

I. Introduction to the Church Series and Vision

We have our Bibles this morning. I want to invite you to turn to Hebrews chapter 8. We will be there in just a little bit. Remember last week we started a two or three-week series. I really wanted to talk about and give you an understanding of what the church really is. I think our church itself has come to the point and grown, and just as you saw here with Logan and all of the other high school kids, and all of the things that are going on around us, and all of the people who are teaching the Bible and growing in the Word of God, I think it is time for us to stop and really examine where we are at so you have a better understanding.

I said last week that my goal has always been, I know that in the book of Revelation you have seven periods of church history. It spans from the early church, which starts there in the book of Acts, chapter 20, with Ephesus, and then runs all the way up through where we are at today in the Laodicean church period. It is no secret that we know that the most fruitful, profitable time in the history of the church was the Philadelphia Church Age, which really starts with the coming out of the King James Bible and then lasts for almost 400 years until the rejection of the King James Bible.

I made it very clear that my goal, understanding what I understand about the history and the Bible, is in the midst of the Laodicean church period to build a Philadelphia church—to build a church that is built on the same principles, the sound foundation that they were during that Philadelphia church period. We saw last week about the diversity of the church, and there is a lot of diversity here with the people that God has given us.

I want you to understand also why we operate the way we do. I want those of you who desire to be part of this work, this ministry—not just a spectator, not just a sightseer, but somebody who really wants to be involved—I want to teach you the inner workings of how a New Testament church is and how it works. This way, you can better find where you fit in. There is something for everybody here, and you can do basically whatever you want to do.

II. Models and Patterns of the Church

You remember last week we talked about models. I talked about two aspects of learning about God: models and patterns. Models will always be the overall concept of an idea. The pattern will be the structure by which it works. Last week we talked about models. Today we are going to begin to move into patterns a little bit and then take it on a little deeper next week.

Last week you remember that we talked about the model church with the church at Antioch, where they are first called Christians in Acts chapter 11 and Acts chapter 13. So we saw there within that church five great things that I want you to remember:

1. We saw the diversity of the church. They had come from all walks of life.
2. There was a unity within that church. Unity is the key.

3. I showed you how God worked through people's lives, specifically Paul and Barnabas, through the local body. It was not somebody just getting up and deciding they were going to do what they wanted to do. There is a structure to it, and that structure works perfectly.
4. Most importantly, we defined the ministry for us, and that is ministering unto the Lord, giving to the Lord, and learning what that really means—giving God what He wants.
5. We saw how God's structure for the New Testament will be the local church. Everything will flow through the program that God has established.

Then I talked about what I look for in people. I talk about looking for people that are able to be touched by God, that God can do something, mold you, make you. I talk about people that I look for that are teachable, that they will take the things of God and do something with it in their life. I talk about people who are trustworthy, that once God gives you the unsearchable riches, gives you the greatest power on this earth, that you do what is right with it. Then I look for people who are thankful, someone who never forgets what God has done for them, never forgets what God has given them, but then spends the rest of their life fulfilling it.

III. The Search for Dedicated Individuals

I made it very clear that in a ministry within this church, I am looking for a certain kind of person. I know there are all kinds of people out there. Very frankly, and you know this to be true, it is really hard for employers to find good employees today. Most of the kids that come out of high school, they do not want to work. They do not want to do a hard day's work to make any money. I know that employers just dread hiring somebody new because they only laugh. They will not show up for work, or they party, they do not come in. It is hard to find good people today, young people who really understand the work ethic of really doing a good job for their employer.

It is the same thing with churches. It is hard to find God's people today who are really dedicated and understand what this is all about. I mean, we could fill an auditorium up like Joel Osteen does and have 25,000 or 26,000 people, but where are they during the week? What are they doing? The key is understanding that for a ministry that is going to do what I want to do, it is not going to be for everybody.

I read a story this last week about the youngest Medal of Honor recipient. Now, if you talk to a military guy or whatever and you talk about the Medal of Honor, never talk about somebody winning the Medal of Honor. You do not win the Medal of Honor. You receive the Medal of Honor. It is a really big deal with them. It is not like winning a lottery. If you received the Medal of Honor, you are a recipient of it because of what you did. You did not win anything. It was presented to you based on what you did.

This guy's name was Jack Lucas. You can Google him anytime you want and really look into it. He was 14 years old when he joined the Marine Corps in 1942. He was an old farm boy. He looked a lot older than he was, but he was 14 years old. In the middle of World War II, the darkest period of time, 1942, he joined the Marine Corps at 14 years of age. Most kids at 14 today, they are not ready for combat in the Marine Corps. They are not ready for the onslaught of

a banzai charge of the Japanese in the middle of the night. They are all right for softball, baseball, football, soccer, but let us face it, at 14 years old, most young men are not ready for the combat that this guy faced.

At 14, he joined the Marine Corps. He went to Hawaii and was attached to a combat unit there. There was an amphibious combat unit that was ready to see combat. He was writing letters back and forth to somebody, and the censors saw it and realized he was only 14 years old. They pulled him out of the combat unit and put him in an area for driving trucks. This kid wanted combat so bad that he just did all kinds of stuff, got into all kinds of trouble. When his unit was going overseas to fight in combat, he deserted, stowed away on the ship, and went with his unit to the combat route. They found out after three or four weeks on the ship, they put him in the brig.

After a period of time, when he had turned 17 years old, he made his plea that he wanted to be in a combat unit, and they put him in a combat unit. He attacked February 12th, Iwo Jima, which is one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific War. On the second day of battle, he and his buddies are climbing up a ridge, and they are into a shell hole, and a Japanese throws a hand grenade into the hole with four or five of his buddies there. Jack Lucas jumps on the grenade, puts all the sand around it, and another one came in. He grabbed that one and stuck it underneath of him, and it exploded, severely wounding him. They thought he was dead. They left him there. A day and a half later, as they were coming through, the medics saw that he was still alive. He had over 15 surgeries. The rest of his life, he carried around over 200 pieces of shrapnel in his body.

