



ADVANCE

MOVING FAITH FORWARD





This Book Belongs To:

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GIVING
Ordinary
PEOPLE
A PLACE TO BELONG
SO THEY CAN
EXPERIENCE AN
Extraordinary
LIFE IN
Christ!

Church Family,

God has done so much at Faith Baptist Church over the years and we know He has big plans for us as we boldly walk into the future together! Since 1971, our church has been steadily advancing forward building God's church in New Port Richey. That's over fifty years of rich history during which the people of Faith have been committed to the mission of helping ordinary people find a place to belong so they can experience an extraordinary life in Christ.

To best further our mission of helping people experience an extraordinary life in Christ, we are kicking off a new, two-year generosity initiative called ADVANCE. This season is about giving our lives to the cause of Christ and moving Faith forward. And yes, part of this initiative includes investing in the expansion of our campus. However, this is more than a building campaign. ADVANCE is a call to join God's mission and invest in something that will matter for eternity.

Over these next several weeks, you will be asked to open your heart and take the biggest step of generosity you've ever taken. I have no idea what step of faith the Lord will call you to take. However, I'm confident that if 100% of us do 100% of what God calls us to do, then we will see God move in powerful ways that we haven't yet envisioned.

I believe this is a defining moment in the life of FBC. I want to invite you to participate with me as we ADVANCE together.



PASTOR TODD ADAMS, SENIOR PASTOR

FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH

1971

OUR BEGINNING THE COUNTRY CHURCH



Our church was chartered as "The Country Church" on April 28, 1971 with twenty-five members while meeting in a civic center for worship services under the direction of Pastor Billie Hale (pictured above).

The church's name was changed to New Life Baptist Church. The church then relocated to Ridge Road and a new auditorium was built.



NEW LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

1973

1980

FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH



Under our church leadership, the name transitioned one more time to its existing name, Faith Baptist Church. This helped to unify the ministry of the church and the then established school ministry that existed for over thirty years.

In June of 1984, Doug Davis came to Faith Baptist Church to take on the role of senior pastor. He faithfully served our congregation for twenty-four years. His presence brought stability and continuity to the ministry as the church grew.



1984

1990



After a successful building campaign, God provided room to expand beyond the auditorium with additional restrooms, nursery suites, and a fellowship hall.

OUR PRESENT
FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH



All these years later, and God is still blessing Faith Baptist Church. Now we pray towards the future and what He has for us by preparing for coming generations. We must plant the tree so that others can share the shade and fruit of our good work.

2018



Once again we found ourselves at three services, and we began to look at the future enlargement of the church's facilities. A few years later we would celebrate fifty years as a congregation.

Faith relocated to its existing location and immediately started construction with a massive property-wide remodel over a fourteen month period. Our Church was able to pay cash for the entire project.



2014

2008



In 2008, Todd Adams and his family came to Faith. Over the next five years, two additional Sunday services were added – each time coming to full capacity. Being landlocked, it became apparent a move was necessary.

This season brought much spiritual growth in the life of our church. Additional classrooms were added to the facility to accommodate growth and the teaching of God's Word.



1999

Our primary goal through ADVANCE is that 100% of the people at FBC will engage in this initiative and experience a life-changing encounter with God.

HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?

We are asking you to go on a spiritual journey with God and your family—to take the biggest steps of generosity you've ever taken.

1. PRAY FERVENTLY

Pray that God would multiply our efforts to make disciples and make much of Jesus. Pray that He would do abundantly more than we ask or imagine for His great name.

My Prayer for ADVANCE is:

2. GROW INTENTIONALLY

Attend each Sunday. Engage in the ADVANCE study with your small group. Learn all you can about God's heart and will for you and your resources.

A Growth Area for me through ADVANCE is:

3. GIVE GENEROUSLY

Ask God to show you what it looks like to give in a way that changes you. Take whatever steps are required to see it through.

I can grow in generosity through ADVANCE by:

4. COMMIT FULLY

Help us reach our goal of 100% participation in ADVANCE. Stand side by side with your church family. Commit to do what God asks. Put your “Yes!” on the table.

My Commitment for ADVANCE is:

- I will pray, asking God how He wants me to respond to the ADVANCE challenge.
- I will read the daily devotions provided in the ADVANCE Prayer and Discipleship Guide, beginning on page 13.
- I will attend every service of the ADVANCE series.
- I will participate in my small group. If not part of a group, I'll find a group that is studying ADVANCE and participate.
- I will submit a written commitment to ADVANCE on or before Commitment Sunday on October 15.
- I commit to all of the above!

SMALL GROUPS *Week One*



READ: GENESIS 12:1-8

REFLECT

At age seventy-five, Abram wasn't a young man with a head full of youthful dreams and plans. For all intents and purposes, his life was complete and he was looking back on the life he had lived with perhaps a sense of completion. However, Abram's life wasn't over until God said it was over.

God called him to leave his country and his father's household, that must have been overwhelming. Abram didn't have a Bible, a pastor, or a church. All he had were these very Words of God. What faith! One might think that Abram was desperate to move out from his parent's house, especially at the age of seventy-five! However, the culture was different then and he was in an extremely comfortable place in life with no need to take risks or needless ventures.

What we see here is an awe-inspiring covenant God set before Abram. Can you imagine hearing those words from the Lord? The promise of great influence, and blessing to not only his nation but other nations around the world; a promise of protection, security, and a legacy. All of these and more were promised by God. What Abram was giving up was of no comparison to what God promised to give and to do.

Something we have to understand is that God's promise to Abram extended far beyond just Abram. The promise had implications and effects for the whole entire world and world history. This covenant was beyond just one man.

SMALL GROUPS *Week One*

APPLY

How often do we feel that prompting of God's Spirit to get up and go, but talk ourselves out of it because we don't have all the details or we're just plain scared? How often do we see a command in Scripture but we ignore it because we are afraid? How often do we lack faith to believe in the promises of God in our life, and we try to do things only God can do in our own strength? This passage doesn't give all the details, but it appears that Abram just went! No bantering back and forth with God, no getting all his ducks in a row...he just did what God told him to do. He walked away from the "known" and the comforts of his life, and into the unknown because God promised if he did, the blessing on his family, his nation, and beyond would be immeasurable.

Abram's obedience and God's fulfillment of His covenant changed the world forever. It was through Abram's descendants that Christ came to earth to save all mankind. Throughout this week we are going to see that Abram messed up. A lot. He lied and cheated. He tried to do things in his own strength and the consequences of these actions can still be felt today. But, even though he messed up a lot, God was still faithful to do what He said He would do. The very fact that you're reading this testifies to that truth.

As we approach this Advance Initiative, God will prompt you to do something. He may prompt you to take a radical step of obedience. How will you respond? Will you respond like Abram? Or, will you stay in the comfortable, and miss out on all of the things God wants to accomplish in and through you? It was financially risky for Abram to leave his home, but it was not a finance issue or a money issue. It was a heart issue, an obedience issue, and a faith issue.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Have you ever given something up in order to obey the Lord?
- What are some potential reasons one may not want to take radical steps of obedience?
- What is one simple act of faith and obedience you can do this week?
- What is meant by the statement, "It was not a finance issue or a money issue. It was a heart issue?"
- Will you pray and seek the Lord to guide you in what next step of obedience He wants you to take?

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR
THE WEEK ONE VIDEO



MONDAY - GENESIS 15:1, 3-6

Like Abram, our journey of faith begins with our belief that the Lord has provided a way for us through His Son, Jesus. And from the experience of Abram, we know that the journey between the time we believe and the time we meet the Lord face to face will be an adventure, filled with many joyful high points where the road is easy, but also times of trial that lead to doubt. It is the hope we gain from understanding that it is the Lord's faithfulness that carries us through. Are you trusting God to keep His word in your life?

PRAY; *Lord, help me to trust You more in the small things and in the big things. Show me how I can exercise my faith and grow in my relationship with You.*

TUESDAY - GENESIS 16

Fast forward to 2023! Running ahead of God's plan still produces sad and flawed replacements, all because we somehow think we know a better way than our Creator God... better than the inspired Word He left for us. Our sin nature calls us to self-gratification and ruling our own lives. Our Savior calls us to trust, obey, and surrender for the best He has planned for us. In what ways are you striving to run ahead of God's plan? The temptation is strong to try and achieve several steps in the future instead of simply taking the simple steps of obedience now.

PRAY; *Lord, please show me where I am relying on myself and help me to take simple daily steps of obedience.*

WEDNESDAY - GENESIS 18:1-5, 9-15, 21:1-7

One of the hardest things to do well in the Christian life is to wait upon the Lord. What we often miss is the work God is doing in us while we are waiting for Him. God is at work, preparing your heart and sanctifying you to be ready to receive whatever it is He is going to do in your life. For Abraham and Sarah, they were waiting nearly 25 years for the promised son. When God said it was finally going to happen, Sarah laughed! This laughter wasn't a joyful laugh, but a laugh of unbelief and scoff. When our faith in God is weak, it is easy to find ourselves sinning when we doubt that He will fulfill His promises to us, much like Sarah when she lied about her doubt to the Lord. Yet, God sympathizes with weakness and remains faithful to His promise.

