

Steve Woodman Personal Testimony

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 October 2009

Preacher: Steve Woodman

[0:00] One of the questions I've been asked several times already is if my family is here, and they are not! We wanted to bring them, but my wife had a very busy weekend to go, and then my daughter picked up a cold and as the week moved on, I just kind of asked my wife, do you want me to just call them and tell them you're going to stay home? And she wanted, you know how that is, she wanted to come, but she knows she has obligations as well.

And so, I have pictures, so you'll see some of those here as we move along. You know, I have often thought that a testimony is really a lot more than just your conversion, and I've thought that more in recent years as I continue to think about the fact that God's salvation is not just a matter of a point in time when He brings us to faith and repentance, but it's actually the work of God that started really in eternity past and then works its way out in our lives.

But that idea of we are being saved, that work is continuing on, and we'll find, you know, culmination in glory. So, I've been thinking about salvation more as God's work in someone's life over the course of it, and not necessarily just that point in time when He brings us to salvation. So, as I share something of a testimony with you this morning, it really, I think, goes right up until the Lord's work at Kemp in my life and in the life of the church there.

Some of my favorite verses are found in Lamentations 3. I'm sure you're familiar with them. One of my favorite hymns as well, Great is Thy Faithfulness. And so, when you think about it, you talk about giving your testimony or my testimony, but really what it is, is it's our testimony of God's grace in our lives.

[2:17] So, that's really what we're talking about, and so we're going to be dealing with some specifics and some of the things that God has brought me through and us through as Kemp Road Baptist Church.

But really, these are the details of God's grace in our lives, and it's my privilege to share those things with you here this morning. Pastor John did ask, like Aaron said, if I would say something about my coming to faith in Christ as well as the work of the Lord at Kemp, and so that's what I'll endeavor to try to do here this morning.

Well, some of you have already seen this. I got to thinking, the only pictures I have of my parents in this are from the 60s.

I don't know if they're going to like that or not. Maybe they like that, but my dad actually pastors about an hour from here, just south of Kalamazoo, Michigan, so they're not that far away.

Well, for those of you who are from Michigan, because I know there are some of you here this morning, my dad is from Bay City, and my mom is from Grayling, which is about 100 miles north of Bay City, up 75.

[3:29] And they both actually ended up in the Cedarville area. My dad went to school at Cedarville and graduated from Cedarville. So this is an old prayer card of theirs from before they had any of us children.

And then I had another one on here. They had my younger, or my older sister. She's a couple years older than I am, and I wasn't, apparently, at least I'm not visibly in the picture.

I'm not sure exactly when this was taken. But the address there is Ontonoggin, Michigan, and that is where I was born in the upper peninsula of Michigan. I don't really remember it because I was about 10 months old when we moved.

But these are a couple of their early prayer cards. My mom and dad actually went to the north shore of Lake Superior after they were in Ontonoggin for a little while.

And they went to plant a church in Marathon, a little town on the north shore of Lake Superior. And they went up under a, it was a GARBC mission called Hiawatha Baptist Mission back in the day.

[4:34] And it is now Continental Baptist Mission, if you're familiar with that. They changed names at one point. Oh, and by the way, if any of you are familiar with the Cedarville area, my older sister was born in Xenia, which is kind of funny because I never was born there, I never lived there, but I now currently live about 15 minutes from Xenia.

So, full circle, I guess. Now, my dad came up through independent fundamental churches, Baptist churches, and the GARBC. And we had some dear friends in that circle.

I think my father had always held to the doctrines of grace, but his church culture was definitely not reformed beyond that. So, when he was in northern Ontario, the Lord was teaching him some things, but we were a little bit isolated up there.

I mean, have any of you ever done the North Shore tour up there? Up there? No? It's really pretty. Although most of our leaves would be gone by now, but it's a very pretty place. If you ever get that opportunity, go up to Sault Ste. Marie, and then up and around over through Thunder Bay.

Very pretty. It's pulp and paper and mining and fishing country. Very rugged. Very little agriculture. It's too cold, really, for that. But that's where I was raised, and that's where they started that church.

