

Yep, 52 today.

There's some.

Man, I'm grateful to be here.

Thank you for having me.

My brother Jeff and his lovely wife.

He the real deal, man.

Give it up for your pastor.

Well, one of them.

I love that dude.

I love him.

Birthdays, birth, yeah, thank you, thank you.

Because birthdays, just birthdays, New Year's, stuff like that, just time to reflect.

And he's been so good.

You know, when you think back, and if you just think you've been walking with the Lord for a while, and I don't know, for me, it'd be like...

You know, the Lord is so good, and you can reflect on his goodness throughout your life.

And it's like when you get up in the 50s, it's like you done lived 10 lives.

But, you know, the enemy is real, and he'll try to remind you of your failures and how you've fallen short.

But God is so good because where sin abounds, grace abounds.

Right.

And you just remember the grace and the goodness of the Lord.

And I'm just so grateful to be able to preach on my birthday, to speak.

I come like Paul when he came to Rome.

I want to be mutually encouraged today.

I need encouragement.

I was looking at this text and I want to be encouraged.

I want to encourage you and I want you to encourage me.

Because I come not as a pastor.

I was a pastor, but I'm a layman.

I'm in the thick of it.

Not that pastors aren't.

Pastors, I love the work that a pastor does.

They get to eat a lot and do a lot of meetings.

We used to eat good, didn't we?

I don't get invited to eat as much no more, but...

But just being a layman, man, it's real.

You know, it's real, as they say, as we say in the north side of St.

Louis, it's real in the field.

And I'm in a good place, people have asked, and I know, I feel like we family, you know, because I'm in a good place.

The Lord is so gracious and good because one of the things that I want to be more than anything is useful.

And one of the things that I know I struggle with is that tension of being useless.

And we're going to talk about today, just from this text, three things that I kind of look to be.

And that is to be inspired, to be intentional.

and to be intense as I run this race.

I want to be inspired, I want to be intentional, and I want to be intense.

And that is the talent, that's the tension that I live with as a Christian.

As a Christian, I have moments and I have seasons and I have times where I just feel like, man, I'm not even inspired to really want to run for Jesus.

And in fact, if I'd be real honest, I get more tugged at wanting to run the other direction.

And in some seasons, I'm just not as intentional as I should be.

I know Pastor Bird, that's my pastor, Faith Community Bible Church, but being intentional in the word, and I love the word.

I love books like Jeff.

Jeff may love books more than me because he's a book man, but I love books.

And sometimes I'm not as intentional with my reading, particularly with the word of God.

And the intensity.

Man, I'm a pretty intense dude.

You know, and as I reflect over my life, I was a street dude and I don't boast in that, but I only say that because I used to be intense.

When I was about that life and whatever I wanted to do, I did it with intensity.

And I sometimes comparatively say I should be running even more intense for the Lord.

So let's help each other today.

I don't know if you struggle with this.

I know that Christianity, man, all flesh is like grass.

I don't, you know, I'm pretty sober.

I have a sober reality of humanity and who we are as Christians.

And I know sometimes we're called to a very high calling to go against the current of this world.

But

If you're like me, if you're flesh, if you're still in this earth suit, we have our struggles, right?

So let's just ask the Lord for some help as we read this text.

Do you traditionally stand as you read?

We're going to read just two verses so you don't have to stand too long.

They're long verses, but Hebrews chapter 12, and you told me the page, and my brother said the page that it's on in the book.

In your Bible, your Bibles that you're reading.

I forgot that quick.

Don't hold it against me.

Again, you can't judge me like a pastor.

I'm not a pastor, so I get a lot of grace up here.

But Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1 and 2, we're going to read and then I'll pray for some help.

And the scripture says, therefore...

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Verse two, beautiful.

Looking to Jesus.

the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was said before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Let's pray for Samuel.

Father, we're needy, but we're grateful.

First of all, before we ask for anything, we are grateful.

As we sang, you have been faithful always and you've, Lord, brought us all together at this point in our life.

Whether we know you truly or we don't, you've brought us, you've sustained us, you've kept us to this point and we love you, Lord.

