

## I. Two Key Times Each Year for our Church

Today I want to give you all the information on our Bible conference slash mission conference that's coming up. The dates are going to be December 28th through January 4th. This will be our second one that we have done, and you'll see my method to this here, hopefully before we're done this morning.

God has given us two key times a year for our church. I actually build everything that we are doing as a church around these two events. The first one is our camp for our kids. We don't spare any expense for that. We do everything. We are hands above the normal camp that you would go to, and what we do for those kids. The quality of preaching and teaching is unparalleled. To me, that has to be a premier week for our church, for our kids. We build off of that in the lives of those kids for the rest of the year. The second one that God has given us will be our annual Bible conference and our mission conference, and that is going to be for all of our adults. I want you to see what God has given us this year as we build these conferences year by year. You saw Halloween night, how every year, we've been doing it now for three or four years, it's just gotten bigger and bigger and bigger. Well, if that's true of Halloween, we're seeing that with our conferences and I want to build our whole year around these two events. I want you to see and understand where we're at today.

## II. The Past, Present & Future of our Church

I tell you this all the time, I've preached this for years and years: the importance of understanding the three elements of time, whether it's in your life, the life of any church, or whatever. The importance of understanding the past, the present, and where you're going in the future. We need as a church to take time like this, and that's why I want everybody here. We need to understand where we have come from and what God has given us. Then we need to have an understanding of where we're at today with what He's given us and all that He is doing. Then we need to understand where He's going to take us from this point on. The Bible says in Proverbs 29:18, it tells us that where there is no vision, the people perish.

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

God's people, above everybody else on planet Earth, are so dependent on a vision of God to keep them going. Because without a vision, without us seeing as a church, without you seeing as an individual where you're at in this church, then the perishing will be the demise of our spiritual relationship with the Lord, with the Word of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

For those of you who have committed your life to this ministry that God has given us here, for me, the team of men and women that God has placed in our church, to the work that God has given us and that He's called us to, I don't know if you even think about this or not, I think about it all the time because I'm constantly looking from those three aspects. But this year, as a church, we will have been together for 23 years. Some of you were from the beginning. We started with about 12 or 14 people. We started in my home, in our kitchen. You remember, many of you, that Pastor Whelan, who was the pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, he's our sending pastor out of that church, to start our church. He preached that morning in our kitchen. He laid out for us and basically chartered us and challenged us as we started our church some 23 years ago.

➤ **Just as Preaching is an Art Form, Building a Church is also an Art Form**

You have heard me say before that preaching is an art form. It's so important for all of us to understand where we have come from, where we are at, and where we are going. Preaching is like an artist. Only where an artist paints a picture with paint and his brush, a pastor paints a picture for the people listening with the very words of God. A good pastor, when you leave, you'll have a vivid picture. It won't be just some mundane spiritual whatever, but it'll be a lasting picture. I have heard in my early years, preachers that preach hell so hot, you could feel the heat. They preach heaven so sweet, you can hear the angels singing. It's the ability to take the Word of God through the Spirit of God to the people of God. Through that book, through your preaching, the art form of preaching, painting a picture that everybody sees and understands.

Some preachers will paint a vibrant colored picture. Some will be drab and ordinary. Some will be good and some will be not so good. Some preachers will be like Michelangelo or Mike Piscato, who paints a masterpiece in his messages. Some preachers, it looks like their sermons are a modern art masterpiece where somebody just threw a lot of paint on a canvas and you figure out what it is. But preaching will be an art form. Just as preaching is an art form, building a church will also be an art form.

God always operates through patterns and principles. We know that. You have a pattern and a principle for everything in life. Life is not always going to be fair to you. Life is not always going to be kind to you. If you're in a ministry and working with people in circumstances, you're going to see very quickly that things are going to go south. That's not always going to go the way that you want it to go. In your own personal life, in your family, things aren't always going to go the way you want them to go. The danger is coming to the place that situations in your life get so emotionally charged that you lose your perspective of what God is really doing. This is what patterns in the Bible and principles in the Bible do for you. They don't eliminate emotions. Emotions are part of our makeup. They don't eliminate emotions, but they put your emotions not around the Word of God, but through the Word of God. So that in any given situation in life, you see it from God's standpoint. God will tell you through the patterns and through the principles exactly how to deal with it.

It's the same way with any pastor. It's not just true in your life. It's true in the life of a pastor. A pastor has to understand that there's a model and a pattern for biblical preaching, but there's also a model and a pattern for building a New Testament church. Just as any pastor needs to know

how to put his sermon together to get his message out, a pastor also needs to know how to put his church together to get that message out. In both cases, whether it's preaching, pastoring, or building a church, it has become a lost art form today.

I think of World War II, in the Pacific Theater, not the European, but when we fought the Japanese. The Japanese were very superstitious, religious people. They followed the Shinto religion. The emperor was their god who lived in Tokyo. When you look at their culture, especially in World War II, they had a lot of things that were part of that ancient culture. They thought it was disgraceful for anybody to surrender in battle. They thought you should either win or you die. That's why they treated American prisoners so terribly, because they looked at their giving up as a terrible thing and treated them terribly. Their fighter pilots, they didn't even wear parachutes. It was a culture that was unbelievable. They wore, not all of them, but back home in Japan, the ladies were sewing up garments they called a garment of a thousand stitches. Each garment, with the ladies back on the home front, they'd send them out to the soldiers, they would stitch a garment that they would wear under their uniform that had a thousand stitches on it. That garment of a thousand stitches was to keep them from ever getting killed or shot in combat. We had a lady in our church a while back, years ago, her dad actually brought one back from when he was in World War II, and she showed it to me, and I got to look at it and photograph it, and it had three bloody bullet holes in it. I didn't count the stitches, but I'm assuming that only had 999.

