

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

RUN WITH PURPOSE | CHURCH IN THE WILD

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It's good to be with you today. If you have a Bible go ahead and meet me over in 1 Corinthians, chapter 9—1 Corinthians, 9 is our passage today.

Early on in our marriage I drove a two-door Honda Civic with a spoiler on the back. I don't mean to brag. But if you remember the very first Fast and Furious movie, I think it was the car that they used in the opening scene where they hi-jacked a semi-truck. My car was just like those, except mine was white, theirs were black.

Because of that I would often volunteer to go to the grocery store to get a gallon of milk and I would pretend that Dom and I were hi-jacking semis. And then my wife got pregnant with our first child so it was time for me to sell that car and get a big-boy car, more of a family car.

So, I begrudgingly put that on the market. There was a guy who expressed some interest in it. And so he came over to look at it. He was about twice my age and about twice my size. He was a rather large man. And he asked if he could test drive the car. He was a complete stranger so I was like, "Well, I don't want you to steal it so I'm going to go along with you."

So, he gets into this tiny little Civic. Did I mention that he was a large man? And it kind of felt more like he was strapping the car onto himself and I was just kind of like tagging along like one of those little minnow fish next to a shark.

I'm inside this little closed in space with a complete stranger and he's asking me questions about the car. And when he ran out of questions to ask it was a little bit awkward. So, to kind of keep the conversation going he asked this question, "So, what do you do for a living?" Which, I've shared with you before that that's a little bit of an awkward question given what I do. Not because I'm afraid to answer the question, but because I just don't know how the other person is going to receive it.

I took a deep breath and I said, "Well, I'm a pastor." And you could tell he was not expecting that. I don't know if it was because I was in my 20s at the time and he wasn't expecting a 20 something pastor. I don't know if he was a militant atheist or just had a bunch of church hurt. I don't know. But I do know that he got extremely uncomfortable. His whole body language changed.

And then he asked this question that I wasn't expecting. He said, "Are you sure you're in the right line of work?" I can't imagine ever responding to somebody when they tell me



what they do for a living with that question regardless of what they do. I could say, “Hey, man. What do you do for a living?”

“I’m a drug dealer.”

“Oh, that’s awesome.”

I wouldn’t be like, “Are you sure you’re in the right line of work?” It’s kind of a rude question. A little tense. But it’s also a great question. And it’s a question that I think every single one of us, regardless of who you are or what season of life that you are in, will ask and are asking that, just in different ways.

If you’ve just graduated from high school, going into college, you’re probably asking the question, “What line of work should I go into?” And then, statistically speaking, you will probably ask that question multiple times and change your answer on that multiple times and will switch careers multiple times—all looking for: what is my life’s purpose? Because in order to find your life’s purpose, you’ve got to move beyond a paycheck to: why is it that I am here and is this worthwhile, is this worth giving my life for? That’s a great question.

And as we come to chapter 9 of 1 Corinthians, I think these are some of the questions that are rolling around in Paul’s mind because we’re eventually going to get to it in verse 26 where he says these words, “I run with purpose in every step.” So, that’s what I want to talk to you about today. I want to talk about the purpose of our church and the purpose of your individual life and how those two fit together.

If you are just now joining us online or at one of our locations in person, we’ve been in a series since this summer called Church In The Wild. And we’re working our way through a book in the New Testament that started off as a letter to the church in Corinth. This letter was written to a group of people who Paul knew and loved well. And they were first generation Christians. Meaning that they didn’t grow up in church even though they might have been exposed to religion, they really didn’t understand who Jesus was.

Maybe you can relate to that. Maybe you attended church periodically as you were growing up. You were kind of exposed to religion and religiosity but that didn’t mean that you knew Jesus or the gospel message. And if you can relate to any of that, you can relate to the Corinthians.

So, they would have been living at ground zero of paganism in the first century. Paul plants this life-giving church and they give their lives to Jesus and they realize, “We are saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus alone, which gives us a right standing before God.” And I’m so grateful for that because without that you and I wouldn’t stand a chance and neither would they. However, now that they’ve been given this right standing in Christ, they’ve got to figure out how that is going to change the way that they live.



Now, this is oftentimes so confusing for a lot of people. Lifestyle choices or what we might put under the term personal holiness or growth or sanctification—whatever word you want to give it—are not there for us to try to justify ourselves in God’s eyes, we’re already justified by Jesus’ finished work alone: hard stop.

