

# Connected Living in a Disconnected World

Acts 2

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*Sermon preached from the pulpit of Boca Raton Community Church on Sunday, September 24, 2000, by Dr. David H. McKinley, Senior Pastor.*

Last Sunday evening, September 17, 2000, the world focused on the Olympic games in Sydney, Australia. For those of us living in South Florida, our focus was directed to a NFL pro player at Pro Player Stadium in Miami. It was a celebration and reminder of the incredible and legendary career of Miami Dolphins #13, Dan Marino.

You may be interested to know that I am holding in my hands an autographed football by Dan Marino. Anyone interested? Obviously, the career of Dan “The Man” Marino has been phenomenal. Over 52,000 fans gathered in the stadium and numerous others watched the national telecast as we heralded the man who holds over 50 Dolphin records; 25 NFL records; the record for 4,967 yards of completions; 61,351 passing yards (that’s over 35 miles!); and over 420 touchdowns. What an incredible celebration it was!

Over his 17-year career, Dan Marino has accomplished just about everything anyone could hope for except for one elusive thing: a Super Bowl ring. Of course, not having the Super Bowl ring didn’t keep him out of the ring of honor at the stadium, nor will it keep him out of the Hall of Fame in 2005 when he is eligible. In all likelihood, he will immediately be established in the legendary position that he holds.

Dan Marino joins a long list of legends: Bart Starr, Roger Staubach, Joe Montana, and many, many others that could be identified. In a unique sense, American life and culture is now defined on Sundays by faith, family, and *football!*

There are legendary coaches, too, such as Don Shula and Tom Landry. One of the most colorful and interesting of all coaches was Vince Lombardi. Lombardi definitely made an impact on American culture through his leadership and development of his football team. In fact, it was his commitment, tenacity, and focus on the game that put Green Bay on the map. At first, Green Bay was just a stop somewhere in the northern country. But Green Bay became synonymous with football in America because of the legendary Vince Lombardi.

A number of his former players and friends have said some interesting things about what Lombardi taught them along the way through the game of football.

Jerry Kramer said, “He made us all better than we thought we could be.” Lombardi inspired and lifted them.

Jim Taylor said, “All he wanted from you was perfection.” That was the Lombardi trademark. He wasn’t interested in a mediocre performance. Lombardi demanded perfection from his players. He made that very clear.

George Halas said, “You might reduce Lombardi’s coaching philosophy to a single sentence: In any game, you do the things you do best and you do them over and over and over.” Lombardi was so relentless that he never quit. He kept doing what he did best over and over and over again. Drilling that philosophy into his players made the difference!

I love this! Forrest Gregg said, “When Lombardi said ‘sit down,’ we didn’t look for a chair.” That’s influence. That’s impact.

One of my favorite stories about Vince Lombardi is about a day following a beleaguering loss to a team that had often been dominated by the Green Bay Packers. Lombardi gathered his men in the locker room at the next practice session. The atmosphere in the room was as cold as ice. The men were demoralized. They knew the loss had been shameful to them and to the coach.

Vince Lombardi walked into the locker room and simply looked at each of the players, peering into their eyes with a piercing stare. Before saying anything, he walked around gritting his teeth, squaring his jaw, and looking at them. All the players assumed he would go into a tirade about the mistakes made during the previous day’s game. Lombardi broke the silence by simply saying, “Alright, men. Today, we are going back to the basics. Gentlemen, this is a football!”

It was a defining moment in that locker room for Green Bay. Vince Lombardi took men who were ten and fifteen year veterans of the sport; men who knew offensive and defensive plays possibly better than their own children’s names; men who would, I guess, have otherwise been absolutely humiliated; but who listened when Lombardi spoke. He said, “We are going back to the most basic and fundamental element of all. This is a *football*. This is how we play the game.”

The secret to winning for Lombardi was not razzle-dazzle plays and spectacular moments. It was doing the fundamentals right over and over and over again. With consistency and focus, a championship team could be developed. Lombardi proved that at Green Bay and left his legacy on football in that fashion.

