

Well, good morning, Grace Hills. As you are seated, I got to tell you that song just gets me every time. I was standing over here during the music, and I sometimes like to just be out here in praise and worship and then come up on stage, but one of my worst fears as a pastor happened. I got the hiccups right before preaching, so I had to go run out of the room. I thought, "Well, I got to get back in the right frame of mind," so I came down the hallway here to the back stage. As I came back, one of the worship pastor's kids was back there listening to Justin Bieber. I heard, "Baby, baby, baby, oh," and I thought, "Okay. I'm ready to preach." I'm glad that you guys are here, glad that you're here for the kickoff of a whole new series called Made For More. We're going to talk about how you're made for more, about how each one of us is made for more than what we usually find ourselves doing and living into in our lives.

Before I jump into the message, though, I want to promote something. I don't usually promote things in a message, but this one is big and personal and very deeply meaningful. In just a couple of weeks, we're having our big serve day. If you haven't signed up, if you haven't jumped in, this is our kind of once or twice a year. We set aside a Saturday to just go out and serve our community through multiple kinds of projects. Some of you, it's people-oriented stuff like serving people directly. Others, it's building something or maintaining some kind of building and grounds or landscaping. There's lots of projects to pick from, and I just want to challenge you to pray about how to get involved because I really believe that you don't discover what life's all about if you just spend all of your time focusing on how I can be happy and how I can be better.

When I start thinking about other people, that's a game-changer, so this is kind of a mental shift. Every time we do this, it's a reminder that life is not just about me. If you haven't signed up for that, you can go on our website and do that and just pick a project that you love, but know that it all kicks off right here at 9:00 AM. There's kind of a kickoff rally at 9:00 AM that Saturday, and then everybody will split apart and go do different projects. There's a shoe giveaway here and several other things going on. Just keep all that in mind. Okay? Let's jump into this and talk about how you were made for more. Not long ago, well, it was long ago, long time ago, when Angie and I first got married, and we lived in Central Arkansas, and we were living in the greater Beebe metro area, and we were commuting to Conway for school.

We had this awesome little car. It was a Dodge Spirit, and this thing was an amazing four-cylinder machine. One day, I noticed as I was driving it it kept slowing down on me. I'd have the gas. We'd be doing 45 or 70 or whatever, and it would just start slowing down. Pretty soon, I would floor it, and it would do 20 or 25. Sometimes we'd have to stop and pull off the side of the road. You could give it a few moments, and it would speed back up. I didn't know what that was all about. I didn't have a clue as to how to diagnose or fix something like that, so I took it to one of our church members who was at our church in Beebe. He said, "Oh, we'll take care of it for you." He takes the car, and I don't know what they're going to do, but he brings it back. He goes, "Yeah, we took out the catalytic converter." I'm like, "Don't you need that? Isn't that illegal?" "Oh, don't tell anybody, you know. It will run fine now," but it didn't. It didn't change a thing.

Now we've got an illegal car with no catalytic converter, and it's still not going very fast. I'm driving down the road one day, and it's doing it. I'm going like 10 miles an hour with it floored. Finally, I pull into this little mechanic shop on the side of the road, and he puts it up on the racks. He takes the wheel off, and the brake drum is solid red, he says basically on fire. As he diagnosed it, he said, "Your master cylinder's malfunctioning, and it's applying your brakes. The whole time you're driving, your brakes are

being applied even though you're not touching the brake pedal." Now, costs us, I don't know, 30, \$40,000 to fix that at the time, but we got through that moment.

As I've lived a lot of life, I've had to come to realize that sometimes I make it through life that same way, like I know what I want to do, and I have these thoughts about what I want to accomplish and who I want to become and how I want my character to grow and the goodness I want to grow into or maybe it's the career or the money or the marriage or something that I want to improve or scale up in some way, and I'm giving it all I've got, and I am just stuck. You ever been there? I think we live in a world with millions of stuck people. They've got their pedal to the metal. They're trying. They're pushing. They're driving. They're hustling. They're grinding, and they're not getting to the destination. I want to say to those people, because I know that I've been in that spot different times in my life, and I know people, and we live in a community filled with tens of thousands of people who get stuck sometimes or remain stuck all the time.

