

Pastor of Student Ministries Questionnaire

Grace Point Evangelical Free Church

4612 N. Adrian Highway, Adrian, MI 49221

Personal Information:

Name: Noah Radtke

Spouse's Name: Erica Radtke

Children's Names: Jackson (Jack), Benjamin (Ben), and Daniel (Danny)

Education:

SCHOOL ATTENDED	DEGREE OBTAINED	YEARS ATTENDED
Liberty University	Bachelors in Early Childhood Education	2008-2013
Liberty University School of Divinity	Master of Arts in Christian Ministry (Emphases: Church Ministry and Discipleship)	2015-2017
Liberty University School of Divinity	Master of Divinity	2018-2020

Experience:

EMPLOYER	POSITION	YEARS EMPLOYED
Milan Baptist Church	Youth Pastor	2016-Present
Faith Baptist Church	Youth Director	2015-2016
Lenawee Christian School	Elementary Science Lab Coordinator, Bible Curriculum and Spiritual Formation, After-Care Provider (and a brief period of substitute teaching)	2013-2015 (substituting in 2016 while at Faith Baptist)
The Centre (Impact Camps)	K-1 st Grade Leader, Athletic Program Coordinator, and Bible Chaplain	2010-2015 (Summer Seasonal)

Credentials:

ORDINATION/LICENSE OBTAINED	DENOMINATION
Pastoral License	Baptist

Gifts / Abilities:

Out of the following list, please identify the areas that you feel are your strengths and the areas that you feel are your non-strengths: Preaching, Teaching, Prayer Warrior, Relational / Outgoing, Managing / Leading Staff, Leadership, Discipleship, Evangelism, Community Needs, Visitation, Administration, Missions (Local and Global). Feel free to include your thoughts about these areas in your life and ministry.

- **Strengths:**

- **Preaching**—I still have a lot to grow in with this category, but I have been affirmed by many that this is one of my strengths—plus I just love it!
- **Teaching**—with my elementary education and seminary background, teaching is a passion of mine. I love getting into God’s Word, submitting to the Holy Spirit’s conviction, and encouraging others to do the same.
- **Relational/Outgoing**—I am a people-person, and my style/methods of ministry reflect that. COVID has really made this one difficult, but we’ve made some great strides.
- **Discipleship/Missions/Community Needs**—building off of the relational side of things, my ministry is based upon a Great Commission Calling (Mat. 28:18-20) through Great Commandment Love (Mat. 22:34-40). It is a unique joy and privilege of mine to build relationships within the church family and community, revealing the needs of each individual as I make it my mission to bring people one step closer in their walk with Christ—especially in taking the initial step of faith in Him for salvation.

- **Non-Strengths:**

- **Administration**—this is my “Achilles Heel” in ministry; the logistical, administrative side does not come naturally to me, and my Type B personality really struggles with the organizational side of ministry; however, this is an area that I have significantly grown in, and I would argue that though this is not a natural gifting of mine, it is slowly becoming a learned skill. I have come to find that it certainly helps to have people on the team that thrive in the administrative realm, though!
- **Managing Staff**—there are two specific areas of growth that I see within myself in this category: 1) I am an individual who likes to take the initiative, and—to my fault—that often leads to me just doing a task that I could easily delegate to somebody for the sake of their own investment in the ministry as well as their personal discipleship. 2) As an extension of my growth in administration, I have had moments where I have missed the mark in areas of communication (last minute emails) and missed opportunities.

I would hope that this all goes without saying, but please know that I look at the above traits intentionally and soberly. There are other traits listed above that I am definitely passionate about and have some gifting in, and there are other traits listed that—though I do not count them as weaknesses—I personally am making steps to grow even more in them. My strengths do not suggest excellence in those areas (though I aim for that in my life), and my weaknesses are not ignored, but rather looked at as areas to improve upon what I am not naturally gifted in—only through the supernatural strength provided in Christ. It’s for His glory!

Questions:

Please answer the following questions either below the question or in a separate document:

1. Please share your theological position in relation to our Statement of Faith (find this at www.gracepointefc.org). Identify if there are any areas in which you cannot agree.

I am in full agreement with Grace Point's Statement of Faith. Theology and Biblical grounding are a high priority for me in looking for a church—being one of the first things that I look at when considering a church.

2. Share your testimony of when and how you came to trust Jesus Christ as your Savior.

I grew up in a Christian home with both of my parents professing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior; however, the old saying is true that “God does not have grandchildren,” and I was not a Christ-follower by association to my parents. I will say, though, that the faithfulness of my parents played—and continues to play a vital role in my walk with God, and for that, I am beyond blessed and thankful. Around the time that I was seven-years-old, I remember attending Children's Church at First Baptist in Canton, Michigan (I grew up in Belleville until we moved to Britton around 2000). Though I am sure that I heard the gospel countless times, it was in this moment that I became aware of my own sinfulness and need for my Savior. I went to a back room with one of the adult volunteers and—as best as a feisty young boy could do—I asked Jesus to be my Savior, believing that He died for my sins and rose from the dead. Shortly after, I followed in believer's baptism, along with my older brother.

There is a phrase I love that one of my friends would often say: “The gospel meets you where you are, but it never leaves you where you are,” and that phrase (alluding to the wonderful doctrine of our progressive sanctification) was rather evident in the early parts of my testimony, and continuing on. As a young boy and on through my early teen years, I struggled heavily with doubt. I would question whether I was a Christian, doubting my salvation, or even have fleeting “what-if” concerns questioning the realities of our Christian faith—and this would lead to anxiety-filled nights of begging God to save me as I wondered if a Christian could truly feel this way. What encourages me to this day is that even in those moments, I can look back and see God's hand as He led me further down the path of His ultimate will for my life. I wish I knew dates—I wish I could go back and observe *exactly* how these past events unfolded—but I remember a point in my early teen years that a group called Life Action Crusade came to our church (Faith Baptist of Adrian), and led a revival in our church. On one of the nights, the speaker gave a talk on what it meant to truly surrender to Jesus as Lord of our life, and that was when I realized a major component that was missing! I remember kneeling down in the pew where I was and surrendering my life to Jesus Christ for whatever He might have for me...and He has taken me up on that. I love how the gospel is so simple that a child can understand it, and yet even after two seminary degrees, I find myself dropping to the floor in reverent awe of what He has done in and through me, despite me. God is so good!

