



Living With the End in Mind

Part 4 Striving for Success

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We've been in a series called *Living With the End in Mind*. And how life without God is utterly meaningless. As Solomon says in Ecclesiastes – meaning less, meaningless, it's all meaningless. If you are pursuing anything in life without the purpose of God at the center, you will find it's a chasing after the wind. You're Putting a lot of energy into something, you get to the end, and it's not what you expected it to be or not what you thought it would be.

If you have your Bible's, turn to Ecclesiastes 4. Today we're talking about striving for success. In here, we have people who have been very successful in everything they've ever done. We have people that whatever investment they've made, it's been successful. Whatever business they started has been successful. Whatever job they've taken, they've gone to the top of that job quickly and they've stayed there for a while. They've been successful at work.

We also have young people... Do we have anybody home from college for Thanksgiving? So, we've got young people that are getting educated, they're getting experience, they are going to go out to hopefully be successful in whatever field they have chosen. And what do you do when you find success? How do you manage it? How do you handle it?

I've had a ball going through Ecclesiastes 4 this week because Solomon is going to give us these guardrails for those who are striving for success. Please here me. Absolutely nothing wrong with striving to be successful. But that can't be your only pursuit or the only thing you are stiving for, so as we talk about living with the end in mind, we're talking about succeeding with the end in mind, leading with the end in mind, and succeeding ultimately... Whatever the pursuit is that you know what to do once you've been handed some level of success.

I was thinking about it this week. As I drove up HWY 65, there was an accident. The person was okay, but their car hit the guardrail and you could tell it went along the guardrail for a little while and then went over the guardrail but was hanging onto the guardrail. I was thinking *That guardrail just saved that person's life*. It was on a pretty big hill. I thought that's exactly what Solomon gives us today. We're going to look at four guardrails or another term that I learned back in April... I was with a small gathering of pastors in Charleston, South Carolina. John Maxwell, Leadership Expert, came in to share with us. He was asked the question: "What do you think about leadership right now in 2022? What are you seeing?" He used this term. I'm leadership sad. I'm just sad. Coming out of the pandemic, I'm seeing a lot of leaders in business and organizations and business owners and pastors just not doing all that well."

He said, "I've met with a lot of players and pretenders. I've met with a lot of people that when the tough time came, they didn't have what was needed." I don't know what he's planning on talking about that night, but I think he switched to this talk because he was wanting to share with us pastors and then have us share with you what he calls success stabilizers. This is just introduction. I know it's a little bit different than a normal introduction, but he wanted to say, "What do you do when you've been successful and things come your way? When you're successful, some good things happen to you. How do you balance all of that out?"

Let me give you a few of them. He says **The stabilizer for money is generosity**. Somebody asked him, "How much money are you worth?" He goes, "I'm not going to tell you that. I've sold 36 million books though. Do the math." He's made money selling books. He said, "And the goal is to understand it's not mine. To understand I'm a steward of what God has given me." John Maxwell was the Wesleyan pastor for years and felt pulled by God out of the church to minister to business leaders. The church really gave him a hard time for that. I'm talking big C church. But John leads about 200 people to the Lord every year. He says, "I've led more people to Christ one on one outside of the church than I ever did inside of the church. So, as I have found money and money has come my way, I just realized I have to give it away." He's got this slogan that is really sticky. When I heard it, I was like, *man I'm going to do that*. His goal is to give his money away before he's dead. He's 75 years old. His slogan is this: "Givin' while you're livin' so you're knowin' where it's goin'." I thought that was fantastic.

Here's the **stabilizer for ego**. Successful people can tend to get a big head. Like, "I've done something great." And every person in here needs a friend who helps you stay aware. Then he said this: "And what does that friend need to remind you of on a regular basis?" It's something we all need to be reminded of. Every single person in here. From me to you, we are all one step away from stupid. Do you have a friend in your life that reminds you of that on a regular basis? No matter how much you are doing in life and how well you've done, you are one step away from blowing the whole thing. He says you need to be aware.

The stabilizer for the pedestal, so this is the opposite of ego, but pedestal is what people like to place successful people on, is serving. You've heard this expression. "If serving is beneath you, then leadership is way too far above you." If you find someone placing you on that pedestal, serve.

