

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

The Good Life

PART

8

TITLE

Trusting Enough To Rejoice

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 16:14, 9, 25, 33; 21:5; 27:1



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Well and it's great to see you Providence family and if you're new here with us as guests, we're so thankful that you have joined us. I've prayed that this time is really encouraging to you. One Sunday a year, we sort of mark off and say, "You know what? On this Sunday, what we wanna do is to intentionally look backward over the last year and see some of the tangible ways that God, in his kindness, that he has been good to us. How he's been faithful to us, what he's done in our lives, in our families as well as a family of faith. We call it Celebration Sunday and it happens to be today and so if you are new with us, you have really joined us on a great day and if you call Providence your home I pray that this day will be really encouraging to you. Now let's be very clear about what this day and what this day isn't.

We wanna celebrate the Lord's faithfulness. This is not Scoreboard Sunday, okay? This is not where we throw out a bunch of numbers of things that God has done. Now we certainly care about numbers and we've seen fruitfulness. God has been so gracious to us as a people and the fact is that sometimes when a church uses numbers it does so and everyone of those numbers represents a real person with real struggles and real spiritual need and God is doing in all of our lives. So we're thankful and yet we also know that numbers are a really poor God. We also know that numbers are not the point. God is not a number. We wanna celebrate him. But the other that we wanna sure that we do is not celebrate in such a way that we minimize or look over the significant pains and the even disappointments that this year has brought to many of us in our church family and the different ways that God by grace has taught us about his sufficiency in those challenges.

You see, some people in the last year lost a loved one or battled anxiety or deep depression or some significant need and yet you're here, God has been faithful to you. You are still marching forward and God is to be praised for all of these things and so what we wanna do today is very specific. We are choosing in faith. Listen, any time you choose to acknowledge his faithfulness, you have to do so in faith. To recognize that the benefits that we have seen, things that we look at we go, "Oh, that's a good thing and that's a good thing." By faith, what we're doing is looking past the blessings to the hand that's outstretched behind those blessings and saying, "I'm the one that gave those to you." And by faith, what we wanna do, right, is to look and trust God enough with our life to rejoice in not only what he's allowed for us to enjoy but also what he has withheld.

And we wanna do this because the Bible, in fact, our text this morning from Proverbs chapter 16 tells us that it's one of the ingredients of a good life. Is that we look to God and we see what he's doing and we look at the practical things in our life and say, "God, I choose to trust you. Even though I don't understand everything, I don't understand all of your ways or your pace, why it's taking this long. I don't know why the hope that I have in my heart has not been realized yet and yet I still choose to trust you." And that's what we wanna do today. So if you brought a Bible with you, if you wanna look at the 16th chapter of Proverbs, we're in a series through Proverbs. Not the whole thing but just parts of it and Proverbs is all about wisdom and what we've seen over the last several weeks is, wisdom is the ability to know and to do the right thing even when the Bible does not specifically address our situation.

For example, is this the right person to hire? Is this the right person to marry? Is this the right friend to confide in? Is this the right amount of freedom to give my child at this age? Every single one of these questions and the questions that we all wrestle with day in and day out and what Proverbs does is it doesn't always tell us the wise choice to make. What Proverbs does is it tells us the kind of person that routinely makes wise choices and then calls us to become that kind of person. And so in this series, what we've been looking at is just practical, tangible facets of the diamond of a person whose a wise person. And the part that we look at today is that people who enjoy the good life, what God says is the good life, who are truly wise, are those that make plans in plain view of God and then they trust God enough to rejoice in whatever he brings their way.

And so we wanna pray to him and ask that God will give us this type of faith. So, if you would, would you pray with me? Father in heaven, we thank you for this day and we thank you for the word of God. We thank you for your book that gives us instruction and clarity, that calls us to become wise individuals, that calls us to trust you with our life. And we lay our lives before and we confess to you, God, that we go through many days that it just seems like that you're far away. We know that you're not, we know that you'd tell that you're not but sometimes we don't know that to do. And so we ask God, that only would you give us wisdom in knowing to make good choices but God, would you continue to refine our lives as a people of faith here at Providence so we routinely make wise choices? And I pray today that you would speak through weakness and that you would help us to have eyes to see the ways that you have been kind to us as individuals and as a church.

