

**I Corinthians 1 – 7**  
**God Grows His Church**  
**I Cor. 3:1-9**

Let me say good evening to all of you on a very, sweet and sad occasion. We have come to love the Richards, and we're going to, I'll say, Crown our service tonight by saying, go in God's peace and we miss you. Go and don't go. That's what we're going to say. But in God's providence, we're working through the book of Corinthians and come to First Corinthians 3. It's a passage about ministry, and so I'm glad to read it to you and to apply it to all of our lives, but especially the situation we have at hand of commissioning one of our people to go out or Texas. First Corinthians 3:1-9 but I'm going to read also verses ten. This God's Word.

*But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving only in a human way? For one says, I follow Paul, another I follow Apollos. Are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each I planted, Apollos watered. But God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything but only God who gives the growth, he who plants and he waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. We are God's fellow workers. You are God's field. God's building. And then the last two verses, according to the grace of God given to me. Like a skilled master builder, I lay the foundation and someone else's building upon it. But each one take care how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Let's pray together for a moment.

Father, I ask that you would give us ears to hear what you're saying to people long ago and then, of course, Lord, to people today. May we hear that you are the one always growing your church. May we not mistake that when we have confidence in that, we pray in Jesus name, Amen.

If I had to pick one verse that summarizes everything in this passage, it would be verse six which says, I planted, Apollos watered. God gave the increase, God grows his church. That's the good news here in the States. And it's the good news in Hungary. God makes his church grow. But we have a hard time remembering that sometimes there are all kinds of things we have a hard time remembering. I don't know about you, but I have a hard time remembering the arbitrary steps to enter information on a website I use once a year. I have a hard time remembering that, and I have a hard time with various other things, so some of you may have a hard time remembering the ages of your children. Would you confess that? I think my children are. And then? And then they make a mistake? No, daddy, I'm. I'm not. I'm 11 now, and you feel silly. Some people can't remember historical dates. They're happy if they get World War I in the right century. You know, 1938. Who knows? I can't remember that sort of thing.

Paul wants the Corinthians to remember something much more important than such arbitrary matters. He wants them to remember the pathways of the gospel. In fact, I'll turn to the last couple of verses right away. Paul has used a number of metaphors for the Church of God is like a field that's the one he uses part of the time. He also says it's like a building. He also says it's like a mother feeding a child spiritual milk. But always, always there is one foundation and that is Jesus Christ. You must remember that only one foundation has been laid. No other foundation can be laid. That is the foundation of the church. And it's folly to forget that and to try to build the church on the foundation of Paul or Apollos, or any human being that you can think of.

Now the Corinthians are having a hard time, as you probably know, in chapter two we heard a excellent sermon on that. I didn't preach it. Someone else did last week, so I'm allowed to say it's excellent. An excellent sermon on the forgetfulness of the Corinthians, the things they lost sight of. They lost sight of the fact that the natural person does not understand the things of the Spirit of God. They're spiritually discerned, need the mind of Christ. That is to say, there's no speaker, no matter how persuasive, no teacher, how matter how wonderful, that can give someone the mind of Christ. That's not something a natural man has or can give to another man. It's God's gift at other problems. They quarreled internally. Chapter one, verses 10 to 16. They were obsessed with spiritual wisdom and spirituality as they defined it. That's chapter one, verses 17 to 21. They were prone to boast about human matters, including my favorite leader, Paul Apollos and Cephas. They think they're wise. They think they're maybe wiser than Paul, who did not come with wisdom according to the standards of that age. According to that age, if you were a really good speaker, you were rhetorically gifted. It helped. So people said in Corinth, that was the culture. It helped. If the speaker was tall and energetic, he had a big voice. That's what they liked. They liked flashy speakers, and they liked speakers who were who appeared to be strong. And they liked them to talk about happy topics, things like virtue and the good life.