The **stabilizer for entitlement**, the idea that things are owed me, **is gratitude**. I have to tell you about this huge blessing I got this week. I've never been so excited for something in my life. Thursday morning, I was in Boise, Idaho in the airport. I had to get to our Date Night Comedy. Was our Date Night incredible with Mike Goodwin or what? We got to hear the snorter and we heard some laugh styles I didn't know existed. I've never heard a snort so I obviously ain't doing as good as Mike did.

So, I'm on the phone at 6:00 am, I'm talking to Amy. We were nervous about getting back in time. I said, "The flights on time. There are no problems." I'm on the phone with Amy and I hear, "Theodore Cunningham, please approach the gate." I was like oh boy here we go. I'll call you right back." I walk up right after I heard the announcement that the plane is full. She said, "Mr. Cunningham, I'm so sorry to tell you this. Your seat is broken." I said, "I'm really going to need a seat, can I sit with the pilot; I'll do whatever. I have to get to my connection. I cannot miss..."

She said, "I hate to tell you this, I know you're in the front of the plane, but we have to put you in the back of the plane." I said, "I don't care; I have to make my connection." She then calls this guy who has been in the front of the plane too long because my seat was stuck in recline. A major threat to the airlines, that little recline right there. So, the pilot... I know the rules and all that, so... The guy behind me couldn't sit in his seat either because in case of an emergency, he wouldn't be able to get out. So, they call him up and they're like, "Sir, we are so sorry but you can't sit there. We're going to have to put you in the back of the plane as well."

This guy was... I'm just going to say it, being a... let me clean this up for the 10:00 online service. He was being a jerk. He was being a total butt to this lady. I'm like, "Bro, we all gotta make our connections. Calm down." I said, "Ma'am, you're doing great. Thank you. Just get me on the plane. I'm going to be thrilled." He leaves and we are in center seats in the back of the plane. She looks at me and she goes, "Sir, I'm going to take care of you." I didn't know if that meant I was getting two bags of pretzels or what. I get in my seat, and I pull out my phone. I had a travel credit from the airline for \$1,000.00. Do you have any idea how bad I wanted to look over at that guy and go, "Hey, did you get one of these? I don't know, I'm going on my next couple trips for free." Let me tell you entitlement, that idea that I'm owed something... Listen, that guy just lost a grand. Maybe they gave him something. Maybe it wasn't as much as a grand.

How do you fight entitlement? Just be grateful. Like every day, "Thank you father for what you've brought into my life. I receive it with thanksgiving."

The **stabilizer for image is authenticity**. John says, "Young people ask me all the time..." John is 75 years old now. "They ask me all the time, 'What do you do about branding? What do you think about branding.'" Everybody is into branding. He has this great line. He goes, "Before you worry about branding, get good at something first. If you get good at something, you won't need branding. If you're not good at anything, no amount of branding will help. Know who you are, know what God has called you to do." I thought whether you use the term guardrails or stabilizers, for every young person in here striving for success, for every senior in here who has been successful, these are the stabilizers. These are the guardrails.

Those are the five that John gave, and these are the four we are going to see today in Ecclesiastes 4.

Compassion. What happens is someone rises to the top at work and maybe you've seen this. They can begin to lead by force. They can become powerful people. That's the term we are going to see today. Solomon is going to use the term *oppressor*. They can become oppressive. And they just lead with the iron fist. What did Jesus tell his disciples? "We don't lead like them. We don't lord it over people. We are servant leaders." So, we have to find compassion, kindness, that gentleness when you've had some success in your life.

Contentment. Contentment is what every successful person needs to not wear themselves out. Some of you, in your business pursuits, in your job, you have worn yourself out, so you are going to get a stabilizer of the one handful of tranquility, the contentment.

Companionship. What happens after you've had some success at work and you find yourself maybe in a leadership position? You've heard the expression: It's lonely at the top. You get to the top and you find yourself alone and lonely. There is a difference between being alone and being lonely. You find yourself making decisions that people don't like. You find yourself making decisions that people don't understand. You find yourself making decisions that not everybody gets the whole story, but you're still called to do the right thing and maintain the position and be steadfast in it. You're not going to be friends with everyone. I've seen the meme. "You're not going to please everyone; you're not ice cream." Or pizza or whatever it is. But you do need companionship. You need that person that will tell you that you are one step away from stupid. You need that person that will help you, encourage you, help you be more productive. We are going to see that in the text.

