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Welcome. In today's episode, we're going to talk theater. Why does Hell exist? Yeah,
That's a combo.

It kind of goes together. Understanding your church's local predicament and the privilege of watching
light bulbs and fireworks go off in people's heads as they buy in and dimming when they don't. Hello?
Hi, Danielle. Hi. How are you? I like that. I like that title. That's good. It's a little wordy, but it gets at it.
It does. It gets at my heart. Hey, so another thing we have in common is kind of a secret love for theater.
Yeah.

And I'm a little bit jealous,
Particularly musicals

Particularly. Yes. We've seen some stuff.

We've seen stuff together. We have, haven't we? Oh, you've seen Les
Mis, Les Mis Rent. Can we Say It?

We saw Rent. Yeah. Yeah. What else have we saw? Did we see? I don't know if we saw Cats Together.
Oh, no, because I've not.

Family of the opera
Probably.

Yeah, I think we,

Oh,

We did.

Yeah. Paul Stanley from Kiss played the Phantom in Toronto. In Toronto, and he took 12 teenagers with
us. It was the most sexualized, inappropriate Phantom of the

Opera. Oh, shoot.

But you win some, you lose some,

Is that what we call it now?

Yeah. Yeah. So anyway, but I totally forgot about it, so I'm mad. But

Yeah, so I've had a long couple of days. I did a almost six hour drive down to Lancaster and back for
some meetings and got back, got changed, got back in my car and went with my wife to Dear Evan
Hansen, which was, there's a Broadway series that comes to the Warner Theater in Erie. And so I don't
love all of the shows that come through, but I've been eager to see this one. And it was one, I've listened
to the soundtrack too for years because the soundtrack's fantastic. And it's the same person that wrote
Greatest Showman. So the music has that kind of anthemic. It's real and catchy. And so the songs are
great, but I'd never seen the show. And I think there's a movie out there.

There's a movie. The movie,

I'd never seen the movie either. So I actually really didn't even know the story

Other

Than the music. And so, yeah, we had a great time. It certainly kept us engaged. So for those that,
dunno, my wife, she's a home builder. She's a construction worker.

Not home body,

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No home builder. Home builder owns her own construction company, builds houses, is a carpenter, phenomenal carpenter and all that. So anyway, so she has a bit of a blue collar take on the world and zero social media presence.

You cannot find her

Z rowe.

Yeah. She has no digital footprint.

No digital footprint, no desire to have one. No. Pretty cool website for her company. No, nothing. It's pretty cool. Zilch. So anyway, that's her. So we watch Evan Hansen. I'm going to try to do a 32nd recap without giving it totally away. But the story's about this nerdy kid in school who it turns out he ends up creating an entire story online. That is not true. That he's at the center of that, almost like the hero of it, out of the goodness of his heart at first. He's trying to help people at first and then kind of gets caught up in it and the whole school gets caught up in it. And honestly, as I'm watching it, I was thinking back to Will Bakker, our youth pastor and some of the, he's done some really incredible research on Gen Z and stuff like that. And just my head was swirling around young students, their desire to be inclusive of people. One of Will's things is he's like, their heart is so to include everyone. And so even if it leads to doing dumb things at times, often it's because they want to include people or be included and be part of a cause and be part of something bigger and make good things happen in the world kind of thing. And so that was all in this musical, and again, he got caught up in it. It was a lie,

But he was trying to do good and videos are going viral and all this kind of stuff in the story. And so we walk out and I'm having all these love emotions for Gen

Z

And feeling bad for their plate and the anxiety and some of the stuff that, so I'm having a moment and we're walking down the sidewalk and I'm like, when we finally get to talk about it, I'm like, what did you think about it? And she goes, the moral of the story for Kim was that's why I can't believe anything on the internet.

Yep, a hundred percent. That was

Her big takeaway.

And that's

It. Everything on the internet is fake.

That

Was her second statement.

She's not wrong. That is funny.

Yeah. So we had a good Evan Hansen experience and slightly different takeaways.

Yeah, I would say so. I would say so.

But it was good.

Oh good. I am so excited. I'm normally not, but I'm so excited to see what they do with this wicked movie.

Oh, I know. Yeah.

The dude that plays the,

Have you seen it in the theater?

No,

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I haven't either.

Okay. Maybe we should all go try to see

It.

We get a group and see it. I think we should

See it first.

Yeah. I've seen videos of it in the theater, but not the whole, oh man. But I read the book books. Yeah, it just looks awesome. It looks like so cool.

Hamilton is another one of our shared loves. We never saw it together.

Never saw it together. I never saw it. I only saw it on tv. And then I accidentally indoctrinated Dax and I came across some videos when he was like one to three. He knew a lot of that

Soundtrack. Are you serious?

Oh yeah, I'll send you something. He was like, rise up. Oh yeah. I was like, hmm. Alright.

