

## I. The Church's Vision and Purpose

I think it is very important to keep everybody knowing where we are at and where we are going as a church. I preached a message to you probably four or five years ago, maybe longer than that, in 2 Peter 2 on the six marks of spiritual growth. I told you that every Christian ought to measure their spiritual growth. There are six things that you can put into your life that will give you a very good yardstick of where you are at: are you growing, are you really getting to where you want to get with the Lord? I say that because churches ought to have a gauge to do that also. Churches are made up of people. As people mature and grow, the church matures and grows.

Next week, President Obama is going to do his State of the Union address for the United States people. When he does that, he gets up and he basically says, "Here's where we're at and here's where we're going." I'll tell you right now, it's not very good where we are at or where we are going. Our church is in a lot better shape than the country is. We are going to talk about that this morning. I want you to always be able to see how a church should grow. How are we growing? Are we doing what we need to do? I think it is vital.

Finding a biblical philosophy in building a church or ministry is absolutely crucial. A philosophy is a simple approach to something. It is a method to get something done. In general, it is a study of the issues of reality, existence, and knowledge. Philosophy supposedly takes a critical, systematic approach to any problem. So when we talk about a philosophy of ministry, I am talking about showing you a systematic approach to making the ministry work, and not only just making it work, but for everybody who is a member of this church to understand it. I think that is the job of a pastor.

God's people, whether it is in the Old Testament with the nation of Israel or in the New Testament with the church, it is so important that they have the leadership and keep a vision before them.

*Proverbs 29:18*

*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*

A church has to have a vision. The leadership of a church has to have a vision, and it has to be the same vision. For a church, there are three distinct visions that the church should have, and we have talked about this before. Having these three in your life will guide you through everything that you do.

- The Rapture of the Church
- The Judgment Seat of Christ
- The Fields are White Unto Harvest

That is the overall vision of the church. We keep the perspective of the rapture coming for us, the judgment seat of Christ, but as we live, occupy till He comes. We need to realize that the fields are white unto harvest, the white unto harvest being like the wheat that is ready to be harvested, the souls of men.

## II. The Pastor's Role in Vision

As a pastor, a pastor's job is also threefold concerning the vision. Turn over to the book of Habakkuk, chapter 2, verses 1 through 3. I think this is a great passage on what my job is and how my job has to translate into what we all do.

*Habakkuk 2:1-3*

*I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.*

*And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.*

*For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

Father, we thank You and praise You today for the Lord Jesus Christ. We do love You and we thank You for our church. I thank You for the men and women You brought over the last ten years, how we started with just 14 or 15 people and what we have today, all because of Your goodness and Your Word, and because we have a philosophy of ministry. We know what we want to do. We know how we want to get there. Lord, help these people today and help us to see and understand as we look at where we are at today and look where we have come from, and then try to talk about where we want to go. We thank You for the visitors today or the folks that are just kind of checking out our church. If they are looking for a church that is Bible-based and a church that knows where they are going and what they want to do, help them to understand that this is our church and our goal. We thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

Verse 1 has always been a favorite part of that verse for me. It says, "And I will stand upon my watch." There are four watches in the Bible. Those four watches in the Bible cover the span of the New Testament. We are in the fourth watch. We are in the last watch. A pastor needs to understand, a church needs to understand, the job of a pastor is to know what watch we are in, to know where we are at in relationship to Christ's coming, to know what the issues are, and then communicate that burden of that watch to the people that God has given him.

The three things that a pastor has to do to accomplish that are:

- Write the Vision
- Make it Plain Upon Tables
- The Vision is For an Appointed Time

To me, a vision has always been real simple. I do not get real technical with it. It is real basic for me. A real vision is working toward a goal, whether it is in your life as an individual, whether it is in this church, working toward a goal that may take a long time to develop. It may take a while to put it together in its final form. But what happens is, and here is the key, through the process of building that, you never lose sight of the finished product. I am in the process of building this church. Many of you are in the process of building your life in this church. But I see you in your final form. I see this church in its final form. The thing that you have got to do, you always have got to do, is you have got to remember that while you are building it, even when it is not here yet, you never lose sight of the finished product that you want to accomplish.