And we thank you for ears to hear and eyes to see and a heart that wants to rejoice and praise and sing and be in a space like this on a Sunday morning.

So with that said, Lord, the space is beautiful.

The ambiance is great.

But some of our hearts are heavy and some of us are in different spaces and thinking about different things.

Arrest our attention.

Arrest our hearts and our minds.

Because one thing that is for certain that I can say with certainty, we all need you.

Desperately.

We need you, Lord God.

And so because we need you, you said, ask.

And you said you won't despise a broken and a contrite heart.

You won't despise.

In fact, you say that is the sacrifice you want.

And there's an element of brokenness in all of us.

But yet we are sorrowful in some instances, yet rejoicing.

And we rejoice in the fact that this text says that you are seated at the right hand of the Father forever making intercession for us.

And very, a very, a very present help in our time of need.

So help us so that we can run with intensity, with passion, with love.

And we'll be careful to give you all the praise, honor, and glory.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen.

Amen.

It's kind of how I judge my faith.

How many have been, and this may be a little untraditional, I may ask and you can talk back to me.

How many have been in the military in here?

Good.

How many the Navy?

Any in the Navy?

Okay.

How many have ever been on a cruise ship?

Been on a cruise, okay.

Can you just give me a moment?

Just help me out here.

What is the difference between a battleship and a cruise ship?

What are some differences?

The food?

The food?

The food on a cruise ship?

I've never been on a cruise, so I assume it's better.

What else?

What else?

One is business and one is pleasure.

Yeah.

Huh?

Guns.

I don't know.

There's some videos of cruise ships.

It gets intense.

Yes, young man.

Dancing.

That's cool.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Any other?

Functionality.

I love it.

I often, you know, I have a mentor and he kind of talks about Christianity and the version of Christianity that we sometimes are before us.

One is more like a cruise ship mentality and the other is like a battleship.

And he kind of goes with the analogies and I get it.

And I think about me personally and I try to assess.

I have seasons where I assess.

I do a 90-day thing where I kind of assess where I'm at because I have to be real intentional about staying focused.

And so I'll use that analogy.

Have I been acting as if Christianity is more like a cruise ship or like a battleship?

The cruise ship, one of the things about a cruise ship is that, somebody said it, it's a place where you can dance, you can kind of relax and chill.

There's some people, though, that are working on the cruise ship.

Others are just along for the ride, the enjoyment.

A battleship, though, I believe so.

Now, you know, that everybody has a responsibility.

And there's a certain level of intensity, even if it's in peacetime because they're anticipating that we may have to go and do something.

Which one, though, do you think is more fitting to Christianity?

I would say the battleship.

There's also, I think, with the battleship, there's an inner dependency that I like.

The all have a task.

I'm learning that everybody has a task when it comes to the Christian faith, and everybody matters.

I love that aspect.

We honor our pastors.

We honor elders.

But we all need to have that same sense that I need to take responsibility for my role.

And if I don't know it, because that's a part of Christianity.

When I first came to the faith, I love great leadership and great pastors who can see gifts and talents because I didn't think I really had a gift.

I had to consume a mindset.

I was happy to be a Christian.

I was young, straight off the streets.

But then my pastor took me in the back room one day and he said, look, you have a gift.

Even with all your ebonics, I think you're going to teach the word of God.

And he let me teach.

And I was terrible the first time, but he kept going.

Some, though, on the cruise ship are chilling and they just chill.

And I think for some of us, that mindset, you know, is something that we have to have that tension with.

Being like, you know, like the difference between fans.

And fans are just spectators.

They enjoy those who are doing the real deal.

And Christianity is different.

It's just something to just throw out because that not only is where you come in like that, sometimes feeling like, is there a place for me within even this church or within God's redemptive plan?

But believe it or not, after 30 years of being in the faith, I still struggle with that tension.

of man.

Sometimes I want to put it on cruise ship or be like a cruise ship and just be a spectator and I don't feel it.

And sometimes I'm very intense.

And you know what?

In the midst of that, understand that God is gracious when we have those moments.

