

Sermon Transcript from September 18th, 2016 Creative Minority Panel Pastor Gerald Griffin, Bridgetown Church

Hey, so we have been in an awesome series called "Creative Minority," talking about what it's like to live as a follower of Jesus in exile, which we've kind of stolen from a Biblical motif and we've followed this guy, Daniel, and looked at his life. An example of a dude that was uprooted out of his home and his community and kind of his religious culture and sent to Babylon, which was the antithesis of everything that Daniel had grown up in. An environment that was pagan and totally anti his God and unjust and all of that. So, we've been looking at the life of Daniel in Babylon and making parallels to our life today as followers of Jesus in Portland.

And it's been pretty good, right? Yeah. I think so. Yeah. So, it's been super powerful teaching, but one thing we haven't done a lot of is tell stories of what that looks like. So tonight, these fine men and women are going to just share out of their lives and their experiences of kind of what it's like to live out this Daniel-like life, and I think it will be amazing. You guys, I'm sure, have your own stories. But, you didn't get picked. Just kidding. You got picked and you said "no" and these guys were bold. Just kidding. Actually, you didn't get picked. But, it's okay. You know what? Do a really good job this season and we'll see about next. You know what I'm saying? Work hard. Show the coaches that you mean it. We'll see.

I've had that said to me so many times. I wanted to... anyways. Let's pray.

God, thanks so much for what You've been teaching us as a church, and I know that this conversation has gone even beyond Bridgetown. We're so thankful, God, that You have called us to this moment in American culture and Christian culture to kind of wake up and look around us and take stock of what's real and what are the forces at work. And God, we're just asking a lot of questions. What does it look like for us to live out the way of Jesus in this moment? And I believe that tonight is going to be significant in kind of coloring in between the lines and clarifying on a day to day level; what it looks like tomorrow morning. So, God, would You do that?

Holy Spirit, would You come and, for each person sitting in here, for all of our friends and guests gathered here tonight, would You, God, speak directly to us about what this looks like, how we can draw parallels to Monday morning and our kind of day in, day out life. That's our prayer tonight. Spirit, would You come? We ask in Jesus' name, amen.

Awesome, guys. We're going to begin in the Scriptures. I'm going to read something to kind of frame this out of Jeremiah 29. If you have a Bible, turn there and we'll read it out loud together. Well, I'm going to read it out loud to you. You've got to be clear about that. Jeremiah 29. This is really interesting. This is the prophet Jeremiah, God's speaking to him and he's writing this letter to send to the exiles.

Jeremiah 29:1 begins like this: **"This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people..."** – that's like the rest of us – **"...who Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon."**

So, pretty clear. This is basically God's instructions for Daniel and that whole crew, that whole generation that got carried out of Babylon into Jerusalem. God sends them instructions. "Here's how you're to live, Daniel, in Babylon."

Skip down to Jeremiah 29:4 and it says this: **"This is what Yahweh Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.'"**

So, look up real quick. What's He saying there? Basically He's saying, "You guys are going to go ahead and be there for a little bit. Put down roots. Plant your gardens. Get married. Give your kids away in marriage. Have grandkids and kind of expect to be there. This isn't a short stay. But, not only that, you're going to actually be part of the fabric of the society and the culture."

Look at the next verse. Jeremiah 29:7: "Also, Yahweh says to them, 'seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I've carried you into exile. Pray to Yahweh for it, because if it prospers,' – if the city prospers – "you too will prosper."

Really interesting, these phrases He says. "Seek the peace of the city." So, in other words, you're taken as a stranger into this strange land and you need to know what your posture is. Are you at war with this culture around you, with these pagans and their injustices? Are you at war with them? And He says, "No. You seek to live with them peacefully."

And He says not only that, but work for the prosperity of the city. So, imagine as an Israelite dropped into this foreign culture you're like, "Well, look, are we supposed to go out in the countryside and remain?"

This is a huge thing in Jewish culture and customs, to remain pure from the pagans. And He says, "No. You get in the city and you work with the people for the prosperity of the city. You don't disassociate and go out into the country. You get right into the heart of it. You don't remove yourself from the beast of Babylon. Instead, you get your hands dirty, you tackle the problems of Babylon and you work together for human flourishing there."

Then finally, He says, "And pray to your God, the God of Creation, the God of the universe, and pray for the city to prosper."