Now, from that standing that gives us the opportunity with a right heart and a standing of righteousness to step by step seek to grow, to step by step say, “Jesus already has my heart, I want to give him the rest of me.” And that’s going to be messy. That’s going to be filled with lots of ups and downs and stops and starts and two steps forward and one-and-a-half steps back. That was true of those in Corinth. They were following after Jesus. They were just making a messy job of it.

And Paul hears reports, one in particular from a woman in the church named Chloe. She reached out to Paul and said, “You’ve got to do something. They are a mess.” So, that’s part of the reason he wrote this letter. The other reason is because they had actually emailed him some questions about some things that they were disagreeing on and Paul is taking his time in the letter to answer the questions. We don’t have the questions we just have the answers. So, we can only assume the questions they were asking.

Last week, in chapter 8, there was a big issue that was dividing the church. It was a hot button, cultural topic that we don’t deal with so much today. But we have our own versions of it. But what they were dealing with then is: should we eat meat that has previously been sacrificed in the pagan temples to an idol? And idols don’t really have much of an appetite so they didn’t really eat the meat. They were imaginary.

So they would usher the meat out of the back door of the pagan temple and sell it in the marketplace. And they were really divided over that, “Should we eat that meat.” And Paul’s answer to them is a bit nuanced. Both yes and no. It’s not a sin to eat the meat, even if you do so unknowingly, you have freedom in Christ. We know that there is only one living God. God is not intimidated by imaginary idols so go ahead and eat the bacon in Jesus’ name. That was his response last week.

However, he said, “You have freedom in Christ but that doesn’t always mean that you indulge your freedoms. Your freedoms need to be regulated by a love for others and the glory of God. So, even though you are free to eat this, you need to pay attention.

Do you have a fellow believer, somebody in your small group, who has a history with paganism? And maybe not that long ago they were worshiping and participating in those worship services to false idols. And they participated in all of that so for them eating a T-bone steak that really does violate their conscience and causes them to stumble. So Paul says, “Be aware of that. Be willing to lay down your freedoms for the sake of love.” That was all last week.

Now, as we come into chapter 9, the first 18 verses are really kind of a continuation of that line of thinking where Paul is going to talk about giving up freedoms. He talks about

a specific area for him as it relates to should he or should he not receive compensation as an apostle. I don't have time to unpack those 18 verses. I am not trying to avoid them. I've taught them from this platform before.

I just want to give you the gist because I really want to get into the meat of verses 19 to 27. The gist is Paul says, "I have a right or the freedom to receive compensation, but if that becomes a barrier to you receiving the gospel, I'll lay it down." That's the gist.

Now, as we come to verse 19 here's what I want you to see. Paul is going to drive hard in the paint on how our individual purpose in life and the purpose of the big "C" church coincides together. And he's going to basically say to these Corinthians, "I want to keep the mission out in front of you. I don't want you to take your eyes off of it."

So, here's a little phrase you're going to see over and over in the text as we read it in a minute. He's going to keep saying: to bring people to Christ, to bring people to Christ, to bring people to Christ. He just keeps coming back to that refrain all through the passage. So, look with me at verse 19. He says:

"Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people," here's the little phrase, "to bring many to Christ." (NLT)

So, Paul uses an alarming analogy here. He uses the word slave. Some translations change it to servant, but the original word is slave. And it would have been an analogy that the Corinthians would have understood really well. Paul is essentially saying, "I'm willing to give up control, I'm willing to give up my preferences and perspectives, I'm willing to take on the mindset of a slave or a servant so that as many people as possible can come to know Jesus.

For our context today, it's the mindset, "I'm here to serve." I'm just telling you, man, that will fundamentally change your whole experience with church. If you can move from what we talked about last week—the cruise ship mentality where everything is catered to me, to a battleship mentality where I'm manning my station because we're on mission and, "I'm here to serve." It's a much more fulfilling way to see it.

Paul says, "I've become a servant, following after the very model of Jesus, where He said, 'I've come not to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many.'" Can I just tell you this right now? If you're looking for more fulfillment in your life, here's just one little step you can take. Just stop making it about you, make it about others and just watch how God will take that and spring up new wells of life within you. Verse 20, he goes:

"When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ."

Now, if you are paying attention, that's a really interesting statement because after all, ethnically speaking, Paul was a Jew. So, he's saying, "I'm a Jew, who lives like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ." What he meant was, because of his background he

understood how the Jews talked and how they thought and the laws that they observed so he said, “I naturally know how to relate to them in an effort to bring them to Jesus.”

That’s just common sense. The number one rule of public speaking is: know your audience. This last summer I had a couple of speaking engagements on back to back weekends. One weekend I was preaching in North L.A. The very next weekend I was preaching in Baltimore, Maryland—two very different places.