That did not stop him. When he got discharged from the Marine Corps in 1945 at the end of the war, he joined the Army and became part of the 82nd Airborne. On his first jump from 3,000 feet, both chutes failed to open. One chute spiraled up, the other one caught a little bit of air, but he came down a lot faster. If he would not have, he hit the trees that broke his fall, but he just had minor injuries and he jumped the next week. President Truman awarded him the Medal of Honor for his heroics on Iwo Jima. The kid never quit. He never stopped. He had a goal that he wanted to do, and nothing or nobody was going to stop him from that goal. He died in 2008. The youngest recipient of the Medal of Honor, President Truman, put it around his neck when he was 17 years old.

That is the kind of kid I am looking for. I comb through life. I look at every one of you when you come in. I comb through everybody that God puts across my path to look for Jack Lucases, for people who will never quit, for people that will fight with endurance because you have a goal—in our case, for God—that you will want to do something for God, and nothing or nobody is going to stop you. He was awarded the Medal of Honor when he was 17 years old. I am looking for somebody with that kind of loyalty, that kind of determination, that kind of self-sacrifice. He did it as a PFC, and he got busted back to private when he went AWOL. He did it for \$12 a month. God will give unto you and me all the riches of glory, the aristocracy of heaven, and we will not even think about being dedicated to what He wants us to do. I am not looking for everybody. I am looking for the Jack Lucases in this world. I am looking for the men and women that will not quit. I am looking for the men and the women that will have a vision of God and what He wants them to do, and nothing or no one will stop you. That is what I am looking for. And they are out there.

IV. The Local Church as God's Ordained Structure

We talked about models and patterns. God has a model and a pattern for everything. They make up the mind of Christ. One of the key concepts I want you to know and understand is that the New Testament local church is the only structure, it is the only program that God has that He ordained for New Testament Christianity to flow through. That is a hard concept for Laodicean Christianity today, who have forsaken the church that Christ loved, forsaken and gave up the church that Christ died for, for some watered-down replacement.

I will take it one step further. A church that will not recognize the King James Bible as God's Word and use another Bible that God never put in print will never be a New Testament-based, Bible-believing church according to the Scriptures. Revelation chapter 3, verses 14 through 22 talks about that church that has put Christ on the outside of the church and He is knocking on the door trying to get back in. It is the difference between the church of the open door and the church of the closed door.

Now, I have been criticized all my life for my stand against higher education when it comes to the Bible, when it comes to Bible colleges, when it comes to seminaries and schools of divinity. I might add that that criticism of me is a true criticism. I wear it as a combat badge of honor because I understand, going on the record, I understand that there is absolutely no justification for any organization outside the New Testament local church when it comes to training young men and young ladies with the Word of God. The fact that the church has abdicated that and gave it over to the world is not my problem. The Bible is still the Word of God.

The two greatest tricks that they have ever pulled on 20th and 21st century Christianity were:

6. To get people to believe that the body of Christ, the priesthood, the true priesthood, did not have full custodianship of the Word of God. Back in the Old Testament, when it came to the Old Testament Scriptures, there was one group of people that had custodianship of the Bible. It was the Levites, the priestly tribe. In the New Testament, there is one body that has custodianship of the Word of God, and that will be the priesthood of Jesus Christ, the eternal priesthood, the church, the body of Christ, you and me. God never gave it to a Bible college. He never gave it to anybody outside the local church. Never did.
7. The fact that the local church, somewhere along the line, ceased to be the structure by which God was going to teach you the Bible and prepare you for the ministry.

I know where it comes in history. I do not have time to get into it this morning. When you go back to the evangelical movement and the neo-orthodox movement back at the turn of the century, around 1900, when we began to move into the 20th century, they took away the common Bible out of the common man. What you have here is so unique because what God is building here is men and women, just ordinary men and women. Common men with the common Bible. You are the most powerful force in the universe. You are the most powerful force anywhere in the world because the deadliest force in Christianity will just be people just like you who believe a book that God gave you. I will tell you something, the devil wants to take it from you. He does.

The first Bible college in the Bible is found in Acts chapter 19. It is a school there that goes against Paul and they are teaching against the things of God. I totally understand. I have had people that went to Bible college, or they get this idea that their college is the greatest college on the planet, and that they take offense to things that I say like this. Hey, I get it. I understand. I totally understand why somebody who spent four or five years of their life going to a Bible college or a seminary, spending what, \$50,000, \$60,000? I know how hard it is to admit that you have been suckered. I know how pride gets in the way when you have to admit you have been ripped off, scammed, hoodwinked, bought some swamp land in Florida.

I have had people that went to Liberty Bible College down there where Jerry Falwell started it years ago and thought that was the greatest school to learn the Bible in the world. Worst place you could go. You can go to Cedarville, out in Ohio. Worst place you could go. Right up the road here we got Calvary Bible College. They know nothing about Calvary. You go to Chicago and go to Moody Bible Institute. Ridiculously stupid. Tennessee Temple. Bob Jones University. You have got to be kidding me. You name it. BBC down in Springfield. A waste of time.

I mean, you spent three or four years of your life and \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000, and now I have kids in a high school class who know more Bible than you do. When Logan stood up here and laid that out to you, that was as good as it gets. We have high school kids, college kids that know more Bible being here just coming up through our program and our Bible studies. Most of you, I say it all the time, I would put most of you up against any of those people. They spent all that time, do not know anything about the Bible. I get it. It is embarrassing. I understand. You bought into a system. You bought into a system that somebody told you was the way to learn the Bible. Believe me, they only exist for one reason, and that is that they are going to take the Bible from you.