That's kind of weird. You might think, "Well, we should pray that this city would be dismantled, that it would fall apart, that it would be toppled. Right, God?"

And He says, "No. Pray for it to prosper and to flourish. Because, if it prospers, you, Israelites in exile, will prosper."

Their future was tied to the future of the city of Babylon. So, with that mindset, then we kind of make that transition bridge to our context here and we ask the question, "Okay. That's what God said to Daniel and his friends in exile in Babylon. If that's kind of a metaphor for us in Portland, then what does that look like for us today to live with that kind of mindset? What does it look like to live in our city in Portland like that?"

And a ton of us here in the room are doing that. Mainly through vocation and in your neighborhoods and school. We're going to hear from a few folks that are doing that well that I'm just so proud to get to share their stories tonight. And as we're listening to these stories, there's a couple things, these values that we see in Daniel, that we want to kind of bring and highlight out. You've heard these before, but let me just run through them. This is some of the things we saw in Daniel.

We saw influence. That Daniel had influence in his culture. That he was a witness. He was that city on a hill that shone God's love. That Daniel modeled for us non-participation. There were some things where Daniel just said, "No. I can't do that. I can't say 'yes' to that."

We see Daniel live a life of non-compromise. We see Daniel resisting injustice. Where there were places where humans were treated less than the image of God, Daniel stepped in on behalf of them. And then finally, we see in Daniel this amazing hope. That he knew that there was, in spite of the injustice and in spite of the tension that he felt and that we feel, that there's a coming King and a coming Kingdom. So, as you hear these stories, I hope that those will be brought out. So, let's just get into this. Are you guys ready? Do you want to meet these guys? If you already know them you're like, "Oh no."

Just kidding. It's going to be awesome. So, first, I'd like to introduce to you my good friend, Holly Rodriguez. You guys say "hi" to Holly. Hi, Holly. She needs a microphone. No one gave her one? What kind of hospitality is this? Holly and her husband, Mike, and their two girls are in my missional community. So, I'm super proud to introduce you guys here to my sister and good friend. One of the joys in my life is about 6:20, because they're on time early. I mean, that's enough witness right there. Let's just pray. The night is over. They come to a meeting that starts at 6:30 at 6:20. Anyways, one of my joys is Tuesday nights. Their two little ones – and when I mean "little," they are little. Mighty, but little – coming to my door and they just burst through our door and I'm like, "Hey, it's so good to see you guys."

And they're like, "Where's Miriam?" which is my daughter. But, it's fun for me because, for a minute, I feel like they're excited to see me. But, what an amazing family. We're going to just jump right into this, Holly. Holly works with Refugee Care Collective. It's up there on the screen. If you don't know about that, you're about to know. If you don't know, you're about to. So, Holly, tell us. What is Refugee Care Collective? What do you guys do?

[Holly]: Well, Refugee Care Collective started a little over a year ago and it's a collective of churches who have come together to care for the refugees in our city. So, what we do is offer volunteer opportunities as we partner with the local resettlement agencies in Portland.

[Gerald]: Yeah, perfect. And, just to brag – a little humble brag right now. I'll pretend like it's about her, but it's also about me – this actually started around our dinner table in our missional community. Holly and Megan Tragethon and Tammy and our crew were dreaming and scheming – this is probably a solid two years ago or more – about, "Hey, what can we do to engage refugees?"

There's only more coming. This is before it was really a political dynamic. It happened shortly after. Thankfully, this got started first. But, this was birthed out of people like you guys around the table dreaming, like Daniel, "Where is there injustice in our city? Where are people being treated less than human, less than the image of God, and how can we step into this?"

So, this formed. And tell us, kind of nuts and bolts, what are some of the things you guys do? Like, for instance, a family's coming from Syria, a family's coming from Afghanistan, they're coming on a plane to Portland, how do you guys intersect their story and serve them?

[Holly]: There are many ways that we serve them. But, we try to put a faith to the process and have someone there at every step of the way. So, from the time they get off the airport we hope to have someone there with a smile who can greet them and take them home to their new place where they're going to stay, which also takes an orientation about how to use the oven oftentimes, how the shower works, how the thermostat is or what the thermostat is and how that works. Little things like that as well as taking them to many appointments, sitting at government offices such as the social security office for hours upon hours.

[Gerald]: That is not my ministry right there.

[Holly]: Right. And just really being their advocate and their friend in a place that is completely foreign to them.

