

A yellow hard hat is centered in the upper half of the image, set against a background of warm, blurred orange and red tones. The text "CHURCH UNDER CONSTRUCTION" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters with a black drop shadow.

# CHURCH UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Pastor Mark Allen Mikels  
*Sonlife Community Church*  
Apple Valley, CA

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## *Table of Contents*

<b>1. CHURCH UNDER CONSTRUCTION</b>	...	Page 4
<b>2. THE DOCTRINAL PHASE</b>	...	Page 10
<b>3. THE BEHAVIORAL PHASE</b>	...	Page 84
<b>4. THE RELATIONAL PHASE</b>	...	Page 132
<b>5. THE EVANGELISTIC PHASE</b>	...	Page 178
<b>6. A WELL-CONSTRUCTED CHURCH</b>	...	Page 212
<b>7. APPENDIX</b>	...	Page 216

**Pastor Mark Mikels - April 23, 2006**

**"CHURCH UNDER CONSTRUCTION"**

(Introductory Message - Matthew 16:18)

**Intro** ... "*I will build my church*" ... that's what Jesus said to Peter and the other disciples that glorious day in Galilee when Peter correctly identified him as "*The Christ - the Son of the Living God*".

Those words recorded in Matthew chapter 16 verse 18 form the backdrop for a brand new series of messages - a series I've entitled:

**"Church Under Construction".**

For you see, even as we begin the construction of a church structure on the corner of Apple Valley and Ottawa, so the Lord himself is involved in constructing the actual Church - *Sonlife Community Church* - that will congregate inside its walls.

That's the church that we want to have ready to meet the world when we open those doors for the first time - that's the church that the Lord Jesus is dedicated to creating - that's the church that we will spend the next weeks together discussing.

And as we launch that discussion this morning - as we overview all that that discussion will try to cover - consider with me ...

***Today's Key Concept ...***

There is nothing in all the world so **ATTRACTIVE**, so **IMPRESSIVE**, so **USEFUL** to God as a well-constructed **CHURCH** - a church constructed according to the **BLUEPRINT** laid out in **GOD'S WORD!**

If that's true, then is it any wonder that Jesus said that he would be investing his "***Post-Resurrection Energies***" in just such an endeavor?

And if ***that's*** true, then is there anything we can more profitably spend our time doing than cooperating with Christ as He works in our midst?

And *that's* exactly what I want us to do over these next few months, "Cooperate with Christ" as we become a "Church Under Construction"!

There will be *Four Phases* to the Construction Process ...

### *Phase One: CHURCH UNDER CONSTRUCTION DOCTRINALLY*

It's imperative that *Sonlife Community Church* be ...

- Built Upon A Solid CONFESSION Of FAITH - Jude 3

Consider these words written by Jude, the brother of the Lord Jesus ...

*Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was **once for all** entrusted to the saints.*

The "*faith*" - the content of the Gospel - has always been and will always be under attack ... And when it is has not been directly *attacked*, it frequently has been simply *ignored*.

You see many believers today (even like Jude in the first century) would prefer to simply talk about "*salvation*" - that is, about their personal testimony and how the gospel has benefited their life and how becoming a Christian will benefit anybody's life. And when you are talking to non-Christians, that usually *is* the place to start.

But frequently these days, that's all that's talked about. Even when the church body comes together, there's very little talk about the great truths of God upon which that salvation experience depends.

And little by little those "*Great Truths*" get forgotten and when they do, the salvation experience itself is diminished and even distorted.

So Jude wrote ... urgently and passionately ...

*"I felt I (simply) had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was **once for all** entrusted to the saints".*

The "*faith*" has been "*entrusted*" to the saints ... It is the responsibility of the "*saints*" to "*keep the faith*" and to "*communicate the faith*".

Notice that the faith was "***once for all***" delivered to the saints - with the close of the Apostolic Period that "*delivery of the faith*" was complete.

For the past two thousand years the church has been responsible to "*keep the faith*" - to "*guard the faith*" - to "*preserve and protect the faith*" - to "*disseminate the faith*" and, of course, to "*live according to the faith*".

But in order to do those things, the church must "*know the faith*" and "*understand the faith*".

So that will be ***Phase One*** of our Church Construction Project - reviewing our *Sonlife* Statement of Faith - making sure we know the basic, essential content of the Christian Faith!

And once we "*get a good grip*" on the Faith, we will enter ***Phase Two*** of our project and become a ...

### ***CHURCH UNDER CONSTRUCTION BEHAVIORALLY***

It's absolutely essential to the cause of Christ that *Sonlife* Community Church be ...

Built Upon A Solid **COVENANT** Of **BEHAVIOR**  
(1 Peter 2:9-12)

Listen to these words from the Apostle Peter ...

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

That's a recitation of some key doctrine!

Now, based upon that doctrine, Peter makes his appeal ...

*"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."*

God's desire is that we live "*squeaky clean lives*" ... that we have our act so "*together*" that the world around us just stands back and marvels and says (in effect) ... "*Only God could produce such a people*".

Our *Sonlife* Covenant takes the teachings of Scripture and organizes them into specific standards of behavior that will not only honor God but also impress a watching world. We will probably be amazed how many areas of our daily lives the Bible addresses!

To some degree, in these first two phases of construction, we could say that Christ is building His Church *individually* - member by member, teaching us what to *believe* and how to *behave* in our *personal lives*.

In *Phase Three* of this Church Construction Project, Christ begins to work with us collectively as we become a ...

### **CHURCH UNDER CONSTRUCTION RELATIONALLY**

For *Sonlife Community Church* to truly become a church worthy of the name Christian, it must be ...

Built Upon A Solid **CONGREGATIONAL CONNECTION** -  
(1 Corinthians 12:24b-27)

Consider these insightful words given to the Apostle Paul ...

*God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

Now here's a point that we individually focused Americans in our super churches where no one knows anyone frequently miss ...

Christ is building an integrated, inter-linked, inter-woven body of believers that carries a "*group identity*" in addition to the multiple identities of the individuals who make it up.

Therefore, in the church that Christ is building, every member is vitally connected to and dependant upon all the others.

And in the Blueprint of God's Word, it is clearly drawn out how each member is to relate to the others ...

How the whole body is to "*one another one another*".

In our third phase of construction, we will examine several of the "*one anothers*" of the New Testament to see just how Christ expects us to inter-act with one another.

Here's just a sample:

*"love one another" ... "prefer one another" ... "encourage one another"...*  
*"pray for one another" ... "confess your sins to one another."*

Some impressive stuff will begin to take shape in ***Construction Phase Three!***

And now we come to ***Phase Four*** ...

I hope that I will be hitting these lessons as we are in the countdown to our Dedication Sunday; for you see, in ***Phase Four***, Christ turns the collective eyes of his spiritually constructed church outward and causes them to become a ...

***CHURCH UNDER CONSTRUCTION EVANGELISTICALLY***



In order for *Sonlife Community Church* to be all that Christ would have us be and to accomplish all that Christ would have us accomplish in this world, we must ultimately be ...

Built Upon A Solid **CONCERN** For The **LOST** - (Luke 19:10)

Listen to the words of Jesus himself ...

*"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

Seeking and saving the lost is the ultimate passion of Christ's heart and so it will be the passion of any church that He has constructed!

All of us were lost at one time ... perhaps some of you here this morning still are lost but at least you are in a place where it is being explained to you how you can be found.

Christ would have each of us become proficient in giving that explanation to those who are open to hear it.

That will be our focus in *Phase Four* of the Series -

*"Learning how to share our faith".*

***Final Thot ...***

A well -constructed **CHURCH** requires a committed and coordinated  
**CONSTRUCTION TEAM:**

God the Father as **DESIGNER**,  
God the Son as the **CONTRACTOR**,  
God the Holy Spirit as the on-site **SUPERINTENDENT**,  
the People of God as the raw **MATERIAL** and the  
Word of God as the set of **PLANS**.

May God richly bless us as we enter this **PROJECT** together!

THE  
DOCTRINAL  
PHASE

**Pastor Mark Mikels - April 30, 2006**

**"THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH WE STAND"**

Church Under Construction - Doctrinal Phase #1

*Intro...* Last week I introduced a new series of messages called "**Church Under Construction**". I pointed out in that introductory message that "*even as we begin construction on a physical structure on the corner of Ottawa and Apple Valley roads, so the Lord Jesus will be engaged in constructing the Church that will congregate within its walls.*"

So for the next few months we will be focusing our attention on us being a "**Church Under Construction**".

Let me re-introduce you to our marvelous **Construction Team** ...

**OUR Sonlife CONSTRUCTION TEAM**

God the **FATHER** Serving As Our **DESIGNER**  
"*I know the plans I have for you*" ... Jeremiah 29:11

God the **SON** Serving As Our General **CONTRACTOR**  
"*I will build my Church*" ... Matthew 18:16

God the **HOLY SPIRIT** Serving As Our On Site **SUPERINTENDENT**  
"*And he will guide you into all truth*" ... John 16:13

We will be closely examining the roles of each of the members of our construction team in the weeks to come and as we yield ourselves to their coordinated efforts, they will move us through **four distinct construction phases** readying us for the moment we open the doors of that new church structure to the world.

Over the next few months we will find ourselves to be a Church Under Construction **Doctrinally, Behaviorally, Relationally** and **Evangelistically**.

And all of this construction in our lives will happen smoothly and seamlessly, as our construction team faithfully and confidently follows the specifications carefully laid out in ...

<p><b><i>OUR APPROVED BUILDING PLANS</i></b> The <b><i>WORD</i></b> of <b><i>GOD</i></b> Itself.</p>
--

It's going to be a great few months. We're going to be provided with an opportunity that we seldom get - an opportunity to systematically and somewhat comprehensively look at the entire make-up of the Church of Jesus Christ ... to understand in some detail, just how it is constructed and how it is intended to function ... to be given (as it were) a peek behind the scenes and discover just how it all fits together.

I'm excited to lead us on this particular endeavor ... it comes at a particularly crucial time in our world.

On May 19th Hollywood will release a blockbuster movie that directly attacks the Word of God and the Person of Jesus Christ - it's called the ***Da Vinci Code***. It's based on a book by the same title that has sold untold millions of copies and has influenced the thinking of millions of people worldwide. The combination of Ron Howard and Tom Hanks as director and actor will no doubt attract many to the theatre who have not previously bothered to read the book.

However, the release of such a movie will provide numerous opportunities for prepared believers to engage themselves in "*contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints*" (Jude 3).

So ... within such an environment, I say "***Let construction begin!***"

Thus, today on this final day of April 2006, we begin this construction of ***Sonlife*** Community Church, even as tomorrow on the first day of May, construction begins on the structure that will one day house us.

## *Construction Phase One ... DOCTRINAL Development*

**Key Verse:** Ephesians 1:17

*"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious **FATHER** will give you the spirit of **WISDOM** and **REVELATION**, so you can **KNOW HIM BETTER**."*

Now that's always the ultimate purpose of "*doctrine*" and the only "*real reason*" for studying it ... so that we might "*know God better*" ... know Who He is and What He does. And how people yearn to know God!

Whether they know it or not, every search for insight, every quest for knowledge, every desire to discover life's meaning is ultimately a search for God!

But frequently, the closer they get and the more informed they become about the functions of life, the further away He seems to be.

**Illustration** ... Just this past week, Linda and I were watching an episode of the TV show "*House*" which takes place in a hospital setting. The main characters are highly trained and highly skilled young doctors under the supervision of a grizzled and cynical veteran practitioner.

The theme of the show this past week was faith and in the midst of the script's development, one of the bright young doctors made the following response when asked by her colleague "*Don't you believe in any kind of God?*"

*"If there is some kind of God behind all of this incredible complexity, it would be the height of arrogance to think that I could apprehend Him."*

Her colleague had nothing to say ... the shows producers did not intend anyone but the audience to respond ... but if he were a believer who was well-constructed doctrinally, he might have said ...

*"Now that would be absolutely true unless He had in some way taken the initiative to make Himself known to you because He, in fact, wanted to be known."*

And that's exactly what our faith declares ... God has taken the initiative to reveal Himself and His Will for man to man!

Thus we come to **Article One** of our **Sonlife Statement of Beliefs** ...

*We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, inerrant in the original writings, complete as a revelation of God's will for salvation and the supreme and final authority in faith and life.*

*(2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:4, 16-21; John 10:35b; Proverbs 30:5-6)*

God has communicated vast amounts of information about Himself and His Will for mankind through the 66 books of the Bible ...

The Bible is an incredible book. It's actually an entire library of books written by some 40 authors, over 1500 years, in three different languages, through a vast array of earthly circumstances, using virtually all known literary genres, yet telling one cogent, consistent, comprehensive story as though there had been but one author after all.

There are **Four Basic Assertions about the Bible** embedded in this **First Article of Faith** ...

**1. Its Message Was *DIVINELY GENERATED* - 2 Peter 1:21**

*"Men **SPOKE** from God as they were **CARRIED** along by the Holy Spirit".*

*"And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy **never** had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

That's the assertion of Scripture and that's the assertion embedded in our Doctrinal Statement ... **God Himself produced the Bible.**

The Bible is not the result of man's conjecture or invention. The Bible declares itself to be a product of God Himself.

**2. Its Message Is *COMPLETELY RELIABLE* - 2 Timothy 3:16**

*"All Scripture is **GOD - BREATHED** and is **USEFUL** ..."*

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

God's Word is completely reliable ... those who follow its teachings will find that their lives go better. God's Word has the scent of God Himself upon it - He has breathed it out and His Presence permeates every page and every line.

**Listen** to these words found in the Book of Proverbs ... Proverbs 30:4-6

*Who has gone up to heaven and come down?*

*Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands?*

*Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak?*

*Who has established all the ends of the earth?*

*What is his name, and the name of his son? Tell me if you know!*

*"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.*

*Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.*

And these from Jesus himself as he sought to make a point to the religious leaders of his day ... "*And Scripture cannot be broken.*" ... John 10:35

*And these from the Psalmist David ... Psalm 119:89*

*"Your Word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens."*

***God's Word is completely reliable ...***

That's the second assertion embedded in this first article of our Statement of Belief. It is not based upon the shifting fancies of men ... Its truth not only precedes time but has stood the test of time. Men and women of faith throughout the centuries have profitably built their lives upon and around the teachings of the Word of God.

And now the third assertion about the Bible arising from this first article in our Statement of Faith ...

**3. Its Message Is *ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL* - Ps. 119:9-11, 105**

***"How can a man keep his way PURE - Your Word is a LAMP ..."***

*How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your Word.*

*I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.*

*I have hidden your word in my heart **that I might not sin** against you.*

*Your word is a **lamp** to my feet and a **light** for my path.*

Let's just say that the Scriptures are absolutely essential for discovering the **system** by which life functions best.

Remember the verse we previously looked at? - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be **thoroughly equipped** for every good work.*

God's Word not only "*equips*" us for life ... it "*thoroughly*" equips us.

However, in addition to revealing the "**System**" by which life works best, God's Word reveals the "**Savior**" who enables us to "*get into the system*".

Here's what Jesus Himself said, again speaking to the religious leaders of his day ... "These are the Scriptures that **TESTIFY** about me" - Jn 5:39-40

*You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*

Actually the entire Bible is focused upon Jesus Christ ... The ultimate reason for its writing has been to bring men and women to faith in Him and to provide fullness of life for them through Him. For that purpose we assert Bible is absolutely essential!

Finally this morning, the First Article of our *Sonlife* Statement of Faith has embedded within it this **Fourth Assertion** about the Word of God ...

**4. Its Message Is *TOTALLY AUTHORITATIVE* - 2 Peter 1:19**

*"You do well to **PAY ATTENTION** to it".*

Believers neglect or disregard the Word of God to their own peril.

Our first question in every life situation should always be "*Does the Bible say anything about this? Or "Is there anything in the Bible that applies to this situation?"*

Why waste energy trying to "*re-invent the wheel*"? Pay attention to the Word of God - it will shield you from harm!