And that you would give us the gift of trusting you enough to rejoice in what you have done. We love you and we need you and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So Proverbs chapter 16, starting in verse one says this, this says, "The plans of the heart belong to man but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a pure in his own eyes but the Lord weighs the spirit. Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established. The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble." And in verse 9, "The heart of man plans his ways but the Lord establishes his steps." And verse 25, "There is a way that seems right to a man but its end is the way to death." And verse 33, "The lot is cast into the lap but its every decision is from the Lord." And then one last Proverb, chapter 21 verse 5, he says this. He says, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty."

So what we wanna do here is I wanna show you three kind of overarching principles that come out of these Proverbs that we just read and then I wanna give you two application, the last of which really ties in with what we wanna do today and that is to celebrate God to trust him enough to celebrate what he has given. We wanna see a video of some of the things that he's done and then we wanna pray and thank him for all that he has done in our lives. So the first thing is this, is God invites us to make plans in full view of God. It's interesting that he does this, he encourages us enough to make plans but not only does he encourage us to make plans, he encourages us to do that planning facing God, acknowledging God, seeing where God is, acknowledging his justice, acknowledging his justice, acknowledging his mercy and his kindness.

He says in chapter 21 verse 5, he says that, “The plans of the diligence lead surely to abundance but everyone who was hasty comes only to poverty.”

Every single one of us knows the value of planning. Businesses tend to function better when they have a healthy business plan. Churches tend to thrive a little bit more when they have a Ministry plan. Construction teams tend to thrive more when they have a construction plan. Even artists, even the most creative, spontaneous artists that if there’s an artist type then I would think that’s really spontaneous, right? It’s, “Here’s a wall, here’s some paint, let me throw the pain on the wall.” But even they are confined by, “This is where I should throw the paint and where I shouldn’t throw the paint.” Every single one of us needs to plan. This is what he says, he goes, “Those who plan, there are significant benefits in their lives.” It tends to help life go a little bit better.

Years ago, like 15 of em, my wife and I, we went out west for a vacation and we thought for this vacation we’re gonna fly out there, we’re gonna make a plan to have a car when we get there but then we’ll plan it once we get there. And so we flew in to San Francisco and our plan was to kind of do some camping but we really didn’t spend a whole lot of time planning it. In fact, when we arrived at about 9 o’clock PM we didn’t have a hotel and so we’re driving there and there happens to be this huge convention we didn’t know anything about and so we can’t find a hotel and so we’re literally driving almost an hour out of the way to a town in the hope that they would have hotel rooms. We get there about midnight. Well, we wake up the next morning and we’re all excited about camping and we looked at the weather, we’ve not looked at the weather yet and it says rain every single day that we’re there and we’re thinking, “What are we gonna do?” And so I said, “Let’s just rent. We’ll just drive north and we’ll see somethings.”

And we did. We saw some really cool things but the fact is, about day three or four, she kind of broke down about five or six. I broke down. We both said, “Let’s go home.” When I broke down, this is what happened, okay? We were really far north, almost onto Oregon and we don’t have a place to stay that night. We’re driving, we’re absolutely exhausted because it’s raining all day and we’ve driven all day, pretty much, and we get there, we don’t have a hotel and so we find a hotel and it, \$32. Now if you know what a \$32 hotel ... It’s actually not a hotel. They call those motels and so we go in and we’re like, “Whatever.” And so we go in and I was like, “Man, this is ... What are we doing?” And so we go out to eat. We leave and we’re like, “Let’s just go out to eat.” So we go out to eat, we finish and I say, “I want some pie. I want some apple pie.” So I order an apple pie.

They bring a slice. Soon, “I don’t wanna slice. I want the whole pie. I want an apple pie. This is the only redemptive part of this day, right here, is this pie.” And so we eat a slice. We go home and so we’re in bed, she falls asleep and there’s a fight outside. All right and I can’t sleep. I don’t sleep any the whole night but I eat the whole pie, right? So the very next day, now I’m sick and I’m thinking, “This was a bad plan.” And the reason is because there was no plan. There was no plan. Churches, businesses, construction teams, artists, vacations, families, parents, we need a plan. And so what he does is he contrasts two different kinds of people.

