

Focus Priorities 2026

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Life Lessons | August 2, 2026 | 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; John 13:35; Matthew 28:18-20; Psalms 145:4

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

Earlier this summer, I was fortunate enough to spend a few days at our student camp up in Missouri. I know you've seen pictures and heard the stories. God moved in an incredible way at that camp. Dozens of kids, seventy-something, trusted in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We saw sixty-something of them baptized. It was just an incredible thing to celebrate.

For everybody who was there, the spiritual growth was incredible, right? They're out of their routine for a week. Their cell phones are gone for a week. They've got leaders and pastors and worship leaders and teammates on their teams pointing them to Christ. The spiritual growth was just incredible.

In addition to all of that, they had a ton of fun, right? All the things they got to do, from the lake and the tubing and the canoeing to ropes courses, mud runs, and rec events, they just had an absolute blast.

One of my favorite rec events, as an observer, just somebody who got to watch, was the four-way tug-of-war event they did. It's exactly like what you think it is, right? It's a tug-of-war rope coming off in four directions. They did the whole thing on a giant slip-and-slide with a big fire hose raining down water on them.

They're trying to pull, and they're slipping, falling down, standing up, and pulling. There's a bunch of kids on each end of the rope, pulling in four different directions. There's a big knot with a flag tied on it in the middle.

What do you think happened to that knot for the majority of the time? Nothing, right? It didn't really move for a lot of the time because everybody was pulling in a different direction. They're pulling this way, and they're pulling this way, so the knot just sort of stayed in the middle.

Now, if at some point, and I never saw this happen, three of the sides had said, "You know what? We're going to join side four and swing our ends of the rope around together and pull in the same direction," what happens to the knot then? It moves, right? It advances. It's not stuck anymore. It begins to see a little bit of progress.

That's a visual we'd do really well to remember as a church family. When we're all pulling on the same end of the rope, when we're all pulling in the same direction, here's what happens: God gets glory, and His kingdom continues to advance here on earth.

As we step closer to Kickoff Sunday, August 16, our new church year that's coming up, we're going to take the morning to ensure that, as a church family, we're on the same page together and we're pulling in the same direction on the same end of the rope.

We have a focus statement as a church family. I hope you know it. It's in the atrium on those big pictures

posted up there. Here it is: Champion Forest, and when I say that, I'm not talking about some organization. I'm talking about me and you, right? I'm talking about the people who make up the church family called Champion Forest.

Champion Forest advances the kingdom of God in three ways: by making disciples, by loving our community, and by strengthening the church. That's it.

That has had our church focused these past several years, pulling in the same direction. I'm telling you, as we've focused on that and that alone, this has been a season in our church family's history when we've seen more people trust Christ and more people baptized than in any other season of our church. God is good, and as His people work in unity, He gets the glory and His kingdom advances.

Again, Kickoff Sunday is in two weeks, and a new church year is coming soon. We're going to work through our focus priorities today, making sure we're on the same page.

Maybe you're newer to Champion Forest, and you're thinking, "What are these people about? Why do they do what they do?" This should give you great clarity, just a great picture of who we are as a church family.

Maybe you've been around Champion Forest for a little while. This is just a reminder to you. This is who we are and what God has called us to do. It's a good refresher for us as we work together for the glory of God.

Let's take a look. Just know that as we discuss these, this won't be an exhaustive list. We could say much more than I'm going to be able to say this morning, but my hope is to give tangible and practical insight into what this looks like as we seek the Lord together as a church family.

Making Disciples

First, we advance the kingdom by making disciples. That is focus priority number one.

That is not my term. That is not Pastor Jarrett's term. I want to show you this morning that we didn't sit around and dream up something clever or fun for any of these focus priorities. All of them come straight from the teaching of Jesus.

This is in Matthew 28. If you've got your Bible, open up to Matthew chapter 28. While you're turning, just know that this is a really famous passage in the Bible. A lot of people refer to the command Jesus gives there at the end of Matthew 28 as the Great Commission. It's the last command Jesus gives before He ascends back to heaven. You could think of it as the marching orders Jesus left for the church.

Here it is, starting in verse 18:

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them'"

That's a big part of this.

"Teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The final command Jesus gives to His followers there is to make disciples. A disciple, if you're wondering, simply means, in this context, a follower of Jesus. That's the call for us.

As believers, if you're a Christian, this is you. If you're part of this church family, this is us. When we're gathered together here and when we are scattered, we should be doing what we can to help people who don't know Jesus as Savior come to know Jesus as their Savior.

Our church family scatters a very long way throughout the week, across our city and across our country. We've got people around the world all week long doing different things. As we're gathered and as we're scattered, we should be doing what we can to help people come to know Jesus.

I would just add this: If you're here today and you've never trusted in Christ as your Savior, know that we're here to help you do just that. There's a God who loves you. There's a God who created you in His image to know you and to be in a relationship with you. That same God has told every single one of us who knows Him that we're to take that good news and share it with you as well.

If that's you and you don't know Christ, I'd encourage you to ask somebody before you leave here today. Come talk to one of our pastors at the end of the service. Visit us in our prayer room and just say, "Hey, give me a little bit more information about what this can look like in my life." We'd love to share that with you.

As a church family, we share the gospel. Then, to finish the Great Commission, when we introduce people to Jesus, we baptize them and teach them everything Jesus has commanded us.

How do we make disciples? I'm going to share a few ways with you. This isn't an exhaustive list, but hopefully it'll get us started and make sure we're moving in the same direction.

First, share the gospel. Tell people about Jesus. That should be very obvious. We're not going to spend a ton of time here.

For people to become followers of Jesus, what has to happen? The Holy Spirit is working in their hearts, of course, but somebody has to open their mouth and tell them about Jesus, right?

Who told you about Jesus? Think back for a minute. Who are the pivotal people in your life who opened their mouths and told you about Jesus? Maybe it was your mom or dad. Maybe it was an aunt or uncle. Maybe it was a brother or sister. Maybe it was a pastor somewhere. Maybe it was a student pastor or kids minister somewhere. Maybe it was a friend who lived down the street from you and told you about Jesus.

Somebody, somewhere, sometime told you the good news of Jesus. As they told you, God worked in your heart and you became a follower of Christ. Someone told you. Make sure you tell someone else. Don't keep that to yourself.

Tell someone not just because it's a good idea or because it would be a nice thing, but because Jesus has told us to tell other people.

We've had a lot of messages on sharing the gospel over the course of the past year. You can go back online and watch any one of those you want if you need a refresher. But I want to encourage you: As we've talked about that a lot in here, we as a church family have gone out and told people.

I get messages and emails all the time from people in our church family who are celebrating sharing the gospel with a classmate, sharing the gospel with a coworker, or sharing the gospel in the stands of a baseball game as they're sitting with other moms and dads whom God has put in their lives for that season. There are so many good things happening, and I want to make sure we keep doing that, that we continue to tell people about Jesus.

Then, as people trust in Christ and enter into a relationship with Him, we know that making disciples means we're going to teach them what Jesus has taught us. It's right there in Matthew 28: Make disciples, baptize them, and then teach them everything I have commanded you. That's what Jesus said.

As a church, we want to be intentional here. We don't just want to make decisions. We want to make disciples.

Think about that for a minute. There's a difference there. We don't want someone to just raise a hand and that be it. We don't want somebody to just come forward and talk to a pastor and that be it. We want to walk with them, like the command of Jesus. We want to walk alongside them, teaching them the way of Jesus.

No one who trusts in Christ should be left to figure this out on their own. The model we have in Scripture is believers walking with new believers to help them understand the Word of God together. Making disciples means teaching people.

I love how clear Paul is on that when he talks to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2. He says, "The things that you've heard me say," that's the gospel, "the things that you've heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust them to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

Think about that. We've got to take what we know about Jesus, what Jesus has taught us, and then we've got to turn around and teach it to other people so well that they get it, grasp it, understand it, and know what Jesus has taught them.

They've got to get it so well that they can turn around and tell someone else in a way that is so effective that the third person now understands the gospel. They've been taught the good news of Jesus. They've been taught all that Jesus has commanded them, and they can turn around and share it with someone else as well.

It's very simple. It's not always easy, but the plan God's laid out is so, so simple.

