

An Interview with Nathaniel Pringle

By Don Green



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Pastor Don Green. As you know, we installed Nathaniel as an elder this past Sunday, a great gift from God to our church, and we thought that it might be a good idea to be able to have a conversation with him so that you can get to know things about him that I imagine most of you don't know, I have the privilege of knowing, but I think that this will be helpful and it will be edifying. We have a lot to learn from Nathaniel and a lot to benefit from him in his ministry, and as good as the past year has been, I'm very confident that the best things are still ahead. You know, we've only gotten started in receiving the benefits of the gift that the Lord has given to us.

So I wanted to give you an opportunity to get to know him a little bit like I do. I would want you to know that, you know, Nathaniel's a man that I love and respect and trust very very deeply, and I don't hand out my trust very readily, there's enough of a suspicious attorney still in my corrupt old man that trust doesn't come as easy to me as it does for perhaps others. But I am very grateful to God with Nathaniel, just even outside the ministry context. I feel like I have the younger brother now that I never had, that's the way I feel about him.

As I was thinking as I was getting ready here this evening, there was a verse, a couple of verses in 1 Corinthians 16 that I wanted to share with you, to have a man like Nathaniel, is to accept and to receive some responsibility from the Lord as a congregation in how you respond to him. We talked about some of this Sunday but there's a little passage tucked away in the 16th chapter of 1 Corinthians that I wanted to share with you. Paul was writing to the church at Corinth and telling them how he wanted them to respond to Timothy and Timothy's ministry in their midst, Timothy being a younger disciple, Timothy being an effective minister but prone to some timidity and prone to fear as you read about in the pastoral epistles. Paul says to the Corinthian congregation, he says, "When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you," I'm reading from the ESV. "When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers." And Paul exhorts and even commands the Corinthian church, "Put this man at ease in his ministry among you. As he serves you, as he ministers to you, as he teaches the word of God to you, put him at ease. Make known to him that you love him and that you accept him. Make known to him that you're responding to his ministry. When he exhorts you, respond in compliance,

respond in deference. Don't defy, don't resist, don't undermine but put him at ease that he would know that you accept him and that you love him."

It's with that spirit that I want to say as I've seen our congregation respond to Nathaniel, that's exactly what you've done. It's been very encouraging that you've seen in him what the elders did before we introduced him to you, but also just to say that in the years to come, this is going to be an important part of the way that you respond to Nathaniel in his ministry. Put him at ease. Let him know that you love him. Articulate that. Verbalize that to him. Tell him how his teaching and his ministry has affected you and how it has helped you. This is how a godly congregation responds to a young elder like we have been given to by God. And I know that you'll do that, I just wanted to point out the Scripture that anchors that a little bit more even in our thinking and in our ministry.

So Nathaniel, with that little bit of introduction, if you would come up, sit on the far seat, I've got some questions for him. As Dane Logan said, "I've been waiting to lay my hands on you."

So Nathaniel, welcome and this is your first extended opportunity to speak to us since you were installed as an elder. We are very very glad and grateful to God to have you with us at Truth Community Church.

Nathaniel Pringle. I'm grateful to be here and 20 years ago I would have chafed at the fact of being called a younger elder at 43 but I fully appreciate that now.

Don. Yeah, well, for us it's just a matter of math. I'm the youngest of the remaining three elders and I'm 60 so there is an age gap, and I think after six decades I've earned the right to refer to someone in their 40s as younger. At least I'm not like Paul calling you "my child" or anything like that.

Nathaniel. That's true.

Don. So, Nathaniel, we go back almost eight years. A mutual friend introduced us and the first time that Nathaniel and I met was at McAlister's in Crestview Hills. This was probably in early 2013 and I remember to this day the mutual friend and I were sitting there and Nathaniel came walking in, and we were trying to do the same thing, in the same place, at the same time. We were each starting churches unaware of each other's presence and got to know each other, maybe a little bit of suspicion at the start, wondering what this other person is doing on my turf and vice-versa.

But yeah, I just wanted to ask you since we installed you on Sunday, just tell us some of your thoughts about that and we take elder leadership pretty seriously here. So we installed you 48 hours ago, so to speak, what are your thoughts as you transition now into more formal recognized role of leadership?

Nathaniel. Well, I think that the installment was a special day and I've been ruminating on it, for sure, but the growth that we'll talk about a little bit later, I think, in my thinking

about what elder leadership is and the significance of that, added weight that I never really experienced previously to what that office is and the responsibility that goes with it, and the terrifying messages that you preached in preparation for it.

Don. It was like I was preaching specifically to you, wasn't it?

