

Knowing Christ In Prayer

by Doug Small

This sermon emphasizes the importance of unity among different denominations and believers, focusing on the need to prioritize core theology over tribal theology. It highlights the significance of building up faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, and centering oneself in the love of God. The message calls for a revival that transcends denominational boundaries and unites believers in a common mission centered on Christ.

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Scripture: Jude 1:3, Jude 1:20, Jude 1:21, Jude 1:22, Jude 1:24

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Description

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Transcript

I'm going to stumble down and get anything good to come out of Kaiser West Virginia. Is that in the audience somewhere? A few years ago I was in Nashville and I was staying in a repurposed monastery. And a beautiful night I walked out and looked down on the little village of Nashville.

It was much larger than it was at the time of Jesus. But I just had this sense that Jesus probably climbed those hills as a little boy. And probably stood at the very spot that I was standing.

Of all the places that I was in Israel at that time and the other times I've gone, I don't think I ever felt closer to a connection with the Lord than that time. And out of that little village of Nazareth came the Messiah. Extraordinary.

God is not, you know, West Virginia, someone has called it the hidden place of the nation. And there's been a move here for, my goodness, at least 25 years or so. I've been here meeting with intercessors across literally the whole state.

I've been in different parts of the state. And I've been, again, down in Mingo County. I traveled the state one year with the coal industry speaking to different people.

Down in Mingo and I can't remember the other county there. To see pastors come together, almost a thousand people at a series of prayer meetings there. And the sense has been, you know, this idea that West Virginia is shaped like a heart.

That somehow God wants to do something in West Virginia that would impact the nation. When Promise Keepers came here, what was it, 25 years ago? It was because they felt like God was up to something in West Virginia that would impact the whole state. We tend to narrow our thinking.

We tend to think about us and our relationship with Jesus Christ and going to heaven when we die. But God's purposes are much bigger than that. And I just would encourage you to consider the fact that God might be up to something with you.

God might be up to something with your church. God might be up to something with your city and your state that could turn the nation. It's interesting to me that your senator has become the hinge on almost every issue.

You know, the direction of the nation is depended by Joe Manchin. And, you know, in West Virginia, you stubborn West Virginians, you're blocking the progress of the nation. You know that, don't you? It's interesting that God is kind of a metaphor, I think, for what maybe God wants to do in this state.

I want you to open your Bible, if you will, to the book of Jude. And I want to read a couple of verses from the book of Jude. And then I want to come back to it at the very end of my time with you today.

Beloved—and this is the brother of Jesus. Everybody knows that, right? The half-brother of Jesus. Beloved, I was thinking about writing you a letter concerning our common salvation.

But I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for not faith, but the faith. Definite article. It is that set of propositional truths that are non-negotiable.

You take one out and the entire construct collapses. If he isn't born of a virgin, then he's the son of Adam and not the son of God. If he didn't live a sinless life, then he's picking fruit off the tree and he's in the same condition as Adam.

If he didn't rise from the dead, there's no authentication of his sinless life and who he was. If he didn't ascend to heaven, then where is he? If he isn't at the right hand of the Father, then he has not opened the tabernacle of heaven and sprinkled it with his own blood. And therefore we are not now connected to heaven so that we worship in heavenly places.

If he's not in heaven at the right hand of God, then he has not been affirmed as the son of God. And Jesus is someone other than we think him to be. And there is no hope for his return.

Every one of these, like the old game pick up sticks. Remember that old game that you played when you were little? If you pull one thread out, it unravels the whole construct. The faith.

I want you to contend for the faith. What you believe matters. We've gone through a season where people seem to say it doesn't matter what you believe.

But actually, you behave your beliefs. Your behavior is driven by your beliefs. That's why worship is not music.

And it's not coming to church and it's not lifting your hands. It's from the old Anglo-Saxon word, worship. It's the collection of your values around which your life is organized and around which you live.

It's what you live for and it's what you would die for. The faith. And then he says, this was once delivered to the saints.

