

I. Opening Remarks and Gratitude

The young lady I spilled orange juice on yesterday, is she in here? Come on, don't be embarrassed. Is she out there? Did she quit coming because I spilled orange juice on her? Is she not here? Okay, I'm not going to apologize then. We'll just move right on. I was going to say, "I'm sorry." Where is she? Raise your hand so I know who you are. She's still way back there. I'm sorry I spilled my orange juice on you, because then I didn't have any to drink after I spilled it. But I could see the look on my daughter's face; she said, "Oh, brother!" She got up and went and got something to clean you up with. So, I'm sorry. I needed to say that.

Then I needed to say something else, and I hope I can. I wrote a letter to Bob a while ago. In that letter, I asked him to thank you for all the notes and cards and stuff. Then I watched on YouTube while he said, "I heard from Jim, like he's doing okay." So he didn't even say anything. I didn't really care about him; I was writing it to you guys. So, I want to thank you for all the cards and notes and letters that you sent me when Kathy passed away. It was a blessing to me. She was the note writer, not me, so I didn't send anybody back notes to thank anybody.

It was amazing. We asked for people not to send flowers, but to give money to either Matt's church or the church up in Vermont that my other son is pastoring now. There's over \$4,000 sent to missions in memory of her. So I thank the Lord for that. I thank you for your prayers.

I've been joking about this. Probably about six months or maybe a year before Kathy really got sick, we had to stop going to church. So I stayed home with her and took care of her, and we would watch you guys. I'd watch my son-in-law, and my other son-in-law is on Facebook, but I don't know how to get on Facebook, so I never watched them. It's been almost two years since I preached. So I told Danny when he called me, "I'm just going to tell you, here's how it goes: it's either going to be four minutes or four hours." Bob told me I had to be done by 12:30. That's only an hour and 10 minutes. So you guys may be, I may still be here when you go wherever you're going, or we may be out of here in the next five minutes. I don't know. We'll see.

This is an exciting time. I am so honored to be asked to come and preach at this occasion of your 19th anniversary. It is, and to be able to do it in this building. Amen. This is a miracle of God. When I watch on YouTube, I never get to see you guys; all I see is Bob or Danny. I think two weeks ago, it panned out, and I got to see what the auditorium looked like a little bit, and I said, "Hey, that looks pretty good." When I got here, it looks really good. So I am just thrilled for you that you have this building. I know what it's like.

Bible Baptist Church in Vermont will celebrate 42 years there. I'm going to go up hopefully for the anniversary service. Hopefully, they'll let me back in. Bob's right; I was there for 39 years. Kathy and I, Becky was, Becky's here. She's on the second row. She was three weeks old when we moved to Vermont and started that church. I'd tell you how long we were there, but then she'll get mad because you know how old she is. She always gets mad when I say how old she is, and I always do it because she gets mad. She doesn't like it. By the way, she said to me, "Dad, don't

embarrass Ben about his eyebrows." So I told Ben, "You better behave, or I'm going to tell her, 'But you shaved your eyebrows!'" And he said, "Do it, do it, do it!" So he shaved his eyebrows this morning. Now, tell me how a nine-year-old could get up in the morning and mistakenly shave his eyebrows. Or ten. How old are you? Nine or ten? Nine. I thought, okay. I don't know how old I am, let alone how old he is.

But I remember what it was like. We started in there with eight people, nine people, in a hotel room. It was an interesting 40 years, I'll tell you. God was good. We started in a hotel room. Then we bought a two-room schoolhouse. Everybody said, "Don't do that. That's an old building. Don't do that." I usually listened to my peers and said, "Go fly a kite." So I did what I thought we should do, and God has been good. So I'm excited to see what God's doing here.

Now Bob's been in the ministry for 50 years. He's pastored this church for 19 years, but he's been in the ministry for 50 years. I know that you appreciate your pastor. I hope you do. You have one of a kind. There are many reasons I say that. Honestly, I tell people all the time, "This is the most unique church in America," and I believe it is. Let me say this: if you're visiting today, come back next week, because you need to come back and hear Pastor Bob and sit under his ministry. If you're on YouTube and it's the first time you're on YouTube, don't pay attention to me. In fact, I asked Bob, "Is this going to be on YouTube?" And he said, "Yeah." I said, "Okay, I got to make sure I don't say something I really shouldn't say." I don't have that. My daughter would say, "I don't have my filter anymore." Kathy would usually be sitting right next to Barb, and if I was getting out of line, I'd look over and I'd get the look. I'd have to reel it back in. So I don't have that anymore. My daughter tries to be that, and I just ignore her.

II. The Value and Relevance of the Local Church

We're going to try to get through this. I want you to go to Acts chapter two. Pardon me. Make it plain. I'm not sure I know what that means. What do you want me to make plain? Are you having trouble finding Acts chapter two? Kathy is giving me a look right now.

In my life, the local church has been incredibly important to me. As Bob said, I've been in church all my life. I can't remember a time I wasn't in church. I can't remember a time when we didn't get up on Sunday morning and go to church. Things were a lot different back then than they are now, but church was an important part of my life. Bob and I were fortunate enough to have a mentor named Mel Sobaka, whom many of you know, who really was the one that trained us. He really was, including all the bad stuff, he was the one. I miss him a lot.

I just spoke with Jean a couple of weeks ago, and those of you who know, Jean is doing good for how old is she? 90? 92. Every time she came to our church to sing and Mel preached, she had to tell them how she changed my diapers when I was a baby. Every time. I don't think she ever did anything but change my diapers. I told her one time, "You know what? I know that because your hands were cold."