There are some parts that maybe it'd be better not for a one to

3-year-old. I'll send you that one too. Yeah, there was one, he was saying, it was one of the Hercules Mulligan thing, and I was like, he was mumbling. He didn't know what he was saying, but he was like, mumbling. I'm like, that's going to come back to bite me. Yeah. Alright, so now we're going to tiptoe. I should have said we were going to box step our way into your inbox.

That would've been also,

We both, we didn't say this. We both were in theater.

Listen, yes,

You

We

Were.

Didn't you do a all the night visitors or

Something? Where you a team? I

Did a bunch of them. Yeah, me too. I did a ton. I did a ton.

But I was on the football, I was the quarterback of the football team. Were the,

We have those two.

So I would go from football practice to play

Practice

And come in all sweaty, smelly, and

They loved.

They

Loved it.

But I found out that later in life found out that my dad, so my dad, who's a historic football coach around here, he is coached a bunch of high schools, a bunch of colleges, is an All-American player from back in the day, played in the NFL. He has a huge football district. My dad played the trombone in the marching band at halftime of their football games in full uniform.

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When did you find this out?

Later in light. It was in adulthood.

That's wild.

Yeah. The team would go into the locker room and my dad would grab his trombone and march full shoulder pads and everything playing the horn in the halftime

Show. That's insane.

Isn't that crazy?

Wow. That smells a lot about you.

Yeah. I have a history of,

Well-rounded family

Of Yeah. Multiple loves.

Yeah. All right. Speaking of, well-rounded question from the inbox today. And just a reminder, we're doing this just so you guys, if you want to just hear Derek's perspective, we'll put it in the show notes. If you want to not research and copy and paste, use it or just for interesting fodder. So today, why does hell exist? Why does there need to be punishment and pain for all eternity? I need to understand this in order to love Jesus with all my heart.

So very honest question. I think that I've gotten some version of this in a variety of ways over the years, and it's kind of funny. I'm going to answer that. But recently I had an interaction that was very instructive to me. So I meet a couple times a month with a little group of writers. Everybody's kind of written a book. That's cool. A couple atheists, a couple Christians. We solve the world's problems. Of course. One of these over cigars.

That's awesome

Impression. Anyway, a few times ago, one of the people who's not a Christian looked at me squaring the face and says, so you believe I'm going to hell? We're just having a normal conversation. And he just locked right in on

Me

And said that. And I said, yes. It's a very honest group,

Obviously,

But I followed it quickly with, and we talked about it

Obviously. Yeah, I'm sure.

But I followed it quickly with, this is the Christian doctrine that I struggle with the most of all of them. I don't love this. The reality of this, there's part of it that feels too harsh. There's part of it feels like eternal crimes for temporal, I mean, sorry, eternal punishment for temporal crimes and some of that. And so I find out later that that was very impactful for him. Not the description of hell, but the fact that I didn't love this doctrine. And he said in his mind, he thought, all Christians love this doctrine. All Christians love the idea

That's so painful

That if you disagree with me, you're going to hell. It's our favorite thing. It's like the thing that we clinging to the most. And so the fact that I said, I don't like this.

Yeah, that's good.

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Was hugely impactful for me. So that's just a kind of throw it out there thing to just be honest about even the way some of these things make us feel, even if they're true,

And

Even if we believe that they're true, the acknowledgement that, man, it's a struggle

To

Think about this can really go a long way

To people. Oh, that's just empathy building.

Yeah, exactly.

For sure. That's really cool.

And it is heartbreaking

To

Think that

That's how we're present.

People think that we love that.

Anyway, that's

Crazy. So I think there's a couple of things kind of at the forefront here. The first is just to acknowledge that there is a literal place called hell. And I think that's an important thing just to establish. And part of it is as many people have tried to explain their way out of it, Jesus said it. He said it often. He talked about it. And so there's really no dancing around the reality of what it is. The other thing I would say is that one of the common ideas is this idea that God is love. Everybody says, I don't believe in a God that would do that. I believe that God is love. And I would just always say in a response that God is love, but God is more than just love. That yes, he is a God of love, but love is not only quality nor would we want it to be because love and justice and even love and wrath go together.

And

They go together in real life too. Because all loving people are sometimes filled with wrath, not in spite of their love, but because of their love, because of love. And so if you're a parent,

Yeah,

That's a great example all about this. And so God's dilemma is that it's not just that he has these qualities, he is these qualities, and he is justice, and he is mercy. And so what do you do when you're both of those things and you have these created beings. And so on the one hand, his justice and his holiness demand punishment for sin, sin can't coexist with God. On the other hand, his love and mercy demand reconciliation and forgiveness. And so both of these things are essential to his nature. And it's the reason why the cross is such a powerful picture. Because in the cross we see both the wrath of God in that the cross is bloodied, but we also see the mercy of God in that he chose the cross to forgive our sins. And so I think that I just want to establish those things. And on hell specifically, the thing I think that is important to note is that the removal from God's presence I think is the key. And it's easy to go, and there are descriptions about what it's going to be like, and it's not going to be great, but it is going to be horrible.