How do we do that? After someone trusts Christ, if we're going to make disciples, how do we teach them? We're going to dig a little bit deeper into the teaching part of making disciples today.

If you're thinking, "You know what? I can tune out for a minute here because I'm never going to get up on a stage like that. Nobody's ever going to put a microphone on me and put me in a position to teach," I would just say, be careful with that, because I thought the exact same thing you thought not too long ago. You never know what God's going to do in your life, okay?

We're all called to teach the gospel, and there are a lot of ways to do it that we might not even realize, think about, or understand as teaching.

Life-on-Life Teaching

The first is life-on-life teaching. We teach the gospel life on life.

Some of the most impactful teaching we're ever going to do in the life of somebody else isn't necessarily with our words. It's not necessarily walking through a lesson. It's just living life with them.

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 to a group of believers:

"So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves."

Some translations say, "our very lives."

"Because you had become very dear to us."

Here's the point I want to make: There was a group of Christians in a church family in the city of Thessalonica a long time ago, and they grew a lot in their walk with Christ, not just from teaching in a setting like this and not just from sitting down and working through a workbook or a Bible study together. They grew as Paul and the other Christians shared their lives with them.

Teaching and making disciples of other people isn't just working through a lesson. It is an intentional, relational, sacrificial investment in the people around you. Our lives should build up other people as disciples. Our families should build up other people as disciples of Jesus.

Here's a phrase you can hold on to, just a convicting question you can think about and wrestle with: Your life should play a role in the spiritual growth of the people around you. It just should.

By how you live, by how you approach things, by what you say, and by how you respond to the situations you're walking through, your life should play a role in the spiritual growth of the people around you.

Does it? Does it?

Listen, I'm grateful. There are a lot of families in our church family who play a massive role in the spiritual growth of me and my entire family. I'm not talking about working through Bible studies. I'm just talking about doing life together.

Think about this in a simple way. When we have another family over to eat, the families are there at the table, and one of the parents in the other family says they're going to bless the food and pray, my kids are hearing someone else pray, someone else talk to God. My kids are seeing that someone else places importance on that, not just Dad, but other families do this too. My kids are hearing someone else talk to God and hearing what's important to them as it comes out of their mouth.

You see that, right? There are other families making that same investment in my kids. My kids hear other

parents talking about what matters to them, the choices they're making, and the way they raise their kids. They see, "Okay, there are some other things going on here. It's not just my mom and dad." That's helping us grow spiritually as a family.

One of our trips this summer was great. It was a camping trip, and we were outside a lot. It was an unplugged thing. The company we went with made us turn in our phones. They locked them in a box, and they were gone the whole time we were there. It was incredible. I highly recommend locking your phone away for a couple of days. It'll change your life.

We were there together, and every day we'd get up, and my kids would see other parents, not just Mom and Dad, reading the Bible and starting their day with the Lord. They'd hear other parents praying with their kids. Some of the older kids on the trip pulled some of the younger kids aside and did little devotionals with them along the way.

There's this sense that families and believers, as they walk with Jesus, are going to have an impact on other believers around them. It's not going to happen apart from time spent together. You've got to have those kinds of relationships.

We know that God wants to use other believers to grow you spiritually. In that same vein, God wants to use you. He wants to use you to help other believers grow spiritually as well. It's all part of making disciples.

For our church family, so many of those relationships are formed, born, or forged, whatever you want to say, in what we call life groups, the small-group Bible studies that meet together on Sunday mornings. Relationships are built there, friendships are built there, and they spill over into everyday life in a way that grows all of us spiritually.

Kickoff Sunday, I think this is the third time I'm mentioning it now, is August 16. That's two weeks away. That's the Sunday, more than any other Sunday in our church, when people jump into life groups for the first time. There are a lot of new people trying it out. There are a lot of people who want those kinds of relationships, and they hear and learn that our life groups are where those are formed.

If you're not in a group right now, or you're not consistently in a group right now, I would strongly encourage you to put yourself in a position where you can be used by God to help other believers grow spiritually, making disciples and teaching them with how you live. Put yourself in a position where you can receive from other people and really be sharpened and grow in your walk with Christ.