So we were fortunate. Honestly, I know God doesn't need anybody. He doesn't need me, doesn't need Bob, he doesn't need Mel. But he uses them. He used Mel in my life. We had a great preacher, pastor. When you have a church of three or four thousand, you have to find somebody

in that group that can help you out, and Mel was the one. He taught us to love the book and taught us how to preach. I was preaching one time. I was a young preacher. I'm still a young preacher, but I was a young preacher, and he said, "Amen," at the wrong time. I said, "Just hang on there, buddy." He looked at me and said, "I can come up there and take care of you." So, the local church is important.

What I want to talk to you about this morning, what I want to preach to you this morning, I've always said this when I come here: I'm really not coming here to teach you. You've got the best teacher. You don't need me to teach you. You've got the best Bible teacher. This is the most unique church. Most 72-year-old pastors don't have a church this age. They have guys like me who can hardly walk and sit. This is unique, and it's unique for one reason: God's given Bob a great, incredible ability to preach and teach God's Word. I would never come in this pulpit and try to supersede that in any way, shape, or form.

Now I must tell you that I've known Bob and I've heard most of these teachings. Some of it's wrong. I just have to tell you that. There are some things, if you would just listen, I could straighten him out. But for the overall picture, you have the greatest Bible teacher, as far as I'm concerned, in America. I'm not blowing smoke. I really am not. I really believe that. So I'm not here to teach you this morning. What I am here to do, though, is to remind you. I want to share some things about the local church to remind you.

You have to ask, "Is the local church relevant today?" If you ask that, most people would say, "Not really." Even the big churches. They have these mega-churches now. We moved to North Carolina when Kathy started getting sicker for two reasons. Number one, I thought it would be difficult for my son-in-law there to fully pastor the church after me being there 39 years, sitting in the front row, or the back row, or anywhere else for that matter. The second reason is, I felt that for a lot of reasons, it was better for Kathy and I to be in a warmer climate, to be out of the house we had, no snow, all of those things. So we moved down to North Carolina, and Matt was pastoring, so it just stood to reason we moved down close to them.

But the local church is so vital in our lives. If you see these big mega-churches and all this stuff that's going on today, I was going to tell you, I went to the doctor when I first moved to North Carolina. I had to go see the doctor. He gave me the once over and asked me what I did. I told him I was a pastor. He said, "Oh," he said, "Where are you going to church?" I said, "Well, I'm going down to Believers Baptist Church." He said, "Oh, you ought to come to my church." He said, "We got a big orchestra. We got, you know, you ought to come. It's great. We got flashing lights and all this stuff." I said, "Brother, you're talking to the wrong guy." I said, "First of all, you think I'm going to go to your church instead of my son-in-law's church? I need my daughter. I don't need him, but I need my daughter."

The church has taken on a whole different venue. So what I want to direct your thoughts to this morning is a little bit about the value of the local church. Years ago, there was a man in our church that was a toy designer. He did Smurfs, and there was a robot thing he did. I don't know, Mr. Robot or something. At any rate, he was going to Hong Kong to look at some new things he was going to do. He went to look at a couple of places they made in Hong Kong, Ming and

China. So I said, "Why don't you go with me?" I said, "I can't afford to go to China." He said, "I'll pay for it." I said, "Good, let's go."

So I thought while we were in Hong Kong, I'd find a missionary, maybe we'd go to church there. So I did. The missionary said, "Why don't you preach for me?" I said, "Okay." So we got there, and they were upstairs in a building, and there was a pretty good crowd there of Chinese and Filipinos. He told me, "Now listen," he said, "you're going to have to preach slow." I said, "Huh?" "You're going to have to preach slow because this is going to have to be translated." I said, "Okay." He said, "It has to go from you to Mandarin, then from Mandarin to Tagalog or something that the Filipino spoke." If my message took me an hour to preach, I'm thinking to myself, "These guys, they're going to be walking out in 10 minutes." They stayed. Not only did they stay, they would have stayed longer, because the local church meant something to them.

Matt was with me in Brazil. We were over in Brazil to help a missionary there build a church. We were going to have a youth group meeting. I had this old laptop that I'd never used anymore, and I said, "I'm going to take that, and we'll give it away to whoever brings those kids." I said, "Man, you thought I was giving them a million bucks." I don't even know if that thing worked. But we're getting ready to do this. We worked and worked on the building, and we're getting ready to meet with the kids. Man, it started to rain. You haven't been in a rainstorm until you've been in Brazil. It was raining and raining and raining. I'm saying, "We're going to have to cancel." The water was flowing down the street, and we were at the bottom of the hill. It was knee-high water. I thought, "This is not going to fly." About 15 of those kids came wading through that water to get to church. The church meant something to them.

In America, the local church doesn't mean much anymore. It just doesn't mean much anymore. When you go to work tomorrow, just ask how many people went to church, any church. Not many people go. Not many people go. So what I want to tell you is that I want to show you the church is relevant today.

III. God's Standard for a Successful Church

A few years ago, I read an article by George Barna. You know George Barna, a guy who makes his living asking people what they think. He wanted to take a poll about what makes a successful church. I said, "That might be interesting." So I wanted to see. In this thing, he didn't give the percentage, but he listed the top five things. Here they are:

1. The very first thing that people think makes a really thriving, successful church is attendance. How many are coming?
2. The second thing: budget. How much money is coming in?
3. The third thing: the programs. How many programs do you have? Today, people shop churches. You know that, right? They come in and they want to see what you got for the kids and what you got for the old people. What are you doing here and what are you doing there?
4. The fourth thing: how many staff members do you have?
5. The fifth thing was how big was the church, the square footage of the church?

