

Next – Vision Sunday

Isaiah 54:2

SERIES “Next”

Jarrett Stephens

We've been looking these last few weeks at what we call our *FOCUS Priorities*. We keep these priorities at the forefront of our minds as we plan programs and ministries and events here at the church. We have put them in a “Focus Statement” that reads like this:

Champion Forest advances the Kingdom by *making disciples, loving our community, and strengthening the Church.*

Making disciples is of course the Great Commission. We talked about this in week one of the series. All of these Focus Priorities have a driving question they are rooted in, and the driving question behind this focus priority of “making disciples” is:

When I stand before the Lord, will I be happy with what I have to present to him?

At the end of the day, when we all stand before God and give an account of our life, the people in our wake are ultimately what's going to matter the most! The question we need to be asking ourselves is, “Who have I invested my life in, and served, and loved and discipled so that they look more like Jesus?

The second focus priority is “loving our community”. We talked about this in detail last week. The driving question that this priority is rooted in is:

If Champion Forest disappeared tomorrow, would anyone in the community know, care, or miss us?

We want to be a church that leads the way in evangelism and sharing the gospel of Christ. And we know this to be absolutely true - the articulated gospel is especially heard when we are showing tangibly the love of Christ to our friends, neighbors, and surrounding community.

The third focus priority is what we are going to unpack today, and that is what we refer to as: “strengthening the Church”.

I call this priority the “Great Commitment. Scripturally, it's rooted in Matthew 25 and Luke 12. Jesus is sharing a parable about the stewardship of one's life. And he calls for the steward to use what God has entrusted to him in a faithful and wise and strategic way.

He closes his parable in Luke 12 out with these words:

Luke 12:48b – “...Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.”

From a corporate standpoint, Champion Forest is a (Matt. 25) “five-talent” church. He has entrusted to us:

- He has given us an abundance of resources...
- He has given us an abundance of people
- He has entrusted to us opportunities and privileges and influence that many churches never get to experience...

The driving question behind this focus priority of “strengthening the Church”. And notice that’s a capital “C”:

- our missions’ programs...
- our residency that is currently training up 25 young men and women called to ministry...
- our church planting and pastor resource arm, CF Connect...

It’s all about strengthening NOT just our church, but THE Church!

Illus. HCPN/Spanish Cohort - Last week, we were privileged to host nearly 500 pastors from the greater Houston area on our campus for a day worship and training and fellowship. It was in partnership with the Houston Church Planting Network which we support with some of our missions’ dollars.

Why did we say yes to hosting this event? Why are we committed to training up Spanish Pastors (a new cohort) – we met this week -60+ pastors trained, equipped and sent out all over North America to being Spanish works primarily in English congregations. Why do we do this?

It’s part of strengthening the global Church. And the driving question behind this focus priority is:

How are we stewarding the gifting, resources and influence God has graciously given us?

A strong local church (little “c” church) makes the (big “C”) church stronger and more effective.

And today, I want to talk to you about what we believe is NEXT for Champion Forest that will NO DOUBT help us be a stronger and more effective local congregation and in turn, help us fulfill our obligation and responsibility to help strengthen the universal Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what I am about to share with you I have shared in various settings over the last nearly six months. Many of you have heard this presentation I am about to make – some of you more than once...but for the mass majority of you present today, you will be hearing this for the very first time.

I’m going to cover a lot this morning and to get it all in, I’m going to have to move pretty fast! And I know what some of you are thinking...that’s different from every Sunday, how?! Ha!

I say this just to let you know that if you feel like you miss something...or maybe you think, "Did I hear him correctly?"

You are for sure going to have questions about some of what I say – have no fear...BECAUSE when you leave here today (Or when you are on campus again if you are not here!), you will receive a booklet that has everything I'm talking about in it as well as a detailed FAQ.

We also have a website that is going live today! I'll give it to you at the end of our time together that will also have all of the information as well as videos, an even more detailed FAQ and a place you can submit questions if we don't answer the one you have in mind.

That being the case, let's talk about what's coming NEXT to Champion Forest, and I do want to emphasize NEXT.

For over 50 years this church has been in Northwest Houston going by faith and making a difference for the cause of Christ in this community. This body of believers was birthed in faith! It was birthed in a desire to reach people for Jesus and do something great for God.

Illus. Church history - I have in my office a church history box. It's filled with files of church history dating all the way back to 1968-1969. This is when the idea of a church was being birthed in our first Pastor, Robin Guess.

