CITYLIGHT
CHURCH

SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

We Stay In Our Lane

Why Focus Keeps a Church on Mission

A church that tries to do everything ends up doing nothing. We stay on mission by staying in our lane: the right lane, our lane and my lane, because God gives exceptional grace inside the lane He assigns.

PREACHED BY
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SERIES
We're Relentlessly Driven by the Mission, Week 3 of 4

MAIN TEXT
1 Kings 20:35-43

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Sermon Transcript

Praise the Lord. Well, join me in First Kings chapter 20. First Kings chapter 20, starting in verse 35. First Kings chapter 20, verse 35.

> **1 KINGS 20:35-43** ESV
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> 35 And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his fellow at the command of the Lord, "Strike me, please." But the man refused to strike him. 36 Then he said to him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, behold, as soon as you have gone from me, a lion shall strike you down." And as soon as he had departed from him, a lion met him and struck him down. 37 Then he found another man and said, "Strike me, please." And the man struck him—struck him and wounded him. 38 So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way, disguising himself with a bandage over his eyes. 39 And as the king passed, he cried to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle, and behold, a soldier turned and brought a man to me and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' 40 And as your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." The king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it." 41 Then he hurried to take the bandage away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. 42 And he said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people.'" 43 And the king of Israel went to his house vexed and sullen and came to Samaria.

It says, "And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his fellow at the command of the Lord, 'Strike me, please.' But the man refused to strike him." So we're starting kind of hot and heavy here. This prophet rolls up on a guy on the street and says, "Hey, would you punch me in the face?" And like anybody with any sense whatsoever, the man goes, "No, I'm not going to do that." But it was a word from the Lord. And so the prophet says in verse 27 — and the people — I'm sorry, in verse 36: "Then he said to him, 'Because you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, behold, as soon as you have gone from me, a lion shall strike you down.' And as soon as he departed from him, a lion met him and struck him down. Then he found another man and said, 'Strike me, please.'" And without any hesitation whatsoever — because there's some stuff that you see that marks you — "the man struck him, struck him and wounded him." That means he hit him hard, because he said, "I'm not going to get bit up by a lion today." He hit him hard. "So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way, disguising himself with a bandage over his eyes. And as the king passed, he cried to the king and said, 'Your servant went out into the midst of the battle, and behold, a soldier turned and brought to me a man and said, "Guard this man. If by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or you'll pay a talent of silver."'" Give you some perspective: a talent of silver in today's currency would be about thirty thousand dollars. So he says one of two things is going to happen: you're either going to die if you don't do this, or I'm going to fine you thirty thousand dollars if you don't do this. Verse 40: "And as your servant was busy here and there, he was gone. The king of Israel said to him, 'So shall your judgment be. You yourself have decided it.' Then he hurried to take the bandage away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. And he said to him, 'Thus says the Lord, because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for

his life, and your people for his people.' And the king of Israel went to his house vexed and sullen, and came to Samaria."

Well, I want to talk to you about this morning — I want to focus in on verse 40. Verse 40: "And as your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." As your servant was busy here and there. Get busy here and there, get busy with a little bit of this and a little bit of that. We're in a series called We Are Relentlessly Driven By The Mission. We started the first week with the Great Commission. That is what we've been called to do: to make disciples of all nations. And last week we talked about a strategy for reaching the lost. I hit you with some numbers, and we talked about what the best way is to reach people who are dying and going to hell.

How many of you want to see people saved? Say amen. But this week what I want to do is I want to talk to you on a similar theme, but I'm going to share with you the title in a few minutes. I have had the privilege to coach and consult pastors around the country for years. Most of the phone calls that I take are pastors who are having issues that they need to figure out in their church and their personal life. And you just learn to see things, and you kind of start to see patterns over time. And I have learned that generally the difference between a growing church and a dying church is the amount of good, well-intentioned distractions that they allow to pull away from the mission of the church.

So this is easy to allow to happen, because, well, frankly, there's a lot of good ideas. There's a lot of good ideas out there. There's a lot of good things that we can — I see the assistant principal nodding real heavy right now. Amen. Because there's a lot of good ideas out there. But you can't do everything. In fact, it's a Bible principle that you can't do everything, but if you want to do more, you have to focus on certain things. And that Bible principle is found in Hebrews chapter 7, verse 7.

> **HEBREWS 7:7** ESV
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> 7 It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.

The ESV says that the lesser, or the inferior, is blessed by the superior. But can I get Hebrews chapter — there we go.

"The inferior is blessed by the superior." The NASB says that it is without dispute that the lesser is blessed by the greater. In other words, if you'll get the high priority stuff handled, everything else will be taken care of. Everything else will receive blessing from that. And oftentimes the decision on whether or not to create or host certain ministries in churches does not come down to whether or not something is a good idea or a bad idea, whether or not something is even right or wrong. It comes down to whether or not there's enough bandwidth to do that thing. I have a friend in Kansas. He's one of my best friends in the world. He pastors a church there that's growing like crazy in the middle of nowhere, which makes it even more impressive. And so he's growing this church, and he just recently got rid of his church choir. Miss Debbie would know I like having a church choir.

I like to — I'm a choir guy. So that got my attention. Because, I mean, I'm not going to lie to you, seventy-five of you wanted to hop up here and start a choir today. I won't do it with seven of you, but I'll do it with seventy-five of you. Amen. With the Saraland Church mass choir. Amen. And so he caught my attention that he got rid of the choir, because that's something I'm into. And I said, "Why did you do that?" This is what he said. He said, "I don't have enough people working in children's ministry." I don't have enough people working in children's ministry. And organizationally, operationally, kids ministry is more important to a Sunday morning than a church choir is. Church choir is a great idea, but it's the lesser, and the lesser is blessed by the greater.

I was actually revisiting a book that I have on my shelf called Essentialism. A man named Greg McKeown wrote this, and this is what he said about the word priority. He said, "The word priority came into the English language in the 1400s. It was singular. It meant the very first or prior thing. It stayed singular for the next five hundred years. Only in the 1900s did we pluralize the term and start talking about priorities. Illogically, we reasoned that by changing the word we could bend reality. Somehow we would now be able to have multiple first things. People and companies routinely do just that. One leader told me of his experience in a company that talked about priority one, priority two, priority three, priority four, and priority five. This gave the impression of many things being the priority, but actually meant nothing was." I have learned that churches that do everything tend to do nothing. Churches that spread themselves incredibly thin cannot accomplish anything. And the reason I'm preaching this today is that I would hate for Jesus Christ to physically walk through that back door, clap his hands together, get our attention and say, "Excuse me, church, why haven't you won the city?"