I want to tell you that.

I'm not here to whip you and say, man, you need to.

No, God is gracious.

But one thing about being in a healthy and a community is that we don't wait to just the pulpit to spur people on because the Bible calls us to do what?

Spur one another on to love and good works.

That word spur means to irritate.

We to irritate one another.

So today, I just want to talk about be inspired, be intentional, and be intense.

And the challenge is for the mindset, like the mindset.

And then more simply, if we want to be simple, because I've learned, man, the simplicity is looking to Jesus.

It's so plain, it's so clear, this text is so clear, but some of the exhortations, though they seem simple, that we need the grace of God and we need to be intentional when it comes to these things that, you know, it's not about big time theology, it's about the application of simple texts like this so that we can run.

Amen.

So my first point is that we are to be inspired.

Verse one in this text.

Therefore, since we also have such a great or a large clouds of witnesses.

So great a cloud of witnesses.

This text is amazing that the word for witness in the Greek is martyr.

I used to believe this text, and Jeff, he'll correct me.

I used to think, man, we got these great, we're in this race and these great cloud of witnesses are cheering us on.

And I don't know.

But the text says that we are looking unto them because it's talking about, therefore, which we go back to chapter 11 where we see biblically these witnesses, those who have given their lives for the faith that we look to, that we are inspired by.

I love inspiration, to be inspired.

And we look to those martyrs, we look to Jesus for inspiration, but that is a meter that I want to check.

I want to, every day I want to be inspired.

Because inspiration is very important.

To be inspired means to feel, you know?

I come from, when I first came to the faith, that if you didn't feel it, then, you know, it was more or less about emotional stimulation when it came to a lot of Christianity.

And I wasn't a very emotional person.

Most people say they're not emotional.

I just wasn't emotional about, you know, singing songs to Jesus.

It just wasn't something, when I came to the faith, that wasn't something that made me emotional.

I understood what Jesus did, and I grew in the grace and the knowledge of my Lord and what he accomplished.

But inspired to be inspired means to feel, not that we, you know, some versions of Christianity where if you don't get super emotional, then you haven't had an experience.

I'm not talking about that.

I'm talking about the sense of being inspired to the point where it leads to some sort of action.

I just don't stay toe tap, knee slap, and then, you know, I'm inspired and it leads to action, to feel, and then to do.

And I think this is important that we have that inspiration.

But I also believe that we, as a community of faith, need to look not far for inspiration.

Yes, we inspire by our elders and we're to look at their model and their example.

But I love within the Christian faith, the one another's.

There's inspiration all around us.

And that's the beauty.

I want to give Heartland one exhortation is that, man, what makes the Christian faith so beautiful, particularly in community, how we can be really distinctive is the way we come, we deal with the one another's and how we do one word to one another.

That is to affirm one another.

to affirm the good works and the grace and the growth that we see in one another.

One thing about the world that I'm learning because I work for a non-profit and we're doing a lot of good works, but believe me, even in the good works that we do as a non-profit, it's still a human element outside of the spirit where people seem to not want to affirm one another and we're trying to one up one another because of position.

And it shouldn't be like that within the body of Christ.

Why?

Because like the battleship, every joint supplies something, has something to give.

And when you give what you're supposed to give from the gift and the grace that God gives you, I should be able to receive it and affirm that I'm receiving the grace from you.

That's the beauty about community.

Hebrews 3.13 says, encourage each other daily while it is still called today so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception.

We can inspire one another.

Again, I look for inspiration not from those who are on the TV screen but from the ordinary everyday actions of believers that should inspire us to spur us on.

Second point is that we are to be intentional.

Here we see in the text, he tells us something to be very intentional about.

He says, let us also be

Lay aside.

Be intentional about laying aside what?

Every weight and sin which clings so closely.

Let us also, because of those witnesses, they had to lay aside some things in order to run.

They lay aside weights and lay aside sins.

Being intentional about specifically what is hindering me.

Specific sins in my life so that I can run.

Lay aside.

Be intentional.

How do we know how to lay aside?

