

# Engage Q&A;

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Preacher: Nathan Gunter

[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Well, thank you all for coming back tonight.

! When Nathan and I were talking about what we could do in the evening, we thought it would be a good idea to do a Q&A; just to give you a better understanding of what Engage is, again, why we're doing it, and give you all an opportunity as well to ask any questions that you might have or make any comments that you might have. And so I have a handful of questions that I'm going to ask Nathan, and then there'll be time at the end for you to ask your questions as well.

But I want to begin by playing a video, if Lee has that queued up, and just to give you an idea, a visual idea of what Engage looks like. So let's watch that video.

Okay, so there you have a picture of what it looks like, and the one, I saw a lot of pictures there of a shoe giveaway, and that was a pretty amazing day. In fact, all those pictures at the beginning, that was all in one day. The shoe giveaway, the swimming pool that was rented out, and then the movie that played afterwards, and the food. I mean, it was just a wonderful day. It's great to see so many people come out, and you see that, wow, these people really need this service that we're providing, and we're doing it all in the name of Jesus Christ. So Nathan, first of all, I want to thank you again for your sermon today. I thought it was excellent. You covered a lot of scripture very well, and I don't think that anybody, after having heard that message, could come up with a legitimate argument as to why followers of Christ should not be going and doing the things that Christ called us to do. So I thought that that was a very good message. That was what you told me to do, right? Take away all the excuses.

You did a good job, and as part of that, you know, our goal as the missions team we were meeting, let's try to get, I think, 20 to 30. If we had 20 to 30 people sign up today, we were going to consider that to be a success. Well, we have 42 people signed up today from our church. Yeah, that's excellent.

[ 2 : 33 ] So you did it. Thank you. I didn't do it. Yeah, I know. First question. One thing that we didn't really cover this morning that people might want to, you know, are curious to find out, how did Engage get started? What was your initial vision for it, and has that changed in any way since then?

Sure. So Engage is the fruit of kind of some dreaming sessions that we started not long after I got to Lansing meeting with our leadership team and really just starting to try to build a picture of how are we going to reach our city? How are we going to make disciples and carry the gospel out there?

And I kind of carried the rough outline of this idea to our leadership team, and I drew in a lot of things from experiences that I'd had before. So as long as I've been in ministry, and even before that, when I was growing up as a student in a church near Wichita, I've always been involved in mission trips, partnering with other churches, helping them reach their communities. And a couple things we had in mind in particular was at my previous church, we had been up to a church in Winnipeg, Manitoba in Canada, you know, way up north, and had an incredible experience partnering with them to do some evangelistic outreach in their neighborhoods.

And before that, we had taken four churches, had partnered up, and we had gone out to Denver, Colorado, to work with a church there that was merging and relaunching and doing a new thing. But they had organized all kinds of different projects similar to what we do on Engage.

But one of the big takeaways I took from that was that's where the genius of the beautiful blue shirts came from. That was the church where they put all of us in the same shirt, and these shirts just said, who cares, right across the front of it. And the idea was for it to be a conversation starter, for people like, well, what's that all about? And say, well, who cares? And on the back, it said, we care.

[ 4 : 30 ] And it was a great way for them to connect that way. And so I kind of shared from that, and I said, guys, shared with our leadership, and said, guys, one of the big takeaways that every time I've gone on one of these trips, and we've done this kind of evangelistic or connection ministry, is

that inevitably when we come back, somebody on the team says, you know, we should do that in our town. That's the kind of stuff we should be doing anyway.

And so I sat with our leadership and said, guys, I think we can, and I think our people get involved with it. So the original vision, the first summer that we kicked this off in the summer of 2014, our plan was really similar to what you just said. Our leadership had planned a handful of projects, and we said, look, if we can get, if we can get 25 or 30 of our people to step out and do this, we had arranged for actually the church that I had partnered with previously in Winnipeg, they were planning on sending a team down of about 15 volunteers of their own. We thought, hey, we'll get, you know, we'll have 40 or 50 people. That's a nice crew. Like, that's visible. You can do some stuff. You can really make an impact going that way. And so we were pulling it all together, you know, planning the best that we knew how and getting things in line. And then God started changing the plans on us. So about three or four weeks before our engaged weekend, on a Monday morning, my phone rings, and it's Ray, who is the pastor up in Winnipeg, calls me up and says, well, Nathan, we need to talk. He said, I'll just get right to it. He said, some things have changed at the church. You know, he goes, I'm not going to drag you down in the details, but the short of it is, I'm not the pastor anymore, and the elders don't want to come and help. And we're three weeks out going, that was not part of the plan. That's a pretty big bump in the road. But we said, you know what, let's just, let's move forward with what we have and let's keep praying. Let's keep working this together. And what we found out was that we badly underestimated our people. We badly underestimated how much the church wanted to go out and represent Christ in the city. And what we ended up having, our church is, numerically, is about the same size as you all here at Highland Park. And we had about 75 to 80 volunteers just from Lansing First Southern the first time. And just, you know, where my vision was to start small and hoping that over the course of three, four, five years, this thing would build some momentum and really become an integral part of who we are as a church. It started with a bang and hasn't slowed down and has really become part of the DNA of our church from the very beginning. And so, if anything, my vision was too small and I underestimated the heart that God had given His people to get out and do what they felt God had called us to do.