For the gospel's sake. And the only answer we have is, "Lord, your servant was busy here and there." And that's the only answer we have — we've been distracted by things that are not the mission. The prophet Habakkuk encourages leaders to write the vision and make it plain so the people can run.

> **HABAKKUK 2:2** ESV
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> 2 And the Lord answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.

And my wife gave me the best opportunity to illustrate the need to press this this morning. Our mission, our vision, our guiding statement for this time and moving forward indefinitely is that we are building a Jesus-centered, Spirit-filled church for all people. We are building a Jesus-centered, Spirit-filled church for all people. And I want to expand on that just a little bit this morning. We're building a Jesus-centered, Spirit-filled church for all people that is large enough to lead hundreds to believe the gospel every week, substantial enough to equip believers to build incredible lives — somebody say amen right there — and formidable enough to reshape the spiritual and social culture of our city. We're going to be a church that's on mission.

And we're doing that by focusing on four things in our church. There are four ministries that are going to get all of my attention for the foreseeable future. These are the four areas. It's preaching. It's worship. And as the preacher, I do always have to compliment the worship leader. He did — in fact, you did a fantastic job this morning. Look good doing it. Amen. I couldn't have done it better myself. So, worship. Kids — kids ministry. And hospitality. Hospitality. These are the four areas where we are putting all of our attention, because they equal one thing: a powerful Sunday morning experience. Amen. So this morning's message, what I'm going to talk about — I'm going to tell you how we're going to keep ourselves from being busy here and there, how we stay on task, we stay focused, we stay on the mission this morning. Today's message is called We Stay In Our Lane. Everybody say that: we stay in our lane.

That's today's message. So I'm going to get started. If you're ready, give the Lord a praise here. Amen. Number one, number one: we stay in the right lane, in part because we are Americans. Bless God. Hallelujah. So we stay in the right lane, and there is no doubt about it that there are right and wrong lanes. There are right and wrong lanes. I remember when I was a teenager, my grandfather, who I called Da — Meemaw and Da, don't know where it came from, but it stuck. Amen. And so I called him Da, and Da was taking me to a music store. I don't know what we were going for, but we were going to a music store, and he had to go somewhere else, and so he pulls over into the turning lane to go wherever he's going. But there was no turning lane.

It was a two-lane road. That was the oncoming traffic lane, and there was in fact oncoming traffic at the time. And so I am scared to death. How many of you know that there is a right lane and a wrong lane? Amen. Now, there's a right lane morally. There's a right lane ethically. There's a right lane theologically. These are right lanes that we have to be in. But I just want to let you know, there's also a functionally right lane. I'm going to talk to y'all like a group of pastors for the next three minutes. Okay? All right. Everybody feeling good? Say what? Promotion.

So here we go. So I want to talk to you like pastors for a minute. There is a functionally right lane that accomplishes the mission of the church. There is a functionally right lane that grows the church. And I just want to let you know — I want to say this in front of everybody — that I will admit there is more than one way to grow a church. There is more than one way to grow a church, but there's not like a thousand. You can't just do it any way. And this is an educated — I've been doing this for a while, I've been around — maybe five. There may be five ways, and you kind of got to just decide as a leader of a church to pick one and go with it. That's the way we're going to grow the church.

There's a functionally right lane, because we don't get where we're going by default. We get there by design. You could put that anywhere in your life. We don't get where we're going by default. We get there by design. In Matthew chapter 7, Jesus said this. He said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You'll recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?"

> **MATTHEW 7:15-16** ESV
>
> 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

The reality is, grapes don't come from thorn bushes. Oranges don't come from bananas, and strawberries don't come from apples. You can't plant apple seeds and expect oranges. It just doesn't work.

That doesn't happen. But if we start with the end goal in mind, if we start with the destination in mind — guess what? That means the strategy's already been determined. If you can figure out where you want to go, you do know how to get there. There's stuff that will get you there and stuff that won't get you there. I'd like to be big and buff, and I'd like y'all to be intimidated if I unbuttoned my shirt right now. I'd like to have me a nineteen-pack. Amen. Chiseled. But guess what? You can't just want it and then eat Doritos and drink Mountain Dew, because that doesn't get you there. By the way, that is how you get this.

Amen. That's — if you were going for this, I can tell you how to get there. Amen. But if I want to go to Birmingham, if I want to go to Birmingham, I can't get on I-10. The decision to go to Birmingham tells me I-10 is the wrong way and I-65 is the right way. Amen. That's how you get there. So when you figure out where you want to go, how to get there is determined. And in the same way, if we want to reach the city and bring them to Jesus Christ, then we have to do the things that move our church in that direction. Somebody say amen. So, number two. Number two: we stay in our lane.

We stay in the right lane. We stay in our lane.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:13-18 ESV

[13] But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. [14] For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. [15] We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, [16] so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence. [17] "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." [18] For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

Second Corinthians chapter 10, starting in verse 13, says, "But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others, but our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may preach the gospel to lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence."

There's a lot we can take from this passage, but what I want you to see here is that every church, every pastor, every person has a realm of influence. Every church, every pastor, every person has a realm of influence. And we're talking about the church today. And this will be a little self-serving when I say this, but I'm going to show it to you in the Scripture: typically the realm of influence is decided top-down. It's decided top-down. In Proverbs chapter 29, verse 18, it says, "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint."

PROVERBS 29:18 ESV

[18] Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.

Where there is no prophetic vision, the people — another version says that they run all over the place. They'll run everywhere if there's no prophetic vision. In fact, when you don't have prophetic vision, that's a good way to get where you're being busy here and being busy there. A church's realm of influence is determined by the pastor getting a word from God. And let me just put this in there.

