



Sermon – May 22, 2022
Phillip Bethancourt

Verses Covered This Week

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Hey, you can grab a seat this morning. Isn't it amazing that we get to celebrate that freedom in Christ today? Absolutely. Let me welcome you to our first Central Family Celebration Sunday. So, over the last year and a half, we've been doing this on Wednesday nights and we want to bring that Wednesday night experience into our Sunday morning worship gathering. I'm just curious by show hands, how many of you is this your first time to experience a Central Family Celebration with us? You haven't been with us on a Wednesday night before. Awesome. Well, here's what it's all about. We want to spend this time looking back at the amazing things that God has done and looking ahead to what He's going to do in the future. And so, it's going to be high energy. A lot of things to celebrate. We're going to have worship. We're going to recognize new members and those who've been baptized. We're going to preach God's word and we're going to see some of the ways that God has been at work. And the way that we're going to kick things off is I want to invite two groups to come and join me down here right in front of the steps right now. Those who over the last few months have been baptized and those who are going through the last stage of the membership process. And they're going to becoming new members here at the church. Y'all just make your way here to the front to the right in front of the steps as I talk about things and kind of set up what's next here for us as a congregation. See, because what we're trying to do is celebrate and highlight all the ways that God has been at work in our midst over these last few months. And so, you'll notice on the screens first, we've got list of those that have been baptized since our last celebration in February. I prayed during the our 21 days of prayer focus that God would provide at least ten people ready to step into baptism and He's provided 12 of them. And they're right here in front of us including some very special folks in my life like my own son, Nathan. I got to baptize on Easter Sunday and if the the Scripture tells us in Luke 15:7,

[17Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.](#)

And if you're rejoicing with that kind of joy this morning about those that have been baptized will you let them know that just by sharing your excitement? And in addition to the twelve that we're recognizing, we get to do four more later on in the service. Isn't that awesome? We're just pumped about that as well. Now, in addition to this group that's been baptized, I also want

you to see on the screen, those that are going through the membership affirmation process this morning. So, we've had about 30 that are ready to take that step. Not all of them could be with us this morning but I want you to remember what this looks like. In order to step into membership in our church, somebody comes forward and they share their story of salvation with us. They go through a new member workshop where they get a sense for the DNA of our church and where we're headed and what we're all about. They commit to that through signing our membership covenant. But then the last thing that we do is we affirm them into membership as a congregation that our, our church is a family and as a family that's what membership is all about. That you're receiving the benefits of being part of the family and you're committing to the accountability of being in the family. And so they're standing in front of you telling you right now that they're ready to go all in with us. They want to lead. They want to serve. They want to contribute. They want to invest their lives here. And what I'm asking of you as a congregation in this moment is that we're also going all in with them. That we're going to love them, serve them, equip them, and encourage them. So the way that we do this each time during our Central Family Celebration is for those of you who are members of the church, you're invited to participate in this process. And we just do it by a verbal affirmation by saying amen. So, in just a second, I'm going to ask you if we're ready to receive these new members into membership and if you are, just give us a hearty amen and we will celebrate them as we prepare our hearts to return back to worship. Are you ready? Okay, if you are on board with receiving these new members into the family of our church, will you please let them know that by saying amen? Amen. Alright, praise God for that. Y'all let them know how excited you are and let me invite you now, let's stand together and we're going to return to worship. First, by praying over these that are here that have we're recognizing for baptism and membership and then responding to that reality through song. Let's pray together now.

Father, thank You for these men and women. The way that You've worked in their lives, You've worked in their hearts to draw them to Yourself, to show them their need of Jesus. And I thank You, Lord, for those that have walked in obedience of baptism, Lord, that they've made this public profession of faith. And I pray that that was a turning point moment in their life where they could follow You more faithfully all the days of their life ahead. We're lifting up these new members to You as well, God. Now that they're a part of our faith family, Lord, would You equip them to walk with integrity? That they would be a blessing to our church. That they would pour themselves out, God, and when the hard times come that this church would rally around them. That we'd stand with them, support them, equip them, encourage them. And Lord the reason we do it is because it's part of one faith family. You have rescue us by Your Son, our older brother, Jesus Christ, who is high and lifted up in the heavens and as we return our hearts to worship now, I pray that our eyes would stay fixed on Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen

Central family, it is my privilege this morning to ask some folks to join us up here on the platform. If you're a part of our inaugural class of the training program, I'd ask you to come up here on stage with me. I want to invite you and I want to think about what we just sang. To God, it's Your breath in our lungs. So, we pour out our praise and that's what we're doing in worship, in song, and in recognizing the way that God has answered prayer. And part of what we have been praying over the last several weeks is Psalm 54:2. Oh God, hear my prayer. Give voice to the words of my heart. And the verse two portion of that represented the two open positions that we hope that God would fill and He did. You're seeing one of those behind us

today, Ben Prater. Aren't you glad to see him leading worship here for us this morning? I know I am. But the second part of that Psalm, the 54 part represented the 54 people that we asked God, would You have 54 people? Would You lead 54 people to step into this new program? We knew that would be a heavy lift. We knew it would be rigorous. We knew this was something that nobody in the church knew anything about. It would be time intensive. There would be reading and writing. We didn't know if 54 people would sign up for this. And this morning, I want to recognize some of the people that have been admitted into this program and I want to answer the question that I know you're all asking. You're probably counting the people on stage wondering, did we get our 54? And I want to answer that question with another verse. And it's a verse that I've been praying from the Psalms. Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your name be the glory. That's what I hope this training program will represent. That as people come to know God more fully, they will serve Him more faithfully. And we prayed Psalm 54:2. But I also prayed this one, not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your name, be the glory. And the reason why that verse stuck out in my mind, that verse is from Psalm 115 and 115 is the number of people that are going to be in the training program in the fall. This is an answer to prayer more than double, more than double the people that we prayed for are being admitted into this training program and I can't wait to get started. But on top of that within the training program, there's also a seminary track that we've talked about. People who will be doing even more reading, even more writing, even more assignments. We thought maybe if we get one, maybe if we get two, that'd be great. We got 14 people this year. 14 people we'll be doing 24 hours of seminary credit right here at Central. We're so thankful for that and we just want to take a moment to pray over the folks that were able to be with us this morning and the folks that will be with us in the program throughout the rest of the year. So, let's pray.

Father, we come to You knowing that what we're doing this morning, satan hates. We know rejoicing in the resurrection of the Son of God, studying the things of God, the people of God, coming together to know You more fully, represents a threat to satan and all of his power. And I pray that the people on this platform, over the course of this year, would find new joy in their walk, would find knowledge of You that leads to love for You, that leads to service, that will change lives. I pray that those people behind us on the stage this morning, through their service over the next year, that there will be people that they come into contact with that do not yet know Christ, that will come to know Christ as a result of what they learn, what they see, and what they love about You, Father. We pray as much as we study, as much as we read, as much as we write, not to us, oh Lord, not to us, but to Your name, be the glory. In Jesus's big, bold, glorious name we pray. Amen.

We've got so much to celebrate this morning. Just an amazing blessing that God has done more than we could ask or imagine through the training program. We also get to recognize that now through these baptisms. So, we have four baptisms to celebrate today and it turns out all of them are brothers and sisters in one family. This is the Kinnard family and they're not just brothers and sisters in this world, they're brothers and sisters now in the heavenly places because of their trust in Jesus. I want to introduce you first to Sam. Sam came to know Christ in his sophomore year of high school. He's going through a difficult season with anxiety and brokenness and God showed up in a way that changed Sam's life forever. If you're part of his family and friends, I want to invite you to stand now in recognition of this milestone in his life. And Sam, I want to ask you to, do you believe in Jesus as your Lord and savior? Yes, sir. Then, because of your