Now, I have to tell you, by that standard, the church I pastored in Vermont was not a success. Not by that standard. God's standard is something different, amen. But not by that standard. I believe the Scripture is very, very clear, folks, that the purpose of the local New Testament church is to exalt Christ as Savior, to evangelize, and to bear one another's burdens. Exalt Christ, evangelize, and then bear one another's burdens. So that's what I want to preach on. Now, those aren't my three points. Those are just three things. I haven't got to my outline yet. It's coming. I only have 18 pages of notes here. I didn't used to use notes, and then people were leaving in the middle of my messages, so I thought I'd better start writing something down so I didn't preach for four hours.

Several chapters in Acts reveal the principles that God uses to bless His people as only He can. Both of my sons-in-law are carpenters by trade, for which I am very thankful, because I can't build anything. One thing I still can't build, I can't put anything together. I've got to order a little table to put together for my apartment, and I've already told Matt I'm not putting it together. I'm not going to try to put it together. It's going to come in 100,000 pieces. It's only about that big, but it's going to come in all these pieces. I can't read directions. I hate directions. I get mad when a stop sign tells me to stop. I don't want anybody telling me what to do.

But here's the truth: if you don't have directions, you're going to be in trouble. You're going to know how to do something. Your pastor, I was listening two weeks ago, and I didn't catch last Sunday, but I had the Sunday before that because I wanted to get the gist of what he was doing. You know what? He's got a plan. Somebody asked me, "What was your plan when you went to Vermont?" I said, "To survive." That was my plan. Bob's got it. He's ready to go with this thing. He's got a plan. Well, the Scripture gives us a plan. The Scripture tells us some things that are really important that need to exist in the local church.

Look at chapter 2, verse 42 in the book of Acts. We'll start at verse 41.

And they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Father, you know my heart this morning. You know this is dear to you, so it's dear to me. Father, the local church was your plan. I thank you for this group of people that have assembled here

today, for this church, their testimony, for what you're doing here, for the leadership. God, I pray that you'd continue to bless them as we celebrate today. Lord, use them in a mighty way. Today may we exalt the Lord Jesus. In His name I pray. Amen.

There are at least, I think we've lost sight of basic stuff. In everything, I'm a football fan, you know that. I was going to wear an Ohio State thing, but I didn't. I should have. I wanted to, but I didn't. Did somebody boo? Boo boo. Are you kidding me? You can't find the book of Acts, and you're going to boo Ohio State? Holy mackerel. Some people just say, "Are you married yet?" No, I understand why. "Are you going to marry him?" Don't do it. Don't do it. I can almost feel Kathy right now looking at me. I can feel it. I'm not looking at Becky because I'm not looking.

You know, I'm not interested in traditions. I'm sick of traditions. I really am sick of traditions. I'm a traditional guy. Normally, I wear a tie when I preach, and I do that to aggravate my sons-in-law because they don't wear one. I sit there going, "I don't really like traditions." I've never been a traditional guy when it comes to church. I didn't care about traditions. I never wanted to do anything necessarily because of tradition. If it's a right tradition, that's fine. But we are so hung up on traditions. In the day and age that Bob and I grew up in, and the church we grew up in, everything was tradition. "You do this and this because we've always done it this way." They put God in a box. Some people are far more concerned about that when it comes to churches than they are doing something for God.

So there are some things here that we find that clearly had some priorities. Let me ask you a question: if you had to list your priorities, and I don't do it here, but if you had to list your priorities, I know what number one would be because I'm here and we're here, and everybody would say to exalt Jesus. I understand that. Let's move just a little beyond that. What are your priorities in life? What is important to you? We ought to have priorities in our life. When Kathy and I had, she had the children, I helped, but she had the children, we had some priorities for them. One of the things we wanted was our girls to serve God no matter where He wanted them to go. I didn't ask them, they didn't marry preachers, by the way. They married carpenters. Both of my sons-in-law didn't surrender to preach, and I never asked them to, did I not? Never suggested it. I never asked them to surrender to preach. I didn't ask my daughters to marry. I asked my daughters to marry Christian men. That's all I asked them. And she did marry Christian men. They were Vermonters. One of them was converted to Ohio State. Both of the boys had to watch Ohio State and Michigan before they could get married. That was a, they had to. My other son-in-law doesn't even understand football. He really doesn't. I kept saying, "Get on the line." I said, "Get on the line." He never did get it. He never did get it.

Priorities. I had priorities for my kids. We should have some priorities in the church. So where do we get those priorities? Is it from denominationalism? Is it because it's the way we've always done? I know some old preachers. When they were old, I was young. I had one of them, though. I hate that. But I know some old preachers. I had John Rawlins. You remember John Rawlins, Bob? Wake up. Bob. You remember John Rawlins? He can't hear, and I can't walk. We're a great team here. You remember John Rawlins? Yeah, I knew you did. Go back to sleep. That's right. John Rawlins and I somehow were related. I didn't know that until he told me. I don't think we were. I think what he said was he knew my grandparents because my grandparents went to J.

Frank Norris's church. So he would call me in Vermont, and he'd say, "How many are running? How many are running?" That's the only, he always had, he'd say, "How are the kids? How are your wife? You got enough money? You got enough money? How many are running?" I said, "10 or 15 away every Sunday." I never took attendance. I never one time took attendance. I couldn't tell you how many we had. Well, that's not entirely true. I don't want to tell the people. I didn't know how many chairs there were. I didn't count the filled chairs. I counted the empty ones, and I could subtract, and I could get a pretty good idea. But that was such a big thing in the 60s: "Bigger church. How many people do you got?" Very seldom did they say, "How many people got saved? How many preachers got called to preach?" They just want to know how many people. Now this is a great crowd. I wanted as many people to come that would come. I'm not against having a lot of people. But folks, that's not the priority.

