

Hey, everybody. Welcome to Leading by Following. This is a podcast where we want you to recognize the fact that you are a leader. Everybody is leading somebody because of that. Who we follow as leaders really, really matters.

My name is Jody Flowers. I'm blessed to host this podcast, and today you are in for a treat. We've got the man himself, our lead pastor, John Dukes, as our first guest. We're going to talk about who he is, how he got here, and where God is using him to take us as a church family. My lead pastor, and I'm so excited.

So, hey, welcome. Let's give it a listen.

All right. Well, what a joy to be with you today, bro. Yes. Thanks for making the time, which, as you've already learned, you don't have any of. Right?

That is very true. That is very true. I think I remember you saying something along the lines of, I've been on the job for three days and I'm already two weeks behind. Yeah, that's exactly what it felt like. And so I don't want to guess how far behind I am three months in.

So. Man. But thank you again, seriously. And kind of just getting started. Everybody knows who you are on the stage.

Yeah. But a lot of them don't know the backstory. So just a little bit of where you from and. Yeah, just a little bit of where you're from. Yeah.

So originally from the state of Georgia, just born in Athens. So it's legitimate when you might hear some barking or anything like that, like, it's homegrown. But anyway, my dad works for Walmart as a truck driver. That's what brought us to South Carolina. And then we've never left and so spent most of middle school and high school, actually all of middle school and high school in Lawrence County.

Went to North Greenville, you know, and so. And then have kind of served in churches in Abbeville and Fountain Inn and now in Chapin. So. Yeah, man. But, yeah, this is.

You know, it's a really cool story when you really get to really look at the nuts and bolts and the way the Lord just kind of wove it all together. Because when we moved, I would have told you, worst thing in my life, like, what in the world? But yet, had we not moved, I wouldn't

have met this guy named Daniel who leads me to the Lord, teaches me what it looks like to read your Bible, to pray, to have a relationship with the Lord, you know, and that then that leads to another relationship, you know, and then that leads to all these other things. And so, of course, you know, in the moment, it looked bleak. You know, you're.

What was it, fifth grade? It was 93, whatever. 93. So, you know, it's snowing, it's blizzarding outside. That was the weekend we moved.

We moved in like, you know, five, six foot, six foot, six inch snow. That would have been crazy. South Carolina getting six foot snow. But March of 93 and we're coming. And yet.

So you're thinking, oh, this is the worst thing in the world. And yet you look back and you go, man, what a gift of the Lord to arrange that right now. Worst thing in the world. Right. So I'm thinking leaving Georgia, Athens, coming to the upstate of South Carolina where that team from the upstate resides.

Yeah, that. That just doesn't seem to me to be a horrible. But we won't go there. You've got the shoes on, which. Yeah, just making sure.

Represent, you know, always trying to. Gotcha. Yeah. Trying to stay in the color scheme with the black and, you know, kind of go with the red, you know. There we go.

Yeah. Well, cool. So thanks for the backstory. I don't want to let you go too long on the Georgia thing. Be talking about national championships and stuff, but.

So you talked about coming to South Carolina. How about just a little bit of the story of coming to Chapin Christian Community Church?

Yeah, so that was a really cool thing. So. And it was funny because I'm horrible with the dates and the years, but Uno, your boy Andrew and I meet in a worship school called 10,000 fathers.

And so there were four of us, including myself from South Carolina. There were multiple people from multiple states and all that kind of stuff, but the four of us from South Carolina kind of connected and we were.

I'll say it. Let me try to be generous basically to myself. We were, you know, of mixed ages and things like that. I was the old guy in the group, basically, but bumping close to what, 37, 35? No, I was at that point, I had to be late the early 30s.

That's probably early 30s. So anyway, late 20s, early 30s. Somewhere in there. I forget when we started this, but I know so well, I mean, your boy is still in college. I mean, like, we're still like anyway, so.

But anyway built the relationship there. Well, there was one summer, you know, 10,000 fathers had made a partnership with Northern Seminary. And so they were kind of offering where you had already. I think it was like you were like a third of your master's degree had already been accomplished. As long as you finished 10,000 fathers and so Andrew is starting seminary and calls me and says, hey, our week in Chicago is also the week of our student camp, so could you lead worship?

Could your band? And I was like, absolutely. You know, I was kind of hoping to start seminary as well with those guys, but I was like, you

know what? I'd rather make some money in the week than I would spend the money. So I said, yeah.

And so my band went to Dakota Falls, led worship for Fusion's summer camp, and we did a night of worship before we left here in the Fusion center. Also did a baptism service that Sunday night following it. And so got to be here. And it was one of those things. I remember going home.

Actually, I didn't go home. I met Sarah. We had traveled to Nashville, so I had to drive from here to Nashville that night. Well, not that night, the next day, something like that. But anyway, as I got there and Sarah asked, how did it go?

