

# **Welcome to Kev's on-line eGroup**

**The e-Glue that helps with the glitter**

**Part 1: Detailed sermon notes**

**Part 2: eGroup study questions**

### Here Comes Church – “In the know”

- Interested in serving at Elevation Church: See: [www.elevationchurch.cc](http://www.elevationchurch.cc)
- Please consider joining an eGroup (small group) so you don't have to walk this walk alone – See [www.elevationchurch.cc](http://www.elevationchurch.cc). The “e” stands for empowerment - because getting the instructions from God without having the empowerment to live them out will frustrate you. These groups are our way of putting some very wonderful people in front of you feed you spiritually.
- Stay out of “isolation silos” - you are an easy target for the enemy – and you don't have the benefit of friends to support you. Embrace the power of numbers.
- Interested in leading an eGroup? See: [www.elevationchurch.cc](http://www.elevationchurch.cc)
- Don't over-think it – Invite someone to church – “Who do you know that is close to you that is far from God?”
- What are your Gr8ful eight?
- Elevation Nights 2025: Elevation Nights is coming your way soon - Fort Worth - Tulsa Oklahoma - Pennsylvania - Toronto - Detroit - Hartford Connecticut – Newark NJ - Washington DC – The dates are February 25th through March 6th.
- K-Love and Elevation Workshop at Red Rocks in CO in August 2025
- Two new YouTube recordings coming shortly: “I Know a Name” and “God Did” on 2/14/2025
- Also, two songs getting released in wherever you stream music: Sons of Sunday coming on Friday, Jan. 17, 2025.
- End of year offering exceeded \$10M to help the world and preach Jesus. Opening new permanent campuses in Greenville SC, Raleigh, NC, uptown Charlotte.

Philippians 1:18-26 - Paul is torn

Paul's Chains Advance the Gospel

12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters,[b] that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard[c] and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16 The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.[d] 20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Numbers 13:27-28 - The Israelites are torn

Report on the Exploration

26 They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. 28 But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan."

30 Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

31 But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." 32 And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. 33 We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

And from his fullness, we have all received” - John chapter 1, verse 16: additional commentary by Charles Spurgeon: “There is a fullness of blessings of every sort and shape; a fullness of grace to pardon, of grace to regenerate, of grace to sanctify, of grace to preserve, and of grace to perfect. There is a fullness at all times; a fullness of comfort and affliction, a fullness of guidance and prosperity. Come believer, and get all of your needs supplied; ask largely in your receive largely, for this fullness is exhaustible and is treasured up where all the needy may reach it, even in Jesus - Emmanuel God is with us.

Closing Prayer #1 by Pastor Furtick on 1/26/2025: “Paul does just the opposite. In the moment of uncertainty, he says, "I'm not going back anywhere. I'm going forward, and I'm going to focus on what's right in front of me at this moment. I'm letting go of what I can't control." There is somebody in here who is being pulled back, dragged back, tempted back, distracted back. The word of the Lord is "Forward, not far." This is going to be a step-by-step miracle. This is going to be a breath-by-breath miracle. This is going to be a day-by-day, moment-by-moment miracle. God is doing it in your life, just so long as you know you can stretch your head forward in faith. You can only see three feet, but you can make the whole trip that way. I came to tell somebody, "You're closer than you think you are." You cannot go back now. Listen to me. You have come too far. Do you hear me? You have come too far to forfeit this. After all he's done, after all you've seen, after all he brought you through, don't you want to run on and see what the end is going to be?”

Closing Prayer #2 by Pastor Furtick on 1/26/2025: “Father, I thank you for your prevailing Word. All flesh is like the grass of the field. It pales and withers and fades and dies, but the Word of the Lord stands forever. God, I thank you for the great faith of the apostle Paul, who gives us a picture today of what it means to be in a space that never would have been his choice, but I thank you, Lord, that he gave us a picture of what to do when the situation that is surrounding us does not correspond to the promise that is inside of us. "I'm stretching forward. If all I can stretch forward is my head, I stretch my head forward. If all I can stretch forward is a weak prayer, I stretch that forward too, because I know you did not bring me this far to leave me." I thank you, God, that you do have plans, a hope, a future, for each and every one you sent me to minister to today. I thank you that this week they're going to get your glasses. I pray that when we're all alone in the secrecy of our own self-sabotage and the thoughts we think that torment us, you would give us your glasses so we would go forward and realize that you are not far. Thank you for drawing near to us today, God. It's amazing how you meet with us. Thank you for the promise that when we draw near to you, you will draw near to us, and if we humble ourselves under your mighty hand, you'll lift us up in due time. I pray for each person today who is experiencing a prison sentence of sorts. I pray they would not have clarity but they would trust in God.”

# **Part 1: Detailed sermon notes**

# Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Sermon notes "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

## Sermon Highlights

- It's important to always have something to look forward to.
- You need a better because.
- Sometimes, God won't give you the conclusion, He'll just give you courage.
- It's ok not to know.
- You don't need clarity to trust God. Your future is not certain, and your hope is Christ.
- When you are torn between what's easy and what's needed, let your purpose pull you forward.
- It's dangerous to not look forward. It's just as dangerous to look too far forward – Look forward, not far.
- The presence of God is good enough to keep me out of these chains today.
- Sometimes, God gives you a taste of what tomorrow could taste like. You are closer than you think.

## Scriptures

- Philippians 1:18-26 - Paul is torn.
- Numbers 13:27-28 - The Israelites are torn.

## Sermon Discussion

- "It's dangerous to not look forward. It's just as dangerous to look too far forward – Look forward, not far." Where in your life have you been looking too far ahead? What's one step right in front of you that you can take this week to keep heading in that direction?
- "When you are torn between what's easy and what's needed, let your purpose pull you forward." Where in your life are you tempted to take the easy route instead of what's necessary for God's purpose, and what is something you can look forward to so that you can stay focused?
- "Sometimes God won't give you the conclusion; He will just give you courage." Share a time you had to trust God with something without knowing what the outcome would be. How did that experience shape your faith?
- "You don't need clarity to trust God. Your future is not certain, and your hope is Christ." Where are you facing uncertainty right now, but will continue to trust God will see you through?

