

**Sermon:** Do More Than Before

**Series:** Unlocking Talents for God's Kingdom (3)

**Bible Passages:** 2 Peter 1:3-15, 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

2 Peter 1: 3-8:

<sup>3</sup> His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, <sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. <sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together please.

*Father God, would you calm our hearts. For those of us who just walked in, feeling disheveled because we were late, or we've been on autopilot all morning. We did our thing, got ready, came to church, and now we're here but we haven't been thoughtful because it's been so cold and dark. Now that we're here Lord, we pray that your Holy Spirit would awaken us, make us alert, because we come before You and we come before Your Word. Every time we open Your Word, we acknowledge that we need to hear from you. Every time we open Your Word, we acknowledge that we are not fully living up to what you envision for us. Every time we open Your Word, we know that you will give us a loving and good word. Do that this morning. Encourage us, challenge us, lift us up, bring us low – whatever we need most this morning because You, Father, know each of us so well. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.*

One of the games that we used to play with the kids on our Nintendo Wii was Wii fit. It's a game counsel that has a Wii board, a little board that measures your walking and jumping. There's a running game; basically, you tell the machine you want to run a mile and you have to stand on the board or hold a remote and you have to run in front of the television. The running game has a Wii character running along in front of you; the idea is that his is your pace runner. As you run, you're supposed to keep up with this runner. As you would know, my family and I, especially my boys, we found numerous other ways to be entertained by this. My boys said "Baba (which means most awesome father), we want you to run really slow so the game system will get mad at you)." The character on the screen just stops and stands there. The pace runner keeps going, but eventually comes back and yells encouraging phrases as you. There's even a little dog that yaps at you; I guess that's supposed to be encouraging or motivating. My boys then said, "Baba, now try running really fast." My youngest one would take the controller and

shake it and the character on the screen would eventually tumble over and fall and get hurt. They would do it over and over again and get so entertained by it. Very Christianly of us.

We're playing this game, and it makes me think about how real running and real Christian life works. If you actually are ever trying to do an activity or learn about a new subject, there is this balance, apparently, between being too easy and too difficult. Something that is too easy requires no effort for you. When something is too easy, we feel really good about ourselves, we feel like, "I'm so smart" or "I'm really good at this" or "This is no problem", but eventually we get bored and wonder "What is the point of even doing this?" If you do something that is too hard, at first you think "I can beat this game or master this art form!" but at some point, after a few tries, you feel "This is too difficult. I'm too discouraged and this is too depressing."

I think we know this in life; in sports, the ideal training partner is either someone at your level, or a little higher. Once in awhile you're win, once in awhile you'll do okay, but either way, it stretches you. Who wants to play basketball four year olds? You can dunk on them all day and hold them all with one hand and then dunk on them. But on the other hand, who wants to play basketball with a bunch of seven-foot NBA basketball players? They'll be the ones dunking on you. The same is true for other activities. You come to the point in your life when you realize, this concept doesn't just apply for activities, but your entire life.

Have you ever come to the point in your life where there is nothing challenging you? It's kind of nice and fun. It feels like the beginning of a break, if you can remember breaks during your school years. The first couple days are nice, but after awhile, the same reruns on television keep playing and you feel like you cannot watch any more hours of YouTube. I guess the appropriate word for it is restless. It's one thing to be bored on a certain day or at a time, but what if that was your life? What if you were in a season of restlessness? What if you weren't growing spiritually or occupationally or physically? But at the same time, there might be a time in your life where life is hard and you're learning difficult lessons and you don't want to be there.

For a long time, I wrongly thought it was about time management. I thought that if I had too few activities, I'd be too bored and restless, and I'd add more activities. But then when I added more activities, I felt overwhelmed, like there were too many demands being put on me and I bit off more than I could chew. I used to think it was all about time management and there was a perfect balance where I had just enough activities and responsibilities that I was challenged and growing, but it's not that hard and I'm not overwhelmed.