It's not determined by a pastor doing what he wants to do. It's not determined by a pastor doing what he's already done. It's determined by a pastor getting a word from God. It has to come from heaven. Amen. And most churches fail to reach their potential because the pastor is trying to be everything to everyone while allowing anything to happen anytime. And we do everything, because now we're busy here and there. We're not on mission. Remember, a church that tries to do everything ends up doing nothing. If we go back to Second Corinthians where we started a moment ago, in verse 17 it says, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends." It is the Lord who has determined the prophetic vision, the realm of influence, the lane that we stay in. And our lane becomes obvious through what Second Corinthians chapter 10 says: the commendation of the Lord. Now, it may have sounded spiritual and high-handed up till this point, but let me help you understand how you find out what the commendation of the Lord is. What works?

Is it working? That's the commendation of the Lord. Jesus told us how we were going to know whether prophets had the real stuff or the fake stuff. We're going to know them by their fruit. What does it produce? So you want to figure out if the commendation of the Lord is on it? Is it working? That's how you determine the lane. You get a word from God, and if it works, you've got the commendation of the Lord on it. Hallelujah. That shows you what your lane is. That shows you what the prophetic vision is. I've got a friend out in San Antonio, Texas. In the last five years — they actually had their fifth year anniversary last week.

He took the church over. They were a little less than two hundred. Last Sunday they had thirteen hundred-some-odd people on campus. Why don't you give the Lord a praise for what he's doing in Texas? I say we ought to give the Lord a praise just as a little seed to sow, to say, "Lord, do it here." Amen. And so he's grown the church fantastically over the last several years. He and I have very similar ministry styles. We think the same, we process the same. If we were just thrown into a random scenario, we would probably give all of the same advice. But what he's done is — he was telling me one day, he said, "I want to do X, Y and Z," which is something you would do and do really well. And he said, "But it's crazy." And this is so foreign to me. And maybe I'm talking a little pastory to y'all for a minute, maybe I'm just a little inside baseball, but amuse me for a moment.

He told me one day, he said, "Every time I invest time, energy or money into groups, my church grows." He said, "Every time I put money into something else, the church stops growing." He said, "So what I've done is I've experimented a little bit, and I'll take money out of something I think is really important and put it in groups and see if the church grows." And he said, "Every time I do it, the church grows." So how did he find out what the commendation of the Lord was? He saw what was working. He saw what was making it happen. He saw what had the blessing of the Lord on it. He saw where the fruit was. Amen.

And so every time he does groups, the church grows. Now, I need to let y'all know, he's a lot friendlier and happier than I am. I don't think I'm going to blow this church up with groups. Amen. But he's done it, and so he found the commendation of the Lord. So I do want to just take a moment, and before I keep preaching I want to do a little housekeeping with you, and I want to talk to you a little bit about the rest of the schedule for 2025. We talked about this in our unofficial business meeting a few weeks ago, but I just want to let you know some things that are happening. These are some changes we're making for the rest of 2025 to keep us from being busy here and there. We're trying to stay on mission. Everybody say "on mission." Everybody say "Great Commission." Everybody say "you look good, preacher."

All right. Good. I'm just making sure y'all are still here. Amen. Want y'all to say true things in this service. Hallelujah. On Sunday, October 12th, we are making a change to our Sunday Devos. We are bringing those to an end for the foreseeable future. And even though I do not foresee myself blowing this church up with groups, groups are coming. We are going to do groups. We are going to have smaller moments that we meet and grow in grace, as the Apostle Paul said.

> **2 PETER 3:18** ESV
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> 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

And so we're making this shift for this reason: so we can focus on having an incredible Sunday morning experience.

I just want to say this. This is something that we talked about from the onset with me coming: the Lord has need of you. The Lord has need of you. But what the Lord does not need is, he does not need you off in a classroom when he sends the harvest into the church. He needs you ready to do the work of the ministry. That's what the Lord needs from you. In fact, if you were to look at Matthew chapter 9, Jesus did not say that the harvest was a problem. Jesus, in Matthew chapter 9, said, "Look at all of this harvest." The harvest is plentiful, the harvest is abundant, it's bountiful. There's a lot of harvest, but the laborers are few.

> **MATTHEW 9:37** ESV
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> 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;

So here's what we're going to do.

We're going to labor the harvest. Amen. We're going to work the harvest. We're going to work our field, and our field is right here, and our field is Sunday morning. Hey, somebody say amen to that. And so we're going to work our field. So if you haven't joined the team, we need you to join the team. Amen. Wednesday, October 29th is going to be our last Wednesday night of 2025. I want y'all to know, we weren't going to go Thanksgiving through the holidays anyway. I'm not trying to have Wednesday night service for six people. Amen. I'm trying to start groups the right way, not by default.

Amen. We start our first small group, everybody stop coming during the holidays. But we're going to stop on the very beginning of November, so the last week of October will be our last Wednesday night. The reason that we are doing this is that I believe that God is going to move powerfully in this church. I'm believing for a powerful move of the Holy Spirit. Is anybody with me on that? What we need, though, is we need a moment to recalibrate and look at the schedule. I am a little like this, and this is just y'all getting to know me: if it was working, it'd be huge. So it must not be working, because it ain't huge. So right now what we need to do is we just need to hit pause, and we need to figure out where the best space in the week is for us to have a powerful Pentecostal expression on an ongoing basis. The power of the Lord is going to move on Sunday mornings, but any Pentecostal pastor will tell you that you almost need to have another service so you can really cut loose, because I got to run some walls — or run some holes through the walls in this church.

Amen. I'm going to run around the room at some point. Y'all will see me. We'll have snakes and everything. Hallelujah. That was good. So we're just going to re-evaluate. That's going to give us two months to kind of think through the schedule. That's a good time where we're going to have to alleviate the schedule anyway. On October — I'm sorry, on December 28th, we are also going to take a Sabbath Sunday. This is the Sunday between Christmas and New Year's. We're going to take a Sabbath Sunday. I just want to let you know, one of my values as a church leader is that I alleviate pressure on ministry leaders and ministry volunteers around the holidays. In my experience, most churches try to make it harder.

I want to make it easier. I know some of y'all transition from making Kraft macaroni and cheese to grandma's recipe. Y'all already got enough stress on you at the house. And so what we're going to do is we're just going to take that week and let the church breathe. And I also want to let you know, the less people that show up, the harder it is to pull off a Sunday morning, and we already know that that's going to be a low attended Sunday. So we're going to take that and we're going to breathe. Everybody say "breathe in, breathe out." Turn to your neighbor, say, "You need a mint."