He says, "The plans of the diligent." Now the diligent can also be translated attentive, thoughtful, strategic and he compares that what he calls someone who is hasty. The word hasty three means impulsive or reckless.

And so he's telling us that the things that are the most important in our life, we need to look and sit down and say, "You know what? Over the next two months, what are some things that I can do in these most significant areas of my life? What are some plans that I can make in order to make progress in what I'm saying is so important to me?" And I would encourage you to make some plans but I could tell you, "Make plans," and I wouldn't even need an open Bible to do that. We all know instinctively that planning is typically a good thing for most of our life. And so what Proverbs does is he serves us by telling us how to make plans. And you remember over our study that we've seen that Proverbs, it's goal is to show us that all of life is condensed down basically into two diverging paths like you see on this slide right here to where you can go one or the other. And these two paths, they're separated by what it calls the fear of God.

In other words, one path is walked facing God and the other path is walked not looking at God at all. One path acknowledges God, acknowledge his way, acknowledges what he loves, what he says within his word and says that, "I fear you, I recognize your justice, I recognize this is your word and not my world." And the other path says, "I don't recognize you at all." This is what he's saying to us and this is really important. He's saying that wise individuals not only make plans but wise individuals factor God, God's pleasure, God's pains, God's ways and God's words into those plans. In Luke chapter 14, Jesus speaks this parable and says that there's a master and he wants to give a great banquet for all the people that he wants to invite to this house. So the banquet is prepared and he sends out this massive invitation and it says into a person, every single one, makes him excused of why they can't come.

So he gathers his servants together and says, "This is what I want you to do. I want you to go back, I want you to go, I want you to find people who are poor, crippled blind, doesn't matter. Find everybody. Tell everybody that they're invited. People have to come. There's a banquet that's made available for them." And it's interesting what the servants say to him. They say this, Luke 14:22, they say, "What you commanded right now has been done." And this is what they're saying and this is really important, what they're saying is, "We know you well enough to know what you would want. We've read your word, we know what you love. We knew that when we came back and we told you that everyone on your invite list said no to it that you were going to call us to go right back out so we didn't wait to tell you so that you could send us back out, we just went back out. We've already done that."

And this is so important for us as a church family Providence that God wants us to grow in our knowledge of how he is by studying his word so that our plans reflect that we know what he would have wanted to begin with. When we're facing God and making plans what we're saying is, "I know you would want this. And so I'm going to go ahead and do this." You see, the Bible tells us that we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and so he sent his only son after making a promise to do so.

From heaven to Earth and he died for us on a cross. He gave his life in order to pay the penalty of sin before God. And he was buried in a grave and then he rose from the dead and says, "If you'll trust me, if you'll commit your life to me, acknowledge me and my accomplishment, stop trusting in your moral accomplishments that are insufficient before God and you trust mine. I will forgive you of all of your sin and I'll give you my righteousness. All of the benefits of who I am will accrue to you. All of em."

And then he says in his word, he goes, "Then I want everyone to know this." And so a year ago, we as a church family, we sat down and we said, "You know what? What we know for certain, this is the mission of God. He wants the knowledge of his glory to be known from sea to sea, everybody. He wants them to know what's available in Jesus Christ. They can be forgiven of their sin." And we know it's in the Scriptures because he's told us that the mechanism that he wants to use in the world is the local church. His plan is for there to be a local lighthouse just like this in every village, in every city, throughout the entire world. That's his plan. He tells us within the word and so a year ago we said, "We need a vision. We have a mission. This is what we're about. We exist to glorify God by any introducing all peoples to Jesus Christ to love them up to love and worship him."

But every now and then what we need, we need some marching orders just for right now and so we say, you know, for the next years let's focus on this and we believe that if we focus on this for three years it's gonna get us closer to fulfillment for his mission for our life. And so we say, "You know what we wanna do? We wanna plant our lives in the church and we want plant the Gospel in the city and we wanna plant churches in the world." And do you know why? Because when you open up the Bible, you do not have to wonder if that's important to him. You don't have to pray and find out if God cares that people in our city hear the Gospel. He's already told us. How we go about doing it, yeah, we can pray about that but if we should do that, no. Should we commit ourself to a local church and be engaged and plan our lives within the church?