3. Describe your personal walk with Christ and how you maintain it.

I often say I'm nowhere near where I want to be, but I'm nowhere near where I've been. By God's grace, I continue to grow in my knowledge, love, and dependency upon Him. Here are some of the ways that I proactively seek to walk with Christ:

- **Bible Study**...I love God's Word, and I cannot expect to love it, know it, and share it if I am not in it, myself. I intentionally pick a book of the Bible, and I dedicate my time verse-by-verse in that book, doing my best to understand it in its hermeneutical entirety. Once I decide a book to read, I follow the chapter format of Kent Hughes' *Preaching the Word* commentary series. For example, if my next chapter in the book covers Romans 8:1-8, I read through that portion of Scripture, seek to meditate on it, and then follow up with reading that chapter in the commentary for further insights and encouragement. I also am a notorious annotator in my Bible, enjoying going back to those passages and seeing what was laid on my heart at that time. Hermeneutically speaking, the Bible should always be consistent in its interpretation, but sometimes our application varies depending on our life circumstances. For instance, in Romans 10:1, I simply wrote “Who am I praying for?” and wrote my grandma's name down with a

date in October 2019. Through talking with her this past year, I was able to determine that she *had* put her faith in Jesus Christ as her Savior, so there is a new date on there for July 2020! It serves a reminder to me, and I love it dearly! At this current moment, I am going through Revelation, and it is amazing!

- **Prayer**... This is an area that I have significantly grown in, but need to significantly grow in even more. My wife and I start our day in prayer before I leave to go to work, asking—beyond specific things—that God would use us for His glory that day, that He would keep us from temptation, and that He would give us opportunities to share the Good News to somebody (either by sharing it with somebody who has never heard it or accepted it, or with somebody who claims it and needs reminding of it). I am trying more and more to live out the heart of Paul’s ceaseless praying, living in such a way that I am constantly in communication with Him and possessing an attitude of prayer. I frequently take prayer walks which are becoming some of my favorite parts of my day. There are three things that I am seeking to become better at, though: 1) Being intentional about praying for people by name. How often do we tell somebody that we will pray for them, but then forget later? 2) Praying more regularly over what I am reading in His Word and asking the Holy Spirit to convict and move me in response to what I have read. 3) Taking time for silence before Him.
- **Filling with the Right Stuff**... it is rather easy for people in ministry to keep pouring out while forgetting to fill-up. This can produce burnout, or worse yet, an empty shell that fills up with the wrong things. For this reason, I do my best to fill myself with things that edify my walk with God on a regular basis; things like:
 - Chick-fil-A...the Lord’s fast food.
 - Worship Music! I love CityAlight, Shane and Shane, Sovereign Grace, the Getty’s, and a good handful of others...but I will admit that I more often listen to worship music over Christian music in general.
 - Sermons! I frequent individuals like John MacArthur, Albert Mohler, John Piper, Adrian Rogers, Hershael York, RC Sproul, and several others (this is one that I could go on about).
 - Podcasts! Pastors Well, Love Worth Finding, The Briefing, Desiring God, Ligonier, We Are Send Network, Acts 29, 9 Marks, and a handful of others.
 - I will add that I am that weirdo who listens to sermons and podcasts while doing busy work 8 times out of 10 over listening to music.
 - Twitter! Yes...I love Twitter, and I predominantly follow pastors, seminarians, theologians, and various ministries and their leaders. It is like reading a bunch of brief biblical plugs that bring so much encouragement randomly throughout the day!
 - I also love conferences and seminars! Some of my most recent ones that I have attended in the past few years are Church in Hard Places (developing churches in impoverished communities), Apologetics in Hard Places (defending our faith in impoverished communities), Acts 29’s Annual Conference, Together for the Gospel, Dare2Share, ACBC Biblical Counseling, and I am hoping to watch virtually with a young man I disciple the Cross Conference (mobilizing 18-25y.o.’s for missions), and my wife is planning to attend The Gospel Coalition’s Women’s Conference this coming Spring.
- **Fighting Sin**...until we reach heaven, this will continue to be a thorn in our flesh that we cannot perfectly pull out; therefore, I do a few things to keep going in the right direction.
 - Regularly ask God what needs to go—whether it is a sinful behavior, or even something in my life that I am rubbing shoulders with that does not honor His name (a show I’m watching, music I listen to, etc.). I am learning the value of living out Psalm 139:23-24.
 - Repent over things that do not belong; not just feeling sorry for what went wrong—whether a single act or lifestyle change—but actually taking steps to (as Clayton King puts it) “hate it, starve it, and outsmart it”; to figuratively cut off things in order to make no provision for the flesh (Mat. 5:30, Rom. 13:14).
 - Regularly keep accountability with people who know me well—both my strengths and my weaknesses. My greatest partner in accountability is my wife, as we mutually go beyond praying through the good and the bad, and continue to encourage each other prayerfully and proactively

toward godly living. I also have two dear friends in ministry, and we mutually keep tabs on each other.

4. If married, tell us a little about your spouse, their training, gifts, and major interests.

Where do I start?! I am blessed beyond belief by my wife, Erica, who I believe is the second greatest gift that God gave me, following my salvation. I call her my “Daisy among the dandelions,” because out of all of the dandelions in the world, I found my one Daisy. Sappiness aside, she is my best friend, partner for life, and partner in ministry. She loves missions and loves to look for opportunities to support missions work locally and globally. At Faith Baptist, she was a regular in their Bible publishing. She is extremely talented in baking and cake/cupcake decorating, and even had her own business from home that was growing; however, she put that on hold due to our smaller kitchen and the difficulty of baking in a sanitized kitchen while feeding a bunch of crazy boys. She is one of the most compassionate people I know, thinking of people and their situations that never would have crossed my mind.