Nathaniel. Yeah. It's not a pleasant situation to be, you know, being preached to like that but you're reminded of the grace of God, particularly with a passage like James 3:1. And so the weight has certainly even the couple weeks leading up to Sunday and beyond, that has been on my mind a great deal. The joy of being able to invest in the spiritual lives in preparing a flock for eternity is almost inexpressible to be able to have that privilege and that calling and know that it's only the Lord that has made that possible. And then also an excitement of, you know, we're in a battle for truth. We live in a world that hates the truth, that hates Christ, that hates the people of God, so we bond together as the church, as those that are walking in the light, and there's an intensity of holding forth the truth in darkness that's invigorating because we know the end of the story and we know that although the opposition is fierce, sometimes overwhelming, we know that Christ prevails. He has prevailed. He is prevailing. And he will prevail. And that's where we stand.

Don. Yeah, very well said. I think I've told this story publicly but I want to repeat it. As Nathaniel and I got to know each other in those years and following years after 2013, what we would do, we would occasionally get together as fellow pastors in the area, just the two of us, we would get together at different local restaurants and just spend some time together every few months or so. But there came a time and the turning point, the turning point in my assessment of Nathaniel as a man and as a leader came in 2015 which was when the United States Supreme Court delivered the Obergefell decision which mandated homosexual marriage across the United States, you know, and that was obviously kind of a watershed moment in the moral decline of our country, it was really just a culmination of what had been taking place, but I had determined in my heart that I wanted to preach immediately on the heels of that decision a series of messages on homosexuality and to stand against and to stand for biblical principles, let's put it that way, in the face of what the Supreme Court had just done. I wanted our church to immediately stand in opposition to that. And you know, without saying anything negative about the group of men, I sent out an email to multiple Reformed pastors in our area and invited them to join us, invited them to participate in that conference so that we could all stand together for truth if we would. And of all of those men, Nathaniel was the only one that responded. Nathaniel was the only man who showed up and he stood on the platform and had a part in that conference and he was willing to stand with us in a bold stand against what was happening. That just showed me something of the character of the man and it stood out and it elevated my respect for him far beyond what it had already been.

This is supposed to be me interviewing Nathaniel, now I'm monologuing here. I feel like the character on "The Incredibles," you know, you've got me monologuing again.

So we started, you know, spending more time together. We started talking about working together and standing together against the influence of Crossroads Church in our region

and we could be more effective together than we could working separately, and those conversations snowballed into what we have today. So when I speak of my affection for Nathaniel, it's affection that is mingled with a great deal of respect. You know, he took a stand with us in a way that others for whatever reason chose not to do.

Nathaniel. And you took the stand and it was a joy to come and stand with you with that.

Don. So, Nathaniel, let's change gears here for a bit. Let's step back into the past. There's something that I haven't even heard you talk much about. Back in your childhood, you actually spent a few years of your childhood in Southwest Africa. Tell us about that. What were you doing there? Because you were born in the Midwest, how did you end up there? Just tell us a little bit about that experience.

Nathaniel. Sure. It wasn't a two year safari. My parents are God-fearing people and I'm blessed to have been raised in a home that the Lord was honored and my parents desired to go and serve the Lord on a foreign mission field. My father had that desire. He went into medicine, really, with that desire and pursued the course of study in surgery.

Don. So your father is a surgeon. He's now retired but...

Nathaniel. That's correct.

Don. ...he was a surgeon at the time. Medical missions was his desire.

Nathaniel. That's correct, yes.

Don. Okay.

Nathaniel. Yes. And so two years into his professional career, he had an arrangement with his partner where they would switch back and forth from the mission field and a practice here in the States. So when I was 10, we packed a crate and moved to Swaziland which is a tiny country there by the Indian Ocean surrounded by South Africa at the bottom of Mozambique. And so fifth and sixth grade, I lived on a mission station in a pretty primitive hospital. I actually had my dad send me some pictures recently from that time. I'll save the descriptions of what those look like because the types of diseases that he had to deal with were pretty gruesome in that field. But some of the things that I learned there and took away, you know, as much as you can as a 10 year old kid, obviously my parents demonstrated a heart of sacrifice in leaving their country for two years to go minister and serve people that were in desperate need, but I met other Christians, African Christians and saw the gospel at work. There was one time we went out into the bush and mud huts just like the pictures you see from Africa, right, the red mud huts with the thatched roofs, and we had Sunday school on rough-hewn benches outside under a tree. The gospel, like the Lord said, it's global. It's successful around the globe and to see that firsthand, I didn't appreciate it at the time but it stuck with me for a long time. And of course, we got to see some other things too like lions sitting in the road

at Kruger Park which was neat as well. But that was a neat neat experience and probably more formative than I even recognize.

