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## KNOW AND GROW IN CHRIST

### GATHER

Romans 10:13-17

*For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

We are in the midst of a vision series. We are trying to communicate over the next couple of months who we are, what we do, why we do it, how we do it. We felt like January 1, the New Year, was a great opportunity for us to start communicating, kind of encapsulating in a framework what we try to do as a church. As Riverside Church, this is who we are.

We are taking a little break from our normal series. We were in the gospel of John and we have just taken a little bit of a detour because we feel like this is so important for us -- that you understand, that we all understand, that anybody who comes in these doors or hears messages on-line, or whatever contact they have with Riverside -- that they understand that’s what this church is about.

So we have this big vision/idea/statement, kind of like our pie in the sky. This is what we believe above most other things about why we do what we do, and it’s this: **Christ is the hope of glory. Christ is the hope of glory in you. He is the hope of glory in the Church, and he is the hope of glory in the world.** We get that from Colossians 1:27. That is our big idea. That is the big statement that says: “This is what we are about.”

We want to make sure that that is abundantly clear, because hope is such an elusive concept. It’s so important to our daily life, but it is an elusive concept. It escapes us. It leaves us, because we hope in all the wrong things, or we hope in things that we really have no business hoping in. “I was really hoping the Dolphins were going to go to the Super Bowl this year.” See, you’re laughing because you’re saying, “That’s ridiculous, Adam. There’s no good reason why you would hope in such a thing.” But, we hope.

And I know that this season in life has been just so strange and disorienting, and it seems like we have whiplash at times. We are going from one weird thing to the next in our society, in our culture, and in the world. We have expectations that people in this world are going to do the right thing, make the right decisions, and say the right things. Why? Why would we hope in such a thing? Because we think people are wise and we misplace our hope. It's not biblical hope. **You see, biblical hope is looking forward to something with good reason to expect its fulfillment.** That's how the bible wants us to hope.

So when we read this first statement in Romans 10: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," that is a *huge* statement. If you are texting it, you would text it in all caps because you'd be yelling it to say, "This is really important!" And we would say, "Well, why would I believe in that? Why would I hope in that?" It's because we understand who God is. Or I should say that *when* we understand who God is, we can see statements like that and have hope in them because we learn from scripture who he is, what he is like, that he is good: merciful, patient, kind, just, etc. **Because of his character, we can hope in him and know that what he says is true.**

So that's who we are. That's our vision. That's the big idea about Riverside Church, and we are on a mission to help people know him more and grow in him more. That's what we are trying to do. We want you and everybody here and everybody who hears this – we want to help people to know and grow in Christ. **We want to help you know and grow in Christ. It's really simple. We exist to help people -- and not just any kind of help. That help is targeted in a very focused direction. It is Jesus. It is Jesus Christ. He is the hope of glory and we want to help you know him more. We want to help you grow in him more, because we believe that's the best thing that you could ever give your life to. It's the most important thing that you could ever give your life to.**

So, for the person who knows nothing about Jesus, hasn't put their faith in him for the forgiveness of their sins, we want to help that person go from 0 to 1 -- from no faith and lead them on the path towards faith in Christ, so that they would grow in their love and devotion for him. And for those who already know Jesus, who already have a relationship with him, we want to help them grow more in Christ and know him more and more every single day.

You are thinking, "Wow, Adam, that is awesome. That's a great vision. That's a great mission. I love it. I want to be part of it, but how? How can I do that?" Well, I am so glad that you asked, because I have an answer. The "How" is something we have tried very simply to articulate. It doesn't give us every little facet of our strategy, but it is simply: **Gather, Connect, Serve, Grow. We want you to know this and memorize it and have it in you, because we believe that these four commitments or components to what we do are essential to knowing and growing in Christ.** If that is the greatest thing imaginable -- for you to give your life more and more to Jesus -- then we want to help you do that in very specific ways.

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You have heard some of that this morning already from Michelle. We just wanted to make it so simple for anyone who comes here. You can picture it as just a wheel constantly spinning with four entry points, and we believe that if you engage in these four commitments that you will powerfully know and grow in Christ.

