

Why Are We Here, Where Are We Going, and How Do You Fit In?

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Planning to Grow

By Steve Viars

Bible Text: Jeremiah 29:4-7

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In his book *Good to Great* author Jim Collins compares the breakthrough of an organization going from one level of effectiveness to the next to the image of a flywheel. He says this.

“Picture a huge heavy flywheel, a massive metal disk mounted horizontally on an axle about 30 feet in diameter, two feet in and weighing about 5000 pounds. Now imagine that your task is to get the flywheel rotating on the axle as fast and long as possible. Pushing with great effort you get the flywheel to inch forward moving almost imperceptibly at first. You keep pushing and after two or three hours of persistent effort you get the flywheel to complete one entire turn. You keep pushing and the flywheel begins to move a bit faster and with continued great effort you move it around a second rotation. You keep pushing it in a consistent directly, three turns, four, five, six. The flywheel builds up speed. Seven, eight, you keep pushing. Nine, 10. It builds momentum. Eleven, 12, moving faster with each turn, 20, 30, 50, 100. Then at some point, breakthrough. The momentum of the thing kicks in your favor hurling the flywheel forward, turn after turn, its own heavy weight working for you. Pushing no harder than during the first rotation, but the flywheel goes faster and faster. Each turn of the flywheel builds upon work done earlier compounding your investment of effort a thousand times faster, 10,000, 100,000. The huge heavy disk flies forward with almost unstoppable momentum.”

I really believe the case could be made that for many reasons our church is poised to experience a breakthrough kind of year. And this morning I want to explain that position from several key passages of Scripture along with an analysis of where we are and an explanation of where we are going with hopes that when we are done this morning, you are going to say, “I need to be part of that and I want to be part of that. And by God’s grace I intend to be part of that.”

With that in mind, open your Bible, if you would, to Jeremiah chapter 29 this morning. That is on page 559 of the front section of the Bible that is under that chair in front of you if you need that. So Jeremiah chapter 29 page 559 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you.

If you have been around our church for any period of time you know that on one of the

first Sundays of the year I always come back to this discussion of why are we here and where are we going and how do you fit in. And obviously a lot of it is going to be different because our situation is different, but we think that it is crucial for every person on the team to have a clear, biblical, practical and compelling set of answers to those questions. Why even are we here? Why did you get up? And where are we going? What is the plan? Where are we heading and how do you fit in?

And, as you can probably already tell, I am fairly fired up about all this. I have honestly preached this message 500 times in my brain in the last couple of weeks. And it needs to get out. So thank you for allowing that to happen.

I have recently been reading a book about Teddy Roosevelt and I will try not to use the word bully in every other sentence, but there are a lot of reasons to really be bully about 2013. In fact, I would encourage you to do this. Do you know how sometimes when you are listening to someone talk you make little tally marks of certain things, like how many times Steve uses bad grammar? There is a tally. Or how many times I say uh, there is another tally. Well, how about keeping a running list this morning of reasons why we can anticipate this to be a breakthrough kind of year. And, of course, all within the confines of crying out for God's blessing and enablement, but why should we be bully about all of this?

Well, the first answer is because we believe we have a mission that flows right out of the Word of God. Our mission is to glorify God by winning people to Jesus Christ and equipping them to be more faithful disciples. And, by the way, I should probably explain the little graphic. That is not a flywheel, ok? That is something I am going not talk to you about later on, but we went ahead and put it on the PowerPoint slide right now to, well, drive you crazy. And that is part of my plan for this year, so we might as well just get at it. But that mission of Faith Church is to glorify God by winning people to Jesus Christ and equipping them to be more faithful disciples. We could literally spend the rest of our time simply talking about the meaning of each one of those words. Because our church family chose each one of them very carefully based on what we understand the Scripture to teach about that purpose of the Church, from passages like this, 1 Corinthians 10:31.