Prayer Prompt: Pray that we develop a deeper trust in God's plan and purposes, even in the midst of uncertainty, for the courage to make necessary decisions, even when they are difficult, and for a renewed focus on the present moment and the opportunities God has provided Pray that we would have unwavering hope in Christ and a joyful anticipation of the future He has planned and to be "pulled by purpose" and to make a difference in the world around them.

# Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Sermon notes – “Look Forward Not Far” by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

Detailed sermon notes:

- Elevation Nights 2025: Elevation Nights is coming your way soon - Fort Worth - Tulsa Oklahoma - Pennsylvania - Toronto - Detroit - Hartford Connecticut – Newark NJ - Washington DC – The dates are February 25th through March 6th.
- To eGroup leaders, Thank you for opening your home, your heart. Thank you for saying "Yes" to God. I pray that God is going to bring just the right people in those eGroups who can help each other. I pray that God would make divine connections, that God would be like a spiritual matchmaker. I'm not necessarily talking about a romantic match, although if the Lord wants to do that through an eGroup, he's God. Amen. But just that God would help you find somebody where they could say, "Oh, I went through that, and here's something God gave me."
- **One theologian said Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where they found bread. Sometimes God gives somebody something you need in the season you're in. So, when you walk through those eGroup tents today or when they come online in a little while and say, "Hey, sign up," don't put it off, and don't tell 15 excuses why you're too busy. That's the problem with you. You're too busy. Sometimes you don't slow down enough, so you spend a lot of effort, but you don't get a lot of result. It's going to come through alignment in this season of your life. So, this is an amazing opportunity.**
- Holly, you've written an amazing study. Brit, the whole team... I'm so proud of you. I'm so excited about the change that will be experienced. Just go to elevationchurch.org and join an eGroup.
- Right now, it's time for the Word of God. Let's go.
- Philippians 1 - The book of Philippians, chapter 1, verses 18-26. The Lord gave me this Scripture, and then he gave me a picture, and I want to give both to you today.
- *"But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two..." "I'm torn between the two. I'm trying to make a decision. I don't know which to choose. I'm torn between the two." "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me."*
- The Lord told me to give you an instruction today that will be very specific for you. It goes like this: Look Forward Not Far. You've been distracted and overwhelmed. You feel like you're kind of going crazy sometimes, coming from every direction. The Lord said, "Look forward, not far."
- On your way to your seat, tell your neighbor one thing you're looking forward to this week. "I'm looking forward to Pastor Steven finishing this sermon so I can go to Chipotle." I know how y'all are. "I'm looking forward to this sermon that the man of God is about to preach."

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Detailed sermon notes:

- Put it in the comments too. I'm going to read a few from online. Somebody shout out something appropriate that you're looking forward to this week. Everybody in the chat, put "I'm looking forward to it," and then tell me one thing you're looking forward to. Forward, not far. It really helped me, because when I walk out to preach, it's always a little unpredictable.
- I never really know how it's going to go. So I do a little trick. This is a little bit squeamish for me to tell you about. You might roll your eyes, and Abbey is going to cringe on the front row, because she hates it when I say romantic things in front of thousands of people about her mother. I always squeeze Holly's hand before I go back to get ready to preach, if she's not deep in rapturous worship. If she's in the shekinah glory, I just walk out and let her have her moment with Jesus. I don't want to cut in. But if she's halfway aware, I'll just squeeze her hand. It's my reminder that in a few minutes...however long it takes me to preach this sermon...in about three and a half hours, no matter what happens up here, I'm going home with her. Here's what that's called psychologically: anticipatory pleasure. I don't mean what you think I mean by that. Chances are all we're going to do is eat and take a nap. If there's something we're watching, we might watch it and probably fall asleep trying to watch it. Something to look forward to after it's over. It somehow fortifies me for what I need to do up here. Reminding myself that in a role as preacher or pastor does not exist the entire definition of who I am as a person, it takes the performance anxiety off, because whether you love it or hate it, I'm going home with her. She has never told me I preached a bad sermon. I know she probably thought it, but she never said it out loud.
- On the chat right now, there are all kinds of people saying things like, "I'm looking forward to the Chiefs winning today." "I'm looking forward to seeking him more this week." See? You have spirit and flesh, all in the comments. "I'm looking forward to teaching my students." That's cool. I thought that was cool when I read it. I thought, "Well, that's not you looking forward to somebody doing something for you; it's you doing something for somebody."
- What a cool way to think. I don't know if you were telling the truth or not, but might as well frame it that way. "I'm looking forward to closing a door." "I'm looking forward to a few days off work." "I'm looking forward to feeling better."
- I think it's important to always have something to look forward to in your life.
- If you ever get in a place where you can't look forward to anything and feel joy, you need to talk to somebody. That's a dangerous place for you to stay in. I don't just mean for a moment, where you're tired or overwhelmed and just want everybody to leave you alone, but if you ever get to a place where there is a prolonged sense of the postponement of joy...Do you know what I mean by postponing joy? Where you're like, "Well, I might be happy one day, but I can't see anything in my immediate future that I look forward to." That is a dangerous way to live.
- Now, it doesn't mean everything you do every day has to be something you enjoy, snowflake, but it does mean there ought to be something, even within the most challenging seasons of your life, that you can go, "I look forward to that." That's why I want every married couple doing date nights. I want you to do it so you can look forward to that time and you can understand that even if you've been busy all week... I mean, it doesn't have to be an expensive date night. Make a sandwich, but set aside a time you can look forward to, especially if you have kids or little kids or something like that.