I was like, oh, my gosh, this church was amazing. I said, it was awesome. And so. And so it had always stood out to me. Well, anyway, that was also.

That week of camp was the first week that Dustin had. Was coming on staff as, like, the assistant student minister. I'm not exactly sure. Serrano. Dustin Serrano.

Yep. And so Tim at Time, Tim Walker is the youth pastor. He makes me put Dustin in my band. I tried to resist for a little bit, and then I found out that was more of a demand than a In a question. And so I was like, okay, well, our band got along with Dustin great.

He was awesome. And so we just kind of stayed connected. Stayed. And then all of a sudden, we had been a part of a church Plant and Fountain Inn. Things were going well, but just sensing the Lord was kind of calling us out, kind of had reached out to a few places, but the doors just weren't opening.

And so we finally just stepped away and just said, I think the Lord just may be calling us out and not necessarily calling us something in this season. Went to work for FedEx. And I remember I was. My car was getting worked on at Walmart in Simpsonville, and I got a call from Dustin, and he was like, yeah, I'm going. It's time for me to step down.

I'm leaving. He had kind of become the contemporary worship leader after Joe. I don't know if it's like, an interim title. I don't know what his

title was. But anyway, he said, dude, you would be an amazing fit for this church.

You would be a perfect fit. That was his line. And so I went to Sarah and was just like, hey, I know you've already signed your contract, but this thing opened up. Yeah. Yeah.

And the next thing I said, you know, she goes, well, let's at least see. And I reached out to you. I emailed you and said, hey, I don't know if you remember me. Oh, now I do remember. And I don't know how many people know this story, but you guys, the 10,000 fathers guys, are having a night of worship in Greenville, I think it was.

Yes. And so Michelle and I went to be there for Andrew. Right. And Morgan, his girlfriend at the time. They weren't married, was going to also drive up.

Yeah. So it's a big deal. We're. Boy, you mentioned Uno a minute ago. There's a story there why he's Uno and your nickname would be Dos.

All right. People can figure that out. Right. But anyway, so we're there. Yeah.

And each one of you guys kind of had different leadership responsibilities that night. We did. And then you. You led a song or two. Yeah.

And I leaned over to Michelle. Didn't know you from Adam's house cat. Yeah. Yeah. Or whatever.

No, I'm not a cat guy. I didn't know you. And I leaned over shells. Like, if I had ever have an opportunity to hire that guy, I'm gonna try to hire him. Yeah.

Now, what year would that have been? Oh, gosh. That had to have been 2015 maybe. Right. Because you end up here in 2018.

2017. 2017. July of 2017 is when I. And so. And I stepped down at Capstone in 2016.

Okay. So I went about a year with FedEx, and so, um. Wow. But, yeah, beautiful. Had a little.

Yeah. And had no idea. So, you know, emailed you. I love it just. It just is perfect because you were like, yeah, man.

I passed on your resume to Rick. And then the next email from Rick was like, oh, man. Got John. So glad. Thank you for reaching out.

You'll communicate with me from now on and not. And not Pastor Jody. And so I was like, okay. And so. But it was.

It was great. There was a point where Rick looked at me, called me on the phone after. How did Courtney say it? The best worst interview I've ever seen in my life, dude. The FedEx truck interview.

Yes. Yeah. Yes. I was doing a phone interview, and phones have come a long way since then. I was doing a phone interview from a gas station in my FedEx truck in my FedEx uniform most of the time in Princeton, South Carolina, on 25 Highway.

25 at a hot spot. And there was no hot spot as far as WI fi or anything like that. And so half the questions I remember couldn't even hear, didn't even understand. Just. Was there and just going, well, I'm.

I heard, like, three words that I recognize, so I'm just gonna answer it kind of like this. According to Danny Blocker, some of them, I was just

way off. Never even answered the question. Never came close. But just something.

The Lord just kind of placed some favor on it. And next thing I know, I'm at the Greenwood Mall getting ready to unload. It's in June. May. No, it's the end of May.

And Rick calls me and says, hey, would you like to not work for FedEx anymore? And I was like, yes, sir. I still got to talk to my wife, and we'll, you know. But yes, sir, I would really love that. Yeah.

So. So God calling you out of Cornerstone. Capstone. Capstone. It's all good.

Capstone. He's calling you out of Capstone. But he also called you out of a FedEx truck. Yes. And that's.

Thank you, Lord. Yes. Right. So much. So much.

Boy, I loved working in the air conditioning again. Oh, my God. One thing I do want to clarify. Rick is Rick Faulkner. Yes.

Who used to be, for 10 years, director of operations. Yes. Right. And so one of the best guys in the world. Oh, yeah.

He's brother. So one of the reasons he reached back to you to say all future course will go through him. Yes. Was because I told him. I said, look, I know John.