Well, we know this by example.

Understand this.

Christianity and the one another's again, we can learn from one another.

That's why I love that our Christian faith is multi-generational.

Me as an older man, a younger man should be able to come to me and say, how did you lay aside?

I'm struggling with this thing called lust.

And we don't just hand them a book.

We say, hey, well, I want you to, since you asked, I'm so glad you asked.

Let me share with you.

And how about we meet up every week just to discuss and talk through some of the patterns and the rhythms in my life that helped me to lay aside.

Because believe me, just saying do it ain't just going to cut it.

Because we didn't just do it.

Well, maybe some of you just did it.

But I think again, he says, also, let us also lay aside every weight and sin.

And I like what it says.

I love the scriptures.

The scriptures are so real, which cling so closely.

I think one of the things that I'm learning as I serve, and I'm grateful to be in this season of where I'm serving, as you all may know, and I think I stated I used to be a pastor, and the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

I have no desire to be a pulpit pastor, but I now lead a group called Men on Mission.

And Men on Mission is just a group of men that come together every Monday.

We eat together.

We chop it up about real life.

And I bring in real life and we talk real life.

And so I like to bring in the real Christ.

And not a mirage or an image of what sometimes I believe Christianity can be.

It's so real.

Stuff clings closely to us.

We're not far removed from our sins.

And I love to be so real and honest because there's a disparity between where people are at out here when they are out in these streets apart from like congregations and places like this.

People are far away from Jesus and even the concept of what Christianity is.

But what we do is so beautiful.

Every time we gather together, we may talk about real stuff.

But what I do is we have what we call a last word.

Well, we'll take one scripture.

This is the last word and it's from God.

They don't even, I don't even have to say all that.

But I'm pointing to the scripture and I said, look how practical and plain.

Because one of the disparities is between people who have never come to the faith and don't know the faith, especially the guys from my context, is that old book.

That my grandmama used to read relevant for today.

And so we don't go through a whole chapter.

We just say one verse.

You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

And then like, huh?

Yeah, didn't you know?

that you are fearfully and wonderfully made or Acts 17 where it says that God has placed you in a particular space and time for that reason so that you may draw close to him.

I say did you not know that God placed us in the middle of North St.

Louis and it's perfect.

It's the perfect place for you because it says in the text it's where you can draw near to him.

He put you right here so you can draw near.

The same with you.

Put you right out here.

I love coming 250, what is that?

I-55, is it 255?

When I go 55 and then 255, it's beautiful.

It's like, ah.

Because I live in Baden and, you know, they popping fireworks already and some of them ain't fireworks.

I'm like, man, but it's just, ah.

Ah.

But aesthetically different.

But hey, don't discount that.

There is a need that's great.

To God, everywhere is a hood that got people that need Jesus.

And a lot of people be like, man, let's come on.

I want a mission trip to come.

Okay, yeah, let's do it.

We all come this week and then next week we'll go out there to evangelize.

Huh?

Yeah.

I'm going to come out to evangelize with you.

But this is a beautiful thing.

Lay aside every way.

Let us run.

Let's be intentional.

Weight clings closely.

And like I was saying with these guys, like they need to understand that the scriptures is real.

But not only that, that those who profess Christianity is real.

Because I know a disparity is between be this and what you were.

And sometimes we act like there's no middle part to that.

No sanctification part to that.

And I let them know that it's real.

To be intentional means making deliberate decisions about how to spend your time and your energy.

Being intentional and specific about what is.

Do you not know that blind spots are real?

Do you not know what seems to be visible and simple to you sometimes takes really asking the Lord, search me, oh God, and see if there be any wickedness.

I know I see wickedness and some of it is plain, but some of it be hiding within me.

And do you not know when you ask the Lord to search me, being intentional about what is it that's hindering me, what is it that's going on in me, that God will not only tell you with a voice, but he'll send a voice of somebody like my brother here with this hat and that nice watch, and he may say something to me, and I can't just say, okay, it's a barrier because he got that nice hat on.

I never wear a hat like that.

I don't want to listen.

No, God going to use him.