When we first met and talked, you shared a story, kind of a hypothetical, you know, there's a girl or a teenager grows up in the community and then she goes off to college. And there in, you know, her secular university, go ahead, you know what I'm talking about. Yeah, yeah, we can share that story. [ 7 : 44 ] I remember having this conversation at lunch one day and painted this picture. So, a lot of you have seen different versions of this story that's kind of been passed around of a Christian student who goes off to state university in their freshman year. They take a philosophy class and a non-believing, sometimes atheistic professor challenges them and bad-mouthed Christians and, you know, how we're judgmental and narrow-minded and all of these things together and everything starts to pile on. And I said, I said, what I would love to see this develop as Engage becomes part of their normal experience in our church. And we talked about really what we wanted to see was Engage become something that's not just about Lansing First Southern, but we wanted partners in the community.

You know, we wanted this to be something that wasn't just our church, but this would be something that Christians in Leavenworth County would do and become so normal that Christians got out and flooded their city serving and sharing the gospel and showing up and caring about people that I said, what I would love to see is the day that a student from Leavenworth or a student from Lansing goes to the University of Kansas and sits in a class and hits this, you know, imaginative scenario where Christians are immediately bashed and we've got you've got a freshman who raises their hand and their reply is Look, I don't know what kind of Christians you're talking about, but Where I come from the Christians are amazing All they do is just turn out and serve the city and take care of people and care about them and And and said I and to have a student say I think you've got it all wrong because every the Christians where I come from Just aren't like that and that's a long-term vision. That's kind of a ways down the road But that's that's I would love to see a child grow up and come out of student ministry and have no idea that Christians are supposed to be understood as Uncaring or narrow-minded or you know Cloistered off from the community that we live in Amen So you're saying that my ku Jayhawks are just a bunch of heathens. Is that what you're I'm That's exactly what i'm saying That is a They do need prayer Lawrence, Kansas is not a bastion of righteousness. Let's just say that Yeah, it is a it is a a dark part of Kansas. That's for sure But they

play great basketball Number two except for yesterday Okay, all right Now this i'm supposed to be the moderator here. I'm the one asking in the questions and This is getting out of the record straight Question number number two Give us some testimonies about the impact that you've seen engage have on you On someone that you had in your church kim's here kim can share in a minute as well about her experience And what what impact have you seen it have on somebody who you encountered as a result of of engage one of the people that you've served?

Sure in the process yeah, yeah, there's I mean there's a lot of stories that we could tell from this i'm just All the experiences going through so i'll try to take them in order You said first of all something that's impacted me and and a big part of that Really has been the relationship that our church lansing for southern has developed with mike's old congregation calvary baptist and leavenworth and That has been an exciting thing that from the beginning we wanted we wanted partners We wanted this to become more than our church and God just really evidently pulled our congregations together and They were they were looking to connect with our city We were looking to share the gospel and really what i've seen as i've watched the two churches just Um the partnership has come together almost seamlessly And one of the things that god has impressed on me is how he has taken The strength of our church and paired it with the strength of calvary so um I don't know how much mike has told you but lansing and leavenworth it's a military community um fort leavenworth up there runs 1200 officers families through a graduate school every single year And so some of the best and brightest military leadership minds in the world are in leavenworth We've got majors and lieutenant colonels and colonels people who've spent an entire career Learning how to plan and lead and execute with incredible ability Um are in our church and so one of the strengths Um that we have at lansing Is uh, we have a lot of planners. We have a lot of people who can take a nugget of an idea and Bring it bring it, you know To fruition and do it with excellence. Um just do things really really well and so for us Moving from a vision to creating projects and connecting with the city and making that happen like that was something that we could do Well, um, but we have a lot of people in our church who came to faith Later in life as adults and don't have as much history Um, and one one part of that is maybe you're a little less comfortable on the personal evangelism side That's just for a lot of people. That's an awkward

[12:51] Uncomfortable thing is initiating that conversation Well, that was the strength of mike's church is he has a number of people there who are are very bold and very confident in confronting somebody and starting up a conversation and looking for a way to share the gospel. So, um, They were looking for someone to help them kind of pull the trigger and get things rolling as in terms of planning and execution We were looking for greater balance and and more boldness in sharing the gospel and the two churches came together And really have just fallen in step and not slowed down yet so that's um, that has been something that has impressed me is just seeing how um, god absolutely knew what our church needed what his church needed and brought them together In his timing in his perfect way. It's a fun reminder that we're not you know For as many bright ideas as we might have we're not in control of this thing God has a way of making it work out um that way um another story example of you talked about how Engage has impacted somebody Um, this will be both somebody in the church and somebody that we met through engage. Um, this is a couple that mike knows as well um, andy and ashley woods, they

Uh courtesy of the u.s army are no longer part of our church Um, because the army gives it and the army taketh away That's just kind of how they roll Uh, but we met uh, we met andy and their at that time two-year-old daughter naomi At our spring engage a little over three years ago Um three or four years ago And so one of our big events there is we rent an outdoor pavilion in downtown leavenworth and we do sunday morning worship there But we also bring in a group called chris cakes that does pancakes and does them with flair and flavor They're they're a lot of fun And so we do a free pancake feed with the worship service and family photos and a lot of things going on there And uh, andy's wife had seen an ad in the paper for this and was going to be out of town So she showed it to andy and said hey, this looks like something fun for you and naomi Why don't you guys?

