

I want to thank Greg, Larry, Loren, Sandy and Tim for graciously and freely allowing us to share our hearts and read our thoughts to you this morning.

To Tim, a kindred spirit. Thank you—for the gifting me by leading us in the powerful songs we have sung this morning. Being able to share them, hearts joined together, is BETTER than cake.

I want to assure you, my FBC family, Raleigh and I are not retiring. In our opinion, we do not need to rest, we do not need a refreshment, or a re-evaluation of our calling. But we do need to number our days—to make each day count, to walk each day in honesty and with purpose, for none of us know how many days we have. We are heartbroken to step away from our relationships with you the people of FBC with whom we have done life for so long. However, we have come to two forks in the road with our bothers in leadership. A divergence that, in spite of many group meetings, many personal meetings; months of diligent discussions and debates, and many days spent in prayer, Raleigh and I are led to our decision to step away from our roles in leadership at FBC. My hope would be you would understand that this divergence between us and the current leadership is not a recent issue that has “built up” without any communication.

The two “Forks” in the road relate first to the communication of truth. It is in our opinion, that truth has for some time, been held back and misrepresented to the people of FBC to accomplish unspoken agendas. We feel that this is more than simply poor communication.

The second “fork in the road” of divergence, in our opinion, is one of a difference in actions taken and choices made based upon governing values. We do not see these actions taken and choices made as simply differences in priorities. The divergence is due to difference in governing Values, not priorities.

Since our arrival at FBC in 2002, Raleigh and I have taken seriously our responsibility to sacrifice, serve and do what is best for this beloved family of FBC. However, in the current situation, we no longer feel we can accomplish that goal and calling.

In this time of sadness, the verse, “Give thanks in ALL things for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” is instructive to me. So as I leave, with great sadness, I begin to curate a list of thanks. Your faithful financial support of us over the years, the many wild, risky and adventurous opportunities you joined in with us; the crazy ways we have served God together as part of “the pirate church.” What an opportunity!

It is nothing less than a gift of grace that for 23 years God has given me the opportunity to fulfill His great commission with you as a family, through you, TOGETHER on mission. What has been this great commission? the charge? the challenge? To Go into Jerusalem, Judea & Samaria, and all the world:

So To my Jerusalem, right here within our family called FBC, I am thankful. Teaching your kids, middle schoolers and youth is a privilege and honor I have not taken lightly. Rejoicing in the unexpected gift of living long enough to even teach your kids’ kids. That is nothing short of God’s gracious, undeserved gift. Celebrating baptisms, prayers of “sending” to those taking Free Grace and Missionality to far away places; celebrating births, marriages, and grieving together at funerals and memorial services. Potlucks, bible bunko, dance parties; Awana; Thanksgiving leftovers, candlelight services; wedding showers, superbowl parties; famines, prayer meetings, block parties; backyard Bible clubs, etc. . . . the list goes on. Humility and dependence upon God has been learned together as we have shared life. We have become more like Christ as we have walked together these decades. I am sure this list will grow even longer in the days ahead. To my Jerusalem, the people of FBC--Thank you.

And then To my Judea & Samaria, the world Jesus loves just out “there” on the other side of our walls and windows I am thankful for so many “trips” to “out there”. You, as my family, entrusted me with the exciting opportunity to serve as host for our family’s Nevada building; to schedule, facilitate and serve over 30+ groups from our community. Kingdom partners who “got Jesus” and those who “don’t got Jesus” From One Challenge Missionaries and a myriad of Bible study students, to unbelieving Hindus who got to see what the grace of the one true God looks like when it wears skin and bones. Munchkin markets, biker church, PPA, Healing Journey, Community Bible Study all serving the world just

“out there.” Who tears down a fence to build a sidewalk to better reach our neighbors? . . . FBC does.

In addition, partnering for 20 years with a majority of the nonprofits in our community, through Mission Survivor, you allowed and gifted me with the opportunity to be a “face” of FBC to those people. Your missional vision opened wide the doors to the world God loves in our Community, in our Judea and Samaria. Thank you.

And then for sending me to the “ends of the earth”—I am thankful. FBC has become a haven for so many over the years whose hearts burn with the passion for overseas, international ministry. This community of people whose eyes see into the hearts of those living “in the uttermost parts of the earth” has been a source of pure delight for me personally. To walk alongside those, to be included in a group of people who have “sold it all, to invest in what does not pay back in this earthly life” has been a truly priceless gift. Over the years, FBC has served as a “home away from a home” for those transitioning between “here” and “out there.” And, for me personally, to have opportunity to share with so many the trials, the amusing anecdotes, sharing homesickness for faraway lands of risk and adventures has been a great, great gift. Thank you.

So I leave with a heart full of gratitude. Thank you, for faithfully supporting me, with the totally undeserved gift of going to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth, through this family that is FBC. You have demonstrated with finances, time and energy—that where one’s heart is, that’s where their treasure will be. With all my heart I believe the church does not exist for those within its walls—but for the world “out there” the world God loves. With all my heart, I believe you can’t go to church—but you ARE the church. And because of these beliefs it is a great grief for me that I no longer feel, with the continuing and increasing “forks in the road” between Raleigh and I and FBC’s leadership, I can continue to express and live out my personal calling and passion for daring, missional living.

Elisabeth Elliott shares great advice when determining God’s will, His leading and His calling, she simply states: “Do the next thing”. I am convinced God has a “next crazy Raleigh & Mary thing,” a next “launching of the rocket ship of faith into the unknown” a new “hey!--there is a pirate ship of adventure” waiting just

on the horizon. So we, with a sad, yet so very grateful look over our shoulder towards you as our FBC family, excitedly walk away from our roles as leaders and walk forward into the mystery of God's will. With passionate hearts and a strong call to trust God for His provision, we walk toward "that next wild and risky thing."