



Sermon – 10/01/2023
Phillip Bethancourt

Verses Covered

Philippians 4:10 - 13

As you're seated, let's take a moment now to pray together as with one heart and one mind.

Father, we come to You in this moment by the power of Your Spirit through the blood of Your Son, declaring today that we follow Christ alone. In this world, we have so many things that pull for our mind's attention and our heart's affection. And this morning, God, we set them all aside. We center our lives on You. We center our hearts on You. We center our hopes on You. And Father, this morning we come to Your word and we get a glimpse of the mission that You've called us to. Lord, we rejoice in the fact that You are a missionary God. That You came to seek and to save the lost. Lord, we're grateful that You sent a missionary Son who left the hallows of heaven to come to this broken world to meet hardened sinners just like us and to rescue us from captivity, to rescue us from darkness, to rescue us from our sin and our guilt and our shame. And Lord, as we remember who You are, may we not lose sight of who You've called us to be. A missionary people who take that same mission that brought Jesus to Earth and to go forward from here to our neighbors and the nations and the next generation with that same truth. Father, this morning, as we turn our hearts to Your word, would You make Your heart for the lost become our heart for the lost? We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me. We're going to spend our time this morning in John chapter 1. John 1, beginning in verse 43. And if you're a guest with us whether in the room or catching us by video, welcome home. You picked a great Sunday to join us because today we're focusing on our call to live life on mission. And that's a call that we've been living out for 100 years. If you haven't been around Central for long, what you're going to find is this is no ordinary church. And what I know is that we're living in no ordinary time. That's one of the reasons that six weeks ago, we launched our NEXT Initiative as we head in two years towards our 100th anniversary. We know as a church, we stand at a crossroads. We're living in a culture that's increasingly hostile to our beliefs. We're surrounded by the rise of the nuns. Those who shun any religion and embrace atheism. We're living in a diversifying community on the doorstep of 70,000 students surrounded by over 5,000 of them from other countries; many of whom have never heard the name of Jesus before. And here's the crossroads we stand at today. We as a church, we have

a choice. We can go one of two directions when we face a cultural moment like this one. The first option is we could just maintain. We can keep it on spiritual cruise control. We can keep things comfortable in here. And yeah, the church might shrink and we might lose more of the next generation. We might feel a bit more like we're on an island in a culture of hostility around us but that is one path we could take. But what if, instead of simply maintaining we made a decision right now that we want to be a multiplying church. That we don't want to just maintain but multiply. That we don't want to react to the culture. We want to run to the culture. We want to reach the culture. We want to stand on the truth of God's word. We want to gather in community and live our lives on mission. And that's what this NEXT Initiative is all about for us. And today is an important part in this launch series for NEXT . You're going to notice in the seat back in front of you, there's going to be a card just like this. Would you mind reaching down there and grabbing one now? Because by the end of the message, as we head into the response song, I'm going to invite every one of you to take a moment to use that pen that's there and to fill this out. This is what we call a Mobilization Card. And on one side of it, it's going to remind you of all of the seven areas of mobilization that we want to focus on over these next two years. And then on the other side, it's going to give you a chance to let us know where it is that the Lord is stirring you to take a next step in the mission that God's called us to. So, we want your name and info but we also want you to check every box in here where you might have interest. This is not you committing to something. It's just letting us know that you want more information about that opportunity. But the most important thing that you're going to see on this card is down here at the bottom. There are three blanks there and I want to invite every one of us this morning to think about people in our lives that don't yet know Jesus. And we want you to write down up to three of those names in your life that you want to commit to pray for and to pursue over these next two years so that they might find and follow Jesus. And during the response song we'll create an opportunity for you to turn this in. In addition to that, if you weren't with us last week, we brought our financial commitment cards. And if you weren't here, you can drop those off in the baskets at the Lord's supper table as well as these Mobilization Cards at that time. In fact, over last week, we were gathering in the cards that came in and I was just blown away by the generosity of our people and we'll have more to say about that next Sunday in our Celebration Sunday. But two cards that came in grabbed my attention when I saw them. If you weren't with us last week, we had the opportunity to baptize eleven people. And two of them, two young girls, not only went through the water of baptism, but they filled out commitment cards just like many of you. One of them made an initial offering of \$1.62. The other for \$2.28. And they committed over these two years to give, between the two of them and their younger brother, about \$50 to what God is doing. And I just don't want you to miss the visual. That there they stand in those waters of baptism. We're baptizing the next generation and they're coming to the table with the resources so that we can reach the next generation as well. That's what it's all about. You see, the question I've been wrestling with as we step into this Mobilization Sunday this week is the question, what can we do as a church to be the kind of people who make disciples that make a difference. To make disciples that make a difference. And what we're going to find in John 1 this morning is we're going to see a road map for that. Because in John 1, Jesus is calling His first disciples and their lives change forever. He raises them up to be disciples who make a difference. And if we want to live on mission right here in the Brazos Valley, this is going to give us a pathway to live that out in our lives as a people of God. That's why we're going to pick up beginning in John 1 and starting in verse 43. We'll read down through the end of the chapter.

