

BLESSED TO MULTIPLY // GENESIS 1:26-28

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Series: Made to Multiply

Two Cities Church, have I told you lately that I love you guys? Guys, we had an incredible Heights Conference. We worshiped passionately and sometimes without a sound system. Remember that? That was incredible.

Yesterday, I was walking with Pastor James Merritt. It was about four o'clock. We were having our five o'clock conference last night, and we're walking around just the building. He looks outside and says, "What is going on outside?" He says, "Why do people have lawn chairs when they're eating meals outside?" I said, "They're tailgating." He said, "People tailgate for your church events?" I said, "Yeah, that happens kind of often around here." He said, "Are you kidding me? In 50 years, I've never seen anybody tailgate for a church event." I said, "Sir, welcome to Two Cities Church."

Guys, it was incredible. So, we went up to the mountain top, and I've got a job to do today as I finish our Heights Conference and as I launch our fall. It has less to do with going to the mountain top because it's fun to have mountain tops, but we need mountains to climb. It's fun to have mountain top experiences, but we need mountain top expeditions.

Today, I've got a special sermon for you guys. I've been thinking about this sermon for four months at least. Normally, I get six days. I got four months to think about this. My normal sermon outline for those of you who care about this is 20 pages. My outline today is 27 pages. Yeah, there's just no way I'm gonna be able to get through all this. It's both a State of the Union address and a sermon. It's telling us where our church is and where we're headed.

Let me tell you why we're doing this. Here's how I view, if I can mix metaphors for a second, Two Cities Church. I view Two Cities Church right now as a beautiful lake. I love lakes. My favorite place to go is Lake Norman. I just love going down there. I love it's quiet, it's calm, it's serene. And we're in a lake. Why are we in a lake? Well, this building has been such a blessing for us, right? And it was a mountain we climbed.

If you're new, here's what we did for the last four years. In 2021, we had to find this property. We did it by the grace of God. In 2022, we had to fund this property. Thank you for doing that through the Forward Initiative. In 2023, we had to build this property. Okay, and Pastor Dave almost had a mental breakdown during that year. In 2024, we, I mean, look around. We have already filled this property.

In fact, here's what someone said. Someone on our staff said the other day, "You know, Kyle," and please hear this charitably, some of you don't know me. They said, "You know, it's interesting. I feel like you could preach any five sermon series this next year, as long as they're biblical, and our church would grow. And I feel like we could give Donovan any 25 or 30 songs. And if he sang them, our church would grow. And we can hold our eight or nine weekenders, and our church will grow. And we could launch all of our community groups, and our church will grow, but we would know we're settling for the status quo."

So guys, here's what we're doing today. We're moving out of a lake into a river. Grab your paddle, put on your helmet, put on your life vest, get in the raft with us. We're gonna hit some white water, but amen, that's right. Some of you are gonna fall out of the raft. And by God's grace, we're gonna grab you, we're gonna bring you back in, guys, but we're headed somewhere together.

I'm gonna try today, and I'm gonna pray in a minute, and then we're gonna do this. I'm gonna try to answer two questions today. I think these are the two questions every dad needs to answer for his family, every president needs to answer for his country, every boss needs to answer for his business. Here it is: Where are we going, and what is my role? The first question is a question of direction. The other is a question of participation.

Here's what I found. If you don't answer those questions for people, people get aimless, and people get anxious. So guys, here's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna pray because a lot of people say, "What's going to happen over the next 16 months?" And the answer is, "I don't know," because the greatest things that are going to happen during the Multiply initiative are gonna have to do with you guys and decisions you've not yet made.

I'm gonna encourage you today, a lot of us, all of us need to make a lot of small decisions starting today, and some of you, you don't know this yet, you're going to make some big decisions. And I wanna pray for you. Let's pray.

Lord, thank you for the Heights Conference. Thank you for the message that a perfect God uses imperfect people. Thank you for the message last night from a man in his 70s telling us, "Keep climbing." Thank you for Donovan and his team just so passionately leading us in worship.

Lord, I wanna pray for people right now. There's a lot of people, I know who's here today. There are a lot of guests just showed up to watch a baptism, have no idea how their life is gonna be changed. There are people whose careers are gonna be redirected and whose marriages are gonna be saved. And there are babies who are gonna be born in baptisms that are gonna be had because of what's beginning to happen today. Would you bless as you promise to do the teaching of your word in Jesus' name, amen.

We're gonna spend the next 16 months talking about the statement right behind me. You and I, this is what we're doing. If you're gonna be part of Two Cities Church, you're gonna spend the

next 16 months filling in that blank: I was made to multiply blank. We are in a cultural initiative, okay?