One of the great treasures out of that was a samurai sword. The officers carried an officer's version, the NCO's carried an NCO version, and it was part of their culture of a samurai. They were a great warrior. We look at those swords and they're very expensive to collect today. Most people don't realize that World War II took place from 1939 to 1945, and they all carried them, but those swords were made four, five, six, seven, 800 years ago. They are masterpieces. I've seen a real one where a guy would hold it up and he'd put a piece of ribbon and threw it up in the air, and the ribbon just floated down on that sword and cut it right in half. You take the handle off, and it's got the maker and all of the information. They're incredible because making swords back then was an art form, and yet today, you can go on the internet, and you can find a genuine samurai sword for \$29.95. It looks like the real thing until you get it in your hand and you hold it, and you take it out of the scabbard, and you see it's just a cheap imitation. Just as samurai swords are an art form to make a sword, building a church is an art form. Just like there's a lot of fake samurai swords, there's a lot of phony churches out there that were built on the wrong foundations and the wrong principles. It's an art form. It's something that every pastor needs to understand what's involved.

Of course, the key to building a church will be to understand how to build people. It's not about this building. It's about people. It's about what makes the church strong. It's not how beautiful it is, but that's where we're at today. People think that the success of a church is how many people you're having at church, and you count them and you brag about it. They forget the great principle and the great pattern of 1 Chronicles 21.

Other than Bathsheba, the one thing that got David really in trouble with God. You know what it was? The numbering of the people. They started to trust in their numbers more than they trusted in God. That's the problem today. We're not building people. We're building buildings. The art

form of painting and preaching the Word of God and laying out a picture that God's people will never forget is gone now. So what happens? You've got to have a Super Bowl halftime show. You've got to have music. You've got to have dancing girls. You've got to have everybody doing everything to make it look like it's really something because the pastor is a modern art masterpiece when it comes to preaching. He just throws the paint out there. You have to figure out what the picture is. You don't measure a church's success by its number of people. Your success is the depth of their spirituality.

### III. The Mandate for the Church

In Acts 1:8, it gives us the mandate for any church that every pastor ought to put out there. He says in Acts 1:8:

*8. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

There is the model. There is the pattern for every New Testament local church: the witnesses of the church through the men and the women that grow as men and women in the church spiritually. Now, the anatomy of that Bible-believing church ministry works simply like this: God will call the man to be the pastor. God will put the burden on his heart wherever God sends him. As Proverbs 31 says with a virtuous woman, he considers the field and he buys it. That's where he starts the church that God has called him to build. As people come to his church, a process now begins. They hear what he has to say. They see his burden. They see the paintings that he paints with the pictures of the Word of God. Then God will call within that men and women who will see his heart for the Word of God, for the things of God and the people, and they will get his vision. I've learned over the years, just through dealing with people, 50 plus years, that probably today, you've got to go through 10 people that come through your church to find maybe two who are going to do what God wants them to do. That's the process. It's a process of spiritual elimination. But what you have left is what you can build on. God moves through them and grows them. They too get the vision, the burden. Then they align themselves with the man of God that God gave them to be their pastor, and they help him build what God has called him to do. This is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:9 that we are laborers together.

*9. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*

I'm giving you a lot of stuff you already know, but bear with me, I've got to do that. I want you to understand where we've come from. I want you to be able to understand where we're at, and I want you to see where we're going. You know that in any church, you'll have three groups in any church. You have those who will get it done. You have those who will watch it get done. Then you have those who try to stop it from getting done. That's just the way it is in any church you're going to find.

➤ 23 years I have prayed for this day right where we are at

For 23 years, I've looked for this day today, right where we're at. I've seen this day, prayed for this day. I can honestly say everything that I've taught you, everything from, I mean, it's more than just being on Sunday morning, all of the key Bible training to prepare you, our Bible Institute, discipleship one, two, and three, the people ministry, you know, the special training teaching time, Sunday morning, Thursday night, our New Year's Eve things years ago, where we just really got into the Bible. Now we're on another level. Our camp program, our Principle Class, our Pattern's Class, everything in my mind, every idea to get you into that Book and to get you as much of the Word of God in my heart as I can get into your heart so we could stand here for this day. It all started with my investment in the Word of God. I'm going to tell you, and I've said this before, everything rises and falls on leadership. If the Bible's not exciting to me, how in the world is it going to be exciting to you? If I stand up here and paint some olive drab, ugly picture, and that's all you ever get is some little spiritual tidbit, what is that going to do for you? If I'm not excited about the greatest Book the world has ever seen, you never will be. So that's where it starts. It starts with me. Then it filters down in time to the leaders in this church. You can't lose your edge. The devil's going to try to get you to lose it. The devil's going to try to bring things into your life. Come on, you've got the greatest Book the world has ever seen. But it all starts with leadership.