PRAY; *Lord, please forgive me for my unbelief and help me grow in my belief in Your promises and in Your Word.*

DEVOTIONS *Week One*

THURSDAY - GENESIS 18:16-33

Abraham knew his nephew, Lot, and his family lived in Sodom. He knew from past experience that it is God's character to be merciful and just. This strange interaction between God and Abraham has so much richness. Notice that God never counter-bargains with Abraham. It is Abraham who continually sets the limits of what he is asking God for, and when God granted it, he realized he could ask for more. A fundamental error we often make is simply not believing that God is good and gracious, and knows how to give good gifts to His children.

PRAY; *Lord, I believe You are good, please help me grow in my worship and trust of You because You are my Heavenly Father.*

FRIDAY- GENESIS 22

When God tests us, it is not because He is curious to find out what will happen, but because He is showing us our own heart and helping us to grow and change. God needed to perform a work in Abraham's life that was only possible by posing a situation in which Abraham's faith was put to the test in a dramatic way. Abraham had the faith to know that the Lord would provide a sacrifice. This foreshadows the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ. We must ask ourselves, "What am I willing to give up for the Lord?" Do you have the faith to believe that God will still provide, even if we make a sacrifice for Him?

PRAY; *Lord, help me to grow in my faith in Your provision.*

SATURDAY - GENESIS 24

This passage has been used countless times to talk about singleness and how to find a spouse. However, this passage is not about how to find a good spouse, but it is about how God miraculously provides to keep His promise. The errand seemed hopeless and the task was daunting. The servant had no idea if and how God was going to provide a wife to keep the line of Abraham alive and fulfill His covenant with Abraham to multiply his offspring. Yet, through obedience and faith, the servant saw God perform the fulfillment of His promise right before his eyes!

PRAY; *Lord, thank You for always keeping Your promises to me, help me to walk by faith in Your Word.*

SMALL GROUPS *Week Two*



READ: 1 SAMUEL 16:6-13

REFLECT

The prophet Samuel loved Israel and loved the Lord. From the very beginning of his life, he was dedicated to serving God in the Temple. Later on, he would prophesy the Word of the Lord and even judge Israel. Despite this, Samuel would have to hand the reigns of leadership over to Israel's first king, Saul. He seemed great from the outward appearance. Yet, it wasn't long until his rebellious heart proved him to be unfit for leading the nation of Israel, and God rejected him. As a result, Samuel went to Ramah, only about two miles from Saul, yet we are told that they never saw each other again. This must have been an incredibly difficult time for Samuel. He was nearing the end of his life and things are not looking good for the nation he had served so faithfully. What was God doing?

In the midst of this, God had a plan. He would raise up a new king, a man after God's own heart. He did not have the outward appearance of a king, but his heart was in the right place.

God commanded Samuel to go to Bethlehem, Saul's town was on the way, and anoint a new king while Saul was still alive. Not only this, this new king didn't even look like a king! Nevertheless, Samuel obeyed and anointed David. He did not know why, or what would happen. In fact, Samuel would die before David took the throne. All he knew was that he had to obey.

SMALL GROUPS *Week Two*

APPLY

If obedience were easy, everyone would do it! We know from young children all the way up to adulthood, we struggle with obedience because it is so hard! We can see how difficult it was for Samuel. In his eyes, it was over. Yet, with God, He had a plan to continue to Advance His purposes and Kingdom in Israel.

In our church, God has a plan for advancing the mission, expanding our outreach, and exalting Christ. Like Samuel, we can sometimes think about how much simpler it would be if things just stayed the same. Or, we may even think about how strange and scary it sounds to step out in obedience and do what God has called you to do. Despite the difficulty and the unknown, we know that God has a plan. Looking back, we see how David became the greatest king of Israel and how it was from his line that Jesus came!

Samuel had a very limited perspective on what was going on, but he did not let that stop him from taking a dangerous journey to anoint a new king who was only a boy. The Lord may be calling on you to make a giving commitment that may not make sense. Maybe if you're honest, you just don't see the point in doing all of this. Don't let that stop you from being like a Samuel. He didn't have all the answers, he was confused and disappointed, yet he still obeyed the voice of the Lord. As he cried out into the night as a young boy, "Speak, for your servant hears," would you be willing to ask the Lord to give you a clear direction and calling as to what he would have you do? It may not make sense, and it may be confusing, but like Samuel, we can obey even without having all of the answers.

On this side of Heaven, we may not even see what the Lord does through our obedience, but we can rest assured that God has a plan, and it is an honor to be a part of the eternal work God is doing. Will you step out in obedience, even if you don't have all of the answers?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- What made it difficult for Samuel to obey?
- Has there ever been a confusing time in your life?
- Why is it important to obey, even if we don't have all of the answers?
- Why might God withhold giving us all of the answers?
- What practical step of obedience can you take today?

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THE WEEK TWO VIDEO



MONDAY - 1 SAMUEL 17

Most people are familiar with the story of David and Goliath. However, something that is NOT in this story is an account of how God told David to slay the giant. David's heart was already in the right place, he already knew his purpose as a man of God. David took initiative to advance the purposes of God when no one else would, and he was able to accomplish this because his eyes were not fixed on himself, like Saul's were, but his eyes were fixed on the Lord and what He Himself can do! Fear can often prevent us from heeding the Word of God in our lives. But, when we are actively walking with God, we can take initiative and advance His purposes.

PRAY: *Lord, help me to stay in tune with Your revealed Word through listening and obedience.*

TUESDAY - 1 SAMUEL 24:1-7

David, the anointed king of Israel, was hiding in a cave. This is likely not what he had in mind as a boy when Samuel anointed him. He was being relentlessly pursued by a vengeful King Saul, who was trying everything in his power to wipe David from the face of the earth. Finally, David got his chance to end things once and for all and claim his rightful place on the throne as God's anointed. But he didn't. When it comes to obedience, there are no shortcuts. When God wants to advance something in your life, He will often test you to see if you will try to take things into your own hands or let God handle it. What have you been trying to do in your own power? Is there something you need to surrender?

PRAY: *Lord, help me to fully surrender to You and trust You to advance in my life.*

WEDNESDAY - 2 SAMUEL 11:2-4A, 12:11-12

If a man like David can slip and experience perhaps the most devastating failure of his life in his "mature" years, we should surely weigh the warning! No matter what your age, there will always be a need to bare our hearts before God and ask Him to expose a complacent attitude, selfish over-confidence, or an itch to push the envelope of what is wise and obedient. To call ourselves His children implies that we openly ask for His approval and direction . . . even before we sense looming danger or the seeds of disobedience. This warning serves as a reminder that we ought to never think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but to continually humble ourselves before the Lord as He advances us in His power. Don't let pride impede the advancement of God.

PRAY: *God, please help me to stay humble in my pursuit of You.*

DEVOTIONS *Week Two*

THURSDAY - 2 SAMUEL 14:21, 23-24

Few things can hinder the advancement of God in your life like harboring unforgiveness can. In fact, God takes unforgiveness so seriously, He says that if you do not forgive others, He will not forgive you (Matt. 6:18). And, if you are praying and you are at ought with someone, you should get up immediately and reconcile with that person (Matt. 5:24). Once again we see David make a mistake of unforgiveness here and the kingdom is put in danger because of it. Is there unforgiveness in your heart? With whom do you need to reconcile? Ask God to reveal if there is any root of bitterness so that He can continue the advancement in your life.

PRAY: *Thank you for Your forgiveness, please reveal to me where I am unforgiving.*

FRIDAY- 1 SAMUEL 25: 1-38

When we are advancing in the Lord and He is doing powerful things in your life, it can be quite puzzling and even frustrating when others are not on board. Furthermore, if you are like David, it can even be angering! The temptation is often strong to point at the lives of other people and say, "But God, what about them?" We need to be reminded that while it is healthy to exhort others to love and good works, this does not mean that we take someone's sanctification into our own hands. Just as God has His ways of dealing with you, He has His ways of dealing with others. Don't be quick to point the finger, but let God work in the lives of others.

PRAY: *God, help me to encourage others and to stay focused on You instead of others.*

SATURDAY - 2 SAMUEL 6

When we read this passage, we may ask, "Why in the world would God kill a man for touching the ark to prevent it from falling?" When you read it in context, you will see that they were transporting the Holy Ark inappropriately. If they would have taken time to learn how they should carry it, it never would have fallen in the first place. David was trying to use the presence of God to bolster his position and reputation as king, and this had devastating consequences. Often times, we can use God's name in vain to try and bolster our own advancement instead of seeking how we can be used of God for His Kingdom advancement.

PRAY: *Lord, I want to be used for Your advancement and surrender to You.*

SMALL GROUPS *Week Three*



READ: ACTS 9:10-16

REFLECT

It is often surprising, not only how, but also, who God chooses to advance His purposes in the world. Saul had just been knocked off of his high horse on the way to persecute Christians when the light of Jesus Christ intervened in his life. Saul's conversion was not a lone ranger journey, there were also other people involved. Here we see that Ananias was a faithful man of God in Damascus. He was about to suffer the brunt of Saul's persecution when God came with an extremely unexpected message: the person who was coming to kill him is the person he needed to lay hands on and commission to the ministry. How mind-blowing!

When we advance, there are always obstacles and difficulties on the way. In our minds, we are quick to label these things as problems, and we ask God to remove them or to give us strength. It is just like God to work in wonderful and unexpected ways. God transformed the Church's biggest enemy into its largest asset. That is the kind of God we worship.

It is understandable that Ananias was a little fearful. "Really God, you want me to do what?" Obedience can be scary and difficult. However, it is in our obedience to do the hard things that God shows us His ability to do the impossible things.