[5:52] So, what happened is, over time, my dad began to come down to the States for Banner of Truth conferences. And then, how many of you have ever been to the Mid-America Reformed Baptist Family Conference that Edgewood put on?

Okay. Well, we went to the first one in 1983 in Bluffton, Ohio. And I missed one in the whole run that they had. I missed one.

So, that was a huge part of our lives growing up. Now, Edgewood Baptist Church actually supported my mom and dad back when they were an independent fundamental Baptist church. So, our roots with Edgewood go way back.

And that really, Pastor Tom Lutz, I think, had a lot to do with my dad coming to further Reformation and coming to these conferences. But because my mom and dad were kind of isolated, it took some time to kind of move through various issues.

And I would say that even by the time I went to go to school, to college, we still were kind of figuring some of those things out. Well, so all that just to say that my dad really went through a long period of Reformation, moving from not just the doctrines of grace, but to some of the other applications of Reformed theology in the pastorate and in doctrine.

[7:10] Well, that's a little bit hard to see, but I guess I'm about seven or so there. First verse I ever learned was John 3.16.

The second verse I remember learning was 1 Peter 5.7. And my dad, I remember my dad making me say those verses at a church one time when I was probably about this age here. Very, very embarrassing.

But you know how when you're a missionary family, you've got to have your kids and wife do stuff like that a lot of times. Well, my testimony is not completely clear.

The testimony of my conversion is not completely clear in my own mind because I was raised in a Christian home. And I, from the earliest days, was learning Scripture and sitting under the ministry of the Word from my father.

Now, my dad tells me that when I was about five, and you know how it is. I mean, I don't know. A lot of you have probably traveled certain theological journeys. And there are maybe some of you that have a testimony like this.

[8:14] Around the time you're five, usually you're encouraged to pray a prayer or make a decision. And then, usually down the road, you kind of have a time where you determine whether that actually is reality in your life or whether it was just a prayer that you prayed.

And so, around five, I made a profession of faith. And as I talk with my dad about it, he says, well, you know, I don't know for sure, but you were asking the right questions.

And you did have a serious heart about those things. Because I remember looking at five-year-olds later on when I grew up and saying, how in the world could I possibly have had any interest or understanding or saving knowledge?

I believe it can happen. I believe God can do it. But sometimes I just wondered, well, I made a profession of faith at five. I do remember never really after that point, I mean, because I don't remember much before that point.

I really don't remember being able to lie or deceive with any kind of comfort whatsoever. If I felt like I had a bad relationship with someone or I had deceived them or anything, I couldn't stand it.

[9:25] I had to deal with it. Now, was that God's general grace? Was that His Holy Spirit working in me? I'm not entirely sure, but I do remember having something of a conscience operative through my growing up years.

When I hit around 12 or 13, I remember having that crisis that often comes. It's like, well, my life has never looked all that radically different because I've always kind of lived this Christian life.

And I remember going through a real period of struggle around 12, 13, 14, having conversations with my dad. Do you think I'm really a believer? And how do you know? And so, quite honestly, I have absolutely no idea when the Lord actually brought me to Himself.

What I had to do is I had to look at those truths in Scripture that describe what a believer is and say, I can currently see the Lord at work in my life.

I can see the fruit by His grace, some of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. I can see things in me that I know have to be attributed to Him because they're certainly not of me.

[10:29] So, I would say it like this. I had to really grow into my profession of faith because I went through a period of struggle. And I would say even through my teenage years at times, you know, kind of ebbed and flowed a little bit with that.

But over time, the Lord has granted assurance. And I simply say I have no idea about how it all happened or when it all happened. But I know whom I have believed.

And I've seen His work in my life. Well, just to show you a little bit, this was actually the view out of our living room window. We were a couple of miles away from Lake Superior overlooking part of it. And it was a really pretty place to be. There's always a trade-off, right? Black flies. I don't know if you can see that.

It's a black bear. And that's our backyard, just outside our back door. These were about as common as rabbits, probably around here.