So that's what we are doing. Over these next few weeks we are hitting on each of these four, and today we are continuing on the "Gather" component, because we believe that it is the easiest beginning point for all of us. When we talk about gathering, we are talking about what we are doing right here. We gather. We do church. **Church – it's a place where people of all types come together to worship God.**

Now, I understand and you understand that worship can be and should be done alone, that you should have a personal relationship with the Lord, that you can engage with Christ by yourself in your home with one or two people. That's fine. That's important. But it also has to be done in a corporate setting. It is important to be done with other people and that's why we have the Church. That's why we go to church.

We understand that the Church isn't a building. It's more than that. It's a group of people called out by God to be his, to be his family, and that family needs to get together. That family needs to stay connected to one another, so we go to church with other people -- not alone, not on TV, not on the internet, not on the radio. Those are important. Those can be fine, but that cannot be the staple of our life.

**The gathering is a unique expression of our faith in Christ. It's a corporate expression of our individual relationship with Jesus.** Look at this quote by Donald Whitney. He's a great writer/thinker/pastor figure. He says, "There is an element of worship in Christianity that cannot be experienced in private worship or by watching worship. There are some graces and blessings that God gives only in the meeting together with other believers."

Now, I know in a sense I'm preaching to the choir because you are here. We make our stuff available on-line. We don't think that's bad. We don't think it's wrong to listen to things on the radio. I benefit greatly from listening to preachers and pastors on podcasts and in other contexts, but that is not my main diet. My main diet is here with you. It's invaluable. **God does special things when we gather and it has to do with the two main things that happen when we are together. Those two things are "singing," and what I'm going to call "hearing." Singing and hearing.**

Last week we talked about singing. Brian took us through why we sing, what we sing. What are we doing when we're singing? It's such a unique thing that we do together. You can go to seminars and conferences all over the world in different cult-type fashions or experiential times, but the Christian Church has been known as a people who sing together, sing God's truths. They are not just listening to a seminar. They are engaging in some activity together. So we sing.

We sang this morning wonderful truths. We experienced it in different capacities. Singing is a creative expression to proclaim truth. We learn from it. Our hearts are engaged. Our souls are engaged in a special way when we do that. And we get to do it together. You can be sitting next to someone who sings horribly, and you might sing horribly as well, so you together, singing horribly, lift up the name of the Lord and it's wonderful because you are doing it together! It might be hidden by other people's singing who might sing a little better, but it doesn't matter how well you sing. It matters that you are singing and we are doing it. It's not about how talented you are. It's amazing.

So today we are going to focus on the other side of what we do when we are together, and that's hearing God's word. We hear God's word preached. It's a little unusual to preach on preaching. It can feel a little awkward from my perspective to tell you that what I'm saying is really important and you need to listen to me, but it is. And I'm going to show you, not because this is just a good idea I have, but because this is what God wants for us and from us.

I want to pull out three things today to help us understand something about preaching. We are going to look at the power in preaching, we are going to look at the scope of preaching, and we are going to look at the profit from preaching. These three things are important to our gathering. This is why we gather. When we gather we sing together and we hear God's word preached. So let's talk about the power in preaching.

#### **I. The power in preaching.**

There is this power lifter – his name is Eddie Hall. He is a British man and he is fantastic. He is a character. He has gotten pretty famous over the last few years, because not only is he one of the world's strongest men, but he also holds the world record in the deadlift. I know some of you are just falling asleep right now as I start talking about this, but this stuff fascinates me. It's incredible, first of all, because the deadlift is a very simple movement. You are just picking weight up from the ground and you are standing up with it. Anyone with two arms and two legs can do that and has to do it on a daily basis. But this guy lifts a lot of that. He lifts a lot of weight. He has deadlifted 1,102 pounds, which is the world record. Yes, more impressive now, right? 1100 pounds -- that's half a ton! It is unbelievable that this guy can lift that much weight from the ground to a standing position. Just in case you are like, "Well, what does that even look like?" I have a picture of him actually doing this. There he is: Eddie Hall, British extraordinaire, deadlifting more weight than all of us probably could lift at the same time.