***Final Thot ...***

The Word of God is the **FOUNDATION** upon which we **STAND**, upon which the entire **CHURCH** is constructed. Don't ignore it!



**Pastor Mark Mikels - May 7, 2006**

**"THE TEAM TO WHOM WE ENTRUST OURSELVES"**

*Church Under Construction - Doctrinal Phase #2*

**Intro ... "Church Under Construction"** - that's what we are! We are under construction *doctrinally, behaviorally, relationally, and evangelistically.*

Last week we entered into **Phase One** of our Construction - The **Doctrinal** Phase.

Here's the **Key Verse** underlying this **first phase** of construction ...

*"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious **FATHER** will give you the Spirit of **WISDOM** and **REVELATION**, so you can **KNOW HIM BETTER.**" Ephesians 1:17*

I explained last week that that's the whole purpose of studying scripture - to get to know God better - to come to a deep, personal, experiential knowledge of God and of God's Will for the World.

Last week we examined the First Article in our **Sonlife** Statement of Belief. We called it ... "**The Foundation Upon Which We Stand**" - the "**blueprint**" according to which our lives are being built.

Today I want us to begin to consider "**The Three Person Construction Team To Whom We Are Entrusting Ourselves**". Together they form one incredible entity - could call them **Trinity Construction!**

Here's how our **Sonlife** Statement of Belief expresses it ...

*We believe in one God, creator and sustainer of all things, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; that these are equal in every divine perfection and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.*

(Ephesians 4:4-6; John 1:1-3; John 14:9-11, 16-17, 26; Mark 1:9-11)

In the weeks to come we are going to be discussing some of those "**divine perfections**" like holiness, wisdom, power, love, grace, mercy as well as what those "**distinct but harmonious offices**" or responsibilities might be.

But suffice it to say today that these three "**Officers of Trinity Construction**" function as one coordinated, perfectly patterned unit. They share identical spiritual DNA; they are committed to the same spiritual outcomes; and there has never been a time when they haven't been together.

They exist ... Father, Son and Holy Spirit - as co-equals with regard to their essential nature - they are God ... they together are **Trinity Construction!**

Consider the **Key Scriptures** that buttress this **Article of Faith** ...

***Ephesians 4:4-6 ... A Trinitarian STATEMENT.***

*There is one body and one **SPIRIT** - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one **LORD**, one faith, one baptism; one God and **FATHER** of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

***Mark 1:9-11 ... A Trinitarian MOMENT***

*At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the **SPIRIT** descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from **HEAVEN**: "You are my **SON**, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

Now keep in mind that the Bible itself never uses the word "**Trinity**". The word "**Trinity**" (tri-unity) came into use to explain what the Bible does say.

Now consider these next two Scriptures ...

***John 1:1-3, 14 ... The SECOND Member of the Trinity***

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was **WITH** God, and the Word **WAS** God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

***John 14:16-17,26 ... The THIRD Member of the Trinity***

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **ANOTHER** Counselor to be with you forever-- the **SPIRIT** of **TRUTH**.*

*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

The Bible declares that there is but One God (Deut. 6:4), however, the Bible also declares that the **Father** is God and the **Son** is God and the **Holy Spirit** is God ... Thus the theologians of the early days chose the word "**Trinity**" to give expression to those declarations.

So then, using our terminology of the day ... We can say there is but one **Trinity Construction Company** ... there is no other company like it anywhere - it is absolutely unique. And **Trinity Construction** is composed of three absolutely identical officers - they are all equally skilled; they are all equally committed to the company task; they all equally promote the fulfillment of that task.

But they nevertheless have distinct roles in the company - essential roles - and they perform those essential roles in perfect harmony with each other and with the overall company objectives.

We entrust our lives to them ... They are God and are most worthy of our trust - our praise and our undying devotion.

The **Father** has envisioned what He wants us to be; the **Son** has committed Himself to seeing that the Father's Vision becomes reality - He has given His life for the Church; He has suffered untold agony in the process of redeeming the Church; He has stationed Himself at the Father's right hand in heaven and awaits the moment when the Father will send Him to rescue the Church; the **Spirit** indwells the Church and carefully guides each of its members toward greater and greater maturity in Christ. Together they make up the **Triune God** in whom we trust!

***Final Thot ...***

The **CHURCH** is Trinity Construction's **MAIN PROJECT!**

**Pastor Mark Mikels - May 21, 2006**  
**"GOD THE FATHER: TRINITY CONSTRUCTION'S C.E.O."**  
*Church Under Construction - Doctrinal Phase #3*

**Intro** ... This morning we return to our current series "**Church Under Construction**".

The main premise of this series of messages is that just as we are currently engaged in constructing a church structure on the corner of Ottawa and Apple Valley Roads so the Lord Jesus Christ is engaged in constructing the congregation that will gather within its walls.

There will be four phases to this spiritual construction project: the **doctrinal** phase (coming to understand the basic precepts of our Christian faith), the **behavioral** phase (coming to embrace the standards of our daily life), the **relational** phase (coming to appreciate the meaning of the Body of Christ) and the **evangelistic** phase (coming to engage in sharing the Good News we possess).

We are currently in the **doctrinal phase** and the work has barely begun ...

So far we examined the **Foundation** Upon Which Our Entire Faith Depends ...  
**The Word of God!**

The written Word of God - the Bible - is the source of all that we know with any certainty about God and His Desires for mankind. We stake our very lives upon the revelations contained within it.

We have also begun to take a look at the "**Construction Team**" into whose hands we have placed ourselves. Two weeks ago, I dubbed this team "**Trinity Construction**" and pointed out that it is composed of God the **Father**, God the **Son** and God the **Holy Spirit**.

In speaking of this divine Construction Team, our **Sonlife** Statement of Belief says this ...

We believe in one God, creator and sustainer of all things, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; that these are equal in every divine perfection and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.

(Ephesians. 4:4-6; John 1:1-3; John 14:9-11,16-17,26; Mark 1:9-11)

Today we open the company's doors and take a much closer look at the members of the team ... Our focus this morning is upon ***God the Father*** ... Trinity Construction's C.E.O.

Americans have come to realize in the past few years that "*as goes the CEO so goes the company*". Untold thousands of people lost their shirts financially speaking as a result of the incompetent and deceptive leadership provided by Kenneth Lay of the Enron Corporation.

***The point is*** ... the CEO is more than a figurehead. The CEO profoundly affects the performance of the company and as a result the lives of all the people associated with it.

So how about the CEO of Trinity Construction? Here's what our ***Sonlife Statement of Belief*** says ...

We believe in God the Father, an infinite, personal Spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. We believe He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

(John 4:24; John 3:16; Matthew 6:9-13; Acts 4:12; John 14:6)

Tucked away in that brief statement are some incredible ***insights*** concerning this One who holds such influence over our lives.

### ***1. GOD THE FATHER'S NATURE - what is He like, in and of Himself?***

Now keep in mind that we could spend the rest of this series simply trying to answer that single question ... Remember that a Statement of Belief is basically a series of summary statements - a kind of "***Cliff Notes***" of the much, much larger work.

Keep in mind as well that many more verses could be presented in support for any of these insights but really all it takes is one statement from an infallible Scripture to establish a point.

Here then is our first insight into the nature of God the Father:

***He's An INFINITE PERSONAL SPIRIT*** - (Job 11:7-9; John 4:24)

Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?  
They are higher than the heavens--what can you do? They are deeper than the  
depths of the grave--what can you know? Their measure is longer than the  
earth and wider than the sea. (Job 11:7-9)

There's a *limitlessness* to our God - he will never exhaust His Resources and man will never be able to comprehend all that He is.

Man knows what he knows about God simply because God has chosen to reveal a good deal about Himself. What we know about God is authentic and accurate but it is by no means exhaustive. The word "*infinite*" is man's word to describe this One who is above all and beyond all.

"God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)

Here God the Son, Jesus Himself, describes the Father as a Spirit Being ... not composed of flesh and bone. In the beginning, Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all Spirit Beings; however, in the fullness of time, God the Son took upon himself human flesh and in that way has forever distinguished himself from the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Here now is the *second insight* we would share regarding the essential nature of God the Father ...

***He's A THOUGHTFUL, PURPOSEFUL DESIGNER*** -(Isaiah 14:26-27; Jer. 29:11)

*This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?* (Isaiah 14:26-27)

*For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.* (Jeremiah 29:11)

These verses zero right in on the key function of a CEO ... the responsibility to plan and to project ... the Scriptures clearly indicate that our God possesses that capability.

In the first chapter of the Book of Jeremiah, God reveals to Jeremiah the prophet that His plans for Jeremiah's life began before Jeremiah was even born ... (Jeremiah 1:4-5)

*"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born,  
I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."*

By the way, do you think that you snuck into this life without the Father's notice - without the Father having a plan for your life?

The very fact that you are sitting in this place this morning would give strong evidence to the fact that He has had His eye upon you before you even had eyes yourself!

***In His essential nature*** ... the CEO of Trinity Construction - God the Father Himself is an ***Infinite, Personal Spirit*** functioning as a ***Thoughtful, Purposeful Designer***.

How good to know that the Corporate Leader is not some irrational, loose cannon who might squander his resources on frivolous or ill-conceived, or hastily chosen endeavors.

Now, having determined something of God the Father's ***essential nature***, let's now take a look at ...

***2. GOD THE FATHER'S CREDENTIALS*** - the abilities and skills He possesses that lead us to believe that He can effectively pull off His Plans.

Let me point out as we begin this discussion that our previously chosen word "***infinite***" leads to the repeated adjective "***perfect***" in this list of the Father's Credentials. Whatever the Father possesses, He possesses in a limitless, absolute, or ... "***perfect***" way.

So let's begin our look at His ***Credentials*** - what does He bring to the table (as it were) as Head and CEO of Trinity Construction?

**\* He Possesses Perfect HOLINESS - Hebrews 12:10**

Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his *holiness*. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of *righteousness* and peace for those who have been trained by it.

What this means is that there will never be even a hint of corruption on any project Trinity Construction gets involved in. Never will any client be "*taken for a ride*" - "*ripped off*" or "*abused*" or "*taken advantage of*" in any way. Trinity Construction is "*squeaky clean*". There has never been a charge or challenge brought against it. At the very head of the company is a **CEO** whose integrity is unquestioned and whose commitment to doing the right thing is legendary!

**Perfect Holiness** - that alone would make me thoroughly comfortable doing business with Trinity Construction but there's more - quite a bit more on the CEO's Resume ...

**\* He Possesses Perfect WISDOM - Job 37:16**

*"Listen to this, Job; stop and consider God's wonders. Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash? Do you know how the clouds hang poised, those wonders of him who is perfect in knowledge?"*

The **CEO** of Trinity Construction - God the Father Himself - knows more than just "*how to do the job*" ... He possesses more than just a "*license*" or a "*diploma*" from some approved agency or university.

He possesses *wisdom* itself - What men call knowledge is simply the results of their efforts to "*pick His brain*" and the more they know the more they realize how much more there is to know.

We are not involved with One whose knowledge base is forever needing to be updated - whose understanding is forever in danger of becoming obsolete.

We are involved with One who knows everything there *is* to know and that there ever will *be* to know. We need not worry that any crucial thing regarding our life project is unknown to Him!



So Our CEO is perfectly **Good** and He's perfectly **Informed** and as we look on, it just keeps getting better and better ...

**Third item** on the resume ...

**\* He Possesses Perfect POWER** - Gen. 18:13-14; Psalm 19:1

*Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son." (Genesis 18:13-14)*

*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
(Psalm 19:1)*

The great thing about this entry on the resume is that it tells us that Trinity Construction will never run out of resources in the middle of a project.

There is no project too big - too demanding - too messed up - too far gone - for Trinity Construction to handle. Our **CEO** has unlimited power and authority to triumphantly finish everything that His plans put into motion.

No one will ever see a half-done, abandoned project with a Trinity Construction sign on it ... Our God possesses unlimited power and resources to accomplish that to which He sets His Mind.

*So what do you think so far ...*

*Feel confident about the One who's gotten hold of your life?*

He's perfectly **Good** and He's perfectly **Informed** and He's perfectly **Capable** and now here, really, is the best credential of them all ...

In addition to all these marvelous perfections already identified, consider now that God the Father - the CEO of Trinity Construction ...

**\* Possesses Perfect LOVE** - 1 John 4:7-8

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (John 4:7-8)*

How awesome is that? The One who is overseeing our lives, who knows all about us, who has authorized our spiritual construction actually *loves* us ... He cares about us and is personally concerned for us.

This is an awesome *CEO* ... Any project headed by Him will be guaranteed the most glorious success - Anyone associated with Him will be blessed beyond measure!

These then are some of the most significant credentials of our Heavenly Father - as well as two of the most significant aspects of His Own eternal nature. So what does He do with all of that perfection?

What then specifically are ...

### **3. GOD THE FATHER'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

\* He Sets The *AGENDA* For All Company *ACTIVITIES*  
(John 4:34; John 6:38-40)

*My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.  
(John 4:24)*

*For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:38-40)*

God the Father does what every competent *CEO* does - He establishes the direction for the company and oversees the carrying out of His Will in the world of men.

In coming to earth and becoming a man, Jesus modeled the kind of submission to the Father's Will that should characterize each of us. Because of all that we know about Him, we confidently trust ourselves to Him and yield ourselves enthusiastically to His revealed plan.

Now just a couple of observations concerning that Company Agenda and the role the Father plays in it personally ...

***\* He SAVES all who come to Him through JESUS***

(John 3:16-17; Ephesians 1:3-8)

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to **save** the world through him.*

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*

*In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

What an insight into the unique role the Father plays in our salvation ...  
It would not be inaccurate to say that though Jesus Christ is surely the **Savior** - God the Father is the **Saver!**

He the One who conceived and initiated the process of salvation - He is the One before Whom someday we will stand clothed in the righteousness that Christ has provided us ... He is the One who will judge us worthy of entrance into His Presence ... He is the One who will (figuratively speaking ) open His Arms to joyfully welcome us.

His perfect love has been set upon us and has found a way to forgive us and to provide for us eternal life with him! He stands as it were at the end of the line and officially and finally "**saves**" all who come into his presence in the name of Jesus.

But while we await that final momentous day when we shall be lovingly and securely received into His Presence as "*trophies of His perfectly expressed Love and Grace*" ...

**\* He HEARS and ANSWERS PRAYER**

(Matthew 6:9-13; Jeremiah 29:12-13)

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, this is what he said ...

*This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. (Matt. 6:9-13)*

Though Jesus provided some very essential content of their prayers, the concept of praying to the Father had been long understood ...

Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.  
You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.  
(Jeremiah 29:12-13)

It is to God the Father - the **CEO** of Trinity Construction - that we most properly and appropriately address prayer. He sensitively attunes His Ear to the prayers of His People ... He responds to every one of their prayers in the most appropriate way possible.

There is never a prayer that goes **unanswered** though there are many prayers requests that go **ungranted**.

If it is not His Will or in their best interest to change the circumstances in which His People find themselves, then He will change them **in** their circumstances even as He works **through** those unchanged circumstances to bring some element of good into their lives.

As the praise song says ... "**Our God is an awesome God**" - we can confidently place our lives in His Hands.

***Final Thot ...***

*How good to know that our **LIVES** (our church) are being  
constructed according to a **FLAWLESS DESIGN**  
formulated by a **FLAWLESS DESIGNER!***

**Pastor Mark Mikels      -      May 28, 2006**

**"GOD THE SON: TRINITY'S GENERAL CONTRACTOR"**

*Church Under Construction - Doctrinal Phase #4*

**Intro ... "Church Under Construction"** ... that's the title of our current series of messages and that's indeed what we are.

We together in this place are a church body - a congregation of believers - that is being build into a marvelous edifice for God - a spiritual cathedral, if you will, that will cause the world around to stop in wonder and amazement.