Amen. Then on January 4th, we're going to come back for an anointing service. We're going to kick the year off by anointing everybody in the church with oil. Amen. It's going to be a powerful, powerful 2026. So those are just some things that we're doing to the schedule that you need to know about. I figured I might as well tell you while I'm preaching, while I've got your attention. We're going to make these changes so that when we go into 2026 we can see God move in a powerful way, and we can stay on mission and not be busy here and there. So we stay in the right lane. We stay in our lane. Number three: I stay in my lane. Everybody say "I stay in my lane." I stay in my lane. Second Chronicles. Chronicles is the retelling of the history of Judah to the Judah and Israel that are in exile. They essentially retell the history of Judah as a north star on how Israelites should live and worship the Lord. And in Second Chronicles, around chapter 20, 21, 22, it tells us about a king and a priest. The king's name is Joash and the priest's name is Jehoiada.

> **2 CHRONICLES 24:1-16** ESV
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> 1 Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's
> name was Zibiah of Beersheba. 2 And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada
> the priest. 3 Jehoiada got for him two wives, and he had sons and daughters. 4 After this Joash decided to
> restore the house of the Lord. 5 And he gathered the priests and the Levites and said to them, "Go out to the
> cities of Judah and gather from all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that
> you act quickly." But the Levites did not act quickly. 6 So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief and said to him,
> "Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the
> servant of the Lord, and the congregation of Israel for the tent of testimony?" 7 For the sons of Athaliah, that
> wicked woman, had broken into the house of God, and had also used all the dedicated things of the house of
> the Lord for the Baals. 8 So the king commanded, and they made a chest and set it outside the gate of the
> house of the Lord. 9 And proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem to bring in for the Lord the
> tax that Moses the servant of God laid on Israel in the wilderness. 10 And all the princes and all the people
> rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until they had finished. 11 And whenever the chest
> was brought to the king's officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was much money in it, the king's
> secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest and take it and return it to its
> place. Thus they did day after day, and collected money in abundance. 12 And the king and Jehoiada gave it to
> those who had charge of the work of the house of the Lord, and they hired masons and carpenters to restore
> the house of the Lord, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the Lord. 13 So those who were
> engaged in the work labored, and the repairing went forward in their hands, and they restored the house of
> God to its proper condition and strengthened it. 14 And when they had finished, they brought the rest of the
> money before the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made utensils for the house of the Lord, both for the
> service and for the burnt offerings, and dishes for incense and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt
> offerings in the house of the Lord regularly all the days of Jehoiada. 15 But Jehoiada grew old and full of days,
> and died. He was 130 years old at his death. 16 And they buried him in the city of David among the kings,
> because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and his house.

And this nation of Judah, which has become incredibly wicked — they are far from God. But this king Joash and Jehoiada, between their partnership, they lead the entire nation of Judah back to the Lord. They restore the nation to serve the one true God. No small feat, if you ask me. But it all came from the king Joash and the priest Jehoiada working in harmony. There's a teaching that's been around probably a little more than forty years now.

I actually think Pastor Sawyer might have taught this up in Kentucky recently in depth. But there's a teaching about kings and priests. I don't have time to go into it. This could be a five-week series, but I'm just going to give you the high points. Kings and priests are essentially a paradigm in the old covenant system of worship, in the old covenant government, that show how the kingdom of God operates. And it operates between kings and priests. This is an oversimplification, but kings are born-again believers who are in the marketplace, and priests are born-again believers who are in the ministry. It's kings and priests. And again, an oversimplification, but often what happens is priests will bring vision to the house of the Lord, and kings will bring provision to the house of the Lord. And that's how the mission of the church is fulfilled.

This is how it happens. But when the king and the priests come together in partnership, it is almost always followed by a dynamic move of the power of God. You'll see a whole city shaken when kings and priests come together. When this dynamic is working, it is powerful, because everybody is in their lane. How many of you know when everybody's in their lane, traffic moves smoothly? Right. Nothing will throw traffic off like one idiot out there. Amen. Who's all over the place texting. Amen. Y'all don't text and drive. I need you to come back to church. Hallelujah. And so it's a powerful dynamic.

What happens when someone gets out of their lane? What happens when someone gets out? Well, if you'll turn with me in your Bibles this morning to Second Chronicles chapter 26 — I want to show you a story. Second Chronicles chapter 26, starting in verse 16.

> **2 CHRONICLES 26:16-19** ESV
>
> 16 But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God and
> entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 But Azariah the priest went in after
> him, with eighty priests of the Lord who were men of valor, 18 and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him,
> "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated
> to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord
> God." 19 Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry
> with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord, by the
> altar of incense.

This is talking about a king named Uzziah. Uzziah was a great king in Judah. And it says, "But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eight — I'm sorry, with eighty priests of the Lord who were men of valor, and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, 'It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the Lord.'" I just want to make a note here real quick before I read the next verse. If you're wondering why it is unlawful for a king to go and burn incense in the place of a priest, it is because the kingship and the priesthood are distinctly separate in Israel. There are only two people in the Bible who have been both a king and a priest and it been okay. One of them is a man named Melchizedek. You find him in the story of Abraham.

> **GENESIS 14:18-20** ESV
>
> 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) 19 And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

He was the king of Salem and a priest of the Most High God. He was a king-priest. But Melchizedek, the Bible says, has no beginning and no end.

> **HEBREWS 7:3** ESV
>
> 3 He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

So that precludes all of us, because you have a beginning and an end. The second king-priest is Jesus Christ. He is both king and he is priest, in the order of Melchizedek also.

> **HEBREWS 5:6** ESV
>
> 6 as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

You ain't Jesus Christ, so that precludes you as well. So none of us in this room, nobody on earth, nobody in history outside of these two men are permitted to be both a king and a priest. Now verse 19: "Then Uzziah the king was angry, and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord, by the altar of incense." There's two things that we know from the kings and priests dynamic. I just want to share these with you quickly, and then we'll close. The first one is that priests should not be kings. Priests should not be kings. I have some business acumen. I don't know where it came from, because everybody in my family has gone bankrupt, but praise be to God that he's done some stuff in me. But I have some business acumen, and I want you to know it's an incredibly frustrating dynamic for me, because I make other people tons of money. People call me on the phone, I'll turn the business around. I don't understand it.