Then the next step, my investment in you. Taking whatever time it needs, whatever we've got to do, any questions, whatever you need in your life to fix it, to make it work, to keep it going, and to help you grow. Then the third step that must happen, which will happen through this process, your investment in the Word of God. You get excited about it. Then the fourth step, Acts 1:8. Your investment in other people. There's our Jerusalem. Then our investment in other churches through our website. There's our Judea. Then our investment in other churches and pastors. There's our Samaria. Now here we are moving into the investment of the world around us. We've been faithful in everything that God has given us. You've been faithful in everything that God has called us to do. I can't think of one thing that God hasn't called us to do that we haven't stepped up to the plate.

➤ The Blessings of God will Always Override the Issues that we Face

Yet I want to say this, by no means are we a perfect church. When I drive down my street going to get on the freeway, there's a church there that is just a little bitty thing. It was a Church of Christ for a while, and it was really a kind of a cult. But somebody bought it, and it's just a little church. But on the marquee out there, it says, "Please come to church. No perfect people allowed." There is no perfect church. It's like there are no perfect Christians. Hey, I'm standing up here preaching the Word of God. You think I don't have issues? You think I don't have problems? I know you do. We all do. We're all human. We're all frail. We all make mistakes. Our feet are made of clay. We all have to deal with the issues of life as Christians in churches. Churches have to deal with them. But like the Christian life, and this is how I've always dealt with it, the blessings of God will always override the issues that we face. But when you don't put

everything in the context of patterns and principles, you lose sight of that, and then your emotions take over, and then you're done. Proverbs 25:28

28 He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

Psalms 23 tells us in the midst of Israel's tribulation, in the midst of all they were going through, God says, "You don't see it because of where you're at, but your cup runneth over." I want to tell you, you've got to be pretty spiritually blind and dead if you can't see in our church here what God has done. The great people that He's brought, the great opportunities that He's given us, the things that we've seen, just like last Friday night. The people around here recognize that this church is different; it was dead before, it's alive now. They just don't know yet what makes it alive. They will. You know what I've always followed in life? I've found this to be so true: **God will always do more for you than your enemies can do to you. But you've got to follow the principles.**

#### IV. Nehemiah 8 the Nine Gates, Nine Areas of Ministry

Looking back to the past, getting our perspective today. Many of you over the last five years have come in, so a lot of this that I'm about to get into, you know, you weren't here to see the pattern and the model that I used to get us where we're at. So give me a few moments here. You remember back when we started. The first thing I took you to was the book of Nehemiah. I explained to you how the nation of Israel went into captivity in 2 Chronicles 36. Seventy years later, the king of Persia allows a remnant of them to go back. In the book of Ezra is where they go back, but in the book of Nehemiah, Jerusalem is destroyed, it's a disaster. When Nebuchadnezzar came down, he breached the city, he destroyed the city. Ezra goes down at night and he looks at the destruction of Jerusalem, the city of God now lying in ruin. He calls the leaders of Israel and Nehemiah, and then they begin to rebuild, rebuilding the city of God. That's how I looked at the church that God called me to start. I saw Christianity like Jerusalem in rubble. I saw churches that have lost every aspect of what the Bible says they should be. I've seen God's people suffer for it because of the fact that they don't get what they need to grow spiritually, and it's a disaster.

Then I saw in a model and a pattern of the book of Nehemiah how I should build my church, the church that God called me to build. You remember that I started in the book of Nehemiah showing as they began to study, the first thing they began to do is build and put back nine gates. They started with nine gates. I remember seeing that and I remember studying that to myself, and one day I saw it and I got it. Those nine gates were the key entry points to that city. That city, Jerusalem, was the city of God. This church, you, is the body of Christ. For people to come into this church, I saw those nine gates as nine areas of ministry that any church needs to put into their church to be fruitful, nine. Nine in the Bible is a number of fruit bearers. There are nine fruits of the Holy Spirit of God, Galatians, the Galatians is a nice book in the New Testament. When Abraham was 99, he bore fruit. It's just that simple.

1. **The Sheep Gate.** That's where the sacrifice came into the gate. I started with that because the first thing a church needs to understand is the sacrifice that Christ paid for us to have what we have. Sacrifice and keeping that before you can be hard. But the first gate that he mentioned was the Sheep Gate. This church or any church can never forget the sacrifice that God made for you and for me.
2. **The Fish Gate.** "I'll make you fishers of men." This church had to be a soul-winning church.
3. **The Old Gate.** So, I teach you church history. I teach you your roots. I show you where you come from. I show you where you got your Bible. I show you all that stuff.
4. **The Valley Gate.** A church has to have a ministry that helps people that are hurting. They're going through the valleys of life.
5. **The Dung Gate.** You know what dung is. I mean, come on. In any city, you've got to have somebody to take out the refuse. We've got a dumpster out here that's full. Overflowing. Our cup may be overflowing, but so is our dumpster. It'll be empty tonight, maybe tomorrow. Then we'll fill it up again. The body of Christ has to have a way of eliminating the waste. You're going to find in any church, people come in, don't like it. Okay, I get it, understand, no problem. There's a special gate for you.
6. **The Fountain Gate.** That's the fellowship that we have.
7. **The Water Gate,** the preaching and the teaching of the Bible.
8. **The Horse Gate,** second coming.
9. **The Eastern Gate,** which is the second coming going into the millennium.

