

Making Disciples

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Priorities | January 11, 2026 | Mark 1:35; Philippians 2; 1 Corinthians 8; Hosea 10; Luke 10; Proverbs 11; John 14:15; Matthew 28:18-20

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

If you have your Bibles, I want you to grab them and turn to Matthew chapter 28.

We're going to start a brief three-week series today, and we're calling it Priorities. With the turning of a calendar year, we're always talking about new resolutions and new commitments. Well, these are some priorities that need to be a part of your life in 2026.

As a church, we have what we call focus priorities. At the beginning of the year, we always do a little series that highlights these focus priorities. We put it in a mission statement that looks something like this. It'll be on the screen for you:

"Champion Forest advances the kingdom."

And what are these focus priorities? There are three of them. We advance the kingdom of God by making disciples, loving our community, and strengthening the church.

This is what we want to be about as a church. It serves as a filtering system, if you will, for everything that we do, every mission we embrace, and every ministry we decide to be a part of. What we do as a church filters through these questions: Is this helping us make disciples? Is it loving our community? And is it strengthening the church, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ?

We talk about this in our new members class. It's one of the very first things that we address. And by the way, I can't think of a better resolution than joining a church. Like in much of life, you get out of it what you put into it.

Next week is our membership class, and if you've never joined Champion Forest and you're interested, text "membership" to 77069. We would love to have you. It's one hour, right before the worship service here. You meet our team, hear our ministry philosophy, and we go over these focus priorities.

Here's what you're going to discover about these focus priorities as we outline them over the next three weeks: Not only do they define our church, but they should define our lives individually. And that makes sense, right? Because we are the church. The church isn't brick and mortar. It is believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, what we prioritize as a church, we should prioritize as individuals.

My goal in this series, and my goal today, is to be extremely practical. I think I told you last week, if you were here, that this message I preach today may be the most practical message I've ever taught. I don't want this to be theoretical knowledge. I don't want it to be about intellectual knowledge. I want this to be about practice.

I don't want to just tell you why you should be a disciple of Jesus. I want to show you how you can be a disciple of Jesus. So, if you're taking notes, as I encourage you to, and you're looking for a title, it's simply "Making Disciples."

What Is a Disciple?

At its most basic, elementary-definition level, the word "disciple" means learner. That's all it means to be a disciple of Jesus - to be a learner of Jesus and His ways.

There were two forms of discipleship when Jesus walked the earth. You had the Greek model, which was like Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. That was like what we're doing right now: You sit still while I instill. It was philosophical. It was intellectual. They asked questions, and they answered questions with questions. That was the Greek model of discipleship, how one learned.

The Hebrew model was very different. It was life-on-life. Jesus became a carpenter because His earthly father, Joseph, was a carpenter. He followed in his steps.

Whenever someone wanted to follow a rabbi, they would go to that rabbi and say, "I want to be your disciple. I want to be your learner." If the rabbi allowed them to be his disciple, they followed that rabbi everywhere. They ate with him. They traveled with him. This is why you see Jesus and His disciples always together.

The Hebrew model of discipleship was a coming alongside. It was a mentorship, an apprenticeship. Think of our residency here at our church, where we have all these young men and women who are training for ministry. They come on our team. They live with us. They learn from us.

This is the type of discipleship that Jesus instilled, and He took even what the Hebrews were used to to a different level. Jesus taught, "If you're going to follow Me, it's going to take a total reorienting of your life. I want complete allegiance. You can't come after Me. You can't be My disciple unless you renounce everything and follow Me."

It was a totally different form of discipleship than anyone had ever experienced before.

And by the way, with Jesus and His discipleship, the disciples didn't come to Jesus and say, "I want to be Your learner." Jesus went to them and chose them to be His disciples, the same way He comes to us and chooses us to be His disciples.

There are two verses that I want to highlight today as they relate to discipleship. The first one is going to be like, "Yes, of course." Matthew chapter 28. We call it the Great Commission.

As I was studying this week, I read research that in 2017 or 2018, Barna asked regular churchgoers if they knew what the Great Commission was. Fifty-one percent couldn't define the Great Commission. Well, let that never be said of us, Champion Forest.

The Great Commission is Matthew 28:18-20. So if somebody calls you and says, "Hey, we're doing some research here. What church do you go to?"