Yeah. And I told him the story about the night in Greenville. Yeah. I said, so I've got to remove myself from this process totally. I don't want to influence it, et cetera, et cetera.

So that's why. That's why he did that. And that was. It was amazing. So.

Wow. 2018, coming up on eight years. Well, the story today that I really want us to focus on is the transition. So you come as a worship pastor. Yep.

Covid hits. And I remember you and I having a converse. Yeah, we can laugh about it now. Covid hit. And you and I are having, really, one of our deepest conversations, the way I remember.

Yeah. And you. Do you mind me sharing? Absolutely. Go for it.

This is a lot of. This is totally unscripted. So you told me, hey, I feel like I'm nothing more than a singer of songs. And, man, the Lord took that

and just penetrated my heart with it because. And I remember telling you, I said, dude, you're so Much more than that.

You are a leader. You're a worship leader. You lead us into God's presence. We went through that whole thing, but that was really the beginning of me starting to see you more in totality, as apart from your role, to really see and know your heart and get to just love who God has made you to be. And so that was a turning point event for me.

A crossroads, whatever we want to call it. So, yeah, I remember that conversation. So that's Covid. That's 2020ish. And then all of a sudden, another one of our former staff members, Hugo Morocco, shout out to Rick.

Hugo, all the guys. And Hugo said, hey, have you ever considered asking John Dukes to preach one Sunday? I'm like, no. Well, you ought to give it some thought. So I did, and I prayed about it.

And I don't know how long it was after that. But then also I was like, oh, my gosh. When he was telling me he was more than just a singer of songs, I don't think he was talking about this, but this is it. Because I

heard somebody who could communicate the gospel clearly, compellingly, powerfully. I'm like, oh, okay.

To an empty room. That was my first one. To an empty room. And, boy, I didn't think through the whole camera thing. Wore some bright yellow shirt, looked like a dadgum big bird on the pulpit.

And Mark was just like, yeah, we gotta change what you're wearing next time. So it's like, yeah, that makes total sense now that I'm looking at it. Yeah, that'll be Mark Slice. Mark Slice. Yeah.

Who's our media production stuff? Awesome brother as well. But, yeah, that was. That was awesome. So talking to a machine is not where it's at, but even in that context, it was clear.

So, you know, people have said to me now that we're on the other side of this transition having taken place from me out of the lead pastoral and you into it. Yeah, it's like, oh, we look back now, we saw what you were doing. You started asking Jonathan. And before Pastor Bob, it was Pastor Paul. Paul Allen.

Shout out to Paul Allen. But we saw. Oh, we know what you were doing now. I was like, no, that really wasn't the plan. That was just a matter of us shifting from solo preacher model to team teaching, which lots and lots of great reasons for that.

But one of the ones that was primary in my thinking was if this church is somehow not built on. That's too strong of a phrase. But if this church is somehow overly influenced by one Personality from a stage or from a pulpit. We're going to be in trouble one day. And God's gifted way too many people to bring that word of his.

And so that was the real motive. But then in the process of that, you just began to get a few more opportunities and a few more. And so, yeah. So anyway, bringing us to that point in Transition, October of 2023, we have left the denomination in June, June 30th of 2023, I almost said, praise God, but we all understand that was just a difficult time. That was a hard time.

But, boy, it was a celebration point for sure. Very much love a lot of my brothers that are still in that denomination, brothers and sisters, et

cetera. Not a slam on the denomination. It was just the right thing for us. We're very grateful the Lord allowed that.

So 2023, October, we're at kind of our personnel team, we call it staff parish personnel team meeting. And one of those awesome people, and they're amazing, said, hey, now that we're not a part of a denomination. And Jody, no offense, but you won't be our pastor forever. I read between the lines. You will die.

Right. So what are we going to do to get our next pastor? And this person, I think had done some research or either in their background understood, you know, succession plans. Right. So we really need to have a succession plan.

And I'm like, man, that sounds right. So, you know, I'm thinking, okay, what is a succession plan? So anyway, you know, go out and try to do a little research. And Vanderblum's book Next. Can't recommend it more highly.

I read it, chaired the team. M.J. Sorrell read it. Amazing. Sister leader Caroline Fogel, director of ops, who followed in Rick. Amazing, amazing leader.

So anyway, we're reading this book, and I put together this draft succession plan. Yeah. And present it to staff parish in February of 2024. Yep. And I had option A, option B, option C. Yeah.

But again, in those options, they wanted an option D. And so we had to come back and work option D. So long, long, long, long story was staff parish decided after a time of prayer, a long season of prayer, that they were going to approach you about being the next lead pastor. And I was thrilled. Still am. You're my pastor, man. And so I love the.

The way the Lord worked, all that. But I really want everybody to know it was not, oh, October. Hey, it should be John. Let's do it. This was a lot of prayer.