That's how God does the one another, being intentional about our relationships, being intentional about do we really want to know what it is that we need to lay aside, what is hindering us, what it is.

And if we ask and we seek in the Lord, God will use not just Pastor Jeff through a sermon, he should use the one another's in the context of community.

God will use the Scriptures, Philippians 2.13.

The Spirit works in you both to do and to will.

I love how the text, though, it says, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance.

Endure.

Endure.

Endurance is the steadfast, courageous ability to remain faithful, hold up under trials and outlast adversity while trusting in God.

Enduring.

Man, I love it.

Endurance is not something that we just muster up.

It's a work of the Spirit to keep us enduring in this race.

That's why at my birthday, I thank God for endurance.

Not just the endurance that I've endured, but how God has endured with me.

He's used endurance and he's brought me from a mighty long way.

But let us run with endurance.

The race that is set before us.

Specific, it's intentional.

There's a race that is set before us.

I was telling my brother, the elder, that, man, I see so many gifts in him and I see so much maturity.

And I know that with Christianity, we're to be present where we serve, but also understand that this race has a track.

And sometimes God will use and set you on another track.

But we have to take seasons of time to assess that.

and to speak and to ask God, what race do you want me to run now?

I know you want me to run, but if I'm going to be intentional, where do you want me to run to now in this season of life?

Let us run with endurance the race that God sets before us, always asking God, what race are you setting before me to run?

So if we gonna be intentional, if we gonna be, if we gonna also be inspired and intentional, let us also be intense.

Intense to do what?

Verse two, looking to Jesus.

Looking to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith.

To be intense, to be focused, to be earnest, and then sometimes to be serious, even as I'm very silly.

But there's an intensity that it takes because as much as I love to have fun and I love the joy of Christian faith because I can't be, you know, you know, it used to be some preachers, man, they preach good and they preach hard, but I don't feel no joy anymore.

I want to feel joy, but understand and know that there has to be some times of seriousness and some intensity because this world is real and it'll try to suck you out.

There needs to be some times of intensity and I tell the young people all the time, young dudes, there needs to be some time where you sober up.

Because we're living in a world where everything is funny.

You know, it used to be a time where courtroom shows, you know, the people's court, boy, I'm telling my age.

It wasn't no laughing in the people's court.

Judge Wapner wasn't playing.

But now you got court shows where you go to court and it's a joke.

It's funny.

Court is somewhere where you should be sobered up.

I remember, you know, we used to play a lot when I was incarcerated and we had on the tier, we played cards and we do this.

But when that trial was coming up, guys got sobered.

We started thinking because now they understand that there's some years going to be attached to this.

I like playing cards with y'all for these months, but this is a possibility.

I don't want to be playing cards with y'all for 20 years, but that's the possibility.

We need to be intentional and serious about how we're going to engage in this world.

Because one of the things that I tell you as young men and even as young women, one of the things about me and my faith that you can learn from me, how I had to know I had to lay aside or I had to be more intentional because I was just a little too loose with my faith.

And it was a period in time where cool Christianity was so cool.

You could just do all kind of stuff, but you're still a Christian.

You could almost be like the world, but you're still a Christian.

You could drink as much as you want, you're still a Christian.

Yes, I'm not saying don't drink.

I don't personally drink because I know that that is a weight.

It's not a sin.

It's a weight for me.

And just like those of us who work out, they're personal trainers.

Some of us do all the same stuff, but sometimes I got to work on this a little more than that area, than you do.

There has to be a focusedness.

Especially when we look in unto Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.

There's a simplicity of Christianity and there's something that it says in the scriptures in Corinthians that the enemy will try to draw us away from the simplicity that's in Christ.

That's why when we came to faith, we were dudes who did a lot of the Christian hip-hop.

We were disciple guys in the systematic theology books, Wayne Grudem.

And we thought we were so cool, Jeff, and we got affirmed a lot from our white evangelical brothers.

Look at them brothers out there.

I ain't never read a book, and I'm going to give this dude a systematic theology.

Because why?

You need to know the nature of God.