Notice how Ananias expressed an initial willingness to the Lord, "Behold, I am here, Lord." Then when God called on Him to do a specific work, the resistance came. We can admire his initial willingness and also admire his eventual obedience; we can also relate to his hesitancy. This was the man who was killing Christians!

What Ananias didn't know was that God was already at work behind the scenes to produce a weight of glory and a wonderful work. We don't always get to see behind the scenes and into the details of how God is working. Firstly, if we did we wouldn't believe it. Secondly, it would no longer require faith. God is still at work all around the world, in our community, and in our Church. He is still doing the impossible.

SMALL GROUPS *Week Three*

APPLY

Perhaps throughout these weeks, you have sensed God asking you to do a difficult thing. It may seem as difficult as going to talk to someone who was intent on killing you the day before! How are you going to respond? Will you respond with obedience or resistance?

As a believer, you may have prayed the initial surrender prayer, expressing a willingness to do whatever the Lord asks. But now, when it comes down to it, there is some resistance. Like Ananias, it can be hard to obey such a difficult command. But look at how God worked it for good and for His glory. Imagine if Ananias did not obey the Lord. Would we have half of the New Testament today? Would there have been a church in Galatia, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Colossae, or Philippi? See, God's call to obedience always extends far beyond just you.

What Ananias didn't know is that God had already made Saul receptive to him. What you may not know is that God already has plans to provide and to bless your obedience. He's not going to show you all He has in store, but we can bank on the character of God and know that He is in control. What God is calling you to do in order to advance is far beyond just you, but He wants you to be a part of it. What are you missing out on because you won't simply obey? What are others missing out on because of a lack of obedience in the Church?

Our hope and prayer is that we will all be like Ananias and obey what the Lord asks us to do. We can rest assured that God has already paved the way, done the impossible, and prepared for you to simply advance in your obedience. Won't you pray and ask God to make clear what He wants you to do?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Has there been a time when you had to do something scary but it turned out to be no big deal?
- When have you seen the hand of God provide in your own life?
- What obstacle or impossible thing is in your life?
- What difficult thing do you sense God calling you to do?
- What is stopping you from obeying what God has asked you to do?

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MONDAY - ACTS 9:1-6

Saul was on his way to do what he thought was right. He believed he was pleasing God by persecuting these "heretics" of the Jewish faith. He had no idea what was in store for him. He was so obsessed with his own agenda and doing his own thing, that he completely missed the Messiah, the person whom he was waiting for his whole life. We can identify with Saul. We can get so caught up in our own busyness, our own idea of what is pleasing to God, and our own wants, that we can completely miss what God is doing in us and around us. God may need to drastically intervene in your life to wake you up to the way He is moving.

PRAY: *God, please wake me up to see how You are Advancing your Kingdom around me.*

TUESDAY - 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-11

Paul makes it clear that he is merely a servant of Christ. Later in the text, Paul reiterates that we are simply messengers, that the real treasure is the power of God, not our power. This passage is a reminder that we are God's humble servants. When we advance, it is not about us, but it is about showing the light of Christ and His power. We can see that Christ's death and resurrection were the perfect example of humility while advancing God's will. Are we following and living out this example of humility, pointing others to the light of Jesus? Or are we allowing our own pride or the hard circumstances around us to choke the message God wants to advance through us?

PRAY: *Lord, I want to be a humble servant for You and not live only for myself.*

WEDNESDAY - 2 CORINTHIANS 11:22-33

Few of us can compare to the hardships that Paul had gone through. He was literally beaten by others in his physical body, and he suffered under the emotional weight of betrayal, hurt, and the responsibilities of the churches he had planted. We may think, "How could he have gone through all of that yet remain joyful?" This is a good question, and the answer to this question points to a great truth. Paul was not focused on himself, but on Christ and on advancing His mission. It sounds so basic, but the basic truth applies deeply in our suffering. So often we are afraid to step out in faith because of the potential sufferings that will come our way. When you are fixated on Christ, no amount of suffering will be able to steal your joy.

PRAY: *Lord, help me to be "All In" for You and not concerned with my own comforts and pleasures.*

DEVOTIONS *Week Three*

☐ THURSDAY - ACTS 9:20-31

Saul wastes no time proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus. The Jews were not happy about this new message. They were so unhappy that they tried to kill him. This wouldn't stop Saul. His heart was changed and his mission was to tell others about Jesus. Nothing was going to stop him now. Despite opposition, Saul would risk his life to preach this message. Saul was living for his heavenly home. Are we making bold decisions for Christ, knowing that heaven is our ultimate home? Or are we holding on with fear to our earthly home? There is a cost to fearless obedience, but the cost cannot compare to what is awaiting us in Heaven when we obey.

PRAY: *Lord, I want to live with a Heavenly perspective and not an earthy one.*

☐ FRIDAY- PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14

Paul had a pretty good life. He was well known, educated, and had an excellent reputation of righteousness. However, once Christ came into his life, he considered all of these things as dung. Paul was relying on the external things to win his own righteousness. It was Christ who showed Him that it is only through Him that Paul could attain righteousness. As a result, Paul left everything behind and pressed on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. When Christ is in your life, there is nothing not worth giving up in order to please Him and worship Him. What are you clinging to?

PRAY: *God, please make Yourself everything to me and help me let go of my earthly things.*

☐ SATURDAY - COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

What is your mind set on? Is your mind set on the next season of your life? Your promotion, your kids, that conflict or struggle? In the text it says to set your minds on things above where Christ is. When we become so fixated on the temporary things of this life, we become discouraged and downtrodden. Yet, somehow we think the solution is to become more fixated on the things of the world. Friend, the only way to live a joyful life in Christ is to die to the world and be alive to and in Christ. Won't you commit to setting your mind on things above, Heavenly things? How many times does this world have to disappoint you for you to know it is only Jesus?

PRAY: *Jesus, I set my mind on You and not on earthly things!*

SMALL GROUPS *Week Four*



READ: EZRA 7:10

REFLECT

This is a very fascinating point in Israel's history. As the time came for the Israelites to return from exile and have the promises of Jeremiah fulfilled in them, God used three men to help set this up. The first man was Zerubbabel. This man led a large group of people to Jerusalem and he rebuilt the Temple. The elders of Israel wept because the Temple was not as grand as the one before in Solomon's Day. The second man that we see comes about 60 years later and he teaches the Word of God and helps rebuild the community of Israel. Finally, the third guy that we see is Nehemiah, he comes later and leads in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem as the city of God.

Nehemiah gets a lot of attention, and it is a great story, but before Nehemiah came, there was this guy by the name of Ezra. Zerubbabel made it possible for Ezra to come, and Ezra allowed Nehemiah to have a community of people to use in rebuilding the city walls.

This was of the utmost importance because before Nehemiah was able to rebuild the walls, Ezra needed to revive the Word. Before the huge project of rebuilding the city walls was undertaken, there needed to be a revival amongst the people. The Temple had just been rebuilt, and now God has sent Ezra to revive the Word in the hearts of the people.

The people weren't just building a wall for the sake of building a wall. This provided protection, security, and identity. It was an essential element for what they were doing. In Bible times, you couldn't have a city without walls. So, why did there need to be a mass return to the principles of God's Word before a construction project? The answer is that because this wasn't just any construction project, this was a God commanded, God ordained endeavor for God's people. For Jerusalem, the building of it had spiritual significance as an identifier of God's people and God's promise. God did not want His people to be wanderers forever.

The building of the walls had a theological and spiritual component to them beyond simply brick and mortar. Additionally, they were facing intense opposition from enemies actively trying to stop the project, opposition from internal sin, and spiritual opposition. Building the wall was a task that required a people whose hearts, minds, and lives were living purely and with holiness. This is why it was so foundational for Ezra to revive the Word among the people.

SMALL GROUPS *Week Four*

APPLY

As our church continues this Advance initiative, we can easily get caught up in dollar figures, building plans, and site development. However, what we are doing here as a church is far beyond brick and mortar. We have a mission and a vision as a church. When we talk about giving, it is more about a discipleship endeavor than it is necessarily about finances. In Ezra-Nehemiah, the people would not and could not, undertake such a mammoth project unless they themselves were dedicated to serving the Lord.

As we advance in our mission to give ordinary people a place to belong so they can experience an extraordinary life in Christ, we are in need of a new facility and an expanded site. God has given us the land and the people. The question is, are we able to perform the task at hand?

The answer to this question lies not in wallets, checkbooks, bank accounts, savings bonds, trust funds, engineers, architects, construction workers, or building permits. The answer to this question is highly contingent on if we are going to be a people who study the law of the Lord, do it, and teach it. The reason why this is the answer is twofold. **One** - we cannot possibly expect for God to do a great thing in our midst if we are not seeking Him and living for Him. If we want revival in this country or in our community, then it starts with the people of God getting serious about their faith and pursuing God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Two - we do not want to build a building for a large group of people who are not dedicated to God's Word. If we are successful at that, then we have in essence built another community center without Christ and without being Scripture led. Yes, community centers are great in their place, but we are not here for that, we are a church. As a church, we exist to worship the Lord and lead others to Him. If we are not doing that now, why would we want to be successful in building a larger building to facilitate that? God forbid we turn into a church without the presence of God in our midst. To successfully advance, we need to be people of God and His Word.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- What significance did the wall of Jerusalem have?
- Why do we need to have our hearts renewed and revived before we advance?
- When have you been the closest to God? What was going on?
- What can you do to revive your heart for the Lord?
- How is Advance beyond just a building?