If you're not in a group, two weeks from now, on Kickoff Sunday, put it on your calendar and just show up. Go to a small-group classroom. Nobody's going to make you feel weird. Nobody's going to make you feel awkward. They'll probably give you a donut since it's Kickoff Sunday. There will be food there.

I want to encourage you: Let other people teach you by how y'all live together. If you want a list of groups, scan that QR code on your seat. There's a whole list of them right there.

Life-on-Life Serving

The second way we teach, without being on a stage or teaching a lesson, is through life-on-life serving. We teach other people when we serve other people as part of the body of Christ.

The Bible is very clear that, as Christians, the way we love one another is a big, big, big, big, big deal.

Jesus said in John 13:35, "This is how a watching world is going to know that you're a Christian. This is how a watching world is going to know that you are one of My disciples."

It doesn't say by how often you're in church, by how often you read your Bible, or by how often you sing a certain song. The watching world is going to know you are My disciples by how you love one another.

As a church family, when we love and serve one another, not only are we pointing a watching world to Christ, but we're also pointing one another to the love of Jesus. We're teaching one another about the body of Christ and about the love that flows through the body to one another.

Sometimes it's a simple note. This week, somebody served me in that way. Wednesday was a tough day, with a lot going on, different meetings, and some hard meetings. I got a text right in the middle of it from one of our guys here, a guy named Matt. He just texted and said, "Hey, man, I'm praying for you today. The Lord brought you to my mind. I want you to know that I'm praying for you and your family today."

I needed that. That was a massive deal, and God used it to teach me about the body, about how we pray for one another, how we serve one another, and how we communicate like that. It was a big deal.

We also love and serve one another tangibly, with the physical things in one another's lives. We've seen it over the years, and we've seen it in the past few weeks. In the past few weeks, it's been really neat to see our families step up and respond to different scenarios.

One of our families, they're here this morning, had a fire in their home about two weeks ago. You probably saw it on the news. It left them with massive medical needs. A lot of y'all have asked how to pray. Continue to pray for baby Atlas, that God would continue to work in his body. Write his name down. Pray for him faithfully this week.

There are medical needs. There are financial needs. It's a huge deal. The way the church family has served this family has taught so many of us about the body of Christ and the love of Christ.

I want you to understand: When we serve one another, we're not just doing a nice thing. We're making disciples. We're teaching about the love of Christ and passing on the love of Christ to others.

You know this. It's common sense. You can't serve people you don't know and are never around. People can't serve you if they don't know you, if you're never around, and if they don't know your needs.

I want to encourage you: Make sure you're connected so you can serve and be served. That's part of making disciples.

Teaching the Next Generation

Third, Kickoff Sunday is coming soon. I think I mentioned that already, but here's another specific way we try

to be intentional at Champion Forest when it comes to our first focus priority.

Our first focus priority, and this is just like a test in the middle of the video to make sure you're with me, because I'll have to start all the way over if not, is what?

It is... Okay, the front row got it, I think.

Our first focus priority is making disciples. We talked about two ways we teach, and the third way we really want to zero in on making disciples here at Champion Forest is through teaching the next generation.

If we're serious about making disciples, and we are, because it's what Jesus has called us to do, then we're seriously going to work to reach our kids and students with the good news of Jesus and help them build a foundation of truth through which they can navigate a crazy world.

George Barna and the Barna Research Group do a ton of faith-based research in the United States and, honestly, around the world. They show that roughly two out of three people who come to faith in Christ do so before their eighteenth birthday, and half of those do so before they turn thirteen years old.

They form their worldview and their faith as kids, as people pour into them. Not only do they trust in Jesus at a young age, but so often they learn about His Word, begin to hide His Word in their hearts, and build their lives on the foundation of the Word of God. This is huge.

Their parents are often telling them the good news. Who else is teaching these kids? The pattern we have in Scripture is that the older believers in their lives do that, that the church family would do that.

Psalm 145:4 says, "One generation shall commend Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts."

Investing in our kids and students is a tangible and real way that we want to make disciples as a church family.

Practically, you've seen a lot of that this summer: Vacation Bible School and camps. Riley and Kylie were both baptized today, one at 9:30 and one at 11:00. Both of them trusted in Christ as their Lord and Savior at Vacation Bible School just a few weeks ago. Many of you served in that. That's a massive part of making disciples.