None of us need to pray today if God cares about that 'cause he's already told us very specifically. And this is what it means to make plans, whether it's business plans or whether it's construction or whether it's family plans in full view of God. We're saying, "God, we know that this is what you're doing and this is what you love and I wanna make plans that accord with what you have already said is important to you." And so he tells us to make plans. The second thing though is that God tucks our plans into the canopy of his plans. He tucks our plans into the canopy of his plans. You see, popular culture would have us think that our choices determine absolutely everything about our future and there's no doubt that what you decide today, there will be bearing tomorrow. There's no doubt about that. We all know that's true. And so we have modern day theologians like Doc Brown from Back To The Future that says, "Your future is whatever you make it. So make it a good one."

And this kind of theology is partially true, what you decide to do today will matter tomorrow. However, we cannot forget that God also has plans for our lives, that God also has plans for our church. Proverbs 16:33 tells us at what level, how small. He says, "The lot is cast into the lap but its every decision is from the Lord." Do you see what that says. Lot casting is like flipping a coin. He says, "We flip the coin but God decides how it lands." Now some of us, already we say, "Well, I just don't believe that. I don't think he cares about small things like that." Isn't it interesting we say, "We don't think God cares about small things like that and yet he chose at the micro level to place that sentence within his word?" He tells us in that verse who kicks off first. We flip the coin, that's what we do, and he decides how and where it lands. That's what it says.

It's every decision is from the Lord. Well this immediately strains our mind and the reason is because our hearts and our minds can only contemplate a reality to where cause equals 100%. This is what I mean. If we say, "My choices matter and have bearing about my future," then we say, "Okay, what I decide today has bearing tomorrow," so sometimes we say it's entirely and so now we have no room for God. But what if everything is fixed? What if everything is already determined by God that what his will is already happens? Well, we have a hard time with that because we say, "Wait a minute. If it's already fixed and determined then nothing I do matters and the reason is because we cannot contemplate causality that exceeds 100% within our own minds." Yet these verses that we just read say that you and I, that we make plans, and it's really important that we do so but it says here that we are both free and determined at the same time.

Verse one, he says, "The plans of the heart belong to man but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." Verses 9, "The heart of man plans his ways but the Lord establishes his steps." Now what does this mean? It means that when you plan your plans they belong to you. Good or bad, you're gonna be held accountable for them. You're responsible for those plans. What you do, they're yours. And yet God in all of this sovereignty, he has the ability to say that what happens as a result of those plans is determined by him. And he even allows the reality of evil to be spoken into this equation. It's amazing that he doesn't back away from this. He says, "No, this even includes when you sin." Proverbs chapter 16 verse 4, look what it says, it says, "The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble." And so this is amazing, he's saying it's not just the small things like a coin flip, it's even the evil things that he tucks into his overall plan in order to bring about good to the world.

Now if you don't understand verse one and verse 9 then you're gonna think that God is the author of the evil and that's not what it's saying. What he's saying is this, is that your plans are your plans and you're gonna be held responsible for those plans, that God in his love and his sovereignty has the power to even take the impact of those plans and they're results and weave them into an ultimate good. And you find this in multiple places of the Bible such as with the story of Joseph. He's got a bunch of brothers and his dad shows favoritism to him so his brothers hate him. He's getting a little arrogant, they're getting bitter, dad's showing favoritism and so his brothers sell him into slavery. They say, "Dad, he's dead." But they didn't. Not true, they sell him. So now all of a sudden he's a slave.

He does really, really well and then suddenly he's falsely accused of rape and so now he's thrown into prison. He's not done anything wrong. And now he's down there in prison and God continues to bless the work of his hands. Long story short, he actually becomes, within time, the Prince of Egypt. He interprets a dream and Pharaoh goes, "Man, that's really amazing you know that. You can probably lead this whole effort. There's gonna be a big famine in the land that's gonna cause everyone to come to me. We need to prepare for this over these years. No one better than you." Well, eventually his brothers have to come and get grain. They don't know him at first. He goes through this really fun lot line to where finally he lets them know at the very end of the book of Genesis. It's fascinating what we read. It says that his dad dies and all of a sudden his brothers are thinking, "Oh man. Now he's gonna exact vengeance upon us for what we did to him."