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR
THE WEEK FOUR VIDEO



MONDAY - NEHEMIAH 1:5-11

Before an endeavor for the Lord, we must be people of prayer to know God's purpose. A surprising and encouraging element of this prayer is how much Scripture Nehemiah quotes. To know God's purposes you have to know His Word. Nehemiah read and knew God's Word, so he knew that they were in exile for a good reason, because they had violated God's covenant with them, and God said this would happen if they did this. He not only knew this, but he also knew that this exile would not last forever. He held fast to the promises in God's Word that they would come out of this, and He claimed these promises for Himself and for His people.

PRAY: *Lord, help me to know Your will through knowing Your Word. I want to follow You.*

TUESDAY - NEHEMIAH 3

That is a lot of names! What can we gain from a passage like this? There are several lessons we can learn, and one of those big lessons is that God sees. We see in this passage a long list of names and what they did to contribute to rebuilding. It was obviously important to God to write down the names of people and what they did, and we have the ability to look back and see what people did. Today, we recognize that we are living in the church age, and God still uses people to build His church. He calls ordinary people like you and me to participate in the building of His church. Like in the days of Nehemiah, we are all called to participate in building what God has called us to build.

PRAY: *I want to serve You in any way You see fit, Lord.*

WEDNESDAY - NEHEMIAH 4:7-9

When a work of God is taking place, opposing forces work double-time. In Nehemiah's case, it came from some outsiders who were trying to threaten and intimidate those working on the walls. Despite opposition, the people persevered. They committed to prayer and they relied more heavily upon one another by stationing guards. As discouraging as opposition may be in the moment, it is often a sign that you are on the right track spiritually. We must remember that we have a spiritual foe. Our spiritual foe is finite and therefore has no need to expend effort to conquer Christians and churches who are not a threat to his agenda. As our church advances, we should expect opposition, but we must also be prepared to recognize it and overcome it.

PRAY: *Lord, help me to be ready for opposition and to be strengthened in You.*

DEVOTIONS *Week Four*

THURSDAY – NEHEMIAH 6:10-13

The enemies of Nehemiah tried to use fear and intimidation to get him to stumble into sin. Fear can be a very powerful tool of the enemy to get us to do things we would never do; things that we know are sinful. What was the key to Nehemiah's conquering of fear? His fear of God far outweighed his fear of man. When God puts us on a mission, we do so with obedient fear and reverence. The enemy will attempt to get us to fear something, a possibility, or someone, far more than we fear God and thus cause us to stumble and fail on our endeavor. What fears typically hold you back from fully obeying God? What can you do to increase your fear of God to decrease your other fears?

PRAY: *Lord, help me not to disobey because of fear.*

FRIDAY- NEHEMIAH 8:1-6

It would seem now that the work is done and that everyone can take a breather as a result of being successful in the work. We get to Nehemiah 8 and we see that the people had a worship service as a result of their work. This worship service reminds us that the reason they did all of this work was not simply so that they could say that they did, but so that they could worship freely and in a more effective way. As we continue our Advance initiative, we must also remember that we are not doing this just so that we can say we did something. There is a goal and a purpose to all of this, and the end result should be worship. When we know this is the end result, it influences the way we work.

PRAY: *Lord, help me to remember that we are worshippers of You.*

SATURDAY – NEHEMIAH 11: 1-2

You can't really have a city without the people. Once the wall was built, those who contributed went back to the equivalent of "Suburbs" of Jerusalem. However, what was needed was for people to actually move into the city of God. When there is a work of God, we can all become enthusiastic about what is going on. We may even give of our finances and some effort in order for it to happen; but when it comes down to a full commitment, that becomes an idea that sounds nice for someone else. It's one thing to like a mission, it's another thing to give to a mission, but we serve a God who wants us to participate in the mission. As we advance, will you, "Move into the city?"

PRAY: *God, show me what it means to fully commit to You.*

SMALL GROUPS *Week Five*



READ: JOHN 6:8-14

REFLECT

We see in this passage that Andrew naturally doubted the effectiveness of such a meager supply in order to meet such a great demand. He says, "What are they for so many?" How in the world can such a small amount of food feed so many people? We might as well just let the boy eat his lunch and we will send everyone home.

The problem is that Andrew, like many of us sometimes, look at problems like this one through the eyes of what we are able to do instead of through the eyes of what God can do. In performing this miracle, Jesus was demonstrating His power, but He was also specifically pointing to the fact that He was the bread that was going to be broken for all, and He was the final sacrifice to atone for our sins. God became a lowly man, in order to perform a great miracle, and we get to catch a glimpse of that in this story.

From the outside, Scripture says that there was not anything remarkable or unique about Jesus Christ, yet we know He is the most remarkable person in the universe! Christ perfectly obeyed the will of God when we could not. Now, because of Him, we are made right in the eyes of the Father. In light of our new position in Christ, we should be imitators of Christ. The best way to be an imitator of Christ is to live a life marked by obedience, even when, and often when, it doesn't make sense or seem like it will work.

SMALL GROUPS *Week Five*

APPLY

We must live in obedience, even when it does not make sense in our eyes. We understand that like Andrew, we can look at situations from a human perspective and only see the impossible, yet with God, all things are possible. One of the most difficult yet important ways in which we can be models of obedience is in our giving. By now, we have all seen the amount of money we are trying to raise in order to Advance the mission of God in our church. You may have even heard about some of the large contributions of other people. Then you look at yourself and what you have to offer and you may ask yourself, "What difference is that going to make?" From a human perspective, not much, but God is able to multiply it beyond measure.

Offentimes when we talk about giving, we see it primarily as a financial issue but as we have been emphasizing, it is not a financial issue, but a discipleship issue. To take this one step further; it is an obedience issue. We can easily fall into the trap of disobeying because something does not make sense in our human eyes. It is called, "Rational Disobedience". In other words, it's just plain disobedience. When we look at what we can give and the impact we can have, it may seem so inconsequential. Our five loaves and two fishes couldn't possibly meet the need that is presented before us. However, when we faithfully obey and give these to the Lord, He is able to multiply and use what we gave far beyond anything we could ever have thought. Imagine if Andrew had not brought the boy to Jesus? What if he would have simply dismissed him because his offering was just too small?

What if you fail to trust the Lord and obey? What will you and the world miss out on when we fail to believe that God is able to multiply our efforts, if only we just obey? We know that the feeding of the 5,000 was about much more than feeding hungry people. Like stated in the beginning, this miracle was a sign that pointed to the salvific person and work of Jesus Christ. Likewise, when we obey and give, it is about much more than a building, a dollar amount, or meeting a goal. When we accomplish this great endeavor, it is all about showing the riches of God's grace and giving God the glory. We don't stop Advancing once the funds are raised and the building is built. In fact, that is when we get to Advance all the more! When you obey and give, it not only contributes to the larger picture, but it is an act of obedience which causes you to tangibly live out the Gospel transformation in your life, and prayerfully, spread the message to more people.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- What was the spiritual significance of this miracle?
- In what ways is disobedience commonly rationalized?
- How can we become better at seeing situations like this through God's eyes
- How is giving actually a discipleship issue?
- What have you been neglecting to do because of your human perspective?

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR
THE WEEK FIVE VIDEO



MONDAY - EXODUS 4:1-17

In the famous burning bush encounter between the Lord and Moses, we see that Moses was not too eager to go back to Egypt and accomplish what the God was calling him to do. Perhaps what is most prominent in the life of Moses at this time was his propensity to make excuses. How could Moses be successful with his checkered past and his questionable skillset? God would be better off calling someone else, right? God did not call on Moses because of his qualifications or great leadership skills. God called on Moses because God would be sure to get the glory from Moses' obedience. Oftentimes we are afraid to step out in faith because of our inability, but when we do this, we fail to see God's awesome ability.

PRAY: *Help me to trust You and do what You say, even when I feel inadequate.*

TUESDAY - JUDGES 6:11-39

Mighty man of valor? Really? Anyone else walking by would see a faithless man of failure, a coward. Yet, the angel of the Lord does not call him this. Is this because Gideon had not reached his full potential because of his negative self-talk? No. God did not define Gideon by his weakness, but by the work God was going to do through him despite his weakness! When we look at ourselves, we see inability and all of our shortcomings. We see what we can give and come to the conclusion that this defines our identity. However, your identity is not wrapped up in what you can't do, but it is found in your position in Christ and what He can do through you, if only you surrender to His purposes in your life.

PRAY: *Lord, help me to stop looking at myself and to look to You instead.*

WEDNESDAY - DEUTERONOMY 7:7-9

Woah! How would you like that to be said about you on the playground when they are picking teams? "I didn't pick you because you're good or anything, but because I made a promise to your dad." What a humbling truth to be told! This is a wonderful reminder that God does not save us because of some innate awesomeness within us. Romans 5:8 reminds us of that. Our own unworthiness highlights the incredible grace of God. Yet, we can sometimes think that we bring something special to the table. Or, we may think we bring nothing to the table! Both of these thoughts stem from the same focus, yourself. Instead, our focus should be on the One who has called us as we live lives of faithful obedience to Him. Advance may seem daunting, but it is God who called us to the task.

