

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

FATHER'S DAY AT TRADERS POINT

AARON BROCKETT + CARSON WENTZ | JUNE 19, 2022

Aaron

Hey, can we give a warm Trader's Point welcome to Carson?

Hey, man. Thanks for being here. I appreciate you taking your time to come back into town and to have this conversation. I know we set this up a while ago now. And for those of you who are part of our church, I had your wife, Maddie, here on Mother's Day. She did an amazing job. She crushed it. Maddie is here today so, Maddie, good to see you.

Mother's Day afternoon you texted me and you were like, "Hey, that was so good. Are you sure you want to have me back? I don't know if I can live up to that. And I just want to say to you that you're not going to live up to that. But something tells me you've got experience in not living up to people's expectations.

Carson

Very true.

Aaron

Hey, come on, man. You can be real about it. We'll get to all of that stuff here in just a minute.

But, seriously, thank you for being here. I've gotten to know you off the field. And that's why you're here. I think it's really great that you are in the NFL, but I wouldn't have you here if it weren't for your character and who you are. So I want.... You've got a lot to say here.

Our character doesn't get revealed when everything goes our way. Our character gets revealed when we go through trials and difficulty. You've had some of that here recently. So, I appreciate you being here.

For those of you who are here or are watching and you have no idea what I'm talking about, and don't know who you are, tell us a little bit about Carson Wentz. Where did you grow up? How did you get here today?

Carson

So, I grew up in North Dakota. Played a lot of sports. Pretty much every sport. I have an older brother—really close with him. I ended up going to North Dakota State. Played five years there. I was kind of a late bloomer in high school. And even in college I didn't play until my junior year. Fast forward a couple of years I ended up getting drafted to the Eagles in 2016.

And I remember my mom sent me that night a little arts and crafts project, fill in the blank, from third or fourth grade: When I grow up, I want to be blank. And I put: I want to be in the NFL. And she sent me that the night of the draft. And it was just a lot of emotion, life-changing emotion.



So pretty cool to be living out my childhood dream so to speak. I played five years in Philadelphia, got traded here. I had a lot of fun for one year here, a quick year. Got shipped out of here to Washington not too long ago. So now we're in Washington going into year seven, fun.

Aaron

Yeah, I appreciate that. Tell us a little bit about your family life. The family you grew up in and talk to us a little bit about Maddie and the girls today.

Carson

So growing up in North Dakota my parents got divorced when I was seven. Both lived in North Dakota. Both of them remarried. I have a step sibling, I have a half-brother, and then I have an older brother, Zach, who I am really close with. We've done a lot of life together. A lot of good. A lot of bad. A lot of everything. You probably mistake him for me if you're around here enough. He's here as well. He runs a foundation actually, AO1 Foundation, so that's about me growing up.

Now, I have my own family. I have a wife. Maddie and I have been married almost four years coming up here soon. We have two little girls. Hadley who is two years old and Hudson who is seven months. And they are a lot of fun, smiling all of the time, all the highs and all the lows within about 30 seconds. It takes a lot of patience but it's a lot of fun, a joy. It's been a blessing being their dad watching them grow up already.

Aaron

Yeah, absolutely. I love that. What's your favorite thing about being a dad?

Carson

That's a good question. Honestly, for Hadley, my favorite thing is putting her to bed. She is so sweet. That's the one time of the day she sits still. She's a lot like me. And when she's tired she crashes. So she snuggles up to me and we pray, and I read her a book and all of that. She's so sweet. That's the sweetest time she'll be, right before bed. So those moments are probably my favorite right now.

Honestly being a dad is a lot of fun but seeing my wife be a mom, that's actually been really cool. Things change. The second she had Hadley (she was a big sleeper before) she was like, "Honey. I don't know how this is going to go, this baby thing." And you just see the mom instincts come on right away. It's been fun to do it alongside of her and see her just thriving as a mom.

Aaron

Yeah. You know there is a passage in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14—I love what Paul talks about in these two verses. He's talking about manhood in particular. And I think that manhood, fatherhood, oftentimes those can be connected. And in our society, manhood is under fire, many times for good reason. There are a lot of examples of bad manhood and toxic manhood, but that doesn't mean that we should shy away from what it means to be a Christlike man.