This is an ambitious undertaking, to say the least, for it takes a lot to impress our cynical world. There is no way that this construction project could be placed in the hands of mere amateurs. It has been entrusted to an outfit that is unparalleled - to a construction company that has absolutely no peer. This incredible project intended to develop you and me into a gloriously sound, world-impressive spiritual structure has been awarded to **Trinity Construction**.

Composed of **God the Father, God the Son** and **God the Holy Spirit**, Trinity Construction has the vision, the resources and the practical know-how to bring this project to a triumphant conclusion.

Last week we took a close look at **God the Father**, Trinity Construction's Chief Executive Officer.

Today's **Key Focus** is upon ...

**TODAY'S KEY FOCUS ...**

God the Son - Trinity Construction's **GENERAL** Contractor who said,  
**"I WILL BUILD My CHURCH!"**

(Matthew 16:18)

The first thing I want you to notice is the incredible **confidence** expressed in that powerful assertion ...

**"I will ... not I hope to or I will try to or I will give it my best shot and see what happens but "I will ... build my church!"**

He actually goes on to say ... *"And the gates (the forces) of Hell shall not prevail against it."*

*"I will build you people into such a spiritually sound body of believers that Satan himself will not be able to make any headway against you. I will build you into a spiritually invincible congregation of saints."*

Now that's saying something! Now is this just braggadocio or does the Son of God have what it takes to back up those confident words?

**Well ... Here's how the *Fourth Article* of our *Sonlife Statement of Belief* puts it ...**

We believe that Jesus Christ is God's only son, and has precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections as God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. We believe further that He is not only true God, but true man, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. We also believe in His sinless life, His substitutionary atonement, His bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, His priestly intercession on behalf of His people, and His personal, visible, premillennial return from heaven.

(Matthew 1:18-25; Isaiah 7:14; John 1:1-14; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 9:11-15, 24-28; Titus 2:11-14; Acts 1:1-11; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 12-28; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:1-6)

In light of that statement ...

**1. *CONSIDER THE SON'S HERITAGE* - Colossians 1:15, 19  
- Same **ATTRIBUTES** as the **FATHER** -**

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.  
For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him ..."

At this point, I'll just have to refer you back to last week's message where we discussed the Father's Credentials as Trinity's Construction's C.E.O. - His Holiness, His Wisdom, His Power and His Love.

Suffice it to say at this point that the Son shares the same spiritual DNA as the Father ... to see the Son - to hear the Son - to watch the Son at work is to catch an accurate glimpse of the Father Himself.

Now it's interesting to note that the primary builder on our own church building project is **Brian Sutton**, who is himself the son of a well-known, long-term builder in this area, Bob Sutton. It was with Bob Sutton that our Overseers met some years ago when our plans for our own church building were in the most embryonic stages. Our impression of and appreciation for the father at that time certainly influenced us when we decided to accept a bid from the son. The son now grown is a genuine chip off the old block!

But, of course, it's not enough for the Son to simply bear the Father's name or even to share the Father's nature and characteristics.

The question that next arises is "*Has the Son gained any experience in the trade himself?*" *Is he capable of pulling off the task that he would desire to undertake?*

Let me say that with regard to our physical project, the son we have committed ourselves to has amassed a suitable and impressive resume of his own. We felt completely confident placing the project in his hands.

Now then, with regard to our **General Contractor** from Trinity Construction, I would ask you to ...

## ***2. CONSIDER THE SON'S PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE - Col. 1:16-17***

Has the Son of God built anything that would give us confidence that He can in fact pull off this spiritual construction of our lives?

Well, how about this for starters: The word of God tells us that He ...

**- BUILT the ENTIRE UNIVERSE -**

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Colossians 1:16-17

According to the first chapter of ***Genesis***, in the beginning God spoke the universe into being ... "And God said, *"Let there be light etc."*

According to the first chapter of the Gospel of ***John***, the Son of God is identified as the actual "*Word*" that was released into action in the process of that very creation.

John goes on to say (John 1:3)

*"Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."*

Paul repeats that announcement to the Colossian believers.

So ... before ever coming to earth, the Son of God engaged in the most extensive construction project of all time, the creation of the universe itself.

However, the "***Building of the Church***" is an entirely new kind of construction. Here the materials are not physical but spiritual ... Here the Son of God would be required to involve himself in ways that the creation of the universe did not.

And so at this point I want you to ...

### **3. CONSIDER THE SON'S EXTENSIVE PREPARATION**

- Born of the ***VIRGIN MARY*** - became ***TRUE Man***  
Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.



But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" --which means, "God with us."

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. (Matt. 1:18-25)

In order to save man, the Son of God had to become a man; he had to thoroughly identify with man. He had to experience life in this fallen world just like any other man.

But in order to prepare himself sufficiently to save man, he did what no other man had ever succeeded in doing.

He ...

- Lived a **SINLESS** life - met all God's **REQUIREMENTS**  
2 Corinthians 5:21a

*"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us ..."*

That's a statement that we could chew on for quite a while. God made him **who had no sin** ... He had no natural sin nature - he was born of the Holy Spirit and was thus born holy ... but so were Adam and Eve.

Being born holy merely means that he was not "*already condemned the moment he was born*" ... he would have the same opportunity that Adam and Eve had - he would have the opportunity to live sinlessly.

**They**, of course, didn't ... but **He** did.

Never an evil thought - never a selfish action - never a thoughtless word in all of his 33 or so years! He lived the life that the Father had originally intended all human beings to live - a life of unbroken harmony and fellowship with God Himself!

That sinless, unblemished life qualified him to take the next step in his preparation to be the hands-on builder of His Church.

And in that next step, He ...

- Took Man's **PLACE** - paid the **PRICE** of Man's **SIN**  
2 Corinthians 5:21b - Hebrews 9:11-15; 24-28 - Isa. 53:6

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us ...  
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

"When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself **unblemished** to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has **died as a ransom** to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. (Hebrews 9:11-15)

For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the **sacrifice** of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so **Christ was sacrificed once** to take away the sins of many people ..." (Hebrews 9:24-28a)

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

God the Father allowed Jesus Christ His Son to become the ultimate sacrificial lamb ... Jesus gave his life as a payment for the sins of men and in so doing He provided the way whereby sinful human beings can be forgiven of their sins and declared righteous and thus acceptable to God.

What an incredibly painful and costly step of preparation that was for the would-be builder of the Church! He gave his own life so that the church could in fact be built. And in the process He qualified himself as the one most deserving of the honor of building it!

Just a couple of more steps in his personal preparation as the recognized "*Builder of the Church*".

Following his incredible sacrifice on the cross, He ...

- **ROSE** from the **DEAD** - demonstrated His **VICTORY**  
1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 55-57

Here the Apostle Paul reports the story to the Corinthian believers:

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that **he was raised on the third day** according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15: 3-8)

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"  
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
(1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

Through his victory over sin and death, Jesus Christ has once for all removed the fear of death from those who trust in Him and has made himself forever available to those who depend upon Him. He will never be forced to retire from the business due to old age - he will never become too feeble to carry on. He will be functioning at the highest level possible for as long as the project requires!

And then, having defeated death itself and having shown himself to hundreds of his followers, he then took the next step in preparing himself for this great spiritual construction project.

He ...

- **ASCENDED** into Heaven - oversees the entire **PROJECT**  
Acts 1:6-11

So when they met together, they asked him,  
*"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:6-11)

Part of his impeccable credentials as **Trinity Construction's General Contractor and Chief Builder** is that he has been exalted to heaven itself and even now is seated at the right hand of the Father.

From that exalted vantage point he oversees every detail of the Building of His Church ...

He has left behind himself an "*On-Site Superintendent*" who carries out his wishes flawlessly but that's a discussion for another week.

And now, the final step the Son of God has taken in preparing himself to carry the title "*Builder of the Church*" - a step that began during his earthly life and that continues to be taken even this moment.

From that incredible vantage point in heaven, at the right hand of the Throne of God, He ...

- ***INTERCEDES*** for His Own - Requisitions all ***RESOURCES***  
Hebrews 7:24-25; John 17: 9-26

Here's how the writer to the Hebrews expressed it ...

"... because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need--one who is *holy, blameless, pure*, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens."

Here's an example of the kind of intercession and requisitioning Jesus does on our behalf ... John 17:9-26

"*I have revealed you* to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. *I pray for them*. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you.

Holy Father, *protect them by the power of your name*--the name you gave me--*so that they may be* one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. *My prayer is* not that you take them out of the world but *that you protect them from the evil one*. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. *Sanctify them* by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

"My prayer is not for them alone. *I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message*, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me.

*May they be brought to complete unity* to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

"Father, *I want those you have given me to be with me* where I am, and *to see my glory*, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. *I* have made you known to them, and *will continue to make you known* in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

So that's what Jesus wants for His Church - to know God, to live holy lives, to be united with one another, to experience protection from the evil one and to demonstrate to the watching world that they do in fact know God and belong to God.

At this point our understanding of the role of the Son of God in the Construction of the Church is just about completed.

*His preparation was extensive and effective ...*

He has provided everything that the *Father's Holiness* and *man's sinfulness* required.

He has set in motion the construction process and it has been working its way out congregation by congregation for the past 2000 years. You might say that the Son has constructed tens of thousands of churches in the building of his One Universal Glorious Church!

*Sonlife Community Church* is one of that vast number. And as the work goes on, the Son of God as Contractor is preparing himself for His Final and most Satisfying Action.

For there in heaven today, He ...

- Awaits completion of the **PROJECT** - anticipates proudly presenting **HIS** Perfected **CHURCH** to the Father!

1 Corinthians 15:24-26

*"Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death."*

What a moment that will be! The great project will be finally done and the *Son of God* will once again be able to utter those words he first triumphantly cried out on Calvary ... ***"It is finished!"***

*"Father, the great construction project is completed. Here is the completed church in which I have invested myself all these years. Be glorified in it for it is my gift to you as the One who is ultimately worthy of all praise."*

Those (I suggest) will be the final words on the subject from the One who so positively asserted centuries ago ... ***"I Will Build My Church."***

***Final Thot ...***

How good to know that our lives are being **CONSTRUCTED** by a Supremely **CONFIDENT CONTRACTOR!** Trust Him.

**Pastor Mark Mikels - June 4, 2006**

**"GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT ...**

**Trinity Construction's On-Site Superintendent"**

*Church Under Construction - Doctrinal Phase #5*

**Intro ...** This morning as we continue in our series "**Church Under Construction**", our *gaze* zeroes in upon ...

**TODAY'S KEY FOCUS ...**

God the **HOLY SPIRIT** - Trinity Construction's  
On-Site **SUPERINTENDENT** who has been given hands on  
**RESPONSIBILITY** for Christ's Church Construction **PROJECT**.

We have previously identified **God the Father** as Trinity Construction's **C.E.O.** and just last week we identified **God the Son** as Trinity Construction's **General Contractor**.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the one who said, "*I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it*".

Jesus Christ has gathered together all the materials for the project. He has given His own life to pay the price of sin, He has risen from the dead to demonstrate His Victory over sin and death and He has ascended to heaven and taken his seat at the Father's right hand. It's from that incredible heavenly vantage point that He oversees the actual church building process.

With reference to His Ascension, I noted in last week's message that "*He has left behind himself an "On-Site Superintendent" who carries out his wishes flawlessly*".



***That's our focus this week ... " The On-Site Superintendent" who has been left behind to make sure the Church of Jesus Christ is constructed properly!***

Here's how our *Sonlife* Statement of Belief expresses our understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in this great project that Trinity Construction has taken on ...

We believe in the Holy Spirit, His personality and His work in ***regeneration, sanctification, and preservation***. His ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and implement Christ's work of redeeming the lost and empowering the believer for godly living and service. (John 16:7-11; Romans 8:1-17; Titus 3:4-7)

In this brief meditation this morning, I want us to focus our attention upon the ***Three Key Responsibilities*** the Holy Spirit has been given in the Building of Christ's Church ...

***1. HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR REGENERATION - bringing something DEAD back to LIFE.***

Have you ever had to "*regenerate*" your car battery? Spiritually speaking, that's what God has had to do to us.

Consider this observation made by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesian believers ...

*"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins ..."*  
(Ephesians 2:1)

Ever since Adam and Eve sinned away their spiritual life in the Garden of Eden, man, in and of himself, has lived in a state of "*spiritual death*" - completely unable to live up to the righteous standards of God - completely unqualified to enjoy personal fellowship with God.

Now because it has never been our Triune God's intention to let that situation go unaddressed, we see God providing ways all through Old Testament days whereby people could be forgiven of their sins and given some degree of spiritual awareness.

However, the full plan of God began to play itself out with the coming of New Testament days.

As it says in **John 3:16** ...

*"For God (the Father) so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish (in his sins) but have everlasting life."*

Jesus himself explained to the Pharisee **Nicodemus** one night that ...

*"If anyone would see the kingdom of heaven (enter into true, saving fellowship with God) he must be "born again" or "born from above". (John 3:3)*

So the **desire** to save man has been expressed by the Father and the **price** to save man has been paid by the Son.

There only remains the required "**re-birth**" so man can receive the life that the Father desires him to have and that the Son has died to provide and that's where the Holy Spirit enters the project.

*"He (the Father) saved us through the washing of **REBIRTH** and **RENEWAL** by the Holy Spirit..." (Titus 3:5)*

Here's how the entire passage reads ... Titus 3:4-6

*"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the **washing of rebirth and renewal** by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior..."*

It's the Holy Spirit who "**brings life to that which was dead**" and who "**renews man in his capacity to fellowship with God**".

It's the Holy Spirit who is responsible for our **Regeneration!**

Now there's a ***second great task*** that has been given to the Holy Spirit in this awesome, world-wide, centuries-long spiritual project...

**2. HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SANCTIFICATION** - matching our ***PRACTICE*** before man with our ***POSITION*** before God.

Time to look at ***two key verses*** ...

"Therefore, there is now no ***CONDEMNATION*** for those who are in Christ Jesus ..." (Romans 8:1)

Here's the full sentence in which that great truth is found ...

*"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."*

That verse describes our "***position before God***" ...

We are no longer under any kind of judgment in God's eyes ... As far as God is concerned, we have done nothing wrong - our slate of sin has been washed clean by the blood of Jesus. When God "*looks up our name*" he finds no record of wrongs against us. We are "*Holy in His Eyes*". Therefore, it follows that He would never "*condemn us*" for (according to the official record) we are innocent!

That "***position before God***" is established the moment we are saved - the moment we "***receive***" Jesus Christ as our Personal Savior from sin!

And that's the very moment the ***Second Phase*** of the Holy Spirit's work in us begins ...

You see, He is responsible to get our ***practice*** (our behavior) before men to match up with our ***position*** (our standing) before God.

As my seminary professor, Dr. Vernon Grounds, would challenge us frequently, the Spirit's job is to get us to "*become what we are*".

Consider now this follow-up verse ...

'You, however, are controlled **NOT** by the sinful nature  
but by the **SPIRIT**...' (Romans 8:9)

Here's the fuller passage from which that phrase is taken ...

*You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead (unable to respond in godly ways) because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

*And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies (enable them to respond in godly ways) through his Spirit, who lives in you. (Romans 8:9-11)*

***Here's the point ...***

Through the efforts of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are actually able to "*perform spiritually*" in ways that were previously impossible for us. And our "*performance*" (our godly living) should continually improve as time goes by!

This whole realm of Holy Spirit responsibility is a most tricky one and one that the Devil has consistently used over the years to confuse believers and to weaken Christ's Glorious Church.

It's a realm where tremendous "***Spirit-Inspired Balance***" is required.

If we overemphasize and focus too exclusively upon the glorious truth of our "***position before God***", we can neglect and get pretty sloppy in our living - as if it really doesn't matter how we behave. To the watching world, we can come across as hypocrites!

On the other hand, if we overemphasize and focus too intently upon our "*practice before men*", we can easily slip into a pattern of legalistic living as if we were personally responsible to earn or at least hold on to our salvation.

Such a pattern of legalistic living will inevitably put us back under condemnation as we find ourselves forever failing to "*measure up*" ...