[11:36] It was a very common sight. We had a compost pile because my dad attempted a garden. It took him like 15 years just to get soil that would grow anything up there. Oh, that looks a lot better.

Yeah, thanks. It was very common in our compost pile. You probably know kind of how that goes. But the bears would come, and they would just sit right on the top of that pile, and they'd just have supper up there.

And we'd watch them while we were having supper. So I consider it to be one of the perks of being up there. Some people were more annoyed with them. They did sometimes get into your trash and that kind of stuff.

That's about 20 minutes from our house. This is one of those places, if anybody ever comes up and visits us, you're going to end up at Mink Falls. It's just one of those things. Now, but what's really cool is this is the exact same waterfall in winter.

We didn't go as often when it looked like this. Definitely not as common of an occurrence. Let me just pause to mention to you here a second that, because some of you I know get around a little bit in Reformed Baptist circles.

[12:43] I currently have my older sisters. They just moved to Sudbury, Ontario, from Marathon. In fact, after living there for like 40 years, my sister just finally moved away.

She was the last one there, and they now live in Sudbury. I have a brother. I'm number two. My brother's number three. He currently is in the Owensboro Church at Heritage Baptist Church, to the Ted Christman down there.

My sister, number four, Ellen Woodman, some of you might know, is in the Grand Rapids Church. Sister number five, or sibling, child number five, my sister Susan, is in the Catskill Church with Adam Davies out in New York.

And my sister number six is still at home with my mom and dad, trying to figure out what to do with her life up there in Kalamazoo. Now, before I flip over to this next picture, I mentioned to you that Mid-America Reformed Baptist Family Conference played a big role in my life.

And that is true in a number of ways. In 1983, at the very first conference in Bluffton, Ohio, in my silly little 13-year-old mind, without even trying to figure out, you know, exactly whether this was something worth doing or not.

[14:05] It just kind of happened. I didn't know anybody. Were any of you at that conference in 83? Let me just say this. Were any of you at Bluffton ever? Okay. All right. You remember how they had that, like, half a gym, and they had, like, these 12-foot fans, and there was no air conditioning?

Well, because I didn't know anybody, I was at the very back, up top, just kind of scoping things out. And being from northern Ontario, I'd say I was probably, I mean, I had kind of an outgoing personality, but this was pretty big time for me.

So I was way back, just trying to figure out what was going on. And I saw some of the young people. They used to sit down on the floor on some of the folding chairs. And I saw, I think Beth Lutz may have been down there.

I knew her from the Lutz family. And I saw this girl. And it was a blonde girl. And on the back of her shirt, her T-shirt, I'm pretty sure it was that same week.

It's been a while. Had the name, I think it was a shirt that had the name Taylor on it. Now, we've joked later that if I had known what was on the front, things may have turned out differently, because it had a cat on the front of it.

[15 : 13] But in my brain, I remember looking down at her, and for some goofy reason, as a 13-year-old, I said in my mind, that's the girl I'm going to marry. You're going to see her here in a few minutes, because she's my wife.

Now, to those of you, I know junior high is in here, and high school is in here. Do not try this at home. It's not my recommended method of discerning the Lord's will.

You know, I want to... It's just kind of the way it worked out in my life. Now, of course, being 13 and living a long ways away, our friendship grew slowly.

I think I lived about 900 miles from her. By the way, her dad is Gordon Taylor, the ARBCA coordinator. Dropped the name there for you. All I was really going to say about that is she lived in the Quad Cities where Gordon pastored for 30 years.

So, it was about, like, 800 or 900 miles. Well, in 1985, Edgewood Baptist Church came up to Marathon, to our church, to host a VBS.

[16 : 22] And they brought Nathan and Melissa Taylor along with them. Now, at the time, I liked her, and a couple people knew that. So, I probably would not have asked for this, but I kind of got pushed into it, and they took a picture of us.

Now, that's old school there. That's my wife and I at 15, almost 16, in front of the, I think it's a John Newton ship.

I think they carried one of the themes from a conference up there. Well, long story short about that, you know, being at a distance and going to two different colleges, it took us a little while, but we ended up in Owensboro together as singles with a purpose.

