

**“Overcoming the Desire to Acquire;
We Value Humility”**

3/14/99

The Bible tells us that there is one called John who came to prepare the way for the Lord. One day when John was baptizing in the Jordan Jesus came to him and was baptized. Jesus, at the very outset of his ministry, gave a picture of what he had come to do, that he would die on the cross, that he would be buried, and that he would raise again. Therefore, Christ’s followers throughout the centuries and the ages have followed in believer’s baptism because it symbolizes that they belong to Christ. They are no longer their own. They have been bought with a price. They now are living for Jesus Christ.

This young lady is Caitlin Kerns. Caitlin’s daddy is here in our choir. Her mom is right out front here watching and witnessing this moment in her life. I talked with Caitlin just a few days ago and Caitlin shared with me that there had been a time in her life when she asked Christ to come in and for some time she has been praying and considering following Christ in baptism. So Caitlin, I just want to ask you this question this morning, do you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Have you invited him into your heart? Have you devoted your life to him? Then Caitlin, because of that profession of your faith in Jesus Christ and in obedience to his divine commandment, I baptize you now, my little sister, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Buried with Christ in baptism unto death, raised to walk in newness of life. God bless you Caitlin! We are so proud of you and thankful for you and for your following Christ today! Thank you!

Thank you! I know that is an encouragement to these who are being baptized, just to hear from you this morning. I appreciate that very much.

This is Elaine Lines. Elaine, I want to ask you this question, do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Have you invited him into your life? Then Elaine, upon your public profession of faith in Jesus Christ and in obedience to his divine commandment, it is my joy to baptize you, my sister, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We are buried with Christ in baptism unto death and we are raised to walk in newness of life. God bless you, Elaine! So grateful for you. So thrilled about the work of Christ in your life in these days. Thank you.

This is John and Mary Jo Shank. For the last few years they have been involved in this ministry at Boca Raton Community Church. Just a few days ago they came and shared it was their desire to be identified with Christ and in following him in the obedience of believer’s baptism. I want to just give each of them a moment to share with you just a word of testimony of the journey they have made with Christ.

John, would you like to begin?

John speaking: In Easter of 1984, here at Bibletown, I came and asked Pastor to help me establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and through him with God almighty.

Pastor: John, God bless you! Mary Jo, would you like to add a word of what God has done in your life?

Mary Jo: The date: January 18, 1984. The place: Boca Raton Community Church. The message in church that Sunday morning changed my life forever. At the end of the sermon the pastor repeated Jesus' words, I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one can get to the Father except by means of me. On Sunday afternoon I reflected on Jesus' words. I recalled how often love had helped me, my parents' love during several surgeries, my husband's love during years of depression. But now I needed God's sustaining love. At the evening service the pastor invited those who desired to be followers of Christ to come forward. I found myself at the altar but have no recollection of how I got there. The pastor said he had seen me struggling for weeks and he asked me the desire of my heart. To receive Jesus Christ as my Savior was my reply. The pastor prayed with me and I was enveloped with peace. I was surrounded by God's love. Now, it is my desire to be baptized as an act of obedience to God.

Pastor: Amen. God bless you, Mary Jo and John.

John, I am going to baptize you first so that you can assist me in baptizing your wife. We are so thankful for this day in your lives together.

John, because of your public profession of faith in Jesus Christ and in obedience to his divine commandment, it is now my joy to baptize you, my brother, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Buried with Christ in baptism unto death, raised to walk in newness of life. God bless you, John! I am so thankful for you and so excited about your commitment to Christ!

Now Mary Jo, because of your profession of faith in Christ and in obedience to His divine commandment, it is my sincere joy to baptize you, my sister, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Buried with Christ in baptism unto death and raised to walk in newness of life. God bless you, Mary Jo! Thank you so much for coming and being a part of today, being willing to obey the Lord, no matter what, in your life. And, John, for your willingness as well. God bless you both! I am so thankful for you! God bless. Thanks.

Well, that just adds to the excitement of celebration in this place today. We have prepared the way for song, for celebration, and preaching of the Word of God. Let's continue now in worship and let's pray that even at the invitation today that there will be those who will know Christ and follow him as we have seen these do today. God bless you!

In the year King Uzziah died I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne and the train of his robe filled the Temple. Hovering around him were mighty seraphim, each one with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces. With two they covered their feet. And with the remaining two they flew. In a great chorus they sang, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord almighty. The whole earth is filled with his glory. The glorious

singing shook the Temple to its foundations and the entire sanctuary was filled with smoke.