We could find ourselves continually condemning ourselves and possibly even doubting our salvation!

Numerous believers - complete congregations - even entire denominations have fallen into difficulty because they have failed to maintain the critical *balance* between these two spiritual realities.

Now having said that, let me point out again this morning that it's the Holy Spirit's responsibility to develop *righteousness* in us - to get us to perform as genuine sons and daughters of God so the world can see that Christ makes a difference and so glory comes to the Father and to the Son through us!

That's the primary part of His role as "*On-Site Superintendent*". He seeks to develop for Christ the most beautiful, the most glorious, the most Godly, the most loving, the most effective Church possible.

It's an awesome task He has been assigned!

He's responsible for *Regeneration* and for *Sanctification* and now thirdly and finally we see this morning that ...

**3. HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PRESERVATION** - keeping us *SECURE* until we reach our heavenly home.

"Having believed, you were marked ... with a *SEAL*, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit *GUARANTEEING* our inheritance ..." (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Out here in the West, that image should be pretty easy to understand.

**Ranchers** for years have sealed their cattle so they don't get confused with anyone else's. They call it **branding** and it's the responsibility of each rancher to develop a **brand** that is unique to his ranch and that he hopes will be very difficult for a rustler to manipulate.

In the academic world, sealing is called **copywriting** ... identifying a work of art or research in such a way that it is recognized by all as belonging to the author.

In the industrial world, sealing is called **patenting** ... identifying a new process of some sort with yourself so that no one can duplicate it and reap the rewards of your labor.

In the Christian world it's just called "**sealing**" and the **brand** or **copy-write** or **patent** is the Holy Spirit Himself who is placed within every born-again Child of God.

Anyone who has the eyes to see His **Presence** will be able to recognize to whom that born-again human being belongs.

The Holy Spirit's presence in our lives is itself the "**seal**" - the identifying mark - and once placed there, there is no way that it (He) can be taken away. We could say "**once sealed - always sealed**".

What an "**On-Site Superintendent**" - He's personally responsible for Our **Regeneration**, Our **Sanctification** and Our **Preservation**!

**Final Thot ...**

How good to know that our lives - our church - are being managed by an incredibly **GIFTED** and **TRUSTED** Superintendent! Yield to Him!

**Pastor Mark Mikels - June 11, 2006**

**"MAN - GOD'S RAW MATERIAL"**

*Church Under Construction - Doctrinal Phase #6*

**Intro ...** This morning we continue our current series "**Church Under Construction**".

The main premise of this series of messages is that just as *Sonlife Community Church* is currently engaged in constructing a church structure on the corner of Ottawa and Apple Valley Roads so the Lord Jesus Christ is engaged in constructing the congregation that will gather within its walls.

There will be **four phases** to this spiritual construction project: the **doctrinal** phase (coming to understand the basic precepts of our Christian faith), the **behavioral** phase (coming to embrace the standards of our daily life), the **relational** phase (coming to appreciate the meaning of the Body of Christ) and the **evangelistic** phase (coming to engage in sharing the Good News we possess).

We are currently in the **doctrinal phase** and so far we have examined the **Foundation** upon which we stand (The Word of God) and we have met the **Construction Team** in charge of the project (Trinity Construction composed of **God the Father** - Trinity Construction's Chief Executive Officer, **God the Son** - Trinity Construction's General Contractor and **God the Holy Spirit** - Trinity Construction's On-Site Superintendent). It's a rock solid **Foundation** and an incredibly competent **Construction Team!**

Today I would ask you to focus your attention upon ...

**Today's Key Focus ...**

**MAN** - The **SOLE** material out of which  
Christ is **BUILDING** His **CHURCH!**

*"You also, like **LIVING STONES** are being built  
into a **SPIRITUAL House**." (1 Peter 2:5)*

What a design concept ... a spiritual house - a temple for God - a place of fellowship and worship - a symbol of God's greatness and goodness - made entirely out of human beings!

Human beings linked together in a marvelous harmony of form and function ... Human beings so skillfully connected that they create a sense of awe and wonder throughout the universe.

Now, your impression might not be the same as mine, but it seems to me that Trinity Construction has certainly challenged itself by its choice of material.

I'm not saying that men shouldn't be *part* of the structure but if I had innumerable angels and a vast array of other heavenly beings at my disposal, and I were constructing a spiritual house, I would either choose them exclusively or at least use them for all the most critical components. Never would I limit myself to men alone!

But maybe I don't see myself or mankind in general the way that our Construction Team does. Maybe they know something about us that I don't. Maybe they know something about us that most men don't.

Certainly insightful men through the years have puzzled over this strategic decision of Trinity Construction.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> Psalm King David phrased his puzzlement this way ...

*"What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?"*

I guess really that's where we need to start ... What *is* man - what qualities does he possess that he should be chosen as the sole material for the glorious Church Christ is committed to build?

Well, distilling the insights about man that God has given over the centuries, here's how our *Sonlife Statement of Belief* puts it ...



### *Sonlife Statement of Belief #6*

We believe God created man, male and female, in the image of God and free from sin. We further believe man is a sinner by nature and choice, and is therefore spiritually dead. We thus believe that those who repent of sin and trust Jesus Christ as Savior have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

(Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 51:5; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10-20,23; Romans 5:12,17,19; Romans 6:23; Acts 2:21,38; Titus 3:4-7; Ephesians 1:13-14)

### *Five Key Observations* Regarding Christ's unique Building Material ...

#### *1. Man Is An IMAGE - BEARER* Of God. (Genesis 1:26)

Then God said, "Let us make man *in our image*, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

This is the fundamental truth in all the Scripture regarding man. Man has been made in the very "*Image of God*". When you see man functioning as he was intended to function, you see something of God's own nature.

Man was made a *relational* being (able to fellowship with others); man was made a *rational* being (able to think his way to reasonable conclusions); man was made a *ruling* being (responsible to care for the earth and all it contains) and perhaps most importantly of all, man was made a *righteous* being (capable of living in complete harmony with the Will and Ways of God).

Man was thus given emotions and intellect and a sense of responsibility and accountability and a sense of purpose and passion. He was made in the very image of God and displays in a finite way the infinite qualities of God Himself.

Therefore, man as man is unique throughout the universe and is deserving of respect wherever he is found. Now we are all aware that man as he was is not man as he now is but still the traces of the Divine Image are upon him and we dishonor His Creator when we dishonor him.

Listen to these words from the Book of James ...

*With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.*  
(James 3:9-10)

When God looked upon man initially he must have thought to himself -

*"There is another who is like myself ... one with whom I can fellowship; one whom I can involve in my business; one who gives expression to the very things that I value most."*

Is it any wonder then when the plans were laid before the foundation of the earth for this Glorious Church that the Son of God would build to be inhabited by the Father, that the sole material for its composition would be the only material in all the universe that already bore the Father's Image?

The very nature of man as originally created simply shouts out the declaration ... ***"Created for the Father's Use and Glory"!***

And so our ***Statement of Faith*** positively affirms that Man was created in the image of God and free from sin.

Now there's a second, incredibly important observation that arises from the Biblical record as reported in our ***Statement of Belief***...

## **2. Man Is Both *MALE* And *FEMALE*. (Genesis 1:27)**

*"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; **male and female** he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

This observation could lead us into weeks of discussion and in fact this observation has at various times and in various places generated great debate and even division among those who would seek to follow Christ.

The point I would make this morning is that in the beginning God made no distinction between men and women, between Adam and Eve when it came to ***"bearing His Image"*** or ***"caring for his creation"***.

They were to be partners in the task ... they were to be complimentary parts of the whole ... They completed one another and together gave the fullest possible expression to the over-all nature of God.

You see, there are some things about God that we will never understand until we understand what it means to be *masculine* and there are some things about God that will be equally mysterious until we come to understand what it means to be *feminine*.

True integrated humanity contains both the *masculine* and the *feminine*.

If you were to make a list of all the admirable masculine traits and all the admirable feminine traits and then search the scriptures, you would discover that Jesus Christ (God come in the flesh) possessed them all.

And you would discover as well that the born-again child of God is exhorted to embrace them all.

Christ is building his church out of human beings - complete human beings - human beings who embrace and exhibit all that it means to be fully and functionally human!

At this point in our study of man do you not feel like joining in with the Psalmist as he continues expressing his astonishment in Psalm 8 ...

*"What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"*

***And the implication is ...*** The Lord's name is *majestic* in all the earth because man His Crowning Creation is *present* in all the earth and wherever man is found, the Glory of the Lord is seen!

Now it's too bad that that's not the end of our study of man ...

Man marvelously created by God - Man uniquely suited for fellowship with God and Man beautifully and accurately revealing the nature of God everywhere he plants his feet.

Surely, man as originally created would have provided marvelous material for the Building of this ultimate Spiritual House.

But as you know, there's more to the story, for in the very action of making man a **responsible** being, God created the possibility that man might choose to become an **irresponsible** being and violate the very terms under which he was intended to function.

That, in fact, is what Adam and Eve chose to do and so there arises from our *Sonlife Statement of Belief* this third observation ...

### 3. Man Is A **SINNER** Both By **BIRTH** And By **BEHAVIOR**.

(Psalms 51:5; Romans 3:23; Romans 5:8, 12; Romans 6:17)

When the serpent deceived Eve in the Garden and Adam chose to follow her lead and disobey the Lord, He was not acting merely as an individual before God. He was acting as the **Head** of the entire race of human beings that would spring from him.

His **sin** became their sin; his **punishment** - their punishment and his resulting **need** for restoration - their need.

Thus as the Word of God over the centuries was given to men to record, it faithfully and terribly communicated the awful outcome of Adam's action.

The Psalmist David would honestly though painfully admit ...

*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

(Psalm 51:5)

And the **Apostle Paul** would let it all hang out in his letter to the Romans ...

*"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" ... (Romans 3:23)*

*"Therefore ... sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned ..." (Romans 5:12)*

*"When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!" (Romans 6:20-21)*

*For the wages of sin is death ... (Romans 6:23)*

So all men have been **born** in sin ... the tendency, the inclination, the pre-disposition toward sin is now part of their spiritual **DNA** ...

They are sinners because they sin and they sin because they are sinners! They are enslaved to sin and it's a slavery that grieves the heart of God and destroys the lives of men.

Now sin itself leads to death - **physical** death ... Adam eventually came to the end of his earthly life and so has every one of his children except two - Enoch and Elijah.

Sin, unless it is cared for, also leads to **eternal** death - complete and absolute separation from God in the lake of fire.

*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the **second death**. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

*(Revelation 20:11-15)*

Now we are talking some *serious stuff* ... eternal judgment hangs over all those who have participated in sin - over all those who have been born into Adam's fallen race.

Man is enslaved to the very thing that will send him into eternal damnation! It's worse than any addiction from which we might seek release - it's part and parcel of our very being.

And now just to further clarify the point, our *Sonlife* Statement of Belief generates this *Fourth Observation*.

In addition to being born a sinner and living as a sinner, man is *incapable* of making any change in his own spiritual condition for ...

#### **4. Man Is *SPIRITUALLY DEAD*. (Eph. 2:1; Isaiah 64:6; 1 Cor. 2:14)**

*"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." (Ephesians 2:1-2)*

What Paul is saying here is that Man in his natural condition is simply and completely non-functional spiritually speaking - He simply cannot function in ways that please God though he may and often does devise ways that seem spiritual to him.

But God revealed long ago that ... (Isaiah 64:6)

*"All our (humanly devised) righteousness is as filthy rags in His Eyes."*

Man in and of himself can simply not get on the same wavelength as God ... His impression of righteous living and his standard for acceptance is simply not God's.

Here's how the Apostle Paul expressed it to the Corinthians ...

*The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:14)*

Man is enslaved to sin and that sin has so distorted him that he is completely incapable of doing anything that will result in God's approval and acceptance. He cannot even perceive God's truth - it sounds like foolishness to him. If he hears it, it does not strike his natural ear favorably at all.

So why not just go home and shoot ourselves ... Why not say like the pagans of old ... *"Let's eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die!"*

Well, I suppose we would choose one of those options, like many have if it were not for this fifth and final observation that arises from our *Sonlife Statement of Belief* ...

**5. Man When *REGENERATED* Will *REPENT* Of Sin And *RESPOND* To Christ.**  
(Ephesians 2:4; Acts 2:21, 38; Romans 10:9-10; John 1:12; Titus 3:5)

Indeed there is hope for lost, sin-enslaved men and women ... The truth is that they can be changed - they can be given re-birth - they can be regenerated and brought back to full spiritual function.

The Apostle Paul said that that's what had happened to the Ephesian believers ...

*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **made us alive** with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.*  
(Ephesians 2:4-5)

And to Titus, Paul would relate that ...

*When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of **rebirth** and **renewal** by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)*

The Apostle Peter, relying upon that work of the Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost called upon his hearers to ...

*"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-- for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:38-39)*

And then to the Romans, Paul would share that ...

*"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.' For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"*  
(Romans 10:9-13)

And, of course, John the beloved Disciple would write encouragingly ...

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*  
(John 1:12-13)

Once enabled by God's Holy Spirit, regenerated men and women respond enthusiastically to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They become members of the Body of Christ and as such become suitable material for the building of Christ's Glorious Church.

Have you heard the Gospel - have you responded by faith to Christ and opened your heart and life to Him?

All those who have so responded have been restored to that fellowship with God that was lost long ago and they have as well become attractive and useful to Christ in His Work in this world!

***Final Thot ...***

How good to know that every **BORN - AGAIN** human being is absolutely **INVALUABLE** to Christ as He **BUILDS** His **CHURCH!**



**Pastor Mark Mikels      -      June 18, 2006**

**"SALVATION - THE PREPARATION PROCESS"**

*Church Under Construction - Doctrinal Phase #7*

**Intro ...** This morning we continue in our series "***Church Under Construction***".

We are in the first phase of construction - "***the doctrinal phase***" - this is our seventh "***doctrinal message***" and I hope that you are getting your minds and hearts wrapped around these fundamental biblical truths.

These biblical truths - expressed in our *Sonlife* Statement of belief - are "***hooks to hang our faith on***" - core statements to build our lives around.

This morning we focus upon the Biblical Doctrine of ...

***Today's Key Focus ...***

***SALVATION*** - the process by which the ***RAW MATERIAL***  
Christ uses to ***BUILD*** His Church is ***PREPARED*** for use.

You see, the raw material that Christ uses to build His Church needs a lot of work - a lot of processing ... in fact, in its natural state, it's actually unusable!

Now we saw last week that the raw material - the sole material - Christ uses to build His Church is ***MAN***. Today's message builds upon and amplifies and clarifies last week's message.

Last week's message contained a ***dreadful truth*** ...

***"Man is Spiritually Dead"*** that is ... "***completely incapable of doing anything that will result in God's approval and acceptance***".

That ***dreadful truth*** leads to ***Today's Key Concept*** ...

***Today's Key Concept ...***

***HUMAN BEINGS*** in and of themselves have become completely ***USELESS*** to Christ as Church ***BUILDING MATERIALS*** for they no longer possess any spiritual life!

And yet Trinity Construction is committed to using them. Obviously, some serious processing needs to take place.

The processing that takes unusable human beings and makes them useable in the work of Christ is called ***SALVATION***.

Here's how our ***Sonlife Statement of Belief*** expresses it ...

***Sonlife Statement of Belief #7***

We believe in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We further believe that this salvation is based upon the sovereign grace of God, was purchased by Christ on the cross, and is received by man through faith, apart from any human merit, works, or ritual. We further believe salvation results in righteous living, good works and proper social concern. (Ephesians 2:1-9; James 2:14-26; James 1:27)

***Note the Six Stage Salvation Process ...***

***Stage One: LOVE*** - John 3:16-17

***"For God so LOVED the world ..."***

***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.***

***For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."***

Salvation begins in the heart of God - specifically the heart of ***God the Father***. How appropriate on this Father's Day that we contemplate that great truth!

