

Believing on His Name

John 1:1-5, 12-24; John 3:16-21

Dr. David H. McKinley

Sermon preached from the pulpit of Boca Raton Community Church on Sunday, Oct. 1, 2000, by Dr. David H. McKinley, Senior Pastor.

You can get in trouble sometimes when you ask for participation from others. I have a good example to illustrate this point.

A teacher in children's church urged the boys and girls to participate in a discussion in order to demonstrate their comprehension of certain Bible lessons. This teacher received some very interesting responses:

- (Noah's wife was called Joan of Ark.
- (The epistles are the wives of the apostles.
- (The Fourth Commandment is: Honor thy father and mother.
- (Lot's wife was a pillar of salt by day, and ball of fire by night.
- (The Tower of Babel is where Solomon kept his wives.
- (When Mary heard she was to be the mother of Jesus, she went off and sang the Magna Carta.
- (Holy Acrimony is another name for marriage.
- (Christians have only one wife. They call it monotony.
- (Paraffin is next in order to seraphim.
- (Adam and Eve had twins: Cain and Mabel.
- (The Eighth Commandment is: Thou shalt not witness they bare neighbor.

Last week, I introduced a statement of purpose and mission that will give life and vitality to our ministry in the days to come. You can participate in the message this morning, not by giving random answers, but simply by reciting with me the mission statement of our church:

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

I want to begin to take this mission statement and to break it down into individual parts. Today and for the next few weeks, I want us to consider the dynamics of what we understand this to mean in our lives, our families, and this community relationship that we share as a part of Boca Raton Community Church.

Look at this first phrase: The mission of Boca Raton Community Church is to build a *community of believers*. Our mission is to build a community of believers who are, first and foremost, characterized by commitment to Jesus Christ.

The most important thing about any church is what that church *believes*. The most important thing about a church is *not* the church building, programs, schedules, styles, music, or even the preaching and teaching ministry of that church as it may be embodied in a personality.

We are first and foremost a *believing* community. Therefore, the most important thing about the members of a church is that they are *believers*.

What do we mean by the word *believers*? What does it mean *to believe*?

When we talk about believers, we are talking about people who have believed on the name of Jesus Christ, people who have expressed belief and a commitment to Jesus Christ.

This belief is different from believing in Santa Claus. With a Santa Claus style of belief, we wish, make up, and try to contrive something that makes coping with hard times a little easier. There are many people who believe in Jesus like that, but that is not the kind of belief we are talking about here.

We are not talking about what you believe *about* Jesus, like you would an historical person. From our history classes and historical records, we believe George Washington was the first president of the United States. We believe he had impact on the development of American culture and government. I am not talking to you about believing in Jesus like George Washington or another historical leader.

We must believe *on the name* of Jesus Christ!

I can illustrate it this way. You believe *on* the chair you are sitting in this morning. You could believe *in* the chair. You could even believe *about* the chair. You could believe enough *about* the chair that you take a coat and drape it on the chair. Some people believe enough *about* Jesus. When they get into a crisis they take their children, their finances, or something else important to them and put it on Jesus. But just to believe *in* Jesus or to believe *about* Jesus is not enough!

The *belief* the Bible talks about is a belief of faith that involves trust, commitment, and decision-making. When you put your faith and trust on this chair, you demonstrate that by sitting in the chair! It's more than believing the chair is there. It's more than believing about the chair to hold your coat. There comes a moment in time when you act on your faith, when you depend on that faith, when you put your trust in Jesus Christ. The Bible defines salvation, the first step, as being an act of faith, of trust, of commitment to Jesus Christ.

Therefore, when we talk about *building a community of believers committed to Jesus Christ*, we are talking about people who do not simply believe *in* Jesus or *about* Jesus, but people who believe *on the name* of the Lord Jesus Christ, have made a faith commitment, and exhibit trust in Him. Everything relates to the name of Jesus Christ because we are the *Church* of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of John is the book we most often distribute to unbelievers because John portrays whom Jesus is and what He came to do in a very unique and concise way.

“¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. ⁸He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. ⁹That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹²But as many as received Him to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:1-14

Who is this *Word* that the Bible is talking about? Who is this *One* who has light and life? Who is John talking about? He is talking about Jesus Christ. Jesus is called the *Word* of God. I communicate to you through my words from this platform. I could stand before you and just ponder hundreds of thoughts. But my thoughts cannot be conveyed unless I use the vehicle of words.

Jesus is the *Word* of God. We are told in this passage of Scripture that the *Word* was in the beginning with God, made everything *as* God, and came to dwell among us that we might see and know whom God is and what God is like. Jesus came to communicate who God is to us!