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”¹

And that means if we are organizing our thoughts and our desires, our words, our actions as a church family this year around that grand purpose of glorifying him, then we can expect God to bless us. See, when the flywheel of your life is on the track that God has laid, you better believe it is going to be far easier to push than if it is out in the middle of a muddy cornfield of selfishness and sin. This concept of glorifying God, it is fundamental to all that we seek to do around here.

You see that same emphasis repeatedly in Ephesians chapter one. And where Paul says we ought to live, here it is:

¹ 1 Corinthians 10:31.

“...to the praise of the glory of His grace.”²

That fabulous theological concept is encapsulated in our very mission statement. That is what wakes us up in the morning. That is what organizes and motivates our efforts. See, it is amazement at his glory. Did you have that in your heart for the praise of his glory? Amazement at his glory and a desire to know him and make him known.

Or this great text, Matthew 5:16:

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”³

So there is the answer to the question: Why are we here? It is to seek to glorify God by winning people to Jesus Christ and then equipping them to be more faithful disciples. And I believe whenever you adopt a mission that flows directly out of Scripture and therefore directly out of the heart of God, you can confidently believe that you are not the only one pushing on the flywheel. There is a reason to be bully about 2013.

Now bringing it around more practically and more specifically, every year our church adopts an annual theme that provides direction for what we are trying to accomplish together. And we put a lot of time into analyzing where we think we are and where we believe the Lord wants us to go. And we believe the theme that best articulates the path we are on this year is planning to grow. That is what we intend to be all about in this coming year from many different perspectives and a variety of ways, we are going to be planning to grow.

Now I would like to organize all of this around five passages of Scripture this morning and for sake of time I am going not give you the first four on the PowerPoint screen and then we will jump into the one that you have opened your Bible to, Jeremiah chapter 29. Here is the first one, though. Just think about this. Proverbs 21:5 which says, “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.” Look for breakthrough right there, that the plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance. And God is going on record as saying that when hard working people plan well they can expect his blessing, right? And we never know for sure exactly what form that blessing is going to take, but according to Scripture, the result will be abundance. That sounds like breakthrough to me if we plan well.

Now add this passage from a different corner, Colossians 1:28.

“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.”⁴

I am going to talk to you more about these passages exegetically as we go along, by the way, but that one gives us the goal of the plan. You plan and you grow, the direction.

² Ephesians 1:6.

³ Matthew 5:16.

⁴ Colossians 1:28.

What or in this case who are we planning to grow towards? And that is another reason to expect breakthrough, because God loves his Son. Do you agree with that, that this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased? And so when you are trying to grow, more in love with him and more like him and more glorifying to him, you better believe the God of heaven and earth is going to help you push on that flywheel. He is bully about that for sure.

Now here is another one that might surprise you a bit. And I am just going to let you suck on it like a piece of hard candy in the corner of your mouth. And we will chomp on it a little bit in a moment, but just think about this. Romans 7:18-20. What would this have to do with planning to grow where the apostle Paul says even as a mature, godly church planter, a very effective apostle:

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.⁵

And you say, “What does that have to do with this?”

Well, if that passage is true—and it is—then every person in this room has some serious growing to do. And that didn’t sound like a compliment. It wasn’t. If that is true—and it is—then every person in this room has some serious growing to do. Can we all give an {?} to that? Thank you very much. And we also better have a specific plan of what we are going to do to tame that beast, because this isn’t going to happen by osmosis. A lot more on that in a few minutes.

Now this next one, if you know your Bible, think about the context of it already. I will talk more about it in a moment, but just think about the verse, 1 Peter 3:15.

“...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”⁶

There is another just piece of hard candy right now, but what had Peter been discussing in the previous two chapters that if accomplished would lead to those around you asking such a question? And how do you practically and specifically plan to sanctify Christ as Lords in your heart?

Now with those four corners already established in the discussion, let’s read from our text and just to get a bit of context we will start in verse four, but I am heading down to verse seven.

⁵ Romans 7:18-20.

⁶ 1 Peter 3:15.