So, I had to, from one weekend to the next, change the illustrations, and change my approach, because a northern L.A. crowd is very different from a Baltimore, Maryland crowd. This is the essence of what Paul is talking about, “I know my audience. When I’m speaking to the Jews, I’m going to think and talk like a Jew in order to bring them to Christ.” And then he says in verse 20:

“When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I,” here’s the phrase again, “could bring to Christ those who are under the law.”

So, he’s saying, “I’m willing to live, culturally, like a Jew. I’m going to keep the laws so that I’m careful not to offend.” This would go back to what we were talking about last week with food sacrificed to idols. He says, “I’m going to be sensitive. I’m going to be respectful. I’m going to regulate my freedoms out of love.”

What he doesn’t mean is that he places himself back under the law as a means of salvation. That’s not what he is saying. He’s talking about, “I’m going to live, culturally, to relate to these people to bring them to Christ. Verse 21:

“When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ.” (NLT)

So, if you are paying attention to the passage, in a matter of two verses he says, “I’m going to live under the law to bring people to Christ, and I’m going to live apart from the law in order bring people to Christ.

“Paul, what are you saying? Have you just watered things down? Do you have no convictions at all?” No—that’s not what he’s saying. He’s saying, “I’m recognizing what is essential to faith and I’m going to major in that and I’m going to minor in everything else. And I’m going to pay attention to the crowd that I’m around so that when I’m with the Gentiles I’ll do everything that I can to relate to them. So, I’ll drink their coffee. I’ll be familiar with their music. I’ll understand the way that they talk so that I can bring them to Christ.”

And he says at the end of verse 21:

“But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.” (NLT)

I think that is more important for us to understand. Sometimes, as Christians, we wonder what to do with the Old Testament. The Old Testament is filled with all of these laws, rules, and regulations and in the New Testament we're under grace. And so we're like, "I like that version better."

But, they go together. You don't really understand grace until you understand law. Here's what we understand about the law. If you were to fulfill the law completely, perfectly, and fully—there are hundreds of laws, it's not like the Ten Commandments—if you were able to do that completely, there would be no need for the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. You would be righteous. You would be justified. Anybody see a problem in that? Nobody can do it. It is a test that nobody can pass.

So, Jesus comes along and He fulfills the law on our behalf. And even Jesus, Himself, would say, "Hey, I've not come to do away with it, I've come to fulfill it." And then somebody said, "Well, Jesus. What's the most important law? What's the most important command?" And He said, "All the law can be summed up in two things." Anybody remember what they are? "Love the Lord your God with all of you heart, soul, mind, and strength. And love your neighbor as yourself." He said, "The whole law can be summed up in those two. Everything hangs on those."

That's what Paul is talking about. He's like, "I'm not ignoring the law of God but I'm obeying the law of Christ. And I'm recognizing what it is that He's called us to do and to be in the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples." Paul understands what is essential to faith and what is supplemental to faith. And he's saying, "Man, I don't have any problems submitting myself to cultural sensitivities because I'm not justified by any of those things. I'm justified by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus alone. But now I want to live my life in such a way that it points other people to Jesus."

And you might say, "Okay, how do I do that? What does that mean?" Verse 22, he gets at it:

"When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ." (NLT)

What does he mean there? He's saying, "I'm just being relational. I'm not being super Christian. I'm not pretending like I've got it all together, because I don't," and none of us do. "I've got my weaknesses too. I'm taking off the mask and I'm actually relating to people who are broken, imperfect, and fallen just like me." And he goes:

"Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some." (NLT)

Now, he's not saying that he's the one who does the saving. He's saying, "I'm pointing to the One who can do the saving." And he says:

“I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.” Romans 9:23 (NLT)

You know, there is something really powerful when you and I can step forward and go first in vulnerability. It gives everybody else permission to be vulnerable as well. Instead of pretending to be somebody we are not, instead of being a poser, we remove the mask and we simply get real.

There is something really powerful, I think, refreshing and unexpected by the world whenever they see a group of Jesus followers who are willing to do that. So, maybe they kind of push against you and share some of their struggles and you're not fazed by it. You're like, “You know what? I struggle too. I've been in that position too.”

“Well, I've got these questions that I don't understand.”

“Well, you know what? I've questioned that too. I've been there too.”

A church should be a mixture, not only of multiple generations of people in physical age, but multiple people in different phases of their spiritual journey. If we're just a group of people who are baby Christians, or just a group of people who are seasoned Christians, there is an imbalance. There needs to be both because we're trying to reach people far from God. That's the goal. That's the mission. But then we help train people up and deploy people out, so there needs to be a mixture of seasoned believers and brand-new believers.