But

The removal from God's presence is the key, because by definition, the absence of God from the picture is equivalent to the absence of all good, all joy in this world right now, we have the common expressions

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of those things, and everyone benefits from, it's not just Christians that benefit from the goodness of God. It's not just Christians that benefit from his mercy and his beauty and joy. So even if you're not a Christian, people are getting the residual effects of those character qualities of God. So when you remove all of those things, it's not like God just arbitrarily created some terrible place where he's sending people to that don't love. It's the absence from his presence is the equivalent of suffering, and it's the absence of the possibility of happiness.

We talked in another podcast we have called Exiles.

We

Talked about how it's like if you can envision a finish line and every step you take being with God is the finish line having a fulfillment, you have this pit for eternity and it just keeps moving. This finish line just keeps moving. You never get to it. I was like, oh, that's a good, it's just never unfulfilled, never joy. That for me. I was like, oh my gosh, if the finish line just kept moving for anything, when the finish line moves for anything for me, I get frustrated. So if it's like,

That's my worst dream, I had reoccurring dreams of that.

Oh yeah. I mean, I feel like that's, yeah, that's it. Anyway,

Right. Yeah. So I think that's the main thing. That's good. I think the other thing I would say is I come back to, for us as Christians, we know God, we've had a chance to get to know him during this lifetime, and we know his love and mercy, and we know his justice as well. And I think that, I'm sure it's easier for Christians to say than others, but I trust him and I trust that the punishment is going to fit the crime just, and so he's not going to do something that's unjust. And there are pieces around the edges of this doctrine that I don't think we fully understand. Absolutely not. And just like any doctrine, and I think when we have the full picture, it will make sense and we will see the justice in an appropriate way.

Yeah. Great. That makes sense.

So yeah, that's how I would answer that

Question. Easy. A little light podcast for your Monday morning. Great. Yeah. And if you want to go to derek sanford.com, you can submit your own question that you may have received or a question you want, Derek, maybe you're anticipating having to answer, you want another set of eyes on it, we'd love to answer that. So feel free to submit those. Okay. We're going to be joined with Pastor Mike here in a second, and we're going to talk about our reinventing church topic for our reinventing church topic. Today. We're journeying from, as a reminder, from a purely assimilation focus megachurch model to a funnel fusion model that includes a focus on disciple making, missional ministry, and calling. This is kind of the ups and downs behind the scenes building as we go, building the plane, as we're flying it sometimes straight into the ground. And today we're going to talk about pursuing your calling in different seasons of life. And Mike is joining us today. Mike was a pastor. Hi, Mike. Hi.

Hey guys.

Hi pastor. For many years at Grace, and you did, we'll get into this, Mike, but you did everything from marketing, communications, discipleship, care and support, preaching team, all the things,

Evangelism,

A million things, evangelism. Yeah.

Yeah.

You retired from Grace semi-recently. Feels like a long time and a short time, I'm sure at the same time. But we'll talk more about your background. But for now, Derek, why don't you just explain why we're talking about this topic?

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Yeah. So I love having you here, friend, but we've been hanging out for a long time with each other and really cool to see you. But I think part of the, and really a major part of this reinventing church thing for us is understanding calling. But because you're here and because you've been a leader in the church for a number of different iterations, I thought it'd be cool at least to start with recognizing where the church has been. So as we're talking about reinventing Grace Church, we've seen, we've been around for a long time, 1895, but even in my lifetime, certainly in your lifetime, the church has gone through a bunch of different phases. So the Jesus movement and the rise of the religious rite in the eighties, and the megachurch movement and the emergent church movement and the multi-site church movement, the missional multiplication church that we're talking about. So as we're thinking about shifting our approach as a church, you come with a very unique perspective in that you've not just come through the church, but you've been a leader in the church in a variety of different stages. So I want to talk about that in just a minute.

Sure.

But this idea of calling is such a centerpiece of our new vision. And it's interesting as we've gone through this calling process to recognize there are three different phases of life where people face a crossroads. And so there's the quarter life phase and the quarter life. In your twenties, you've just come through whatever you've come through out of high school and maybe college, maybe workforce or whatever, maybe in your twenties you got your diploma, your degree, the one that you were supposed to get, But maybe never really found out your career path. Or maybe it's different than what you thought it was going to be. And the quarter life question is, what am I doing? What am I doing with my life? Is it worth it? Is everything I've come through worth it? And aimlessness can set in at the quarter life stage, then the midlife crisis is the most famous one. The question at the midlife is, is there something more really by 35 or 40, even that early people can start to have doubts about what they invested their lives in. Some are unsettled because of success, and they had success and then kind of got bored with it and are looking for a new challenge. Others become unsettled because of failure. So it's not as much success as they had hoped. And the stakes are much higher at midlife than quarter life because all of a sudden there's relational obligations and financial obligations, and there's other people dependent on what decisions you make.

