

I. Introduction and Context Setting

Please get into the general vicinity of Ezra and Nehemiah, two books in the Old Testament. We are going to go there in a moment. While you are turning there, John and Jimmy, please pass out the papers. I have something I want to give to every family that you can follow along with this morning. If you are here as a single adult, you can get one too. We just do not have enough to give to everybody, but make sure that everyone gets one that can look it over. Just put it away right now. We are going to get to it here in a little bit, but I do not want to have to stop once we get going. Just have it there and check it out.

As you know, we have taken a week's break from our children's power of parenting classes. We really want to focus today on some decisions we have got to make as a church. I think you need to be fully informed of where we are at, what our options are, and yet at the same time, I do not want to just get up and have a business meeting as most churches have. I think that any business meeting of any church is God's business, so it has to be operated out of the Word of God; it is that simple. We are going to talk about some things today. Next week, we will be back on our parenting classes. We will be starting a couple of week series that is going to have to do with disciplining your child as far as the problems that come up, the strong-willed children, kids that really give you some issues, or just in general how to deal with it.

Today, we want to just take some time, and I want it to be a number of things today. We have got some things we need to accomplish. Today is, in my mind, and I thought about this all week, I really reflected back as best I could and just tried to let the Lord let me come to you this morning with some really good balance that you need to understand of where we are at and what we need to do. I worked through all of these things this week, and I could not help but look back and reflect on the things God has taught me personally in the last four years. A lot of times I talk about the things that you need to learn, and I give you things that you need to really focus on and try to help you come along. But I never want you to think for a moment that I do not learn as much about things as you do. I cannot think of anything that I teach you that I do not learn from myself. It is one of the things I really enjoy about you coming over one-on-one when we talk about the Bible. I will learn as much from things that you show me or ask me that I did not see before as I am sure you do. It has always been a great benefit to me.

As a pastor, I never want to think that there is not a point that I do not have to keep growing in my own life. I learned a long time ago that God's schooling is never out. I could not help but think about this week and reflect on where we are at and what God has taught me the last four years as I taught you. I teach people when they get into a place where they are going to have the potential to be leaders and maybe take a small part of this ministry or a large part of it. I teach them one infallible principle that God has taught me over the years that we constantly need to always be aware of. I break it down into a simple little form: look behind, look around, and look ahead.

As Christians, we always need to be looking behind. We need to see what God has done for us, where we have come from. I think one of the big problems that keeps us from really getting and making those goals in our lives with God is because we forget what God has done for us. So constantly I teach, especially leaders, and it is good for anybody. It is a biblical principle taught all the way through the Bible. You see it in the Old Testament with Moses dealing with the nation of Israel. You see it in the New Testament many, many times, and in type and in form, that we constantly have to be looking at our constant situation, looking behind, looking around, and of course, looking ahead.

II. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

I could not help but reflect on some things. As I thought about Ezra and Nehemiah, I went back to our first series of messages. I know that early in this year, we came through the nine gates in Nehemiah. I took you back and showed you how this church was built on a text in the Old Testament, just as they were building the city of Jerusalem that was lying in waste, that we have to build a church. Certainly, if there is any day and age when the church is lying in waste, it is today in a Laodicean church spirit. We talked about those nine gates that they put up going into that city and showed you how those nine gates are a picture of the nine ministries. Of course, that is not all we have to have, but the nine entry points into this church and the way that we begin a ministry, and you have to build them into the church. We have talked about it. If you did not hear that, you can get it on tape, and you can go through that, either the original copy or you can get what we did here in the first of the year when we took that month and just kind of looked back at where we were.

I thought about Ezra and Nehemiah. In Ezra, that book is where they begin to build the temple. The two books are incredible books. In the book of Ezra, which precedes Nehemiah, they build the temple. We know that the Bible says from 1 Corinthians 6:19 in the New Testament that translates into your body. In the Old Testament, they were rebuilding the literal temple that was in Jerusalem. But we know now that God does not dwell in buildings made with hands. The Bible says today that your body and my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. So when you read the book of Ezra, even though you are reading in the Old Testament that they are really building a literal temple, if you look at what is in there, you can make a spiritual application, and you see what it takes to build your temple, your body for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we came to the book of Nehemiah. The book of Nehemiah was a book that followed the book of Ezra, and it showed us how to build a church. I am saying all that because I want to talk to you this morning about some things that God showed me, that He reminded me of this week, that I think we need to look at to set a context of where we are at and where we have got to go from here.

III. Building People Before Buildings

One of the first lessons, or one of the great lessons, I learned from coming through this, and yet it was a lesson that I already knew. You are going to find in your Christian life that you are going to learn things, and as you go and you learn other things, some of the things that you learned, you

kind of forget or maybe you take them for granted. What God does is He constantly, by other people's lives, other circumstances, or something else that He gives you, He constantly is reinforcing and bringing back to remembrance those core principles that you need to know.

I know as a pastor, and some of you young men in time in the future when you pastor, and maybe you will go out and start a church someplace, I know that this lesson that I have learned will be a great lesson for you. It is a lesson that is totally contrary to everything that is taught today. The lesson is simply this: if you are a pastor, you have to build the people before you can build a building. It is that simple. The thing that we are taught today is to go out and get a building, and then sacrifice, mortgage, beat, whip, kick, shoot your people to pay for it, and put them into some kind of horrendous debt where all you have to do every Sunday is get up and talk about money.

What happens is because you are so driven by the building, and it is just human nature, it is going to happen. Because you are so driven by the building, driven by the financial obligation that you saddle the church with, you have to put your—every human being is like this, it is just human nature—what you do is you get so preoccupied with the burden of debt. You get so preoccupied with the building itself, some great monument to somebody out there, that what you automatically do is you stop teaching the people and you start raising money. You will see it in every big church in this city that they will get up and they will take 15, 20 minutes and talk about the Bible, but somewhere in his monologue will be a 40-minute stint for money. Then the next week will be "give more money," and then the week after that will be the sermon of "give more money." It just constantly begins to take everything that that church is supposed to be focused on away because of the focus that is put on money.

I learned a great truth early on. That truth is, my job as a pastor is not to build a building. If we did not have this, if God had provided a tent, I would have been satisfied with it. It does not bother me because I know that those things are not my concern. If they were my concern, then I would feel this tremendous burden. I would have went out and got some kind of building, or as I was told when we started this church, that this church would never—we started with 20-some people—this church would never go because you have got to have a building. People are just conditioned to come to a place where you have some grand building. We were over in Park last night, and I, we were driving down Metcalfe, and right there about Metcalfe and 95th, I remember it is a Baptist church. There was a humongous Baptist church. I got looking at that, and I thought to myself, the shrubbery and just the cosmetics of that place probably would buy any church for anybody within, probably cost a couple of million dollars itself. I do not know if they think that that is what you have got to do in society.