IV. Priority of Doctrine and the Pastor-Teacher

Let's look at the description and see what their priority was. The very first thing that we find in this verse is that they gave priority to doctrine. Look at verse 42.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Doctrine. Teaching the Word of God. That thought underscores two things. It underscores content, knowledge. Now the Bible says knowledge puffeth up, so you've got to be careful with that. The other thing that underscores is what you do with what you've got. I am a prime example of that. If you take it in and don't do anything to get it out, when you're 72 years old, you can't walk. It doesn't do any good to get fat on the Word of God, to have one of the premier teachers teach you, and you're not doing anything with it. That just spiritually makes you fat.

This early church, and they weren't going to deviate from this, doctrine, teaching, and learning is gravely important. They honored the office of a pastor, a pastor-teacher. Now Bob isn't called pastor. He's really not a traditionalist. I never asked people to call me a pastor. I had people call me by my first name. I had other people call me a pastor. I had some people call me a lot of things. But that was not ever the issue for me, what they called me. But they had, I wanted them to know that the position that God had called me to was an important position. I wasn't important. The teaching of the Word of God was important.

The greatest compliment I ever received in 39 years happened in the first year we had Wednesday night service in our apartment, Kathy's and my apartment. Debbie Lorenaevich, her family were the first ones that were with us. They stayed with us almost the whole time until he retired, and they moved over to be closer to her kids. So about 37 years or so. You know how Debbie said this? She said, "We were doing verse by verse study." Nobody ever heard of that. We grew up in verse by verse study. "Nobody heard of that. You mean you're going to open the Bible and actually look at every verse and talk about every verse?" Yeah. You know what she said? "I felt like I'm in Bible college." She didn't know what Bible college was, but she felt like she was there. That was a compliment to me.

But you know what, folks, you need to not only get the teaching, you need to do something with it. Now, I'm not saying you don't. But you know when you get to be a teenager, 19 years old, you get to be a teenager, you can get a little cocky. You don't want to get cocky. You want to take what God has given you. Honor this man. Don't bow down to him. Don't honor. Love this guy. You're not going to have him forever. He's 72. Are you 72 yet? Okay. We're both 72 years old. We're not going to be around very long. You know, Jean's 92. I don't want to live to be 92. I really don't want to. I don't want to live to be 92. Can you imagine me trying to walk at 92? I don't want to do it. I do want to live to see my grandkids graduate from high school. That's my goal. Unless Ben makes it at Ohio State for the basketball team. Then I want to go a little longer. I don't know if that's going to happen or not. He thinks it is, but I don't know if it's going to happen.

They honored the men that taught them the Word of God. I will never be able to say thank you to Mel Sabaca enough. Never. He was friends with my parents. They got saved about the same time. Long before Mel was in the ministry, he and my dad were buddies. I grew up, which was really bad because growing up when Mel knew you, it was a little harder. He could talk to my parents. When I got older, I loved you more than. I could never thank him enough. I couldn't. I don't know. I love my parents. Please don't misunderstand. I had godly parents, but Mel was my mentor in the ministry. I could never thank him enough. I'm not blowing smoke here today. That's not my intention. These folks were grateful for what they were getting. Don't ever take it for granted, folks. Someday, God's going to take him. He'll replace him.

The most disturbing thing when I stepped down was somebody else could take over, and they don't even know who I am now. Honestly, that's what I always prayed for. When I left, the thing would just keep going. It wouldn't even hiccup because it was never built on me. It had to be built on the Word of God. What I wanted for them is to know the Word of God. The five preachers that are out of our church, the two missionaries out of our church, I wanted them to know the Word of God. I told them, "If you're going to go to Bible college, you better know what you believe before you go." They honored the pastor-teacher. First Timothy chapter 3, one of the requirements is to be apt to teach. I wish somebody would tell these preachers today. I wish somebody would tell these young preachers today, "You've got to know the Bible to teach the Bible. You've got to know what it says if you're going to use it."

People don't need to hear your stories. People don't need to hear about politics. I get so sick of preachers. If you're a Trump, don't get mad at me if you like Trump. I really don't have a... Don't get mad at me, okay? Well, get mad if you're going to tell them I'm leaving tomorrow. I got sick to my stomach when all these preachers started running towards Donald Trump when he became president. Here's an adulterer. I didn't mean all these policies were bad, but I'm telling you what, folks. The first time he said, "Oh, my favorite book is one Corinthians." I said, "This guy's never opened the Bible in his life." What's all these guys? "Oh, man. Trump, we love you. You're the best thing since chocolate." No, I'm telling you what, folks. He never one time gave honor to Jesus Christ. He never one time ever said, "You know, you ought to be born again." He had the pulpit of the world.

I can't stand politics. Don't get into politics. Vote. Honestly, I told... It was Matt, and I think the lady left the church for this reason. The Ukrainian thing just started, and I said to Matt, "Can you let me say something on Wednesday night?" And he sort of went... He said, "Okay." So I talked about two armies coming together and Christian men in both of those armies. He said, "There aren't any Christians in Russia." Oh, yes, there are. Oh, yes, there are. And some of them were in the army. Had to be. And there were Christians in the Ukrainian army. Here they were going to shoot at each other. So do you know what a predicament that is? So where is your loyalty? I said this: my first loyalty, and we had a Christian flag, is to that flag before that flag. I love that flag. My dad was a World War II veteran. Actually, my mother was too. I used to tell my kids, "You think you had it hard? Both my parents were sergeants." The Christian flag, what it represented, my loyalty is to Jesus Christ over my loyalty to the United States of America. My concern for this country doesn't have anything to do about politics. My concern for this country is most people are dying and going to hell and need Jesus Christ. You know who's going to tell them? You.