"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, 'Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.'"

"For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,' declares the LORD."⁷

Again, I will set it contextually in a moment, but planning what you are going to do, planning to grow.

"Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare."⁸

Now let's organize the rest of our time around this idea, three key ideas, three key areas in which Faith Church is planning to grow this year. Now if you have been around this church you kind of know my modus operandi so just get used to this. Sunday after Sunday after Sunday I will find a time, I will find a way to announce our theme, right? And then I will find a way, a time to announce the three key areas I which we are trying to accomplish that theme, because I have the view that God's people need to reminded from time to time. Isn't that right? So you are going to be hearing this over and over and over. So get used to this song. It is going to become music to your ears. Don't you think? And so the three areas in which faith is going not plan to grow this year—and I am just going not tell you in advance, on purpose—I plan to spend the majority of our time this morning on the first one. So don't get all wound. He is going to be in so much trouble. He is going to miss the next {?}

There is a plan. Just relax. Be mellow like me, ok? Yeah. There is the plan. Three key areas in which Faith Church is planning to grow this year. It starts right here by continuing to discuss and refine and implement our discipleship process. You will hear us use this phrase, planning to grow, hundreds of times this year. And on purpose it can mean different things. That is what is going to make it so useful to us. But first and foremost here is what it means, that we want to be and we need to be the kind of church where any person can walk through the doors and quickly be connected to resources that will help you become more of what God wants you to be. See, planning for you and planning for all of the rest of us to grow. So this year is not going not be talking about how bad the world is. I think churches set them up when they get into negativity about people who aren't even there to be the kind of group of people who aren't growing

⁷ Jeremiah 29:4-9.

⁸ Jeremiah 29:7.

themselves. So this isn't about how we are better than the world or how we are going to try to push our legislative agenda on somebody else by political force, blah, blah, blah. It is not planning for them to grow, because judgment because where? Yeah, at the household of God. So our chief concern is how does God want me to change and what plans can I and should I put in place to be sure that progress is made in my spiritual walk this year?

Now let's break that down. It starts by recognizing Christian growth is a process. See, the Lord could have designed salvation to be as soon as you trusted Jesus as Savior and Lord you were immediately and completely transformed, right? With no struggle, no effort on your part at all. And if that were the case there would be no need for a plan, because the process would be easy. The process would be instantaneous. Do you believe that God is powerful enough that he could have designed the process that way if he chose? Absolutely, but as soon as we open the pages of Scripture we learn that while the decision to trust Christ as Savior and Lord occurs at a point in time, once and forever, becoming more pleasing to God as a Christian is a life long endeavor. True? Which is why we would read a verse like this, Philippians 2:12:

“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”⁹

Now think of this. Our confidence in that resides in the sufficiency of the resources that God has provided for our growth. So, yes, it is a process and, yes, I have to be involved in working out my salvation with fear and trembling. But if you know your Bible, you might have already thought: Please keep reading, because there is another half of that verse. That is right. Paul went on to say:

“...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”¹⁰

So wait a minute, then. In the process who is working God or me? What is the answer? Both. Both is the answer, but I am fairly certain God is going to do his part. Would that be true? So if there is going to be a hang-up in the process, it is probably going not to be... yeah, go ahead and say it. It will feel better. You. No question about that. But if God is involved in pushing this flywheel forward, don't be intimidated by planning to grow. Because if God is involved in pushing your flywheel forward, then there is confidence involved in this. That is why Peter said, “Seeing that his divine power...” This isn't a human think, ok? These aren't human resolutions.

“...seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”¹¹

⁹ Philippians 2:12.

¹⁰ Philippians 2:13.

¹¹ 2 Peter 1:3.