And we've just got to monitor that all of the time, “Am I leading you to grow and are we continuing to reach people far from God?” And I always know that we are whenever I'm out in the lobby and talking to somebody and somebody comes up to me and hasn't been here long enough to know what is appropriate to say or not. It's like, “One hell of a sermon, Pastor.” And I'm like, “Thank you.”

I just know, “Alright, man. We're reaching people far from God. Now, how are we growing them up?” It's a constant monitoring of the metrics. And Paul says, “Listen. I've come to do everything I can to deliver the Good News and share in its blessing.” And if Good News isn't good for everyone, Good News isn't good for anyone.

Now, if there was a highlight reel for some of the most impactful things that Paul ever said in the New Testament, what we're going to read next would easily make the top 10 in verses 24 to 27. Some of my favorite analogies that Paul uses for helping me understand the spiritual life and growth in Christ. I think Paul must have been an old, worn out jock with bad knees because of all of the sports analogies that he uses. And it just helps us to understand our walk with Jesus. Check out what he says in verse 24:

“Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win!” (NLT)

There are no gold medals or participation prizes here. He's like, "Run to win. It's competitive talk. And then he goes:

"All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize." (NLT)

So, here's the verse that I started out with at the beginning of the message:

"I run with purpose in every step." (NLT)

What's the most important step you take? The one in front of you. The one that is next. You run that with purpose. Don't let whatever the finish is be the thing that paralyzes you. You just say, "You know what? What is the next best step I need to take? Let me run that with purpose." And he says:

"I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified." 9:26-27. (NLT)

That word disqualified is not disqualified from salvation, that's disqualified from being an apostle, from being disqualified from actually being a herald of this news.

I love this analogy here where Paul's is using physical training, laying that over and equating it to spiritual training, because I think that maybe that helps clear some things up for us.

I remember reading about the training program of Michael Phelps—one of the most decorated Olympians of all time. If I'm not mistaken, in his career he won something like 38 medals, which means that, by himself, he won more medals than 70 percent of the countries that have ever competed in the Olympics have won in their history. One guy—that's pretty amazing.

During his peak training seasons he would swim 12 miles a day every day—he did that for 1,800 consecutive days and never missed a day. Because of that he ate 12,000 calories a day. That's a workout in and of itself. That would take a lot. He ate like a pound of pasta for lunch, a pound of pasta for dinner. Who says you can't out train a bad diet? You swim 12 miles a day, apparently you can eat whatever you want.

Man, that is some serious discipline. Every single day. Why did he do it? Well, he did it to accomplish some records that will eventually be broken. And he won some medals that will eventually collect dust in a museum somewhere. Paul says, "We discipline our bodies, spiritually speaking, to run to win an eternal prize."

One thing that we just need to be reminded of or maybe have clarified, because I think this is so confusing for a lot of people... They are like, "Well, I'm just not a very good Christian." Or, "I need to do more." Why? I think there is this continual battle in our heads

over justification. Or, there is this shadow side of us. We feel like we need to do more. It's hard for us just to claim the free gift of salvation that comes through God.

And then we hear others talk about, "You need to be reading your Bible daily. You need prayer and spiritual disciplines like fasting and attending worship and getting into a group." We hear all of those things and we confuse them and we think, "Well, this is what good Christians do. I've got to re-up my salvation." Or whatever it is.

I want you to set all of that aside and recognize that those things are things that you do after you receive your right standing in Jesus. Those are things that you do to spiritually train. It's kind of like physical training. Physical training—there may have been a time in your life where you went to the gym and you worked out for aesthetic reasons. You just wanted a six-pack or whatever.

Then, eventually, if you do it long enough you realize, "Well, I'm not just doing this for aesthetic reasons, I'm doing this for health. I'm doing this for longevity. I'm actually doing this because..." Here's one of the things I've learned about physical training, as I've gotten older, it's far easier to stay in shape than it is to get in shape." Can I get a good Amen from somebody?

Have you ever noticed it is so much harder to get in shape than it is to stay in shape? You put all of this time and energy into getting into shape and then you fall out of shape way faster. It's not fair. And it's kind of like the best thing to do is to just chip away at it little by little.

If there has ever been a season in your life where you've just sort of been inactive and the all of a sudden you're like, "I've got to lose some weight for summer." And you get back in and you're just overly sore, you do too much, you get hurt, and then you stop again. And your physical training is filled with lots of stops and starts.