Understanding that the Lord was probably bringing us together. And we were in Owensboro for a year as singles, and then got married in 1993. Well, in my senior year of high school, I'm sorry if this is offensive to anyone, but I heard you all were kind of a rugged type of people, I guess.

So, we did some hunting and fishing. This is a moose. It's kind of interesting to me now, because I've been hunting deer on and off for a number of years, and that's actually a very small moose.

[17 : 40] It's about twice the size of any deer I've ever seen, but it was a lot of fun. That was the kind of stuff we did. Anybody recognize anybody here? You really don't? That's your pastor, Aaron, right there.

I didn't have too many pictures, but this is one of the times where we were together in Owensboro. I think this was a walk for life, wasn't it?

I think it was a walk for life that we did together, something like that there in Owensboro. That's his brother, Ben. And, you know, I had that written down.

I forget now when that was, but it's early, mid-90s, probably. Yeah. Well, I had to show that anyways. I might just keep it up there for a sec.

I was in Owensboro from '92 to 2001. I think we figured out yesterday, we intersected about seven years, I think, of that, so a good chunk of that time. I worked for his dad the whole time I was there.

[18 : 45] I taught in their Christian school and worked for Tim Hoke as the administrator. From that point, some of you remember us being out in Illinois from 2001 to 2005 at a church plant in Rock Falls.

And I was encouraged at that time. I remember a couple of specific instances where God used Pastor John to encourage us out there. It was a tough ministry there.

I was with a good brother, Glenn McClure, and his wife, Michaela. Good people. It was just a difficult time in a difficult town and just slowly, slowly shrunk.

And the companies that the men were working in were going through Chapter 11 bankruptcy, reorganizational, and just a lot of difficulties. And we basically consider that to be church boot camp for us, where the Lord kind of trained us in some of the issues of the pastorate and Christian living and that kind of thing.

But the Lord was even good to us during that time. We closed that church peacefully and joyfully and yet tearfully in 2005.

[19 : 57] And it was right about that time. I'm sorry, it was actually the end of 2004. In 2005, we were in the middle of an adoption. And so we stuck around that area, weren't really sure what was next.

And so I was actually working for Glenn for a while. And then that ran out in August of 2005. And all of a sudden, the Lord just began an unusual series of providences to bring us to Kempro Baptist Church.

Now, I don't know about you, but most Reformed Baptist churches that I'm familiar with are very careful about that pastor-people relationship and about bringing on a new person. But because of circumstances in our lives and circumstances in the life of the church, I went to Kemp to preach, just to preach, in October of 2005.

I had moved there by Thanksgiving. But it was just the way the Lord had worked things out. And it was such a crazy time in our lives. At one point, I joked with people, because we weren't sure what we were doing, where we were going.

We just knew we were leaving Rock Falls. So we were joking. We were going to get in our Penske truck and be heading down the road, waiting for a phone call to tell us which city to move to. I mean, it didn't get quite to that point, but it wasn't too far away from that.

[21 : 12] Well, the Lord brought us to Kemp, and I'll talk a little bit more about that here as we move along. But I did want to say that I've always appreciated Pastor John. Of course, Aaron's been a longtime friend.

But Pastor John has specifically been of encouragement to me over the years, and I appreciate that. Well, we did adopt.

This is actually our first family picture that was taken in China after we got Jenea May there in my lap. Her Chinese name was Fu Me Yi, but the Fu was really just because of where she was staying. It was the name of the orphanage, basically. So her name was Me Yi, which meant beautiful jade, something along those lines. Well, we kept the May, spelling it M-E-I, and we had already chosen Jenea, which means God has answered.

And May means beautiful. So to me, her name means God has given us a beautiful answer, or God has answered beautifully. For a variety of reasons.

[22 : 21] Actually, we're not even entirely sure. We had our son, Josiah, in 1998, and we have struggled with infertility.

And so we decided that since we still desired children and we were struggling with infertility, this must be God's mandate to us to adopt.