Here comes Paul, small bow legged. So they say bald, big nose doesn't look that impressive. And he says he deliberately rejected rhetorical flourishes. He says, I didn't come with worldly wisdom. He says I did not come. Chapter two, verse one with lofty speech or wisdom. He came with a message. It seemed like foolishness. He said, I came to proclaim one thing Christ and Him crucified. And that was so offensive in that day. You weren't even supposed to say the word crucify. It was the biggest curse word of the day. It was the height of rudeness to say the word crucify because people knew what it meant. They knew it meant humiliation. It meant agonizing death. It meant someone was despised by everyone. No one would stand up for them. No one would rise to their defense. They wouldn't just kill them fast. It would kill them in agony. It was the most debased word you could use. It was worse than any four letter word. You know. Paul kept on saying it. Crucified Christ crucified, Christ, risen. Christ died for our sins. He died in the cross. He was crucified. He just kept saying it and then thought, what is wrong with this man? Why does he not follow the rules? Well, the reason why he doesn't follow the rules is because he knows that the cross, not just the cross, but the cross and the resurrection is as he says in

chapter one, verse 24, folly to the Greeks, but is the power of God and the wisdom of God, which tells us that there's only one way to be right with God.

Our situation is that dire. We are that poor spiritually, that the only hope is that the Son of God would come into this world and die on the cross for our sins, and rise again, and give us, as chapter 11 says, a new covenant in his blood, that we would be justified as chapter six. First Corinthians says, in the name of Jesus Christ, that God brought him back to life from death. That's chapter 15. Now, this idea that Paul is fixed on, that Jesus died on the cross for us is repugnant to some people like the Corinthians. But on the other hand, the truth is everybody knows about everybody knows about substitution. Even if people didn't like it, then even if people push against it now, the truth is, substitution is woven into the fabric of the universe every time one person pays for another person's education. That's the principle substitution. If you pay for your child's education, they're the ones getting the education. If you give money to have a scholarship to a school like Briarwood Christian School or Birmingham Theological Seminary, that's the principle substitution. You're paying for someone else's education. And not only that, but we see it in parents paying any number of debts. Their children have it, and we also see it in entertainment. I don't I don't, I don't know what happened to the Marvel Universe. They made \$5 billion in ten years. And then they said, oh, we're done. But if you would ever look at the Marvel Universe, all the heroes are willing to die for their people all the time. I mean, every ten minutes, Thor's willing to die for his people. Maybe not every ten minutes, but he's often willing to die for his people. Doctor Strange is willing to die for his people. As arrogant and obnoxious as he is at the beginning, the truth of the matter is, by the end, even Tony Stark. I don't want to give too much away here. Even Tony Stark in all of his egocentricity is willing to. And in fact, close your eyes if you haven't heard the end of the story. He gives his life for his people. Even Loki, that scoundrel, is willing to die at the end of one of the spinoffs because the principle substitution is woven into the world and it's foolishness. And yet it's the wisdom of God. Spiritual person understands it, sees it. Paul says, you who are spiritual, you understand this now, of course, the Corinthians had a misguided view of their own spirituality at times. Sometimes they thought, we're so spiritual that our body doesn't matter. Chapter six. It doesn't matter what we do with our body. No sexual ethics of any kind, because the body just isn't spiritual. The chapter seven.

There's another problem with excess of spirituality. They said, we should husband and wife should stop touching each other at all because we're spiritual. Chapter 15. Some said the resurrection of the body doesn't matter. The resurrection of Jesus, our resurrection doesn't matter because we're spiritual. They had their problems that Paul had to straighten out, and he is straightening in or out.

In fact, he rebukes them in verses one and two, which we have up there. He says, I'd love to address you as spiritual people if misunderstood. Spirituality is what I'm saying. But you're of the flesh and you're infants in Christ. That's not a compliment. You're infants in Christ. He says, I had to give you milk, not solid food, because you weren't ready for solid food. And in fact, even

now he says, you're not ready. It's so stark you wonder if they're even Christians. But he makes it very clear in verse five that they are believers. If you want to look at verse five with me for a minute, I've got to find it myself. Verse five says, What is Paul? He is a servant through whom you believed.

And he also tells them that you are God's field in God's building. So they're believers, but he's disappointed in them. They're like spiritual children. What's their childishness? Their childishness is they're following human heroes. Instead of recognizing that Jesus is the one and only hero, Christians should follow, they say, I follow Paul, I follow Apollos, I follow chefs. They're saying my hero is better than your hero. And that's infantile. Now, in the New Testament, milk can be good or bad. In First Peter chapter one, Peter says, when you're new Christians, you need pure spiritual milk. He says, Peter says to the people, when you're a new believer, you're like a baby who nurses from his or her mother and his nurse. They're by like newborn infants long for pure spiritual milk that by may grow up into salvation. So you grow up by spiritual milk. But you do need to grow up. You need to stop needing milk eventually. Milk is for infants. We know this, right?