I told you what happened at our camps this summer. There are a lot of other things: mission trips for students and discipleship classes for parents as they pour into their kids as well.

Making disciples through Next Gen ministry looks like intentional midweek ministry. It looks like intentional life-group programming on the weekend. That intentional teaching of the Word of God to kids advances the kingdom in a powerful, powerful way.

I still remember my life-group teachers from when I was a kid in second grade, Gail and Andy Brown. They're still members of Champion Forest. They attend our Champions campus. They showed up and taught me about Jesus.

I remember some things. It's been a long time since I was in second grade, but I remember their classroom. I remember their names were Mr. and Mrs. Brown. I remember my friend CJ coming in every week and calling

them Mr. and Mrs. Purple. That was his thing. That's what he did in the class. He changed the color of their last name just to have fun with them a little bit.

But I also remember that Gail and Andy Brown always showed up. They were always there. They were faithful. They were fun, and they made sure we heard the Word of God.

We have teachers in our kids ministry just like that today. Twenty years from now, there are going to be kids who are grown up and have kids of their own, and they're going to remember the investment of teachers here on Sunday morning.

I believe that's why we continue to see more and more families calling Champion Forest North Klein home. As we grow, here's the honest need we've got as a church family: If we're going to continue to make disciples by investing in our kids at a high level, we need more adults willing to do that, willing to take the Word of God, step in, and pass it on to our kids.

I've talked with our kids team. I've talked with several who serve in our kids ministry, many of you, and I truly believe it would be a game changer to have one teacher in every class in our kids ministry who's there every Sunday morning, who doesn't rotate in and out. They're just there every Sunday morning.

They're like, "At 9:30, I've got my second graders in life group, and I'm going to be there every single week for the next church year."

I talk with my hands a lot, and I was explaining it to Lewis this week with my hands. I thought of the whole deal like one body with many parts. We're all part of the body of Christ. We all work together to advance the kingdom of God and make disciples.

I said, "You know what? We need about forty pinkies."

The pinky in the body is that person who says, "I'm willing. Every week, I'm going to take the 9:30 second graders, or the 11:00 fourth graders, or whatever. I'm going to be in there every single week of the year. I'm going to invest in those kids. I'm going to pour out the Word of God to them. I'm going to know them. I'm going to know their families. I'm going to know their parents. I'm going to make sure I do everything I can to see them grow up as disciples of Jesus."

Then we have to have more than one adult in the room, so the ring finger is the every-other-week person. They pop in and help out. When this person isn't serving, this person serves. They just sort of rotate in and out. The pinky is the constant, every week. That's just sort of what it looks like.

I got into this rhythm, showing Lewis what it could look like, and he said, "You'd better practice that and make sure the right fingers are up at the right time on Sunday morning, or you're going to get in trouble."

So I worked on that all week long, just a little drill there for myself.

But here's the reality: We would be stronger than we've ever been and healthier than we've ever been. Our kids would be in a better place than they've ever been if we had forty pinkies willing to jump in and cover that in our kids and preschool ministry.

That's all it would take to make a radical difference in our church family. It's not forever. It's for this next church year, as we're building the building, as things are expanding, and as more families are coming. We need forty pinkies.

The good news is that's sort of a new model for us. We've done every other week a lot, and we still need people serving every other week. But as we started this push about a week ago for forty pinkies, we got thirteen, which means we need twenty-seven more.

As I've been praying about Sunday and praying about Kickoff Sunday, I've been praying that twenty-seven people this morning would feel like God's impressing on their hearts, "You know what? I need to be the pinky this year," and that they'd step up and be willing to make disciples of kids and their families week in and week out.

Listen, I could keep going this morning on how we practically walk out that first focus priority of making disciples, but if I do, we're going to run out of time. We have three focus priorities. I've covered one, and what is it again?

It's making... Okay, great.

That clock on the back wall says I have five minutes and thirty-five seconds to hit the final two focus priorities. I'm going to talk fast. I'm going to encourage you to listen fast, and your answer to this next question is going to let me know how much I need to drill down on focus priority number two.