But certain men have crept in unnoticed. And long ago they were marked for condemnation. They are ungodly men who turn the grace of God into lewdness or lasciviousness.

Or, more plainly, they use grace as an excuse to continue in sin. They see grace in a static and not transforming way. And then, finally, he said, they deny the only, exclusive, none other, never will be another like him, Lord God.

And to make it clear who he's talking about, and he says, our Lord, Kurios, Jesus, Christos, Jesus, the anointed one, Jesus, the Messiah, Jesus, God. Three things he talks about here. I'll come back to these things.

Let me go to verse 20. And let me just make this comment. In this one chapter, you have 30 indicators of pathology.

This is one more sick church. This is a minotaur catalog, a profile of a fundamentally unhealthy church. What do you do when you live in a church that's unhealthy, a church age that's unhealthy? Where we're denying the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ.

There are many ways to God. Where grace is the occasion for sin and we're not seeing authentic transformations and related to conversion. Where we no longer have the faith.

What do you do in an age like that? Well, you, beloved, plural in the Greek. You. The remnant.

The church inside this church that seems to be falling apart. You. Here's what you should do.

You should get together and build yourself up on your most holy faith or a faith that makes you grow in holiness. You should pray in the Holy Ghost. You should keep yourself in the love of God or guard the love of God.

Or one colloquial translation says, center yourself in the love of God. You should look for mercy, but the long-term view should be unto eternal life. You should live knowing you have a God of mercy and a God of grace.

But you should live with eternity in view. And then he becomes missional. This is the prescription for fixing the church.

It's very simple. It's very simple. And then he says, now here's your mission.

Some have compassion marking them. Others, save with fear or reverence, pull them out of the fire. Fire meaning hell.

Fire meaning lust. Fire meaning something that's taken over their life. Now, theologians are divided on whether he's talking about two groups or three.

I prefer the three-group scenario. And then he says, pulling them out of the fire, the third group would be hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. There's no nice way to say this.

There's no nice way to say this. This is, the Greek is, semen stained clerical robes. These are sexual predators in the church whose basest desires are not under control.

And the church becomes the place where they operate. This is morality at its lowest, modeled by clergy. And he's saying, there are some you can make a difference in their lives.

There are some you can pull from the fire. There are some, the Greek indicates, they need a little more time. Be patient with them, but there are some.

You are not going to turn them around. You're going to have to work around them. We're talking about a church that's apostate, and inside that church is a remnant.

And he's talking about how the remnant begins to influence the apostate church. Now, I know you don't go to apostate church. The other apostate churches are in the building, and they didn't come to the meeting.

So I'm not talking about your church, understand? Everybody, yeah, okay, right. And then Jude just goes off on this wonderful, extraordinary, now unto Him who is able to keep you. You don't have to be like this.

You don't have to fall into sin. You don't have to be captured by apostasy. You don't have to sink to the lowest level.

You can live a life of victory. He's able to keep you from stumbling and present you before the presence of His glory with exceeding great joy. You don't have to lose your victory.

You don't have to lose your peace. You don't have to lose your song in the middle of all this hell that's breaking loose around you, even in the church. And then He ends with one of the most glorious doxologies, to God our Savior, who alone is wise.

Be glory and majesty and dominion and power both now and forever. Amen. Up in the Catskills, there's a wonderful legend.

I love it, of Rip Van Winkle. Thank you for helping me. I fall down.

I can't say my words. God help me, you know, okay. And he's got a bit of a nagging wife, and he loves to hang around the town hall and tell stories and yarns to the children.

His wife is trying to get him to be more responsible, and finally one day he just gets tired of it. He gets his gun and his dog, Wolf, and he wanders up into the Catskill Mountains, gets caught in a thunderstorm, and has an encounter with the long-lost ghostly men of Henry Hudson's voyage never found. They share some rum with him.

He's obviously not a good Baptist or Pentecostal, and so he has a little magic rum and drifts off to sleep. And when he awakes in the morning, he thinks his dog is gone, his rifle is rusty, and his beard is a foot long. He wanders back down into the village to find his house dilapidated, his wife gone, and no one in the village that he recognizes.