I think that, you know what my bottom line is? I am just going to tell you this. I told you this when we started our leadership training, and I was training some of you young men about how to be good preachers. I told you that preaching is a lost art form. There was a time, and some of you do not have that understanding, you are not that old in it yet, but some of you older people, I am sure, would know this and understand this. I grew up hearing some of the greatest preachers in the sixties and the seventies that wherever was. I have heard guys like B.R. Lakin, Victor Sears, Harold Sears, Harold Seidler, Fred Thompson, all the great preachers that are now dead and

gone. They all had one characteristic about their preaching. Every one of them when they stood in the pulpit and they took that pulpit and they preached, they took this Bible, and they literally, whatever their sermon was, they painted a picture in your mind with this book and the things that were in this book by their style, by their delivery. It was very clear that their passion was what was in this book. Through words, they painted a masterpiece like an artist does with a canvas and paint. They painted a picture throughout the Bible that everybody in that building fully understood. Everybody in that building got it. When they left, because of the power of preaching and the power of the Holy Spirit of God and the power of this book, they painted a picture of what they wanted to get across in their mind.

Those days of preaching for the most part are gone. Do you know how I know they are gone? Do you know how I know that preachers today do not have the power to paint? This is going to sound petty to you, but it is absolutely the truth. I have watched this thing for 35 years. The reason why I know they do not have the power to do it is because now, in place of this, they have got some gigantic multimedia up there to paint the picture for you. All the things now are mechanics. Everything is about the dynamics of the five or six screens or the three or four screens that are flashing behind you. They have lost the ability to take one single book, that is a living book, and preach it.

I will tell you, that same kind of mentality has crept into the church buildings themselves. You are told now that if you want to reach people, because we live in such a society that is such an upper class and such a dynamic society, that you have got to build some gigantic edifice. What happens is churches get in competition. I know that is true. I know that they look at other churches and they covet what they have, or when they get this big building, they are down in the dumps because they do not have one. It becomes like keeping up with the Joneses.

I want you to understand that when I read my Bible, the most beautiful building in the Old Testament before the temple was built, the most beautiful building that was ever built anywhere in all of the Bible, if you would have seen it out there, it would have looked like just an old ragtag army surplus tent. It was covered with badger skins. It was covered with animal skins. From the outside, if you would have went and looked at it, it looked just like Joe's flea market down here that you would see down around the corner. The beauty of it was not what was on the outside. The beauty of it is what was on the inside. Inside was the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Inside was the golden altar, the golden incense, the table of showbread. Inside was the seven golden candlesticks. Inside that was the Holy of Holies where God Himself sat on that mercy seat. It is not about what is pretty on the outside. It is what is beautiful on the inside. It is so true of churches today that have lost that concept. I am not interested in keeping up with anybody except God. He is the only one I am concerned about keeping up with.

I learned a great lesson: you have to build people before you build a building. I told you from day one that we would build our church by the book, by the book of Acts. The book of Acts in this church is the foundation of what we believe and where we go and take our commission from. The book of Romans is our constitution of our Christianity. Everything that we believe is defined and laid out in the book of Romans. Paul's letters to the churches define the body and the

examples and become our model for everything, not only in our personal life, in the books that he writes to individuals, but in the letters that he writes to the churches.

I will tell you from that, another great thing I learned, and preachers have a tough time with this. I have seen this all my life. I realize another great truth is simply this: in any church, there is never one person or one family that is more important than anybody else in the church. Money has a way of getting most pastors' attention. When you see somebody that is affluent, or somebody that is rich, or somebody that has the wherewithal, preachers just naturally like to gravitate to that because I know it is a standard joke. It is, it is, it is, it just, preachers are all about money, and many of them, probably most of them, are. They look at somebody, and they want to cater to that person.

I know a pastor in this town. I would not tell you who he was for anything in the world. Church had a church split. This church was running about 400 people. The church that split was running about 2,000, lost about, I do not know, a whole bunch of people. A man who was in the church that split went to this pastor that had a church of about two or 300. I am not speaking out of school. I know this to be true. I know this to be true. The man that had a delegation of about 400 people goes to the pastor of the church now that is running 200, maybe 300, and he says to him, "I will bring 400 people into your church with all their tithes and all their offerings. I will have them here tomorrow. They will follow me wherever I go. We have come from so-and-so church, and we have left that church, and we are shopping around for a church." Here is the deal: "I will guarantee you 400 people tomorrow with 400 families' tithes." What preacher in the world would not be happy with that kind of offer? 400 people, just like that. He went from 300 to 700.

I am telling you, the only condition was this: the guy that brought him in says, "You have got to make me a pastor and put me paid on staff." The second issue is this: "You cannot ever preach out of the King James Bible again." The guy bought it just like that. Do you know why? Because more important to him was the nickel and noses than the book that got him where he went. I know it to be true because I spent two years with that pastor a number of years ago, walking him through every week, showing him why the King James Bible was the absolute Word of God. He had a problem with it back then. But that is where we are at today. That is where we are at today.

Let me tell you something. There was no family, there was no individual, there is nobody that a church has to be built around, including me. Every one of us is expendable to the work of God. Nobody here is so invaluable that we cannot get along without you. It has been over the years, I have been held hostage with that. I had a family a couple of years ago come to me and basically want to blackmail me, hold me hostage. "We are going to leave the church. We are going to leave the church if you do not give us this, this, this, this, this." Just by the way, if you ever get in a hostage situation where somebody has got a gun to your head, and I happen to walk around and I find another gun, and he is standing there and saying, "You all right, drop your gun, Bob, or I am going to blow his brains out." You have picked the wrong guy to help you out of that situation. Because I already know the minute I lay my gun down, he is going to shoot you first and shoot me second. That is the way it is going to work. So sorry about it, but it is going to go like this: he dies first, you die second. It is that simple. I am not a very good person in a hostage situation. So if you find yourself in that, you do not want me. If you are on a plane, they have got a bomb, I

will just say, "Blow it up, we will get everybody else to survive." I do not know what else to tell you. You cannot, and the moment as a pastor, you are negotiating that, you are done. You are done, you are done.

I told that person, I said, "You know what? I said, I will tell you what. You just go ahead and do whatever you have got to do, wherever you have got to do it." You have got to realize that there is nobody, and I had to learn this over the years, but there is nobody, no family, no individual that this church cannot do without. This church does not need you or me. You and I need this church. That is really the bottom line.

