

Two weeks ago, we started on a new series. What I wanted us to do was kind of boil everything down into simple pieces and answer these questions. What are we doing here? What is this all about, us coming together, us gathering groups and Bible studies? Ultimately what are we seeking to accomplish? So that's what we set out to answer. And I said that in order to answer that question, we've got to get a lot higher than the Village Church. We've got to get way beyond that because the Village Church should be in glad submission to other things. So we set out trying to answer this question, a massive, philosophical, theological question. What's God doing here? What's the mission of God? If we look at the reality of the universe and that you and I are here, why do we exist? What is this all about? If there is a Creator God, isn't the universe a bit overboard? What's His point? What's He after? So we started in Psalm 23, and then we went through about forty passages of Scripture. Psalm 23 starts with, "The Lord is my shepherd" and ends with, "He restores my soul and He leads me into paths of righteousness for the sake of His name." And then we spun off of that to say that God loves you, God is for you and God will provide for you, but the motivation behind all that is not your awesomeness, but rather God. God is ultimately for God. God is about God. What God wants is the praise of God's name in the universe. It's the reason that everything exists. You, I, the planets and the universe exist so that we might display that infinite perfections of God Almighty.

Now that rubs against the air we breathe, because the air we breathe is that we're the point, we're what it's all about and everything should be about us. We breathe that air. Every commercial is pointed in that direction. "You earned it. . .you deserve it. . .why wouldn't you?" Almost all marketing schemes are built around how worthy you are of [insert product here]. So we said that the reality is you are not the center of God's affections. You are most definitely not the center of the universe. Ultimately God is the center of the universe. Since that rubbed us so raw, I told you why this is good news. I told you why God being about God is infinitely better than God being about us. So we just walked through a lot of texts, and I gave you three reasons why it's the best news in the universe that God is ultimately for God. If God is after the praise of God's glorious grace, then He is not at odds with my desire to be filled with joy. If God is for God, He is not after my begrudging submission. He's not after me just doing what He says so He won't destroy me. If His goal is to be praised, to be worshiped, to be enjoyed and in that enjoyment to show Himself to be glorious to the world and to the universe itself, then He is for my joy. Which means all the commands of God in Scripture are not about taking anything from us, but rather leading us into deeper joy than we can imagine. Now I know some of you are just itching to sit down and have a drink with me so you can tell me how that's not true for you. "You don't understand my situation. You don't get my relationship. You don't understand the part of life that I'm in and how I'm wired." You would love to sit down and explain to me why that's not true for you and how the commands of God shouldn't apply to you because, if you were to do what God commanded, that would easily lead to your misery all the days of your life until you died. So I tried to just press on the fact that that's an unbelievably arrogant position. No one has been a greater threat and caused greater violence to your joy than you have. Now have people jacked with you? Absolutely. Do we live in a broken world? Yes. But how you have handled that, how you have responded to that is completely on you, not them. You're the greatest enemy of your joy, not God. God is beckoning towards life, and you're pulling toward death. C.S. Lewis used a great illustration that God is offering you a holiday at sea, and you want to stay in the slums playing with mud. You think that the invitation to the sea is robbing you of the joy you have making mud pies. So we just talked about the reality that God's being about God is tied to our ever-expanding, everincreasing joy. And that's how God is praised and gloried in, in our ever-increasing joy in Him and in His perfections. What do I mean by His perfections? I'm talking about Him lining us up with how He designed life and the universe to work.

And then we moved on to the second one, which I thought was the big piece. If you're not the center of the universe, that frees you up in a thousand different ways. Because if I'm the point, then I have a whole list of things Lauren had better be doing. If I'm the point, I have a whole list of things that my kids had better do. They had better not represent me like I really am. And if I'm the point, then I view my money a certain way. If I'm the point, how dare you go 45 mph in the left lane. If I'm the point, if you cut me off, I'm going to have to follow you home and maybe punch you in the throat. If I'm the point, I'm easily offended. Because, "It's my universe. How dare you intrude on my universe? I have a set plan for my day. How dare you get in the way of my day. Because I'm the point. I'm the sun. It's about me." But if I'm not the point, I'm a free man. If I'm not the point, I'm hard to offend. If I'm not the point, I have been set free to love Lauren and not have a list of things she had better do. If I'm not the point, then I'm set free to love and shape my children with grace and not fear. If I'm not the point, then that frees up my finances and I'm not constantly worried about what I have and don't have. If I'm not the point, then I don't get as offended when life just happens. You might be type-A and plan out your day to the millisecond, but it doesn't work that way, does it? So if it's not about us, that's all easy to handle. If it is about us, that stuff is very difficult.