Pre-COVID, Erica helped regularly in our Nursery, and she still serves as a member of the core leadership team of a monthly women’s ministry. She genuinely loves serving in the youth and ministering to our young ladies, but naturally, it has become difficult for her with our growing family. We do our best to make sure that she is involved as much as possible—occasional babysitter, bringing the kids with us, or me hanging out with the boys so she can get away and meet with students—but we also understand that this is the stage of our life, and our family takes priority.

5. Describe the challenges you face in making your family a priority.

Ironically, because of COVID, not many at the current moment! As I look back to before COVID, and as I look toward the future, one of the biggest challenges continues to be time management. Even if a ministry leader’s weekly schedule is somewhere between 40-50 hours/week, more often than not, beyond the typical office hours and scheduled events, there are several unplanned moments. There are some things that my family certainly understands are priorities that cannot be put off (crises and major needs), but I also work hard to live out the spiritual principle of “no.” Unless it is an emergency, a phone call, text, or email can wait; meetings do not fix everything; and I cannot attend every single extracurricular event of each student (that is why I try to make it my goal to attend at least one of each student’s events...with some events hitting multiple students, and often my family comes along).

Another challenge I see is the temptation to constantly bring work home with me. Granted, our lives are called to be focused on Christ, and by extension, much of our lives revolve around the happenings of the church; however, my relationship with my family is *affected* by my ministry, but not *controlled* by my ministry. It is controlled by Christ. I am not claiming perfection in this, but I need to protect my family from drama, issues, and especially gossip that does not directly affect them, produce God-honoring fruit, and/or present opportunities for them as active members to serve and build up the body. In the same way, though I know that pastors “live in a fishbowl,” and though I know that the way I shepherd my family is directly linked to my qualification and ability to shepherd the flock (1 Timothy 3:4), I need to protect my family from hurt that can come from within the church, and I do not believe I am called to parade my family like some exhibit at the zoo. Nobody is perfect, the church is a bunch of imperfect people pointing to our Perfect God, but I can assure you that my priorities are firm: 1) My relationship with God, 2) My relationship with my Family (Erica first, then kids, then everybody else), 3) My relationship with my Church (first immediate/congregational, and then global in Christ), and 4) My relationship with the World—primarily in evangelism. I will be the first to say that I have at times put one before the other, but this is what I base my relationships on.

6. Briefly describe your call to the ministry.

God will get His way no matter what (He is sovereign!), but it definitely helps when we follow along without kicking and screaming. I can go as far back as my teen years, seeing God’s hand preparing me for ministry, but college was one of the biggest catalysts that He used. I went to Liberty in 2008 for Nursing, but God immediately placed me in student leadership, leading a weekly small group for the men on my hall. There came

a point where I questioned my major and considered ministry, but through internal and external pressure, I changed my major to Elementary Education. Still, God used some amazing things and people to prepare me for ministry despite my ignorance of His calling in my life. I returned to Michigan in 2013, and joined Lenawee Christian for the next two school years, serving in a number of different ways that—to this day—I am beyond thankful for, but one of the greatest moments came through an interesting situation. Tom Durbin set up a meeting with the Department Head for the School of Education at Siena Heights, and the Department Head mapped out a plan for me to get my Michigan Teaching License. It was beyond gracious, with some classes she had determined that we would simply meet and discuss the source material; basically boiling down to one year of classes, and one semester of student teaching—and my classes started immediately. This was my crossroads, and I knew that teaching had an expiration date if I was truly to follow my commitment I made years ago. I had some great and influential voices cheering me on, but I knew that it would be one more moment of me compromising from my calling. In Spring of 2015, I surrendered to my calling for full-time ministry, and God has put me on a fast track of experience, training, and personal sanctification. It is now the Fall of 2020, I am in my fifth year serving full-time as a Youth Pastor, I have accomplished two Master's degrees in seminary, I have been blessed with an amazing wife and two rambunctious boys (with a third on the way), and I am living a life that looks drastically different than what it used to be. God is so good to a man who does not deserve His goodness. I have every reason to shout from the rooftops His steadfast love!

7. What have you identified as your main spiritual gifts? Describe how you came to this conclusion.

Similar to what is said about a calling to ministry, I think it applies here: The confirmation of our calling in ministry is seen first in the passionate burden that the Holy Spirit places upon us, and second through the affirmation of others. With that being said, I would conclude that my main spiritual gifts are:

- **Verbal and Written Communication:** I love to preach and teach, and I love to write—formally and informally. If my seminary work had relied on test-taking, I would have been doomed from the start, so thank the Lord much of it required scholarly research and writing! As a man who used to doubt, it matters to me that Christians know that they know that they know, and I find it a great privilege to dig into God's Word, and passionately share it with others. Among the various things that I do, I probably receive the majority of compliments from my teaching, preaching, and writing.
- **Interpersonal Discipleship:** I love discipleship, from the initial parts of evangelism to the deeper side of mentoring and walking alongside somebody. I discovered my gifts in it through the discipleship ministries at Liberty, and grew to love it even more in my Master of Arts emphasis. In ministry, I tend to go more for the long game, slowly building deeper relationships with people and letting that take root, over a flashy seeker-sensitive model. Though there is a place for the exciting, I much prefer building relationships and challenging people while we're pulling weeds for a nonprofit, raking leaves, or patching a roof; of being present in their life, discovering their interests, and remaining through the hard things. I am only taking two things to heaven with me: my soul along with the souls of those called by the Father, bought by the blood of the Son, and regenerated by the working of the Holy Spirit, who I am blessed to serve...so why not invest in those?

8. In ministry, describe how you ensure that you are in contact with non-Christians.

First, it is a dangerous thing to assume that everybody in your circle is a Christian, which is one of the several reasons why the gospel must be front and center. Second, in regards to Student Ministry, from connection with current students who invite their friends or connections through engaging in the community, bridges are made to invest in the lives of students on a regular basis. I will admit, though, that the two areas that I am seeking to grow in this area are engaging non-Christian family members/parents, and people my own age. It is so easy to emphasize students and miss out on the people in my own concentric circles of influence (like family, neighbors, barber, etc.). For this reason, I actually just recently bought a bunch of CSB Bibles that were on sale, and I am preparing to write a gospel-centered letter to each of my family members who do not know Christ as their Savior (please pray for me on this one—both for wisdom in what to say and starting conversations, and to commit to urgency and not delay).