I brought some little tools that I use at my home gym just to kind of stay in shape. I just try to use these on a daily basis. I've got a jump rope up here, some running shoes, these are just simply tools. Please, I can feel the judgment these are just dumbbells I use to warm up. Alright? Just stop, I lift way heavier than that. I mean, come on.

These are tools that I've got laying around and I just try to make it a goal to say, "Let me just try to use them daily. I'm not trying to do too much. I just want to carve out a little bit of time to just stay in training, stay in good physical shape. Why? Because I'm not getting any younger and I know I'm going to get injured or I want to just maintain a base of health for longevity and quality of life.

I remember somebody saying to me a long time ago, "Hey, I was always prepared to die. I wasn't prepared to grow old." And some of what can make the older years more difficult is when you are in pain because maybe you didn't have a good basis of physical training and health.

The same thing is true spiritually. And can I just very lovingly say this? The reason why some of you are frustrated or the reason why you feel distant from God or the reason why it doesn't feel like you are making any more spiritual gains is because your spiritual life is filled with way too many starts and stops. You are here on Easter and Christmas. You are here when there is a crisis. You're here when you are struggling.

Please, don't misunderstand me. I want you here on those days. Can I just ask you to make it a little bit more regular? I'm not even talking about church attendance. I'm talking about your time in God's word, your time in prayer, your time seeking after Him.

And it doesn't need to be one of these things where you go on a mission trip to Africa and try to go on this super spiritual journey all at once. Just say, "You know what? Ten or 15 minutes a day I'm going to spiritually train, little, by little, by little, by little. I'm going to run with purpose in every step."

Why should you do that? Because there is another crisis around the corner. I wish there wasn't. But that's just not reality. Jesus would say, "In this world you're going to have trouble. There are going to be relational conflicts. There is going to be that work thing. There is going to be that financial difficulty. There is going to be that health scare. So, you spiritually train every day, not to be super Christian, not to justify yourself in God's eyes, but giving yourself a basis of spiritual training and maturity to help yourself weather the storms that will inevitably come.

So, what I want to do in the remainder of our time is I want to—keeping in line with what Paul does in the text—I just basically want to put two questions in front of you as they relate to running with purpose for the mission of getting people to Jesus. Here are two questions I want to end with:

How is our church running with purpose?

And then lastly I want to end with this:

How can you run with purpose?

How can you as an individual run with purpose? And how do those two things coincide?

Last week I talked about how our church is kind of a rarity in the sense that we are 190 years old. And most churches have a life span of about 40 to 50 years, because that represents a generation. What ends up happening is that the generation of people who came to know Jesus through a certain methodology begin to make the methodology sacred and they eventually take their eyes off mission.

So they start arguing over methodologies of the past and reflecting on the good old days and they end up treasuring their past over their children. And when that happens they slip into maintenance mode, life support, eventual death. I showed you that graph last week.



And in order for a church to continue to be fruitful beyond the 40 to 50 years, its life cycle has to kick over again which is kind of represented by this dotted line at the top. And that is when we begin to recognize that we need to change the wineskins, so to speak. We're not going to make the methodology sacred, we're going to stay on mission, which is what Paul keeps talking about in this passage.

I really think right now, since we came out of COVID, our church is right in that dotted line at the top of the curve right now. I think that right now what we are watching is our church, this 190 year old church, kicking its life cycle back all over again in order to reach the next generation and set ourselves up for another 40 to 50 years of fruitful ministry.

And a lot of that is encapsulated in this thing that you've probably been hearing about called Awaken. Some of you were here a year ago when we launched it. I know a whole bunch of you are brand new to the church and you weren't here a year ago. And I encourage you to tune in tonight at 7, online, for a replay of Thursday night's Vision Night so you can kind of get oriented and caught up with what that is.

But, really Awaken is an opportunity for us to recognize. Coming out of COVID I just sensed, both personally and corporately, that we were at risk of slipping into maintenance mode. The reason why I say that is because we were so focused—at least me—on, "Are we going to survive the pandemic? When can we get back together again?" It was all of these minimums and we were like totally on the defense, not enough on offense.

Then God spoke to us through various passages, Ephesians 5 being one of them, where it says, "Wake up O sleeper." It was as if God was saying, "Wake up church. I want to breathe a fresh wind into you and I want to do a new thing within you." So, that's what Awaken has been about. We want to run with purpose.

Here are a few ways that we want to run with purpose. One is just reaching, involving, and passing the baton of this mission to the next generation. I said this last week. Our kids and our students, they are so lit up and on fire in ways I've never seen in our lifetime. Back in February of this year (some of you were here for this) we did a worship night here at this campus. It was filled.