This morning's message relates to our missions theme, which Pastor Billy Lo spoke about last week: Unlocking Your Talents for God's kingdom. The idea behind this theme is this, even if you're not a Christian, there is a place in your life where you can be not so bored and restless, but actually growing in a challenging, life giving way. It's like a good workout. A good workout is challenging and hard, and in the beginning you don't want to do it, but by the end of it you're glad you did it. It's like a difficult conversation. At the beginning, you're not looking forward to this difficult conversation, but by the end, you've grown, learned from it, and seen God work through it. Can you have that in all of your life? Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was a place in your life where you weren't just spiritually, occupationally, emotionally lethargic, but you're in a place where you're being challenged in a healthy way. It doesn't even matter whether or not you're a Christian. I think most people naturally want to be at that place.

This passage gives us three points of insight about being challenged in a good way:

1. What do we need to know and understand in order to live in a place where we are challenged in a good, positive way?
2. What do we need to do to put ourselves in that place?
3. How do we (through practices and attitudes) get to that place?

I think church is great place to have this sermon because I know that in my own personal life I have felt the church is boring. Yes the sermon is boring, the same songs, the music is too loud or too soft, etc. You know you're in trouble when you're going to church and although the service and preaching is wonderful, but you're still bored spiritually. The worst part about being there is that it doesn't bother or disturb us that we're at that place. As we go through a season of missions emphasis, this concept of boredom and challenge is something I want us to consider.

### **1. What do we need to know and understand in order to live in a place where we are challenged in a good, positive way?**

This is going to be a slightly more involved, longer point because I think the passage addresses it more. I want to direct our attention to 2 Peter 1. Peter is beginning his letter talking about God's Power. We're going to jump down to verse 5 where he begins his list of adding certain virtues to certain things. Let's take a look at 2 Peter 1:5:

<sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

What do we need to know? There are only two options for your spiritual life, according to Peter: you're growing or you're backsliding. There is a dichotomy here. You're either growing, progressing, advancing, moving forward with your spiritual life, or you're backsliding. Notice what he says. You're either increasing in these qualities or you've forgotten. Period. There is no such thing as maintaining or staying in the same place.

<sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

He's not talking about people who have never professed Christ. He's saying, "you've been cleansed but you've forgotten and therefore lack those qualities." The opposite of lacking these qualities is increasing in them. On another day in another sermon, we could focus on the nature of these qualities, faith, virtue, godliness, and knowledge, but today, in light of our theme and in light of the passage, what I really want to stress for us is this: in your and my spiritual lives, there are only two ways to be: growing or backsliding. If you say, "I don't know if I'm growing", you and I need to consider if we're backsliding. There is no happy medium.

When I went to California a couple years ago to visit my older brother, we did San Francisco thing. San Francisco has a street called California Street that is a very steep road; the ultimate, daunting thing is not only is it steep, but it's really narrow and windy. My dream that I haven't done yet because I don't think my family would let me, is to drive up that windy road in a manual, stick-shift car. My high school was on a big, long road called Silver Spur Road. At the time, in high school, I was driving a 1986 Buick Century, a big American car with a big American engine.

I remember that I was parked at a 30 degree angle (which is pretty steep) on this street and now had cars parked in front and behind me. I get into my car, turn on my engine, shift the car into drive, lift my foot off the break, and before I can put my foot on the gas pedal, and you can all guess what happened next. The car alarm of the car behind me went off and I fled the scene because I was not a very mature, experienced driver.

The point is: you're not designed to stay in the same place. There is no such thing as maintaining; you're either growing, increasing, and feeling the life giving stretching and challenge of what it means to learn more about life and learn more about God, or you will soon find that you lack those qualities. Yes you may be experienced in the Christian life and you have the Biblical knowledge, but we are either

growing or backsliding. Either you are growing and increasing or you lack them. I think we can see this concept in other areas.