I love what Paul says in 1 Corinthians. He starts off this way. He says:

"Be watchful."

I love that. It's this idea that my head is going to become a swivel. I'm going to be watching for the pitfalls that are in front of me.

"Stand firm in the faith. Act like men and be strong."

And oftentimes we think of strong as insensitive, but that's not the case here because what he says in the very next verse is:

"Let all that you do be done in love."

And manhood is oftentimes looked at with, like I said, suspicion in our society. So in reference to that verse and even your own experience as a man with other men, what do you think it means to be a man?

Carson

It's a great question. And the sexual orientation part of it, you answered greatly a couple of weeks ago. So I'll leave that to your realm. Awesome things were discussed here. But no. I think of it like this. When you're young, as a kid, even as parents we kind of find ourselves doing the same thing. As a kid, as a little boy, you're socialized, "Hey, be tough." If you fall, "Hey, get up. Be tough. Hey, don't cry. Men don't cry." And all these things. You might subconsciously not even realize that you are doing that, or thinking those thoughts, but it kind of portrays this message that you have to be a rough, tough, gritty man to be a man.

So when I look at what it means to be a man, obviously, I look to the Bible. And I look first and foremost at the person of Jesus. A verse that everyone can memorize in the Bible, can't forget it, it says:

"Jesus wept."

There you have it. Jesus wept so it's okay to cry, it's okay to be emotional, it's okay to have feelings, it's okay to do those things.

I also think of King David. King David was a man's man. He was a warrior. He took down Goliath. He did all of these things. And you think of David, and you think that he is a king of kings, a man's man. But if you read Psalms, that dude was emotional, heartache, he was all over the place. And that's real. That's real to have those emotions. And it's okay to not suppress them but to let them out. So I think being a man is all about loving people, being real, being authentic.

I think of Jesus, He came to serve. He came and washed feet. He came and served and loved others. But at the same time He was convicted. So there is this fine line of being humble and humility, and having grace and love and those emotions, and at the same time being convicted.

When He saw things going on in the Temple that He didn't like, He stepped in there tipping tables. He was angry. So you can be convicted but you can also still walk with love and grace. That's a balance that, as a man, I think you have to walk. But oftentimes we think more of the convicted side and living this rough, tough emotionless side. And I don't think that's really how God called us to be as men.

Aaron

Yeah, I totally agree with that. You know I think that oftentimes.... There is a lot of truth in this phrase: hurting people hurt people. And hurting men hurt other men and women and kids.

So you go back to that crying piece and expressing our emotions, some of the most wounded guys that I know are guys who can't get in touch with what it is that they feel and how to express that. And if you don't it's going to end up coming out in really sideways, unhealthy ways.

I think that that is so important. And I think being able to model and to strive for those attributes about Christ, I love that you mentioned that. There were times when He demonstrated some real force, but it was not at the wrong people. He was able to decipher that.

When you think about the attributes of a godly man, what are the ones that you really admire in others and ones that you are striving for in your own life?

Carson

So I've been fortunate to have some really awesome mentors for different seasons of life. I gave my life to Christ in college and just had seen attributes of men and godly things from these guys that I really valued.

The first thing that comes to mind is just being unashamed and just being bold with your faith and wearing it on your sleeves, so to speak, from a loving perspective. And being courageous to share when it comes up and also just seeing guys who you can just tell that there is something different about them. They carry such a different sense of joy when they go through the ups and the downs of life. Our flesh wants to rise up in those ways and be really high and really low. As a man of Christ, a follower of Christ, you want to stay the same, have that deep rooted joy that I think we talked about last week or the week prior here.

So those are the things that I'm really looking forward to: being bold, being courageous with my faith, unashamed. Just that sense of joy that people can see that there's something different. That's something I'm walking through every single day trying to get better at, I really admire that in others.

Aaron

Yeah, me too, man. There is something about.... I shared with you that I was in Wyoming last week with a group of guys. One of the guys who is in his mid-60s, was just super grateful. Every day he just kept talking about, "Man, I'm just so grateful."