[Gerald]: And, just to intersect real quick, there are government partnerships with organizations like Lutheran Family Services, Catholic Charity – what is that one? Catholic Charities. Got it. I thought there was more season there. But, organizations like that. But, just like you'll hear about in a minute about foster care, those organizations are totally overwhelmed. Understaffed, underfunded and absolutely overwhelmed. So, what these guys are doing and what many of you guys, as you're volunteering, and other churches in the Portland area is they're basically coming alongside these maxed out organizations, these employees that are doing the best just to hang on, and they're coming in and offering free services.

"How can we help you?"

They're like, "Go do airport pickups."

"How can we help you?"

"Go meet with this family and help them get acclimated to turning on their oven."

[Holly]: Yeah, exactly. The way the relationship formed was us going to the agency and saying, "What is your greatest need?" and having them tell us that. And we said, "Okay. We're going to meet your greatest need. So, we stepped in to do that and that formed a partnership of trust. Since then, they've really opened the doors to us to come alongside them and be involved in more than just that initial way.

[Gerald]: And I can imagine there's been resistance as you meet people. I mean, even in

a political landscape out there there's all kinds of concerns. You know, we've got people coming from Syria. The majority of these people that we meet from Syria are leaving because they're victims of ISIS. They're leaving because they want to protect their family. Many of them have lost family members. But, how do you deal with – what's the interaction like when people are like, "Oh, you're helping these people? I'm afraid of these people."

Like, how do you balance that?

[Holly]: I think, going into it, I was naive and just so excited about what I was doing. I would tell people. "So, what do you do?"

I would say that I welcomed refugees and we helped care for them in the city and I quickly learned that, "Oh, not everyone's as excited as I am." But, that's okay. And now I welcome that and I love to engage in dialogue following that. Because I really think that the questions that people have come out of a spirit of fear. And, if truth can be spoken to that fear – because fear is a lie – then that dialogue changes and things become different. And we've seen that, particularly among our Muslim friends, as volunteers engage with them. Fear is completely dispelled and deep friendships and relationships are formed.

[Gerald]: So beautiful. And there's so many good stories. Let's just talk about a couple cool ones. People that you know and that I know and our families have been able to connect with. Tell us a little bit about a family from Afghanistan, single mom, two kids. Tell us about their story a little bit and what that's been like.

[Holly]: They came last December and the director of the resettlement agency said, "Holly, if you can find anyone to work with them, she's going to need help. Single mom, two kids."

It's right around the holiday time, so it's a hard time to get volunteers. And I mentioned it to our missional community and they said, "Let's help."

So, we jumped in and I can remember driving her to an appointment and in the car it came up about what happened and why she's her and what's the reason. She said, "Oh, Taliban. My husband, no more."

So, her husband is deceased. She fled the country and came here for that reason. But, she was so determined. She has been faithful in her English classes. We've looked for a job for her and she's finally found one.

[Gerald]: Which is a big deal. That's huge. They have a short amount of funding and it's really short. So, finding a job is huge, especially for a single mom.

[Holly]: Exactly. And her kids are flourishing. They're doing so well. Have picked up on English and Gerald's taken them skateboarding a time or two. So, they've acclimated well.

[Gerald]: Yeah. So cool. I'm going to just skip to this last one. For you, a lot of this was kind of a no-brainer. You're like, "Refugee opportunity? Let's do it."

I have a feeling there's many people here tonight that God is stirring in them something that is a big change. A career change, a direction change. And you talked about fear in there. What would you say to someone who's like, "Man, I think God's calling me into a greater story like this, Holly, but I'm scared to death."

What would you say to them?

[Holly]: Well, don't listen to fear. We want to listen to what the Lord has to say to that. So, just ask Him where that's coming from and He'll show you. But, I also think that He wants to speak to you who you are to Him. Like, once we know our identity in Him and then He calls us out and draws us out from that. And, as we walk in our identity and in what He's called us to, fear is non-existent. It doesn't have power anymore. So, I would challenge you to bring that to the Lord and listen to Him and watch Him expose the fear and speak truth to it.

[Gerald]: And you absolutely live that out. You are like a strong, quiet force, Holly. In the cross fit box, I hear she's a beast and I've seen her just go to work. Like, you're quiet,

your head's down, you're focused and it's loving and serving people and you live that so well. So, thank you.

[Holly]: Thank you.