Number one is making disciples. You've got it. I just want to make sure you know: What is focus priority number two?

It is... I've got a lot of work to do. Okay. Oh, man.

Loving Our Community

Number two is loving our community. That's it.

Again, we didn't make this up. We didn't just think it was a good idea. This comes right from Jesus.

In Matthew 22, somebody asked Jesus, "Jesus, what is the most important command in all of Scripture? If we're going to pick one thing and just do that, what should we do?"

Jesus answered in Matthew 22 and said, "The most important thing you can do is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

But Jesus didn't stop there. He went on and said, "But the second is like it. You've got to love your neighbor as yourself."

You see the same story in Luke 10. A lawyer speaks up. It's always the lawyers. But a lawyer speaks up and says, "Why don't You qualify that, Jesus? Who exactly is my neighbor?"

Jesus tells a story to help us and to help that lawyer know who our neighbor is and whom we're supposed to

love. It's the story of the Good Samaritan.

Jesus paints this picture in the story of the Good Samaritan about love and what that's supposed to look like. We see that love crosses boundaries. We see that love happens even when we're uncomfortable. We see that love is often expressed through radical generosity, thinking through the needs of others. We learn that our neighbors, our community, are the people God puts in front of us.

Listen, there are a lot of needs around the world. We can't solve them all. There are a lot of people in need whom we'll never know, meet, or understand. We can't meet those needs if we don't know about them.

But do you know what needs we can meet? The needs of the people God puts in our path, the people in front of us. That's our community.

How do we love those people? Again, we're moving quickly.

First, we share the gospel. That's the most loving thing we can do, but we've talked about that.

Second, we meet tangible needs. That happened in the Good Samaritan story. He bandaged the guy up. He took him to an inn. He pulled money out of his pocket and said, "I'll pay whatever I've got to pay to meet the needs of this guy here."

Why? The guy was in his path. The guy was in need, so he jumped in and did it. That's the picture Jesus paints for us.

As a church family, that happens in two ways.

One, it happens in an organized manner. What do I mean? Here's a great example: Every week, people bring food to their life-group classes. We put it in that little wagon out front, and then we pass it out on Saturday mornings to twenty-five or thirty families in need who come through. That's our community ministry center. It's all of us, organized and working together, to meet a food need in our community.

Hurricane Harvey was a great example of our church working together in an organized way. As our church organized and mobilized together, many of you were there. Go back and look at pictures of this. It was wild. We mudded out and cleaned out over two thousand homes in the weeks following Hurricane Harvey. That was a massive, organized effort in which we banded together.

That's not the only way we should love our community. We should love our community organically as well. That means that as we go and we're scattered all throughout this community every single week, we individually meet the needs of the people in front of us.

We meet the need of the person our kid goes to school with. We meet the need of the family we know where someone's struggling with cancer. We meet the need of the kid in our kid's class who doesn't have school supplies this year.

We just meet needs and love our community because that is what God has called us to do. He placed a high priority on it. He said loving our neighbors, our community, is second only to loving God. As a church, we want

to make it a priority.

Strengthening the Church

Our final focus priority is strengthening the church. This one seems to have the most questions, and unfortunately, I've got about a minute and a half to explain it, so I'm going to do my best here.

When we say "strengthening the church," please know we're not talking about just this one, okay? In that third focus priority, we're not talking about Champion Forest. We're talking about as many local churches as we can possibly impact.

Again, that's not just something we think is a good idea. This follows the teaching of Jesus in Luke 12:48. Jesus says, "But to whom much has been given, much will be required."

The context refers to someone who's been entrusted with a lot: a lot of knowledge, a lot of opportunity, and a lot of resources. Jesus is saying those people have a responsibility to steward what has been entrusted to them in a way that brings glory and honor to their master.

Who's our Master? Jesus is, right? We're to steward what we have in a way that brings glory and honor to Him.

Knowing that, we see and know the impact a local church has on people. We want to make sure as many local churches as possible are strong, healthy, and sharing the gospel.

Practically, there are a few ways that happens. We'll host conferences and bring in pastors who don't have access to training anywhere else. We'll give a bunch of VBS supplies to churches all around our city that might not have VBS supplies to do one at their church. We know the impact it makes, and we want to help other churches do it too.