### III. Long-Term vs. Short-Term Vision

I am going to give you a great term in your life that you want to use. You folks are going to get into the people ministry. It will be one that we will use a lot, and I have not really given it to you yet. It is simply the concept of long-term versus short-term. Most of us make the mistake of only looking at life in the short-term. That is never good, because the short-term never proves anything.

When you work with people, you are going to find that when people come in, they have disasters in their life, they have problems in their life, they are hurting in their life. They will basically tell you whatever you want to hear. Many times they are not trying to fool you. Many times they are sincere in it, but that is just where they are at. Many, many times they will tell you everything you want to hear. They will tell you all the stuff that is the right stuff. Many times we get fooled by that, because we think, in the short-term, "Wow, that guy was really going to put it together." It is never the short-term. People will tell you whatever you want to hear in the short-term. I have had so much smoke blown up my rear end in the last 40 years of ministry by people telling me what I thought they wanted to hear. I had to install a stopgap valve. People will always tell you what they want to hear in the short-term. It is the long-term that proves what is really real. You have got to watch the long-term.

I do not know how many times a girl said, "Well, I love this guy. I love this guy." Short-term. Long-term. "How did I forget this bum?" Short-term versus long-term. "I love this car. I have got to have this car." Short-term. Long-term. "I do not have the money to pay for it." We have to learn and understand that there is a process. People will say anything in the short-term. They will do many times what is right in the short-term, but the Bible says, "Prove all things." It is the long-term that you will look for.

When I work with people, and you need to learn this, I will take what somebody says at face value. Somebody comes in and tells me, "I want to do what is right." I am not going to stand there and call them a liar. I am going to let them say whatever they are going to say, but I understand that that does not really... I appreciate it, and I may give them the benefit of the doubt, but that does not mean that I am going to buy into everything because I follow that principle. It is not short-term. It is long-term. When it comes to a church, not short-term. It is long-term. When it comes to your life, it is not short-term. It is long-term. You have got to start learning and understanding that a vision is working toward a goal that may take a long time to

develop and put together in its final form, but the key to that process is not short-term. The key to that process is long-term and never taking your eyes off the finished product.

We saw this in our New Year's Eve study. If you remember, we saw it with Israel and the church. God had a vision for Israel. Did He not? We already know now throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, God had a vision for the church, but when you study them both, neither vision will yet be realized. The vision for Israel has never been realized, and the vision for the church has never been realized. It will never fully be realized until one, for the church, the rapture, and two, for Israel, the Second Coming. The vision got realized. It got accomplished, but it took a while, did it not? It always takes a while. That is one of the things that maturity and leadership teaches. It tells young Christians who have a zeal but not according to knowledge that it is okay. It does not have to happen all today. I tell you all the time when you work with people, you cannot expect them to be like you out of the box. My job, our job, your job is to hold them accountable, give them every chance in the world, but do not be deluded that it is never the short-term, never the short-term. One more time, never the short-term that proves anything. It is the long-term. It is the long-term. You are going to find that in both cases, they go through five stages: formulation, calling out, establishment, the whole deal. God's vision gets realized, but it takes a while.

#### IV. Building the Church: A Long-Term Process

I want to talk today, and you have heard me say this a lot. It is one of our principles: look behind, look around, look ahead. Great advice for anybody. Always look where you have come from. Always look where you are at, and always look where you are going. I am really glad today that this worked out to be Kid Sunday, because a lot of this is going to be about you today. I want you to hear it first from me. I think that is very important. I want to talk to you about where we go from here in the building of our church. Year by year, I have laid out a plan. I have kept the vision before you. We have written the vision out. We have made it plain. Every year, we talk about and add some new dimension to it and show you where we come from, show you how the pieces fit together.

In building a church, I have been around for a while. I have never understood it. Building a church, everybody tells me today how hard it is. The truth of the matter is building a church is not hard, but it does take a lot of hard work. Building a church is not complicated. It really is not, though you are going to find there are many pieces to its construction.

