



Sermon – 11/20/2022  
Phillip Bethancourt

**Verses Covered**

*1 Timothy 4:12 – 16*

As you grab a seat, we're celebrating the goodness of God this morning on our Central Family Celebration Sunday. And to start things off like we normally do at our celebrations, we get the chance to recognize those that have been baptized and who are joining as new members of the church. So if that's true of you, if you've been baptized over the last few months or if you're going to be a new member, I want to invite you to stand up now, even while I'm talking, and start making your way to stand right here at the front of these steps. Because we want to recognize you and pray over you in just a moment. Now if you haven't been a part of our Central Family Celebration, here's what it's all about. John 3:30. That we must decrease so that Christ must increase in our lives and in our church. And the way we're going to do that is by celebrating all the things the Lord has done over these last few months in anticipating what He's going to do for us in the future. You'll notice as I'm setting things up, we'll see names on slides on the screen rotating through. You can see a list of the new members that are joining us. You'll also see lists of those who are being baptized. By God's grace, we have the largest group of people joining our church at one time since the pandemic. Almost 60 of them. Aren't you so excited that we get the chance to welcome them into this time together? And I want to invite those of you that have come down to stand here as new members to face towards the rest of our church. As a body, we are a church governed by our members. And in order for you to step into membership, you need to be received and welcomed by those who are already members in our midst. See, Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 12:12:

<sup>12</sup>For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one, so it is with Christ.

And that's what church membership is all about. Being welcomed into the family. Committing your life to go all in with us as we commit to go all in with you as well. And so, what I want to ask of you, those that are joining us this morning, you're going to be here and hear our people receive you in this moment. So if you're a church member sitting here in the room, what I want to ask of you in just a minute is to affirm them into membership, if you support them taking this step. Each of these people have met with our ministers, shared their story of salvation, they've gotten to know our church, and we believe they are ready to take this step together. Are you ready

to welcome them? So if you're in favor of these new members joining us here as part of our family at Central, will you let us know that by saying amen? Alright, let's let them know how excited we are as y'all can head back to your seats now. Thank you for joining us up here in this time. In fact, but before you walk off. I'm sorry. We want to pray for y'all. Come back. You can't get away. Because this is a big spiritual moment in your life. A big time of commitment. And let's pray for these men and women right now that God will do amazing things in and through them in these coming days.

Father, we thank You for what you're doing in building this church with men and women who love You, who know You, who long to serve You. And I pray for each of these men and women standing here, God. That You would use this next season to make them more like Jesus. That they would pour themselves out for the sake of your Gospel. That You would help them to love You with their whole heart. That You would help them to walk faithfully and that You would use the men and women who are already part of our faith family to join alongside them, to spur them on to love and good deeds. And we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Let's stand now and continue worshipping.

Hello, church family. It is a blessing and privilege for us to be here. I have the privilege of introducing to you, Rupert, who is a pastor of First Baptist in Roatán, Honduras. He's got some of his family here with him this morning. And we are excited. Central's had a partnership with them for 12 years. And so we're excited just to hear what God is doing in and through their ministry as we continue to partner and see how God can use us there.

Good morning, church. It's a blessing to be here this morning. My name is Pastor Rupert Solomon and my wife and my daughter and my son is here, my cousin. And it's a blessing for us to be here. First time here in Central. And we are blessed to be here this morning and we thank God for the opportunity to be here and to be able to thank you all for being there with us as partner for the last 12 years. God has been blessing. And we have an orphanage where God has been blessing through Central Church throughout the years, the last 12 years. And we are grateful for the Lord for that. Because God has been using the finance that you have been sending to our church and to our orphanage to be able to help in so many ways. Even during the pandemic and we just want to give God thanks and praise. Because if it wasn't for your church and for the help that we receive from your church, it will be a sad situation. But we thank God this morning that would be here and to be able to share with you and tell you and to give thanks publicly for what you have been doing throughout the years. And God has been blessing us in our church and that church growing and we are on a small island by the name of Roatán over in Honduras. And we give God thanks and praise to be here at Central this morning.

We're going to pray for them as we continue to partner and see how God can use us as we try to engage the nations with the Gospel.