Here's what the cultural initiative is called if you haven't gotten it so far: it's called Multiply. It's a Multiply initiative. When you came in, I hope you saw those beautiful banners hanging in our lobby. We just decided we're flying flags at Two Cities Church. We're flying the flag of multiplication.

And then when you came here, I mean, isn't this thing, let me just hold this, doesn't it feel good? Doesn't it just feel so good? We gave you guys a Multiply Moleskine, basically what that is. That is your passport for the journey that we're gonna be on as a church for the next 16 months. Some of you, what you need to do is you need to just start taking notes. Some of you are gonna look back just at that journal.

And by the way, each one of you only gets one. So please don't lose it, okay? I want you to take notes. I want you to write down, you're gonna see, we've got things in there like what's my next step. And here's what I think. I think you're gonna look back in December of 2025 and you're gonna say, these are the promises I believe. These are the things God did. These are the things I learned.

Guys, I wanna talk to you. We got a lot to talk about today, okay? I got so much in my brain and in my mind and heart to share with you guys. I wanna talk about what a cultural initiative is. It's super special, guys. A cultural initiative is an intentional spiritual journey we're gonna be on together as a church family. Everybody ends up somewhere. Very few people end up somewhere on purpose. We're aiming up together, and I couldn't be more excited.

I wanna tell you before I get into the text, three reasons that we're doing an initiative. Why are we doing this? Number one, we wanted something that was simple. Like one of the things I do every time before I get up here is I put do not disturb on, even though I don't have my phone up here, I have my watch on. And I know if I don't have the do not disturb, even in the 45 or 50 minutes I'm up here, I'm gonna get buzzed multiple times, right? Because everything's calling for our attention, notifications, right?

A mentor of mine, you know this, always told me, the good is the enemy of the best. And we said, this is the question we asked: what's the one thing that can drive everything in our church? What's the one thing that we can build everything around? So we wanted something so simple. Remember in the one initiative, it was one word with one syllable? Well, now it's one word with three syllables, okay? But it's still a great word.

But the second thing is we wanted it not to, please listen, we wanted it not just to be simple. And I'm, 'cause I'm not into what's cool and I'm not into what's popular and I'm not even really into what works. I wanted to do something that wasn't just simple. We wanted to do something that was biblical. I'm like, if we're going to do this for 16 months, if I've got to get up here and preach about this theme for 70 weeks, it better be biblical to the core.

Well, okay, well, look at Genesis 1:28. I'm just gonna do this quickly 'cause this isn't even my sermon yet, okay? You're like, well, yeah, if you're new, welcome, okay? This is just the intro. We're still in the intro, okay? Genesis 1:28, God bless them. Listen to me, the first word to humanity is multiplication. It's to multiply. It is God, literally God says nothing else to us before he says multiply.

So I'm like, okay, let's go back to the beginning and let's just try to do the first thing God told us to do. What if we did that? But then you might say, well, Kyle, come on, that was given to Adam and Eve and they were in the garden and it was sinless and they were perfect. Genesis 9 verse one, God gives the exact same word to Noah and his sons to be fruitful and to multiply and to fill the earth.

And here's what I want you to know. And some of you need to know this. The call to multiply is given to messed up people. The call to multiply is not given to perfect people. It was given to perfect people, then they messed that up, that's okay. Because now God gives this, it's the same exact command he gave to Adam and Eve, he gives to Noah. In Exodus chapter one, verse seven, we're basically told as a summary statement of what's happening in the book of Genesis and now Exodus, that the people of God were multiplying.

Have you ever opened up your Bible and you've been like, why is the Hebrew phone book in my Bible, all these genealogies? You know what I'm talking about? You know, Hebrew get, Hebrew get, Hebrew get, you know what I'm saying? Guys, let me tell you, 'cause even you open up your New Testament and what is the first thing you see in the book of Matthew? You see a genealogy, like what's going on? It's God saying multiplication is working, it's happening.

We get to the New Testament and Jesus' first parable, Jesus told a lot of parables. You know what's the first parable as far as we can tell when we put everything together? The parable of the soils. Do you remember what he says in Matthew 13? He says, hey, there's like three types of bad soil, there's one type of good soil, oh, and when the seed goes in that soil, it bears fruits. And it's the language of multiply, a hundredfold, sixtyfold, thirtyfold.

Okay, when you're in the book of Acts, right, which is the church at its birth, is the church at its best, okay, remember this? And you get a summary statement in Acts 6:7, and here's what it says, the word of God increased, right? And it says the number of disciples multiplied greatly and many priests came to faith. And when we go to the very end of the book, the book of the Bible, when we go to the book of Revelation, and I believe it's Revelation 7:9, it says, John says, I saw a great multitude.