Uh, why don't you go check that out on sunday morning? It'll just be a fun thing And uh, he came in and saw what was going on and got fired up and and actually ended up joining our church out of that They uh, they were both believers, but they had been in the lansing area Uh for a couple of years and had just not found a church to connect with had had had struggled to find a place to land and put in put down roots And uh, and so engage while our goal is to reach unreached people

We've also found it has been an effective way to reach Christians who have wandered away from a church home and need to be Reconnected with the body of Christ So so the woods plugged in and began growing growing and got excited about what God was doing And uh, and last year when the when the opening came up not only did they join us through engage But last year they became our engaged directors and uh, and just brought all of their enthusiasm and all of their talent and all All that God had poured into them and began pouring it back into our church and they were just

Um an amazing bright spot for us um walking through that Yeah, it's pretty that's pretty awesome testimony. You know a couple you meet through engage Comes into the church and then they're the ones who end up Leading it themselves and uh, that's pretty pretty awesome of what You know God is able to do through through this. I want to have Kim Come up and Kim give her perspective because I think a lot of times, you know And I'll hand you my microphone in a second. Oh good a lot of time. Um We think in things like this like the kids We need to push them to the side and you know and you know not acknowledge them We don't want to them to do anything embarrassing or whatever, but that's not the case with this So I want you to kind of explain that too And from your own perspective as well of what you've seen God do Um, yeah when we started engage Um, our son was three years old and so You have all these projects and that kind of thing and so you think how am I gonna take my three-year-old to do all of these projects?

Um, and that kind of thing thankfully God has allowed us to have a kid that is pretty go with the flow kind of thing, but um One of the things that we did was canvassing which is what y'all are gonna do So if you have small kids, it's perfect for them because you can get your little red wet wagon Bring a wagon and put them in and they're capable of putting flyers Um on the front doors of people's houses and um sometimes they actually are a good Conversation starter. Um some of them if they're not scared to talk our kid is a little shy, but um We packed him up. Um, we had that first engage we had taken Um neighborhoods with in areas of where we were going to do service and so we'd split ourselves up into different teams And so I think on our team it was myself and then a couple of other ladies who also had small kids And so we had a stroller and we had the wagon and the kids were just in it And they were so excited about running ahead and knocking on doors And we wouldn't let them knock on the doors until we were there for safety purposes, but Um, they were excited to do that. Um, you saw the pictures of the slushes at Sonic like

[17:55] The kids are super excited about that and thankfully we live in a community that the Sonic is very good to work with us Um, and they'll let us just hand out go hand out the slushes Um to the cars and that kind of thing and so we'll hand those to the kids we'll walk with them as they hand those slushes into um The cars of the people that the customers and then we get to hand them a business card and invite them To church or to have a conversation with them Um and that kind of thing So there is no one that is too small to be involved and engage Um, if you are breathing and you can move you can do something with engage Um, if you cannot move and you're breathing you can pray for engage and so you have A way that you can all be involved in the process of that Um, you know and some of it's just a matter of for Ethan Um, we had done engage for several years and just a couple of years ago Um in our church we do small groups or life groups we call them during the week and he one day

We have a creek that runs behind our church Um, and he was out there playing one day and he said dad I think I have an engage project that the kids of our life group can do and so we said, okay What is it? And he said well, I just noticed that there's trash in our creek or around there and I think we need to just clean that up and so When I was I think Saturday afternoon or Sunday afternoon after church All of the parents and kids from our life group they all came out and the kids They picked up all the trash along the creek and that was their engage project Um, and that kind of thing so everyone can be involved in doing engage and Um for me a story I guess of it. Um, one of the things we've done is also free oil change Um, we have a great part. Well, we've done it with two different I guess dealerships there in Lansing Leavenworth area, but um They've been great to work with and they'll give free oil change And so we basically have appointment cards that we hand out to people that we know to start conversations with them And so then they can call a number set up an appointment

