

I. Introduction and Family Testimony

This is retiring and wonderful work that you've always done, and you're staying now. All of this put me ahead about two years in work, just running around like ants. I know at the beginning some of you were like, "We came here to work hard?" Yes, we need you to work hard, and you did. I appreciate that very much. You did good, and I invite you to come back. I know you want to go to other countries, but please come back to Costa Rica. You already know the road; the trail is already marked. Keep coming back. I have whole bathrooms to build and a whole full year to build. I'm like, this church here, you have all done great with this church. It feels very nice in here. You have all done a lot of work. It looks wonderful.

I want to reintroduce my family if they can stand up, and I'll tell you a little bit about each one of them. I'm going to have Julio get up here and give a testimony of salvation because the pastor said I have a little bit more time.

My son, Ethan, is a Sunday school teacher. He directed kid camp for the first time this year, so I'm very proud of him. They have been camp kids for years since my wife, Nina. Her name is Andrea Lóz, but we call her Nina. She is not my daughter; she is my wife. Actually, I'm only a year older than her. I'm just kidding. But she is a tremendous help in the ministry. Her gift is counseling and running the kitchen at camp and doing a lot of the grunt work. But she's an amazing counselor. I'll counsel one person a week, maybe. She'll be doing ten at the same time. I don't know how she does it. God has just given her a gift for that.

This is my daughter, Emily. She's eight months pregnant, due July 14th. She's 22, right? 22. 21. You said 22 yesterday. All right, 21. She got younger. Emily is a Sunday school teacher, has been a Sunday school teacher for years, and a camp leader as well. We are missionary kids; we're all born in Costa Rica, including myself.

This is Julio. Julio Caesar is his name. Julio Cesar, a very common name in Costa Rica. He's 26, right? Yes, 26. Julio is one of our preachers in our church, one of our Bible school professors, and he's also the director, or the youth pastor. They do a great work. So you all can sit down.

We have left a void in our church, and a challenge, because a whole different team has to take over for us. I don't call them; I don't bother them, and they've been doing great. Pray for them. Our church in Costa Rica, if you saw it, will run about 100, a little bit over 100 sometimes. But just pray for them this morning. I don't know. I'll have my kids. I want to have Julio also give a testimony after we sing. But I want them to come up, and we want to sing one song that means a lot to us because we're still in a worship mode. Ethan, could you get the guitar over there?

This song was written by a gentleman, and it means a lot because my dad won him to the Lord. It's over there. In his testimony, he said he was a very hateful person, just a mean, ugly person, hated everybody. He was confronted with the gospel, and when he found out that God forgave him, even of all his sins, it moved him. It kind of knocked him down. He says he couldn't believe

that God would forgive such a bad person as he was. But when he got saved, he was a different man. I never met his ugly side; he just talks about it. But he wrote this song, and it's called, "I Am So Unworthy Lord." We'll sing it for you in Spanish and English so you can get a kind of a feel of what our music is like. Thank you.

[Congregation sings "I Am So Unworthy Lord"]

I've really enjoyed singing with this church. You guys really do sing out. This is the best time we've ever sang that one, just because you inspired us to sing better. So thank you for that.

II. Julio's Salvation Testimony

I'm going to ask Julio to get up here real quick and give his testimony about his salvation and what he does in Costa Rica. I think you'll like that.

Good morning. Buenos días. I'm not very fluent in English, so I wrote down my testimony. So I'm going to read it for you all. I love when you say "you all," but that's another thing. Sorry, sorry, sorry.

When I first started going to the church, it was because some of my friends from school invited me to a church activity. Honestly, at first, I only went because I love to play games and sports, and they had food. So that's the only thing that I went for. They have really good food. Over time, I started to like it and began attending the church on Wednesday. I remember that Mr. Donny, my father-in-law, used to hit the pulpit when he was preaching. I remember sitting right there, and he would do like this, and I would get scared a lot of times. He starts, how do you say, "start with"? Yes, well, he scared me a lot.

One day, during a service, I decided to pay attention so I would not get scared. That day he preached, and I felt like he sent me straight to hell. I remember that day, and he gave an invitation. When he finally finished his preaching, I went forward. They explained salvation to me, and when I went home, I prayed and I received Christ into my heart.

Sometime later, I felt the desire to learn more about the Bible because I didn't know any of the stories or much about God's Word. I started talking with my father-in-law and asking him questions. There was something in my heart that kept stirring, stirring at me. I remember we were in camp, and they made an invitation for those who wanted to give their lives to the Lord. For me, it was fun because they had a lot of games in camp, and I was like playing every game and then ready or not to play every game. I just said, but that's more colloquial Spanish. Let's continue.

I remember they called me, and they wanted to talk with me, and I said, "Hey, but we have soccer now. Why don't you wait a little bit?" They didn't want to wait. So they called me, and they talked with me about the seminary and how I could give my heart to the Lord. That's what I did. I decided to obey that calling and enter the seminary and gave my heart to serving the Lord. I am so thankful with the Lord in this moment because I always say that I stole his daughter, and I'm really, really happy about that. She's pregnant now. She's expecting my little girl, and I'm happy. I'm really grateful with the Lord, and I'm happy to be here.

I don't think I've in the past thought about coming to the States or anything. I'm really happy in Costa Rica, but now I'm here, and I'm happy to see some faces that I know go to Costa Rica, and I'm happy to be here serving the Lord and trying to help them with all the things that He wanted to do. So that's it. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks for following me.