Someone asks him, Who's voting for? Are you for George? Absolutely I am for King George. Wrong George. They were not talking about King George.

They were talking about George Washington. Rip had slept for 20 years, so the legend goes. He had slept through a revolution, and he woke up on the wrong side of the revolution.

Every 500 years, there is a seismic shift in history and in the church. It's epic. It changes the landscape.

Everything shifts. 500 years ago, the Reformation. Rome saw Luther as a little muck that could be crushed by the little finger of the Pope.

It didn't turn out that way at all, did it? You see, some ended up on the wrong side of history. 500 years before that, you have the schism of the church east and west. You have the crusades.

You have the church on the wrong side of the crusades. You have the battle axe moment between Jewish people and Muslim people and Christians. It's one of the black eyes of the church, and we didn't discern the times very well.

500 years before that, you have the collapse of the Roman Empire, the rise of the Holy Roman Empire, and again, we didn't discern the times. We took the handouts from Constantine. We loved the power that he offered us, but we discovered over the years that when the gospel mixes with power, when it's presented from the position of power and not humility, it comes off in a very, very different way.

500 years before that, we have Christ. 500 years before that, we have the Babylonian captivity of Judah and their exile and their coming back and the temple and the preparation for the Messiah. 500 years before that, we have David.

We are now at one of those 500-year moments, and we are experiencing the beginning of a seismic shift which, when it is over, will make the church look very different than it does now, just as the church looked very different after the Reformation. I can't predict what's going to happen. I don't know what the outcome is going to be.

I just know that a number of years ago, I was there at the 500th anniversary of Luther's nailing the thesis to the church door in Wittenberg. I crowded in that place with 700 other leaders. It was my privilege to lead prayer in the sessions leading up to that, and then Barbara and I went from Wittenberg, Wittenberg as it's called, to Heron Hut, where the 110-year prayer revival took place.

We walked that place. We walked and saw Christian David's grave and Zinzendorf's grave, and early in the morning, God woke me up, and I stumbled downstairs in a working farmhouse, a bed and breakfast, and I sat down, and the Holy Spirit said to me, I am about to thrust the church into a new apostolic ethic. It will not be optional.

I insist that my church be a house of prayer. I grabbed a writing pad, and I sat there for two and a half hours and wrote. As the Holy Spirit seemed to download, this is rare.

This is not something that happens to normal people. This is not something that happened to me. Out of this came my book, *The New Apostolic Ethic, 95 Theses*, for what God is going to do moving forward.

I don't understand what I'm saying to you, but I'm telling you, we are not going to go back to a pre-COVID church. We are not going to go back to three songs in an opera. We cannot go back to that.

God is wanting something very, very different, not for the sake of being different. He wants a missional church. He wants something transformational to begin to take place in our lives.

I want to flip over, if I can, to Philippians chapter 3, and I just want to touch something in Philippians chapter 3 very, very quickly. Philippians chapter 3, here's what Paul said, though I might also have confidence, so here's the question. If you're a Christian, where is your confidence that you are a Christian? In what is your confidence place? Here's what Paul said.

I might have confidence in the flesh. If anybody thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I even more. I was circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel.

I am of the tribe of Benjamin. I am a Hebrew of Hebrews. Concerning the law, I am a Pharisee.

Concerning zeal, I persecuted the church. Concerning righteousness, which is in the law, I was blameless. Now, notice this.

Notice what Paul is saying. You can't put your confidence in a ceremony. For him, it's circumcision.

For us, it's baptism. So you know you're a Christian because you were baptized? Not according to Paul. You can't put your confidence in your ethnicity or your background or the fact that you came from a Christian family no more than Paul can do it because he is from the tribe of Benjamin.

God has no grandchildren. You have to have your own reckoning with God. You can't put your confidence in being a member of the tribe of Judah or a member of the Pentecostal church or a member of the Baptist church or a member of any other group.

That's not enough. That is bad confidence if that's where your confidence is. You can't put your confidence in being a Hebrew of Hebrews or a Christian of Christians or excellence in your life.