I had a girl call me one time who had a business, and she was making two thousand dollars a month. And we had one phone conversation. By the end of the month she was at twenty thousand dollars a month. Not bad. Me, on the other hand, I'm over here kicking against the goads, not making any money.

> **ACTS 26:14** ESV
>
> 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

And the reason is, I'm just ruined to the ministry. It's taken me a little while to really get comfortable with this. I'm just ruined to the ministry. I wake up, I eat, breathe, sleep the local church. I think about the kingdom. I get before the Lord. I just can't do anything else.

I'm ruined to the ministry. Priests have no business being kings. And let me just say this — some of you have said this. This isn't a way — it is a correction, but it's a nice correction. Amen. But people have said this to me for years. It's a well-meaning statement, but people will say, "Well, now, I know the church is a business." Now, when people say that, what they're normally trying to say is, "Pastor, we know you got things you got to do." To which I appreciate that sentiment. But I just want to be clear: the church is not a business. Church is not a business. Now, the church does some business. There's some stuff we have to do. We have to pay people.

We've got bills we got to pay. We have maintenance we have to do. Stuff has to happen. The preacher has to come up to the stage on time without his wife coming to the foyer to let him know it's 10:30 already. Amen. Not that that happened today or anything. So there's business that has to be done, but the church is not a business. The church is the representation of Jesus Christ in the community. Somebody say amen right there. So a priest should never be a king. But in the same way, a king should not be a priest. A king should not be a priest. And here's what happens sometimes.

Sometimes we'll have people who will get involved in ministry and God will use them in a fruitful way, and then all of a sudden this thing happens. The pastor's nodding down here. Amen. And so we'll have people who get into a fruitful area, and then all of a sudden they'll think, "I know better than the pastor. I know how church works better than the pastor. I know how ministry works. In fact, I know the will of God better than the pastor. This pastor don't preach the truth. He don't preach the word. He don't do this. He don't do that." And they will raise up in arrogance.

It'll happen. There'll be an arrogance that raises up, and all of a sudden this priest who was passionate and involved and was showing some fruit — this king, I'm sorry, that was passionate, involved, seeing some fruit — all of a sudden they'll grow proud. And this is no good. And on occasion you'll have a king who will rise up in the church and try to take the place of a priest, just like Uzziah did. Just like Uzziah did. And I've been in ministry long enough to guarantee you this: that Azariah the high priest actually had very little interest and very little passion in burning incense before the Lord. It's just something that had to be done. But it's something that he had to do. It's something the priest had to do.

Nobody else could do it. This wasn't about passion. This wasn't about preference. This wasn't about authority. This wasn't about throwing his weight around. This was about lanes. This was about the right people being in the right lanes. And I just want to tell you this today: God will give you exceptional grace in your lane. God will give me exceptional grace in my lane. But listen to me, there is no favor for me outside of my lane. There is no favor for me when I step out of the thing that God has anointed me to do. There is no favor for you when you step out of the thing that God has anointed you to do. So we stay in our lane.

We stay in the right lane. We stay in our lane, and we stay in my lane. We stay in these lanes. We stay in our lane. I want to tell you a story real quick before I close. Somebody say "this is good preaching." Just so we're clear, this is the kind of stuff that — what I just preached right there, I'm just preaching the word. Okay? I just want y'all to hear me. I'm just preaching this. This does all the work. But that's the kind of stuff that leaves you sitting awake at night going, "Lord, I got to stand up here and I got to say something in front of the church." And I'm not trying to exert authority over you.

I do not have to exert that which I already have in this house. So let me be clear about that. But I'm not trying to tell you I'm taking control. That's not what this is. What I'm trying to do is make sure that we all get in a groove. Because if we're in a groove, we will reach this city for the Lord Jesus Christ. But if we're not in a groove, if we don't do this God's way, if we don't do this the kingdom way, it's going to be friction after friction and argument after argument. And I just need y'all to know, I've only got about three stupid meetings in me before I lose my mind. So we don't want friction. We want to be able to operate in a godly way in this house. Somebody say yes.

Yes. Okay. Let me tell you this story. In the late '70s, the early '80s, Apple Computers was crushing it. The Apple II was a smash hit. The Macintosh changed the way people thought about computers. But by 1997, Apple was a mess. They were losing money, losing market share, and honestly, they were losing their identity. They were making printers, cameras, PDAs, educational tools — dozens of products, but none of them were great. That's when Steve Jobs, the founder who had been ousted by the board, came back to the company. He looked at the bloated product line, and he asked one simple question: "What are we doing?"

And nobody had a clear answer. So Jobs walked up to a whiteboard, drew a four-square grid and said, "From now on we make four products: a consumer laptop, a pro laptop, a consumer desktop, a pro desktop. That's it." In one move he cut seventy percent of Apple's products. Entire departments were shut down. Good ideas were thrown out — not because they were bad, but because they weren't the main thing. That one decision didn't just save Apple, it positioned Apple for its greatest run of innovation. That focus made the iPod possible, and the iPod led to the iPhone, and the iPhone led to the iPad, and that chain of innovation transformed Apple into one of the most influential companies in the world. But it started with focus. It started when they focused, because that's what made them powerful. They got back in their lane. I know that there are some of you, the more involved you've been over time — I know there are some of you that feel a little bit of that discomfort as a new pastor has come in. And I know some of you feel a little bit of that cutting away. And I want you to know, I don't know how I'd respond. I don't know how I'd respond if I was in your seat. I think I told y'all this when I first came to the church: I've actually never been through a senior pastor transition.

This is the first one I've ever been through. It's my favorite one, but it's the only one I've ever been through. I don't know how I'd respond if I was in your seat. I have no way to empathize with you in this. I do know that if I had another individual come in as strong as myself, I probably would be a little taken back, and I get that. And I know that some of you feel a little bit of the cutting away of things. But I just want you to know that we're not cutting away just to cut away. We're not changing schedules just to change schedules. We're not simplifying just to simplify. This is a little bit of addition by subtraction. Sometimes you got to do less so you can do more.

