



State of the Church Address

Tune Up Time

Written By

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A lady at my last church bought a brand, spanking new car. It smelled great, had a few nice extras, and plenty of room for taxiing the children all over the place. For years, she drove that car everywhere and just loved it. Then, one day at a busy intersection, when the light turned green for her to go, she hit the gas to go; however, things didn't go as usual. The car lurched forward, made a loud banging sound, and then completely stopped in the busy turn lane. A couple of hours, and a whole lot of embarrassment and frustration later, she had the car towed to a local car repair shop for analysis.

Her thought about her car was simple, "How could a fairly new car just stop like that?"

When the mechanic contacted her, she found out the very simple answer to that question. If you never change the oil after five years, you never check the oil level, and you drive the car with virtually no oil in it to speak of, you are going to throw a rod and destroy your engine. That's exactly what she did and it is exactly what happened.

I'll never forget the day she called to tell me this story. I felt sorry for her, but also thought to my pastoral self: That's a perfect sermon illustration. How so? In many ways. Take, for example, what it tells me as a pastor who is called by our church constitution to stop once a year and give a State of the Church address to the car owners. If we don't stop and occasionally look under the hood and check the various levels, then we'll not realize optimal performance. Positively, the flip side is true. We, as pastoral mechanics, need to constantly check under our hood to make sure everything is running well, and we should stop occasionally, like today, and tell you how the engine is performing.

Is there biblical justification for this diagnosis? You bet. Jesus, the High Priest of the Church, spends two chapters in the book of John, evaluating the strengths and weakness of the seven local churches in Asia Minor, viz., modern day Turkey. Christ addresses the angel of each

of these churches. I believe this denotes He speaks to the angel assigned to each church, for this is the customary definition of the Greek word *angelos* (**ἄγγελος**); however, there is also lexical room for interpreting this word as the messenger of the church, or the pastor.¹ Taken in this

¹ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 9: **ἄγγελος, ου, ὁ** (Hom.+) ‘messenger’.

① **a human messenger serving as an envoy, an envoy, one who is sent**

ⓐ by humans (Hom.+; ins, pap; Gen 32:4, 7; Jdth 1:11; 3:1; 1 Macc 1:44; 7:10; Jos., Ant. 14, 451, Vi. 89): in his earthly ministry Jesus ἀπέστειλεν ἀγγέλους (Diod S 2,18,1 the king of India to Semiramis; 4, 65, 4) **Lk 9:52**; of John the Baptist’s disciples **7:24**; of Joshua’s scouts **Js 2:25** (cp. Josh 7:22).

ⓑ by God (prophets Hg 1:13; Mal subscr.; a priest Mal 2:7.—1 Esdr 1:48f. S. also Theognis 1, 769, where the poet is Μουσέων ἄγγελος; Epict. 3, 22, 23; 38; Ael. Aristid. 37 K.=1 p. 15 D.; Maximus Tyr. 11, 9c Plato, as the one who brings us information about God, is called ὁ ἐξ Ἀκαδημίας ἄγγ.; Oenomaus in Eus., PE 5, 20, 3; 5 Carnus the soothsayer is ἄγγ. of the gods) of John the Baptist as forerunner **Mt 11:10**; **Mk 1:2**; **Lk 7:27** (all Mal 3:1; cp. Ex 23:20).

② **a transcendent power who carries out various missions or tasks, messenger, angel** (ἄ. as a spirit-being, oft. connected w. the nether world in Gr-Rom. sources [EZiebarth, Neue attische Fluchttafeln: NGG 1899, 127ff no. 24; IG XII/3, 933–74. Other material in Dibelius, Geisterwelt 209ff. S. also the oracles: Theosophien 13 p. 169, 31; Ps.-Callisth. 1, 1, 3 ἐπεκαλεῖτο τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ θεὸν Ἄμμωνα; 2, 25, 1; Porphyg., Ad Marcellam 21 ἄγγελοι θεοῖο τε κ. ἀγαθοὶ δαίμονες; Hierocles 3, 424, 23, 468.—ἄ. w. θεοὶ and δαίμονες Damascius (V/VI A.D.) 183 Ruelle; ἄ. w. δαίμονες and ἥρωες Proclus, Rep. II 243 Kroll, Tim. III 109 Diehl.—FCumont, RHR 72, 1915, 159–82; FAndres, D. Engellehre d. griech. Apologeten 1914 and in Pauly-W. Suppl. III 1918, 101ff; Rtzst., Myst. 171, 2; Bousset, ARW 18, 1915, 170ff] and as a transcendent power in Judaism [LXX; En 10:7; 20:1; 99:3 al.; Essenes in Jos., Bell. 2, 142; Philo, cp. Schürer III 881–85 (on Philo) w. lit.; Joseph.; Test12Patr; prayers for vengeance fr. Rheneia (I B.C.) 9f κύριε ὁ πάντα ἐφορῶν καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι θεοῦ; on this Dssm. LO 353f; 357=LAE 414; 418f; SIG 1181 w. note 2; PFouad 203, 3f (I A.D.); on this PBenoit, RB 58, ’51, 549–65; PKatz, TZ 10, ’54, 228–31. Loanw. in rabb.—Bousset, Rel. 320ff; J-BFrey, L’Angéologie juive au temps de J-Chr.: RSPT 5, 1911, 75–110; HKuhn, JBL 67, ’48, 217–32 Jewish apocalypses], likewise in the magical pap, w. their mixture of gentile and Jewish infl. [PGM 1, 76 an ἄ. as a star fr. heaven; 4, 570ff; 998; 1112; 13, 329; 585; 609; 744]. Cp. the ins APF 3, 1906, 445 no. 67; 451 no. 94. The more common term in polytheistic lit. for beings intermediate between gods and humans is δαίμων [q.v.], which monotheistic writers reserved for reference to a realm hostile to God’s interests, while retaining the term ἄ. for intermediate beings, either those loyal to God or those in rebellion [s. c].)