Why would a Holy God set his love upon those who have rejected His Ways and consistently violated his Laws?

It makes no sense to man and that's why the religions of men know nothing of a loving God who seeks a way to overlook man's rebellion. The pagan religions of men all portray a wrathful God of judgment before whom the world rightfully trembles in fear.

And in their pagan religious configurations they show that they understand something of the Holiness and Justice of God but not until the Good News is preached to them will they ever come to understand the ***Love of God*** ... the motivation that set the entire salvation process in motion!

The ***Love of God*** is the wellspring out of which all else good has come.

***Stage One*** in the Salvation Process immediately and logically leads to

***Stage Two: GRACE*** - Ephesians 2:8-10

*"For by GRACE you have been saved ..."*

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

***Grace*** is a loving God deciding to do for man what man can not do for himself ... ***Grace*** is God deciding to provide a way that man's sins and man's sinful nature can be addressed. ***Grace*** is God deciding to give to man what man, in and of himself, does not deserve and can never achieve.

***Grace*** is at the heart of the Christian Faith ... not works, not human merit, not human accomplishments but ***Grace prompted by Love*** ... the pure unmerited favor of God expressed to those who would become His Own.

But ***Love*** and ***Grace*** can not be expressed in ways that violate the ***Holiness*** of God ... Man's sin is no small deal ... Man's sinful heart prohibits the very reunion that God's Love desires and that God's Grace would provide.

***Love*** says, "I want him to come home." ***Grace*** says, "Let's make it happen."  
***Holiness*** says, "Here's how it has to be".

If we had been privy to the deliberations of the Godhead in the distant ages before the world began, we might have heard something like this:

*"We can not just pretend that man has not sinned ... We can not just overlook the fact that he has become corrupted by sin ... We can not ignore his complete unsuitability for life in heaven or for fellowship with God. Somehow his sin must be dealt with and so must his sinful heart! If only there were a suitable **sacrifice** that could pay for his sin and a skillful **agent** who could permanently alter him."*

Who knows how long the heavenly family pondered these questions in the vast ages before time began but suffice it to say ... Father, Son and Holy Spirit laid out the entire script out long before man took his first breath.

It was decided in ages past, that when the time was right **stage three** in the salvation process would be implemented ... The Apostle Paul reveals that Godly perspective on things in his letter to the Galatians chapter 4 verse 4 ...

*"But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."*

And with the coming of Jesus Christ, the salvation process moved to stage three which is ...

**Stage Three: SACRIFICE** - Philippians 2:6-8

*"He became obedient unto **DEATH** ..."*

*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!*

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God come in human flesh, became that suitable sacrifice. The Scriptures tell us that he was "*slain before the foundations of the earth*" (Revelation 13:8).

In the Book of Hebrews we catch a bit of His Passion and enthusiasm for the task as he says,

*"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.*

*Then I said, 'Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll--  
I have come to do your will, O God.' " (Hebrew 10:5-7)*

Animal sacrifices (though necessary) were not sufficient to accomplish what the **Love** and **Grace** and **Holiness** of God desired and what the **sinful condition** of man required.

Man's sins needed a complete atonement - a complete, once for all, payment - and that's exactly what Christ provided for all those the Father would give Him.

And at this point in the salvation process, the raw material for Christ's Church first begins to take some useful form ...

Man's picture is taken down (as it were) from the wall of Heaven's Post Office ... He is no longer a condemned criminal with a record. His sins have been paid for and the warrant for his arrest has been revoked.

But there is more to be done ... much more! Man's record of wrongs has been expunged but what about man's sinful heart that causes him to sin in the first place? Will he just go on sinning and God just go on forgiving? Christ's sacrifice is certainly sufficient for that - in fact, Christ's sacrifice has actually provided for that!

All sins that will ever be committed by Christ's Own were placed on him on Calvary ... He has paid for them already - so those who belong to Him really do possess an irrevocable "**get out of jail free**" card.

In a sense, whenever we sin and the justice of God would naturally kick in, we can pull out our "**card**" and say "**Already paid for**" and just go on our merry way.

But obviously, that is not the final product that God has in mind! Christ didn't sacrifice himself simply so that those who would become His Own can sin without fear of consequence!

Christ, you remember, is "***Building His Church***" - a glorious dwelling place for God - a marvelous demonstration of the miraculous power of God ... and to build such a structure, he needs material that has proceeded further through the salvation process than just stage three.

More than man's ***sinful record*** needs to be addressed as Christ refines this raw material for His use.

The next thing that the salvation process must address is man's ***sinful heart*** ... the thing that predisposes him toward sin in the first place!

It's man's sinful heart that blinds him to spiritual truth and that causes him to invent his own version of everything; it's man's sinful heart that causes God to declare him to be "***spiritually dead***".

And so, having provided the means whereby the sin of man can be cared for, the salvation process now moves to ...

***Stage Four: REGENERATION*** - Ephesians 2:4-10

*"God made us **ALIVE** with Christ ..."*

*But because of his great **love** for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **made us alive** with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by **grace** you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his **kindness** to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's **workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Here's God's hands-on activity in the process ...

God takes the raw material (sinful men) and personally breathes into it new spiritual life, just as He did to Adam eons ago in the Garden of Eden.

He arouses those whom He has chosen as His Own from their spiritual death even as he once aroused his Son Jesus from his physical death.

And with the influx of that spiritual breath, these men and women become living spiritual beings capable of understanding spiritual truth, capable and desirous of fellowship with God and capable and eager to live spiritual lives.

The Raw Material now takes on life and once alive it begins to express its new life ... And the **first expression** of that new life comes in **stage five** of the salvation process. We call it ...

**Stage Five: CONVERSION** - Acts 3:19

*"Repent, then and be **CONVERTED** ..."*

*"Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. **Repent, then, and turn to God** (be converted KJV), so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord ..."*

**Conversion** takes place when the renewed mind of man **encounters** the truth of God and the newly freed heart of man **endorses** it and the newly energized will of man **embraces** it eagerly.

Conversion is the initial **outward** manifestation of the **inward** change ... Through regeneration God enables us to respond to His Truth and at our earliest opportunity we do!

And that response of **conversion** (turning to Christ from our former way of living) propels us into the **sixth** and **final stage** of the salvation process. The **stage** we call ...

**Stage Six: TRANSFORMATION** - 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10

*"... He is a **NEW CREATION** ... created to do **GOOD WORKS**"*

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.*

Everything is new for one who truly experiences the conversion that flows from regeneration. There is no thought so captivating to him or her as the thought ...

*"I now belong to God and God Himself belongs to me.  
Nothing will ever be the same again!"*

Now that thought is not only ***captivating***, it's ***transformational*** for if I belong to God then my life and my behavior will become defined by God. And that realization leads us to consider this awesome truth Paul shared with the young Ephesian believers ... (Ephesians 2:10)

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,  
which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

This is the ***key reality*** in the entire salvation process - this is the intended end result of the entire process ... the raw material with which Christ began has at this stage of things been transformed into "***useful stuff***" - "***glorious stuff***" - "***God-honoring; God-revealing stuff***"!

***Now here's the wonderful point*** ... You don't have to go through life wondering what God's purpose is for you or what "***good works***" God has for you to do .

This passage says that God has already (before you were born, let alone saved) "***prepared the good works which He has in mind for you to do***".

There is simply no way that you can miss doing the works God wants you to do if you faithfully walk with Him. You might well do some of them and not even know it!

But believe me ... they will get done and you will be useful.

### ***Final Thot ...***

Is it any wonder that Paul would say he was not ***ASHAMED*** of the Gospel (Romans 1:16) - it produces ***SALVATION*** which in turn produces the perfect building ***MATERIAL*** for Christ's Church!



**Pastor Mark Mikels - July 2, 2006**

**"THE CHURCH - GOD'S ULTIMATE PRODUCT"**

*Church Under Construction - Doctrinal Phase #8*

**Intro** ... What an exciting thing to be part of a construction project - or more correctly put - to *be* a construction project! For that's what we as *Sonlife* Community Church are. We are a "**Church Under Construction**" ... under construction *doctrinally, behaviorally, relationally* and *evangelistically*.

We are nearing the end of *phase one* of our construction - the *doctrinal* phase - this morning's message is the *eighth* in the series. We hope to publish all these messages in a booklet when we are done.

So far we have examined the **FOUNDATION** upon which we stand (the Word of God), the **CONSTRUCTION TEAM** upon whom we rely (our Triune God), the **RAW MATERIAL** with which Christ builds (human beings) and the **PREPARATION PROCESS** for perfecting that raw material (salvation).

Today we turn our attention to "**THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST**" ... Consider with me ...

***Today's Key Concept ...***

The Church of Jesus Christ is God's **CROWNING**  
Achievement - His ultimate **ENDEAVOR!**

There was a time in my life when I would have disputed that statement or at least been confused by it. My early experience in the faith focused my attention pretty much exclusively upon the individual believer. It was all about getting saved and getting disciplined and getting fruitful and someday getting rewarded. It was me and Jesus.

The organized church seemed to me to be more of a hindrance to the process than a help. The organized church seemed to be such a mixed bag of believers and non-believers - of fuzzy doctrine and liberal notions. Our family faithfully went to church but I was never sure why.

I never - as a child - would have thought that the "*church*" is God's primary focus in the world. When I imagined myself growing up and serving the Lord in some way, I never even considered the possibility that I would in any way be involved in a **CHURCH**.

So as you can see, things have changed a lot ... It's been a long wonderful journey of discovery that has brought me to the place where I can wholeheartedly say to you this morning ...

*"The Church of Jesus Christ is God's **CROWNING**  
Achievement - His ultimate **ENDEAVOR!**"*

The Church is where it's at!

Jesus said, "*I will build my **CHURCH** and it will be so strong and true that even the forces of Hell will not be able to prevail against it.*"

So this morning - as we prepare to commune with the One who is so committed to this "**Church Building Task**" - let me share with you **three quick observations** concerning the Church that Christ is building.

This won't be our last word on the subject but it's a start.

## **THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IS ...**

### **1. THE HOUSE OF GOD - 1 Peter 2:5 (a spiritual house)**

*"you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."*

God's People combined together create a spiritual structure that God can inhabit just like He inhabited the Temple in Old Testament days.

And when the people assemble together and the Presence of the Lord is felt, much that is spiritually good and pleasing can take place.

First of all, people experience a sense of ***sanctuary*** - we are in the presence of the ONE who has redeemed us and who cares for us.

Secondly, people experience a sense of ***Significance*** - each one of us shares in the forming of this place where God Himself can dwell.

Thirdly, people experience a sense of ***Security*** - in this spiritual house we cannot be touched by the world outside, we remember that "*Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world*".

Indeed, the church gathered together is ***The House of God*** and as such is God's ultimate endeavor.

But there's more ... The Church of Jesus Christ is also identified in the Scriptures as ...

## ***2. THE BODY OF CHRIST - 1 Corinthians 12:27ff (a fellowship of believers)***

*"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."*

The Church of Jesus Christ is an "***intentional fellowship***". That's how Jesus planned it - individual believers linked to one another in a symbiotic relationship - each one benefiting from the connection they enjoy with the others - each member discovering his/her purpose and giftedness as they interact with the others.

Thus we can say that the Church of Jesus Christ is a "***beneficial fellowship***". Each member of the fellowship should be a better person and experience a better life because of their active membership in the fellowship.

The Church of Jesus Christ ... it's the ***House of God*** - it's the ***Body of Christ*** and thirdly and finally this morning, consider that it is ...

## ***3. THE LABORATORY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT***

*(an on-going experiment in grace and truth)*

Let's step into the "**Lab**" for a moment ...

*Acts 2:42-47 - " They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*

Notice that those early formative experiments of the Spirit contained both **LARGE** Group and **SMALL** Group Activities ...

### ***Large Group Activities:***

They met every day in the Temple Courts (large gatherings in a large place) ... thousands could assemble in the spacious temple grounds.

They devoted themselves to the Apostles' Teaching - largest possible teacher/listener ratio. Miraculous ministry took place where the world could see and where the gathered body could feel the Power of the Lord. No doubt exuberant worship was enjoyed! Feelings of "*awe and wonder*" were common. Those gatherings provided some unforgettable moments!

But the Spirit balanced out those ***Large Group Activities*** with some ***Small Group Activities*** ...

They "*broke bread in their homes*" ... they distributed their goods according to people's needs (personal ministry).

***Acts 20:20 ... "I taught you publicly and from house to house."***

The end result of all these works of the Holy Spirit was "***glad and sincere hearts***" among the people and a continual flow of new believers into the fellowship!

### ***Final Thot ...***

In the Church of Jesus Christ should be experienced  
the nearest thing possible to ***HEAVEN*** on ***EARTH!***

**Pastor Mark Mikels - July 9, 2006**

**"THE CHURCH - GOD'S ULTIMATE PRODUCT II"**

*Church Under Construction - Doctrinal Phase #9*

**Intro ...** This morning we continue our consideration of "*The Church - God's Ultimate Product*". We consider the same **Key Concept** this week as we did last week ...

***Today's Key Concept ...***

The **CHURCH** of Jesus Christ is God's Crowning  
**ACHIEVEMENT** - His **ULTIMATE** endeavor!

Last week we drew three brief observations regarding this crowning achievement of our Triune God ...

We said that the Church of Jesus Christ is depicted Biblically as "*The House of God*" and "*The Body of Christ*" and "*The Laboratory of the Holy Spirit*". (Notes available)

This morning, using our **Sonlife Statement of Belief** as our guideline, I would add to that list of Biblically based observations.

Here's how that **Statement of Belief** reads ...

***Sonlife Statement of Belief #8***

***We believe*** that the church is the spiritual body of which Christ is the Head.

***We believe*** that the true church is composed of all persons who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and expressed saving faith in Jesus Christ.

***We believe*** that this body expresses itself in local assemblies where believers associate themselves for **worship**, for **instruction**, for **evangelism** and for **service**.

***We believe*** the ordinances of the local church are believers' baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper.

(Matthew 16:16-18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; Matthew 28:18-20;  
1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Acts 14:23-27; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32)

Based upon that Statement I would add these observations to our list of a week ago ...

## ***THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IS ...***

### ***1. COMPOSED OF ALL BORN-AGAIN BELIEVERS***

*"Baptized by one Spirit into one Body" - 1 Corinthians 12:13*

All people who have received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior are members of the world-wide, centuries old Church of Jesus Christ.

The very moment a person is born-again by the work of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the gracious love and mercy of God the Father which is itself based upon the totally sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that person is made a member of this awesome fellowship called the Church of Jesus Christ.

Paul used the term baptism (total immersion) to picture the process. By the exercise of their faith, new believers are inserted into the Body of Christ and are forever after a part of that Body.

Any isolated soul who picks up a scrap of scripture containing the truth of John 3:16 and sincerely receives Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord is placed into the Church and at that very moment begins the quest to find others like himself.

The very nature of the Church communicates the fact that the Christian Faith was never intended to be lived in a solitary way.

The Universal, Invisible Church must become the Local, Visible Church if all the Purposes of God for the Church are to be fulfilled.

Consider secondly this morning that the Church of Jesus Christ is ...

### ***2. GOD'S AGENCY FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH***

It's in and through the workings of local churches - local assemblies of believers that spiritual growth takes place. Our *Sonlife* Statement of Faith identifies four ***Key Areas of Growth***.

*First of all, there's ...*

*\* **WORSHIP** - growth in **WONDER** and **SURRENDER**  
(Acts 2:42-47)*

Here's that great passage we looked at last week ...

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with **awe**, and many **wonders** and **miraculous signs** were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*

Not too often do we think of our spiritual growth in terms of our ability and experience in worship but when you think about it there is no area of our lives as believers that is more important.

Jesus Himself pointed out that the Father is seeking **Worshippers** (John 4:24) ... True worship leads to a life of **Wonder** and **Surrender**.