PRAY: *Help me to be faithfully obedient to You. Thank you for saving me.*

DEVOTIONS *Week Five*

THURSDAY - 1 TIMOTHY 4:12

Others may have had the tendency to look down on young Timothy because of his young age and lack of experience, yet Paul says to not let this happen but to instead be an example by living a godly life. Once again, we see in Scripture that it is not about our ability, status, skill, or knowledge, but it is about our faithful obedience to the Lord. God can use a cracked cup, but He will not use a dirty vessel. What are you relying on to get you through? What is a common excuse for NOT getting through? Bring either or both of these things before the Lord and acknowledge that success is determined by obedience, not status or skill. What has God called you to do?

PRAY: *Show me where I have been disobedient.*

FRIDAY- 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10

No one ever throws a celebratory party after a tragedy. Yet, Paul says here that he rejoices in his weakness and suffering. Why is this? It is because in these moments of weakness and hardships, the power of Christ is magnified, which is actually the whole point! When you are successful, does God get the glory if you, and everyone else around you, think that you did it because you are great? Probably not. God will often choose the weak things of this world so that it is obvious that God is the one behind it all. Who would have thought a country church in New Port Richey would take on such a big task? Do we get the credit? No, God does. Our job is to be obedient to Him.

PRAY: *I want to give You the glory for my life.*

SATURDAY - 2 CHRONICLES 26:1-16

What a sobering story. This king was wildly successful because the Lord blessed him. Yet, when he thought he could do it on his own and that his success could be attributed to himself, this is when he failed. The continual theme throughout Scripture and in this week's devotion is that we cannot and must not get caught up in what we bring to the table, big or small. We must keep our eyes on Christ and what He can do through us when we live lives surrendered to Him, obedient to His calling, and faithful to keep up the fight. Is this you? What do you need to do in order to demonstrate the power of God in spite of you?

PRAY: *Lord, show me what next step of obedience I need to take for Your glory.*

PRACTICAL STEPS TO HELP YOU MAKE A COMMITMENT TO ADVANCE

EXERCISE AND REFLECTION TO DO AT HOME PRIOR TO COMMITMENT WEEKEND:

1. List out the financial commitments that you currently have – those that go beyond a one-time payment, but that have a time duration to them. Examples would be a home mortgage, a lease agreement, a car loan, a cell phone contract, tuition for school, etc.
2. Now, write out the commitment you are planning to make for ADVANCE. Where does it fall in the priority of these other commitments? Do you need to change or modify one or more of these other commitments in order to be able to fulfill your ADVANCE commitment? What if you wanted to raise your ADVANCE commitment? What would that require? Is there a financial commitment you currently have that appears to be prioritized above your ability to make a truly surrendered giving commitment?
3. If someone who didn't know you looked at your financial commitments, what would they say that you value?
4. Would that statement be true about you? Or is there something that needs to be explained or modified?
5. As you keep this commitment over the next two years, what type of spiritual transformation will that cause in you?

6. How will you leverage this change to influence others such as your children, your family, your friends, your co-workers, or others in your circles of influence? Pray over your commitment as you prepare to bring your card with you on Commitment Weekend, *October 15*. Prayer is the most important thing in this whole process and prayer is what gives us the heart and will of Christ to make decisions like these. Let's allow God to finish the good work He began in us as a church as we boldly obey what He is calling us to do!

MY/OUR TWO YEAR ADVANCE COMMITMENT
PLEASE CALCULATE WITHIN THE WORKSHEET BELOW

\$ <input type="text"/>	WHAT I/WE NORMALLY GIVE IN ONE YEAR <small>(general fund, GraceGiving, Christmas Offering, etc.)</small>
+ \$ <input type="text"/>	MY/OUR EXPANDED ANNUAL GENEROSITY FOR "ADVANCE"
= \$ <input type="text"/>	X2 YEARS = \$ <input type="text"/>
	+ \$ <input type="text"/>
MY/OUR GIFT(S) FROM STORED RESOURCES <small>(stocks, real estate, savings, selling items, etc.)</small>	= \$ <input type="text"/>
MY/OUR TWO YEAR ADVANCE COMMITMENT: <small>NOVEMBER 2023 - NOVEMBER 2025</small>	\$ <input type="text"/>

If you think your gift doesn't matter when compared to our total goal for ADVANCE. You're wrong! Every gift matters to God. It's not about the amount, but what that amount means to you (see Mark 12: 41-44).

Use this table to see how your monthly gift adds up over two years!

TWO YEAR GIVING TABLE	
MONTHLY GIFT OF	OVER 24 MONTHS EQUALS
\$10	\$240
\$20	\$480
\$30	\$720
\$40	\$960
\$50	\$1,200
\$60	\$1,440
\$70	\$1,680
\$80	\$1,920
\$90	\$2,160
\$100	\$2,400
\$125	\$3,000
\$150	\$3,600
\$200	\$4,800
\$250	\$6,000
\$300	\$7,200
\$350	\$8,400
\$400	\$9,600
\$500	\$12,000

SMALL GROUPS *Week Six*



READ: Psalm 71:15-16

REFLECT

For this final week of small groups, there is no lesson or video. Use this time in your Group as a time of discussion and sharing what God has called you and those in your group to do. You cannot underestimate the power of sharing stories of obedience, hesitations, questions, and God's provision.

Maybe your story of doubting the call of God to step out in obedience, but obeying anyway, will encourage someone in your Group to take that step of obedience in the Lord.

Has your prayer life changed over these last six weeks? In what way?

SMALL GROUPS *Week Six*

Have you felt a clear calling from God to give a certain amount? Have you made that commitment yet?

What are some of your biggest doubts or hesitations regarding this initiative?

If you have committed to give and have already given all or some, what has your experience been like?

Share at least one thing you are hoping the Lord will do through this initiative in the church and community.

ADVANCE GIVING VISION

PRIMARY GOAL: 100% ENGAGEMENT

Advance is first and foremost a discipleship initiative. We want to learn new things about God and ourselves. We are asking each person and family at Faith Baptist Church to fully engage as we advance forward. This includes each of us joining together to pray fervently, commit fully, serve joyfully, and give generously. If we all do that, we will see Him do amazing things!

SECONDARY GOAL: \$5.8 - \$6.8 MILLION IN GENEROSITY

We are inviting everyone within the Faith Baptist Church family to join us on a journey that will enable us to advance into the coming years of ministry around Faith. This vision includes many exciting new steps in the areas of ministry development, local and global outreach, and ongoing campus development. We have seen God do so much already, and we believe He has bigger plans for us to advance forward in the years to come!

Over the next two years, we're allocating

\$3M FOR OUR MINISTRIES

as we continue to impact lives.

Over the next two years, we're allocating

\$300K FOR OUR OUTREACH (GRACE GIVING)

both locally and globally.

Over the next two years, we're allocating

\$2.5M - \$3.5M FOR OUR CAMPUS

that God has entrusted to us.

TOTAL ADVANCE GOAL: \$5.8 - \$6.8M

ADVANCE OUR MINISTRY

\$3 MILLION

This will resource our week-to-week ministry activities for the next two years.

Through Advance, we will continue supporting our existing ministry to kids, students, adults, and families.

Our mission remains to give ordinary people a place to belong so they can experience an extraordinary life in Christ. This will continue to be our focus as we strive diligently to provide opportunities for people to gather, give, grow, and go!

ADVANCE OUR OUTREACH **\$300 THOUSAND**

We will give away these resources to our local and global ministry partners.

Through Advance, we will continue supporting our 40 missionaries and church planting partners to accomplish our mission of introducing people to an extraordinary life in Christ!