Then this. This is the first time... I really dove into it this week, I've read it before countless times in the scripture, but one of the stabilizers for success is **succession**. Some of you have worked for people who stayed too long. There were a lot of senior adults in the first service. There was an audible groan. If contentment keeps you from wearing yourself out, succession keeps you from wearing other people out. We're going to see today the example of an old, senile, stubborn king. And I ain't gonna be an old, senile, stubborn king or leader. We don't want that for any of us. To know that succession... this is the cycle of life that we see that Solomon talks about in the grind of life.

Whatever success you have, you're going to have to hand it over at some point. Why don't you make good decisions about it?

Let's jump into Ecclesiastes 4. This is a great chapter. I've been so encouraged this week. I hope you are as well as we read through it. I hope you are encouraged in wherever you are. Some of you are like, "I've been unsuccessful in my last pursuit." Maybe you're timid in pursuing that next opportunity that was given you or job that was offered to you. I want to encourage you to think through the stabilizers we just looked at in the introduction and these four.

Compassion keeps us from becoming toxic and abusive. Two words being thrown around a lot in the church today, with podcasts being made off of church leaders, the rise and fall of podcasts that some of you listen to being toxic and abusive. So what's the stabilizer so that we don't lord it over people? Compassion and Kindness. Let's look at Verse 1 of Ecclesiastes 4.

Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: So, that's the word he's going to use for toxic and abusive – the oppressor. ***I saw the tears of the oppressed...*** I don't know if you remember this language from Chapter 2. He said, "I hated my life. I despaired of life." He's going to use similar hyperbole here to talk about how painful it is to serve under an oppressor or an oppressive leader. ***I saw the tears of the oppressed...*** I don't know if you remember this language from Chapter 2. He said, "I hated my life. I despaired of life." ***I saw the tears of the oppressed —and they have no comforter...*** No one is helping them. We're going to see a stabilizer for that in just a moment. ***...power was on the side of their oppressors...***

I'm not going to get into it too much. I don't want to offend anybody, but we'll talk about politics for just a little bit. Both parties want power. Let's just be honest. They want power so they can make

decisions. They want to stay in power so they can rule and have their way. And Solomon is saying power oppresses people. Power was on the side of the oppressors. And these people that were oppressed, **...and they have no comforter.**

2 And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive.

So, he's going to use that same dark, lamenting type language to say it's so painful to serve under this much of a tyrant that it's better to not be alive. But he doesn't stop there. In Verse 3, he uses Jeremiah type language.

3 But better than both is the one who has never been born... Remember in Jeremiah 20, all that had taken place in Jeremiah's life, he gets to the place where he says, "This is so bad I wish I had never been born." He says that's what those who have been oppressed by tyrants or by people who have been in powerful positions and try to rule with force, with power. **...who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.**

4 And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. Man, we can just keep going back to politics on this, right? But sometimes people succeed and the motivation for their success or their pursuit of success or their striving for success is because of what somebody else has. And "I want that." And we start to see everybody as a competitor, and we go after them and it drives us. He says, **This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.** You're going to put a lot of energy into this and at the end, get to it and be like that was not worth the toll it took on my soul.

I had lunch and dinner several times years ago with two people who ran the thriving resorts of Branson at the time. One of them is still the most thriving and biggest. We sat down with the general managers of it. These two couples were friends. The wives were best friends and the guys were best friends. It was fun to watch. I was like, "You guys have the biggest resort in town. How do you get along so well?" He goes, "We have never viewed each other as competition." He said, "The mistake a lot of people make, especially in a town like Branson, we're all trying to get a piece of the pie. We don't try to get a piece of the pie. We're all working together to try to make the pie bigger. I'm not living in envy toward another." So, compassion, kindness for those that you lead. If you have success in your work or business or whatever, bring others with you.

The second stabilizer or guardrail that we get is **contentment**. And it keeps us from wearing ourselves out. Let me tell you. What Solomon is teaching in Ecclesiastes 4 is not teaching you to be a mediocre employee or a mediocre person. He's just saying at some point, you have to answer the question and you have to answer it for yourself. When is enough enough? You've had some success and another opportunity comes your way. Have you learned to say no for the sake of contentment?