You can't even put your confidence in your morality, touching the law blameless. I keep all the rules. I check all the boxes.

I don't drink. I don't smoke. I don't chew.

I don't go with girls who do. You can't put your confidence in passion. I'm zealous.

I worship. I really pray. I cry when I pray.

None of that. An impeccable life, passion, morality, class, status, membership, ceremony, none of that matters. In fact, Paul said this is D-U-N-G.

Nice word compared to what it could be. Three times he says it. I would suggest to you this is where most Christians in America put their confidence, in one of these things.

But if you can't put your confidence there, then what is this all about? That I might know Him, epignosis, experiential knowledge. It's not knowing from the left side of your head. It's knowing in your heart.

It's a knowing that comes by the Spirit. It's a knowing that lights you up on the inside. That I might know Him and the power of His resurrection.

We're not talking about something in the future. We're talking about something that lifts me now on the inside. We're talking about something that empowers me now from the inside out.

Even if I have to taste fellowship with His sufferings. This is the goal of the Christian life. That I might know Him.

Now let me just say something to you. I was in Australia a number of years ago, and a guy used this phrase, and I pondered it, and it took me a couple years to really get what he was saying. We confuse the goal and the prize.

The goal is to know Him. It's a relationship. The prize is the upward call.

The prize is the rapture of the church. The prize is heaven. The prize is eternal life.

The prize is whatever that is on the other side. But you see, that cannot be the goal, to go to heaven. No, no, no, no, no.

But that's the way Christianity is presented. Would you pray this prayer with me so you can go to heaven when you die? And what that produces is minimalistic Christianity. I keep the rules.

I go to church. I don't do this. I don't do that.

I'm a good person, and I'm going to heaven when I die. Are you pressing toward the mark? Are you pursuing Him? Are you embracing discipline in your life to know Him? Are you suppressing the flesh by fasting? Not only food, but sleep and other things. Are you on a journey? Is your relationship with the church, or is your relationship with Christ? Because you see, we think coming to church is the same as coming to Christ.

We think being faithful to the church is the same as being faithful to Christ. No, no, no. The church is the bride of Christ.

You can't be saved by a relationship with the bride of Christ. You've got to be saved by a relationship with Christ. Do you know Him? Does He talk to you? Do you talk to Him? Are you hungry to know Him more? Are you on a journey that He would change your life if there were no heaven? Would you be a Christian? You see, if you are pursuing Christ, let me tell you, your relationship with the church will not go down.

That's what preachers fear. That's what preachers fear. No, no.

If you're pursuing Christ, here's what the MOVE study said. The MOVE study said that 10% of people who come to church have never made a serious commitment to Jesus Christ. That 37% to 38% of the people who come to church have made a commitment.

They've prayed a prayer, but that's as far as they've gone, and they do not feel close to God. 37%, 38%, 10%, that's 47%, 48%. That's half the people that we're preaching to every Sunday.

They've made no serious commitment, or they've prayed a prayer, and they're stuck. They are not moving forward. 27% have off-and-on encounters with God, but they don't experience His presence except once in a while in church.

That's 75% of the people who are in church or were in church prior to COVID. We are in a mess. And those in the other group, let me tell you about those people.

Those are the ones who tithe more. Those are the ones who volunteer more. Those are the ones who show up at church even when they're not having church.

Those are the ones who are more loyal and more dedicated and more consecrated because their focus is not on the church. Their focus is on knowing Christ and walking in His presence and living in His presence. Am I making any sense here at all? You see, the prize is heaven.

The prize is eternal life. But the goal is a relationship with Jesus Christ. I think we've presented minimalistic Christianity, and we're in trouble because of a wrong perception of what it really means to be a Christian and a follower of Jesus Christ.

Now, since I'm leaving, let me be mean to the preachers that are here. Just a moment. All members want just a moment to be mean with the preachers, so I'm going to do it for you, okay? Preachers, have you ever been to— most of you have been in a Catholic church or you've been in an Episcopal church or you've been in a Lutheran church.

