

Following God's Lead

Capital Campaign Series

Gather, Grow, & Go

©Pastor Marty Baker

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Sometimes, as we see in the birth of the Church in Acts (Acts 2:41; 5:14), local churches grow exponentially by God's sovereign design, coupled with a deep commitment, on the churches part, to the Lord's Great Commission to make disciples and to go into the world with His gospel (Matthew 28:19-20). Because we are committed to this divine commission, which woven into the fabric of our church through our Gather, Grow, Go vision, God has blessed us with spiritual and numerical growth beyond the ecclesiastical norm.

To accommodate this perpetual upward numerical trend, your leadership, after much prayer, research, and discussion, is convinced we must build a larger worship facility. Here is a video fly through designed by our architectural firm of the proposed new \$13 million dollar structure.

[Show video]

Truly exciting, would you agree? With this 50,000 square foot structure, which doubles the size of all of our current facilities, we will be able to expand our commitment to **Gather** folks for worship of the living Messiah, to help them **Grow** in the teachings of Jesus, and to motivate them to **Go** in the ways He has revealed in His inspired Word. I'm glad you are here to support what God is doing among us. I'm glad you are people possessing forward vision. I'm glad you are corporately and individually committed to mission and vision because that is what God has blessed, and that is what He will bless as we continue to build a local church to His glory.



Today, we finalize our **Following God's Lead** capital campaign introduction by zeroing in on the last facet of our vision statement. It is wrapped up in this short sentence:

We Are Committed To Go

Going, from our understanding of the Lord's teaching, involves focusing on two biblically-based concepts. Here is the first one.

We Go Forth To Share

Sharing, of course, references the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ. We are individually and corporately commanded by our Savior to deliver this message of eternal hope and forgiveness of

sins to the world around us. Paul, who lived out the Lord's final command each day, wrote in Romans why he was so motivated:

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Romans 1).

Christ's gospel is THE only power which can redeem the sinner regardless of his or her ethnicity. No wonder we are to be constantly looking for opportunities to deliver God's goods, as it were, because spiritual life and death hang in the balance. Evangelism has to be our heartbeat. Evangelism is our heartbeat and that is part of the reason we have grown because lives are being radically saved and transformed.

Before we press on, I have to ask you some personal questions: When is the last time you shared the gospel of Jesus with a non-Christian? When is the last time you openly talked about what His gospel has done for you? When is the last time you have led someone to a saving knowledge of Jesus? With national studies demonstrating that healthy churches have a 10% conversion ratio per year, this means we should be leading at least 250 people to the Savior per year. I'd say we have more work to do, and as we do it a new and larger building will most certainly come in handy.

As we consider our commitment to evangelism, permit me to isolate two crucial sub-points about what constitutes effective evangelism.

Effective Evangelism Is Tied To Our Health. True, the church primarily exists for the worship of the living God and the training of the saints for the work of God. Paul says this much in his letter to the Ephesians:

¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love (Ephesians 4).

Church leadership guides us in our corporate worship of God, and they help us grow up in the faith so there can be bodily unity and spiritual stability. This is all important because of two reasons.

One, even though church is divinely designed primarily for the maturation of saints, if it is healthy it will attract non-Christians. If it is unhealthy it will repel them. Two, if a church is healthy it will, by definition, possess an outer focus to positively impact it's culture for Christ; however, if it is unhealthy, it will court a negative internal focus which won't attract many unbelievers, let alone believers desiring to mature in the faith. Looking at this from God's

perspective we could say He does not desire to place new believers or searching-for-truth non-believers in sick, anemic local church environments for obvious reasons. He wants them to either mature or come to faith, and both of these goals are thwarted by an immature, unhealthy body. Conversely, both of these goals are better realized when there is health throughout the local church body. Why? Because the new saints see it is not only possible to live the Christian life but they see how to live it in the lives of the more mature believers around them, and non-believers come in direct contact with people who do, in fact, live radically different lives.

Dr. Gene Getz, a former church planter and a great professor of Christian Education at Dallas Theological Seminary, expands on the important of church health to evangelism in his book *Sharpening The Focus Of The Church*:

Personal evangelism takes on an usual significance against the backdrop of a mature body of local believers – Christians who are making an impact in their communities because of their integrity (1 Th 4:11-12), their unselfish behavior (Ro 13:7); their orderly conduct (1 Co. 10:31-33); their wisdom (Col. 4:6); their diligence (1 Co 6:1); their humility (1 Pe 2:18); and yet, there forthright testimony for Jesus Christ (1 Pe 3:15) ... God's general plan is that community evangelism be carried out in the context of dynamic Christianity, and vigorous body life.¹

I couldn't agree more. When non-believers see former non-believers being transformed into the holy character of Jesus, it is an attractant. Likewise, when believers see other believers truly growing up in Christ, this is an attractant as well, with both of these resulting in the growth of a local body of believers.