You remember that I took a lot of time, it's still on the website, and went through every one of those gates to show you that if you're going to build a church as a pastor and you want to be successful, you build these nine gates into your church for people to come in through these nine gates.

Now, we're not done yet. We see in Nehemiah 8:1-9, that once the gates are in place and the ministry is now working, seven keys to the New Testament ministry of any church. Let me read it for you. Turn over to Nehemiah chapter eight, if you're not there already. I want to read the first nine verses. This is after they set the gates. Now we see them beginning to minister.

*Nehemiah 8:1-9*

*1. And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.*

*2. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.*

*3. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate **from the morning until midday**, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.*

Now I'm not even going to get into this, but you notice how they started from the morning to noon and nobody was upset because of how long the preacher went? There's a big church here in

Kansas City a couple of years ago that a guy was applying as a candidate for pastor. You know what he ran on? He promised them that if they had him to be a pastor, none of his sermons would go past 15 or 20 minutes, that they would be out in time for their lunch. That's where we're at today

*4. And Ezra the scribe **stood upon a pulpit of wood**, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.*

*5. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; **(for he was above all the people;)** and when he opened it, all the people stood up:*

It's a pattern. Do you know why that pulpit is in the middle? If you go to a Catholic church, it is on the side. If you go to an evangelical church, it is on the side. Why is it in the middle? Because Nehemiah said it is above the people and it is in the center of this platform because the word of God is the center of everything that we do. Pattern!

*6. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.*

*7. And Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.*

*8. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.*

*9. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep: for all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.*

Now I want you to see how this lays out. This is the pattern that I used, the nine gates. When we got the nine gates in, then I went here, that was past, this is present, that I'm going to take you to the future. But look at the similarities. If you can't see our church here, you're in the wrong pew, pal. Now watch how this all lays out.

**Nehemiah 8:1**: All the people gather together. There's a unity. They say as one man because they have the mind of Christ. They have "let this mind be in them, which was also in Christ Jesus," that will always bring to your church if you have the right Bible, the unity of one man, not the pastor, the unity of one man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at **Nehemiah 8:3-4**: They paid attention to the Word of God, which was given to them, the pulpit of wood, for the purpose of preaching the Word of God. There we are.

**Nehemiah 8:5-6:** They opened a book and all the people stood up. You know why? Because they have a respect for the Word of God. There's no respect for the Word of God today. We had a guy that's in jail. We wanted to get him a Bible. He said that we couldn't get him a Bible because they don't let Bibles in the prisons anymore, because the inmates, take the pages out, roll up cigarettes, and smoke it. I guess that's holy smoke. But anyway, that's, they've only, anyway, there's no respect for the Word of God anymore. Guys get up in the pulpit and correct it. God didn't mean what He said there. He didn't know, but I know what it should say.

Look at **Nehemiah 8:7:** The older people helped the younger ones to understand the Word of God being preached. That's exactly what we do here. The discipleship one, discipleship two, lifeline groups. All of you investing your life with people and causing the people to understand the law.

Look at **Nehemiah 8:8:** The people now read the Word of God distinctly, gave the sense to understand the reading. Somebody teaches them the doctrinal, historical, and the inspirational application of the scriptures.

**Nehemiah 8:9:** When they understood what God had given them, they wept because they loved the Book. You know why they're weeping? They went into captivity seven years before and never had a Bible during that time. Now God has brought the remnant back. They're in there. God is going to rebuild it again through a biblical process. Now they have the Word of God handed to them. The Word of God was so special to them that they wept because they didn't have it. And now they've got it. God's people today, we probably all have four or five Bibles at home. Don't read any of them. If all the dust was knocked off of the Bibles on the coffee tables in Kansas City it would be a dust storm that smothered the crops. Nobody sees it for what it really is. Nobody loves it for what it really is.

That's the past. We came through the nine gates. I took probably a year getting everybody on the same page of what we had to build into this church. Those nine gates for people to come in and one for them to go out. Then when you began to grow, began to see these things of a ministry in our church.

## V. The Future of Old Paths Baptist Church

Now that brings us up from the past to the present. Now, stay in Nehemiah. After building the nine gates and then putting in the seven principles of ministry based on those nine gates, they're now ready for the next step. So are we here today. Today, after 23 years, putting in the gates, rebuilding this mindset of the church, Laodicea versus Philadelphia, building a church one person at a time. Now here we are. Look around you today. Look how many people are here. It's all because of the nine gates and the pulpit of wood, the water gate, and the ministry of helping you discern the Word of God. So many of you today love it.

Now today, because of how we built the people, and the people now represent a strong church. Look at Nehemiah 8:9-10. You see how this goes? Once the gates are in the ministry in work, and once the people are ready and everything is cooking and it's hitting on all eight cylinders, here's the future of this church.

*9. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep: for all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.*

*10. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*

Then he said unto them, and I say this unto you, you have fallen in love with that book, got my heart and my mind for what God has called us to do here. This is where we are at. We laid the gates, we got the thing cooking in spite of ourselves. Then he said unto them, "*Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared.*" For this day is holy unto our Lord, neither be you sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. Verse 10, he says, "*Go your way and eat the fat and drink the sweet.*" Fat and the sweet, building your life around the fatness of the Word of God and then the sweet things of the Word of God. That's where we're at today. Our cup runneth over. Now all that God has given you, the fat and the sweet that we were told to drink our fill and eat our fill and enjoy it. In the world, thin may be in, but when it comes to the Bible, the fat is where it's at.