They vetted you. They thoroughly vetted you. Interviews. I mean, the whole nine yards. They were very prayerful.

And so then when it came along In April of 2024, the decision was then, hey, that that needs to happen. And it's going to happen fairly soon. Now. One side note that I'm going to get. Everybody's here to hear you talk.

They're listening to you talk, so we're going to get to that. But I just remember praying about it in the midst of putting that succession plan together. And it wasn't an audible voice, but it was so clear. And I'd made some comment from the pulpit a Sunday after you had preached. When I was following, I was like, man, didn't Pastor John do a great job last week?

He's going to be a great lead pastor somewh someday. Yeah. And it was from the pulpit, while those words were coming out of my mouth, it was like the Lord said that somewhere is here and the time is soon. Yeah. And I was stunned.

Not that it was here. I was celebrating that. Right. But the soonest was okay. All right.

Right. I'm about to turn 64. Right. That sounds really young to me now.

But anyway, that's kind of how it went down.

And so Stapper started doing that process and then here we come to April. So all of that being said, you're now three months removed, first removed from worship pastor, who then was worship Fusion pastor, then was Fusion pastor, now has transitioned into lead pastor role. So from your perspective, how's it going, man? Well, it's going great. That Lord willing and the creek don't rise, as my granddaddy would say, I don't have any more transitions in front of me.

Yeah, we're hoping that. I'm looking, I am looking forward to. Oh, man, what would this be like? I might have the same job for a couple of years. You know, this is going to be great.

But, but no, it's. I mean, I honestly, honestly, I am. I have been super blown away and it hasn't been what I was planning or expecting. And I mean that in the best way possible. So, you know, as you know and as I've shared with, you know, multiple times on, even on Sunday, like, still working on my master's degree right now.

So there's a lot of going on. Like, you know, the plate is still plentiful and, and, but the Lord has just been. The Lord has just been super kind in this and I think there's. There's been a unity, there's been a graciousness, there's been a.

Just from the Congregation. I sense it even in the staff. I sense it with absolutely key leaders. But just. The Lord has just been.

I think my biggest takeaway, the biggest thing from this has just been the kindness of the Lord to, you know, it hasn't been flawless, you know, making mistakes and, you know, you kind of have little flubs and all that kind of stuff, but just the kindness of the Lord to just. There's just a unity around where we're headed. Like, you know, we talked about, you know, I use that. That story, you know, from the episode that. That line wheels up, and everybody keeps coming around, like they're just super excited.

And I just see this. There's. There's a hunger, there's a. There's a. Like, let's go.

Like, we're not. We're not waiting around. This is great. And so. But just I.

My biggest thing has been just in this process is the. Which is, again, a kindness of the Lord is just to remind me of the same thing that I'm wanting to preach and encourage and lead us towards as far as the presence and prayer and things like that are the things that the Lord just constantly reminds. Don't forget that starts with you. Like, start. That starts with, you know, so my prayer life has.

Has grown, you know, and I say this jokingly and not jokingly in the sense of, you know, there's definitely the need of dependence on the Lord to do. To do some work. I mean, it's a different thing when you're the guy. You know, I preached a few times in the last couple of years, two in a row or something like that. I mean, that happened some, you know, but now all of a sudden you're doing two, three, four in a row, you know, like, it's.

It's like, lord, we need something more than John's personality. Like, you're the one that's got to work. You're the one that's got to move.

You're the one that's got to do this because it isn't on me anyway. And that's been the other thing of what God's been up to as far as my life goes.

And what's going on is the.

It's the. How do I say it? Like, it. It's the reminder that none of this. I can't do this on my own.

And it's been. It's just. Not that I didn't. Was ever thinking that I could do this on my own or anything like that, but it's the idea, the reminder constantly that the Lord just kind of just goes, you know what? This isn't, you don't have to carry that weight.

I don't have to carry that. We just, this past week we're just praying. I mean, we're praying for this every week, you know, for people to give their life to Jesus, for lost people to be found and then for those found people to go find people. And so we're praying for all of those things, but at the same time too, and don't get me wrong, I want to be faithful. I want to be faithful to the text, I want to be faithful to the Word.

I want to be faithful in doing the best that I can with the Holy Spirit and writing those sermons and planning and praying and all those things. But at the end of the day, that's up to the Lord. And, but you can take that into so many things I shared with you. Shortly into January, like you feel the weight of every news. You hear about someone going to the hospital or someone doing this, and you feel the weight of wanting to go and like literally have conversations or go meet with every single one of those people.

But yet your capacity, especially at a church this size, you can't to use the line of your guy dollar in the jar kind of thing. Sometimes you have to do for one what you wish you could for everybody. And, and, and, but, but the, but the pull, the pull towards, in your, your heart just, just beats and hurts for those that are struggling and those who've, you know, and it's like, you know, you're trying to meet, you try to meet every need and if you're not careful, somewhere along the lines, at least for me, like I, I even, I mean early on I was just catching myself. Like, you can't, you can't be everything to everybody. Like, that's just not, that's just, you're not going to be able to sustain that way.