5 Fools fold their hands and ruin themselves. 6 Better one handful with tranquility... A great question for anyone in here today leading at any level, running any business, in your job, to hold out one hand and go, "What is in my hand right now? And the peace that I'm experiencing? What keeps me here with one hand out and not necessarily needing to put out the second hand?"

I have a friend who was a very successful plumber, which when you're successful in any trade, what happens? You get work and you just don't know what to do with all the work that comes your way. So, he bought another truck and hired another plumber that had the same core values, the same work ethic. Guess what? The work wouldn't stop pouring in, so he bought another truck and he bought another truck and he bought another truck. He has a whole fleet of trucks. You're like, *Was that too much?* He sold it for millions, so he did okay.

But let me tell you. When he plumbed my house... He had moved from another state. When he plumbed my house 15 years ago, he was one man back in one truck. I just remember him saying, "There is great joy in what I'm doing right now." I just remember the smile on his face verses him sitting in an office in the morning sending people out. Again, nothing wrong with a lot of trucks. But he himself decided this one handful with tranquility, he loved it. You have to answer that for yourself. Don't allow your customers to answer this question of when is enough, enough for you. Don't allow your employees to answer the question of when is enough, enough. That's a question for you because that's all on you. He says, **6 Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.** Contentment.

Companionship. This is the next guardrail and I love it. Keeps those of you who have succeeded from getting to the top and being lonely. We looked at this next text in Ecclesiastes 4 a couple months back about finding those companions, but let's look at it from another angle today of what it means to be that companion to someone in your life who is succeeding right now.

7 Again I saw something meaningless under the sun: 8 There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. So, he wasn't going to be able to give all this success to anyone. **There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?"** Remember we looked at this in Chapter 2 – to eat, to drink, to find satisfaction in your labor. He says I'm depriving myself of that. **This too is meaningless — a miserable business!**

9 Two are better than one... I want to be the type of friend and companion that helps someone have a good return for their labor. A good companion will make you more productive. You have plenty of people in your life that distract you from production. You need to find that person that comes alongside and gives you that good return. **...because they have a good return for their labor:**

10 If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. We all need to be that friend. When they see a friend struggling, as you go and you give them a hand and you go seek to help them.

But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Companionship is so important.

11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. A good companion brings comfort to your life. **But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.** Now, you know what happens when you maintain any success in your life or you become successful. You will have people that envy you. You'll have people that will come after you, people that will accuse you. And you know **the only thing worse than the allegations of your enemies is the silence of your friends.** We live with that today, especially in cancel culture. When someone is attacked, friends and family back away.

They don't want to be on that person's radar because they don't want the attacks coming toward them. Be the type of person that will stand up and take the attacks. Be the type of person that will help defend and stand there for your person and your friend. Then it says you know what's better than two? Do you know what's better than having one friend? Having two. ***A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*** Here's what we get. I want to be this type of friend. I want every single person in here striving for success, every person who has had some level of success to be that person who helps others succeed. That's the secret. This is not an Oprah thing. This is a Bible thing. Successful people help others succeed. Successful people help others be productive. Successful people defend others, comfort others, walk alongside and help others up when they are hurting.

A few years ago, I was invited to the Christian Comedy Association. It was a blast of an event in Atlanta and there were about 300 comedians. You can look him up later, but there was a great comedian. His name is Nazareth. He got up to do a talk in front of these 300 people on how to book more gigs. You could just see the comedians in the room getting ready to take notes and build their businesses. I'll never forget Nazareth getting up there. His first point... All of his points were in questions. His first point was alright we're going to book more gigs; this is how it works. Number One. Are you tithing? Crickets... much like I just experienced right there. That's not what these comedians wanted to hear. Then I'll never forget... There was nothing funny about his talk as a comedian. He said, "How in the world do you expect God to bless you if you're not returning to him? How in the world do you expect God to bless your business as a comedian and your schedule and get you more gigs if you think you're the one doing it all? This ain't about you." I thought it was awesome.

He goes, "Number two. When's the last time you prayed for a gig?" Again, crickets. You've not asked your Heaven Father once for this lead that you were given that it would turn into a gig? But then he said this, and I about stood up and gave him a standing ovation. I knew the pulse of the room. He said, "When was the last time you worked to get another comedian a gig?" No, they don't do that, and do you know what? Because they envy the comedian who got the other gig. They're trying to figure out how they can get that gig next year.