Don. So your dad was a surgeon. He's now retired and just tell us a little bit about them living up there west of Indianapolis in Danville, if I remember right.

Nathaniel. Yes. Yeah, that's pretty much where I grew up, out in the country on some property, and we were homeschooled and my mom, I'm the oldest of five children, my mom homeschooled all five of us and we're spread around the country now but it was a wonderful place to grow up. I'm so thankful for the sacrifices my parents made to rear all five of us in the discipline and the fear of the Lord.

Don. Now looking back on your spiritual life, Nathaniel, at what point, can you identify a point in time or a season in life where it was clear that Christ gave you the new life of which you spoke of on Sunday? Where did that happen in the course of your, you know, your life experience and just tell us a little bit about the nature of your conversion to Christ and repenting of sin and putting your faith in him alone for salvation. Just talk about that a little bit.

Nathaniel. Yeah. Well, to the best of my knowledge, I was nine when I was converted. I grew up, actually, in the Church of the Nazarene which is a very Arminian denomination, but the Lord, you know, they preached the gospel and on a Sunday evening is when I, again to the best of my understanding...when I took Romans in seminary and started to understand all that took place when I got saved, I was like, "I want to do this again. Now I understand." But it was exciting to know that the Lord, when I was nine all that happened, even though I didn't understand all that happened, it did.

Throughout my teen years, being in the Church of the Nazarene, they believe, they preach the doctrine of a second work of grace and Christian perfection, so I was down at the altar all the time, "I want to get perfected," you know? I'm dealing with all this sin in my life and what a wonderful understanding that that's not the case, we have all of Christ at conversion and we grow in our sanctification.

Don. Yeah, no perfect gift has he withheld...

Nathaniel. That's right.

Don. ...from his children. He doesn't hold it back. He gives it all to us right at the start.

Nathaniel. Yeah, there's nothing I had to do to get more of him. But there was a sensitivity, I guess, all through those teen years to desire to follow the Lord.

Don. And eventually that led you to Bob Jones in Greenville, SC for studies and seminary, and then after that you served in the administration there for a while. Tell us just a little bit about your years after seminary at Bob Jones and just what you were doing

because it influences the way that you approach ministry and you draw upon that experience as you counsel and deal with people, I think.

Nathaniel. Yeah, I think I do as well. I served as a dorm or a resident supervisor so I was over a residence hall on the men's side, and then as the Assistant Dean of Men, which was an administrative position, and with helping to oversee all of the men students at the university. So we dealt with practical matters but a lot of discipleship, disciplinary matters as well.

Don. When you showed up at the door of somebody in the evening, they knew something not good was about to happen in their lives, right?

Nathaniel. Yes.

Don. You had the responsibility to, sometimes you would expel people from the university for sin in their lives, violating the code of conduct, things like that, pretty weighty responsibility to have and just talk about that a little bit.

Nathaniel. Sure.

Don. I'm not misrepresenting that, am I?

Nathaniel. No. No. Yeah, we had some very clear standards and when those were violated, and it was sin issues, it wasn't just, you know, practical matters, they were deep sin issues, then you would have to often research that and have a little bit of interrogation sometimes to verify the details, but then often the decision would have to be made to terminate enrollment for a student and that involved communicating to them, communicating to their parents and, you know, particularly if you think about the end of the semester, end of the school year, or even a senior, when things like that would take place there were some heavy times.

Don. Pretty weighty stuff...

Nathaniel. Yeah.

Don. ...because you're affecting the whole future course of a man's life...

Nathaniel. That's right.

Don. ...that way.

Nathaniel. That's right. And it was a joy at the same time often to do that in the ministerial sense, and often for a man that was broken, just to encourage him of God's mercy that the Lord was dealing with him now about an issue in his life that could be destructive in much more significant ways later on in life. So those are some sweet opportunities.

Don. Now did any of those men ever come back to you and talk to you, thank you, or did they just kind of was a pattern to just kind of move on and you didn't hear from them again? Any sweet stories in the midst of those, what you described there?

Nathaniel. Yes. Two come to mind. The first, two brothers I had to expel on the same night and they were broken, they knew they had done wrong, and the next day I had a good conversation with their father, and as soon as they were allowed to come back, they did and just thrived.

Don. Different men.

Nathaniel. Very much so.

Don. Chastened and humbled by the experience.

Nathaniel. Very much so. Very much so.

Don. And you know, Nathaniel, that really points out an aspect of what we call church discipline. Actually the goal is not to simply expel people, the goal is for accountability to produce restoration and that's what you saw in that. Talk about that a little bit.