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Detailed sermon notes:

- Set it up where you know, "Okay. We are so busy managing this corporation called our kids..." Excuse me. "...this terrorist organization called our kids. We need a time set aside that I can look forward to connecting with my girlfriend, my boyfriend, the one I used to spend hours on the phone with." I think it's really important that you have something you can look forward to, even if it's a little thing.
- That's why I have the fridge stocked with Fairlife shakes, because after I've done all of my squats and all of my curls, I know there is the taste of artificial sweetener awaiting me. Just something to trigger my tongue to let me know, "You did good today. Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Again, I'm taking a moment to set this up, because if I don't set it up practically, if we jump straight to what Paul said from prison, you will think this message only applies when you're going through the hardest situation in your life.
- **I saw a principle this week that was so practical it reminded me about something Brennan Manning said in one of his books about when a man went to visit Mother Teresa at the Home for the Dying in Calcutta. This brilliant ethicist, John Kavanaugh, went to see her for three months, and on the first day he met Mother Teresa. The report goes he was trying to figure out what to do with the rest of his life, and he felt foggy about it. You might feel the same way today. You might not be going to see Mother Teresa, but you came to Elevation Church or you clicked on the link, and you're feeling like, "What do I do with the rest of my life?" or "What do I do in this next week?" or "What do I even do for my next step?" Well, Mother Teresa, upon meeting the man, said, "What can I do for you?" and he said, "I would love for you to pray for me." She said, "What would you like for me to pray for you?" He said, "Pray that God will give me clarity." She said, "I won't do it. I have never had clarity." He said, "But you always seem to have clarity." Mother Teresa said, "I've never had clarity. What I've had is trust. So I will pray that you will trust in God."**
- The apostle Paul, writing to the church he founded (which was the first church in Europe, incidentally, founded when he was in prison another time), is now writing to span 800 miles from Rome, where he is sitting awaiting a verdict of his current imprisonment for preaching the gospel, to the church he loves, and he's worried about them and burdened for them. Euodia and Syntyche are arguing.
- There seems to be within the Philippian church a sense that when the teacher left class, "We can do whatever we want." He checks in to let them know, "I'm proud of you, but you need to keep making progress." In doing that, he shares with them an update about his situation as well.
- **As we are expecting Paul to give the exact details of whether or not he will be released to continue to preach the gospel or whether he will continue to be restrained by his chains, he does something very interesting and different. He begins to share with them not about the conclusion of his trial but about the courage God has given him to face it. Sometimes God won't give you the conclusion; he will just give you courage.**
- The people like Mother Teresa and the apostle Paul, who are really confident... It's not because they have so much clarity. It's not because they always know what to do next. It's just that they're always focused on what God has called them to do now. This is a great distinction for all of us who are overwhelmed. From a man who had every right to be depressed and despondent, who had every right to feel and communicate his sense of total, utter despair, comes a book like Philippians where he says, "Yes, I will continue to rejoice."

# Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

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Detailed sermon notes:

- Why are you rejoicing, Paul? Did you just get good news that they're going to let you out in a week? Why are you rejoicing, Paul? Did Andy Dufresne just take a rock hammer and crack halfway through the Shawshank wall? Is Morgan Freeman narrating your last night in prison? Why are you rejoicing? He said, "Because..." Now, "Because" one day, when I get the opportunity, I want to do a whole series on why you need a better because.
- Verse 18: "And because of this I rejoice." Now, whatever your this is controls your rejoicing. Paul's this was the purpose of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, what he was sent to do. Since that was still happening, and happening at an accelerated rate, Paul said, "I have a cause to rejoice because my calling is being fulfilled."
- If your cause to rejoice is your comfort being satisfied, then any moment you are uncomfortable, you will not have the ability to rejoice. You need a better because. Some of us need a better because when we come to worship.
- Some of us only praise God on the weeks where we feel grateful. What a small God you serve that you need a feeling of gratitude to prompt an act of faith called worship. You're worshipping a God you can't see. You're worshipping a God who's not made by human hands. You're worshipping a God who does not exist to serve you; you exist to serve him. If the reason I worship is tied to the work he does on my behalf or the wish list he fulfilled based on my preferences, that is a limited lens through which to see the God I worship.
- **Sometimes it's good for us to lift our hands because he's great; because he's holy; because he's awesome; because he's sovereign; because he's God all by himself; because before Abraham was, he was; because he is the Great I Am; because he is perfect in all of his ways; because I'm created to do it; because I love him; because he first loved me; because he forgave me; because he sent his Son to die for me; because he gave me breath in my lungs; because I'm living on borrowed breath; because tomorrow is not promised; because God brought me this far. If he never does anything else, he has done enough to be worthy of this next one.**
- **Paul is playing games with the Devil in this letter. At the moment that he has every right to be discouraged, despondent, and at the dead end of his own despair, he turns his attention outward and begins to think about that church God has called him to serve. He turns his attention outward, and he begins to focus on their future. It's almost like he's setting up an appointment. Walk slowly with me here. I want to meet you in this text. You can see Paul, who's about 55 years old at this point in his life, saying, "I don't know when, but I'll see you again." What's he doing? He's creating a sense of anticipatory joy even though the timeline is uncertain. He doesn't have clarity, but he trusts God. You can see this wrestling match that is written on the page and preserved for us through the passage of time, as Paul is wrestling with his own volition and will, because there's so much about the situation he can't control. It's not as if, when he says, "What shall I choose?" he gets a vote in whether or not he's executed.**

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Detailed sermon notes:

- Now, just to make sure you understand the situation, Paul is about to be put on trial, and they have the power to decide if he lives or dies. Paul does not have the power to decide whether he lives or dies, but he still has the power to choose how he lives in the meantime. So, here he is, wrestling with a decision that's really not his to make. I thought it was kind of funny. Maybe there's even a little swagger on what Paul is doing here, because he's telling the Devil, "I haven't decided yet. I haven't decided yet whether I'm going to let them kill me so I can just be done with this and go get all of my crowns from Jesus. I haven't decided yet whether I just want to get out of here and see his face, the one who died for me, the one who knocked me off my horse on the Damascus road. I haven't decided yet whether I want to be one with all of these trifling Pharisees I used to be - one of who keep running me from city to city. I haven't decided yet if I want to be done with the storms and the shipwrecks and the stonings and just see him and be known as I am known. I haven't decided yet if I just want to leave or if I want to stay."
- **He uses an interesting term. He says, "I'm torn between the two." What a picture. "I'm torn between the two." Recap. He's in prison, but when it came to describing his condition, he didn't say, "I'm trapped." He said, "I'm torn." "Two things could happen here, and I don't know which one God is going to do yet. Either my life could be over in a matter of weeks, months, or even days, and I could be with Christ, or I could stay here and keep serving Christ longer. I'm torn."**
- **For everybody today who is feeling torn in an area of your life, let the apostle Paul administer to you these words of encouragement. He says, "If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!" Write this down and put it on your mirror. It's okay to not know. It's okay to not have clarity. It's okay to not have a five-year plan. It's okay to not know how you're going to get out of this exactly. It's okay not to know.**
- If Paul, who said, "And we know that in all things God works together for the good of them who love him and are called according to his purpose," said, "I don't know about this one..." You have "I don't know" moments that you have been hiding because you think that somehow means you don't have faith.
- **It is okay to say, "I don't know." In fact, just say it right now. It'll feel like 100 pounds lifted off you. "I don't know." You can't say it properly. "I do not know. I have not the information." Don't say it formally. Just say, "I don't know." Paul says, "I don't know which one I want yet. I kind of want to get out of here, but I kind of think I need to stay. It'd be awesome if I never had to deal with the opposition I'm dealing with again. It's hard out here for a preacher. But I kind of think you need me, because y'all are fighting back home. I kind of think you need me, because I've heard some rumors about you. I don't know if I want to get out of here or if I need to stay in this for a little while."**
- **He's acting like he gets to choose, like he won the coin toss, but nobody is coming to ask him. So, what is he really wrestling with? Paul is wrestling with the tension of looking forward into a future that is uncertain with unwavering confidence in Christ.**

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Detailed sermon notes:

- Everybody in this room is facing the same challenge. Your future is not certain, and your hope is Christ. I just hit everybody in the room. How do you preach to so many backgrounds of people? There are rich people, poor people, young people, old people, religious people, and people whose eyes look like right before they came to church they might have had something that wasn't the Holy Spirit. How do you preach to all of those people? Because every single one of you, your future is uncertain and your hope is Christ. In this way, you are no different than Paul. So he says, "I don't know. I'm torn. I kind of want to just see Jesus. It would kind of be nice if this was all over."
- I guess because I was preaching on prison, I was doing research. I mentioned The Shawshank Redemption, and then we watched The Green Mile this week, too, with John Coffey. The Green Mile is trippy. I'm going to give you a spoiler alert. The movie is, like, 40 years old, so if you haven't seen it by now, you deserve to have it spoiled.
- At the end, you find out the prison guard can't die. Well, he's going to die, but he's like 102, and he doesn't know how long he's going to have to live. That's the end of the movie.
- Graham and I were watching it together. He goes, "Well, that was kind of anticlimactic. I thought it was going to be scary." I said, "Son, that is the scariest thing I've ever seen in a movie. You don't understand now, but you will. The thought that this is going to go on forever like this..." I said, "That sounds cool to you right now. You're 17. I'm 44. Trust me. This is a horror movie." That was the scariest scene I've ever seen. I've never seen anybody jump out of the bushes that was scarier. I've never seen a chain saw that was scarier. The fact that "I don't know how long I'm going to be here..." In fact, they've even done studies. They did a surgery on people, and they told them, "After six months, the condition might be reversible." Then they did other people, and they said, "It's not reversible. You're just going to have to live with this." The people whom they told, "In six months we'll check, and it might be reversible. You might get better. Come back in six months" were less happy than the people who were told, "It's this way forever; get used to it," because the people who were told, "This is how it's going to be" began to adapt. When they began to adapt, they started to see, I can live with this. It's not what I wanted, but I can live with this. It's not what I asked for, but I can live with this. It's not what I would have chosen, but I can live with this." The people who were told, "It might be reversible" were living in a suspended state of anticipation that it might get better, and it might not.
- What was worse than the pain they were suffering was the deferred hope that it might get better.
- If you just tell me this is the way it's going to be, then I'll make arrangements around the way it is, but to give me the possibility that it could change, but I'm not sure when or how it might, is the most painful hope of all. I want to talk about the ache of faith for a moment. I want to talk about when you know there's something more in you, but it can't express itself because of what's blocking you. I want to talk about when you know you have love to give but no one to trust to give it to.

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Sermon notes – “Look Forward Not Far” by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

Detailed sermon notes:

- I want to talk about the ache of faith today, when you know God brought you through this for a reason, but you can't see what it is yet. Paul said, "I'm torn right now. I'm aching in faith right now. A part of my heart wants to be with you, but a part of my heart says, 'This is hard,' and I don't know which one is better." He says, "On one hand, I think it's better to be with Christ." In fact, he says something interesting in verse 23. "I desire to depart. I want to get out of this. It's better by far; but..." Let's go really slowly so everybody can apply this in their life how they need to. "It would be better for me if...and I'm torn about it. I think it would be better for me by far if...but..."
- Notice what he's doing. He's setting it up. "My preference would be that I go to Jesus now and get my reward." I'm not saying anybody in here just wants to die. I'm just setting that up as a metaphor. "I would like for this to be over, but..." "I would like for this to end, but..." Verse 24: "...it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith..."
- I want to do the whole sweeping thing again from verse 23 on. "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far..." There is something drawing Paul. He says, "To live is Christ; to die is gain. I could just go to heaven. That would be easier for me. It would be easier for me." Verse 24: "But you need me. This would be easier, but this would be needed, and I'm torn. It would be easier for me just to let go and surrender and ask God to take me now, but you need me here. Because you need me, I'm going to let go of what would be easy." Paul says, "I'm going to let my purpose pull me."
- Pulled By Purpose – see demo of Graham and Gavin pulling on Pastor Steven to explain tension.
- So, at some point, Christians, we have to decide. Are we just going to be driven by decisions of what's easy or are we going to be pulled by purpose into what is necessary? I came to let you know there is a necessary "next" in your life. If the brook dried up, there's a widow in Zarephath down to her last meal. God is positioning you in this season for a need you don't even know about yet. So, it's very important right now that as we look at the example of Paul, which, to me, I told you, was a picture... It's a picture of somebody being pulled. It's a picture of everybody in this room who is being pulled. The easy thing and the needed thing.

# Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Sermon notes – “Look Forward Not Far” by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

Detailed sermon notes:

- Holly giving a pair of reading glasses to Pastor Furtick: The thing you want... See, sometimes, when you get old, you get farsighted. Holly started looking at me funny the other day. We were in a restaurant, and she was looking at me funny. I was paying the bill, and she was looking at me funny. "What are you looking at?" I thought she was looking to see... Because I tip bigger than her. I thought she was scrutinizing my tip percentage. Y'all, pray for her, because I'm generous. I thought she was scrutinizing the bill, but then later that night she was looking at me funny. I was in bed reading a book, and she was looking at me funny. A few days later, I came home, and she said, "I left something for you in the bedroom beside the bed." I'm like, "Oh?" She was like, "No, it's just a little something that I think you need." That woman looked at me stone cold, ice in her veins, and said, "It's time. I watched you at the restaurant. I'm not going to sit there while you pull out your flashlight for 15 minutes trying to read 'Is it a 5 or a 7?'" They keep it so dark in the restaurants. Can I preach about how the Devil is busy with a light-dimming ministry? She said, "It's time." I said, "No, no. I've got more years. I can make the font 72, and I'll use my iPad when I preach." She said, "No, you might want to use a paper Bible. It's time. You're farsighted." I said, "No, I'm actually close-sighted, or whatever the other one is, because I can see it if it's far; I just can't see it if it's close." She said, "That's what farsighted means. It means you can see far, not close." She said, "There's another name." She had done research. She said, "There's another name for it when you get over 40. It's called aging eyes." A soft way to say, "Getting old." Aging eyes. There was even some Greek word she used for it. I don't even remember. It had presby-something in it.
- An ophthalmologist can send us a text about this message and correct everything I'm saying that's wrong. She said, "It's time." Y'all can't even take me seriously with those on. You're going to have to get used to it, because I need to see what's right in front of me in this season. I'm afraid if I can only see what's far away... Paul said, "I want to be in heaven with Jesus, but..." God said, "That's too far, Paul. One day.
- One day I'll give you a 'Well done,' but not today, because I still have stuff for you to do that's right in front of you." Paul says, "Convinced of this, I decided I'm going to make what's right in front of me, that I could miss if I was too farsighted, my focus."
- So, the word of the Lord is whatever is right in front of you that God has given you to do, that is your focus in this season. All you have to do with the parts you don't know about God's plan for your life... You know, Jeremiah 29:11 is a wonderful Scripture. "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you, not to harm you; plans to give you hope and a future." That was spoken to prepare them for their captivity in Babylon, which would last 70 years.
- He said, "In the meantime, while you're in Babylon, you need these." While you are waiting for the future you believe God has for you, I don't want you to get farsighted and miss what's right in front of you. Sometimes the reason I miss it is because it's right here and I'm looking out there. Now, this is for all of the worriers who call themselves planners.
- You do know that every time God gives a gift, the Enemy attacks it with a perversion. Planning is God's gift to you. Worry is the perversion of God's gift called planning. People who are good at planning are also world-class worriers.

# Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Sermon notes – “Look Forward Not Far” by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

Detailed sermon notes:

- Worrying is when I don't have clarity about the situation because I'm looking so far. I'll illustrate this one other way, because I'm passionate that you get the picture. I don't want to just preach these messages, and when they ask on Tuesday, "Did you go to church...?" "Yeah." "What did he preach about?" "I don't... God." I want you to have something you can remember. What I see you doing is this. You're going forward. "God, direct my path." But you are looking so far. I promise you I will not take one more step. It's too risky for me to go forward looking that far.
- I mean, maybe I could do it. Remember? I'm 44. It's way too risky for me to take that step. If I'm going to go forward, that's what I'm going to look at next. Now, somebody who wants me to come up there and give them a hug, wave at me really quickly. Okay. I'm coming for you in the back row right there. I see who I'm coming to. Everybody else, put your hand down.
- I'm coming all the way to you. That's my future, but I am not coming to give you that hug, which I'm going to give you in just a few moments... I'm going to come toward you (that is the future), but I am not going to look that far, because if I look that far, I'll fall. That's the definition of anxiety. That's why Peter didn't make it all the way to Jesus. He saw the wind and the waves. When you look too far, you fall, but if you take this next step by faith and say to the Devil, "My purpose is pulling me..." "This is the next sandwich I need to make. This is the next bill I need to pay. I'm not going to think about the other \$18,000 in debt right now. This bill, this baby step, this phone call, this workout, this breath, this appointment, this phone call, this day, this hour, this minute."
- I'll tell you what. I found out that the Word of God is like headlights on a car. When you're driving at night, you can only see as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way...three feet at a time.
- **The Danger Of Looking Too Far Ahead - I promise you I'm going to look here while I'm walking there. This, to me, is the balancing act of great faith. Look forward, but not far. Now watch. I'm not going to do this. I'm definitely not going to do that. I have that much down. But if the Enemy can't get you to look back on your past, he will try to get you to go so far into your future . . . It is just as dangerous for me to look at where I'm going all the way up there as it is for me to look back at where I came from. It's dangerous not to look forward. It's dangerous not to have anything to look forward to. It's dangerous for you not to have a plan for this year of your life. It's dangerous for you to not have structure around your day. It's dangerous for you to not have a budget. It's dangerous for you to not have an eating plan. It's dangerous for you to not have a Bible reading plan, because you will need a plan to produce what you're called to produce. It's dangerous not to look forward. It is just as dangerous to look too far forward, to try to control things only God can control, to start thinking about the product while you're still in the process of making it. You don't know what it's going to be. If you look too far and go, "Okay, I'm going to be sober the rest of my life..." Too far. That can be where you're headed. That can be where you're going, but what I want you focused on right now is "The presence of God is enough to keep me out of these chains today. I'm not drinking it today. I'm not doing it today." "I'm never eating sugar again." That's too far. Don't eat it this week. Can we do this week?**

# Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Sermon notes – “Look Forward Not Far” by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

- **As I make my way back down, notice what I'm doing. I'm going far, but I'm not looking far. That's what God wants you to see. Verse 20: "I eagerly expect and hope..." It's a Greek word that Paul used, not for glasses, but he makes this word, apokaradokia. It means to stretch the head forward. When he says, "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that whatever happens, Christ will be exalted in my body," he says apokaradokia. He says, "I stretch my head forward, but not far, because I'm in chains right now." Forward, not far. Little steps, little things, little moments. Forward, but not far.**
- Not to make this negative, but I want to give you the antithesis of Paul's perspective. See, when the children of Israel had the opportunity to enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses, they forfeited that. It was theirs, and they forfeited that. It was what God wanted them to have, and they forfeited that.
- The account is pretty well known, but I don't know that the details have ever really been looked at up close. When the spies who went to check out the land where they would have to fight the battles to win the promise... You have to fight the battles to win the promise. When they came back and said, "It's pretty amazing in there," in Numbers, chapter 13, they gave Moses this account - "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit." Where is its fruit? Here. They brought it back on a pole. Two of them carried the fruit of Canaan. These people had never eaten the fruit of the land. Many of them had only existed in Egypt, so they had never had this kind of fruit before. Well, just about the time they're looking at the fruit and seeing a picture of what their tomorrow could taste like... Sometimes God will give you a taste of what your tomorrow could be like, of what it could be like if you were open and free, of what it could be like if you were focused and not distracted, of what it could be like if you were a servant rather than seeing yourself as a continual chaser of status. God will give you a glimpse and a taste of what tomorrow could be like.
- "Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there." Go back to verse 27. "Here is its fruit." "It's fruitful. It's beautiful. It's amazing. We saw it with our own eyes. It's fruitful, and it flows. But..." Watch this. Verse 28: "It's fortified, and we're going to have to fight."
- Facing Fortified Challenges - Now, fortified means it's protected. Some of you will remember that the first city they fought was Jericho. The significance about Jericho was not the size of the city; it was the height of the walls. So, when they said, "It's fortified," they said, "It has really big walls." "It's fruitful, but it's fortified." Now here comes the decision. Paul said, "What shall I choose? One is pulling me toward purpose; one is pulling me toward what is easy. I'm going to go with the purpose of God in this season of my life. Apokaradokia. I'm stretching my head forward." At just the moment that the people of God could have gone forward, they got farsighted. They started thinking about who they were going to have to fight when they got there. Here's the bad thing about forecasting a fight before you are even on-site to fight it. You don't realize God is going to give you the backup when you show up. You don't know the future, that when you look at those fortified Jericho walls, those hard things in your life, those tall things, those strongholds in your life... You don't realize that as you think about them in the future, they are fortified, but when you get there, God is going to give you a trumpet to blow. When you blow that trumpet, something supernatural is going to happen that only God could do. You couldn't do it. When you get there, you will have the strength for there. You have to go forward, but not too far. Don't start thinking about, "What is this going to be in three years?" What is it going to be in three minutes? When we first started church, people used to always meet with us.

# Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Sermon notes – “Look Forward Not Far” by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

Detailed sermon notes:

- Trust him so you don't trip. Trust him right now. Paul said, "...so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body." There are two groups of people in here. The first one is like the Israelites. When they thought about what was ahead of them and the fight and the expense of it... Those of us who live in states of mind that are always forecasting the fights in the future, this is what happens. Chapter 14 of Numbers is one of the saddest scriptures you will ever see. The people of God, who were poised and promised to be possessors of the land, started questioning God. "Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?"
- You can't go forward looking back like that. You can't go forward trying to forecast what's going to happen with a wall that God is going to knock down that you don't even know about yet. "Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" Verse 4: "And they said to each other, 'We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.'"
- Closing Prayer #1 by Pastor Furtick on 1/26/2025: Paul does just the opposite. In the moment of uncertainty, he says, "I'm not going back anywhere. I'm going forward, and I'm going to focus on what's right in front of me at this moment. I'm letting go of what I can't control." There is somebody in here who is being pulled back, dragged back, tempted back, distracted back. The word of the Lord is "Forward, not far." This is going to be a step-by-step miracle. This is going to be a breath-by-breath miracle. This is going to be a day-by-day, moment-by-moment miracle. God is doing it in your life, just so long as you know you can stretch your head forward in faith. You can only see three feet, but you can make the whole trip that way. By the way, they were 150 miles from Egypt and only 50 miles from Canaan. It would have been closer for them to keep going forward than it would to go back. I came to tell somebody, "You're closer than you think you are." You cannot go back now. Listen to me. You have come too far. Do you hear me? You have come too far to forfeit this. After all he's done, after all you've seen, after all he brought you through, don't you want to run on and see what the end is going to be? Somebody say, "I will go. I shall go."
- Closing Prayer #2 by Pastor Furtick on 1/26/2025: Father, I thank you for your prevailing Word. All flesh is like the grass of the field. It pales and withers and fades and dies, but the Word of the Lord stands forever. God, I thank you for the great faith of the apostle Paul, who gives us a picture today of what it means to be in a space that never would have been his choice, but I thank you, Lord, that he gave us a picture of what to do when the situation that is surrounding us does not correspond to the promise that is inside of us. "I'm stretching forward. If all I can stretch forward is my head, I stretch my head forward. If all I can stretch forward is a weak prayer, I stretch that forward too, because I know you did not bring me this far to leave me." I thank you, God, that you do have plans, a hope, a future, for each and every one you sent me to minister to today. I thank you that this week they're going to get your glasses. I pray, God, that this week, when parents are starting to worry too much, teenagers would hand them some glasses. I pray that when teenagers are starting to get too distracted by what's out in the front, a parent will hand them some glasses. I pray that when we're all alone in the secrecy of our own self-sabotage and the thoughts we think that torment us, you would give us your glasses so we would go forward and realize that you are not far. Thank you for drawing near to us today, God. It's amazing how you meet with us. Thank you for the promise that when we draw near to you, you will draw near to us, and if we humble ourselves under your mighty hand, you'll lift us up in due time. I pray for each person today who is experiencing a prison sentence of sorts. I pray they would not have clarity but they would trust in God.