The hymn, “Holy, Holy, Holy” is sung.

Thank you so much.

Father, we give you praise today because you are holy. From the very depths of our hearts there is one expression we desire to give to you. Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.

Father, we pray that our lives would be a reflection of that holiness and purity. Lord, that there would be a devotedness and a sense of being set apart for the things of God. Lord, this day has been set apart that we might come and worship you through singing, through giving, through testimony, through obedience, and through commitment. Father, I pray that it would be seen and known in every part of the service today. Thank you for your presence in this place. Thank you for the joy of being together. It is in Jesus’ name that we pray. Amen. Amen. God bless you.

Would you be seated? I just want to take a minute and say, welcome today. Thank you for coming. Thank you for being a part of this wonderful morning of worship. When you entered the building today you received a worship guide and on the inner portion of that worship guide there is a worship register. I simply ask that sometime here in the next few minutes you take time to detach that, fill it out, and then return it in the offering plate at the close of the service today letting us have a record of your visit. Whether you are a member, certainly you need to be present and accounted for, you are the guys I am counting on to lead the way, but then, for our guests, for the first time or for many times. We are just grateful you have come. If there are needs in your life that we can respond to, if there are questions you have about spiritual matters, if you are interested in something like baptism, which you just witnessed here this morning, we certainly will be glad to respond to you. We will help you and we will give you materials. If you have a prayer need in your life, if you will just indicate that on that piece, that will be good. We will be glad to respond to that need in your life and to be a part of praying for you and seeking to help and encourage you. I am just so thankful that each of you has come. I am looking forward to the time we will spend studying God’s word today. It is my prayer that you will be challenged, that you will be encouraged, and that you will be strengthened because of your visit in this place today.

Now we will continue together in worship and celebration. Sonny, please come and lead us.

Song: “I Would be True”

I guess every one in this building at one time or another has heard John, Chapter 3, verse 16. Why don’t we say it together? “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Ooh, I like that! I like the way you did that this morning! You did it well. You did it openly, and boldly. You know, the key word is that God's love gave. We have just sung "Oh to be Like Thee." Do you know when we are like God? When we give. When there is generosity and grace and kindness poured out through our lives to others because of a willingness to give. So this morning we have that opportunity. We have that joy. I simply would encourage you and challenge you to share and to be a part of giving to the work of Christ in this place. There are envelopes available there in the pew racks if you would like to have them to use them. That will allow you to have a record of your gift. Certainly I think that is a prudent thing and wise thing to do.

We have dear friends who come every year from Canada who are a part of this ministry and who give and share through Bibletown Canada. If there is not a Canadian envelope there, you can simply mark Canada there and we will be glad to facilitate you as well. Certainly the important thing is just that each one of us would seek to honor the Lord as we give and as we share. Thank you for doing that. Thank you for believing God and thank you for opening your lives and giving and sharing in the work of Christ in this place.

Father, we give to Christ not to an organization or to anything else but to Him. Yet, Lord, you have put us in this place. You have put us as a part of this body. You have given us a mission and a vision for the future. Father, I pray that through our lives one by one we will be able to invest together in the work of Christ in this place and in this time whether it is through Bible conferences or through gatherings like this on Sunday. There is a host and variety of Bible studies targeting all ages and stages of life. Lord, to the many different things that we are engaged in together, help us Lord, just to be found faithful to Jesus' name. Amen.

Dana Stroud sings.

Thank you Dana, so very much.

I need to just take a moment this morning and share with you that we are going to have an adjusted schedule tonight. Word arrived this week that Dr. Lutzer, Dr. Erwin Lutzer, Pastor of Moody Church in Chicago, who is going to be our guest tonight is going to be arriving a little too close for comfort. Especially when you are coming out of Chicago that is always too close for comfort during this season of the year. But, just the same, we are going to shift the start-up of our service to 6:30 tonight. What time? (Congregation responds – 6:30!) Good. Now that you have said it, you have heard it, you know it, 6:30 tonight! We really believe this will help us to be able not just to be starting and kind of wondering but hopefully to start with some confidence and to know where we are and to be confident about his situation at that point. So at 6:30 tonight that will involve our choir program and everything else moving to 6:30 tonight, children's choirs that is. So our service will be at 6:30 tonight.

Today is also (the end of the first side of the tape).

because that is really what matters. It is that I have learned to have God's companionship in my life, in my circumstances, in my condition, not to compare where I am with others.