Not with, not with a family at home. And Galaday, you just added a new baby now, you know, you got a little four month old now at home. And those, you can't do all that stuff, you've got to lean and press in. Which is so funny because that's exactly what I'm preaching and exhorting our church to do is just like lean into the Lord. This isn't on you.

What you do in obedience, how you serve the Lord is in response to his salvation. It's in response to what he's done. It's in response to the love that he has for you. You're not earning Any of that love. Well, in the same way, it's like I have to remind myself again, like I said this past week, the gospel's not the diving board, it's the pool.

And so I remind myself that even as a pastor, the Lord builds the house. I labor and I'm going to give it with everything. Colossians 1:28. I want to labor with all of his strength, but at the same time, it's up to the Lord. And I just got, I just gotta, I get to live open handed.

And that's the biggest thing which is so tempting though, to, you know, you catch yourself closing those hands. I gotta open up, gotta open

back up, man. So much, so much of that. So good. I wish we just had a couple days to kind of unpack it all.

But you mentioned the kindness of God. How. When I said, how's it going? Yeah. And you initially started talking about some evidences.

Yeah. Of God's kindness towards you as you are in a new role. Yeah.

And. And I think that part of that kindness, not that you need pumping up or, you know, any of that, but I think a part of his kindness is to, to give some confirmation, some affirmation.

Absolutely right. Yeah. And so, and you, and I may have mentioned this a couple weeks ago, but, you know, when I was you, you gifted me with an opportunity to preach on March 8th. And as I was beginning that message, the line was going to be, pastor John has done a great job these past two weeks setting us up in this becoming one series. And before I could even get the words out at the nine o' clock traditional service, I said, pastor John has done a grr.

I don't even think I got great. I think it was grr. And once I got grr for great out, grr. The room erupted into a pause. And they didn't know I

was saying the past two weeks preaching, they were responding to Pastor John's doing a great job transitioning.

What an affirmation, what a confirmation kindness. Very much so. And as you know, I don't need to tell you anything, but as you know, the more dependent you are upon him, the stronger in him you become. And as you walk in his strength, he never removes. John's strong enough now.

He doesn't need the kindness anymore. Right. Yeah. His mercies are new every day. Right.

So that kindness is always, always, always there when things are going great, when they're not. And not just for leaders, not just for us. Everybody watching, everybody listening, everybody reading. Right now they know what the kindness of God is all about and how its kindness is just rich in mercy towards us and especially when we're most needy of it, that kindness is just there. And so I'm so glad to hear you say that's what you've been experiencing is the kindness of God and this beautiful faith family here, they're conduits of that kindness.

Absolutely. And I hear a lot. You know, my phone number has not changed, my email address has not changed. And so I still get the emails and the text. Pastor John did a great job today.

I'm like, tell him. Actually, I don't. I just tell them. I will tell you. And so.

But yeah, just thrilled. Thrilled for what I've experienced in a behind the scenes role of watching the transition take place. Kind of a little bit of knowing what you were going to be stepping into. Right. But also seeing how you are stepping.

Yeah. And how I know the Lord's leading and how the fruit is evident that he's in the midst of this, which is so, so encouraging. Absolutely. So thinking about that, you mentioned the kindness of God, would you, as a real blessing, would you feel safe? I mean, hey, it's just me and you having a conversation.

Right. Would you feel safe and tolerant? Maybe. What's the greatest challenge you faced up until this point? Or I don't know if you want to call it an obstacle.

Yeah, let's, let's stay with opportunity there. Yes. There's Caroline's word she likes to use. These aren't issues or challenges or problems, they're opportunities. Yeah.

What's maybe been the greatest opportunity you've kind of bumped into? Well, I mean, you know, I think, I think there's, I think it's, it's, it's been kind of continuing to help us. See, I think, I think for me, let me say it this way is very much with what we preached in the Legacy and launch series, which is we aren't headed in a new direction. We're taking the next step in the direction we've already been walking. Yeah.

Like, we've been walking in this. And so the challenge, opportunity, whatever that we want to use has been just honestly just staying faithful and true to that in the sense of like, I'm not trying to take us in a completely new direction. That actually what I want you to do is see that each step that we take is actually where we've already been walking. And so we use the illustration like Moses to Joshua, that Moses was leading the people of Israel to the promised land. Well, when the leadership transition happened at the Jordan river, and it transitions from Moses to Joshua.

Well, the direction didn't change. Joshua's still leading him into the promised land. Now, some of the strategies looked a little different because the way you get out of Egypt is not the same way you take hold of the land that the Lord's laid out before you. But at the same time, your direction has stayed the same. But it's kind of constantly keeping that in focus.