I asked him one morning, "How can you be so grateful?" And he said he'd been doing this exercise every day where he will get up every day, first thing in the morning, and go for a walk. And he'll run through the alphabet and for every letter of the alphabet he names the things that he is grateful for. I was like, "You do that every day? How many things are you grateful for that start with A?" And he was like, "Oh, man. All kinds of things: apples and armadillos."

But I love the fact that, as we grow older, one of the things that I'm really striving for because life's hard, you're going to take tons of hits, tons of criticism and you can have

a calloused heart, or you can have a scarred heart that still is soft. And I want to be a man marked with gratitude and humility and so amen to that. I agree with all of that. Tell us a little bit.... You said you came to Christ in college. Tell us a little bit about.... Did you grow up a Christian? What has that relationship been like?

Carson

So, I remember, vaguely remember, when I was really little praying with my grandmother to accept Christ. And she was pretty proud of that story, naturally, as any grandmother should be. And then I remember going through elementary school, middle school, high school kind of going to church. I'd claim that I was a Christian. I'd pray before games because I wanted good luck and God's favor on my side.

I tried to be a good kid. I just naturally thought I was saved and that I was right with God because I was a good person. And I go to college and that's when I was like, "Okay, now it's time to grow up." You're away from your family, your friends, kind of on your own living in a dorm room all that stuff.

And I will never forget, I go to my first practice and Dante Perez, he was the senior quarterback at the time, and we're just sitting there. And my head is spinning. I'm already like, "I'm away from my family, my friends. I've got to learn a whole new offense. A whole new playbook." My mind was in a million places. I was sitting there stretching and he was like, "Hey, bro. Have you ever read the Bible?"

I was like, "Okay, right now is probably not the right time to have this conversation." But it was funny because at the time I had said it's time to start growing up and start thinking about, "Why do I say that I'm a Christian? I don't even know what it means." I barely even noticed Jesus' character.

So he and I ended up meeting the entire first year of school going through the Bible, once a week. We just read the entire New Testament. It was like two months with him back and forth and my perspective of faith and Christ and following Christ just flipped on its head.

I realized quickly that it's not about what I can do. It's already been done.

"By grace you have been saved through faith, not by works."

And that verse, once I read that in Ephesians, I went, "Dang. That is not what I thought it was." And then you go on and read more and more of the Bible and you learn all about grace and the rest comes out of the overflow of your heart.

And then you go and study, "Okay, what are all these other religions all about?" And you realize rather quickly that Christianity and why it's so different is because it's not about earning anything. It's that it has already been done for you by Christ. And now we can go live out of that.

So that's when, in the freshman year of my life, I completely changed to Christ. It was Dante. It was a lot of people along the way who helped point me in the right direction.

Aaron

I love hearing that. I love hearing that.

You still stay in touch with Dante?

Carson

I do. I just saw him a couple of weeks ago. Great guy. Great guy. Very cool.

Aaron

I think that it's always astounding to me, you know, I mean I could share my story about how God brought somebody into my life who introduced me to Christ and helped to walk with me along the way. But everybody that I've talked to, usually when you ask about their story, their testimony, there is always a name.

For you it was Dante. For somebody else, it's a different name. But God uses just regular, ordinary person to speak up. I'm sure that Dante was probably like, "I don't know what this kid is going to think of me when I ask him these questions," but God used him. And so, expressing gratitude for that and the way that God works through people... It only makes sense. You said it. This isn't a religion. It's a relationship. God desires to have a relationship with you. So the most effective way that you come to know Him, it's via relationships. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a solo life, solo ministry. Jesus always sent His disciples out by twos.

So I just want to encourage all of you, even in your own walk, like when you have those little impulses to say something, or to invest into somebody's life to act upon it. You're never going to go, "I think I've got it all figured out." Or, "They're going to probably respond to me. I might get shot down by them." But God can use you in tremendous ways to change the trajectory of somebody's life. That's how it always works. I think that's incredible.