And Landon gave me a little spot in the middle of the worship set to just come up and to just do a little bit of encouraging and teaching. And he said, "Hey, I'm going to be reading out of Isaiah, but you can do whatever you want."

I didn't really know what I wanted to do, but while we were worshipping it was as if the Spirit of God said... I read that passage that said, "Here am I, send me." And it was as if God said, "Say that to the room. Invite the next generation into that."



So, I got up on this platform and I just said, “Hey, if you are under the...” The team didn’t know what I was going to do, which is always fun. And I was like, “Go with me.” And I just said, “Hey, if you are under the age of 30 and you are like ‘Hey, God. Here am I send me.’ And you want to go into vocational ministry or you just want to be salt and light in the marketplace—because we equally need both—can you just come down. We want to pray a prayer of blessing and commission you to be the next generation that will lead this church into the future.”

I thought maybe 12 people would come forward. But as it shows in this picture behind me there were about 500. It was like this ignition of the next generation. And over the course of the next three to five years we want to continue to build into that and to not just say that you are the church of the future, but you are the church now. Invite them to the table and allow them to speak into it because they are going to be able to show us how to connect to and give voice to the gospel message in their generation.

We want to run with purpose as a church through what I might call: campuses, new churches, and partnerships. We are one church that just gathers in multiple locations around our city. And if you’re new to our church or maybe you’ve been here for a while and you just need a reminder of why we do that.

We don’t start multiple campuses because we’re just trying to franchise Traders Point across Indianapolis like Chick- fil-A. We’re not trying to grow bigger. We recognized when we moved into this building that we became regional because of our location. So, a whole bunch of people [map on screen]—those orange dots right there represent households and that top left pin is the Northwest Campus.

We were having people driving more than a half hour to this location, but it was difficult for them to be on mission, on the battleship, with us. That’s why we went multi-site to begin with. So, we said, “Let’s start a campus where we have a lot of those orange dots to help them be on mission where they live.”

And then we were like, “Man, we love every part of our city so we want to contextualize this one church to every part of our city.” And I think we can accomplish more together than we can do separately. Every time we launch a campus, not only do those orange dots multiply, but our bench deepens. And people get in the game. They start serving. We just kind of see this incredible movement that is happening in our city.

Right now I want you to know that we are praying about and asking God to lead us over the next three or four years in starting campuses seven, eight, nine, and 10. We envision 10 campuses throughout our city within the next four to five years. Why? Because we love our city and every part of our city and we want to reach every part of our city to bring people to Christ.



Every now and then somebody comes up to me and says, “Why do you start campuses? Why don’t you just start autonomous church plants?” That’s a great question. Those things are not mutually exclusive.

We will start campuses in our city, we will plant churches around the world. Here are three lenses which we look through: population density, spiritual disparity, and ethnic diversity. And if there is a location that matches those lenses we will help start a new church by helping to find, mentor, and manage the church planter and resource it with lots of finances. A lot of our staff will be on the management teams of those churches.

The map behind me, all of those pins represent new churches that we have either helped start or are currently partnering with. I just want to show you that because I don’t know if you are aware of it or not.

In the words of my friend Carl Kuhl who pastors a church down the road from us—I love how he says it, so I’m going to steal it and use it for us—he says, “You didn’t create that, but you are a part of that. You didn’t cause that, but you are a part of that.” And I just want to say that to you. You didn’t cause all of that but you are a part of all of that if you’re fully vested in the life of our church.

I wish I could share stories from all of those church plants. I just don’t have time to do it so let me highlight two. One is in East Germany, a church called Zeal Church. This is one of my favorite churches because this is an area of Germany that is post-Christian, only two percent profess to be believers. It’s where Martin Luther got started and kicked off the whole Reformation—if you know anything at all about church history. And spiritually, in the last several decades, dead.

Zeal Church is bringing new life to this. They are reaching so many young Germans for Jesus. I preached there in 2019 when we kicked off our partnership. We had a team of people who were just there a couple of months ago. Our Fishers campus pastor, Chad Lunsford, got a chance to preach there.

Zeal started a coffee shop in their city to build bridges into the community. It’s been attacked multiple times and vandalized. And despite all of that, they continue to see the gospel advance. I said that they baptized 40 people, but René Wagner, the church planter just texted me this morning because he was watching online and he said, “Hey, we baptized another 19 people. Get it right,” so nearly 60 and 170 decisions for Jesus in East Germany. You didn’t cause that, you are a part of that.