So, what's interesting if you watch that lift on the video? He lifts it and then he falls over. He passed out because his body just went into complete shutdown mode. That's what happens when you lift 1100 pounds. In an interview afterward he said, "I almost died. My nose started bleeding. I passed out. My body just went into complete shutdown." And he said, "I'm never going to lift that much weight again, because I don't think anybody will ever break that record." But then he said, "Well, if they do, I'm sure I'll try to break it again."

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He is a powerful man, uniquely powerful. But what we see there is that that kind of power has dramatic effect. And what I want to say to you is that preaching is powerful, and it also has dramatic effect. Look at Romans 10, at what Paul is saying when he says, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” He goes through this awesome chain of events and he says, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” **Preaching leads to salvation. It leads to faith. That’s amazing! There is power in the preached word.**

Do you see Paul’s chain of events as I read earlier from Romans 10 here? We understand there’s no real formula to get someone saved, or else we would just hand you stuff as you walk in. We would be like, “Hey, do you want to be saved? Say these four things then abracadabra, God will save you.” No, no. There is no magic formula, but it is clear that Paul is laying out this important means that God uses as a pathway to salvation. This is what he says. This is his chain of logic. He says, “How will someone call on God if they don’t believe? How will they believe if they never hear? And how are they going to hear without someone preaching?”

You see, preaching has this horrible connotation in our culture. We don’t want to be preached at. “Don’t be preachy. Don’t preach at me.” And that’s fine. You can substitute another word in for preaching, but we cannot substitute the means by which God’s word is communicated to his people in the gathered Church. It’s not a bad word. If it’s misused, it can be. It can be undesirable. It can lead to maybe some judgmental undertones, but the preaching of God’s word is essential. It’s one of those things that have been carried through from the beginning of the Church and even before that.

In the Old Testament, the prophets of the Lord would come and say, “This is what God is saying. You need to listen.” Usually the people of God would not listen and horrible things would happen. When they did listen, God’s blessing would come. In the New Testament we see that it’s not quite the same way, that the Spirit is living in us in a unique way in the New Testament age. So when God’s word comes forward, I am not a prophet of the Lord saying, “Thus says the Lord: We need to do x, y, z.” No, no. We have the scriptures now and all of this in here helps me to communicate to you: “Okay, God says this. Let me tell you how that applies to your life.” There is power in that, not because of me or whoever is standing up communicating it.

I mean, Eddie Hall, the most powerful man in the world right now could be up here and all his power would not save your life because it’s not about his power. **It’s about the power in the word of God. It’s about the power that the Spirit brings when the word goes forward. So, in the mystery of God, human preaching leads to faith. That’s unbelievable.** This is why Paul was so motivated to go throughout the world. He was going all over the place, getting in shipwrecks, getting beaten up, getting stoned, getting bitten by snakes – all of these things happening because he knew that to give people the most important thing of their lives, he had to go out and communicate the gospel. How are they going to believe if they don’t hear? He says, “Well, I have a mouth. I am going to go let them hear.”

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We don't understand why God chooses preaching for this, but he does. And I want to say this: It's not just about coming to faith in Christ. The preached word or the word of God – this power that is unleashed isn't just about leading to faith in salvation, but stirring up faith in us just to live daily life.

I think you know this: Life is hard. Yeah, just a general groan. Ugh. It's hard, man. If I asked for a show of hands, don't raise them, but who had a hard morning? There would be like two hands up, right? Or who had a hard week? Month? Year? Everything that happened at the end of 2016 – in so much of what I was reading, I was like, "Thank God this year is over." That was the common thread throughout so much. We just want 2016 to end because it has been miserable. I don't know if that's true or not, but that's a sentiment in the ethos, right? That's what's happening. Life is hard. We need power. We need a continual influx of faith, not just to get by, because we don't just want to do that. That's not what God wants for you, just to make it through, but he wants you to thrive. **We need that continual influx of faith so that we can thrive in this life.**

But what makes it hard and where the challenge comes in in unique ways is that everything we are told, everything we hear in our culture, in our world, is that the power to change lies within. When you are constantly told that: "Okay, the power is in me. I've got to work harder. I've got to try harder. I've got to unleash what's hidden in here. I've got to get to my inner child. I've got to unleash my spirit animal. I've got to figure out what it is..." What happens is we spend money, we buy books, we go to seminars, trying to figure out how to live a more powerful life, how to change and grow. All these "try harder, figure it out, unleash it within you" – they promise freedom, but they enslave us. They make us miserable and prisoners to ourselves because they can't deliver what they promise.