[Gerald]: Alright. Pass the mic. Next one. Next guy. Hey, this is my friend, Marcelo Bunta. His wife is over here and two girls are around. You guys might not know this, but Marcelo and I – you might not even know this – went to sister universities. Do you guys know Multnomah University? Multnomah Bible College? Yeah. I was out here in the west while he was at Yale on the east. To be fair, my school's a little less known, but a little bit more academically rigorous. But, it's amazing how God brought us together at this point, right buddy? Yeah. Brings us together.

So, God's done incredible stuff through Marcelo and a great story that we're going to tell right now. God called you into really something brand new that was diversity and the environment together. So, just tell us a little bit. How did you get started in that? How'd you kind of discover your calling in that?

[Marcelo]: Yeah. Thanks for having me here, by the way. So, my story begins in 2000. I'd just graduated from graduate school and had my first job at a national wildlife conservation organization. And I quickly realized that I was the only person of color on the national conservation staff. That led me on my journey to ask this question, "Why? Why am I the only person of color in this organization and why is there such a challenge around racial equity diversity inclusion in the environmental movement?"

So, I had lots of conversations with people across the country just trying to dig in and try to figure this out. So, I stayed at this organization for four years. I tried to help move the organization forward on these issues. We hit some roadblocks. I wasn't totally equipped with the knowledge and tools to figure out how to do that. But, I do know that my experience there was the worst experience I've had in my whole professional career. I faced a lot of overt and covert racism. Even though I came out – I knew I was going to do this. Sorry.

[Gerald]: You're doing great.

[Marcelo]: Even though I came out of grad school with the latest knowledge of conservation and protecting endangered species, I wasn't seen as someone who could provide that type of knowledge. I felt small and it just was a dead end for me. But, what it did for me was to try and figure out. I left that organization with a commitment to try to figure out what needs to happen to move the needle forward on racial equity diversity inclusion in the environmental movement.

So, two years I did whatever it took. I learned how to train, how to bring these tools around diversity equity inclusion to organizations and to leaders. It was two years later where God placed in my heart and He basically said, "You need to start a non-profit organization."

My first reaction was like, "No, no. Not me. Not me."

But, there was a huge need out there of those two previous years that I found out that there was a lot of environmental professionals, white people and people of color across the country, that wanted to better on this work. They acknowledged that this was a challenge for the environmental movement, but they didn't know how to do it, where to start, what to do. So, it was obviously there needed to be an organization and I totally agreed with that. But, I totally disagreed that I was the right person to do that.

For one was I went into this work because I wanted to hang out with wildlife. I wanted to hang out with they grey wolves. I wanted to hang out with California condors, piping plovers. I'm kind of like this nerdy guy.

[Gerald]: Who doesn't? Man, that sounds awesome.

[Marcelo]: So, I figured if I go in this direction, I'm not going to go back to my personal love for this. Then the second thing was I'd never ran an organization in my whole life. I was never an executive director. I didn't know anything about fundraising, financial management, operations, you name it. I didn't know it. But, I know that God placed in my heart to jump into it with faith. So, two years later, I jumped into it with a couple of founding board members and it was spring of 2008 when I started. And, as all of you remember, fall of

2008 was not a great time economically for us in the U.S.

[Gerald]: That's a great time to be fundraising.

[Marcelo]: Yeah. Great time to be fundraising. So, while many non-profit's budgets were going low and they had to have layoffs, we were actually growing in this time and space. The only explanation is God. God doing His work. Not only did we grow financially, but the impact, who we connected to, was amazing. I was giving interviews on radio, in magazines, on TV. People wanted to hear this or were thirsty for this work. I was getting paid to do keynotes all across the country. The most important thing I felt – well, two important things. One is I'm being invited to important, decision-making rooms around. For example, how do we protect our open spaces in the metro region here in an equitable way?

But, what really I loved the most about our work was our leadership development programs. What we did was we invited people who were thirsty for this work to learn about the history of race and racism in the U.S. and the legacy that still plays out in our institutions and systems today. Coming together to build strong relationships of trust across different. Then, lastly, learning the tools and skills – and I learned with them – and how to create change more broadly. It's just been an amazing ride. I've stepped out of that role recently. But, the organization continues to fly and I continue to move this vocation forward now in the philanthropy world.