Nathaniel. Yeah. Every time that was what we would try to encourage the men with, particularly, you know, God resists the proud but he gives grace to the humble, and sometimes they were very proud people and you did what you could. But another instance after I moved up here to Cincinnati, a couple of students actually contacted me via Facebook or whatever and thanked me for the involvement at one time or another. And I believe in one case, if I recall correctly, one of the men basically said that it ultimately, that was part of God bringing him to repentance...

Don. Wow.

Nathaniel. ...was that discipline. So some of those things were years down the road.

Don. Yeah, one of the things about ministry is that that kind of accountability, holding people accountable to biblical standards in their personal lives, at the time it can be a thankless task but the man in ministry has to look beyond that to what is it that motivates a man in ministry to get beyond the cold indifference or the defiance even that sometimes he's met with. What is it that you think gets a man beyond that in ministry to be able to do what Scripture would have him to do? He wasn't expecting that question.

Nathaniel. It's a good question and merits a thoughtful response.

Don. Do you want to get back to us on it or what? [audience laughter]

What sustained you at Bob Jones as you were doing this and realizing as you were dealing with some of those proud resistant ones who defied, who wouldn't listen and all of that? What helped you do the right thing even though you were being met with a resistance to your leadership?

Nathaniel. First of all, knowing yourself and knowing that apart from God's grace or even before God's grace, that was how I was, and recognizing that what God's chastening had done over time, and that the strength of discipline, the rod of God, is restorative and it's for our good and it brings forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness like Hebrews says. And that takes, it does, it takes faith because it's not pleasant to discipline, it's not pleasant to discipline a student, it's not pleasant to discipline your kids, you know, any kind of discipline, it's never pleasant. And we often would say in the Dean of Men's office, look, the moment you enjoy what you do, get out of here.

But it's necessary. Because of our flesh, the strength of our flesh, the strength of the influence of the world and our enemy, the devil, it's God's means. It's one his means of grace to us and like he says, it does yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness and we have to believe that. And so it's with joy even though it's unpleasant, it's with joy that we pursue those things because we believe what God says.

Don. And, yeah, and there's sometimes in the moment the joy and satisfaction of simply out of doing the right thing...

Nathaniel. That's right.

Don. ...and saying this is what God would have me do in this position of leadership, and that, in itself, is its own reward in the moment while you're looking to the longer term restoration that God, you know, often brings in the process.

Nathaniel. Absolutely.

Don. Yeah.

Nathaniel. Absolutely.

Don. Well, let's fast-forward to September of 2012. Unbeknownst to you, Truth Community Fellowship had been going for about, you know 9 or 10 months at that point. Why did you bring your family to Cincinnati when you had no prior contacts, you had no relationships here that I know of, why did you come to Cincinnati of all places?

Nathaniel. Well, the thumbnail version here. A year before that, Katie and I had sat down knowing that hopefully within the next year we were going to, we were looking to go to and be involved in church ministry somewhere after I had finished, I had just completed my M.Div. and were going to stay at Bob Jones for a year while we prayed and sought where we needed to go. There were two things at the bottom of our list and those two things were stay in Greenville and plant a church.

Don. You didn't want to stay in Greenville and you didn't want to plant a church.

Nathaniel. That's right, those were the two things....

Don. I have a feeling you got one out of the two.

Nathaniel. Yes. Yes. We looked at many many different opportunities but we connected with an organization here in Ohio who was looking for someone to plant churches in Ohio. They said you can plant anywhere in Ohio and so I explored Cincinnati, Grove City on the southwest corner of Columbus and Akron, and through a number of providential events, we actually connected with a couple who had lived in the area for about a year and hadn't been able to find a church, and they were of like mind with us in what they desired for a scripturally-based church that preached the word and they lived out in the country in Batavia. So, again, that's the short compressed version of how we ended up on the east side of Cincinnati but it was ultimately out of a desire that I pursued really since I went to college and majored in Bible, to preach the word and to minister in a local church setting and bring the word to bear on the lives of people, preach the gospel.

Don. You came to the east side of Cincinnati, started at a hotel in Milford, if I remember...

Nathaniel. That's correct.

Don. ...remember right and then you ended up a few miles, just across the freeway from where you were at and started the work there. Talk a little bit, this is a very big question that I'm about to ask, covering so much, but talk about what started as your philosophy of ministry, the philosophy of ministry that you started with, and maybe how that grew over time as you just preached the word. Just walk us through that because it's pretty, it's a pretty remarkable and important story.

Nathaniel. Sure. Well, I came with a philosophy of expository preaching. That was a big thing in the church that I came from, but I also came with that mindset of that's how I'm going to handle the word in the pulpit, verse by verse, book by book, but we also need to have a number of other programs going on. So summer VBS.