"Champion Forest."

"Do you know the Great Commission?"

Please answer it.

Jesus came to all of His disciples. He's resurrected. He's getting ready to ascend back to the Father. Here's what the Bible says:

*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 of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

— Matthew 28:18-20

Make disciples of all nations, of all people groups. By the way, this is one of the major reasons we give, because we support the Great Commission through mission causes happening all over the world that we sponsor, and through church plants happening all over North America. When we give, it is a way that we go.

Now, the tense that's being used here in the New Testament, if you're reading it literally, is, "As you go." This is an act of faith right here. Meaning, as you go to the classroom, as you go to your workplace, as you go to your neighborhood, everywhere you go, your head is on a swivel. Because what do you want to be about? You want to be about making disciples.

As you go, you want to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is why baptism is so important, because baptism marks you as a believer. Baptism doesn't save you, but the reason we make a big deal out of it is because it marks you.

How do we know whether you're a Christian or not? The New Testament way of showing that you are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you are His disciple, is to be water baptized.

So, if you've never been baptized, I want to encourage you: It is way more than just this practice that we do, just this ordinance of the church. It symbolizes, "I am a disciple of Jesus."

As we go, the thrust is on making disciples, baptizing those disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and then teaching them to observe all that He has commanded us - showing them the ways of Jesus. And He says, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

We want to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we want to make disciples.

It was said of rabbis in Jesus' day that to truly be a learner of the rabbi, you needed to walk so closely to him that the dust of his feet kicked up on your face. That's a good picture of what it is to follow Jesus, to be a disciple of Jesus. We want to follow so closely to Him that the dust kicking off His sandals is kicking us in the

face.

Jesus is still calling us today to be His disciples. If you've never trusted in Christ, never received Him as Lord, that's the first step. You trust Him by faith - His death, His burial, His resurrection.

You say, "I want Jesus. I'm turning over the leadership and lordship of my life. I'm going to stop going my own way and doing my own thing. I'm going to turn, what the Bible calls repentance, and I'm going to follow You. I'm going to be Your disciple."

Walking With Jesus Through His Word and Prayer

The primary way that we walk in a discipleship relationship with Jesus is through His Word and through prayer. Prayer, in elementary terms, is simply communication. It's communion with the Father.

You cannot have a relationship with Jesus, and you cannot be in a discipleship relationship with Jesus, if you're not giving yourself to His Word and to prayer. The Word is where Jesus is revealed to us. The Word is where we learn His teaching. The Word, the Bible, is the instrument He uses to change us, transform us, and shape us.

There is no discipleship taking place between you and Jesus if you're not spending time with Him in His Word and in prayer.

We're going to get really practical this morning. That's why I brought this little Elmo here. It's kind of a projector. You're going to see some images on the screen in just a minute, because I'm going to show you how I walk with the Lord in my own personal walk with Him, how I try to be the Lord's disciple through spending time alone with Him in the Word and in prayer.

As we get started, let me give two qualifiers. First, what I'm going to show you and talk to you about today is a way to have time alone with the Lord. It's not the way.

Many of you are senior saints, and you've been spending time with Jesus for a long time. You know how to walk with the Lord because you've been walking with the Lord. Others of you are elementary. You haven't really started. Maybe this will help.

I just want you to take it all in. I'm going to have points that I'm throwing up. I'm going to show you some things on the screen in just a minute. But qualifier number one is this: This is a way, not the way.

Second, whatever I tell you today, the temptation is going to be for you to say, "Man, I'm going to start all of that tomorrow."

I've been following Jesus for over 20 years. I've been His disciple for a long time. If you do that, it's going to be like me going into a weight room tomorrow when I haven't lifted a weight in years. I'm like, "I'm going to go in there and kill it." I won't be able to move the next day.

In this, less is more. Take what we talk about here and make it your own. Just ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom as we start going through this process today.

A Practical Pattern for Time With the Lord

First, think relationship.

Why do I say this? Because oftentimes we call prayer and Bible study "spiritual disciplines," and they are spiritual disciplines. But you have to think relationship when you get into the Word of God and into prayer.

You can do a quiet time. You can read the Bible. You can check it off your list, and your heart not be any closer to the Lord Jesus Christ than it was when you opened it up.