And then we ended that week saying that God is ultimately for God and that's good because, if God is infinite and He has always been and will always be, then that joy, regardless of time, is ever-increasing. There is a great book in the Old Testament called Ecclesiastes. Solomon, who was a king with more money, more power, more fame than we will all have even if we combine all our clout, writes a whole book on how everything in life is meaningless. It's a chipper little read. I recommend it for vacations and happy things like that. So he has all this money, and he says it's vanity, it's meaningless and it doesn't matter. He literally says, "You're going to die, and your kid is probably an idiot because you're rich and have spoiled him. It's vanity. It doesn't matter." And then he builds. He plants forests and vineyards. That puts your Crepe Myrtles to shame. And he says, "It's vanity. It's meaningless." He builds houses for his wives and concubines, he builds the temple of the Lord and says it's meaningless. "Vanity, vanity. All is vanity. There is nothing new under the sun." And the reality of God being infinite and for our joy means that our experience of that joy is ever-increasing to the point where we don't hit that ceiling or finally get to the bottom. It's ever-growing and ever-expanding.

So then we asked how God glorifies Himself. Since God's mission is the glory of God, how does God glorify Himself? We started last week just talking about the fact that God glorifies Himself in a thousand different ways. He does it at a macro level. He does it just in the expansive of the universe. He's going, "Look at how big this is. I just told that to happen." The book of Job says that the universe is just the fringes of God's power. I follow one of the astronauts on the International Space Station on Twitter. That's a level of nerdiness I'm comfortable with you knowing about me. He has been posting pictures of Hurricane Irene. Here's what's crazy to me. He's taking these pictures of this massive storm that slammed into the whole eastern seaboard and made it invisible from space. There are millions of people under that, and it just looks like this little ball. And he's not even past the moon. He's just in orbit. So think how big this thing gets, and God is going, "Yeah, I did that. I just told it to happen. I didn't even do it. I just told it to happen and it happened. I created out of nothing all that is, and my glory is displayed in that." But it's also displayed at a real micro level. Like the reality that there are colors. God thought that up. He designed the natural systems here on earth to display His glory via colors, via flavors in food. He's involved in every bit of cellular mitosis. God is displaying His glory in that. And we said last week that God decided, in His own providence, to flex specifically and most powerfully through His covenant people. We see this in Ephesians 3 when Paul tells us that God, through the church, would make known His wisdom to the rulers, to the powers and to the heavenly places. Through His church, the manifold wisdom of God would be seen. So God is glorified in all of those things, the sunset, the sunrise and the expanse of the universe, but where He wanted to flex, where He really wanted to show His power was in a covenant community of people. So He calls Abram and says, "Through you, I'm going to make a massive people who are going to show My glory to every tribe, tongue and nation on earth." He promises that in Genesis 12 and repeats that promise in Genesis 15. And then the Prophets begin to prophesy that great and glorious day of the Lord where this is no longer an Israeli or Jewish thing, but this is every tribe, tongue, nation, color,

culture and socioeconomic level. Among every people group, among every type of system, there will be those who worship and make much of God the Father through God the Son. And then John the Baptist shows up and declares that that day is here. That's John the Baptist's message boiled down into the simplest possible place, "It's here. Let's go." Jesus shows up and preaches this same thing. "There are sheep that are not of this flock. I have come so that they might enter in."

And then you've got what we read last week, so let's look at it in Matthew 28, starting in verse 18. "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." So as it began with the fall of man and the promise of Abraham, as it runs through the Prophets and the law, now John the Baptist says it's here, Jesus lives that righteous life, dies a sinner's death, is resurrected and says, "It's time. Go into all the nations and make disciples." So if God is about the glory of God, the church then is about the glory of God. But the church's role in glorifying God is making disciples who observe all that He commanded. So we talked at length last week that the mission of the church is to bring glory to God by making disciples, being about discipleship. And that's why the first part of our mission statement reads, "We exist to bring glory to God by making disciples."