The Bible uses another description. This *Word* is light! Jesus is the *One* who came to shine the light of God into the darkness of mankind and to bring illumination and light to everything.

“¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

¹⁸He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” John 3:16-21

The Bible connects this concept of *believing*, to the concept of *being saved*, to the concept of *having light*, to the concept of *having life*. These are all word pictures being played out in the Bible. In particular, the picture that is unfolding in front of us is the contrast between two properties: the property of darkness and property of light.

Have you ever asked someone about something they recently tried that was new and innovative? Possibly it was something new in the field of technology. You may have asked them if it made a difference, and they responded by saying, “Like night and day!”

Jesus Christ came that you might know the difference between night and day in living!

People were made to fulfill God’s plan and God’s pleasure, but they are unplugged from Him. It’s as though the world has experienced a universal power failure. The result of that power failure is a life in darkness, a life unplugged from God, a life in an unplugged condition. God knew the darkened condition of this world and He wanted to do something about it. We can’t experience the light and life of Christ apart from knowing Christ.

Because we are unplugged from God, we walk in darkness.

What can darkness mean to us?

1. Darkness creates fear and imagination.

Why is our world so overwhelmed with fears and darkened imaginations? We are walking and living in darkness. We don’t have to be in a dark place very long before we experience fear and anxiety. All kinds of things can come into our imagination.

I heard about a little boy who was being tucked in bed one night. He looked at his mom and said, “Mommy, would you sleep with me? I’m scared!”

She said, “Sweetheart, you don’t need me. You’re fine. I have to sleep with daddy.” She turned out the light and walked out of the room. Just as she started to close the door, she heard him say, “Big chicken.”

2. *Darkness conceals danger.*

Why is it that so many evil deeds are done in the dark? It is because of the element of surprise. You can't see the danger that is there. Darkness also conceals danger in your own home. Try navigating through your house in the darkness of midnight. You can catch your foot, turn an ankle, trip or fall over undistinguishable objects. You can walk into danger and not even know it in the darkness. We stumble over things that we would easily see and avoid in the light.

3. *Darkness causes confusion.*

On Monday evening of this week, my son played in a baseball game on a new baseball field in Ft. Lauderdale. We were in the fourth inning of the game. A batter stepped up. A pitcher began his throw. Suddenly, the lights went out. From stadium lighting to nothing, it was a rather confusion moment on the field. Where's the ball? Where's the pitch? What happened to the players? Within seconds, park officials ran in and out of a building shouting to one another. How ironic it was that in the darkness, everyone knew something was wrong, but nobody seemed to know what to do about it.

Because we are unplugged from God, we walk in darkness. Everyone knows something is wrong, but nobody is quite sure what to do about it.

Because we are unplugged from God, we are dysfunctional in life.

Every one of us has been born into dysfunctional families. Father Adam and Mother Eve have seen to it that we will never experience all that God intended for us from the beginning because we lost what it means to live according to the glory of God. There is no glow of God *in* us and there is no glory of God *through* us.

“... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

We are not plugged in rightly. We are living in the dimness and darkness of a life without God. Therefore, we are dysfunctional in life. We fail to see everything properly.

I have an unlit lamp on this table. Most of us tend to worry about the outside condition of the lamp. Does it look good to others? As I dust this lampshade to make it presentable, I see thousands of dust particles flying around the lamp. It's strange how we spend our lives worrying about all the things that don't look good to others. There are particles everywhere!

When a preacher talks about *sin*, people tend to think about all the *sins* of their lives, all the little particles. God is not really focused on those outside characteristics. Yes, there are particles everywhere, but God is much more concerned with the condition. You see, I can continue to dust this lamp to make it look better, but there is something wrong with the condition of this lamp.

There is no *power!* It's *unplugged!* This lamp was made to glow and it can't glow without a power source.

There is a difference between *sins* and *sin*. When we talk to people about their sins, they think about the characteristics, the dust particles, all the things they have done wrong. But the reality is that nothing can change these dust particles, nothing can change what needs to be changed in their lives until they are connected to a new *Power Source*.

Without Jesus Christ, we are dysfunctional! Without Jesus Christ, we are in the dark! We try to get rid of the *sins*. But the *sin* I am talking about is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ, rejecting God's plan. The only way to get the Power Source is through Jesus Christ!

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

What is missing in us is present in Jesus Christ! What we don't have, He is! When we believe on the name of Jesus Christ and He comes into our lives, then our lives suddenly are infused with a new source of power. No longer am we living a dysfunctional life! No longer are we living in the dark! We're living in the light and the light reveals us as new creations!

In the Old Testament, we find the Law. God gave us the Law to help us understand that there is a power failure in our lives. The whole purpose of the Old Testament Law is to help us see that, try as we may, we cannot do anything about the condition of our lives. The Law is a diagnostic tool. The Law reflects failure, failure, failure.