ⓐ as messengers of God, *angels* (LXX; Philo, Somn. 1, 190; transcendent messengers of the gods in Hom. are not intermediate beings. Yet the description of Hermes, the κῆρυξ τῶν θεῶν, as their ἄγγελος ἄριστος [Diod S 5, 75, 2] may have made it easier for Gr-Romans in general to understand ἄ. as God’s heavenly messenger; cp. the messenger of the god Men: EA 18, ’91 p. 92f, no. 2, 5f [lit.]) mostly w. gen.: κυρίου (Gen 16:10f al.) **Mt 1:20**; **2:13**, **19**; **Lk 1:11**; **2:9**; **Ac 5:19**; **12:7**, **23**. τοῦ θεοῦ (Gen 31:11; 32:2 al.; Philo, Deus Imm. 1; Jos., Bell. 5, 388) **Lk 12:8f**; **15:10**; **J 1:51** (HWindisch, ZNW 30, ’31, 215–33; also s. below on **Lk. 2:15**). ἄ. θεοῦ (Gen 21:17 A; Judg 13:6 B; Jos., Ant. 1, 73; Orig., C. Cels. 8, 31, 18) **Gal 4:14**; **Hb 1:6** (Ps 96:7; Dt 32:43); 1 Cl 29:2 (Dt 32:8). Abs. (Num 20:16; Judg 13:11; Tob 6:4ff al.) **Lk 1:13**, **18**, **38**; **2:10**, **13**, **15**, **21**; **J 20:12**; **Ac 7:53**; **1 Ti 3:16**; **1 Pt 1:12** (in wordplay on the superiority of human beings to angels s. Sextus 32; on their status and classification s. also Orig., C. Cels. 4, 29, 16) al. ἄγιοι ἄ. (PGM 4, 1934, 1938) **Mk 8:38**; **Lk 9:26**; **Ac 10:22**; **Rv 14:10**; 1 Cl 39:7 (Job 5:1); Hv 2, 2, 7; ἐκλεκτοὶ ἄ. **1 Ti 5:21** (ἄ. as witnesses so TestLevi 19:3 and SIG 1181, 10=Dssm. LO 351–62 [LAE 413–24]; cp. Jos., Bell. 2, 401); ἄ. ισχυροὶ (cp. Da 4:13; Ps 102:20) **Rv 5:2**; **18:21**. Their abode is heaven, and so they are ἄ. τῶν οὐρανῶν **Mt 24:36** (unless οὐρ.=θεοῦ); ἄ. ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς **Mk 12:25**; ἄ. ἐν οὐρανῷ **13:32**; ἄ. ἐξ οὐρανοῦ **Gal 1:8**, cp. **Mt 22:30**; **28:2**; **Lk 22:43**. They return to heaven when they have fulfilled their mission on earth **2:15**. Hence ἄ. φωτός (cp. SJCh 78, 17) **2 Cor 11:14**; ἄ. φωταγωγοί B 18:1. There the good are united w. them after death Hv 2, 2, 7; Hs 9, 27, 3. They appear in dazzling light **Lk 2:9**; **Ac 7:30** (Ex 3:2); ISm 6:1; cp. the ‘shining face’ of **Ac 6:15**; or in white garments **J 20:12**; cp. Mt 28:3; **Lk 24:4**. Called πνεύματα **Hb 1:7**; 1 Cl 36:3 (both after Ps 103:4). πνεύματα λειτουργικά *serving spirits* **Hb 1:14**. Their voice is like thunder **J 12:29**; γλῶσσαι τῶν ἄ. *language of angels* **1 Cor 13:1** (after the analogy of the languages of the gods, Plato in Clem. Al., Strom. 1, 143; cp. **2 Cor 12:4**; **Rv 14:2f**; TestJob 48–50; GSteindorff, Apk. d. Elias: TU 17, 3a, 1899, 153). They bring messages fr. God to men **Lk 1:11f**; **Mt 28:2ff**, and were also active in the giving of the law νόμος διαταγῆς δι’ ἀγγέλων **Gal 3:19**; cp. **Ac**

fashion, Christ is letting the pastors know what He sees under the hood of their churches. It's interesting how He vacillates between words of commendation and ones of correction (Ephesus in Revelation 2:2-3, 4; 2: Thyatira in Revelation 2:19, 2:24-25). His goal, of course, is to make sure the churches are running and functioning well until His glorious return (Matthew 25). I'd say is a great model, so we'll adopt it today as we check out our vehicle. With my mechanics manual in hand, coupled with my knowledge of how this particular car should run if its running well, I think its most appropriate to begin our diagnostic work with a question:

7:38, 53; Hb 2:2 (Jos., Ant. 15, 136 τῶν ἐν τοῖς νόμοις δι' ἀγγέλων παρὰ τ. θεοῦ μαθόντων; cp. Did., Gen. 110, 15 κὰν γὰρ διὰ ὑπουργῶν ἀγγέλων ποιῆ ἃ βούλεται θεός). As guardian angels of individuals (Tob 5:6, 22; cp. PGM 1, 172ff; Ael. Aristid. 50, 57 K.=26 p. 519 D.: ὁ σὸς Ἑρμῆς ἐστίν, to whom Aristid. has been entrusted since his birth) **Mt 18:10** (PBarry, ET 23, 1912, 182); **Ac 12:15** (JMoulton, JTS 3, 1902, 514–27, ET 14, 1903, 5ff); **Lk 4:10** (Ps 90:11); Hv 5:1f. They conduct the blessed dead into heaven **Lk 16:22** (Hermes does this acc. to Pythag. [Diog. L. 8, 31]); instruct humans to do good Hv 3, 5, 4; δικαιοσύνης m 6, 2, 1 (ParJer 8:12); rejoice at the repentance of a sinner **Lk 15:10**; cp. the ἄ. τῆς μετανοίας Hm 12, 4, 7; 12, 6, 1 al. They preside over various realms ἄ. ὁ ἔχων ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τοῦ πυρός **Rv 14:18**; ἄ. τῶν ὑδάτων **16:5**; the four winds **7:1**. God assigns them διακόσμησις γῆς Pa (4) (cp. ἄγγελοι ἐπὶ τῶν ἐξουσιῶν GrBar 12:3). An angel, Thegri, rules the animal world Hv 4, 2, 4 (Synes., Ep. 57 p. 192b p 9 δαίμονες as leaders of the grasshoppers). ἄ. τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ προφητικοῦ m 11:9; τὸν ἄ. τὸν τιμωρητὴν Hs 7:6; cp. ὁ ἄ. ὁ μέγας Hs 8, 4, 1.—As creator of the world AcPICor 1:15. On ἄ. τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν **Rv 1:20**, cp. **2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14** (on the textual problems associated w. these vss. s. RCharles, ICC Comm. 1920, I, clvii; clxf; II 244; RBorger, TRu 52, '87, 42f) and s. on ἀστήρ.—Subordinate to Christ **Mt 4:11; 13:41; 16:27; Hb 1:4ff** (Ps 96:7; B-D-F §254, 2); **1 Pt 3:22; Rv 5:11f**; glorify him **J 1:51** (JFritsch "... videbitis ... angelos Dei ascendentes ...," VD 37, '59, 1–11). δώδεκα λεγιῶνας ἄ. **Mt 26:53**; μυριάσιν ἄ. **Hb 12:22**; cp. **Rv 5:11**. Seven principal angels (Tob 12:15) **Rv 8:2, 6; 15:1, 6; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9** (GDix, The Seven Archangels and the Seven Spirits: JTS 28, 1927, 233–50). Six angels, created first, to whom the management of all creation is entrusted Hv 3, 4, 1. Angels at the Parousia **Mt 24:31; 2 Th 1:7**. Μιχαὴλ καὶ οἱ ἄ. αὐτοῦ **Rv 12:7**. Revered by people (Celsus 1, 26 Ἰουδαίους σέβειν ἀγγέλους; 5, 6) θρησκεία τῶν ἄ. *worship of angels* **Col 2:18**; λατρεύειν ἀγγέλοις as a sign of Jewish piety PtK 2 p. 14, 26=Clem. Al., Strom. 6, 41 p. 452, 9. Christ as σεμνότατος ἄ. Hv 5:2; m 5, 1, 7; cp. ὁ ἅγιος ἄ. Hs 5, 4, 4 v.1.; ὁ ἔνδοξος ἄ. Hs 5, 4, 4; 7:1ff; 8, 1, 2. ὁ ἄ. κυρίου Hs 7:5; 8, 1, 2ff; called Michael in Hs 8, 3, 3, where it is to be noted that Michael was the guardian angel of God's people (WLueken, D. Erzengel Michael 1900; MDibelius, Hdb. exc. on Hs 5, 6, 8 p. 575f).

Ⓛ intermediate beings gener., w. no ref. to their relation to God (opp. ἄνθρωποι; s. 2 above immediately before a) **1 Cor 4:9** (cp. TestJos 19:9 ἔχαρον ἐπ' αὐτῶ οἱ ἄγγελοι κ. οἱ ἄνθρωποι κ. πᾶσα ἡ γῆ).—**Ro 8:38** ἄ. as serving spirit-powers seem to be differentiated fr. the ἀρχαί, who rule.