Sometimes you got to go slow so you can go fast. Sometimes you got to simplify so you can actually achieve the things that God is calling you to do. And I just think, if we look towards the future and imagine all the things that we'll be able to do in the future if we stay focused and don't get distracted running here and running there — I've watched it kill churches. Distraction. And the next thing you know, some auxiliary ministry that meets on Tuesday nights at 6:30 p.m. is controlling every decision in the church. And you cannot grow and move forward that way. You cannot. But if we pull back a little bit and we get focused and we get powerful, what all could we do? What ministries could flow out of our church?

Because the lesser — this is not an abstract principle, this is a promise from the word — the lesser is blessed by the greater. And when we get focused on the mission and we see this city saved and brought to Jesus Christ, how many people can we reach in the niches and the cracks and the spaces and the hedges and the highways?

> **LUKE 14:23** ESV
>
> 23 And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.

And we can reach them all, in Jesus' name. If you receive that, give the Lord a praise this morning.

02

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This is the third message in a four-week series on the mission of the church. Week one was the Great Commission. Week two was a strategy for reaching the lost. This week turns from strategy to focus: what keeps a church from drifting off mission is not a lack of good ideas but too many of them.

The message was preached in a new pastor's first months, and it carries announcements about cutting and simplifying the weekly schedule. Those dates belong to one church in one season. Keep the shape (a pastor explaining why the church is doing less so it can do more) and put in your own church's changes.

Expect some people to hear "we are cutting things" as "my ministry does not matter." Say plainly that this is not about right and wrong or good and bad. It is about bandwidth, and about lanes. Say it with warmth: the goal is not control, it is a groove where everyone can thrive.

Introduction

> **1 KINGS 20:35-43** ESV
>
> 35 And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his fellow at the command of the Lord, "Strike me, please." But the man refused to strike him. 36 Then he said to him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, behold, as soon as you have gone from me, a lion shall strike you down." And as soon as he had departed from him, a lion met him and struck him down. 37 Then he found another man and said, "Strike me, please." And the man struck him—struck him and wounded him. 38 So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way, disguising himself with a bandage over his eyes. 39 And as the king passed, he cried to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle, and behold, a soldier turned and brought a man to me and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' 40 And as your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." The king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it." 41 Then he hurried to take the bandage away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. 42 And he said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people.'" 43 And the king of Israel went to his house vexed and sullen and came to Samaria.

The prophet's story is a parable aimed at the king. A soldier is given one job: guard this man. And his excuse is, "as your servant was busy here and there, he was gone" (1 Kings 20:40). Busy with a little bit of this and a little bit of that, and he lost the one thing he was told to keep.

We are in a series called We're Relentlessly Driven by the Mission. Week one: the Great Commission, to make disciples of all nations. Week two: a strategy for reaching people who are far from God.

The pattern. Years of coaching and consulting pastors around the country teach you to see patterns. Generally, the difference between a growing church and a dying church is the amount of good, well-intentioned distractions it allows to pull it away from the mission.

It is easy to let this happen, because there are a lot of good ideas. But you cannot do everything. If you want to do more, you have to focus.

THE LESSER IS BLESSED BY THE GREATER

> HEBREWS 7:7 ESV
>
> [7] It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.

Another translation puts it this way: the lesser is blessed by the greater. Get the high-priority things handled, and everything else receives blessing from them.

The decision to start or host a ministry usually does not come down to good idea or bad idea, or even right or wrong. It comes down to bandwidth.

Illustration: the choir in Kansas. A close friend pastors a fast-growing church in rural Kansas. He recently disbanded his church choir. For a choir guy, that got my attention, so I asked him why. His answer: "I don't have enough people working in children's ministry." Operationally, kids ministry matters more to a Sunday morning than a choir does. A choir is a great idea, but it is the lesser, and the lesser is blessed by the greater.

Illustration: the word "priority." In *Essentialism*, Greg McKeown points out that the word priority came into English in the 1400s as a singular word: the very first thing. It stayed singular for about five hundred years. Only in the 1900s did we start talking about "priorities," as if renaming it could give us several first things at once. A company with priority one through priority five, he observes, really has no priority at all.

Churches that try to do everything end up doing nothing. Churches that spread themselves thin cannot accomplish anything.

I would hate for Jesus to walk through the back door of our church, get our attention and ask, "Why haven't you won the city?" and for our only answer to be, "Lord, your servant was busy here and there."

WRITE THE VISION

The Lord told Habakkuk, "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it" (Habakkuk 2:2). So here is ours.

Our guiding statement: We are building lives on Jesus: a church large enough to lead hundreds to believe the gospel every week, substantial enough to equip believers to build incredible lives, and formidable enough to reshape the spiritual and social culture of our city.

We are doing that by focusing on four things, the four ministries that will get the pastor's attention for the foreseeable future:

- Preaching
- Worship
- Kids
- Hospitality

Those four are really one thing: **a powerful Sunday morning experience.**

So how do we keep ourselves from being busy here and there? How do we stay on mission, the Great Commission? **We stay in our lane.** Have the congregation say it together.

1. We Stay in the Right Lane

There is no doubt about it: there are right lanes and wrong lanes.

Illustration: Da and the turning lane. As a teenager, riding with my grandfather (I called him Da) to a music store, he pulled into what he thought was the turning lane. There was no turning lane. It was a two-lane road, that was the oncoming lane, and there was oncoming traffic. I was scared to death. Everyone knows there is a right lane and a wrong lane.

There are right lanes morally, ethically and theologically. But there is also a **functionally right lane**: a lane that accomplishes the mission of the church and grows the church.

Talk to the room like a group of pastors for a few minutes. There is more than one way to grow a church, but there are not a thousand. Maybe five. A leader has to pick one and go with it. You can have what you want, but you can't have it any way you want it.

We don't get where we're going by default. We get there by design.

> MATTHEW 7:15-16 ESV
>
> 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

Grapes do not come from thornbushes. You cannot plant apple seeds and expect oranges. If you start with the destination in mind, the strategy has already been determined.

Illustration: the nineteen-pack. I'd like to be chiseled. But you cannot want a nineteen-pack and live on Doritos and Mountain Dew. That does not get you there.