**The fundamental truth is not that there is power in me just waiting to unleash. It's that I'm broken inside and I need help.** The deeper I go in and of myself into here, I'm going to find more of a mess and more brokenness. I need help from without, from outside of me, to come in and to change. **Change comes from the word of God coming in us. Change comes from the power of the Spirit living in us, to show us our need.**

**We need the power of the gospel, the freeing, liberating power of the gospel. We are broken and separated from God and without intervention we will live in that forever.** I don't care how successful, or how much money, or how many friends we get in this life, it will never fill that void. We need help. We need Jesus to come in to save us, to say, "Listen, I can heal what's broken in you. The relationship from God that has been severed -- I will restore it by giving my life for you."

**Christ lived the life, the perfect, powerful life that we can't live, and he lived it for us. And for all the sin that we have committed in our lives, he chose to take on all of that and pay the penalty of that sin for us. He stands in our place. He**

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**is perfect where we should have been perfect, and he was punished where we should have been punished. And he says, “I give it to you. Trust in me and you will find power and change in there.” That’s the gospel.**

We talk about vision and we have this icon up here. You can see it. It’s just simple. We said, “What can simply come across in our logo/icon/branding material?” It’s the cross, because for us there is no greater instrument of change. There is no greater symbol for what will bring you the life that God wants for you more than that image of the cross. **Because it was Christ on the cross dying for you that brings you life. The power to change does not come from within. It comes when Christ enters.**

You might be thinking, “Well, that is awesome, Adam. I agree with you. That’s right. I need to hear God’s word regularly. I need to do this. I love it. But can’t I just do this at home? Hear God’s word preached? Can’t I just listen to it on-line?” We already talked a little bit about that. The answer is yes. You absolutely can be doing that. You could be listening at home to the word of God being preached, but it’s not the same. It’s just not the same. There is something significant, something special about this -- being together.

There is sacrifice involved, right? You had to get up this morning and come to the crack of dawn meeting at 10:00 am to hear God’s word being taught. Listen, I know how hard it can be. We have four children. Trying to get them out of the house -- I leave early because I just can’t handle it. I’m here early; peaceful, serenity. I’ve got worship music playing in my office. I’m preparing and my wife is at home, hair pulled out, trying to wrangle those four little monsters to get to church. There is sacrifice involved. There is commitment involved.

But when we are here, that pays off. There is focus. You’re here. You are kind of forced to just listen. I mean, you could tune out. You can do other things, but most of you are like, “I’m here, I might as well hear what he has to say. The music is kind of good and I know he probably won’t preach too long.” We are focused. When we are here and you’re sitting around, you can look around and you can identify with one another. Often when we do our prayer times after worship, we stand up where there is a need and you might see someone that you think has just got it all together. They stand up during the prayer time and you are like, “Oh, man. I wonder what’s going on with them? I hope they are okay.” Or someone might be kneeling or you might see a dad that you greatly respect and you are like, “Wow. We are here together. We are all in it together. I have prayers needs. He has prayer needs. This is good.” That can’t happen at home. It doesn’t happen at home.

And it’s not just about hearing the word of God being taught when we are together. We sing together. We take the Lord’s Supper together. We see baptisms together. We actually have to talk to people and communicate with others without using a keyboard. You don’t get to use emojis when you are face to face with someone. You are the emoji! You are the original emoji! You have to smile and look at people and give them a thumb’s up or give them the arm thing, or

whatever. That's how we interact. The more that we shift to on-line space, the less impacting we are going to be in one another's lives. The Church is a family. There is power when we gather, and there is power in preaching.

It's important that not just preaching happens, but it's important to understand that what is being preached needs to be saturated in the bible, which leads to our second point.