We would never have adopted if our hand had not been forced, if I could use that terminology. Never would have adopted. We thought it was a wonderful thing. We just both had grown up in Christian, pastoral homes with dads who were in the ministry, and I was heading that direction, and we just figured we would never have the money to do something like that.

We didn't really hear. But the Lord provided in amazing ways, just amazing ways the Lord provided for us. And we're so thankful for that. It didn't have to go into debt or anything like that.

This is the red couch picture. If you adopt in China, usually it's traditional. When you get to the White Swan in Guangzhou, you have to get a red couch picture.

[23 : 31] It's traditional. And so we did that with some of the other ones, some of the other babies as well as our own family.

Well, so this is my beautiful wife, Gordon Taylor's oldest daughter. Our son, Josiah, he's probably about seven there, and he'll be turning 11 here next month.

I've got a couple more updated pictures here in a minute because she's about 10 months old here. This is actually back in 2006. So our girl today looks like this.

She is four. She's one of those kids that I think if you throw a book at her, she'll start reading it pretty soon. I mean, maybe that's just a girl thing.

I don't know. And Josiah, if you threw a book at him, he'd throw it back. Jenea, she'll start reading it and figuring out phonics and stuff. But it might just be a girl thing.

[24:36] Has Gordon been here since he's been the coordinator yet? Did he show you any pictures of his grandkids? Because isn't that like a tradition? I think it's usually a tradition. Like Bob would always, Bob Self would always show pictures of his grandkids.

And I know I've seen, I know Gordon has done it in some places. He's shown pictures of his grandkids. Well, I thought I would turn the tables today. And I'm going to show pictures of my kids' grandparents. All right? My mom, or my mom, my wife, their mom, went out to Carlisle.

I was not able to go with them. But they went out there in, I think it was in June this last year, to go see grandpa and grandma in their new home. And so I guess this is the Arbka office. I've never been there.

That's where he works. Some of the sites. A lot of history in the Carlisle area. So they were out on some battlefields and defending us from enemies.

This is my wife with her mom and dad and our daughter, Jenea. Well, moving more to the church at this point, I brought a few pictures of some church activities and people.

[25:51] And I'm going to kind of use this time as a way to let you know a little bit about the church, as well as ask prayer for a number of things. The Lord has been very good to us at Kemp. The previous pastor had had some serious struggles and actually is out of the ministry today.

And the Lord was very gracious at that time, back around 2005, to show himself to be the shepherd of the sheep there at Kemp. There were a number of reasons.

There were a number of things going on that could have really caused great struggle and division in the congregation. But the Lord was very gracious to us. And we didn't know.

I mean, when my wife and I came, we just really didn't know much of anything that was going on. And just a few months in, we began to have to deal with a number of things. And our people, just about everybody stayed.

And the Lord began to work in us. And over the last several years, I think we can say the Lord has granted us a sweet spirit of fellowship and unity in the congregation.

[26:57] Well, for the first time in a long time, I don't know, maybe Stephanie could tell me, but since I don't know how long it's been since Kemp had had a VBS, we decided to try one this year.

And in fact, we decided when it was really only a few months away, and we decided to do one in June. And our people just jumped in. Some people took leadership. And it was a great thing.

I don't know, you guys have probably done stuff in your church, even like what you did yesterday, where you have the college and career serving the 55 and older crowd. And it's a neat thing, because as you do that, you form bonds in the trenches.

While you're doing that work, you form bonds. And it's not just about ministering to those kids. It's about your people working together side by side, doing the work of the ministry. And it was a wonderful time.

The Lord also gave us the opportunity to minister to a sister OPC church in town that brought a number of their children to our VBS, as well as a few people from the outside of either of those churches.

[28:01] You probably recognize one of those young ladies. Stephanie Skolls there on the right. If you don't recognize her, she is now a part of you, so get to know her.

All right? Stephanie's folks are still with us, and her younger brother, Phil. Well, these are some of the gals that helped with VBS and with the craft table.

These are mostly VBS pictures, but I'm going to go ahead and use this as an opportunity to just ask for prayer. This young couple here, Ryan and Aaron Stern, have expressed some interest in ministry.