I get it. It has got to be embarrassing. I mean, we are going on the record today. I understand. I mean, how stupid are you? I do not mean that in a bad way. That is a good question. Think about it. Why would you pay \$40,000 or \$50,000 to learn a book that God gave you freely? What is wrong with us?

Matthew 10:8

Freely ye have received, freely give.

Who in the world are you to charge somebody \$40,000, \$50,000 to teach them a Bible that God gave you free? And how stupid are you to pay it? You should not use the word stupid. It is not a good word. I know it is not a good word, and I do not like to use it. You know when I will stop using it? Quit being stupid. I mean, a brain with gunpowder, you would not have enough to blow your nose. Do not get mad. If you are listening to this, do not get mad. Think it through. Give me book, chapter, verse for why you did what you did.

A lot of kids go to Bible college because mom and dad want them to go because they have been brainwashed in the idea that that is what you do to learn the Bible. You know what the biggest joke is among preachers in this country today? The biggest joke that they laugh about is Bible colleges, and yet they will send their kids there all the time because that is what you are

supposed to do. We have bought into it that the church is not the format for higher education when it comes to the Bible. We think that us deluded pastors can only take you so far. Well, pal, show up on Thursday night, and I will show you how far I will take you.

Let me tell you something. The body of Christ is everything you need to be everything God wants you to be when it is done right. I cannot apologize for the idiots out there that do not understand that. Most pastors do not want to pastor. They want to get a paycheck. They want to do as little as possible. I mean, let me tell you something. When the weather forecast comes on on a Wednesday, Tuesday, when they are saying that Wednesday it might snow, Sunday it might snow, they are already canceling their church services. They want that night off. They might as well. They do not give their people anything anyhow. It is on the website. You will get something there. But I am telling you, when you get back to the Bible, you do not have a leg to stand on.

I had a kid years ago that was going to Bible College, and he got kicked out, and he was a nice kid, and he came by the church, our church back then, and he wanted to talk to a pastor. Well, I was the only one there, so they asked me if I would talk to this kid, and I said, "Sure." He came in, and I said, "What is the matter, son?" He said, "Well, I just need to talk to the pastor to get some advice." I said, "Okay." He said, "I just got kicked out of Calvary Bible College." I said, "What for?" He said, "Well, they accused me of looking in the girls' dorm windows." I knew that was not true because he was too short, just a little guy. He says, "I did not do it." He says, "They would not let me tell my side of the story." He said, "The Bible says that you have to be brought before the witnesses," and he went through all of these things the Bible says have to be done. He says, "I am really upset that it was not done." I said, "Well, I do not mean to upset you any further, but it does not have to be done. Those things were given to a church. That is not a church. They do not have to follow the same lines a church does. They can do whatever they want to do. They are not a church. They have never been ordained by God for anything. They were an idea in man's mind that you are going to take the true church, you and the Holy Spirit of God and the Word of God, and lift it out of here and put it in some institution of higher learning, and you are going to get more Bible."

He did not understand that. I mean, you have learned a set of terms. Really. On Thursday night, somebody will ask the question, "Hey, what about Adam and Eve and the sin of man, and what about the depravity of man?" And we will talk about it. But if we were in Bible college, we would call that anthropology. A \$25 word. Somebody says, "I want to talk about salvation." In Bible college, we talk about soteriology. To me, it is God's simple plan of salvation, but to them, it is soteriology. We are talking about the church. I am teaching about the church. But if we were in Bible college, this would be a class on ecclesiology. Are you not impressed?

You see, if I talk right now, when you leave here, if I stood back there and said, "Pay me for what I said," I would get 25 cents. I could not buy a Burger King burger. But if I used these big words, you would think you were getting something. The lunch pockets would be full. We talk about the Holy Spirit. In the annals of higher education, it is pneumatology. We talk about Christ, Jesus Christ. In the annals of higher learning, it is Christology. I talk about how to teach you the Bible. In the upper levels of understanding of knowledge, it is hermeneutics. When a guy does it, it is more like hemorrhoid-nudics, but it is the same. I talk about the practical application. That is

practical theology. You say, "Wow, are you not impressed?" See, this is where you are stupid. You gave up four or five years of your life, spent \$30,000 or \$40,000 to learn to talk like nobody in the Bible ever talked. You bought into a system of terms. Now you are going to go out and reach the world, and you are going to learn to talk like Paul did not talk that way, Jesus did not talk that way, Barnabas did not talk that way, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did not talk that way, Aquila and Priscilla did not talk that way. Nobody down through the Bible ever used those words, and now you think you found it. I mean, nobody.

Listen, God's structure and God's program is a New Testament local church. I cannot be responsible that 99.9% of them do not follow through and do what they are supposed to do and have abdicated themselves over to the higher realm of education. That is not my deal. I am telling you this for the New Testament Christian in this church age, it will be a New Testament Bible-believing church who follows the model and the patterns, who takes you just like they did at the church of Antioch and builds into you what God wants you to have. A New Testament church that understands the concept of ministering to the Lord that will teach you that aspect. Paul and John, they talked about the same thing. They are on the same page as we are.

Acts 4:13

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

They are up against the greatest minds of the day, and the Bible says they are hearing Peter and John speak, and they are perceiving. They are perceiving that, "Boy, they never been where we went to school. They never got a degree. They never been to Bible college. They do not have any of the wisdom and the knowledge that we got. We perceive them as unlearned and ignorant men," but they saw the boldness. You know what it came down to that gave them that boldness? It was not the fact that they had been learned or they were not even ignorant. He says they marveled. Why? And they took knowledge of them. Why? Because they had been with Jesus. Let me tell you something. If God and the Holy Spirit and the Word of God cannot teach you everything He wants you to know, you are wasting your time anyplace else. It is just that simple.