Have you watched a baby lately? When a baby's hungry, they start a little baby like four weeks, six weeks, eight weeks old. They start looking for their mother. They want a nurse. That's where they get their nourishment and that's good for them. They put on weight. And then after about, I don't know, 3 or 4 months pass, you notice that the little infant starts to watch other people eat. So for a while all they know is their mother's breast. But then they look around and they say, what's going on over there? What are those people putting in their mouth? And they start opening their mouth right when they're older. Brother and sister eating. You know this, right? Raise your hand if you know what I'm talking about. They're going like this, and then, you know, okay, within 3 or 4 weeks, they're going to want to eat solid food and they want to eat solid food because milk is not enough to make you strong for the rest of your life. And the Corinthians are still weak. They're not ready. Should be ready. They're old enough, he says to them in verses three and four, you are still of the flesh. For a while there is jealousy and strife among you. Are you not of the flesh behaving in a human way, that is to say, not a godly way? For one says, I follow Paul. I know this is, I follow Apollos. Aren't you being merely human? Answer yes. People love their heroes. Some people say, I don't know if you have heard this. in the sort of self-help, self-help literature, they'll say things like, you need to be the hero of your own story. You be the hero of your story. And most people understand somehow, viscerally, they are not great enough, grand enough, strong enough to be the hero of their own story.

And so they look for other heroes. And if they attach themselves to the right hero, then they'll feel like they're heroic. And Paul says that's foolishness, leads to jealousy, that leads to strife, leads to quarreling about secondary matters. Have you heard anybody here heard the term caged Calvinists? I heard that term. A caged Calvinist is someone who's so zealous for Calvin that he kind of forgets that he's following Jesus. So when young man, they're usually men. In fact, they think they're always men. And I think they're always young men. And, you know,

they're they come to Christ and they have some vague Arminian ideas in their minds. And then somebody says, well, you know, there's this guy named John Calvin. And he had this to say, and they become enthusiastic. And then they find themselves trying to force Calvinism into every conversation. And people say, just stop it. Stop. Let's talk about Jesus more than Calvin, right? There are people who get enthusiastic. This is also young men about God's order for marriage. And we got to talk about submission and authority and headship. So, you know, that's true.

I know you read a book and it's good to read books about men taking leadership, but let's focus on loving your wife. Also not getting her to submit to you. I was in Saint Louis one time driving around, when there was an extraordinary example of this, the Saint Louis Cardinals. The year was 2005, and at the time, the Cardinals had the man who's probably the best hitter in baseball. His name is Albert Pujols, and they were in the playoffs as always. They were playing the Astros and the Astros were ahead three games to two in the National League championship. So whoever wins is going to go to the World Series, and the Cardinals are down. I'm going to get this right. The Cardinals are down 4 to 2 with two outs, two runners on base. Ninth inning Albert Pujols comes to the plate. Two outs, two men on behind by two runs. One more out and they're out. And he's up against the best relief pitcher in the major leagues at that time, Brad Lidge. And Brad Lidge throws a slider over the plate and Pujols hit it into the third deck. Five for the Cardinals win. The great Albert Pujols comes through again the next morning. I heard I just for some reason, I never listen to talk radio. I just thought, well, I'll see what they say about talk radio. And the woman said this. He said she said based on the homerun that Pujols hit, now the world will see how great the Cardinals are. Now, the world will see how great Cardinals fans are. The Cardinals and their fans live for this. And the Cardinals lost that night. Don't live for Albert Pujols. Don't live for your favorite politician. Don't live for your favorite Christian leader either. Not Paul, not Apollos, not anyone. Can I just give you a forecast? Go ahead. Don't love your next pastor more than you love Jesus. No matter how great he is, no matter how gifted he is, no matter how he fulfills all your dreams, he's not your hero. There's no human that should eradicate the brilliance of Jesus.