BCC is, in my pastoral estimation, a spiritually vibrant and healthy church. Sure, there is much for us to work on, and we can always be healthier; however, it is because of our health the gospel is powerful in us individually and corporately. Health is what people encounter here and health either leads them to get more spiritually healthy themselves, or to find spiritual health for the first time in their lives. Think about it. Who wouldn't be attracted to a church where there is a real commitment to fulfilling and fleshing out all those "one another" commands in the NT?

- Romans 12:10 ... Be devoted to each other.
- Romans 12:16 ... Be of the same mind toward each other.
- Romans 13:8 ... Love one another
- Romans 14:13 ... Let us not judge one another
- Romans 14:19 ... Pursue things which build others up.
- Romans 15:5 ... Be of the same mind with each other.
- Romans 15:7 ... Accept one another.
- Romans 15:14 ... Admonish one another.

And these are just the Pauline commands for great, healthy body life from Romans. There are twenty-six more in the rest of the New Testament,² with ten of the overall total calling for us to

¹ Gene Getz, *Sharpening The Focus Of The Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974): 41.

² 1 Cor. 12:25; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:1-2; 4:32; 5:18-21; Col. 3:9; 3:12-13; 3:16; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:18; Heb. 3:13; 10:23-25; Jam. 4:11; 5:9, 16; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:9; 5:5, 14; 1 Jo. 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 Jo. 5.

love each other. Do you think agape, unconditional love is important? No doubt. Let me tell you, when a church commits to living in this fashion, the community can't help but take notice because it is so other-worldly, so unnatural, and so refreshing.

When a church commits to living in this fashion, people don't just grow up in the faith, lost people get saved. Because we are a church committed to being and staying spiritually healthy, our ability to realize the Great Commission, and our ability to be successful with the gospel is enhanced and blessed by God with spiritual and numerical growth. And all of this is just another reason why we need a larger building. Since church health is an attractant, we had better plan on having room for the influx. And believe me, when the lost are attracted here, we will be faithful to introduce them to the only One who can bring them to full spiritual health. His name is Jesus and we'll share his gospel in sermons, Bible studies, seminars, and wherever we can in order fulfill His final command to us.

A logical outcropping of this last sub-point can't be missed:

Effective Evangelism Is Tied To Your Home. A spiritually healthy church which impacts people with the gospel of Jesus naturally empowers the local home to be a center of gospel presentation. Put differently, when your church excites you with the gospel, you take the gospel home and begin to share it. Such is the model from Acts 1:8:

⁸ but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

The presentation of the gospel is to start in the place nearest to where you are and then it is to spread out from there to the whole world. Yes, we are all called to be Christ's witnesses of the power of His gospel to redeem and transform a sinner. Stop and think of all those thousands of people who came to faith in Jesus during the initial growth stages of the early Church. I'm sure many of them came in contact with the gospel simply because saints were excited about the components of their healthy home churches (Acts 2:42-47) and they took what they were hearing and seeing home to folks they knew needed a faith relationship with the risen Savior. Such is how the gospel spreads like a wild fire, consuming the stubble of unbelief and leaving the ground ready for fruit bearing and harvest.

We are effective in our evangelism because many of you have been more than faithful to take the gospel home, to share it with your children, to give it to your parents, to introduce it to co-workers, and so forth. And I'm sure that some of your excitement and confidence in sharing your faith is intrinsically tied to this healthy church environment, one designed to showcase how Christians are to live, from how they treat each other to the training they receive as to why this gospel is the gospel. And many among us have taken that glorious gospel beyond the home to the world at large, either through military/government moves to other states and other countries, or through those who have stepped forward and signed up for either short-term or long-term missionary assignments. Believe me, God can't help but bless a church with growth when it is firmly committed taking His gospel to those who need it most, regardless of whether they are co-workers at the Pentagon, or children at an orphanage in Africa. We are that type of church and that is why His blessing rests upon this place. We are a church who doesn't just say we must go with the gospel intellectually. No, we get up and go pragmatically, just like our Savior did on so many occasions. Dr. Luke reminds us of one of those times in Christ's life:

¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. ³ Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” ⁶ And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. ⁷ When they saw it, they all *began* to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” ⁸ Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” ⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.” ¹⁰ “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19).

I've always loved that story, partly because I know that at one time of my life I was Zaccheus and Jesus came to my home. Now it is my responsibility, your responsibility, the pastoral staff's responsibility, the responsibility of the Elder Council, and the responsibility of our missions committee to make sure we are constantly looking for the next Zaccheus because this is the mandate, the heart of God. And as we do this not only will people be added to the kingdom of God, a church will grow and need more room to train disciples.

Believe me when I tell you we are passionate about going forth to share the gospel of Jesus. We trust you will share this passion, but it is not the whole story about the **GO** feature of our vision. There is one more concept to discuss:

We Go Forth To Serve

Our world is consumed with status, with being served not being a servant, and with having people pay attention to you and not you to them. Seems like everyone wants a massage but people aren't lining up to be the masseuse. Ladies love to get facials, but to give facials is another matter altogether. Guys might dream of having a golf membership at an exclusive club where you have your own golf caddy but who wants to actually be the caddy? People like to ride around in stretch limos but you'd be hard-pressed to find folks who are dying to be the limo driver and serve other people.