profession of faith, it's my joy to baptize you, my brother, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And let me introduce you to Sam's sister Rylee. Sam, Rylee is coming now and she met Jesus at a backyard Bible Club. The Kinnard family would do one every summer in their neighborhood to try to share with the community about Jesus. And little did they know that one of those particular summers that Rylee would hear those words and recognize her need of the gospel as well. And if you're part of her family and friends, I want to invite you to stand again now in recognition of this moment as I ask you, Riley, do you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Then, upon your profession of faith, it's my privilege to baptize you, my sister, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And this is where things get so encouraging because after Rylee came to Christ, she didn't just keep that to herself. She started talking about it with her brother, Weston. And through some of those conversations and other ways, the Lord was at work in Weston's life. He came to a saving knowledge of Jesus. And if you're a part of his family and friends, let me invite you to stand now at this time as I ask you, Weston, do you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Then, because of your profession of faith, it's my privilege to baptize you, my brother, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And let me introduce you last to Davis. Uh Davis and Weston share room at the house and after Weston came to Christ, they of course began to have conversations about what that meant for Weston and he began to share about that reality with Davis. And God used his testimonies, it's never too young to live on mission for God. And through those conversations, Davis came to know Christ. If you're part of his family and friends, let me invite you to stand now in recognition of this moment. Davis, do you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Then because of your profession of faith, it's my joy to baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In addition to these baptisms, I'm going to invite you to turn your attention to the video screens. We got an update from our missionaries we sent out this time last year. John and Laura Lee. We prayed over them in the service, sent them to Oaxaca, Mexico to work amongst unreached peoples and I want you to hear this encouraging update. And as you do that, let me invite you to turn with me in your Bible. The 2 Timothy chapter 3. That's where we'll be spending our time this morning in God's word. Let's hear this encouraging update from the Lee family.

Good morning, Central family. We're the Lees and we're currently serving as missionaries in the southern state of Oaxaca, Mexico. Last Sunday marked our one year anniversary here on the field and we're excited to share with you briefly how the Lord has been working and how y'all can be praying for us. This year has definitely been one of transition for our family. As you might imagine, packing up and moving to another country presents a lot of challenges. And we've had our ups and downs as we've been working to adapt to local life here. But God has been very gracious to us. Our children, Olivia and David are in a local bilingual school and are doing great not just learning Spanish but learning in Spanish. They have been making friends and are adjusting well to living life in Oaxaca. For John and I, God has provided some really wonderful relationships this first year which is definitely made our family's transition and cultural adaptation a lot smoother. And on the ministry front, our goal is to see new churches

planted among the numerous, unreached indigenous communities that are scattered throughout the mountains here in Oaxaca. And to that ends, we're living in the capital of the of the state, working alongside a local church in order to take advantage of the symbiotic relationship that exists between the capital and the remote populations that surround us: Zapotec, Mixe, Mixteco, Cuicateco, Chinanteco, Trique. People from all of Oaxaca. 17 different language groups come to the capital to trade, to receive medical care, and do all kinds of business. And so this past year, we've been able to utilize this symbiotic relationship and to visit with people from all over the state right here in our own backyard. We've learned about their cultures, their traditions, their beliefs, and with many of them, we've also been able to pray and share the gospel. But we're not just waiting for people to come to us. This past year, we've also been able to travel as a family with members of our, and with members of our local church to visit several unreached communities in the Zapotec, Huave, Amuzgo, and Chatino, parts of Oaxaca. We're doing the initial work of building relationships and developing trust in those pueblos with a long, longer-term goal of evangelism, discipleship, and seeing local churches raised up in these communities. And so to this end, in Colossians 4:3 and 4:9, we want to ask y'all for prayer. First, that God would open doors, both literally and figuratively, in these unreached communities. Many pueblos and peoples are still completely closed off to Christianity and persecution is very real for many who place their faith in Christ. Second, that as God gives us opportunity to share the gospel that we'd be able to speak it clearly and in such a way that it's understood. Third, that we would continue to press into the local culture and that Oaxaca would feel like home. We believe in order to love people well and accomplish our work here, Oaxaca really needs to be our home. We want to be all in and not looking back to the United States, longing for the things and the comforts that we left behind. And fourth, that our relationship with our local church would continue to strengthen. We believe we're where God wants us to be both for our own personal spiritual edification and also as it relates to our ministry strategy. We want to edify, mobilize, and work hand in hand with this body of believers to see the worship of Christ extended to every mountaintop here in Oaxaca. And to end with something very timely, actually, as you're watching this, I'm about to preach at our local church. So, if you would even right now, say a short prayer, asking that God might speak through me as I proclaim Christ from the Scriptures. I would definitely appreciate it. We love you guys. We miss you all. We think about Central and pray for y'all often. Thank you so much for your love and your support. God bless.