Ⓜ evil spirits (Lactant., Inst. 2, 15, 8 daemones Trismegistus ἀγγέλους πονηρούς appellat. Cp. also Job 1:6; 2:1; Philo, Gig. 16; TestAsh 6:4; PGM 4, 2701; αἱ πονηραὶ δυνάμεις, διάβολος καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ Did., Gen. 45, 5; ADieterich, Nekyia 1893, 60f) τῶ διαβόλῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ **Mt 25:41**; cp. **Rv 12:9**. ὁ δράκων καὶ οἱ ἄ. αὐτοῦ vs. 7; ἄ. τῆς ἀβύσσου **9:11** (s. Αβαδδὼν); ἄ. πονηρός B 9:4; ἄ. τῆς πονηρίας in contrast to guardian angels Hm 6, 2, 1; ἄ. Σατανᾶ, which causes physical pain **2 Cor 12:7**; esp. called ἄ. τρυφῆς καὶ ἀπάτης Hs 6, 2, 1f; leading men into evil B 18:1. Of the angels' fall and their punishment (cp., in the opinion of many, Gen 6:2; En 6ff; 54; Book of Jubilees 5; SyrBar 56:13; LJung, Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan Lit. 1926; ALods, Congr. d'Hist. du Christ. I 29–54) ὁ θεὸς ἀγγέλων ἀμαρτησάντων οὐκ ἐφείσατο **2 Pt 2:4**; ἄ. τοὺς μὴ τηρήσαντας τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν *who did not keep to their proper domain* (s. ἀρχή 7) **Jd 6**. From the pass. already quoted above w. Gen. 6:2 (cp. also TestReub 5:3; Jos., Ant. 1, 73 ἄγγελοι θεοῦ γυναιξὶ συνιόντες; and polytheists' concept of erotic desires of transcendent beings: HUsener, Weihnachtsfest² 1911, 74f; Rtzst., Poim. 228ff. Herr der Grösse 14f; and GJs 14:1) some conclude that the angels were subject to erotic desires; this is held to explain the regulation that women are to wear a veil in church services, since angels are present (cp. Origen, Orat. 31 and Ps 137:1 ἐναντίον ἀγγέλων ψαλῶ σοι) **1 Cor 11:10** (for another view and for the lit. s. ἐξουσία 7; s. also JFitzmyer, [Qumran angelology] NTS 4, '57/58, 48–58; LJervis, JBL 112, '93, 243–45: angels mediate God's presence).

How Are Things Under The Hood?

As we pop open the hood and expose the engine, I think there are several key areas we need to check in particular ... of the many we could most certainly focus on. Any shop worth being identified with will have a worn, tattered, and probably centrally located vision statement posted somewhere. Our spiritual shop is no different.

Shop Vision

What oil is to the engine, vision is to the local church. It's what drives us. It's what excites us. It's what keeps us heading in the right direction as we're moving forward. It's what keeps us from getting distracted, as say, the churches in Laodicea or Corinth did, back in the day. Many of you know our vision and can state it effortlessly, while the new folks among us need to get familiar with it:

To know Christ and make Him known

Of course this concept is nothing new because it is derived from our Lord's last words to us in Matthew 29:19-20,

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

These final commands really boil down to two visionary concepts we are to zero in on: discipleship and evangelism. Evangelism, of course, is sharing your faith and challenging people to come to Him in saving faith. It's what the early saints did so well as you read the book of Acts. Discipleship, conversely, is all about the process of actually teaching converts how to grow and mature in their relationship with Jesus. Our vision, therefore, is Christ's vision, and this shall never change. How it is packaged, how it is programmed can, and will change, as the church grows spiritually and numerically; however, the truth of the vision is a constant for us.

In his excellent book *Start With Why*, Simon Sinek, the author also of the widely successful Ted talk video with the same title, correctly teaches us that most secular organizations, and churches by proxy, of course, can quickly tell you *what* they do (we're cranking out rotors, or brake pads, or radiators, or whatever), while few can articulate *why* they do what they do. At the close of his introductory chapter on the importance of the visionary why, he wisely states:

Knowing your WHY is not only way to be successful, but it is the only way to maintain a lasting success and have a greater blend of innovation and flexibility. When a WHY goes fuzzy, it becomes much more difficult to maintain growth, loyalty and inspiration that helped drive the original success. By difficult, I mean that manipulation rather than inspiration fast becomes the strategy of choice to

motivate behavior. This is effective in the short term but comes at a high cost in the long term.²

Lasting success for Christ. That's what we desire.

Many churches aren't running well because they have forgotten why they are and grow content to function on what they are doing. As your mechanic, I'm here today to tell you, we don't ever want to roll that way, do we? We, on the other hand, must never forget and we must be purposeful to constantly remember why we do what we do. Sure, we want to bring God all glory in the final analysis; however, until He comes, we are to be all about purposefully and strategically bringing the gospel to our culture, followed by a deep, abiding, passionate commitment to, then, helping them grow and mature in the faith of following Jesus. We, at BCC, are all about two things: reaching the lost and maturing the saints. That's why we do what we do. We don't blindly do things, and we don't seek to do everything which comes our way either. We are very selective and focused because we know why we are here on this busy street corner.

Sinek talks about how the railroad business dominated our country back in the 1800s. They laid track everywhere, built engines and cars to move men and material all over the country, and naturally became the biggest companies in the country. However, they became so focused on the WHAT, they forgot about the WHY of their business, and when the Wright Brothers launched the first plane at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, it spelled the eventual doom of railroads because they were headed in the wrong direction with their WHAT. Had they been focused on the WHY, viz., we're in the business of moving people, then, things would have probably turned out differently for them. As a large local church, we can certainly learn much from this bit of secular information. We cannot get so caught up with the WHAT, we neglect or forget or find boring, the WHY of it all. To go down this road, which is what happens to so many churches, is to court mediocrity societal impact for Christ. To keep the vision, the *why*, front and central, on the other hand, will keep us fresh, motivated, and, well, INSPIRED.