III. Ministry in Costa Rica

Thank you, Julio. Julio and Ethan are my left and right, my right arm in Costa Rica, really. They work very much physically and spiritually. I'm going to stand here because I can see, does this work?

If I do this small presentation, I know that most of you have seen everything we have there in Costa Rica. You've probably seen a ton of videos. So I'm going to go into a little bit of the history too, of how it all started. As I said, Costa Rica is our country. We were born there, all of us. I'm a second-generation missionary, and Costa Rica is in Central America, about five million people, mostly Catholic, but very secular as well. A lot of atheism is coming in; it's another religion, really.

My dad went down to Costa Rica in 1972. He drove down in a 1960 Dodge pickup truck. They graduated from Tennessee Temple. They were just very young. My parents are originally from West Virginia, from Boone County, and they grew up in the same hall or went to the same high school. They took off to Costa Rica with my older siblings, Jonathan and Daphne. We were four in total. They went to language school there, and Costa Rica has got one of the best Spanish language schools.

When they were done with language school for three years, they went into Nicaragua because that's where God had called Dad to go. But after a while, the war was starting to break down, a civil war with the Contras and the Sandinistas. This is like the 1970s. They had to flee, and Mom got really sick as well. She was pregnant with my sister Amber. They went back to Costa Rica and could not go back. So Dad started a church in a town that had a big refugee camp for the Nicaraguans. There were 5,000 Nicaraguans in that refugee camp that he would preach to them. Our little town was only 2,000 people, and people in town in Costa Rica were thinking that Nicaraguans were going to take us over. So that's just a little history about my parents.

This is our church today. This is what they went to work on, and we have a lot of different projects that we need to be building. This church was started by my father and I in 2000. That's when the Lord called me, or I answered the invitation, to go to Costa Rica and start a church with a serious Bible college. I didn't want to do that at first. I was working in Atlanta, Georgia, with my brother-in-law, starting Hispanic churches, and I was fine. I was invited to go to Costa Rica because of my building skills. Dad was saying, "Well, you can come and help me build it. We want to build something that will last, that will produce men." I couldn't get away from that idea.

The only thing I didn't want to do was work under my dad because Dad is a type of missionary that they call "bulldozer missionaries." They just go in and break up everything where nobody would expect anything to ever happen. They make it happen. They're just that type of generation, kind of like your pastor here, just because he's the same age as you, brother. I see my dad in him

a little bit. But I talked to my pastor, I prayed, I talked to many other pastors, which is what you should do if you feel called. You should go to your pastors, and you should start praying, you start talking. I just couldn't get away from that idea, and everybody said, "It's going to be hard to work with your dad." Yeah, I know what it is. I know what it's like. He built half of his ministry on me and my brother's back. So I went there, and I'd never looked back. It's been the most wonderful thing that I've ever done in my life, 25 years now.

Before, I was just working in construction. No purpose, no fulfillment. I mean, I was making way more money than I am even now, and there's nothing in that. There's no joy in that; it's very temporal. But when I went to Costa Rica, everything changed. So we started this church together, and then the next year, we started the Bible college.

This is some of the pictures of our churches, some of our men. We basically took a Bible school into the Sunday school classes. We don't just, the whole church takes Bible school classes. I was surprised that this church kind of does the same thing because this is very rare that people are interested in training, that pastors are interested in seriously training everybody in church.

This is some of the pictures of what we do. My wife also writes Christmas plays. It's a wonderful job. She's been doing it for almost 20 years. She does Christmas plays, and this is a way to get Catholics in. Catholics won't get near a Protestant church. Of course, we're not Protestant, but they won't get near us. But if you have a Christmas play with baby Jesus or anything that has to do with it, they'll come. We fill up that whole building and preach the gospel. We've had people saved, and it's a great ministry.

This is some of the youth. Three years ago, I put, how long have you been youth pastor? Three years? Three years, they had three youth. Churches go through cycles. We just graduated a bunch of young adults, and then they became adults, got married, and they run the church. But then the youth was like three people, and I said, "All we can do is just start praying, start visiting, start praying, start inviting." And this is the youth now. So they've really grown. We've got a lot of young kids. Some of these kids are leaders at camp and now Sunday school teachers, and we get them involved.

Now Miles does this for us. He brings his Bibles. Now they're already put together. So what we do is put them in a little bag because it rains six months out of the year. It rains, and the bags get wet. I mean, the tracts would get wet and destroyed. So I put them in these bags with a little pamphlet of our church. Also, the dogs, everybody has dogs. Everybody lives in a cage in Costa Rica. Their house is like a jail cell, and there's a big dog inside, and you put that tract in that little crack of the door, and the dog will grab it and rip it up. So these little dogs are demon-possessed down here or something, and I'm there exercising these dogs. One day a dog just came up to me, grabbed it real politely in his mouth, and he took it to his owner. I'm like, "Man, if they were all like this." But they have a hard time tearing that up, so that works really good. We do that on Wednesday nights. That's kind of our Bible night. We pray, and we put Bibles in packages and get it done. They really like to do that.

This is some of the work that we've been doing. Ethan, some of my nephews, my wife, Ethan, and my nephew over there, we laid all that floor. Julio will help too. I love grabbing these young

guys and just teaching them, and it has to do with how do you form people? You don't just work, but you're there training them. You always have to be in discipleship mode, teaching and training as they work.

This is a group that was down there. Is this your group? No, this is a group from Florida that came down and helped us with the kitchen. Now Miles is in a lot of these pictures. He's coming down all the time now. I don't know, he probably ended up being a missionary there in Costa Rica.