I'm out of the game, folks. I'm 72 years old. People watching me on YouTube, if anybody's watching, they probably turned off by now. Anybody watching me, I'm not the guy they're going to listen to. I'm not the guy going into the shops today. I don't work anymore. I'm not out among the people. I don't know the guy that fixes the cars. I don't know those people. You do. This man is equipping you to go to them, to bring them to Jesus. That's what America needs. America doesn't need a great president. They need a great God. What they need. They got one, and they just ignore him.

These people gave priority to the Word of God. 1 Timothy 5 says something else, and I always get kind of a chuckle out of this.

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

How many preachers have I ever heard say double honor meant more money? More money. Are you kidding me? I wanted people to be thankful they had me because I taught them the Word of God. Double honor doesn't mean money. Now, later on, it talks about taking care of them, and that's fine. You take care of your pastor. He's got to live just like you do. But I'm going to tell you something, folks. You have to honor this man more than you honor the president of the United States. That doesn't go well among fundamental Baptist churches these days, I have to tell you. You have to honor this man. This man's calling is higher.

I will tell you this, and I know Bob doesn't wear a tie, and I don't care. It's not a big deal with me. It really isn't. I make it a big deal because it's just fun. But a young preacher said to me one time, "Why do you wear a tie?" I said, "Let me ask you a question. Do you ever see the president of the United States get up and give a speech without wearing a tie?" Never. Never. The office that I held was higher than his office. Higher than his office. You don't have to wear a tie to do that. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. Kids got it wrong. Young people got it wrong today. This isn't a job, folks. This is a calling. What this man did was give his life to Christ. God brought him to a place and used him and used him and is still using him. And you're lucky. There are churches

all over this country that don't have what you've got. You ought to praise the Lord for that and honor this man. Don't pay him more. He's got plenty of money. You don't have to pay him more. You have to love him more. I know how hard that is. I've been trying to love him for 50 years, and it's tough. It's good now you can say, "I love you, Bob." And he'll never know what you're saying. I love him. I appreciate. I love you, Bob. A double honor. You ought to respect that man more than you respect the President of the United States. One of the requirements of a pastor is to teach. It's to teach.

Now, something else that they stress here. They stress the importance of the teacher's responsibility of not only teaching the Word of God, but focusing on the Word of God. In Acts 6, a problem came up. There were some feelings hurt. Don't tell me it wasn't a Baptist church, because feelings were hurt. Somebody said to me one time, "Do you think the first church was a Baptist church?" I said, "No. They didn't get messed up that quick." But I'll tell you what, churches are churches, right? It doesn't take too long for somebody to get mad in church. The Greeks were mad at the Hebrews because nobody was taking care of their widows. I always wondered, "Why didn't they take care of the widows?" I don't understand why the Greeks didn't take care of the widows. They were widows, right? But they were mad. So they went and said, "Somebody's got to be helping us." So the apostles rolled their eyebrows. I know they did. I don't know that, but I think they did. They rolled their eyebrows, and they got together, and this is what happened in verse 1 in chapter 6.

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

Now I want to tell you something. Pastor Bob is not an employee of this church. He doesn't work for this church. My father-in-law, he never did get over the idea that I'd never had a job. I did. I worked. But my main job wasn't a job. I said, "That's not a job. I'm not an employee of the church." I never was an employee of the church. The principle was, they take care of my physical needs, and I take care of their spiritual needs. If they couldn't take care of my physical needs, then I went out and fixed it until they could. Becky might remember this. I think she did. I delivered newspapers. We had to have a morning newspaper in the mailbox before 6 o'clock. I was on a paper route. I'd get the girls up about 3 o'clock in the morning, put them in the back of the station wagon, go down to the newspaper place, get the bundles. Kathy would be putting them in the bags. I'd be driving. We'd be putting them in. Trying to get back in time so we could take them to school, and we both taught. I'd say, "Oh, poor Jim." No, those were good days. Those were good days.

My point is, I was never an employee of the church. Now, I know the government said I was, and the government said, "You got a job, you got to pay taxes, you got to do this, you got to do that." I did all that. What the government thinks and what the people in my church thought was something different, and I certainly didn't work for deacons. Deacons are valuable assets, and I

had some good ones. If you're a deacon in this church, I'm not picking on you. Deacons get picked on all the time. When I tell you something, deacons, you're to pick up the slack so this man can do what he's supposed to do, and I'm sure you do.

Now, today things are different than that. Honestly, I wouldn't want to have been one of the guys that were teaching in those days. There were 3,000 of them. 3,000 of them. They didn't have a building. It says they went from house to house. So they were 3,000 people divided into these small groups. They had small groups before small groups were important. Somebody said to me one time, "Why didn't you have small groups?" I said, "How much smaller do you want me to get? I only got 30 people. How much smaller do you got?" We got more than that now, but back then I said, "I don't need small groups. I got small groups."

Folks, Brother Dean, I'm feeling like you are. I'm trying to loosen myself here. It's your fault. The Lord thinks He can do with you, He can do with me what He did with you. He's working with a lot tougher piece here. The work of the pastor in the 20th century, I'm going to tell you it's different. I never thought I'd be an older pastor. Those of you guys that are young, you never think about getting to be in your 60s, 70s, and 80s. Man, it happens. Here you are at the end, and God's still using you, thankfully. You look back and you say, "Wow, God." The most important part of my ministry was teaching and preaching. It wasn't visiting, although I visited. It wasn't going to the hospital.