[Gerald]: And it's interesting because you went after it to resist injustice around race with a heart for environment, and God promoted you, like Daniel and like Joseph in the Bible, to this place of influence where, all of a sudden, you're able to have the attention and be a decision maker. And, from that place of influence, what did it look like for you to be a representative of Jesus? How did you incorporate, "Wow, I've got people's attention now. How do I live out faith in front of them, talk about Jesus, all that?"

[Marcelo]: Yeah. It's something I still struggle with today. So, part way through, I started thinking about, "Okay. I'm in this space. There's people listening. How do I bring the Gospel to people? Then there's a challenge, too. There was a study done about an additional challenge about a decade ago that said that about 10-12% of people working in the environmental field are religious in any religion. So, Christianity is even less. So, my challenge was like, "How do I speak into people's lives with God?"

So, the one thing I did was I made sure I had the values of Jesus without speaking His name. Especially the values of compassion, empathy, love and humility was just how I did my work, how our programs operated. And then the other piece was when I would tell my story, I would tell them the story of God in my life. So, when people come into this space, this is what I learned working across difference, when people come to this space of curiosity, even though there's fear and I'm like, "Oh, I'm not sure if they're going to listen to me or not. Are they going to think I'm weird? Are they going to just go the other direction?"

They want to know. They come into the space of curiosity because they want to know. I found some great responses once I went into that space.

[Gerald]: That's awesome. So, specifically as we think about working with race and helping people on that journey, how do you keep hope? How, in your vocation, do you promote and keep hopeful as you focus on the goal?

[Marcelo]: Yeah. It was an intention from the beginning. Because, as we're seeing here on a national stage, the conversation around race and racism, the dominate what we see is this blame game. No one taking responsibility but we blame each other for being racist. We've gotten nowhere. So, I wanted to do things differently and from a place of hope and doing this together. While on one hand it's a great thing to be working on these issues, it's also we're trying to create, for those in the environmental movement, my vision is to create an equitable and environmentally protected space that's inextricably linked and doing that by bringing the values of Jesus and doing that.

So, in the end, we're going to have a planet, our creation, is going to be protected successfully. Then, also, when I say "creation," it's all of us. It's humans, it's wildlife, it's our habitat, it's the place we inhabit. So, I'm trying to move that way and the same way seeing a building this community of other people who want to move in that direction.

[Gerald]: Awesome. Thank you so much.

[Marcelo]: You're welcome.

[Gerald]: Alright. Next up. Moving right along. Kaitlyn Marchbanks. She and her husband, Devin – Devin's over here.

[Kaitlyn]: No, he's over there.

[Gerald]: He's over there. And their kiddos. We're going to talk a little bit about foster care and being a mother and how those two intersect and your story. So, tell us a little bit about how you got excited about foster care and kind of what happened next from there.

[Kaitlyn]: Awesome. So, Devin and I have been – just a little background story – certified foster parents for about five years. But, when we started that process, it was something that I knew very clearly – even from my teens – that God was calling me to live into what being a mom meant in a different way. So, foster care was always on my heart and it was something that God brought Devin along with. So, we began to take classes. We were actually going to both Bridgetown and Westside at that time. We were volunteering with the three's class and we actually had contact and we got to meet some of the kids that were in the foster care system in the tri-county area. So, we got faces to what it was that we were considering. So, that just kind of propelled us forward. We started taking the classes.

So, you have to go through 30 hours of training as part of your certification to become a foster parent. So, we started going to those classes in the evening. During that time, I found out I was pregnant with our son. So, our parents and our family were like, "Okay. What are you guys doing here now?"

[Gerald]: They're like, in other words, "You're done with the foster care stuff, right?"

[Kaitlyn]: "Are you going to maybe put this off until later? That's cool that God's calling you to this, but what about your family? You're going to provide for your children first, right?"

Devin and I, we'd already bought in at that point. This was where God was clearly calling us. So, there was no reason for us to step back. So, that just kind of came along with us. That was just part of our story. So, we finished our certification and we were living in a studio here in north Portland and we were like, "Okay. What's next?" God provided for us with each step of the way. He provided. He provided a house in southeast that we were about to buy before market prices and stock went way up. He provided a missional community to wrap around us. Because, at that point, we were attending Bridgetown, but we were part of – probably like a lot of you, we go to church every Sunday and we say "hi" during the four minutes, meet a new person every week. But, we didn't have rootedness. We didn't have that community around us.

So, God provided that before we walked into it.

[Gerald]: And He's basically setting you guys up to receive your first foster child. So, tell us about that. So, your first kid that you got.

