

Beyond the Surface

Sermon, Part 2 – Youth Sunday, 19 July 2015 – by Jordan Aspiras



There's a Big Bang Theory episode where Penny makes dinner for Sheldon, and then later on takes him to Disneyland. I was watching this episode on the plane ride home from Texas back in April, and I could not stop thinking about Bodie. I am determined to take you to Disneyland eventually. We are Sheldon and Penny, and I really do cherish all of our crazy memories. Memories like the time I spelled like a five year old or the time I headbutted you at SSP and told you **“we are a puzzle because my head fits between your shoulder blades”**. I cannot even begin to describe how proud I am and your family is of you. All of these memories, they make me so glad to be leading worship with you here today.

Today I'm focusing on family. I've written speech after speech on family. The definition. The differences. What a **real** family is. Yet I have never touched on **this** family. This **home**. *This family sitting up here*. The family I have in Arizona, Oregon, and all parts of California. This year, I realized how

significant of a change this church and Sierra Service Project has made on my life. I really wanted to make my sermon about Sierra Service Project, but you can learn more about it at our luncheon on August 16th. These high schoolers here, we're a little family. One that has changed everything for me. They **love** me unconditionally. They **care** about me. They are my home. At SSP Kira and I were lying on the floor talking and she said something that really stood out to me. She told me, "Home is where you feel safe, complete, and loved". When Audrey saw me write this down, she added to my lovely folder , "Home is where your passion and the people you are passionate about meet". Let's just let that soak in. "**Home is where you feel safe, complete, and loved. Home is where your passion and the people you are passionate about meet**". That's just beautiful. Audrey has taught me a lot. But today she reminds me to find home everywhere I find passion. Finding home at **Family Camp**. Finding home at **Baylor**. Finding home with **my** football and baseball team.

These two teams have touched my life like no other team ever has. Student athletic training provided me with a truly valuable relationship. One of which is **100%** supportive and caring. One that apparently isn't understandable since everyone takes it the wrong way. Because yes, on the field they are my athletes, where I was both their Student Athletic Trainer and sideline Therapist when they made mistakes. But off the field, they're some of the most reliable friends I could ask for. Now, my relationship with them, it's more than a friendship. They have my back. They protect me. They wipe their nasty sweat on me. During the season, they were my safe haven. When I was just too stressed out, coming to practice was the only way I felt I could totally cope with it. Because thinking more about their problems helped me think less about mine. Towards the end of the season, they made time slots when they plan to call or skype me on game day while I'm away at college. Standing with these stinky athletes, listening to their whining, and even sometimes crying with them. That's where I feel most at home.

High school beat me down emotionally over the four years. I watched people come and go from my life. But then I remembered Sylvester Stallone's well known inspirational speech, "**...The world ain't all sunshine and rainbows. It's a very mean and nasty place and I don't care how tough you are it will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. You, me, or nobody is gonna hit as hard as life. But it ain't about how hard ya hit. It's about how hard you can get it and keep moving forward. How much you can take and keep moving forward**". That's what kept me going my senior year. That reminded me I had to always **AT LEAST** stand back up. I was hit a lot, but there was always someone, something that kept me going.

A friend asked me, what does it mean to be strong? Does it mean you don't cry? Because if that's true, I failed miserably. Being strong is being able to fully open yourself up to others. Being strong is spilling your heart, your love all over someone. Everyday, I wonder, "**Will these teams remember me when I leave?**" Because I already graduated. Move in day is in a month. And as much as I want to convince myself, "**Oh yeah, for sure,**" there's this little doubting side of my conscience that tells me they won't. Because **not everyone stays with you through life**. But what I do know, is that it will be hard for me to forget them since I've seemed to have already collected a bunch of little footballs with their names on them, TONS of selfies that 90% of the time I'm not in and occurred because they stole my phone at practice, a name plate, and a boatload of memories. I'm not sure if they realize how much I love them, how much they inspire me every day, or how hard they make it to leave. On our annual Big Bone Game on Thanksgiving getting the text from Thomas Ballin that read, "**I know this is corny, but I'm thankful for you**" made me realize the impact I made on his life and that hopefully we'll stay best friends (**I'm thankful for you too Ballin, even if your hair is longer than mine**). **Robert Najar** has put up with me for about five years now, he's my kid brother. He has proved to be absolutely loyal, never giving up on me or **giving me up**. He believes I am strong. He always tells me,

“I’ll never say goodbye to you, just see you soon.” And that’s simply what it is. Because, **‘I’ll see you soon’** is **SO MUCH** easier to say than **‘goodbye’**.

When I heard this poem, I was immediately set on doing a full blown church service on it. There are so many parts to this poem that speak to me. Like the part about how the children's "**definition of beauty begins with the word mom because she has only ever always been amazing**". That part hits especially close to home. Before my sophomore year, I never realized how hard life would be without my mom being the active woman she is. And every time the topic comes up, I still manage to get choked up because there is so much from that experience I continue to keep locked up. Mom, you **ARE** my definition of beauty. No matter how much we butt heads, because we do it **A LOT**, she’s very important to me. And the fact that she and my dad are letting me go so I can accomplish my dreams is all I could have ever asked for.

He ends his poem forcing the audience to reflect on their own life *-if they haven’t already been doing so the entire time-* with "**but our lives will only ever always continue to be a balancing act that has less to do with pain and more to do with beauty**". We are all trying to balance on our own tightrope. But all tightrope walkers know there is one very important thing beneath them: **a safety net**. One that catches them when they fall. I know the friends and family I have will always be my safety net, but Pslam 121:3 says: **“He will not let your foot slip - He who watches over you will not slumber”**. So not only do you have friends and family there to catch you, God will always be there. Because God is eternal. God’s love will continue to hold us all when those we thought would never leave **do**. God built my home. **Take your passion everywhere you go so that you always have a home.**

Please stand, stretch, and join us in singing “Here I Am to Worship”.