Now here's where things start to get a little loose. Even though we have covered those things, they're a bit ambiguous. The second year I was pastor here, I was invited by Leadership Network to join what can best be described as a think tank. They got a group together of guys who were 35 and under with churches of a thousand or more. And then we set the agenda. The meetings were here in Dallas twice a year. Then they would fly in guys who were older than we were who had churches much bigger than ours. We set the agenda and here's how it would work. We would talk about what we were trying at our churches, and then they would weigh in on it. They would go, "Well I like that. . .that won't work so well. . .you're probably not saved. . .that's not in the Bible. . .here's what we've tried. . .here's what worked for us. . .here's what didn't work for us when we were where you were." So some of my best friends from ministry to this day came out of that group. So early on, we all wanted to talk about discipleship. We all understood that God's call on us as leaders of churches is to make disciples. The question is: How do you do that? So we gathered for that first meeting in Dallas. They break us into two groups so we're smaller and more manageable. We all started talking about what we were all doing for discipleship, and almost everybody was doing something different. Then they brought in a guy from California. He's wearing a Tommy Bahama shirt, flip-flops and cargo shorts. And then the other guy was actually from a church in the metroplex. He was the complete opposite. So the group I was in first was the California group. He was just completely laid back. "You know, we're velcroing them to the Bible. We're velcroing them to one another. And that's how you make disciples." So I'm a "I need to know if that works" kind of guy, so I raise my hand and said, "Okay, is it working?" So he threw out some statistics and numbers, but he really didn't answer my question and just talked. It was kind of like a Presidential debate where there's talk but no real answer. But it was my first meeting and I wasn't going to be the guy who just goes, "Okay, but you didn't answer my question." So I just let it go. And then we had lunch and I'm with the Dallas guy next. Now he had the completely opposite style. All I remember was this guy was very, very ironed. So we have wrinkled Hawaiian shirt and flip flops in the morning, and then I've got creases that could cut bread in the second one. He has these massive three-inch binders there, and he starts talking about their program. "Well, this is semester one here. It covers theological basics along with some high-level theological stuff that we believe. And then this is semester two. This is leadership and the application of leadership into our church body." So I was like, "Man, that's spectacular. Is that working?" "Oh yeah. The men and women who complete this program are this, this and this." It sounded really, really good. But I learned some things in college that had made me skeptical. Like in my Greek class at the beginning of my first year, there were like forty of us. Two years later, there were six. So I have learned that in church life, it's easy to get people to sign up for stuff, but it's not really easy to see that through to the end. So I wanted to know if it was working. At the time, we were growing by a thousand a year. So the thought of having to take a year and a half to

train somebody before they could be released into doing ministry seemed impossible to me. So I asked him, "Well how many people last year did you put through the program?" "Around fifteen." Now let me be straight. Fifteen well-trained people can do some work. Jesus turned the world upside down with twelve. But in a church of six thousand, how do you break that down? "You seven hundred, you're with me. Here's what we're going to do. I know you would like to make us smaller, but we have guys in training. In a year, we'll be able to break us up into a small group. So you 42 on Monday. You 116 will have Tuesday. Wednesday is kind of an open day, so let's put 300 of you there." How does that actually play out? How does it work? I know it could work like, "Hey, let's do a Sunday school class." But going to a Sunday school class and being discipled are not the same thing. Knowing about the Bible and practicing the Bible are not the same thing. Jesus rebukes one and rejoices in the other. And so that night, Darren Patrick, who is pastor of Journey Church in St. Louis, and I sat at the bar in the hotel, and we just talked about the fact that the organic model didn't really seem to work nor does the mechanical model. Both of these models had huge holes in them. One drew in linear people and could lack real relationship, and the other lacked any kind of accountability or any kind of systemic grid that would enable you to know where people were.