Let's pray.

Father God, we thank You so much for this morning. As we get to come together as a church to gather and to worship your name, Lord, to come here and to be among fellow believers, Lord. Those that are seeking after You wanting to serve You, wanting to just live life on mission. Lord,

we're thankful right now. Lord, we get to hear briefly from Rupert, Lord, just what You have done in Honduras and Roatán. Lord, we thank You for his family, just for the opportunity for them to come here to be a part of our church this morning as well as to be in the states to see family and to have some time away. Lord, we continue to pray for their church. We continue to pray for their ministry, Lord, that You would bless them. That You would use them for the glory of Christ, Lord, that You would allow the Gospel to go out across the island. Lord, as they continue just to bring the Gospel to be on hearts, Lord, that You would soften hearts that they may hear and receive Jesus. Lord, we also just pray as they minister through their children's home, Lord, that You would continue just to use that to be a light for the Gospel on the island. Lord, we pray as a church, Lord, You would continue to just give us wisdom and insight as we partner, as we support, as we send mission trips, as we send teams to go serve alongside them. Lord, that we may bring the Gospel to people. Lord, we love You and we thank You that we have the privilege to really just share the Gospel with others. And so, Lord, I pray for us right here in Bryan/College Station, Lord, that we would be a light for the Gospel for the glory of Christ. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Well, it's not every day that you get to hear from the pastor of one of your partner churches. Thank you, Rupert, so much for sharing what the Lord is doing there in Roatán. And we can celebrate what the Lord is doing right here in our community through baptism. I want to welcome Sophia McCoy to come to the baptism waters. She's coming to let you know that she met Jesus this summer at our Sports Camp. And through conversations with her parents after that, she recognized her need of salvation to take this step of baptism. What's really fun about this for Sophia is today is also her birthday. Can you get any better birthday celebration than that? So if you're part of Sophia's family and friends, I want to invite you to stand now in recognition of this moment. I want to ask you a question, Sophia. Do you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Then because of your profession of faith, it's my joy to baptize you, my sister, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We spent the last few weeks talking about what it looks like to go all in together as a church. And I want you to turn your attention to the screen because we've got a video that's going to show some of the highlights of some of the amazing things that God has been doing in our midst during this all in series. Let's check it out now.

Would they look at your life and say, this is the life of someone who's all in with Jesus? Would they look at my life and say, he's all in with Jesus. Would they say, if someone came to them and said, "I want to see what it looks like for an entire church to be all in for Jesus, would they look at them and say, "You know what you need to do? Sunday morning next week at 9:30 you need to show up at Central and you'll see.'" If we're not sure about that answer, why not? What's holding us back from going all in? What's keeping us from fully committing our lives to Jesus? Jesus is the word. The Bible is the true story of God's good news that changes our lives as we find and follow and focus on Christ. If you're around our church for very long, you'll hear us talk about being a church where every generation is reaching the next generation. Why? Because that's another way to talk about the work of discipleship that Paul is speaking of here. Discipleship is that investment in the next generation so that they might see and savor Jesus Christ. The reality that we are called to community. That community is the way. That we should see the church as a family that's committed to one another as we gather, give, and grow. The mission is the world.

The vision is to reach our neighbors, the nations, and the next generation as we serve and share and send. What would happen if all of us went all in for Jesus?

