

State of the Church 2007

Roger Sand: Welcome to our State of the Church service. I'm Roger Sand and I serve on the official board as a lay elder. It has been a little more than three years since the *Purpose* campaign was introduced to us. We have experienced the blessing of God's great faithfulness in seeing the entire *Purpose* come to a reality. It is vital for us now not to view this as a final finished work but rather as a confirmation and a foundation for what God would have us to do next.

This service will present the opportunities that we will have a privilege to be a part of in the days and the years ahead. So I'll pray that you'll be blessed by being here and that God will use you to be a blessing to others. Let us commit our time to prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we come before You with hearts of gratitude for the saving grace that You've extended to us. We're thankful for the blessing that we are experiencing now from those that have gone before us and taken steps of faith. We're thankful for the provision that we've experienced through the Purpose campaign, that on Your timetable everything was put in place. We celebrate today the lives that have been changed from hopelessness and despair into an eternal relationship with You. We also look expectantly forward to what You might do through us. So I pray that Your Spirit would prepare our hearts for what You would have us do with the role You would have us be, that we would truly be the church You intend us to be. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Pastor Bryan Clark: The mission of Lincoln Berean Church is to glorify God by seeking to present every person complete in Christ. The reason we do what we do is for God's glory—to enhance God's reputation. Therefore, there are no celebrities here. "Every person"—we're constantly stretched by the implication of what that means. What will it take to present *every* person complete in Christ? "Complete in Christ" reminds us this isn't just about making converts. It's about discipling people to become like Jesus.

If you think about the process, then, all of us go out to where we live, where we work, where we go to school. We influence others. We reach others for Jesus. We bring them into the life of the church where they are corporately discipled, and they go back out to reach someone else. That whole process makes what looks like a loop—which we refer to as the People Loop. You'll hear that language around here quite often.

Three and a half years ago, as Roger mentioned, we introduced the *For This Purpose I Live* campaign, which for us was a significant step of faith. It included planting two churches in our city: one in the inner city and one up north. Both churches have been planted and are doing well.

It included the beginning of a Christian Leadership College, which this year we just started our second year and have six students, which is twice as many as we had last year. So we're continuing to make good progress there.

It included trying to fund the planting of a hundred churches in India. As of now, we're more in the neighborhood of 150 and growing in India. So we continue to see God's hand in that.

And of course, it included the building of a Youth Complex and this Auditorium.

As we began to talk about what would the next chapter be and what would we call that, of course we were aware that from the beginning, building an auditorium has never been an end in itself. It's merely a means to an end. It's merely a tool that we might further seek to accomplish the mission that God has given us. As a matter of fact, having this auditorium now as a tool for ministry allows us to go aggressively forward to accomplish the mission in a way that we've not been able to do for at least 12 or 13 years.

So we thought with all of that in mind, this is really the unfolding of the *For This Purpose I Live* concept. So we thought, why not just call it that: *For This Purpose I Live*2. It's, in essence, the second chapter, the unveiling of what God has in store for us in the years ahead.

When we were thinking about what does this next chapter look like and how do we work out some sort of a meaningful strategy to carry out the vision, we thought one of the things that's going to be very important is that it is so simple that everybody can identify with it. Everybody can say, "Okay, I understand how I'm included in accomplishing this mission."

This concept was first introduced last January, so it's not new to many of you. But as of this summer, the first campaign came to an end and this is the official launching of the second chapter. We decided to call it *Each One Reach One*. It's not complicated; it's not terribly profound. And yet the multiplying effect is really unimaginable.

The concept is simply this: that every single one of us—regardless of age, regardless of spiritual maturity—would trust God to use us to reach one other person for Christ in the next year. Not 20, not 50, just one—that you would carefully, prayerfully ask God to lead you to that person whom God has prepared that you might introduce that person to Jesus and bring that person into the life of the church: *Each One Reach One*.

Now when we say that, there's probably nobody who gasps because the vision seems so big. It's kind of like, "Okay, that seems reasonable. I can do that." But here's where the power is. If every single person that will be in this auditorium this weekend would say, "Yes, I will do that," it would only take us six years to reach the entire population of Lincoln. And it would take us around 30 years to reach the entire population of the world.