I know that for you, it really matters how you live your life, what you give back off of the field. And that's one of the things I've been really impressed with. Tell us a little bit about your foundation and some of the ministries your guys are involved in.

Carson

Yeah. So AO1 Foundation started in 2017 after my rookie season. It was just my brother and me trying to figure out how we wanted to give back. So it kind of evolved over time and now we have a handful of folks who work on staff with us.

First thing, we have a sports complex in Haiti. We're partnering with Mission of Hope down there, which is super cool. We built this sports complex with a turf soccer field, which is incredible. You go to Haiti, and you do a flyover in a drone or in a plane, it's this big, green piece of turf. It stands out like a sore thumb.

So these kids, to be able to go and play soccer on a turf field verses on a rock bed or on dirt or all that... It's got two basketball courts, locker rooms. It's been really cool to see the Haitian staff during COVID and just through some political unrest over there.

North Americans haven't been able to be there much at all. Our team with AO1 hasn't been able to get over there. It's still running. It's still thriving. The Haitian staff members are kicking butt over there. You're seeing these kids show up in uniforms and referees wearing real ref outfits. And all of the villages and local teams are there, and they are cheering for each other. Kind of gives me goosebumps when I see these videos. That's one of our ministries.

The second ministry is a food truck. You've probably seen this here out back or around the city. We have food trucks here and in Philly that just go around and give out free food and give out Jesus resources, pray with people. Kind of goes anywhere and everywhere. It's been a lot of fun. Our chef is really good as I think you can attest to.

Aaron

Yes. Chef made our staff lunch at an all-staff meeting—amazing. Want to give a shout-out to her.

Carson

Charity does a great job. So does our entire staff.

Then we have our outdoor ministry. It's based in North Dakota, but we have some trips around here in the Indiana area as well. We've got kids who are overcoming life-threatening illnesses and are still going through different tragedies and those types of things. And we get them in the outdoors, get them on hunting trips, fishing trips, hiking trips, rafting trips. And then every night they go back, and we have a mentor on our team who will pray with these kids. Kids go through devotional and all of those things.

It's pretty simple. We want to physically bless people and spiritually bless people. Those are really three things that we are passionate about: sports and how that brings people together and brings them to God; how the outdoors—I've always connected with the outdoors and connect to God through the outdoors as well; and then food—everybody loves food, everybody can rally around food. So those are the three things that we are about.

Aaron

Well, I want to commend you for all of that because I've been able to observe, and I've been able to participate in some of those ministries. And it's awesome the difference that you are making. And you're a young guy, relatively speaking, 29 years old, and have been able to accomplish a lot already, you're leveraging....

You and I have talked about this before. You're very aware. This is a temporary career that you have. Football will one day come to an end. So while you're in it, you're leveraging the platform, the resources, the opportunities to make a big difference in people's lives. And I just want to commend you for that.

But with tremendous opportunity comes a lot of scrutiny, you know? And there is a lot of pressure. You wear a lot of different hats at a young age. So you're first and foremost a Christ follower, you're a husband, you're a father, an NFL quarterback. I know, in your list of priorities, it's on down. But that creates a lot of pressure.

And I know that I kind of cracked a joke at the beginning, but let's address the elephant in the room. I remember having dinner with you this month last year and you were talking about the trials that you went through in Philly, you were kind of glad all of that was over. And here you are in Indy, and you were really excited. And it didn't pan out.

We'll kind of leave it at that. We've obviously seen all the news and all those stories.

I've just been appreciative of how you've handled yourself. Not very many people would be.... I don't know if I'd be able to do it. I think I'd want to be defensive and offer

explanations. And there is just a poise about you that you can tell that comes from this inner strength.

I think all men struggle to various degrees separating their identity from what they do. So oftentimes when people say, "Hey, tell me about yourself," I might say, "Well, I'm a pastor. This is what I do for a living." But that's not who I am. It's my temporary assignment. And the danger in that is when things are going well, I think pretty good of myself. When things are going bad, I think pretty lowly of myself.