Beyond the why is the *how*. Naturally and logically this is the next key movement of a healthy church vehicle. How we implement the why given to us by Christ is contained in our pithy statement I'm sure you know and have heard by now:

Gather, Grow, and Go

What does it mean? Let's review.

Gather speaks of the biblical mandate for us to get together as followers of Christ. Hebrews 10:24 puts this into perspective in relation to our worship services:

²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

² Simon Sinek, *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (Hudson Street, New York, Penguin Group, 2009).

God wants us to be with each other each week, especially on Sundays, which is the day He rose from the grave (Luke 9:22; 18:33; Acts 10:40). During this time of worship, we not only give Him praise and worship, as we are supposed to (Psalm 100:4 “Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name;” Psalm 107:32, “Let them exalt him publicly before the congregation and before the leaders of the nation”), we teach the Word, so the saints can grow, and we showcase the gospel so the lost can hopefully come to know the Savior.

Paul mentions this Bible study emphasis in his letter to Timothy:

¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth (2 Timothy 2).

²Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires (2 Timothy 4).

Bible teaching feeds the soul, giving the listener the opportunity to grow. It also serves to challenge the non-believing with the viable, logical reasons for having faith in the person and work of Jesus, the Christ.

Before we depart this all-important concept about gathering to study about the Lord, I must give you an interesting statistic from Thom Rainer. Writing in his book *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched*, he acquaints us with Myth #6 about the formerly unchurched:

Myth #6: We must be careful in our teaching and preaching so that we do not communicate deep and complex biblical truths that will confuse the unchurched.³

A few paragraphs later he adds,

Perhaps equally surprising was the fact that the unchurched were more concerned about doctrine than Christians who had transferred from another church. Almost all of the formerly unchurched responded that doctrine was important.⁴

The stat is actually 91% felt this way. Most interesting. What this tells me is the non-believers in our culture want churches to be known for teaching! Following right behind this is the desire of non-believers to have pastors/teachers who speak with authority, and ones who deal with tough issues and are excited about explaining spiritual, biblical truth.⁵ Based on this analysis, we are definitely doing what God wants us to do as a church, and we shall remain deeply committed to serving up the Word of God to a relativistic culture really hungry for absolute truth.

³ Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 45.

⁴ Ibid., 62-63.

⁵ Ibid., 62.

As we continue to be a church committed to gathering for God to achieve these twin purposes of spiritual growth and spiritual new life, let us remember a couple of pragmatic things. First, a potential drawback of a teaching ministry is clear. People can come to grow spiritually fat with the information. We, however, are not about information as an end in and of itself. We are about spiritual, biblical information leading to life transformation (growth). As Paul warns the self-absorbed Corinthians believers, “*knowledge makes arrogant*” (1 Corinthians 8:1) Such is not our goal, our vision. Two, teaching the unadulterated Word of God in a godless world challenges darkness, thereby arousing persecution

Ostensibly, how are we doing at gathering? Stellar, by God’s sovereign movement. In December our adult worship average was 1603. In January it was 1757. Last Sunday for the start of February it was 1836, or 2,941 total ... that is 2, 941 people, of all ages, being exposed to the teaching and preaching of the inspired, inerrant Word of God in the various educational platforms our church provides just on a given Sunday. Just eight years ago our adult stats for worship were 653. What does this mean? It means God is working in a powerful fashion to challenge and change countless lives, lives like yours. It means people are getting the importance of consistency of corporate Bible study and worship. It, also, means we need to remain committed to telling people what our vision is and how that vision is intrinsically tied to the concept of gathering.⁶

Our vision is realized, additionally, as we stay focused on the word **Grow**. Once you come into Christ’s family by faith for all eternity, He expects you to grow in your faith and understanding of how to live for Him. There’s no room in the life of a believer for sitting, and just soaking in the Word. No. There’s only room for sitting, soaking, and sizzling in the Word. God is in the business of helping you move from spiritual infancy, to spiritual puberty, to young adulthood, and finally to full-spiritual maturity. John, who enjoyed an intimate relationship with Jesus while He walked the earth, underscores this maturation process in his first of three letters toward the close of the New Testament:

⁶ Consider these stats:

Our growth rate:

- Between 2009-2010 we had 26% growth.
- Between 2010-2011 we had 20% growth.
- Between 2011-2012 we had 19% growth.
- Between 2012-2013 we had 11% growth.
- Between 2013-Present we are at 11% growth.
- We will be at over 1,500 as an average by the end of this year.

Projected future growth rate & the new building (calculated at the low growth end of 11%):

- For 2015 average worship attendance should be 1665.
- For 2016 average worship attendance should be 1848.
- For 2017 average worship attendance should be 2051.
- For 2018 average worship attendance should be 2277.
- For 2019 average worship attendance should be 2527.
- For 2020 average worship attendance should be 2805.