So since that day, we have been, in our minds, in our conversations, going, "What does a disciple look like? What does a maturing disciple look like? What are the pieces that are in place for someone to be a maturing follower of Jesus Christ?" Because there is no silver bullet. "Well yeah there is. Just know the Bible." Well the Bible tells you to do some things. So it's not just the Bible. "It's just genuine relationships." I have genuine relationships that don't have much to do with Jesus or my maturity in Christ at all. "Well it's about ____." There is no silver bullet here. So after years of robust dialogue (which is our term for arguing), we have settled on how disciples are sustained at the Village Church, how we create environments in which discipleship can flourish, maturity can flourish. And that will take us to how we're going to go about making disciples that you see in our mission statement.

So "We exist to bring glory to God by making disciples through. . ." So the methodology by which we plan and hope to accomplish making disciples for the glory of God is ". . .through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service and gospel-centered multiplication." Now I know some of you are going, "That's a bit repetitive. You could have just said, 'gospel-centered' and then followed it up with those four areas." But we wanted it to be repetitive. We wanted it to be like a drum. Because we're not after community; we're after gospel-centered community. We're not after service; we're after gospel-centered service. We're not after worship; we're after gospel-centered worship. The defining element of those words is in their gospel centrality. So in everything we do, we want to rejoice in the perfect life, the wrath absorbing death and the victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. Does that mean we discuss other things? Yes. We will discuss things like holiness and biblical manhood and womanhood, but all of that has to be viewed through the lenses of the gospel or it simply puts a weight on you that you cannot bear. So when people ask about the Village Church, what we want them to say we're about is the gospel.

So let me walk through each of these with you briefly, and starting next week, we're going to take each one of these and go in depth. So the first area is gospel-centered worship. We are going to make disciples of Jesus Christ that bring glory to God through gospel-centered worship. I'll be as clear as I can about gospel-centered worship. You are by your nature a worshiper. It's what you were created to do and be. Everyone worships. It just matters what we worship. Our problem is not that we don't worship; it's that we worship wrongly. We worship things that can't sustain and won't hold up under the weight of life. We'll begin to see examples of that almost immediately as football kicks off next week. And I'm as excited as anybody about the season kicking off. I hate this little season where there's not a lot going on unless you love baseball. So I'm looking forward to the start of football season. But we will be able to detect attendance patterns based on games. Just let the Cowboys kick off at noon, and I will know the Saturday night and 9:00 Sunday services are going to get slammed. Just let there be a huge Big 12 happen, and you're going to see us drop in the services at that time. And I'm not saying there is anything wrong with that. You're getting it in another spot. But that is an aspect of worship. I'm not