I just want to say you were made for more, that God's intention for your life is greater than you have imagined so far. Now, I would say that to someone who is not a believer, not a Christian at all, that God, who made you, has a purpose for your life that is far more significant than you have begun to imagine or to experience. When you begin a relationship with God, with the creator, you will start to explore that and to grow into that and to discover what that's all about, but I would also say to the person who's been a Christian for a long, long time and is growing in your faith, and you're getting time with God, and you attend church, and you're in a small group, and you're serving other people, you're doing all the things, I would also say, no matter how mature you have become, there is still more for you as well.

God's designed it that way, so there's always more to explore. There's always more adventure to live out, so to speak, in the Christian life. I was made more for more, and you were made for more. I want that to be the truth that we unpack for the next six weeks. We're going to tackle different areas of life over the next few weeks like the fact that we were made for more than just being stuck in a rut. We were made for more than just scraping by. We were made for more than just worry and anxiety. We were made for more than just a constant mess in our lives. God has a pathway to victory, to maturity, to growing, to achieving. God has this plan, this pathway for us to walk, and it leads to more. No matter where you're stuck at in your life, God has more for you. I promise you that.

Think about it like this. When God says your life is here on the current spot on the timeline of history and if you follow Christ, if you have a relationship with him, then where you are headed is heaven. When the Bible describes heaven, it's this new heaven and this new earth and this place of no more pain or sorrow, this continual, constant, great relationships forever and forever with God and all of his people. There is always more for you ahead, but I want you to understand that that connects back to the present moment in this life. It doesn't just start when you die. Don't come in and go, "Okay. There's more for me, and I'll experience it if I can ever just get to the grave." No, it begins the very moment that you come alive spiritually and awaken in your relationship with God. In that moment, you get to experience more.

Now, let me talk for just a minute about why many of us are stuck. I think that sometimes it's obvious. People are stuck because of an addiction. People are stuck because of a pattern of sin. People are stuck because of poor choices. Sometimes we get stuck in a relationship that is not healthy for us. It's harming us. It's hurting us. Those are kind of the obvious cases. We can look at someone and go, "Yes, it's obvious that someone who is stuck in an addictive pattern of unhealthy, destructive choices is going to

be in a spot where they could definitely experience more in life." We want them to have freedom. We want them to experience breakthrough. We want them to be healed, to be changed, to be saved, to be renovated and regenerated. That's what we desire for people who are obviously stuck.

Maybe you've been there in your life. Maybe you're there right now, and you need to know that when you're in a spot of being obviously stuck that God loves you as much as he loves anyone else on the planet, that his Son died for you, that he's ready to rescue you and save you and pull you out of that. The Psalmist wrote, "He's the one that pulled me out of the miry clay. I was stuck in the pit, in the mud, and he set my feet upon a rock." God wants to do that for you if you're in a spot of being completely stuck, but I think for a lot of us in the room, there's kind of a second version of what stuck looks like or what being made for more looks like. That is that we're kind of settling for something.

I would put it this way. Too many of us pursue our own version of more instead of God's version of more. In other words, in our American culture, in Western culture, we're all about more. We're very into the idea of achieving and climbing and pursuing and getting things lined out. We often times will take all of our energy and our passion and our love and our relational ability, and we will pour it into the pursuit of things that are good, but they are not God's best. When you live your life pursuing money, and you make it, and it comes flowing in, and you're now wealthy, and at the end of that, I've talked to people who are multimillionaires who will say, "At some point in the journey, I had earned plenty. I had earned enough to live on the rest of my life, and I looked at and said, 'There must be... What? There's got to be more.'"

Or people who pursue one relationship after another, they just go from one guy, one girl to the next, and it's sexual experiences and relationships that are short-lived and short-term. It's just one after another. That seems like, from the outside looking in, it might seem to be a life of fun, a life of adventure. Yet, when you talk to somebody who is successfully pursuing that kind of life, so often, they will say, "Just feels like I was made for more. I just can't figure it out," because a lot of us are pursuing our version of more. We've substituted something in, some kind of pleasure, some kind of success, some kind of picture of what life is supposed to look like according to the American dream or whatever else it is, but we're missing out on God's best, on God's version of more.