But Nazareth is the type of guy... You know what he does? After he does an event and they're taking him back to the airport and they ask what they should do for next year, instead of Nazareth, like a lot of people would do, asking to be brought back, Nazareth will give two to three names of other comedians they should bring in.

If you want to be successful, do it God's way. That's Nazareth understanding everything about my life and everything about my business and all of my success if determined by God Almighty, not me. So, I'm going to help other people be successful, I'm going to give and be generous. That's where some of you maybe you've been striving for success... and I just described at the beginning all the people who have been very successful, but there are a lot of people in here that nothing you've ever touched has been successful. Every business you've ever started lasted a little bit and died. You're in one job after another. Why don't you try a new way. Stop chasing after the wind and stop striving for life and success without God because it's utterly meaningless. It's a chasing after the wind. Successful people will help other people.

That's what I love about Branson. Have you ever been to a Branson show where you hear the entertainer get up and talk about other shows? To me, that is a confident, secure, entertainer. Not just other shows in their building. Just like "Hey, my buddy down the road..." You want to be a successful restaurant? Don't just live in envy toward other people. Tell them. Speak up about the other restaurants in town. Watch God bless your business when you start helping others be successful in theirs.

Succession. Listen, if contentment keeps you from wearing yourself out. Succession keeps you from wearing other people out. Succession keeps us from staying too long and wearing others out. Maybe you've never seen this before in the scriptures:

Advancement Is Meaningless

13 Better a poor but wise youth... So a young person who is about ready to take over. He's got wisdom because you want your leaders in your business in ministry or in the church, to be wise. But if they are young and they haven't been working very long, they're probably going to be poor. They are not going to have a lot of money. They haven't been able to build up anything. Their 401k has a whopping \$6,000.00 in it. Poor but wise youth...

than an old but foolish king who no longer knows how to heed a warning. When I read this, do you know what my very first thought was? I refuse... I'm 48 years old; I'll be 49 in January. I refuse to become an old, senile, stubborn leader. And I'm hoping those of you in your 40s and 50s right now will make that decision. That's what leading with the end in mind is. Don't become an old, senile, stubborn leader. All of us in here have worked for someone who has stayed way too long, and it wears people out. I am not going to be the foolish king. And I don't want that for you.

Now he's going to go into the cycle. This is what succession is. You succeed at something, you're going to hand it to somebody. That person is not going to have it forever. They are going to hand it to somebody. He breaks it down in Verse 14 -16. **14 The youth may have come from prison to the kingship, or he may have been born in poverty within his kingdom.** But he has wisdom and he's going to be someone who takes over. **15 I saw that all who lived and walked under the sun followed the youth, the king's successor. 16 There was no end to all the people who were before them.** This is the cycle of life. **But those who came later were not pleased with the successor.** So, even he's not going to make it forever. Even what he does isn't going to be making it forever. **This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.**

Here's a good lesson for all of us. As you advance in your work, bring others with you and prepare for your replacement.

I was with a friend this week who is becoming the successor to another pastor. He's a long-term pastor and they've got this long plan in place. It's a beautiful plan. How it worked was the pastor decided that he wasn't the guy for the next vision of the church. He said, "What I want to do is find my successor and let him have vision. And then I want to become the number one champion for that guy's vision."

Twenty years ago, at Woodland Hills, we wrote a statement of what we thought Woodland Hills vision statement would look like 20 years later. It's been 20 years later. Twenty years ago, we wrote down, "We see God doing something great in Branson that will probably be a church around 2,000 people in a campus type environment." That vision has taken place. Last week, we had 2,200 people on campus. We're having some issues with parking. We're trying to figure that out. Anybody have any issues with parking coming in? They're talking about adjusting the first and the last service time; we've had that conversation. I told Amy this week... You know we've had fender benders. I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand if you've had a fender bender. Just don't turn it into our insurance, but we're glad you're here.

I told Amy, "I have a sermon prepared that I guarantee will take us back to services at 9:00 and 11:00. If you just tell me when you want me to preach that. I was saving it for 2024, but I'll release it early if you think that would help."

Do you have a plan. Are you leading right now with the end in mind? Again, I don't want to get controversial but if I can end the message this morning talking about politics.