9. What do you believe is your greatest personal strength? Weakness?

I know that this sounds *beyond* cliché, but I think my strong Type B personality contains within itself my greatest personal strength and weakness. I am a person that thrives with people and interpersonal relationships, and this is wonderful for my calling! On the other hand, it means that I am not as detail-oriented as I could/should be, and (as shared earlier), this is why administrative work is one of my growth areas.

10. What do you see as a “ministerial weakness” that will need support from other people around you (laymen, church staff, or other pastors)?

As stated previously, it would definitely be my administrative and organizational skills. I do a handful of things to keep myself in check with it (sticky note reminders all over my monitor, attempted calendar updates, a notebook with notes all over it), but many things I have learned in this realm come through the encouragement of others and—quite frankly—the shortcomings of my own. For instance, our youth goes up North to Camp Barakel every year for our Winter Retreat, and a vast majority of our students love to stop at the A&W in a small town on the way. One time we went and they were short-staffed, and beyond stressed to have 30+ people show up at once...so now we call ahead!

11. Describe your expectations, experiences, and understanding of team ministry.

Team ministry is a must (Exodus 18:13-27, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12), and it should be both encouraged and pursued to whatever extent God allows it. My team ministry experience has been...a roller coaster. Before I came to the church I am currently serving at, the church ran three separate branches of youth ministry (Sunday School, youth group, and an open-gym/outreach), led by mostly different teams/volunteers with some serving in a couple ministries, and they were without a youth pastor for over a decade. When I joined, I noticed that the ministries were exclusive, and people were rather protective of their ministry (a part of the story that would require more history/context). I was brought on in hopes of uniting the ministries and seeing a single vision take place. It was messy, we lost people, and—with most established churches—it has taken years of slowly turning the “freighter” in the right direction, but I believe that we are moving in a direction that could possess great potential. Moving forward, and in any future context of ministry, my expectations for my team are:

- Profession of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and clear understanding of what the Good News is.
- Possession of a life worth emulating (not perfect, but seeking holiness).
- Evidence of an active Christian walk (church participation, Bible reading, prayer, lifestyle decisions).
- Commitment to the Student Ministries and the students impacted therein.
- Commitment to each other, seeking to encourage each other’s strengths while helping through each other’s weaknesses.
- Commitment to be discipled and disciple somebody else.

12. Describe how you would plan to train your adult student ministry leaders?

These are things that I am currently doing, and/or am preparing to do in my own adult team:

- Monthly Meeting:
 - Bible/Book Study (we are currently going through *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* by Dodson)
 - Prayer Time (prayer requests and over the ministry)
 - Event Planning...both to make sure everybody is on the same page for what is ahead in that month, as well looking further in the calendar and brainstorming for future opportunities.
 - Accountability (this will be new for our group, but I’m bringing it in)...split off into male and female groups and openly discuss:
 - What is being personally studied in God’s Word and what we’re learning.
 - What our prayer life consists of.
 - Holy living...time to confess if needed, open up about struggles, discuss repentance, and look for ways to support one another in addition to prayer.
 - Professional Development...evangelism, tackling hard conversations, when to call CPS, discipline, do’s and don’ts of one-on-one, social media usage, tech, etc.

- (At Least) Annual Conference/Seminar...we were supposed to go hear Shane Pruitt in Flushing this past weekend...but COVID is a ruiner of all things happy.
- Some mode of open communication (Facebook Group, Small Group, Text, etc.) to be able to contact one another and share insights, articles, prayer requests, and ideas.
- (Big One) Get to know my team even better, figure out their gifts, and push them!

13. Describe how you relate and work with those that God has placed in a position of authority over you (i.e. Elders, Lead Pastor, and Administrative Pastor).

Before anything else, the church—both congregational and global—serves under the headship of Christ, being the ultimate Authority over all happenings, methods, and missions set forth in the church (Col. 1:18). He is the Good Shepherd over all His flock, and those whom He has placed in spiritual leadership of a congregational family are called to be under-shepherds for Him. With that in mind, within the construct of the spiritual family (local church), I am called to submit to the Christ-like leadership of those whom God has placed over me for the sake of my progressive sanctification and the fulfillment of the Great Commission (specifically in discipleship, evangelism, teaching, discipline, and local/global mission).

In addition to submission to those in authority over me, I also would greatly appreciate discipleship and personal investment. In ministry, a Lead Pastor and Elders are not just my “bosses,” but men that I have been entrusted to. I am a “green horn” in both life and ministry, having only been in full-time ministry for four and a half years, a husband for about the same, and a father for three and a half years. As a man who firmly believes in the value and necessity of discipleship, this is something that is of great importance to me, and I look forward to the possibility of building those relationship at Grace Point, Lord willing.

14. Describe the importance of God’s Word in your selection of curriculum, teaching, and leading.

God’s Word is God’s most direct line of communication to us; therefore, it is central to my personal life and pastoral ministry (Sola Scriptura). I saw a joke recently whose premise was that if we want to hear from God, we need to read His Word, and if we want to audibly hear from God, we need to read His Word out loud (I thought it was pretty funny). In my current context, I primarily write my own curriculum over using others; and depending on the context of the ministry setting, I either teach topically based out of a created series (topical in relevance to their need, expository in presentation of Scripture), or by going verse-by-verse through a portion or whole book of the Bible (pre-COVID, our Sunday School was going through Matthew). I am not a man who spends 75% of his time teaching/preaching through life scenarios and my own wisdom with supportive verses slipped in; on the contrary, I would much rather rely on Scripture to lead what we are learning and interject examples and aids to move others toward a correct response to His Word. This goes for my leading, as well. I do not have to worry about any decision I make or advice I give if it comes straight from Scripture—and I take James 3:1 seriously, knowing that *how* I present truth (and whether I am sharing it correctly) is of great importance. If we truly believe that God’s fully inspired Word is profitable in our ministry (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and if we believe that it cuts to the heart of man (Heb. 4:12), why wouldn’t we use it above anything else?