Let's talk for a second about what God's version of more looks like. In John chapter 10 verse 10, Jesus gave what is one of my favorite verses in the New Testament. I think it is underrated and overlooked. When Jesus said this, he said a mouthful. He said in John chapter 10 verse 10, "The thief," and he's not directly referencing Satan, but he certainly is suggesting that we need to know who the thief is in our lives. He's giving a picture of what it is to be a shepherd, the great shepherd like he is. He's saying, "The thief," the one who comes to steal the sheep, "The thief comes in order to steal, and kill, and destroy." Our enemy sneaks into our life, and whether he just takes it all away and wrecks us and destroys us or gives us lots of counterfeits and substitutes and second best to follow, whichever plan of attack it is, his ultimate goal is to steal or to kill or to destroy. That is what Satan wants to do.

I believe that if you follow Jesus or if you start thinking about following Jesus, Satan starts to hate you more. The closer you get to God, the more of a threat you are to the power of darkness in this world and the more of a target you become. The thief wants to do anything he can to steal life from you, to kill, to destroy, to dampen and water down whatever fiery passion it is that you once had in your spiritual life. The thief comes along to take all that away, but then Jesus says this, "But I, Jesus, came that they may have and enjoy life and have it in abundance." That abundance means to the full, till it overflows. Jesus,

unapologetically, this is one of the times, Luke 19:10 is another, several other verses, but this is one of the times when Jesus says the words, "This is what I came for." Jesus describes coming to earth, and he says, "Here's the reason, here's the purpose, why I came."

He came to redeem us from the power and the penalty of sin. He came to purchase us back to a relationship with God. He came for those reasons. The plan of redemption is obviously the big goal that Jesus lived his life for, but he also says very plainly, "I also came that you might have more," that you might have life abundantly, that your life means more, that it is full to overflowing when you follow Jesus Christ. Now, let me just explain what that doesn't mean. That does not mean if I follow Jesus, all my problems go away. If I follow Jesus, everything gets easy. If I follow Jesus, all my circumstances will just work themselves out. Everybody will like me. I'll get the promotion at work because now I'm a Jesus follower. No, sometimes the exact opposite happens.

Sometimes you follow Jesus and, because of that, people start to not like you as much. There are whole countries where it's illegal to be a Christian for all kinds of reasons, where people meet underground. Even here in our Western culture, you will suddenly come across to some people as judgmental even when you try hard not to be or you'll come across as being superior even though you're trying really hard to stay humble and to be everybody's friend. There's just this kind of subliminal perception about those who are the religious types even though religious people killed Jesus. That's a lesson for another day, but, nonetheless, we sometimes will get in a spot where we miss out on what Jesus really came to bring us. He came to bring abundance, fullness, overflowing so that even in the midst of difficult circumstances, right in the middle of pain, right in the middle of loss, when you're being tempted, when you're being tried, when everything is going away, when the economy crashes, and the company downsizes, and you're struggling financially.

When you can't seem to just make it click in your marriage, and you're wrestling through some relational issues and can't seem to communicate well, when your kids are going through a hard time, when your kids hit a certain age, and all of a sudden they become like a completely independent person with the opposite views of you on everything else, when those moments come in life, it is still possible in those hard moments of life to live abundantly, to live full, because where this fullness comes from is not my external circumstances, is not my physical health. It's not what happens to the shell called my body. It's not what happens in my bank account. It's not what happens in my world, my environment, my economy. The fullness of Jesus comes from within. He promised, "If I go away to prepare a place for you, I'm going to send this comfort or this Holy Spirit. He's going to come into your life. He's going to fill you. He's going to indwell you. He's going to take up residence inside you, and he'll be there forever and ever."

When you follow Jesus, God is in your life. In other words, let me unpack this this way. God made you for a life of more, more love, more peace, more hope, more purpose, more of him. When you decide, "The one thing I want most in my life, that I'm going to choose to desire above all else, is I want more of Jesus. I want more out of my relationship with Christ. I want more of the creator's plan for me. I want more of him, more of a relationship with him. I want him to get the glory. I want him to be the source of power. I want him to be the one who receives the credit. I want to live for him. I want to know him. I want to dive deep in my walk with him. I want more of him," then you get all of the other things that Jesus is in your life, all the things that Jesus brings to hopelessness, all of the hope that he speaks over, that you have greater hope in your life.