Paul himself, in Philippians chapter 3, verse 8, Paul was one of the most educated men that ever lived. He had been schooled in the Old Testament by one of the greatest Old Testament theologians that the world ever saw. He understood every aspect of it. He was a doctor of the law. He knew everything about the Old Testament, and that is why God picked him because God had to have somebody who understood where the Jews were coming from that he could better put in perspective where the Gentiles were coming from, and he picked a man that was probably the most educated man of his day. And when Paul was faced with it in Philippians, you know what he said?

Philippians 3:8

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ;

He said, "All that I have learned, all that I have gotten from man about the Bible and God is dumb compared to what God gave me." That is just that simple. I do not know how people miss that.

V. The Pattern of the Church

Today we are going to take and begin to look at the second aspect of understanding the church. That will be the pattern that will be found in the Bible. I wanted you to turn to Hebrews chapter 8. Let us look at verse 5.

Hebrews 8:5

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

Now that is for you and for me. We serve every day of our life under a shadow of things that God made that will teach us things that we do not understand.

Romans 1:20

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

God uses patterns. God uses models. Patterns in the Bible will be the key to everything. Models in the Bible will be the key to everything. As I said last week, my goal here is to go on the record with all of this to leave a legacy of truth. I want men and women in this church, your kids growing up in this church, the people out there—I do not know if you follow the website or not, but on every sermon, no matter who preaches it, we are getting 200 or 300 hits throughout the week. I get a phone call or a text or I get an email almost weekly from multiple people who are following that. I am telling you, I mean, I want to leave a legacy. I do not want what happened with my father and the Lord and the men around there that never left a legacy of the great things that they learned from God, especially in the day and age that we live in.

VI. The Origin and Nature of the Church

Now let us talk about the church. I want you to know first of all, and I think all of this is important, I want you to know when the church started. The church age runs approximately 2,000 years. It starts in Acts chapter 20 with Paul there at the church at Ephesus and it comes up and runs up to the rapture of the church, approximately 2,000 years, however you are going to figure it.

Now I want to talk to you about when officially the church started. I think this is important. You have got people running around, they call themselves Baptist writers. They call themselves Baptist writers because they think as Baptists they are the only bride of Christ, and they think that the Baptist church started with John the Baptist. Now that sounds logical, John the Baptist,

so I am a Baptist, so it probably started with him. It sounds really good until you get a Bible. Then you find out that John the Baptist, he came to baptize to manifest Christ to Israel. He had nothing to do with the church, not a thing. So that does not work. Then you have got all kinds of people that believe all kinds of stuff.

I want to give you some really good practical stuff about the Bible that will help you in many, many areas of studying the Bible. First of all, in understanding where the church started, let me say this: whenever He does something major, God will always do it through a transition. God will never stop something on Monday and start it on Tuesday. He always will put a transition through it. When you look at the nation of Israel from going to Abraham to Israel, Abraham is the father of the Jews, you study that as a transition there. He brings him through.

I do not know if you know it or not, but you have got a King James Bible sitting in your lap today probably. There was a transition of those Bibles. There are seven English translations that start back there with Wycliffe in 1392 that comes all the way up to your King James Bible in 1611. The Bible went through transitions. It did not go through revisions, it went through editions, but they were transitioned until God got the final form. Why? Because God does everything through transition. He just does.

You will see that when He transitions from the Old Testament to the New Testament, He transitions from the Jew to the Gentile. He transitions from the law to grace. That is why the book of Acts is such a tough book. The book of Acts is one of the three transitional books in your Bible. You have three books in your Bible that are transitional books: Matthew, Acts, and Hebrews. Every heresy, every heresy a person gets into today, whether it is a saved heresy or a lost heresy—one that you can go to heaven with but just be screwed up in the Bible, or one that sends you to hell—every heresy on this planet will come out of one of those three books. You know why? Those are very important books. Those books are transitional books. You better know what you are doing when you get into Matthew. You better know what you are doing when you get into Acts. You better know what you are doing when you get into Hebrews.

Your Christian life is a transition. I have showed you before. You go through seven stages of spiritual growth. You start as a baby, you wind up as the aged. You go through seven stages in your growth process spiritually. That is a transition. Right now, where Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John transitioned us into the New Testament, we are transitioning out of the New Testament into the Tribulation period. We are also in a transition period. We are on our way out. That is why I tell you, this is the most exciting time that you are living. You are transitioning right now out. In God's mind, probably, I would say that the times of the Gentiles are over. He is just doing what He has got to do, but His full attention is on the Middle East and the Nation of Israel, and we are transitioning out of this place. God has got a plan. Everything God will do, He will do in a transition.

Okay, let us see how the church came into being. It was not, as I said, just one day, and then it started the next. First of all, the church in Ephesians 5:32 is called a mystery. There are seven mysteries in the Bible. Sometime you need to learn them. In our institute, we will teach them to

you probably next year, maybe the year after. But there are seven mysteries. One of them is the church.

In Romans 16:25, you are told that the mystery of the church was kept secret from the foundation of the world. God never told anybody about it. God never told anybody anywhere in the Old Testament anything about a church age. He kept it as a mystery. He kept it to Himself. He never laid it out to anybody until Paul showed up because God wanted it, was doing some things. Sometimes God will do things, and He has got one thing going here. He has got something else going here, and He is waiting to see what somebody will do before He decides which way He is going to go over here. That is the church.

So, here are the four stages of the church:

8. The church was called out in Matthew chapter 10. It is called out when He calls out the 12 apostles. You are told over there in Ephesians that they are the foundation of the church. Nobody knew it yet, but they were.
9. It goes into effect in Matthew chapter 28 at the death of Christ because Hebrews 9:16 says that the testament cannot come into full view or full working property until the death of the testator. So, even though they were called out in Matthew chapter 10, the church did not go into effect until the death of the testator, Christ.
10. It did get in power in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost. See how it works?
11. Even though it was called out in Matthew chapter 10 and it went into effect in Matthew chapter 28 and got empowered in Acts chapter 2, it did not get revealed until Paul comes on the scene in Acts chapter 13.