15. How do you deal with conflict? Describe the process that you go through to attempt to bring resolution.

Matthew 18...if I personally was dealing with an area of conflict with somebody, I would personally go to him and point him to God’s Word. If he does not repent, I would bring witnesses or others who care about this individual to talk with him. If he still does not repent, I would then take it to the church (specifically the leadership...whole church involvement would come into play at the discretion of the elders). Even then, though, if the individual walks away without repentance and reconciliation, it is with hope that one day, that relationship can be restored—there is always grace! I will not say that I am perfect in this model; however, this is and should be my aim in handling conflict. In the context of youth, then, I would encourage students to work through it together, offering assistance/support if needed as they try to figure out how to live out the Matthew 18 principle. I would walk through the steps with them, and, if the final step is needed, would determine whether the situation requires A) a serious conversation with members/leaders of our youth team, B) a meeting with all involved and their parents/guardians, or C) intervention from a member (or members) of the Elder Board. No matter the

situation, though, any moment of conflict is an opportunity to remind those involved of the grace, mercy, and love of Jesus Christ which undeservedly satisfies His justice—we have every reason to point people back to the cross!

16. Describe the gifts and abilities that God has given to you. How long have you been using these gifts to bring Him glory?

I am a rather talented coffee drinker, and I have used this blessed gift (both coffee and the ability to drink it) to connect with countless individuals and encourage them in God's Word! In all seriousness, though, I would argue that my strongest gifts fall into my interpersonal skills and communication. I love relationships, I love learning, and I love sharing within those relationships what I am learning. The Great Commandment (Mat. 22:34-40) is something that I take seriously, and I am still growing in, constantly asking myself if what I am about to do truly displays love for my God and for those around me. One of the biggest areas I have been trying to grow in within this is feeling and expressing empathy while intentionally listening to others. I can tend to be a fixer, when sometimes that is not what somebody is wanting (or needing) in that moment. Beyond interpersonal skills, I have also dabbled in light graphic design, creating logos and promos for our ministries in various capacities. I am not talented enough to be up on stage doing anything, but I do enjoy guitar, piano, and singing, and have used that to encourage and help others in life and ministry (I am strongly encouraged that the Psalmist says to "make a joyful *noise*" to the Lord). Though not terribly skilled in anything specific, I also love the holistic side of ministry in meeting people's physical needs in order to bridge opportunities to address their spiritual needs.

I find this question interesting, though, because the theme of God's glory has been a central focus of mine for years. My life verse is Romans 11:33-36 (with special emphasis on verse 36), and I make it my aim that—gift or not—my life is called to be lived for God's maximum glory in all things. This affects relationships, media intake, time management, rest, and a rather massive list of other things. There is much to learn and grow in with this truth, but what a privilege and joy it is to spend my days seeking it out daily!

17. In your own words, define unity. Do you feel that you are able to bring groups of diverse people together in unity? Please describe how you have done this in the past.

Unity is a group of individuals who are on mission. Wherever you see a group of people, they are often congregated based on something (cliques, teams, cultural influences, statuses, etc.), so how should that affect the church? Paul gives several encouragements to it, from his discussion of the functioning Body in 1 Corinthians 12 and the dispelling of cultural divisions in Ephesians 2:11-22, but I think the most beautiful passage of unity is found in Philippians 2. I could write pages on this passage (I love it so much), but I will simply say that a church that is truly united is one that is united in Christ, in the Good News, and in His Word. It sounds so simple, yet it is literally the answer to it all—both successes and shortcomings in unity.

I suppose I would say that I am able, though I would argue that I could do better. One of the most noticeable investments that I have seen is that when I first came to Milan, our youth ministry was segregated by two groups: a more edgy outreach group that met on Thursdays, and the "church kids" who met on Sundays. They did separate events and trips, and hardly ever blended. Through building relationships and intentionally blending youth activities, we were able to see a significant increase in cross-over between the two ministries that has been amazing to see. For our students who know Christ, I continue to model and teach what it means to love our neighbors in a Christ-like way; for our students who do not know Christ, I continue to point them to the cross and the truth of God's Word while welcoming them with open arms. This has led to students from the outreach group making decisions for Christ, going on missions trips that they would have never gone on, and having hard conversations with leaders and peers regarding their worldview compared to the Bible (a common situation is LGBTQ discussions). The gospel *must* be at the center, and if it evidently is, the group will naturally become a messy microcosm of the community won by Christ.

18. Describe the importance of evangelism and the role it should play within the church. When was the last time you shared the Gospel with an unbeliever?

I would argue that evangelism should play a primary role in the church. If the church is an embassy of Believers representing their true, eternal nationality, if the church is truly to live out Great Commission discipleship, it must begin and end in the gospel—and where does it begin if not in proclamation of the Good News? Take youth ministry for example...it is not my goal as a youth pastor to train my students to become well-adjusted church attenders, but rather to mobilize them for God's mission to make His glorious name known, and this comes through evangelism, discipleship, education, service, and missions. Evangelism within the church must extend past the invitation by the pastor on Sunday mornings; it has to be an individual and corporate conviction, and sadly, the latter is often lacking because the former hardly exists. We cannot act like evangelism is a gifting that only some people have, and therefore, is not expected of all Christ-followers. With that in mind, mobilization, training, and opportunity creating within the church for its members must be a priority.

I have recently (within the past year) been convicted that as a pastor, I “hide behind the pulpit.” It is so easy for pastors to claim that they share the gospel as they teach it weekly, but there is a difference between preaching evangelism and personal evangelism. It is increasingly becoming my aim and prayer to present the gospel at some point every day—whether it is to somebody who does not know Christ and needs Him, or to somebody who claims Christ and needs remembering. This has greatly affected how I live daily, even causing me to reflect more intentionally on missed opportunities.

The most recent time that I was able to share the gospel with somebody who did not seem to know Christ was a couple of weeks ago. A small group of families went down to Kentucky to serve on a mini missions trip with an organization that we love (Big Creek), and on that trip, some of us spent the weekend repairing a family's roof. As we stood in the kitchen and ate lunch with one of the family members, he began to talk about how he “used to be religious and go to church,” and I started to share with him how his salvation did not hinge on church attendance, but with faith in what Jesus Christ had done for him on the cross. The man was quick to cut off the conversation, but at least something was shared. As a side note that I greatly appreciated, two of my students were with me when this happened, and it sparked a conversation afterwards about it.