When the rest of the world is chaos, you have peace. Churchill even said during World War II, "It is Christ or it is chaos." Instead of the chaos, I get Christ. I get the fullness of who God is. I get more of him. Ephesians chapter three verse 20, this is just a fragment of a sentence, but I want you to hear this part of it. He says, "Now to him," to God, "who is able to," and, again, this is the Amplified Version. We're kind of getting what these words mean, "He is able to carry out his purpose and do," and I love this word, "super abundantly more than all that we dare ask or think, infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams, according to his power that is at work within us." God, his ability, his power that is at work within me, is super abundantly more than I have even begun to think about.

You can't dream, even where the impossible can happen in your head, you can't dream big enough to match the super abundant power and ability of God, who's at work in your life. He is that powerful. He is that good. I used to, when I was a kid, while all the rest the kids were doing homework, I'd be imagining things. You may have a kid like that, and you keep wondering why like I hand them socks in the morning. I'm like, "Put this pair of socks on by the time I come back in the room," and I come back in the room 12 minutes later, and there's no socks on the kid, and the kid doesn't know where the socks are. His mind is elsewhere. Right? I used to do that. Tests would come. Homework, and all the other kids would be doing their work. I'm just daydreaming about stuff. I was a big baseball fan when I was a kid, and so I was stealing bases like Rickey Henderson in my mind. The crowds are going wild.

In my mind, where the impossible can happen, where my imagination can come up with almost anything, where you can go, "Here's a life I desire," and it's like your own private island with some kind of mansion or maybe you're more noble than that, and it's like you run a nonprofit that's the biggest in the world, and you're feeding millions of hungry children. Whatever you can imagine, whatever you dream, whatever brings a smile to your face, you go, "Man, that's the life I want," it's not even close to what God's able to do. He's the creator of the entire universe. He governs it. He sustains it. He made life happen, and he keeps life going. He's this miraculous God who started time and will stop time someday. God, who is in charge of everything, lives in you. He who is in you can super abundantly, more than you can dare, ask, or think, infinitely beyond your greater prayers, hopes, or dreams.

1 Corinthians chapter two verse nine says this, "But it is just as the scriptures say, 'What God has planned for people who love him is more than eyes have seen or ears have heard. It has never even entered our minds.'" Unless you think that verse is just about heaven, the context gives evidence it is not. The context is about the Christian life, that you and I, in this life, in our walk with Jesus, we have not even begun to ask or imagine or think or even daydream about the possibilities when you fully surrender your life to the power of God. I want to give you a challenge to live life in a different way, and I want to give you a sort of a picture of what that's all about. I want to encourage you to live what I would call, what others have called, a plus ultra life. If you've never heard this before, this fascinates me.

I want to show you a picture of the Strait of Gibraltar. Anybody ever been there? Nobody. If you look at a map of Europe and Africa, you've got the Mediterranean Sea in between. You have the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, and this little break between them. That little spot between them where the two landmasses come together and almost touch, that's the Strait of Gibraltar. It's where the Rock of Gibraltar is. In ancient times, pre-Columbus, Europeans thought that's the end. That's as far as we go. These two landmasses are often referred to as the Pillars of Hercules, and story says, we don't have pictures. They didn't have Kodaks back then. Story says that what was inscribed on the Rock of Gibraltar was this Latin phrase, "Non terrae plus ultra." What that literally translates into, "No land further beyond."

When ships are sailing, and they head out of there, we want to warn them. There's nothing beyond this. Don't go out there because when you go out there, there's nothing. Probably, at some point, there's just like a waterfall off the end of the earth just like in Asgard in Thor. Nothing further beyond. A lot of people live life that way until Europeans discovered that there was something on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, that there was land here. They weren't the first to discover it, by the way. 12,000 years ago, there's some people that came down from Russia. It wasn't Russia then. Nevermind. Long history lesson, but the point is that, all of a sudden, Europeans, Westerners, go, "Wait a second. This whole time, we've been living a limited life. We thought there was nothing further beyond."