That means realistically, with each one reaching one over the course of a year, within our lifetime we could see the world reached for Jesus. That is staggering. Isn't it an amazing thing to think in the next couple years, every single seat that you see empty could be filled with someone who today is walking in despair and hopelessness? And it's as simple as *Each One Reach One*.

In order for that to be accomplished, we are offering you a series of equipping classes. They'll basically cycle all year long. You'll find them in your *Atlas*. The next one coming up is called "Just Walk Across the Room." Sometimes I think we make evangelism way too complicated, and it really is as simple as just walking across the room and talking to someone. That class will begin next Sunday morning. It's also offered on Saturday night. You can register for that this weekend. Just ask someone at an information counter and they can tell you where to go to register.

There's also another class coming up in November. Several months ago we surveyed you, the congregation, and asked you, "What are the questions you hear? What are the obstacles that seem to come up that you want help in knowing, how do I respond to this? How do I address this?" We've taken all of those that came back in the survey and we've put them together in a class, and

we'll offer you help in how to respond, how to work your way through those most common objections or obstacles to sharing Christ with someone.

So check the *Atlas*. Take advantage of those classes. Like I said, they'll be cycling through all year long.

Obviously, if we each one reach one and those people are brought into the life of the church in order to be discipled, we'll need to continue to expand our base of service in order to faithfully shepherd and serve the people that come through. So the second part of *Each One Reach One* would be if every single person who is serving somewhere in ministry—and it may be here on this campus, it may be off this campus—but if you are serving somewhere, would you take it upon yourself over the course of the next 12 months to find one person who is currently sitting on the sidelines and encourage that person to get connected in serving somewhere?

Again, it's not complicated. Just over the course of the year, in your LifeGroup, in your relationships, you find someone who right now is just sitting it out and help that person get connected somewhere in service. Again, it's just *Each One Reach One*. You can do the math. Our number of people serving would double in a year. And of course that would be a significant thing.

If you have a Bible this morning, I want to invite you to turn to Acts chapter 16. I want to give you four very simple principles this morning just to kind of get the motor going a little bit as it relates to *Each One Reach One*. We've spent the last two years working our way through the Book of Acts. I want to come back to chapter 16 because there are principles here that I have found personally very helpful in my understanding of this process of reaching other people with the Gospel of Jesus.

We don't have time to read through the whole chapter, and we studied all the way through it not too long ago, so I just want to highlight four principles. I would encourage you to write these down and over the next couple of weeks to think about them, to process them. I think it will be very helpful as you think about your part in reaching someone else for Christ this year.

Paul and Silas and team are launching into their second missionary journey. They desire to go to Asia, but the Spirit of Jesus closes that door and redirects them to Macedonia. I want to pick it up in verse 10.

When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:10; *NASB)

The first principle is this: It is very important to be very sensitive to the Spirit leading you to the person whom God has prepared for you.

The team wanted to go to Asia, but the Spirit of Jesus said, "No, I haven't prepared Asia. I've prepared Macedonia, and I've got people there for you. That's where I want you to go."

The danger is when you hear me say this morning, *Each One Reach One*, immediately you think, "Okay, I'm going to get Bob. You know, I'm going to get Sue." You already have that person in mind. But how do you know that's the person that God has prepared for you? The person God has prepared for you may be someone that you have never even met yet. So don't lock it in and just assign somebody as your project. You need to be very prayerful in considering: *Who is it that God has prepared for me?* So be very sensitive to the leading of the Spirit to lead you to that person whom God has prepared for you in the months to come.

Second of all, I want to pick it up in verse 14. The team now makes their way to Macedonia and specifically to the city of Philippi. It says:

A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. (Acts 16:14)

The second principle is this: Never forget that it's God who opens the hearts of people to respond to the truth. You cannot open someone's heart. God has to open the heart. When I understand that, it takes the pressure off. It's not my job to convince them. It's not my job to argue with them. It's not my job to force something upon them that they really don't want to hear.