If you've ever done any physical conditioning and you've reached an area you thought you'd never reach, it's just not a challenge anymore. There was a season when my brother didn't run or move more than 3 mph unless he was in a vehicle. One day, he just started running and eventually got to marathon condition after 10 years. Even then, he thought the marathon distance was boring, so he would start running double marathons with distances of 50 miles. Eventually, he found the double marathons boring and did ultra marathons with distances of 100 miles, where he would run for more than 24 hours through desert trails in Death Valley, CA. After that, he got bored and, except for a few marathons here and there, he stopped running.

Have you ever gotten to a point where you couldn't ever imagine getting to this level of performance but it doesn't challenge you anymore? It could be human pride or hubris, but more often than not, it's not. You did this particular activity because you enjoyed the challenge, but the challenge just isn't there anymore. That activity might be fun once in awhile, but you realize there are other things in life, and you're moving on because you weren't growing anymore.

Peter says this,

<sup>5</sup>...make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the other thing you need to know. For those of us who are interested in being fruitful for the Lord, in making a difference for His kingdom, in being impactful in the lives of others, the only way that we can ensure that we are being effective, is right here. We as a church need to be growing. Not necessarily adding new ministries and not necessary adding new facilities, although those are important and helpful. Individual people in the church need to be growing to the degree that all of us in here are willing to be challenged in our faith and our lives. We will be growing and our church will be healthy and fruitful. However, if we're relying on experience, reputation, or gifts and not being challenged, we may be experiencing fruitfulness for a season, but eventually it goes downhill because that is how life works. You're either growing and being challenged or you just get bored. Being bored spiritually is a hard place to be. I've experienced and seen it and maybe you can relate. I've only seen two outcomes: you either get a major big jolt, maybe from having a new discipleship program or a new church, or you quit.

Most of my friends in California who do not walk with the Lord anymore don't do so because of some incredible theological argument, some devastating philosophical blow to their view of God, or some evil terrible tragedy in their lives. Most of my friends who are in their late 30s and early 40s have just grown bored of Christianity. That's pretty scary. Boredom is the enemy of faith and growth in the Christian life. We're not being stretched. If you want to be fruitful and have an impact, you have to keep growing.

If you're not a believer, you can see this in the working world. If you're trying to demonstrate to your company or your employer that you're an important contributor, you want to grow and demonstrate you're a valuable employee. If you don't or stop growing, they're happy to keep you where you're at, which is fine, but then you realize at some point that you're bored and need a change. Maybe that's what we're saying spiritually.

The privilege and challenge of unlocking one's time, treasures, and abilities for the kingdom of God is not just another "Oh, here comes a number. They're asking for money again." Rather, it is an opportunity for us to understand if we're growing as people, as Christians for those of us who are, and as a church. The thing we have to understand is that you are either growing or you're backsliding; there is no choice in between. If you are not consciously and intentionally aware of growing, you won't.

There have been months where I know I've been preaching many sermons, but I think "I don't think I've been growing these past few months even though I've been preaching and learning things." I confess this struggle too. Here's this challenge. What do we need to know? To be effective and impactful and to derive some significance and difference for the God that we love, who sent His son on the cross for us, we have to be making every effort to grow. If that's what we need to know, what do we need to do?

## **2. What do we need to do to put ourselves in a place where we are challenged in a good, positive way?**

I want us to focus on that past part 2 Peter 1:8-10 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-7:

<sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.

What we need to do is we need to grow and practice these things. Here we trip on this incredibly potentially controversial topic of predestination and election and calling. What I want to say from this passage is this: the moral and spiritual growth of people does not earn the calling or election from God.

According to this passage, the growth of us spiritually confirms our calling and election. The way to know that you're still walking in the Lord, that you still really love and know Jesus, and that you're still His child is that you're growing in these things. If you're not growing, Peter says this: you may have forgotten or be in a prodigal's son kind of place or you better confirm your election and make sure you understand whether or not the Holy Spirit is at work in you. Notice he says, "add more".