And then there's the three quarter life question, which is what will outlive me? And so the quarter life question is, what am I doing midlife? Is there something more? Three quarter life is what will outlive me. And until roughly 55 years old or so, which I'm quickly approaching fruitfulness, you're a baby, fruitfulness tend to be tied to activity. And then you approach the three quarter mark and become even more aware that you won't be doing stuff forever and you won't necessarily be producing stuff forever. And it becomes more apparent that there's a finish line to this whole thing. And the question then centers around what legacy did I leave? So anyway, we're talking about, I'd love to talk about the iterations of the church, and I'd love to talk about, because I think a lot of people listening talk about just pursuing your calling at different stages of life. And really, Mike, what did that look like for you? And I know you're doing some exciting stuff now at Post Official Ministry that may even feel like more ministry than what you were doing when you were a pastor. So I'm excited to talk about all that.

That's great. Yeah. Well, let's start with the church movement thing. So as you think about Mike, just I'll let you summarize it, but your twenties, your thirties, your forties, just kind of what you've seen over the arc of church in Erie. Even if you want to just focus on kind of our local

Sure. I'm just thinking how long it's been since I've been around a table with you two.

Wow. It

Feels like a long time. It

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Does.

The twenties wouldn't make any sense with that. What came before, and that was my Catholic church upbringing, which was very sporadic and very honestly confusing and not a slam against the Catholic church. It's just that my parents weren't devout and we were a celebrity family in the sense that our uncle was the bishop Veri,

The first family, almost

First family. I had nuns and priests. My whole education process put a good word into your uncle for me. And I'm 11. So going through that, being dropped off at church as a little boy, and they drive away, they wanted me to go. So I'd wait in the lobby until I saw them go, and I'd walk around for an hour. I wasn't going in there anyway, at that same time, from 10 to 18, I was nursing a pretty handsome drug situation. It wiped out those years for me, wiped them out.

Started that early for you?

Yeah. Wow. Yeah, solvents. Wow. Just ridiculous. But the seed that was planted in that experience, I was an altar boy. And going in there at 11 years old to this cavern of a building where he had just touched something go, they had life-sized stations of the cross. So when I would go into the altar board chamber, there was a dark little vestibule thinking back where the priest was, there'd be the shadow of a head with thorns in it from the faint light. And I can remember standing there thinking, why would you do that to someone? What would have to happen to have that happen to you? And that was a seed that embedded in. So I had a radical conversion. It's 18, 19 years old, radical in that it wasn't just, okay, I'll try this. I got knocked off my feet by the word of God, which was so precious to me. Somebody gave me some literature. I read it, said, all have sin and fallen short of the glory of God. And I thought, all obviously we've done something and we've come up short. And then I just pawed pawed and pawed and baw just threw up emotions of those dark years to be so in trouble so young.

And I just knew, man, oh my gosh, he is here and he wants me. And just really being worried about telling the girl I fell in love, who was the second person that made the most sense to me in my whole life. And find out she came to Christ within hours, separately. That's wild. So we found this group and they were like us. It wasn't looking. Somehow we stumbled into it. And what was amazing, zero church background. Nobody had any kind of template. They had no idea what just happened to 'em. A lot of drug kids, a lot of misfits. And all of us had that same, I'm serious. Awe. What happened to us? Wow. What happened to us? And to think back. Now, there's three great awakenings from the 17 hundreds through, and they're very much feeling that that movement was the fourth. All of North America, Australia, all of Europe, south America, central America. It wasn't like, was it Asbury College?

Yeah. Oh

Yeah. Just a very strategic regional. This was

All over the world. You're talking obviously about the Jesus movement,

The Jesus movement, Jesus movement. And here's what that model, if you want to call it. We didn't know it was a model. We didn't have any songs from Heritage. Nobody had ever been taught the Bible grounds for being really reckless. That's why countless calls popped up and we were dealing with them all the time. Children of God, the family, the way unification, church. Anytime we did something, we were hell bent on taking what happened to us and giving it away. That was it. We didn't know anything about structuring community yet. So we were in the media, we were in music. We were in every detention center. We were in every nursing home. We were standing out in front of high schools. Everybody. It didn't have to be mobilized. You couldn't help it. You knew what you just got freed from. So that model was fascinating, but it was juvenile. We really shopped ourselves around to a few

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churches say, here's what's happened to us, and I know we don't look like you the hair. We kind of don't know what we're doing. And they would try, God bless them, they would

Try,

But they were afraid we didn't affect their kids. Sure. So anyway,

It's so funny because there's a lot of recent focus on some of this coming back around. So the Jesus Revolution movie and all this kind of stuff, you see the Chuck Smith story, and it's like you guys were almost living a localized version of that. His church happened to take in some of that crew, and you had almost a similar path that you followed here. You never really landed in one of those traditional Churches for seasons, but eventually it would be, we didn't want to become that.

