

I. The Founding Vision of Old Paths Baptist Church

At the end of our service today, we are going to ordain Kyle into the ministry as our official youth pastor. We will talk about that throughout the time today and at the end when we do it. I want to just take a few moments. We have a lot of things to do today, and I would like to move through this message quickly. Unfortunately, I won't, but know in your heart that I would really like to.

Eight years ago, really today, normally our anniversary Sunday, we always have it at the end of June or sometimes in the first of July. But really, honestly, today is the day that eight years ago, over in my home in our kitchen, we met with sixteen people and we gave life to Old Paths Baptist Church. We chose the name, and I've always been interested about the name because I can always tell what somebody knows about the Bible by how they react to the name of our church. You say, "What's the name of your church?" And I'll say, "Old Paths Baptist Church." And they'll say, "What?"

It's interesting that we chose that name because we chose a name based on a verse found in Jeremiah 6:16. It really was something that I thought was different from many, many churches because you have a little stereotype of names of churches. But, you know, we believe the Bible is the Word of God, and I wanted our church to be biblical in every aspect of it. I thought Jeremiah 6:16, given the time period that we live in and where Christianity is at, that would be a good name.

Jeremiah 6:16-17

Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

I thought that passage really said where we needed to be as a church. We live in a day and age where churches are on a new path, just a sparkly path. It's a path with a lot of smoke and a lot of mirrors and a lot of illusion about things. It's a path that projects a very amalgamated, nice, warm, fuzzy feeling Christianity. That's not the church that God intended for us to be. God intended for the church to stay on the old path, the path that has been cut through the eons of time, of God's people, all the way back for the church where it started in Antioch, in the early book of Acts, and then moved right on through where they're first called Christians. For us, the name dealt with staying on, not straying from the old path.

Verse 17 talks about building watchmen. That's a key word in the Bible used in the Old Testament. Watchmen who will stand their watch on the wall. The Bible says, listening for the trumpet. For you and for me, we know what that trumpet represents. In the historical and the

doctrinal context, that trumpet represents the second coming of Christ and the gathering together of the nation of Israel. But in the practical application, if you're saved here this morning and you're a member of this church, you should be a watchman. A watchman is someone who stands on the wall and watches. In this case, they're watching for and listening for the sound of a trumpet. For you and for me, that'll be the rapture of the church, the great trump of God in 1 Corinthians 15.

II. The Importance of Standing Apart

Today, some eight years later, we have a pretty good idea of how verse 16 and 17 lays itself out. It says, "stand in the ways." That's something that many pastors don't want to do today. That's something that most of God's people don't want to do today. I told you yesterday in Bible Basics and also on Thursday night, I think it was, the problem that we have today is the fact that we live in a world that wants to get everybody together. We live in a world where everybody wants to amalgamate together and get away with all the differences. That's true of churches. We want churches today that have a unity. So they've got to get rid of doctrine because doctrine always does the number one thing that the Bible was intended to do. The problem we face is doctrine divides.

You don't go four verses in Genesis 1 before you find that God divided the light from the darkness. I told you this yesterday. You don't go a couple chapters and God divided Noah from the world. You don't go to Genesis 11 and 12 before God called Abram out of the land of the Chaldeans, and He separated him, and He divided him. He becomes a nation of Israel. The day you got saved, you know what God did? Colossians 2 says that He divided asunder the soul and your flesh. All through the Bible, once you get saved, you're supposed to be separate from the world. You know what that means? God divided you from the world. When you take that and understand that, that means that you've got to take a stand. Churches today need to stand. Pastors today need to stand. God's people today need to stand. But the problem is we live in a world that wants to get together. In our Bible and everything that we know, we know that God divides us. And yet we live in a world that wants to put it all together. That's our problem.

III. Building People, Not Buildings

Today, some eight years later, we look around at what God has given us. It's kind of amazing that in eight years, you can start with sixteen people and have what you have today. We look around at what God has given us. I've known churches that have been existing for ten, fifteen years. There's a guy in this city who would tell everybody you talk to that God showed him greater things than He ever showed me. He can teach you and take you places in the Bible much better than I can. He's got a church now for ten years, and this morning, he still has the same nine people that he had four years ago, and three of those are his family.

You see, you look around you, and it's hard to, and it's easy to take for granted, but it's hard to believe that God could do what He has done in just eight short years when there are churches out there that struggle through years without getting anywhere. It really has nothing to do with the

pastor. It has really nothing to do with the preaching. It has simply to do with the philosophy a church adopts about your attitude toward the Word of God.

I believe that with all the fangdangled stuff we have in Christianity today, I believe that with all the worship services and all the multimedia presentations and all of the dynamics that they put in and all of the interpretive dancing that they have in the aisle ways, and classes they have on it, and all of the things that they do, all of the websites, all of the great spectacular cantatas, all of the things that, and all the great buildings and all the things that they do, I still believe that the greatest way to build a church is found in the Bible. Jesus simply said that if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me. I've yet to find, after forty-some years in the ministry, a better philosophy in building the church than just lifting up the Lord Jesus. You lift up the Lord Jesus Christ, everything else will pretty much take care of itself.

When you have an arrogant attitude that you know more about it than anybody else, and you know all the answers, and you know what, you come unto me instead of coming unto Jesus, your church reflects that. This church is not a reflection of me. This church is not a reflection of any of my preaching. This church is a reflection of a bunch of people who simply get an attitude about the Word of God and simply believe that the Book works today just like it did two thousand years ago. Amen. And then let God change your life in the process.

You remember in those early years, the first study we ever took, and we began to add a few people here and a little people there, and the first study that we took was a study on two books in the Old Testament, the book of Ezra and the book of Nehemiah. Some of you remember that. We've talked about that other times, but that was our first study. I picked those books because of the great parallels that they represent. When the nation of Israel was in total disarray after the captivity of 606 BC, they had been taken captive, the southern tribes by Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar, the northern tribes that went into captivity earlier under Assyria with Sennacherib, and Israel was decimated. But God began to bring back a group of Jews in Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra and Nehemiah, those books are named after the two men that were their leaders.

In the book of Ezra, the first thing that they began to do, if you study that book, is they began to clear off the foundation and began to rebuild the temple. That book is a record of them building that temple because God knew that before they could build the city, which was going to be the next book, Nehemiah, they had to get the central aspect of Israel's relationship with God intact. That was simply the temple. So we see in Ezra, they build the temple. In the book of Nehemiah, they then begin to build the city. We saw in that great book how that the city is represented by the little houses and the little thatched houses that are in it. Around that city, they build a wall. That wall was for their protection.