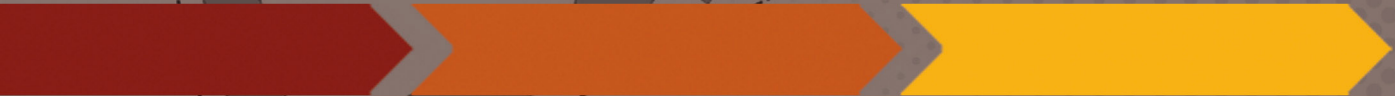
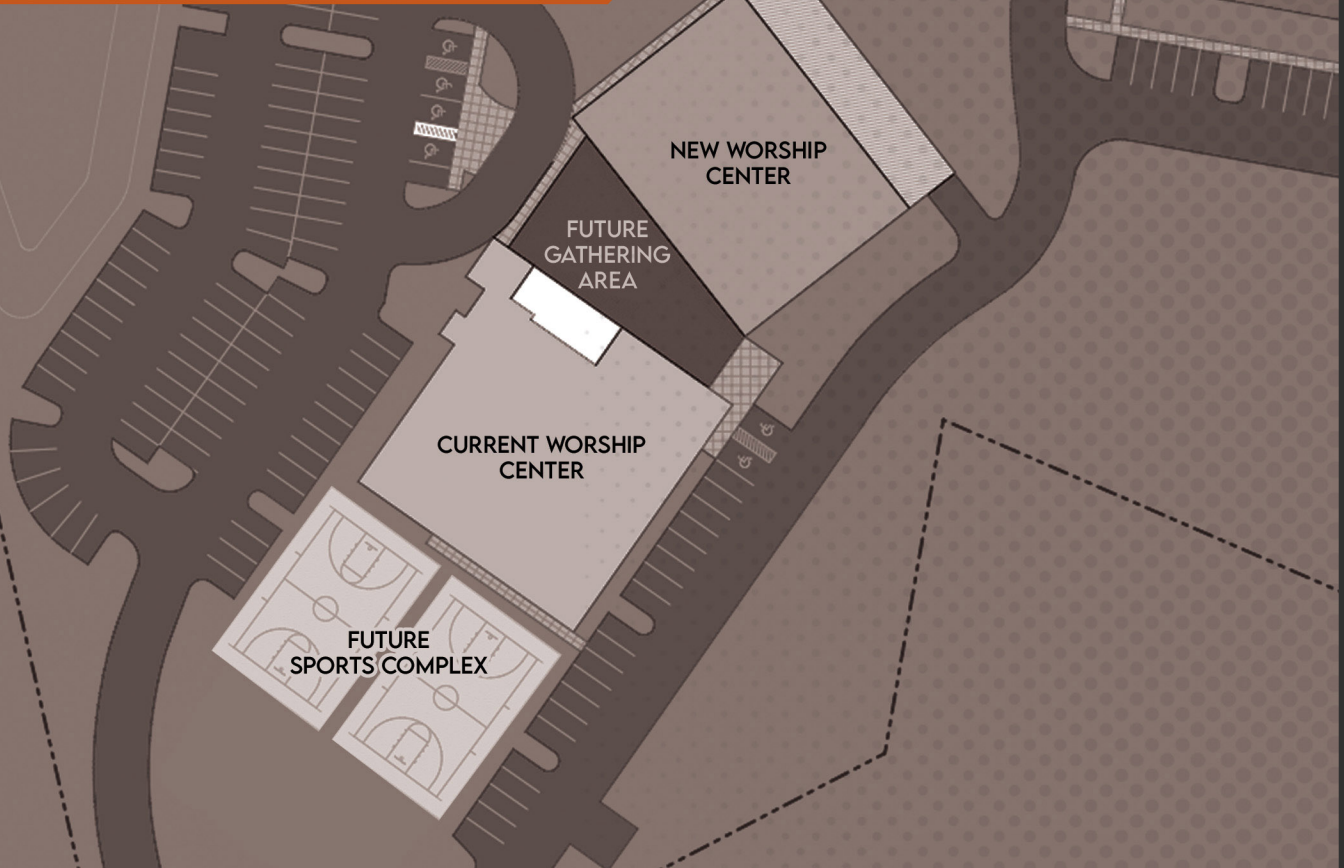
As we have done in the past, we plan to strongly support our ministry partners in the future. We continue to be committed to serving those most in need while we invest in our local and global ministry partners.

ADVANCE OUR CAMPUS \$2.5M - \$3.5M

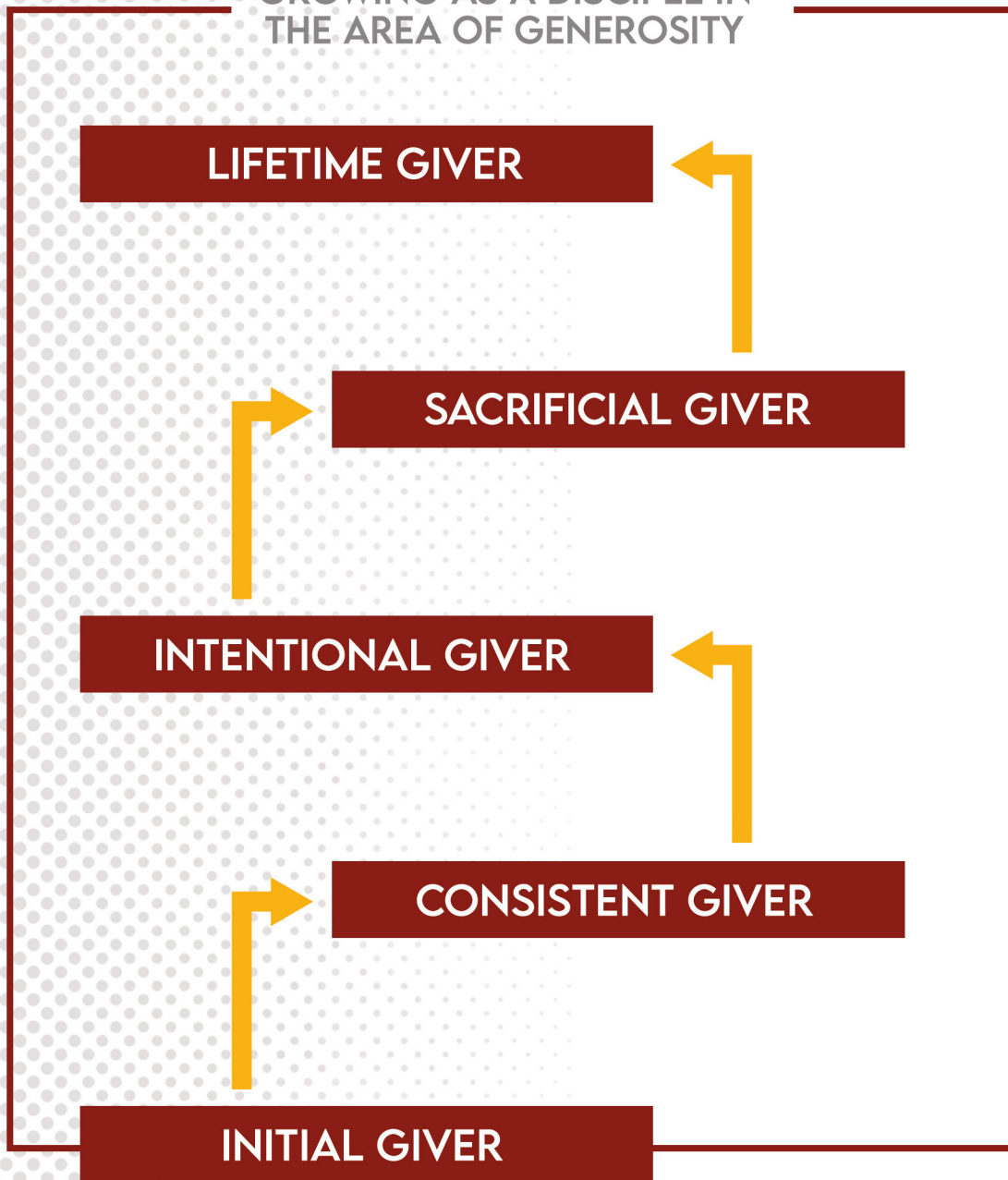
A major part of Advance is expanding our campus to make the most of the property God has entrusted to us for the sake of the future. To optimize our campus in pursuit of our mission, we will also make significant renovations that will result in a more physically connected and easily accessible experience for everyone.

This includes site development, parking lot, enhancing our kids space, and building a new worship center.





GROWING AS A DISCIPLE IN
THE AREA OF GENEROSITY



These stages focus on behaviors and attitudes of our hearts—our discipleship—rather than on an amount. Each step represents growth in a lifestyle of generosity and sacrifice that transforms us into the likeness of Jesus who gave up everything.

An **INITIAL GIVER** is someone who decides to give for the very first time, out of a response to God's Word about giving. This is someone who decides to give something and trust God and the leaders of the Church with this gift.

A **CONSISTENT GIVER** is someone who commits to give something on a regular basis. Consistent Givers start to think of their giving in the same way they think about other budget expenses that are always paid, regardless of seasons of plenty or want. They often set up an online recurring gift to help.

A **INTENTIONAL GIVER** thinks about giving in relation to other things they spend their money on: "Why do I give the cable company or my cell provider more money than I give to God?" They consider a percentage or amount they want to commit to in order to consciously grow in their generosity. Intentional Givers look at their budget and consider how their giving reflects their view of God and commitment to His Kingdom. This may also be the point when someone begins to tithe, which is being intentional about a certain percentage that they want to give to God.

A **SACRIFICIAL GIVER** is someone who recognizes the cost Christ paid on the cross for us and is surrendered to honoring God with 100% of their resources as a result. They give in a way that changes them. Their giving governs their spending/saving rather than their spending/saving governing their giving. A Sacrificial Giver continues growing the percentage of their giving over their lifetime - well beyond ten percent. They seek to honor God with 100% of what He has given them.

A **LIFETIME GIVER** is someone who thinks about the long-term effects of generosity rather than month-to-month, or even year-to-year, generosity. A Lifetime Giver makes decisions in the short-term that have longer-term effects as it relates to their generosity capacity. They think of what home they buy, what car they purchase, and how much savings they choose to keep all in relation to their generosity capacity. A Lifetime Giver might be someone who has a lifetime giving goal that governs their large buying decisions. Much like a Progressive Giver makes a commitment that will govern monthly and annual decisions, a Lifetime Giver makes a lifetime or longer-term commitment that governs larger-item purchases like homes, cars, and investments.

ONE FUND INITIATIVE

You may have been part of church campaigns in the past where you were asked to give a second gift “above and beyond” your usual gifts to complete special projects. Normally, you gave that gift to the “Building Fund” and you also continued to give to the “General Fund.” This type of giving is potentially confusing to people who either don’t have a baseline for their “usual giving” or who aren’t able to really celebrate the total giving at FBC in one single number. We believe we’re all on ONE MISSION—to help people experience the extraordinary life in Christ.

The ADVANCE Initiative will last two years. In those two years, every gift given to FBC will go to the ADVANCE Initiative—to help us ADVANCE for our ministry, outreach, and campus.