Right.

It seemed really

Kind of tired. So there was some on their side and some on your side that was just like, this isn't really what we were signing up for.

But the gospel was center focused. Man, if this is what it is, there is no more outstanding news than this. There's no more helpful thing you could give a human being than this. Nothing compares to this. So let's take it.

You said that you guys just went after everything with evangelism, every platform you could find. I remember hearing you say, went to Florida, you would go to Israel. You were just all over the place with the gospel. Any interesting, this is just out of curiosity. Any interesting Jesus people story about an evangelism moment that you remember that sticks out to you that was a little weird or wonky or, We led a girl to Christ at the whaling wall.

Oh, whoa.

And again, very childlike. I like, Hey, well, there was the yeshiva, a rabbinical school on the hill that were watching us the whole time. And they got word that somehow that this girl had made a decision. If you ever been to the William Wall, I think you have, it's packed, it's shoulder to shoulder at certain times of the day. And I was sitting off to the side with the son of the pastor of the big church in Jerusalem. David, of course, shocker. And he was a beautiful guy, but he was pouring out his heart to me. He goes, I don't want to be a pastor, so I'm going, David, that's all of a sudden I see the crowd just parting, like parting. And these guys in long black things were just marching.

Whoa,

Whoa. I said, David, I just think you need to get out of here right now.

Oh, wow.

Go get out of here. And he did. And he got me under each arm and dragged me across the entire span of the concourse there to throw us out. And one of my other buddies was a real lunatic from Key West Church was coming in. He had just went and bought a mug

As you do,

And I'm off the ground. And he goes, Shalom. And kept going. He just kept walking then. So long story short, oh, that's great. They were really going to beat the snot of us. And these soldiers came up and pushed. They didn't like them. Right. He said, one more time. You're out of the country. Get out of here.

Wow. Geez.

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So we were sharing the gospel in the epicenter of the story. Unbelievable. And got to feel a little bit of the tension. Maybe he felt, wow.

Well, yeah, I feel like that could have been a Bible story for real.

Right.

Wow, that's

Cool. So you came to Grace as a pastor in kind of the early stages, maybe even the beyond that of the megachurch movement. So this is a little bit more structure obviously than I'm sure you were used to. Can you just talk about that transition that maybe the similarities, differences between those two church experiences that you were, because you were a pastor, essentially a pastor of that church of Erie pastor teacher. Yeah. Pastor teacher came in as a pastor at Grace. That's not how you started, but that's where you ended up. Just talk about church leadership in those two different contexts.

What was crazy is before coming to Grace, I had a period where I just didn't

Do

Anything. It was exhausting that decade. But we traveled all over the place and it's like a switch went off. These fellowships that were everywhere coast to coast, they just all evaporated. And we felt like it was the end of the world and what God was doing. He goes, I've never abandoned the church. This is because the church didn't know what to do with intoxicated young people, but they're mine. And all of these people went into the church and most of these guys that we knew became pastors in the church that they wound up in. That's cool. So that happened to Grace. We had dozens and dozens of people that came to Grace because of Al Deter. We got to know Al well in Street church. We worked with him. We got a kick out of him, all us. And he had a shirt and tie and sport coat. Khakis. Khakis. But he had a great heart. So we needed stability and he provided it. But it was a real culture shock. We didn't know anything. We were all singing. And we wrote our own songs, honestly. We wrote our own worship songs.

I'm sure they were like I unspoken community contracts and things that the group would live by that you guys probably got confronted with too, just like how to behave, how to,

Yeah, a little bit. Al was very generous. He just opened the door. He actually told me years later, he goes, that changed grace right there because you had stuff that we didn't know about. That's right.

That's awesome.

But I didn't come right away because I knew if I went there, we could wind up being a subgroup. So I didn't. And part of it is I didn't want to. I needed some time. But yeah, it was very different. I found the spirit of God is the spirit of God and the spirit of God in people is very recognizable. And there was people all through this place that had a relationship with Jesus. You're more formal than I am, but in the long run. And it took me to learn that there are models. That's funny. Okay. I see that they're kind of doing this, and it was a crisis time. You were there. We're going to make big changes in the music and the style of dress and a lot of things. And it's not easy to see one model being broken to make room for a new one.