What do you notice about the arrangement in those churches? You don't have a set of pews here. You've got a straight line from the back door right down the aisle. There's no pulpit in the center because preaching for them was not centric as it has become in evangelical Pentecostal churches.

You see, what we do is build buildings around pulpits, and we become the stars of the once-a-week gathering of the people of God. Our liturgical people place more emphasis upon preaching than they ever did, but they have rightly kept the arrangement so that when you come into church, the thing that you see is the altar, or more precisely, the altar table, the place of the family. You see, I think that we've developed this thing where the goal is to get people to come to church.

The goal is to get people to hear the preaching. The goal is to get people to hear what I think I've heard from God this week. I would suggest that is a flawed goal.

I would suggest that the goal is to get people to hear what God might have said to me or you, Pastor, only as a bridge to get them to begin to hear from God for themselves over an open Bible. Somebody was here this morning, and this wasn't recorded, but Pastor Conlon was talking about how he'd given his heart to the Lord, and there was this wonderful place where he left to go for breakfast when he got off after he's a cop, and he said he had his eggs and his bacon and his Bible and his beer, and he didn't see a problem, but he's reading the Bible, and when he's reading the Bible, he encounters this whole thing about abstinence, and he looks at it, and he reads it again, and he looks at it, and he reads it again, and the Holy Spirit convicts him to push that back, and he says, never again did my lips touch alcoholic beverage. If we would trust people to read the Bible and pray the Bible and pray the Bible and read the Bible and read the Bible and pray the Bible and pray the Bible and read the Bible, then the Holy Spirit would begin to teach them, and hearing something from God, the Holy Spirit, has a deeper, more compelling hold on my life than hearing it from a preacher.

I think the goal is to get people to hear God. I think the goal in your church is to get people to hear God together in a prayer meeting where everybody begins to pray in the same way because we're hearing that God wants us to do that or that or that, and all of a sudden, all of a sudden, we're moving forward. I don't

think the goal is to grow the church.

I think the goal is to grow the people in the church. I don't think the goal is to catch and hold. I think the goal is to catch and release.

I think God might be happier with lean and mean more than He is with big and fat. Here's what we know. The bigger the churches are, the less engaged people are with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We're in a mess. Oh, 2 o'clock. We're in a mess.

In the book of Jude, you have a problem with Christology because He is not the only Lord God. There are alternative roads to God. He's not held in an exclusive way.

They have a problem with understanding their theology of Christ. Not only do they have a Christology problem, but they've got a soteriological problem. That is the theology of salvation.

If they don't hold Christ in an exclusive way, then they've got a problem with understanding how people get saved and what constitutes salvation. If they've got a problem with soteriology, they've got a problem with missiology because they don't have a purpose. What's their purpose? What's their message? What are they preaching to the world in which they're living? Then they've got a problem with ecclesiology around what is Christ or the church organized.

What's the organizing principle of the church? For us, the organizing principle is Christ, the presence of Christ. It's the table where He is alive and well. If they've got a problem with ecclesiology, they've got a problem with core biblical theology, and then they've got a problem with their eschatology.

This is a messed up church. This is one more messed up church. I tell you today, when you look around, we have a problem again with Christology.

He's not being held in a central way. Listen to the media. There are many ways to God.

Christianity is just one way to God. Nonsense. Nonsense.

What do you do when you're in a sick church? Look at you. I can't go through all the pathology that's here. What do you do when theology is starting to become unhinged? Here's what Jude said.

You can't turn the Sunday morning church. You can't preach this right. You can't correct this.

Not at the macro level, but you, beloved, somewhere inside this congregation, is a remnant. It may be three to five percent at the very beginning. I want you to find out who those people are.

You, beloved, the faithful, who still hang on to core theology, who still believe in the exclusiveness of Christ, who still believe the Bible and take it seriously, who are living impeccable lives. I want you to find those people, and I want you to get them together. And I want you to help that remnant inside that church begin to build themselves up on their most holy faith.