Fundamentals are vital. While you may think that I am a frustrated sports commentator talking about Dan Marino and Vince Lombardi, these illustrations have *everything* to do with who we are and why we are here today. If we, as a church, don’t understand the fundamentals, then we fail to accomplish the purpose for which we exist. We fail to do that for which God has called us to do in His name and for His glory.

I believe the most crucial issue for the church today is to regain a sense of identity, influence, and impact. The church in America has lost its fundamental sense of who it is, why it exists, and why it is here. We have to go back and regain a sense of vitality and understanding at the point of fundamentals. This is a football. This is a *Bible*. This is a *Church*!

Tragically, the church in America today has been pushed aside. The expression of faith that is most dominant is *individualism*. People go where they get what they want, basically moving from one service line to another in cafeteria style. Churches are marked by a lack of commitment, a lack of accountability, a lack of excellence, a lack of investment, and a lack of devotion.

It appears that people have their own agenda for the church, from political activism to every other form of expression that parallels our culture. Churches are also chasing identities. There are many *copycat churches* trying to look like another church that is doing something well. But for a church to win, a church must begin at the essential foundation of what has God called it to do and to be. We have to go back to the fundamentals!

Beginning today and over the next several weeks, we are going to spend time talking about what we have been called to do and why we are here. We are going to look at ways in which we can make that happen as a local congregation.

In Acts 2, we find the original blueprint of what a church is to be and what God's intended plan and purpose is for His people. In Acts 2, Peter, the follower of Jesus Christ, preaches and gives an invitation for decision just we will do today. At the close of this service, there will be a call for people to respond. We do that because we believe there should never be the expression and proclamation of Scripture without calling people to a defining moment of commitment.

“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousands souls were added to them.” Acts 2:41

What an invitation! As soon as Peter finished preaching, the people received the word and were immediately baptized as testimony of their faith. 3,000 people were added to that first church in one day! Now that is church growth!

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42-47

This is the original image of a church. This is the first place the church is seen, described and depicted in Scripture. We need to quit trying to copy other churches. We need to quit letting other people impose their agenda upon what they think the church should be. We need to move beyond whatever may be a part of our background in coming to this moment and determine that, as God's people known as Boca Raton Community Church, our single heartbeat is this baseline of measure: Are we the church that *God wants* us to be?

Michael Griffiths wrote: “Christians collectively seem to be suffering from a strange amnesia. A high proportion of people who go to church have forgotten what it is all about. Week by week they attend services in a special building and go through their particular time-honored routine, but give little thought to the **purpose** of what they're doing. The Bible talks about the Bride of Christ, but the church today seems more like a ragged Cinderella.”

Look at that word *purpose*. Everything we do is ultimately to be a part of a *purpose* that God has outlined and designed for us. The church is not *programs*. The church is not *activities*. The church is not *ministries*. Although the church has programs, activities, and ministries, the church exists to fulfill a **purpose** and a **mission** in this world today! Our effectiveness as a local church has much more to do with how collectively we embrace that purpose than it will anything else.

The great tragedy of the nation of Israel, recorded throughout the entirety of the Old Testament, is that Israel fixated on the privileges and benefits that God had provided for them, but they never understood their purpose: to be a witness to their nation of the Messiah to come, Jesus Christ. What a tragedy that they missed the primary purpose that God had called and intended for them!

I, for one, desire more than anything else to be a faithful steward of the position of leadership that has been entrusted to me. I want to ensure that we, as a church, are reflective of the very things that are seen in this Acts 2 passage of Scripture.

Let me make a couple of preliminary observations:

1) When we read about the first church in Acts 2, there is no discussion about style of worship, structure of government, or schedule of services. We could guess that their style of worship was reflective of the things that would be in the temple and the culture of that day. The only thing we know about their structure of government is that God's apostles, who were entrusted with the stewardship of the Gospel, were leading in the church. Those whom God had called and gifted were leading in that capacity. But beyond that, there is nothing about organizations, by-laws, committees, or governments. We know that the first century believers began the practice of worshipping not on the Sabbath [Saturday], but on Sunday, the Lord's Day. We see from various Scripture that this was a 24/7 church [24 hours a day/seven days a week], meeting from house to house and day to day. Every day, things were happening through the lives and ministries of people, and God was using that in the process.