IV. The Good Hand of God

Another great lesson God showed me, and I will tell you what, this one really helped me to stay on course, not only in the early years of my ministry, but even as we started this church. It is a very simple phrase found in Ezra and Nehemiah, and that is why I wanted you, one of the reasons I wanted you to go there. This phrase is a real comfort to me when I struggled or needed to be patient and just needed to wait on God. Because, you know what? I can shoot my mouth off up here and say whatever I want to say about how we wait on God and how this is God's church, but I want you to know, you think that there is not peer pressure in my life. You think there is not an element in me that wants to show these guys how it is done. I am as human as anybody else. It is things like this that God puts in my life that keeps me honest. I am talking to you about more what God has taught me this last four years than I have taught you, because you need to understand these things with where we are at today.

That phrase is a very basic phrase, but it is found all throughout Ezra and Nehemiah. It really sets the backbone for what really is going on, just like it sets the background for what we are at today and what we have got to do. The phrase is simply this, you find that all the time: "According to the good hand of my God." Over and over and over again, you will find that when something comes up, Ezra and Nehemiah recognized that what was going on and what was transpiring, and the events that were taking place in Ezra and Nehemiah were simply based on the hand, or "according to the good hand of my God," that was upon me.

Father, we thank You and praise You now for the Lord Jesus. We ask You to take the remainder of our time this morning and speak to our hearts and give us what we need to know and understand today. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it, amen.

I think the greatest feeling of contentment and satisfaction in a Christian's life—and some of you will know what I am about to say in this, and some of you do not, and some of you will in time, you are not right there yet, some of you, bless your heart, you probably never will—but I think the greatest contentment and satisfaction is the knowledge and the confirmation that God has His hand on your life and is using you. I do not know of any other great thing in this world that is more sustaining. I do not know of any other thing that brings about more contentment, more satisfaction. I do not know of any other thing that puts the joy in your heart that really nothing that the devil tries to put into your life can take away. And boy, he does. You know it is true as well as I do. You can get up in the morning and have a great day, go on the hour excited, and get

one phone call, and it ruins your day. Most of the time, those phone calls are from the people you love the most. We are all that way.

The greatest contentment, the greatest feeling of contentment, and the greatest satisfaction that any child of God can have is to know and the confirmation and the knowledge that God has His hand on your life. When you know that, you know that no matter what comes your way, no matter what happens, because you are where God wants you to be, and you have spent the time learning the Word of God.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

A life that is simply God has got His hand on your life. You have invested your time in the Bible. You have built your relationship with God. You are not going to get swayed by anything out there. You pass that point in your life where you understand the importance of where you are at, how God has grown you. You have looked behind, looked around, and looked ahead. You are not going to get snatched out of here by some charlatan that is going to try to give you a better deal someplace. You know exactly what you have got, where you are at, and you can see and understand that for the first time in your life, and this is where the comparison is. You know the emptiness of the life before. You know the disappointment. You know the brokenheartedness. You know the failures. You know the screw-ups in your life. To come to the point in your life where now God without a doubt has His hand on your life, and He has got His hand, and He has touched you, and you now understand that He has something for you to do, and no matter what happens, He has got His hand in your life, and He has got His hand on you, and He is using you. Your steps now are being ordered by the Lord. That does not mean that opposition will not come in. That does not mean that somebody will not try to get you off the track. It means now that in everything in your life, you have decided at some point that you are not making a move, not making a step outside of these biblical principles because the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. The way God orders them is through the principles of His Word.

Let us face it, in your life and my life or any ministry, opposition will come. It comes from within and it comes from without.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

When you know and God has His hand on your life, it is special. I want to say this to you this morning because I want you to understand this: God has His hand on this church. There is no question in my mind. I have been in the ministry 40 years. I have seen all kinds of churches. I have been involved in all kinds of churches. I have seen across this country, all around the world, and I am telling you something. You can believe me or not believe me. It does not make any difference to me one way or the other because if God is for you, who can be against you? I am telling you something. God, for whatever reason, this church does not deserve it. You do not deserve it. I do not deserve it. But for some strange reason, God has His hand on this church, and God wants to do something with this church. You better understand that because as I have said many, many times, and I will say many, many times again, to whom much is given, much is required.

My priority has never been to build a building, but rather to build you as God's people. I really believe the promises of Philippians 4:19.

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

I really believe that. I look at my own life, and I have seen over the last 56, 57 years of my life, God has met my every need. He has not met all of my wants, but He met every need. Whenever I had a need, He was there with the answer. Whenever I struggled through something, He was always there. Many times it was my own prideful, sinful self that would not let me see, but nevertheless, He was there. He will always be there. The problem is not Him; the problem is you and me, being able to believe that and trust that.

I have got a long way to go, and I have got a lot of things to learn, but I am going to tell you something. I do not claim to be the smartest man in the world; I just claim to be the smartest one in the slow class. I am telling you this, the bottom line is this: God has taught me some things about trusting Him through you. As much as I hope that I have taught you some things about trusting God through that book. If God has used me in your life to get you someplace spiritually, I want you to know it is a two-way street, and God has used you in my life to get me where I needed to be. I bring to you this morning as your pastor a great statement that God has His hand on this church. It is not because of you; it is not because of me. It is because that we are honoring a book that God honors. It is that simple. It is that simple.

I told you last year, before we ever got into this year, because I was seeing what God was doing in some of your lives. I see what God is doing in some of your lives this year. I see the potential that if you will let Him, what God will do in your life, if you will just let Him in and let Him have those things. But I told you last year, before we ever entered 2007, I told you that this year would be a defining year for our church. I am neither a prophet nor a son of a prophet; I just know the handwriting on the wall. I am telling you, God has His hand on this church. We have come today to just one of the many defining moments we are going to face as the church. I want you to understand that.

Somebody asked a question Thursday night in Bible study and asked a question about where we are at as a church. I told them, I said, "You know what? The bottom line is this: churches are like people, because churches are made up of people." In your Christian life, when you get saved, the Christian life is nothing more than a series of levels that you have got to go through, each level higher than the last, each level with more responsibility than the last, each level bringing you closer to the Word of God and Christ than the last, and each level tearing it up as you come through there. But the bottom line is this: on each level, there will be obstacles that you must face. Nobody ever got to have a close relationship with God without going through some tough times, for example, Job. There are many examples in the Bible, almost every example in the Bible. You have to go through the rough times to get to the good times. But it is the rough times if you take it to God.

I have told you many, many times, you as an individual, me as an individual, there is no difference between me and you. I am tempted with the same things you are. I struggle with the same emotions and feelings that you do. You get the idea sometime that I am devoid of any kind

of emotion that could lead me down the wrong path. I have got news for you. I am just as frail and vulnerable to sin in the world as you are. There is no steel in my backbone that keeps it from breaking. I can guarantee you that. The difference is, and this is where you have got to get, the difference is, you come to the point in your life when you know that God has His hand on what you are doing, and there is no way you are going to screw that up. You have got to come to the point in your life where you know that each level you are going to find something that you are going to have to deal with. Going to the next level is determined on whether you deal with the issues on that level.