### ➤ We Send Portions unto those People for Whom Nothing is Prepared

Now we send and take portions unto those people for whom nothing is prepared. There are people on our website that follow us morning, Thursday night, and everything we do because they have no church. They had no Bible till they found us. Some of them had no salvation. They got saved and you're discipling them online. They're doing this through our website because they have nothing. You see, we put the nine gates in, we got the ministry going, we did our Jerusalem, we did our Judea, we do our Samaria, and we're still doing all those things. Now we have to take to the uttermost, the people that have nothing is prepared. We have, we talked about this a couple of Thursday nights ago, this church has the key of David. The key of David, Revelation 3 and Psalms 119, was the Word of God, that they kept the word of His patience and it kept them from the hour of temptation. The hour of temptation is not going out and drinking or going out doing it. Our temptation was what hit the church where higher education told them that they didn't have a Bible that they could believe and took the King James Bible out of their life and gave it another Bible. God saved us from that temptation. You know why? Nine gates, pulpit of wood, and here we are.

Now we see our investment in people, the investment in the pastors out there and the churches pay off. That's why this year, if you're paying attention, God opened up the door for us to go to Boston and meet a preacher up there the way that I did. For what they wanted. Many of you went up there and you saw the reaction of those people, and we offered to them, they just got a brand new church. We gave them \$5,000 to help them with the church, and we opened up everything in the bookstore that they can have free from this point on. Now you know what they did with it?

We just sent a whole load up there. You know what they called back and wanted? They want to start their own printing ministry up there and put it out through New England. All because of you. It had nothing to do with me. You think I could do that by myself? No, I don't even want to do it by myself. I couldn't do it by myself. It takes laborers together, us, eating the fat, drinking the sweet. Seeing those out there for whom nothing is prepared. It's up to us. I mean, there are other guys doing it out there. I'm talking about us. I forget everybody else. Us!

We sent a group to New York. If you can't see the timing of God in these things, I went to Boston because I had to preach. I didn't get to go to New York. I really wanted to go. People up there wanted me to go, see me. But in hindsight, it was much better that I didn't go. Because the impact that happened in New York, by me not being there and you being there and all of the people and the pastor and his wife and all of those people up there taking you in and you becoming one with them, you had to step up to where I would have had to be. It would be one thing. I wasn't going to go up there and say, "Hey, this is what we're doing." But you went up there and they already knew from the website what was going on. They knew me, and it was a natural fit. Now look what we have. Oh, you ain't seen nothing yet. I'm just telling you. God's hand is in this. If you can't see it, maybe you ought to be a Episcopalian. His DNA is all over what we're doing.

All of this and these incredible things have set up our Bible conference for this year, which is going to be unlike anything we have ever done before. God bringing my ministry of 50 plus years full circle. New England and the Boston and New York is where my beginning of my public ministry was. New York was the church that Mel went to. It was the parting in my life. I've been with him for five or six years. We're in camp together. We're ministering together. We have all kinds of ideas and dreams together. Then God takes him to New York and leaves me there. You don't understand how hard it was and how God orchestrated the circumstances that I could not go to New York. How I looked at God just like we all do. Why? God, I've been with this guy for six years. He taught me everything I know. If there's anybody that can have his back and help him be there and do that, it would be me. Yet you fixed it so I can't go. He's gone. I'm here. Everything's changed. What in the world are you doing? God says, "Shut up and sit down. I'm going to send you to Kansas City." Every one of you needed a Bible. Every one of you needed to eat the fat and drink the sweet. I put nothing on myself because I'm the worst vagabond sinner the world has ever seen. Why God ever chose to use me, I have no idea. But I am going to tell you this: if I would have went to New York, we wouldn't be here today. I'd like to say that God thought so much of you that He sent you me, but I'd rather say it. God thought so little of you, He sent you me.

We're a church. We're a church of men and women. Young men, young moms and dads, older folks. We're a church of people who labor together. Here we are today. You've drank the fat, you've drank the sweet now. We've got to take it to those that don't have anything. This Bible conference is going to set up some incredible opportunities.

## VI. Bible Conference Details and Speakers

Now, I'm going to tell you right in front, I'm not expecting everybody to get on a mission trip. That's not what it's about. You're going to see how we take it one day at a time, how God will open up, He's already showed me how change has to change. Let me just explain it to you. I'll do a better job at that than trying to just tell you what's on my heart, because I'm so excited, I'll just mess it all up.

Now let me lay out this week for you. **Our conference dates are going to be December 28th, that's a Sunday, through January 4th, that's Sunday to Sunday, seven days.** We're going to build that week around, obviously, all the events that we're going to do. Bible preaching, emphasis on missions. Miles will be coming in with 30,000 scriptures, and families will start on Sunday night through Tuesday. Families with their kids, will sit down there and put the Word of God together around the fellowship of the Word of God.