Well, how do you see a great multitude of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation? You only see a great multitude if you multiply. So guys, this, I don't have time, on the podcast, I'm gonna unpack every sermon series we're doing for the rest of 2024 and 2025. My friend called me the other day and I said, guys, I told him, he's a guy that I mentor, and I said, we're planned out

through 2025 in sermons. He said, you're planned out through the rest of the year, that's amazing. I said, no, we're planned out through all of next year.

I want you to know how intentional we're being as a church to trace this theme through all of scripture. But it's not just simple, that's great. I like things that are simple because then they're portable and there's a lot of chaos and confusion in our lives and we need something that we can grab onto. And I love it, it has to be biblical, but then this is it. It's timely. Like, I really believe this. Like, I think there's like, I don't know how many words there are in the English language, but I really believe this, for the deepest part of me.

There's one word for our church right now, and it's multiply. Why? Because what's the opposite of multiply? To be me-centered. To be safe and to be selfish. It would be very easy with a building like ours and a budget like ours and a staff like ours for us to just focus on us. And we could do it with some Bible verses somehow and we wouldn't even know it was happening. Would you know what the opposite of multiplication is?

Well, let me, I'm gonna read this to you. Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 30. I want you to see this. You're not gonna believe this unless I show this to you. Verse 15, "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules." Here it is, you see it, it's right there. This is not a minor theme. "Then you shall live and multiply." That's what we're hoping for, that's our North Star.

"And the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it." Here it is, here's the opposite. "But if in your hearts, but if your hearts turn away and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today," here it is, "that you shall perish." What is the opposite of multiply? Die.

Now I thought about calling this initiative multiply or die, but some of our staff thought that was too intense, okay? (congregation laughing) But I want you to know that I actually think, it's interesting, like, you know, there's this, a leader says, one leader I read, he says, "The vision matures in the leader and the vision matures the leader." And so the more I'm in this, like, I'm just constantly having all these new thoughts and I'm sitting in my office this week thinking about this message and I thought, not only is this the most timely word for our church, but this might be the most timely word for our culture.

You know that we have a population problem in the Western world, the population is shrinking? Do you know, this is kind of a gross statistic, but I know it, so now you need to know it, okay? For the last several years, there have been more adult diapers sold in Japan than kid diapers. Do you know that at a political event in the last few weeks, they were giving away free abortions and free vasectomies to young men? That is a culture of death and sterilization. And it is going completely contrary to God's design.

So in a population that's shrinking, we are going to be a church that's multiplying. Now with all that said, my intro is now over. Let's go to Genesis 1, verse 26. I wanna talk to you guys about this. I am so excited about sharing this with you, okay? Go to Genesis 1, 26, here's what it says. We're literally going back to the beginning.

By the way, we're gonna be spending, there's so much going on, we're gonna be spending nine weeks in Genesis 1 through 11, dealing with the foundational, I don't even, ideas, principles of life, in a series we're calling Made to Multiply. But I want you to see this. Then God said, let us, a reference to the Trinity in the Old Testament, let us make man in our image. If you underline, you might wanna underline the word image. It's gonna show up three times.

Then God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. Here it is, look at verse 27. So God created man, here, second time, in his own image. Then a third time, in the image of God, he created them, male and female, he created them.

Here's why I'm so excited about the idea of multiply. It's because I want you to understand that it's the very first thing God said to Adam and Eve. It's the very first thing God told man to do. And here's what I want you to understand. We already said it, it's the name of the series. I want you to know this. I don't really have points to my sermons, but if I had a point to the sermon, I mean, I'm headed somewhere, but you know what I mean.

Here's the first thing I want you to know. You were made to multiply. Multiplying is an issue of identity, right? So the first thing we're told about ourselves, it's like, okay, think about it this way. God designed us so God knows how to direct us. God created us so he knows how to command us. And here's why, this is what I'm so excited about. I know that you guys can do this by the grace of God. You can multiply because it's why you were designed.

This series is not called Fly, F-L-Y. Why? Because you're never gonna be able to fly. Doesn't matter how much we pray about it. Doesn't matter how much we motivate you. Doesn't matter if we give you a book to take notes on how you could, you're not gonna be able to fly. This series, this initiative is called Multiply because God made you to multiply. You're made in his image.

Now, I want you to see a couple of things. First, I want you to see that the commandment to multiply is not given just to one person. Do you see this? So God comes to Adam and Eve, and let's just go, I want you to see it, every word matters. Go back just real quick to verse 28 if we can. In verse 28, it says this, "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply.'"

So marriage, we'll get here in a few weeks. I'm gonna do a whole sermon on multiplying in your marriage. Okay, that's not today. But I want you to understand this, that the primary picture of multiplication, like the archetypical picture of multiplication in the Bible, is marriage. Why?

Because a man by himself can't multiply, and a woman by herself can't multiply. But if the man and woman will come together, they will multiply.