The issues today with churches are really simple when you stop and think about it. It is unfortunate, but it is simple. It is not hard to figure out. Pastors just do not know biblically how to build a church, and they cannot communicate it to their people. They have no real vision. They are not able to explain how we are going to get from this point to this point and how we are going to do it. In many cases, they have a wrong, not only a wrong philosophical approach, but they have no philosophical approach to the ministry. Then the real problem comes in is when the people falter, because as I said before, God's people, it is absolutely crucial to have good leadership and have the vision kept before them.

Honestly, you can start a church tomorrow, and you can run four or five years probably just on the excitement if you have a group of people, because it is new, and it is exciting, and you see a lot of things for the first time. But I am going to tell you something. After four, five, six, seven years, the newness wears off, and at that time as a pastor, you better know what you are doing. You cannot ride on a hype anymore. You have got to now have a plan and get that plan to the people that they understand it, that you are riding it out, you make it plain, and they pick it up and run with it, or you are dead, and that is what happens today. It is exactly what happens today.

There is a song that says, "I am going higher someday," and that is true. We are going higher someday, and when the rapture of the church comes, we are going real high, but the bottom line is every day of your life, you ought to go higher every day. This church, every year it is in existence, every month, every day, ought to be higher than the day before in its own spiritual growth, in its own spiritual walk.

## V. The Family as the Foundation of Church Strength

Fundamentally, the strength of a church, as far as I am concerned, and what I see in the Bible, it is only built on one thing, one concept. I know we automatically think that is the Bible. Obviously, that is true. The Bible is the foundational thing of everything. It certainly is, but that is really not what makes a church strong. I know churches that... I know Christians that have the right Bible. I know Christians that have right now in our church, a King James Bible in their lap or at home, and you know what? It means nothing. I would not let you teach my dog the Word of God. They are all smarter than you are when it comes to it. So just having a Bible does not make you anything, and a church having the Bible as their... "We believe the Bible." I have heard that all my life. "We believe the Bible is the foundation of everything." Really? Then why are you so screwed up in everything you do? It does not prove anything.

When you go through the Bible, the issue is clear. When you go back and you look at the nation of Israel, after they rejected the Word of God, the problem they had was the same problem that the church faces 2,400 years later. It is simply this: and this is where the real strength of any church is. It is the families in the church. Strength is built on families being strong in any church. When God set this whole thing up, He put three institutions in play. The first one was civil government, which we see in Israel. The second one was the church, which we saw in the New Testament. And the third one was the establishment of the family. Simply put, strong churches are based on strong family units.

How do you build a church? You build a church by first recognizing that that church will only be as strong as the families in it. Then you go to work building all the components that make that family strong. Many pastors make a tragic mistake. I have seen it all my life in ministry. They think you build a church with men. I understand men and women. We have some great men in this church and we have some great women in this church. I understand that. But fundamentally, that is a tragic mistake because also I have seen many men down through history, and I know some of you guys have too, who are Christian. They go to church. They teach Sunday school. They teach the Bible. They are good preachers. They know the Bible a lot, but their families are a disaster. The bottom line is this. What builds a strong church is not men. What builds a strong

church is not women. What builds a strong church is strong families. When the family units are strong, the church is strong. That is how you build a church.

When God called Abraham out in Genesis 11 and 12, the thing that God saw in him was not his abilities. He did not see his individuality. And though he was a tremendous individual, and he was tremendous, the Bible says he was a friend of God, but that is not what God looked for.

*Genesis 18:18-19*

*Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.*

*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

The key to their stability was not his great personality. It was not the great power that he had. It was the family that he commanded. In the military, you know what it means to be under command. God knew if the family broke down, the whole system breaks down because it is built on a family unit. The nation of Israel was a great nation, but it was built on that concept. And the church is a great concept, but it is built on that principle.