I think the challenge for me is also the opportunity has been honestly balancing everything, you know, is still working on a master's degree. It's. It's amazing. Hey, can I interrupt? Yeah.

What's your mat. I know, but tell everyone what your master's. It's a master's of arts in spiritual formation and leadership. And so, I mean, it has been. Oh, it's been so good.

It's been the best decision, you know, outside of Jesus and Sarah. Well, coming here, a lot of decisions. So we'll put it in the top 10 of decisions. That's been good, but it's been balancing everything. And so what the opportunity has been is to.

Again, going back to what I said earlier of just reminding myself that one. This isn't dependent on me. I don't need to kind of drive this thing at 90 miles an hour. Like, no, we just need to. We need to do what we have the capacity in this moment to do.

And so. And don't get me wrong, I am looking so much to graduating in May. So we're almost there. We're in the home stretch. But at the same time, that's been one of the challenges is like, you have dreams.

And so, you know, for the last year, as we've been preparing for this, like, there's dreams in your heart. You know, I got journal pages and bullet lists and all this kind of stuff that I'm just constantly adding things to. And. And you get excited about those. But at the same time, you're going, you know what?

I need to stay at the pace of Jesus and not get ahead of him. Like, I trust that this is where he's leading us, but at the same time, like, we just need to stay at his pace. You know, the keeping step with the Spirit. Yes, yes. Galatians 5, 16.

And so it's the. And I forget the Japanese theologian, but the. The three mile an hour God that, you know, a general walk. Walking pace takes you about three miles in an hour. And so it's just like a three mile an hour God.

Just like you're at a pace that stays with the Lord, as opposed to getting ahead of him and trying to. Trying to go faster. And then I would. I would also say, and this is kind of a funny thing. So Caroline, she's our director of operations now, and fantastic.

Does an amazing job. But anyway, one of my other challenges is realizing that my voice carries more weight than it did as of December 31, you know, so we're talking about the prayer chapel, and I'm loving, you know, the Lord's been so kind in that as well. You know, if we're praying during services and things like that. Well, Caroline is sick coming out of kind of the Christmas break and all that kind of stuff. So we have a staff meeting.

Well, it's the week before. You know, I'm laying out some vision pieces of, you know, prayer, presence, formation, you know, mission, thinking about the.

The residency program, things like that. And I just mentioned the prayer chapel and my heartbeat for what I want us to do. Well, the next thing I know, some of our staff have already gone down. They've taken measurements. They're doing all kinds of stuff.

And I was like. And so Caroline comes in, goes, what is going on? And I was like, that's my bad. Because people were excited, and they were like, yes, the lead pastor wants to do that. Let's go.

And I was like, oh, no one's really, you know, John said anything as a student pastor, like, oh, that's a good idea. Yeah, we'll see if that happens. So you say you were a little more than 3.0 at that point. You were just a little bit faster, maybe a little bit. A little bit where I was just kind of like, oh, oh, wow.

I got to be careful what I say, because everybody's going to jump on it. And if we're not careful, we can get ahead of, you know, and get things

and do things in a way that doesn't necessarily. There's a kindness in the way that you lead through some of those things that is something different. It was something new we were adding, and we needed to be wise in the way that we led through that. So.

But that was that. I look back and I laugh. You know, it was just funny. And so Caroline and I, we. Our phrase for the first month, as you know, was kind of like, we'll get better at this.

We'll get better at this. Wow, that's cool. But anyway, that's really cool. And you are. Yeah, not.

I think it's just obvious to everybody that you are. Yeah, you were made for this. Thank you. It's the right Moment. Yeah.

And it's a beautiful thing. And I just want to brag as I've bragged on you and. And bragged on our team. Yeah. I also want to brag on the congregation.

Oh, absolutely. They, yeah. Everybody's like, nobody likes change except a baby with a dirty diaper. Yeah. How change is so hard to everybody.

And change is hard. Yeah. But man, they have been gracious. They've the appearance that from my viewpoint, it's been beautiful. It has been.

I don't want to use the word seamless, but it's been seamless. Yeah. And to see them just embrace. They'd already embraced you. And that's the beauty too.

Again, being an independent network church. Yes. Being able to do what God led this church to do, which was to take an eight year member of staff that they knew, loved, understood that person who knew and loved them as a church family. Understood people who are on the same page. Vision wise.

You mentioned, hey, we're not going in a new direction. It's the next step in that same direction. We've been traveling and I'm still waiting on my not new but next T shirt or hat. I don't know when it's coming. Probably will come after I graduate.

It's not new is next. I just think that's going to be amazing. But that whole idea of watching them transition. Yeah. After, I mean, 25 years is a long time of kind of used to the same face, but boy, was it time.