This mentality, however, is not part of the Christian mindset.

Selfless Service Was Christ's Model. As I've said many times before, Mark 10:45 sums up the life of Jesus:

⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Jesus came to serve people and to give His life away so some of them could be saved. To study His life is come face to face with one who wasn't consumed with His power and position, who wasn't looking for others to serve Him, the Lord of the universe, and who expected everyone else

to meet His needs. No. Jesus not only took upon the form of a lowly servant, as Paul teaches (2 Philippians 2:1-11), but He lived the roll daily.

- He took the time late at night and after a busy day to talk with Nicodemus about spiritual things (John 3).
- He spoke to a half-breed woman other Jews wouldn't speak to because He was concerned about her soul (John 4).
- He took the time when He walked miles to get to Jerusalem to heal a lame man sitting by a pool north of the Temple (John 5). He could have just kept moving, but He stopped.
- He defended a woman caught in adultery when others wanted to stone her (John 8).
- He actually did the unthinkable when He touched a leprous man who desired healing (Mark 1:40).
- He washed the dirty feet of the disciples prior to His crucifixion, when they should have been washing His feet (John 13) ... and He even included Judas.
- He even cooked a meal on a beach for the disciples after His resurrection so they could have some quality and joyous fellowship (John 21:9).

I could go on, but I'm sure you get the point. Jesus, despite His power and position, lived as a servant of servants, doing work nobody else wanted to do and touching lives nobody else wanted to touch. Yes, He perfected what it means to serve, think, and care about others before yourself, and that's why He is so amazing. He, the Lord of glory, could have appeared as the King of Kings and demanded we serve Him, but He chose to come to earth to serve us. What a model. What a message for us. What is that message?

Selfless Service Should Be Our Model. We know this much from what He said the disciples after He washed their dirty feet prior to His crucifixion:

¹³ "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. ¹⁶ "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them (John 13).

Underscore that promise in verse 17. A blessed life will be a servant's life. Such are the ways of God. He looks for us to walk in His sandals, to live as He lived toward others, to be servants meeting the needs around us instead of having others meet our needs. Is this you? Better yet, "Is this our church?" I think so.

BCC is a blessed church in so many ways and that blessing is directly related to the high level of servanthood you see among us. As I said a couple of weeks ago, we don't want you to come and sit and soak, but to sit, soak (up the Word of God), sizzle (with what God tells you), and SERVE. For us to continue to be a church blessed of God, for us to be a kind of church

which is growing spiritually and numerically, for us to be the church which makes a divine difference in this community and beyond, we must be servants above all things.

What does servanthood look like in the corporate body?

- It means you step forward and willingly use your spiritual gift(s) without prodding.
- It means you see a need, be what it may, and you fill it whether you get notoriety or not.
- It means you don't serve to hear the accolades of man, but are fine with obscurity and waiting for Jesus to say, "Well, done good and faithful servant."
- It means you relieve people who have been serving hard and long so they can have a reprieve.
- It means you look for needs to fill and you fill them.
- It means you respond quickly when a needs is presented by the staff.
- It means you serve somewhere in the body, whether it is serving as a worship greeter or parking cars in the parking lot ... you get plugged in and do what needs doing.
- It means, well, I'll let you fill in the blank.

As God continues to grow this church, one thing is for certain: We will need servant-minded people to make quality ministry happen. So what about it? Where are you serving? Where are you being the hands and feet of Christ to this body? We have high expectations for you to engaged in Christian service because Jesus has high expectations for you.

Here is a short video clip of key servants in our body who have, over the years, fulfilled every facet of our Gather, Grow, and Go vision. I think you'll find their words encouraging, as well as challenging.

[Show video]

It's because of fine, devoted, sacrificial Christian people like this that BCC has grown and flourished. It's also because of the saints like this, who are deeply and personally committed to our mission and vision, we have followed God's lead to this next building program. What, now, does this all mean for you? It means we present you the opportunity today to financially support where God is leading us in the construction of this new worship facility. How can you do this? Simple.

You have in your hand a **Following God's Lead** commitment card. We encourage you to fill it out and note exactly how you desire to financially support this new construction venture. For some it will be a weekly commitment, for "X" amount of weeks, while for others it will be a monthly gift over and above their normal giving for "X" amount of months, others will be more inclined to give a yearly gift for "X" amount of years, and some will feel led to give a one-time gift. The point is, there are a variety of ways you can support what God is doing here at BCC and you can choose the one which best works for you and your family.

With all that said, I now direct you to taking a few moments to fill out your card. The ushers will, then, pick it up in an moment. Let's pause before we offer this tithe to the Lord for a moment of prayer.