## **II. The scope of preaching.**

The scope of preaching is important. When we say that preaching must be saturated in the bible, we ask the question, "Okay, what part of the bible? What parts of the bible do we really need?" It's going to help us to look at Acts, Chapter 20. What's happening in verses 26 and 27 of Acts 20 is Paul, the same guy who wrote our Romans passage, is talking to the elders of the church in Ephesus. Ephesus is where we get the book of Ephesians. The book of Ephesians is Paul's letter to that church. Well, in Acts, he is starting the church. He is with them and he is about to leave them. He has planted this church and he is like, "Alright, I have to go. I have other things I need to do. I'm probably never going to see you again, because I think this will be it. I'll never make it back here, so let me tell you a few things." And this is what he says as he is finishing up his statement with them. He says, "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God."

**The whole counsel of God – this is important.** Paul is saying, "Listen, there are going to be people who come in after me who are going to mess you up. They are going to teach you things that are going to make you swerve into the wrong lane. They are going to teach you things that are going to be destructive. He is saying, "Listen, I have done my part. I can't be blamed if that happens, because I have taught you the whole counsel of God."

So when we ask the question, "Well, what do we need to be talking about when we are together in church? What needs to be preached?" Well, it needs to be the whole counsel of God." **We say, "How much of the bible do we need?" All of it. "How much should be preached?" All of it.**

Now, that's hard, right? That's not easy for the preacher and that's not easy for the listener, because sometimes we are forced to get to parts of Scripture that are unappetizing at times or difficult to explain, or just challenging to what we believe. That's why we need it, because we are not okay by ourselves. By ourselves we start to create the religion we want. We start to create the God that we want, and if we only go to certain portions of Scripture that tell us about those things, then we will start to believe that's what all of Christianity is.

**Our job is never just to make you feel comfortable when you come to church. It's to tell you what God says and to allow the word to challenge the way that we all live. We have a mandate to teach everything contained in the Scriptures.** Not all at once, but it's what's best for us. We all would love to just eat ice cream breakfast, lunch, and

dinner, or something like it. But we know that will lead to bad things. We need broccoli. We need vegetables, even though we may hate it at times. And sometimes we need that when we see God's word in its fullness. We say, "Oh man, that's not ice cream. That is not sweet, but okay, I better listen, because this is what God is saying."

That's why we choose to preach the whole books of the bible, so that we can have context into what is happening in the Scriptures. It forces us to teach the whole counsel of God. It keeps us focused on God's word rather than just talking about our favorite topics all the time.

Allstair Begg is a popular preacher, a Scottish preacher, who says this: "There is a way to preach the bible unbiblically. You can use the bible as the springboard for all kinds of ideas, can't you? Look around and hear and find something that fits your fancy (he's European) and then launch a rocket off it. People say, 'That was amazing, wasn't it? Remarkable what he got out of that!' Well, of course it is, because he put it in before he got it out."

What he is saying is that if we have ideas about God and what we want the bible to say, we can import that into the Scriptures at times. We can import that into the Scriptures rather than pull out what God is saying to us. So it's very important when, if you're not a part of this church, or if you are a part of this church, wherever you go to church, that you hold your preachers, your pastors accountable to say, "Okay, was that what God was really saying? Or are you kind of twisting it to make it sound the way you want it to?" It's very easy to do and you have to be very careful in that.

We gather together in this place to hear from God, not just funny stories, not the pastor's top ten list, not five steps to a better life. Those things can be interwoven at times, but they can't be the main or predominant message. Why? Well, that leads to the final point.

### III. The profit from preaching.

I'm going to jump to 2 Timothy 3:16. Look at what Paul says. This is a famous passage, one we know. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness..." Look at what he says. **He says *all Scripture, the whole counsel of God is profitable***. That even means that that book in the Old Testament that you skip all the time because it's so hard, and like, "I don't understand a lick that's going on in here, God. I'm just going to rip it out of my bible" -- even in those books, you can find profit. It might be a little harder to mine the profit out, but it is in there and we need it. God's word, when we study it, whether it's alone or in small groups, or hear it taught in a setting like this, it changes us. It is profitable. It is helpful.