Christian life is so basic. You get saved, and you enter the first level, and you start having a great time, and you start enjoying church and the Bible, and you just think that everybody and everything in this world is absolutely perfect, especially Christians. You do not go six months, four months, two months, a week, probably an hour, you do not encounter your first problem. I have seen it happen all the time. I have seen a young guy come in and get saved and really get plugged in, and then out of nowhere, out of the twilight zone, comes an old girlfriend he had not seen for 10, 15 years who he does not need in his life now. I have seen it with the opposite, where it just is the reverse. I have seen situations where people come in, they get into the Word of God, they begin to grow, and something else will come up. I have seen them lose their job.

Nicky, if you do not mind me using the example, you are a classic example. Can I use an example? All right, I am going to do it next month. I do not want to use it today, but I know it is ready. Here is a guy right here. Started coming to church, got saved. First thing she did was lost her job. Lost her job. Found God for the first time in her life, and I remember the phone call. I remember the fear and trembling in my heart when I heard those words because I knew this was going to be something. I knew it was. The first thing she says is, "My mom who lives in Columbia, listen, no reflection on your mother, because she is a great woman, but her mother says, 'You know what, just come on, move on back to Columbia. You can move in with us, and you can take the time to find a job.'" You were faced with a decision right there. A defining moment in your life. Do you know what you did? When you made the right choice, you did not go up one level, you skipped up to the next third level.

I remember our phone conversation. I said, and I always tremble in saying this, because I know the truth sometimes when you are, and it is not what you want to hear. But I have got to remember, I am not getting paid for telling you what you want to hear. I am getting paid for telling you what is best for you. I said, "Nikki, no reflection on your mother, but I am telling you, going back to that dead church, going back to where there is no church, it is going to be the worst thing you can do." I said, "I am telling you, if you can just trust God, God will get you through this, and He will take care of you." He did. But in the blackness of that moment, in the fear and the terror in your heart, when you lost your job, or you lost this, or you lost that, or something happened, you know what that is? You say, "Well, I lost my job." No! God gave you an obstacle to go to see if you are willing to trust Him. He wants to get you to the next level. Quit looking at it wrong. You did not lose your job. You got an opportunity to go from point A to point D. Do you want to take it, or do you want to stay where you are at? That is all it is. How many times

have I seen that? Just as many as I have seen you do what is right, I have seen them do what is wrong. I am telling you.

This church is the same way. God is going to give this church, as we band together as individuals, God is going to give this church different levels that we have got to go up to. This church is going to face many defining moments till Jesus comes back. We are going to have to deal with issues, just like you will have another issue, and you will have another issue, and another issue. What you do is you learn that God took care of me in the last issue, bless God, He is going to take care of me in the next one. Bottom line is this, and I do not know if you can get it or not: God did not bring you this far to let you drop now.

I had a preacher one time, did not know him very well. He was over there in John, I think it was John 14, one of those places where it talks about that you are in God's hands, or in Christ's hands, and Christ is in God's hands. He was walking around like this, preaching, everybody was enjoying except me. He was saying, in fact, he was preaching on eternal security, and he was saying, "Now, now, now, you know how you know you are eternally saved?" He says, "Because the Bible says that you are in Christ's hands, and then the Bible says that His hands are in God's hands. How are you going to fall out of God's hands when He is in Christ's hands and you are in Christ?" Everybody went, "Amen," except me. That is very bad doctrine. I want to tell you something. You want Bible doctrine? You want it the way the Bible says it is? I know the context, Dr. Lee, of John chapter 14. Too bad he did not. John chapter 14, "in the hands of the hands of the hands of the man" is not the way to go. That is a song, is not it? "In the hands of the hands of the man." Is that a song, Pat, is that a song? No, okay. That is not how I know I am saved. I am not in His hands of His hands. My Bible says I am part of His body. I am His hand. Do you know how I go to hell? God walks up to the chopping block up in heaven, takes a big axe and says, "This is Bob Alexander from here down, what?" Then He walks around, He turned like this. Boy, if enough of you lost your salvation, He would not be walking around at all. He loses toes, His legs, His fingers, His arms. I am not in His hand. I am part of His hand. I am in His body. We have forgotten that. He is not going to lose you now, but you have got to continue to go up those levels, and churches have to continue going up those levels.

V. Opposition and Strengthening Hands

I told you it was going to be a defining year. In July, we established our first real deacons, our real leadership. We had men that were in this church up to that point that were pastors and really were the backbone of this church. Yet we needed to develop some new leadership. We need to, we are all going to die someday. You see us walking around, looks like we are going to die tomorrow in some cases. But we are not going to be around forever. You cannot just focus on the old guys that are hanging out here holding it together. What happens when we go? Somebody is going to have to grow up to take over this circus. We need a ringleader, ringmaster. We need an organ grinder with a lot of monkeys. We established our first real leadership, homegrown in this church. I told you we are going to be a defining year. For the most part, almost without exception, you have stepped up to that challenge.

My job as pastor is to lead you up to those challenges and those levels, but I cannot lead you through them. What I can do is get on the other side and be your cheerleader. But I cannot go through what you have got to go through. I can be your pastor and lead you up to each level. Then when you are standing there contemplating going through this, what I will do is run around the other side and say, "Come on, you can do it, you can do it." You ever get a little kid, my little grandkids, I like to put them up on a table, test their faith in grandpa. Put them up high and then say, "Jump, jump." There is little Maddie up there going, "Yep." Little Kenzie up there going, "Eeh." She is going to be one to watch. She jumps, no chute, no nothing, no static line, she is out the door, man, going to watch her. Now, I am grandpa. What sick grandpa would say, "Jump, come on, jump"? And there is little Maddie jumping, and I go, "Oh man, did not that hurt?" What sick man would do that? Do not raise your hand. This is not a time of confession. Who would do that to their child? I would not, you would not. Well, if you being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall Him that is in heaven give good things unto them that ask Him? God is not going to let you drop. But boy, is not it, is not it chilling on the end of that table?

Somebody asked me one time years ago, "What should your relationship with God be? What should my relationship with God be?" If you really have a great relationship with God, and you are growing and going and really doing what you need to do, you know what you ought to be in your life all the time? Your life ought to be like you are out in a tree, out on a limb, blowing in the wind, knowing it is too much weight for the limb. Then when you look back at God, who is standing at the trunk of the tree, He has got a smile on His face and a saw in His hand. If He decides to cut the limb, you are finished. Because that is just the way it is with God sometimes. Because He knows He wants you and I to get to another level. You do not get to the other level without stepping out by faith and trusting Him and then stepping up to the challenge that God gives you. That is how you build men and women. That is how this church becomes what God wants it to be.

Look now at Nehemiah chapter 2, verse 17 and 18. Then I want to compare that with Ezra chapter 4. So you want to get it in one hand and get it in the other. Then we are going to get right into this thing here, and we are right on our time schedule.