In fact that's an excellent way to tell if you have indeed "**worshipped**" on a given Sunday ... Are you caught up in a sense of **wonder** at the Goodness and Greatness of God and have you consciously **surrendered** yourself once again to His Guiding Hand upon your life?

In addition to **Worship**, there's the area of ...

*\* **INSTRUCTION** - growth in **UNDERSTANDING** & **APPLICATION**  
(Ephesians 4:11-12)*

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for **works of service**, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become **mature**, attaining to the **whole measure** of the fullness of Christ.*

Before we can "**live the faith**" we must "**understand the faith**" ... And that's the calling of the "**Pastor/teachers**" that Christ has placed in His Church - to explain the faith in such a way that people can understand it and apply it to their lives.

My job is not to "*obscure things*" or "*confuse things*" ... my job is not to impress you with me but to expose you to the truths of God in such a way that you can embrace them and implement them in your lives.

After sitting through a few dozen or thousand sermons, you should know more about the faith than you did the first Sunday you sat down. You should be living more "*of the faith*" as well.

We believe that ***Cell Groups*** are where a good part of the "*understanding and the embracing of the faith*" takes place.

Now adding to our involvement is ***Worship*** and ***Instruction***, our ***Statement of Belief*** next identifies our involvement in ...

**\* *EVANGELISM*** - growth in productive ***WITNESS***

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*  
(Acts 1:8)

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20*

One of the key reasons the Church exists is to present a clear witness to the Person and Work of Jesus Christ - that's exactly what the early believers did.

*But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. (Acts 4:19-20)*

And it wasn't just the appointed Apostles who presented that witness ...

*"On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all **except the apostles** were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria ... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."* (Acts 8:1, 4)

And that's still how it is today ... ordinary believers who speak of Christ can make a great impact for Christ!



Lastly then, in addition to ***Worship*** and ***Instruction*** and ***Evangelism*** , God wants the Church of Jesus Christ to involve itself in the area of ...

**\* *SERVICE*** - growth in ***NEED-MEETING*** Sensitivity  
(Galatians 6:9-10)

*"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."*

Service to one another leads to a very special kind of testimony and witness. Meeting one another's needs shouts out in a very vivid way ...

*"This thing works. These people can see beyond themselves and are able to express loving concern to those around them."*

God would have us grow in our sensitivity to the needs of others - starting with those closest to us and then moving outward.

The Church of Jesus Christ is "*Composed of all Born-Again Believers*" and is "*God's Agency for Spiritual Growth*" ...

Lost Observation this morning ... The Church of Jesus Christ is ...

### ***3. THE EARTHLY EXPRESSION OF GOD'S HEAVENLY KINGDOM***

*"The place where Heavenly Directives are taken seriously; the place where Heavenly Activities are engaged in."*

Three such "*Heaven Directed Activities*" are identified in our ***Sonlife Statement of Belief*** ...

**\* *BAPTISM*** - the outward sign of the inward ***CHANGE***  
(Romans 6:4; Matthew 28:20)

*We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...*

It's an awesome thing to participate in a baptismal service ... to demonstrate and illustrate physically what the Spirit of God Himself has already accomplished spiritually!

Baptism powerfully links the physical and the spiritual realms - the realities of the spiritual realm are revealed through our actions in the physical realm. Heavenly realities take on earthly manifestations. The Kingdom of God is given tangible expression in our midst.

**\* COMMUNION** - the physical witness to our Savior's **SACRIFICE**

*For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup,  
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26)*

Here's the particular **beauty** of communion ... The Scripture makes clear that though Jesus died physically and spiritually on Calvary's Cross outside the City of Jerusalem, he personally offered his blood before the Father in Heaven within the Heavenly Temple itself.

When we engage in communion, we link ourselves to that incredibly potent moment when the Son of God atoned for the sins of the world. A Heavenly **reality** is witnessed to through an earthly **ceremony**!

**\* SUBMISSION** - a tangible demonstration of **BROTHERHOOD**

(John 13:34-35)

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

Fallen men and women who form caring bonds are notable in this normally selfish, self-centered world. Fallen men and women who maintain those bonds over time are particularly notable. People who are genuinely committed to one another demonstrate something of the supernatural - something of Christ Himself. And in that tangible demonstration of **Brotherhood** something of the **Heavenly Kingdom** manifests itself.

**Final Thot** ... In the Church is where our Heavenly Father plans  
to **GRANT** the first **PETITION** of the Lord's Prayer.  
Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done ... On **EARTH** as it is in **HEAVEN**!

**Pastor Mark Mikels - July 16, 2006**

**"THE CONSUMMATION - GOD'S FINAL CHAPTER "**

*Church Under Construction - Doctrinal Phase #10*

**Intro ... "Church Under Construction"** - that's what we declared ourselves to be way back on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. We are in the process of being formed into a spiritual house, a family of faith, a people for God's Pleasure and Use.

This morning we come to the close of the **First Phase** of our Church Construction - the **doctrinal phase**.

In this initial phase we have seen that this Spiritual House is being built upon the Foundation of the **Word of God**... We have also recognized that it is being built under the watchful eye and in accordance with the considerable talents of **Trinity Construction** - over the weeks we have been introduced to the entire team: **God the Father, God the Son** and **God the Holy Spirit**. In addition to meeting the team, we have come to appreciate the **process** by which the various members of Trinity Construction transform the raw materials they have been given (you and me) - that process is called **salvation**. The past two weeks we have shared together **six observations** concerning their final product - **the Church of Jesus Christ**.

Today we I want you to consider with me the doctrine that reveals where God is heading in all this incredible activity - a doctrine that answers the question -

**"What's the final chapter to this doctrinal story?"**

This is the doctrine that concludes the initial phase of our Construction - I call it simply "**CONSUMMATION**".

Here's how our **Sonlife Statement of Belief** briefly expresses it ...

***Sonlife Statement of Belief***

**10.** We believe in the bodily resurrection of the saved and lost, the eternal existence of all men either in heaven or hell, in divine judgments, rewards and punishments.  
(Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; John 14:1-4; Revelation 20-22)

***That's a pretty concise statement*** ... it states the things that all Orthodox believers believe while it does not mention things that genuine believers debate such as the ***Rapture*** of the Church and the ***Tribulation Period*** or even the ***Millennial Kingdom***.

Here's how ***I believe*** those things will fall out ... We are currently in the ***Evangelization Period*** of Church History ... We have been in this period ever since the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost when the Apostles first acted upon Jesus' final directive ... "*Go into all the world and make disciples ...*".

This ***Evangelization Period*** will conclude when (as Jesus said) "*the Gospel has been preached to all nations*" (Mark 13:10). The ***Evangelization Period*** will conclude with the ***Return of Jesus Christ*** for His Church in an event known as the ***Rapture*** (I Thessalonians 4:13-17).

The ***Rapture*** will occur either immediately prior to or in the midst of a seven year period known as the ***Tribulation*** when God will pour out His Wrath upon an unbelieving and rebellious human race.

In the ***Rapture*** all believers living and dead will be caught up to meet Christ in the clouds of heaven and will be taken to be with him - thus beginning their glorious fellowship with Him.

The ***Time of Tribulation*** will conclude with what is properly called "***The Second Coming of Christ***" when Christ will return to earth and establish the ***Kingdom*** long promised to the descendants of Abraham.

This Kingdom called the ***Millennial Kingdom*** will last for a thousand years and will be the highlight of all God's dealings with man on this earth. It will truly be a time of "***heaven on earth***". Perfect peace and perfect justice will prevail and all mankind will see first hand what it is like to live under the daily grace of God. The Devil will be bound, though sin will not yet have been completely eliminated.

*At the end* of those thousand glorious years, Satan will be released and he will once again find a following. However, his rebellion will be quickly squelched and God's ***final chapter*** will commence.

This sequence of events is pretty much that which inspired the popular book series "***Left Behind***". There are many variations of the theme held by committed followers of Christ.

*However*, all orthodox believers believe the same about ***God's Final Chapter*** and it's that ***Final Chapter ... The Consummation ...*** that today's Article of Faith primarily addresses ...

***Sonlife Statement of Belief***

10. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the saved and lost, the eternal existence of all men either in heaven or hell, in divine judgments, rewards and punishments.  
(Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; John 14:1-4; Revelation 20-22)

***Several Key Considerations arise from this Article of Faith ...***

***#1 ... ALL HUMAN BEINGS WILL FACE JUDGMENT*** - Heb. 9:27

*"... man is destined to DIE once and after that to face JUDGMENT"*

There's not a true believer anywhere who doesn't believe that ... no one leaves this life and just slips into heaven unnoticed ... no one spends time in this world and fails to have the use of his time evaluated. But by no means are believers and unbelievers judged alike.

Consider first of all that ...

***\* UNBELIEVERS*** will stand before the ***GREAT WHITE THRONE*** Judgment. (Revelation 20:11-15)

*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

This is a ***judgment of works*** overseen by the very ***ONE*** who said ... "*By the works of the law shall no man be justified*" (Galatians 2:16)

Anyone who is summoned to appear before the Great White Throne Judgment is doomed because his or her "***works***" will never measure up to the standard that God has set.

The purpose of the ***Great White Throne Judgment*** is to demonstrate once and for all that unredeemed human beings are truly guilty before God and that God is completely ***Just*** in pronouncing their sentence.

You see, by that point the ***Age of Grace*** will have passed - the time for tearful repentance will be over - God, who had patiently waited through all the long centuries because He did not wish that any of his creation should perish, will show Himself to be the Judge of all the Universe and will execute his ***Righteous Judgment*** upon rebellious, sinful mankind.

Now though believers need not fear the horrors of facing the Great White Throne Judgment, they themselves will surely be judged ...

\* ***BELIEVERS*** will stand before the ***JUDGMENT SEAT*** of ***CHRIST***.  
(2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

*"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."*  
(2 Corinthians 5:10)

*"By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his **reward**. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."*  
(1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

Salvation is not at stake here because Salvation has always been and will always be a "**gift**" ... (The gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord - Romans 6:23). What is a stake here is what this Scripture calls "**rewards**".

Listen to the way Paul expressed his expectations as he faced the end of his life ...

*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:6-8)*

All that we have done will be evaluated by our Savior when we stand before Him ... He will reward or rebuke us according to what we have done during the days we bore **His Name** on earth.

**Salvation** shows the Faithfulness of **God** ... **Rewards** show the Faithfulness of **His People** ... Christ Himself is honored as the lives of those He has redeemed are shown to be fruitful.

That will be the moment when many will hear those coveted words ...

*"Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the Joy of your LORD."*

Our first **doctrinal consideration** then arising from this particular Article of Faith is ... "**All Human Beings Will Face Judgment**".

Consider secondly then, that according to the Scriptures ...

## **#2. GOD WILL MAKE ALL THINGS NEW...**

Now there's a reason that all things must be made new and that reason is this ... Sin has affected and corrupted everything - everything that God originally created.

The once perfect world has suffered long under the burden of God's curse upon sin.

Listen to these words the Apostle Paul wrote to the Roman Church ...

*"The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." (Romans 8:19-22)*

Every time a living thing dies - every time some violent spasm shakes the earth - every time drought or flood or pestilence endangers the earth's inhabitants, the **creation** groans - for this was not the way it used to be and there's a yearning for the day when it will be this way no longer. The sin-cursed condition of the earth itself cries out for intervention!

It's a cry that long ago reached the Father's ears ... It's a cry that stirred His Heart to make all things new ... to speak once again from the Highest Heaven and lovingly answer creation's mournful cry.

Consider with me this morning ...

**\* The *COMING* of the *NEW* - Revelation 21:1-5**

*"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the old heaven and the old earth had passed away ... and I heard a loud voice ... saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with man and he will live with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things (the corrupted order of things) has passed away.'"*

That's the concluding vision God gave to the Apostle John to pass on to us. It's a vision of the new thing that God is going to do. It's the ultimate destination for the follower of Jesus Christ - the experience of living in a perfect environment with God himself in the midst of it.

That's not only new - it's awesome - it's perfect - it's Heaven! It should be the focused hope of every believer's heart!



**Now**, in addition to granting us a vision of the future state, God also reveals something of the cataclysmic end of the present world order ...

**\* The *DESTRUCTION* of the *OLD* - 2 Peter 3:10, 12b-13**

*"But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare ... that day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in its heat ... But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."*

Peter is not forecasting a nuclear holocaust in this passage; he is picturing something that goes far beyond mankind's destructive ability. He is picturing the destruction of the entire earth and heavens. He is picturing what will just naturally happen when Christ stops "*sustaining all things by his powerful word*" as it says he does in Hebrews 1:3.

Listen to what the writer to the Hebrews has said ...

*"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and **through** whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, **sustaining all things by his powerful word.**" (Hebrews 1:1-3)*

Here's the way Paul explained it to the Colossian Believers ...

*"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, **and in him all things hold together.**" (Col. 1:15-17)*

*"In Him (Christ) all things hold together"* so ... When he lets go, everything will come apart!

Fascinating, the **ONE** who is the "**WORD**" who brought all things into being is the same **ONE** who will cause all created things to pass out of being. It will be an complete **reversal** -an absolute undoing-of creation!

The prophet **Isaiah** centuries earlier had caught a glimpse of that same reality: (Isaiah 34:4)

*"All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved, and the sky rolled up like a scroll, all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine."*

Indeed we believe that ***God will make all things new*** even as we believe that ***all human beings will face judgment***.

Now those two beliefs gives rise to this third and final ***consideration*** ...

### ***#3. GOD'S FINAL CHAPTER SHOULD DETERMINE HOW HIS CHILDREN LIVE EVERY CHAPTER!***

Listen to these words from the Apostle Peter ...

\* 2 Peter 3:11-12a ... ***"Live HOLY and GODLY lives."***

*"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming."*

Did you pick up on what Peter said there? If I could paraphrase a bit ...

*"The faster we get our act together, the quicker God can finish the story!"*

What an incredible concept ... in a sense, while we might say *"we are waiting on God"*, God could well answer that *"He is waiting on us"*.

***Indeed*** ... knowing the end of the story should influence the way that we carry out our part in the story! Here's how the Apostle John expressed it ...

\* 1 John 3:1-3 ... ***"PURIFIES himself just as He is pure."***

*"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure."*

John says that since we know our ultimate destination (Christlikeness) then we should be preparing ourselves for the trip!

His directive to us would be ...

*"Seek to become as Christlike as possible even while you live in this fallen, sin-cursed world - allow your **hope** to motivate you!"*

And it's those **admonitions** from the Scriptures that now cause us to turn to the eleventh and final article in our ...

### ***Sonlife Statement of Belief***

**11.** We believe the supreme task of every believer is to **glorify** God in his life, that his conduct should be **blameless** before the world, that he should be a faithful **steward** of his possessions, and that he should seek to realize for himself the full stature of **maturity** in Christ.

(Ephesians 1:3-4; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 2:12; 2 Peter 3:11-12; 1 John 3:2-3; Malachi 3:10; 2 Corinthians 8:7; Ephesians 4:13-16)

That's the statement that transitions us into the next phase of our Construction ... ***the Behavioral Phase***.

For whereas our ***Sonlife Statement of Faith*** expresses *what we believe* so our ***Sonlife Covenant*** expresses *how we behave* ...

And that's the discussion we will begin next Sunday ...

***However, here's the bottom line for today*** ... here's *the* Biblical Bottom Line when it comes to the ***Doctrine of the Consummation*** ...

When all is said and done - "***WE WIN!***"

So ***WALK*** like a winner; ***TALK*** like a winner; ***HANG AROUND*** with other winners and never forget that in Christ a ***WINNER*** is what you are and what you always will be!

### ***Final Thot ...***

God has ***REVEALED*** how mankind's ***STORY*** is going to end; it's a ***FOOLISH*** man who doesn't ***TAKE*** it to ***HEART!***

So what about you ... ***FOOLISH*** or ***SMART?***

THE  
BEHAVIORAL  
PHASE

**Pastor Mark Mikels - July 30, 2006**

**"WORSHIP AND WORD"**

Church Under Construction - Behavioral Phase #1

**Intro** ... Today is a special day in the life of *Sonlife Community Church* - this is the day we enter the second great phase of our current construction.