Too many people have tried to see the Law as though it were a prescription. It is somehow the answer for getting right with God. But the Law is not a prescription. The Law is simply a diagnostic tool to show us that we are without power.

“... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” Galatians 2:16

We can never improve our condition in our own effort and our own accord. We can't do better and be better in God's eyes apart from Jesus Christ.

This past week, a friend from Canada sent me a message tape by Charles Price, a popular preacher from England. I was captivated by a story Charles Price told:

There was a man imprisoned in England. He had been a thief most of his life and accumulated numerous offenses that resulted in his incarceration. In the course of time, a group of believers came into that prison and preached the message of Jesus Christ. This man understood the

Gospel, received Jesus Christ, and his life was changed.

At the end of his prison term, he was released and did what any sincere new believer would do: attend a worship service. He didn't know much about the differences in churches. He just found a church, walked in, and sat near the back. The service began, and he noticed a massive stone slab behind the pulpit with an imprint of the Ten Commandments.

As this man read each commandment, suddenly he felt as if were back in a courtroom rather than being in a church to celebrate what God had done in his life. Each commandment reminded him of his failures: "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain . . . Thou shalt not commit adultery . . . Thou shalt not bear false witness . . . Thou shalt not steal! . . ."

"I guess I'll just never escape it. I'll never be what I ought to be!" he thought.

But in the course of that service, something happened! He remembered what Christ had done in his life, and a new thought emerged in his heart. Instead of seeing the condemnation of the Commandments, he began to see the promises of the commandments! Instead of reading "Thou shalt not steal," he turned that into the promise: You shall not steal anymore! He didn't have to live that way anymore. He didn't have to be that kind of person anymore. He reversed the condemnation! He thought, "Because Jesus Christ is in my life, I'm not going to steal anymore!"

"Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." Ephesians 4:28

In Jesus Christ, this man had a new life! He didn't have to live under the condemnation of his failures. The condemnation of *Thou shalt not lie*, turned into promises: *You are not going to live like a lying cheat any more. You are not going to live like a lying thief any more. You are not going to live coveting from others any more!*

When Jesus Christ comes into our lives, He not only removes the darkness, but He changes us from being dysfunctional to functional people. We *can* honor our fathers and our mothers. We *can* be faithful to our mates. We *can* live a life of contentment. We *can* be honest in giving and caring and sharing. It's the power of God working in us!

God's plan is to take us from darkness and dysfunction to a new life in Him. The Bible tells us in the Old Testament through the prophets:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and with the house of Judah . . . I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Jeremiah 31:31, 33

"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep

My judgments and do them.” Ezekiel 36:27

Here’s what the New Testament says:

“... the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
Colossians 1:26-27

Does the light go on when you read that? You don’t have to live any longer without the glory of God. It is Christ in you, the hope of glory! The glow is back! The glory of God is back! You *can* live with the power of God!

That’s what salvation means! It is Christ coming into your life, transforming your life, and plugging you into a new *Power Source*.

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” John 1:4

No light, no life!

If you don’t believe on the name of the Son of God, you are condemned already. You are already living in darkness. You are already unplugged. You will go out of this world the way you came in: an unplugged condition being eternally separated from God. You don’t have to do anything to go to hell. You’re already unplugged!

How can we be connected to Him? It is very simple. God has provided a connection to Himself through our Savior, Jesus Christ. In the moment when we believe on the name of the Son of God, commit ourselves to faith and trust in Jesus Christ, we are brought together with God.

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”
I Timothy 2:5

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9-11

It all begins with an act of faith, an act of commitment, an act of devoting and dedicating yourself to Jesus Christ, believing on His name! When we talk about a community of believers committed to Jesus Christ, we are talking about a group of people who have gone from being unplugged to being plugged in to God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

“... that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that

God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ... For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'" Romans 10:9-10, 13

Every month, we participate in Communion, the Lord's Supper. The elements of the Lord's Supper remind us of the body and the blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. They remind us that the *Word* became flesh and dwelt among us. The *Word* was broken for us that we might be connected to God. It is a celebration for those who are "plugged in" to Christ. It is our testimony and witness that we no longer are living in darkness, dysfunction, or under the sentence of death. The power of God is in us through Jesus Christ!

Personal Testimony given by Brent Gray:

I have been a member of Boca Raton Community Church since 1993. I'm currently involved by serving as an Elder. But that is not why I am here today.

I want to take a moment and tell you about when the light came on in my life. I was raised in a Christian home and we attended church three times a week. Unfortunately, at age 18, I decided to pursue a life of worldliness. This particular lifestyle brought with it large quantities of shame because, deep in my heart, I knew that this wasn't the life God had planned for me to live.

