it back even greater than before. That’s the reward. But God’s 100% in charge. Figure that out.

How do I do that? How do I develop that kind of humility? We can talk a lot about humility. I think there is a lot of misunderstandings about humility, but just staying true to the text here and staying very close to what God says in the story, I would say actually dealing with humility and developing the kind of humility that’s necessary is really, it’s the second lesson we understand, and that is that humility comes from remembering that our influence is on loan to us from God. Humility comes from remembering our influence, whatever it is, it is on loan to us from God. We don’t have influence. We don’t have power. We don’t have authority. We don’t have our kingdom, whatever it happens to be because we are great, because we are incredible, because we are gifted, because whatever. No, we have it because it’s on loan to us from God. I’m going to be vulnerable with you.

I want to be vulnerable with you. I want to share something with you. I’m hesitant to because what I’m about to say can be very easily misunderstood. But I feel like I need to model this in the way that we are supposed to understand it from the story, so I’m going to tell you that I have a lot of influence. Leading a church this size and in several other ways, God has allowed me to have a tremendous amount of influence. Honestly, it’s terrifying. If I can just be really vulnerable with you. When I’m writing messages, and praying through them, and knowing that I’m going to get up and say them in front of thousands of people and multiple thousands of others are going to watch them around the world, and then multiple thousands of others are going to download them and listen to them on podcasts, there is a big part of me that doesn’t want to say anything. It’s scary to have that kind of influence. But you understand that -- here’s the really vulnerable part, I know that I have that influence because I’m a gifted communicator. I know some of you are like, how arrogant is this guy? That’s the fear because I know it can come across that way. Here’s the thing, I don’t believe we glorify God by denigrating the gifts he gives. Nebuchadnezzar didn’t do it. He said I became more powerful than ever before because He gave it to me. We don’t glorify God by denigrating the gifts -- I understand, I’m a gifted communicator. I don’t glorify God by saying, I’m not gifted. I glorify God by saying I am what? Gifted. You see that word? I’m gifted. It’s not me. I didn’t develop the ability to communicate like this. This is a power from God. It is a blessing from God. It is a gift from God, and I work hard to steward it well, but I know -- believe me, there is not a day that goes by, not even a portion of a day that goes by that I don’t live in the reality that this is a gift and the influence that comes with it is on loan from God.

Some of you have powers of positions. Those positions are on loan to you from God. Humility comes from remembering that. Some of you have positions because you are gifted at things. Every one of us has stuff that God made us good at. Listen, you are not humble because you are like, I’m not any good at this. You are actually refusing to give God glory for the gifts he’s given you at that moment. You don’t glorify God by denigrating the gifts. You glorify God by acknowledging the gifts and remembering that they are gifts, and they can be taken and the influence that goes with them can be taken away. Parents, neighbors, friends, bosses, managers, employees -- any influence you have is a gift. That’s where humility comes from. It’s remembering that reality. Lesson number three. Our influence has been loaned to us so we can do what? So we can do good for others. So we can do good for others. God didn’t make me a gifted communicator so that I could build a big church, so that I could experience respect and honor and all of those kinds of things. No, God gifted me as a communicator so I can equip you to be what God intended you to be which is the hands and feet of Jesus.

To equip a person who realize that church is not a place we come to sit in, it’s a mission that we choose to be part of. My job is to equip you to be “The Church.” The people of God engaged in the mission of God. That’s the only reason I’m gifted as a communicator so I can lift you up and help you to be what God intended you to be. It’s the only reason. Now, understand, doing good for others doesn’t always mean making them happy, so I’m occasionally going to say some things with my gift of communication that will make you realize, I need to repent. I’m not doing this right. My job is not to make you feel good. My job is to do genuine lasting good with my gift. Parents, you understand exactly what I’m talking about. Bosses, you get it. Listen, we thrive only when we humbly use our God-given influence to do good for others. That’s your big take away. We thrive only when we humbly use our God-given influence to do good for others.

Three questions for you. Question number one, in what areas has God given me influence? Identify them. You probably have more spheres of influence than you realize. Wrestle with that. Question number two, in what ways have I used my influence arrogantly. We all have. Where is
God calling you to learn humility, as parents, as employees, as bosses, as neighbors? In what way have I used my humility arrogantly, or influence arrogantly? The great news is that when we identify them, when we lift our eyes to heaven, when we confess our sin, we are forgiven, and we move forward from there. Sometimes we have to go through that difficult process of realizing, I screwed it up. God, I’m sorry. I forgive you. He goes, absolutely. Now let’s get busy doing what we are supposed to be doing. Third question, how can I use my influence to do good for someone today? Every one of you has a kingdom. Every one of you has influence. It has been loaned to you for the purpose of doing good for others. How can I use my influence to do good for others today? There is probably a lot of different ways you can do that, but I want to make sure we don’t forget about one really important one. That is the greatest good you can do for anybody is to introduce them to Jesus Christ.

The greatest good you can do for anybody. The greatest good you can do with your influence is to introduce someone who doesn’t know Jesus to Jesus. To speak the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them. Maybe that means you use your influence to invite them to come to church, or maybe it means you use your influence to share the good news of what God has done in your life and let them know he wants to do the same thing in their life. There are lots of ways we can do good. I’m not putting any of the others down, but I want to make sure you don’t forget this one. Because there is no greater good that you can do with your influence than to introduce somebody to Jesus Christ. Would you pray with me?

God, we acknowledge that you are great and mighty and 100% in charge. It is astounding, and it is perplexing on some level that you would loan influence, power, authority to us, that you would give us all a kingdom of some sort. Lord, we confess the ways we have used our influence arrogantly to benefit only ourselves. We ask for your forgiveness. We rejoice in the fact that we know we have it. We ask for wisdom from your Holy Spirit to use that influence for the purpose that you gave it to us. We don’t want to learn the lesson the way Nebuchadnezzar learned it. We just want to be able to learn the lesson that the story teaches us. In Jesus’ name, amen.