Illustration: the road to Birmingham. From south Alabama, if I want to go to Birmingham, I cannot take I-10. The decision to go to Birmingham tells me I-10 is the wrong way and I-65 is the right way. Once you know where you want to go, how to get there is decided.

If we want to reach our city and bring people to Jesus Christ, we have to do the things that move our church in that direction.

2. We Stay in Our Lane

> **2 CORINTHIANS 10:13-16** ESV
>
> 13 But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned
> to us, to reach even to you. 14 For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For
> we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ. 15 We do not boast beyond limit in
> the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be
> greatly enlarged, 16 so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work
> already done in another's area of influence.

Every church, every pastor and every person has a realm of influence, what Paul calls "the area of influence God assigned to us" (2 Corinthians 10:13).

It may sound self-serving, but Scripture shows that a church's realm of influence is typically set from the top down.

> **PROVERBS 29:18** ESV
>
> 18 Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.

Without prophetic vision, people run all over the place. That is how a church ends up busy here and busy there.

A church's realm of influence is determined by the pastor getting a word from God. Not by a pastor doing what he wants to do, and not by a pastor doing what he has always done. It has to come from heaven.

Most churches fail to reach their potential because the pastor is trying to be everything to everyone while allowing anything to happen at any time. Remember: a church that tries to do everything ends up doing nothing.

> **2 CORINTHIANS 10:17-18** ESV
>
> 17 "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." 18 For it is not the one who commends himself who is
> approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

It is the Lord who determines the prophetic vision, the realm of influence, the lane we stay in. And our lane becomes obvious through the commendation of the Lord.

That may sound spiritual and high-handed, so make it practical: **how do you find the commendation of the Lord? What works.** Jesus said we would know prophets by their fruit. Is it working? What does it produce? Get a word from God, and if it works, the commendation of the Lord is on it. That shows you your lane.

Illustration: groups in San Antonio. A friend in San Antonio, Texas took over a church of a little under two hundred. Five years later, they had more than thirteen hundred people on campus on a Sunday. He told me, "Every time I invest time, energy or money into groups, my church grows. Every time I put money into something else, the church stops growing." He experimented: take money from something he thought was important, put it into groups, and watch. Every time, the church grew. He found the commendation of the Lord by watching where the fruit was.

PROTECTING THE LANE: OUR SCHEDULE

Pastor Jason paused here to announce changes to the church calendar for the rest of 2025. Adapt this section to your own church's changes, or move it to the announcements.

These are changes to keep us from being busy here and there, so we can stay on mission.

- **Sunday Devos end (October 12).** Groups are coming, so we can meet in smaller settings and grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18). We are making this shift so we can focus on an incredible Sunday morning experience.
- **The Lord has need of you.** He does not need you off in a classroom when He sends the harvest into the church. He needs you ready to do the work of the ministry. Jesus did not say the harvest was the problem: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37). Our field is Sunday morning. If you haven't joined the team, join the team.
- **Last Wednesday night of 2025 (October 29).** We are pausing for the last two months of the year to re-evaluate the weekly schedule and find the best place in the week for a powerful Pentecostal expression on an ongoing basis. We are believing for a powerful move of the Holy Spirit in this church. You can have it all, but you can't have it all at once.
- **Sabbath Sunday (December 28).** No service the Sunday between Christmas and New Year's. One of the pastor's leadership values is to take pressure off ministry leaders and volunteers around the holidays, not add to it. Let the church breathe.
- **Anointing service (January 4).** We will start 2026 by anointing everyone in the church with oil.

3. I Stay in My Lane

Chronicles retells the history of Judah for God's people after the exile, as a north star for how to live and worship the Lord.

Kings and priests in harmony. In Joash's day, Judah had drifted far from God. But King Joash and Jehoiada the priest, working together, led the nation back to the Lord and restored the house of God. "And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest" (2 Chronicles 24:2).

The kings and priests paradigm. This could be a five-week series, so give the high points only, and say that it is an oversimplification. In the old covenant, kings and priests picture how the kingdom of God operates. Kings are born-again believers in the marketplace. Priests are born-again believers in the ministry. Priests bring vision to the house of the Lord, and kings bring provision.

When kings and priests come together in partnership, it is almost always followed by a dynamic move of God. A whole city can be shaken. When everybody is in their lane, traffic moves smoothly. Nothing throws traffic off like one driver all over the road, texting.

But what happens when someone gets out of their lane?

> **2 CHRONICLES 26:16-19** ESV
>
> 16 But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord his God
> and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 But Azariah the priest went
> in after him, with eighty priests of the Lord who were men of valor, 18 and they withstood King Uzziah and
> said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron,
> who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring
> you no honor from the Lord God." 19 Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn
> incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of
> the priests in the house of the Lord, by the altar of incense.

Why was it wrong for a king to burn incense? Because in Israel the kingship and the priesthood were distinctly separate. Only two people in the Bible rightly held both offices:

- **Melchizedek**, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, who met Abraham (Genesis 14:18-20). Scripture presents him as "having neither beginning of days nor end of life" (Hebrews 7:3). You have a beginning and an end, so that rules you out.
- **Jesus Christ**, King of kings and "a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:6). You are not Jesus, so that rules you out too.

Two lessons from the kings and priests dynamic:

PRIESTS SHOULD NOT BE KINGS.

Illustration: ruined to the ministry. I have some business acumen. I once had one phone conversation with a business owner making two thousand dollars a month, and by the end of the month she was making twenty thousand. Meanwhile I am kicking against the goads (Acts 26:14). I am ruined to the ministry. I eat, breathe and sleep the local church. I can't do anything else.

People mean well when they say, "I know the church is a business." What they usually mean is, "Pastor, we know you have things to handle." But the church is not a business. The church does some business: we pay staff, pay bills and keep up the building. **The church is the representation of Jesus Christ in the community.**

KINGS SHOULD NOT BE PRIESTS.

Sometimes people get involved in ministry, God uses them fruitfully, and then pride rises: "I know better than the pastor. I know how church works. I know the will of God better than he does." They grow proud, just like Uzziah, who was strong and then "grew proud, to his destruction" (2 Chronicles 26:16).