It probably won't surprise you to learn that we are going to be encouraging every person attending our church to develop a PIP. That is right, a personal improvement plan articulating the ways you are planning to grow spiritually this year. But the reason that is achievable—we are not just talking about having a plan. We are talking about accomplishing a plan—is because you can believe that God will bless your efforts to change. That is some good news, huh? That is also why we are not afraid to include everybody on the journey. And maybe even those who might say that until recently they were living far away from God and his Word, also you noticed in those passages that I read there was a fair amount of outreach involved in those passages. So hopefully we are going to see a number of people come to know Christ this year and become part of our efforts. Do you agree with that?

But what about all the baggage they are going to bring? What about all the baggage that we already have? Well, the bottom line is the resources of heaven are available for our growth. And if that is true, then everybody can be included in the plan, because nobody is beyond the hope of God's grace. Do you believe that? I hope you do.

Now here is the other side of that occasion. No one has reached the place where growth is unnecessary. See, somebody might say, "Oh, I see where this is going. Faith has had a lot of new people become part of the church in this past year and so now you are all worried and concerned about the spiritual vitality of those who are new."

Not exactly. We are concerned about the spiritual vitality of every last one of us. Isn't that right? Absolutely. That is where Colossians 1:28 fits into this. We proclaim him, admonishing whom? And, by the way {?} feeling admonished right now. Well, good. That means I am doing my job and I can collect my next paycheck with integrity, because that is what that text says. We proclaim him admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom. Here is the goal. So that we may present every man complete in Christ. That is why we are planning to grow.

Now if you would say, "Well, I don't need to grow, because I am already complete in Christ." Well, {?} please stand up right now and we will love to hear about your wonderfulness. But assuming you would not stand up and make that statement, which we would have to confront you about pride, lying, and a whole bunch of other things. If you are not yet complete in Christ than this is for everybody. We all have to and we all get to plan to grow.

Now notice this, too, theologically. Processes by their very nature require planning. And we are not going to get all engineering about this. I realize you look at the front cover of the bulletin that I have already used a flywheel. Now I have got that thing going on in the corner that I am not sure what it is yet, but it is looking kind of engineering. Are you saying that it is all just some sort of a mechanical man made process?

No. Sanctification is not that. But there is process. There is plans. We saw that in our key text in Jeremiah. That was at the beginning of the Babylonian captivity and the false prophets were telling the Jews who had been take by force to Babylon that the captivity

would be over in two years. They didn't need to make much of a plan. And God said through Jeremiah, "No, it is going to be 70 years. And even when you are in a situation, in a culture you don't like, you can still plan to make a difference for me even in that condition. Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you."

And who among us is not in a position where there are some aspects of it we don't like? We feel like we are in exile politically or vocationally or in our families where there are at least some things that disappoint us or anger us or discourage us. And if you say, "Well, I can't grow because of my stuff. I can't grow because of my boss. I can't grow because of my political leaders, blah, blah, blah."

Tell that to the captives of Babylon. We can still plan to grow in the midst of all of that.

Now already I hope you are beginning to formulate a plan. Are you doing that? By the way, I didn't mention, but at the back of your bulletin, at the back of your handout there is this little thing that says, "My takeaways." Do you see that? That is a place for you to write some of the applications of this message. And I hope you are starting to think already about some takeaways, formulating a plan. Here is an area of my walk with Christ that I am going to need to develop this year. Or here is a habit that I know displeases God that I am going to have to learn to stop this year or here is something about the way I communicate that needs to change or here is something about my work ethic or here is an area that lacks integrity. I mean, it could be a million things. But sanctification is a process and processes by their very nature require planning.

Now let's bring that verse in from Peter. Here is the principle. Often the best way to seek and promote the welfare of the city is by working on practical holiness yourself. Remember Peter said, "Be ready to give an answer to any person who would ask you a reason for the hope that is in you." Well, why in the world would anybody ever ask you that question? What is the context of those words that Peter gave to go back in the previous chapters? The answer is: How to be a godly citizen and how to be a godly employee or employer, how to be a godly husband or a wife. And as people around you see you walking out a plan to become progressively pleasing to God and more like his Son, the opportunities to speak for him are going to naturally emerge.