There is something every person agrees on in politics. The first service couldn't guess what it was. But this is something that unites republicans and democrats. It's an issue that unites democrats and republicans. Does anybody know what it is? He just yelled it out. Term limits. According to the last five national polls on the issue, 82% of Americans want term limits. Now, I'm going to have to check you on that because you want term limits because you're tired of all the chaos and corruption in government. However, you want your party to maintain power. Just let that sit in your soul for a second.

Eighty-two percent of Americans want term limits. The other 18% right here? That's the politicians. But we all know it. Talk about staying too long. Talk about getting to a place where "I now run the committee," "I'm now in charge." "I've got the power and the authority. I can't give this up; our country will go to hell in a handbasket." And that's both sides. And there's the crickets that Nazareth heard. That's why people want term limits. Underneath those polls, Americas believe it is the number one way to remove corruption from the government. It's the fastest way to go serve, don't go be entitled, don't go rule with power and force. Serve the people.

And it's never going to get fixed so long as the ones voting on it are the ones in power. I don't have a solution, but I can tell you from my perspective this is what I'm excited about. I'm going to show it to you right here. I'm preparing for this day (picture of Ted's retirement cake). I'm excited for this day. I'm leading with this day in mind. Because there are two ways that you can go out. I've asked the Lord, "Oh please, let me go out with a sheet cake." Because you can go out like spoiled milk, or you can go out with a sheet cake. I've chosen the sheet cake. I don't want to go out staying too long, overstaying my welcome. I don't want to go out where I'm just stubborn and I don't listen to anybody else or what they have to say or get any input or thoughts on that.

You get to choose this. I would encourage you to begin making plans now. A guy came up to me after the first service and he was pretty emotional. I loved that he shared with me. He said, "I heard it long ago. If you can't be replaced, you can't be promoted." Successful people understand you can't hold it

forever. So, are you preparing? Who's on your bench ready to take it over? I talked to a pastor this week who encouraged me. He said, "You need a *hit by a bus* envelope in your office." He said, "You don't have to announce it to anybody, but if you know who the guy is, if you know who you would recommend right now to take your place and run with it, I want you to write down the plan on one piece of paper. Fold it up, put it in an envelope and hand it to your assistant and say, 'Don't open this. If I'm in the back of a plane because my seat wouldn't recline and everybody on the back of the plane is gone, open that envelope.' Because if you can't be replaced, you can't be promoted." It is another plan of God that we would understand this part of life.

Somebody came up to me after the first service and said, "Are you retiring?" I've been here 20 years. I'm telling you I'd be a fool if I'm not thinking about this in the next five to ten years. I want that. Our whole staff, you in your job, need to be thinking who's going to take your place. And then you look at that person and you begin investing in that person as "Hey, are you ready to go?" That's what I love. Some of you right now are like, *Who on the teaching team is the next guy? If we get news that Ted is dead.* I know that will bring joy to a few people in here, but the rest of you, please get me the cheesecake.

Here's how John ended his talk, and I was so encouraged by it. He talked about stabilizers and keeping us all in check. We got a tongue lashing from him. He was telling us, "Guys, I'm leadership sad. I don't want you to end as a player or a pretender." And he said, "The stabilizer for the many things that have come my way is the one thing and that is **Jesus**. If he is not at the center of all this, guys, what we're doing is chasing after the wind. What we are doing is meaningless, meaningless, utterly meaningless."

Father, in the name of Jesus, I thank you for Woodland Hills Family Church. Could we begin praying now, Father, who is the one with the vision in the years to come? Who is it? And who can we begin pouring into? Can that be true of every single person in here, whatever their work is and whatever their business is, thinking who is it? And they go to work with a new mentality and a new thought. To say this isn't all about me.

Whatever success the man or woman in here has had, the young man, the young woman has had, that they would not take that as theirs, but they would offer it to you each day as a gift. And seek from you wisdom on next steps and the plan and put that plan in place.

Father, you've heard this prayer from me I don't know how many times. I want to die in the seats of this church, but not as the senior pastor. I want to become a champion for whoever it is you call to this place in the years ahead. So, give us wisdom and what that looks like. May everybody in here be chasing the cheesecake, not the wind. Chasing the sheet cake, not the wind and not go out like spoiled milk. Give us these stabilizers and guardrails before us each and every day to keep us headed down that right path with you at the center.

For the one that has never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day of their salvation. That they would repent of their sins and confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord that they would be saved. We pray all this in the authority of the name of Jesus. And everyone agreed and said... Amen.