Then I said unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

You see that thing? "The hand of my God which was good upon me." There it is again. And they spoke to me and they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they, here comes the key, "So they strengthened their hands for this good work." My job for the last four years is to be strengthening your hands for the work of God by teaching you the Bible. In everything that we have done, there is not one thing I do that we have done as a church, whether it is the athletic ministry,

whether it is the one-on-one, whether it is Thursday night Bible study, child training, whatever it is, marriage enrichment, whatever it is, everything is for one bottom line purpose: that is to strengthen your hands.

Now look at Ezra chapter 4.

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel,

Look at verse 4.

Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

Now there is your opposition. My job is to strengthen our hands for the work of God. The adversary's job is to weaken your hands. Now I want you to write this down somewhere in your Bible because I want you to see this come true at some point. Maybe not this year, next year, five years. At some point it will fulfill itself. This church, if it ever gets attacked, will never get attacked from the outside, never. If this church gets beat up, destroyed, attacked, it will get done from the inside.

The problem with this church will never be bad doctrine. Write this down. This is what I want you to write down. The problem with this church will never be bad doctrine. The problem in this church will be bad attitudes. That will be the problem. That will be the problem. When you stop growing, you start grumbling. You need to understand this morning that this church is going to be under attack. You yourself are going to be under attack. The devil, our adversary, wants to destroy and weaken our hands in the building that we have committed ourselves to do and strengthening our hands for this good work because the good hand of God is upon us. Everybody in your own personal life and as a church now is faced with the challenge and a continual challenge of moving up those spiritual levels in trusting God. This is the context of what we need to understand this morning. We have done our job at the level we are at. Now God has opened up a tremendous door of opportunity to the next level as a church. We must face it as a church, and now we have got to make a decision as a church. It is just that simple.

VI. The New Building Opportunity

Now I want to bring you up to speed on where we are at based on what I just said. On anniversary Sunday, as we were locking up the place, Chris and I were down doing a far door, and the lady who runs this particular establishment met us down there, and she called us into the office, and she said, "You know what? Larry Lester, who is the man who owns this and all of this stuff around in his area, he is a builder." She said, "We really feel bad because we just have got to quit bumping you guys around all the time." They rent this out on a regular basis. We only rent it two times a week. One is for Sunday morning, and one is for Thursday night Bible study. The times that we would want it other than that, we have to compete with. They have weddings in here, receptions. There is hardly a Saturday night or a Saturday morning or even a day throughout the week they do not drive by, and a lot is packed. Like last Sunday, we get here for

church, and they had a, Lester had a party here last night. It was beer all over the windows. Sticky beer all on the floors. Do not get me upset, I am all for that, but I mean, just saying it was not a good thing to go to church at. One of our elder ladies came in all excited to go to church, and she just slid all the way down the thing there. We caught her, luckily. But that is what she did. There have been times that they have the bookers. In fact, she used to call me, and I just said, "Quit calling me." She used to say, "We are going to have to move you from this end, which we are about this end now, down to this end next Sunday." She did not want me to get confused at where I was supposed to be. I told her, I said, "You do not have to call me. As long as when I get there, I have a place, I do not care if it is in the north end or the south end. As long as it is not in the parking lot, take care of me."

But they felt bad about that. Coming up in a couple of weeks on a Thursday night in October, they have got something else booked. We can have Bible study if we want, but we are going to be jammed down there, and it is going to be a tough thing to do. They felt bad about that. She said, "Larry has got another building up here." She said, "He is willing that if you guys would like to go up and look at that, he is willing to make arrangements for you guys to go up there." Barb and I said, and Chris, we said, "Yeah, we will go right up." Everybody had left. So we blew up there. I remember Barb and I going home, we were talking about the fact, "Well, happy anniversary, Old Path Baptist Church." I mean, right on anniversary day, look at this. We tried to play phone tag. Larry was on vacation for three or four weeks. We could not get back with him. Finally, we did make contact, and the lady said, "Well, he had one other guy that he had as a carpet company that he offered that to, and he felt like he needs to give him the opportunity." He said, "Fine." At that point, I said, "Chris, I said, you know what, Chris, just let it go. If they want it, if it is for God, just do not hound them. I do not really care one way or the other. We will get through the beer in the morning. It will be fine." So off we went.

We got a phone call a couple of weeks ago that said Larry wanted to meet with us to find out what we wanted to do. So we went down to meet with Larry on a Friday afternoon. We looked at all down there, and we saw what needed to be done. We talked to Larry about some things. Larry basically said this. He said, "You know what? You go, I go back and think about it, talk about it, find out what you want me to do, and then get back with a proposal, get it drawn up, get a proposal, I will sit down, and he says, we will find out what your budget is. We will find out what I can do. He said, I really want you to have it, but let us just sit down and talk about it. Find out what you want me to do first." Well, okay.

Now you can look at your paper here if you would, and we will talk about some of this that you need to see. You want to hold it so, if you are going to look at this right, hold it so the auditorium or the sanctuary here, hold it like that so the steps are down here and the sanctuary is up here, so I am explaining it. You are not upside down with it.

Here is what we have got. This is what we need to talk about this morning. This building is 9,000 square feet. We have got an auditorium possibility here that will seat up to 500 people probably, maybe even more. We will have our own fellowship hall. We will have our own kitchen in it. We will have a complete nursery that will be sealed off and walled off, and it will be completely enclosed in itself. We have enough room to build Sunday school classes, probably four or five

Sunday school classes depending on how big you want them. In time, enough place and enough space and with everything set to put a baptistry in it if that is what we want to do and what we want to go.

VII. Options and Financial Proposal

Now, we have two basic options, three if we count not doing it. But here are our options. Here is what needs to be done.

1. We have got to redo the bathrooms because we do not have enough bathroom space downstairs.
2. It has got covered with pegboard at this time. So we are going to have to take the pegboard down, we are going to have to restud the walls, probably move the electricity, and then sheetrock it, and then put all the sheetrock up.
3. We are going to have to paint the walls and the ceiling, and of course, that is going to require going in and taping everything off. It has got a sprinkler system, it has got lights running up and down it, that is going to have to be done.
4. We are going to have to carpet the entire area, which is 9,000 square feet.
5. We are going to have to have chairs and tables.
6. Obviously, probably going to have to redo some of the electrical, if not mostly electrical.