One of the best tools in the witnessing bag is the changed and changing life. And the only way that is going to happen for you is if you take time to plan when and how it is going to happen. That is why God wanted the exiles to seek the welfare of the city so they could be a bright light to the people in that wicked and pagan culture.

Now I have said a lot. Come up for air. Here is the big point. When you hear that phrase, "planning to grow" this year what that should mean to us first of all is our intent to continue to discuss, refine and implement our discipleship process.

Now let's try to make that as practical as we can. Would you agree with me that our task as a church is to link men and women with appropriate resources to facilitate that growth and then to provide mutual encouragement and accountability as the process unfolds? Do

you buy that? I know it is a long sentence. That is all very, very important. We believe God wants us to be an equipping church. See, it is not just about the what. Here is what God wants you to become. It is equally about the how tos. Here is all the resources. Here is all the principles. Here is all the help available to help you get to that place.

Now maybe this metaphor will help, because I realize there are so many different things going on around this church. It is hard to get your arms around it. So maybe this metaphor will help. Faith Church is very much like a big gyroscope. Do you know what a gyroscope is? There is a lot of effort, there is a lot of energy. Hopefully there is a lot of progress, but when you think about our discipleship plan about how we try to accomplish that discipleship gyroscope, don't get lost, there is like three little gyroscopes inside. We try to accomplish that in three ways, three other areas that are spinning as well and that is helping us move forward. Now don't get lost in the threes. I told you when we talk about planning to grow we have got three key ways that we are going to do that. I am going to hit these last two in a minute. I am still on the first one. This whole matter of making disciples. And we are going to hit the pop down menu and I want you to think about how does this church go about the matter of trying to help people become more like Christ and where do you fit into all of that? So think about the Faith Church gyroscope. How do we try to accomplish this task of discipleship?

Three ways. One of them is through soul care. That is led by pastor Brent Oakwood. And pastor Oakwood is going to be moving away from direct college ministry and that is because we are in the process of hiring Nick Lees. Nick is one of our soon to be seminary graduates and he is going to be leading Perdue Bible Fellowship and the discipleship ministries at Faith West. That frees pastor Oakwood to lead us at both of our campuses in the very ministries I am talking to you about this morning meaning soul care, organizing resources to help every person at Faith grow spiritually, normal discipleship. Now there is all sorts of activities and personnel that fall under that heading. I think what Titus does up in a tree with no shoes, there is Titus. I think what Titus does helps us in becoming more passionate followers of Christ. So that is part of soul care. Certainly our children's ministries. We want children's ministries in place that help children want to follow Christ, do we not? That is part of soul care. What Johnny does with our young people. And we are in a process of bringing Johnny on to our pastoral staff, but all of that is part of soul care. We could add what Faith Christian School does. And we could, if I took the time to do, so bring all sorts of godly lay people who work in these ministries, all sorts of other staff members, all of that and much more fits under this heading of soul care and resources to help people grow. We could talk about adult Bible fellowships and I could show pictures of all of their teachers and class leaders and we could talk about men's point man groups or ladies' Bible studies, our prayer ministry, faith community institute, on and on. All of that is soul care.

Here is another crucial piece of that, a resource that we want to provide for you and always have. It is a matter of our deacon's care ministry. Our deacons were led for many years by Dr. Bob Smith. He and Leona have been faithful people in this church forever. Leona is now in failing health and doc has had to resign from his position as chair of the deacons in order to care for his wife and he sees that as a great delight and we applaud his

godly leadership in that particular phase of his life. Now the deacons have elected Joe Blake to be the chair of their deacons and, as we always have, we have continued to have each person who is a member of our church divided up among our 33 elected deacons and so if you are a member here, you are on a deacon's care group. And that deacon is looking for opportunities to shepherd you and he is looking for opportunities to connect you with resources to help you grow and help you serve. And Joe is especially passionate about that. And so what that means is Joe and Brent, along with everybody else I mentioned and a whole lot of people I didn't, are working especially on this matter of soul care and we are planning to grow in that way this year.