God has opened up from your trip in New York, some incredible things. Some of you met a guy named **Mark Palma** up there and his wife. I met Mark 40 plus years ago up in Rochester, New York, when I was going up with Dr. Ruckman and those guys preaching at the Baptist blowouts. Mark was in charge of all of the sports ministries in that church. He came down to Kansas City where we had an elaborate sports ministry. He saw that sports ministry and then went back, and now he is a missionary to the Dominican Republic and other places. He works with churches and takes teams down there that work through sports ministries with these young people. Soccer and pickleball. He says it's crazy down there. He says he takes a team in, they work through a church, they have hundreds of kids come out. I was on the phone with him last week and he says, "Bob, I just want you to know that I patterned my thing after what I saw you do 40 years ago in Kansas City." He's going to kick our conference off on December 28th, and he and his wife are going to be here for the full week. What an opportunity for a couple of you young guys and young gals to go with him down there who are good at soccer. I've got to tell you Mark, if you're listening to this, I'm not giving anything away. I know what he's doing. First thing he asked me, he says, he didn't ask me what the church was like, where it was, what we have to eat here. Those are the first things I ask. He says, "Can I ask you a question?" I said, "Sure." He says, "Is it okay?" I said, "Yeah, ask me." He says, "Do you guys have pickleball there?" So we're going to set up three or four days where we all go play pickleball. I'm telling you right now, he's looking for you guys and gals that are really good. What an opportunity to go down there. We don't need to send 20 people down; we don't need to send 10 people down. It's just two or three of you, every time he goes down, goes down and works there and gets an understanding of that. Winning kids to Christ, that's what it's all about. You may not get him to come to church, but you get him to come to do that, and then you win them to Christ, the church takes over. Incredible. He will be here, him and his wife for the whole week for you to fellowship with.

**Luke Johnson**, North Canton, Ohio. He's the son of Sean and Tammy. Now this is a great story. Every time we go to Ohio, we go to that church and we spend basically our vacation together down there along with our families. It was probably four years ago that I got an email from Sean who was talking about our website. He was on the website, almost everybody in that church was on the website. I remember what we're talking about, but as I always do, I called him and we

talked and it just came up that he lived in North Canton. Well, my sister lives in North Canton and I stay there when we go to Ohio. I told him that, found out he was only 10 minutes away from where my sister was. So that first year we went, we spent a lot of time together, got to know his wife, his kids, he's got two boys, both married, all in the ministry together, and it was just an incredible time. Every time I would go to that church, there'd be a line of people just thanking me for the website and all the stuff that they do over there. We met Sean, and then his boy is going to go take this church, he's already went over there and the pastor's going to resign, he's old, in about a year or six months or whatever, and he's going to take it over, and we're going to help him with that. Luke's coming to preach to us that week, he's coming the whole week. In fact, Sean and his wife are coming the whole week and the other boy's coming the whole week. All because of that website that you made available. That's just the tip of the iceberg and the people are out there to follow it.

**Kevin and Kathy Baughn.** Some of your oldies may remember them from the old days. Kevin came up from Ohio, he's an Ohio State fan. I remember when he moved up here and he told me he wanted to get the Bible, learn the Bible, and he went to work with me in the ministry. We disciplined him, we trained him, we got him ready. He met Kathy, I married them, and those two became really my right-hand people in ministry. They worked with me in a counseling ministry, they were really good at everything that they did. We developed a little league ministry aside from our athletic ministry. We developed a little league ministry that probably had 40 or 50 teams in it. They would play early Saturday morning, we staffed it with coaches who were our people, the umpires were our people, and we ran the whole thing internally through my ministry there. He and his wife ran that for probably eight or nine years. Then God gave him the burden to go to the mission field. Kevin and Kathy were the first kids out of my ministry that I sent out into the ministry, and they went to Australia as missionaries. A little bit later on, her brother and his wife went to be with them. They built a solid King James church there. They were down there for years. Then several years ago, they came back to Kansas City, the church is still going strong, and he had a little church right down the road here. God united our hearts together by wild coincidence. We went to Culver's to get something to eat, and there they were at the counter, we ate with them, bought their dinner, lunch or whatever it was. We talked and talked and talked and talked and talked. Nothing really came out of that meeting but in time he called me later. This all just came about the last week. That's why I'm waiting until now to give you all this stuff because I didn't have all the pieces. There was a lot of stuff floating around out there, but then God brought it all together in the last week. Kevin is going to come and preach to us on Friday night. His wife, Kathy, is probably one of the best Bible teachers for women that you're going to find. She's going to hold a women's teaching thing on Saturday morning. It's going to be incredible. Both Kevin and Mark Palma, we're going to cut some time out, and they're going to have little seminars where on one night Kevin can do it, the next night Mark can do it, that they're going to lay out their burden for missions and where they're at, you ask questions and learn everything you can about it. Kevin, even though he's pastoring, a couple of times a year goes to Central Africa and takes teams down there, and he's getting ready. He does this a couple of times, taking a medical team down. His boy is a doctor. What an opportunity for you folks that are in the medical world to go be part of that and go down there and work in that. God is just opening up the doors. Again, it isn't where everybody here needs to sign up. God will deal through this week.

God will deal in everybody's heart, and everybody can do something, even if you don't go. Some will go down to the battle, some will stay by the stuff. But at the end result, we all part alike. They grew up in my ministry and they're an incredible couple.

**Chris Myers** will be here. He's only going to be here for that Sunday we start. His whole family's going to be with him, and he's going to be here for the first day. The next day, him and his family leave for the mission field in Laos. We'll have prayer over him and send him out.