[Kaitlyn]: So, our first placement was Zachary. So, we had Zachary for three months before I had Oliver. So, our family dynamic, this is our normal. Foster care is what we do. It's our commitment.

[Gerald]: So, you have Zachary and then you have your own biological kid, Oliver. So, Oliver comes home and he's the little brother.

[Kaitlyn]: Yep. He's the little brother. So, Zachary was our first placement. Our commitment as we step into foster care is that we commit to whatever children are placed in our home or within are family. So, we said one at a time is kind of our family motto.

[Gerald]: "One at a time" is a great family motto. That's good. I like that.

[Kaitlyn]: That's what we did. So, we did. We had Zachary first and then we had our son, Oliver, and God just provided for us each step of the way and Zach was a real light to our family and that was part of what we got to experience and share. We got to share kind of God's grace and teach him as a kid growing up of a different perspective of what it

looked like to be in a family and to have a community.

[Gerald]: Yeah, and I love that. Sorry to interrupt you here, but I'm in charge. Just kidding. I think I'm in charge. I love that your heart, as I was asking you these questions, is really the "one at a time." But, it's like you really have the mentality of mentorship and training this little disciple. You're like, "I'm going to work with Zachary."

Tell us a little bit about some of the fruit that came out of that. Like interactions with his mom. He's back with his birth mom, which is success. That's awesome. Well done. But, tell us a little bit about how you guys saw God's light working out of Zachary.

[Kaitlyn]: So, with foster care, the average placement for kids in our area that are in foster care is for a little over a year. Our commitment for "one at a time" was for however long they needed us. Zachary was placed in our home and he was with us for about two years. So, within that time – so, we had him from about three to five and we got to teach him all about Jesus. We got to bring him to church and bring him to our community and share that light with him.

[Gerald]: Three to five years old?

[Kaitlyn]: Yeah. Three to five. Like, foundational...

[Gerald]: Critical years.

[Kaitlyn]: Yeah. Very critical years in kids' development. So, you could just tell when he came that he absorbed the light of God. He just would understand and comprehend things in ways that kids at three shouldn't really understand and comprehend. He knew God's love. He knew God was caring for him and providing for him even as a three-year-old.

So, he would take that and he would go to his visits with his biological family and his mom recognized when he came from time with us and spent time with her, she recognized God's light in him and she would say, "He's so happy and he just glows."

She would describe it as that. But, what she didn't realize is it really wasn't us. It wasn't what we were offering him, but it was the Holy Spirit and it was God renewing and restoring him.

[Gerald]: And that's a beautiful – the contrast of the influence Marcelo's had at one executive level and then the influence that you're having in the home with this one child and then he goes and meets with his mom and his mom's like, "What the heck?" And then the DHS employees are seeing this too. That's influence. That is so powerful. I love it.

[Kaitlyn]: It's pretty awesome.

[Gerald]: Yeah. That guy likes it too. So, let me ask you this: what's your dream? Big picture? What would you like to see more of and what would you like to see come to fruition through your vocation; through this work?

[Kaitlyn]: So, we have kind of two big dreams. We have our dream for foster care in Portland and how that looks and how that means inviting all of you guys in with us as volunteers for foster parents' night out or volunteers as foster parents themselves. God is already working and calling other people and we're just...

[Gerald]: And a great way to get connected with that is at embraceoregon.gov.

[Kaitlyn]: Check it out. There's lots of places to volunteer.

[Gerald]: Yeah. That's who we partner with as a church. Incredible organization.

[Kaitlyn]: And just to invite people. Part of our mission and our goal, my husband and I, as our family, is to the foster kids and to restoring hope of individuals and restoring their lives. But, it's also to our community and to our city and to see change on a more broad scale.

[Gerald]: And it is actually happening. In the past years that I've been around Bridgetown Church and seeing people like the Marchbanks and Justin and Amy and Gavin and Bennet and others. Like, the work that your missional community and others have done through foster parents' night out and other partnerships, you guys are changing the landscape of the city for sure. Without a doubt.

[Kaitlyn]: When we started coming to Bridgetown like five years ago, there weren't foster parents or families within our church. But, that's something that we've already seen. We've already seen God restoring hope to even our church body in our city. Like, there are more people here now and we have a community and support and we have people who God's already called and prepared and He's been equipping you guys and really just inviting you in. So, check it out.