Now already I hope some take ways are coming for you. One of them is you might say, "You know, part of my growth plan this year needs to be to get involved in an adult Bible fellowship or needs to be to get involved in a small group. It needs to be when my deacon calls me and leaves a message on my goofy answering machine, because I never answer my phone anymore, instead of screening my deacon out, I am going to call him back, because I understand I need accountability and I want people who are helping me try to grow."

See, this is a two way street. All God's people got that. We can do everything in the world to provide all sorts of resources to help people grow, but at some point you have to decide which one of those resources you need to benefit from this year. And that is part of the improvement plan. There is also the matter of not just being a consumer of resources, but also being a provider of resources. Is that a fact? Because if you want us to be A+ in worship and God gave you a voice, maybe it is time for you to contact Titus. And planning to grow by using your musical gifts in service to the body. If you want to have A+ children's ministries—and we all do, right? We want our kids to be taught the word of God and disciplined, then part of that, if you have that desire, then it is also a willingness to participate in that way.

You say, "Well, I am a little afraid of it."

Time to grow. Or I have got this going on or that going on. I will tell you what. Bring me your weekly schedule and you and I can together find all the ways that you waste time.

And you might say, "That did not {?}."

Remember, I am doing my job. I keep doing it I might ask for a bonus today. My job is to admonish you. Many of God's people waste time. Fact. Facebook, Pinterest person. Don't be giving me the I don't have any time. And I am friends with most of you. I see how much time you spend on it. So the bottom line is... see, I am unfriending you. Yeah, so soul care.

Now what about when soul care is not enough in a particular situation. That is a great question and the answer is that is when biblical counseling becomes part of the equation. Pastor Rob Green leads that particular part of our ministry. And here is the bottom line. There is so much I could say about this, but it may be for some people who hear this

message part of your personal improvement plan is to day we are going to get some counseling this year. And listen. Let's demystify that. There is nothing wrong with that. You are not saying that you are odd or strange. You are standing in line with the apostle Paul and Romans seven. And if you are stuck in a particular way, there is nothing wrong with saying we are going to get some coaching. We are going to get some help for a limited period of time to get over that hump. And there is so much I could say about that, but, husbands, if your wife has been saying to you, "Honey, let's get some counseling help," and you have resisted, you need to get over that like today. In fact bring me your bulletin right after the service. I will write on your personal improvement plan, sign up for counseling so we can get some help. And don't let pride or stubbornness stop you especially if your wife, for crying out loud, is asking for those kind of resources in our marriage.

We could also under that heading of biblical counseling talk about vision of hope and the marvelous mob that Jocelyn and her team are doing. We could talk about safe haven and bringing that online and just a couple of weeks now. But the bottom line is when we think about discipleship, we think about soul care. We think about biblical counseling and then also we think about outreach and assimilation. That is led now by pastor Folden, also your service pastor. He is moving over from the community center to serve on our church center staff overseeing outreach and assimilation.

You say, "What does that mean?"

It means these things. It means his job is to equip everybody in our church to be passionate and able to share your faith well with the people in your sphere of influence. That is outreach. It is also a matter of leading us to be sure that when someone moves in around us that we welcome that person to the neighborhood well. It is also a matter of helping us be sure if somebody visits here that we are going to follow up on that person well in a friendly fashion. It is encouraging people, shepherding them to become members of Faith Church. That is what Dustin is all about.

You say, "Who is minding the community center?"

Another person we have just hired, Andre Ballard. And I am really fired up about Andre. He has been with us a couple of weeks now. I am hoping to move into a position on our pastoral staff over time. He is leading our faith east community ministries. Josh Greiner, another one of our graduates of our seminary soon to be is going to be leading our faith west community ministries. Bob and Joan {?} continuing to lead our community leagues and all of that. Brian and Carolyn Barrett leading project Jerusalem and there are so many other things that I could talk about, outreach. But I hope the take aways are starting to flood your mind. Are they? Where you would say you agree that this church needs to be an incubator for spiritual growth. That means emphases of soul care and biblical counseling and outreach and assimilation are crucial to helping us live lives that are glorifying to God. And therefore you want to plan to grow to formulate a plan both to benefit from these resources and also to contribute to them.