This is Camp Joy. Camp Joy is 43 years old. Dad started this because he was a coal miner kid that went to the coal miner camps in West Virginia. Dad said that those were, they were not Christian camps, and they were more Christian than they are today, a lot of camps. But he comes from that type of coal mining, and he also was with Camp Joy back with Word of Life back when it started, and that's why he named it Camp Joy.

There are some of the pictures. This is amazing. We keep a very tight schedule. We don't have any resting periods. The phones go to a safe; nobody can have their phones during the week. We can do that still. It takes them a day or two to detox from their technology, and then like Wednesday, they start talking to each other. They act like normal kids that you would see back in the 80s. I mean, everybody talked to each other. But it's a wonderful ministry. That last picture that you saw there, these are the ones that got saved this year in January. They all got a Bible, and we had some saved in kids' camp too. Then we would have camp next month, and we had to cancel. This is the first time we've ever canceled a camp in many, many years because nobody was there. All the leadership was doing something else, and we were here in the States. So it hurts us very deeply that we can't do our own camp. We love it.

These are some of the people that give their life to the Lord, and we grabbed those guys. Julio was talking about, they were playing a game at camp, and Dad took them all aside, the men that gave their life to the Lord, and talked to them about Bible college and giving yourself to the ministry. Julio wanted to go play. He's like, "I already gave my life to the Lord. I want to go play soccer." He's just a teenager. But Dad would do that. We take them, those guys that are serious about making decisions, immediately take them. We don't just let them go home. We also send them back to their pastors with a letter, a recommendation, or a letter or a comment. "This kid is really serious. Take him under your wing." Campers are trampling as well to get into the...

These are two churches, and all of our leadership team, our whole church, is involved in camp. Everybody, just like here. I'm preaching to the choir here. So this is wonderful to find a church that's similar, a similar philosophy. But this is what they do. They get muddy. They get, we have three services a day, and we preach them the Bible. I try to get the best speakers I can find. We also have in the morning, service with the, when they wake up. But here are just some of the pictures, some of the music. We were so, I guess it's a West Virginia thing. Kids say, "Can I bring my guitar?" "Bring a guitar." And they're all going to bring guitars and sing and bring whatever instrument you can bring. They love that. Our camp is not like a church where everything's so organized and perfect. No, camp is just come and just praise the Lord, bring what you can. They

love that. Sometimes we'll have eight or ten guitarists there, and it's just a wonderful experience for them.

This is my mom. She is still with me. My dad is buried in Costa Rica. He died in 2020. My mom is still serving the Lord. She's a musician, and she trains my music directors. She won this boy to the Lord, this camp, which was amazing. This kid just walked up to her, started talking to her, and she questioned his salvation. He started crying. This is my nephew's cousin, which is amazing. His family is a wreck, but he got saved at camp, and it was a blessing.

This is some of the pictures of our kids' camps. Kids' camps are awesome. Kids never get tired. It makes it a little bit harder for us as leaders. Teen camp is kind of laid back. Not really, but kids' camp is full 24 hours, moving and playing. These are some of the pictures.

This is what the building looked like before you guys came down. We covered all that in sheetrock and put the tile down. But this is a seminary. We started the seminary in 2002. My dad, myself, my older brother, and these other pastors and missionaries, we just all got together and said, "We need to form a Bible College." Our philosophy is like, we need to get pastors and missionaries to be the teachers of our men because we want to form what your pastor has on his office sign there, "four-wheel drive missionaries." We want to be able to preach the Bible and also take a shovel and dig a ditch if you have to build a roof or a church. So that's what we did for 14 years. There are 17 men on the field. Well, actually 16, one died a few years ago, but there are 16 men that came out of this. There are probably 60 that came through our school, but there are 16 that are full-time in the ministry today. And those four, or some of those men, they're still there.

This is the ordination service. These are some of the men that we have. If you see that picture way up there where they stand, there's a building back there. The mountain came in and tore that building down. That was the first time I built that Bible College. The building that you saw when you went to Costa Rica is the third building there. So there's been a lot of damage, a lot of water damage and cave-ins. But this is what we want to do. I want to train the nationals and go with them to start churches. There are probably, Dad said he started maybe in his lifetime 17 churches. These students that Dad has trained and all of us together, there are more than 25 or 30 churches amongst them. So this is it. This is what missionary is about. This is what missionary life is about. I call it a full vision. You preach the gospel, they get saved, you disciple them, you go with them and start ministries with them, and then you die and go to heaven, and we graduate, which is beautiful.

There are some of the pictures of them working, training in four-wheel drive. There are some of the pictures of our graduations. After COVID, look how we only have two left. The school closed down, and when Dad passed away, it was kind of the time that everybody went their own direction. So the men that he trained, we started this year again with the Bible College, but our church people are running the Bible College, which I think is wonderful.

This is what the place looked like when we took it. That was a coffee plantation built in the 1930s. That building is completely gone, and I used to live in the top floors up there. This is what it looks like now, after 25 years. I can tell you that we work with our fingernails, literally work.

We don't have heavy equipment or a lot of tools. It's all been backbreaking work with the students, with my dad, and other missionaries, and mostly me. I'm the builder in charge.

We want to build, this is the kitchen on this right here. We want to finish that as a kitchen and entrance foyer. Then I want to build some bathrooms over there where that little building with the rusted roof is. I need to build some bathrooms because all we have is two little bathroom stalls for over 100 people. Then when we have camps, there are 150 kids, so we need these bathrooms built pretty soon.