You remember I told you that that's always a picture of a church. The Bible says that your body is the building of God. Your body is the temple. This church is a lot like a little city. The Bible says in the gospels in Matthew, it says, "A city on a hill cannot be hid." The reason for that is at nighttime when everybody has the lights on, from a long distance away, you can see that light of all the different houses that have their lights on. Now, really, that's a great preaching passage. We have a little joke that we say, "Well, the lights are on, but nobody's home." Ironically, that's true

of most churches. But the key here is that when a church and people in the church represent that they make up the individual little buildings of God and you let your light shine, the Word of God, let the Word of God be the light that shines through you, then that's what people see. That's how God brings them to where they need to be.

We didn't have a sign in our church until about two years ago. And then it's so stuck to the left, you can't even know where it's at. We have a website, but it really doesn't have a direction to our church because I don't really want people to come to my church because they drive by and they say, "Oh, there's a church, let's go try that one." You know why they say that? Because they just had a big fight at the last one and are looking for another one to go cause problems in. I'm not interested in that. I'm not interested in picking up somebody else's problems. I know I'm not dumb enough to think that you don't find good people that way, but I know that you find a lot of people with a lot of problems that way that are just looking to cause more problems. I want the people that when they come to this church, the best way they can get here is by somebody in this church bringing them and letting your light be the light that affected them and to get them here. That's really how this church grew.

But it was built on the concept of Ezra and Nehemiah because I told you Ezra building the temple and Nehemiah building the church, that there was no use trying to build a church until we started to build the individual temples. In other words, you've got to build yourself first. You've got to get your life, your relationship with God the way it needs to be. Then God in time will build the church through you as the lights come on. That's really what we followed. We don't build buildings here. We build people. You build a building one brick at a time, but you build a church one person at a time, one couple at a time, one individual at a time.

Most pastors are good at building elaborate buildings at the cost of millions of dollars, but they're no good at building people. They think that the church is some edifice out there on a scale of Taj Mahal that if you build it, people will come, kind of like the Field of Dreams. In reality, that's not how you build a church. That may be how you build a building, but I'm not interested in building a building. Obviously, you can see that. People laugh about our little basement church. I think it's a good thing. If a tornado ever hit this part of town, you're already in the basement. We could just go right on with church. When you go out, your car will be gone. All the furniture will be gone. The mattress will be gone. But what else to do? I'll just say, "Come on back down. We still got time. Let's have a Bible study."

This isn't about the building. This church is living proof that it's not about a building. This church is living proof of what I believe that I've taught for forty years of my life. You don't need some big edifice. You don't need some big website. You don't need some big sign. You just need a lot of God's people who get their lights turned on. The rest takes care of itself. You just need a lot of people who work at building their temple first, and then you build the church one person at a time. That's why the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3 that you and I are to be a wise master builder. A wise master builder first to your own temple, then of course, in building the church of Jesus Christ, one person at a time.

IV. The Nine Gates of the Church

You remember I told you that when they put those walls around that city, the Bible takes great emphasis in a couple of chapters to talk about the nine gates that they actually built into those walls. Those gates were entrances to the city. Remember? Then I told you that those same nine gates are the gates that we need to build into our church that people come into our church from, and that those gates gave access to the city. Every one of those gates represents something. We talked about that. We talked about how that the wall represents the Bible doctrine. You see, the wall in the Old Testament was there for protection. The watchman stood on the wall and protected the city, but in our little world, you are the watchman. The wall that we have is the Bible doctrine that we hold dear to us, but within that teaching of the Bible, you have nine gates, and those nine gates are the way that people come in.

We talked about it:

- The sheep gate, understanding the sacrifice that Christ made for us.
- The fish gate, understanding our obligation to win men and women to Christ.
- The old gate, representing understanding where we've come from, our history, church history. We talk about it all the time.
- The valley gate, those that are hurting, the gate of compassion, people who are in the valleys of life.
- The fountain gate. Well, we've got that one down. That's the fellowship gate. If you've ever been to one of our activities, it takes us an hour, two hours, three hours for the fellowship and about an hour and a half to say goodbye. It's just like the Walton commercial. Once we hit the cycle, we start all over again. But that's a good thing.
- The water gate, the preaching of the Word of God.
- The horse gate and the eastern gate. Two gates that represent the two aspects, the horse gate representing the rapture of the church coming back on a horse and the eastern gate when Christ goes through with the second coming of Christ.
- The dung gate. The dung gate is still operational and still working, oiled very well.

When you look at that and you see how that thing works, all of this today is simply a record of what the Word of God says is true. God still does what He claims to do in the Bible. The problem is today, He doesn't have anybody left that believes it. The problem is today that pastors want to take an easier route because it's not an easy way to build a church. It takes a lot of time, takes a lot of energy, takes a lot of effort. It takes a lot out of a man to try to do it. That's why God gives him other men and other women and helps him do it also. So everybody kind of spreads it out and goes from there.

A church is only as good or as strong as the people in it. I've always listened to what people say. To me, a real key in understanding people is listening to what they say. People will say, "Well, that's a real, he's a really good guy." And that's supposed to mean something. I always say in my head, "Compared to who?" I mean, that's a relative term. "He's a really great guy compared to who? Stalin?" Somebody says, "Well, that's a really good church." Really? Compared to what? Compared to what? A church is only as strong as good as the people in it. What makes a church vibrant, what makes a church work is the people that are in it. This church is here today simply

because of you. You who decided to change your life, better yet, you who decided to let the Word of God change your life. You let the preaching of the Word of God.

My job is just a normal job. Everybody wants to give the credit to the preacher. I'm just doing what a preacher is supposed to do. Now you may know a lot of preachers that don't do what preachers are supposed to do, but I can't help that. I don't do my job any better than Mel Sabaka did his. I don't do my job, my father in the Lord. I don't do my job any better than Harold Henniger did his. I don't do my job any better than John Rawlings did mine. It's just that that's what preachers are supposed to do. I don't know where preachers got the idea that you get into the ministry and it's just like another job. You're supposed to burn yourself out in the ministry. I don't understand pastors that retire. When you hit sixty-five, sixty-six, basically, and I have not hit that yet, but basically, I mean, you've gleaned all of this knowledge and information now for fifty, sixty years. Suddenly, when you come into your prime, you're going to go to Pismal Beach. Show me anybody in the Bible that was God's man that ever retired. I'll show you some that retired, but I don't know any that retired that didn't get into problems.