Don. Vacation Bible school for those not familiar with that culture.

Nathaniel. And many other different branches, if you will. And as time went on, one of the...maybe a picture might be helpful. I kind of felt like some of those branches like vacation Bible school and other program-heavy ministries where like taking a branch off of a 50 year old oak tree and trying to graft it into a sapling, you know, the picture is pretty, makes pretty clear what happened.

So as I was working through the word of God, preached through Ephesians, preached through Matthew and 1 John and an overview of James like I did here recently, but those

were the books that I went through, it became clearer and clearer that the word of God has to be absolutely central and undiluted with a lot of activity.

Don. That's a great word. Not to interrupt you but "undiluted" is a critical critical term for biblical ministry.

Nathaniel. Absolutely. And you can often see how through the week different ministries where there was maybe a requirement and we need people to do this or need people to do that, you'd get people to do different things but then on Sunday you might not even have people there, they were worn out doing other things during the week. So there were just things that started to kind of sink into my thinking of, well, if the word of God is supposed to be preeminent, how does it work to have these other things that are diluting the effectiveness of the word and the focus on the word.

Don. And distracting people from it because it was a smaller congregation, it was under 50, right?

Nathaniel. Yes.

Don. And so to try to multiply programs, you've got to staff those, people have to plan for it and all of that. You know, what I think you're saying is that what you're trying to do that maybe is good in itself actually is a detriment because there's an opportunity cost; it takes people's focus away from the preached word and has them focused on keeping the activity going as opposed to receiving the word implanted which is able to save their soul.

Nathaniel. Yes, and even it takes the pastor's focus off preaching the word because often you have to run this or that, and that taxes the time for study and preparation and other necessary and important pastoral work that needs to be done.

Don. Yeah, because you're the lead guy. If you're going to run the programs, you've got to be the leader in those things and Acts 6 talks about this, you know, the Hellenistic Jews were concerned because their widows weren't getting served food. They come to the apostles and they say, "You know, you need to help us with this." And the apostles said, "We'll appoint men to take care of this but we have to focus on the word of God and prayer," and they made clear what their priority was. As important as feeding the widows was, the word of God was even a higher priority than those very legitimate needs, and it sounds like that's the kind of thing that you're describing became more clear in your mind the longer you pursued ministry and preached in that context.

Nathaniel. Absolutely, very much so. Yeah, I could tell the personal tax that it took.

Don. Yeah, just talk about that because it would help, I think it would help us to understand it from a pastor's perspective what effect that has of trying to keep so many different things going. In principle, you're committed to the primacy of the word, just walk us through how you sorted that out.

Nathaniel. Yeah. An example of what a Sunday would look like sometimes, we would have a lunch pretty consistently for the first several years, right after the service and it afforded a lot of time of fellowship but if you have, say, an outreach event on Saturday that you're spending several hours preparing for during the week and then engaging in on Saturday and then on Sunday teach Sunday school, preach, have a lunch, and then maybe have an evening event or service or something like that, the preaching is not as strong because of the time that you've had to spend doing other things during the week, then your energy is sapped over time. When you first come, it's like, "Oh, I can do it. I can do it all." You realize that that's not the case, you're not Superman. Then even within the time that the people are gathered, if there's a lot of different programs going on, then there's a distraction in the minds of the people about, "Well, we have to have a meeting about this, or we have this activity next," and so it can actually become a distraction to the focus of the word of God in the preaching moment. So there are a number of factors that, again, dilute what you want the main thing to be and compromise the calling and what the Lord makes preeminent.

Don. With the best of intentions.

Nathaniel. Absolutely.

Don. With the best of intentions you dilute the impact of your own ministry...

Nathaniel. That's right.

Don. ...when you diversify what you're trying to do too much.

Nathaniel. Yes, very much so.

Don. Yeah, very helpful.

Nathaniel. And I like "the best of intentions" because I really wanted to serve the Lord in all those things, right?

Don. Yeah. As do the people.

Nathaniel. That's right. That's right.

Don. But as I understand, as you preached through the word, that became increasingly clear in your mind and you started to jettison some of the programs for the sake of a more exclusive focus of your time and the church's time on the word of God.

Nathaniel. That's right. And two main things that influenced my thinking. "Revival and Revivalism" by Iain Murray crystallized my understanding of a lot of different things about church ministry philosophy.

Don. That's a very substantial book that I'd encourage you all to read. The history of it is remarkable. He's got a whole chapter on Charismatic outbreak in the state of Kentucky that took place in the early 19th century. "Revival and Revivalism" by Iain Murray. Everyone should read that book.