What would happen? That's what we're talking about. And I hope as you see those images, those videos, that it's just a reminder to you of the way that God has worked in our midst right here at Central. Let me invite you to open your Bible with me. We're going to spend our time in 1 Timothy chapter 4 this morning. 1 Timothy 4. And as you're turning there, if you're a guest with us in the room, welcome home. You're going to get to experience something unique today because as part of our Central Family Celebration, we get to have an ordination ceremony for two of the men in our church that God is calling out for Gospel ministry. That's why we have these chairs seated right here to my right and your left. I'm sure some of you have been wondering why those were up here. And it's because after the conclusion of the message, we're going to spend some time laying hands and praying over these men. We've seen the Lord doing some incredible things even looking back to last week with our Get in the Game Sunday. There was over 250 of you that brought commitment cards forward including over 100 who had indicated that they were not currently serving in the church and want to get off the sidelines and get in the game. Isn't that encouraging to see over 100 wanting to take that step? Absolutely. And along with that, I mean, I was blown away. There was a couple of kids under 10 years old who indicated that they wanted to serve. There was somebody who said, "I've never done media before, but if you'll teach me, I'm in." There was somebody who, based off of that Exodus 3 message and Moses' response, "Here I am." Said, "I'm not sure where God is calling me, but here I am." That's the heart that we are longing for as we step into this time this morning. This reality that we will see in 1 Timothy 4 this ordination process is going to take place in front of you. It's an ancient practice where the church recognizes gifting and calling people and affirms that and in a sense authorizes them for Gospel ministry. It's both to set apart and to support. And it's interesting that we get the chance to do this because 10 years ago this very week, is when our church ordained me right here at Central back in November of 2012. And I know the spiritual turning point that this was in my life. And my hope is that as we work our way through this passage today, that you'll see the way that God is at work in our midst and take delight in the fact that He's raising up more and more people for Gospel ministry. Now this ordination experience will culminate today, but it's been an ongoing process where throughout the last period of time we've equipped these men and we've examined them by meeting with them and interviewing them. And now this morning it culminates in empowering them. And so at the conclusion of the message, I'm going to invite any of the ordained men in the church, whether ordained to pastoral or to deacon ministry, to come and join me on the stage. And we're going to surround Shane Mikeska and Donnie Fowler, the two men that we're ordaining, and pray over them at that time. And here's the danger. When we do something like this on a Sunday morning, there may be some of you that sit in the room and say, "Well, this message isn't for me. It's just for these two men or for those that are called into ministry." But in fact, when Paul is putting in front of us this pattern of laying on hands in ordination, he's giving us a picture of what it looks like to be all in with Jesus. A picture that's true whether we're called to full time vocational ministry or we're just called to serve Christ faithfully no matter where the Lord has us. So let's turn our attention now to 1 Peter chapter 4, 1 Timothy chapter 4, and we'll start down in verse 12. It says:

<sup>12</sup>Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. <sup>13</sup>Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. <sup>14</sup>Do not neglect the gift you have, which was

given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. <sup>15</sup>Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. <sup>16</sup>Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Let's pray together.

Father, this is the day that You have made. We rejoice and we're glad in it. And as we celebrate all that You've done in our midst over these last few months, we anticipate what You're going to do even now by the power of Your word. That by Your Spirit and through Your word You might change us, break the chains of bondage to sin, set us free from the cares of this world, and set our hearts on Christ. Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Who for the joy set before Him despised the shame and suffered for us so that we can be Your sons and daughters. May we walk in that forgiveness and that gift this morning. We pray all these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Well, as I mentioned, 10 years ago was when Central ordained me. I was serving up in Louisville, KY as professor at the Southern Baptist Seminary and I came down and both Chris Osborne, our former pastor, and then my old boss, Russell Moore, led that ordination service. And as part of it, they gave me this Bible. This is not my normal preaching Bible but I brought it to show you. This is my ordination Bible. I think I had to check an extra bag to take this thing home it was so huge as they gave it to me. But I was looking through it this week in preparation for this and I was captivated by the fact that I saw names signed on the front of it who were people I didn't really know 10 years ago who now I know all too well. Because that ordination council, ordained ministers and deacons were there. I think of men like Woody Thompson and Bruce Boyd and Randall Pitcock and Dean Gage and Eddy Boyd and Randy Rother, Guy Benson, Caleb Venable, Cliff Parks, George Jacobus, even my brother, Justin Bethancourt was there. And so many more to be a part of it to encourage, to examine, and to empower me for this next chapter. And as we get the chance to take this step with Donnie and with Shane, I want to put a challenge out to you this morning. Let's come along side these men and spur them on, not just today, but into the future. And one of the ways you can do that best is not just to be a passive observer in this moment, not even just to be an active prayer for them in this moment. But I want to challenge each one of you to wrestle with the question, is it possible that God may be calling you into ministry. Into vocational ministry. All of us are ministers. All of us wherever we are are called to lead and to live out the Gospel. But is it possible that the Lord has been stirring unrest in your heart that He may be laying the foundation for you to take a step just like Donnie and Shane are today? You see, Paul is writing this message in 1 Timothy to his protégé, Timothy. This younger leader in the faith. This man who he is raising up in the next generation. And he's reminding them of this gift that he's received when hands were laid upon him by leaders in the church. And as we look at this text, what we're going to find is it's a perfect culmination to this all in series. We thought about what it looks like to be all in on the word and the work and the way and the world. But the question we have to wrestle with today is, how will we know if we're actually all in? Are there any characteristics that we can see in our lives that would be indicators or markers that we are truly all in with Jesus?