Now, again, be mean to preachers. The goal of every preacher is to be a megachurch star, hallelujah, for the glory of God, and be on television. And if the world could only discover my gift, I sing to... Jesus fed 5,000, He fed 4,000, but He poured His life into 3, then 12, then 70, then 120.

The 5,000, the 4,000, the whole village, that was the laboratory for teaching them. He teaches them, comes back, and they say, what did you mean by that? He teaches them and comes back, and why couldn't we do that? He teaches them and comes back. What were you arguing about back there? Let's talk about that a little bit.

He's molding the lives of a handful. Most pastors, they're trying to work with the 100, the 75, that's the average church in America pre-COVID. If you have a church of 350 or more, you're in the top 10%.

If you have a church of 1,000, you're in the top 0.7%. Most churches in America pre-COVID were less than 100. We spend all of our time on Sunday morning, all of our time on the one hour, all of our time on the praise, all of our time on the preaching. It is a mistake.

It is one of the things that God, I think, is calling us to change. It's one of the things that He is shutting down off and on. We think we're on again, then we're off.

We think we're on again, and then we're off. God is calling us to discover the remnant. Who's the remnant in the church? No more minimalistic, come on Sunday morning and check in and be there for the singing and listen to the preaching, even though you don't take any notes and take anything serious, and 80% forget everything they've heard within three hours according to Barnum.

What are we doing spending all this money and all this time doing something that means nothing and makes no difference fundamentally, not only in the community, but in our own lives? You can't change this. You don't want to shut this down. You don't want to burn the building down.

You can't change this. Even if it's Congress of 100, you can't change it. But what you can do is go here and find your remnant and start an alternative church inside the church that is not minimalistic, where you say to them, we must build ourselves up on a most holy faith, or a faith that makes us holy, or a faith that is at its core holy, or a faith that challenges us to live more and be more like God.

Number two, you must pray in the Holy Ghost. I'm a Pentecostal, but I tell you, as surely as there is an anointing to preach, there is an anointing to pray. You've seen somebody sing, and all of a sudden they go to another level.

You've seen somebody preach, and all of a sudden they go to another level. We know, whatever tradition you come from, there is something about the touch of God upon a life. I tell you, there is an anointing to pray.

And if you will pray, so you have to pray to pray. You have to give yourself the prayer to pray. And there's a point in prayer when something happens to you, and you begin to pray what I call transcendent prayer.

This is prayer beyond you, prayer above you. The words begin to flow. God begins to take over your prayer life.

You are praying at an altogether different level. Most of our praying is transactional praying. We're doing business with God about the problems of living in a broken, fallen world.

Good prayer is not transactional prayer. It's transformational prayer. But the best prayer is when you get caught up in the Spirit, and you are anointed to pray.

You pray in the Holy Ghost. The third thing he says is that you keep yourself in the love of God. It's interesting, he doesn't say keep yourself in the faith.

He said keep yourself in the love of God. But you don't have a faith problem when you pray. You've got a love problem.

Faith works by love. You can't pray effectively to a God whose love for you you doubt. You can't do that.

That's why we are forever trying to get somebody else to pray for us. God will hear your prayer when He won't hear my prayer. Fundamental thing you've got to settle.

If you're going to grow in God, He loves me. You can't love Him into loving you. You can't love others and prove yourself lovable.

You have to accept the fact that God loves me. He commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners. So look at the person next to you and say, you rascal, you, you, yeah, well, not your wife.

That will get you in trouble. Pick somebody else and say, God loves you until you settle the love of God. You can't pray effectively because the Bible says faith works by love.

You don't have a faith problem. You've got a love problem. And when you begin to pray to a God who you are convinced loves you, your prayer life changes.

It becomes a delight. You don't feel like you're trying to argue something from a contrary God. He loves you.

His hands are full of gifts to give to you. He cares about you. Faith rises.

It soars in you. Keep, center yourself in the love of God. Let me show you something here.

Now you're building yourself up on what kind of faith? A faith that makes you holy. But you're centering yourself in the love of God. See, if you make prayer about the love of God, it will be a warm cup of milk in the morning and you'll go to sleep every time you pray.