And so they come and they lie to him and they say, "Dad told us beforehand, don't hold that against us." And this is what he says, he goes, "Listen to me. You had plans and those plans were evil and they were intended to harm me." He says, "But God meant it for good." Selling him into slavery was an evil plan and they're gonna be held accountable for that and yet God was able to take that and move to the place where he was able to preserve literally a culture of people. We also see this with Jesus. Evil men falsely condemned the only innocent to ever walk the face of the Earth. They had plans to do him harm. Those plans belong to them. They will be held accountable for those plans and yet God used their plans to crucify the son of God to save every single one of us. And so he invites us to make plans in full view of God and then he tucks those plans into the canopy of his overall plan and then we get to the third and this is so big and that's that God instructs to trust his ultimate plan.

Oh, he wants us to make plans and he wants us to see that he has plans too but at the end of the day he goes, "Now look. Now after we said all this and you got all of your plans and you know my plans, you have to understand this, what actually takes place, I need you to trust me." And verse 3 is fascinating, he says, "Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established." Now if truth be told, you actually read that and studied that intently, you would know that I just said something that you don't believe or you don't practice, every single one of us. You see, we're used to this and it's that we've flipped the order in the way that we live our life. Most of us heard, "Commit your plans to the Lord and your work will be established," but that's not what it says. It says, "Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established." Now what's the difference?

The difference is significant. The word work there can actually be translated life or labor or even final fate. Most of us, what we do is we do this, we see God as the world and we see our life as our own little world. And it's that we make plans in our little world and we say, "God, would you bless these plans to bless my world?" And so we think it says commit your plans to the Lord and your work will be established and this is what he says. He says, "You commit your life to me and then your plans will be established," and what he means by that is that you will learn how to establish wise plans that align with my will. You see, the word commit is an interesting word. It literally means to roll over onto. This week I was at Rex Hospital and there's a great doctor I was with and that's not a part of the story.



So there's this table and he says, "I want you to lay down on this table." And I looked at the table and I said, "Well that's a problem because this side doesn't have any legs. This side's connected. It goes all the way out. Looks like Star Wars or something, you know? It looks like it's levitating." And he goes, "Just lay down on it." And so literally I'm pushing down it. I'm not the first person that's ever sat on this table but I'm like, "Man, all right, whatever." And so, what did I do? So then finally I rolled down on it. I committed myself to the table and this is what he's saying. He's saying, "If we'll come to the Lord and then say, 'Here's my plans, would you bless them, God?'" He says that we commit our work, our ways, our entire life to God and say, "God, you can use me however you want." He then begins to train us to make plans to help us determine what those plans should be establishes our plans so that they're in alignment with his will.

There's a vast difference there. One of them says that I'm God of my world and I'm asking you simply to bless and the other says total abandonment, I give you my all. And whatever you give and whatever you withhold I trust you. I trust you. And so two applications, the first is this, is let's commit our lives to Jesus. Did you know, there's only been one person in the history of the world that's ever rolled over entirely upon God? And it was Jesus Christ. He says, "Not my will but your will be done." He totally rolled over, rolled himself over and committed himself to his father's will. He marched to Jerusalem knowing what was awaiting him, knowing that he would be falsely condemned, falsely accused and he would be crucified and because he did that, friends, you and I can roll over on Jesus, commit our life to Jesus and all the benefits of his life, death and resurrection accrue to us.

You can trust him today. Be forgiven of all of your sin. And in the second is this, let's trust God's heart enough to rejoice. In the lobby this morning, there's a big board. There's room on it enough for each one of us to write something small, something that we saw God do in our life over the last year and the fact is, look, my list is so long. I just sat here this week and I started making a list of the sins in the whole congregation that he's forgiven. Think of all the sins that's forgiven in us. Think of all that he's taught us. Think of all he's provided, how he's protected us. Think of how we kept us together as a church family during displacement and he gave us a place to worship and that's actually large enough to invite people to. Think of all the obstacles he had to move through in some many people's lives for us to plan our lives within the church to give to the church, to serve the church, to connect [inaudible 00:30:19].