19. Describe your plan for discipling students.

For years, I have classified students in discipleship using Dan Spader's book, *4 Chair Discipling* (an excellent read that simplifies Jesus' intentional model for discipleship). In summary, there are four basic levels of discipleship within students:

- **The Seeker**...these are students who are either completely unregenerate but brush shoulders with our ministry, or students who are beginning to seek out truth. At this level, evangelism is the priority.
- **The Learner**...these students have put their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior, but they are babies. They are learning biblical principles, and are watching what leaders are doing. At this level, teaching/preaching and motivation toward holy living and Great Commission work are expected.
- **The Follower**...these students have a growing knowledge and love for God and His Word, and are beginning to join the discipler in using their gifts for God's Kingdom. At this level, students are discovering their spiritual gifts (often with help), are engaging in God's Word, and are actively being the hands and feet of Jesus...but with heavy help/supervision from the discipler.
- **The Disciple-Maker**...these students are now actively growing, utilizing their gifts, and are now looking for Seekers, Learners, and Followers to help them grow into mature Christ-followers, leading to multiplication.

Each ministry and church is different in how engagement with students and discipleship is implemented. At its simplest levels, every youth pastor/team should seek to engage all four levels of students within their programs and events, as well as seek out ways to personally and relationally move students to the next level. Grace Point's may look different from Milan's in the specific programming; however, let me share with you what we are hoping to do once COVID restrictions lift:

- Sunday School (Education)...in this time, the primary focus is teaching God’s Word. Though we were going verse-by-verse through a book of the Bible, we will be moving forward in a more “big picture” mentality. Instead of going verse-by-verse, we will be covering multiple weeks doing overviews of books of the Bible. For instance, instead of going a chapter each week in Matthew for 28 weeks, we would cover it over a course of 4-8 weeks, highlighting key themes, authorship, context, and purpose so that students get a clear overall understanding of that book of the Bible. The goal is that if a student comes in at 7th grade, by the time they graduate, they will have an adequate understanding of the whole Bible.
- Sunday Night Youth Group (Light Discipleship and Evangelism)...this is our traditional youth group with time to hang out, food, worship, teaching, and break-outs into small group discussion and prayer. Topics of teaching will focus more heavily on character study and holy living (how God’s Word affects the way we live) with a gospel emphasis.
- Wednesday Nigh Small Group (Moderate Discipleship)...this time is primarily dedicated to Bible study, fellowship (with a snack/meal, of course), and prayer. Topics that are covered at this time are heavier (theology discussions, responding as Christians in non-Christian situations/surroundings, evangelism and discipleship methodology). This has historically been our key ministry for mobilizing students for service.
- Service and Missions (Heavy Discipleship)...these events are where the teachings become practical, including our annual missions trip, service projects for the church and other ministries within the church, community service, and many others. This has become a growing aspect within our ministry that has produced great conversations and decisions for Christ among our students.
- Monthly Saturday Outreach (Heavy Evangelism)...this is a recreation of our Thursday night, but on a larger scale (it is a new ministry that will begin the moment COVID restrictions lift). Students will be encouraged to invite their peers to this event, which will have some form of activity to draw interest (water wars at the park, special entertainer doing a show, knockerball rental, etc.). This event will then allow leaders and student leaders to engage in students within the community in a fun way, inviting them to other events that happen on a weekly basis as well as special events/trips (i.e. camp, movie nights, bonfires, etc.). At the end of the night, the gospel will clearly be presented in an engaging way as the Holy Spirit works within the hearts of those led to hear His call.

There are other aspects that could be discussed, but I hope this gives you a good picture of what I am currently implementing—or preparing to implement to disciple our students. And again, a rather large part of this for me is the relationship aspect with students, and that comes through years of investment with them; I am man who is a fan of the “long game” over short, shallow impact.

20. Describe your plan for engaging with and equipping parents as the ones responsible for discipling their student(s).

- Build relationships with parents that (preferably) extend beyond youth pastor to parent. Some ways to do this include inviting families over for dinner, going out to coffee, intentionally engaging parents at church and outside venues, among many other ways.
- Be as aware as possible of parents’ own walk with Christ—whether they are Christ-followers, and to what extent. With this knowledge, provide opportunities for parents to grow through shared resources and opportunities (seminars in the area, ministries in the church, etc.).
- Keep in close communication with parents about the youth ministry as a whole as well as the development of their student(s).
 - At least monthly newsletter covering events and happenings.
 - Make sure parents have ways to contact you.
 - Provide parents with verses, questions, and/or prompts to continue biblical discussions outside of youth programs.

- Develop special events tackling topics that parents need support in (technology, dating/relationships, social media, teenager discipline, discipleship in the home, etc.).
- If their child(ren) is/are comfortable with this, and to whatever extent, provide opportunities for parents to serve within the ministry:
 - Regular Youth Team Member
 - Host Home
 - Food Provision
 - Event Chaperone

21. How have you expanded your own biblical worldview over the past year?

For a more detailed explanation, see my answer to question #3, as I believe that my biblical worldview is closely linked to my daily and continual walk with Christ. In reflection of this past year, though, here are a few thoughts that I have mulled over:

- My love for God’s Word has increased significantly as I have become more intentional about *how* I study it.
- My prayer life has become more specific and intimate as God has worked in my life and is preparing for what He has for my family.
- I have become more passionate about clear and deep theology, not wanting to water anything down as well as carefully observing what others teach/preach.
- I think many Christians are good at pulling at the green parts of the “weeds” of sin in their life, me included, but God has taken specific time to help me dig into some of the ugly roots and pull them up, which has been wonderful and painful at the same time. I just recently heard a pastor-theologian say that the older we become as saints, the more aware we become of our own sin...this is so true, and as my view of myself begins to decrease, my view of God is so much more significantly increased, as well as my love and compassion for others.
- I used to be so specific about how I wanted to serve God (locations, pursuits, ministries), but I am finding myself more and more simply wanting to be faithful wherever He has me and leads me. I just want to show Him glory!
- In all of this, I have also seen a significant change in my involvement in things of this world. For instance, my filter for media has become significantly more sensitive, and things that I would have watched/listened to a year or more ago, I cannot fathom involving myself in (it definitely helps that I am rather busy, and what TV I do watch is with toddlers now)!