I think one of the reasons we make evangelism so hard is we memorize this script and then we just kind of get overwhelmed with guilt and we try to jam it in at a time when it just doesn't fit. The person is not ready to hear it. We need to understand that our part is to present the message as clearly and as compassionately as we possibly can. But it's God's job to open up the heart of the person to respond to the message. So it's very important that I am faithful to do my part, but I trust God to do His part.

The third one is found in verses 16 through 18. Paul and Silas and team are preaching the Gospel, and a woman possessed by a demon becomes quite an obstacle. We pick it up in verse 18:

She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment. (Acts 16:18)

It's very important as we launch this *Each One Reach One* that we understand this is a battle. This is not a playground; this is a battleground. We remind ourselves we did not get on board a cruise ship; we got on board a battleship. We should not expect that we're just going to go wandering into our neighborhood and someone is going to run to us and say, "What must I do to be saved?" You should expect it's going to be a battle.

We do have an enemy that is completely opposed to everything we're talking about this morning, and he will do everything in his power to discourage you and to keep us from accomplishing our mission. We should expect that. But what we also know is: Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

So the third principle is this: We must trust that God in His power is able to remove every obstacle the enemy puts in our path. You just have to believe that by faith.

Reaching people with the Gospel is the heart and soul of what God is all about. It's what Jesus died for. So God will be faithful in His power to remove whatever obstacles the enemy puts in our path, that we might be faithful to the mission.

The fourth and final principle we pick up in verse 25.

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. (Acts 16:25)

Of course, most of you know the story: Paul and Silas were thrown into a Philippian jail. There in that jail they could have very easily gone into a little bit of a pity party, wondering, *Why does it have to be like this? It's so unfair. We're out there doing the work of the Lord, and He lets us be thrown into prison.*

But rather than responding that way, they responded by praising God and singing hymns. It was so powerful that the other prisoners gathered around to listen, so powerful that when an earthquake hit and the doors flew open and all of these prisoners had the opportunity to escape—now again, remember this wasn't the chess club; this wasn't the citizens of the year club; these were prisoners; these were some very bad people—and yet when they had their chance to escape, they didn't because what they had experienced with Paul and Silas was so powerful they stayed with them.

The jailer, realizing that this was true, ran up to Paul and Silas and said, "What must I do to be saved?"—in other words, "What must I do to have whatever it is you have?"

So the fourth principle is this: It's likely that your greatest times of witness will come in times of adversity. The reality is, when everything is going well, people tend to do fine. People's religion seems to work for them, and everybody kind of cruises along. It's typically in times of adversity that the reality of the presence of Jesus in our lives begins to be obvious. If that's true, then we could expect that our greatest times of witness will probably be in times of adversity.

It reminds us, then, that we need to be very careful how we respond to adversity. When things are not going so well at work, when you have a boss that isn't always fair, when all of this stuff is happening, be very careful that you don't enter into the same type of responses that would characterize the people around you. That's your moment to demonstrate that the presence of Jesus makes a difference in your life. And that is likely to be your greatest time of witness.

I would suggest over the next couple of weeks, you just give these four principles some careful thought and I think they'll be very helpful to you. Be very sensitive to the Spirit leading you to that person whom God has prepared for you. That's the first principle.

Second of all, remember that it is the Lord that opens the hearts of people. We need to be faithful to clearly, compassionately deliver the message. The goal is not just to get something said. There are no points for just cramming it in somewhere. It's to get something heard. To do that, you have to be sensitive to the Spirit's leading and remember the Lord opens their heart, not you.

Third, you have to expect that the enemy is going to put obstacles in your path, and you have to trust the power of God to remove whatever obstacle the enemy puts in your path—in order for you to be faithful to accomplish the mission.

Last, you should expect that your greatest witness is going to come in times of adversity.

It's very important this morning to realize what we're talking about here is not a new program. What we're talking about here is not something that's going to just kind of come and go over the next couple of years. What we're defining is a way of life. What we're defining is how we want to reach people in our community in a highly relational context, in a very loving, compassionate way—that each one would reach one.