I understand that some of you parents came into this church late in life, and your kids were already up and grown, and they already were into problems. I am not necessarily talking about you. In most of those cases, I can say and testify that all of you have done, given your situation, and there is always something you can do. You have done everything that you could do. So I am not preaching at you this morning. I am telling you simply this. The strength of this church and where we go is going to be based on the strength of your family because that is the way it has always been. That is why there were such harsh penalties for your child being rebellious back in the Old Testament. Very harsh penalties.

*Ephesians 6:1-3*

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.*

*Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;*

*That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.*

You know what that promise is? That promise is Deuteronomy 21:18-21. That promise is in the Old Testament when a child disobeyed his parents, would not do what is right, and a father could not command him. They took him before the judges. They gave him a chance to get it right. When the kid was obstinate, would not follow and rebellious, they killed him. Sounds harsh, does it not? Capital punishment for disobeying your parents in the Old Testament. But thank God for the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, rebellion was capital punishment. It was just that simple. And it was just that the way it was. Why? Because God knew, God understood that if the family unit fractured, if the family unit broke down, if the family unit went to pieces, the nation would go to pieces. That

is true of the church today too. That same principle holds true in the church today. One of the greatest keys to all of this is getting parents and their kids, and you have seen me start this the last couple of years, is getting parents and kids ministering together. Get you to the place where you are ministering the Word of God together.

I understand that some of you are not married yet, but you will be someday. And as I said before, I realize that some of you have come to the place where when you came to this church, your kids were in their teens or past that and you already lost your kids. I understand that. There is always something you can do. There is always something that you can accomplish in any given situation. That is just the way we have to deal with situations sometimes. But as far as you, new ones coming up, who have so many kids and all your kids growing up, there is a great principle taught in Proverbs 5:15. It simply says this, "Never wait till you are run out of water before you start to dig your well." There is a day coming with your kids that you need to start right now and understand some things. Do not wait, do it now, get the vision for it, see how it works for the ones who have their kids working with them in ministry. Look at the leaders of this church whose children are by their side in ministry. Learn from that.

In ministry, everything rises and falls on leadership. When you do not have control over your family, when you do not have control over the situation in your own house, you have absolutely no credibility in doing anything for God. Yet in churches, we see it all the time. I grew up in churches where some of the most... I was a youth pastor for so many years. I dealt with kids whose moms and dads were deacons, were pastors. They were the most godless, worldly people in the church. My first camp experience when I first came there in old Mount Sabaca came down with a disaster. We went to camp, we had 60 kids saved. You say, "What is a disaster about that?" They were all kids of deacons and pastors back in the church. I will tell you what, when you are a deacon and a pastor and you have a Sunday school class and you are a big time guy, you do not like for your kid who you wanted to pretend was where he needed to be to come home and say, "I just got saved at camp." It is an embarrassment to go there and to sit in that church and watch your kid be baptized when you are a pastor, you are a deacon. You should have had that kid covered.

*1 Timothy 3:4-5*

*One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;*

*For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?*

The answer is simple. You do not and you cannot. Two great words in there: the word "rule" and the word "gravity." You have to have some rules. And the word "gravity" comes to the aspect that when push comes to shove and the situation gets grave, you deal with it with all gravity, the rules for and today. We like to blame everybody else. When your kid does something wrong, just find nine or ten other people that are doing the same thing. That is how we deal with it today. I am not saying your kids are going to be perfect. I am not saying they are not going to have any problem, make some terrible mistakes. Abraham's kid was not perfect. But when they do, the real question is, do you have command? Can you demand command that they do right? You say, "Well, my kid is 50." I do not care if they are 90. "Honor your mother and your father" has no end to it. You do

not honor your parents by disobedience to your parents, no matter how old you are. Honoring your mom and your dad is more than a Hallmark card for five bucks on Mother's and Father's Day. It is the principles that they instilled in you that you should have in ministry that makes the strong family strong. And when it breaks down, hammer it.

The finished product has always been my vision of this church, of you. I never judge you in the short term. I always let your long-term judge yourself. It is the best way to do it. The last 10 years, we have come through a slow building process. There is a great principle, promise found in Romans 4:17. Again, it would be dealing with Abraham. What a great example he is.