And regardless of whether or not the guys in this room think they could have done your job better—and I know you're out there—when it comes to our careers very few of us have our worst moments put on TV in slow motion over and over and over again. So, Carson, how do you navigate the pressure, the scrutiny, the things that people say.

Carson

It's a great question. I'm walking through it every day. It's hard. I go to the verse Colossians 1:10 and I'm not trying to win the approval of men but of God. And that's kind first and foremost, "Okay, what's my identity?" It's not for other people. I'm not doing what I'm doing for other people, but it's for God.

Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men." So those things remind me, I have to go to them every day and remind myself in those hard moments because there are human impulses that are real. When this trade happened for example, you're trying to navigate something, because you're a player, you're a football player, but you're also a husband, you're also a man and you're a follower of Christ.

And it's easy to kind of get those lost in shuffle and be like, "Okay, as a player I'm frustrated, or I'm mad, or I'm bitter or resentful," all of these feelings that are real. And, "Now as a man I've got to prove myself. I've got to do this, that, and the other." And all of those things are real emotions that come up.

That's why a Christ follower can't be just one of four things. It has to be the lead thing. And the rest comes from that. And so for me I've got to say, "I'm a follower of Christ first and foremost. God, what are we doing here? What are you doing here? What are you trying to teach me? What's next? How can I be obedient with the next step?"

And that's so easy to say, it's very hard to do. But at the same time, those real emotions I mentioned, they are going to be there. And no matter how hard you pray them away or file them away, they are going to be there. So you have to take authority and say, "Okay, I'm a follower of Christ first and now what do I do? What do I do next? God, what are you teaching me?"

I'll never fully know what God is up to behind the scenes. We might see bits and pieces of things here and there. But on this side of the veil we might not ever fully know. But we can be obedient and take the next right step. And that's all I'm trying to do. And it's hard. It's hard and it's a lot of fun. It's challenged a lot of things, but I've got a great team with my wife and kids around me. We are having fun on this adventure.

Aaron

Yeah. I appreciate that. You know, I think you referenced this a little bit last hour. Character isn't revealed when the wind is at our back and things are going well, but character is often revealed when life kind of sucker punches us or takes us on wild ride. So talk a little bit.... I know you mentioned this when you were in Philly, that you were having an incredible season. You were like on your way. Talk of MVP was going around. You guys were going to the Super Bowl, your team did. But you got hurt. So talk a little bit about that season.

Carson

Yeah. So that season, I mean, it's been the over-arching theme that I've been learning from God of just surrender. Before I hurt my knee and I had really good control of my life I thought, "I've got this planned out, God. This is how it's going to go. Winning a lot of football games on the field. I'm chasing after you, God."

I had this plan and then I tore my ACL and my LCL and did a whole mess to my knee. It was just this moment of surrender. God bless my wife who was my girlfriend at the time, that she's still with me because I was a mess. I was a mess, and I was not a very good patient. I was impatient. And it was something that I had to walk through; this understanding of surrender became real in a new way.

And then watching my team win the Super Bowl was another challenge. If you dream of that moment as a kid.... When I was in third and fourth grade I dreamed of being in the NFL. And you dream, "When I'm in the NFL, I'm going hoist that Lombardi trophy, I'm going to stand up there." I got all of those things, but I was in street clothes. So it was just a different level of surrender that I had to walk through.

And ever since then I'm like, "Okay, I've got that challenge checked off, right, God? We walked through that; the surrender is good. Now we can get this back on script, right?" And then it's just another lesson in surrender over and over within my professional career.

But God's always working on our hearts, and He knows what we need. And just how you respond each time is just like, you're learning, trying to learn every time to take the flesh and the human nature side out of it and just say, "Okay, God." And just lay it before Him, "What do you have? Let's do this thing."

Aaron

Yeah. I appreciate that. And I just want to encourage you. You know. I don't know very many 29-year-olds who have that perspective. Honestly, there are not a lot of 29-year-olds who have been in the position and the pressure that you've been in. I think God is accelerating that maturity for you. And I think your best contribution will come off of the field because of the adversity on the field.