Praise God for that, huh? Let me invite you to turn your Bibles with me to 2 Timothy chapter 3. We're going to start in verse 14 this morning. And as you turn there, I want to let you know that at the conclusion of the message today, I want to challenge you to come and join me at the steps for a time of corporate prayer during the response song. I can think of no better way to celebrate what God has done than to praise Him here together at the steps and to pray that He continues to work in our midst. And if you've never been with us on a Wednesday night, when we've done the Central Family Celebration, the the message is going to feel a little bit different today than normal. It'll still be verse by verse through the Bible but it's both a sermon and a sense of a show and tell. It's like a message combined with the ministry celebration where you're going to see pictures on the screen at different points. It just highlights some of the incredible work that God has been doing in our midst so that we can see 2 Timothy 3 becoming a reality in our own church. Follow along with me now. 2 Timothy 3, beginning in verse 14. Here's what Paul says

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the

sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Let's go to Lord and prayer in this time.

Father, as we to You, we're not just coming to You on behalf of the work You're doing in our midst today. We also lift up Jon and Laura Lee to you God. As he mentioned on there, Lord, we pray Colossians 4 over them. That You would open doors both literally and figuratively. That there will be a wide door for effective service that he can walk in there in that community, God. That people who have never heard the name of Jesus might hear it and know Him because of the Lee's faithfulness. And we pray especially this morning for Jon as he opens God's word and proclaims it through preaching to his local church there. And as we turn our hearts to this message, God, as we seek Your face, as we celebrate Your goodness in our midst, Lord, I pray that we would not take the credit that we would not get the glory but instead that Jesus, the one who's high and lifted up would be celebrated today. And we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Well, back last fall, we spent a season talking about God's heart for our church. It should continue being a church where every generation reaches the next generation. That's one of the things I love about the video update we just got from the Lees is because they're a living embodiment of that reality. I mean, if you've been around here long enough, you know that Jon grew up in this church. This is where he was raised. This is where he came to Christ. This is where he was baptized. He was discipled. He was developed and now we've deployed them. Literally one generation invested in the next generation. And now that generation is being sent out on mission to people who have never heard the name of Jesus. That's what this text is all about here in 2 Timothy chapter 3 this morning as we turn our attention to this truth. Remember what's happening here. Paul is writing this letter to his protégé. The one he's been mentoring. It's a last letter in the Scriptures that he writes and as he does it, he gives us a glimpse into what a next generation church ought to look like. And what we're going to find this morning as we celebrate God's work in our midst is that there are four marks of a next generation church that Paul calls our attention to. And if we want to continue to see that be a reality for us, then, each of these things must be true for the heart of our church. So, how can we continue being a next generation church? Look back with me in verse 14. You'll the first thing that Paul says is that we need to continue in next generation community. So, notice what he says there, but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believe, knowing from whom you learned it. And now, zero in there on the keyword for this portion of the passage, continue. That I, that idea there is to remain, to endure, to persist. It's the reason that we every week when we close out with our benediction, I will say to you as a congregation, keep pressing on. It's the heart of what Paul's saying here or to put it in the Aggie translation. He's saying, don't be a two-percenter for the sake of the Gospel. Stand firm. Move forward. An that same guidance is true for our church today. He's saying, it doesn't matter what kind of changes there are around us, whether it's from a global pandemic or global conflict or rising inflation. Everything around us could be changing but one thing remains the same. Jesus; the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He ought to be at the heart of our community. And when that's true, it has all sorts of effects on how we gather as a congregation. So, you'll look at the first half of the verse and you see that Paul is calling us

to be a next generation community grounded in deep convictions. You see the way he talks about those deep convictions he speaks there of in the beginning of the verse? Continuing what you have learned and firmly believe. Paul knows that our convictions contribute to community. That they're part of what lays the foundation for us. These things that we don't just casually consider but completely embrace. That we're all in on these realities. It that's a community grounded in those deep convictions.