What we're going to find this morning as we look at the text is that Paul is going to show us the three marks of the all in life. You'll notice the first one starting back in verse 12. First mark of



the all in life is character. Character. So you would expect that Paul's giving instructions to his protégé, that he would focus on what to do. But instead, when you look at this passage, you see him not focusing on what to do but how to do it. It's less about competency and more about character, the heart, the integrity behind that ministry. And when that happens, that character shows up in several ways in our life. You'll notice first in verse 12 that Paul is calling him to display Gospel character. That's why he says,

<sup>12</sup>Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example

There's this picture here that even though Timothy's young, the scholars think he was probably a teenager when he connected with Paul. And now he may be about 30 years old. The same age as a typical Jewish rabbi would begin their ministry. Even though he's young, he's saying, don't let that hold you back from displaying that Gospel character. And how's he going to do it? Look back at the end of verse 12.

in speech, in conduct , in love, in faith, in purity.

In other words, at every age of our lives and in every aspect of our lives, we are called to put on display the character that God is working in us by the power of the Spirit. And look what happens then. And he doesn't just display that Gospel character but we see in verse 13 he is developing that Gospel character in others. That's why he challenges him there,

<sup>13</sup>Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching.

See that word, devote, that's right there at the beginning of verse 13. It's this picture of commitment, of continuing. It's this idea there where you are going with intense focus. You're all in on what you are being called to do. And in this case, what is he asking of Timothy and of us? To devote ourselves to what? At the end of the verse. To the reading of Scripture, to encouragement or exhortation, to teaching. In other words, that Timothy's call is not just to reflect Gospel character in his life but to invest Gospel character in others through his gifts. As we pray for Donnie and Shane today, one of our primary prayers is that God would raise them up to continue to be men of character who walk in the way of Christ and who show that way of Christ to others. And one of the things as a pastor that I have had the privilege of doing is being a part of celebrating the passing and the lives of people that have come through our church in our community. And as we gather for funerals and memorial services, I've yet to come across in all my years of doing that, somebody when they get up to read the eulogy or to offer the message who pulls out the person's resume at the podium. Says, you know, "Back in high school in 1976, Bill had a 1320 on his SAT. And that's why he got into Texas A&M and he graduated in Animal Science with a Magna Cum Laude with a 3.8 GPA. And, you know, a little bit later on in 1986, y'all remember that was a big one because in February he got vote employee of the month at Producer's Coop." Never happened. Why? Because when people celebrate you at the end of your life, they don't celebrate you on the basis of resume virtues, but one author named David Brooks calls, eulogy virtues. Not on the basis of your credentials but your character. Not on the basis of your qualifications, but your qualities. And the danger for us in the Christian life is we can spend all our time and energy chasing credentials, pursuing greater qualifications when Paul is reminding here of what truly matters. What matters in our lives is character and action. Seeing the way of

Jesus and following it. Putting it on display as he says here, setting an example for the believers. So Paul first calls us in this moment to embrace the first mark of being all in. That of character.