Last but certainly not least, because of your interaction with the church in New York, one of our keynote speakers is going to be **Mike Vetch**, pastor of Bible Church in Staten Island. Him and his wife are coming down, and he's going to be preaching twice. He's going to kick it off Friday night, and him and Luke are going to have two sermons preaching on the last Sunday, and it'll be an incredible thing. Mike is probably the most incredible pastor I have ever met in my life. He's got incredible balance. He knows the Bible. He is extensively involved in missions, and he's probably the best balanced out pastor I have ever met in my life. I am so excited that he's going to be here, that you can meet him, hear him, and we can deepen that relationship between his church and our church. It's going to be incredible. Seven speakers, and there's going to be a host of out-of-town people coming in. Seven key speakers that will give us what God has for us.

You'll be reminded that I have built this church around two concepts. One is families ministering together, and the second one is that the local church is the training ground to train you to get ready for ministry. Everybody coming in has went through that process. Not necessarily with me, but through the local church, their families are ministering together, and they were trained through a New Testament local church, and it's incredible.

## VII. Conference Schedule

Now here's how the week is going to go.

- Sunday morning we'll kick off our preaching, and that will be Mark. Miles will arrive sometime that Sunday, and we'll begin to set up to do the Bibles, and we'll start that night. I'll give you more details later.
- Sunday night, Monday night, and Tuesday night we'll be putting the Bibles together and bringing them up here as we always do.
- Wednesday night is New Year's Eve. Wednesday night is a pivotal night for us. I don't want to leave the kids out of this, and everybody is going to be here, and it's going to be a great time of fellowship. So like last year, we're going to take all of our kids and everybody, and we're going to go to Dave and Buster's and spend the night, let the kids have fun. Last year we fellowshiped, we talked, we laughed. I want you to get to know the guys and their wives and their families that are coming in. We have made great investments in their ministries. Now allow them to make an investment in ours.
- Friday starts our preaching and our Bible conference, and Mike Vetch will kick that off.
- Saturday morning, Kathy Baughn will do the ladies meeting.
- Saturday night, her husband Kevin will preach.

- Then Sunday morning, Luke Johnson and Mike Veach will both finish up. We'll end with two preaching services with Luke and Mike. We'll start the service early, we'll cut down everything, and we're going to end this thing with some really good preaching.

It's a week packed like camp for us to enjoy the fellowship of some of the key men in Christianity today and their families. Along with putting the 30,000 Bibles together and the preaching, families, putting the Word of God, we will have many opportunities to hang out with these men and their wives and their families, and we'll learn from them.

Year by year, for 23 years now, I've labored in my field to bring us where we're at. Like any church, any pastor would say this, in those 23 years, I've seen a lot of people come and go. But in those 23 years, I've seen a lot of people come and grow. That's where we're at. We've ate the fat, we drank the sweet. Now it's time to take all that we have and send portions to them who have nothing is prepared. December 28th, Sunday to Sunday, to January 4th, God will bring it all together.

### ➤ Bob Asks Three Things of Us in Preparation for the Missions Conference

I've never asked you for anything. I've answered and gave you everything that you have asked for to the best of my ability. But I've never really asked you as a church for anything. I figured that if you grow, things take care of themselves, and they do. So in the 23 years we've been together, not one time did I ever ask you for anything. But I'm going to break that today, and I'm going to ask you for three things. Because this week is going to be a defining moment for our church.

1.) Block this week off and let nothing get in the way and make this week for you and your family a priority.

There's a lot of little things we've got to work out yet. I've given you the basic outline. We're going to have it made up into a schedule like they do for the outline of Psalms. So you'll have it. Jamie's going to put something together that's going to give you more details as we go through. But today I wanted you to hear it so you can get everything ready to go. I'm just simply, simply, if you're a part of my ministry and my vision and the work here with me side by side, if we're laborers together, make this week happen in your life. Hey, when I called Mike Veach, after what you guys impacted him up there, when I called Mike Veach, and there's no stopping Mike. Less than a year ago, he was down south someplace riding a motorcycle, and he slid on a gravel and pinned his leg into a guardrail and it cut his leg off. So he had to go through rehab, get a peg leg or whatever he's got, an artificial leg, you know? It wasn't three months later, he's on a mission trip. Nothing stops this guy. This is the kind of people I want my people to hear how he preaches. I called him and I said, "Mike," I said, and I asked him, and it's because of what you guys did up there. He says, "Bob, I'll do whatever it takes." I said, "I've got some things going on, I will do whatever I have to do to make sure I'm there with your people." Now here's a guy who, I know he's got Sundays flying down and do a wedding in Arkansas, flying back up and then got to fly out here. I know how busy he is, but if a man who's a pastor with the busyness of his church

would say, "I'll do whatever I've got to do to be there with your people," we need to do whatever we've got to do to be here to hear him preach. It's just that simple. I'm asking him, I'm giving it plenty of time. This week will not only be a defining moment for our church, but it's going to be a defining moment for all of us. Everybody can be a part of our future.