If you make prayer about your exposure to the holiness of God, it will be so uncomfortable and disarming that you will never want to pray. You see, it's the holiness of God that challenges you. It's the holiness of God that overwhelms you.

It's the holiness of God that leaves you speechless. It's the holiness of God that connects with His transcendence that causes in you awe, which is a word for speechlessness. I don't know what to say.

I'm wordless. I can't say it. You and I need moments in prayer where God pulls back the veil and we have a Revelation 1 moment of Christ where we have a Daniel on all fours moment before God.

But I also need to know in that moment that He loves me. And good prayer lives back and forth in the tension between the unconditional love of God and the absolutely overwhelming holiness of God that convicts me. But I'm not repelled.

I'm not pushed away. I'm not running from that. Love causes me to run to that and say, change me.

Make me like that. The end of holiness is wholeness or health and vitality. That's where Jude is trying to get them.

He's trying to get them to holiness, to health, to wholeness. You've got to build yourself up on your most holy faith. You've got to pray with the anointing and enablement of the Holy Spirit.

You've got to center yourself in the love of God. And you look for mercy. You need mercy.

You've got to have mercy, but you've got to lay hold of mercy with eternal life in you. You've got to remember what happens today counts for all of eternity. You can't live your life in a narrow, little, self-interested, existential way.

You've got to understand there are things that are happening today that may impact my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren and generations and generations from now. I've got to stop. In the 50s, more than 50% of people attended church in America.

Hard data. In the 60s, all hell seemed to break loose. And in the 70s, we began to say, well, what in the world is going on? And we had experts that began to tell us, here's how you keep people coming.

Here's how you get new people. And the church growth movement was born. Now, you typically watch a baby grow out of number one, two, three, four, five clothes, these shoes, whatever.

Why? Because growth is what? Natural. But we began to artificially manipulate growth. We were very successful because out of that came the megachurch movement.

And then somebody realized big is not healthy. And then the natural church growth movement was born. And now we're seeing just this extraordinary collage of moral failure and this just collapse of megachurches that are being bulldozed down.

Literally. Bulldozed down. Vacant.

Because we grew churches, but we didn't grow we didn't grow people. I'm trying to find a stopping place. It was my privilege in the last ten years of his life to get to know David Duplessis.

Duplessis was a South African Pentecostal leader. And in the 30s, his denomination hosted Smith Wigglesworth. Wigglesworth was in his home and he said, Wigglesworth came up, I was in my study, I got up to meet him.

Duplessis was a little man, Wigglesworth was a big, big, big man. And he said, I was in my study and Wigglesworth took his hands and pushed me back against a bookcase because I remember David told me this story himself. And he began to prophesy.

He said, Well, come to pass at the turn of the half century, I'll pour out my spirit upon the mainline churches. He said, I see fields and fields full of people churches are not adequate to hold the number of people and you will be an apostle of this movement. And they turned around and left.

Breakfast, Duplessis said, You were rude to me. He said, I was on a divine mission. No time to socialize.

And Duplessis said, I just concluded he was crazy. He was just nuts. And then one morning in the Northeast before retiring, the Holy Spirit spoke to him and said, I want you to go to the World Council of

Churches headquarters and he told his wife, Anna, pack him a lunch.

Now, I know this is a little Pentecostal story, so forgive me. I know we're in an interdenominational setting, but maybe you can forgive me. He said, I want you to go there and tell him about the Holy Spirit.

He told Anna, he said, If you'll pack me a lunch, I'm going to go in, I'm going to tell him, I'm going to obey God, they're going to kick me out, and I'm going to get on the subway or the train and head home and I'll have something to eat and I should be back by lunch. It didn't happen like that. They said, We've never seen a Pentecostal.

We've never talked to a Pentecostal. They kept him all day. They took him out to lunch.

They kept him until they closed and they invited him to the next World Council of Churches meeting. Immediately, since he was chairman of the World Pentecostal Conference, they kicked him out. You can't go over there and be a part of that group and stay a part of our group.