But look at the second half of the verse. You also see that it's a community grounded in deep connections. That's why it says there, knowing from whom you learned it. He knows not just our convictions contribute to community but our connections do the same thing. And how do we see that here? He says, remember who learn it from. Not just your church family but as we know in Timothy's story, his earthly family. Through those relationships, the gospel made a transformation in his heart. And just think about the next generation community going on here. That there was an older generation that reached Timothy. And now at the end of Paul's life, he is challenging Timothy to foster a next generation community that will have an impact on the next generation that comes after him. And if we want to see that true in our church as well, we need to reflect these realities of next generation community. That's why I want to highlight and celebrate through some of the pictures you'll see on the screen all the different ways the community has been fostered here recently. So, you'll notice here in this first one, there's two pictures there. Both of our women's ministry and they're gathered together event and then also our student bonfire night took place. We welcomed Christine Hoover back to our church to equip our ladies earlier this spring. And our students gather in community once a month through those bonfire nights to forge those deep connections. But there's more than that that takes place. You'll see on the next one that we had pictures both from our Dad and Daughter Dance as well as our couples and young families group retreat. And so we're trying to foster those deep connections in the family between dads and daughters. And I just gotta tell you, it's pretty entertaining to watch our dads out there on the dance floor. But then, in addition to that, one of our life groups took the men from their life group, about 30 of them, to East Texas for a weekend retreat. Because we know our life groups is one of the best ways that community happens in our church, and this community spans to generations. You'll notice on the next screen that we're, we have a picture from our Widow's Hope group doing an outing together. And then from our dodgeball tournament last weekend. So, the Widows Hope group brings together some of our amazing widows and just keeps that relational bond type between them. And in dodgeball last week, I escaped without any injuries other than my pride. Because yet again, we lost. We didn't even make the championship this year. But there's nothing that brings a church together faster than pegging your pastor. And that's what we found last week. But there's one other thing I want you to see here before we return back to the text and this is something I'm excited to announce to our full church for the first time. That we are in the early stages of building some new construction out on our Central Sports Fields. And I want you to see the picture of the blueprints. We're calling it right now our Central Sports Snack Shack. It'll be restrooms. It'll be a concession stand. It'll be storage. We've got hundreds of kids and families out on those fields most Saturdays in the Fall and in the Spring. And this is going to be a way for us to amplify that connection to community that Paul highlights here. It's a next generation community that he calls us to continue.

But notice back with me in the text here beginning in verse 15, there's second next generation reality that he calls us to continue. He says to continue on a next generation mission. So, verse 15 says,

¹⁵and now from childhood, you've been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

And can't you see this next generation mission here? That word from childhood more literally would be translated from infancy. It's as if Timothy was on the cradle role at his church there locally. From the very earliest stages, they are sowing of the gospel to him. Sending out the word in a next generation mission to reach those that have come afterwards. And what we notice as Paul talks about the nature of this mission is that this type of mission needs to be centered on a few realities. The first is that a next generation mission needs to be centered on Scripture. So, look back at the first half of the verse. It says, from childhood, you've been acquainted with sacred writings. He's talking about the Hebrew Bible. What we would know today is the Old Testament. That these words of the Bible are words of truth. They're words of grace. They're words of hope. They're words of life. And if we're going to live faithfully on mission, it has to be centered on God's word. But he also says that it needs to be centered on salvation. Look at the rest of the verse,

which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

We know elsewhere in the New Testament, Paul tells us that the Gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing. But now, Paul says that when you come to faith in Christ, it's as if God is making you wise for salvation. I remember connecting with one of our central members here not too long ago who told me that when they came here, he had grown up in the church. He'd been around the gospel all his life but God did some amazing work starting last fall in his life. And he remembered looking up in the mirror one day, at the reflection of himself and for the first time, recognizing he'd been made a new creation. It's like the gospel had just clicked for him. That it all now made sense. What he'd heard over the years. The seeds had been sowed had now begun bearing fruit in a way that he could recognize. And that's the picture Paul is giving here. To make you wise for salvation. To recognize God's design in the gospel and not see it as foolishness. Instead that foolishness is replaced by faithfulness. A faithfulness in dependence on God's word as we seek to live out that next generation mission. And I want you to turn your attention back to the screens as we see some of the ways that mission has showed up in the life of our church. And so just as Paul was reach reaching Timothy and others are reaching Timothy from his infancy, we're doing that today. So, you'll see in this slide here both through Awana and through what we do with our preschool, our weekday school, our Mother's Day out in the lead up to Easter. That we're sowing those seeds of the gospel. Sharing that Easter story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. How all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and everyone of us needs salvation that only come through Jesus Christ Himself. We're also planting seeds in the next generation through Trail Life and our American Heritage girls. These are pictures from their Court of Honor, the ending conclusion of their semester. And I hope these pictures blow you away because that one on your right with American Heritage Girls didn't even exist last year. And now we've got over 30 girls participating. We started the year with in Trail Live with 40 boys in the troop and now there's over 90. And it's not about the numbers. Here's what it's about. We had one of our legacy adults share with us a story that one