He is a teacher right now, a math teacher. He's completed a degree with RTS through distance learning, and he is actually quite interested in ministry to Muslims.

But he just, you know, we're trying to figure out what that looks like, as well as continue the process of development for ministry. Ryan will preach for us probably about once a month or every four to six weeks or so on a Sunday night.

[29:05] And he actually took a great amount of leadership with his wife for VBS. They pretty much ran it and directed us in it. So if you think of us, if you pray for Ryan and Aaron Stern, they have two young children right now.

And pray for us as we kind of work through and try to be faithful with that stewardship. These are a few more of our people. You know, I was telling some of you, our demographic is pretty heavy with 20 to 30 year olds and young children.

We literally, I was counting up the other day, I literally think we have six people that are 60 and older. Six. And there is one of our dear ladies. I would say if you took Aaron and Aaron and just kind of photocopied them about a dozen times, that would be the core of our congregation.

And what's funny right now is I was trying to count the other day. I was trying to count the other day how many of our families have exactly four children.

And we have several families with four children and some with more and some with less. But we have our average attendance. We've been keeping track because we've been toying with the idea of building at some point.

[30:20] And the company we're working with wanted us to keep track. So we know that we average about 115 on a Sunday morning. And that can come and go quite a bit.

But out of that, we have over 40 that are 10 and younger. So that's a big part of who we are. So VBS was kind of crazy with our limited facility.

But it was a wonderful time. So another one of our couples she is pregnant for, I think, their eighth child. We have a number of families that size as well.

That's Pastor John Rockwitt, one of my fellow elders. He's a professor out at AFFIT, the Air Force Institute of Technology, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

That's one of their young'uns. A few of the children from that week. Do any of you know Ethan Merrick?

[31:22] Pastor Merrick's, one of Pastor Dave Merrick's sons. He went to Cedarville. Then he spent time in China teaching English. And he just recently has come back, well, maybe a year ago or so, but just recently has moved back to our area and has a job at the base.

And so he's come back to us. He's the tall guy on the right. And then Cedarville has always played a big part in the life of Kemp.

We're about 25 minutes away. And in years past, they've had a lot of students. We probably have 10 or 12 or so right now, but some of the ones we have are very committed and we're really thrilled with them, attempting to maintain some level of churchmanship even while they're at college.

And that's an admirable thing. Well, a couple of these young ladies, I took my daughter out to Chuck's, to the cafeteria, to eat with them here this last year.

I know Jenea liked it. Now, one of the other things that we tried to do this last year, I don't know, what is Bremen's big celebration?

[32:33] Do you have a big Bremen celebration, festival, fair thing? What is it? Okay. Well, you know how some communities, you just got to come up with some reason to celebrate?

Beaver Creek, which is actually where the church is, it's just kind of outside Dayton. Beaver Creek is a city of about 40,000, 45,000 people, but you don't really know when you're leaving it and going into Riverside and Dayton.

It's all one big area. We have in Beaver Creek a popcorn festival. It's an excuse to shut down one of our main streets in town and have a bunch of people come and set up booths of every kind.

Well, so for us, one of the things that we really feel like we've been struggling with over the years is just having a lot of relationship with the town, having a real face in the town.

It's funny, I've been talking with Pastor Aaron a lot in the last couple of days about our churches and in so many ways, our churches are very, very different and certainly similarities in Christ, but different in other ways.

[33:46] And I get a sense around here that a lot of you have been in Bremen for a while, and I know some of you travel as well. Kemp Road in the mid-90s almost closed.

So we only have a few people that have been around for more than probably a decade. Most of our people, probably 80% of our people have been there in the last decade or so. And a lot of them have come through Cedarville or Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

So what that means is very few of our people are from that area. And there have been times I've joked, you know, if we had a well-placed bomb that just took us right out, I wonder how many people would even miss our congregation.