Do you remember what happened in the Book of John, the very last chapter in the Book of John? When Jesus was on the seashore one morning fixing a fresh breakfast over some hot coals, Peter and some of the disciples had been out fishing all night and they saw Jesus at a distance. The Bible says Peter jumped out of the boat, got in the water, and swam to the shore to see Jesus. There he stood with Jesus, but within just a matter of moments the whole atmosphere began to change because Jesus was stirring the coals of the fire. He looked up at Peter and he said, "Peter, do you love me?" Somehow that was all reminiscent of another night by a fire in Peter's life. Somehow I just have to believe he connected that the last time he stood by a fire and had anything to do with Jesus a little servant girl looked at him and said weren't you with him? He said, no, not me. You remember that Peter denied Jesus three times. Three times by this fire Jesus looked at Peter and said, "Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?" Do you know what Peter did right in the middle of that discussion? He did just what you would and just what I would do. The heat was building and so he stood there and he looked at Jesus and he said, hey, Jesus, what about John? What do you want him to do? I mean, isn't that what we like to do? Let me compare how this guy is going to do and let's talk about the deal you are going to do with this person and Jesus said, what is it to you if he remains until I come, you feed my sheep! You see we have to intercept the thoughts of comparison because pride ever pushes us to compare ourselves with others. Faith and humility always cause us into companionship with God and it really doesn't matter how others are doing. What matters is that I am walking with God.

D - Determine to serve rather than to be served. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you sinners. Purify your hearts you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of God and he will lift you up.

It is so important that if you are going to deal with the issue of pride in your life that you understand that one of the greatest ways to turn it around is to begin to focus on serving rather than on being served. The Bible tells us of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, over in the extreme expression of that, in the Book of Philippians, Chapter 2. Jesus emptied himself and humbled himself to the point of becoming a man and ultimately dying on the cross. It talked to us about how we are not to look out for our own interests but for the interest of others. One of the true signs and symbols of humility is when I am learning what it is not just to be self-absorbed, how are others serving me, but when I am living to serve others.

You know they say that when a runner runs for an extended period of time, after awhile, he gets what is called a runner's high. Initially he begins to fatigue, he begins to faint, he begins to falter, but then there is a breakthrough point where suddenly he begins to feel that he can just keep running and keep running and keep running. It is the high I always wanted to get when I ran but it never seemed to come my way. I want you to know that I

think there is a helper's high. I think there is something about serving that as you begin to focus on it more and more, after awhile you just quit thinking about yourself. You see, humility is not thinking less of yourself it is just not thinking about yourself. It is thinking about others and it is thinking about service and it is thinking about ways in which we can help to benefit others along the way. It is vitally important that we determine to serve rather than to be served.

There is one other thing that we have to do and it is the last thing. That is that we need to evaluate ourselves in light of God's standards and seek his approval, to evaluate ourselves in light of God's standards and seek his approval. You see, when I am proud I am evaluating myself by false standards. I am evaluating myself, as I just mentioned, by the standards of others. When I am proud I am always seeking the approval of men. Let's just be real honest here, every one of us needs approval. We need the approval of our parents as children. We need the approval of our friends. We need approval in our lives. But one of the most distorted ways in which we go about trying to get approval is when we make ourselves the focal point of life and when we try to just do nothing but let everything else revolve around our approval and our affirmation. What we really need to do in life is God's approval a life that is approved unto God, a church that is approved unto God and a family that is approved unto God. The challenges and the circumstances and the conditions that surround you are different then the ones that surround me. What is important in life is to be willing to face those challenges, circumstances, and conditions as they come. Rather than trying to be proud and say, hey, I've got it all together, to be willing to look and stop and say, I don't have it together. I need someone to help me put it together and Lord; I humble myself before you. I humble myself and I seek you and I deny myself and devote myself to you that the whole focus of my life would not be pride but that it would truly be humility. You know there is nothing as attractive as humility and there is nothing more offensive than pride.

Oh that God would make us humble people that we might not be resisted but that the grace of God that releases the power of God might be known in every one of our lives.

Let me ask that your heads be bowed and your eyes be closed. I would ask that no one be making noise from shuffling Bibles and books. Let us just pause for a minute here. You know this morning it is so important that we take time to stop and reflect on that whole issue of whom is in charge in life and that we take time to ask ourselves maybe one of the most crucial questions of all. That is the question, have I ever relinquished the control of my life to God?