I think that a church, I mean, I just do my job. I just preach truth. I don't preach it any harder than I should or any less than I should. I just preach it the way God tells me to preach. That's my job. Don't give me any credit for that. That's what I do. The real credit goes to the people who take what I say and let it change their life. That's what builds a church. Don't kid yourself. I could preach up here a thousand hours straight, but if nobody does anything with what you tell them, you're wasting your time. This church is great. Any church is good in God's sight because of the people that are in it who decide to let the Word of God change their life and then do something with it the rest of their life. They figure out that life is more than just a party that you go do what you want to do and you find your niche in life and you raise kids. It's more than that. God saved you for a purpose and a reason. Not finding out what that is is going to be a disaster for you. No, this church is only good if it's good in God's sight at all because a bunch of people decided to stay on the old paths and didn't venture into the new paths with all the little sprinklies on it.

V. Three Kinds of Workers

You may remember back in the book of Nehemiah 3, I was thinking about this this week as they're rebuilding the wall and they're building that thing. Remember I told you, if some of you were there then, I told you that I showed you in chapter 3 that there were three kinds of people that repaired the wall, were putting in the gates. I told you back then, and boy, if it hasn't come true, everything in the Bible does, and that's why this church is such a testimony to that aspect. I told you back then that there were three kinds of people who did the work, and you may remember I also told you that any church will have the same three kinds of people in it, and it's true.

Nehemiah 3:1

Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.

- The first kind of people are represented by Eliashib and his brethren. The Bible says that they worked on the sheep gate, and the Bible says that they sanctified their work. You know what that represents? That represents somebody in this church or any church really who really understands that this church is special not because it's this church but because it's the church of Jesus Christ. They sanctified it. They set themselves apart. They knew that the work that they were doing on the wall was different than anything else they did in life. They knew it was doing God's work God's way. They knew that every aspect of that was them fulfilling something that was special with God. You see, they were not just looking at building a building. They were looking at building a future. They were looking at their kids. They were looking at every aspect of everything that they had and realized that the work they were doing in their church was different than any other work that is done on planet earth because it's God's work, and their attitude reflected that. They set it apart. They didn't let anything else get in the way.

I see parents all the time, and I know that everything's okay, but I see parents all the time. They'll encourage their kids in all of these. There's always some, every time in a year, there's some athletic thing going on. They play basketball. They play soccer. They play baseball. They play little league. They play big league, whatever they do. I see parents all my life, I've seen this. They consistently push their kids toward that. They consistently have their kids play that instead of come to church, and then they wonder why their kid grows up with a warped value system. You see, your kids need to understand, as you need to understand, there are some things that need to be separated in this world that they know that this is what we do on this day. But that's the old path.

Nehemiah 3:20

After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning of the wall unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

- We saw the next one in Nehemiah 3:20, Baruch the son of Zabbai. The Bible says he earnestly repaired his portion of the wall. You see, he did a good job, but it was all the same to him. It's kind of like being in a church where, "Oh, it's just another class. It's just another Bible study. Oh, it's just another Sunday morning." There was nothing really special there for him. It was that, "Oh, this is what we do. This is where we're at. This is what we're going to try to accomplish." He never understood how vitally important what he was doing was. He saw it as just another job. He looked at it just like he did everything else that he did in life. He just did not focus on the fact that what he was doing was the number one most important thing that you could ever do in life. He just kind of went through life. Oh, he did it, and he didn't do a bad job. But he just didn't make it in life.

You see, this is the difference between me and most pastors. The difference between some of you and most Christians is the same difference. I don't do this because this is the way I make my living. I do this because this is my life. Many of you in this church don't do what you do just because that's what a Christian is supposed to do. It's become your life. It's become your fiber.

Every part of your being. There's nothing about the work of God that you even associate remotely with what the rest of the world does. You see it for what it is.

Nehemiah 3:5

Moreover the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

- Then we've got the third guy here, and this is the group of people. Nehemiah 3:5, these would be the Tekoites, and they worked, but the Bible says that their leaders, the nobles, put not their necks to the work. There's a lot of God's people like that across Christianity. They only did the minimum. They only gave the minimum. Their work was conscripted. What does that mean? It means they were forced to do it. They did it out of obligation. A lot of people like that, they come to things because they know that they want to have, go to a church. They just don't want to get involved in it. So you give the minimum, and you go sometime because you know somebody will ask where you were if you're not there. So you don't go because you want to learn. You don't go because you want to get, you go because you don't, you want to keep everybody off your back. You see people like that, you know, then and now, the work to them didn't mean anything. If they didn't do the work, they would have been looked at and frowned upon by the other people. I mean, you had the guy who sanctified, and you had the guy who earnestly did it. How do you think you're going to fit in if you just don't want to build the temple of God and you're a Jew coming back after the captivity? Ain't going to go over very well. It goes over a lot like people in churches today who really don't want to get involved. They really don't want to do anything meaningful. They just want to kind of exist. There's an interesting phrase there. It says, "put their neck to the work." We call that sticking your neck out. You get into the ministry, and you really do the work in any church, you're going to put your neck on the line. You really are. Not too many people are willing to do that today.

I told you in Nehemiah 4, I remember how in chapter 4, once they began, this was in Ezra, I believe, when they began to rebuild the temple, and they go into work there, the Bible tells you in chapter 4 that the adversaries show up. You know who the adversaries were. They were people that didn't want them to build that temple. Just like there are people that don't want you to help build this church. Just like there are people that don't want to see any ministry go on. Of course, the Bible says that they troubled them in building, and they weakened their hands. That's why, if you're going to do the work of God, and it's really what makes this church for what it is, is that many of you young folks coming up who don't know how to play the system yet, you simply just take a stand for what's right, and that's a good thing.

VI. The Three P's of Ministry and Vision

You remember I also, in conjunction with Ezra and Nehemiah, gave you the three P's of ministry. P as in Paul. I told you that in ministry you have to have:

- Perspective. That's seeing what God sees.
- Purpose. That's understanding what God saved you for.

- Passion. The passion is grasping the vision that God has for you in any church or in any ministry.