## 2.) I want you to begin to pray and bathe this upcoming week in prayer.

Your lifeline groups, your personal prayer life, our public prayer, I will keep it before you. I'm going to have a countdown week by week till that time. There are so many pieces to this week that God has just this week put it all together. That's why I haven't said anything. I didn't know anything for sure. But we now have a countdown of nine weeks till our week gets here. As 1 Thessalonians 5:16 says, I'm asking our people to pray without ceasing. You guys who live together in your little domiciles, have prayer groups, have prayer meetings for this week. You're a discipleship people, disciple, but spend some time praying together for this. Your lifeline groups, make it part of that. In everything that we do, let's put this at the forefront and we pray for it, because God's going to do some tremendous things. So block that week off, the prayer.

## 3.) I'm calling on our church to make the month of November, December, two months of sacrificial giving.

The number one gate, the Sheep Gate. We did this last year, and I want to take care of every minister, every pastor, every missionary. We've got 30,000 scriptures to pay for. I want to give love offerings; I want to help support them. I want to cover their food, their lodging, everything. Last week, in the two months that we did this, we raised \$100,000. That's nothing for this church. As the Bible says, "to whom much is given, much is required." God has given us what He has here. God has been a blessing in all of our lives. Having these men and women here for this week and helping them financially will set up their going back to their work, ready to do the Word of God and prepare our work to reach the world.

### ➤ Our Pattern for Sacrifice is Found in 2 Samuel 24:24

Our pattern for sacrifice is simply found in the definitive of 2 Samuel 24:24. The story of David buying the threshing floor. You know in the story, keep it quick and short, David is now king. David is told to build an altar on this particular spot. Well, a guy owns the land. He's got a threshing machine on it. He threshes the wheat there. Now, looking forward, this same spot where this threshing machine is that David was told to buy and build an altar is where the temple was going to be built when Solomon builds the temple. It's also where the temple is going to be built in the millennial reign of Christ, right on that spot. Right now, if you go to Jerusalem, the Muslims have it. It's called the Dome of the Rock, and it's a Muslim shrine right on the spot. Where so many hundreds of years ago, David went to this guy and he says, "I want to buy this piece of ground for the Lord. I want to build an altar here." The guy says, "Well, King David, you don't have to buy it, take it. You're a good king, you've been good to me, take it." David said, "No, no, no, I want to buy it." He said, "No, I don't want to take your money. I want to buy it, I don't want you to buy it. I want to give it to you." In 2 Samuel 24:24, here's the principle. David

says, "I can't do that because I'm going to make a sacrifice and an offering to the Lord. For me to make a sacrificial offering to the Lord, it has to cost me something." That's where we're at.

*24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.*

I'm telling you, we've got some tremendous people coming in, and I want to make sure when they leave, what a way to start 2026. It all comes down to you understanding the sacrifice that God made for you. The sacrifice that this church has made to give you what you have and then to put it out through the world. Now we have the men and the women here, and I'm asking you to take those two months and make it two months of sacrificial giving that we can take care of every one of these guys and their wives and their families coming in and pay for everything. When we do camp, you've never heard me ask for a dime. You sponsor people, but we pay for everything. It probably cost us 40, \$50,000 for camp, and I don't care. We pay for all the counselors, so it doesn't cost you anything, you're taking time off from work. We do everything we need to do, the stuff that we feed them is, we pay for everything. We pay for the speakers coming in, we don't ask you to give a dime, you know why? Because this church needs to make an investment in your kids. Now I'm asking you to make an investment on this church's future. God's been so good to us. Every one of you, almost without exception, every one of you, go look in the mirror, your cup runneth over. Now it's time for the overflow to touch the lives of somebody else.

Over the years, those very discipleship lessons that you disciple people with, they've been translated in almost every language, we've sent teams to Australia, Romania, Hungary, Central America, Korea, Africa, North, Central and South. I mean to Ukraine, Brazil, Germany, Haiti, the Philippines, all were translated, and it's all because those people needed something. Now here we are, 40 some years later, full circle. We need to reach out and give to those who nothing is prepared. For 23 years, I looked forward to this very day. I watched God develop it slowly. I watched Him bring the circumstances in. This is why I called everybody together. I needed a day to have you clearly understand with perception and understanding where we started. How God brought us through those nine gates and then through those nine gates, God gave us a ministry. Through that ministry, God has brought us now and grown us up to a church this size that can reach out to the world and all that God has given us, all the Bible you've got, all of the fat, all of the sweet. I gave it to you for one reason and one reason only. That now we can take it as people that don't have it. That's where we're at, and we can do it through these guys. Allow these guys to use us. For those of you as God moves in your heart, we've got a team going to Costa Rica here, in December. That's our entry level to missions. Those 16 or 17 people will come back on fire and get everything ignited for what we're going to do. It's only the beginning. When Mark gets here with the sports ministry, when Kevin gets here with what he's doing in Africa, and we see what Mike's doing in the Philippines. There'll be opportunities for you as small groups or one or two people or just one person to go be with them and to really bring back and show us what God is doing, but us making an investment in their ministry. So there it is, you have it. Nothing more to be said. You put that week on your calendar, you pray for it, and then it's look deep inside of

all that God has given us that we take care of our missionaries. The countdown from today, nine weeks. I'm going to keep that before you, just like if you went on the news, they would tell you it's four hours and 13 seconds to when the Chiefs play. Forget that. Nine weeks till God takes us to the next level. I'm going to the next level. I want to take all of you here with me.