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite, in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." ⁴⁹Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are, You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

There's a theologian named Carl Henry who once said, the Gospel is only good news if it gets there on time. The Gospel is only good news if it gets there on time. And the reason is because even if the Gospel's true, if someone doesn't hear about it before too late, before it's too late for them, then they've missed the moment. That every one of us should have a sense of Gospel urgency just like what we find here in John 1. You see, think about what's happening in this passage in the introduction of John's Gospel. We see him first come to Andrew and Peter. He calls them His disciples and then this part of the story, centers on one of His other disciples, Philip. He finds and follows Jesus and then he goes and tells Nathaniel about it. And what we see here in this passage is Philip is living like what we'll call this morning, a front door missionary. You ever heard that term before? A front door missionary. The idea of a front door missionary is someone who the moment they walk out of their front door, they're living their life on mission. They're seeing everyone around them as a mission field. That someone who doesn't yet know Jesus that needs to be invited to come and see who Jesus is. And what we're going to notice this morning as we see Philip's story unfold is that God is calling every one of us here at Central to be front door missionaries. That the moment we walk out the front door of this church, the front door of our house, the front door of your dorm, the front door of your workplace, the front door of your school, we're called to live on mission. And why should that be true? I mean, just think about it. We put our hope in a missionary God who sent a missionary Son that's filled us with a missionary Spirit who's given us a missionary calling and surrounded us by a missionary church. How could we not live as front door missionaries living life on mission to the glory of God? And what we're going to find this morning as we work our way through John 1, is if we want to be front door missionaries there are several things that need to be true in our life.

You'll notice the first one back in verse 43. The first thing we must do as front door missionaries is find and follow. So, we live in a culture that tries to make it easy to find things. You've got Siri, you've got Find My Friends, you got Google. Now, Chat GPT. All these things trying to help you find what you're looking because they know when you find you're going to follow. And in Israel's history, they've been waiting for hundreds of years, longing to find the Promised One, the Messiah. And what we find here in John 1 is He's here. And He invites this man, Philip, to find and follow Him. And as the story unfolds, it's going to give us a glimpse of what it looks like to find and follow Jesus in our own lives. So, notice in verse 43, the first thing you'll see is that when we follow Jesus, we find out it's because He first found us. So, notice what he says there.

⁴³And the next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.”

So, Jesus arrives in Galilee. He finds this man, Philip. He calls him to follow Him. But look down in verse 45 about how Philip explains this moment to Nathaniel. He says,

⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him

So, Philip says, he found Jesus. But if you look back in the middle of verse 43, you'll notice that the first thing that happens before Philip finds Jesus is Jesus finds Philip. That's the way God works in our lives. He sends His Son to seek and save the lost. And even when we're wandering from Him, not looking for God, Jesus is looking for us. He sees Philip there and He calls him to Himself. And I bet we can hear story after story in this room of those of you that have found Jesus. And only once you came to saving faith, you realize before you were ever trying to find Him, He was finding you. We remember the way that God's at work and we go on in verse 44, we find that when we follow Jesus, we find others to follow Him too. That's what Philip does here. Verse 44.

⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

And then notice verse 45 begins by saying, Philip found Nathaniel. So, what's the first thing that Philip does after he finds and follows Jesus? He finds Nathaniel and he invites him to follow Jesus as well. And see, a pattern emerges here. And the pattern is this, that what we truly love, we can't help but share about with others. One of the essence or the marks of genuine love is that we don't keep it to ourselves. We share the goodness with other people. And that's true not just with the things of God. That's true in every area of our life. So, you find a new app for your phone that's changed your life and you tell others about it. Or for those of you that are long-timers here in College Station, do you remember the restaurant Cafe Eccel? Had this famous dessert called the Strawberry Tart. I got any Strawberry Tart fans out there. Okay. I've been in mourning for years since that restaurant closed down. I owe my first job to Central because I brought one of those to my final interview with our college minister, Kyle Hoover, and that sealed the job for me. It's got this soft spot in my heart and probably in my waistline too if we're being honest. But my life was changed this summer because I found out that Burger Mojo on University Drive has revived the Strawberry Tart and it's back. And I found myself not just going there to eat it myself but telling others about it as well. I'm sure the next time I show up, they'll all be gone because y'all are going to go and have some on your own. And the reason you do that is because when you love something, it grips you so deeply. You can't help but share it with others. And isn't that what we see here in Philip's life? He finds and follows Jesus, and he can't but find his friend and call him to do the same. Nathaniel encounters Jesus because Jesus encountered Philip. And notice what happens in verse 45. When we follow Jesus, we also find ourselves in the story of salvation. That's what Philip explains to Nathaniel in verse 45 when it says there,

⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

And so, what Philip does here is he explains how the, all the Scriptures have been pointing to this that he's now arrived. He's sharing the entire storyline of Scripture. The whole message of the Gospel to this one because when we follow Jesus, we see ourselves in the story line and that

salvation. It's one of the reasons why, if you've been around Central long enough, we regularly talk about a Gospel-sharing tool called the Three Circles. And I want you to see it unfold right here on the screens. Because when Philip shares with Nathaniel, he's sharing to him a similar message. And the Three Circles is great because if you learn it, you can share it with someone in any setting. You can take the back of a napkin and draw it out for them. You can walk them through these truths that Philip is pointing to here in verse 45. And the three circles starts with God's good design. That God made the world and it was perfect and holy. It was blameless. He was there in his righteousness but sin came into the world. When Adam and Eve fell, they turned their back on God's design. They walked away from it. They wanted to make themselves God. And we often follow in the same way, trying to seek after our own desires through forbidden fruit. And what happens as a result of that is it brings about brokenness in our lives and in the world. And I know I don't have to spend much time convincing you that this world is broken, right? We see it with wars and strife and controversy, with the Longhorns being ranked number three and undefeated. There is brokenness all around us. And what happens is we try to flee from that on our own. Chasing success or significance or status or satisfaction and we try like those squiggly lines to escape it on our own. But just like a rubber band, we're always snapped back to reality. We can't escape that brokenness in our own strength. But here is the beauty of the Gospel that Philip is sharing with Nathaniel. Is God gave to us His Son so that we and believe in God's design, His Gospel gift to us. And if we repent of that and put our faith in it and believe, it can change our life. And what is that Gospel? The Gospel is that God loved us so much that He sent His only Son. So that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. He came down. He died on the cross. He was raised from the dead so that we could be made right with God. So, that sin that separated us from His design and led to brokenness might be washed away in our lives. And what that means for us, and what Philip was showing Nathaniel here in this moment, is when we put our hope and trust in Jesus, it allows us to recover and pursue God's design that He originally intended for each one of us. Philip sharing that Gospel message with Nathaniel then. You've got a tool to share that Gospel message today. And the reason is, if we want to be front door missionaries, the kind of people that see everything around us as a mission field, we'll remember that when we find and follow Jesus, it drives us to want to help others to do the same thing. So, we notice here in the first part of this passage that as front door missionaries, we need to find and follow.

But the the second thing that front door missionaries also have to do picks in verse 46. We need to come and see. We need to come and see. You know, once what happens is once we find and follow Jesus, we can't help but invite others to come and see the Savior. And what I know is if we're interacting with somebody who doesn't yet know Jesus, they're often a skeptic. Either what I call a hostile skeptic or an honest skeptic. And either type of skeptic has the same deep hesitations, the same difficult questions. But the difference between a hostile skeptic and an honest skeptic is an honest skeptic, while they reject Jesus, is willing to reflect on Jesus; to consider who He is and why He matters. And what we find here with Nathaniel is that when Phillip comes to him, he's an honest skeptic. And we can see in the way that Philip takes the Gospel to Nathaniel, and what happens when he encounters Jesus. When we see that, it can show us what it looks like to invite others to come and see Jesus for their very first time. So, if we want to invite others to come and see Jesus as front door missionaries, it needs to begin by first understanding the heart of an honest skeptic. So, look back at verse 46. We get a window into Nathaniel's heart. Nathaniel said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" So, how does he respond? It's with a skepticism, a suspicion, there is a sense of doubt that's here. Why is that the case? Well, on the