Just two weeks ago, I had my second year anniversary here as your pastor. It was on September 13, 1998, that we began a journey of faith together. When I began on that very first day, there was a brochure distributed here to introduce my family and me to the church fellowship. I just happened to notice it among some things I was moving in my office the other day. Included in that piece, was a question and answer interview. One of the questions was:

Q. "Why is it important for a church to have a clearly defined vision?"

A. Not long ago, I read this statement by George Barna: "The state of the church in America is like the Titanic. The church is large, affluent and sinking fast." My reaction to his statement was "how true" and "how tragic". Why? The church has lost its perspective. It is said, "If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time." I believe focus is the key to effectiveness. Scripture says, "Without vision, the people perish." Some translations use the words "are dispersed". For this reason, I believe a church should be mission focused and ministry supported. Ministries support the overall mission of the

church, but the mission defines, determines and develops the ministries of the church. Our vision takes our mission and causes it to be personalized and embraced by every member of our church community.

My answer to that question would be the same today. It is crucial for a church to come together and to have an incredible sense and focus of why they are here. Candidly, focus is challenging as we deal with people at a variety of seasons and stages of life in a ministry that is at a different stage today than at any other time. In the two years that we have journeyed together, we have had good days and new experiences. We have had some hard moments and tough assignments. We have walked through some challenging transitions. But we have forged forward toward one simple purpose: to get us back to the fundamental focus of why we exist, why we are here, and what God has called us to do.

Over the last two years, we have made clear that we are not simply a Bible conference that has a Sunday chapel service. We are a local church in a local community dedicated and devoted to doing everything we can to reach the people around us for Jesus Christ. It is vital that we have a sense of collective purpose and that we are using the right point of measure in accomplishing that purpose.

Over the last two years, I have worked with members of our elder and staff teams to clearly define our purpose, mission and direction for the days to come. This message in many ways is a culmination of that pursuit and passion.

In order to fully understand Acts 2, let's look at the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 16. During the course of His earthly ministry, Jesus was in a place called Caesaria Philippi with His disciples. On this particular day as they gathered together, Jesus looked at his disciples and said to them,

“Who do people say that I, the Son of Man, am?” Matthew 16:13

Jesus asked the disciples [paraphrased], “Who am I? What are people saying? What are they talking about?”

Some of them said that Jesus was Elijah, the prophet. Others said that He was like John the Baptist. Some said He was Jeremiah or a prophet. But then Jesus looked at Peter and said,

“But who do you say that I am?” Matthew 16:15

Peter answered and said,

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Matthew 16:16

Peter hit the mark! He connected with that pass in the moment! Peter's answer was so great that Jesus looked at him and said,

“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

Matthew 16:17-18

That day, Jesus affirmed the confession that Peter made: Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the Son of God! Not only did Jesus affirm Peter's response, but Jesus went on to say [paraphrased], “Your name is Peter. Your name is like that of a rock. But this is the rock solid foundation upon which my church will be built: Who I am and what I came to do.”

Consequently, Matthew 16:18 is the backdrop to Acts 2 which occurs 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The scene of Acts 2 is the Day of Pentecost. People are gathered for a traditional Jewish feast. On this particular day, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit came upon a group of people and they began to speak in unknown tongues. Not so much unknown tongues, but tongues that were not learned. The Bible makes a distinction about this particular type of speaking. It is the same as if I were speaking to someone who speaks German or Spanish, but I had not studied or known the language prior to speaking it. I was able, though, to speak in his own dialect so that he could hear and understand it. It wasn't some sort of utterance, but they literally were speaking to one another about the things that had happened. The Apostle Peter stood among the people that day and said,

“Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.’”  
Acts 2:14-17

Peter continues to quote Joel [Joel 2:28-32], and then continuing in Acts 2:22-24,

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”

Peter said [paraphrased], “This is what this is all about. It's about Jesus Christ, Who He is, and what He came to do.”

Peter continued to preach. In fact, most of Acts 2 is his sermon. Peter says,

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Acts 2:36

Here is the issue: Peter is continuing the confession he made in Matthew 16, and fulfilling what Jesus said to him in Matthew 16:17,

“Blessed are you . . . and on this rock I will build My church.”