Um to bring their car in and that kind of thing and so Um, I work in an elementary school in Leavenworth Um And so we and another lady the principal actually goes to our church And so we invited our secretary to have an oil free oil change Um and that kind of thing and so she did Um,

and out of that has been able to have some conversations her and I at school But then she also has come to like our community worship service that we've done and is very open Um, we're still working. I'm not positive exactly spiritually where she is So we're still working on those conversations, but I also would say if you are maybe um Hesitant to have those conversations to recognize that if you can take somebody from having no spiritual knowledge To a little bit of spiritual knowledge Maybe you didn't share the gospel with them But you got them thinking about the gospel or you got them thinking about jesus Then that's a celebration for that because they were not and now they are and there's maybe more conversations Um that can be had of that so For now Yeah, thanks That's good. Thank you for your perspective because uh As kim was talking I was reminding of a reminded of a church or a young couple at our uh, our church in leavenworth and You know, we're encouraging them to come to engage and they had two small kids and we're like Well, we got to find somebody to watch our kids that day or like no, you don't bring them with us And they just looked at me like I had a you know, like I was growing a third eye out of my foreheads Like yeah, we want them to come and we did some help with the nursing home We worked on a garden, but I mean they they had the greatest time and what a great way to teach our kids The importance of evangelism at such a young age, you know where they're they're just used to it They're they're getting equipped. They're learning how to share the gospel with people. They don't know and it's a great thing for the church uh moving forward and they love wearing the t-shirts is yeah Nathan and I were talking about they love something almost biblical something I think it's deuteronomy 6 says something about parents Modeling for kids and talking about what they believe is their living life and so parents don't underestimate the impact of your children serving elbow to elbow with you

Of them seeing you live out what you talk about at home on sunday morning It's a huge impact and it's a blessing for the church. It's one of the very few ministries that the entire church family can do um, you know regardless of age Everybody gets in and does it without limitation and that's that's just a neat picture of the body of christ at work Amen um So I know that you uh, you Expressed some this morning and I want you to elaborate more about the importance of consistency With doing something like engage that you know, you you you express this morning that yeah, we'll get some results, but You know to kind of temper those expectations, but really what's important with something like this is consistency So I wanted you to kind of elaborate on why that's so important. Yeah, really setting expectations is a big thing because um Because we're not in control this process because um God works in timing that we don't understand so I shared a second with you ago out the chute I

[ 23 : 08 ] Underestimated our congregation and their willingness and their desire to get involved and so they we outperformed on that side on the other side I would say we've not seen uh Phenomenal growth in the church because of this now initially we saw several people join and then Just because we live in a world where we can't control everything the army took away a bunch of families We're kind of right back where we started um, and so One of the things we want to understand is this is not a plug and play formula to suddenly triple your church That's and that's not the reason we do this if god blesses with a lot of new families and a lot of salvations We are going to celebrate i'm going to celebrate with you guys I would love to see just a huge, you know boost in the arm right away out of that uh But there's also a whole lot to be celebrated and a whole lot to be affirmed For faithfully showing up over and over again and convincing your community That god is doing something real and lasting in this congregation um

It's it's really easy and and I would say I don't know if bartlesville is a lot like lansing leavenworth this way But where we are Um, it's not uncommon people aren't necessarily shocked to see what what I call paratrooper ministry Or a paratrooper event where a church organization Drops in does a huge blowout event one huge thing all in one day and then they're gone and never heard from again Uh, but it's different when you show up and you make a huge impact and a big splash And then a few months later you show up and do it again And then a few months later you show up and do it again And then a few months later and and eventually what ends up happening is people get in their minds that these people are serious about this They actually care about us They actually want to get involved in our lives and i'll give you an example of this story I shared with mike Um, one of the projects that we do that you guys are doing also is the hot dogs at the soccer field We call it soccer and brats because we do hot dogs for the kids, but the men want Brats and so we we put there you go

Amen, right? All right, so we we call it soccer and brats and we've done that Um fall and spring soccer seasons for more than three years now Um, we show up they see the bright blue shirts. They know what they know it's free Um, they know it's fun. They know we've got extra activities frisbees and kites and stuff like that for You know the siblings who aren't on the soccer field and don't care about watching a soccer game We've got a way to engage them as well Um, so we've got to where the point where people are kind of looking forward to that which led up to an experience I had last fall Um as we're getting ready for the season to start our our six-year-old son has played for the same soccer coach for several years And uh one saturday morning we we had finished practice and ethan and I were walking out to the car And uh, his coach came up behind us and hey, nathan. Do you do you have a second?

I want to ask you a couple of questions And I said, yeah, yeah, go ahead. Sure, um, ethan go play for a second He walked me said like all right. I got I got two questions for you. He said number one. Are you guys doing brats again?

I said, yes, we are here's the date. We'll be there Lock it in he said, all right He said I love that you guys do that. He said number two. He said Um, I don't know exactly how to ask this one. So here's what i'll explain he said um, i've never really been in church or religious or anything like that and neither has my wife Uh, but we've got we've got some little girls starting to grow up and we've started talking to each other and saying, you know Um That seems like important stuff and maybe we need to get something figured out. So he said Could you just share with me? Um What does your church believe?

[ 26 : 50 ] Um, and is it okay if we visit? I said yeah Yeah, we can talk about that Um, it was an incredible thing and that's another an ongoing conversation where they're asking he's asking questions about the gospel now And how does that look to give your life to jesus and to begin following but here's what I would share this guy?

He's a former he's a navy man. He's a former sailor Um, you know, he he's uh, he's a laborer with his hands He's a blue collar guy just a good guy through and through Um, he wasn't gonna he's not going to ask just anybody that question We had to earn his trust And for that it took showing up he had to see that team there!

Several times and be convinced that we were the real thing So that when the conversation came up in his home for him and his wife, it was a no-brainer I know What pastor and what church?