saying that there's anything wrong with you going, "This thing has importance in my life. This has an emotional response in me. I love this. I'm drawn to this," but I am telling you though that that is worship. It's not that we're not worshipers; it's that we simply worship wrongly. So gospel-centered worship defines the type of worship we're after. And here's what Jesus says about that in John 4:23-24. "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." Now there are two things that I want to press on every time you come in here. I want to press on your mind. Our intellects and our faith are not at odds. You don't shut off your mind and just have an emotional response to Jesus. That would be manipulation. So I want to engage your minds. I want to let the Word of God read our culture, read our lives and I want us to come face to face with lies that we're believing and things that sound right and smell right but in the end will kill us. I want to engage your mind. I want to address historical things, biblical things, philosophical things and I want to point out where the position of arrogance isn't the Christian position but rather the position outside of Christianity basing nothing on history or ultimate reality but instead on one's opinions of how things should work currently in 2011. I want to point that out and engage your mind. Whether you've been in church for your whole life or this is your first time here, I want to engage your mind, and I want a full mind to inform the heart and have your affections stirred for God. There is a high view of church that says there is no place for emotions among the gathering of God's people. I just could not disagree more. How do you praise the glory of God by appearing indifferent? Come talk to me about my girl, and I'll tell you what I love about her. And I'll tell you how I couldn't have asked for what I got. I'll talk to you about her faithfulness to the Lord. I'll talk to you about how she engages other women with the gospel. I'll tell you how repeatedly in our lives, we've given away money that we've saved up for something she really wanted and valued. Whether that be new floors or remodeling the kitchen, there have been times where the Spirit really pressed on our hearts that what we were saving up needed to go somewhere else, and she has been on board. I could just tell you of her praises all day long. And that's a good thing; that's a right thing. So should it be with God. Truth should invoke emotion. So as much as truth should stir up your affections, we want to see your affections stirred. We don't however just want to stir up affections for affection's sake. We don't want to manipulate. We don't want to stir you up with things that aren't true. We want to stir you up with things that are true. There should be an emotional response to the fact that you are a sinner and Christ died for you. To be loved despite who you are is an unbelievably powerful thing. And to get that, to sit in that and to understand that is a profound gift. So our worship here is going to revolve around the perfect life of Jesus Christ, the wrath-absorbing death of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The second one is gospel-centered community. Now if you have a church background, you may think I'm going to Acts 2 now, but you're wrong. So let's look at Romans 15:1-3. "We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." Now genuine discipleship takes place in gospel-centered community, not in just a gathering of friends who have a good time, who drink good wine, laugh and eat good food. That is good and let's have that, but what we need is a community of faith that has at its central goal edification and maturity into Jesus Christ. So you can have a group and you can get together with people who you like to hang out with and never see that, never have that. But it's vitally important that we not holy huddle up with people who have been in church a long time and only welcome others in when they become serious and get it together. You were at one time a moron. In fact, I'm wondering when that's going to stop, because here I am now getting close to 40, looking back on my two years ago going, "Man, how did I live?" I've just got this feeling that two years from now I'm going to look at me right now and think the same thing. This has been a pattern my whole life. I don't know if it ever ends or if you're 80 and you're like, "Ugh, I just can't wait to die." So gospel-centered community has a desire to mature in the faith, but a desire to bring along others for the ride. Which means that we open up our hearts and our lives toward difficult people. When I was in high school, they rolled out a gifted and talented program. That's kind of a slap to the face. It's like, "Gifted and talented kids, over here. Good luck graduating, the rest of you idiots." That's kind of what it felt like. "Let's take all the smart kids and put them in a class because we don't want to be slowed down by the dummies

who can't read." That's what it felt like. In the world of Christian faith, there's no place for that. Am I my brother's keeper? Yes, you are. Gospel-centered community leaves no man or woman behind. "Well Matt, they're not serious about it." Okay, well that means you get to have a great, loving conversation about what it is that's their hold up in regards to fully surrendering to Christ. "Well in our group, nobody is as serious as me. I'm the only one who really wants community." Okay, my recommendation is to engage one or two other people and ask, "How can we make this thing deeper? How can we focus more on maturing in our faith? How can we get deeper into one another's lives?" Try that instead of doing the Elijah thing up on the hillside going, "I'm the only one." Because it's simply not true. Gospel-centered community has at its core a desire to mature and a desire to bring others along.