Nathaniel. It will really give you a whole perspective of why the church is what it is today. And then the second thing was several years ago just taking some, making a commitment to read through the entirety of the Bible as quickly as I could for the purpose of exposure to the whole revelation of God in a short period of time, and it just happened at a time where all kinds of things just fell into place in my thinking as I saw the whole scope of redemption from Genesis to Revelation.

Don. Wow. And so that gives us a good background on the nature of your ministry at Eastside. You were there about eight years and then you and I started to have serious conversations and I kind of remember the gingerly way that I broached the topic with you because as our elders, we were talking about Nathaniel at one point, I don't even remember exactly when the meeting was but we had an elders' meeting and I briefly broached the topic of Nathaniel and possibly being at Truth Community Church one day, and the other elders just jumped on the idea. I mean, it was a remarkable manifestation of the work of the Spirit of God in our hearts that that conversation accelerated so quickly, far beyond what I expected.

One of the delicate things that I needed to cross with Nathaniel was you were in a lead pastoral role at a church that you planted and, you know, and you're the guy there, and to call you here is going to be a different role. You were going to be in more of an assistant role rather than that lead role that you had been used to. How did you contemplate that change and what was it in your heart that made it so that you were willing to take a different role than what you had known in order to be at Truth Community Church?

Nathaniel. Well, one more layer I'll add to that, if I can, in that role too, there were people there that I love deeply and had vested in, and still love deeply, and so that was also part of that, of thinking through those things. And as the Lord had clarified my thinking about theology and about church ministry philosophy and seeing the connection of those things, how theology drives philosophy, I began to realize, you know, I need time to process all this, for one thing, and think through these implications and learn and work these things out, and I need to be able to do that and to continue to learn. And at the same time, I felt like I had done what I could at Eastside in that role as a lead pastor and it was just kind of a contented, and I use that word very intentionally, it was kind of a contented, "I think I've done what I can here." And I think that this is the next thing that the Lord has and I'm very content with that and I'm very content to come into a supporting role and whatever the Lord has in that role, I'm content with that.

So ultimately, I guess, it would be just a contentment with that possibility and what the Lord might have. And one other kind of, it's not unimportant, it's a very important aspect, you know, I have three daughters and for the most of their lives they've been under one man, their dad, as their pastor, and he's also the one that's teaching them at home, and one

voice can kind of grow stale after awhile, and the possibility of having my family in a ministry where they would be able to hear another man preaching the same thing and working together promoting the doctrine that we promote here from Scripture, all of those things were factors and I'm still very content.

Don. Well, we hope that you're content for many many years to come and, you know, like a 30 year contentment would be....

Nathaniel. Amen.

Don. ...just fine by us. And you know, you touched on in making that statement, you touched on one of the qualifications of an elder is, you know, managing your own household well and I don't know if you processed it in exactly that term, but there was a different but a similar kind of fork in the road for me in my own ministry career, for lack of a better word, having to make a choice between a ministry and the impact that it would have on my family, and for me the choice I turned down would have had a negative impact on my family and that just had long-term consequences. So part of what's so easy to miss is that sometimes it's not the job description that you've got that should drive the decision in ministry, you have to think about broader principles, you have to think about, you know, one aspect of it is thinking about, "How does this affect my family? Is this positive or negative on my children and on their spiritual development?" And make a decision based on that, and that won't always be in the thing that elevates you even into greater prominence, sometimes it will put you in the background for a while. It did for me, that's for sure.

Nathaniel. Yeah, absolutely. And just to kind of make one almost backtrack statement too, with the eight years that I was a lead pastor, I'm really thankful for the patience of the people that I pastored. They had to deal with a lot with a young new guy trying to find his way and I don't by any means take that lightly in the support that I had from them as well as I learned a lot of things in those eight years.

Don. I could say the same thing about the congregation here at Truth Community Church and, you know, and just the sweetness of your spirit toward the people that are there, the evident affection that you still have for them speaks to part of the reason why we came. You left there content. You left there without bitterness. You left there with a love for the people that you had ministered. Some of them came with you here, a lot of them didn't, they've moved on but just to be able to love them even though your circumstances change is part of what we appreciate about you.

Boy, the time goes by so fast on these kinds of things. You've been here at Truth Community Church for about a year and especially in light of the comments that I opened with from 1 Corinthians 16, just tell us how we can be an encouragement to you, to Katie, to your kids. Help us just to understand in a practical way how we can minister to you as you minister to us.

Nathaniel. Well, this church has already been an encouragement from the day we walked in, just the evident love for one another that is reflective of the love of Christ in your midst, and the love for the word of God and for what our name and body is, the truth of who God is and what he has said and what he has set forth in Jesus Christ. Those things have been so encouraging to us to become a part of and to participate in, and hopefully that to continue to help cultivate. But so in that sense, keep loving one another, keep loving the word of God, keep loving the truth and I don't know that there's much more encouragement beyond that, but pray for us as a family. We're five human beings. Anything you're struggling with is probably something we're struggling with as well, and maybe the details are different but you can guarantee that we need the Lord's grace every hour of every day.