*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.*

That is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. God who calls those things which are not as though they were. He is talking about Abraham and Sarah. What he is making a reference there is them having kids. It is a perfect example of what I am trying to get you to see about a vision, about this church, about your family. What I see in you, the whole world saw an old couple ready for John Knox Village in Abraham and Sarah. But God saw the nation of Israel. I do not look at you of where you are at today. I look at you of where I know you can be. I do not look at this church of where it is at today. I look at where this church needs to be. I look at you and I see you in your final form, not in the one you are in today. You may never make it. But I look at you and I see you and I see your potential. I do not see what you are. I see what you could be. It is the same way with a church. All churches have problems. All Christians have problems. All churches have bad Christians in them. I never met one that did not. But you never focus on the short term. The long term is what you focus on.

As I said, you do not get sidetracked with the side issues. You keep the vision and you keep going toward the vision that God has for you. I never focus on petty little things. I never focus on petty little problems that people have. I try to help people through. I am sure I do. I am not talking about that. I am just saying so many of you get so caught up in the stuff that does not matter. You get so caught up because you are so short-termed in what you do. You never realize that it is long-term. Everything is going to happen. Wherever you have movement, folks, you have friction. So many of God's people could be something for God, get so sidetracked with the things short term that never matter and they lose sight of the long term that does matter.

Do you ever notice why people leave churches? I have examined this for 40-some years. I have made a study of it. I can honestly tell you after 40-45 years of studying it in almost every case, I mean here, wherever I was before, all the way down my life, I have made a study of it because it intrigued me. I am going to tell you today, and this is a great lesson whether you are learning or not really does not matter, but the great lesson is good people do not leave good churches. Good people leave bad churches, but good people do not leave good churches. Bad people leave good churches.

You may not like that, may not appreciate that, and you may have some friend that left this church or any other church, you say you do not agree with that. What do I care what you think? You have not been in the ministry, you know nothing about it, you have probably not even disciplined anybody. If I threw you a Bible and told you to find Habakkuk you would be lost forever. Your opinion means nothing. I am telling you, I have watched this thing. Somebody came to me a while back about a year ago, and I love these things. People get so caught up in it, called pull me aside like it is CIA stuff. "Do you know so-and-so is not happy in a church?" "No, really?" "Yeah, he thinks he is going to leave the church." "Oh really? Well let me ask you something. How do you leave something you never really were part of?"

If some of you left tomorrow, it takes six people to replace you. That is what you do. Somebody else leaves, nothing changes. Nothing changes. You know why good people never leave good churches? I will tell you why, because they have an investment in it, that is why. Their family is in it, their life is in it, the people they have won to Christ and disciplined and ministered are in it. They have an investment. You have no investment. What do you care? That is how it works. You need to write that down. Make a list. Make a list of the people, if maybe nobody will, but make a list of the people to leave this church this year. See if that is not true. I run one every year. It is the long term folks. It is not the petty stuff that means nothing. It is not somebody getting their nose bent at a joint who does nothing, who works with nobody, who does not disciple, does not help, does not get in ministry, that all you come is for whatever you come for when you leave. So what? It is the vision of where we have got to get to. What are we doing to realize that vision and strengthen our families? It is all that matters, but boy we sure get hung up on the short term, do we not? We do. All we see is what affects us. All we see is what we want. All we see is where we are at. All we want to do is defend our own self. We never stop and think about the long term. That is the vision. I care nothing about the short term. I help people every day. I spend my whole life working with people in the short term, but I do not get sidetracked. I do my best to help them make it. They do not make it. I am sorry. I am not going to go into mourning and wear black the rest of my life. I am looking at it not short term, long term. There is a goal that this church needs to get to. You can be part of it or not part of it. That is your choice.