And you've heard a little bit, you're not on staff anymore, so you're not in the inside conversations necessarily about what we're up to. But you're in the congregation and have heard a little bit about this kind of disciple making shift that we're talking about at Grace. Can you just from a 30,000 foot perspective, just go, how does that land with you? What do you see? What do you thinking about as you've seen now this iteration, this iteration, this iteration. Now we're talking about this one other

Thing. I think it's fascinating. I think, and you would know this better than I, the church wobbled after pandemic, the church at large, people were going all over the place, not going, changing things up. So sometimes it's shocking to stand in the lobby and go, I don't know hardly anybody here, but there's a genuine, powerful enthusiasm of grace right now, I think. And I think this is going to bring a way to unlock people, to arm people, to show what I've heard, to show them that your purpose is pretty easy. Jesus said it to his guys, look up. Right. Here's the deal. See this. Go. Go. Yeah, exactly. So I think it's going to change everything about how they see their jobs, their

Recreation,

Their neighborhood.

Yeah,

That's good.

I think where you're going with it, it is

It. Yeah. I think, Mike, you're a perfect example. Not because of anything we did, just because of who you are as a human being and who God's made you to be. But you've had a big shift in your calling and focus from well throughout your whole life. But talk a little bit now about the work you're doing now, kind of post-retirement, the world you're living in and your calling. Sure.

Well, retired in 2019, had two months, and then the world shut down. Yeah, my gosh. So I spent a whole year and I quickly use that to say I'm going back through everything I believe because I can't leave the house. I'm going to go back and verify everything that I haven't picked up, any trends that are wobbly. And I started drinking a lot of coffee, so I did. Here's the deal. You got to be comfortable with the lane you're in. And I'm an old man. Titus talks very clearly about old men and their roles. So to sit and try to push your way into a young buck table, it's just sad. Don't, because now I get to talk. Psalm 78 says, you take the praises and the power and the strength of God and bring it to the next generation. So one of the things that really excites me, I've had coffee with so many young guys, listening to them, challenging them, asking them questions over and over and over, and really trying to figure out what would I do at Grace. I've done, like you said, a lot of it, I was actually going to go back on the worship team. I thought, I'll start where I started.

And then I got called to a meeting by an organization, office of Children and Youth. They said, we're not offering anything for young men that are single parents or broken family. The women have a lot of resource the men don't have. So you go to prison, you come out or you, you've really blown it. The courts say, you got to go to fathering classes or you're not even going to get a visitation again. And I heard that. I went, that's it. But then in the smaller meeting, they said, I know you're a pastor now. You can't bring any religion into this. And I thought, that's a game changer. And the Lord was, he's always been so faithful to me. He said, no, it isn't. Do it for a year. Plus, I've been with guys that come in the same way. Every time there's a new session, they're pissed. They've been forced to go. It's three months long every week. You miss one, you don't get qualified. Oh, wow. Nope, no grace. And then I watch community

And somebody's actually interested in me. I don't know who's going to hear this, but the word of God's. The word of God. So in our class, what it means to be a man, they tell me earnings status, physical ability. I go, you want to hear how it works? When I was a child, this is ancient stuff guys. When I was a child, I spoke like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. But when I became a man, that's the point. I put it all away. And they go, whoa, you get to do this a lot. And you think the word of God is a big boy stands on its own. I'm not going to give 'em reference verse and author. You're

Not telling 'em, pull out your Bibles. And we're

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Read literally had guys, whoa, did you get that? Did you get, don't worry about it. If that doesn't happen. You're a 50-year-old child.

Wow.

And your children never had a dad. They had a fellow kid. Just it's beautiful.

Well, and that's super inspiring too. I think the people who own businesses or work in places where they feel kind stifled by, oh, can I share my faith? It doesn't have to be this. Let me tell you all these verses and do all these things. You're just living the stuff and imparting it.

And when you can,

You do. Yeah, of course. Appropriate. You

Do. But you bring Jesus to the table, whether just because he's in you, he's with you, not

My words. Yeah. I can move completely aside and let 'em stand on his own two feet here. And these guys are like brothers. By the time they leave, they've tasted very high vulnerability. They tell you their stuff and it's not good. And they really come around each other. Hey, I'll be thinking of you this week.

Wow.

Graduation's a tough one.

Yeah,

You get close. Yeah. I mean, I can't have any involvement with them. Not supposed to. I do, but I get a text, I check in.

We're editing.

Yeah, we'll

Edit it up.

We won't.

So one things we will close out with this, Mike, we really appreciate you speaking into this, but one of the things that I always admired about you through our serving many years together as colleagues, is your love and admiration and investment in your family. That was just always first priority to you. And we've got some pastors, young ministry leaders, church leaders who listen to this podcast, and I was just wondering whether it's stated or unstated that's been a focus of your calling no matter what. I also think it probably is why you're drawn to this fatherhood ministry right now is because you've been so passionate about your family. But just what advice would you give to folks about family, first of all, but then just about calling in general about living out your calling in every stage of life. What would you just give us some blanket advice from your chair.