And then there's gospel-centered service. We put gospel-centered in front of service because your motivation for serving matters. We don't serve out of guilt, and we don't serve to earn the approval of God. It has been freely given in Christ. The motivation for our service comes out of an understanding that we have been served, loved and have had grace and mercy extended to us in Christ. So there is an overflow out of us onto others, to serve others, to empower and help others because God did that with us. Let me read you Galatians 6:9-10. "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." So first of all, there is the serving of covenant community in an institutional fashion. When you drove into our parking lot, there were people waiting for you wearing orange vests. They have been praying about their hearts all morning, because you're going to be rude to them, you're not going to obey them and some of you are even going to tell them that they're #1. So they have been here since 8:00 this morning. And it's chaotic with them directing traffic, isn't it? It's a nightmare. You're rushing, screaming at your family, just hoping to get in, knowing that they're going to shut down that parking lot. And there they are, making sure we get in as clean as we can and making sure we get out as clean as we can. They are making disciples. Then some of you dropped off your babies and children with us before you came in here. Let me tell you that we're not babysitting. That's not what we do here ever. There is never a time where we go, "Okay, you go do that and we'll watch them." From an infant to a 4th grader, we are praying over, pleading with and unpacking to them the character and nature of God. We are not teaching your kids morality. Morality is an albatross around a kid's neck. I love you, but your kid is a liar. Mine are too. They're just liars. So think how we put them behind the eight ball when we go, "God hates liars. We shouldn't lie. There's this whole hell thing." No, we want to say, "Look at God. Look at who He is. Look at what He has done. Yeah, you're a liar, but look at how small that lie is compared to the grace available to you." So what we're teaching is the character and nature of God. And we'll get into moral aspects of that, based on the grace, mercy and forgiveness of God. If you don't do that, then you really hang chains around kids to where they're just going, "Okay, this can't be for me. I'm not going to measure up. I fall short of this ideal." Because they fall short of this ideal. And then they begin to learn that there's hypocrisy in the church because you fall short of this ideal. But where the nature and character of God is the centerpiece, not you have a real shot for the Holy Spirit to do profound work. But there are volunteers that do that. They're here to do that. They've studied all week and have prayed for your kids by name. They are pleading with the Lord to save and rescue. People are spending blocks of time here. The worship teams on all campuses, we don't pay them. Those aren't paid musicians. So for the campuses that do Saturday night services, they got here at 2:00 yesterday, were here until 9:00 last night, then they were here at 8:00 and they will be here until 1:00 this afternoon. Those in Denton got here at 6:30 this morning and then they'll play again tonight and get home at 9:00 tonight. Do you know what they're doing? They're making disciples. You were greeted at the door. That's making disciples. There are people who come on Saturday night whose preference is to come on Sunday morning, but they're doing that so you could get in. You're here today at the expense of someone not being here. The parking lot, the child care, something shut it down. And don't think I'm drive-by guiltig you. You got in. Congratulations. But there are people who go, "You know what? I'm going Saturday night at 7:15. That's not ideal for me, but I'm going because I am allowing someone else to come and I'm making space for someone else. I'm going to ride the shuttle to make room in the parking lot." These are small acts that we don't think of as making disciples that have everything to do with disciples being made. And I could go on and on about how that's going on here.

And then there is the non-institutional aspect of serving. I have been blown away in my nine years here at how generous and gracious you are to one another. I've seen people really provide for people long after the death of a spouse, long after the death of a child. I've seen people buy people cars. Other people make up for shortfalls in mortgages that went on for extended periods of time. People have found jobs for one another. There's this really beautiful thing that happens to this covenant community where we're generous toward one another because God has been generous to us. It's not because we have to or we feel guilty because I told you to. We're doing it because God has been gracious to us. And because we have received much, we want to give much. And doesn't this take us back to who the center of the universe is? Because if you are the center, you won't even notice the needs of others.

And then that takes us to the last piece, gospel-centered multiplication. Let me read 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 to you. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." If you go through this text and keep reading, it says that we are ambassadors of Christ as though God was making His appeal through us. So ultimately, we're about gospel-centered multiplication. I am who I am, you who you are because other people, whom God touched through other people, got into your life. And so someone taught me to read the Bible. Someone would press me when I would say things that were untrue about the nature and character of God. They would give me verses to go read and encourage me to not talk so much and read more. And then I had a group of guys who taught me how to pray. I really didn't know how. I was a great studier but a poor prayer. I had guys who really taught me how to pray. I had guys who taught me how to share my faith. There's a bit of boldness in me partly because of how someone first shared the gospel with me. He said, "I need to tell you about Jesus. When do you want to do that?" So his aggression rubbed off on me a bit. He disciplined me. He shaped me. He molded me. And there were a ton of people who did that. I couldn't go, "This is the guy who disciplined me." I have to say, "There is this whole group of people who, because of what God had done in them through other people, spoke into me." And now I get to speak into you in a platform level, in a building out of systems and for some of you, on a friend basis. And the charge on you and me is to multiply what God has done in us in the lives of others and to do that to the ends of the earth.