And this dude looking like, okay, I wanna be a Christian, so is this what it takes?

And we was more so shoving theology down their throat than just relationship with Jesus.

And that's why a lot of these dudes, even though they became big rap stars, are no longer in the faith.

Because they can quote a lot of theology, they can quote a lot of people like Spurgeon and all that, but they don't even know how to have intimacy with Jesus.

Look into Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.

Jesus, he's an example.

He's the one who should inspire us.

Jesus had passion.

You know what passion is?

Passion is this, and if you don't remember nothing, remember this.

Passion is enduring the pain for something greater than the pain.

That's why we have to have a view of our faith because it is painful to try to resist.

And even though 12 and 4 says we haven't resisted to the point of bloodshed, we really kind of punks with it because we ain't shed blood like them.

But it's still something to try to restrain.

Like it says in Psalm 73, well, you see everybody doing all of this stuff, even under the guise of Christianity.

But I want to stay intense.

I want to stay focused and I want to be useful.

So I know for me, I got to do some stuff that for this worldly Christianity, they would say you're doing too much.

Not in a way to shame people because I don't shame people and I don't should on people.

That means telling them what they should do.

I know for me.

It's not Pharisaic.

I know for me.

I done been through too much.

I done lost too much.

And that's why I love being a part of my boulevard when it come to young preachers.

I'm not a pastor no more, but I tell you, I get a chance to speak to young preachers in cohorts, and I tell them it's no joke.

Your rhythms, I know you look good, I know you can preach, and I know you hip, and I know you got cool shoes, but understand this, boys, take more than that.

You gotta constantly stay looking unto Jesus because the gaze of this world and the things, it's like billboards all over to distract us from the simplicity that's in Christ.

Here, I leave this with you.

We are to spur one another on.

Relationship, that's the beauty of Christian community.

And that means that I need you.

Your brother, your sister, they need you.

The level of importance that we place upon leadership should be important and it should be reverence because I think there is another disparity where you can't even be a leader no more.

That's why I'm praying for leaders.

He's domineering.

I mean, I'm seeing guys who are as gentle as I am.

Now the church is saying they're domineering.

They put them out, but that's another story.

The emphasis should be on everything, shouldn't every spur, every exhortation, every correction shouldn't have to come from the pulpit.

We should be doing to one another.

And since we do do that because the Bible commands us to, you know, to sometimes we got a challenge.

Sometimes we got to confront.

Let's make sure that we have a culture of affirmation because a lot of times people want to speak into your life and they don't see no evidences of grace.

Come on.

That's all you see.

That's the world.

You know that.

The world, all they see is what's wrong with us.

We see through the lens of grace.

Even Paul in 1 Corinthians, my God, dude, sleeping with his stepmother and all this.

First thing he say, I thank God for the grace that's in you.

I'm messing up the camera.

I'm moving too much.

They told me not to do that.

We spur one another on and that means, again, sometimes we irritate.

But you know what?

When I know you love me and what irritation often just be initial because nobody likes to be corrected.

But more than most of the people that have ever challenged and corrected me in the past and had to confront me, you know, they're some of my greatest friends right now.

Because that's real love.

I was telling the guys that I meet with, I talked about relationship and friendship and I love my dudes in the streets.

And I used to have a tension between why was we so close together?

And then when I get to the Christian faith, sometimes it seems fickle.

I used to be like, man.

We need to do better on the Christian faith.

But that kind of love that we had, I don't know.

I've struggled with it because it is a love where you will help somebody hide a body.

Not literally, but maybe.

But it's a different kind of love that will say, we need to dig this up and deal with it.

Because I know that maybe this will get you over hiding it for a while.

But in the long term, I want to see you endure to the end.

And I don't want them lumps in the carpet to keep building up.

Let's spur one another on.

Let's look unto Jesus.

Let's keep looking.

Let's keep looking.

Let's keep spurring on simply to keep looking.

I do something that I've done since I've been in a faith.

One chapter of the gospels every day.

I just want to see him.

It's very simple.

I just want to see him.

Give me one little thing that I can gaze upon, that I can behold his glory in.