Unseen factors can occur which could slow our growth rate; however, in order to wise and prudent, we must assume God will continue to work as He has in the past and in the present and plan accordingly. And, please bear in mind, these figures are all based on God growing us at an 11% rate. Suppose He moves us back into the 20% or 26% ranges? We definitely need to take a good, hard look at the engine, right?

¹²I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. ¹³I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. ¹⁴I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one (1 John 1).

Underscore the following words: little children, fathers, and young men. Spiritual children know their sins are forgiven, but they do not know much about what God expects from them in the days and years ahead. So everything is new to them in the faith. Spiritual young men ... or young people ... are drawing closer and closer to Jesus. Their character is looking like His character, their spiritual disciplines are reflecting His as disclosed in the New Testament, they are starting to be vibrant in their Christian witness, they're learning how to overcome the evil One, and they are really getting pumped about the numinous and powerful nature of the Holy Scriptures. Spiritual mothers and fathers have an rich, abiding, unique relationship with Jesus and the Word of God, and the fruit of the Spirit is clearly evidenced throughout their lives (Galatians 5:22-23), they've gained many victories over who they used to be, they've learned to follow God wherever He leads, they know the value of prayer, and they know how God has used adversities in life to providentially shape and mold them into His wonderful image.

Such is the nature of the Christian faith. It's all about moving from one stage of maturity to another. There is absolutely nothing static about it. Consider the verses which address this pivotal spiritual concept:

¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which* is your spiritual service of worship. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12).

²⁸We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ (Colossians 1).

The Greek word complete is *teleios* (τέλειος) and it speaks of being mature, or grown up. Interestingly enough, the term also lexically means to be mature regarding moral issues and concepts.

τέλειος, α, ον (Hom. [e.g. Il. 24, 34 of unblemished sacrificial animals] +) gener. 'attaining an end or purpose, complete'.

① pert. to meeting the highest standard

② pert. to being mature, *full-grown, mature, adult* (Aeschyl., Pla., X.+; oft. pap; Philo; Jos., Ant. 19, 362).

Ⓐ adj. ἀνήρ τέλειος Eph 4:13 (opp. νήπιοι, as Polyb. 5, 29, 2; Philo, Leg. All. 1, 94, Sobr. 9 νήπιον παιδίον πρὸς ἄνδρα τέλειον=an immature child compared to a mature man, Somn. 2, 10). In dazzling wordplay: μὴ παιδία γίνεσθε ταῖς φρεσίν, ἀλλὰ τῇ κακίᾳ νηπιάζετε, ταῖς δὲ φρεσίν τέλειοι γίνεσθε *do not think like children, yet do be infants as respects evil, while at the same time grown-up in your thinking* 1 Cor 14:20.

Ⓑ subst. (Dio Chrys. 34 [51], 8 οἱ τ.; Diogenes, Ep. 31, 3 οἱ τ. ... οἱ παῖδες; Ath., R. 17 p. 68, 31) τελείων ἐστὶν ἡ στερεὰ τροφή *solid food is (only) for adults* Hb 5:14 (opp. νήπιος). οἱ τέλειοι 1 Cor 2:6 is contrasted with νήπιοι 3:1 by WBauer, Mündige u. Unmündige bei dem Ap. Paulus, diss. Marburg 1902 (also Aufsätze u. Kleine Schriften, ed. GStrecker, '67, 124–30 et al.; s. also GDelling, TW VIII 76–78.) But this may also belong in the next classification

④ pert. to being fully developed in a moral sense

Ⓐ of humans *perfect, fully developed* (Hippol., Ref. 1, 19, 16) in a moral sense τέλειος ἀνὴρ Js 3:2 (s. RHöistad, ConNeot 9, '44, p. 22f). τὸν τέλειον ἄνθρωπον GMary 463, 26f (restored). Mostly without a noun εἰ θέλεις τέλειος εἶναι Mt 19:21 (EYarnold, TU 102, '68, 269–73). Cp. IEph 15:2; D 1:4; 6:2. Pl. Mt 5:48a; ISm 11:3a. W. ὀλόκληροι Js 1:4b. W. πεπληροφορημένοι Col 4:12.

Ⓑ of God *perfect* (Pind., Aeschyl. et al.; Theocr., Diod S, Plut. et al.; Tat.4, 2, 12; 4, 15, 2; Theoph. Ant. 2, 15 [p. 138, 12]) Mt 5:48b (i.e. God is a role model for unlimited display of beneficence; cp. on this verse Hierocles 18 p. 459: the goal is τὴν πρὸς θεὸν ὁμοίωσιν κτήσασθαι 'attainment of likeness to God' [oft. in Hierocles]; Marinus, Vi. Procli 18 ἵνα τὴν ὁμοίωσιν ἔχη πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ὅπερ τέλος ἐστὶ τὸ ἄριστον τῆς ψυχῆς; Betz, SM ad loc.). Restoration in a corrupt context AcPl Ha 1, 11 (ed. indicates τελέσαι or τελεῖν as alternatives).—RFlew.⁷

Here at BCC, we have a wide array of people who can give testimony that God has grown them in profound ways, even shocking ways, and spiritual growth in the lives of people is contagious. What do I mean? When others see the radical, awesome change in your life, as they see you move away from immorality to morality, as they watch your caustic, negative, unhappy character change into that of Christ, as they watch you change before their eyes, many of them will want some of that for their rudderless, nihilistic, and vacuous lives.