I don't think I've had the chance to share this with you, but a couple of your teammates, I've just talked to them, and they've just talked about what kind of a guy that you are. And I had the privilege of talking to Coach Tony Dungy because he was in town to run the mini marathon with his wife. And I was talking to him in the lobby of the J. W.

Marriot, and he said so many great things about you. I just want to pass that on to you. You deserve it and I want you to receive that.

Carson, what is it that motivates you? You're with Washington now in the new season. New beginnings. What's motivating, what's driving you into the future now?

Carson

Yeah, I've kind of touched on it a little bit with that Colossians 3:23 verse, "Whatever you do work at it with all of your heart." I just remember that. I'm working for the Lord. So wherever God places me, I'm going to do it with all of my heart. And that always motivates me.

Coming home from work to three dogs that are super excited and usually get pushed to the side so I can go see my wife and my kids, that motivates me. Because they don't care how I did at practice or in a game, whether I threw five touchdowns or five picks, sat on the bench, or road the bike. They don't care. Those things always motivate me. And then to just make a difference. You try to make a difference because one day.... As we've talked, I don't know how long I'm going to play this game. God is writing that story. I mean, Tom Brady is kind of changing the perspective a little bit on age. But he's kind of the outlier. This is a season of life. So how do we make a difference while we can and then continue that into whatever the next chapter is whenever it may come.

Aaron

Yeah. You have such a healthy perspective. What do you want to be known for?

Carson

I want to be known.... It's funny because this morning walking in, I literally get out of my truck and it was like, "Hey, here's that quarterback." And the guy was very nice. And I don't mean any disrespect to him, but it's like I feel like I have an uphill battle to show I'm not a quarterback. I'm a follower of Christ first. I'm a husband. I'm a father. I'm all of these things—quarterback is just my profession, it's not who I am.

I want to be known as more than a quarterback. I want to be known as someone who is unashamed, that I was bold, that I wasn't afraid to share Christ wherever I go. And it's easy to say, harder to do in our culture in this day and age. But I just want to be known as someone who loves his family well—loved well, served well. I've got a lot of work to do in those departments but it's a journey.

Aaron

Yeah. We all do. We all do.

You know, I think that the older I get the more I recognize it's really about staying on your feet. Just stay standing. I think there is something about just faithfulness. I think it's roughly 20 percent of leaders in the Bible who finished well. That means 80 percent didn't. So for me, it's like every time I walk out to the car after a day of work or after Sunday, it's like, "God, I'm one day closer to finishing well. Help me stay on my feet." So I think you're off to a really great start with that. And it's exciting to see.

What types of things would you want to just encourage the men and the dads with who are listening to this today? Offer up some encouragement.

Carson

Yeah. I'd probably say that whenever I'm asked, "How would you encourage others?" It's how I try to encourage myself. What can I kind of focus on?

One thing that comes to mind is to have grace for yourself. Being a parent is very hard.

And I think it's easy—I see this in my marriage, I see it with my kids. My wife makes a mistake, or a daughter makes a mistake, it's easy to forgive them and have grace.

I think it's sometimes hard for me when I make a mistake or I respond in a way that I don't want to, to just kind of feel shame and kind of give the enemy a foothold in that.

And it's okay to make mistakes, to have grace for yourself. Because we're not perfect and we won't be perfect fathers, but we have a perfect Father and that's what we always rest on.

Another thing for me is to just always remind myself to be present. Be present at work.

Be present with my kids and my wife. I'm a very forward thinker. I'm always trying to have a vision for what is next in the future: this, that and the other. And sometimes I can miss what is right in front of me.

So I would just challenge everybody to be present with their kids, the good and the bad, and enjoy every step of the way. Be present at work. You never know when someone is going to come in who had a really rough night the night before and needs you, whatever that looks like. You don't know. But just be present. Be aware. Be in tune with the Spirit in those moments.

Then lastly, I would say be bold. I think in our culture, kind of what I touched on earlier, just being bold and being unashamed I think can cause some fear in some of us to want to step out and say something or be bold in that area or to challenge something at work or someone saying the wrong thing to correct them on that or to be bold for Christ.