Here are our two options if we decide we are going to do this. This is where we left it with Larry. Larry told us, and you can figure this out, Larry told us that it was going to, no matter what we did, and he is willing to do it all. But Larry told us it was going to cost. Construction today is about \$40 a square foot. So you can figure that from where it goes in with a \$40 square foot. Obviously, what Larry is going to do is Larry is going to take whatever his construction costs are, and he is going to roll it into our monthly rent. We are going to have to sign a lease. We still do not have to pay for utilities; he will cover all of that. But he is going to take the \$40 or \$50,000. Does anybody figure out yet what \$40 a square foot is for 9,000 square feet? How much? \$360,000. That is what it is going to cost him to do what he needs to get done there for us to move in. So he is going to take that \$360,000, and he is going to roll it into our rent.

Here is what I do not want to happen, and this is what will happen. All right, so he rolls our \$360,000 into our rent. He is doing that because he wants to get his \$360,000 back. I have no problem with that. But when he gets his \$360,000 back, he is not going to come to us and say, "Okay, now I am going to lower your rent again." We are going to pay for that \$360,000 for the rest of our lives. It is just a simple business. I am not fighting it. If I wish I could do it, I would do it too. But that is where it is at, and that is what he is going to do. He is not going to come back and say, "Okay, now we got done \$360,000 payback, so now we are going to drive it back to what was."

So here is the other option. He brought this up. Once we met with him and we got some of the guys together that were there, and we came up with an option that we think will work. This is what I am bringing to you this morning. We go to Larry with the proposal that he does the bathrooms and he supplies the chairs and the tables. We go in and do everything else. We figured

it up that where he is charging us \$40 a square foot, doing it the way we can do it, we will do it for \$1.72 a square foot. We will do everything that we have got to do and everything that we have got to accomplish for everything for around \$16,000. With the men in this church who are all professionals in their field, we have Steve Bracken, we have both Kyles, we have Jason, we have Bubba, we have Chris and John Christensen and others in here too, but those guys, you do it for a living. We have enough manpower that we can get that done with all of us supplying the labor that has to be done for the non-essential stock. We can get it done for under \$2 a square foot.

This option will require all of us, one, to raise the money to do it. We are not going to have a special offering. Here is how I look at this. I need to tell you this, just upfront so you know. I am not coming to you saying, "Hey, look, we are going to have a building fund." Oh, I am not going to do that. I am not going to say, "Okay, we are going to have an offering now, go out and squeeze all your friends, just have offering day for the building, bring all your rich friends in." We are not going to do that. This is your church. If we are going to do it, then we will pay for it as a church. You are going to have to decide in this if you are going to start financially supporting this church or not, if you are a member of this church. It is just that simple. If you are not, that is fine. If we are not going to do it, let us stay here. I do not care, it does not bother me. I do not bother me in the least. I am not, I want you to understand, I am not pushing this any way, shape, or form. I do not care, I will stay here forever. It gets too full. If you like your kids being down there in a makeshift nursery, if you like that, fine. If you like your kids, because when they get overflow, they have got to take them outside and have nursery out there, fine. If you like coming in and setting up and smelling stale beer, I do not mind it. I am kind of getting used to the smell of it. I do not care. It is your call, not mine. I do not care, it is up to you.

If you want to be a real church and you want to have what we have of the tremendous opportunities of ministry, where we have got more room and we know what to do with, and we can build into it, and I will tell you, I will tell you what the next level will be after that because he has got two businesses up topside, so I do not even know how they are staying open. As we grow, they are going to go. Write that down. That rhymes. There is another one. We have got "hold the line," we have got "back to back," we have got "turn it up or turn it in," now we have got "we are going to grow and they are going to go." You do not have to write everything down I say.

What is going to take place is simply this. What is going to happen is that in time, if God so designs, everything is in that building, topside and bottom side, that we can do whatever we want to do, and if that is where God wants us to be, and that is where it will be. It is your call, it is your choice. But we are going to have to step up to the plate not only financially, supporting it every month. If everybody who is a member of this church would just start tithing and doing what is right, we would not even have to have this conversation. But that is up to you. This is not my church. I am not up here to raise money. I am up here to tell you, "Hey, I will stay here in this place all you want, I do not care." If this is all you think church is, and you do not want to make an investment of your family and your time and your finances, that is okay with me. You are not going to get me up here and have a money-raising campaign that brings it in. Hey, I do not care.

We cannot fill this place out anymore. Then we will just go get a big tent. I do not care. It does not bother me a bit. It is your church.

I told you from day one, when we got this decision to make, we do not get a bunch of little leaders around here and decide the fate of the world that you have to accept. I am telling you what it is. I lead you up to the level, but I cannot lead you through it. You are a church. You have to decide what you want to do. I am going to have a chance where you can ask some questions here in just a moment.

Once we understand that, then my thinking on it is that I am going to set Steve Bracken Jr. up as the general contractor, and as far as getting all the things that we need, all the other guys that will work in conjunction with that, that will head up the areas, and we will go in and we will do all the labor work that we have got to do, and we will do everything we are going to have to do. I want to do it in stages, and it will probably take us, and Steve will probably disagree with this. I am just giving myself a little lead time here. But once we get the green light, I am going to say three or four months. He is probably thinking a lot quicker than that, and that is fine with me. But I am just giving myself just what I know these things go.

Here is what we are going to have to do:

- We are going to have to totally focus everything we do till we get into that thing as quickly as we can.
- We are going to have to have some nights where we go over and we stage it.
- First thing it is probably going to have to do is we are going to have to go over there and take off all that pegboard. We can do that in one evening. We get enough people there.
- Then we are going to have to come back over. We are going to have to begin to frame it in. We have got only so many guys that can do that.
- Then we are going to have to probably rerun some electrical. We have got three or four guys that can do that.
- Then we are going to have to haul the sheetrock in. We do not have guys that, we only have several guys, probably all of our construction guys can mud and sheetrock or know what they are doing with it. We have got a couple that do it for a living. But the bottom line is we are going to have to haul the sheetrock in. That is what we have to do. Now we just work together and get it done.
- Once we get it sheetrocked, once we get the whole thing done, then we are going to have to go back and we are going to have to paint it. That means we are going to have to go over some nights. We are going to have to tape off everything up there. Then they are going to come in, and one night they can get the whole thing painted.
- Then we are going to have to come back, and they are going to have to build a wall or door, an entry, so that we have a little foyer area. When you come down the steps there, a little foyer area.
- If you notice on that sheet, there is a wall coming across that is going to block off the auditorium from the rest of it. On the one side, on the back side, there is going to be fellowship hall. There is going to be a kitchenette in there.

- One of the things we want to do right out of the box is we want to contain the nursery. We want to build that nursery across and get that done. We can go back and put the Sunday school classes in later.
- What I want to do right now is get in and get functional. Get in with the basic things that we can do ourselves to get us in there. Then we can build what we want to build as we want to go.
- The thing I do not want to do is hurry up, get it all done now, and then a year from now, saying, "Boy, I wish we would have done this differently." Let us find out when we get in it, how we have to redefine it. We may get a totally different idea about it once we are there. But we have got to get in with the basis. We need the auditorium branched off, and we need the segregation between the fellowship hall and from the children's area.