See that transition? That is what God does. God transitioned the church in, and now He is transitioning the church out, and you are part of it right now. You see it so clearly when you understand the breakdown of the book of Acts and what He is doing in those transitional books.

Along with that, you need to know this: in the Bible and down through history, there have been from Genesis to Revelation seven different churches in effect. Now this is a killer. This is totally unheard of today, absolutely unheard of. Everybody thinks that the church is us, and it is. But I have got news for you, nothing like a Bible to clear up your seminary education. When you get into the Bible and you understand what a church is, the word church means "called out." The word for it is *ekklesia*, which means "called out." That is a \$25 word that means "called out." You are separated from the world. You are set apart with a commission. A church has a mandate from God, okay?

You go down through the Bible, you will find six people circumstances that fit that description. They are called out, they are set apart, God gives them the commission. Technically, under the Bible, they are a church.

12. The first one is Adam and Eve. They are called out, they are given a commission in Genesis 1:28. He said, "Be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth." He gave Adam and Eve complete dominion over everything. He separated them out, made them different from the

animals, made them different from everything that He created, and then He gave them a commission. They are called out. That is your first church.

13. The second one was Noah. Noah steps off that ark, he inherits the whole world, and he is given a commission in Genesis 9:1. "Be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth." He is called out, he is separate. He preached for 120 years against the ungodliness of the earth, and when he steps off that ark, he is called out.
14. The third one was Abraham. He is called out of Ur of the Chaldees in Genesis chapter 12, and in Genesis 15:15 he gets his commission. God took him up there and said, "Someday your seed is going to be like the stars of heaven, and I am going to multiply your seed like the sands of the sea." He is called out.
15. The fourth one is the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel was called out in Exodus chapter 12. Just so you would not miss it, in Acts 7:38, when Stephen is preaching it, you know what he calls the nation of Israel in Acts 7:38? The church in the wilderness. There you go. They are a church.
16. The fifth one will be the apostles in Matthew chapter 10. They are called out with a commission. They have a mandate. They are to separate themselves and go to the lost sheep of Israel.
17. The sixth one is you and me. That will be the New Testament church, the body of Christ that is called out with a commission. Acts chapter 11, 12, and 13 in the book of Ephesians. You and I have a commission. The commission is to reproduce ourselves, to bring back the fallen image of Adam and restore it into man.
18. The seventh one will be the churches in the Tribulation period. Revelation chapter 2 and 3. They are called out with a commission. That commission is found in Revelation 7 and Revelation chapter 14.

Seven groups called out with a commission from God. Each one, based on the Bible definition of a church, falls into that category: a called out group. A church called out. You see, we get so hung up on terms that we forget what the Bible teaches. It is not about what the Bible teaches or what the name church means, or we have a church or we are in a church age. You go into your Bible and find out what a church is, you will find there have been seven of them.

Now our church, which runs as I said, Acts chapter 20 to the rapture of the church, our church is unique from all the other ones. Our church is the only church that is in the kingdom of God. All the other ones, except the Tribulation church, are in the kingdom of heaven. One of the Tribulation ones is not in any kingdom, that is the end I am questioning. But our church, this church, our church, our church age is in the kingdom of God. This church is the only church that is made up of men and women who get into a spiritual body by a new birth that makes them a son of God. Nobody else does. Nobody else is. There is nobody else born again in the Old Testament. There is nobody born again in the Tribulation period. The only group of people that are born again is the body of Christ right now, and that is why the Bible says we are called out to finish the work that God started with His Son.

So we are born again and become a son of God as 1 John chapter 3, verses 1 and 2 says:

1 John 3:1-2

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

See? Now, now are you a son of God. But it doth not yet appear what you shall be. You are a beautiful woman, but you are an ugly man. See? That is what He is saying because what is born again of you right now is on the inside, not the outside. This outside is your flesh. It is well in the side, it is well with no good thing. You could not do one thing for God in this flesh. God had to give you the fallen nature of Adam restored through Christ through a new birth, and now you are a spiritual being in a spiritual church that is Christ's body, and you are the only one. You are the only one. Moses will never have it, Elijah will never have it, Joshua will never have it, Tribulation saints will never have it. Nobody will ever have it other than the church age. So there may be seven distinct churches as the Bible defines them, but there is only one that is empowered with the Holy Spirit of God in the church age. That is you and me. You need to know that.

John 1:12-13

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

All the Old Testament saints and the Tribulation saints were born of blood, they were born of flesh, and they were born of the will of man. You are not. When you got your new birth, you are born of God. You are spiritual, and you are in a spiritual body. So God calls us as a church to be a spiritual body called the Body of Christ, and we now are a local assembly made up of men and women who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior. Where the other of the seven will be found in the Kingdom of Heaven, like I said, other than the Tribulation one, we, they will never be born again.

Now I realize that scholarship teaches just the reverse. They will teach you that the sons of God in Genesis chapter 6 were born again believers. They will teach you when the Bible says they do not believe in the giant. They do not believe in the fallen giant. They believe when it says that the sons of God come down and marry women. It is saved people marrying unsaved people. In other words, they will teach you in scholarship, they will teach you that in the Old Testament in Genesis 6, people were getting saved just like you are. But you will know that heresy always has a way of tripping itself up over the Bible.

I asked a guy one time, "Well, those were saved people back there. Those were sons of God just like us, and they were married to unsaved women, but there were sons of God back there." I said, "Great, why did not they get on the ark? What happened? Did they go to a Joel Osteen concert in Missouri? Rain too heavy, could not get there?" If there are all these sons of God back, you see how stupid you are when you reject the Bible and you try to make up the Bible on your own?