I'll tell you what, Dean, I'm going to warn you about this. Your wife's going to be a nurse? I'm going to warn you, this is going to happen to you. My wife would be working midnights. She worked midnights. By the way, let me brag on my wife because she's not here. She would always get mad at me if I bragged on her. My wife spent 22 years working as a nurse, and she worked midnights. Do you know why she worked midnights? So she didn't have to miss a Sunday morning service. She would work 12 hours a Saturday night, come home, change clothes, go to church, teach Sunday school, whatever she was doing, go back home, take a nap, get up and go back to church Sunday night. That was my wife. That was my wife. I didn't have anything to do with anything, but I'm going to brag on her. I miss her. I miss her every day. I can't understand it. I don't want to talk about it. I'll start to cry. I've got to keep going here. The time you say I had to be out of here at 12:30. Oh, man, I'm only on the first page. It's been a hurry. We've got to go eat, Bob. We've got to go eat. Get out of here at 12:30.

We have to keep our priorities right. That verse says that these people absorbed. Look at verse 42 again.

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

They absorbed the teaching. Now, the church doesn't have a smorgasbord of preachers like we've got today. My other son-in-law, Josh, was putting the kitchen floor in for my house in Vermont. He's putting the floor in. I didn't know how long it was going to be before we could walk. I went down, got on my computer, looked to see how long it would take before I could walk on the floor. Anywhere from six hours to two weeks is what the internet is. The internet is so helpful. So I was laughing about it, and I told Josh, and he said, "That's nothing." He said, "We go to do a

job, and the people have already looked up on the internet what it is they want done, and they think they can tell us how to do it." I said, "It's worse than that." Because people sit in the church today with their iPads and their iPhones, and they look up things you're preaching on while you're preaching. I've seen them do it. You say something like... But the church isn't to sing. We assemble together. It's a different ballgame than it was then. I'm just saying, you've got to do everything that they did. Let me tell you one thing: it was not entertainment. I'm tired of churches being entertained. I love to sing. I love music. I can't sing, and I can't play anything. I love the singing that we did here today. But it doesn't have to be like this. I'm just going to tell you, it doesn't have to be like this. It can be something different.

My son-in-law came to me with fear. He was scared to death. He said, "Pastor..." It's funny to hear. The boys still call me Pastor. They don't know what else to call me. They can't call me Jim. I mean, they could, but they don't want to. So they call me Pastor. He says, "Pastor, do you think it would be possible if we could put the hymns up on the thing?" I said, "Yeah." "Now, do you think we could sing something that's not in the hymn book?" I said, "Only if the thing says something." Now, there are some good new songs. There really are. A lady in our church, a pianist. Where's her pianist at? Did she leave? Typical pianist. Where is she at? Nursery. Oh, she's in the nursery? Good, I can say this thing. I've got to hurry. She came to me and she said, "Pastor Lake, I do not believe we should not use hymn books." She said, "It's just so wrong. I feel so uncomfortable." I said, "You're lucky you're here." Because I was in Williamsburg a couple of years ago, and in Williamsburg, in the quarter of... I'm a history buff, right, Becky? She loved going to Gettysburg. She went about 10 times. They were on vacation this year. I went to Gettysburg. I said, "Why don't you guys come over? I'm in Gettysburg." She said, "Not in a million years are we going to Gettysburg."

Kathy and I were in Williamsburg. We went to a little Episcopalian church on the corner. It's where George Washington and Patrick Henry and the boys all met when they were down there, writing the laws and stuff. We were in there sitting, and the lady was getting a little cocky on the names where they were supposedly sat. We were sitting there, and she said, "Now you will see hymnals here. But when George Washington came to church here, hymnals were worldly. All they sang was the Psalms." Hmm, tradition, tradition, you know. You've got to be careful, folks. Some things can be new and still be okay. You've just got to make sure they're okay. That's all you've got to make sure of. How did I get on that? Holy mackerel. Dean, this is your fault. Oh, entertainment. Not supposed to be any entertainment. You didn't come here. I mean, I may make you laugh. You may be laughing at me. I don't know. But you and I didn't come here to be entertained. You came here. Listen, these folks had a priority. When we come, it's not to be entertained.

V. Priority of Fellowship

The next thing they did, it was devoted to fellowship. The apostles' doctrine and fellowship. Fellowship basically is association. That's really what it is. Being what's it in Greek? I don't know what Greek or Hebrew is. I knew a little Greek and a little Hebrew. Greek had a pastry shop, and Hebrew had a laundromat. It basically means we're associated, which is why you've

got to be careful about associating with Christians that isn't centered on the Word of God. You've got to be careful of that. I'm not saying shoot them. I'm not saying be mad at them. I'm not talking to them. I'm saying just be careful.

Do you know what happens when people, here's another rabbit trail. I can shoot the rabbit and be back in a minute. He doesn't know what I'm saying. Shaking his head. He didn't know a word. People leave my church. A couple left our church. "We can't be here anymore." Okay. Sorry. See you. Next thing I know, they're not going to church anywhere. You know who they're fellowshiping with? The world. That's who they're associating with. You know what their kids are? Big trouble. Big trouble. You've got to be careful.

Fellowship. You know what these crazy bunch of people did? By the way, Ephesians 5 tells us to be careful about the works of unrighteousness. Second Corinthians tells us not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. That doesn't mean you know what a yoke is. That's two oxen going in the same direction. I'm not going the same direction that an unsaved person is. They're going in a whole different direction. They might be nice people. They don't have to be the deepest, worst sinner in the world, because there's only one level of sinner, and that's lost. There isn't. "Boy, now that is a sinner." No, folks, this is a sinner that got saved. That person, whether he thinks he's a girl or not, is no worse than the unsaved Baptist church member who's not saved.