I saw him having compassion.

Man, I haven't been in compassion.

It helped me.

Because that's what I'm supposed to do, grow in the grace and the knowledge of my Lord.

Let's keep looking through the lens because that lens that Jesus is a lamp to my feet.

It's a light.

to my path as Bird preached about the word.

That's how we navigate this world.

We need that lamp.

We need that light.

All flesh is grass.

My thoughts and my opinion and some of us are very smart and wise according to the world, but man, we all need that word.

Finally, when we think about the race that is set before us, and I'll close with this.

Think about this when it comes to your faith and what it is you're called to do.

Particularly in here, in the church, and in your calling.

There are many things.

I believe that your vision come from your burden.

A burden.

Something that eventually like you begin to not, you begin to go to sleep thinking about and you wake up thinking about.

It's not about what you can do.

Serve where you can, but always ask the question, what is that thing that God has called me that I must do, that I have to do?

And that happens within seasons of your life, even if you're young.

What is that thing that I must do?

It ain't about doing a lot of stuff, but it's something that I must do.

If I don't do it, I just don't feel right.

Paul said it like this, woe is me if I don't preach the gospel.

When I fell from grace and didn't have a church, I wondered, what is the thing that I must do?

And I realized that over the course of my time, as I began to work in a non-profit, that these men began to cling to me and I have a heart for them.

They're struggling with the same stuff that I struggled with.

Why don't, I'm going to sleep thinking about these men.

I'm waking up thinking about these men.

Why are they coming to me?

Why are they asking me little questions?

Do you work out or, man, you so cool, man.

I'm like, it's something that I think I must do.

Not that everybody, all these men going to sit at my feet.

What if I created a space for men?

Because I want, because in our city in St.

Louis, and Jeff will tell you, he's passionate about the city of St.

Louis.

He loves this church, but he's passionate.

One of the things is, is that there needs to be gospel representation.

In the city, and I mean this.

I'm not saying this as a slight.

I mean it because the churches are dwindling because generations are dying off.

And going in that city, in there, that's a different kind of work.

Not no less a call than being here, but it's a different kind of work.

Let's pray.

Pray for me.

Let's pray right now that God send laborers because the harvest is plentiful.

It's plentiful, man.

It is plentiful.

It's plentiful.

I see dudes every day.

They still nodding off drugs.

I see them.

They still wasting their life.

I seen a dude just in my neighborhood messed around, left a gun somewhere, a 10-year-old child.

It's not for shock value.

A 10-year-old child got a hold of the gun, shot their seven-month-old sibling, and it's gone.

Now, this is just, you know, a snapshot.

It's not like all of this is just terrible, but I'm talking about there needs to be gospel.

And it don't need to necessarily be beautiful edifice.

It needs to be men and women who are willing to just say, man, the real life that I've been through, I want to bring the real Christ.

And it's going to take me being very intentional.

I need to be inspired to do it by the Spirit of God.

I need to be intentional about it.

And I need to be intense.

Even though I want joy, I need to be intense when it comes to being a vessel for God's use in the midst of a generation that needs to see someone tangible that they can't worship that's broken, but that will point to him.

Y'all need it here.

I'm praying for y'all.

We need it there.

Father, thank you for your word.

Thank you for your truth.

Thank you that I'm in the race.

I love my brother Jeff.

He's seen my life.

And I'm still in the race because you're good always.

You're faithful always.

You can use broken men like me always.

And you've been doing it throughout the history of time.

That list in 11.

Perfection, just people in pursuit.

So help us.

Broken, tension in our life, struggling with, I ain't feeling it today, ain't feeling it this week.

Help use us.

You put treasure in earthen vessels.

Easily breakable, easily replaceable, but yet you don't replace.

You say, I'm going to use you.

And you use people like us so that places like this and places like

Like North City will know that Jesus is real.

He's alive.

He's on the throne.

And you can not only be saved by him, you can be washed and you can be useful to the master.

Because you have called us to that, I'm grateful.

Help me, Lord.

Help us.

In your son Jesus' name, amen.