Whatever you do, whenever you enter into a time with the Lord, you have to think relationship. Reading the Bible and praying are not an end in and of themselves. They're a means to an end: growing in a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ.

Second, find a time, place, and rhythm that is conducive to meeting with Jesus.

This is going to look different for everybody. I'm going to fly through these, so I need you to hang with me. But you've got to find a time, place, and rhythm - a routine - that is conducive for you to meet with Jesus.

Everybody's different. Some of you are early-morning people. You wake up and you're singing, and you're ready to start the day and get into it. Others of you barely made it to church at 10:45 on time. You came in after the first song. No judgment. It's just the way we're wired.

Some of you love nature, and you feel really close to the Lord in nature. You like being outside. Others of you like a coffee shop where things are going on. You can put your earphones in. I don't know how you need to do it. I'm just telling you, you need to find a time, a place, and a routine and rhythm that are conducive to meeting with Jesus.

Jesus gave us His routine:

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

— Mark 1:35

He would go to a solitary place, a desolate place, and He would do it early in the morning.

For most of us - I know some of you are saying, "I'm a night owl" - but for most of us, you need to give God your mornings. That's when you're plugged in. You need to do it before you start your day.

But again, to each his own. The most important thing is that you give God your very best.

If you're wondering about me, I've got two places. I switch them on and off depending on the mood I'm in that morning when I wake up. I get coffee, and I'm either going to the living room, where I've got a little setup, or I've got my study at the house that I go into. It's going to be one of those two places.

Third, develop a reading plan.

You can get a reading plan anywhere online. I told you I'm going to be so practical in this message. But the key is giving yourself every single day to taking in and digesting the Word of God.

In this, I will tell you that less is more. If you haven't been having time alone with the Lord, don't jump in and read three chapters tomorrow. Read one paragraph. Less is more. Take in one truth.

But when you have a reading plan, and you're reading the Bible systematically and holistically, you start to see how it fits together. I'll show you what I do here in just a moment.

I do my Proverb of the day. This morning, I've got my journal here, and I'll get into this in a moment, but my Proverb of the day was Proverbs chapter 11. You can see all of this. I write in my Bibles. I like to take notes. I like to pray the Scripture in. I'm going to talk about that in just a minute.

I do the Proverb of the day. Then I go to the Psalms. I do two to three Psalms a day, depending upon the size, my time, and where I'm at. I'm systematically reading the Scripture in.

My Old Testament reading was Hosea chapter 10 this morning. Then I do one New Testament chapter. First Corinthians chapter 8 was this morning.

I say this to say, if you do this, you read Proverbs 12 times in a year. There are 31 Proverbs. If you do two, three, or four Psalms a day, you'll read the Psalms four times in a year. If you do one Old Testament chapter a day, you'll read through the Old Testament in a year and a half to two years. If you do about one New Testament chapter a day, you'll get through it twice in about a year and a half, depending on whether you miss days or not.

But you need to develop a reading plan.

Fourth, get a good study Bible and a good journal.

The reason a study Bible is very important is because it has notes in it. I brought a few of mine up here. I've got the ESV Study Bible. Most of the time, I get hardback. I'm not bringing this one to church. It weighs too much. But I keep it here, and it's got notes in it.

I've got the Holman Christian Standard Bible that I've gone through, the NIV - it doesn't matter. But a study Bible is like a seminary education, and it'll really help you.

If you don't understand something, instead of just glancing over it, study Bibles have these notes and cross-references. It's easy. If you're serious about the study of the Bible, get a good study Bible. You can get them online.

I know I'm old-school here with my books and everything. A lot of this we do electronically now. However you choose to do it, get a good Bible and a good journal.

I brought these out here. This is 20 years of my spiritual life right here. I started journaling when I was in high school, and I've kept these journals.

Obviously, I don't show this to say, "Oh, look at me." I show this to hopefully inspire you to say, "Man, I can

pick out one of these journals, find today's date from 10 years ago, and see what God was teaching me. I can look in there and see what I was struggling with and go, 'My goodness, I can't believe I struggled with that. That was crazy. Look at where You've taken me, God.'"

Then, on the other side, I look at it and go, "My goodness, I was struggling with that 10 years ago. I'm still struggling with it. God, what's wrong with me?"

It's all right here.

You say, "Man, that's awesome. Are you going to publish those one day or give them to your kids?"