Another brand new church plant that we are really excited about is happening right now in Bergen County, New Jersey. Brandon and Malia Cobb—they haven’t even had launch Sunday yet. Last week they did what they call a preview kind of deal where they set up and tore down in a middle school that Brandon attended as a middle schooler. Now he’s leading a church there.



And I thought it would be good for you to hear directly from Brandon, himself, so take a look at these screens:

Video

This is B coming to you live from north Jersey. Coming to talk to live about this preview service. I'm just excited. And I wanted to hop on here because I've intended to write you all personally, but my hand writing is so atrocious that I'm just a little embarrassed.

I think I started doing this instead just to keep you all a little bit updated in a personal way and let you know how much I appreciate what it is that you are doing in partnering with us. And also so that you can see what your encouragement and prayers and resources and generosity and love are doing in a part of the world that is largely ignored by the gospel, by gospelists I should say.

So, yeah. It's really good. We just had our portable church weekend. So we called it. And there is so much beauty in this. I feel like I could tell you 35 positive stories of all that has happened.

One of the biggest things that stands out to me is how much this weekend, specifically, our dream team and our coordinators, especially leaders, just stepped up in incredible ways that I've been praying for for months.

I found that part of the business of reaching the far and the lost directly means that we don't have a lot of natural Christian leaders, qualified leaders, leading a bunch of things. So, I've just been praying for leaders just to see people—some people who have been baptized in the last year, just to step up.

And I think one thing in particular is seeing how this weekend all that we were committed to for hours and hours as a team, I saw people go from telling me congratulations to congratulating the group and saying things like, instead of congrats B or good job B they were like, "We did it." Not, "You did it." And that sticks out to me as our community continues to form. People are really taking ownership.

It's something that I've been looking out for for months now. And I think this weekend I finally started to hear it consistently, "We did it." And that's just so beautiful to me. I think you are also a part of that week. You are also part of that group of people who have invested so deeply in the mission of Jesus Christ in Jersey. And everything that happened today wouldn't be possible without you."

End Video

Isn't that so good? I love how he said it. He said, "You're a part of that week." So, you didn't cause that, but you are a part of that.



So, campuses, church plants, last thing I'll just share with you hear is strategic partnerships. And here are all of our strategic partnerships [map on screen] across the globe. Let me just highlight two.

One is Food for the Hungry in Guatemala. We did kind of a vision trip last year to see if we wanted to partner with them. This is a picture of my youngest daughter, Kadence. She went with me. And we are partnering now with Food for the Hungry. It's an organization that collaborates with local leaders to design, develop, and deliver solutions so children, families, and communities can flourish. We are directly connected to a community called Marshena.

So, over the next six years we want to try to help end poverty there, which is possible because it's a mountain town filled with 1100 people, about 175 families. And our team went there early in 2024. Pastor Ryan Bramlett was on that trip. And we helped to install 12 smokeless stoves in that community. This is Ryan trying to practice his cooking skills with some of the people in that community. That's one partnership.

And then one locally here that we are really excited about is called 91 Place—91 Place is a transitional living program on the near east side of Indy serving youth ages 18 to 24 facing homelessness. They currently operate three transitional homes in the city taking a holistic approach to what they call chronic homelessness. So, house mentors live with the youth. They create a family unit of safety and encouragement and life skills training.

We began partnering with them just this last year, 2023. A number of you have begun serving there or maybe serving one time on Serve Saturday. And the residents of 91 Place have begun attending our church and we are really excited because one of them just recently gave his life to Christ and was baptized. And we're so excited about all of that.

So, I just share all of that with you: campuses, church plants, strategic partnerships to make you aware of what you are a part of. You didn't cause all of that, but you are a part of all of that. And what we're trying to do is advance the Kingdom of God. Why? Two passages and then I'm going close up. 1 Peter 5:8:

"Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." (NLT)

You've probably heard that passage before. You kind of read that and you're kind of like, "Whoa." Maybe you're a little bit on the defense. I don't know about you, but if there was a roaring lion prowling around me, I'd be a little bit defensive. I'd be back on my heels.

But Jesus says this, it's a lesser known verse in Matthew 11, verse 12, which our mindset needs to be, He goes:

"...from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now," get this, "the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing." (NLT)

And I love that. It's not this idea that we are playing defense, it's this idea that we've got to go on the offense. And last week I just posed the question: how much is enough? I don't know. But as long as Satan is actively advancing in this world, we will actively advance the Kingdom of God to push back those forces of darkness.