I want to take my questions to because they're the ones that have been showing up and proving that they care about us Um That's why engage is not a one-time thing. That's why you can't measure the effectiveness of engage By going out for one day and seeing how many people Come in because you've got neighbors around here Who they're gonna watch they're gonna watch you once but they're gonna watch and see if you come back And it's good. They're gonna have to be persuaded over time That you mean this That you believe what you say you believe and you care about them the way that you say you care about them But if you're faithful and consistent you will change those people who need time to warm up to the gospel Amen I was uh thinking of another conversation I had with a lady and uh She had some kind of event that she wanted but she she wanted she asked how do I get the blue shirt people there?

Nice Because you know, they just associate that and I was like, well, what's the event? You know, we had you develop a reputation And it's and it's a good reputation to have that takes consistency The more they see it out there. That's why we want to wear in our case It'll be the red shirts and uh eventually will I think adapt Uh that engaged logo with that shirt as well But the more they see it the more they put that together The more consistent you are The more of an impact that we have so We were having the conversation in the lobby earlier We've had I think some people from your church too, but i've had people in my church tell me they wore that They just wear their engaged shirts out and about and they've been they've worn them to walmart and had people chase them down in the aisle and say You're part of those blue shirt people. Yeah, we love you guys That's such a cool thing that you do and so once again that takes that takes showing up a few times, but uh, but it makes an impact People notice and it's a good thing. Amen. Amen Uh, so you've given us a lot of encouragement This morning you gave us a lot of encouragement Uh this evening and the testimonies you've shared

[ 29 : 46 ] But if there's still somebody who's on the fence and they've heard the incur they've seen from god's word This is something they should do They've heard the testimonies and they know that this is something that they should they should do But they're still hesitant Uh, they still haven't

signed up. They're still concerned what more encouragement could you offer um to them A couple things come to mind the first one We do we talked about this beforehand. I said I said go home and pray about it tonight And then tomorrow morning get on your church website and look up the sermon from this morning And listen again, uh, but more practically than that, um, because it can be especially if it's way outside your comfort zone It's an incur and it can be an intimidating thing. Um, here's the practical advice I would give to you find a battle buddy Find somebody who will sign up with you Um, if it really is a matter of just saying I just I feel anxious about this and I know I should Uh, and I want to want to but i'm just a little bit hesitant

Find somebody else somebody who's here tonight Um, or somebody else who tends on a regular basis and and just say I want to do this, but I need someone to do it with me Will you sign up with me and go out go out two by two?

There's something in the bible about that too. I think you can look it up. You're the pastor Um, but Well, that's something we We talked about as well is uh, not only is there The benefit of Being obedient to god and going as you're supposed to but also When you're doing this with your church family There's a bond that you develop with them that you otherwise wouldn't I mean There's just something about you know, like you said being in battle Uh with one another side by side working together for the same Uh good for the same goal and you get to know the people in your church better and you get to know them in a way that Otherwise, you maybe not wouldn't have known them Uh otherwise Uh, so one of the things that we've talked about as well is that this is not something that's meant to be for one church Only so, you know in lansing You found a partner in calvary and and potentially some others and here in bartlesville We're looking to do the same thing Uh, this isn't something that we just want to keep to ourselves We want to eventually have a greater impact And the greater our impact will be is by incorporating other churches As well So my question to you is what are What should we look for In a partner church?

What are the the non-negotiable things the things that are essential? What are some things that maybe we think are essential but really Maybe aren't so much You know, that's That is a big part of this is us wanting to see that Um for us engage is not just about lansing first southern we pray that as it takes root here In at highland park that it would not be just highland park, but Um, you know a big part of our heartbeat as southern baptists really from the beginning of southern baptist. We've been a kingdom cooperating people Uh, we've understood that in every circumstance We make a bet a bigger impact for the kingdom when we work together with sister churches Than when we try to go it alone and uh That's I I love that prospect. I love what that can grow into But it does take just some wisdom and some carefulness because you want to understand What you desire you know what you desire to see god do through this um, one of the things that we've had as a continuous conversation with

[ 33 : 27 ] Even at lansing Is that engage can't be allowed to um, to whittle itself down to just Uh, what some people call random acts of kindness or Just showing god's love in tangible ways that if we're going to be a kingdom people We want to reach out we want to serve we want to extend a hand of mercy But we also have to extend a word of grace at the same time There has to be that gospel witness and so that's that's probably the priority Uh criteria that I would look for in a an engaged partner Is a church that wants to reach people with the gospel not just a church Who's looking for an opportunity to do kind deeds?

Um, there's nothing wrong with doing kind deeds we we could all we can always use more of those but My conviction and our church's conviction is that um Kind deeds are not going to change anyone's eternity You know Ultimately the deep need that people have and and for lost People they may not always feel this, you know They may tell you what I need is a pair of shoes to go back to school What I need is a meal what I need is someone to help me fix my house And those are all good things and they're all good things we've done through engage but ultimately what they need is To have their sins forgiven What they need is to be restored to the god who created them What they need is eternal life and We have that message And so that's that's really the primary thing I would look for is is a church that says um, are are we willing to work together as equals?