My proposal to you as a church is the fact that we do that, and we go to Larry and we simply say, "Larry, you do the bathrooms and you provide the chairs and the tables, and we will do everything else and pay for it," and then go on from there and see what he says. If he has to fudge a little bit on that, we can do that. The bottom line is I do not want to, I know that if everybody gets on board that, and I figured total shine out front, I would like to, in the foyer area, I would like to get some, and I do not know if we can do this right out of the box, but I want to get some couches. I want to make a nice area where we can do those things. The full thing is probably \$25,000, but \$16,000, \$17,000 to get functional and get in there. Then we can see where we are at from there. If you will just do your part, we will pay that back in no time into our general fund, and we will move on from there, and we can take whatever we want to do and go from there and do it as we need to get done. But you see, it is your choice because it is your church. I do not care.

VIII. Questions and Decision

Now I am going to open it up for some questions here for a few minutes before we take it. Let me say this before I answer your questions or take any questions, please keep them relevant to what we are at right now. Do not ask me about the color of carpet. Do not ask me what kind of toilet paper we are going to put in it. Do not ask me about this or that, I do not know. All I know, ask me your questions based on where you are at, and please stand up when you ask so everybody can hear.

Jan, go ahead. That is a little mistake. Yeah, go ahead.

We have already got a lot of material donated to us. Waiting to go. Is that accurate, Steve? Where is Steve at? Is that accurate? Okay.

Yeah, John, real loud.

Okay. Okay, John, real loud. Okay, John, real loud. Yeah, John, real loud.

No, we are going to, I am going to, oh, I am sorry, John. Thanks for bringing that up. Very good. I am going to basically say to him, thank you, John. Thank you. I am going to thank you, John. Thank you so much. Thank you, John. You helped me out here. I am going to say to him, "Larry,

yeah, this, good point. Larry, you do the bathrooms, you do the tables and chairs, we do everything else, and you do not raise our rent." That is what I am going to tell him. That was a pretty important part. Yeah, and basically we are paying right now \$2,000 a month. So that is what we are going to propose to him. Now he may fudge on that a little bit, and that is fine. We have got some areas to work with, but I want to get in. After we are doing all the work, he really likes us. We have got a really good testimony. From day one, when we started our church, we have paid a month ahead on all our bills with them. Most churches, he has rented that out to a couple other places. He had to take it back because they would not pay him. Since we have been in there, we always pay one month ahead. Is that not true, guys? That is what Chris said. Is that true? One month ahead. I told him, I said, "I want to keep a testimony with him." He knows we are money in the bank. He knows that, and he does not want, everything is sitting empty down there. So we have got some great opportunities.

Anybody else? Stand up, honey, so we can hear.

On the classroom, the 16 by 20, is that the nursery?

That is the nursery. Yes, that is. We have a list of the other classrooms on there, but we have got, we can put them almost that big, three or four of them, yeah. The original angel fist-wink. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. Does it matter, Jan? I do not know what is going on when you want to borrow the key at 11:30 at night. And say, "Me, you are praying." I said, "You are not praying, you are spraying." I mean. I know when there are two, I know when there are 50 caliber holes at the end of the wall, it is either one of two guys that are putting them in. He can fix them so he can put as many as he wants.

Anybody, yeah, Joe, stand up.

We have invested \$25,000 in the building. What if someone is a half an Larry? I mean, is it still his building?

Yeah, yeah, we have a lease. We have to go, we are going to sign a lease with him. In other words, we will have three or four years that, it is ours that you cannot, see, we do not have a lease here. They can come and tell us to leave tomorrow. That is why we got in such a panic when we saw the for sale sign down here. Remember last year? It did not mean anything. I have come to find out this has been for sale for 19, 20 years. So it is not that issue. We are going to sign a lease. We are also going to make an agreement with him that we can continue to do what we have got to do whenever we want to do it. He is absolutely cool with it. I, you know, we are just going to go to him. Once, if you guys approve it today, we are going to call him this afternoon. We are going to try to set up early this week. I want Steve to be there so Steve can go over everything because we have got some issues we want to talk about as how we are going to do it and when we can get started. But that is where we are at.

Anybody else? Yes, real loud, stand up. Stand up.

They are free.

That is a good question. First of all, I do not want any more round tables. I want long tables like back there. He will probably supply us chairs like these. We are going to take those. I have not went through everything. We are going to use those for Bible study. Part of our \$25,000 is to go get some really nice chairs that lock together that are comfortable to sit on. Those will be done in the auditorium where you use these for Bible study. Hey, that is in the proposal.

Yes. Oops, she has got her glasses on, this is serious.

Where are your outside doors to go? From the basement, right outside.

Good point. You do not have to go upstairs. No, no. For everybody that has trouble with stairs, there is a hallway that goes out the back, and there is a big garage door with two doors on each side. On bad weather, you can park, or good weather, you can park right around the back, right at that door, you and you and you and whoever else, you can park right at that back door. The garage door will be up, you walk right down the hallway and come into church. No stairs for you whatsoever.

Yes, ma'am.

A what? A sink?

There will be one right there close to the nursery, yes. That is where we are putting the kitchen thing back by the nursery. Huh? We cannot do that because of the plumbing. There is no way to run it that far over. Not in the nursery, no, no. There is no way we can get that over to there because the plumbing for the water is all on the other side.

Any other questions? Yeah, Harry?

This will be a lease option to own.

Pardon me? No, this will not be a lease option to own. I do not want to get tied into that. Now, once we are there for three or four years, if it works out good for us, then we can reevaluate that next year or the next time around because I do not, what are we going to own? Somebody is in the upstairs. If I am going to do that, I am going to get the whole building, and it is going to be ours. Yeah. Yeah, and we will just have to play that, but right now, that is not an option for us financially, nor is it an option feasibly for who all is in there.

Any other questions? Yeah, Steve? Real loud, stand up so we can all hear you.

On the nursery, we can now hand sanitize. Okay. We can hand sanitize. So we are making a document. That is where it is not very cold. It is going to be, yeah, it is going to come out more cold. Okay, and this is backwards between. On the nursery as well. Let us put it straight here. Right about to go. The BATC being exposed, is that Yeah. The bathroom and I get the nursery, they are all on one level, correct? Yes. Why can not you pipe a drain to get into your bathroom?

Well, we could, but like you said, we would have to trench the concrete all the way down. You cannot see the wall. It is a cement wall. It is a concrete wall. Oh, there is nothing but there is no metal stud in there? Not at this point. Not at this point. Oh. Yeah. But you have got a water source here, right? You have to move your multipurpose down to make the nursery here and tie

into that wall. So you have to sink. Cannot because of the exit there. It is going to have to go down at the end. Those are all good questions. You have got to see it. We have already been through most of these because we have tried to work through every scenario.