Now I mentioned at the beginning we were going to devote most of our time to the first emphasis. I accomplished that, did I not? I want to mention the last two with the few minutes we have together and then I am going to tease a lot of this out much more in the coming weeks, but we also plan to grow by organizing and launching our new cluster of ministries at Faith West. Obviously one of the big changes that is going to happen around here this year is we are about to become a two campus church. In some ways we have been experiencing that already with our 10:15 service which has worked out so well, but it ought to take our breath away when we think about all the ways we are going to be able to serve God as a result of Faith West coming on line this year.

So much can be said. Let me just mention a few. The big one today, the big headline is just thank you. Honestly our bank was skeptical about whether our church family would follow through given the state of the economy on our capital campaign or whether people would just shift their regular giving to the capital campaign. Our goal for this first year, the first 12 months was a little over two million dollars. Our church family faithfully met that and exceeded it along with the regular giving to all of our other ministry endeavors being fully funded as well. And I just want to say thank you. And that is another reason that I believe we are on the cusp of a breakthrough year. Yes, we have a biblical mission. Yes, we have a great staff. We have hundreds and hundreds of committed lay people. But we are talking about a church family filled with people who are the real deal, not flashy, but faithful. And I did not use this text to motivate people to consider giving to the capital campaign, but I am going to read it to you now as a result of the faithfulness of the people of God. Look for breakthrough. This is the promise of God. 2 Corinthians 9:6.

Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER." Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!¹²

¹² 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.

And I believe the statistics would suggest that God would say that exact same thing to the majority of the members attending Faith Church. Thank you. Let's plan to grow as a result of what God has already done in us.

Now what are some take aways? I want to encourage you to pray. Pray for the safety of the workers right now. And pray for our neighborhood relations. Pray for PBF and all that we are organizing with that, for our biblical counseling ministries that will take place over there, our community ministries, our preschool, our worship services. We need to be bathing this plan to grow with faithful prayer and then to act. We need to determine who from our present church family is going to be worshipping over there. You are not going to a different church. You are just going to a different worship service for the same church. And we also need to determine who from our present church family is willing to serve over there.

And here is the bottom line. It is going to require a significant amount of energy and attention devoted to launching these new ministries of excellence. Your involvement may be one of your take always as we plan to grow together. And then, lastly, you heard me talk about this practically every Sunday last year. It is coming. Well, now it is here. When we think about planning to grow we are developing our next five year strategic ministry plan together. And I am so glad for Bryce Hufford at being willing to lead this effort. I am going to be saying a lot to you about this in the coming weeks, but here is what it is going to take in order to get this job done well. One is a willingness to acknowledge ways we need to get better. We have to live in Romans seven. And that means we are going to ask of criticism and we are going to take a hard look at who we are. We are going to get input from people inside and outside of our church. We are thinking of creative ways to generate ideas from persons so a willingness to acknowledge ways we need to get better, broad participation by the entire church family. I believe this that perhaps the best ministry idea for the next five years may currently reside in the heart of the shyest person in the room. And that means we need to do everything that we can to hear from one another and then, lastly, hear this. Our willingness not only to talk and plan, but also to be part of the plan's accomplishment.

Here is the bottom line. Where do we hope to be at the stewardship celebration in November? First answer in heaven. If Jesus came we will be happy with that if we didn't have to do any of this, right? We would be all right with that. But if that is not the plan and here is the deliverables, to be in a better place in our spiritual lives and our ability to help others because we plan to grow with Faith West launched well and functionally successfully with demonstrable fruit because we plan to grow and with a new five year strategic ministry plan because we intend to continue to grow.