Paul moves on in verse five to tell us, then what is the role of a human who is a leader? The answer is a human who's a leader is a servant. Look at verse five. Paul says it this way. What then is Apollos? What then is Paul servants through whom you believed, servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned each that is to say, God gave each one of those men a role, and they both help you believe. Either begin to believe. Paul mostly, or continue to believe and grow in your faith. That would be more Apollos. So who are they? Well, Paul was the pioneering evangelist, uniquely qualified by God's providence in his life. He had a fantastic university education. If you look at his writings, in his speeches, he quotes philosophers that are well known and philosophers that are obscure. And so he had a he had a university, Greco-Roman education, a Greek. He knew he knew Latin, he knew Aramaic, he knew Hebrew into the four main languages. Anybody could know. And he also knew Jewish culture really well. He studied with Gamaliel, the greatest rabbi of his day. He was perfectly equipped to start

preaching the gospel in churches throughout the Roman Empire, start to start speaking in synagogues, to tell them, this is the Christ, the one you've been waiting for.

And then whoever would follow him would help him start a church. That's what he did. He was perfectly equipped by God for that. Wasn't a great orator. He wasn't a handsome, but he was equipped by God for his role. And Apollos came by, and Paul's was gifted in the skills of rhetoric. He was impressive. People were blown away by him. We would say today he was magnetic. He was a dazzling speaker. And what is he? He he's a man who builds on the foundation that Paul started. The foundation is Christ in everyone who does anything worthwhile is building on that foundation. Paul and Apollos and any leader we have today is someone through whom you believed, not in whom you believed, but through whom you believed.

If Paul and Apollos and any other Christian leader is the hamburger, we've made a terrible mistake. Jesus is the hamburger, and Paul and Apollos and any other leader is the knife and the fork that enables you to put it in your mouth. Or Jesus is the milkshake, and Paul in a Paul and everybody else is the straw or the spoon. We're just agents. We're just agents. Speaking of Christ, presenting Christ through whom we believe. Now Paul calls himself a servant. The word is darkness. If you're a deacon in the church, the word deacon means servant. Paul calls himself a servant in verse five. A little bit later, he calls himself a slave. In chapter four, verse five of Second Corinthians, he says in another place that Jesus took the form of a servant.

In other places a Jesus took the form of a slave. That's in Philippians chapter two, Jesus said, I am among you as one who serves a deacon. Jesus said, The Son of Man, man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. So if you say to Paul or Apollos or Joel or anybody else, past pastor, future pastor, if you say to them, you are my hero, you've missed the point. Jesus is our hero. I invite you, if you would the turn with me to Hebrews chapter two, verse ten. Hebrews two, verse ten. Now there's a word that's used in Hebrews 2:10. It gets translated a variety of ways, but the best way to translate it, I believe, and some translations say it, although the ESV does not, the best way to transmit, I think, is probably by the word founder or hero of the faith.

And this is what it says. It says in verse nine, just a little context. We see him, Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. That's his atonement. For it was fitting that he for whom and by whom all things exist in men, bringing many sons of glory, should make the founder the word is archegos. Archegos means chief leader, first leader, trailblazer, hero. That that he should make the founder the hero of their faith perfect through suffering. There's only one person is called a hero in the Bible. That's Jesus. If you call any other human a hero, you've made a mistake. These people are through whom you believe, not in whom you believe.

Now that also means we're servants. Paul's a servant. If you're a disciple, your servant. And it means that as we go through life, we should ask the question, how can I serve? How can I serve

you? One of the pastors I worked with sort of the middle of my career, I noticed after a while that he was saying over and over again, how can I serve you? How can I serve you? But every two weeks he'd say that he's trying to build into his life the idea that we're servants. And of course, our culture doesn't help us here. He's talking to someone a while ago and they said, you know, the wellness industry again it self care, you know, don't exhaust yourself. Get your sleep. Don't burn yourself out endless toil. But she said, oh, it also seems to me that the wellness industry is kind of the selfishness industry. Sometimes. Take care of yourself, take care of yourself, take care of yourself. They say. Self care can become selfish. If we think of ourselves as a servant, then we serve. See what needs to be done. Ask God, show me what I can do in my family, in my home, in my workplace, in my church.