Sure. I mean, loving on my kids is attributed to my dad. He was a master. He's a simple man, but man, he got it. And he was good at both collectively investing in us and very good at individually collecting or investing in us. And I thought, I want my kids to feel what I felt if I can even carry a little bit of his weight. So I did give it my best to be honest guys. I saw too many pastors lose their kids

Because

They're so involved in the situations of everybody. And that is not, the early church did not see it that way. You couldn't even be an elder that says, if your kids, if you've blown the mismanagement here, what are you going to do to the family of God? How effective is it going to be? And I know that's easier said than done. Are you busy, man? Yeah, you got kids. But trying to say, listen, I've Bible says manage, I've got to manage this, that I have the appropriate amount of quality space with them and it's not negotiable. And that is not always easy. It might mean I still do the things the church requires, but I'm

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trying to dig in on each end of my church time, breakfast tomorrow, you and me, I took all my daughters on dates, you and me. What are we going to do Now I'm down to eight grandkids doing the same thing. Oh my gosh. Calling's a beautiful thing. It truly is that if you've received one, it could be just something I'm really highly interested in spiritual community. Well, that's fine. But a calling, at least for me was a without question, I want you to do this.

You can't do this. So I will do this with and through you. I just need you to take my leads. Not your church. Never will be so to recognize he has input all the time. Am I asking enough, am I passionate about Jesus? Have I let prayer slide to the side? What is prayer? I bring my stuff to him. How do I do this personally? I never let my calling wipe out my passion for lost people. And church is very capable of that because you have no time for lost people. You are so as a leader, as a pastor, you're embroiled with this baby. And where are we? Thousands now, right here.

Oh yeah.

How does a staff deal with thousands? Who's going to get left out? The very people that this is our deal. That's right. So I would encourage any young pastor, anybody pursuing their calling, who do you know that doesn't know him?

That's good.

And make room for them. Make room for them.

Yeah. I love it. Mike, thank you so much. Thanks. This has been such a rich time. Love you, man. You too. How long have you and Annie been together? You go back to

51 years married. So 53 together.

Jesus. Wow.

Yeah, it sounds ridiculous. 16-year-old kid saved my life. She saved my life. He saved my soul. Oh my gosh.

It's awesome. Love you, man.

Thank you for doing this. Thank you guys.

See you.

Thanks. Okay, so let's talk about a real thing that happened this week.

Yeah. And you're going to talk a little bit about this. It happened to you, and I liked your description at the beginning that said, we're going to talk about the privilege of watching light bulbs and fireworks go off in people's heads as they buy in and dimming when they don't.

Correct.

Okay, so let's talk about that. We're talking specifically about this dream disciple. I'm calling it an orientation class that's not, yeah, it's like a primer and introductory class, if you will, to our dream disciple roles to some of the tools that go along with that. We've had, this is the success side of this. We've had 200 some people,

It's amazing

Sign up to go through this first round. We have a number of our staff people and some key volunteers who are going to be teaching these classes in the future who are kind of tag teaming, teaming up to teach them on this first go round. These are the people who came through our pilot experience and got to experience it themselves. Now they're going to teach it for the first go round in teams, and then we're going to kind of go from there. So you're a part of a teaching team. You're probably not normally one of our teachers. No. But there's a

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Reason

In this case, you had your first class or two.

First one class.

First class, and of the dream just how many people are in the class

12, which is full. We want our ideal when we set the course stuff. See, this is why I'm not teacher. Our ideal class size was about 12. And so we're doing some bigger groups as well just to get people through it.

And this goes back to that training center idea that we talked about, that we don't just want these to be lecture

Hall

Experiences. We want them to be around a circle,

Enough time to

Participate, talk, do tools, practice.

And I got partnered up with a couple who are teachers.

Perfect. That's

Another,

That's a win.

Yay.

So how did it go?

It actually went great. It really did. I had a little bit of taste, I think of what you had when you did your calling class, obviously have been part of just reviewing what you guys have been doing, stuff you've been thinking through, and to stand up there and then have to say it to a bunch of people that you don't know really well. I know I knew some of the people in the class, but most of them I didn't. And so even

Just hope to be like, here's this thing we've been working on for

Hope. You like it. Hope it's

Good. It's terrifying.