I've got to tell you a quick story. One more quick story. Kathy and I moved into this apartment complex. Nice place. Really nice place. When I walked in, a young guy walked out, and he said, "Oh, welcome. This is the best place. This is the best apartment. Welcome, welcome, welcome." I said, "Thanks." We got moved in. Matt says, "You know, that kid is a youth pastor over at some Baptist church in town." I said, "Really?" Next time I saw him, he said, "Hey." I said, "I'm a retired pastor." I'm not really retired, but they understand that. You've got to talk in their lingo. I said, "Yeah, I'm a pastor." And I said, "We've got to get together and talk sometime." He says, "Yeah, let's do that." His dad was a pastor. Eight months later, he moves out into a house, never said a word to us, never one time said a word to us. And two, this is on YouTube. I hope this is okay. Two gay guys moved in. I was taking, I had my trash I had to take out, and I couldn't leave Kathy by herself. So I took her with me, and I said, "Got outside the door. I said, 'You stand right here while I lock the door.'" And I was doing a head to thing and sort of hold on to her. One of those guys came out the door, and he said, "Hey, can I help you?" I said, "Yeah, so let me take your trash for you. If you ever need anything, call us. We're right there. Just call us." Isn't it a shame that the world sometimes is better than Christians, and a preacher, and a preacher? Wow. Wow. I'll never forget that.

VI. Priority of Worship and Mutual Love

Third thing, I'm going to be done. They emphasize the priority of worship. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers. Okay. Breaking of bread. I actually think that meant communion, but we call it Lord's Supper. Somebody corrected me once and said, "No, they were just having eaten together." Okay. So it was the church's supper and not the Lord's Supper, but they were together. I think it was the Lord's Supper. I don't care. It doesn't make any difference. Right. Amen. People fight over the

dumbest things. They say, "Well, believe what you want to believe, man. It's a free country." I don't care. Here's the thing: they had fellowship. That was expressed in not only the ordinances, but it was also expressed in prayers.

Now, let me ask you a question. When we had a public prayer here this morning, how many of you were praying? How many of you were listening? We need to pray together. The old thing was, "We're going to lead you in prayer." It meant you listen while I pray. We ought to be praying together. There are a few times some of you, I saw you bow your heads. I know you were praying. Hurry. I hope you hurry. I'm getting done. Listen, it wouldn't hurt to pray. "God, use this guy. Use the pastor, Lord." We're supposed to be together in this. That's what fellowship is in prayers. You're going to have the Lord's Supper next week. I love that. Somebody said to me, "Why don't you do the Lord's Supper on a more regular basis?" "We need a schedule." I said, "We do whenever I feel like it." Why? Because I never wanted it to be a tradition. Honestly, I love Ohio State tradition, but that's it. I don't like any other traditions. I mean, why don't you get the best anyhow? Whatever.

You talk about trust in one another? This is crazy. I read this, and I think I would love to just see what happened if I suggested it in my church. Somebody came up with the bright idea, "We've got some people that don't got no money. We've got a lot of money. We've got people that got money in the middle. Let's just bring all our money together, put it all together, and then divide it up." How do you like Pastor Bob to say next week, "You all bring your paychecks here. Sign it and to the church. The church is going to count it, and then we're going to divide it up to each family." Yeah, sure we will. Now I've got to tell you, nowhere in the Bible do they tell them to do that. Nowhere in the Bible do we find anybody else ever doing it. Because they were Baptists after all. But you know what that shows me? How much they loved each other. They really loved each other. And you know what God saw? He saw two people that said, "I'll do it," and didn't do it. Now they weren't in trouble because they didn't do it. They were in trouble because they said they would and they didn't. I'm glad God doesn't do this now. He killed them. You ever make a promise to the Lord not to keep it? Be grateful you're in the age of grace. Boom! Hi Kathy.

Look how much they loved each other. The last thing I told Bible Baptist Church was, "Love each other. Love each other." This is a loving church. You're loud, you laugh, you hug. I hate hugging. Several of you women just come and hug me. I know I'm not married anymore, but please give me a break. No, I'm just kidding. I just got the dirtiest look from my daughter. And my son went, "Oh boy, is he in trouble?" No, honestly, whatever. You've got to love each other. Honestly, it's more than a hug. It's after the hug is over. You've got people that used to be here and aren't here anymore. I think you hugged him in COVID. You shouldn't have done that.

VII. Final Exhortations and the Future of the Church

Listen, let me tell you something, folks. 19 years, I don't know what God has for the next 19 years, and I don't know if you'll have him the next 19. You probably will because the Lord's not going to take him until He has to. However long you've got together, love one another. The day is coming, folks. The day is coming when trouble is on the horizon. We're all worried about who's

going to be president. I'm worried about who's going to be the Christians when the trouble comes. Where the prison is going to be when the trouble comes.

Up in Vermont, there was a guy who put a letter in the editor. I wrote a letter to the editor a couple of times. One that they wouldn't print, which I was really upset about. They said it was too long. He said this, "I think we ought to quit listening to those people who believe in fairy tales." You know what he was talking about? He was talking about us. I went to Vermont, honestly and truly. I didn't argue with the Lord. But after 40 years, I wanted to say, "What were you doing? What were you thinking?" This is, I mean, Bernie Sanders is our senator. I had a run-in with him, a couple run-ins with him. And our representative, I got so many stories. I was shaking hands, and he was going through one day and shook my hand. I said, "I don't believe anything you do, just leave me alone." I walked over, came out of the grocery store, and he just smiled and said, "Boy, that was a good testimony." I said, "What are you?" She said, "I'm just saying, you sure told him." So I wrote him a letter and apologized. I hated doing that. I really did. But I told him I was sorry, and it was unbecoming of me. So he called me. We talked a while. I invited him to church. I said, "I got my own church." I said, "Which one?" He said, "It's the Breckland over down on that." I said, "Okay."