So, I just want you to get on board the battleship. And I love how that analogy—some of you have gotten ahold of it. I've had a number of you come up to me today, "Okay, I'm manning my station." I love that. So, we want to have that mentality.

Here are the five things that I gave you last week. I just want to reiterate them:

Come ready (weekend worship)

Man your station (make a difference)

Find your crew (Get into a group)

Give your first and best (time, talent, treasure)

Invest and invite (build intentional relationships)

Come ready every week and worship, man your station by making a difference, find your crew by getting into a group, give your first and best—your time, talent, and treasure, invest and invite like crazy, build intentional relationships with the community around us. I want you to be a part of our church running with purpose.

Here's the last question. I'm going to close with this. I promise.

How can I personally run with purpose?

And I just want you to do a little bit of reflection right now with where you are in your own life regardless of where you are at.

I think that Paul was a reflective guy. We know he was in his 40s or 50s when he writes this letter to the Corinthians. We know that when you look at the body of his writing throughout the New Testament he was always evaluating things, reflecting upon things. He would talk a lot about his life pre-Jesus. He talked a lot about his conversion in Christ—how grateful he was for the miraculous grace of God.

One of my favorite things about Paul is that the longer his spiritual journey, the less entitled he seemed and the more sober he became. What I mean by that is early in Paul's writing he would introduce himself this way, "I am Paul, an apostle." And a little bit later in his writing he would say, "I am Paul, the least of all of the saints." And by the time you get to Timothy he goes, "I am Paul, the worst of all sinners." He goes from apostle to worst of all sinners. And that's deeper in his spiritual journey. I think it's because he'd sobered up. He realized what he'd been saved from and what he'd been saved for.

What about you?



Right I'm currently reading a book by Bobb Biehl called Decade by Decade. Bob is in his 80s. He's coached a lot of executive leaders. He's a believer. And I find it fascinating how he has broken down the decades of our life. And he gives an "s" word for every decade.

Age 0 to 10 the word is security. The question is, "Am I loved and safe." That's what kids need and what they are wanting to know. Teenagers, the "s" word is self, "What does all of this life mean to me?" You get into your 20s, the "s" word is survival, "Can I survive the adult world?"

You get into your 30s, the "s" word is success, "What I've chosen to do, am I going to be good at it, am I going to be successful at it?" The word in your 40s is significance, "I've been successful, but is my work really gratifying and is it significant?" You get into your 50s the word is stride. Maybe you've kind of found your stride, you've got your momentum, but here's the question, "Are my most impactful days behind me or is there still more to do?"

You get into your 60s the word is strategic, "How do I finish well?" You get into your 70s, the word is succession, "Who is going to carry on and be blessed by my legacy?" You get into your 80s the word is slippery, "Can I count on my health?" That's why these tools [the gym items] to keep in shape are so important. Get into your 90s the word is sleep, "Passing on with no regrets."

Can I just ask you this as we close our time? I don't know which season or decade you're in, but whatever it is, are you running with purpose in your season to prepare you for what is next to then prepare you for your eternal reward? Man, I want to encourage you to run with purpose in every step by identifying what your next step is, by identifying what you need, and maybe by identifying that you just need to build in a more consistent routine to that. And you just take it step by step by step.

So, I just want to encourage you, right where you are, that you would just allow the Holy Spirit to cater to the specific application for you right now. Where are you at, what do you need, what is God doing in your life? And I just want to tell you this.

This is a prime opportunity that, as you're listening to the Holy Spirit, there is another voice. And Satan is going to try to say, "Hey, man. You missed it. You bombed. You failed. You're too far gone."

And I want you to recognize that that is a lie straight from the pits of hell. There is nobody too far gone. There is nobody too old. Over the hill—no such thing as over the hill as long as there is still breath in your lungs. God is not done. So, wherever you are right now, would you just submit yourself to the Holy Spirit and say, "Hey, man. Even if

I'm in my 80s or 90s, there is still more to do. I'm going to run my race with purpose for the good of others and the glory of God.”?

Father, we come to You right now and I just pray that You would speak to each one of our hearts and minds and You would let us know what it is that we need to hear today, what we need to do from it, and when we would do it. Help us to run our race with purpose.

Some of us have sprained ankles. Some of us pulled a spiritual hammy, we're still on the side of the road. God, I pray that You would rehab us, get us back into training, and get us running with purpose, keeping our eyes fixed on what it is that You died for us to have.

So, we thank You for Your mercy and grace, because without it none of us would stand a chance. May we do all that we can to intentionally build bridges with those in our realm of influence who need to know that message as well. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