One of the things the Bible tells us is that no matter how religious we are, how good we are, how many efforts we make to do a good job, both with God and men, the Bible tells us we will never be good enough to gain God's approval and entrance into heaven. In fact, the Bible makes it very clear that by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast. God has set up salvation such that there is no place for human pride. There is only a place for humility, a humble spirit that will come before God and that will say, God, I am a sinner. Lord, I have lived life my own way and I have done my own thing. Lord, today, I want

to give you my life. Lord, today I want to be saved, I want to be forgiven, and I want to know that I am going to heaven. But, Lord, I know I can't do that on my own so Lord, I give my life to you. I receive your son, Jesus Christ, the one who came and died on the cross, who was buried, and who rose again. I realize it is his work not my work that will take me to heaven. Therefore, today I put all of my trust in Jesus Christ. You see, salvation begins in the moment that someone puts his trust in Christ. So this morning I just want to challenge you to put faith and to put trust in Jesus Christ. Maybe this morning you have put faith and trust in Christ but you have let pride keep you from doing what you saw four people do earlier in the service – follow Christ in baptism.

I want you to know that one of the ladies who was baptized this morning has had a lifelong aversion to water because of a hearing-related issue in her life. It would have been far easier for her to say, I am exempt, but she even went to the trouble of getting a special piece in her ear and being able to be baptized today because she just said that nothing matters to me more than being obedient to God.

You see, what matters in our life is putting that pride away. Sometimes we have pride by assuming we can be believers on our own, disconnected from the body of Christ, do our own thing in our own way, to sort of make up as we go along – cafeteria Christianity. Really, we need to get connected into the body of Christ. We need to become a part of a community. We need to share commitment so that we can grow with others. So, this morning, after I have prayed in just a moment, we are going to stand and we are going to sing a hymn of invitation inviting people to come and to put faith and trust in Christ and to follow Christ today. What I am asking you to do causes you to have to lay aside pride. It is the barrier. I understand that but I want you to know that there is another atmosphere here and it is an atmosphere of love. People have loved and prayed for this moment that you might know Christ, that you might be connected to him and to his church, and that you might be obedient to him. Maybe there is an area of relationship in your life that needs to be mended and rather than coming and speaking with a pastor or one of those who have come to help those who will come forward today, maybe you just want to use this altar as a place to kneel and just surrender and submit to God today. If that is where you are then I would invite you to come.

Father, this morning we do not want to choose a spirit of resistance, inwardly and personally. Nor would we want to choose that spirit that would cause you to resist us because Lord, we are full of pride. Father, I pray that graciously and humbly you would move and work in the lives of people this morning and that there would be a genuine connectedness to the savior, Jesus Christ, and Lord, to the mission of the church, and to obedience and submission in every area of life.

Father, I just want to thank you for your grace that is sufficient. And, Lord, wherever we may be at the point of need today, whatever brokenness may be there, whatever hardness may be present, I pray that the softening power of God's grace would work in our lives in this moment. I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Would you stand to your feet together? I ask that no one be leaving. You either be coming forward or you be coming to the side of a friend. You be praying. Let us sing together; Come Just as You Are.

The hymn, "Just as You Are" is sung.

Just come. Step out and come. God bless you.

We are just going to wait another minute.

Would you just quietly be seated for a moment please? We will continue to deal with these who have come and responded today and thank the Lord for them, for their lives.

I am going to ask for about five more minutes of your time this morning because there is a very important matter that we need to share with you. There is a matter of transition that we have been working through with our leadership team in recent days and it is very important for you to be able to hear this information and to be aware.

I am going to invite Anthony Barber, the Chairman of our Elder Board, to come and to share a word with the church family. Then I want to be able to share another word personally at that point as well.

Anthony Barber speaking: A little over a year ago the Board of Elders agreed to facilitate an alternative service called Impact on our campus under the leadership of our student minister, Greg Centineo. While Impact has been fruitful we have identified specific ministry direction for our middle school, high school, and college students currently attending our church while continuing to aggressively seek opportunities to share Christ with students in our community. In outlining the direction for the future ministry growth we have found it necessary to honestly and at times painfully but prayerfully and carefully evaluate the current priorities and consider how all of the parts fit into the whole. As a result of this process we have concluded that at this time in the ministry of our church we are unable to balance the growing focus on Impact with the needs of the ministry to students. We recognize and affirm Greg's passion and desire to see the expansion of Impact. We further understand the demands on leadership in teaching discipleship and outreach in our student ministry. Therefore, it has been mutually agreed that Greg Centineo will be released to pursue his passion and the call of God on his life in a context outside of the Boca Raton Community Church effective March 21, 1999.