22. Describe your plan for engaging in intentional relationships with students and parents. How would you train other adult student ministry leaders to model this as well?

- Be aware that each individual relates to other individuals differently. It is quite alright if one student relates to an adult leader better than myself; thus, building a closer relationship. As the youth pastor, I must be aware of those natural connections, and take advantage of them in discipleship (i.e. having that adult invite that student to an event may be better than personally inviting the student myself; therefore, though I still invite this student, making sure that the specific adult reaches out to this student, as well, will create a deeper impact).
- Similar to question #20, I would take time to invite families over for dinner or do something outside of church together. This is something that should naturally be encouraged for adult leaders, as well, as the Body of Christ builds fellowship with one another.
- Get to know students and their parents beyond the surface level. It is rather simple (and tempting) to provide a “service” for students—they come in, you do youth group, they leave, you have nothing to do with them until next week. By attending students’ extra-curriculars (sports, concerts, etc.), visiting students at the school (often at lunch), and looking for other ways to be a part of their life outside of youth group are often more important than what can be done within youth group. The truth of the matter is that most students will not remember every lesson that I teach, but they will remember how present I

was in their life. It is also fun to encourage youth leaders (and students) to join in on the fun. This creates a sense of ownership and family among the whole group.

- This one takes a long time (often years), but get to know the deeper side of students and their family; their upbringing, culture, beliefs, strengths, weaknesses, interests, and so on. This comes not only from the previous point in investing beyond youth group, but also from engaging families intentionally when with them; asking meaningful questions that build conversations that build relationships. Not in a bad way, but most people to a degree enjoy talking about themselves; asking questions that spark conversation about somebody, and then providing follow up questions make that person aware that they matter to you, and that you are interested in them. This actually is a perfect example of topic in training for youth leaders while having conversations with students in and out of youth group, asking a progression of questions like:
 - What is one of your favorite things to do?
 - [Express interest], how long have you done that for?
 - What is your favorite part of that?
 - What is the hardest part of that?
 - Have you ever tried _____ [in relation to that hobby]?
 - The list could go on here...be adventurous!

23. Describe the importance and function of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.

The Holy Spirit plays a vital role that is often misused in the life of so many Christ-followers. There are those on the hyper-charismatic side that either lack holy reverence toward Him or live in a pseudo-supernatural exploitation of Him, while several other Christians—in a form of over-correction—live a life that appears to express a belief in a “Biunity” over the Trinity, neglecting the blessing of submission to the Holy Spirit’s residence, work, and leading. Here are some key biblical observations of the Holy Spirit that are essential for the Believer daily:

- The Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus following His ascension into heaven (John 14:15-17, Acts 1:8). This matters for Believers today because Jesus’ promises should not be taken lightly.
- The Holy Spirit is the active Agent of regeneration in the lives of Believers at the moment of His calling them to salvation (Titus 3:5-7). In addition, He baptizes Believers into this new life as one Body with many members (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Historically, there were instances where signs were present at His baptizing (Acts 2:1-4, Acts 10:44-46); however, there is no Scriptural evidence that this should be expected of every Believer at the point of conversion, and therefore, that it is required as evidence of salvation today. On the contrary, many scholars argue that the miraculous signs as displayed at the moment of baptism in the Spirit were primarily and strategically experienced to display and confirm God’s working in the early church and through the Apostles; much in the same way that a shift is seen throughout Acts of the Apostles laying hands on converts to receive the Holy Spirit, and then the Holy Spirit coming upon converts without need for hands to be laid on them. Still, and no matter to what degree a Christian is convicted on this topic, it is such a sweet encouragement to know that the Holy Spirit creates new life in the Believer!
- The Holy Spirit intercedes for Believers according to the will of the Father, even when we do not know what we ought to pray for (Romans 8:26-27). Especially within the context of Romans 8, there is great peace and encouragement to know that the Holy Spirit is praying for us in the midst of our suffering. What an undeserved blessing that is often overlooked!
- The Holy Spirit provides empowerment, gifts, and direction/conviction to Believers for the sake of fulfilling God’s eternal purposes within the Great Commission, mutual edification of Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and the pursuit of holy living (John 14:26, 16:7-11; Acts 1:8; Luke 12:12; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11). The Holy Spirit is and should be actively involved in the daily life of Believers, and we are called to be filled with Him (Ephesians 5:18). This requires surrender; He is not some magical power that we can tap into in times of need, but rather God Himself taking residency and lordship over our lives as we continually submit to Him in all things.

This is one that I am continuing to seek learning in because, sadly, pneumatology is often neglected or misused in the church, and I will personally admit that I previously was in the neglectful camp. I think it needs to be noted (if not picked up already) that I lean toward a cessationist/hopeful continuationist view in my doctrinal beliefs of the miraculous sign gifts (tongues, new prophecy, healing, etc.). A contextual study of 1 Corinthians 12-14, I would argue, points to Paul's emphasis that the sign gifts are not meant to be pursued in greater emphasis over the gifts that are used for everyday life, ministry, and edification of one another. So much more could be said on this topic; however, I simply believe that the regular use of the miraculous gifts were used by the Apostles to confirm their authority and assist in the exponential early growth in the church, and that over time (especially with the death of the Apostles and the end of apostleship), these gifts were no longer needed for affirmation. Does this mean that God cannot and does not do miraculous things? In the words of Paul throughout Romans, "By no means!" Though I do not believe that the miraculous gifts have a regular place within the church community, and though I do not believe that individuals possess these gifts as special traits for themselves, I cannot deny that God in His sovereignty has every right and reason to use His people at specific times for specific purposes to do miraculous things. He is the One Who is in control; not us—and that is the point. We as Christians must submit to the Holy Spirit daily as He leads us to His purposes, both internally within our own sanctification, and externally as He moves us to invest in the lives of others.