Most liberal state in the union. You think New York's liberal? No, those guys are conservative. We got a socialist. He only calls himself a socialist Democrat, so the Democrats will vote for him. We got a there. There's socialist up there. That's what's coming, folks. And it's going to come with thunder. And those of us that believe fairy tales, get ready. That's why you need the book. That's why you need a preacher that teaches you and preaches the book. That's why you young guys have to learn the book. Us old guys are going to be gone when it happens, probably. Or if it happens, and we're not going to take as long to be gone because we won't be able to take it. You young couples and your young families, you're going to have to carry the banner. You better train your kids. You better teach your kids while you can because the school wants them. I got a public school teacher in my family, and they just took their kids out of the public school. She's going to say teaching because it pays more. She's going to pay to put them into Christian school because those Christians charge a lot of money, you know.

You better train your kids, and you better be careful what you say about the preacher in front of your children. I've stopped preaching and started snooping. I'm telling you, folks, those kids will hear it. Those kids will hear it, and they will believe what you say over what he says. You better have those kids grounded in the Word of God. If you have a disagreement with that preacher, you and your wife, talk it over. You go to him, get it fixed. Don't you bring your children into it. You'll wreck them. We've got a whole church full of wrecked kids because parents are stupid when it comes to raising their children in the church.

I love you, folks. I love coming here. I hope I'm healthy enough to come back again sometime. I don't know what tomorrow brings. Who knows? I want to tell you, Kathy and I, we love coming here. We got to go a few other places. Mostly nobody had me except the people overseas, and I was sending them money, so... I love this man. We don't talk very often. Nobody talks to this guy very often, especially on the phone. You can't talk to him face to face. He can't hear anything. This couple, they've given everything to you. Everything to you. You love them. I know you do.

But before long, they're going to do something you don't like. You'll be wrong. They'll be right. But you won't think that way. You love them anyhow. Why? Because God put them here for you. I'm getting on a plane tomorrow. He didn't put them here for me. He didn't put them here for me. He put them here for you.

If you're here this morning and you don't know Christ is your savior, this hasn't been a message for you. I kind of hate that. If I was a real fundamentalist, I'd somehow work in the plan of salvation and give an invitation and sing 20 hymns until somebody comes forward. But I'm not one of those guys. I want to talk to the people of this church. You're good people. I love you. I can't remember any of your names, but I love you anyhow. You come up and hug me and shake my hand and say, "Oh Jim, I'm doing great." "Who are you?" You sent me cards, and I said, "I wonder who that was." I love you. I really do. I love this church. I pray for this church. I pray for Barb and Bob. Love them. Love their kids. Because they love you. They love you. Five minutes to spare. Come on. I'm done. Thank you.

VIII. Closing Remarks

Well, that's good this morning. Amen. I'll tell you what. Thank you, Jim. Thank you for all you've been in my life. Thank you for your kids coming up, for Dean coming up, and for making our time special. I saw this coming a long way off and just wanted to make it all work for us. Now I'm ready to go. I waited for this moment for a long time.

Next week's going to be Vision Sunday. You're going to go away with a whole new concept of a lot of things. Maybe some of you young ones will understand what we do, what I do, a little better. I told you a couple of weeks ago that a pastor, a good pastor, has to know how to do four things well. If he doesn't know these four things, then he's going to get into some trouble.

6. First of all, he has to know where he wants to go. He has to have his vision.
7. The second thing he has to do is he has to know how he's going to get there.
8. The third thing he has to do is he has to communicate that to his people.
9. The fourth thing he must do is find ways, open doors, opportunities for God to develop them through his ministry.

That's what we do here. I'm not a very good pastor. I don't think I am. But I have the pastor to do what God has called me to do all my life, and that's to train young men and young ladies for the ministry and the Word of God. I do that better than anything else in my life. A lot of pastors, as Jim said, they look at what they do as their job. So when they hit 65 or 66 or 52 or whatever, they head out and they retire. This is not a job. This is my life. This is what I do. At this stage of my life, my goal is to put everything God's given to me into as many of you who will accept it. We're going to start that. I've done it up to this point. Nothing like you're going to see what's going to come into the future. We're going to change some things, the way we think, the way we do things. You're going to get a hands-on approach to what the ministry is really all about.

All right, Jim, as always, you're right there on the spot, and you can come back whenever you want to. You don't ever have to wait for an invitation. All you do is come up and stay with us and preach. We could have some fun together with the kids and everybody here. Same way with you

guys. You're welcome. Dean's welcome. You're always welcome to come up. You need to get away from him. Just want to come up for a while and bring the kids? Let us know. Dean, you want to bring your family up? You're always welcome to do that. So thank you, guys.

Let's have a word of prayer. I'm going to have these guys meet out here in the front because they've got to get going. Remember now, 5:30 up at Jamie and Danny's, come by. This is our 19th year. The way Jim said it, we may not see another 19. We may not see another five, but we have to take the time that we have and do what God has called us to do. So come by today. We love you. We appreciate all that you do. Come pray next week. I know you do. We'll lay it out, and then we're going to hit the ground running. So let's have a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you. Thank you for all you do for us. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for this last couple of days. Thank you, Father, for the kids that got saved. Thank you for the good time that they had. Thank you, Father, for us being able to provide that for them. I thank you for today and for Jim, and Lord, truly, Lord, he understands probably better than anybody in my life, you know what God has called both of us to do. Lord, I love him. I thank you for his friendship. Thank you for all the things that we have been through together, the good times and the bad times. But it's made us brothers born for adversity. We'll thank you and praise you in Jesus' name for his sake we ask it. Amen.