The Assemblies of God took his license away from him. I picked him up at the airport in Fresno, California. I said, I know you're tired.

He'd just flown in from Europe. He said, No, no, no. He said, I never get jet lag.

I don't even know what that word means. Let's go out for coffee. So we went out and had some coffee and pie.

I'll never forget it. And he said, Next week, he said, I go back to Springfield, Missouri, and they're going to reinstate my license and I'm going to become an ordained minister again in the Assemblies of God. And for all those years, all those years, 27 years, that he walked outside, he wore a pin that said 70 times 7. You know what that means, don't you? Forgiveness.

And he championed unity and oneness. From Yankee Stadium full of people to Candlestick Stadium and all across the nation and around the world. And around the world.

The other part of this, I was reading, he pastored Westminster, I followed him, Martin Lloyd-Jones followed him, Kendall. I was reading R.T. Kendall the other day and he was telling the story of Wigglesworth encounter with Du Plessis. And it reminded me of this.

And I'm trying to find a stopping point. Wigglesworth said to Du Plessis, he said, there will come a revival after the turn of the century that will bring spiritual renewal across the church world, the Christian church world. And that has been called the charismatic renewal.

For every 10 Pentecostals in the world, whatever that means, let's define it in a way that we could agree. Wherever you find people that are widely open to the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit, whether they believe that the sign gift of tongues is evidence of spirit fullness, where you find people that are widely open to the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit, which wasn't the case, wherever you find them, nine out of 10 of them are not in a Pentecostal church. Nine out of 10.

Someone said there may be more Pentecostals in the Southern Baptist Church than there are now in the Pentecostal church. They hide. But there's an openness to the Holy Spirit.

They pray in the Holy Ghost. They believe that God works. They believe that He heals.

I meet them everywhere. One of my best friends is a Catholic charismatic. One of the churches that I minister to on a semi-regular basis is a Lutheran church, another Methodist church.

Quick as we're set, that movement comes after the half century, will only be preparation for another move of God. Listen, in which the word churches or Bible churches that resist the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit and churches that are open to the fullness of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostal churches, but are often more focused on experience, the exotic, etc. You know what I mean.

He said when these two come together and reconcile, they will be the greatest move of God in all of history. For 10 years, I gave myself to going into more than 100 cities in the Southeast, trying to get evangelical non-Pentecostals and Pentecostals together in the same room for three or four days around the table to pray together and hear one another pray and be concerned for their city. Claude King, who co-wrote *Experiencing God*, one of the best runaway sellers of the Southern Baptists with Henry Blackaby.

He called me just the other day. He and I have gone into probably half a dozen cities together. I'm a Southern Baptist.

I, Doug Small, am a wild-eyed Pentecostal. But we love Jesus and we believe that we have to come together because God wants to do something bigger than a Pentecostal experience, bigger than evangelical. See, there's a core theology and then there's tribal theology.

That's the theology that makes a Baptist a Baptist. The theology that makes a Pentecostal a Pentecostal. The theology that makes a Lutheran a Lutheran.

What we've done is we've ignored core theology and focused on tribal theology. And now we're losing core theology. We have to come together around what matters.

Then we'll go in the back room and we'll beat one another up with our different versions of the Bible. But in front of the city, we need to learn to stand together. God wants to do something in West Virginia.

I tell you he does. God wants to do something in Kaiser. Can we get the wild-eyed Pentecostals and the Baptists and the evangelicals together without the Pentecostals insisting that the Baptists have to somebody say it speak in tongues and maybe even this would really be a miracle the Baptists not insisting that the Pentecostals don't and neither one running out the room understanding the centrality and the supremacy of Christ and the common mission to which he has called us.

Father, I want so much to see a move of God. A nation changing, shaking move of God. I want so much to see a move of God.

Why not here? Why not West Virginia? Why not with these people who might learn to appreciate one another's distinctives but find value greater value in the centrality, supremacy of Christ and the common mission. I pray this for this place in Jesus' name. Amen.

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