We know that God's program is a local church, and then fulfilling it as Christ fulfilled His, just with the same passion. Over the years, the aspect of a vision. The Bible says in Proverbs 29:18 that without a vision, the people perish. The pastor's job, if there's any single job that he does, is when God gives him a vision of what God wants him to do, then he relays that vision to the people. Some people like it. Some people don't like it. Some people will stay and be part of it. Other people will go someplace else. That's just the way it works. Habakkuk 2 talks about how to lay that out. Habakkuk 2 gives you every detail. You've heard me say that just as my responsibility is to provide a vision for the church, your responsibility as a father is to provide a vision for your family. That's why the Bible says that he that does not provide for his family is worse than an infidel. The Bible says, "How can you take care of the church of God if you can't take care of the family that God gave you?" Of course, that's just the way it works. That's the Bible. That's the old paths. That's just the way it works.

Over the years, based on the Bible, and this is really what I want to talk to you about today, and we're in good shape today. We'll be out of here in a good time. It's clear to me that a church should maintain three basic visions. Maybe a better way to say that would be one vision with three parts, but any way you want to look at it, three aspects. The word watchman in the Bible is a key word in the Old Testament. A watchman in any church is simply the men and the women who grow up and grasp the concept of the Bible. They grasp the concept of what the pastor is trying to do. They get the vision and they make it their vision, and then they simply stand on the wall. Now we know what the wall is. We know what the city is. They simply stand on the wall and help everybody else that's coming in through the gates see the vision. That's what a watchman does. Obviously, he watches for the enemy. Obviously, he watches the countryside, but what he does is he watches who comes in, and because he has the vision, he is the one or she is the one who maintains that vision for the rest of the church.

You see, you get a church of two hundred people, and one hundred fifty people in the church all grasp the same vision. You're going to get something done. You can always have a margin of fifty people who don't, who want to be the Tekoites or who want to be in a brutal concept. But you give me a church of two hundred that has one hundred fifty people that grasp the vision, who are willing to be watchmen, and I'll show you a church that'll get something done. A church is nothing more in its lowest common denominator than a group of saved people who get God's vision through getting God's perspective and then making God's purpose for their lives their purpose, and in doing so, they get God's passion, and they get the passion just like Christ had it when He did the work of His Father, and now today, after God saves you, we're doing the work of our Heavenly Father. Same concept.

Years ago, I heard a great preacher, and he talked about defining a vision. A vision is one of those elusive things that can be anything you want it to be, but he defined it as good as probably anybody I ever heard, and he defined it as a vision is basically stepping out of the natural into the supernatural. He says a vision in the Old Testament was exactly what you did. For a moment of time, God gave you a vision, and you were not conscious to the physical world around you, and

you were focused on some heavenly vision that God gave you. Now we know that God does not give you heavenly visions today, but He does give a vision. The vision today will be found in the Word of God, and when you grasp that vision, it has the same effect, it takes you out of the natural and puts you into the supernatural, and that's what it does. That's exactly what it does.

He said years ago, I wrote this down, it's in my Bible, he says the definition of vision is basically:

Hearing the inaudible, in other words, hearing from God what nobody else hears.

Seeing the invisible, seeing what nobody else sees.

Touching what is intangible.

Believing in an infallible.

Through God's grace, doing the impossible.

That's what a vision is. This church in the world that we live in should not be. This church stands as a testimony to one thing, and that is that God still means what He says when He wrote it in His Book, and it's just that simple.

VII. God's Perspective on the Church

When God sees this church, He sees three things. Our job is to see things the way God sees them. I think the greatest example of that is Abraham. Abraham in Romans 4:17.

Romans 4:17

(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

You see, that's what God does. God looks at things, in this case, Abraham, who was ninety-nine years old, Sarah was eighty-six, way past childbearing, and all the world saw was an old couple, but God saw the nation of Israel. When you look at this church down here, this room's been everything. It's been a flea market. It's been a collector's storage for old cars. It's been a storage area for antiques. When we first walked down here, anybody who was really associated with real, what they call real churches, would walk down here and say, "What in the world do you want to do down here? Why, there's a piece of ground over here that you can buy for two million dollars, and there's a building company over here for seven million dollars. It'll put you up a decent building, and you can furnish it for another three million dollars, and then all you've got to do is beat your people over the head every Sunday to give money and pay off the total debt of fifty, twenty, thirty thousand million dollars when it's all said and done."

Let me tell you something, I wouldn't trade this place right now for anything on planet earth. You offer me the biggest, most spacious, most beautiful place on planet earth in Kansas City, and you walked up and the guy said, "It's yours, it's a title deed if you want it." You know what? I'd stay right here. You know why? Because this is where God put me and where He wants me to be right

now, and if I learned anything in life, it is stay where God wants you to be till God moves you and makes it clear where He's moving you. That's a great lesson you should learn in life. Everybody else just saw an old empty downstairs basement of a warehouse building. God saw Old Paths Baptist Church. God saw what we have today. God saw the marriages put back together. God saw the individuals that got saved. God saw the couples that came in that the husband got saved and the wife got saved or vice versa, and then they found God, the Word of God, and their life was changed, and their life was better. That's what God saw.

You see, you've got to quit looking at the natural things in life and start seeing what the supernatural thing is. That's why people get mad and leave churches. They get mad and leave churches because all they ever see is what affects them. All they ever see is the natural things. They focus on, they go around looking for things to complain about. They focus on the negative things and miss completely all the things that God's doing, but that's what those kind of people do. I mean, that's just the way it works. It's not a complicated concept to grasp.

Now I want to take you to three places in the Bible today. In Hebrews 11:27, ending the story on Abraham, it said about Abraham, "for he endured." He endured. There are some things in building a church that you have to endure. There really are. You have to endure a lot of things in building a ministry. It's not easy. The good side of it is God gives you a lot of good people who shoulder to shoulder with it, who stay by the stuff, but in a Christian life is enduring too, and there are some things as a child we know, we teach that once you get saved that your problems are all over. That's not true. Once you get saved, your problem may be over as far as eternity is concerned, but in one sense, when you first get saved, your problems just start in a good sense because now you've got to endure. When you're building a church, you've got to endure. You've got to endure some things, and we've endured a lot of things. We've endured problems with the city. We've endured problems with this, endured problems with that. You've got to go through those things. In your life, once you get saved, it isn't going to be a bed of roses. God didn't, you know, people get the idea that once you get saved that your life is just going to be rosy. No, you need to read Fox's Book of Martyrs and see how the rosy life goes down sometimes. God just promised you He'd never leave you nor forsake you.