As a part of these discussions and evaluations Scot Gravat, who came to serve a two year term as a student minister associate, has determined that the wisest choice would be one transition instead of two and has therefore submitted his resignation effective March 21st and that resignation was accepted by both the Senior Pastor and the Board of Elders.

Greg and Scot are two gifted young men. They will be uniquely used of God to reach people for Jesus Christ and to enlarge his kingdom. We have been blessed to have them and their wives Kelly and Denise working here among us. I know that as Greg and Scot

go out that you wish them, as I do, Godspeed and that you will remember to lift them up in prayer.

Pastor McKinley: Thank you, Anthony.

From the very earliest days of discussion that I had the opportunity of being involved in with both our pastor search team and our elder leadership team, there was a collective sense of awareness that one of the great needs of Boca Raton Community Church was to see a focus come to the ministry and an integration of all of the ministries together as we were to take steps forward into the future. Our church has had a very unique experience over the past five years of going through an extended season of transition. During that season of transition God has used and has blessed the ministry team that has been present in that time. At the same time, over the past six months our leadership team and the members thereof have been involved in a process of trying to observe where we are in current ministry conditions, of attempting to listen, and then ultimately evaluating what we believe are some ministry concerns and needs. We have spent time assessing the current ministry resources and how they can best be allocated for the future. Of course, we spent time in prayer and faith trusting God and asking him to give us wisdom and that we might be able to strengthen the focus of our ministry. One thing has been abundantly clear and that is that we have to have all of the energies of the ministry focused in that direction together and moving forward that way.

It would be my desire, very much my desire, that the outcome of such leadership assessment would only be finding the next addition. I wish we could embrace an addition-only strategy and that all we had to do was just add more here and add more there and add more here but to be honest with you that is just not realistic. Many times when you go through this process the result of the process is transition. That is where we have come in ministry. It is a painful transition because of the value of the people that are involved therein. It is a purposeful transition because of direction that the leadership team will be giving to the ministry in days to come. Ultimately, I do believe that it will be a beneficial transition, both in ministry here as well as in the lives of these men because they are gifted and they are very capable of being used of God.

It was Solomon, the wise man, who said, "To everything there is a season, a time and a purpose to everything under heaven." Solomon simply identified that in life we go through different seasons and I am learning the further that I go that there are different seasons of life and seasons of ministry and seasons of service. While the seasons may change the value of each season is to be cherished. Therefore, we never need to face the next season with fear nor do we need to fail to give thanks for the seasons of goodness and fruitfulness that God has given to us. So it is my prayer that we will go through this change and grow through it as we move to the next season of life and ministry, both in our church and in the individual lives of these men. We will be, in the immediate future, having some opportunities to gather and to speak with parents, student ministry leadership, and others about directions and the process of what needs to be done in our student ministry. But let me just say this morning, publicly, that I am very grateful for the effective season of ministry that God has given to Greg and Kelly Centineo here. I

admire them. I honor and appreciate them. I find them to be a very attractive and effective couple in ministry and it is sincerely my prayer that God will bless and use their lives together as they go forward. They have been a tremendous blessing here and we need to be sure that as a church family we not fail to appreciate that and to honor that.

Next Sunday we are going to have some special times of celebration with Greg and with Kelly and their family and also with Scot and Denise Gravat. Then next Sunday we are going receive a love offering for the Centineos, just saying thank you for the eight years that they have been here with us. I trust that each and every one of you will take part and will share in that and will just let the grace of God and the love of God be evident through your lives to them and the gratitude for the service that they have given.

I also believe that Scot Gravat is a very promising young man whose gifts will serve him well and will serve Christ well in the days to come. I will look forward to praying and seeing what God does in his life and ministry and all of our lives as we move forward. So I ask you for prayer. I ask you for an abundance of love and grace and kindness as we walk through these days together and as we seek to look at tomorrow and the horizon of what God has for us in the days to come.

Father thank you for giving us time to be together today. Thank you, Lord, for the body of Christ, the church. Thank you that whatever stage or season we may be in that you use the church to grow us, to strengthen us, and Lord, to prepare us to send us forth. Father, I pray that there would be a tremendous sense of blessing and love in our lives in these days of transition and in the lives of both Greg and Kelly and Scot and Denise. Father, I simply trust you to lead us as we each seek your will and your purpose and that, Father, more than anything else, we will seek the higher good of the kingdom of God and the higher value of investing our lives in ways, through the gifts you have given us, to make a difference for eternity. So, Lord, we seek you in that way. Thank you for what we have enjoyed and experienced and seen and learned today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

6:30 tonight! We look forward to seeing you then. God bless you.