This is the foundation upon which the church is built. In Acts 2, Peter preached the message of Jesus Christ. He is the Christ! He is the Son of the living God!

The most important thing about a church is the *message* of that church. What does a church believe? It doesn't matter what kind of programs a church has. It doesn't matter what kind of culture a church adapts itself to. It doesn't matter how *chic* a church may be in all of its presentation. It's the *message* of the church that is important! *What does the church believe? Are the members believers? Do you believe this central issue? Do you believe in this foundation that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, that He is the Son of the living God?*

Peter preached that message with such power and persuasion on that day that the Bible says when he finished, the people looked and said,

“What shall we do?” Acts 2:37

They said [paraphrased], “Obviously, we can't go on living the way we have been living any longer. We can't play church games and live in religious tradition. We can't live out here on the edge of this culture. We've got to be different. We've got to be changed!”

Peter responded,

“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38

Peter said [paraphrased], “It's time for you to turn. It's time for you to change.”

The message of the church of Jesus Christ is a message so compelling and so confrontational that it brings people to a moment in their lives when they have to change from how they have been living to a new life, a new path, following Jesus Christ.

You may be thinking, “Don't all churches talk about Jesus?”

Sadly, this is not true. There are crosses on our churches and Jesus makes cameo appearances. The reality today is that far too many churches have missed the essential and central essence of their being: to be about the business of proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ!

## **I. We Exist to Build a Group of Believers Who are Committed to Jesus Christ**

Therefore, it must be said of us that we, the Boca Raton Community Church, exist to build a group of believers who are committed to Jesus Christ. We confess Christ! We belong to Him! It is more than just a nod of acceptance. It is the realization that there has been repentance in our lives that has changed our course and direction. Your association with this body and fellowship begins with an understanding of the message of who Christ is. That message must have impact in your life. You must personally repent of your sins, recognizing that you are sinner, that the judgment of God is upon you, and if you do not turn to Jesus Christ, there is no hope for you in this life.

Every person must begin with the realization of a need to turn from sin, to turn from self, and to *turn to* the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the most incredible things we see in the Olympic athletes is how many things they have turned from and have set aside in order that they might focus on one thing: Winning the prize!

I am not saying that we need to turn away from everything and just *will* ourselves to try to follow Jesus. You cannot *will* yourself into salvation. You cannot gain enough credits with God to earn your salvation. But there must be a sense of turning to Christ, recognizing our need for Him, and literally allowing life to begin to fixate and focus on the Lord Jesus Christ.

So great was the impact of the message preached by Peter in Acts 2, that the Bible says three things happened:

1) They gladly received his word [Acts 2:41].

When the people heard it, they thought [paraphrased], “This is it! This is what is missing. This is what has been absent in my life. This is where I need to turn. I need Jesus.”

2) Immediately, they were baptized [Acts 2:41].

It must have been incredible! They went to the nearest body of water and one person after another was baptized. Baptism pictures the burial, death and resurrection of Christ. In that moment, people made it clear that they were not going to live the same way any longer through the testimony of their baptism.

3) They were added to the church.

They moved from old commitments to new commitments in their lives. If there is one thing that must be true of us, it is that we exist to build a community of people who are committed to Jesus Christ!

## II. We Exist to Build a Community of Believers Committed to Jesus Christ, Connected to One Another

Not only did this early church build a community of believers committed to Jesus Christ, but they were also connected to one another. We see the atmosphere and activities of the church described in Acts 2:42:

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them all, as anyone had need.”

Do you see the connection that is going on in their lives? The old connections are gone and new connections have come into their lives. There was a connectivity in that early church at several levels:

**1) *Discipleship*.** After they received Christ, they focused on how they could begin to know, believe, and follow Christ. They focused on the apostles’ doctrine. The word *doctrine* means *foundational teaching*. I grew up in the South. When you were sick, you went to get some “doctrine”. That is not the meaning here. When the Bible says that they continued in the apostles’ doctrine, the focus of this church was on teaching and training so that people would be solid in the Truth. That is *discipleship*. It is helping people to become rooted and grounded in their faith.