I came to the States for two needs that we have. We've been working here for 25 years. We sit in the Central Valley where there are over two million people, and we have access to a lot of people, camps, and Bible College. But we haven't paid off this property. I said, "Lord, You own the whole world, and I'm going to trust that You fulfill Your promises. You said You're going to give us everything we need." I'm raising \$75,000 to pay off this property, and we needed to get this burden off of us. It wasn't something that I did in my generation in the past. I don't like debt that way, but I just said, "Lord, can You just pay us off so we can take this money and put it into the ministry that we want to put into? We want to put it in different areas." So this is why I'm here.

The other need is my wife needs a heart ablation where they go in and burn the circuit. She needs that done. We're going to get this done in Mexico, which is much cheaper than here. We don't have any life, any insurance here. We do have the third-world country insurance in Costa Rica, which gives you an ultrasound two years after you're pregnant, so it doesn't work really good. So we're waiting actually, we're in line to get the ablation done in Costa Rica, but there are only two guys that will do it, and I don't think they'll do it. She needs it soon, and that's going to be around \$7,000. So just so you know, these are our needs. This is one of the reasons why we're here. We're also trying to raise a little bit more support, so pray for us, pray for us. I know God has been amazing so far, and if He doesn't give it to us, we'll keep working because we're already content and happy. I wouldn't do anything else in my life than what I'm doing now. I don't need money, and I don't need things. I just need the Lord, and He provides everything we need. So this is, in a nutshell, our ministry.

Does anybody have any quick questions about what we're doing? If not, I'll be around, and we'll eat some barbecue later. So let's go to our Bible. We're going to be in Romans 12, chapter one, I mean, chapter 12, verse one. Chapter 12, verse one and two.

Romans 12:1-2

1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The title of my message is "A Missionary Recovery Message" or "Missionary Life." Read John 10:10.

John 10:10

10. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

In 2018, I was in a church, a supporting church in Florida, and I had preached a message on the urgency of the gospel and how important it is to send out men, how important it is to preach, how important it is to be in constant gospel mode. When you see people outside in the world, you need to know how to witness to them. We need to be experts in sharing the gospel. It's not difficult to share the gospel. I know that sometimes we're shy, and we might be embarrassed because we don't know everything. I tell people, "Start with your testimony. Start with your testimony. How did you get to know the Lord and tell them about it?"

The church that we were there, I was preaching, and I guess, I don't know if he felt, maybe the guy that raised his hand, he may have felt, I don't know what he felt, but he raised his hand after I preached, which is kind of odd because normally you're done preaching and you sit down. But this guy raised his hand and started talking. He said, "Why don't you missionaries come back to the States and help our country rebuild its Christianity?" I looked at the pastor, and he was annoyed, and I was in shock. I didn't know what to answer. I just answered, "Well, God called me to Costa Rica, and God called you here." I don't know if that was the right answer. I should have been more gracious, but this is the thing. I feel every time I come back to the States, I ask, "Lord, give me a message for the United States." I don't know what's going on here. Then I see people say something like that, which is shocking.

Then I realized that, yeah, the U.S. is in bad shape in a lot of ways, and in a lot of ways, it is not. You're still the number one sending missionary country in the world. You open up a map on Google Maps, and you just press in "Baptist church," and you'll have 30 Baptist churches in a 10,000 populated town. That doesn't happen anywhere on Earth, anywhere. You have universities that are just mind-boggling, Baptist universities. You don't have any universities in the rest of the world like that. So my thought is everywhere is bad. Everywhere, everybody's sinful, and everywhere people are unsaved, not just here. So if you feel like our country's going in the wrong direction, the world has been going in the wrong direction ever since Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden, and that's just how it is. So we need to get on the ball about some things, and I want to share with you just something very simple.

IV. The First Missionary Field: Your Personal Life

The first thing that we need to do, if we want to do it right, if we want to start serving the Lord and getting things straightened out in our life, you have to start with Jesus Christ. It all starts standing. We sang a song, "Standing on the Promises" as well. We started a song about Jesus being the rock of our life. You're not going to do anything, anything in the ministry for the Lord, if it's not first through Jesus Christ and founded on Jesus Christ.

The first thing you need is salvation. I don't know everybody here, but if you're not saved, today's a great day to believe in Jesus Christ and get the gift of salvation. He'll give it to you; it's a gift. There's nothing we have to do to earn it. So before you start anything and before you go

anywhere, take off running, doing something, you need Jesus Christ first. You need to understand everything you do is for Him and His glory, everything. He sustains everything. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." His salvation is a true gift, and it's the best gift that anybody can have.

If you are saved and you live a life as a son of God, you need to have a goal, and your goal is the person of Jesus Christ. So we run towards Him; we are in a race. The first thing we're going to see when we close our eyes and die and open them again is Jesus Christ coming in the clouds. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and then we are caught up in the air if we stay, if we're here that long. So we're going to see, this is the first thing we're going to see after death is Jesus.

Are you running towards Jesus? How is your life, your race towards Jesus Christ? Because sometimes it could be towards a religion. Sometimes it could be towards a tradition or a methodology or some pastor, some big leader. We don't want people to run towards us. We're the same as you; we're in the race as you are. So you need to have Jesus Christ in your sights if you're going to serve Him because He's going to be the King in this whole universe one day. I already asked the Lord, "Lord, I want Costa Rica. When I'm in Your millennial kingdom, I want to be over, can I be the king or one of the kings of Costa Rica? I want to fix the country. They have terrible roads and just a terrible health system." I just want that; I want to be getting ready for that.

