

'Keep first things first': Longview Point prioritizes missional church culture

*By Chloe Newton
Staff Writer*

Wade Stevens, Senior Pastor of Longview Point Church, Hernando, joined "Around the Table" podcast hosts Tanner Cade, MBCB Director of Communication Services, and Jon Martin, MBCB Chief Strategy Officer. Stevens imparted his wisdom about healthy church culture, church planting, enacting change within a church, and monetary discernment.

For a little over five years, Wade Stevens has served as the Senior Pastor at Longview Point Church, defined by its welcoming and missional church culture. That healthy culture has been maintained by "keep[ing] the first things first."

"Our number one and only focal point in disciple making is broadening discipleship groups and the ability of members to make disciples even independent of the gathered body. There is such a spirit of unity. I've served in established church settings for a long time before coming here, so I get how fragile that can be and what a precious gift it is. I think it's just a shared desire to see the kingdom of Jesus advanced," Stevens remarked.



Longview Point Church, Hernando, focuses on discipleship by opening broadening groups and encouraging disciple making in and outside of the church. (Photo credit: Longview Heights Church)

God has used the humble

mindfulness of the members to plant seven churches

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Being a church plant itself, Longview Point stands out from churches with longer histories. Because the church does not have an established church tradition, members have learned to be open-handed to whatever the Lord may have. When asked about how to make change in a church that is set in its ways, Stevens responded this way:

“I would say [to the pastors] to stay and trust the preaching of the word... Sometimes, I think we run ahead of the Lord and make a mess. In doing so, I just say, be patient and stay as long as the Lord would be pleased to let you be there. And there’s a word of caution there for churches too that may be releasing the guy that came and stayed for a long time to trust his leadership through transition processes as well. I’ve seen that go sideways and everything comes crashing down, but stay and be patient.”

Since its inception, Longview Point membership has grown to be more than 1,800 people. As the church has grown, it has adjusted to meet the needs of the body yet has maintained the “Kingdom first” mindset. The church has successfully navigated growth without incurring debt, prioritizing the use of

resources God has already provided. Churches with a large amount of debt are a growing epidemic.

“The churches that have square footage don’t need it, and the churches that need square footage don’t have it... It’s driven by concern that we keep first things first... It’s not about Dave Ramsey motivations. It’s really just about guarding the DNA of our church and making sure that we don’t get in a financial position where we can’t train pastors, send missionaries and plant churches,” Stevens stated.

To listen to the full “Around the Table” episode visit Podcasts – Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (mbcb.org).