Anybody who halfway knows the Bible will cut your legs out from under you so fast you are unbelievable.

VII. The Church's Commission and Autonomy

We have a commission. Again, every Baptist church out there in a place will tell you that the Great Commission for the church is Matthew 28. Matthew 28 is not the commission for the church. If you could read your Bibles and go back to Psalms 91, 92, 93, 94 all the way through there, you would find out that that is a millennial commission given to the nation of Israel. The commission for the church is the model church at Antioch in Acts chapter 20. I will show it to you here in a little bit. But that is where we are at today. Our job is to reproduce ourselves spiritually as sons of God through a spiritual new birth. Matthew chapter 28 is a millennial commission given to Israel. It is two nations. I am not called to nations, I am called to individuals. When you look at Psalms 96, 57, 66, 72, 82, 108, it is clear what you have in Matthew chapter 20.

Our church, as any church should be, but our church will be. Our church will always be and form the base camp for all spiritual operations and ministries that we undertake. It has to start right here with us. We will train our people, we will grow up our people, and in time we will send our people out to the various places that God sends us—Wichita, Lincoln, Washington State—based on the model of Acts chapter 11, 12, and 13.

We do not believe, we are not part of any Baptist fellowship. I know many churches are. I have got good friends that swear by, "Oh, you know what, I went to this Bible college and we go down there where our church is a fellowship, a loose fellowship with those pastors." Let me tell you something, you know why most pastors fellowship with other pastors and other fellowships? That is because they have got nothing going on with their own people. I do not have time to fellowship with somebody that I am going to sit around and listen to him gripe about why his church is not growing. I am having too much fun talking with you about why this one is. I have too much fun dealing with you in the Bible and sitting down there and listening to some pious gasbag get up and talk about what is going on and what he is not doing. We do not belong to those. We operate solely in the New Testament principles.

Most people do not understand, you hear the term the independent movement or an independent Baptist church. Let me tell you what that means. Back in the 1920s and the 30s, the Southern Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Church in the convention was the main Baptist stay in America. You had the American Baptist which was smaller. You had the GRB which was a little bit bigger, but the Southern Baptist ruled, there was no independent Baptist. What happened was that J. Frank Norris, we talked about this before, he was their fair-haired boy, but he did not put up with all of the goofy stuff that was going on in the Southern Baptist Church. If you are a Southern Baptist today, and I know many of them do not adhere to this, but if you are a Southern Baptist church today, they tell you what to preach. If you are a Sunday school teacher, you do not have a right to do your own lesson. They will send you the lessons. Now not everybody follows them, but you are supposed to. They basically have control over you. If you need a pastor, they

will send you one. Most Southern Baptist churches, many of them are owned by the Southern Baptist Convention. That is so they can never become anything else.

When J. Frank Norris left the Southern Baptist Convention, he started the independent movement. Originally the independent movement was that we were independent of anybody telling us what to do. But what happened over the years with the independent Baptists is they got so independent, they got independent of God. I have people all the time say, "Are you an independent Baptist church?" And I say, "No, I am a dependent Baptist church. I am dependent on God and the Word of God and everything that we do." See, that term has lost its power, its punch. But you need to know where it came from. You need to know how it started.

I am independent of all of those things out there. This church stands on its own. It has its own leadership. It has its own structure. It has its own governing body. It has everything that we need. We do not need any, I do not say we are not friends with other people. We do not do things with them. They can come over, we will do all things together, fine. But at the end of the day, we stand on our own through the Word of God.

The word "self" is usually not a good word in Christianity, because it always gets tied to somebody, all about themselves or selfish. But in a good Bible sense, every New Testament church should be five things about self. Every Baptist church should be:

19. Self-sufficient. You should not look outside what God has given you to take care of what you need. You should be self-sufficient. That is not only about the offerings and money, but that is about the Bible and your training and your teaching. You ought to have everything that you need right here to be every word that God wants you to be.
20. Self-motivating. Now, I am not against this, and I am not saying I would not do it from time to time. I have got a couple of guys in mind that I would like to have come and preach here. But a lot of churches, they will just have guys come in that are motivational preachers just to motivate the people. Let me tell you something. It is my job to motivate you. And if you think I cannot light a fire under you, you are talking to the wrong guy. I know you. I know what you are made of. I know where you are at. I know what you are thinking. And I know what your struggles are. And let me tell you, you cannot pay a guy to come in and light a fire under somebody who does not know the people. Everyone goes back to us being motivated together. It goes back to a common cause, not some guy that is running a circuit. Every pastor ought to be able to motivate his people. He motivates them through leadership. He motivates them through his own motivation. Why would you ever get excited about studying the Bible if I am not excited about studying the Bible? Why would you ever want to get into ministry if I am not excited about getting into ministry? That is the key. Getting some hired hand in to do it for you will never work.
21. Self-propagating. It needs to grow from within. It needs to grow because you people are the ones who bring people in. I have told you this many, many times, for the first four or five years we had a church, we did not have a sign because I told people that you are the sign. Many of you came here because somebody else brought you here. You came here and you said to yourself, "Whoa, this is what I need." Or you came here and said, "Once is enough." I

get it. I am hard to take sometimes. Once a meeting is enough, I get it. You have got to have some kind of mental deficiency to be around here for any length of time. I get it.

22. Self-cleaning. When you do your job with the Bible, you are going to keep the Jack Lucases, and the Jackies are going to go. You are going to keep the men. You are going to keep the ones who want to do it, and the ones that cannot cut it. It is okay. It is all right. A church needs to be self-sufficient, self-motivating, self-propagating, but it needs to be self-cleaning. And you do that by just preaching the Bible.
23. Self-governing. We have everything we need right here. We have our deacons. We have our finance committee. We have the people who know the Bible as good or better than I do, who handle situations and things. We do not need anybody but God and the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God.