Heavens, no. In my will, these are to be burned. Every single one of them. Because this is my walk with the Lord.

In fact, I'm going to show you in just a minute. I write in hieroglyphics. Even if I lost one of these, you couldn't figure out what I was struggling with and walking through to save your life. It's between me and the Lord.

But it shows spiritual growth. And again, when you write things down, I just believe this: When you're in your time alone with the Lord, you've got the Holy Spirit of God in you and the Word of God before you. There's nothing coincidental. God speaks, and you're writing it down.

So get yourself a good study Bible and a good journal.

Fifth, limit distractions and refuse to rush.

I'm not going to stay here long. This speaks for itself. But listen, if you were meeting with somebody important, there is no way on God's green earth that you would be checking your phone while they were talking to you. It wouldn't happen.

Limit distractions. Turn the notifications off. Get quiet. Get in a place where you can hear from the Lord. And don't rush.

Listen to me: God does not download transformational spiritual truth to those in a hurry. You can't rush the Holy Spirit of God.

This is Luke 10, right? Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus, and Jesus says she's chosen what is better. Where else do you want to go when you're sitting before the Almighty? Limit your distractions. Refuse to rush.

Sixth, pray the Scripture.

I'm going to walk you through what I mean by praying the Scripture. But if we want answers to our prayers, we've got to pray the will of God, and the will of God is the Word of God. We've got to learn to pray the Word of God over our situations and over our loved ones, because those are the prayers God answers.

Seventh, always act and implement.

Let me show you what I'm talking about. It's amazing how God, when you're using His Word, will speak to you.

Right here, you can't read this, but I'm just going to read it to you:

*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
and whoever captures souls is wise.*

— Proverbs 11:30

Whoever captures souls, whoever is an evangelist, whoever is going after the hearts of people, is a wise person.

Over here, I've got the names of some people I'm praying for, people I want to come to know Christ. As I get to Proverbs 11 every single month, this is a reminder to me: "The next time I see this individual, Lord, I'm praying for their soul. Capture their soul. Give me eyes to see."

It becomes action and implementation.

What did James say? What good is it if you know the Word, but you don't do it? What's going on there?

Jesus said:

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

— John 14:15

The litmus test for a true disciple, a true learner, is this: Are you obeying what your rabbi tells you to do?

For some of us, our level of education is beyond our obedience. We are Bible-studied out, and our heads are big, but our hearts are small because we're not using our hands in service to the King. We're not working.

We don't want knowledge that puffs up. Who cares if you win a Bible trivia contest but stink at life? We've got to implement.

And this is not something we do in and of ourselves. If you listen to anything I say today and you're thinking you've got to grit your teeth and do it more, no, no, no. This is something the Holy Spirit works in you.

I need the Holy Spirit's power to get up in the morning and spend time with Him. I need the Holy Spirit's power to implement what He teaches me. It's all the Holy Spirit.

But because the Holy Spirit lives in me, I cooperate with Him in my sanctification. He's the one doing it, but I wake up. I submit myself to Him. I open up. I surrender.

This is what Paul said in Philippians chapter 2: We work out our salvation, but God works in us. So this isn't, "Grit your teeth and do better."

Eighth, give yourself grace.

You're going to miss days. You're going to get off your reading plan. We've got young moms in here, and I'm talking about waking up early and spending time with the Lord. You're like, "You have no idea, Pastor Jarrett. I'm barely awake right now."

You go through seasons of life. There's sickness. There are busy travel seasons. I'm just trying to encourage you: This is relationship. Don't get rigid. Always think relationship, and give yourself grace.

An Example From My Own Time With the Lord

Let me show you how I do this. Again, my goal is to get really practical with you. I'll show you how I do my time alone with the Lord, and this is from just this morning. I'm letting you in on a little thing here. I'm not worried about it. You can't read my writing anyway. I'll read it to you.

This morning, I got up early, which is my practice pretty much every day. I get up a little bit earlier on Sunday mornings because I want to be ready to go.

I have entered the reader stage. All right, so here we go.

"1/25."

If anything is going on that day, and it's a big deal, I write it at the top. This says, "Twins' birthday." They're 14 years old today, the little twins. They're not little anymore. And my Kelsey turned 18 yesterday, on 1/10. So we're a birthday family.