I talked to a guy a couple of months ago, and he said, and a single guy, and he got saved, and he was struggling through things, and he had lost a job, and he said, you know, and he's a typical young Christian, not seeing things the way he needs to see them, and he was struggling. He lost a job, he couldn't find a job, and he was going through things, and he told me, he said, "You know what?" He says, "I said, I'll tell you," he said, "I got to say this," so he says, he said, "I just may have my nose above water, but my nose is above water, and I'm making it by the skin of my teeth, but I'm still hanging in there, and I'm making it." You know what? That's all God ever promised you. Did you think He'd promise you a twenty-room house villa? Did He think He'd promise you four cars in your garage? Now you may have those, and there's nothing wrong with that, but all He ever promised you is that you would get through it. Don't get messed up, the real things are on the other side, not today. He just promised you He'd get you through, and He will get you through.

Hebrews 11:27

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Can you see Him this morning in your life? Honestly, can you see Him in your life today, and is that the enduring factor that sustains you when all the world comes? Let me tell you something, if I wouldn't have seen God in my life in doing what He was doing in His church when nobody else saw it, to me it never really bothered me. I don't really need a fan club. I don't need somebody to pat me on the back saying, "Boy, that's really what God wants you to do." Let me tell you something, I know what God wants me to do, and I'm also understanding that building something for God will probably be the hardest thing you ever do in your life, and the first lesson you ought to learn that when push comes to shove at the end of the day, everybody will leave you no matter what they tell you. So you better get set that at the end it's just you and Him because that's all it really is anyhow. Then you don't have to worry about all the emotional ups and downs. You expect it to happen because at the end of the day it's going to be you and Him anyhow, and that just helps you always have the right motive for what you do.

Now I want to show you three places in the Bible, and it's a lot about where we go from here, and your first place I want you to come to is the book of Jonah. When God looks at this church, He sees three things, and if we're going to get God's perspective, God's passion, and God's purpose, we need to see these three things, and this is good for today. It's just good for us to stop, get out of everything we're doing, and focus on what we're going to do today, where we're at, where we've come from, and then we've got one of the greatest object lessons that I could ever hope to have, and that's the ordination of Kyle and his wife.

VIII. God's Threefold Vision for the Church

1.) The Next Generation (Children)

In the book of Jonah, the book of Jonah is one of the greatest stories in the Bible of somebody not seeing what God sees. Jonah reflects the attitude of most of God's people today in respect to doing what God has called them to do and what God has saved them for. He's the Tekoite through and through, and he's a perfect reflection of what God's people and the attitude they have today toward the things of God. In the first place, he was given a mission by God, and you know what he said? He says what a lot of God's people say, "I'm not going to do it." Then God works on him a little bit, just a tad, and then he gets a reflective moment in his life, and he gets repentant, and then he comes back with a second attitude that most God's people have today, and that is, "Okay, I'll do it, but I don't like it," and we see that this just leads to, should I say, a whale of a problem. You see, sometimes going through whale university is the only way to get it, and then after he went through whale university, he did his post-grad work at Gourd University, if you know the story.

Jonah 4:11

And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Jonah is such a perfect picture, and in this story, we see what Jonah missed because he says down there in chapter 4, verse 11, God said, "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" You see, Jonah saw the enemy of his nation, and you've got to understand where Jonah's coming from. Jonah knows that when you put this story together, Nineveh is the capital of Assyria, and Assyria is the sworn enemy of the nation of Israel, and this is the reign of Jeroboam, if you remember we went through the kings of Israel back there in 2 Kings 14. God tells Jonah to go down and to preach to the people of Nineveh, and God's going to bring a great revival, but Jonah doesn't see it God's way, just like we don't see it God's way. He sees it as a death sentence, and he runs from the mission of God. He can't get God's perspective, he can't get out of the natural into the supernatural, and in Jonah's life, Jonah saw his enemy. God saw a nation without God. Jonah only saw what affected him and only caused him discomfort. God saw the discomfort of a nation without the blessings of God.

You ever been around a spoiled brat? Oh, you have, have you? Many times, not all times, but many times when parents have, and I think it's good to have parents to have more than one child. Many times, not always, but many times when you have one child, you tend to spoil that child, and it just happens because when you have two, you know, there's enough to keep the fight going all the time, and you have to balance it out. But we've all been around spoiled brats that grow up, and they think when they grow up the world revolves around them. They've had everything they wanted, they think nothing about anybody else's needs. All they want is what is theirs. They want people to bow down to them, they want people to hold court for them, they want people to be out there that everybody, you know, they want everything to themselves. It's all about them. That's Jonah, and Jonah represents a lot of God's people today who really never get God's perspective. When he sees the city of Nineveh, he just sees the enemy of God. When God sees them, He sees a city without God. He sees a city that's going to be lost and turned into hell, getting God's perspective.

So he says in chapter 4, verse 11, "Should I not spare Nineveh? Wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?" You see, Jonah saw the enemy of his nation, a wicked, sinful, utterly despicable in his sight, and he said, "I'm not going to do one thing for that wicked nation." But you know what God saw? God saw not only the nation, God saw the next generation of that nation. He saw the little kids that did not discern between their right hand or their left, one hundred twenty thousand of them. You see, God knew that if revival would come, maybe the present generation could not change anything, but the next generation could. I want to tell you something. When God looks at this church, the first thing He sees is the next generation of our kids. That's the first thing He sees.

Now let me talk to you kids for a second. The reason why I bring you in one Sunday every month, the reason why we have the things that we have when we do and the fun things, and we're very family oriented and you kids are very important to me, is that I understand that you are the next generation of this church. What is done in your life right now will be the future of where this church goes. I know we're all arrogant and we're all foolish in a lot of our thinking, and sometimes we think that this church cannot get along without us, but all of us in time are going

to pass the way of time, and somebody else is going to take our spot, and who they will be are sitting right in amongst you right now.

Let me say something else to you little kids. We're coming to a point in our church where many of you were four or five years old, three years old, two years old when we started our church. Now you're coming to the point when you're eight or nine years old, and as we've seen in the last couple of weeks, last couple of months really, some of you now are starting to trust Christ as your own personal savior. Let me say something to you. Don't be in a hurry. Don't get saved or want to get saved just because your friend. Little kids have a tendency to do that. Adults have a tendency to do that, but little kids have a tendency when Susie does something or Johnny does something or they go somewhere because their friends, they want to go with them, and I understand that, but let me say something to you kids. You're coming into a time in your life where you're going to for the first time begin to understand your little sin debt and the fact that you do need a savior. You need to understand that you need to take time with that. You don't just do it because somebody else is doing it. You do it because it is the thing that you personally have to do at some point in your life, but you don't do it because everybody else is doing it. Everybody else goes to Chuck E. Cheese, you can go. Everybody else goes to Paradise Park, you can go. Everybody else goes to Fourth of July, you can go. When it comes to being saved, you do that by yourself, and your parents for the most part know that.