Don. So, wait, wait, wait with what you're saying there. You have not attained sinless perfection in your family? [audience laughter]

Nathaniel. I've fallen. [laughter]

Don. We didn't cover that. Wow. I'm going to have to think about that one. You know, I appreciate your transparency about that, you know, appropriately transparent because, you know, a pastor's family is just like any other family, it's just a different role. You know, you've got the dad may have a different role but, you know, we're all dealing with the same issues of raising children, of discipline, "God, what do I do in this situation," and those things. I like the way you said it, the things that everyone struggles with, you know, we share in that. We all stumble in many ways, as James says.

Nathaniel. Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And you know, this church has been so encouraging just in the year, even what you admonished at the beginning and encouraged us with of the feedback from the teaching, that's been encouraging to hear. Again, the hunger for the word of God that you all have is heartening, it really is, and to know that when you walk up to the pulpit and open the word of God, what the expectation is, is to hear from the Lord, right? And that takes all kinds of pressure off. I don't have to be funny which my wife will testify is a really good thing because I stink at that. Just say what the word says.

Don. Yeah, that's right and that takes all of the pressure off. The Lord's word doesn't return void and, you know, we're not trying to be popular, we're not trying to attract the most people that we possibly can, we just want to preach the word and let the Lord take the consequences of that where he does, right?

Nathaniel. Absolutely. It makes it simple.

Don. Yeah, you've heard me say this, you and the audience, you've heard me say this, I said it a lot at the very beginning of Truth Community Fellowship. Our philosophy of ministry, we were talking about philosophy of ministry, our philosophy of ministry to this day is still the same, we're going to take this Bible, open it, teach it, and then deal biblically with the consequences. It's nothing more than that and it's nothing less than

that, you know, our feeling as a church is, that's the most profound philosophy of ministry you could have. Everything else is details.

So, well, thank you so much for all of those things. We labeled this a conversation, conversations go kind of both ways, is there anything you want to ask me and to interact with me on before we close in the next 30 seconds?

Nathaniel. Don, you're looking at your watch. I mean, how much time are you going to give me here, right? I have all kinds of things I want to ask you.

Don. Well, go for it.

Nathaniel. Time, I think, affords us one at least, that is, one question that's burning on people's minds, I think, since we've announced that on March 17...

Don. May 17.

Nathaniel. May 17, yeah, that's important.

Don. Yeah.

Nathaniel. May 17. I didn't have any notes. I'll need to bring more notes next time. But John MacArthur will be with us. One of the big questions is how are we going to fit all the people that want to come to hear him? So any thoughts on that?

Don. Yeah. I'm shocked that you asked me that question, that was the one question that he was supposed to ask me.

This is a major announcement, an exclusive announcement. You're the first ones to hear this publicly. There are going to be at least 2,000 people in town, in the area, for the Truth Matters Conference all coming to hear John MacArthur speak, and when we were contemplating that and after John agreed to come speak with us, I realized that the math of that does not work in our facility. We have, you know, you can fit 325 people into our room and my assumption is that the 2,000 people that are coming to hear him Wednesday through Friday would jump at the chance to hear him on Tuesday evening as well, and that's more than what we can do. So in keeping with the philosophy, go big or go home, what we have done is we have signed an agreement with the BB&T Arena at Northern Kentucky University. So our Tuesday night service on May 17 is going to take place at BB&T Arena. We're going to promote that and hopefully be able to attract several thousand people for the opportunity to hear our friend, our church's friend, John MacArthur preaching on that evening. In addition to that and something that we'll appreciate more as a church than the public will, leading the music, special music that night, there was only one man who could do that for us, D. C. Washington will be here to lead the music that night.

It's going to be a wonderful night, a simple night but an opportunity for us as a church. A couple of things I would say about it, it's an opportunity for us as a church to serve the greater body of Christ and to let our relationship with John be a greater blessing to the broader church of people that will want to hear him speak. Second thing, there's actually three things here. Second thing that I'm excited about as a congregation as the pastor of this church, is for us as a congregation to see in a tangible way a demonstrable evidence of the fact that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. You know, we are part of something that is bigger than what happens within the walls of our church. The truth that we believe, the truth that we proclaim is something that many other people believe and many other people proclaim, and so we get to, you know, we get to see a visible evidence of that. And the other thing that I would say is that in between now and May 17, we're going to need a lot of help from you to help make this happen. There's a lot of logistics involved with this, that we're going to be asking for help, and so this isn't simply a spectator event for the people of Truth Community Church, this is a participant event where we're going to need the help of a lot of people to make this work.