one hand, Nazareth and Bethsaida were rival towns. And there's this kind of hostility or skepticism. How could anything good come from that backwater place? But also, Nathaniel is an honest skeptic because he knows the Old Testament. He knows the prophets and there is no mention of the town of Nazareth in the expectations of the coming promised one of God. And when he hears this, he can't help but ask how could anything good come from Nazareth. And notice how Nathaniel responds in the second half of verse 46. We see him offer the invitation of a committed friend when he says to him, come and see. See, Nathaniel is met in his skepticism by Philip, not with an argument but with an appeal. Not with a confrontation but an invitation. Come and see. Let me introduce you to this man. Make up your own mind. He knows that he on his own doesn't have the power to convince Nathaniel. But what he does know is that if Nathaniel comes and truly sees who Jesus is, it will change everything, everything. And that's exactly what we see happening in verses 47 and 48. We see the way that he puts his trust in the knowledge of a loving Savior. So, notice what it says there starting in verse 47.

⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

And see, every skeptic like Nathaniel is faced with a choice. Will your skepticism drive you to become a cynic or a seeker? And maybe you've walked into this church this morning and you find yourself skeptical of the things of God just like Nathaniel and that's a choice before you. Will you look at these things? Will you come and see Jesus and respond as a cynic? This can't be true, it can't be right. It can't be necessary. Or will you come as a true seeker like what we see here in the life of Nathaniel? He comes as a seeker and Jesus commends him. In verse 47, he says, he's an Israelite in whom there is no deceit. Jesus knows His Old Testament. He remembers the book of Genesis and the way that Israel, Jacob, was described as a deceiver. And here's this one with no deceit who's an Israelite, an honest skeptic. And you'll look and see what happens here. How does Jesus know that Nathaniel is a seeker and not a cynic? Well, look at the end of verse 48 and you'll find the answer. Jesus says to him, "I saw you." So, think about it. Before Nathaniel had come and seen Jesus, Jesus had come and seen him. He sees him. He knows his heart. He sees what God is working in his life and that defies all our expectations of who God might be. Because for many of us, we think that God is so grand, so big, perhaps even so distracted that He would never put His eyes on us. That He doesn't have the time of day for my life, my situation, my hardship, my future. But this passage shows us a different way. That before even we can come and see Jesus, He has come and seen us. And He sees you this morning in your sin. That shame, that guilt, that failure that you feel. That that that overwhelming sense of uncertainty and lostness that is gripping your heart, He sees you in that. And that doesn't turn Him away in disgust. Instead, He looks at you the way He looks at Nathaniel. He sees you and He invites you to come and see Him. To take your eyes off the things of this world. To take your eyes off the strengths of your hand, of the power of your works, of your ability to make a way to God. And instead, to come and see the only Savior that can set you free from your sin.

This church has a 100-year history of inviting people to come and see. If you were to cut Central Church, we would bleed missions. It's a part of the fabric of who we are. It's not just what we do. And I just think back to the history of our church. We talked last week about how in the early years of our congregation; we went through the Great Depression. We couldn't even pay our bills in 1931 and in all the money they were cutting including this, the pastor's salary, you know, the

one thing they didn't cut? We talked about it last week. They wouldn't cut the funding for missions. And the reason was because we were committed to inviting the world to come and see Jesus. And a few years after that, when we called our second pastor, V. B. Brazeale, within the first 6 months, he called the church-wide missions focus for a month. And out of that, he decided not to hire another staff member at the church but to take some of the excess money they had and pay half the salary for a frontier missionary in the country of China. Because our church was committed to inviting the world to come and see Jesus.