## VI. The Church as an Assembly Line

Building families. Our church, with problems with any church, obviously, but our church, I want to tell you, is as healthy as it can be in several aspects. One of the things that we are really healthy in is probably 85% of our church is under 30 years of age. Most churches are funeral homes in disguise. Everybody is 85 or over. I have two guys I work out with. I have a little Baptist church down here, not far from my house. We always kind of walk the track together and work out. I love them, but I do not know how they got into this fitness center. They never bought workout. I bought a workout thing. I think they got a camping permit. I am not sure how it works, but we walk around the track, and they are always complaining. They cannot get anybody to do anything. They are all old people and old people complain about everything. They walk around, they complain. Nobody does anything. There are no new people. When they have a wanners, the wanners make a little mess. The old folks get upset. Everybody is mad. Nobody is happy. And it is going to die. It is dying right in front of them. And they do not have a clue. I do

not say anything to them. It just makes me look like I am better than they are and self-righteous and it is not my deal. But I am telling you, this is a problem everywhere. My wife was home in Ohio. That is true of their old church back there. It is dying. Everybody is 90 years old and counting. It is a mess. There is no new blood coming in. Nobody is part of anything. Nobody is growing. No young couples coming in. Why would you want to go to that? My favorite thing in life is not going to a mausoleum and sitting down and watch the flowers wilt on the wall.

85% of our church is under 30. We have some of the sharpest couples you ever could find. Some of you singles will set the world on fire. And add to that, whatever we have in the water that keeps the birth rate just going on here. Tobin came over to see me this week. Just another young couple in our church. Just came in a couple months ago. Came over to my office, sat down there and began to talk about the Bible and tears brought up in his eyes. He said, "You know what? I am here for one reason." He says, "We are having our first baby and I want to raise my baby right." That is what I am talking about. And I said to him, "You know what? With that attitude, you do not need me." You will. That is what it takes. We have got some sharp couples, man. Some of you guys, you do everything. You hold a male everywhere. Us guys in our seventies, we cannot do it anymore. And the older ones, and I say older, I am not talking about as Jessica was talking about it. I am talking about older in the Lord who have your kids by your side. We have a great task. That task is to train these younger moms and dads.

I like reading biographies, autobiographies, whatever. I read a book a while back on Henry Ford, biography of Henry Ford. He was an amazing guy. He established obviously the Ford Motor Company, which many of you work for, but he was the man who first mass produced what they say was the car for the common man. One of his innovative ideas that he came up with is used almost in every aspect of industry today was the assembly line. He turned cars out by putting them on a line. It moved very slowly. As the car moved down the line, a process of adding the parts to it and a car in time emerged off at the other end ready to drive off and do whatever you want to do with it.

I have often thought that that is the same concept in building a church. It is an assembly line process. It is an assembly line that a church goes through, except I guess they turn out a car. John Brusquette says about every two days, I mean, I would in the church, it takes 10, 12, 15 years maybe. But a church moves down that line in time and all the right components get added to it. At some point the finished product is ready to really do something for the Lord. When you look at it, it is quite incredible. It all starts at Ford Motor Company by laying a frame down. Then you get a body to it. Then you add an engine, tires, you get a transmission at some point, you get a steering column. In a church, it is the same way. When we started our church, you know what? You lay a framework. You have to have a philosophy of ministry. And then you go to work building the assembly of the body, the people. And at some point on the assembly line, you join the body to the framework. And then as it moves on down the line, you just keep adding components to it. And you know what you have at some point? Well, in assembly line at Ford, you have a car you drive off, but in a church, you have a church that is ready to do something for the Lord.

You have heard me say it many times. When Jesus Christ went back to heaven, He replaced Himself with three things. I have given you an analogy many, many times. The Holy Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the local church. The Holy Spirit of God is your guide. The Word of God is your roadmap. And the local church is what? It is your vehicle. This is our vehicle. This church is our vehicle. And you build this church, God's vehicle, to get the gospel to the ends of the earth, just like they build them at Ford Motor Company. You start with a frame, you put it down the line, and you add to it, and then you build it from there. And pretty soon, the finished product rolls off, and you are going to get some things done. Everybody here is on some stage of that assembly line. And if you can look back and remember, that is exactly what we did.