We’ve included a sample commitment card so you can see how a “one fund initiative” works. Please take the time to look it over to have an idea of what you will do. We will provide commitment cards on Commitment Sunday, October 15.



MY/OUR TWO YEAR ADVANCE COMMITMENT

PLEASE CALCULATE WITHIN THE WORKSHEET BELOW

\$

+

\$

=

\$

WHAT I/WE NORMALLY GIVE IN ONE YEAR
(general fund, GraceGiving, Christmas Offering, etc.)

MY/OUR EXPANDED ANNUAL GENEROSITY FOR "ADVANCE"

X2 YEARS =

\$

+

\$

=

MY/OUR GIFT(S) FROM STORED RESOURCES
(stocks, real estate, savings, selling items, etc.)

**MY/OUR TWO YEAR
ADVANCE COMMITMENT:**

NOVEMBER 2023 - NOVEMBER 2025

\$

NAME(S)

PHONE

EMAIL

We encourage you to bring this card with you to service on Commitment Sunday, October 15th

CREATIVE WAYS TO GIVE MORE GENEROUSLY

Generosity initiatives rely on church members making gifts that expand and accelerate their current level of giving. The best path to increased giving is the spiritual path, where you set your heart on things above. Financial priorities then take shape from the spiritual priorities.

One way of defining this is “Lifestyle Stewardship,” a term used to describe a level of giving that affects one’s living. The challenge of Lifestyle Stewardship is to find ways, boldly and prayerfully, to let your giving touch your living!

King David declared, “I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God of that which cost me nothing” (2 Samuel 24:24). David understood the gift that would touch the heart of God must first touch the heart of the giver! This is the spirit of Lifestyle Stewardship: If it is for my God, my gift must have value and meaning to me.

Often, Lifestyle Giving means giving up something in one area so that you can give more of yourself in another. The three keys to effectiveness in Lifestyle Stewardship are:

- Reassess lifestyle
- Rearrange priorities
- Reallocate resources

Many believers have been amazed at their ability to give more generously to their church. The following seven steps are offered to help you in this regard.

1. PRACTICE PRIORITY BUDGETING

Many families will choose to rearrange their priorities and give up something in their current budget in order to give more to a generosity initiative. Priority budgeting may mean postponing a planned expenditure such as a new car, vacation, home remodeling, or other major purchase. Many Christians giving to

capital stewardship campaigns find a way to give through sacrificial commitments made in faith and coupled with priority budgeting.

2. REDIRECT PRESENT EXPENDITURES

Often, families have significant short-term expenditures for special needs. One example is the large expenditure a family incurs for a child to attend college. A family realized that their daughters would be graduating from college during the two years of the generosity initiative and, as a result, they were able to increase their commitment to the second year of the campaign by thousands of dollars by giving what they had been spending on their daughters’ tuition. Another example would be the cash flow that is freed up when a loan is paid off.

3. INCREASED GIVING WITH INCREASED INCOME

Some people receive periodic increases in salary or bonuses from their employers. The temptation for many of us is to increase our lifestyle to fit the higher income. In many instances, families have decided that they will commit the full amount of salary increases.

4. GIVE FROM YOUR EXCESS

A young man decided that two collectors’ baseball cards worth over \$20,000 he had been holding for a number of years would be the most appropriate means of touching sacrifice for his family. Some families save money over a period of years for a special project. A couple had saved \$80,000 to build a lake cabin. When their church entered a generosity initiative, they decided the needs of the church were greater than their need for a second home.

5. COMMIT UNEXPECTED CASH

Often, people pray for God to show them a way they can give beyond what they can presently see or afford. Sometimes, the answers come unexpectedly. A couple had been praying for weeks about their commitment to

the church generosity initiative. Much to their surprise, they received an inheritance of several thousand dollars. They gave the entire amount to their church as part of their two-year commitment, in addition to a commitment from their regular income.

6. SACRIFICE YOUR EXTRA TIME

Some family members have extra time they would be willing to use in a part-time job to be able to give more to the church. This is particularly true for families whose children are grown and away from home and for semiretired or retired couples. A man was in the process of retiring when his church entered a campaign. He and his wife secured new jobs and gave the first two years of their retirement income to the generosity initiative.

7. DONATE APPRECIATED ASSETS (STORED RESOURCES)

Many people own stocks that are worth significantly more than the original purchase price. That is good news. The bad news is that if these stocks are sold, a significant portion of the gain would be lost to taxation. Gifts of appreciated assets—typically investment securities or real estate—can be very advantageous to both the donor and to the church. By transferring ownership of the asset to the church, the donor avoids capital gains taxes on the sale of the asset. In addition, the donor receives an income tax charitable deduction for the full market value of the asset. That, in effect, makes these gifts less costly to make.

	Sell asset and gift net proceeds	Give asset directly
Value of asset	\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00
Original Purchase Price	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
Amount of Appreciation	\$9,000.00	\$9,000.00
Capital Gains Tax*	\$1,800.00	\$0
Proceeds to Church	\$10,200.00	\$12,000.00

(asset value minus taxes)

*Assumes 12-month holding period, 15% capital gains tax. Please be sure to consult your finance planner, attorney or CPA before making a final decision for your gift.

Though it is important to invest your giving to further the mission of the ministry God has laid on your heart, it is also important to consider the tax implications of making a gift to the church. Before making a commitment of this type, please consult your CPA, tax attorney, or other financial advisor.

A FINAL WORD

Giving does not have to be in equal increments over the two-year period of the campaign. You might be able to give more in the second year than in the first. As you think about your financial commitment to the campaign, think not just of your potential to give right now, but also of your potential to give in the future. It might be that you can make a two-year commitment in which 35-40% is given in the first year, and 60-65% is given in the second year.

Finally, as you consider your financial commitment to the God's work, you might want to consider estate planning. Many sincere, committed Christian people have not made provision for God in their wills and estate planning. Now might be a good time to do that. It might be as simple as including a provision in your will that 10% of the value of your estate will be donated to the church holding your letter of membership at the time of your passing. Or, it could involve a planned gift such as a charitable remainder trust. While such gifts do not provide immediate financial benefit to a generosity initiative, they are marvelous gifts of faith commitment to carry on the work of the church for future generations.



GIVING SCENARIOS

Each of us embarks on the generosity journey at a different starting point. Here are a few hypothetical situations that may be similar to the one in which you find yourself. Each example below illustrates how an individual or family can take the next step on the generosity journey, and how the ADVANCE commitment card could be completed accordingly. Which of the following giving scenarios fits you best?

INITIAL GIVER

MY/OUR TWO YEAR ADVANCE COMMITMENT

PLEASE CALCULATE WITHIN THE WORKSHEET BELOW

\$ 0	WHAT I/WE NORMALLY GIVE IN ONE YEAR (general fund, GraceGiving, Christmas Offering, etc.)
+	
\$ 1,300	MY/OUR EXPANDED ANNUAL GENEROSITY FOR "ADVANCE"
=	
\$ 1,300	X2 YEARS = \$ 2,600
	+
	\$ 500
	=
MY/OUR TWO YEAR ADVANCE COMMITMENT: NOVEMBER 2023 - NOVEMBER 2025	\$ 3,100

Michael is new to the faith and has never given before. He is now starting several spiritual disciplines, including generosity. It's a huge step of faith for him, but Michael has decided to give \$25 per week. Combined with \$500 from his savings, Michael plans to give a total two-year contribution of \$3,100 to the ADVANCE initiative.

CONSISTENT GIVER

MY/OUR TWO YEAR ADVANCE COMMITMENT

PLEASE CALCULATE WITHIN THE WORKSHEET BELOW

\$ 500.00	WHAT I/WE NORMALLY GIVE IN ONE YEAR (general fund, GraceGiving, Christmas Offering, etc.)
+	
\$ 1,250	MY/OUR EXPANDED ANNUAL GENEROSITY FOR "ADVANCE"
=	
\$ 1,750	X2 YEARS = \$ 3,500
	+
	\$ 500
	=
MY/OUR TWO YEAR ADVANCE COMMITMENT: NOVEMBER 2023 - NOVEMBER 2025	\$ 4,000

Jennifer has witnessed changes in her own life through the ministry of the church. So far, she has been giving casually, if she has extra cash on hand. However, she now feels led to become more consistent in her giving by setting up a recurring gift online. Her plan is to increase her usual annual giving of \$500 by \$1,250, bringing her to \$1,750 a year. With the addition of \$500 from a vacation savings fund, in two years she will have given \$4,000 to the ADVANCE initiative.

INTENTIONAL GIVER

MY/OUR TWO YEAR ADVANCE COMMITMENT

PLEASE CALCULATE WITHIN THE WORKSHEET BELOW

\$ 6,000	WHAT I/WE NORMALLY GIVE IN ONE YEAR (general fund, GraceGiving, Christmas Offering, etc.)
+	
\$ 6,000	MY/OUR EXPANDED ANNUAL GENEROSITY FOR "ADVANCE"
=	
\$ 12,000	X2 YEARS = \$ 24,000
	+
	\$ 2,000
	=

MY/OUR GIFT(S) FROM STORED RESOURCES
(stocks, real estate, savings, selling items, etc.)

MY/OUR TWO YEAR
ADVANCE COMMITMENT:
NOVEMBER 2023 - NOVEMBER 2025

\$ 26,000

Paul and Rebecca have given consistently to the church at a steady 5%. With a combined income of \$120,000, they contribute \$6,000 each year. ADVANCE, however, has prompted them to tithe a full 10%. It will require some adjustments to give \$12,000 a year, but they know it's what God is calling them to do. Also, they've been saving for a boat but have decided to give the \$2,000 in that account as well. They are now planning to give \$26,000 to the church over the next two years.