These are all things that you need to understand about the intro of understanding the pattern of a church. Each New Testament Bible Church needs to be autonomous, unto itself, within its own structure based on a pastor. They will stand alone on the principles of the Word of God and the men and women that are in it. The church within it only has two offices. It has the pastor, who in the Bible is sometimes called a bishop (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy), and the deacons (Acts 6). Those are the only two offices that they have. There are no women preachers. There are no women deacons. The Bible is very clear on how the process goes. If you get a church that has women preachers or has women deacons in it, there is somebody that completely steps outside the realm of the Bible, and they are just doing what they want to do. I do not care. None of my business. But you are not a New Testament local church. Each church within itself has all that it needs to win people, to train people, to send them out, to do the job that God has called us to do.

VIII. The Church's Mandate from Acts 20

Look over at Acts chapter 20. I want to show you our commission. Now we know from Acts chapter 12 and 13, we know how this thing plays itself out. We see the church in its pattern. Now let me show you the church's mandate.

In Acts chapter 20, and by the way, I have told you this before. When you break down the book of Acts, fundamentally here is how you break it down. You draw two lines in the book of Acts. The first line you draw is after Acts chapter 7. The second line you draw is at Acts chapter 20, after Acts chapter 19. The book of Acts will divide itself up. Acts chapter 1 through 7, split. Acts chapter 8 through 19, split. Acts chapter 20, split. Acts chapter 21 to 28, there is your third section. It is so simple. If you study the book of Acts and break it down in that section and understand each section, you will get the book of Acts.

What I am saying is this, in Acts chapter 20, when you start the end of the second section, you are starting church history. You look at our chart over there, the seven periods of church history, the first one is Ephesus. In Acts chapter 20, guess where Paul is at? He is at Ephesus. Fundamentally, the book of Acts for you and for me as church ends in Acts chapter 20. All you have in 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 is Paul going down to Jerusalem and being in jail. But church history and the book of Acts as far as what God is doing ends in Acts chapter 20, and it also picks up in Acts chapter 20 with the church at Ephesus.

Paul is getting ready to go down to Jerusalem. He meets with the elders here, and he preaches to them. He lays out for them some great principles. He gives them six things that make up the commission for the church. Six things that he tells this church. This is the last thing that Paul says to a New Testament local church, which becomes the first church in church history. The last message he preaches to anybody about a church is the first church that starts church history, the church at Ephesus. It is a very moving chapter, I want to tell you. It is basically Paul's farewell message. Most of these people know that Paul is making a big mistake. He is going down to Jerusalem. He has been told several times by God Himself not to go. That is one of those things where his burden for the nation of Israel outweighs his common sense, and he goes, and he basically ends his ministry at that point, and then he dies down in a Roman prison. So it is a very, putting it in the right context, it is a very emotional farewell. At the end down there they are weeping, they are crying, they are hugging on him. They know they are never going to see him again. And they know what he meant to their church. He knew the impact and the influence. But before he leaves for Jerusalem, in his farewell message, he leaves this church a pattern of six things that they are to do to get the job done, and here forms our commission.

I am not going to read the whole chapter, but I am going to give you the verses, and I am going to tell you what each one is, and you need to mark them in your Bible.

24. Acts 20:19

Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

He is saying, "You know what, you do not lord over people." You realize that as a church they are there to serve people. You have people in your church, in this church and every church, who are struggling, they are hurting. You have people who are struggling with everything. Sometimes they are struggling because of their own stupidity. Sometimes they are struggling because of nothing that they did wrong. It does not matter. As long as they are coming to church and as long as they are trying to do what is right, you never judge them for it, you just try to help them. You keep the humility in what you are doing of your mind, the mind of a servant. You keep that thing going where you are not here to judge somebody unless they are just blatantly out causing a problem. It does not matter what they have done or where they are at. Sure, do not you think they know they have screwed up? Do not you think they know they made a mistake? Absolutely, they have got to live with it every day. The humility of the mind of a church is to take people who are hurting and broken. In most churches today, we are not interested in the hurt and the broken. We are only interested in the rich, what they can do for this church. I have never met a church that was ever built of any substance with rich people. I bet I have not met a lot of churches that built with substance for broken people. Jacob never became the man of God that he wanted God to be until God broke him. You know what? He limped the rest of his life. Every day he began to walk, he had to limp, he had to remember the day that he fought against God's will and God won, which brings up the things in my ministry. You know what? Never trust a man or a woman who does not limp. There are certain things that will come into our lives that are bad things at the time we go through, but they will make you in time. But the church has to have the humility of mind to see that.

25. Acts 20:20

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

He says, "I did not hold anything back that was profitable for you." This church exists for one thing, for you to profit by it. I am going to give you what you need to grow. I will not always give you what you want, but I will give you what you need to grow. I will give you what you need to profit. You know what? We all got messed up in our lives. You know why? Because we thought there was profit in something that we got into that was not much profit in. And sometimes we have got to show those shares off and invest in some other things. But a church should be for one thing, it should be for your profit. You should leave here better this morning than when you came in this morning. You show up on Thursday night, you should leave better when you leave than when you came in. You sit down with discipleship or counseling or with somebody in this church. When you are done, you ought to be better off and more profitable than when you started it. That is what a church does.