But I really look at you kids, and I really look at, I want to tell you some things. Learn from your parents. Many of your parents, there's no greater testimony than any church, bar none. I don't know of any greater testimony to any church in any family is the parents growing up with their kids beside them in ministry, working with them. Your parents are discipling people right now. Learn, watch what mom and dad does because someday you're going to be my disciples. Someday you guys are going to be the ones who help me with people. Someday you're going to be the ones who are going to grow into the fact that you're going to pick up a Bible, pick up a set of lessons, and you're going to help somebody else. The way you learn that is to watch what your mom and dad is doing right now. Learn from them. Grow up with them. You've got the greatest teacher for ministry you could ever have at your parents, and you watch what they do. I know there's times that they have to sacrifice things with you to work with other people. In time, learn that you as a family are a ministry. When you get a little older and you know your mom and dad is out working with somebody and you've got to go over to somebody's house or somebody watches you, get your sister, get your brother, and then pray for your parents. Start to be part of a ministry team in your family. You don't have to wait till you're fifteen, sixteen, eighteen, nineteen years to do it. You should be doing it right now, and parents, you ought to be cultivating that within their lives.

Psalms 127:4

As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.

The Bible says, "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth." Just as an archer can take and hit that clock back there in that wall time after time again with accuracy, parents launch their kids into life, and the accuracy will be heaven or hell. Make your goal to

ministry in this church alongside of your parents. Make your goal, make your life to want to be part of what God is doing. Develop a value system, kids, in time. Just let it happen naturally. Use what your parents are doing and build that thing the way that it needs to be done.

I think probably Barb Christie has the hardest job in this church personally. I have no respect for her and for anybody who works in the elementary division. The way I did that is in most churches you just have one set of workers and they're there every week, but I don't see any value in that. One, it's all of our responsibilities, not just this group of people, and I want you to be taught and learn to know everybody in this church. I want you to know when this person teaches you and you remember down through life the things that they gave you, the little stories. I want every person, I want you to know every adult in this church because you are the most important thing and the first thing when God sees when He sees this, He sees the next generation, and that's you. You little guys who don't know your left hand from your right hand, and that's the key, and that's what this church has to be.

I have little tolerance with people in any church. It's been this way all my life. People have to work in the elementary. They don't even remember their day they're supposed to be there. You're worthless. I mean, come on. I guarantee if you were preaching on Sunday morning, you'd have it there with bells on. You see, it's the importance we attribute, and we've got to begin to see our elementary as God sees it because that's our next generation. That's just the way it is. All Jonah saw was the enemy of God, and all most of God's people see is a bunch of little snot-nosed kids, but in both cases, God saw the next generation.

2.) *The Young People (Teenagers)*

Now the second thing, the next perspective that God looks at is found in the writings of Solomon. I want you to come over to the book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon writes the wisdom books, five of them in the Bible in the Old Testament. Those five wisdom books, I believe, are the key to everything else in the Bible.

Ecclesiastes 12:1

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

In the book of Ecclesiastes, he says in chapter 12, verse 1, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." The next thing that God sees in His church is the young people. You saw them on the little thing here that Kyle and Casey always do for anniversary Sunday. You saw there how that, and the second thing, and really the instance, it's in the order of importance, I think, because I'll tell you what, did you ever notice something? You ever been out in John Knox Village? I'm checking it out. Somebody asked me a couple months ago, "What are you going to do when you get too old to preach? You got a plan?" I said, "Yeah, I got a plan. When I get too old to preach, but I can still get around, I won't be a Walmart greeter." And that way I can't do anything else. I thought about it, by that time some of you older guys, look at Jimmy how gray his hair is, he's heading to where I am. Were you laughing at John? You're looking just like him.

And Phil, I know Mexican guys hold their age longer, but you're way past the point there too. I figured this, we'll all be in the same place at the same time. We'll let you young guys take the church, we'll all go into John Knox Village and kick the hell out of the place while we got time left. We'll just preach the fire out of them. That's my plan. I'm getting one of them wheelchairs with motors on it and slicks on the back. That's where I'm going.

But you know, you go to John Knox Village, you've been out there on a Saturday night, walk down them halls, quiet. Oh, you might hear a little box car really coming out from under the doors, Grand Ole Opry. I don't think, and I'm not sure, Joe probably would know more with this than I do. Joe, I don't think there's ever been a drug bust at John Knox Village, has there, in your time? I know you're not independent, but I think that would make news. In my neighborhood, the apartments right behind me, the cops are there three times a night. I mean, if you want to do a police thing, that's who it's at, man. I mean, you know, they're all over down my street. I go out some nights and hour on the summer, and all the kids are over there on the street, and the marijuana smells so bad. I mean, you know, my dog is walking sideways going down the street. He just can't keep it all focused. They don't have that problem out there. Did you ever see anybody at John Knox Village walk out with a Led Zeppelin t-shirt on? Have you figured out why that is? No disrespect to them, but the devil's not after them, they're in the golden years of their life, and they really pose no threat. You know where the devil goes after today? He goes after young people. You know why? Solomon said, "Remember now thy Creator in days of thy youth before what? The evil days come when thou say in thy heart, I shall have no pleasure in them." I'll tell you why, because there will come a time in your life where you will say, "I don't want anything to do with God, and I have no pleasure with Him." The job of this church is to keep that from happening. The job of this church is to slow down that process.

It's a great example in the Bible that we don't have time to get into all of it this morning, but it's really with Daniel. In Daniel 1, you know that the captivity had taken place, and the Bible makes it very clear that Nebuchadnezzar was interested in the children of the king's seed, and that would be Daniel and the three Hebrew children, and he brings them down there, and the Bible makes it very clear that obviously what Nebuchadnezzar wants to do, or really what the devil wants to do through Nebuchadnezzar, is he wants to destroy the seed of Christ. So the Bible says he gives these kids a daily portion. He wants to get them to learn the tongue, the language, and the tongue of the Chaldean. That means he wants to get them to cuss, use four-letter words, and just speak filthy. That daily portion is everything that the world wants to give your kid when they go out in this world.