I just want to ask you a question, and this is maybe an odd question, but just to give you a little test and put you on the spot. If we're going to reign and be priests and reign with Jesus Christ in His kingdom, if Donald Trump showed up at your house with all his limousines and his security team, you know, and he walks into your house because you're going to open the door. He's going to walk in, he sits down, he says, "Listen, Luke or Logan, I need you to run everything for about a month. I have to disappear. Here are the keys." The guys walk in with a big suitcase and the red button, you know, the big button. It's like, "Here you go, right here." And you're holding that thing, and you're like, and then all your generals walk in, and they sit on your couch, and they're like, "Okay, Mr. President, what are the orders? What do we do at the Hormuz Strait? What's next?" You're probably going to pee in your pants because people say, "Oh, I do this, I do that." No, no, you wouldn't. If Jesus comes today, everything's going to go really quickly after He comes, very quickly. We're supposed to be ready to reign with Him in the future. He's our King; we're going to be His bride. Are you ready to reign? Are you ready to fix this world? It's going to be a mess after tribulation. It's going to be an awful mess. So our goal, our race, is toward Jesus Christ. You need to think that way because when we get saved, we think eternally anymore. We have to think eternally in the future. This world is soon going to be over, soon going to be over.

So we need to start somewhere, and I want to take this excitement that you have for missions. I was reading about the Moravian missionaries, wow, amazing. You went to Costa Rica; now you want to go other places. That's the way we're going to be. You want to go other places. That's exciting. But the first missionary field that you need to work on is your own personal life. That's the first missionary field. This is a missionary recovery message. We're going to help you set some standards.

Jesus Christ, He's our foundation. He's the One we run to, the One we're going to serve one day, and He wants to transform us like Himself. He wants us to be like Him. How do you do this? Well, you have to change. You have to change. You don't act Christian. A lot of Christians and pastors act. They have this front of holiness, but then their lives are a mess, and they're monsters at their house. They mistreat their family, but they come to church, they're like saints.

Okay, so the first missionary field we're going to work on is yourself. You have to start with you because there are also the Christians that take off and they try to save the world, but their own personal life is awful. Their own life is miserable, depressed, and taking pills. They don't work on their own life. They don't work on changing and getting rid of sin and getting rid of carnal things. This is very common, and a lot of people, a lot of Christians, will hide behind the wrong battle. You'll be fighting the wrong battle and running the wrong race. There are a lot of things you can get involved with. This is America. Americans, I see, and I'm dual citizenship, and I've learned to be more relaxed about a lot of things, not my morals or my doctrine, but things that aren't important. I see in the U.S., people see you as very intense. In politics, you're very intense and in a lot of different things. You're always fighting something.

I challenge you and I ask you, are you fighting the right battle? Because all the other battles that people fight are just noise. They're noise. They're not worth fighting. I'm talking political stuff. I'm talking all the little social things that come up. Is that worth fighting? Is that worth spending all your time or dying on that "hill type" battles? Some are. Of course, the Word of God is fighting for Jesus Christ and the gospel, and His doctrines and His absolute truths, yes. But there are a lot of other little things that take our time, our energy, our money, that we shouldn't be fighting. I find that a lot of people will be very debate, they'll go into debates and arguments and stuff that's political and stuff that's just not that important in the eternal scheme of things, and they don't grow spiritually. So you can actually become a very hateful Christian, not a loving and merciful and forgiving son of God, but a person that's always wanting to be right, always wanting to be heard, always wanting to be seen, always wanting to be correct, and nobody ever beat me in a debate. And yet your spiritual life, the one you should be working on changing and transforming, just is dead.

So the first mission field is our personal life, and are we more and more like Christ or not? Yet what you think, well, Jesus always knocked people down, and yeah, but He was right with certain people. But I guarantee you, He wasn't like that 24 hours every day. I can imagine Jesus Christ as a happy, pleasant, wonderful person to be around. Now, if you put Him on a spot like they did, like the Pharisees did, yeah, you're going to be knocked down by God. So set your sights on Jesus Christ and be more and more like Him. What are your goals? What are your battles? How is your race? What kind of race are you running? Where are you running, who are you running with, and what are you running for? Are you growing spiritually? I ask you, when was the last time you changed something? That you said, "Oh man, I used to be this way, and I'm no longer this way. I'm going to be like Christ. I'm going to be forgiving. I'm not going to be bitter anymore. I'm going to forgive and give it over to the Lord." When was the last time you changed something? Because you're supposed to be changing every morning. You have your moment with the Lord, or every day you have a moment when you're supposed to be changing

these things. So the first mission field that you need to work on is yourself and your relationship with Jesus, and if you're running towards Him and serving Him and being more and more like Him.

V. The Second Missionary Field: Your Home

The second mission that you should work on before you go out and save the world is your own home. How is your home? Is it in order? Is your home a place where kids can be raised in the admonition and the Word of the Lord? Is it a good place for that? Is it a pleasant spiritual place, or is it always a war or a battle or just something very messy?

I used to hate making up my bed. I hated it. I thought it was a waste of time. There's this guy, Jordan Peterson, the psychologist, I don't subscribe to them, but he would say something to young people. He said, "The first thing you need to do, young generation, is get up and make your bed. If you can make your bed, then you can start doing the chores, and one thing after another, you can conquer the world." Of course, that's not the Christian way. We get up, and we have our time with the Lord if you're doing it right in the morning, and you get up and make your bed. But I hated it. I don't know how many years, how many years did I go through our marriage and I didn't want to make the bed? I'm a builder. I can put on two sacks of concrete, walk up some stairs, pick stuff up off the ground that weighed more than I do. But I hated to make up the bed. It was just the wrong angle to make. Oh, my back would hurt. I was like, "This is a waste of time. Won't we put some kind of, I even envision better ways that the bed will make up itself, like an inflated, inflated, you know, and just, I don't know."