I mean, can you imagine having to look at this? So it's a, it's a great thing. But then just, it's just, it's hard to shift gears when you've been in a certain mode for a while. But they have shifted gears beautifully. Yeah.

And just to see the fruit and the excitement. The excitement. So I'm just thrilled. Could not be happier, could not be more proud of them, this team. You were a peer part of the staff team.

Yeah. Now all of a sudden you're the leader of the staff team. That's a big transition for the leader and for the followers. So kudos to everybody. They respect you.

They still give you the business. Oh, absolutely. If they did not, I'd be worried because I'm like, they gave it to me, why aren't they giving it to John? But it's beautiful. It really is beautiful.

And I'm so thrilled and honored to be able to watch it and to be a part of it. And I'm thrilled that you're my lead pastor. I'm so honored to know honored is the wrong word. I'm so blessed to know who you are and to be able to get in behind and say, let's go. Bobby Scott, another amazing guy on our team, has had me do some online.

I think you'd call it online pastor during the services, during the live streams. So I'm in there just corresponding with people, which has been amazing. I've loved doing that. But each week that I've done it, as we begin the service, I've. Let's go.

And hashtag will go both times. Let's go. Or three times. I don't. Anyway, I love it.

I think it's great. So. All right. So the obstacle. Yeah, we are the balance.

Yeah, balance. And that's. That's a challenge. I don't think that'll probably ever go away. Even when transitions.

Not in the conversation. Balance is always good. Lynn Carter, who's in heaven with Jesus now, was my DS for a long time. District superintendent. Yeah.

He was the leader in the United Methodist Church. That brought us, Michelle and I, Andrew, to Chapin. Forever indebted to him for that. Forever. But he used to say, the hardest thing, Jody, for you in ministry will always be keeping the main thing, the main thing.

And I used to think, well, that's the gospel, which it is. It's pointing people to Jesus and decisions and discipleship and all that. The main thing's a big thing. But you can't keep the main thing, the main thing, unless you're maintaining you. Yeah.

And that's where that balance comes into play. And so way to go for recognizing that. Way to go for leaning in to that. And you've got a good rhythm established. I think a really healthy rhythm established.

Question would be, now that you're not three days on the job, more like three months on the job. Do you still feel two weeks behind or is it

more 20, or do you feel like. No, I'm all right. Yeah. You know, I think it depends on which week you ask me.

So this week we just, you know, depending on when you release this, we just had some potential bad weather, and so out of precaution, we just went ahead and shut the offices down on this past Monday. So. So this week kind of feels. It's a little out of your routine all of a sudden. Your Tuesday, which is kind of a day I've tried to set aside as.

As more of a writing day and things like that and prayer day, all of a sudden that's. It's. It's your Tuesday, but it's also your Monday, and you're trying to catch up on a few things. And, and so, so this week feels this, this week feels a little bit like that. But on, on average, you know, I feel like I'm getting a hang in the sense of, like I said, you know, just measuring.

Hey, this is what, this is what in me that I can do right now. Yeah. And you know what? I don't need to try to overextend, like, because again, one, you know, like I said, and I've joked a couple of times, you know, my hope in prayer is like, this is it. Now.

We're always, Sarah and I always keep our yes on the table. He wants to, whatever the Lord wants to do, he wants to send us across the world or, you know, across the country. It doesn't matter. We'll always say yes if it's clear the Lord's leading that. But my hope is, you know, and hopefully the church will still want that, that they get another pastor for the same guy for 25 years.

So. And that would be my. That's my plan. That's my hope. And we're, you know, so it's also just kind of I can do what I can do right now.

And because, one, we're going to be here for a really long time. I don't, you know, I don't have to think through. It's kind of like when Jordan was graduating and Jackson starting to get into that because, you know, in his junior year, these are kids. Yeah, these are kids. And so you start realizing, oh, they're about to move out.

Oh, my gosh, now I got to teach them everything that I feel like I didn't teach them. And it's like drinking from a fire hose or something like that. And at the same time, just to be like, no, we don't have to try to answer everything. We don't have to try to solve every sermon. Doesn't

have to cover every potential topic and opportunity because, Lord willing, we're going to be here for a long time.

We're going to be preaching for a long time. That idea of trying to teach him everything you hadn't taught him, I laughed out loud because poor Andrew, when he was getting ready to go off to Clemson, it was a Saturday, it was like 98 degrees. And I realized I had this whole tire changing thing. Yeah, hey, bud, we're gonna go out and practice. Change your tire today.

He's like, dad, it's 98 degrees. I got it. I'm like, no, no, we're going to change the Tire today. But anyway, the rubber is melting. Yes, indeed.

Why are we out here? But you. I want to kind of use it to kind of maybe kind of bring our time, which has been amazing for me. Thank you again. Absolutely.