If you think about building a building, we would see this as the foundation, because this is the heart and soul of what Jesus has called us to—go and make disciples. It always has to start with reaching lost people. So this is the foundation, and this is not going to go away. Whatever we build, however we remodel, whatever wallpaper we put up in this ministry over the next years, it will be built on an understanding that God has called each one to reach one. If we're faithful to do that, we will change our community.

With that in mind, I'm going to invite Mark to come up and give us just a glimpse of some of the things that are coming in the next couple of years.

Pastor Mark Kremer: I hope that what Bryan has shared this morning is as challenging for you as it is for me. The reality of my daily life is I live in southwest Lincoln and I work in southeast Lincoln. I mean, you could say that 90 percent of my life is spent up and down Pine Lake. Frankly, as I drive down Pine Lake Road on a daily basis and live from Highway 2 south, everything on the surface looks pretty good. One can be lulled to think, *You know, the world is a pretty good place. There really aren't any big problems or any big needs.*

But then you begin to meet people, even people who live in the more affluent parts of your community, and you begin to realize there's real pain. There's real hurt. There's real spiritual need.

I think about this summer my wife and our little kids spending time at our daughter's apartment swimming pool, and time after time conversations with people at the pool as they would begin to talk about the things that were going on in their life and the spiritual hunger and the need that they were experiencing, and the opportunity just to be and do what Bryan was talking about—just to build a relationship and to talk and to begin to build a foundation. You begin to realize that even in what seems to be a nice and comfortable community, there are people with really significant spiritual needs.

But I'm also aware that my world gets kind of limited. Even if I see the people in my immediate sphere and I'm reaching out to them, I have to understand that there are people that are outside of that that we also have a responsibility to—the people we never really run into in our daily walk. And God has called us to reach them.

Every now and then when I make that couple-of-time-a-year excursion down to the DMV to renew my license, I suddenly realize that my view of our community is very limited. There are more Iraqi refugees in our community than there will be people in our church this weekend—over 5000. I don't usually see them.

There are dozens of people who are hurting, and it's coming out and oozing out of their life in many different ways. You see it in a hospital. You see it in times of crisis. You see it in other places. You just get a little glimpse of it. But we believe that beyond each one reach one, God is calling us to look out and see our community with His eyes.

We're reminded in the Gospels that when Jesus approached Jerusalem—the city that He loved, the people that He dearly loved—He wept over the city. He saw them as hopeless, like sheep without a shepherd, hurting and needy. He wept because He cared so much for them.

I wonder how often you and I, as we drive over the hill over here from Wal-Mart and look down across our city, weep, really weep with compassion for all the people in our community—people who are very unlikely to ever set foot in this place. We're going to have to go to them. We're going to have to seek them out. We're going to have to listen to the Spirit of God as He prompts us to go and care about people who are outside our immediate sphere of influence.

That's what we're talking about in sort of the next phase of our church mission. We are calling it *The Church Unleashed*—unleashing our vision, our talent, our passion to reach every single part of our community. Over the course of the next year, we're going to be developing a team of people who will help lead and spearhead that effort. Next fall when we come to this particular State of the Church Sunday, we're going to begin to unpack some of what we believe that means.

Let me give you a couple of ideas of where we think God will call us. One would be the area of compassion ministries. Where are the neediest, the poorest, the people with the most disadvantages

in our community? How can we partner with people who already have a heart and a passion for those people and who are already working with them? How can we find new ways to get involved in the lives of people who really desperately need hope and need Christ?

Another area would be children, youth and families. Do we really care about all the kids? Do you know how many foster children there are in our city? How many abused and neglected children? Do you know how many single moms there are? My daughter works at St. Elizabeth hospital—how many babies are taken away from moms at the point of birth because these moms are addicted to crack? Who will care for those children, and who will reach out to those moms who leave the hospital crying because the child they thought would be such an important part of their life is now gone, taken away? There are hundreds, if not thousands, of opportunities to be involved in families' lives here in our community in the years to come.

Another significant area would be called community improvement. How can we get involved in our community in lots of different ways to make it a better place to live—a place where people have a greater opportunity and chance to actually come across a Christian, to meet somebody who really loves Jesus? Where can we get plugged into what's going on in our community to make it a better place to live?