We are a *non-denominational* church. That means we don’t have any singular alliance with any particular denominational background or heritage that brings us together. In fact, we have people from every denomination you can imagine here. Because we are non-denominational, that does not mean that we are *non-doctrinal*. We, as a church, have a firm doctrine of what we believe and teach in accordance with the Word of God. We have to focus, as a church, on teaching and establishing doctrine.

**2) *Fellowship*.** This first church was clearly connected.

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship . . .” Acts 2:42

“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.” Acts 2:46

This is a beautiful picture. These people became a community of believers, taking care of one another, and fellowshiping together.

**3) *Stewardship*.** The early church had a common collection out of which they met the needs and responsibilities of their ministry. You may say, “I don’t want to go to a church that talks about money.” If so, then you don’t want to be a part of a New Testament church. Can we talk about

money in the wrong way? Absolutely. Can we harp on money? Yes, we can. But can we neglect the issue of individual stewardship and personal responsibility of that which God has given to us? Absolutely not! To fail to do so is to fail to be biblical as a church. When you are baptized, you don't go down in the water with your wallet up in your hand above the water. That is not what we do. It's all of me, Jesus.

#### **4) *Worship.***

“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.” Acts 2:47-48

The word *praising God* is the word that is used most often in the Bible to speak of *worship*, of giving up a word of confession to the Lord. They were common together in their worship. They were connected in their lives, even though they lived in a disconnected, dysfunctional society. But they began to have connectivity to one another, and this connectivity gave distinctiveness to their witness.

### **III. We Exist to Answer the Challenge to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ**

This first church moved from disconnectedness into connectedness with one another, but that was not so their church could be “us four and no more,” “our club and try to get in.” No! The Bible says very clearly in Acts 2:47,

“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Look at that word *daily*. Not *occasionally*. Not *a couple a quarter*. The Bible says that every day people were being saved because of the message, the witness, and the influence of the church of Jesus Christ in that day. *Daily* they were being saved! We must not only be committed to Christ and connected to one another, but collectively we are challenged as a people to share the Gospel of Christ. That is why we exist!

Shame on us for being in this location for 50 years, having exploding population around us while sitting in a service that still has empty seats on Sunday morning! We ought to be filling this building multiple times every week. We ought to have multiple services, not because we want different styles, but because the mission of the church is so strong that we can't facilitate it! We've got to have a single heartbeat to reach lost people in Boca Raton. Sometimes I get the impression that we are happy to get “fire insurance” personally and then the rest of the world can go to hell! The reality is that the world is going to hell. We are God's people with a purpose of reaching others for Christ. Every one of the Gospels ends with this: Go, Go, Go!

“. . . and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

God's people are to be a people of witness! As a result, we are constantly looking for a way to answer the challenge to share the Gospel.

What am I saying to you today? I am simply saying that over the last couple of years with our elders and with our staff, we have been wrestling with how we can give a sense of recovery, of focus, and of identity to who we are as a people. What I have shared with you this morning is the mission statement that we have embraced in our hearts and that we are asking you to embrace today. Let's look at it collectively:

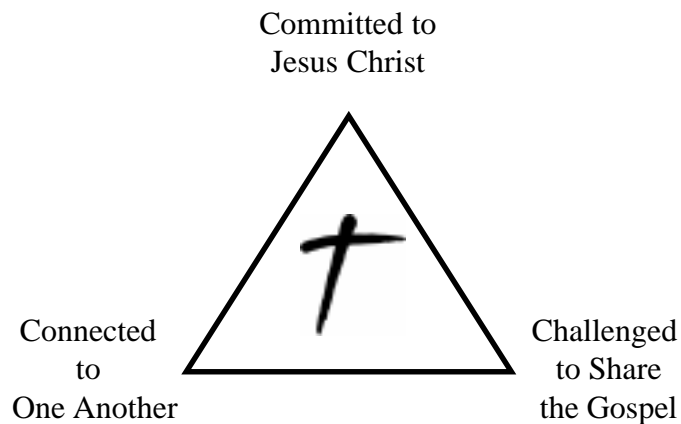
**The mission of  
Boca Raton Community Church  
is to build a community of believers  
committed to Jesus Christ,  
connected to one another,  
and challenged to share the Gospel.**

That's what it is all about! This is our fundamental focus. This is the fundamental issue for all of us. This is a *Bible*. This is a *Church*! Everything else we do may be active development of this mission, but we don't exist for activities. We exist for the assignments!