And are we committed to giving the good news of salvation in jesus christ to people as we go? We don't want to be abrasive about it. You know, we're not going to thump anybody over the heads, but we're looking for conversations We're looking for people who god has prepared to hear the gospel and we want to go ready to share with them So we've talked a little bit about how How consistency is important how we can't necessarily?

uh measure our success off the first one if we have you know 50 people all of a sudden start coming to church as a result? That'd be great As a result that'd be great But maybe not something that we should expect right off the bat But what are some kind of measurable? uh things that we can measure to determine whether or not we've had a successful engage event? That's a huge question that's been an ongoing challenge for us and engage um You you all understand this what the nature of evangelistic work is uh You can't make a decision for people You can't make them believe um that that there are parts of this that are just out of our control And so if we want to say that engage is successful if 15 people get baptized um You might see that you might have an incredible party and celebration But you might do engage four times and not have anybody get saved That doesn't necessarily mean that you don't have things to celebrate and so um at lansing Two things that that i've found myself repeating over and over and over to the church from the beginning um is you know What is engage and what are we trying to accomplish?

[ 36 : 55 ] And so we say what is engage the phrase that I use all the time is it engages our all church all hands on deck ministry outreach To the cities of lansing and leavenworth It's everybody in the church all together getting outside the four walls of our church To go meet our neighbors where they're living And the second part of that is we talk all the time about we are trying to create conversations That wouldn't happen if we didn't go So lansing um lansing leavenworth is in a lot of ways unique community But lansing especially is it's a bedroom community and by that. I mean people Sleep in lansing and they send their kids to school in lansing And that's it They work in kansas city or they work on fort leavenworth Um, there's no downtown in lansing. There's no coffee shop. There's no gathering places Um people get up in the morning get in their car back, you know Open the garage door back out drive to work come back pull back in the garage Close the garage door and go back in the house and oftentimes never step foot on their front lawn

If they go outside it's into their privacy fence back Privacy fenced backyard where they don't have to see their neighbors They don't have to talk like we have lives that are constructed to avoid interacting with other people That makes it really hard to share the gospel To the point where if somebody knocks on your door in 2018 You wonder of what they're trying to sell you and wish they would go away um That that's made it more difficult So part of our motivation and engage has been saying guys We're gonna have to go out of our way to create conversations with people because it's not happening. Otherwise we're gonna have to plan it We're gonna have to inconvenience ourselves and we're gonna have to go find people where they're living That's why we're at the soccer fields because that's one of the few places that people in lansing congregate So when we started talking about okay, well now what does success look like?

If we've said we're out there to create conversations the results are up to god the conversions are up to god But we can be faithful and we can talk about that so we can we can measure things like How many people in our church took the simple step of faith to sign up and show up? And we want to celebrate every person who sees the value in this and says I want to be a part of what god is doing in my church And so i'm going to be a part of engage that's a good thing. We can measure that and we can celebrate that um, but one of the new steps that we're implementing even just this year is uh, we want to start keeping track of our conversations if if we're saying we're out here creating conversations that wouldn't happen Otherwise, uh, we want to know when that's happened and we want to celebrate that as a church. So, um I'll share this with you all if you want to use it great if not We're going to give it a try this year, but we're tracking two different kinds of conversations We call them engaging conversations and gospel conversations um engaging conversations are simply You stepped up and you tried It means if you're serving at the soccer field or you're volunteering at the nursing home or your whatever project you're involved in Um, you see someone and you have decided in your mind you're going to approach this individual With the intention of having a conversation about your faith

Now it might turn out that that person wants nothing to do with that You start the conversation and you know what? I want your hot dog and I don't want your jesus and you know You might get cold shut down like that. I pray that doesn't happen, but it's a possibility Somebody might just want nothing to do with that. That's okay. It's all right Or you might find somebody who you know just wants to kind of brush you off and say well, I you know I grew up in church. I grew up catholic is a common thing in in the lansing leavenworth area, you know Oh, i'm catholic. I grew up catholic and you know, and they kind of use that as a dismissal thing. Here's the deal If that's not natural to you to approach somebody To want to share your faith to want to talk about jesus if you worked up the

boldness to Approach them with this in your heart that I want to talk about Jesus Regardless of how that person responds We want to celebrate that because you were obedient You stepped out in faith and that's a big deal and and that's a good thing

[ 41 : 13 ] We want to see more of that. So those are engaging conversations. I made it a point to engage somebody and my desire was to share Jesus Whatever direction that conversation went. That's a good thing And then kind of the next level of that is the gospel conversation That's not only did I engage somebody but I got to have I got to explain The good news of Jesus to the point that this person had an opportunity to respond Whether that was an invitation to bow their head and pray and receive Christ on the spot Or whether you left a more open-ended conversation and said well, this is what we believe as Christians Do you believe that or what do you think about that and you you kind of extended in conversation?