So I'm very very excited about that, and at the same time we're planning to take care especially of the membership of Truth Community Church, our plan is to reserve the best seats in the house, so to speak, for first access to the people of Truth Community Church so that you're not sitting up in the rafters or sitting outside in the standing room only area. We're going to give first access of the tickets to our church body and so people will have to register to attend so we know how many people are coming. You will need to register to attend but we're going to make sure that you get some of the best seats in the house by virtue of being part of the hosting church.

So is that what you wanted me to say?

Nathaniel. I believe it is. Yes, that's quite an answer.

Don. I've already heard from people in Georgia, in West Virginia who want to come, who are begging me to make sure they can get registered so that they're able to do, and people coming from eight hours, five hours away, just for the opportunity. It's going to be a very very special night and you're not going to want to miss it.

The other thing and this is entirely a joke what I'm about to say, this is going to permanently elevate our average attendance on Tuesday evening in a very remarkable way. [audience laughter] So I'm excited to be able to meet with my pastor friends in the future, tell them what our average attendance is on Tuesday night.

Nathaniel. And it's May 17.

Don. May 17. May 17. So circle that date. No one is going to want to miss it. It's going to be a remarkable time.

Well, Nathaniel, let's wrap this up. Just closing thoughts from you in terms of where you're at, where the church is at and, you know, just give us a positive look forward as we wrap up our time here tonight.

Nathaniel. Sure. We are thrilled to be here and we're thrilled to be here and become and have become more thrilled to be here as we've gotten to know the body. And we have, I have, my family has great affection for you and a love for you and, you know, it's hard to communicate those kinds of affections but they are there. We do love you and we are very excited for what the Lord has ahead as together we serve Christ as we live for the glory of God and as we look forward to the reconciliation of all things in Christ. What better thing is there to anticipate than all things in Christ and knowing that that is what your heart is and that we're of one mind in that, it is thrilling. And so to come alongside of you to rejoice with those who rejoice, to weep with those who weep, to carry one another's burdens is a privilege and for the next 30 years, as God would be willing, I'm so thrilled for what the Lord has.

And Don has said a lot of very wonderful things that are very humbling but I would just say that the affection that he expressed toward me is mutual. I'm so thankful for you, my brother, and for the like-mindedness that we have, and the joy of seeing that work itself out over these first 12 months, as we've often expressed, has been even better than what we expected and we expected it to be really really good.

Don. Yeah, that's well said.

Nathaniel. And so this has been, this is thrilling and I can't wait to see what's ahead.

Don. Yeah, and as we're wrapping up this discussion in the mutual admiration society, Nathaniel, one of the things that, and I know that I speak for many in our congregation when I say what I'm about to say, one of the things that I genuinely appreciate about you, the nature of your ministry, comes out in your teaching, is your very gentle spirit. You preach with a smile which I don't do. [audience laughter] You preach with a smile, there's a gentleness about you that makes you very approachable. Your care for the flock is just evident in everything that you do, and for as much as your teaching and your oversight and, you know, your example, are a ministry to our church. The gentleness of your spirit points to the even greater gentleness of our Savior who said, "I'm gentle and humble in heart therefore you can come to Me." And you make that a living reality in the midst of us and we're all very grateful.

So let's give Nathaniel a hand. [applause]

So, Nathaniel, if you would, close us in prayer and then we'll have David come up and lead us in a closing hymn.

Nathaniel. All right.

Let's pray.

Father, God, we come before You with humble hearts tonight because of Your great love toward us expressed in Christ's death on our behalf while we were still sinners, and we cannot comprehend the greatness of divine love yet we're so thankful to be objects of it, we're so thankful to be in Christ. Thank You, Lord, for this body. Thank You for what You have raised up and are raising up and will continue to do. Thank You for each person, for each household. Thank You for the evident love for the Lord Jesus and the work of Your Spirit as You teach us to love Christ more and to love one another. And Lord, we pray that You would continue to bless the ministry here, that You would continue to bless each household. We pray that Your blessing would be evident as You convict us of sin and move us to repentance. and we find refreshment in Christ again and again. We pray that You would keep us faithful to the word of God and to exalting Christ as preeminent above all else.

Lord, I pray for Don and for Dane and Andrew and for me as we lead, that we would lead in the fear of God, and that we would lead out of a love for Christ and a love for Your church that was purchased with Your blood. We love You, we thank You, and we give, commit to carrying out this ministry as we seek to for the glory of God according to the word of God. And that's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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