of our five-year-old boys in Trail Life, he overheard him talking about prayer requests and he said, I want to pray for the teachers in my school and pray for opportunities to tell other students in my class about Jesus. As a five-year-old. That's the kind of next generation mission that Paul is highlighting here.

And at the center of that, you'll see on the next slide is Easter. We gathered at Easter. We had more people in this room since the shutdown for the pandemic than at any other time since we started gathering again. And as I mentioned earlier in this in the service, I got the chance and the joy to baptize my own son, Nathan. We're seeing God bearing that fruit in the next generation. And it's not just the ones that are within our church but beyond it. And two of the ways that shows up right now is both through our international student outreach and some of the mission trips we get to start doing again. As you'll notice on the next slide you'll see that we've had about 30 or 40 international students. Many from unreached people groups in countries where we can't even get into with the with the gospel safely who are now here and hearing more about Jesus. We got a chance to send some of our college students over to North Africa in order to carry out a mission trip. They hosted a a vacation Bible school type set up for over a 120 kids and reached out to those families just sowing those seeds of the gospel. And one of the things I'm most excited about as we look into the next few months when it talks about living out this next generation mission is what's coming with sports camp. I just want you to see a picture of them gathered last year during that time. Just an army of children hungry not to just grow as athletes but to grow in the Gospel. In fact, we've got already 511 of them signed up. We're on pace for the largest sports camp we've ever had. Isn't that encouraging? Yeah, it is. And if you celebrate that reality like me, in order to pull that off, we need about 15 or 20 more of you to step up to volunteer. And let me tell you why it matters. We saw kids come to know Jesus in salvation including my son, Weston, last year during sports camp. You can give a few hours for a few nights during your summer in order to help sow the kinds of seeds that Paul is speaking of here. These ones that reach Timothy from his childhood and the ones that he's challenging us to embody right here in our community through this next generation mission.

But let's return back to the text now because the third mark of a next generation church, you'll see down in verse 16. He calls us to continue through next generation discipleship. So, notice how the text continues.

[¹⁶All Scriptures breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.](#)

Paul is reminding us that the, the word of God is the power of God for discipleship. That it is breathed out by God. He never, that phrase is never used anywhere else in the New Testament. It talks about how the Scriptures is inspired. It's authoritative. It's a word from Christ and a word about Christ. The same God who with His voice breathed into existence the world in creation is the same God who with his voice breathes into us the word through the Scriptures. And what he is showing us here is those Scriptures are profitable for discipleship in several ways. So, if you look back at the end of the verse, you'll see how next generation discipleship happens when we use the word of God for teaching and training. So, look back at what it says.

[It's profitable for teaching, for rebuke, for reproof, for correction, and for training and righteousness.](#)