But they had a chance to hear enough to respond That's that's huge That is phenomenal. I mean that that's planting the gospel in somebody's heart and giving the spirit of God a chance to do the work and draw Them in and so you know little some of those are little things some of those are big things but all together um That that's understanding that conversion is out of our hands That's understanding that other people's reactions are out of our hands But we can be obedient to show up We can be obedient to engage people And we can be obedient to speak the gospel and to be equipped to do that So those are three things that as a church if you keep track of those and as time goes on You're seeing more people showing up more people starting conversations and more people explaining the gospel guys that is that's a that's a picture of a healthy church Regardless of how many people attend on Sunday morning That's a picture of a vibrant healthy church that is following Jesus and the mission that he's given us and it's worth celebrating amen

Absolutely We got about 10 minutes a little under that So plenty of time for you guys to ask any questions that you might have any comments um There's no such thing as a stupid question, right?

So go ahead and ask it if I don't have the answer. I'm sure Nathan does at least I hope so uh, do you have a do you have a mic dan? Yes Good question That's a great question and before I answer I'm going to point out I love that you asked this because this is something I feel like God's been laying on my heart for the last year is that um With the boomer generation just beginning to retire I honestly believe that in the next 10 to 15 years You're going to find the age 70 and up population is going to be the new mission field in America You're going to have a whole lot of people with time on their hands to think about to think about spiritual matters and I think as churches we need to recognize that there are people we can reach the gospel Not just we we've always targeted young folks, but that's that's a great question um, but I would start simply by

It starts with a conversation that shows that I'm interested in who you are um, there's an outline that uh, Daryl Robinson has a book called um something about Jesus blanking on in a moment it's not actually called something about Jesus, but it's um That sounds like a good book title though. It should be something about Jesus. That would be a good one Uh, but he's he's got a great book on personal evangelism He he gave an outline that I memorized a long time ago. It's easy to hold on to Um, it's called firm firm and it's a he uses it as a really simple conversation guide Um to build rapport with somebody says the f stands for family You can ask anybody about their family ask them about their kids ask them where they're from just let them talk about themselves And and not just let them talk but actually listen actually should actually you have to actually care about them But you start that conversation and then you can quickly transition from family to interests Um, or some people use the o and call it form and ask about occupation to ask about what do they like to do?

[ 45 : 18 ] You know, what do you do to keep yourself busy? What kind of things are you involved in and see if you have like interest that you can kind of chat about for a while And then he talks about turning the conversation Um to the r stands for religion. He says sometimes you can ask a uh a non-threatening religious question something something as simple as um, hey, do you have a church family or do you have a church that you attend on Sundays or?

um, you know Or or just you know, do you Have you ever been A church going type of person? Um, that gives them the opportunity uh to Kind of lean in to the conversation spiritually Or if they're cool to kind of shut it down without it getting more personal than they're ready for But if they start saying well, you know, I you know, I I my mom and dad took me to church when I grew up But I really haven't done that in years um, or or they might say something like, you know Uh, I don't right now, but I've kind of thought for a while that I should um, they can respond any way they want but you

kind of warmed it up a little bit and then you simply You get to the m which stands for the message And I think the simplest way to get to that is is just to ask permission to share You know say well as part of engaging, you know, we're out here Um, we're out here because we want to we want to talk to people About what jesus has done for us Would it be okay with you if I shared you what with you what jesus has done in my life?

Would it be okay if I shared that story with you right now? And once again, you you've put the ball in their hands, you know, they they can give you permission Or they can shut it down. You're not force feeding anybody But you just you have a conversation treat them like a person and just see Where their heart is at that point Yeah, I have uh, my neighbor Uh, not the one that i've been talking about the one on the other side. He's uh I think he's in his 90s and I'm not sure where he's at spiritually. I don't know whether or not he's a christian But we've had an opportunity to talk to him Um and to get to know him and he definitely has a lot of time on his hand He's a widower and uh, so whenever he is outside One of one of the projects he's been working on is he's got this really nice Street lamp that's in our uh It's like right on the line of our property and that's one of the things that he asked us Danny and I were kind of playing a game who can get to meet our neighbors the fastest and she's usually better at it than me So one day I saw him getting his mail and I ran over to him and then Uh from there So that's what i'm trying to say is just approaching him With a desire to talk to him with that like nathan said I want to share jesus with this man And so that means i'm going to step outside of my comfort zone which Involved me running over to him, you know, and he probably was like who's this young guy's going to attack me my neighbor's weird Uh, but he you know, he did it and then he told me this whole story about this light And how the previous owners they didn't they didn't like him to shine it because it shined in through the Window and so, you know, he asked if I was okay if you lit it back up at night And I said sure that's fine, you know, because that's another thing. It's just like I You know, I care about you as a person and you know if that light shines in the window just a little bit Which is not a big problem, but so anyhow to get to what i'm trying to say is he's trying to work on it And so danny was calling me because he's this this light is over 100 pounds and he's he's not a big man, and so he had it upside down Trying to work on it and danny's calling me, you know, hurry up and get home so you can help, uh holbert with his light And so by the time I got there, he had already somehow this man is strong He had lifted it back up, but he needs to put it back down to work on it. And so I have no idea about Those kinds of light fixtures or any light fixture for that matter I know how to change light bulbs for the most part, but i'm going to go help him and so and for the the purpose purely of because you know, I want to I want to I want to know where he's at spiritually and I want him to know jesus so I think no matter who How old they are?