Well, it is. But then just to go, one of the things we do is kind of go around and give a real quick, who are you? What do you do, kind of a thing. And two teenagers in the class, which is fascinating, really cool. They're really, they're both really quick to, one's a little shyer than the other, but quick to draw connections between what we're talking about and what they do at youth. So shout out to Will because they're already kind of getting it, which is, it's just cool. And maybe I just have a soft spot for young people that way, just because how I came up in ministry. But

To

See a young person, it was so cool. I had to stop myself from crying a couple times. And yeah, just to see different people grab onto different things. So in the first class, it's like a fire hose. I we're just trying to get a bunch of stuff out, go over all the dream disciple roles and hearing them share about the different things that rise up. I'm excited to see what's going to actually happen with this as more and more people get exposed. I think for me, I was getting affirmation that these are the right four roles for Erie. Just in hearing how people were talking about them and why it makes sense to them, why they feel like they need to work harder on it, whatever it might be. It was really cool. And I think the interesting, the uphill battle, I think we're going to have to be a hundred percent honest, is people who think they

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already know it or think they've already been there. And there are people who are, obviously there are people in their sixties, of course, giants of the faith in our community who know these things we're just repackaging principles,

But I also don't want them to miss it. There were a couple moments where there were some people that were kind of leaned back a little bit from the table, but it was because they were thinking. And we talked about it, not, I didn't call it out, but I kind of did. We talk about the movements of God's story. So we just redid the, what's the old tract called

With

The cross?

The cross and the

Chasm. The chasm, yeah. Basically it's that, but it's the full story of full God's story.

So we're going back to creation and we're adding creation and restoration.

Restoration

To the beginning into the

End. And we're putting the church in the mission and

The mission church age.

So we're trying to put some emphasis on those. And it was like they didn't hear that whole thing. They were like, oh, this is just a cute way that they redid that. And so it'll just be interesting to pay attention to what are people assuming? And it's not like their lights were dimmed, but it was just, I could tell that they were like, this is below me kind of a thing. But it was awesome.

Learned this before, don't need

And kind of you did. Sure.

Right.

It's valid.

It's interesting that we were, so when we were going through this process, and we would have these moments as people leaned back and were like, eh, not deep enough. Or we're getting some of that. And part of it is because of the language. We're just trying to be current with some of the language. And so instead of saying evangelism,

We're

Saying compassionate storyteller. But it is a little bit more robust than just evangelism. It's knowing God's story and being able to tell your story. But anyway, Dave Rhodes from Clarity House, obviously, that are partners in all this along the way, somebody had leaned back and said, eh, not deep enough. And my favorite response, he goes, I dare you.

That's good.

I dare you to take these four roles and to take these eight questions to pick another person and to ask each other these eight questions for a week. I dare you to come back a week from now and tell me that God didn't change your soul.

And that person did that.

Yeah, I know. Took it to heart,

Which is amazing.

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I know. Yeah. So yeah, there is this, and I think that's a natural, I have that reaction when somebody, I've got this new thing I'm trying to do in the church. I'm like,

Okay, I'm sure you do.

Sure you do. I thought of that 20 years ago. So there is that, that pride to rise up in you and just go. But I admire all of these folks that are going through this, especially some of our more mature saints that are like, okay,

They're helping us.

They're helping us. And they're like, okay, I want to grow. I want a refresher of my faith. And so yeah, hopefully it'll have that

Effect. I hope so too. And one of the more, I dunno if I should say this, cut it out if it's weird. One of the more painful things I think I've been through in church life is when people who are further along on their faith are like, meh, not deep enough. And then they bolt. We need those people. You're one of those people by the way, now you're old enough. No, just kidding. But we do. It's like we do. And so it's cool.

The whole idea is disciple making. And so it's very one sided. If you go, this isn't deep enough for me, I'm going to go get fed to where it's more deep. Instead of going, I'm going to take all of these things that I know and have learned and invest them into someone else that's disciple making. And it's almost kind not to call people. It's almost kind of selfish to just go, not deep enough for me, so I'm going to go elsewhere.

You got everything you needed.

Yeah, I got everything I needed from here. So I'm a different place. It's ultimate consumer. Yeah. It's like, come on, this is about beyond

You. Yeah, for

Sure. Good.

Yeah. Good. Alright, so thanks for joining us this week. If you liked the episode, you can tell us by leaving a rating or a review and you don't want to miss what's coming next. We have some really great guests lined up. And so feel free to come back and join us, help a friend by sharing this with them. And you can find detailed show notes, related resources over at [derek-sanford.com/reinventing church](http://derek-sanford.com/reinventing-church). And that's where you can also submit those questions from the inbox that we talked about. Derek also has a really cool newsletter that I just subscribed to last week, by the way. Oh, did you? Yeah, I did. I'm like, maybe I should

Subscribe. How do you like the favorite things segment?

I love it.

It

Is really cool. It's fun.

Yeah,

It's

Fun. That's my favorite part.

Yeah. Yeah. So get over there and get all the latest free tools and posts and blogs and all the things. So thanks so much and we'll talk to you next week. See you, Daniel. Bye. Thank you. Bye.