Every student knows that. It is great to go to school and be a part of the clubs, sports, and recreation. But if you go to school and you don't do the assignments, you can't participate in all the other activities. You are in school to do the assignments, to learn, to develop, to grow.

We must come back to the fact that, as a church, we exist to perform and fulfill this assignment: *to build a community of believers committed to Jesus Christ, connected to one another, and challenged to share the Gospel.*

It is my heart's desire that you would come to such a place that any given day of the week, on any occasion, you could do what I did not long ago in a restaurant. I was at Macaroni Grill with one of our elders. Did you know they let you draw on the tables there? I drew a simple diagram that illustrates what I am talking about today. I said, "So much of what we want to ultimately accomplish is to help people see that we exist to get people connected to God, connected to one another, and connected to people in need in the world.



What an incredible way to witness to others: Committed to Jesus Christ (get connected to God through Jesus Christ), connected to the local church (where they grow, are nurtured and developed) and then ultimately challenged to share the Gospel.

That's what we want to accomplish as a church family. That is the business we are in. That is the heartbeat of who we are and what we are to do. Nothing else can connect and matter as much as this!

If I can be straightforward with you today, I believe that it has been the lack of focus and blurring of a vision that has limited the accomplishment of our church. I believe that if we are going to be what God wants us to be and have impact here, we have got to regain the edge of focus! We have got to regain a sense of vision. Together, we have got to embrace one purpose.

Vince Lombardi said,

“The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but a lack of will.”

“Success demands singleness of purpose.”

We must have a singleness of purpose. We must focus together on the big picture. After that, there are just details.

When I arrived in my office early this morning, I saw this Bible I have in my hand today. I haven't used this particular Bible in many years and have never used it to preach from this pulpit. A number of years ago, this was a very important Bible in my life. In fact, 26 years ago today, September 24, 1974, I was lying on the floor of my room. As a sixteen year old, I remember reading Isaiah 41:10 from this Bible,

“Fear not, for I am with you; but not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

On that day, I had a sense of God's call into the ministry. Every day of my life, I have to go back and say, “Am I fulfilling that call? Am I doing what God has called me to do? Am I leading God's church to be what God has called it to be?” You see, it's not *my* church. It's God church! It's not *your* church. It's His church! What matters in all of our lives is regaining the focus, renewing the vision, and establishing the commitment in our hearts. We exist *to build a community of believers committed to Jesus Christ, connected to one another, and challenged to share the Gospel.*

This a *Bible!* This is a *Church!* Will you be committed to developing this image in this place?

What I have shared with you today has a two-fold objective. The first objective is for us, as a church, to gain a focal point. Beginning today, we will join hands with the elders and our staff to say, “I will do everything I can do as an individual member to focus on being committed to Jesus

Christ, connected to one another and challenged to share the Gospel.” It all begins with a heart commitment to share that focus. My prayer is that God would use this as a focal point in our lives.

Second, there are some of you here who are not a part of this church. You have never had a turning point in your life where you have turned from sin and self, and turned to Jesus Christ. Today may need to be not only a moment when you hear us talk to a church about having a focal point, but God’s turning point in your life.

Today, if you have never trusted Jesus Christ; if you have never understood what it is to confess that He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world; if you have never received Him into your heart; then I want to give you an opportunity to receive Christ and follow Him today.

Others of you joining us in affirming this focal point may also need to say, “I need a fresh sense of surrender to the Lordship of Christ in my life, to be a fully devoted, fully committed believer and follower of Jesus Christ.”

*Father, today Your Word makes very clear that following Christ is not always easy or comfortable, that it is demanding and that it calls for a new course and direction. I pray that we would begin afresh and anew as a church to have the first love for Christ, for following Him, for loving one another, and for fulfilling His call and purpose in this community. I pray that You would do something fresh and new in our hearts and lives as part of this fellowship today. I also pray for people who are here and who are in search of faith and substance in life, who need to know Christ. Lord, let this be the moment! Let this be the turning point of life, turning to Christ and following Him. Spirit of God, do Your work in this moment we pray, in Jesus’ name. Amen.*