It's always interesting to me, we talk about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and yet we don't study enough to find out that those weren't the names that God gave them, those are the names that the devil gave them. Shadrach means shining for the sun god. His real name is Hananiah, which means God is gracious. Meshach, his name means who is like Venus in blue jeans. Oh, Venus, remember that's the 1950s, I love that song. Meshach means God without equal. Abednego means a servant of Nego, where Azariah means God is my helper. You know what the world did? You know what Nebuchadnezzar did? He did the same thing with them that the world tries to do with your kid. He changes their name. He gets them to talk differently. He gets a

different diet for them than you provided for them, and then you wonder why when they're fourteen, fifteen years old, suddenly your child is not the sweet little loving bundle that he was or she was. The world has done its work on them. They have got them to speak like the Chaldeans. They have changed their name now so they think that there's somebody better than they are, and at the end of the day, there in chapter 1, verse 5, after three years of doing that, Nebuchadnezzar wanted them to stand before him. You know what the devil wants with your young people today? He wants them to stand for him. God wants them to stand for Him, and there's a battle today for your teenager, and you little kids growing up right now that are not yet teens yet, you will have to face that. We've got a good start with you, but you never can take your finger off the trigger because the devil is always there.

1 Timothy 4:12

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

This is why Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." A great verse in that chapter that should be every young teenager's testimony verse on his plan is found in Daniel 1:8.

Daniel 1:8

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Today, obviously, we're going to ordain Kyle and his wife Casey, and they are youth people, homegrown, and they understand the concept and have devoted their life to dealing with kids. Our job is not to raise your kids. It's certainly not my job, it's certainly not his job. The job to raise your kids is your job, but his job and my job is kind of a two-fold aspect. You see, the first aspect that needs to be done is you need to give parents the tools. That's my job. Then the second aspect is you give parents the support. That's Kyle and Casey's job, and that's why you'll see them out there at the youth activities like you saw out there. That's why you'll see them at their sporting events and going and being part of everything that they do. They understand that concept, and I've got to say this too. Not only do I feel we have the best two kids that could ever be youth pastors in this church, but I also believe that and that we have with our own young people the greatest role models for your kids you could ever want to have, and I believe that's true.

I watch these young men and these young ladies take in your kids. You know what I've got that makes me so happy? Do you know what I have at my fingertips that makes this church work? If I get a parent calling me up and saying, "I've got problems with my kid, and I need some help with him," I can make one phone call and have five guys and four girls wrap themselves around that kid and help that kid balance out what the world's trying to do with him. That's impressive to me. You saw the thing up there. My God, Gary Potter was out there. Gary, what is your deal? I'm

watching this thing, and all of a sudden I saw this, I thought it was Father Time walking through the whole process there. I said, "That's Gary Potter." I've watched on your softball teams. You young guys get out there and play. You bring in the older people to do the devotions. That's what I'm talking about. You see that when God looks, the second thing God looks at, God looks at our teenagers because the devil's after them.

3.) Building Men and Women as Leaders

Then there's a third thing, and this last part of this vision is found in the book of Ezekiel, and I want you to turn to Ezekiel 22. That will be building men and women in this church in the role of being biblical leaders in the role of being a watchman. The United States Marine Corps has a slogan for recruiting. I think it's one of the best slogans they've ever had. Most of you know it. It simply says, "The Marines are looking for a few good men," and I look at that and I think to myself, "That's true. They're always a cut above the rest." But also God's looking for the same thing.

Ezekiel 22:30-31

And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God.

In Ezekiel 22:30-31, here's what it says, the Lord says, "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God." Now folks, God's looking for a man, and I say that women too. The Bible makes it very clear that the time period we have here is a time when Israel was in deep apostasy. The time period here was when Israel was off the scale with their ungodliness, and there was no man that would stand for God. To me, I look at the parallels of that is where we're at today. You already know the concept of the city, our church, the walls, the doctrine of what we believe.

If you're familiar with combat in any way, shape, or form, you know that in any battle, in any war, especially in the Old Testament, if you go back through and study the battles, you'll find that there are times in any battle, in any warfare, where the wall can get breached, and a breach in the wall is when the enemy can't get in. So they'll, in old days, they took a battering ram and they put a hole in the wall. In modern days, we put a stick of C4 up there and blow a hole in it, and everybody pours through. All through history, there have been men who make up the hedge, who stand in the gap, but in this particular case here, he's not talking about in a physical sense, and I'm not talking about a physical sense either. The job of a watchman in any church, because any church is going to, there's a time when that wall can be breached in any church, there's a time when that wall can be attacked in any church, there's a time when that wall can be a hole in that rampart can open up for the enemy to come through. Simply put, our church is surrounded by a wall, that's what we believe, and the enemy on the outside always wants to try to break that wall

and penetrate that wall, and sometimes that wall can be breached in a possible break in the wall, and the bottom line is when that happens, who will run and stand in that gap to fill up that breach?

I like to read about a lot of history, in particular military history. Back in 1879 in Africa, they had what they called the Anglo-Zulu War, and the Zulu were an incredible, I mean, they looked like a bunch of skinny little natives with spears, they were the most formidable army on the planet in that day. They're like the old ant story and the elephant. The ant goes in and he gets attacked by an elephant, goes in, he gets attacked by a bunch of ants, and the elephant kills hundreds and thousands and millions of ants, but at the end of the day, the ants win. It is overwhelming elephant. The British army now was in Africa, and this was their colony, and down in a little place, and by the way, it was a Baptist missionary station in Africa called Rorke's Drift. A company of British soldiers had set up a field hospital, companies about back then with about 230-300 guys, and they had set up a field hospital there in that little mission station when they had gotten word that the Zulu nation had declared war on the British and had just wiped out a force of about 3,000 British soldiers, and then they got word that 6,000 Zulus were headed their way. The lieutenant who was in charge, his name was Chard, I do believe, won the Victoria Cross. In fact, this battle, there were more Victoria Crosses awarded, which is the equivalent to our Congressional Medal of Honor, awarded in this battle than any other battle in British history. He decided the best thing to do was to stay, and they fortified the surroundings around them, and they fortified it with everything that they could, and they could hear two days before they got there, they could hear and see the smoke of the dust of the Zulu coming their way. One morning they woke up, and they went to the alarm, and they looked up, and the Zulus had them circled all the way around on the ridges, and out in front of them was four or five thousand Zulu soldiers up against about 300 British.