Robin was a pastor at First Baptist Church Navasota. As a hobby, he took photographs and the Navasota Examiner hired him to cover the 1969 US Open at the Champions Golf Course.

He came and covered the event and while in this area, he was blown away at the growth he was seeing in this region. He went home after the tournament, and this is his wife's Janie's testimony.

Janie Guess - **"He related to me all the wonderful things he had seen, how Champion Forest Drive was going to be a major thoroughfare someday, and that this area needed a church. (She said,) Robin needed and wanted more of a challenge, so we prayed that God would give us a challenging field, and our prayers were answered...whether clearing the land, or turning the preacher's garage into an office, their genuine faith and their works went hand in hand. They would all say, "To God be the glory, great things He has done."**

They started this church with 6 people...5 with the last name of Guess...and just look at what God has done over the last 56 years!

This church was birthed in faith! Pastor Robin preaching at the grand opening of the original building on Greenwood Forest, which was later the Chapel. Listen to what he said to the congregation in those early days of getting the church up and going! Here's the copy of his sermon that day! What a challenge!

Robin Guess - **"Believe me – if we yield to the temptation to sit back and take it easy for even one day – if we relax for one week we will tend to become like the church in Laodicea (he was referencing the church Jesus referred to in Rev. 3 as "lukewarm"). I pray to God that**

we shall never be a ‘warm’ church...let us pray fervently that the influence of Laodicea will not encroach our blessed fellowship.”

God bless you, Robin Guess! From the VERY beginning...it's in our DNA, Champion Forest...it's ALWAYS been our desire to move by faith and attempt great things for the glory of God.

It wasn't just Robin Guess...it was also Pastor Damon Shook. He built on this foundation and desire to reach the world for Christ.

Listen to Pastor Damon's (I sure wish I would have known him!) Both of us 42 when we were called to Champion Forest. Both of us graduated from the prestigious Ouachita Baptist University.

Listen to his challenge to this congregation way back in 1981! He asks:

Damon Shook - “Therefore, do you want to do something great to make a difference in Houston and the world? Then put your first emphasis, your first prayers, your first energy, your first dollars where Jesus Christ put his concern and commission – his local body of believers. For you and me, this means Champion Forest Baptist Church.”

See, that call to go by faith and attempt something great for God...to be faithful stewards and to invest in the Kingdom and make a difference for Jesus...to steward everything we've got for the glory of God NOT just here in Houston but in the world...this has marked us all of our days.

From Pastor Robin Guess to Damon Shook to David Fleming! The call has gone out to this congregation again and again, “let's step out on faith”, and you Champion Forest have answered the call time and again.

In 2008, Dr. David Fleming posed this question as you were seeking to expand and grow and continue to move by faith. It's the question of this hour:

David Fleming: “Will we do whatever it takes to keep reaching people for Christ? Each of us must make an impact with our lives and with the resources God has and will provide...I pray you will respond with a confident and faith-filled ‘yes’, so that together we can make an impact for him, for every generation.”

THIS is why we're calling this NEXT...because what I am presenting today is just the NEXT chapter in the rich history of this wonderful congregation. This isn't a new book...this is just a new chapter of being who we've always been and doing what we've always done.

And so, with that being said, let me introduce you to NEXT and as I do will share with you the story behind how all this came to be.

NEXT Presentation:

- Worship Center Remodel (past work, Churchill)
- North Klein expansion (Fox Elementary, Parking lot)
- Digital Ministry and Broadcast expansion (SWBTS, Right Now, CBS 11, Pando, Hacia Adelante, The Nix)
- International Church Planting (GEM – Rome, Pristina, Birmingham and Frankfurt, FAMM Nepal 7, IMB)
- Third Campus in North Magnolia (land acquisition)

I repeat the words of Pastor Guess way back in 1976: “**Sacrifice is the key to success.**”

Champion Forest to whom much is given, much is required. We have a stewardship on our church. We have an obligation...a responsibility to do WHATEVER it takes to reach as many people as possible with the gospel of Jesus Christ and disciple them to become more like him.

There's a sense of urgency! Now is the time...don't hold back!!!

From Northwest Houston to the world...let's move forward together, by faith, and step into what's NEXT.

Would you pray with me?

Text “Devo**” to **77069** – begins Feb. 1 (28-day journey together along with FASTING)

NEXT website: **next.championforest.org

**Experiencing God this Wednesday Night

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.