## **Part 2: eGroup study questions**

# Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Sermon Discussion: "When You Just Can't Win" by Pastor Steven Furtick January 19, 2025

## Good Company Moment

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

ecclesiastes 4:9-12

To dig deeper into this topic, read ruth 1:1-18 to learn about a biblical example of a committed relationship.



The Elephant model:

Why women are better than guys.

Sermon Discussion: "When You Just Can't Win" by Pastor Steven Furtick January 19, 2025

Recall Pastor Furtick talked about Brennan Manning who said in one of his books about when a man went to visit Mother Teresa at the Home for the Dying in Calcutta. This brilliant ethicist, John Kavanaugh, went to see her for three months, and on the first day he met Mother Teresa. The report goes he was trying to figure out what to do with the rest of his life, and he felt foggy about it.

**Well, Mother Teresa, upon meeting the man, said, "What can I do for you?" and he said, "I would love for you to pray for me." She said, "What would you like for me to pray for you?" He said, "Pray that God will give me clarity." She said, "I won't do it. I have never had clarity." He said, "But you always seem to have clarity." Mother Teresa said, "I've never had clarity. What I've had is trust. So I will pray that you will trust in God."**

Sermon Discussion: "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

"Some of us only praise God on the weeks where we feel grateful. What a small God you serve that you need a feeling of gratitude to prompt an act of faith called worship. You're worshiping a God who does not exist to serve you; you exist to serve him. If the reason I worship is tied to the work he does on my behalf or the wish list he fulfilled based on my preferences, that is a limited lens through which to see the God I worship.

Sermon Discussion: "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025



Dr. Timothy Keller

## "A Reason for Living"

total freedom = lack of meaning and significance

What if we found the reason for life? Why we were created? Why we were designed? And conformed to that and then honored that?

If there is a design, there is a designer. And if there is a designer, the logos has come. Not some abstract philosophical principle. **It is a person.**

The designer has punched a hole into the world and he has descended. And you were built not to just honor some philosophical principle. But you were built to know and love this divine person. When you know him and when you serve him and you find out what he built you for, when you comply with it and submit yourself to him, you find out who you are. And you are now able to reach your potential.

Sermon Discussion: "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

What is anticipatory joy?

Sermon Discussion: "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

What is anticipatory joy?

"Paul is playing games with the Devil in this letter. At the moment that he has every right to be discouraged, despondent, and at the dead end of his own despair, he turns his attention outward and begins to think about that church God has called him to serve. **You can see Paul, who's about 55 years old at this point in his life, saying, "I don't know when, but I'll see you again." What's he doing? He's creating a sense of anticipatory joy even though the timeline is uncertain.**

**"Now, just to make sure you understand the situation, Paul is about to be put on trial, and they have the power to decide if he lives or dies. Paul does not have the power to decide whether he lives or dies, but he still has the power to choose how he lives in the meantime."**

Sermon Discussion: "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

"For everybody today who is feeling torn in an area of your life, let the apostle Paul administer to you these words of encouragement. He says, "If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!" Write this down and put it on your mirror. It's okay to not know. It's okay to not have clarity. It's okay to not have a five-year plan. It's okay to not know how you're going to get out of this exactly. It's okay not to know."

Sermon Discussion: "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

What is meant by the ache of faith?

Sermon Discussion: "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

What is meant by the ache of faith?

God brought you through this for a reason, but you can't see what it is yet.

**"So, at some point, Christians, we have to decide. Are we just going to be driven by decisions of what's easy or are we going to be pulled by purpose into what is necessary? I came to let you know there is a necessary "next" in your life. If the brook dried up, there's a widow in Zarephath down to her last meal. God is positioning you in this season for a need you don't even know about yet. So, it's very important right now that as we look at the example of Paul, which, to me, I told you, was a picture... It's a picture of somebody being pulled. It's a picture of everybody in this room who is being pulled. The easy thing and the needed thing."**

Sermon Discussion: "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

So what was Pastor Steven's point when he says there is danger in looking too far ahead."

## Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

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Sermon Discussion: "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

So what was Pastor Steven's point when he says there is danger in looking too far ahead."

It's dangerous for you to not have a budget. It's dangerous for you to not have an eating plan. It's dangerous for you to not have a Bible reading plan, because you will need a plan to produce what you're called to produce. It's dangerous not to look forward. It is just as dangerous to look too far forward, to try to control things only God can control, to start thinking about the product while you're still in the process of making it. You don't know what it's going to be. If you look too far and go, "Okay, I'm going to be sober the rest of my life..." Too far. That can be where you're headed. That can be where you're going, but what I want you focused on right now is "The presence of God is enough to keep me out of these chains today. I'm not drinking it today. I'm not doing it today." "I'm never eating sugar again." That's too far. Don't eat it this week. Can we do this week?

Sermon Discussion: "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

What is the Greek word apokaradokia mean?

Sermon Discussion: "Look Forward Not Far" by Pastor Steven Furtick on January 26, 2025

What is the Greek word apokaradokia mean?