As story goes, they scratched off the first two words. Now, what was left on the Rock of Gibraltar was the phrase, "Plus ultra." It was the Latin phrase that meant, "Further beyond." There's like way more out there than you've experienced so far. A lot of us are limited by our experiences. We have adjusted our personal vision of life and God down to be comfortable and to align with what I have experienced so far. You know, maybe I started out at age 18, 19, and I had big dreams for the world. One of my favorite lines in It's a Wonderful Life is when Jimmy Stewart's talking about, "I'm going to see the world," and he goes through all this vision. Then, you know, years pass, and he hasn't done it. Maybe that was you, "I'm going to see the world. I'm going to explore and experience all that God has. Life is going to be amazing. I can't wait to get started." Then, things came along.

Maybe you feel like you got married, and marriage wasn't what you thought it would be. You grew different and grew apart. Now, it's disappointing, and it's difficult. You had kids, and you love your kids. You love them like nothing else on earth, right, but there are parental challenges. They throw things at you, and they're not supposed to do that. You've dealt with the challenge of this. Work, man, you really thought you'd just skyrocket the ladder, and you've have a book published by now and speaking career because you've been so successful in your janitorial career, whatever it is that you have dreamed of doing. There's something that short-circuited along the way, and you start to adjust your vision back. You start to cut that back and go, "Okay."

We even start to say things to our kids as they get 15, 16, 17, and we even say things to them like, "Don't expect too much. I mean, try your best, but real success isn't for everyone," and we'll say things that indicate our vision has been paired down to match my experience thus far. Let me tell you there's something beyond. Now, I don't want you to come to this sermon series and go, "There's an abundance for me. That means I can make a lot more money than I'm making now." Maybe. I don't know. That's not really what I'm dealing with. Don't come and go, "I can be happier than I've ever been in my circumstances." I don't know. We're not talking about how to change all of your circumstances. We're not talking about how to change the size of your paycheck or your retirement account.

What we're dealing with in this message series is how to change your heart. It's how you change your mind. It's how to take your soul, your psyche, the part of you that nobody else sees or really knows and understands and expand that to break the chains of mediocrity and mundaneness and miserable living and say, "I demand more out of life because I follow the one who brings more. I follow the one who has more, more peace than this chaos, more purpose than this aimless life, more freedom than this addiction, more thriving than this deadness and this coldness that I feel. From deep within, I can overflow with abundance." Let me tell you how to get started. We're going to spend five more weeks going deeper and understanding in different areas of life how to have more than the mess, more than mediocrity, more than scraping by.

We're going to talk about all those things, but I want to talk real quickly about how you start. Ephesians chapter one verse 13 says this, "And you were also included in Christ." By the way, this is a lengthy sentence. From verse three of Ephesians one all the way through verse 14 is one sentence in the original Greek language, so we're just looking at the end of the sentence for a second. The end of the sentence says, "And you were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed," look at this next phrase, "you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is our deposit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of his glory." He says when you trusted in Christ, when you began your walk with Jesus, you were marked for more.

In that moment, you were sealed, and God gave you a promise that is unbreakable, that there is now more about your life than what you have experienced so far, than what you've imagined so far, that your body and your human mind, the way it is born into this world, can not yet fathom how amazing God's plan is for you, and you were marked for that. How do you step into this? Three things real quickly today. This is how you get started. A lot of you have done these things or you've done one or two of these things, but I want to challenge you to do all three of these if you've never done them before in your life to make sure these three things have happened in your life. The first one is this, hear the message of the gospel. Paul said, "When you heard the good news about Jesus, and you believed and were marked," it all starts with hearing the message of the gospel.

God wants this abundant life for you, and he wants this eternity for you, but the pathway to that is this one and only Savior, this message that Jesus Christ came to this earth and died for our sins, paying our penalty, so that we could be forgiven and freed. You got to hear that message. There is no other saving message on earth. There are lots of great books, lots of great teachings, lots of great ideas, and lots of great elements of philosophy that might even bear resemblances and pieces of truth from what God himself has authored, but there is one message, one plan that actually saves and changes and makes you something radically different than you were before. It's the message of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. It is life-changing good news. We got to get it out to people as quickly as possible because everybody needs to hear this. Right?