But let's look down starting in verse 14 at the second one. The second mark of the all in life is commitment. So you'll notice back there in verse 14, he tells us,

<sup>14</sup>Do not neglect the gifts you have,

You see, after Paul focuses on character, he turns to commitment. And he speaks there of this gift you have. And in the original language, the imagery it would invoke is this is both a free gift and it is a spiritual gift. It's something that you didn't earn or deserve, but God has given it to you and He's given this spiritual gift to you for the use and the building up of the body of Christ. And as he unpacks this reality, what he is speaking here to Timothy is true of each one of us. That if we've been bought by a price through the blood of Jesus, if we've been set free to walk with Him in salvation, one of the things that God does as He brings the victory of Jesus into our lives, is He pours out the Spirit. And with that, gives us gifts to use for the building up of the body. And in the same way that Paul is challenging Timothy here, to use the gifts that he's been given, that same challenge is set before each one of us. So what are we supposed to do with these spiritual gifts that we've been given? What does it look like to reflect this character quality of commitment? Well when you look back at verse 14 you see that he is challenging us to commit to preserving our spiritual gifts. That's why it says in verse 14,

<sup>14</sup>Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given to you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

Do you see that word right there, neglect? That word means to ignore or to disregard. Maybe to put it in perspective. I know this week's Thanksgiving week. Anybody looking forward to that? So you're getting everything ready, you're buying the turkey, paying the inflated prices to get all the fixings. You're working on getting the house ready to host people. But I know for some of you that in addition to preparing the normal things, you're going deep into some storage closet to pull out a gift that maybe a family members gave you this last Christmas. Maybe it's that one that you pretended to like but immediately thought to yourself, "I'm never going to use that." It's been sitting wrapped in the back of the closet, totally unused all year. But now you know they're coming back for Thanksgiving. And if they don't see it out, if there's not an appearance it's being used, it could create some tension. You've neglected it all year. But now that it might be beneficial or helpful, that's when you pull it out. It's out of convenience, not out of conviction. But when Paul is speaking here of this danger that we might neglect the gift we've been given, he's given us a similar warning. That we could use the gifts of the Spirit out of convenience, not conviction. Use them not to build up the body but only when it's beneficial. And yet, he says to Timothy and to us that we must preserve the gift. Be faithful in living that gift out.

But he goes on to say something else right below that in verse 15. We also need to commit to practicing our spiritual gifts. That's why he says there,

<sup>15</sup>Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.

So in verse 15 it's like the opposite of 14. So in 14, you're neglecting it; now you're practicing it. You're immersing yourself in it; you're all in. It's one of the reasons I love our Central Sports program. When it kicks off with practice next week in the gym for Central Basketball, you'll walk in and these teams will be a mess. They don't know how to dribble, they don't know how to shoot. They're still learning these things. And as you go back each week and you watch each game going on and on again, you see the progress. You see the practice paying off. You see them immersing themselves in the game and growing in the use of their athletic gifts. How much more so should that be true for us with these spiritual gifts? These things that God pours out for us in the usage of these gifts for the building up of the body. So one of the questions you may be wondering at this point is, how does this passage connect to the ordination and prayer that's about to take place in just a few minutes? Well when you look back at the middle of verse 14, you'll notice that Paul tells us there's a connection to the source of this gift when he says;

[Which was given to you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.](#)

So for Timothy, for this man marked out for ministry, there was this moment where the elders, the pastors, gathered around him, they laid hands on them. And when they prayed, God did something supernatural. Now when we lay hands on these men in just a moment, we're not sitting there saying there's some sort of spiritual power in the laying on of hands that unlocks potential that they wouldn't have otherwise. But what we are saying is what Paul is saying here. Which is that in this moment as we gather around and as we affirm and authorize, we are pleading with the Holy Spirit to use these men in even greater ways than He has already. Which is the way that Paul is speaking of here with Timothy in this moment where we are following this pattern of setting apart and supporting these men, encouraging them and empowering them. Now I just want to ask you the question, as you look at these two empty chairs right here on the stage, would you ask God if one day He would want you sitting in a similar position, being prayed over for a Gospel ministry that the Lord has calling you to? See, our church has a history of raising up men and women for Gospel service. And one of the moments I don't want to miss here is the chance to invite some of you to take a next step towards that. So in just a moment, you're going to see a QR code pop up on the screen. And if you've even briefly thought about what it might look like to follow God in missions or ministry, let's leave that up for a few moments. I just want to invite you to snap a picture of that on your phone and text us following the link so that we can start a conversation with you to help you process through that. I've watched over the years as God raised up dozens of pastors, dozens of missionaries. I even think of right now in our church some of the examples of men and women wrestling with ministry that might describe a situation like here. And I can think about a guy who's getting ready to graduate this May who's wrestling with, do I take a secular job or do I head towards ministry? We're talking with one of our pastoral residents right now about where the Lord is leading him next. I know another college student who's wrestling with an opportunity to serve on missions this coming summer and evaluating that. There's a man who's a middle-aged single in our church who's gotten an opportunity potentially to take his vocation and move to the Middle East to do it where he can live his life on mission by doing his business. I know a middle-aged man who's married who's right in the prime of his career who's thinking about walking away from it all so that he can spend the last two decades of his life pouring himself out for the sake of the Gospel. Have you asked God if He might be stirring something like that in you? I hope that you will pray through that and consider it. Wrestle with what's holding you back from following Jesus in the calling that He may be placing on your life. And as that question stirs in your heart, I just want to bring us to one final mark of the all in life that we see here.