I've got right over here how much I weigh, just because I'm keeping tabs on it. I weigh every morning. I want to, you know, I'm a little heavy from Thanksgiving and Christmas. Give me a little grace.

Here's what I do first: I pray the Scriptures.

"Lord, thank You for another day to live for You. Speak to me as I read Your Word today."

I confess any unconfessed sin.

"Help me to listen to Your truth. I want to be surrendered to You today, God. Teach me. Lead me. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit."

I'm sitting before Him today. I just open myself up. That's every single day. It's just a brief prayer.

Why do I write it down? Because my mind wanders, and I want to engage. When I write it down, my mind is engaging. My mind isn't wandering.

Then I start my reading in Proverbs chapter 11. Sometimes nothing pops off the page in Proverbs 11, and I go straight to the Psalms. Other days, it may just be one verse that pops up, and I like to write that verse down.

Today it was Proverbs 11:2:

*When pride comes, then comes disgrace,
but with the humble is wisdom.*

— Proverbs 11:2

I just wrote that down. It's a good reminder: Man, don't get prideful. Be a humble person. Come on.

Then I got to verse 25:

*Whoever brings blessing will be enriched,
and one who waters will himself be watered.*

— Proverbs 11:25

It's about encouragement. I want to be an encouragement to other people. He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

As I'm writing, I'm looking in my Bible, and I write dates in my Bible. You see this right here? This says, "2/11/22. Stephanie Williford passes away."

She was a great friend of mine and Debbie's, and we walked with Stephanie and Brian. She wasn't even 30 years old when she passed away. She passed away in February of 2022.

The reason I write dates like this is because when I come to this date in February next month, I'll think about action and implementation. I'll read this, and I'll shoot Brian a text. I'll say, "Brian, buddy, I know it's been a few years since Stephanie's passing, and I just want you to know I love you, and I'm praying for you today."

It's just a reminder, and I pray for Brian. I write dates like that in my Bible because I want it to be an interaction.

In 2017, you see right up here, I wrote this down on September 11, 2017. Debbie and I were considering purchasing a home when we were living up in the Dallas area. I just didn't know what the wisdom was on it. I was thinking about it and praying about it.

I came to Proverbs 11 that day, and dang if the Lord - stink if the Lord - doesn't go, "Hey, look at verse 14."

*Where there is no guidance, a people falls,
but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.*

— Proverbs 11:14

God spoke to me that day through His Word: "Jarrett, you're struggling with making this decision. Go get some people around you and bring them in. Show them your finances. Show them where you're at. Show them the home. Let them help you."

God speaks to me, and these are just things that remind me. I'm interacting with the Scripture.

Then I go to my Psalms reading.

What's interesting about today is that in my Proverbs reading, I noticed something. Here's a key in Bible study: You have to observe, observe, observe. Read, read, read. Look for repetition of words. Take it in.

Let me show you some things to look for in your Bible. Y'all are going to have to take a picture of this. We don't have time to keep it on there. I'm flying through this.

Here are some things to look for as you're doing your Bible study:

- Promises in Scripture - Sins to forsake - Blessings to enjoy - Examples to follow - Teachings to learn

Take a picture. You can put that picture by your Bible study and say, "Okay, now I'm looking for truth."

The Bible is a treasure map for life. "God, this is in black and white. Avoid this sin. All right, this is a promise that You made to me. I can claim this today." You can take it in.

Or you can do the HEAR method: H-E-A-R. Again, less is more. Maybe there's just one verse you look at. Highlight it. Then you want to explain it.

"God, Holy Spirit, You're the illuminator of truth. Help me understand this."

You've got your study Bible. Read the study notes on it. Less is more.

"Lord, help me apply this to my life. How does this affect me today?"

Then you respond. It's action. "I'm going to implement it." These are just some things you can do.

Today, just in my observation in Proverbs, I thought, "My goodness, the word 'righteousness' is used a lot."

Ten times. I thought it was seven, then I kept reading, and it was eight. Then it was nine. Ten times. I wrote down all the times it's used. I just thought that was interesting.

Then I went to my Psalms reading. I was reading Psalms 4, 5, and 6 today. I got to Psalm 4:3:

But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself;

the Lord hears when I call to him.

— Psalm 4:3

I just said, "Lord, thank You for Your presence. Thank You for hearing me when I call."