[Gerald]: Yeah. Check it out. And that has happened through your hard work, Kaitlyn, and others like you. So, thank you so much. Thanks a ton.

Hey, Chancellor.

[Chancellor]: What's up?

[Gerald]: Hey, man. Last, but not least, Chancellor. You guys may recognize him. He also plays guitar in the band up here. And Chancellor works at Good Coffee on Division in Southeast. I know, right? People are like, "Finally. A light topic: coffee. Refugees. Environment. Racism."

Chancellor, what I loved in our conversations and talking – well, let me start with this: first of all, you have a reputation. Everybody has a reputation. Hopefully it's good. Chancellor has a rep, and it's actually really good. One time my wife came back from Good Coffee and she's like, "You're not going to believe this. I went in there to read, but the guy that was making my coffee was super nice. Turns out he's in the band. Chancellor. You know him?"

And I'm like, "Oh, yeah."

"Yeah, so we started talking and then I go to sit down and some other guy turns to me because he overheard us talking about Bridgetown church and said, 'Hey, I'm new to this city. I heard you guys talking about your church. I want to go there. Tell me about it.'"

So, Jenny comes home from Good Coffee because of a guy like this working there and has invited the whole coffee shop to come. And they're probably here. They started a missional community. But, Chancellor, you have a reputation as being light; as being the kind of person that people walk into the coffee shop and you make their day. And the conversation that they have with you changes their mood and the rest of the day. So, I know that you have skills in pulling shots, but it's more than that. Tell us about your vision and Good Coffee's vision for hospitality and how you guys live that out.

[Chancellor]: Yeah, so hospitality is a huge passion of mine and is just a big part of the fabric of Good Coffee as a company. So, my bosses really push that we bring hospitality in a fresh, new way to the coffee scene in Portland. Since hospitality is really a passion of mine, I feel like I can just have a ton of freedom in that and just serve people almost however I want with being intentional. I guess my vision and dream for it is just when people show up, I want to have more meaningful, impacting conversation. You know? And they could be 10 seconds or they could be 5 minutes if it's slow.

[Gerald]: Depends on how busy things are, right?

[Chancellor]: Yeah, exactly. It depends if there's a line at the door or not. But, there are tons of opportunities throughout the day where I feel like there's room to be intentional with people and not just they're in and they're out. You know? You can connect with people and, to me, that's what I really love doing when I show up.

[Gerald]: Yeah. I love that. You said that your boss and your team actually are even reading a book about hospitality. You're intentionally talking about it as a team. As I heard you unpacking that, I started thinking of other coffee shops – I will not mention them on this thing. But, I started thinking about it and I'm like, "That's interesting. My experience at this specific other one I thought of is cold."

Like, the interaction with people and the vibe in there is like, "Man, I don't feel cool enough to be in here. Does anybody like me?"

I feel like I'm in middle school looking for a place to eat lunch, you know? It's horrible. The coffee's good though. But, what a contrast and what a completely different offering. So, you have an intentionality that when people come in the door, we want to actually acknowledge them, look them in the eyes and speak to their humanity. I mean, it's just beautiful. But, that leads to – and I know how the small talk begins. "Hey, so what are you up to today?"

And then you start talking to people. You've told me about this leading into some deep relationships and some interesting ones. You told me about one guy who's a small – let's call him a small business owner. Small businesses owner. He owns multiple. Tell me about the interaction with that guy and what that's like and stuff.

[Chancellor]: Yeah. So, in talking through tons of people every day because you're interested in these people and you're giving them your full attention and they're hyped or they're happy you're talking to them – sometimes they just expect you're about to agree with everything that they say or are just going to sign right up for anything they tell you to do or to receive.

So, yeah. One regular in particular, one of my favorites dudes, owns a couple strip clubs and about four or five dispensaries around Portland.

[Gerald]: Strip clubs and dispensaries. That's what our city's known for, man.

[Chancellor]: Dude, he's an American hustler.

[Gerald]: This guy's part of the economic engine, right?

[Chancellor]: Which, I guess I'm not that surprised, because working upper Division and I mean you're just blocks from that everywhere. So, it's kind of a regular thing to meet and talk to people who like, that's their life. So, you know, he strolls in a lot. And it's amazing. I really love this guy because he's really fun to talk to. Like, he's super intentional back to me when I talk to him and we have really great conversations about Portland. But, he's constantly working on this medicinal brownie recipe and he's just like, "Dude. Tweaking this recipe, man. Please, just let me bring you a brownie. Just give me some feedback. Like, I'll bring you some. I'll bring you some."