I'm like, Lord, that has got to change. So help us to know how to develop relationships within this community. You know, one of the long-time families, actually Stephanie's folks, they've been there

for a while, and they're one of the families that have stuck it out through all of these decades. Faithful people, very faithful people, they're there all the time. But my brother Andy and sister Deb, Steph's parents, are really a minority. One of my elders and his wife have been there for a while as well.

[35:04] But so many of the rest of us have been there a shorter period of time. Then you throw in a couple of other things, and some of you mamas know how this is. When you have a lot of young children, that is what you do.

That is your life. And that's who we are largely as a congregation, as mamas with young children and men in the military or at least working for the base. And a lot of our families currently homeschool.

So we have a number of reasons why we're isolated sometimes, I think. So that's another prayer request, if you would. Just pray for us as we continue to try to develop relationships with the community.

and really right along with that is the whole issue of evangelism. Well, we decided to take ourselves down to the popcorn festival this last year.

And so there's our, it's really a double-sized booth. Some of them are about half that size. But that happened to be the tent that one of the people in our church owned. So that's what we took. And that's kind of what it looked like.

[36:05] It was fairly busy. This was actually just off of a Wendy's parking lot. They basically, they just, you know, go out there with spray cans and put numbers down and that's where you guys are going to be.

And so that's where we were. That's Pastor Tom Danube here. I think he's 6'6". Does that sound about right, Steph? He's tall. He's a tall guy. Some of you may recognize these.

These are the brochures that CCEF puts out. One of the counseling, you know, guys like Paul Tripp, David Powlison, some of you may know. Well, they send, they give out or they sell brochures that have to do with all kinds of counseling issues like marriage, divorce, family, anorexia, you know, cutting, just all kinds of stuff that they have a biblical perspective on these issues.

So we brought, we brought a full tray of these. And what we did is we manned the booth on Saturday and then on Sunday we just, we just left it out. And we didn't have our people man it. Kind of went back and forth on that. But it was kind of a carnival-y atmosphere and I just didn't want to ask my people to go sit down there in that environment. I don't know. That's what we decided to do. Well, when it was all said and done after Saturday and Sunday we had given away over a hundred of those brochures that people had come and actually, I mean really, they came and they looked and they decided to take them.

[37:22] And they all had our church name in them and that kind of a thing. So, you know, you never know what will come of it but it was certainly an encouragement to be out there, to be seeing people and to be, I don't know, trying to see what the Lord may do.

What was funny is it was our first year and one of the first things I did, you know, when I got there in the morning and began setting everything up was I really was saying to myself, okay, what did I forget?

What should we do better next year? You know, that kind of thing. And then I came back later in the day and we had gotten an award for our booth. And what did we do?

How'd that happen? What'd they say when they came by? What was that all about? I guess it looked clean or something, I don't know. Something about the theme and I don't know.

But it was fun. Even though I don't really know what it's all about, it is on my bulletin board in my office. But a couple of our pastor's kids here, Pastor John Rockwitz' kids were helping man that booth.

[38:22] We had two-hour shifts and so stuff like that, like VBS and the Popcorn Festival, I mean, our people are excited about these things. It's just, it takes time, I think, you know, to develop some of that.

I've got just a couple of bonus pictures in here before I wrap this up, maybe a few final prayer requests. Over the years, I've had the privilege of going to a number of ski retreats that Edgewood puts on and I have met a number of you young people and some of the parents that have chaperoned and I flipped through a couple of old photo albums, digital albums, on the computer and I found a couple of pictures I thought I would share with you.

I don't really know what to say about them, but Pastor Calvin and Heather, is Heather here? Okay. You can bug her about this when you see her. And then, now I know these girls are in here so don't be hating. That's from a couple of years ago, I think.

Yeah. So, I had to do that. Well, let me just take the last couple of minutes to just kind of summarize some prayer requests if you would for us.

[39 : 40] I mentioned to you that we have over 40 children that are 10 and under and over the last year and a half or so we've had about seven women pregnant and I say about because, you know, one will give birth and another one will get pregnant and so for a while that happened.

Now we're down to about three but we've had a lot of children born and that's kind of who we are. So, right there, I mean, we talk about evangelism but right there that's a stewardship too you know, in our own homes, in our own families and we long to see these children come to Christ.