Azariah probably had little passion for burning incense. It was simply the priest's job, and nobody else could do it. This was not about passion, preference or authority. It was about lanes: the right people in the right lanes.

God will give you exceptional grace in your lane. There is no favor for me when I step out of the thing God has anointed me to do, and there is no favor for you when you step out of the thing God has anointed you to do.

We stay in the right lane. We stay in our lane. I stay in my lane.

Conclusion

Say plainly what this is and what it is not. It is not the pastor taking control. It is getting the whole church into a groove. In a groove, we will reach this city for Jesus Christ. Out of a groove, it is friction after friction and argument after argument.

Illustration: Steve Jobs and the power of focus. In the late 1970s and early 1980s Apple was thriving: the Apple II was a hit, and the Macintosh changed how people thought about computers. By 1997, Apple was losing money, market share and its identity. It was making printers, cameras, PDAs and educational tools: dozens of products, none of them great. When Steve Jobs returned, he asked one question: "What are we doing?" Nobody had a clear answer. So he drew a four-square grid on a whiteboard: a consumer laptop, a pro laptop, a consumer desktop and a pro desktop. That's it. He cut most of Apple's product line. Good ideas were thrown out, not because they were bad, but because they were not the main thing. That focus led to the iPod, the iPod to the iPhone, the iPhone to the iPad. It started with focus. They got back in their lane.

A word to those who feel the cutting. If you have been involved for a long time, a new pastor and a simplified schedule may feel uncomfortable. That is understandable. But we are not cutting just to cut, changing schedules just to change schedules, or simplifying just to simplify. This is addition by subtraction.

- Sometimes you have to do less so you can do more.
- Sometimes you have to go slow so you can go fast.
- Sometimes you have to simplify so you can achieve what God is calling you to do.

Distraction kills churches. Before long, an auxiliary ministry that meets on Tuesday nights controls every decision in the church, and the church cannot move forward. But if we pull back, get focused and get powerful, imagine what ministries could flow out of this church.

This is not an abstract principle. It is a promise from the Word: **the lesser is blessed by the greater.** When we get focused on the mission and see our city saved, we can reach people in the niches and the cracks and in the highways and hedges (Luke 14:23).

If you receive that, give God praise.

OPTIONAL: SALVATION PRAYER

This prayer is in the original notes. It is not in the recording of the message. Use it if you give an invitation.

Dear Jesus, I know that I'm a sinner, and I need a Savior. Today I put my faith in You. I believe You are the Son of God, God in the flesh. I believe You lived a sinless life, died for my sins, and rose again to give me new life. I receive Your forgiveness, and I confess right now: You are the Lord of my life. Thank You for saving me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

03

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

1 KINGS 20:35-43

35 And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his fellow at the command of
the LORD, "Strike me, please." But the man refused to strike him. 36 Then he said to
him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as you
have gone from me, a lion shall strike you down." And as soon as he had departed
from him, a lion met him and struck him down. 37 Then he found another man and
said, "Strike me, please." And the man struck him—struck him and wounded him.
38 So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way, disguising himself
with a bandage over his eyes. 39 And as the king passed, he cried to the king and said,
"Your servant went out into the midst of the battle, and behold, a soldier turned and
brought a man to me and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your
life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' 40 And as your servant
was busy here and there, he was gone." The king of Israel said to him, "So shall your
judgment be; you yourself have decided it." 41 Then he hurried to take the bandage
away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets.
42 And he said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have let go out of your hand
the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall be for his life,
and your people for his people.'" 43 And the king of Israel went to his house vexed
and sullen and came to Samaria.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:13-18

13 But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of
influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. 14 For we are not overextending
ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to
you with the gospel of Christ. 15 We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others.
But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be
greatly enlarged, 16 so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without
boasting of work already done in another's area of influence. 17 "Let the one who
boasts, boast in the Lord." 18 For it is not the one who commends himself who is
approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

2 CHRONICLES 26:16-19	16 But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the LORD who were men of valor, 18 and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God." 19 Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the LORD, by the altar of incense.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

HEBREWS 7:7	7 It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.
HABAKKUK 2:2	2 And the LORD answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.
MATTHEW 7:15-16	15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?
PROVERBS 29:18	18 Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.
MATTHEW 9:37	37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;

2 CHRONICLES 24:1-16

1 Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in
Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. 2 And Joash did what was
right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest. 3 Jehoiada got for him
two wives, and he had sons and daughters. 4 After this Joash decided to restore the
house of the Lord. 5 And he gathered the priests and the Levites and said to them,
"Go out to the cities of Judah and gather from all Israel money to repair the house of
your God from year to year, and see that you act quickly." But the Levites did not act
quickly. 6 So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief and said to him, "Why have you
not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by
Moses, the servant of the Lord, and the congregation of Israel for the tent of
testimony?" 7 For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house
of God, and had also used all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord for the
Baals. 8 So the king commanded, and they made a chest and set it outside the gate of
the house of the Lord. 9 And proclamation was made throughout Judah and
Jerusalem to bring in for the Lord the tax that Moses the servant of God laid on Israel
in the wilderness. 10 And all the princes and all the people rejoiced and brought their
tax and dropped it into the chest until they had finished. 11 And whenever the chest
was brought to the king's officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was much
money in it, the king's secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and
empty the chest and take it and return it to its place. Thus they did day after day, and
collected money in abundance. 12 And the king and Jehoiada gave it to those who
had charge of the work of the house of the Lord, and they hired masons and
carpenters to restore the house of the Lord, and also workers in iron and bronze to
repair the house of the Lord. 13 So those who were engaged in the work labored, and
the repairing went forward in their hands, and they restored the house of God to its
proper condition and strengthened it. 14 And when they had finished, they brought
the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made utensils
for the house of the Lord, both for the service and for the burnt offerings, and dishes
for incense and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the
house of the Lord regularly all the days of Jehoiada. 15 But Jehoiada grew old and full
of days, and died. He was 130 years old at his death. 16 And they buried him in the city
of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and
his house.

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

2 PETER 3:18	18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.
GENESIS 14:18-20	18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) 19 And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.
HEBREWS 7:3	3 He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.
HEBREWS 5:6	6 as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."
ACTS 26:14	14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'
LUKE 14:23	23 And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.

Pastor Jason Mayfield

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Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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