Building a church is nothing more than a constant, constant redefining of yourself. When we first started our church, the first couple of years, it was the framework. Remember, I took you through Ezra and Nehemiah, and I told you the biblical approach in building a church. I talked about the nine things that a church, the gates that a church has. I talked about all the different aspects of building a church. Then I brought you through the basic seven series: the seven baptisms, the seven resurrections, the seven mysteries, the seven judgments, the seven sevens. That was all framework stuff.

Then as we got a few more people around, we were running 30, 40 people. We wanted to use as an outreach an athletic ministry, but we did not have what we have now. Some of you remember this. I know Jimmy will remember it. Jimmy Stymans. Remember, we got our softball team together, but we played over at Coleman Livingood Park. One team out of our thing to play in a Raytown City League, just to get the thing going. We played these big Samoan guys. Remember those big Samoan Indian guys? The women were bigger than the guys, man. They whipped their tails every time. But we started with that. We started just basically with that. Now look what we have got. If you missed last night, the opportunities that were there, the people that were in that place in volleyball last night. I know some of you think it is stupid. I know some of you are only in it for the game of it. You are only in it for the competition of it. But most of you are in it because you see it as what it is: a vital aspect of reaching couples in this church. And that is the lifeblood to keep feeding this church. It keeps it from turning into a cemetery. That is how it went. Now we have developed it into probably the single most vital ministry, and in softball too, what, 14 teams? Many people that are not saved come in here, hear the gospel every week. How many hundreds of thousands of hours of Bible study, Sunday morning, the one-on-one time, the specials we have done. You go to our website, look at what we have done on air. You could choke a horse with it. Everything was done in time and place as we moved down the assembly line to give you the pieces and the part that you need.

Three or four years ago, maybe three years ago, we started our prayer groups, redefined this church, redefined a lot of people. We have some people that took a prayer group the first time and have not been seen since. It has so changed the dynamics of this church forever. I know they are not perfect. I get a thing from Bob every week on them and he lists the things that are good about it and the bad about it. I appreciate getting the information. They are not perfect, but look what they have done to the leadership structure of our church. It is the concept. You are always

going to have good and bad in anything that you do. You are going to have those who apply themselves and those who do not.

Then God, as we moved down that assembly line, gave us our restart in our homeless ministry. You talk about something that digs deep down inside and proves the sincerity of our love of all that we have, giving it up for something that somebody else does not have. There it is, boy. You see, we are moving down that assembly line. And many of you are being assembled with the right parts. You really are.

As I started to look at what Henry Ford did, and I really loved the book. It was a great book. I began to see the parallels and I just think this way. When I read something, I am always looking at a parallel of how I can do something better or what I do, or how am I doing, or see the connection to it. I just think that way. And I looked at what Henry Ford did to make the, and made the parallels to us building a church. Two great things struck me.

- Not One Person Builds the Car
- Every Part is Important

Henry Ford never built one car by himself. It was his vision. And I will never build this church by myself. But it is my vision. And when I write the vision, lay it on a table, some of you pick it up and run with it. And in time, as we move down the assembly line.

I saw this too. At some point on the assembly line, you get all the major parts together. Then they start what they call, the trim work. You start putting in the stuff to finish it up. And in our church, that is my goal. Getting the finished product ready to drive off the ramp. Our church, that is my goal. With you, that is my goal. Getting this church level by level, year by year to the place where we are functionally ready to take and get something done. We already are. But we only have to get stronger. And it is like anything else. You have to keep the vision before the people, because if you slack off and lose the vision, the family fractures. And when the family fractures and your kid does not come to church, does not come to Bible study on Thursday night, does not want to be part of it. That is when it falls apart. When something else on Sunday morning and Thursday night is more important than being in God's house with your kids, you have some issues. Just that simple. I do not care if they are 90. I am in my 70s and my mother who is in her 90s had me very young. When I go to Ohio, she tells me where it is at. I listen to her. Anybody that survived to be 92 has got something she can say in life about it.

## VII. Future Ministry Goals

Let me talk about this next year. I want to develop two more levels on our assembly line.

- People Ministry
- Youth Ministry