Another issue is we have been trying to develop a master plan for our building. It's probably going to be a long-term thing but a master plan for our property really. The way our building sits on our property has some limitations and our current building is actually pretty small.

We have no kitchen. We have a microwave and a fridge that's in a, like in a closet next to the copy machine. So, I mean, that's the truth, right?

Steph knows. We have no kitchen. We have really no fellowship hall. I mean, what we call a fellowship hall is really a small room that's just big enough to have some juice or coffee but not really to eat together or anything like that.

[40 : 52] We know a lot of churches have struggled through things. I know you all hosted the GA when you had that other sanctuary and this is the first I've seen this. This is wonderful. This is beautiful. Praise the Lord.

So, we're trying to decide what the future might hold for us in that way but as you know, it takes time and planning and money and preparation so we're trying to work through that and develop a master plan that could give us a path for the future for that and the current thing right now, the most urgent prairie quest is, I won't go into details but a house next door with an acre lot came up for sale and the guy came over and talked to me, it was actually his father that passed away and the son was back dealing with it and he walked over and said, wanted to let you know.

Well, after doing a lot of research and talking to a lot of people and looking at our situation we've actually decided that we're probably going to make an offer on that because of some of the limitations for our current property.

So, even right now here this weekend I've been, you know, on the phone some talking to the various people involved with that so, you know, I've told a few people this is not what I do, you know, and so pray for us.

I'm not a real estate guy, this is not what I do so pray for us as we try to make these decisions and honor the Lord with those things. I've already mentioned to you Ryan and Aaron Stern if you'd pray for them concerning future ministry and then I just want to bring some praises as well here this morning.

[42 : 24] You know, one thing I'm very thankful for is that our people have taken child training seriously. How do you say this without bragging? Because, you know, sometimes as a pastor you feel like it's, you know, you're a part of your church and it's we and other times you look at your people and you say, Lord, you must have done that because I couldn't do that.

That's, you know, it's wonderful. So I try to look at the congregation and I say, Lord, what you have done here with, we, the Lord has blessed us with those children and we're not perfect and they're sinners but I really appreciate the fact that our people have been serious about raising the children to the glory of the Lord and that's encouraging as a pastor.

We had a child training class last spring, I guess it was, that Pastor John and I co-teach. My Pastor John, he does, he's not, I know he's a busy man, he doesn't commute down there.

John Rockwit from our church and I think we had about 30 people in that and a couple of them were from outside the church but most of them were our own people so that's been encouraging. I'm thankful for two elders, John Rockwit and Tom Danube, you saw Big Tom there on the screen, been there a long time.

I'm thankful for them, I'm thankful to have men so that my weaknesses and idiosyncrasies and unbalances don't mark the church more than they have to. I'm thankful for, the Lord has blessed us with five deacons, we're going to lose one here soon.

[43:46] I don't think any one of them is older than 35 but we have five of them that are learning what it means to serve the body of Christ and doing a good job of it. I'm thankful for that. I'm thankful for the good spirit the Lord has given us, fellowship and unity and for spiritual growth.

I don't know what your personality is like but sometimes I have to be careful because it's easier to see the work that is left to be done instead of the work that's already been done and I have to be very careful that I have a balanced view.

And sometimes it's very easy to say boy this needs to change, this needs to change. But there have been some specific things recently as I've thought about them where the elders had prayed specifically for certain situations or certain people and particularly, especially for their spiritual growth and maturity over specific issues.

And I can remember praying for some of those things and within a matter of days seeing tangible, maybe even almost surprising answers as God was answering in the lives of specific people.

And we were able to say, Lord, you've answered that prayer. What a blessing to see you working in these people's lives and sending your spirit to do what, you know, no pastor could ever contrive, you know, those particular situations.

[45:10] Well, that's the gist. I'm pretty much out of time. Pastor John, did you want me to field any questions or do you think that we've had enough? Okay.

You can ask me later if you want to. Thank you. Thank you for your interest.