Yes, sir.

You have got to see it. Is everybody going to go see it?

Well, we have already have. We went one Thursday night, went last Sunday, and you can go down to see it afterwards, though. Everybody knows where it is at. It is a half a mile down the road here at the Country Meadows right across from Tim's Pizza. It is like an 18,000 square foot building going back to the thing there. You can just walk in the door, and the steps going down. There is a corridor rope you can go down. I am sure Jimmy or John will take some people up there if you have not seen it tonight and want to see it.

Yes, ma'am. Real loud.

Okay, so the stuff is a sign, sir, just right outside. Do you feel we can put anything right there by the way?

Yeah. A sign is going to cost us somewhere between \$5,000 or \$6,000 to do it. That is in the \$25,000 overall figure. It just remains to be seen where we are at. I can live without a sign. Yeah. We have got a place there that is already set for it that is ready to go, put a monument sign in. It is already graded, already ready to go. They just never put one on. We can do that. Or he told me I can put one on his big tall sign, but that is up to the independents. I do not know if they will let us do that or not under codes. But the bottom line is I can live without a sign. I mean, obviously, I want to have one at some point, but my goal right now is to get in, get it done, and then take some time to see where we are at and not put ourselves over the edge financially till we see where we have got to go.

Yeah.

By the end of the day, this is going to require an amount of time to go through, all the time to go under. We do not want to get in debt. Where are we standing then with the amount of money that you think is appropriate compared to how much money is actually gone? How much money do we need? No.

Bottom line is this. We have got the money in the bank to do it. I have been very, very, very, very, very, very careful of everything that we have done. We have the money in the bank to do it. Give him a check today for \$16,000 or \$18,000, whatever it is, and all the material is paid for. That is not the problem. It is really not a problem anyway. The bottom line is this. You never want to put yourself to the point where if something else goes down or goes bad, it is like you do not want to go buy a brand new car when you do not have enough money to put money in the bank in case the car breaks. Do you know what I am saying? I am very careful about that balance. Now, we are very good on where we are at with money. I rattled everything because I knew this day was coming. We have rattled everything that we can. We have got the money to pay the whole \$25,000 out of our pocket, \$26,000, whatever it is, without a problem. I just do not

want to go crazy and stage it in in case something else goes bad or goes wrong and give us a chance to put that money back in if everybody gets on board and just says, "Okay, I am going to start. This is my church. I am going to start giving so much to it." Then we go from there. But I am telling you, you will never hear me say another word about it. It is not like next week I am going to say, "Hey, you know what? You guys know, if you decide to do it today and you do not say no, then I am going to take it that that is where you are on board with it." Then we will go from there. You will never hear another word about me today until I tell you, "Look, we have not paid the rent for the last three weeks, three months. He is throwing us out." I will go ahead. I have got a room at my house for 40 people. Let me see here. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. You actually go do what you want to do. That is the bottom line, guys. We are either going to do this as a church or we are not.

Yes?

I was just wondering, whenever you come down, they will stare at you, and then there is just a rope up on the top. If someone comes in on a Tuesday afternoon, are they going to be able to come down and walk you in the sanctuary?

They will not be able to go to the sanctuary. If you look on there, we are going to put a wall up with two steel doors on it that will wall off the sanctuary. That way we can leave the sound equipment up, basically stay intact. There are some other things I want to do in there that are not really relevant to today that would just take more time that we are going to use as a dual purpose for church on Sunday morning and Bible study on Thursday night without having to move it up because we are small enough and that is big enough we can do that. But yeah, they will be locked out. They will still be able to get into the other area, but there will not be anything in there. Yeah.

Any other questions? Yes, sir. Daniel?

We will not. We do not pay utilities here.

He takes care of the utilities here, and he takes care of, I have already asked him that. He will cover the utilities. In other words, all we will pay is rent or lease, however you want to look at it. Yeah. Yeah, that will be okay, but I do not think he is going to do that. I do not think he is going to do that. They are not, they are not thinking that way. Their thinking is he wants to help us. He knows we are good for it. He knows we are going to be long term. I think you want to know my gut feeling, and I have no hair on the back of my neck that tells me this. I just, from what I am talking to him, I think at some point he wants us to buy that building. That is what I think. I think if we ever got to that point where we would buy that, we could be big enough that we needed to buy that building, I will tell you what we do. We would never have to go to a bank. We have got our testimony with him. He would finance that for us, and he would carry the loan for us because he knows we are good for it. That is what we have earned with him and our reputation and our testimony. I am not against that. I just do not want to jump into that at this stage of the game. All things in time. All things in time.

Any other questions? All right. Now I am going to, I swear we are going to bring it to a vote. Bottom line is this. If you are against this and you are a member of this church, if you are against this, do not feel bad if you are against it. I mean, we will just, Jason and back there, you can count who is against if anybody is. If you are against it, do not, if you want to, if you want to just raise your hand, I am not, say you are against it, that is fine. If you want to stand up and say why you are against it, nobody is going to get mad at you. We are not going to drag you behind the cars out of here. You have a right to your opinion. I do not care one way or the other. I do not care. It is not going to be like I am going to look at you and say, "Why are you trying to screw up what God is doing?" I do not care. I really do not care. So you do not have to feel bad about it at all. I do not want anybody intimidated by the fact that you think, "Well, if I say I am against it," if you are a member of this church and you have a right to say whether you agree with us or what I am proposing or not, that is fine. You just need to be honest. So down the line someplace, I do not want to hear you saying, "Well, I was against it and did not have a say." No, that is not true. I am not shoving this thing on you. I do not care one way or the other.

But let me just ask you now as a member of this church, is there anybody that does not want to do this? Just raise your hand, stand up. I do not care. We will still be buddies. Go to the astronomy thing Friday night with me. No problem. I will go out to lunch with you today, and you can buy my lunch. No problem. Pam, you got your hand up, or you were scratching your head. Okay. Anybody? Your deal, man.

All right, guys. What we are going to do is this. Steve, we are going to set you up to once we go talk to him, get a hold of him today, Chris, if you can find out according to your schedule. How is your schedule all week? Pretty good in the evenings. Yeah, because he has got to work so. Huh? Monday night, you have got something. Okay, we will get with him and work it out. We will go to him this week, and we will let you know where we are at. I love you. Appreciate it. You know what our responsibility is. We will come back next week and find out what he says. We will probably know by then. We will know more about it, and we will just go from there. But I love you all. Appreciate you. Let us have a word of prayer. Pray much about it this week. Thank you for being here today. I look at you being here today as your endorsement that you are part of this church. I told you last week, and you know what, other than a couple of them that are sick or had surgery, just about everybody is here that really cares about this church. So we are good to go with that. So let us have a word of prayer.