I grew into a double-minded man, looking good on the surface as I enjoyed gleaning worldly success. On the inside, I was dying. As the emptiness of living a life apart for God's will increased, I withdrew from family, friends and the church. In my world of relational isolation, I began to medicate the pain of loneliness with alcohol and drugs. Many tried to reach out to me, but I had built a strong wall of protection from the fear of rejection that I thought I would receive if they knew the depths to which I had fallen.

My isolated life became one that included trips to the emergency rooms, treatment facilities, and jail. Fourteen years ago, having lost my worldly possessions, reputation, and friends, I found myself at a rehabilitation clinic on my knees. I cried out to Jesus Christ asking Him for another chance and clearly gave Him the reins of my life. That was when the light came on for me! I realized that He had always been there, patiently waiting for me to turn to Him.

Today, I no longer live in the shame of a hidden life or the pride that often covers a life in need. I know my Savior loves me and provides me with guidance, encouragement, and accountability in the body of Christ. Today, the Lord allows me to offer help and hope to others struggling with the same issues that brought me to my knees. I have come to see how God will work through our weaknesses, to serve others and give strength. If we choose to surrender and humble ourselves before Him, He will heal and restore that

which we had at one time believed to be lost forever.

Thank You for your wonderful light, Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior.

Personal Testimony by Steve Shepherd:

I am member here at Boca Raton Community. I serve in the youth department where I enjoy myself and I have a great time with the youth, just sharing with them and enjoying their company. I grew up in church my whole life. My parents were godly Christians. I grew up in the youth group, but Satan got the best of me. He chose me and I went with him down his path and by his hand, I did what he persuaded me to do, not living for Christ, not anything. Just totally denying Christ and saying, "Christ, I am going to do my own thing cause I'm a big boy now. I'm going to do this. I'm going to have fun. I'm going to do what I want to do."

It didn't last for long, maybe a couple of years. My life was horrible. I wasn't having fun. Everything that I had was gone. I lost my father. I lost the mother that I loved. I lost my family. I lost Christian friends by modeling Satan.

My life got too bad for me on my own, so I came to Florida to live with my mom where I was welcomed with loving arms. It's only because of the prayers of Christian friends that never gave up on me and it's because of a God who never gave up on someone who went away and became unplugged from God. Because of that, I am here today to say the Lord has transformed my life.

Doors have opened up for me to serve and to give back what the Lord has done for me to the youth here at Boca Raton Community Church, but to go on mission trips to serve Him in ways that I have never been able to serve Him before. It's neat to see how when you are plugged in, as Pastor said, to see all the blessings that you will receive as far as a huge circle of friends. You can go to a Bible study and enjoy the fellowship of Christian friends. You can just feel loved. It's a great thing! I am very blessed to be here today. I thank everyone who has prayed for me. I thank Eulie, Pastor McKinley, and Ken Muenstermann for what they have done in my life. Most of all, the praise goes to the Lord. He never gave up! He'll never, never leave. He's always there. That's my testimony of a Lord that never left me and a Lord that always loved.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

All of these things in Scripture are written that you might believe on the name of the Son of God, and that believing, you might have life through His name.

Are you plugged in to God through Jesus Christ? Do you have the light of Christ shining in you? Has there ever been a moment in time when you realized that you were unplugged, living in darkness, dealing with dysfunction, under the sentence of death? Have you ever come to that point of need when you had a “plug in” experience with Christ?

If that has never happened, this could be that moment in your life. In a spirit of prayer and examination, look at the condition of your life today and consider this question: Is Christ the Lord of your life?

If Christ is Lord of your life, then rejoice! Rejoice that the life of God is in you. Rejoice that you have the hope of glory! Rejoice that you are “plugged in” to the Power Source!

Today, if you are without Christ, you could continue just trying harder and doing more. You could continue to focus on dust particles as in the lamp illustration, focusing on your *sins* rather than the *sin* of rejecting Christ. Do you need a new heart, a new condition, a new Power Source? If you have never trusted on the name of Jesus Christ and desire to do that today, right now in your heart, pray this prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am “unplugged,” that I am a sinner in a condition of need for a Savior. Jesus, You came that I might be “plugged in” to the Father. Jesus, today I put my faith and my trust in You. I believe on Your name. You are the Son of God! Today, I take You at Your word that if I receive You, I will become a child of God. I’ll experience light, power, and life! So Jesus, I trust You. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer today, let us help you continue to grow in your faith. We have ministers on our church staff that can answer any questions you may have. We have a Bible we can give you and resources to help and encourage you in your decision to follow Christ. Please contact us, either through correspondence or by telephone:

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