Oh, I don't mean the construction that is happening at 13324 Apple Valley Road - I mean the construction that is happening right here in this place, the construction that is the result of Jesus Christ saying ...

*"I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it".*

Now that's a mighty project ... that's the most significant and strategic construction project underway in our world today. All around the globe Christ is building His Church and someday He will present that Church to the Father without spot, blemish or wrinkle.

What a day that will be when Christ turns to the Father and says,

*"Here's my Church - my Bride - my Life's Work!"*

**However**, for us there's another day to which we point ... it's the day we open the doors of our new Church Building on Apple Valley Road for the first time and Christ has a chance (as it were) to say some very similar words to the surrounding community!

*"Here's another expression of my earthly church -  
Come and see what the Father's Grace and the Son's Sacrifice and  
the Spirit's Faithfulness has produced!"*

That, too, will be a most significant day and Christ would have us all be ready for it - ready to accurately and adequately function as His Church for all who walk through those doors.

Oh, how grand it will be to hear people say,

*"I've never met people like these before; I've never been in a church like this before -  
I've never walked into a place and sensed the Presence of God like this before."*

That, of course, has been our desire (and to some degree, our experience) since the Founding Day of *Sonlife* Community Church - I've actually heard those very words from numerous ones of you describing your first exposure to our fellowship!

And so we have given ourselves to this time of "*Focused Concentration*" as the Lord diligently readies us for this next chapter in our Church Life.

During this same six month period that R.E.M. Builders is physically constructing a church structure at 13324 Apple Valley Road, the Lord Jesus Himself is constructing a congregation for His Glory and Service here in this place - our goal is that that both projects wrap up about the same time.

So, as Mickey always used to say ... "*On with the show*".

*It's a four phase project* we are involved in ...

*First*, there's the *doctrinal* phase dealing with the great truths of our Faith;

*Second*, there's the *behavioral* phase dealing with the application of our Faith in our everyday lives;

*Third*, there's the *relational* phase dealing with the specific ways members of the church are to inter-act with one another and

*Finally*, there is the *evangelistic* phase dealing with the specific calling upon the Church to "*reach out to the Lost with the Good News of the Gospel*".

Last Sunday we concluded the *doctrinal* phase of this ongoing construction project ... I trust that you feel more familiar with the *Great Truths* of the Faith now than when we began!

Today we transition into phase two - the *behavioral* phase.

In *phase one*, we focused our attention upon our *Sonlife* Statement of Belief.

In *phase two* our attention turns to our *Sonlife* Covenant of Behavior.

Our *Sonlife* Covenant contains **ten** statements. We will "*pair them up*" and cover the entire document over the next five weeks ...

Today we "*pair up*" statements one and three. Here's how they read ...

***Our Sonlife Covenant ...***

Believing in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and desiring to live in a manner that will bring glory to Him, and having associated myself with this local body of believers called *Sonlife Community Church*, I do now covenant together with them that ...

*"I will seek to worship God in spirit and in truth as a continuous practice of my life and I will commit myself to a regular study of God's Word so my mind might be renewed and my life transformed by its truths."*

(John 4:23-24; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 2 Timothy 3:15; Romans 12:1-2)

***These Two Statements arise from Five Key Concepts that themselves arise from several Key Scriptures ...***

***Key Concept #1 ...***

**OUR HEAVENLY FATHER SEEKS WORSHIPPERS**

*Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

John 4:21-24

How ironic that the God of the universe - the Creator and Sustainer of all things - should need to **seek** for worshippers!

Man in his original state was created with a natural tendency to "**bow down**". Man is a worshipper by nature and yet that basic nature of man has been corrupted by sin and so man's natural inclination toward worship has been corrupted as well.

Paul spoke of it this way ... " *They worshipped and served created things rather than the creator who is blessed forever.*" (Romans 1:25)

The very woman that Jesus was addressing there in John chapter four was a Samaritan and the Samaritans long years ago had created a worship system that ran contrary to the one laid down in Jewish Law.

God himself would ask His ***Own People*** in the final book of the Old Testament ... (Malachi 1:6)

*"A son honors his father and a servant his master.  
If I am a father, where is the honor due me?  
If I am a master, where is the respect due me?"*

Man has been waylaid by sin and diverted by His own perceived needs and has developed his own objects of worship and thus has forsaken and perhaps even forgotten that the One True God even exists.

And so we find incredibly that ***The One True God must seek for worshippers*** ...

But as we see in ***Key Concept #2*** ...

NOT JUST **ANY WORSHIPPERS** WILL DO - John 4:24  
*"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

The Samaritans were a case in point ... they had a well-worked out system of worship but they were not acceptable to God. Jesus said,  
*"You Samaritans worship what you do not know (understand).*

To the woman's great credit she accepted his pronouncement of her ignorance and said, " *When Messiah comes, he will explain everything.*"

And in an amazing disclosure, Jesus responded ...

***"I who speak to you am He".***



And with that announcement, there began a flow of truth into her heart - the kind of truth that would cause her to bow before Her Lord.

The more *informed* our worship is the *better* our worship is!

We should be better worshippers for having spent the last 12 weeks pouring over our *Statement of Belief* ... Every truth we have learned should cause our hearts to more easily bow before our Awesome God.

And a big part of the truth that leads to worthy worship is that God is Spirit ... that means He is everywhere present - He is not confined to any particular place or time.

So God is seeking for a particular kind of worshippers - He is seeking for those who know enough about Him to worship Him accurately and for those who understand enough about Him to know that He can be encountered anywhere at any time.

This first two concepts then lead right into *Key Concept #3* ...

**COMMENDABLE WORSHIP IS CONTINUAL WORSHIP -**  
"Pray (commune/worship) continually"  
(I Thessalonians 5:17)

It directly follows that since God is not confined to any particular time or place that our worship is not to be confined either.

God does not want worshippers who confine their "*worship*" to a particular time of the week or to a particular place where they meet.

"*Worship*" (an attitude of praise and wonder leading to a lifestyle of submission and surrender) is a 24/7 kind of thing. God would have us live in such a way that prayer might erupt at any moment in our lives!

Thus when we walk conscious of His Presence and in awe of His Power, we find ourselves "*praying*" - "*worshipping*" continually and that pleases Him greatly!

And so we put just such an intention into our *Sonlife Covenant* ...

*"I will seek to worship God in spirit and in truth  
as a continuous practice of my life."*

Now it ought to follow that consciously committing ourselves to "*worship God in truth*" will cause us to seriously seek out such truth wherever and whenever we can and so arises **Key Concept #4** ...

A LIFE OF **CEASELESS WORSHIP** SHOULD LEAD TO A PATTERN OF **CEASELESS STUDY** OF GOD'S WORD.

Here's how the Apostle Paul instructed his young protégé Timothy ...

*"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15)*

The more we engage in worship, the more we concern ourselves with questions like these ...

*"What does God desire of me - How does He want me to live?"*

In God's Word we discover how to be "*approved*" ... the more we read and study the Word of God the less we will be "*ashamed*" by either our answers to questions or our actions in life situations.

And that is true because as we see in **Key Concept #5** ...

CEASELESS STUDY LEADS TO CONTINUAL **DISCOVERY** WHICH RESULTS IN **TRANSFORMATIONAL** LIVING. Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of **worship**.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** by the **renewing** of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Hasn't it been your experience that there is always something "*new*" in the Scripture - there's always something that you "*never saw before*"?

God's Word describes itself as "*living and active - penetrating even to the dividing of soul and spirit - judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*" (Hebrews 4:12)

When you approach the Word of God as a true Worshipper of God, your knees are always flexed and ready to bow before every new insight or directive you discover.

Your mind is ***renewed*** (brought to a state of newness with regard to some circumstance addressed by God's Word) and being already surrendered in heart (the continual condition of a true worshipper), you voluntarily and almost automatically adjust your behavior to match up with God's expectations ***and*** miraculously and (seemingly almost effortlessly) your life is transformed yet again!

With such a prospect in view is it any wonder that we eagerly say in our ***Sonlife Covenant ...***

*I will commit myself to a regular study of God's Word so my mind might be renewed and my life transformed by its truths."*

### ***FINAL THOT ...***

**WORSHIP** without **WORD** or **WORD** without **WORSHIP** will lead to an **UNBALANCED, DYSFUNCTIONAL** Christian Life.

So be committed to both **WORSHIP** and **WORD!**

**Pastor Mark Mikels - August 6, 2006**

**"WHO'S RUNNING THE SHOW?"**

Church Under Construction - Behavioral Phase #2

**Intro ...** Last Sunday we transitioned into phase two of our spiritual construction project - the one being handled by Trinity Construction - the one intended to produce a gloriously beautiful body of people right here at *Sonlife Community Church*.

**Phase One** was the *doctrinal* phase and we spent some twelve weeks examining and hopefully understanding and embracing the major doctrines of the Christian Faith - Doctrine is the *Foundation* upon which we stand.

**Phase Two** which we entered just last week is the *behavioral* phase and we will be examining and discussing the standards of behavior laid out in our *Sonlife Covenant* - Our Covenant defines the *Framework* within which we live our lives.

Last week we saw that we are to live our lives as genuine worshippers of God immersed in the study of God's Word.

**Today** we come to the second set of *dual commitments* expressed in our *Sonlife Covenant*. Here's how they read ...

***Our Sonlife Covenant ...***

Believing in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and desiring to live in a manner that will bring glory to Him, and having associated myself with this local body of believers called *Sonlife Community Church*, I do now covenant together with them that ...

I will make my time, energy, and personal resources available for God's use knowing that all I am and have is simply a trust from Him **and** I will invest my finances cheerfully and sacrificially in the work of the Lord, taking the Biblical "*tithe*" as my guideline for giving.

(Psalm 24:1; Matthew 25:14-18; 1 Corinthians 4:1;  
Malachi 3:10; Matthew 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 4:7)

Those are some incredibly important statements - statements that (once we embrace them knowingly and intentionally) will absolutely transform our lives.

From those two statements arise ***Two Key Concepts*** that I would share with you briefly in this Communion Mediation.

***Key Concept #1 ...***

EVERY BELIEVER IS A **STEWARD** - Handling **RESOURCES**  
that have been **ENTRUSTED**.

Psalms 24:1 - 1 Corinthians 4:1 - 1 Corinthians 4:7 - Matthew 25:14-15

Let's just let the ***Scripture*** speak for itself ...

*The earth is the LORD'S and everything in it - the world, and all who live in it.*  
(Psalm 24:1)

*So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God.* (1 Corinthians 4:1)

*For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*  
(1 Corinthians 4:7)

*Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.*  
(Matthew 25:14-15)

It's pretty hard to miss what the Scripture is saying here ... Everything ultimately belongs to the Lord and thus everything we have in our possession we hold as stewards or trustees.

That's the position fervently denied by the unbeliever but passionately accepted by all genuine followers of Christ.

My house, my car, my bank account, my talents, my education, my life experiences, my perspectives on life ... they're all His.

As Rush Limbaugh says nearly every day on his radio show ... he possesses "*talent on loan from God*".

Recognizing that truth should, of course, make us humble and grateful.

God Himself has designed this world in such a way that human beings are suited for it ... He has given to every human being certain necessary things for existence in this fallen world ... to some human beings it would seem He has given more than others but all living creatures owe what little or much they have to Him.

Now "*redeemed human beings*" have received so much more - we have received the knowledge and the gift of ***eternal life*** - we have become aware of the glorious plan of God to express His Love to the world through the sacrifice of His One and Only Son.

We have been made sons and daughters of God through our expressed faith in Jesus Christ - we have been included in God's Covenant People - we are heir to all the blessings of Christ - we have been given the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts and to guide us into a fuller and fuller understanding of the Truth of God and to equip us for greater and greater service for God.

As John the Apostle would say ...

*"How great is the love the Father has lavished upon us that we should be called Children of God!" (1 Jn. 3:1)*

The only valid response to such generosity from our Heavenly Father is that expressed in our ***Sonlife Covenant*** ...

*"I will make my time, energy, and personal resources available for God's use knowing that all I am and have is simply a trust from Him."*

***Tell me*** ... if Jesus came to the front door of your home this afternoon and said, "*I need to use your car this week*" - what would you say?

The quickness of your answer will indicate to what degree you recognize that all that you have is simply held in trust for the One to whom it actually belongs.

Now that first concept ... that "*every believer is a steward handling resources that have been entrusted*" leads to ...

***Key Concept #2 ...***

EVERY BELIEVER IS AN **INVESTOR** - Seeking a **WORTHY RETURN**.

1 Corinthians 4:2 - Matt. 25:16-18 - Matt. 6:19-20 - Malachi 3:10

Once again let's hear what the ***Scripture*** says ...

Now it is ***required*** that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.  
(1 Corinthians 4:2)

Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and ***entrusted*** his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.

The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more.

But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. (Matthew 25:14-18)

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matthew 6:19-20)

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. (Malachi 3:10)

God expects his stewards to be actively engaged in seeking a worthy return on the resources He has entrusted to them.

*"Invest in Kingdom Work ... in worthwhile work ... in work that will please the Father ... in work that will bring a good return."*

And in this "**work**", it's imperative that we follow the instructions that we have been given ...

Begin your investment with the "**Tithe**" ... it's a directive from the Father Himself ... *"Use the first part of my resources in this way"* He says.

And so our **Sonlife Covenant** includes this commitment statement ...

*"I will invest my finances cheerfully and sacrificially in the work of the Lord, taking the Biblical "tithe" as my guideline for giving."*

Actually, Biblically speaking, you cannot *"give anything to God until you are tithing"* ... if you are not tithing, you are actually *"withholding"* from God that which He requires.

Now that might sound harsh but that's what the Bible says and I would be less than faithful to you as your Pastor if I did not point that out to you.

**"GIVING"** ... to the work of the Lord - to the needs of others is *"above the tithe"*.

Now **giving** is a wonderful biblical option ... in **Old Testament Days** the people gave what the Bible called *"free-will offerings"* at several key points - when Moses was assembling the materials for the Tabernacle - when David was gathering resources for the Temple and even when the people gave gifts for the repair of the temple in the days of Joash. Free Will Offerings have a long and wonderful history in the life of the People of God. It's a wonderful use of the resources that God has put at His People's disposal.

There is a wonderful older lady in this fellowship whose tithe is \$80 dollars a month - she has faithfully given that tithe every firstfruits Sunday since she has been here. Imagine my surprise a few years ago when she asked me to stop by her home after church one Sunday and presented me with a free-will offering check for \$100,000. That was over and above her tithe - it was an action she felt led of the Lord to take and it has, of course, benefited our church tremendously.

And the next month ... there was her \$80 tithe once again in the firstfruits offering basket.



There are others in our congregation who regularly give "*beyond their tithe*" ... it's not required but it is certainly noted not only by me but by the Father Himself who I'm confident counts it a worthy investment.

In *New Testament Days*, the early believers took up a great collection to meet the needs of the saints in Jerusalem who were experiencing a time of great need. That's called *Benevolence Giving* and is also *above* the tithe. This too is a wonderful use of the resources that God has entrusted to us.

Here at *Sonlife* for the past 11 years, I have taught and stressed *tithing* ... I have even gone so far as to say that ...

*"If the tithes of our people are not adequate to accomplish the task, then it's not a task that we are going to get involved with."*

You see, God is blessed by a congregation that honors Him in the tithe. We are not a fully tithing church yet but we are closer than any church that I have ever been a part of ... the evidence of God's pleasure is upon us ... "*There is food in His House*".

The tithes of this church provide for a full time pastor when in many churches this size the pastor must be bi-vocational ... The tithes of this church are building a building that few churches this size could even dream of ... and the tithes of this church have supported several missionary endeavors beyond our own congregation and the tithes of this church have on numerous occasions over the years been used to help members of our fellowship through difficult times.