Or once we finally dug out of the hole we were in from the financial impacts of the Great Depression and we began to have surplus funds again, our church made a decision to devote one third of all its excess resources that went over the budget towards missions. And as a result to that by our 10 year anniversary, in 1935, 18% of every dollar that came into this church was going out the door to reach the lost. Why? Because for 100 years, we've been committed to inviting the world to come and see Jesus. And that's what this NEXT Initiative is all about. We're filling out these mobilization cards this morning because we're giving you fresh opportunities to come and see Jesus and invite others to do the same. And I want you to see on the screen. We've got a list of opportunities of ways to get involved and invested. And out here in the foyer of the church, we've got a Mobilization Fair going on. And after the service, we want you to go out there and have conversations and get connected and learn more information. Did you know that Central is involved in all these different ways in terms of living life on mission? There's even more than this through our missionary partnerships. Just to call your attention to a few. You'll see about half way down the left side there, you'll see something called Bible Ministry. And once a week, at both Blinn and at Texas A&M, and once a month on first Friday in downtown Bryan, we pass out Bibles in English, in Arabic, in Chinese, and in other languages. And in just the first week of the semester alone this Fall, we passed out over 500 Bibles. We did that. Our church carried out that mission. Or look down there at the bottom, Care Portal. That's part of our Call to Care Foster and Adopt Ministry. And we partner with other churches in the Brazos Valley to care for families that are helping in the foster care system. And the Care Portal helps to match family's needs with our resources. And last year, in the entire state of Texas, our community and all the churches bonding together, were the number one community in the entire state in meeting these needs. More than Houston, more than Dallas, more than Austin, more than San Antonio. And to that end, our church, in just the last two years, has helped over 100 kids to the tune of over \$50,000 to help them in those moments. We're inviting them to come and see Jesus. And when you walk out these doors after turning in your mobilization card and you swing by those tables at the mission, mobilization fair to learn more information about those opportunities, we're asking every one of you to live as front door missionaries right here in our community by getting more involved in these opportunities. Philip did it in the life of Nathaniel and we can be a part of doing it in the life of others today.

And this brings us to the last part of this passage. It's when Nathaniel encounters Jesus and how he responds. And it shows us the third piece of what it looks like to be front door missionaries. First, we find and follow. Then we come and see. But now at the end of this passage, it's calling us to go and tell. To go and tell. See, what happens is when we meet Jesus, it changes everything for us. It happens in the life of Nathaniel and God's been doing it for centuries ever since then including in our own hearts. And when we meet Jesus, there's at least two things that changes about us that put us on the path to live out our lives as front door missionaries who go and tell

others about our Savior. The first thing it does is it changes our priorities. So, look at what Nathaniel says here in verse 49.

⁴⁹Nathanael answered Jesus, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

It's like this light bulb moment for Nathaniel. What was once darkness has now become light, that hard heart replaced by a heart of flesh. Everything changes for him and it changes the way he sees Jesus in a way that reshapes his priorities. He calls him Rabbi because Jesus teaches the way of God. He calls Him Son of God because Jesus is the way of God. He calls Him King of Israel because Jesus makes a way for God in our lives. And here's what happens. When we meet Jesus and He becomes the king of our hearts, it changes our priorities. It changes our desires. It changes our lifestyle. So, this this call to reach the lost in our community and around the world is not something that we do from a back burner when we get around to it. It's in the fabric of who we are. We reorient our lives around it so that we can declare that the same King that is taking root in our hearts is inviting others to embrace Him as King as well. It changes our priorities. But that's not the only thing that happens because we also see in verse 50 that it changes our perspective. Notice how the passage finishes.

⁵⁰Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” ⁵¹And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

You see, what happens is when Jesus changes our lives, it doesn't just change our priorities; it changes perspective. And Jesus helps Nathaniel and all of us see Him in a new light. See Him in a new way. And He does that by tapping into a story that's very old. It comes from Genesis 28. And as you know, we've been spending the last period of time in our church journeying through Genesis verse by verse. And once this series' done, we're going to be heading back to it. And it's picking up this passage from Genesis 28 where Jacob has this dream and he sees this ladder, this stairway from heaven and angels ascending and descending. And Jesus reaches back into the past to give Nathaniel and us a new perspective of our future. And because what Jesus is reminding us of here is that He is the new and better Jacob. The one upon whom the presence and power of God has fallen. The one who has come down in order that He might make a way for us. But He's also that new and better ladder. That ladder is there not so that you can try to climb your way to God through good works. Not so that you can try to earn your way to heaven by just doing a little bit more than your neighbor. Instead, that ladder is there because God sent His one and only Son to us. He took on flesh. He lived the perfect life we never could. He died the criminal's death that we deserve. He was risen from the grave to defeat satan, sin, and death so, you and I can our way by his power to heaven through that ladder of the cross that we could have never made on. That's the new perspective that Jesus gives us. And that's at the heart of what it looks like to be front door missionaries.