26. Acts 20:21

Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is evangelism, reaching people, finding a way to penetrate our culture, finding a way to reach people where they are at. I think the greatest enigma and stigma to Baptist churches is that church over there in Kansas, wherever it is that always pickets in everybody's grave, Westboro United, crazy church, Baptist, whatever. Now you know the saddest thing about it is, most of the things that they picket for are true. Homosexuality is wrong. Unfortunately, many of the soldiers that fight over there in the wars, go to hell because they are probably not saved. They are not wrong in a lot of things they stand for. They are just terribly wrong in how they go about presenting it. It is a clear case of letting your good be evil spoken of. I would not associate with them. I would not even tell them they are right. I think that they are so far out of touch with the reality that they will never win anybody to Christ. You know, everybody in that church is related to somebody else. They are just a big family. They do not ever get anybody saved. You know what? They will never penetrate their culture.

You see, it is one thing to have the truth. It is something else to have the grace to handle that truth. They may have the truth, but they do not have any ounce of grace. Then I find a lot of churches that have grace, but they have no truth. You have got to have a balance of grace and truth. You have got to have the truth, but you have got to have the grace to use it to reach where people are. I have told people all my life, you know, most pastors, they will put themselves up at the top of the stairs and look down here at all the people at the bottom rung or the stairs, and they will just scream and yell at them to get up where they are at, you know, "Get up here. Put that stuff away. Get rid of that. Get rid of that. Quit this. Quit that. Get up here with the rest of us spiritual folks." Let me tell you something. A real pastor does not stand at the top of the stairs and yell at the people down there. A real pastor goes down those stairs, puts his arm around, and walks him up one step at a time.

Colossians 4:3

Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

That ought to be your prayer every morning when you go to work for God to give you a door of utterance. I have told you before out of Acts chapter 8 where you have the story of the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip, the great evangelist, that God has a prepared sinner and a prepared servant. He was preparing them in two different parts of the world. But at the right time, the Holy Spirit of God brought them together. Right now, God is preparing out there somebody who was lost without hope, who needs the story of Christ, and He is counting on you to prepare yourself so the Holy Spirit of God can put you two together. Evangelism.

27. Acts 20:24

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

This is steadfastness. A church, there are some things it needs to stand for. There are some things that a church needs to be steadfast on. There are some things that you as a child of God need to be steadfast on. I put up with a lot of things in Christianity, a lot of things with people. I have got more patience probably with people than I should have. But I will tell you one thing about people that drives me crazy: Christians. What do they worship? You cannot stand for anything. Every time the 155 starts coming in, or the artillery starts coming in, you put your chair between your legs or so forth down in a foxhole, you are halfway to China. Pathways. Steadfastness. There are some things that you need to stand for. It may cost you your friends, it may cost you relationships. It may cost you your job, it may cost you a price. But if Christianity and things in it that are true are not worth standing for, then none of it is any good. And we are willing to get saved, we are willing to come to church, but we are not willing to stand, to be steadfast. This church will be steadfast. It will be steadfast. You say, "Well, I do not like everything you stand for." I do not really care. As long as God is happy with it, I do not really care whether you are happy or not. One word, steadfast. If you think it is wrong, come on Thursday night, I will give you 45 minutes. No, I will give you 50 minutes, it is going to only take me 10 to finish you off. Steadfast. If you think it is wrong, come on Thursday night, I will give you 45 minutes. No, I will give you 50 minutes, it is going to only take me 10 to finish you off. Steadfast.

28. Acts 20:27

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

You need to get all the Bible. I do not want to teach you what you want to hear. I do not want to teach you things that make you my friend and never be mad at me. I do not want to teach you things that you might leave if I say it. I will be honest with you. I sit back there, and I mean, I am human, but only for a short time. Well, I am human all the time, I did not mean it that way. I sit back there sometimes to come in here, and somebody will say, "We have got nine or 10 visitors today." And I will look at them and size them up, and I am glad they are here. But I know that some of the things I have got to say this morning, you have got to be careful with some of that

stuff because maybe they do not, maybe they are not ready for that yet. So I sit back there and I brood for about five or six seconds. And I say to myself, "I have got all these people out here that came to hear the truth. Now I have got four or five people here that are visitors. I know some of the things I am saying, they probably have not heard, and I do not want to really make them upset or mad." So what am I going to do? You know what I am going to do? I am going to preach the whole counsel of God. That is what I am going to do. Because I have learned over the years that sometimes maybe that is why I got them here, they brought them here to hear what they have got to hear. I will tell you something else. Some of you, you did not get right with God or turn your life around until you got mad about what I said first. Okay? I am not here to be your best friend, though I am your best friend. I am here to preach to you the truth. I am here to give you all the counsel of God, not what you just want to hear, not what fits in what you want to do. The Bible is the Bible. It lays itself out for everything we have to do. My job is to put it out there to you.

29. Acts 20:28-31

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

You see, when you are a leader, you are an overseer. You take the oversight of the people that are younger than you spiritually. You oversee what goes on. Make sure it takes care of it and gets done the way it should. You feed the church. You give them what they need. You realize, and the reason why you are an overseer, that grievous wolves will come in. And they will not spare the flock. And then he tells you in verse 29 and 30 that some of them are within the church already. That is going to cause your problems, and some are without the church are going to try to come in. To draw away disciples after themselves. And he says, "For three years, I told you to watch and I warned you. To watch and I warned you to watch, watch." If there is anything that needs to be watched over by God's people who love the book, it is God's people within the church. And most of God's people, they are too busy doing their own thing. We have a responsibility not only to the Word of God, we have a responsibility not only to do the ministry of God, but I want to tell you something. We have a responsibility to each other. And our responsibility is to take care of each other. And it is a situation where that is the key.

Now all of this is only the beginning of understanding the pattern. This is the beginning of the inner understanding of the structure of the church. Next week, we are going to go inside. I am going to show you another pattern. I am going to show you several patterns of how this thing works, how it goes together, how it all pulls together, and how that at the end of the day, the model and the pattern give us exactly an understanding. So if any of you young men or young

ladies ever marry a guy who is in the ministry or goes in to be a pastor, you will have this material on the record that you will understand it.