**First of all, it shows us who God is. It keeps us from bad thinking.** It keeps us from creating God in our image, because that's what we want to do. When the bible comes in and shows us: "No, no, no, no – this is what God is like," you are

like, “Oh, right, right, right. He’s not like me. He’s very different. Better. I need to be like him.” The bible shows us that’s part of the profit.

**But it also equips us to live life.** Listen, all the challenges that life brings our way each and every day, God’s word makes us ready to deal with them. I’m not saying that life is perfect every time you just read the Scriptures, that there will be no challenges. No, no, no, no. But it fortifies you. It puts a deposit in you so that you can draw from it when those problems come.

Here’s what it does according to that passage I just read. Here’s how it works. It says the word of God is profitable. It teaches us, so in a very real way it imparts knowledge to us. It shows us. It holds up the standard, okay? This is what you should think. This is what you should do. This is how you should live. It teaches us. It gives us knowledge about God and how we are to live.

Then when we start to drift off course, there is that word “reproof.” **It reproves us.** That word is a corrective. It kind of smacks you on the side of the head and says, “No, no, no. You are going off course. You are being reprovved. You should not do this. This is bad. Do not continue on this path.” Then it brings correction in to help bring you back to the right path. Then you are like, “Okay, I’m back on the lane where I need to be.”

**That’s what God’s word does. That’s the profit. You see, we need that, because we all wander from the truth and we need constant teaching. We need constant reprovving and correcting so that we can honor God and love others and live the best life that he has for us.** I know that we don’t like that, because we don’t want to be told what to do. We don’t like to be reprovved.

You know, I’m a honker. I’m not super proud of it. What I mean by that is I honk my horn when I drive. It’s not great and some people look at me weird who are in my car when I do it, like, “Why are you doing this?” I tell them, “Well, I was born in New York. I think it’s in my blood to honk.” I’m a honker because I feel like it’s my responsibility to let everyone on the road know what they are doing wrong. And God has given me this wonderful notification device on my car to carry out his will and his purpose. You know: When the light turns green, go! Get off your phone. But don’t honk at me, because I will have none of it.

In some ways the illustration fails on so many levels, but **God’s word is a horn. It’s a loud horn. If we will read it and listen to it, we see what’s right. When we start to swerve and go into the other lane it wakes us up.** And you, sitting here: This is a piece of that where you hear it coming forward. You are like, “Man, I haven’t been in God’s word by myself, or even been listening in church for the last several weeks or months, or whatever.” You are putting the horn away. You are deactivating. You are putting the horn on silence, on vibrate, so that it doesn’t bother you. That horn

needs to be active and awake all the time so that we can live and we don't run off the road over the cliff. We need it. It's good. It's right. Because we swerve. We are foolish. We wander.

Let me give another illustration. When I was a kid I wanted to be a pilot, so when I was a teenager I actually started to work on my private pilot's license. I was about 16. I never wound up getting it, but I remember when I did my first solo flight. It's really frightening when the instructor says, "Okay, I'll see you – go," and you just are flying around in a plane and trying to stay on course, focusing so hard. "Okay, I need to go here, here."

Let's face it. The ante rises when you're in the air in a small, silly plane that doesn't seem like it can do much. When you drift off course, when you are in trouble, the consequences are elevated. If you don't correct those problems, you are in a lot of trouble. There is this principle in flying (and this is for more sophisticated planes) that if you are one degree off from where you are supposed to be going, if you continue in that direction, in that one degree margin of error, for every mile you fly you will miss your target by about 100 feet. So if you fly one degree off course for 60 miles, you will miss your target by a mile.

Now, keep extrapolating that out and out. The longer that you stay just one degree off course – forget if you go five degrees or ten degrees or fifteen degrees off course -- the longer you stay on that track without correction, you will miss the target completely by miles and miles and miles. The reality is it's not a big deal for short distances, but the longer you stay even one degree off course, the farther you will drift from where you want to be.