Here's what we're trying to do in this initiative. We're trying to call all of you to join us in multiplying. Listen, we need, what God wants to do, he wants to do through all his people. Everybody in here needs to multiply, whether you're an introvert or an extrovert. We need masculinity and femininity. We need old people and young people. We need new believers and mature believers. We need white collar and we need blue collar. You can't, there's no multiplication in isolation.

But here's what I want us to think about for a little bit, because let's just go one level deeper, okay? So he tells us to multiply. And you might think, "Well, how do I multiply?" Well, there's two other words. Did you see them? I won't reread them, but in verses 26 through 28, there's two other words that God uses to describe what it means to multiply. And they're not words that we usually use, but I want you to see them in the text, you can find them.

It's the word dominion and subdue, or to subdue and have dominion. Now, when's the last time you've used those words? You know, you'd probably be pretty scary if you walked into your home, you're like, "I'm gonna have dominion." Everyone's like, "What got into dad?" I mean, right? We don't normally use those words, subdue, but they're so important because you can't multiply if you don't know what those words mean.

The word subdue is the Hebrew word kibosh, okay? You can look at your neighbor right now and just say kibosh, just say, just be proud of kibosh, 'cause we're gonna do it together. We gotta know these Hebrew words if we're gonna do this, guys, so subdue means kibosh, okay? Here's what it means, take care of. Are you taking care of what God's given you? Take care of your wife, take care of your husband, take care of your body, take care of your kids, take care of your house, but that's only one of the words.

The other word is the word dominion, which sounds big and sounds scary, and is the Hebrew word radah. You're like, "Is he gonna make me say it again to my neighbor?" Don't worry, you don't have to say it to your neighbor. Radah is the word dominion, it means to rule. This is amazing, guys, listen. God is giving the language of kingship and queenship. All the commentators agree. He's talking to Adam and Eve, and he's giving them the language of being vice regents. They are royalty with responsibility.

Here's what this whole initiative's about. We're gonna talk about so much over the next 16 months. This is about you deepening and developing what God has given you. That's what the whole initiative's about. God gave you a body, and he wants you to take care of it, and to deepen and develop it. God gave you a mind, and he wants you to expand it, enhance it, and learn things. God gave many of us families, he gave us jobs, he gave us skills. And we are to subdue, and we are to have dominion.

Here's another way to think about this. When God created the world, I don't know if you ever had this thought, you know at the end, he always says, it's good, it's good, it's good, and then he creates Adam and Eve, he says, it's very good. Here's what I want you to know. When God created the world, it was good, but it was not done. God created us to take the world somewhere.

So I, for about five years of my life, this may surprise some of you, I was a Presbyterian, and I was in this Presbyterian church, and it was a great church, and the Presbyterians talk about something that most other churches never talk about. I'll give you a new phrase today. Have you ever heard of this phrase before? They talk about the cultural mandate. The cultural mandate is what I just read to you in Genesis 1:26 through 28. It's the great commission in the Old Testament that what God basically said is, I want you, just think about it, we're made in God's image right after God did what? Create.

God says, I just created, and I just spoke things into existence, and the difference between us and God is obviously God creates out of nothing, and we take the raw materials. Here's what it means to have dominion. We take the raw materials, and we repurpose them for human flourishing. That's what we do. But I want you to see something else. Go with me back to verse 28. This is our key verse. This is our theme verse. He says this, "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply.'"

Okay, so I wanna say two things to us, and I hope you hear them both. Number one, you were made to multiply, and so you can do this. In fact, so many of you are already doing this, and I want you to just help more people in our church to multiply. And also, because you were made to multiply, I know that you're going to love it. Like, you're going to find it, when you start to do this, when you start to invest in other people, when you start to think about other people other than yourself, you are going to find so much meaning, right? Because everything is most happy when it's doing what it was designed to do, right?

If you could ask a can of Coke, if it could speak back to you, and you said, "Coke, what would you like me to do?" The Coke can would say, "Please drink me." That's what I was designed for. But I want you to see a second thing. The second thing is we can't multiply apart from our Maker. Do you see that it says, "God blessed them," even before he tells them to multiply, he blesses them.

Listen to this, please. Before multiplying is a command, it's a blessing from God. Yes, at one level, it's something we have to do, but at a deeper level, it's something we get to do. Listen, this is why, as excited as I am, and in a few minutes, I'm going to tell you all the ways we're going to try to multiply, and the vision that we have, and the places that we want to go, and the things that we want to do, but I want to just say, day one, beginning of the initiative, sermon one, I just want to tell you, we understand that we are completely dependent on the Holy Spirit to do this.

Because, look, okay, listen. Trying to think if I want to tell you this story. I was in a church that was really emphasizing, you know, mom staying home and having as many kids as she can.