It's a prayer of thanksgiving. God, the God of the universe, hears my prayers. That's amazing.

Then I got into Psalm 5:

For you bless the righteous, O Lord;

you cover him with favor as with a shield.

— Psalm 5:12

And:

Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness

because of my enemies;

make your way straight before me.

— Psalm 5:8

I had just read it 10 times in Proverbs, and here it is twice in Psalm 5.

Then I got to my Old Testament reading in Hosea 10. Look at this:

*Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love;
break up your fallow ground,
for it is the time to seek the Lord,
that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.*

— Hosea 10:12

I'm reading this and going, "Oh, Lord, there's a theme for the day right here. Help me to sow righteousness. Rain Your righteousness upon me and my family as we seek You. Soften my heart, Lord. I want to break up that fallow ground anywhere my heart is hard."

Then I wrote a note: "Righteousness is not something I do as much as it's something God pours out and produces in me. It results in actions that are righteous, but it doesn't start there. Lord, rain Your righteousness on me today for Your glory."

Then I went to my New Testament reading, 1 Corinthians 8. Same thing. This is like my hieroglyphics. You don't even know, but the Bible talks in 1 Corinthians 8 about not making a younger brother, a weaker brother, stumble.

I said, "Holy Spirit, is there anything in me, things I do, that makes somebody stumble?"

God gave me three things right there, and you don't know what they are. He does. I just confessed them and hopefully repented from them. Time will tell.

Then I make a prayer request list. I do this every day. That was yesterday. This is today. I'm praying for the services today. I'm praying for this message. I'm praying for wisdom.

When we're coming across things that are happening in Minnesota, we're looking at what's going on in Iran. I prayed for Iran right here.

"Lord, I need wisdom on how to address that, what to say, and what not to say. God, give me Your Holy Spirit's wisdom on when to address it."

I prayed for Cam and Landry. Those are the twins. You know what I prayed for them? Righteousness.

"Lord, let them be righteous in You, and let them live righteously."

You better live righteously, girls.

Winter Huddle is tonight at North Klein. Next week, it's here. I prayed for the Winter Huddle because we're going to cast vision for what's next. I prayed for you to receive the vision and what we believe is the direction God is taking us. I'm saturating that in prayer, along with praying for other things.

But that's as simple as I do it right there, guys. You can take this off the screen now. That's as simple as it is.

This is what abiding, what remaining in the Lord, looks like. It's just getting alone with God in His Word and prayer and being a learner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Kick that dust on me, Jesus. I want to be so close that I've got to have a shower every day. I'm following You so closely."

Passing On the Baton of Faith

If you're a disciple of Jesus, you have a responsibility to disciple, to pass the baton of faith on to someone you know.

Paul put it like this in 2 Timothy chapter 2:

*You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,
and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men,
who will be able to teach others also.*
— 2 Timothy 2:1-2

That word "entrust" is a banking term. It means "deposit for safekeeping."

In other words, you and I are to take what we learn in Scripture and deposit it in someone else. We are to give it to someone else so that they safeguard it and, in return, pass it on to someone else.

It's this idea of passing a baton, and all of us ought to have people to whom we are passing on the faith. It starts with our immediate family. We ought to be passing the baton of faith on to our kids. We ought to be passing the baton of faith on to our grandkids.

Then it goes outwardly from there, into every relationship. Again, the Great Commission says, "As you go." Our head is on a swivel.

"God, who can I teach to be a learner of You, the great Rabbi?"

Surely you're not holding on to the baton. Surely you're passing it on to someone else. If you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, someone passed their faith on to you.

We have a driving statement behind every focus priority. Here's the driving statement behind this priority of making disciples: When I stand before the Lord - and all of us will one day - and give an account for my life on an individual basis, will I be happy with what I have to present to God?

You aren't going to be looking to the right or the left. It's you and the Lord.

It's not going to be your resume. It's not going to be who you know. It's not going to be your trophies. None of that matters in the end.

What matters is who's behind me in my wake because I passed the baton of faith on to them.

I want to invite Jeff Hecker to the platform. Jeff, come on up very quickly. Y'all welcome Jeff Hecker to the platform here.

Jeff is a good buddy of mine. He's a personal trainer in the Woodlands area. We met several years ago, and about three years ago he started coming to Champion Forest.

