

Joke tk

Ya'll, they asked me to speak today and usually I like to keep my religious-type thoughts on the inside. But I started writing some stuff down and ended up with a twenty minute sermon. So here it goes...

No, I made some cuts. I even somehow managed to cut a few hundred words on why \*Dead Poets Society\* is a bad movie. It's a big day, gotta keep it lean.

You know, I was here for not only the very first service but the very first meeting about the very first service. I remember working on the mission statement. It was long, complicated, but in the end we settled on "Love God, love people." And that's what we've tried to do through thick and thin.

When we started, I played music and helped to lead the youth. I was a first-year college student. Eventually we started meeting in the rec center, and we had to move everything in a U-Haul, each week, into and out of that rec center. Each and every Sunday: Drive to the rec center, unload the U-Haul, set up the sound system, the chairs, the nursery and kids' rooms, break down the nursery and kids' rooms, pick up the chairs, pack up the sound system, load the U-Haul.

Then we moved here. I put up some of the walls in this room, and believe me, I did NOT know what I was doing. I nailed like \$20 worth of nails in that corner right

there. Once I let an blindfolded eighth grader fall face first into a tree. (The blindfold wasn't my idea.) Once we were raking yards and the kids buried my car in leaves.

When I was 20 I stopped showing up. I was probably a little depressed, and a little busy, and a little lazy. I didn't come to church for months, maybe a year. But one day my parents said they wanted to visit, so I had to pretend none of that ever happened. So I showed up, a total fraud, and the band acted like I had never left. And then during the children's time, Lynne, the pastor, asked me to come join her. And she said, to the little kids, about me, "This is a rock. This is who we're built upon."

This was false praise to some extent, a show for my parents. But she said it like she meant it. And I believe she did. It wasn't a lie so much as a statement of faith.

So I came back, and Lynne left, and Bryson came, and he believed in me, too. And Bryson left, and Jonathan came, and he believed in me. And I'm not yet strong enough to be that rock, but you know, I can carry a little weight. Take a little of me, a little of Jonathan and Kelly, a little Tanya, a little Erin, a little bit of Anna Bosco, a little bit of Kara, Tiffany, Jim, Ashley, a little bit of Dodie, a little bit of Kwame, a little bit of Monica in my life, a little bit of Erica by my side...

I don't know, I guess I'm just saying that that's a lot of rocks, and there are a lot more. And you can build something on that, which is what we have done.

We've helped thousands of people. I wish I had a little more time to tell you about some of them. We've helped each other, too. We're raising our second generation of kids now!

You know what, here's the short version of the \*Dead Poets' Society\* spiel: I've taught for a while, and I'm not the best or the worst, but I know that the job is not to come in at Mach 5, light every kid up and get fired; the job is to be devoted, to be there for your people day in and day out, knowing you'll have to let them go and you'll have start over again, again and again. The path of devotion is the more difficult in some ways, but at least it will sustain you, and it will teach you to sustain others.

But you know a funny thing about church is that you give it your time and your attention, your effort, even your soul--and then the church asks for your money too. And what do you get in return? Everything. You get everything. Everything you put in is returned to you, just as long as you keep coming, keep the church in your heart, and give what you can, \*\*if you can\*\*, so that we can keep a roof on the most beautiful foundation I've ever seen.

So here is a token of my devotion. It's not the only way to show your devotion, but it's a way. I wish I could give more, but I know that our leadership team takes every dollar as a serious responsibility.

Okay, I gotta go play drums. Jonathan, Kelly, I'll miss you. Peace!