Several years ago, I was doing a series about the mission of God. I mapped out on a historic time line the split between Paul and Barnabas as one went east and one went west, and I just followed the spread of the gospel through the Roman world, through the ancient world on over into the New World, all the way until the Southern Baptists formed the missionary board in the 1800's and planted a church in El Paso to reach Indians. And then they started moving back eastward and started planting prairie churches. A prairie church was planted in the early 1800's right around here and it grew. It got massive for that time period. There were like 30-something people. So they moved into town and renamed themselves to First Baptist Church Lewisville. And then several years later as the community began to grow, they saw a new subdivision going in and said, "That place needs a church. We don't want people driving all that way out to us. So let's plant a church there." And they planted Lakeland Baptist Church. And then as the suburban sprawl began to take root in the late 70's, Lakeland saw that it looked like Highland Village was going to become more than just a lake community but that there was going to be a full on burb put there. So they said, "We need to put a church there," and they planted First Baptist Highland Village Church. And 100 years ago, there was a Presbyterian church meeting right about where we are, praying that God would do something mighty in this area. You and I are here in these buildings today because the men and women before us were faithful to be agents of reconciliation. With the gospel on their minds, they multiplied and made disciples. And now it's our turn.

You have to have all four of these pieces. If you remove one of the four pieces, it unravels. The way I try to get my head around it is I imagine my daughter coming home with her husband when she's in her 30's. What would I want her to say to me? What would I want to hear from her in regards to her relationship with the Lord? Well I would want to know where

she's worshipping, what they teach. There's a lot of teaching in Christian churches that don't have a lot to do with Jesus. My desire would be that she be in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, worshipping because of the gospel. I would like for her to be in a place that wasn't making much of her but was making much of Jesus. I'd want to hear about the crew she was running in. Were they edifying? Were they exhausting? Was it a mixture of both? I'd want to hear who she was pouring into, who was pouring into her. I would want to know how she's serving the church and those around her. I would want to see if there is generosity towards her husband, towards her children and towards other believers that she knew. And I'd love for her to ask me to pray with her about these neighbors that she has, these worker friends that she has, these girlfriends she has who don't know Jesus. But if you start taking out pieces, then you don't get a maturing believer. There will be a breakdown. If you don't have gospel-centered community, there's going to be a breakdown. You'll spend a lot of time with people that in the end is vain and doesn't matter. If your worship isn't gospel-centered, you will grow bored with it. So the biggest problem with the "seeker church" thing where they go, "Let's focus on production. Let's draw them in with a spectacle. Let's fire off some fireworks, and I'll come in on a zip line," my biggest problem with that is you have to keep topping it or you're going to get bored. "I have to figure out something else to draw you in with." Well, I'm just not that good. So I'll draw you in with the gospel. Now, other guys are more creative than I am. Other guys have a greater skill set than I do. I'm definitely not dogging them, but I am saying that eventually the show has to get unbelievably magical. You've got to make Disney ghetto eventually. Otherwise, people are going to get bored. So I'd want her to say, "They make much of Jesus, daddy. You've got to meet our pastor. He just is on fire for Jesus." But if you take out the gospel from worship, we're in trouble. If you take out the gospel from community, we're in trouble. If you take out the gospel and you're serving either because of guilt or you think you can earn God's favor, you're in trouble. First of all, you're never going to last. You're going to serve for a week or two and then disappear. And then it's not going to bring you any joy. And if it doesn't bring you any joy to serve, you're not bringing glory to God. And if you're not bringing glory to God, then why bother? You don't get points for that. You do understand that, right? God's not going, "I was checking things out, and you weren't really a believer. . .but you did park cars. So you got that going for you." That's not how it works.

So let me just ask you this in closing. If we're saying this is how someone matures in their faith, how do you look? Are you worshipping Jesus, making much of Jesus, stirred up for Jesus? What about your community? What about your friends? Do you find yourself edified and stirred up? When you leave, do you want more of Jesus? Do you have friends who have been willing to call out your inconsistencies and short-comings in a way that's loving and gracious? Are you joyfully serving, whether that be in an institutional way or in an organic way? Are you pouring into others? Because if look at this list and you find something that is missing, you have your answer of why God might seem distant to you, why you seem to be stagnant and stale in your relationship with the Lord.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women. You drew them here today. I believe that You love them. I pray, where there needs to be repentance, that there would be repentance. Where there needs to be a stirring in our hearts for a more serious pursuit of You, I pray that You would do that. So stir up our affections for You that You love us regardless of where we are in these things. For some of us we fall short in some areas, and for others we fall short in all. And yet You still love and extend grace. We thank You for that. Help us, Jesus. It's for Your beautiful name we pray. Amen."