But after a while, I realized that I shouldn't fight that anymore, and I should just get up and make my bed with my wife. Now I spend time with my wife making up my bed. Before, it took me like, if you're by yourself, it's going to take you like 30 minutes. But if you're somebody else, like your wife, it takes you less than a minute. You're like putting both the sheets at the same time, folding at the same time, the cover, and you start working with your wife, and things start to look good in the room. Wow, the room looks nice. What's next? Then you want to go wash the dishes, then you want to clean up the house. When you're in harmony with your wife or your husband, things can be done very quickly and in order. I challenge you to think about that. That's just physical things.

How about spiritual things? A lot of people have a family, and they think that the church has to teach them everything about the Bible. That's not how that works. Actually, in the Jewish culture back 2000 years ago, the man was the one teaching the Bible, the Word of God, and the wife was too. That was a school; it was a constant thing for them. Today we think that churches just take over that. But really, one time a week, how many of you have two or three services a week? That's very, very little time to teach your kids and train your kids. You have to be doing it at home as well and take time.

One of the things that I did not do, I was homeschooled, and I didn't like homeschool very much. I know it's a good thing, and for some people, it works. But by the time my mom and dad had adopted nine other kids, so we were 13 at a time, my mom and dad were worn out. They wore

themselves out. By the time I was the youngest one, they were going to homeschool me, my mom was worn out. So Jesus left me alone with the books, and I would rather have gone to school. I did; Dad and Mom would send us to public school in Costa Rica. We'd walk these little schools down there. Literally walk, we would go to school uphill both ways, and that's true. But we'd come home, and they'd have to take the ticks off of us, not literal ticks, but bad, bad teachings. They would say, "Mom, the teacher said this," and Dad would open the Bible, "No, this is what this Bible says." So I did the same thing with my kids. I sent them to public school in Costa Rica. I knew the director; he's a Pentecostal, and he's very biblical, though. I didn't have any fear of sending him to public school. But every time they came back home, they would talk about their socialist, communist social studies teacher. We'd debate every day about what he taught and what is right, biblically, what is right in history. So it was a constant teaching our children. That's the point. I'm involved in their life. I want to know what they're learning from their friends, what they're learning in school. I'm there talking to them constantly. Do you do this? Do you open the Bible and correct things? There's nothing wrong with that if you do it in a loving way. I'm not talking about slapping them up the side of the head with the Bible. I'm talking about doing it in love and in patience. If you have a home where kids can grow up and learn the Word of God and know how to defend themselves and know how to live this life, that's a great mission field to work at. That's a full-time job. I'm actually very impressed by this church and just seeing the family-oriented and seeing kids and young people and young adults because I travel a lot in the United States when I'm home, and I see that churches don't have any more kids or young people. I don't know what they're doing, but you guys are doing the right thing, and I commend you. I'm very impressed with it, and my heart is filled to see that churches are still doing the right thing.

VI. The Third Missionary Field: Your Church

The third missionary field that you have to work on after you are working on your personal life, you're working on your family, and I can go to many verses in the Bible. We don't have a lot of time. But the third missionary field is your church, your church. The church. I want to go to Romans 12:3, a little bit more ahead.

Romans 12:3

3. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

So church is not a place where you come and show off or be a big shot. You come to serve Jesus Christ. You come to serve each other.

Romans 12:4-8

4. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5. So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

6. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

7. Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8. Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be without dissimulation. So we're looking at this, and we're reading all this, and so we're many members in the church. I remember a young man in Costa Rica, we would have young adult classes not in the church. We would go and do it at a restaurant, at a cafe, in the park, to get people from the world in to join us. I remember one day I asked a group of young adults, "What is a church?" A kid that was just coming off the street said, "It's just four walls." He was so kind of smart, I like about it. I'm like, "No, it's not just four walls. You're thinking about the building. You're thinking about the, you know, I'm talking about the church, the body of people who have accepted Jesus Christ and are following Jesus Christ, that people." That's what a lot of people think. People, a lot of people think and they look at a building, "Well, that's the church." This is just the building. The church is you and me, and that's what we need to build up with our gift. What is my gift? What is your gift? We need to be experts at sharing the gospel, and we need to hone our gifts in the Lord and work with them because that goes with your calling. If you keep reading this, and you find this also in 1 Corinthians 12 about all these gifts, where all one can be, not everybody can be the eye, not everybody can be the hand, we have to be different things.

It also says here in verse 11:

Romans 12:11

11. Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

So when you come, when you walk in church, and you all sing amazing, I was really encouraged by just being around people that sing to the Lord. What is it, do you have a prayer moment before you walk in this morning or in that parking lot before you walk in here and try to find somebody to edify? Because if you don't have that moment of prayer and get your heart straight before you walk here, you're going to come here and look at so and so and like, "Oh, look what he's wearing today," or "What she's wearing." "Oh, look at the pastor, he's doing this and that." You're going to walk in in your carnal self, in all your carnal eyes, and that's all you're going to see is negativity and problems. It's all going to be criticism, and you're going to have a bad attitude, and the message is going to be awful because you didn't fix your heart before you walked in here. It's not the place; it's you're walking in on people that need to be edified. So getting together like this is an opportunity to see somebody with a need and say, "I know what to do." Are you sharp that way? Because that's running the race for Jesus Christ.