Think of all the obstacles that it took, all the fear he had to work through for many of us to take courage and to share our story or our testimony or the Gospel with somebody else within our city, a friend. Think of all the obstacles he had to do, work through to send so many of us overseas on a mission trip to be able to tell other people who don't have access to the Gospel about Jesus Christ. Think of all that he's done but in addition to this I want you to think about all that he's taught us through all these storms. Have you ever considered why God made Joseph go through all the pain instead of just telling him? God could have showed up like a 30 minute TV show and said, "All right guys, look, family. You, stop showing favoritism. You guys, get rid of your business. All that bitterness, all that resentment. And you, you're not so great so humble yourself. Oh and by the way, in 25 years from now there's gonna be a really big famine so start saving up grain.

All right, I'm out." All right.

He could have done it that way, all right. He didn't. What did he do? He made a real person go through significant pain, for 25 years. Why would he do it that way? Why would he allow you to go through anxiety and depression and job loss? Why would he allow you to go through bereavement or divorce? And the reason is because nobody grows by being told how to grow. Nobody learns they're a sinner by being told they're a sinner. No one learns that they're truly loved by God by me standing and saying, "Did you know that you're loved by God?" The only way that we really know that we're loved by God, the only way that we really grow in our faith is when God leads us through seasons of life that are really hard and then through those seasons we see how he's been active and then after we get past that season we look back and we see that God was active, that he was faithful, that nothing could separate us from his love and then we have the trust in his big heart that's enough to come back to him and say, "Thank you."

And that's what today's about. It's not just the people who have been saved and been baptized and have joined and have served the children and everything else that God's done in our life but every single one of us he has taken us through a journey and we are better for it. But it's a hard journey. And so what I wanna do is I wanna show you a video, show you a video that we build that really has three purposes. It intends to remind every single one of us of God's amazing faithfulness to each one of us. It seeks to remind us of our mission as a church family, why we're here, what we've assembled to do, why he has built us? And it also reminds us of God's incredible love for each and every one of us. And the reason we wanna show this is not only to celebrate and to be reminded of some of the things that he's done but we also hope that this day is gonna propel us forward in faith and in hope that God can continue to do amazing things in the year to come.

So watch this video together.

Video: A city of 440000. A world of 7.6 billion. A loving God who cares for each person, each family, each struggle. 1978, the year God began a work to plan a new church in northwest Raleigh. Along this journey, we've been blessed with many great resources but in a city with so many that don't know Jesus and a world with even more. How could we ever make this about us? We are called to be on mission beyond our doors, in our schools, at our jobs, in our neighborhoods. We seek ways to plan our lives in the church, the Gospel in our city and churches around the globe. Being on mission God is woven into the fabric of our culture. We are a people set on seeing lives radically changed by Jesus.

It all starts here. Connecting with others in worship, growing in life groups and serving together. This building exists as a training ground to equip disciple makers to go out into the world to make an eternal difference.

Our life groups have really reflected this plant vision over the last year in some amazing ways. And one of the ways they're been doing that is just by inviting people, just being an intention to help people to be a part of a community here at Providence. But also being intentional to be welcoming place, spending more time in hospitality as well as when their groups get too big, they're multiplying into smaller groups to help people connect and to be a part. They're served our city really well through City Serve as well as life groups being intentional to serve at different projects throughout our city month to month. So it's been great to see that and they're not just serving the city but they're also sharing the Gospel while they're out in the city.

We've had so many Gospel conversations that have happened through our life groups and we've even seen 40 people come to know Jesus Christ because of people's faithfulness to share.

So this last year was my first year serving with the Children's Ministry. At church, we're talking about living life on mission and so I would encourage my kids and say, "Has anyone shared the Gospel with a classmate or a neighbor this week?" And every week I would have someone who had talked to a neighbor about church or had talked to a classmate at lunch or some that wanted to and they weren't sure how to talk about it and we'd talk about that together. So each week I left encouraged knowing that these eight year olds were living life on mission and so if they could do then I should be leveraging my life for the Gospel as well.