To do this, I want us to turn to 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. I want you to remember a couple things as we go through this. This passage is going to point out specific things to do and I want you to really pay attention to those things.

**8** We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup> for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup> For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, <sup>4</sup> begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—<sup>5</sup> and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. <sup>6</sup> Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among youth is act of grace. <sup>7</sup> But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

You know what this is a picture of? This is a picture of one of the poorest churches of the New Testament era who recognized their own version of a super typhoon, their own version of persecution, and they wanted to donate money to the relief funds around the world during their time. They were the poorest of churches and they gave their means, even above their minds. Paul says they even went beyond that and they begged Paul, saying "Would you please take our resources and use them to help others in the name of Christ?" That's why Paul says in verse 7: <sup>7</sup> But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.

The idea of "excel" has nothing to do with a spreadsheet. It's the concept of moving forward. What do we need to do? It's the title of the sermon: do more than before. What do we need to do to be moved and to be challenged? Do more than before. How do we know that we are being challenged in a positive, life giving way? Do more than before. Like everything else, whatever you've been doing in your spiritual life, if you keep doing the same thing, you might be better than most people in the church, I grant you that. You might be better than those "sinners" in the world. God knows that in our hearts, the only thing that helps to measure your growth is where you were yesterday, the month before, the year before. For you and I to grow, it all comes down to this: if we're going to grow and increase in these areas, you and I need to do more than before – whatever that was. That's really the call there. That's how you proceed and advance. The concept of doing more than before is humbling.

Last night, as an exercise, my wife, Karen, my kids, and I took out two things. We took out the charity fund envelope for the typhoon relief and the blue missions pledge form. We give each of our boys an allowance because in my thinking, it helps them understand that they are giving a portion of their income. We give them \$0.50 a week, and they put \$0.05 in the offering because I want them to think that offering isn't putting whatever quarter Mama or Baba gives them in the bag, but giving whatever income the Lord provides symbolically representing everything being given to God. We're taking a look at relief envelope and realize that we need to be giving more. One of my boys says, "I gave my offering to the relief fund last week." We said, "That's very good, but if everyone did that, then there would be no heat or electricity at church."

God calls us to go beyond. How much of your portion do you need to give to missions? I was talking to Karen and I realized, in godly shame that our giving has not increased. Part of that is because our missions pledge as a church has not increased. However, I have to ask myself: has my income increased over the years? Has my standard of living increased over the years? Has my quality of life increased over the years? As an American of middle class, I have to admit, yes. God has blessed me with more income, more resources, more blessings, over the years. Our tithing has increased, but that's kind of straight forward. The fact that I haven't challenged my family to give more to missions is humbling in a very difficult way.

I can tell because I have access to all the missions financial information. We're doing okay and as a church in comparison to other churches around the world, we're doing really well. God hit me over the head with this passage. It doesn't matter what other people are doing. God was challenging me to do more than before.

I will bring us back to that practically, but first we've seen. What do we need to understand in order to grow? We need to know that there are only two options: we're either growing in a way that is uncomfortably challenging or we're backsliding. What that means is, in order to do something about it, I believe that Peter and Paul agree on the same thing. The only way to grow and improve yourself, not to earn God's confirmation or election, but to verify and confirm it, is to do more than before. Whatever you were doing, do more than before.

### **3. How do we do what it takes to live in a place where we are challenged in a good, positive way?**

I want to take us back to 2 Peter. How do we do more than before? We need to embrace reminders. If we understand that life is about growing or backsliding and that there is no in between and that we

need to do more than before, how do we do that? This passage says that we need to embrace reminders. Let's take a look at 2 Peter 1:10:

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. <sup>11</sup> For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. <sup>13</sup> I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, <sup>14</sup> since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. <sup>15</sup> And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

As a parent, I confess, when I get frustrated with my offspring, I'll say this, "You know, I shouldn't have to remind you!" I feel entitled to be angry and yell at them because I've told them so many times. I feel like they should know and I shouldn't have to deal with their forgetfulness. This passage says no. It says that being a parent is taking on the responsibility of reminding your children of the same four or five things for the rest of their lives. To be a small group leader or pastor is to not come in here and unload this great theological insight week after week, although that would be great. It's to basically remind most of us, Christians or non-Christians, the same simple things. God created us. We sinned. He loves you and sent His one and only Son to die for our sins. Accept that and respond by living for Him.