The Zulus came after them, and they held them off. They held them off the first attack, the second attack, they held them off a third attack, and on the last attack, they had lost almost 100 men, and they were worn out, and they were tired, and the Zulu were making one last attack, and Lieutenant Chard did something that was one of the most remarkable things that I've ever read in history. He took 150 British soldiers, he put them, he put them in three ranks: a lying down rank, a kneeling rank, and a standing rank, fifty, fifty, fifty. When the Zulu came over the wall and breached their wall and were coming into the intersection, he lined those soldiers up in that breach, and as the Zulu came over that wall, he gave the command, "First row, fire! Second row, fire! Third row, fire!" And every time fifty muskets went off, the old Martini-Henry rifles, every time one of those rifles went off, fifty of them went off, fifty Zulu fell. He poured into them one of the most modern techniques that we would find today back in that time. He stood there as those Zulu came over that breach and came over that wall and fired volley after volley after volley after volley, and then the bodies started stacking up, and the Zulu couldn't get over the bodies, and he slowed them up enough that he kept firing, and those 150 men who stood in that breach, who stood in that gap and made up the hedge, 150 British soldiers turned back 4,000 Zulus. They got so decimated coming through that breach that they finally gave up. They went back, and the rest of the Zulu, they were an honorable tribe, they stood there and gave credibility and sang them a song for their bravery and then left.

I looked at that thing, and I thought to myself, "That's what God's people ought to be. That's exactly what God's people ought to be." I'll tell you, I put up with a lot of things in the ministry, and I understand the ministry is a lot of things, and you know me in my position, we talked about this on Thursday night, I believe that, you know, who am I to hold anything against you what you've done in your life? I mean, God has forgiven you, and we all make mistakes, and I take people where they're at, and you know what, you have a chance here, anybody can, I mean, it's just that simple, and I'm long-suffering, I'm patient, I'm tolerant, I can deal with everything in this world, but I've got to be honest with you, when it comes to the ministry, and I told you this Thursday night, there's one thing that I have absolute no tolerance with, and that is cowards in the ministry, cowards in the face of the adversity that comes our way.

General Patton one time, World War II, almost got relieved of his command in Italy, you know why? Because he slapped a soldier. You know why he slapped the soldier? I mean, it made the front news. He slapped the soldier because he would not have no cowards in his army. Now I personally don't believe the guy that he slapped was a coward, he was shell-shocked, but that was his mentality. He detested because he knew that cowardice and fear is worse than any disease in any army. It becomes infectious, and when the leaders of any army show cowardice, when the leaders of any church show cowardice, there's no room for it. There's no room for it. I can't take, I just can't stand pastors today, pastors who are offended by the fact that their people may not like the word Baptist, so they take Baptist off their name. Christians who are afraid that they'll offend somebody, so they'll be wishy-washy, they'll be middle of the road, they're spineless, they're gutless, they've got a yellow streak a mile down their back. My old father in the Lord, Mel Sabaka, he was very rough and very gruff. I don't even always tell you some of the things he used to say in some of the slogans, but he lived back in a day when you told it like it was, and the famous line that I talk about in the example that I gave you about holding the line, that came from him, but his phrase was, "If you don't hold the line, you'll wind up kissing their behind." But that was him.

This church has to build men and women who will stand in that gap, who will make up that hedge, that no matter who it is, what it is, or what transpires, they'll take a stand in these last days, and it doesn't matter if it's your son or your daughter or your brother or your sister or if it's somebody at work or whoever it may be, you realize that God has called you to be a watchman, He saved you to do something for God, and you're going to have to endure to do that, you're going to have to pay the price to do that. Going down the middle road and preparing to playing both ends against the middle will never work. It never has worked, and it certainly won't work in the ministry of Jesus Christ, and this is why God was looking for a man, and by the way, if you read the rest of that verse, He couldn't find any, and God is looking for a man today, but we do have the same problem, they're hard to find.

So when God sees this church on anniversary Sunday, and where we think about going from here, understand it's our little next generation, all these little kids that someday are going to have to make decisions for Christ, going to have to grow up and become part of the ministry, understand the concept and grow and be brought right into the middle of what God is doing here. Then it's our teenagers, and these young kids will grow up to be teenagers, but the teens we have

right now that Kyle and Casey work with, and so many of you give your time to help them in the support of everything that you do, of bringing in the things that they need, the food and whatever to support our kids because I'll tell you something, the devil is after them. But I'm going to tell you the last thing, this church will only be as strong as the men and the women who are willing to stand in the gap, who are willing to be used of God in these last days, no matter what anybody thinks about it, what anybody says about it, no matter what your friends think about it, no matter what the world thinks about it, no matter who thinks about it, and stand in the gap and make up the hedge because we're in a war and the wall can get breached.

Just like that British officer, in fact, when he was asked, when he got the Victoria Cross, I forgot to tell you the rest of the story, when he got the Victoria Cross and he was interviewed and they asked him how he came up with this brilliant plan, he took it right back to Ezekiel 22. He was a saved man, and he had read that in the Bible, and he thought in the world hurt that he was in at that particular point in time that might just be the solution, and brother, it was. I'll tell you something, in the world that we live in today of Bible Christianity with its absolutely wishy-washy mindset and its up-your-nose attitude, it is the best position to take. Be a watchman, stand on the wall, and when the wall gets breached, run to the breach, fill that gap, make up the hedge, and hold the line. Hold the line. These are what the three things that God looks at. These are what this church should envision when it sees ourselves today.

Today we see the end result of all that. We see Kyle and Casey, a great object lesson for where we're at today, a great example of what every young man and young lady should grow up to want to be like. They're not perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but they have come into this church years ago, worked through their issues, grew up in this church, learned the Bible principles, got involved at every level of it, and now today this church is nothing more than recognizing what God has already said about them. That's all ordination is. Ordination is not some special thing that makes them better than you. It's not something that sets them apart and how God's going to give them greater things than He gives you. No, ordination in the Bible is simply a church recognizing what this guy and gal is doing or this person is doing or this couple is doing, and then after the church, after they do it and it's recognized that he's doing it, then you simply set them apart and recognize and designate them that this is what you do, and that's what we're doing today. The way we work that in just a moment is we have, we're going to have Kyle and Casey come up here. We're going to have all the men of this church who are ordained and have their ordination papers as a pastor, and we do something strange, we lay hands on them. Now in some churches that means something that's not good, but in this church it's simply taught all the way through the Bible by the laying on of hands as a symbol of the church recognizing who they are and recognizing what they've done and setting them apart. So I'd like at this particular point Kyle and Casey to come on up here and all the men that hold the ordination come on up.