Jeff, fill us in on where you were three years ago from a spiritual standpoint.

****Jeff:**** Three years ago, I guess I was on the fence. I committed to Christ about 20 years ago. I did an altar call, and I was supposed to get baptized the next week. That entire week, I was just under duress. The enemy was telling me how I wasn't worthy and how I had screwed up. I couldn't even go one week without messing up. I fought that turmoil for the better part of 20 years.

Then I came in here, hooked up with this guy, and finally committed to it. I talked to him and told him, "I just don't feel worthy. I don't feel like I deserve any of this."

He's like, "Duh, you don't. None of us do."

****Jarrett:**** You're not worthy, Jeff. What are you talking about?

Let me translate what he was saying. He had followed Jesus for 20 years, and there was no victory. There was no sense of confidence in walking with the Lord.

What was the catalyst for you in saying, "I've got to get in the game, begin really getting serious about the Lord, and come back to church"?

****Jeff:**** The catalyst for me was our daughter. I have a lovely wife, and we have a daughter, Haley, who's 19. This would have been about her sophomore or junior year, and she was about to go off to college. We were both convicted that we hadn't provided her a godly example.

We would go to church for a little while and then kind of fall off. We taught her about Jesus, but we never really dug in and showed her that example. We wanted to do that before we led her out into the wild.

****Jarrett:**** Some form of discipleship. She ended up going to A&M. I don't know what kind of discipleship you've got going on in your home.

What's it been like being in a discipleship relationship? Jeff and I meet every week. I was just asking him, "How did we even meet?" It was your brother Chris, who just recently started teaching a life group with some young adults here, if you're interested.

I met Chris at an event, and he told me you were coming. I said, "Well, give me his number. I'll reach out to him." We ended up having lunch, and that started it.

For the last couple of years, we've met every week. We go through Experiencing God, the workbook, which is what we've been going through recently. Then we talk about what's going on in our time alone with the Lord.

You'll be amazed how often those things cross like that.

What's it been like for you to be in a discipleship relationship?

****Jeff:**** It's been amazing. It's been life-changing. Everybody in my life can tell a difference.

I'm a strength coach, so I spend most of my time in a gym and in Nike shorts. I'm not very buttoned-up. At the very beginning, I thought something like this would be kind of stuffy and not my cup of tea, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Like I said, we hang out, talk football, and make fun of the Aggies.

We're also both the only testosterone in our households, so we kind of chop it up a little bit. Then we lean into the Word, and it's just so amazing. It's totally life-changing.

Something that I struggled with for so long, I can talk to him about, and he's like, "I've felt that way before, and this is what I did." He can refer me to Scripture. It's really given me the confidence to say yes to something like this and be in front of all of y'all.

****Jarrett:**** He's told me God's teaching him to say yes. He just goes, "Obey."

I said, "Well, good. I need you to help me preach on Sunday now that you said yes."

Final thing I'll say, and then we'll close it out: Would you encourage someone to be part of a discipleship relationship?

****Jeff:**** No doubt. Like I said, it's been life-changing. Since I leaned in, and with getting to meet with him, I can see his steps. It's not overwhelming, and it's changed my life.

My daughter's been baptized. My mother-in-law has been baptized. My brother-in-law and sister-in-law are members of the church now. It's been a slam dunk. Please, please take the step.

****Jarrett:**** Praise God. Thank you, Jeff. You're awesome. Thank you, Nikki. We love your family, the Hecker family.

You saw the Experiencing God slide on there. We're going to start that on Wednesday, January 28, right here. It says \$20 a person, and that's for the workbook. You can buy it online, but we're going to meet in the FLC. I'm going to lead us through Experiencing God. I just felt a weight in this.

If you're looking for entry-level discipleship, we're going to talk for about 30 minutes, and then we'll have table groups.

Also, if you're interested in next steps, like you've never been discipled, text "steps" to 77069. We have people who are ready to disciple you. We'll try to pair you up, mix and match it so there's an affinity there.

We also have a Next Steps booth right out here in the Commons. If you want to go afterward and say, "Man, I need somebody to put the baton in my hand," or, "I'm ready to put the baton in somebody else's hand," just go to our table right there.

In 2026, we're going to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we're doing it right, we're going to disciple someone else.

Amen.