Life is about reminders, giving reminders with patience and grace and love, and receiving reminders with the same spirit. Look at Peter's spirit. He's basically saying, "I don't have a lot of time. I'm going to die soon. But I want to say these few last things, and actually, they're things you already know but I'm going to remind you anyway. By the way, I'm going to write these things down and make sure you remember these things when I am gone. I will make every effort that, after I die, you will be able to recall these things." It's reminders.

One of the hardest things for a preacher to hear is, "Oh, it was a good reminder." You know why? I think my suspicion, and I may be wrong, is that they really mean, "I didn't really learn anything new, but it was from the Bible, so I guess it was a good reminder." What if we actually said, "It was a good reminder. I needed reminding." What if we came to the Bible in our quiet times, not looking for new searing insight that is going to solve all our problems, but with the heart of, "God, I probably don't need to learn tons of new theological truths every day, but I need you to remind me, gently or firmly, whatever I need this day, remind me of something about you.

This is the how: we need to be willing to embrace reminders. Friends, we don't need to learn new things. I mean we all probably should and we probably will I hope. The fact of the matter is, for our lives, for our marriages, for our families, for our work, we kind of know most of what we need to know. We simply need to embrace the fact that we forget and that we need to be reminded. If you're a parent,

you'll be reminding people for another 40 or 50 years and if you're not a parent, you probably have parents who are reminding you. Eventually, when you get in-laws, you'll have another set of people reminding you. That's life. In an Asian context, reminding is a sign of love. It may come off as nagging: "Did you eat enough?" but they ask because they love you.

What do we need to understand in order to be challenged and grow, especially in the context of unlocking our talents for God's kingdom? We need to understand that there are only two places to be: growing, being stretched and challenged in a healthy but uncomfortable way, or you're coasting and sliding down a hill. Life, especially the Christian life, is a life of incline and steep slopes. Unless you're willing to grow and face that fact rather than have a comfortable life, you're not going to follow a savior that died on the cross. That's not the way.

We also need to understand what to do so that we can position ourselves, align ourselves with God's spirit, we need to do more than before, whatever we were doing. And how do we do that? We need to embrace reminders.

Now, some practical ways we can do more than before. Would you take out the blue missions pledge form? I want to challenge us to think about this. I trust that many of you have taken this home, prayed about it, talked about it as families, partners, roommates, I trust you did that. For many of us, it's still in our Bibles from last week. Let's go down this paper. There is a place for you to put information. Would you focus on the first block titled "My Commitment". If you're not a believer this morning, would you still consider this with us? "As a member of the body of Christ, I would like to grow in my awareness of missions. For this year, I would like to make a commitment to..."

Here's the challenge that struck me as I was praying over this passage. What if, on this form, in addition to all the things on this form you could say, there was a little box where you could put how much you've given in the years previous. Not for other to see, but for you to see. What if, for us to see, we could see our giving in the past. It's just been the same for the number of years, when other things financially have gotten better. You may wrestle with doing more than before and realize, "I cannot possibly do more than before. Things are different. I'm unemployed and things are harder." That's fine. The point is: do we go through that process? Do we ask "God, where do you want me to do more than before? What do you want me to do more than before?"

This church has been built on the generosity of poor, low-income who scraped together money to buy and renovate that building over there for what looked like a ridiculous amount of money. That generation, by the grace of God, is now being called home. The senior pastoral staff, who used to pay visits to people at their thriving, successful job places, are now visiting them at nursing homes. As that generation passes into eternity, by the grace of our Lord, the new generation must rise up. Individually there is a call to do more than before, but there is also a call as a church to do more than before.