And then also we're slaves, which implies that we have a master. We're not employees. The Bible never calls us employees. Employees can switch jobs. A master owes total loyalty to one person 24 hours a day. You can work for two, master. You can work for sorry. You can work for two employers. You know you can't work for two masters. We have one master, namely Christ. Paul's a servant. Apollos is a servant. Every leader of the church is a servant. It doesn't put the leaders down. We're thankful for leaders, but they are through whom we believe, not in whom we believe. I'm going to tell you a personal story can make me look good, and I'm going to sort of pull myself down a notch, okay? Don't feel bad.

Don't think I'm bragging. So one day, I was preaching in a church for, I'm going to say maybe the 50th or 60th time. It was one of those times when I was helping a church out by preaching and doing some other things for about a year and a half and near the end of my time, I noticed a woman started to come and kind of sit by herself over here, and she had, it's almost like she tried to find, come in late, find a place with nobody else around and sit there. And she would just stare at me the whole time. And then at the end, near the end of my time, she was clearly waiting around one Sunday till everybody was gone and I said, well, hello, I've. I've seen your face many times but we've never talked. She said, yes, it's true. We never talked. She said, I need to tell you that you saved my life. You don't interrupt somebody when they say that you want to say no, I didn't. But I let her talk. She said I had a baby. And I became so depressed afterward that I thought about killing myself every single day. But for some reason, I came to this church. And when you spoke about God's love and grace, I'm reading her words because I wrote them down. It gave me reason to hope. Every week I became so depressed that I thought about killing myself again. But every Sunday, these are exact words. I dragged my body to church. I dragged my body to church, and I heard a reason to live and not kill myself and come back the next week. And now the clouds have lifted and I had to say thank you.

Well, that's a heart rending story. It's also a beautiful story, and it would be an enormous mistake for somebody to say, truly, I saved that woman's life. I was a person through whom Christ ministered to her. Somebody invited her to church and said, come to my church. And her husband apparently said, I'll stay and watch the baby so you can focus completely uninterrupted.

And somehow the Lord kept her. The Holy Spirit kept her from taking her life and spurred her to come back. I even reviewed I decided to read my sermon notes. She said, you gave me hope. Every week I looked through six or 7 or 8 weeks of sermon notes. I didn't find the word hope a single time I'd been pitching Christ, discipleship, obedience. And she kept catching hope. Why? Because the Holy Spirit was at work. The Lord opened her eyes and ears. She every whiff of a reason. I gave her every tiny thread that encouraged her to keep on living was one she picked up by God's grace. It'd be a terrible mistake to say anything other than God preserved her through a series of people and invite her a husband.

And yes, the messages that I was giving as well. Well, who are we then? Paul says we are a field that God tends. We are children who need milk and then we need solid food. We are a building. Verses 9,10, 11, 12 we're a temple. And Paul says, I planted, Apollos watered. God gave the increase. Paul planted the church. He's the one who founded it. Apollos taught there. He watered. God made it grow. God equipped Paul to go to the Gentiles, and he went. And he equipped Apollos to take people farther, because he was gifted at rhetoric. And the people did love rhetoric, and God gave them a rhetorician. But it was always God regenerating the heart, always God opening the mind.

And if I may say so directly, this is a lesson we need as we look for our next pastor. This church has been gifted with marvelous pastors, two tremendously gifted and godly and hardworking men, and you will most likely get another gifted, hardworking, and virtuous man. Most likely, very likely. But it would be a terrible mistake to say the church rests on men. There are men through whom we believe gifted men, hardworking men, godly men, exemplary men. But always the leader is secondary. He always we are God's servants. Now Paul says it so strongly that you almost think, come on, Paul, look at verse seven, what he says. He says so neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything. We're nothing. It seems like only God gives the growth. But then in verse eight he says, well, maybe, maybe I'll pull back on that a little bit. He says, he who plants and he who waters are one in each will receive his wages according to his labor. That is to say, they are working. God does recognize it, and he'll reward it as he should.

So in a way, the servant is nothing but another way. We're one with each other, and to exalt one leader over another is always to make a mistake, because all the leaders are one and pointing in the same direction toward Christ. The foundation. Now that doesn't mean skills are meaningless. Skills are still important. They're just secondary. If I may say, Jesus was a fantastically talented teacher. You know, he told stories. People were enraged at him and he'd say, oh, let me tell you a story. And then they would forget their rage and listen and condemn themselves. Sometimes. Matthew chapter 21, he should bring those wretches to a wretched end. And Jesus said, well, you're talking about yourselves. Jesus transfixed outsiders. One day he was in the temple precincts.