Oh, my gosh. But the idea of, I guess I just can do what I got to do. I can only do what I can do. Right. And the idea of trusting the Lord.

Right. And I've tried to share in my own heart with myself and with people over the years. God's responsible for the outcomes. Right. God's responsible for results.

Right. I'm only responsible for obedience. And so it's listening to what the Lord says, asking him to give me the courage to do it, but then trusting him with the outcome, trusting him with his results. Because if I want to just feel like I'm only going to attempt what I can do, apart from trusting him to do it, not going to do a whole lot, there's nothing of eternal significance for sure going to happen. And I sense in you, not just somebody who understands the weight of what you're in, not only somebody who has great faith in our great God, but I sense somebody who's willing to say, you know what?

I'll be obedient. I'll do what I can, but I'm going to trust him with the outcome. I'm going to trust him with the results. So thank you for being that kind of leader. Let me give you an opportunity to kind of give your, like, hey, my kind of final word to the church family on this initial.

Right. Initial podcast. Yes. What would you want to tell them? I mean, I think it's everything that I've been saying.

It's. Guys, we have a big, great, glorious God who is inviting us to play a role in a bigger story that is so much bigger than ourselves. And I believe the Lord, I think, so many times. I'll speak for myself. I'll try not to use the we language.

I'll just use me. I can look back and see so many times where the Lord was calling me into something, and I think there were moments of hesitation because I'm just concerned about, like, well, what's this? What's this gonna look like? How is this, you know, golly day. If I really do this, they're gonna think I'm an idiot.

Like, you know, like. Like, what? Oh, if I fall flat on my face, I'm gonna get laughed at. And yet every single time the Lord has used that, sometimes I did fall flat on my face, but I look back to see what The Lord was forming in. I mean, just the FedEx alone.

Like, what the Lord formed in me that year.

You know, I am who I am because of the way the Lord basically took me into the wilderness, basically took me off the stage, stripped away all of those things to make sure that my identity was going to be in him and him alone and not in what I did, not in the fact, you know, I mean, like, literally had recorded an ep, had written some songs, released an album, did all those kind of things and then stepped away. Like, it was almost like you're inching up. Had written and published, self published, like an Advent devotional, all this kind of. And so you're like going up and you're thinking, all right, this is what the Lord has. This is kind of the next step.

And then out of nowhere it's gone and it strips away. And I look. And so for me, I mean, my encouragement to the church in this moment is like, seriously, Will's up. Like, I believe the Lord is leading us into something. I believe the Lord has been shaping us over the years to be the church that we are and is going to continue to shape us in the Genesis 12 kind of way of we've been blessed to be a blessing.

And so I'm going to be like, hey, guys, like, it's time to step into who we are because of who God has made us and say it is part of our

responsibility in this story to raise up the next generation to be people that are sending out, you know, not to. I don't want to kind of freak anybody out or whatever, but, like, I'm praying in the next, like five to 10 years. I'm praying for. Missionary organizations will use terms like units. And so a unit could be like a family of five, like a mom and dad and three kids or whatever.

A unit could be a single person. You know, it could be one person. But I'm praying for at least three to five units to be sent out to the mission field full time. Like, we're leaving. We've been raised up in Chapin, but the Lord has done something in our heart and I've got this heart for these people.

And we're going to move there and we're going to serve the Lord right there on the field. I'm praying for that and I'm believing that the Lord wants to do that. I'm praying that the Lord would show up in a way like he has done in the history through the, you know, the Hebrides Revival, the Businessman Revival in New York. That he showed up in ways where people were hungry for his presence and willing to just

obediently pray and seek his face, and then with whatever he said, respond to it in obedience. I'm praying for the Lord to do that.

That all of a sudden, like, that this would be like, you know, and Chapin, as it is in heaven, I mean, like, that's. And what I want to say to the church is I want you to believe that that's possible, because, again, it isn't built on us. It's built on the Lord. And the Lord can do it. There's a.

There's a passage in Isaiah, and I am forgetting the actual verse reference or whatever, but basically, you know, in thinking about kind of what's in front of him, the Lord says it is too small a thing. Like, in other words, you think this is this great big, huge problem. This big. This big. You know, like, we're talking about the world needing to know about the Lord and the Lord wanted.

And at the same time, like, how are we ever going to do. You know? And I'm just going, oh, no. Oh, it's too small a thing. So let's, like, let.

Let's wheels up. Let's get ready, and let's just. And let's just say, hey, Lord, we're following you, and we're going to trust you, and we're going

to put everything that we have behind you and what you're calling us to do. So let's go. Let's go.

Yeah, P. John, lead us on, bro. He John, lead us on, man. Love you, bro. Love you, too. That's so great.

And, guys, thank y' all for. For listening. Thank you for being a part of this. And, hey, who knows? We might do it again.

Yeah. A lot of fun, me. I love you guys. God bless.