And I'm like, "Dude. No. But, thanks I guess."

[Gerald]: But, that really brings out something that's real. Which is, if you're building relationships intentionally with people, you're loving them, you're shining the light, you're going to get to a place where there's going to be a crossroads.

[Chancellor]: All the time.

[Gerald]: Right where they're like, "Hey, so now I'm doing this thing."

And you're like, "Dude. I cannot sign up for that. You getting drunk last night is not a positive. I am never going to try your pot brownie, but I love you. If you make it without the pot, dude, I'll eat them all day to my own demise."

[Chancellor]: There's people like your wife that come in and it's like, "Oh, I love Jesus already and blah, blah, blah."

And it's like, okay. That's a lot easier than people like this dude strolling in. So, yeah. There are lots of times where I kind of have to just be like, "Wow. I've got to show this guy love, but I've also got to say no to what he's offering me."

Or there's other examples, too. Stuff like that.

[Gerald]: And I just think that for all of us that have those kind of conversations with a friend, with a neighbor, with a parent or whatever where someone's asking you, "Hey, just compromise in this thing or participate in this thing," and you're like, "I can't do that," I just believe – as we were talking the other day – that out of a hundred conversations that guy has, the one that's going to stand out is the guy that loved him so well but said "no." You know? And I just believe that there's going to be a back end of that where he's going to come back. You know? Who knows what's going to happen in his life and he's going to be like, "Hey, you know what? The whole pot thing or whatever led me down this road and it hasn't been the best. But, you know the one guy that stood up to me and said no? It was Chancellor. I'm going to go back and talk to him about that."

Yeah, man. That's punk. It is, man. It's like hardcore not to eat the brownie now. You're so straight edge, bro. It's like insane. I can't even handle it. What would your dream be, man? Like, what do you want to see happen through your life at Good Coffee and beyond?

[Chancellor]: I really just want to show up to work every day in hopes that people walk in through the door, whether knowing Jesus or never even heard of Him, would just be able to tangibly feel His presence in that place and that might be a starting point for people to learn about who He is or what He's like and just experience His love, you know, over something super common like coffee. The basics.

[Gerald]: Yeah. It's beautiful, man. And I believe that there's a room full of people here and will be again in an hour of people that are trying to figure out that. "How do I live in rhythm with the Spirit, open and want to talk about Jesus, not participating in stuff that's evil and hurting others or the city."

So, dude, you, I think, are just a shining example of how to live that out, and it's beautiful. So, thank you, man. I appreciate it.

I don't know about you guys, but this has been super encouraging. It makes me so proud of our church and the kinds of things that are happening through your lives in the city. I want to go ahead and I want to conclude by reading a blessing over you guys. Kind of a commissioning, if you will, that we might, like these guys, go out and live as a true creative minority. So, let me just read this over you and maybe just kind of close your eyes if you want and just receive this as a prayer and a blessing over you.

First, may you know your identity and calling from your heavenly Father. May you hear His voice call you the name that only He knows. May He guide you into the vocational calling that He created just for you. May you have the influence like Daniel. May God give you favor and the right relationships with the right leaders. And, by His Spirit, may you influence them for human flourishing in our city and around the world. May the Spirit of Jesus increase your boldness of witness. May God Himself open a door for you to share the message of Jesus and, in the words of Paul, may you be wise in the way that you act toward outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. And may God give you heavenly wisdom to know when to opt out in non-participation. May you love people well, but may you also know when to say "no." And may you not agree with all that they invite you into or freely offer you, no matter how good the brownies might be.

And may God grant you power from His Spirit to resist compromise. Just as Jesus was tempted in every way and yet resisted, may you also resist temptation to compromise in white lies, inflated numbers, hallway gossip, and may you remain pure. And may you also resist injustice in our city and in the world. May the Spirit show you the area of injustice – like foster care, refugee care or race relations – that you are being specifically called into to fight with compassion, love, action and prayer. And, above all, may God fill you with undying hope for the Kingdom of God to come in Portland as it is in heaven. Hope that God is at work right here and now in your life and in your situation. But also, may He fill you with hope that one day the Kingdom of God will come crashing in and all that is broken in this city and in this world will be put to rights again under King Jesus.

But, until then, may God fill you with His hope. Let's pray.