Let's stop for just a moment and give God the praise. Who among us feels compelled to stand up, grab the mic and answer this question: What has this church's collective teaching ministry done for your spiritual walk? There are many of us, so keep it short, but why not give a word of testimony?

The last facet of our vision realization is intrinsically tied to the little monosyllabic word **Go**. What's this mean? It means you ... it means we as a church ... purposefully take the gospel to friends, family, co-workers, strangers, and the world. There's a whole lot of **going** going on

⁷ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 995-996.

here. The amount of children's baptisms we saw in the last year is a testimony to the faithfulness of parents, friends, Sunday School teachers, and pastors making sure the gospel is clear. If you got saved in the last year, why don't you stand up and give God some praise before His local body? See what I mean? When we take food to the homeless down in Woodbridge with the 25th project it's all about giving the gospel, eventually. When we serve with the Sanctity of Life Ministries, it's all about saving an unborn life and also sharing the life-giving gospel of Jesus. When we pack this place out in the summer with Vacation Bible School, it's focused on making sure the gospel is showcased to those living in darkness. When we give 13% of our \$4.7 million dollar budget to our missions team, it's concerned with equipping them and others with going forth with the gospel in targeted areas nationally and internationally.

We are, in every respect a going church, evangelistically speaking; however, there is always room for improvement. Who will you take the gospel to this week, this month? Who are you taking the gospel to? Whose soul are you praying for? Who are you building a bridge to? When's the last time you led anyone to a saving faith in Jesus? As Jesus said many years ago,

³⁶Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸"Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matthew 9).

Will you be God's harvester? Will you be His seed-caster?

Vision. We thrive on it because our vision is God-inspired. And as long as we remember what we are supposed to be about, God will be all about us in a powerful, jaw-dropping fashion.

Secondarily, as we take a quick peak under the church hood, we need to get our trusty tools and

Engine Modifications

What does this mean? It means we need to beef up the current engine to make sure we are getting optimal performance. There's nothing like a bigger carburetor, adding "nitro", or a beefier engine to get that much needed extra boost.

Let me illustrate.

While a freshman at Azusa Pacific University, I had to bum rides from everyone because I didn't have a car yet (☺). One evening after a basketball game on our hillside campus, I hung around waiting to get a lift back to the valley campus several long miles away.

As people filtered out of the game, I eventually had to one guy to choose from to get a ride home. He was a bit, let's say, nerdy, so I wasn't too excited about being identified with him. You now, not cool with the ladies to be seen with someone I perceived was uncool. But I had no choice.

Sliding into this front seat of his stock, white Chevy Nova, replete with bubble seat covers my grandma would have loved, I was horrified. Then, he turned on the engine. The rumble from the glass pack mufflers was, well, deafening. I'll never forget the smile on his face as he pumped the gas pedal. It was as if he was saying, "You read for a real ride?" We basically flew home, really. He had dropped a 454 Chevy Corvette engine into that "stock" car. Wow. With that engine modification he could certainly go faster and farther for God, right? Think of

our church like that. We are a point where we need to modify the engine in order to accomplish more for God with the new “power.”

What exactly does our engine need?
Two things.

One, we have to buy three shuttle buses. Place heavy emphasis upon that word “have to.” In order to accommodate the large number of folks who call BCC their church home, and to position us for further growth, we have to establish a long-term shuttle service. We just do not have enough parking for everyone for a given service, its dangerous parking cars on the park strip in front of the church on Old Keene Mill Road, nor it is simple getting 700 people out of one service and into their cars, while 700 more



are seeking to come in. As you know, it is a real challenge. Our parking team has done an outstanding job; however, we who attend faithfully need to now opt for shuttle service to free up parking spots for new people God will bring our way. We will also need to establish this shuttle service as we anticipate the construction of our new 1,200 seat sanctuary by the winter of 2018. From its completion we will automatically be in multiple services, which will, in turn, require we have a safe and smooth shuttle ministry. So, this is a modification we must make.

In the next few weeks, we will be purchasing three brand new 15 passenger Ford walk-in vans. These are not normal vans, but ones with an aisle and the ceiling height to accommodate a person six feet tall. With three of these, we will be able to offer a streamlined and seamless transition from the nearby Park N Ride on Old Keene Mill Road, just past the Shoppers mall area, to our church. You will be able to park your car in this nice lot, get picked up and transported quickly to the church. Your return trip will be just as comfortable and convenient.

Again, I can't underscore enough how important it is for you to start thinking ... and praying about ... changing your mindset about driving to and parking at church on a given Sunday. For the committed, those days are almost completely behind us, and a new day has come. Sure, it will call for sacrifice, but what is discipleship about? As you sacrifice, you will be making life easier for a new person coming to our church for the first time. What could be more important than this? So, I challenge you today to begin to talk as a couple, as a family, and as people how you will commit to this worthy endeavor.

Two, to accommodate our growth, as well as prepare properly for the future, we are working hard at creating a video venue on our church campus during the second and third worship services. We already have between 40 to 50 people worshipping in our video environment in the Foyer near the coffee bar. We've had over 100 per service recently as well, so, as you can readily see, it is a “problem.” As a side note, I would ask our coffee drinkers to be considerate of those sitting in this Foyer worship environment. Quietness is next to godliness, is it not?