"As I make my way back down, notice what I'm doing. I'm going far, but I'm not looking far. That's what God wants you to see. Verse 20: "I eagerly expect and hope..." **It's a Greek word that Paul used, not for glasses, but he makes this word, apokaradokia. It means to stretch the head forward. When he says, "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that whatever happens, Christ will be exalted in my body," he says apokaradokia. He says, "I stretch my head forward, but not far, because I'm in chains right now." Forward, not far. Little steps, little things, little moments. Forward, but not far."**

# Back up material

Sermon Discussion: "Where You Meet With God" – by Pastor Furtick on Sunday, Jan. 12, 2025

Closing Prayer #4: "May this be a year of recovery for you. May this be a year of clarity for you, for God to bring things up out of the muddy Jordan River. May this be a year that you don't stand swinging your stick, knowing this isn't working anymore. May this be a year that you don't just keep pretending like everything is fine when you know your effectiveness is at the bottom of the water. God will you come with me? The answer is "Yes." He already promised his presence. It lives inside of you. May this be the year where the place where you meet with God becomes the mountaintop of your victory and the valley of your midnight. The place you meet with God has been too small. If church is the only place you meet with God, the place you meet with God is too small. Expand your expectation of God's presence. I declare over your life a year of expansion. Not just that you would get more stuff but that you would get more him. May this be the year of his presence in your life. "God, come with me to work this year. God, come with me as I struggle to sleep at night. God, come with me into the challenge this year. God, come with me into the uncertainty. Will you come?" He says, "Yes," and he says, "When it falls, I'll show you where to reach to get it back."

Sermon Discussion: "The Battle Made Me" by Stephen Chandler from Union Church in MD – on Jan. 5, 2025

Daily devotional Spurgeon quote from 12/26/2024

"The reed is spongy and hollow - there is no substance in it. The reed lives in water and owes its very existence to the moisture. Let the water drain away, and the reed withers - do I only serve God when I am in good company - when faith is profitable and respectful? Do I love the Lord only when I am enjoying comforts from His hands? The reed cannot grow without water - but the Lord's plants can and do flourish, even when there's a drought - A godly man (and woman) often grows best when his/her circumstances are daunting - Lord - let me find my life in you and not in the shifting sands of this world's favor or gain."

Sermon Discussion: "God Gave It To Me" by Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 17, 2024

Closing Prayer on 11/17/2024: "I want to pray over those things in your life right now, whether they are gifts or glitches. I want you to see them as in the same hands, the hands of God. There's something significant God is trying to get you to take responsibility for today. As you take responsibility for that thing, he is calling you to reframe it and refocus it. The starting place is not the problem; the starting place is God. So now, God, we worship you because you're great. We thank you for all of the battles you've won for your people. We thank you for all of the times that all we had was a donkey's jawbone, but you did it. He's the one who cleansed you. He's the one who set you free. God, we're not going to get to this place in our lives and think we have to do it by ourselves. We have a really good record of what you've done."

**Outstanding theology Here – I really lean in when Pastor Furtick talks about Gideon in Judges 6:**

“When God Goes In” by Pastor Steven Furtick – March 27, 2023

“Make Peace With Your Strength” by Pastor Steven Furtick – April 2, 2023

“Breaking The Bondage Of Wrong Belief” by Pastor Steven Furtick on 8/11/2024

Power quote from Pastor Furtick on 8/11/2024: *“They have come into a land whose customs have become their captivity. They have come into a land that God gave them, and the customs of that land have become their captivity. The Lord says, “Gideon, I want to use you to lead a revolt and a revolution. I’m going to enable you, strengthen you, supply you, and give the enemy into your hand, and you will strike them all down.” Gideon said, “Me? I’m the least in my family. My clan is the least in the nation. Why me?” God said, “Why you? Because me.” God turns 2s into 10s instantly. Only God can do that. The beauty of this is God doesn’t say, “Gideon, I’m going to put you through a preparation process. This is going to take three years to get it done.” He has actually been preparing Gideon while Gideon has been hidden. Do you know God has been preparing you while you have been hidden too? Do you know God has been giving you tools, resources, lessons, words, and confirmations while you have been in the cave of what you perceive to be your abandonment and wasted season?”*

## Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Sermon notes – “The Gift Of Grief” by Lisa Harper – on July 7, 2024

Awesome prayer by Lisa Harper on 7/7/2024 – in the sanctuary, most of the congregation is standing – those in grief are sitting – remarkable moment:

- Closing Prayer: “I'm near to those whose lives feel crushed today - this low point in your life - if you bring it to the Lord – He will lead you to a place of intimacy - a place of personal revival - that you probably haven't had the faith to carry – lower your pretense in this family of God - For those of you who are grieving - if the Holy Spirit confirms - would you be audacious enough to even right now say thank you God I'm going to choose to be grateful for this grief? - I can't see around the corner of my circumstances - yet I really do believe You will answer and I really do believe you're enough - and I really do believe you're close to the brokenhearted - and so I'm going to choose right now - I'm going to say thank you - I don't feel it yet - but I'm going to say thank you for this grief because somehow - some way you're going to use even this dead-dog of a season to make me more dependent on you - to make me lean into my brothers and sisters more closely - you're going to build in me a heart of flesh instead of allowing me to hide my heart of stone - King Jesus come and bring Revival - King Jesus come and bring healing - Thank you God.”

Have a good navigational beacon in 2022:

“Life and Leadership at the Highest” A quote from an unknown author and requoted by Pastor Tim Keller in his sermon “This is Jesus” part 4 “Two Grieving Sisters Encounter Jesus” at Oxford University in 2016: “The accounts of Him in the New Testament speak for themselves – He combines qualities that no one has ever seen – despite his incredible claims, we never see him pompous, offended, or standing on his own dignity. Despite being absolutely approachable to the weakest and most broken people, he is completely fearless before the powerful and the corrupt. Despite being weary and lonely, we find him remarkably human - filled with joy, fear, love, and anger. Yet, we never see him Moody. We never see him being inconsistent. We never see Him strong when He should be tender and we never see Him tender when He should be strong. Most interesting of all – Of all his encounters with people - we are continuously surprised – shocking us - but never disappointing us – it is difficult for us to imagine words that Jesus ought to have said or deeds that he ought to have done. Nothing he has done ever falls short - in fact He is always surprising us - because He is incomparably better than what we could imagine for ourselves. Why? These are the surprises of perfection – He has tenderness without weakness – He has strength without harshness – humility without the slightest lack of confidence – unhesitating authority without the slightest sense of self-absorption – Holy and unbending convictions without the slightest lack of approachability – power without insensitivity – passion without prejudice – there is never a false step – there’s never a jarring no – this is life at the highest.”