SACRIFICIAL GIVER

MY/OUR TWO YEAR ADVANCE COMMITMENT

PLEASE CALCULATE WITHIN THE WORKSHEET BELOW

\$ 7,000	WHAT I/WE NORMALLY GIVE IN ONE YEAR (general fund, GraceGiving, Christmas Offering, etc.)
+	
\$ 1,400	MY/OUR EXPANDED ANNUAL GENEROSITY FOR "ADVANCE"
=	
\$ 8,400	X2 YEARS = \$ 16,800
	+
	\$ 2,000
	=

MY/OUR GIFT(S) FROM STORED RESOURCES
(stocks, real estate, savings, selling items, etc.)

MY/OUR TWO YEAR
ADVANCE COMMITMENT:
NOVEMBER 2023 - NOVEMBER 2025

\$ 18,800

Anthony developed the discipline of tithing years ago, and he has experienced God's provision again and again. Anthony will increase his giving percentage from 10% to 12% of his annual income of \$70,000, or \$8,400 a year. Over two years, with the addition of \$2,000 from the transfer of stocks that are no longer of interest to him, Anthony looks forward to giving \$18,800 to the ADVANCE initiative.

LIFETIME GIVER

MY/OUR TWO YEAR ADVANCE COMMITMENT

PLEASE CALCULATE WITHIN THE WORKSHEET BELOW

\$ 13,500	WHAT I/WE NORMALLY GIVE IN ONE YEAR (general fund, GraceGiving, Christmas Offering, etc.)
+	
\$ 1,500	MY/OUR EXPANDED ANNUAL GENEROSITY FOR "ADVANCE"
=	
\$ 15,000	X2 YEARS = \$ 30,000
	+
	\$ 60,000
	=

MY/OUR GIFT(S) FROM STORED RESOURCES
(stocks, real estate, savings, selling items, etc.)

MY/OUR TWO YEAR
ADVANCE COMMITMENT:
NOVEMBER 2023 - NOVEMBER 2025

\$ 90,000

Judy loves to give of her time, talents, and resources. She has set a lifetime giving goal for herself, and is excited to reach it. She has been giving 15% of her \$90,000 income (\$13,500) to the church in recent years, but is inspired to increase the annual amount to \$15,000. She has been considering the purchase of a new home recently, but she realizes that purchase may inhibit her ability to reach her giving goal. So Judy has decided not to move, and to give her down payment toward the ADVANCE initiative instead.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT ARE YOU ASKING ME TO DO?

First and foremost, we are asking that you pray and seek God's direction on what He is asking of you. Prepare your heart to hear Him and then listen to what He says. Take your next step. Engage in personal reflection with God in this guide. Talk with your spouse, your family, or others about what this commitment will mean for this next exciting season of your life. We are asking that you make a sacrificial commitment to gospel-centered generosity, whatever it is that God leads you to do. Follow His leading.

Finally, we ask that you prepare to be amazed. We serve an awesome God, and He is going to move in huge ways. We anticipate an unprecedented impact from our collective ADVANCE commitments, something only God can do. Please mark your calendar for Commitment Sunday, October 15 and prepare to experience a life-changing worship service that will forever be remembered as a defining moment for our church and our faith.

HOW IS ADVANCE DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS GENEROSITY INITIATIVES?

We are more focused on everyone at FBC seeing their giving as an integral part of the discipleship process and then being challenged by God to take a next step. The bulk of this notebook is focused on helping us dig into some key Biblical principles that guide us in this area as we follow Jesus. This is our first priority—100% participation in the process. Even if someone wrote us a check today for our secondary goal of \$2.5 - \$3.5 million, we would still do this initiative. Whether we're just starting in our giving journey or we're very committed givers, we all have a next step to take and room to grow in this area.

HOW DOES \$2.5M - \$3.5M OVER TWO YEARS COMPARE TO CURRENT GIVING AT FBC?

Our current annual giving is approximately \$1,650,000, multiplied by two years is \$3.3M. So, in essence, we're believing God to grow our resources by \$1.25 - \$1.75 million per year for a total of \$5.8 - \$6.8 million.

ARE THERE ADDITIONAL WAYS BESIDES CASH THAT I CAN GIVE TOWARD ALL IN?

Be creative as you explore ways you and your family can give toward ADVANCE. You might have some stocks, property, or other items of that nature. Or you may have stored resources that God has blessed you with in the past that He just might be calling you to give during this time. Please let us know if you need assistance with facilitating gifts of property or stock, and we would be happy to help you. Pastor Micah Warren, FBC's Executive Pastor, is able to assist with all such gifts and questions by email at pastormicah@fbcbelong.com.

WHAT IS BIBLICAL TITHING?

If you are new to the idea of tithing, the following are five facts about biblical tithing: (1) The tithe is 10% of everything God provides through income, gifts, etc. (2) The tithe is to be the very first ten percent of your income - before taxes, bills, savings, house payment, etc. (3) The tithe is to be given to God's work around the world with priority given to His work through the local church. (4) The tithe was modeled by Abraham, Moses, Jesus, & Paul. (5) The tithe is supposed to be the floor and not the ceiling of our Christian generosity. In fact, we like to say that "tithing is the training wheels for a life of generosity" - where God begins teaching us how to be generous in all areas of our life.

WHAT IF I HAVE NEVER EVEN GIVEN TO FBC BEFORE?

ADVANCE was crafted specifically with you in mind. ADVANCE is a “one fund” generosity initiative. It’s different from a traditional capital campaign where you are called to give an extra gift above and beyond your normal giving, thus creating two steps for people who aren’t yet giving. ADVANCE is a call to sacrificial, gospel-centered generosity for absolutely everyone at FBC. If you have never given before, this is your chance to get in the game with a committed sacrifice. We really hope you will.

HOW DO I GIVE ONLINE?

You are welcome to give online to ADVANCE by going to www.fcbcbelong.com/give

HOW LONG IS MY COMMITMENT?

We are asking that everyone make a two-year (24-month) commitment. The fulfillment period for your commitment will begin with BIG GIVE SUNDAY and our offering on Sunday, October 15 and it will culminate in October of 2025.

WHAT IF I AM NEW AROUND HERE?

ADVANCE is about the vision for our church and our personal discipleship in giving as followers of Jesus. We believe that the local church is one of the most compelling missions to give toward, and we would really love for you to make FBC your home and join us in ADVANCE. If you are ready for it, this is a perfect time for you to put a stake in the ground and make this your church home. The best way to do that is to attend our next Connections Class.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A JOB RIGHT NOW? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR MY ALL IN COMMITMENT?

ADVANCE is about your total, radical, sacrificial generosity to God's mission at FBC. We believe that God calls us to action in times of hardship just as much as He does in times of abundance, and that looks different for every person. ADVANCE is about a heart change—one that is only accomplished by surrendering our lives completely over to God in this area of giving and declaring that we are people who are willing to ADVANCE with Jesus. That may mean that you are being challenged to sell things, to pick up odd jobs, or even to trust God in faith by making a commitment that you don't quite know how to fulfill right now but that you believe God will provide for, as you seek for ways to work towards that commitment. We would like for 100% of us to be a part of ADVANCE so that we can all be supporting, loving, encouraging, and praying for one another through this spiritually-stretching season at Faith Baptist Church.

WHAT IF I AM SEVERELY IN DEBT RIGHT NOW? AM I STILL SUPPOSED TO GIVE?

If you are someone currently seeking to make payments to pay off debt right now, we commend you for making progress on that. And you should continue to do so. We would be happy to help you in this journey and/ or to recommend a budgeting resource that might minister to you. Being in debt does not, however, “excuse” someone from giving. Giving isn't about what God wants from you; rather, it's about what God wants FOR you. It should be our joy and privilege to give at all times. Please visit with one of our staff if you need assistance with this. We would be honored to help you!

Next Steps

Mark your calendar and plan to attend three important dates on our ADVANCE calendar:



www.FCBCBELONG.com/ADVANCE

EARLY COMMITMENT NIGHT

OCTOBER 4

We will host a worship service and advance commitment event on Wednesday, October 4, at 6:30pm. This will be a special time of prayer and celebration with those who desire to lead in their ADVANCE response by turning in their commitments early. You are personally invited to this important and memorable night. May it be one of the most defining moments in our history at FBC.

COMMITMENT SUNDAY

OCTOBER 15

On Sunday, October 15, all of us will be asked to turn in our ADVANCE commitment cards. This is the time when we will take a step of faith together and see what God can do when we yield our lives and resources to Him. We encourage you to spend the next few weeks praying - and as you pray, realize that God will show you one way or another exactly what He wants for you to do.

BIG GIVE SUNDAY

NOVEMBER 5

Mark your calendar for November 5 when we will give our very first and best offerings toward ADVANCE. We will announce our ADVANCE commitment total on that weekend and celebrate what God has done in each of our lives to that point. If you are committing stored resources, gifts or savings, we encourage you to give those on that day in order to accelerate the vision God has for FBC. Others may choose to accelerate current giving by offering more than usual on this weekend to help us jump-start our initiative in a big way. We encourage everyone to participate, regardless of the size of your commitment, in this first offering.



Faith BAPTIST
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