But before we close, I just have to warn you. If you're going to make a commitment to fill out this mobilization card today, if you're going to take a step to go into that mobilization fair and have a conversation about a way that you can get involved, if you're going to commit today to be a front door missionary for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, here's the warning. Satan's going to be after you. Because when we set our hearts to the mission, we become a bigger threat, a bigger target to the

enemy. And I want you to count the cost now before you fill this card out. I want you to count the cost now before you go back to your neighbors and your coworkers and your your roommates and your family and share with them the life-saving message of Jesus. Because if it's truly change your priorities and your perspective, then, you're willing to get off the sidelines and onto the front lines. Let me give you some hope this morning. Just last week, we had a college student here at Central come to our college minister, Patrick, and share with him that he had just come to faith in Jesus. It's amazing to see God on the move. But here's the reason it might give some of you hope this morning. I know that many of you are going to write down names on the bottom of this card that you've been praying for for years. And you've yet to see God breakthrough in their lives and in their hearts and you're wondering, is it ever going to happen? And get this, this college student that came to faith last week, one of the things he was most excited about sharing with Patrick is the fact that once he made this decision, he began to share it with his close family members and friends. And he found out that they had been praying for him for years to come to know Jesus. And they were just filled with deep joy at the new life he had now in Christ. I want to remind us this morning, Central family, God's not done yet. He's still on the move. And He's inviting us to join Him as we invite others to come and see, as we live out the call to go and tell. So, here's what I want to ask you to do. Right now, I'm going to invite Ben and our worship team to come up here. And in just a moment, they're going to play instrumentally while we take some time to fill out this card. Hopefully, you've got a pen in your seat back and you can do that. And we're going to have baskets all over the sanctuary where you're going to grab the Lord's supper elements after I pray. And in just a minute, I want you to write your name down and check every box that you think you might have an interest in getting into. Remember, this doesn't commit you in anything. It's just going to give us a chance to give you more information. I also want to add a bonus item to there. One of the things I found in our community is there's a growing and growing interest in pickleball. Is anybody a pickleball fan out here? . Okay. So, if you like pickleball and you can imagine using pickleball here at Central as a community outreach to connect with others who don't yet know Jesus, just right below where it says, Church Plant, just write the word word Pickleball down there so, I know that as well. We want to use all means to reach all people. And in just a second, you're going to fill that out. You're going to write those names down that don't yet know Jesus and you're going to bring that forward during the response song. I also want to remind you that if you haven't yet submitted your financial commitment card last week, you can bring those as well. But before you take these and turn them in, I want to encourage you to grab your phone and just take a picture of your card. Right there, just like that. Once you've written it all out, you've written those names down so that you can remember who you're praying for. You can remember who you're going to be pursuing over these two years. And once we get some time to write down on those cards, I'm going to pray over us. And as I do that, I'm going to be welcoming a college mission team that's going to be going out over fall break up to Syracuse, New York. We're partnering with Radiant Church. It just launched this year with Pastor Jason Langford. And they need prayer right now. Because of their stand for the Gospel, because of their commitment to what the Bible teaches on gender, marriage, and sexuality, there's been hostility to them. They've been kicked out of local schools where they met. They've been run off from a facility connected to Syracuse University and they are seeking to find the right opportunity in that city to reach people so that they can find and follow Jesus. And our team is going up there at a strategic time to encourage them and to invest alongside them in this moment. And they're going to come forward as we're filling out these cards. And as I pray and ready us for the response song, we're going to pray over this team as well. So, you take some time now quietly and in your heart, ask God to show you where He's

calling you to explore, taking a next step so that others might come and see Jesus. You write that down now and I'll pray over us in just a moment as our mission team comes up here and joins me.

Let's take a moment now to pray over our team and to pray for our hearts.

Father, I lift up all these men and women that are gathered before us. Ready to take Your Gospel hope to Syracuse, New York. And we're praying for Your favor upon them. We're praying for Your favor upon Radiant Church and Jason and their team. Lord, we're praying that through the work of our missions team that there will be people that get to come and see Jesus, that have seeds of the Gospel planted that You might water now or in the future. We're praying that You would help to strengthen this church and lay down Gospel roots that will last in this hostile community for decades to come. We're praying that You do a work in each one of their hearts, God, to show them more of who You are and who You've called them to be in this season. And for all of us, Father, we're praying for the heart of a front door missionary. That everywhere we go, we would live out the mission that You've called us to. And so as we ready ourselves now to bring these cards forward, as we ready ourselves now to respond in singing, as we prepare ourselves for the Lord's supper and the parent dedication that is to come, Father, we pray that You go before us and make Jesus high and lifted up and in our hearts and in our minds. And we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.