This was several churches ago. And it had this kind of interesting culture of just have a lot of kids. This isn't a bad thing, I'm going somewhere with this. And when you have a culture that emphasizes have kids, have kids, have kids, have kids, have kids, have kids, the best thing you could do is have kids, and if you have, and the more kids that are sitting on the pew with you, the better your life is.

Then it really is hard on the mom who can't get pregnant. If you've ever met a couple, and we have several in our church, maybe, probably many, probably more than I know. If you've ever met a couple who they want to have kids, and they can't for some reason, and we're gonna, we always pray for them. We're gonna believe God for them, to open up the womb. But you will meet a couple who understands we can't multiply unless God blesses us.

And I just want that to be the posture of our church. Like we're gonna, in about, I don't know how long, 10 minutes or so, I'm gonna say some things about where we're going. And it's like, we're gonna be very confident. But I want you to hear me say up front that we know that we cannot multiply if God does not breathe and bless what we're doing.

I also want you to hear this. You can only multiply what God has given you. Right, you can't multiply zero. You're only responsible. I don't want you to get overburdened in this initiative. We're gonna help you, okay? You can only multiply what God has given you. The problem is sometimes we're not starting where we are in using what we have. We're looking around at everybody else and saying, why do they get to go on vacation more than me? And why are they better looking than me? And why are their kids better behaved than mine? And why are they married and I'm single? And why do they live in a nice neighborhood and I don't?

And I just wanna encourage you, God is only gonna hold you responsible to multiply what he has given you. But there's something else we need to talk about for a few minutes. It's, go back to verse 28. It says, "And God blessed them and he said, multiply." No, he says something before multiply. He said, "Be fruitful." I wanna talk about this for a few minutes. I think this is maybe, in my opinion, the most important thing I'm gonna say today.

You can't multiply unless God blesses, but you can't multiply unless you're first fruitful. What does it mean to be fruitful? It means to be healthy. Part of what we're doing here is we're saying, listen, we're helping us 'cause we all need to draw lines in the sand and say, today's gonna be a different day. Like I'm asking you to connect your life to the life of this church. And today is the day, listen, this is not primarily like a mission initiative. It is, we're gonna multiply and do a bunch of things. I want you to hear me, please. This is a health initiative for you.

Because you can't multiply if you're not healthy. Here's what this means, okay? Some of you, I'm not thinking of any one person, some of you need to get physically healthy in this initiative, and we're gonna give you 16 months to do it. Do you understand what we're doing? You need an expiration date. You need a sunset. Some of you men need to lose 50 pounds during this initiative. It may be the most important thing you do. Because you're like, I wanna be around for my grandkids.

And if you're not, listen, I'm just speaking particularly to the men, if you are gonna continue to be unhealthy, I want you tonight at dinner, I want you to sit down with your family. And I want you to say, "Hey guys, listen, I'm gonna remove the fig leaf for a second. And I just wanna tell you that I'm not gonna take care of myself for the next couple of decades. And so I'm gonna be an unnecessary extra burden on you guys as you age." I want you to look at your wife, or I want you to look at your husband and say, "You know what, if that's what you're gonna do, if you're not gonna take care of yourself physically, I want you to look at them. And I want you to tell them tonight, listen, I'm sorry to break this to you. I'm not gonna take care of myself and you're not gonna be attracted to me anymore."

Some of you, you have to get healthy in this initiative. We're gonna come alongside you to help you. Some of you need to get relationally healthy during this initiative. Is there peace in your house? Is there unforgiveness in your hearts? Is there somebody that you need to be reconciled to? Is there somebody you can't talk well of? Is there somebody you get angry about every time someone says something nice about them? You're gonna have to deal with this.

Some of you need to get financially healthy. You're gonna need to pray and ask Dave Ramsey into your heart during this initiative. You're gonna have to not try to keep up with the Joneses. You're gonna have to say consumerism and materialism are not gonna define my life. You're gonna have to learn to worship God with your wallet. You're gonna have to learn to give, save and live. And this is, listen, please, we're gonna give you 16 months to figure it out.

I want you to hear both that we're giving you 16 months and we're saying like, dude, we are gonna come alongside you. We're not pointing the way, we're leading the way. There's a second component to fruitfulness. 'Cause you might ask what trees bear the most fruit and the answer would be, well, the healthiest trees bear the most fruit. But then there's another answer, the most mature trees bear the most fruit, right?

So this is a health initiative and this is a call for all of us to grow up. And I know, again, we're all at different stages. Some of you are doing all of this so well and so keep doing it and help others to do it. But there's three movements to maturity, right? You know this, it works with boys going to men and all this. There's three movements. You have to move from me to we. That's what I'm asking you.