The last thing I would mention is the marketplace. You know, it's interesting, when I was 30 years old I decided, *God, I really want to be out in the marketplace. I really want to be mixing it up with lost people.* So I left a role that I had on a church staff and went out into the marketplace. One of the things that really struck me when I came to church on Sunday was it seemed like the message was always, “I want you to get excited about what's going on in here.” I sat there and thought, *You have no idea what's going on in my life out there, because I'm mixing up with people and I need help. I need to be equipped and I need to be encouraged.*

That's what we really believe God wants us to do—that we are here to equip and encourage and support and celebrate what God is doing through you in all the places you already are planted—where you already work, where you already have platforms of opportunity. So thinking about all of the kinds of things that we can do to support people who are in the marketplace is, again, a part of our church unleashed vision.

The final piece of that will be that beginning two years from now, we would like to plant another church every single year somewhere in our region. It may be in Kansas City. It may be in a small community that doesn't have a church. But we believe God wants us to actively pursue and look for places where there is no effective grace-based, biblical church—that we can help plant a lighthouse in every community in our region and do that one per year for however many years God will allow us to do it.

Now the details of *The Church Unleashed* are in the little piece that you got as you came in this morning. You're going to need some time over the next weeks and months to think about that. But I hope that God is beginning to stir in your own heart the fact that what we've been given—the resources, the staff, the incredible thing that we experience here and in your small group and in our church—God has not given it to us for ourselves. It's a platform; it's a base; it's a foundation to launch out into the world, to truly be like Jesus, the hands and feet of Jesus touching our community. We believe it's even bigger than that—that God wants us to affect the very ends of the earth. Jeff is going to come and talk about that.

Pastor Jeff Peterson: During our trip to India this summer, I traveled to a rural village in the tribal state of Jarkan. Due to some unforeseen circumstances, we actually ended up arriving in this village hours later than our intended arrival time. Yet when we got there we found this tiny little rented church building packed and overflowing with 59 committed followers of Jesus Christ, and this wasn't on a Sunday. In fact, it was right in the middle of the week, and it was right in the middle of the day. The primary reason that these people had literally waited hours for us was because they wanted to say thank you to us and to all of you.

As I went in that building and began to talk with these people through a translator, I asked them the question: How many of you had a relationship with Jesus Christ or had even heard and understood the Gospel of Jesus Christ five years ago? If I asked that question here this morning, the hands would fly up. In that room not a single hand was raised. And I went through four years and three years. It was when I asked about two years and one year that the hands began to fill the room—because the reality is that every one of those 59 people was, until just a few years ago, lost, without God and without hope, worshiping dead idols.

It is through the church-planting ministry that God has allowed us to establish that those people have come to faith in Christ and have found eternal life. It was amazing to hear story after story as they shared their testimonies of how they've been seeking after God and looking for Him and trying to find Him through worshiping dead idols.

I especially remember the story of an elderly man whose face now beamed with radiance as he shared the joy of finding a God that is real and a God that is alive. That has taken place in the last few years because God chose to use us. It's just one story of one church planter's work in one place.

The reality is it's being multiplied all over India. Right now there are 327 men serving full time in our Berean church-planting ministry all across that country in 27 districts across five states. As Bryan shared earlier, over 150 of those men are able to do that work because of you—God using you as the people of this church to provide their support. It's truly amazing what He has done.

But you know, as we look at all that God has given us and all that He has put into this place, and as we pray about the future and we think of the wonder of the past, we honestly believe that God has even greater things in store. We believe that God wants to unleash this church, not just to have an impact that will transform our city and our region but literally to have transformational impact throughout our world.

As a result, we are trusting God through a two-track strategy for the future as we look forward to what God is going to do. The first track is similar to what we've seen God do in India as throughout this year we're going to be prayerfully looking for other partnership opportunities where we can come alongside, we can support and we can equip nationals—and we can help them to establish church-planting movements among their own people or among other peoples that are similar to them in culture or geography. We've seen how God can use us in strategic ways similar to what He has done in India.

Even at the end of this month I'll be traveling to Africa and India again. Part of what that trip will be about is meeting with potential partner organizations to look for new opportunities that God might have for us as a church to be involved in that type of a strategy.