From newborns to college students, we want to invest in leaders who will take the Gospel further than before to cultivate a new generation to live on mission. And while our eyes are fixed on Jesus, we never forget to have fun and enjoy each other along the way. When close to 60% of the community is unchurched, our love for Jesus can't be contained within these walls. In a nation with so much to offer in comfort and entertainment, many feel isolated and in despair but we have a message that goes beyond the surface, a message of hope that changes the heart and brings joy.

The plant vision has energized the people here at Providence and myself to really reach out, to get out our comfort zone and to try new things to engage our community or our neighborhoods or wherever we are. Some of them City Serve where we're trying to incorporate more relational opportunities and also just with Read and Feed, serving in Romley Gardens and Casa Del Soul or just reaching out to our neighbors through Starting Point or having people over for breakfast or lunch or cookouts. And so it's been really exciting to see how people are taking this mission and vision seriously and planting their lives in the city.

Our involvement in City Serve was really spawned with a connection that we had already through our children's school and our desire was really how do we plug in and try to build relationships there? Out of that we've been able to plug in with PTA and it's allowed us to really, again, a partnership with them and obviously has allowed us to have multiple conversations now about Jesus and about why we are wanting to love and to serve them.

So I would like to be able to encourage our life group to model this in a way that goes outside of City Serve or anything that Providence just specifically gives but also that be part of our normal rhythm of living life together, that we are constantly looking for those opportunities of people to love to share the hope of Jesus with as we continue to grow in our awareness of that and the need that surrounds us here in our city.

From the beginning, the mission was never meant to stop at leaving a large footprint to Raleigh but to advance a kingdom around the world. Over 40 years, God has grown our abilities to finance and send missionaries to cities and nations around the world. These men and women see the need beyond the comforts of what they've known and have responded overwhelmingly to short term and long term missions.

Every Sunday and Brian's messages, the theme of going comes out in God's word. It is God's mission, which now has become our mission. We have set the plant vision in place and over the next couple of years continue to grow in planting churches around the world. We currently support 22 international church planners and the eight national church planners.

I'd say Providence has been a part of the growth of the kingdom as a whole in just providing people to go, being willing to offer up strong leaders within the church and not holding onto them but saying this is part of God's plan and sending them out into the world. Missions is part of our daily lives. It's not just a, "I'm gonna do this because this is my job." It's saying, "In the future, my mission is just me living my life," I guess, "for Christ." It's been awesome to see the encouragement that we have been able to take to the nations. Providence people have led people to Christ. They have encouraged pastors, they've encouraged church members in all different continents. It's just been really awesome to see the work that's going on around the world from this church here in Raleigh and connecting its arms everywhere.

This year, God continued to move, continued to grow and continued to reinforce our church. We can't stop now. The fire is just getting started. We will keep planting, planting our lives in the church to support one another, to grow deeper and to invest in the next generation. We will keep planting the Gospel in our city so that our community will know the love of Jesus. And we will keep planting churches in the world so that all peoples will grow to love and worship our God.

Brian Frost: To him be all the glory. Let's pray together. Father in heaven we bow our hearts and our lives before you. We see what you have done for us and made available to us and we want to commit our life to you. We thank you Jesus that you modeled this perfectly for us so that for each one of us whether we have trusted you before or not, today can be a day for every one of us that we lay our life before you in abandonment to say, "God, this is our life, take it and would you establish our plans?" And so we thank you. We look back, God, it's with admiration for you, it's with affection for you that we see what you've done really amazing, kind things for each and every one of us.

And we thank you God that you have blessed us with such benefits but we also thank you that you have blessed us with growth through difficulty and we pray that you would help us to ever become a wise people, a humble people, a gentle people, a loving people, a holy people.

Would you help us to be a thankful people and a worshiping people. I pray father even now, Lord, as we give to you not only from our resources but of our hearts as we sing to you. We pray God that you would help us to put forth an offering to you from our life, with, of course, with great gratitude. And so all the blessings that we've received, we know they're from your hand. We love you and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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