Do you know, I don't even know how all this works. I heard a psychologist say, thinking about yourself and being unhappy are the exact same thing. This is why sometimes the worst question you can ask somebody is how you feel because as soon as they start thinking about how they feel, they realize I don't feel very good. And sometimes, I mean, the best thing you can do is start to think about other people. And in this initiative, we're gonna move from me to we.

And it might just be, you're gonna think about your spouse for the first time. There's a study that said it takes couples 10 years to practically and functionally move from me to we. The second is I want us to move from now to later. These are the two moves of maturity. You have to think not

me, but we. And the more we you can put around that, the more people you can think about at the same time, the more mature of a person you are by definition, obviously.

But then you gotta move from now to later. Here's the problem with multiplication, guys. Multiplication is so messy. And it takes so much time. So I was like, I can't get up here. I feel this all the time. I'm like, I can't get up here and talk about this unless I've already made some changes in my life before I got up here. In fact, it was funny. I was hanging out with James Merritt yesterday. Those of you who are here know who he is. And he said to me, "Kyle, do not," he's kind of an intense guy. He said, "Do not practice what you preach." He said, "Preach what you practice."

So I was thinking to myself, well, what can I do during this initiative? And maybe I'll share more things. There's several things I'm doing. But I thought, you know, and I don't know why I never had this thought. Maybe this will be a new thought to some of you. I thought, why don't I start a DNA group with my two boys? I've got a 10-year-old and an eight-year-old. I'm in a DNA group already. These are groups of three to five men, three to five women, deeper discipleship, all that. But I thought, you know, this is like a month or two ago. I'm like, I gotta start, I gotta multiply personally before I get out here.

I gotta do new things. So I tell my boys, "Hey, guys, you wanna be in a DNA group together?" They're like, "Yeah, this is awesome. We have a nickname for it. We have a handshake." I mean, I can't show it to you. We got all this kind of, anyway. So we go to the first one. 'Cause I gotta see, like, can this work? And what does this feel like to try to do this kind of stuff? So we go to, we're at Panera. 'Cause they're like, "If we're gonna do a DNA group, will you buy us breakfast?"

Okay, do you wanna be in DNA group or do you want breakfast? Whatever. True story. So we go to Panera, and I'm in Panera with my boys, and we're like, "What do you guys wanna read?" We're talking, anyway, we're talking. And we're reading Acts. I don't wanna get lost in the story here, but basically, so we were going back over Acts, and at the end, I was summarizing some things, and we were recapping what we learned today.

And I asked my eight-year-old, my youngest, you know, what he learned, and I asked him a question that we talked about today, and he didn't know the answer, and he looked at me and he goes, "Dad, I'm quitting this DNA group." (audience laughing) And I was like, I am the worst dad ever. And I literally, I said to him, I said, "You can't quit a DNA group." He goes, "I'm quitting." I said, "If you quit, I'm telling Pastor Caleb." He says, "You're not gonna tell Pastor Caleb, are you?" I said, "If someone leaves the DNA group defiantly like you are, yes!"

So about five minutes later, he recommitted and everything's going well, okay? But here's what I mean. Multiplication doesn't happen in a minute, and multiplication is a mess. And so you're gonna have to move from now to later, okay? You're gonna, here it is, here's a great line. You're gonna have to choose what you want most over what you want now.

I think the best parts of us all want the same things later. We want, you know, and here, right? When you hand your kid a screen for the 55th time, go away, Junior, go. You know, I don't wanna be bothered by you. What you want right now is your kid to leave you alone. What you want most is him to be a fully developed and devoted follower of Jesus Christ and for you to have a great relationship with him.

But you're making decisions now based on what you want now, not what you want most. When you look at things that you shouldn't, when you have a fantasy life, when you emotionally flirt, you do things that you want now, but that's not what you want most. What you want most is a lifelong, stable, faithful, intimate relationship. We have to move from me to we. We have to move from now to later. We have to move from toys to tools.

By definition, when you're young, you play with toys. But basically what it means to grow up, like why you, if you're thinking rightly, like why you go to college or trade school, is, or medical school, whatever it is, is you're saying it's time for me to grow up and what I'm gonna need is tools. And here's, the multiply initiative is way more than this, but it's not less than this. It's a tool for you guys to use.

I've said many times here, we're not trying to give you new rules, we're trying to give you new tools. And I want you to, like guys, we have, I'm not trying to pat ourselves on the back here. We have spent countless hours thinking about you and how everything from the journal we gave you to the series we're doing, to the videos we're showing, to the events we're holding, it's a massive tool to help you multiply.

So with that said, I wanna tell you how we're gonna multiply as a church. I'm gonna do this really quickly. Behind me on the screen, you're gonna see concentric circles. By the way, this is on pages 10 through 12 in your journal. Now we think, I don't have time to explain all this, but we think in terms of concentric circles, again and again and again in our church.