But beyond that strategy, we believe that God wants to unleash this church by having many more in this body be even more personally involved. That's why there is a second track to our strategy. We

have just entered into a joint venture partnership agreement with *Avant Ministries*. *Avant*, formerly known as GMU, is a mission organization with over a hundred years of church-planting experience.

Right now they are on the cutting edge of some of the strategy that God is using to launch church-planting movements in the world. We have just entered into a partnership with them where together we are going to take significant steps of faith in the coming years.

One of those steps of faith is that instead of just trusting God to raise up and send out individuals from this body to the world, we are actually praying and believing that God is going to raise up entire teams of people that will come entirely from Lincoln Berean Church to go to completely unreached places in the world.

Instead of believing God simply that an individual who will go to a location and after spending an entire life in a location there will be *a* church that is planted, we are trusting God through a strategy called “short-cycle church planting” that God will use these teams in a short cycle (somewhere around five years) to not plant *a* church but to literally start and establish a church-planting movement always in a place that is today less than two percent Christian.

We believe God is going to call many of you to be personally involved in strategies just such as this. Throughout the year we're going to be laying the framework and the foundation for this strategy.

The first step for involvement for people in the body will be at the last week of March when we're going to take a group of people from Lincoln Berean to southern Spain and to north Africa for exposure to what God is doing in the world, through this short-cycle church-planting strategy, and an opportunity to begin to prayerfully consider how God might want to use all of us together in this way.

We're going to share more about it during our missions focus weekends in the beginning of November, but for now I just want to ask you, would you pray? Would you pray for what God wants to do in and through us not only to transform our city but to have transformational impact throughout our world? For as you pray—every single one of you—it's a way that every person in this body can literally be involved in what God is doing to change the world.

That's what this *Purpose2* concept is all about—this next chapter. It's about every one of us being used by God to see our world turned upside down. Bryan is going to come and share more about that.

Pastor Bryan Clark: Clearly, there has never been a time in our 45-year history where we have had a greater opportunity literally to change our community for God's glory and to impact the world. We have what we have today because of hundreds and thousands of faithful people, for 45 years, who have invested themselves into the things that last forever. This is *our* moment. And we're required before God to be a faithful steward of what we've been given. And we believe God is giving us the opportunity to change our community and to impact the world.

So what are we asking from you? What are we asking from you by way of commitment? The first commitment would be that you would be willing to be a part of the *Each One Reach One* strategy. Whether you're 90 years old, whether you're 10 years old, whatever your age, we are asking you: Would you be willing to trust God that He would use you over the course of the next 12 months to reach one person for Jesus and to bring that person in to be discipled and equipped through the life of the church, that that person can go back out and reach one more?

I understand it's easy to listen to this and then go back to life as it was, and it just kind of all goes away. I'm asking you not to let that happen. But that you would carefully, prayerfully say to God, "Yes, I want You to use me and I'm going to be very focused on that mission this year in my school, in the marketplace, in my neighborhood"—wherever God has placed you.

Second of all, I'm asking you—we're asking you—to be committed financially to the mission. Over the last three-and-a-half years, God has done a remarkable thing through His people financially as people have stewarded their treasures for God's purposes. It has been a remarkable three and a half years. So we believe we're right on track. We just need to continue the momentum and continue to make sacrifices and invest ourselves into the things that last forever.

Our General Fund is in essence our ministry fund. It's the fund from which all the ministry here at Lincoln Berean is funded. That's obviously a very critical fund. We've done very well the last three years. We just need to continue to keep that fund healthy.

You need to remember, if you want your gift to go to Missions, you have to designate your gift to Missions in order for that to happen.

Mark mentioned the *For This Purpose I Live2* brochure that you received this morning. In that brochure there is a list of several projects that we did not feel we could justify putting in the budget this year, but they're things that need to be done. As you read through those, there may be some of you that would say, "This is one that I think I would like to help see come to pass." If you'd like to do that, then you can contact the church office or you can simply make your gift and mark it accordingly.