So, let's look at the first of those and the last of those, teaching and training and righteousness. Teaching is a classroom image. Training is a weight room image. It's this idea of this combination that results when information leads to transformation. That we grow as disciples. We grow in our knowledge of God in a way that fundamentally changes who we are through teaching and through training. That's one of the reasons I am blown away by the 115 of you that said "yes" to our training program in the fall. God is going to use that time through Daniel's leadership to teach and to train you in a way that will transform you and have a profound impact in the life of our church. But it's not just about teaching and training. Look back at the middle two words there; for reproof and for correction. In other words, next generation discipleship happens when we use God's word to confront and correct. This is two sides of the same coin. This sense of reproof is rebuke; to convict, to confront, to show what is wrong. But it doesn't stop there. The word comes alongside that and when God convicts us of what is wrong, he uses his word to correct us, to improve, to enhance, to conform. That's exactly what Paul is speaking of here. The God's word through God's Spirit, does God's work. And that happens through discipleship and it's happening all over the life of our church. Notice with me back on the screen some of the way that that showed up over the last few months. One of those is through our 21 days of prayer. And you'll see there a picture of us with the group that went on our campus prayer walk at A&M. You'll see a picture of the 1,000 prayer requests and answered prayers that came in. You'll see a glimpse of those books that were so transformative. And at the heart of that focus, was believed God can do anything. Embrace your child-like identity. Specify your request, and trust God to do what's best. And we have seen even this week more and more of those prayers be answered. One of those answered prayers is come in the form of what you'll see next on the screen through the launch of our Reaching the next generation through Scripture training program. What we're doing is taking those who want to grow as teachers of God's word and once a month investing in them. In fact, we've got our one for May happening this week out in B108 following the service during the life group hour. If you've never been, you can come and be a part of it. The heart is, how might we equip our people to rightly handle this profitable word that Paul speaks of here. This also showed up through our Re:engage ministry which just wrapped up with its second group. And you'll see some of the snapshots from that group as they celebrated this marriage enrichment program. We've seen over 50 of the couples in our church over the last year participating in this and strengthen their marriage. And it can benefit every marriage in the room. From those of you that would rate it a nine out of ten to those that would say a two and we're just barely hanging on. And one of the things that you'll see here is that with the training program that launches in the Fall, we've seen double the amount of people that we've prayed for. God has answered our prayers in ways beyond what we could ask or imagine. And we're trusting that He will use that discipleship to bear fruit. And in order to make that happen, it means that we get to enhance the way we do Wednesday nights starting this Fall. We're going to continue doing our preschool and our kids and our student ministries in similar ways of what we've been doing. But for adults, for years, we've only had one offering for adults and when it comes to discipleship on Wednesday nights. But I'm excited that with the launch of the training program and other shifts that are happening, we're going to expand those offerings starting this Fall. We're on Wednesday nights. We'll have the training program going on. Our Re:engage ministry is going to move to Wednesday nights. And we'll have several other offerings we're still developing so that we can serve more people, grow more people, disciple more people consistently with what Paul is reminding us of here in verse 16.

But notice with me finally, as we turn our attention to this last verse from the passage, there's a fourth mark of a next generation church that Paul highlights here. He calls us to continue in next generation service. That's what it shows us in verse 17 when it says,

¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

He's showing us that our preaching has a purpose. Our teaching has a target. Our discipleship has a direction. And what is it? What's the goal? What's the heart? Well, he shows us there that the heart behind our discipleship is that we might learn more about God so that we can grow in our love for others. That our study shapes our service. That what starts in the head transforms the heart in a way that reshapes the use of our hands. Pouring ourselves out in service to others. And the only reason we can do that is because by the power of the Gospel working in us, God changes who we are in a way that can enable us to serve more faithfully. So, part of that is that he shows us there in the beginning of the verse that through discipleship, God empowers us for next generation service. That's why it says there that the man of God may be complete. You see that word complete there? It has this idea of being proficient, of being qualified. In just a moment, we're going to welcome our high school graduates up here for a recognition. And when they walk the stage in graduation, it's it's a declaration that they are qualified. They're complete, that they have fulfilled the expectations for what is to come. And that's the picture that God is giving us here; that each of us is empowered, we're qualified to serve. But it goes on there and in the second half of the verse, it also shows us how our discipleship equips us for next generation service. It says there that we should be equipped for every good work. In other words, we're completely competent, that we have all that we need to do all that God asks. And what I want to remind you of this morning, Central Family, is that we are never more alive in this broken world than when we are using God's gifts to invest in God's kingdom by doing God's work for God's glory. It brings you to life. If you find yourself in a season of dryness, you can so often turn inward on yourself but the prescription that Paul is giving us here is that the gospel calls us to turn outward towards others. That we're equipped for every good work. And I want you to get a taste of the way that that good work has showed up in the life of our church. If you'll turn your attention one more time to the screens, you'll see a picture of our preschool ministry diaper drive. We are never too young to serve the kingdom God. We challenge our preschoolers and their families to bring diapers that we can provide to our local partner, Hope Pregnancy Clinic. We had over 4,000 diapers show up. What do you think? That'll last about three weeks for the average baby? Never too young to serve. You'll notice next another picture from our mission trip to Egypt where our group that went of our college students brought suitcase after suitcase after suitcase of supplies provided by our women's ministry to provide relief aid to the families that we were inviting to these VBS's so that they might hear the gospel. Service and evangelism going hand in hand for the sake of mission. And that service didn't just show up through what we did with our hands and it's what we did with our votes. You'll notice in the next screen that we had our interviews and our votes on our new ministers that were welcoming. We've had Ben here this morning. Wasn't it great to have him with us here today for the first time? And he's going to be starting up full time with us in just a few weeks on June 19th. Uh Shane Mikeska, our missions minister, is going to be starting with us part time in June and full time in July. We're so close to having them here to serve our congregation through this. We've also have seen this happen through our new member workshop as we prayed over these new members here at the start of the service. I mentioned how during our workshop, we cast a vision for the heart of our church. And at the heart of that is