[ 49 : 21 ] Um, if your desire is to share the gospel with somebody and god puts that person on your heart and You know find find reasons to do it Uh, you didn't step outside of your comfort zone. So that's a good question. Yeah, that's a really good question Wes I have a question and then uh two ideas that came you told us to think about stuff one are you doing this?

Uh, you said you keep going up back out again You talking like four times a year every quarter kind of thing We have done it Since we started we've done it three times a year. We've done spring summer and fall Now as a smaller church one of the adjustments that we're making this year is we're actually Dialing it back um to two times a year because we found out that the the planning process can be exhausting um, when you do Spring summer and fall planning begins at the beginning of february and it wraps up in november and it never lets up in between then um As a smaller church, I think that you can do it three times a year when you get Two or three fully engaged partners and so one of the things we're doing at calvary this year Is uh, we're we're grateful to have them Shouldering some of the load so for our spring engage mike's old church calvary They're taking the point on planning everything and we're kind of going along for the ride when it gets to summer We'll switch back and we'll take the point and they'll come along again And so that that helps share the burden a little bit It's its going to be a little easier on us this year Um, that really is something just as a leadership team to decide together and you know What can we handle that we can do joyfully, you know Be willing to sacrifice if god calls you to it, but you know, but we also we we want to be sensitive not to just leave everybody exhausted all the time uh, the other thing I wanted to kind of suggest is people that uh, may not be able to get out and about or they're a little bit um Nervous about it, whatever. Uh, kim had already kind of scooped me on it, but uh, We didn't have a list out there people actually Committing and signing up to be on a prayer

team that might even just meet at the church Our part on the 31st we're all going to get together and we're going to pray we do it for the services and stuff like that I think it'd be a great way to get people to Be part of the team not just well, I can't do any of that stuff So i'm not going to do anything to commit to coming in and just praying with a group of people And then the other idea I had you're talking about keeping track of your um, uh conversations and maybe do something like a Thermometer kind of thing and or that we can just on a honor system come in you can check off I've talked to three people this week check check check and so we can all see the Physically the progress and like hey all of a sudden now we're getting people coming in too, you know Or souls are being saved whatever that that might just be kind of a neat way to uh monitor What we're doing and kind of encourage people to it's like it's still sitting in three conversations it's been three weeks Like I guess maybe it's time for me to get up and do something Yep, I'm a little bit nervous about doing this okay Are there any other questions it's uh, we're almost past 6 30 and I don't want to make dan mad because you know Part of the switch was choir practice would be able to start at 6 30 But we want to make sure if there's any questions Yeah, that that's the key you know that that question that's funny You mentioned it ties in with engage it was it was a part of a conversation I had with some of our leaders

I mentioned that as enrichment last week and they were talking about, you know Constantly asked by family of going missionaries, you know, why do we send people to places where? You know, they could lose their life for sharing jesus where they could face diseases and Hardship and all the and separated from their families by thousands of miles and and I heard one of our leaders answer And it's the same question that I would pull back on us when we're asked when we're looking at going out to engage our cities And the only question you have to answer is is jesus worth it?

[ 53 : 24 ] Is jesus worth the inconvenience is jesus worth the fatigue is jesus worth the discomfort? And I think most of us when when we take just a moment to be halfway honest with our heart The answers are resounding. Yes. Yes. He is worth it Yes, he is worth everything we can give and infinitely more and we will we will never regret Stepping out in faith to serve our lord Amen. Amen Uh, thank you guys. Thank you nathan for coming kim. Thank you Uh, we know that, you know Pulled you away for your from your son for a couple days, but we're so glad to have had you down here Thank you for the message you've shared this morning and for uh, you know coming here again this evening and and uh, just Being even more clear with us about what engages about I think, uh, you know I speak for our church that we're excited and we're looking forward to what god's going to do and Uh, so so so thank you for Uh coming and so let's uh, thank them for being here and then we'll close in prayer

Thank you I'll pray all right, let's pray lord god Thank you so much for This opportunity that we've had to come together together again and to uh, talk about Uh, how great it is to serve you Uh lord, it's it's frightening and it's scary at times Uh to put ourselves out there to step outside of our comfort zone lord, but when we do so uh, when we Go with the purpose that we want to talk to somebody about you lord, it's just There's nothing like it. There's there's no greater thrill. There's no there's no greater thing worth doing spending our time Doing than talking to people about how wonderful you are And so god we pray that uh for our church as we prepare for engage for for lansing and leavenworth up there as they prepare as well uh, that you would lead us to people who Um need to hear this good news lord that that there would be a lot of fruit that results from it and uh god We pray that all of it would be to glorify your name and uh lord We we thank you again for Nathan and for kim uh coming to visit with us We pray that they would have a safe trip back home Thank you lord for uh the good things that you are doing through them and uh god we love you We thank you that you uh Give us the opportunity to be your hands and your feet into a world of desperate need of uh of Of seeing Uh of hearing the good news of jesus christ in his name. We pray. Amen Oh Thank you.