24. What steps do you take in seeking specific direction from the Lord?

Pray, pray, and pray some more! Specifically, though, there are some active ingredients to a life of devoted prayer:

- In one sense, I obviously pray specifically for direction. If there is an identifiable possibility (i.e. this position that I am applying for), I pray for that possibility along with those who are involved. If there is not an identifiable possibility, I remain in a heart of prayer, regularly asking God to lead as He sees fit.
- At times, I will fast, though I will admit that this is a spiritual discipline that I should arguably do more often.
- I will often ask the Lord to search my heart and make sure that motives and intentions are honoring to Him, including asking for wisdom to determine if there currently is a difference between His will and my preference.
- I will look to Scripture for direction, firmly believing that God's Word will either give direct answers to a certain circumstance, or wisdom and principles that will help guide me as I seek God's will.
- Seek godly counsel and encouragement from fellow Believers.
- There is another method that I call the "prayerful pursuit," in which all of the above is actively involved while a specific opportunity is being made possible. There is a marvelously mysterious union between God's sovereign plans and our obedience/stewardship, and God does not call us to sit and wait for Him to drag us to the next chapter of our lives. It is like the proverbial hallway analogy: we find ourselves in a hallway full of doors of opportunity, yet so many of us sit down in the middle of the hallway and ponder what God's will is for our lives. We need to get up, and prayerfully wiggle some doorknobs. I think a neat case study of this is found in Acts 16:6-10, as the Holy Spirit stops Paul and his crew from going one place to another, and then leads them to Macedonia. As we submit to the Holy Spirit's leading, and as we prayerfully pursue new opportunities for God's maximum glory, we can have peace to know that God will lead us to exactly where He wants us to be. If during this process, I specifically pray for Grace Point and God's leading, I fast and dedicate time to reflect and pray for God's will, I check my motives and heart, I seek wisdom through God's Word and His saints, and I pursue this with humility, how can this process end badly—even if it is determined that God does not want me and my family at Grace Point? On the contrary, it will go *exactly* as planned according to His will; therefore, it will be good, and in that, I have an abundance of peace.

25. What three persons have had the greatest positive impact on your life and why?

- Michael Miller...former campus pastor at Liberty University and head of (what were then called) the Spiritual Life Directors (administrative pastor at Community Crosslink in Harrisonburg, VA). He was one of my greatest disciplers who still impacts me from time to time today. He truly showed me what it

meant to intentionally pursue somebody, going above and beyond what most would do—including ministry leaders—to make sure that he was a part of my life. He taught me what it meant to be a biblical man, to lead no matter the circumstances or hardships, to work hard for the Lord, to be adaptive and flexible in ministry, and to find the character qualities and gifts in each person. He remains to this day one of God’s most strategic investments in my life that moved me to full-time ministry and making disciples.

- Bart Leu...former youth director at Faith Baptist Church (current church planter in Lansing). We all have ideas of what youth ministry should look like, but Bart was the first person to help me see a more realistic and biblical view of it. Bart emphasized the people over the programs, and relationships over all of the hum-drum business of youth ministry. He scooped me up when I came back from Liberty and intentionally invested in not only my passion for ministry, but also in my life in general. He trained me in the theory of youth ministry and discipleship, going through material with me, and practical methodology as he continued to give me more responsibility in the youth. Looking back, he was God’s “finishing blow” to bring me to my knees in submission to His calling in my life for ministry. Full circle back to the question on my calling, at that time that I was presented with the opportunity to get my Michigan Teaching License, God was using Bart to pour into me the burden for ministry—specifically with students. I owe so much to this man, yet similar to Michael, I see their investment in me, and how the discipleship principle of multiplication has impacted the lives of so many people, reminding me that I am just called to be faithful in discipleship to each person I come in contact with.
- Erica Love...my amazing wife and best friend. There is a reason Paul says that the mystery of marriage is profound and relates closely to Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:32). I know I have only been married for four and a half years, but God has drastically changed me in that short period of time. I look back at bachelor Noah, and I see a completely different man—yet another moment to praise God for how He sanctifies us. My marriage to Erica—and now our lives as parents—has taught me in greater and humbling detail what it means to love sacrificially, to forgive and be forgiven, to be patient, to enjoy the simple and not fret over the grandiose, to find contentment, to be vulnerable, to show grace, to accept gifts (especially when not deserved), to show compassion, to genuinely care for another person, to be intentional, and so many other things. I thought I understood—and exhibited—many of these traits, yet marriage has shown me how much I lack, how much I have learned, and how much more I have to go. I do not know how one man could love a woman so much, and yet I find myself loving her more and more each day. She is my Daisy, and I will forever be wowed by her.

26. Have you ever been asked to resign from a church? If so, please explain.

By God’s grace, I have not.

27. Is there anything in your past that, if made public, would bring dishonor to the name of Christ?

Of course! But at the same time, no. If we were really real with ourselves, within the pains and regrets of our past, the foolish temptations and compromises of our present, and the sinful potential of our future, we are professionals at doing things that bring dishonor to the name of Christ—just spend a few minutes on Facebook. The beauty of the gospel is that Jesus’ wonderful name one day will cause every knee to bow in heaven, earth, and under the earth to Him, and every tongue confess Him as Lord, to the glory of the Father; and this glorious future hope has nothing to do with what I have ever accomplished, but rather on the sole fact that He graciously paid what I could never afford to give me what I never deserved (Philippians 2:5-11). We can have complete peace that all of our sins have been nailed to the cross, our debts have been paid, and the enemy has been defeated by our Lord (Colossians 2:13-15)! It is for this reason that whether in the testimony of my past sins or in my continual imperfections as I strive for holiness, I can declare the wonderful goodness of Jesus’ love and mercy despite me (1 Timothy 1:15-17, Ephesians 2:1-10). So on the contrary, even in my weaknesses and failures, Christ is exalted, and I aim to point all people in that direction until the day I hear “Well done, good and faithful servant”; not because of what I have done, but because of what Christ ultimately did for me at the cross, and continued to do through me in my life. It is only by His strength, grace, and mercy, and it is all for His great glory!