But I think you'd be surprised how many people around you might have the same feelings that you have who are also fearful to say the right thing or to step out for Christ. So I just challenge everybody to be bold in that. Because in this culture and this world that we live in we need more followers of Christ to rise up and say the right things in those moments. It's crazy out there these days.

So those would be the three things that I would say to myself, but I would encourage everybody else with.

Aaron

It's so good. It's so good. And I would say, yes, and amen to all of that. And I would tag one more thing onto that. I would say to all of the guys, specifically in the room, this is true for everybody, but to all of the guys in the room, don't do this alone. Don't do life alone.

Some of the latest statistics on manhood, it's a high percentage, a lot of grown men don't have a close friend, or they say, "Well, my closest friends are the guys I went to high school with or college," friends in the past.

But with families and jobs and responsibilities we've found it hard to cultivate new friendships. And if the enemy wants to take you out, he'll get you alone, he'll take you out of relationships.

I mentioned already I just got back from a fly-fishing trip in Wyoming with a bunch of guys and we sat around the campfire every night. If you ever want to get guys to open up, just light a fire. And it's just like the flames open us up. We cried together. And we got really honest with each other. And many of us admitted that we were lonely.

And so I just want to encourage you guys—when we talk about groups and we talk about the church and relationships, I really genuinely mean that. I want you to be in relationship with one another. And I think we definitely need this.

I love what it says in Proverbs:

"Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

So we want to be able to sharpen each other, encourage each other, stay in the game, stay on our feet, man. You take a haymaker to the face and you're wobbling, stay on your feet.

Thank you for everything that you said. Thank you for your example. I know that your career here in Indy did not go as we anticipated, but I think that God used you in ways that you might never know over the course of this last year. And I want to thank you, Carson, for what you've contributed to our community, the encouragement that you've been to me personally and to our church family and just who you are as a person. It's paying huge, huge benefits.

So I want to ask Carson to pray and then I'm going to pray for us. And then I'll let you guys go.

Carson

Dear Heavenly Father, God, we just come before You with gratitude. Thank You for this day. Thank You for this time together. Thank You for this church. Thank You for Pastor Aaron's leadership and his willingness to say the hard things, to put You first in every situation.

God, we just pray for everybody out there today, this day can bring about a lot of emotions, some good, some bad, some heartache. So, God, we just pray for healing, for peace where there is a lack of it.

And, God, we just thank You for the fathers and pray that You would give us all the patience that we need to raise our families well and lead our families well. Thank You for this time together, thank You for this church.

I pray a blessing over every man and woman in here, that they would just be bold for You, live unashamed, and just live against this culture, God, and live for You fully and outrightly. We love You and we thank You.

Aaron

Father, we're so grateful for the example that You've given to us as a heavenly Father where You sacrificed Your one and only Son for us so that we might be in relationship with You. So, God, I pray that today, if there is somebody listening to this who maybe

grew up in a religious home but not necessarily a Christ centered home, or maybe somebody here who is not familiar with You, that they would begin to recognize that what You desire is not religious external behavior, but a relationship where somebody is changed from the inside out.

Thank You for doing all of the heavy lifting for us. Thank You for grace. Thank You for justice. Thank You for mercy and love.

God, I pray that lives would be impacted today in a big way, maybe for eternity as they step across that line of faith and receive You. Maybe there is somebody here who is recognizing that as a man, he's finding his identity in the wrong things, and he wants to find his identity in You and claim his sonship.

And, Father, I pray for those people here today who don't have a dad. Maybe he passed away, maybe he is just absent from their lives if not physically, emotionally and spiritually. God, I pray that You would bring healing into their hearts. I pray that they would be able to distinguish the shortfalls of their earthly father from their heavenly Father and recognize that we don't want to confuse those. If you don't have a very good example of an earthly dad, we have a heavenly Father who redeems and restores.

God, thank You for Carson and Maddie and their family and what they mean to us as a church and as a community. God, I just pray a blessing over them. Thank you for his character and his willingness to profess Your name, not just when it's easy but when it's hard. So, God, I just thank You that he was willing to come and make an investment into us today. And we just ask all of this in Jesus' name. And everybody said: Amen.