You'll notice it down in verse 16. We've already talked about character and commitment. But the third mark of the all in life, verse 16 will how us, is consistency. Consistency. That's why Paul says,

<sup>16</sup>Keep a close watch on yourselves and on the teachings. Persist in this, for by doing so you will save both yourself and your hearers.

See, what Paul is reminding us of here is that when it comes to being all in with Jesus, it doesn't just matter how you start, but how you finish. That we need to run the race faithfully. That there needs to be a consistency in our lives as we find and follow Jesus. Whether we're called to ministry like Shane and Donnie, or we're just walking faithfully as everyday Christians in wherever the Lord has us in this life. And as we aspire to the kind of consistency that Paul is confronting Timothy with today, what Paul is going to offer us is both a warning and a command. He brings up a risk and a road toward consistency. So what's the risk that he speaks of there? You'll look back at the beginning of verse 16. It says:

<sup>16</sup>Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.

So that phrase, keep a close watch, it has this idea of intense focus where you're entirely undistracted. Think of it as a summertime life guard whose watching a six-year-old who just learned to swim, whose taken their floaties off, and he's vigilantly paying attention to see if they're able to keep their head above water. That's the kind of intensity. That's the type of focus that we have pictured here. He says, keep a close watch on what? Yourself and on your teaching. He's warning us, there's a risk of being pulled away from the faith. And that risk can happen either when we go astray in our behavior or in our beliefs, in our integrity or in our instruction. He says, you've got to keep a close watch on it. It's like the nurse down at St. Joe's or Baylor Scott & White whose coming into that exam room, that patient room, and they're watching the vital signs. How's it looking? What trajectory are we on? Is that the kind of way that you keep vigilance over your own heart by the power of the Spirit? Where you are watching. Lord, where might I be led astray in my beliefs? Where might I be falling short in my behavior? Because what tends to happen is that those who go astray, those who fail to finish well often find themselves off course one small step at a time rather than through one giant fall. The fall happens after they find themselves off course. So there's this warning here, this risk consistency, but there's also, that Paul gives us, a road to consistency. There at the end of verse 16 when he says to us,

Persist in this,

This word, persist, means to continue. It means to remain. It means to keep pressing on. And the picture here is that Paul is telling us, the path towards faithfulness comes through a Gospel grit. Where it takes our passion, our perseverance fueled by God's purpose in our lives, and allows us to press on, to persist, no matter what the barriers. How great the suffering. Whatever the cost may be. We know that the reward is worth it. That's why we stand firm in the faith. As I was looking through this Bible earlier this week, I came across some handwritten notes from Christ Osborne and Russell Moore in this Bible as they gave it to me on that ordination 10 years ago. Chris' words echoed this morning that Paul gives us here. To keep a close watch on our life when he said,

If you stay in the spirituality you displayed before your ordination council, you will finish well.

Then when I look at Russell Moore's note in here to me, it echoes this road towards consistency that Paul speaks of here. He says;

I pray on your ordination day that you will live, fight, and die as a faithful warrior of Christ Jesus. Never ashamed of the blood. Never apathetic to the kingdom.