So you can see you are at the center and then it's your family, that might be you and your wife or you and your wife and kids or you and your grandkids, whatever you wanna put in there. You've got you, you've got your family, you've got our church, you have the city and then you have the world. Listen, on pages 10 through 12, and I'm gonna talk about this this week in the podcast, we unpack all 20 things we're trying to do as a church over the next 16 months. It's just way too much to talk about right now.

What I wanna give you is I wanna give you just one thing about each area, okay? So first of all, we're gonna start with you. Guys, the reason we're starting with you is how much better would everything be if you were better? And I really want you to focus on you in this initiative and I want you, there's so many things we're gonna talk about, but maybe the one I'll focus on is I want you to discover or rediscover the spiritual disciplines. I need you to be healthy.

James Merritt told me yesterday, he said, "There's one thing I'm gonna do every day of my life. It does not matter what else happens that day." He said, "I'm gonna read my Bible every day of

my life." Here's what I want you to know. In the Christian faith, there is no spiritual hacks. There is no cheat code. I hate to break it to me, there is no spiritual ozempic, okay? You just have to do the hard things that Christians have done for 2,000 years.

You need to get up, you need to see God's face, you need to confess your sins, you need to read your Bible, you need to serve others, you need to share your faith. Secondly, I wanna talk about the family, guys. Look what we said here. A commitment to multiply the vision and values of God's word in our homes. Do you know that it is only modern Western people who are afraid to pass on their vision and values?

Historically and globally, this is what every family's dying to do. If only my kids would do and believe what I have believed and build their life on this. And we're like, "No, no, no, no. Let's just send out little Frank to the university and I hope he's happy and we'll see what happens." Guys, we're gonna come along marriages in this, okay?

'Cause there's, again, I keep putting James, I wasn't planning to do this, but James Merritt said to me last night, "I know there are hurting marriages in your church right now." It's like, "Of course there are." And too many people settle for being sexless roommates raising kids. And we're gonna do a marriage conference in February, we're gonna help you figure out the complexity of raising your kids, we're gonna do all of that.

Number three, we are going to, with the church, a commitment to multiply discipleship, community and care within our church. Guys, we are going to strengthen every ministry in our church. It's too much to explain to you. By the way, have you noticed these are all we wills, not we might. We're burning the ships and we're headed forward.

Fourth, in our city, a commitment to multiply the grace and truth of Christ in our city. We basically, we wanna serve and reach and bless and care for our city in such a way that if Two Cities cease to exist tomorrow, we would want our city to miss us. We're thinking, I mean, just one little thing, we're thinking about how to get more deeply into the prisons. I mean, we're strategizing, we're setting a North Star and we're going for it.

And finally, with the world, a commitment to multiply our obedience and sending. If I can just tell you one thing, the thing that bothers me the most about our church right now, just me personally, this wouldn't be all the staff, this wouldn't be the elder, this is just Kyle speaking, is that we have not yet planted our own church. We're eight years old, we're over 3,000 people.

And we have partnered, listen, we've partnered with many, we've partnered massively financially, relationally investment, we have never parented a church. I want there to be a day where it's like, hey guys, Johnny's getting on stage, you'll recognize Johnny 'cause he got baptized five years ago in our college ministry, man, he's doing incredible. He's gonna be planting a church in Idaho, we're gonna, I mean, that's where we're headed.

I wanna be known for our sending culture that young men and women come from all over the United States. I never heard of this place, Winston-Salem, but I've heard of Two Cities Church, and I know if I go there, they'll send me somewhere.

Okay, now when I give you those five areas, a lot of us, I mean, some of you, you're very excited about all five of those areas, some of you go, it's just Kyle, and I didn't even go into much of it. You go, Kyle, it's just too overwhelming. Well, here's what I want you to do. I want you to focus on you in this initiative first. Because the concentric circles are the way they are for a reason. You can't take care of your family until you take care of yourself.

And this is why, right, if you read 1 Timothy 3 and other places, the requirement for church leadership is that the guy's taking care of his family. You can't take care of the church's family if you can't take care of yourself. So listen, I want you to take care of yourself, and here's what this means. I thought about you guys. I thought about the individuals, and this means that some of you who are single, particularly single men who are out of college, you're single and you can't multiply being single.

So here's what I wanna say to the single men on behalf of the single women in our church. We are giving you 16 months to get engaged. Yes! (audience laughing) 16! I almost, literally guys, I literally told my wife, I said, "I'm gonna come up here with an hourglass, "and I'm gonna flip the hourglass." And she was like, "Please don't, that's like cringeworthy."