In the temple authorities said, arrest that man. And the soldiers went there, and they came back empty handed. And the man in charge said, what happened? Where's Jesus? And their answer was, nobody ever spoke. The way he speaks like boss, he talks too good. We just



couldn't take him away. There is something to it. People write books about the techniques, the method and message of Jesus, things of that nature. So human skill matters. But it's not final.

We sing the song, "Yet not I, but Christ in me." And I had the privilege some months ago, close to a year ago, of being in a conference where City of Light, who wrote it, sang. And I have to tell you, they're really good. I mean, they write good music and they sing it well, and they had a sound system that really was beautiful. In fact, I was so moved with 7000 people that at one point I couldn't sing anymore because I was choking back tears of joy. It's just so beautiful. And then about two weeks later, I was speaking at a men's conference and or a children's conference. Like the further up the details in cases like this and, the first tier and second tier musicians were gone. One was sick, lost his voice, one couldn't come at the last second. And so it was it was team C presenting the music and they wanted to sing, yet not I, but through Christ in me. And they were so nervous that they forgot they had capos on their guitars and they it just, it was so low yet, you know, it's just this beautiful song was so, so hard to sing. Presentation counts. We should take care to make a presentation. If we're leaders, it matters. But it's never final. It's always through. Whom? It's always servant. It's always slave of Christ, always pointing to Christ.

It's amazing how God does things. If you're in ministry enough and talk to enough people. There's so many stories are so astonishing that describe the way God does things that transcend all expectation. I'm going to share one with you from a campus minister. He's gifted, no question about it. He's got a great personality, works hard. He's disciplined. He's a gifted man. He's reformed. He's one of us. And he's on a major campus in America. And he told me the story of an international student that came to faith through his ministry. And here's how it happened. She was a far distant country, not a Christian at all. And as her mother sent her off, I wrote this down to she said, listen, you need to look for a Christian group, find a small Christian group. She said, they are the friendliest now. Her mother was right. Her daughter Marie did find her way to a very friendly group and found communion as never before. But she soon learned that her group aimed for more than friendliness. She meant to find friendly people, but she found Christ. How does that happen? Was it the campus minister who did some marvelous thing?

Well, yes or no? I mean, a Buddhist mother said, go hang out with the Christians. You'll find some friends there. What a crazy way to come to Christ. And yet it's what the Lord used because she came there and the people were friendly, and they. She heard the gospel and she became a Christian. And now she professes Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It's all God's work. We aim to be faithful, but it's all God's work. And so let's remember our tendency to love our heroes, to love politicians and musicians and athletes. Yes, pastors and theologians, to. And it's true that God gives people who are gifted, and it's true that people who are gifted should work hard to manifest their gifts and make the most of them.

But the foundation is always Christ. Nothing will happen. The most articulate, gifted, rhetorically beautiful person will never see a single convert unless Jesus opens the heart, moves people to repent, moves into trust in Jesus. It's always our hope here. It's our certainly it is our hope for

Joel and for Rusty. They're nice people. They're godly people. We're going to miss them. They're sweet. They're kind. Their children are adorable. When I met them, I had to ask them the question, how did you become so cute and beautiful? How did it happen? Who did this to you? And the answer is God did it. They knew that. But beauty and sweetness and kindness will never convert anyone. Christ is always the foundation. We're only servants saying what God gave us to do, and now we're going to commission them. After I pray we're to commission them to do just that.

Let's pray, and then we'll have a commissioning. Heavenly father, we thank you so much for your word always. We thank you for all your servants, every servant who has been a lead pastor, an assistant pastor, associate pastor, youth leader in this church for all the campus ministries that we get to support and love. And Lord, we pray that as much as we love these men, we know that always. You're the foundation. You're the message. Christ and Him crucified, Christ, risen Christ, the foundation of the church and of life. And so now, Lord, as we transition to a time of, of lamenting a little but praising you will what for the Richards, we pray that we would truly send them off with joy and love to a ministry that you will make fruitful, and we pray in Jesus name.

Amen.