When I experience something good in my life, a great meal, I want others to go check out the restaurant or I see a great movie, I want others to go see it. I have a Savior who has changed me from the inside out, and I got a peace and a purpose and just a strength that only could come from God, and I got that by hearing the gospel. I want everybody to hear this message. I want you to hear that message. Number two is to respond to it, to put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. You've got to hear the message. You've got to let it soak in and let it sink in. When it does, you then have a decision to make. You put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and you say, "Okay. I'm going to receive him as the Son of God."

Now, it may be that you're visiting Grace Hills or you've been attending for a while, and you've not taken this step because you're not so sure yet. I want you to be sure. I want you to trust and understand that God made you and loves you and wants to save you. When you're convinced of that, that he's made you and he loves you and he wants to save you, then you can come to God and say, "I want to turn from my second best life. I want to turn from my version of abundance. I want to turn from my sin, my substitutes, my counterfeits. I want to turn from all that. I want to give the rest of my life to knowing Jesus." You put your faith and trust in him. Then, thirdly, you begin to receive all that God has for you. You will be receiving it the rest of your life.

Now, let me explain something. According to Ephesians one, everything you need is given to you the very moment you trust in Jesus. It's not that God has more for you that you don't have yet. It's that God has given you all of his heavenly resources, but throughout your life, you will grow in your experience of and expertise with what it means to be mature in Christ. You will begin in your walk with Jesus to receive all that he has for you. Jesus himself journeyed and traveled with disciples, and he told them, "Everything I'm teaching you is great, but you guys aren't getting it. Are you?" They're going, "Oh, yeah. We got it." Then, he dies on the cross. They're like, "Why did he die?" Then, he rises again. They're like, "What?" I mean, they just weren't getting it. Right? That's exactly how they said it too.

They weren't getting it. Right? Jesus told them, "You're not going to, but when I go, I'm going to send the Holy Spirit, and he's going to remind you of everything I said. He's going to teach you and bring you into truth. He's going to expand your mind more than you've even begun to imagine yet." Some of us grew up in a tradition that was all about number one and number two, hear the gospel, get saved, now you're good, but I think in order to experience abundance, I want all that God has for me. I want an intimate relationship with him through his indwelling Holy Spirit in my life. I want to experience his presence and walk with him every day, not just to have a new status, "I was lost. Now I'm found. I'm now saved. I'm a Christian. I'm okay," a new life, a new identity, a whole new way to live. It comes as you receive all.

When you talk to God about, "God, you mentioned in the Bible what the Holy Spirit can do for me. You mentioned in the Bible this idea of my faith expanding. You mentioned in scripture about prayer. You talk about knowing more of your will through your word. God, I want all that. I want all that. Bring it to me, Lord. I want all that there is," you start here. That's where it begins. Would you bow your heads with me? For just a moment, let me be really simple. If you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ, you haven't experienced the best life you possibly can yet. You've not experienced the abundance yet that he has for you. Maybe life's been okay. Maybe life's been really hard. Maybe life has been good, but God has more for you than you have begun to imagine. I want to just lead you in starting that.

If you're here, and you're not a Christian yet, you're not saved yet, you've never had a relationship with Jesus yet, it's as simple as saying from your heart to his, from your mind to God, of just expressing to him, "Father, I believe in you. I believe that you want to save me and change me and bring me to a life more abundant than I've ever imagined. I say yes to that. I'm turning from my sin. I'm repenting of my past. I am trusting in Jesus and receiving him as my Savior." You may be a Christian here today, but you've never lived in the fullness of God's power, and you might say, you might pray, "God, I know the gospel, and I've said yes to Jesus, but I've been missing out an intimate moment by moment relationship with you. I want to be filled with your Spirit, your presence. I'm asking you, God, to give me all of you in this moment. I want to experience the fullness of life in you."

He's super abundantly, more than you could ask or think or imagine or dream or pray, will pour into your life. If you're here this morning, and you're walking through brokenness, you've got an addictive pattern you just can't seem to struggle your way out of, you've got the pedal to the metal and just can not seem to get there, you just pray out of that moment, "God, I want more. You made me for more. God, please free me. Please break these chains. Please lead me into counseling, healing, relationships, small group, whatever it is. God, rescue me. Grow me." Lord, we love you. We're so thankful for that abundance. Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.