What did Jesus do? You think Jesus wasted any moment? He didn't. He walked into somewhere like He owned it. "This is My synagogue." He walks in there and preaches, and He knows exactly who needed healing, who needed fixing, what needed to be said because He was completely, He was God in communication with God constantly. We have to be the same way.

He wants us to be like Him. So we need to get our heart straight before we walk into church because this is our third missionary field, and do we come here to serve each other?

So what is your gift? "Well, I don't know." Well, then start out with being nice and courteous and put a smile on your face. You know, one of the first things you should look at when you choose a missionary to support is make sure they're courteous, make sure they have good manners. That's just, those will take you a long way with people. It opens up doors. Then unless you get in there alive and help them with things, some of you might be great counselors. Some of you might be great Bible teachers, women and men. Some of them might be very merciful and forgiving. Some of you might be very giving. Just being with somebody spiritually, helping them in their spiritual battles, that's what we should be doing in church. It's not just coming here singing and listening to a message and going home. No.

It says in verse 12:

Romans 12:12-13

12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Your reason why the second mission field is your home is because does your home, could you host a missionary in your home? Could you host somebody who needs a home? Can you be hospitable? Have you studied how the Middle Eastern people are with hospitality? This church has been, you all put Arabs to shame because you all have been amazingly hospitable to us, thank you. Brother Danny and his home, and then we're going to go eat barbecue, my goodness. I hope, and then you've been asking me, "How long are you staying? Why are you leaving so quickly?" That's exactly how they were. You know, they didn't want people to leave. They wanted the, and they were taken under their care. They were guarding with their life. Maybe God's trying to tell us something. He's trying to show us how we're supposed to be. That's why your home has to be in order, spiritually and physically. You have to be able to, what if angels come up? What if they're angels? And you're brought in angels to your home, I don't know. But it's some things to think about. Your personal life, first mission field, your home life, second mission field, your church.

Then, it's not that you have to have all those in perfect order, no. But it helps. It helps a lot when you go to a mission field, and you're not a burden to missionaries because you need help. I've had groups come down where I'm, oh my goodness, I have to minister to these people. They can't help me at all; I would have to help them. But it would be wonderful to go to a mission field, and you're just ready to take on a battle with the missionary. That's what we need. People will come down, boots on the ground, ready to fight. That's what we need, and that is a missionary life.

VII. The Drowning Illustration

I finish with this story because, and I'm not a preacher by topic. I'm really a verse-to-verse, chapter-by-chapter, book-by-book expository preacher. I've been doing it for many years. But as a missionary, I need to bring something that's useful to you, and I hope this has been useful. But I

want to give you a story, an example, and I'm finished with this, because it gives you an idea of the chaos a lot of people's lives are in.

We were living on Bird Coast in Costa Rica. I was about nine, and Dad had started a church there in that little town, a little fishing town. There might be a thousand people in that town. Mr. Hernán got saved with his family, and he was coming to church. He had a boat, and he said, "I want to take your whole family and all the students that you have at camp, take them out on the ocean. We're going to go ride around." Dad's like, "Yeah, let's go." So there were six or eight students, I don't remember. We piled up on his boat. Our family was four of us, and my mom and dad, and the fisherman and his kids. It was not like this yacht that you see driving around here. It was like one of those boats that you see in Vietnam, a little rickety thing, a wooden thing with a little diesel motor in the middle, inside the cabin, and everybody just kind of hanging on the side. That's what it was.

So we went out, got on the boat, took off to an island called Bird Island, off of Bird Coast. It was about a kilometer off the beach. Hernán, the gentleman that had the boat, he says, "Yeah, now, you all can get out and start swimming." So everybody got off the boat, started swimming. It was a very odd place. There was a little beach there. The island was just full of bird poop. It was Bird Island, so it was full of bird poop. You could get to near, I was nine, my sister, we all jumped in the water. We knew how to swim. My brother, my older sister, they're like fishes in the water. They went out to the deep with six of the students. My dad was out there swimming back and forth. Dad was a lifeguard, and he was trained as a lifeguard, so he was an excellent swimmer.

When you're in the water, if you've ever had anything happen, you know things get ugly. You know, it's like really quickly, like really fast. All of a sudden, everybody was drowning. That's how it was. This current came through in between the island and the beach. Just comes through, whoosh, sweeps everybody off their feet. They got pushed into the deep. They were standing on a sandbar, and then there was a sandbar about 30 yards in. Then there was a big hole in the middle, and then the boat was sitting right in between the hole and the beach. So my mom starts yelling, "Get Arthur, get Felipe, they're drowning!" So Arthur and Felipe were drowning. Dad had already just got on the boat. I was treading water beside the boat. My sister was treading water beside me, and everybody just went into chaos, shock. Just, and I was treading water, and I was trying to reach, I couldn't reach the edge of the boat. So because before I was so, before they would just pick me up off, but nobody was there to pick me up. So I was drowning. My sister was drowning. We couldn't get in the boat. There were two guys drowning in the deep. My older siblings just, they just swam to the beach and got out of the way. Some of the students swam and barely got out.