There are quite a variety of things. One of the things would be moving the adult library over here to the second level of the E wing. One would be finishing out that courtyard as you go out the doors to the west here. It's a big courtyard that's going to be a beautiful space that right now is obviously unfinished. Another would be some pads for handicapped. Our handicapped friends need better access in and out, and we need to get them some pads. Another would be a parking lot back here to the northeast. We'd like to pave a big area of that. We'd like to move our senior parking over there so that they don't have to try to navigate the rocks and would have better access in all seasons. So that's another opportunity.

There's a whole list of things—for example, a couple of signs, finishing out the Youth Complex. If you've been in the Youth Complex, there's quite a bit that isn't done there. The price tag on that is

\$500,000. That's what it takes to finish everything. That can obviously be broken down into smaller chunks. If you're interested in that, just talk to one of the youth guys.

In addition to all of that, one of the biggest areas of focus financially in the next three years is we would like to totally eliminate our indebtedness. We have about eight million dollars of indebtedness and we'd like to, three years from now, have that completely eliminated and would like to move forward on a cash-only basis.

If we do the next three years what we've seen God do in the last three years, we will be completely debt-free in three years. So it's very reasonable to expect that God would do that through us.

So what we're asking is this: If you've been a part of the *Purpose* campaign, would you prayerfully consider extending that for another three years in order to eliminate the indebtedness? It would save us four-and-a-half million dollars in interest that could be poured out into the ministry, poured out into our community and around the world. So if you've already been onboard with the *Purpose* campaign, we're just asking would you stay with it three more years and let's finish this thing out.

If you haven't been a part of the *Purpose* campaign—if you're new or you weren't able to get involved three years ago—we'd encourage you to prayerfully consider on top of your normal giving some sort of a commitment in order to accomplish this. When you give your gift, you just need to mark it accordingly for the *Purpose* campaign.

It's easy to hear this and think that your little gift couldn't possibly make a difference, but you have to understand these last three years have been about thousands of people faithfully stewarding what God has given them, and all of those little gifts add up to significant gifts.

One way to process this would be: If every single person who currently is giving would give a hundred dollars a month toward wiping out the debt, in three years all of the indebtedness would be gone—just a hundred dollars a month.

Now I know when you go home this afternoon and you start looking through your budget and you start chatting with your spouse or thinking about it as a single, you may look at your budget and say, "You know, I just don't think that's going to work."

Let me pose a question to you. I just want you to answer it honestly in your heart. If this morning I had a brand new \$30,000 SUV, and I had it parked up here on the stage. And I committed to you that if you could come up with a hundred dollars a month for the next three years, it's yours, no strings attached, how many families would figure out a way to rearrange the budget in order to make that happen? If you're willing to do that for something that will end up in a junk pile, I'm asking you, are you willing to do that for something that will last forever?

This evening is our baptism service. It's very intentional to have it on the evening of the State of the Church, because this morning we talk about strategies; we talk about visions; we talk about where we're headed. But it's very easy in all of that to lose sight that this is about people—and people's lives being changed forever. Tonight if you come back you'll see 43 people whose lives have been changed by the power of Jesus, celebrating their new life in Jesus. The service is at 6:00. It's in the chapel, the old C wing auditorium. The service is about an hour. If you haven't been to one of these, you have got to come.

It is so powerful to see person after person after person whose lives have been changed by the power of Jesus. As you look these people in the eye and you see the joy of Jesus in their faces, you have to ask yourself: *Was it worth it? Was it worth it to rearrange our budget, to make some sacrifices so this person could live forever with Jesus?* You've got to put the flesh and blood, you've got to put the reality of people's lives into these choices we make, because that's what it's about.

So we're asking you: Would you be willing to get on board with us over the next three years and see all of this indebtedness wiped out? It's really a remarkable thing, isn't it, to think about the reality that, all across our community there are people waking up—many of whom are hung over, they're in despair, they're empty, they're wondering why they should even go on living another day? Over the next 12 months, hundreds, maybe thousands of those people will be filling these empty seats, giving testimony that Jesus has changed their lives. Some of those people are people whom God has prepared for you to share the good news of Jesus, that that person's life could be changed forever. It's not complicated—*Each One Reach One*.

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