Think about our residency program. We'll have residents here for a year or two. They're trained. We invest in them. We pour into them. We give them a place to stay. So many things happen as we invest in them, knowing they're not going to stay, right? We know we're going to send them out to other local churches to be pastors, leaders, and teachers.

Ben Besner came through here. His residency just ended. He's preaching in a week or so, in view of a call to be a pastor at a local church by his seminary. We want to invest in that church through Ben.

Brett Wolf was here for a couple of years. He's now leading a growing and thriving student ministry at a church in Tampa.

Ryan York is at an incredible church in Nashville, Tennessee. He's their education and discipleship guy over everybody in their church, from birth through college ministry. He was equipped here.

We wanted to keep him. We wanted to keep all of them. But we sent them out to other local churches so that the entire body of Christ grows and is strengthened.

We didn't make that up. That happens in Scripture. Here are a few examples.

Timothy was sent by Paul to the church in Thessalonica. You see in 1 Thessalonians 3:2-3 why he went: to strengthen the church in their faith.

Titus was sent to Corinth. Titus was sent to Corinth twice during tense periods. Why? To strengthen the believers in their faith.

Judas and Silas were sent to Antioch. Why? To encourage and strengthen the new believers in their faith.

Every time Timothy, Titus, Judas, Silas, or Barnabas was sent from one church to another, I want you to hear this because it affects us: It cost the sending group of believers. It cost the sending church family. It cost them something. It came with a sacrifice.

They were sacrificing one of their better people to go and help. They were sacrificing the funds and resources it was going to take to get them there and to invest in and pour into that church.

It cost them something, but they were willing to pay it, ultimately, to strengthen the body of Christ. Faithfully, we want to do the same thing here. We want to use what the Lord has entrusted to us to ensure that as many local churches as possible are strengthened.

That's us. That's who God's called us to be. That is our focus. Those are our priorities.

We want to make disciples because Jesus told us to.

We want to love our community, and we want to do it really, really well, in an organized way and in an organic way as we flow out of here every single week. Why? Because Jesus told us to.

We want to help strengthen as many churches as we can. Why? Because Jesus has entrusted many resources to us, and He's called us to use them in a way that brings glory and honor to Him.

I'll just say this to our church family here: Thank you for the way you do that week in and week out, year in and year out.

I never feel like we're playing four-way tug-of-war here. I never feel like there's a group of people here who want to do this, a group of people here who want to do that, and another group of people here who want to do something else.

I feel like, consistently and constantly, we're pulling on the same end of the rope, all looking ahead to the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom.

Thank you, church family, for that.

If you're newer around here, I'd encourage you: That's what we're about. Find a space on the rope, get in, and start pulling in the same direction as this church family, all for the glory of God.

Would you pray with me this morning?

As we bow our heads, just think about God's Word. Think about our focus priorities as a church and how God's calling you to jump in and continue pulling together with your brothers and sisters here in our church

family.

If you've never trusted Christ, we need to go back and start there. I mentioned this earlier. If you've never trusted in Christ as your Savior, that's where this all begins.

The Bible tells us in John 1 that when we trust in Christ as our Savior, we become children of God. We're part of the family of God when we trust in Jesus as our Savior. When that happens, all these people around us become our brothers and sisters in Christ. They're part of the family, and we can pull in the same direction together.

If you're here and you've never trusted in Christ, know that it starts there. Let God work in your heart and do a really special thing today.

When we stand and sing in just a minute, we're going to have pastors and prayer partners down front. They'd love to pray with you about that, or honestly, about anything.

If you're wondering what God has next for you and you want to pray with somebody about it, maybe you've got a medical need. Maybe there's a financial need or a relational need. Maybe God's doing something in your life, and you just want somebody to come alongside you in prayer.

That's what we're here for, and we'd love to pray for you over any number of those things.

Lord, we love You so much. God, we thank You that Your plan, Your design, was never for us to do this by ourselves, but for us to jump in together as a church family, to pull on the same end of the rope, and to move together in the same direction, all for Your glory.

God, I pray that we'd be a church that does just that.

It's in Your name we pray. Amen.