a challenge for them to serve because we know as Paul is saying here that God has equipped them for every good work right in our here in our church and in our community. And there's one more slide I want you to see. So, to give you a picture of the care portal that we have embraced as a congregation. We partner with about a dozen other churches in our local community through a group called BCS Together to work alongside the foster care, the adoption and the Family Services Community here in our community. And we have had the chance through that to be the hands and feet of Jesus. We've, as a church, have been able to fulfill 40 requests. And the way that's been possible is because at the start of last year, we only had 14 people in our church volunteering for this. Now, we've got over 40. And those 40 requests that we have filled, it might be a baby bed, it might be a car seat, it might be some financial assistance for a mom in crisis. It's led to us serving 62 children at the value of over \$30,000. And let me tell you why that matters. When we serve those families in that way, it's a blessing to them that gives them a chance to raise those children in a way that honors God. And how much more critical might that be in the months and years ahead. If this leaked Supreme Court ruling comes to a reality and Roe vs. Wade is reversed and abortion is banned in our state. There may be moms who bring babies into this world right here in our community who are in desperate need. And our church has the opportunity to show to our community that we're not just pro-birth but that we're truly pro-life. That we want to invest and to care for them. That's one of the reasons this Wednesday night at 6 o'clock during our equip class we're going to be doing a deep dive on what that Supreme Court ruling might look like and how we as a church can serve. And what it might look like for us to take a group of us to Washington, D.C. in January to mark the milestone of the 50th anniversary of Roe vs. Wade. I hope you'll come and join us on Wednesday night at six for that.

Now, if you're a guest for us for the first time, I just want you to understand what this celebration is all about. Because we're not here to make much of ourselves but Jesus. We're not here to say, look at the great things we have done but to look at the great things that He has done. We're not here to boast about our power but about His power made perfect in our weakness. What we celebrate this morning is exactly what we've seen in the life of Jon and Laura Lee. Next generation impact in them leading the next generation impact in places of the world where most of us will never go. And there maybe some of you in the room are watching by video this morning who think, "I want to be a part of a next generation church. I want to pour myself out. But I can't imagine selling everything, moving halfway around the world, and telling people about Jesus who have never heard his name before." The good news of the Gospel is that everyone of us who've been bought with the price by Jesus have been empowered to live on mission right here. And we pour ourselves out through community, through mission, through discipleship, and through service so that by God's grace, we might see the next generation transformed for the sake of the gospel.

Let's pray to that end right now as we turn our hearts to a time of response.

Father, we come in the name of Jesus. Celebrating the victory that You've given us on the cross. Celebrating the gift that you've given us in your word. Celebrating the community that we have in this church and asking, Lord, would You do in the future what we've seen You do in the past? Would you grow our hearts so that every person in this room would have an ongoing commitment, that every generation might reach the next generation? And even now, Lord, as we

respond and as we recognize our high school graduates, Lord, we're praying that You would be honored in this time. And we ask this in Christ's name. Amen.