Donnie and Shane, we issue that same challenge to you today. To walk faithfully in that. Some of you may be new to Central. You may be a guest joining us today. You're not really sure what this is all about and why this is taking place. Well, let me tell you why this matters. As followers of Jesus, we believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ changes everything. That God sent His only Son to live a perfect life, to die a death that we deserve, taking on a punishment we owed, a penalty for our sin. And He rose from the grave three days later so that those of us who find and follow Him by trusting in Him in salvation can be set free, forgiven, raised to walk in newness of life. And what we're telling you this morning as you watch this play out is that when Jesus gets a hold of your heart, it changes everything. It changes you from the inside. It washes away that sin. It sets you free to follow Him. And that's so true and so powerful that God works in our midst to raise up a next generation of leaders who aren't just so invested that they give their spiritual life to Him, but they give their vocational life to Him as well. They say there's nothing more I can imagine doing than pouring myself out for the sake of the Gospel. And that's why we do these ordinations in just a moment before you. Here's what's going to happen now. In just a moment, I'm going to pray at the conclusion of the message. And as I'm praying, I'm going to invite any ordained men in the room, whether ordained deacon or pastoral office, as I'm praying to start making your way up here to the stage and gathering around these chairs. And ask Donnie and Shane to come and sit down here. And after I conclude praying, we'll set up our ordination time and pray over them and then prepare for our response song as we normally do.

Let's pray together now.

Father, as these men come forward, I pray that You would ready our hearts for the step that we're about to take. But more than that, God, I ask that You would take these three characteristics, these three marks, these three indicators that Paul speaks of here and seal them on our hearts. That we would be men and women of character, commitment, consistency, who live our lives in a way that honors You. And God, I pray especially for the men and women in this room who are wrestling with a call to ministry. That You might be stirring some unrest in their heart. They're unsettled about next steps. Lord, I ask that You would use this time to make Your path clear to them. To prepare them for the future that You have. We ask all these things in Christ's name. Amen.

I want you to notice up here on the stage, we've got these two men. Man, what a sight. Wow! Standing here before you they're declaring that they know Jesus. I want y'all, in case you don't them, to know these two men. Donnie Fowler came to Christ back in 1992, played baseball here at Texas A&M. He's been connected to our church for 20 years. And now, not only does he serve as a deacon, but we're ordaining him to Gospel ministry because he works with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes right here in our community. Next to him, Shane Mikeska. Y'all probably

recognize Shane as our Missions Minister. Shane came through our church and God changed his life and put him on a path to missions where he served overseas for more than a decade. And now the Lord has brought him back to help us raise up the next generation of missionaries in our midst. And as Paul says here in 1 Timothy 4, there's this process of laying on of hands. In just a moment, I'm going to invite all of those that are gathered here on the stage to pray out loud over these men at the same time. And even as they're doing that here, I want to challenge you to do the same thing from where you're sitting. Just lift up a prayer towards these guys. Pray that God would move in their hearts and in their midst. And once that time of prayer is done, we'll stand and respond through song. And if you want to take a step towards membership or trusting Jesus in salvation, we'll have our ministers down here at the front in that moment. Let me invite you all to stand with me now as we prepare to pray over them and then we'll respond through singing. So in this moment, let's all pray together out loud and I'll close us in just a minute.

Father, in this moment we're declaring that Jesus is more than enough. That He is all we need. We pray for Shane and for Donnie in this time, God, that You would use this as a turning point in their life. To spur them on in love and good deeds to strengthen them on for the task at hand. And in the highest of highs and the lowest of lows that they will remember that Your Spirit is in them. That You are with them and for them. That they've got a church behind them, spurring them on. And I pray that You would supercharge the ministry You're already doing in them. That You would shape them. Help them to walk faithfully. Help them to finish well. Help them to be a light. Lord, keep their marriages and their families strong. Keep their hearts for You burning a flame with a fresh hunger and thirst for righteousness that they may be filled. And I pray that You strengthen them, not just for today but for all the days in the future that You've set before them. And we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.