So Dad jumps in the water and starts swimming. It takes him a while to get out in there. The current is just pushing him away, and he grabs Felipe. Felipe starts fighting him, and Dad has to hold him real tight, just like how they teach you, you know, "Suck him if they don't be still." But he starts swimming. He had a hard time getting back to the boat, puts him up on the boat. Hernán throws a lifesaver into the water, misses completely, and whatever fell on the current, just took it the other way. So that thing didn't do anything. It was just chaos. There was one person saving lives, one person. And he was worn out with the first one. There were his, two kids were

drowning. When Dad went back in, Arthur was nowhere to be seen. Arthur's my brother-in-law. He married my sister. Dad swims out there, couldn't see anything, and he's looking around, and he saw big Elvis Presley hair. He had a big old Elvis Presley. Dad grabbed, pulls him out of the water. He was around, he was already gone. Dad grabs his limp body and swims back in. Really hard time swimming in. I was treading water. I had no more energy, and I'm like, "Man, I'm going to swim under the boat and go underneath," but I don't have any energy to do that. My sister swims around the boat, and I finally get, start swimming around, swimming around, swimming around. I barely made it to the beach. Dad brings the limp body up to the boat. They put him on the boat floor. They put him on his side. They, nobody knew CPR. They were just beating him on the back again, and he finally wakes up, but it took him a while.

But that is a picture of what goes on in people's lives and churches and families. It's just chaos. You want to save lives, but nothing is in order on this boat. Nothing was prepared. Everybody is shooting from the hip, you know? There was nothing planned. There was nothing in order. People throwing in the wrong way, the lifeguard. There was only one person doing things right. I'll leave you that story because that can't be how our life is. It can't be how our family life is. It can't be how our church life is. I know I might be speaking to the choir, but I hope this helps you because this reminds me so much of how a lot of people, Christianity has run. We have to be prepared. We have to be trained. We have to have a heart and know the dangers of this world out there. When you're out there knocking on doors or preaching to people, you're in Satan's world, and it's very dangerous, and you can get killed. So you need to be ready, and you need to be prepared to serve right. Your heart has to be right, and you have to be running the right race.

VIII. Closing Prayer and Announcements

So let's pray. Lord, heavenly Father, thank You for this. Thank You for the Word of God. Lord, thank You for giving us exact and precise instructions on what we're supposed to do, who we're supposed to serve. Lord, how are we supposed to fix our life? Lord, thank You for Your truth that really transforms us, Lord. Bless this church, Lord. I pray that they'll continue to do a great work. They need to serve You and pray for the pastor, pray for the pastor's wife, Lord, and all the leadership that is here are given great wisdom. I adore, thank You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Well, not only was I looking forward to having them here and hearing him, but I really enjoyed that this morning, I tell you. You know, Danny and I were talking about this. I think the thing that I love about his family, and that you can see it very quickly, is they're just like us. I mean, they could be in our church and get along just fine. We could be down in theirs, get along just fine. Maybe the language would be a little different for a while, but it's just the way that it is. Again, this has been a real blessing to me.

Now tonight at 5:30 at Danny and Jamie's, we're having an open house. They'll be there. I'd like to invite all of you to come by. They'll be leaving in the morning, and come by and spend some time with them. I really appreciate them being here. You know, as I said earlier, the Lord really opened up what we have been building for a number of years here out of our missions conference. We had a missions conference the year before this one, and it really moved in this direction. We always build it around the putting of the Word of God together. Now, you know,

we've got to see our team go down to Costa Rica. You know, the White family is here. We got the Dominican Republican kids coming up in the first of July. That's going to be a real blessing. Then your kids are coming in, you know, from Vietnam missionaries there. That's going to be exciting. We're going to have them here, and it's just, you know, the Lord is really doing some things.

One of the things I love about today is, you know, you hear me talk about the MARS program a lot. I started the MARS program probably 45 years ago when I was taking trips and teams, and many of you were part of those teams. We were literally going around the world. I had teams passing in the air as going to discipleship with churches in Europe and the Philippines and those places. I came up with the idea of MARS. It's an acronym for "Missionaries Are Really Special." You know, you hear me talk about it. I know that we have committed to \$5,000 through the church in Africa. You know, I always want you to know because I asked you to give over and above your regular giving and what we do with it. You heard his needs here today and are up here for Brother. I just so you know, we're going to give you \$3,000 to help you with your goals of everything that you need, and that won't be the end of it. We'll be always here if you need us. I always tell the missionaries, you know, that if you get in a jam and you need something, you call me. That's what it's all about, and it's all because of you, your burden, your vision, and your ability to give what God has blessed you. Now we take it to others, and that's really what it's all about. So thank you for your family for being here today. We'll look forward to having some time together tonight. Again, 5:30, Danny and Jamie's combined. Spend some time and just really get to fellowship with them. I know they're just here for two days, but let's use that to get to know them. It won't be the last time they're here. It won't be the last time we're down there with them in Costa Rica.

So let's close out with a word of prayer. Thank you, Julio. I'm going to meet you over in the bookstore. I got a book all picked out for you, and we'll get everything going. Thank you for being here today. We love you very much. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We do love You. Father, I just thank You for today. All that You have given us with the White's family being here, the blessing they've been to us, and how that we now have a kindred spirit for each other. Our work, our ministry, and our people. We pray, Father, that You'll continue to bless us here so we may be able to bless others and take care of missionaries as they have their needs. We love You, and we'll thank You and praise You in Jesus' name for a sacred ask it. Amen.

One thing for you, Lee. You talked about your dad out of West Virginia in coal miners and him and I being similar. My family roots are in West Virginia and Maryland. They were coal miners too. There you go. God bless you. You're dismissed.