What we are proposing this year is moving our youth program on Sunday mornings to the modular, and then utilizing their area for our much needed video venue site. This will give us around 240-250 new seats, or will allow us to accommodate 500 new worshippers. We are currently working at improving the sound in this room by adding specially designed acoustical

panels, plus we've recently carpeted this great area and added new paint and furniture. We will also be providing some small bistro tables around the perimeter of this worship environment. Why? Many of you have personally told me you enjoy having the tables out in the Foyer, so we've listened and we will add them to assist you with your worship needs. During a second or third service, we will have live worship in this location, and the sermon will be televised live with top notch video cables and equipment. Our goal is to start this in the fall, but I'm sure you will see it at Easter when our numbers will really explode.

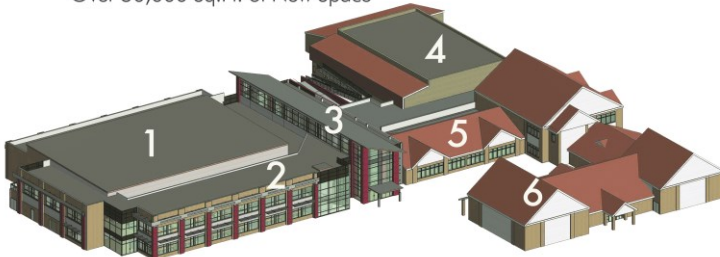
In the meantime, what do I need you to do? Contemplate coming either to the first or fourth service. These services have grown, but there is room for appreciable growth in the next year. By doing this, you will free up seats in our core services for new people to come and worship Christ and learn how to know and walk with Him.

A third thing we need to think about as we look at our engine is this. We need ...

New Engine Purchase

FUTURE CAMPUS LAYOUT

Over 50,000 Sq.Ft. of New Space



- 1 • 1,200+ Seat Worship Center
- 2 • Adult Classrooms and Offices
- 3 • Lobby/Bookstore/Cafe
- 4 • Remodeled Student Center/Gym/Multi-use
- 5 • New Expanded Nursery and Child Check-in
- 6 • Repurposed Children's Space

Currently, we are on the leading edge of our **Get In The Game** capital fund drive program to raise monies for our new worship/educational/office facility. This new, much needed, structure will double our current footprint by 50,000 square feet, and it will enable us to turn our existing worship facility into a large youth building, and it will position us to re-design part of our children's facility to help structure better flow for this thriving ministry.

The cost of the new venture is \$13 million.

During our **Get In The Game sermon** series prior to Christmas, I challenged each of you to consider what generous giving would look like in your lives. I took you through key texts like ...

⁶Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9).

¹⁸Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed (1 Timothy 6).

.... Just to name a few key biblical texts about giving. What we learned is God blesses those who not only have a giving plan, but who give generously to support the advancement of His kingdom work, especially through the local church.

As your “mechanic” and “coach,” I’m proud to say you have and are stepping up to the plate to help us purchase this new engine, as it were. For our *Following God’s Lead* capital program, 197 worshippers stepped forward to support this pivotal work, and for that we are encouraged and excited. For our recent *Get In The Game* capital drive 456 joined in giving to make this much needed construction endeavor a reality. It is humbling to watch the church collectively giving to this endeavor with such selfless generosity. We, as your pastors/elders/leaders, are humbled by your obedience and sacrifice.

We needed \$9 million to launch this program effectively, and currently we have received \$2,358,112 cash, \$3,338,846 in pledges (and we have almost a 100% commitment fulfillment to past pledges ... amazing) for a total of \$5,696,958. Coupled with cash we have on hand, we are fast-tracking the construction of this new facility. Our Master Planning Committee anticipates we will be able to occupy the new facility sometime in December of 2018.

So, thank you. Thank you for sacrificially and faithfully supporting what God is doing among us.

For those who are new, or who haven’t given to this crucial endeavor, we challenge you today to begin prayerfully consider what generous giving would look like in your life this next year. As you step out, know that God will step with you in powerful, moving ways, as He already has in so many lives.

Lastly, we need to say a word about what I call ...

Engine Emphasis

Last year we focused on our marriages, and rightfully so because so many are in need of help and improvement. We will continue building a church which helps you grow a relationship to God’s glory and one which is exciting and enriching to be in; however, there is, as you might guess more work to do in other areas.

This year, staff proposes we focus intently on the concept of Christian service inside and outside the church. With some 240 workers needed in our children’s department on a given Sunday, with drivers needed for our new shuttle service, with folks needed to help with new coffee and greeting ministry in the new video venue site, with numerous people needed for men’s and women’s ministry positions, with a large group of folks needed to effectively run our burgeoning youth program, and so on and so forth, coupled with all of the needs we have in our surrounding community, service is the order of the day. Let Mark 10:45 guide us.

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

The motto we stated earlier can be rephrased: We challenge you to sit, soak, and serve. May your prayer this year be, “God, here I am. I have a busy, tight schedule, but I want to be used by and for you. Show me where you want me to be your hands and your feet, I will move heaven and earth to make it happen.”