You definitely don't want to do that when you're flying in a plane, but it's no less acceptable in our lives! **When we continue to operate even one degree off from what God wants for us, it leads to disaster.** Sometimes I think we're just too comfortable living off course by small degrees. We make small concessions, and we are like, "Aw, it's no big deal. It's just this little concession," and that little concession will then lead to a bad habit. Then that bad habit will lead to more concessions, and those concessions will lead to more bad habits. Before you know it, you have veered off course so far that it takes a lot of work and effort to get back on course. And we just feel like, "Well, God's word can't do enough to help me now. I'm just so far gone and God would never help."

**They are all lies and we need the word of God to continually be massaged into our souls so that we can be alerted when things are going off. We need it. We have to love it. We have to learn to love it. We have to learn to love other people helping us with it. We need the word of the Lord and what we need is to see our need of God's word, because we are blind, often, to our need of it.**

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So I just want to leave you with a couple of thoughts as we finish today. The gathering of the church is so important. And when we gather, when we are together and we are hearing God's word preached, I just want to give you three thoughts to kind of steer you, to take some things away, to know how to move forward.

**1) The first is this: Gather and hear.**

Really simple. Paul says faith comes by hearing. Come. **Come to church.** Don't let it be an option. Don't let the gathering of the Church be optional to you. Don't let sporting events, don't let life get in the way of what is most important. This is not a legalistic, "We're going to be taking attendance every week and if you don't come, just don't bother coming back." It's not like that. We need this. I need this. You need this. We need to be together. We need to hear God's word being taught. We need to sing together. We need this activity so that we can grow.

Gather with other people to hear God's word taught. And when you're there, when you're at the gathering, participate. You're here! **Participate!** So sing! And when the word of God is being taught, you are like, "Well, how do I participate?" Well, you listen. Maybe you take notes. You are absorbing. You are doing what you need to do to get what's being communicated. Participate. Stay off your phone unless you're taking notes or looking at your bible. Don't distract the people around you. Talk to other people. Engage.

**2) The second thing is: Gather and trust.**

**Put your trust and hope in God and in his word. Trust that what he says is true and that what he says is profitable for your life. Trust that you sitting here right now, that you sitting here, hearing God's word, will unleash power in your life.** As I said before, it's putting a deposit in you that is bringing change right now, and a deposit that you can draw from when Tuesday's problems roll around. When you take a vitamin, you don't expect to just all of a sudden be full of energy and strong. You know that it's fortifying you. God's word does that. It brings change in the moment as well as fortifying you for what's to come.

It's also equipping you to preach to yourself. When Tuesday's problems roll around, you can sit there and say, "Okay, I am not defined by this. God is in control. He is good. He is powerful. The gospel has strengthened me. I know that in and of myself I am a sinner, but God has done this. God has power in my life and I can overcome because of what God has done." That's what we need to be doing to ourselves all the time, preaching to ourselves.

**3) And third: Gather and share.**

**Share what God is doing in your life. It's not just about you and God. It's about us and God. The power of the gospel isn't just for you. It's for you to share with others.** And part of the power and the profit that comes from preaching is

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that you are equipped to now preach to others. It's not necessarily going to look like what I've just done here. It's going to be in your context, in the way that you can communicate it, but we want to equip you so that when you go talk to other people, you can tell them: "Hey, Jesus loves you. I'm a mess. This is what he did for me. Let me tell you a little bit about it." That is how we start to share.

And you know what else we do? We invite others to come to church. The biggest tool that we have to becoming more fruitful here is you going out and inviting other people to come in. That's just a piece, but it's important. **Invite others. Bring them in. Show them how God has changed your life.**

And if he hasn't, if you're here and you don't know Jesus as Lord and Savior, then I want to invite you to come to him today. We sang earlier "Come to the Altar." Forgiveness is found there. Life is found there. You don't have to come to the foot of the steps. The altar is where you come to God in your heart and you say, "God, I am a sinner and I am in need of salvation. Would you help me? Would you save me? Because I can't do this by myself. I can't do this anymore. Everything I try to do myself fails. I am in prison. Free me." And he will. Because we saw it: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." I want to encourage you this morning: Call on the name of the Lord. Let's stand together. **We are going to call on the name of the Lord together. But in your own heart, if you don't know Christ, I want you to call on him, ask him to save you. If you do know him and you are in the midst of battles, call on the name of the Lord.**