Someone asked at the annual members' meeting, "how come the missions fund has not changed in the last several years?" How many of us get upset when we don't get a cost-of-living adjustment, yet missionaries don't? How many of us get upset when we don't get things we deserve? Michael's response was, "when we make the budget in June, we're often behind. What fiscal responsibility tools give us the right to increase the fund? That would come off as bad financial planning." Which is understandable. I would love it if every year, for the sake of their expenses and inflation, if we could increase our contribution to missionaries, increase support in praying for them, increase our awareness of them, learn at least one missionary's name. Are they honored and esteemed brothers and sisters, who aren't necessarily better than us, but have been given a unique and challenging calling.

What some of us need to be challenged by is not by me or the Bible, you just need to see what you've been doing the last few years. I think the Holy Spirit will speak volumes to us. This is not about shame or guilt. This is about an opportunity to grow as people. Some of you that I've talked to are considering doing things you'd never considered last year. Maybe it's considering an unhealthy relationship. Some of you have ministry opportunities coming up or you're facing now. You're being offered opportunities to lead things. Some of us have been given significant promotions, responsibilities, and raises and have opportunities to do more than before. Some of us need to focus at home and cut back things at church so we can do more than before at home.

Wherever you are, to unlock God's kingdom is not about money to one missions fund. It's about positioning ourselves and saying, "God, I don't want to be a bored, restless, listless person. I want to grow and to grow means to be challenged and to be challenged means to be uncomfortable and dependent and brought to our knees to pray. Because God is calling us, always, to do more than before.

This is what Jesus does. Theologically, we know Jesus has never done more; he has already done the ultimate. As a follower of Christ, I have this experience, and I hope you have this experience frequently as well: I appreciate more what God has done every year that I get older.

Recently I was being evaluated by my employer and my supervisor. He gave me my performance evaluation and he said things that were encouraging and challenging. As I've grown, I am seeing more and more that I am a pain in the neck. Hopefully I'm becoming less of a pain in the neck or I'm at least recognizing more that I am a pain in the neck to certain groups or people in my life. Sometimes I'll just go to people and say "thank you for doing this", not because they've done more than they have in the past, but because I appreciated now more what you did for me because I'm a little older and hopefully a little wiser.

I say that to my parents every time I see them. Every time my boys reach a new life stage, I think, "Oh man, three boys are a pain... oh wait, my parents had three boys. Thanks mom, thanks dad." That makes me hug my parents even harder. I'm scared that every day that goes by is another day closer to

when they go to eternity. That's the way it is with Jesus. When you feel the sting of criticism or the blackness of depressing or the fear of loneliness, you and I can go to those dark places and say, "Oh my God (literally), is this even a little glimpse of how Jesus must felt on the cross?" The incredible emotional pain and weight. The incredible isolation when all His friends abandoned him and betrayed him. The weight of evil and wicked sin of all human race. Jesus has never done more because He has already done the most. Every day that goes by, I think we as Christians, and maybe we as non-Christians, we can see how much He has really done for us. That is why we do more than before. We are still responding to what Jesus has already done for us.

*Heavenly Father, we know that this is so much more than a missions fund or raising money or doing stuff. We know this is a desperate need for us to just grow as people, to not become bored people drowning in our affluence, but to be broken hearted about things that break your heart Father and to be burdened by things that Your heart is burdened by.*

*We ask that You would challenge us and stretch us to do more than before, whatever that was. Not for other people to see and not so that we can feel good about ourselves, but because this is Your will for us. Jesus has given everything for us. He is our Savior, our Redeemer; He gave it all.*

*I pray that you would challenge us, this BCEC Chinatown English-speaking community, congregation, family. Lord, what do you want me to do more than before for the sake of your kingdom? What do you want my small group to do more than before? What do you want my family to do more than before? What do you want our church to do more than before for the sake of Christ who paid it all for us?*