But I mean, I am metaphorically flipping the hourglass, and we're saying, by the way, young men, do not overlook the single mom. Some of you are double income, no kids. You're dinks. And you're not thinking about kids, or one of you isn't thinking about kids. Usually it's the wife, she's finally, she wants to have kids, but the husband doesn't really wanna have kids yet because he can't go on his nice vacation if she doesn't work.

I wanna say to you, double income, no kids, you're done with that during this initiative. You're gonna get pregnant during this initiative. Isn't that amazing? Because guys, kids are half your life. My wife and I, we were on vacation for my 40th birthday. Have I told you guys I turned 40? And we're at this nice restaurant, we sit next to this couple, and they're a nice looking couple and we were only at this place for four days.

They said, "Well, we're here for 10 days." I said, "10 days?" They've been married for eight years. They said, "Oh yeah, we don't have kids." (audience laughing) And I was jealous for about three seconds, okay? I really was. But they said, "Yeah, we don't want kids." And I said that, you are so, I didn't say this to them, I'm thinking you are so silly and so foolish. Kids are half your life, grandkids are a third of your life.

And your life is not meaningful enough for you not to have kids. I honestly, I have had a, I mean, I'm still very young, I've had a very meaningful career. And there's still nothing more meaningful than my family. Some of you, you have a dead end job. You have a dead end job. And it is just,

you're not gonna be able to build a life and you're not gonna be able to build a career. And during this initiative, you're going to leave your job, you're gonna find a career.

Some of you, you have a career and it looks nice and shiny and it's killing your soul. And during this initiative in 16 months, you're gonna make a transition. Some of you grandparents, I'm talking to you and you're like, "Oh my, maybe we need to make a big transition." I don't want anyone to leave Two Cities Church, but if you're gonna go leave Two Cities Church because you realize you've got 15 years of health left and you wanna be closer to your grandkids, then you're gonna leave.

Some of you are gonna become, I know you think I'm silly right now, wait till we get into this. Some of you are gonna become missionaries. Some of you are gonna help plant churches. We don't even know what's going to happen. But I wanna give you the motivation for all this as we close. John 12:24 says this. John 12:24 is Jesus at the end of his life. Here's what he says. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, by the way, he was speaking of his own death, it remains alone.

Look at this, as Jesus refers to his own death. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Jesus Christ died and in his life, death, and resurrection, it bore fruit. It bore the salvation of sinners from all over the world. Maybe I'd say it simply, Jesus Christ died so that you could multiply. And I told you at the beginning, we went back to creation. We went to Genesis 1 and we said, hey, the motivation is creation, but I would say also the motivation is the cross.

And here's what I think is gonna happen. And I don't know what God's gonna do 'cause I don't know the big decisions that you're gonna make starting today. But before we know it, 'cause this is how life is, it's gonna be December of 2025. We're gonna be like, wow, that was an amazing season in our church. And here's what I think is gonna happen, I really do. I think that there will be people who said, you know what, we'll shoot videos, we'll bring them on stage and we can tell their stories.

There are gonna be people who are gonna come up here and they go, guys, listen, I came to Christ during the one initiative. I wasn't even here when you launched it, but I was so-and-so's one. And there are gonna be people who go, you know what, they're gonna look at this, there's gonna be families in our church and they're gonna look back and they're gonna say, listen, it was during the multiply initiative that for the first time in our lives, we can honestly say we were a Christian family.

People are gonna say, it was during the multiply initiative that we got married. It was during the multiply initiative we moved back with our grandkids. It was during the multiply initiative we had our first kid or we had our final kid. It was during the initiative God called me into ministry or God called me overseas. We have no idea what God is going to do, but we're just praying Genesis 1:28 over our lives, which is this, God, would you bless us? We're gonna be fruitful and we're excited about how you will multiply us.

Let's pray. Lord, this is just the beginning. And I wanna pray for people right now. I wanna pray just the text of scripture over them, Lord, that people would realize they were made to multiply. It does not say God created them and he said to consume. He created them and he said to cultivate. Lord, I pray people would decide I'm gonna cultivate, I'm gonna be done. I pray people right now would decide I'm done complaining about my spouse, I'm done. I'm gonna cultivate.

I'm done complaining about my job, I'm gonna cultivate. I'm done complaining about my kids, I'm gonna cultivate. I'm done complaining about my health, I'm gonna cultivate. Lord, I pray for people all over this room who they need to get healthy. You would help them. Lord, I pray for people over this room who are already doing all of this. They're leading the way in this. I pray that they would realize we can't do multiplication in isolation. They would grab people. They would grab young people and old people and they would invest and they would teach other people how to multiply, Lord.

And I pray that as John saw in Revelation 7:9, that great multitude, that the decisions that we're making today here in Winston-Salem in 2024, that as we multiply, it would be part of seeing one day that great multitude. It's in Jesus' name we ask, amen.