

## **Not Yet, Lord! There Are Still Sparks to Ignite.**

Good [morning/afternoon], everyone. Thank you for gathering here with me today. My name is Dr. Corydon Strawser, and if you've ever walked in our school's halls or stepped onto our fields, you probably know me as the science and robotics teacher who geeks out over circuits and code, the coach who paces the court during volleyball matches and sidelines during soccer games, the sponsor who cheers on every breakthrough in Girls Who Code, and the adjunct professor who still believes late-night office hours can change a life. I am an author, from my memoirs to the Apostle Paul's Prison Letters. But more than any title, I am a follower of Christ, a man who has tried, imperfectly but earnestly, to live out the call to love others as He first loved us.

(1:32)

And right now, that love is tearing at my heart because I'm standing at the edge of retirement, and it feels less like a gentle sunset and more like ripping roots out of the soil where they've grown deep for decades.

(1:58)

Let me be honest with you, the thought of retirement keeps me up at night. Not because I fear boredom or lost income, though those whispers come too. But because walking away means leaving the beating heart of my days. You, my students; my incredible colleagues; the parents who've trusted me; and the young women and men on my volleyball and soccer teams who've become like my own kids.

(2:49)

Picture this: an eight grade girl, eyes wide with nerves, stepping into my robotics lab for the first time. Her hands tremble as she solders her first connection. Then, weeks later, that same girl stands tall on stage, presenting her robot to judges, voice steady, smile radiant. I've lived for those moments, the spark igniting, the doubt crumbling, the quiet victory of "I did it." In Girls Who Code, I've watched young women who once said, "Coding isn't for me," suddenly debug like pros, dream bigger, claim their place in a world that sometimes tries to push them out.

(4:11)

As a Christ follower, I see every one of these kids as fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139), entrusted to me for a season to point them toward truth, beauty, and purpose. How do I close the door on that sacred work? How do I say goodbye when there are still so many sparks waiting to catch fire?

(5:01)

My colleagues, oh, how my soul aches at the thought of mornings without our shared brainstorming and collaboration, without the quick hallway prayers when a kid's struggling, without the post-game debriefs where we laugh until we cry over a crazy play or a heartbreakin loss. You've been my iron sharpening iron (Proverbs 27:17), my partners in this beautiful, exhausting ministry of education. Leaving you feels like losing family.

(6:42)

And the parents, those fierce, loving warriors who send their children to us every day with prayers and hopes pinned to their backpacks. I've sat across from you in conferences, celebrated report cards, held space for tears when life hit hard. We've been teammates in raising these young people, and retiring feels like stepping off the field mid-game.

(7:30)

Then there are my teams. Volleyball girls diving for impossible saves, sweat-soaked and screaming encouragement to one another. Soccer players charging down the field, hearts pounding, turning a last-second goal into pure joy. I've bandaged knees, delivered halftime speeches drawn straight from Scripture about running the race set before us (Hebrews 12:1), watched shy players become captains who lead with grace and grit. These aren't just athletes; they're my heart walking around outside my body. The idea of no more early-morning practices, no more sideline hugs after a tough loss, no more watching them graduate and knowing I won't coach their little siblings, it hollows me out.

(9:42)

But here's the part that hurts deepest: our kids are changing, and the shift breaks me. I see it in the classroom, a creeping complacency that dims the once-bright curiosity. Projects that used to light them up now get half-hearted shrugs. In robotics, the "why not try?" spirit sometimes fades into "what's the easiest way?" Test scores are slipping, not from lack of ability, but from a quiet surrender to indifference. In Girls Who Code, some hesitate to push

past the first bug, settling instead of striving. On the courts and fields, that fierce hunger for excellence flickers where it once roared.

(11:34)

As a teacher who's spent his life modeling diligence as worship (Colossians 3:23), as a coach who believes every practice is a chance to build character that lasts into eternity, this wounds me. I think of the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25), God entrusting us with gifts to multiply, not bury. How can I leave now, when these young souls need someone to fan the flames, to remind them they're capable of so much more? When the world tempts them toward ease and distraction, who will stand in the gap and say, "You were made for greatness, don't settle"?

Thriving isn't about being perfect or never struggling; it's about choosing to push a little harder even when your brain says "this is too tough," even when you're tired, even when no one's watching. Every time you rewrite that paragraph instead of leaving it messy, study that extra ten minutes instead of closing the iPad, or ask for help instead of giving up, you're building a version of yourself that won't back down when life gets real. The hard stuff isn't punishment, it's practice for becoming unstoppable. Don't let "good enough" steal your shot at great. You've got more in you than you know!

(13:59)

Retirement promises rest, travel, quiet mornings with Scripture and diet coke. Part of me longs for it. But another part, the part shaped by years of pouring out cries, "Not yet. There's still work to do. There are still kids who need to hear they matter, that God has plans to prosper them (Jeremiah 29:11)."

(14:50)

I know seasons change. Ecclesiastes tells us there's a time for everything, a time to plant, a time to uproot. I'm praying hard, seeking His voice in the stillness, trusting He'll make the path clear. Maybe retirement opens new doors to serve, mentoring from afar, volunteering, tutoring, writing about faith and education. But right now, the pull to stay is fierce because love doesn't clock out. So if you're here and you've ever felt the ache of letting go of a role, a calling, a chapter, know you're not alone. *It hurts because it mattered. It hurts because we loved everything we had.*

(16:41)

Thank you for letting me love you all these years. Thank you for being part of God's story in my life. Whatever comes next, may we all keep running the race with perseverance, eyes fixed on the future, Jesus.

God bless you, and God bless the next generation.

Thank you.