*Stewardship* ... it's the term that means somebody is handling somebody else's stuff. It's the term that means that the top dog has placed His Affairs in someone else's hands. It's a scary thing to do and a weighty thing to be given. May God find us faithful!

***Final Thot ...***

God "*runs the show*" through those He left in ***CHARGE*** and He allows Himself to be "***JUDGED***" by how well they manage things.

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - August 13, 2006***

## ***"MY WITNESS IN THE WORLD - Part One"***

### ***"Demonstrate The Positive"***

Church Under Construction - Behavioral Phase #3

***Intro*** ... Jesus Christ said, "*I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it*". That's an ambitious task! The Church of Jesus Christ generally and *Sonlife Community Church* specifically is a "*Church Under Construction*".

How appropriate during the very months we are engaged in building a physical structure to house our congregation that we turn our attention to the spiritual construction project going on in our midst!

There are ***four distinct phases*** to Christ's construction project: the ***doctrinal*** phase where the foundational truths of the faith are laid down; the ***behavioral*** phase where the essential behaviors of the Christian Life are laid out; the ***relational*** phase where a discussion of true body life is taken up and the ***evangelistic*** phase the heart of God for the Lost is fleshed out.

So far we have completed the ***doctrinal*** phase and we are three weeks into the ***behavioral*** phase. The messages during the ***doctrinal*** phase were based upon our ***Sonlife Statement of Belief*** (our doctrinal statement). The messages during the current ***behavioral*** phase are based upon our ***Sonlife Covenant of Behavior***.

Today's message "***My Witness In The World - Demonstrate The Positive***" is the third in this behavioral set. Here's the statement from our ***Sonlife Covenant*** that stimulates it ...

#### ***Our Sonlife Covenant ...***

Believing in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and desiring to live in a manner that will bring glory to Him, and having associated myself with this local body of believers called "***Sonlife Community Church***", I do now covenant together with them that...

I will ***endeavor*** to give ***positive*** witness of my ***relationship*** to Jesus Christ by ***word*** and ***deed*** in ***every circumstance*** in which I ***am placed***. (Acts 1:8; Col. 3:17; 1 Pe. 2:15)

Today's message is part one of a two part discussion ... we might say that today's message establishes the **context** within which next Sunday's message will be given. Today's message can certainly stand alone but next Sunday's message will definitely flesh it out.

**So then** ... on with today's message ... our **Covenant** says in a statement that could easily be committed to memory ...

I will **endeavor** to give **positive** witness of my **relationship** to Jesus Christ by **word and deed** in **every circumstance** in which I **am placed**.  
(Acts 1:8; Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 2:15)

Here are the **key scriptures** upon which that statement is based ...

*"you will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8)

*And whatever you do, whether in **word or deed**, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.* (Colossians 3:17)

*But in your hearts **set apart** Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared** to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with **gentleness and respect** ...* (1 Peter 2:15)

There can be no doubt that Jesus Christ intends the members of His Church to have an impact upon the world around them - He expects them to be demonstrators and explainers of the Life He provides.

Committing ourselves to live as His Witnesses puts us firmly on the Path of His Choosing and Blessing.

So then how do we go about it? How should we understand this commitment that we have made?

Upon reflection upon our **Sonlife Statement** and upon these **key scriptures** that underlie it, I would share with you this morning

***Six Key Words*** regarding our ***witness*** in the ***world*** ... ***Six Key Words*** that hopefully help unlock the procedure whereby we become effective witnesses for the Lord in our everyday world.

***The first word is ... EFFORT***

Our *Sonlife* Statement begins with these words ... "***I will endeavor*** ..."

Living as a witness for the Lord in this fallen world requires some conscious actions on our part ... actions that are not necessarily the most easy or natural to take. In fact all of the actions that lead to the right kind of "***witness***" are actions that are unnatural to our fallen sin nature.

It takes conscious "***effort***" to live "***like a Christian***" in this fallen world, doesn't it?

The Apostle Peter explains the "***starting point for witness***" in his first letter to the Church ... "***But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord***" ...

Best to do that first thing every morning ... "***Set apart Christ as Lord***" ... that means "***acknowledge that He is running the show***".

To set Christ apart as Lord means to simultaneously "***set self aside***". Either ***Christ*** is Lord or ***Self*** is Lord. It takes conscious effort to make that commitment and to maintain that commitment throughout the day.

But once I establish Jesus as Lord of my life for the day, what am I consciously trying to accomplish as I go through the day?

That question brings us to our second ***Key Word*** of the morning - The Word **RESULT**...

According to our *Sonlife* Covenant Statement:

***"I am endeavoring to give "positive witness"***

Sometimes **adjectives** can be irritating things ... it would make our job a lot easier if the statement simply said ...

*"I will endeavor to give witness of my relationship with Jesus Christ by word and deed in every circumstance in which I am placed."*

But the statement says that the **RESULT** for which I endeavor is a "**Positive Witness**" ...

That means that the words I use and the deeds I perform need to reflect positively upon Jesus Christ ... they need to be the kind of words or deeds that someone could say "*I could imagine Jesus saying that or doing that*".

Once again we take our cue from the Apostle Peter ...

*"But in your hearts **set apart** Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared** to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with **gentleness and respect** ..."*

No haughty or "*know it all*" condescending attitude allowed - don't express your witness with a condemning, putdown attitude.

The result that we seek is a **positive, winsome, attractive witness** - the very kind of word and deed witness that Jesus himself gave.

So I make the daily **effort** to establish Jesus as the Lord of my life and having done that I allow Him to bring out of me a wholesome, attractive, positive **witness** ...

Now **to** what and **of** what am I giving this positive witness?

This is where we come to our **Third Key Word** ... **FOCUS** - the focus of my witness is "*my relationship with Jesus*".

**Note** that I am not **primarily** witnessing to the trustworthiness of the Bible or to the correctness of my doctrine or to any other such thing.

I am witnessing to the fact that I have a ***personal relationship*** with Jesus Christ and to the corollary fact that my relationship with Jesus determines and explains and gives meaning to everything that I do and say in my life.

And since that is the ***focus*** of my witness then it logically follows that I concern myself with our fourth ***Key Word*** of the morning - ***METHOD***.

For how do I get an opportunity to tell people about my relationship to Jesus Christ ... Do I button hole them or do I wait until they ask?

But why would they ever ask?

Basically our ***METHOD*** is to live in such a way that they can't help ***but*** ask. Again here's what our ***Covenant Statement*** says ...

*"I will endeavor to give positive witness of my relationship with Jesus Christ by word and deed in every circumstance in which I am placed."*

Those words come right out of the Apostle Paul's directions to the Colossian believers ... (Colossians 3:17)

*"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him"*

As we mentioned just a few moments ago, it's our ***words*** and ***deeds*** that enable the "***witness***" - they are the things that draw the attention of those around us.

When our words and deeds are consistently positive - especially in times when circumstances are negative - people will notice and they will inquire.

They might say things like ... "*Don't you ever get down?*" - "*Don't you ever blow up?*" - "*Are you always so together?*" - "*What's the deal with you anyway?*"

Here's where ***Peter's*** words come into play once more ...

*But in your hearts **set apart** Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared** to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with **gentleness and respect** ... (1 Peter 2:15)*

Our **answer** in a nutshell is ... *"I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and He keeps me going".*

That answer, of course, can lead to much more conversation but that answer all by itself is the "**WITNESS**" ... anything that would follow falls under the category of explanation and is only given if the person who asked wants to hear more.

So my commitment is to make the effort to live in such a way that my words and deeds bear positive witness of my relationship with Jesus!

Now there's **two more things** to share this morning and those two things are communicated by our final **key words** ...

Our **Fifth Key Word** is the word **EXTENT** ...

**Where** am I to maintain this positive witness and what, in fact, is the **EXTENT** of this commitment I have made?

*"I will endeavor to give positive witness of my relationship with Jesus Christ by word and deed in **every circumstance** in which I am placed."*

There's **never** a break from witness ... **never** a circumstance where I can forsake my commitment to live in such a way as to give positive witness to my relationship with Jesus Christ ...

**Never** a circumstance where I can say, *"I don't care whether they know I have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ or not."*

**Never** a circumstance where I can consciously say, *"I don't even **want** them to know that I have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ"*.

***Every circumstance*** of life is "*witness territory*" ... In every circumstance of life I am to live in such a way that my words and deeds bear positive witness to the fact that "*I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that keeps me going strong*".

Now knowing how twisted and even bizarre some circumstances of life can become and knowing that the Devil himself would frequently whisper in our ear ... "*This situation doesn't count ... in this situation you need to just act like everybody else, you need to use the language they use and do the things they do*" ...

Knowing that that's how life frequently is ... we need to truly experience the power of this final **Key Word**... **CONFIDENCE**.

*"I will endeavor to give witness of my relationship with Jesus Christ by word and deed in every circumstance in which **I am placed**."*

God is the One who oversees the circumstances of my life. In every circumstance I can confidently say, "*I am here either by the direction or the permission of God*". He will grace me to function for Him if I set Him apart as Lord in my life.

***So in every circumstance of life I will endeavor by word and deed to give positive witness to my personal relationship with Jesus Christ!***

What a commitment and what a challenge!

Our **final thot** simply once again underscores the fact that though the living of a positive life must come first, the witness to the source of that life is essential if people would understand what our life really is all about.

### ***Final Thot ...***

Before people can know that your **RELATIONSHIP** with Jesus **WORKS** they must know that you **HAVE** a relationship with Jesus. Otherwise they won't know **WHAT'S** working! They might see that **SOMETHING** is working but they can't know what it is until we **TELL** them ... "*I have a personal **RELATIONSHIP** with Jesus Christ and **HE** keeps me going strong!*"



**Pastor Mark Mikels - August 20, 2006**

**"MY WITNESS IN THE WORLD - Part Two"**

**"Eliminate The Negative!"**

Church Under Construction - Behavioral Phase #4

**Intro ...** This morning we continue the focus that we began last Sunday - the focus on our *witness in the world* as we live out our lives as followers of Jesus Christ and members of *Sonlife Community Church*.

Last week in a message that we sub-titled "**Demonstrate the Positive**" we placed our attention upon the statement in our *Sonlife Covenant of Behavior* which says ...

"I will *endeavor* to give *positive* witness of my *relationship* to Jesus Christ by *word and deed* in *every circumstance* in which I *am placed*."

In other words, in every situation of life in which I find myself, I will seek to demonstrate the fact that my relationship with Jesus Christ produces a positive and productive effect upon my life!

We saw last week (notably in 1 Peter 2:15) that the "*demonstration of that positive effect*" frequently creates an opportunity for witness as unbelievers around us "*ask us a reason for the hope that we have*".

Demonstrating the positive through our words and deeds as we bear witness to our relationship with Jesus Christ prepares the way for effective witness. No doubt, Christ would have all of His Own demonstrate the positive in their daily lives!

Now having discussed that at some length last week and having said that last week's message in a way establishes the context for this week's message, I want you to consider with me today's **Key Concept**.

**Key Concept ...**

In the living of the Christian Life, eliminating the **NEGATIVE** is as important as demonstrating the **POSITIVE**.

*Here's how our **Sonlife Covenant** expresses it ...*

*"I will **refrain** from any activity or practice of life that might discredit the name of Jesus, harm the temple of the Holy Spirit (my body), hinder a fellow believer, or cause my personal testimony to be compromised."*

(Romans 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:19-10; 8:9; 1 Timothy 4:12b,15-16; Proverbs 23:29-35)

**Key Action Phrase** in that statement... "**I will refrain**" - I will stay away from - I will avoid at all costs - I will have nothing to do with ... **What?** What are the things from which I will refrain?

That Covenant statement identifies ...

**FOUR THINGS THAT I AS A CHRISTIAN WILL NOT DO ...**

**1. I WILL NOT DISCREDIT THE NAME OF JESUS!**

*"Make Him LOOK bad." - Romans 2:24*

As it is written: "*God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.*"

Could there be anything worse than that? To have the One we claim to love and follow actually discredited in the eyes of others because of the way that we live our lives? That condition was originally attributed to Israel in Old Testament Days by the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel ... (Isa. 52:5; Eze. 36:22)

Because of their disobedience God had allowed His People to be overrun by their enemies; they were taken into captivity and in their captivity they had become an object of scorn and their God had become a symbol of impotence. How feeble must their God be that He could not protect them from the invader!

So God's Name linked to His People had become a joke and their faith a farce - their disobedience had caused Him to withdraw his hand of blessing and thus He Himself had suffered humiliation right along with His People! **Here's the point** for us today ... Jesus' name is attached in people's minds to every one of us who calls himself "*Christian*". The way we live reflects either positively or negatively upon him. Like it or not, it's possible for us to "**make Him look bad**" - to make him less desirable than He might otherwise be!

**Illustration:** Have you seen the signs posted on the back of many trucks on the road asking -“*How am I driving?*” with a company phone number to call? Imagine what it would be like if all Christians were to have a sign on their backs saying “*How am I living/behaving?*” with their pastor's number to call! What calls would your Pastor receive?

It is reported that the famous Indian philosopher and social reformer Mahatma Gandhi once said ... “*Give me your Christ but not your Christianity*”.

He, at least, could see past the performance of those who called themselves Christian and realize there was more than what they were demonstrating but ***most people can't***. Most people figure that a Christ who can't change us into something worthwhile is not worth investigating let alone following.

And so we go on record as a congregation as saying ...

*"I will **refrain** from any activity or practice of life that might **discredit** the name of Jesus ... I will not **Make Him Look Bad!**"*

Ask yourself in every situation ... Will this behavior of mine make people think better or worse of Jesus?

## ***2. I WILL NOT HARM THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!***

*"Make His **HOME** Bad."* - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

*"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."*

Now there's a thousand ways that that Scripture can be applied ... I have personally used that scripture to pressure myself into “*buckling up when I get in my car*”. It can be applied to our eating habits and to our entertainment practices (sky diving or bungee jumping or motorcycle riding or rock climbing) but I want us primarily today to apply it in the way that Paul himself did ... ***sexual misconduct***.

We are living in a day when the Church of Jesus Christ and when vast numbers of followers of Jesus Christ take a very lax position with regard to sexual behavior.

The Bible has never changed its position and we cannot either ... sexual activity outside of the secure bonds of marriage is a violation of God's prescribed plan - it is sin. And like any sin, it negatively affects our fellowship with God.

However, unlike many other sins, sexual sin directly affects the dwelling place of the Spirit of God. Sexual sin, Paul says, is a sin against our own body and as such adversely affects the Spirit of God Himself.

Now, of course, the first focus here is sexual intercourse but all sexual activity between two unmarried people designed to bring some degree of sexual satisfaction would be included.

Sexual sin corrupts the home in which the Holy Spirit dwells - it makes His Home a bad place to be - a less than honorable place to be - and yet He is required to be there. How unpleasant that must be for him!

Like some family in New Orleans trying to get comfortable once again in a home still filled with the muck of hurricane Katrina so is the Holy Spirit in the body of a believer that has been corrupted by sexual sin.

With a degree of conviction borne of deep appreciation for the work of the Spirit in our lives we say ...

*"I will **refrain** from any activity or practice of life that might harm the temple of the Holy Spirit (my body) - I will not **"Make His home bad** - that is, a bad place for Him to be!"*

Well, we are halfway done ... two down and two to go ... two more incredibly important things that our *Sonlife Covenant* says that ***I as a Christian simply will not do ...***

### **3. I WILL NOT HINDER A FELLOW BELIEVER!**

***"Make Him DO Bad"*** - 1 Corinthians 8:9

*"Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall."*

In this passage, the Apostle Paul touches on an incredibly important guideline for our Christian Living ... As a Christian, I need to be aware of the way my behavior affects other Christians.

There may well be things that I can do with a perfectly clear conscience that others cannot. My behavior in those circumstances might offend or confuse or possibly even mislead them.

In Paul's day the issue was "*eating meat that had been offered to idols*" that is, meat that had been presented to an idol as part of a pagan religious ceremony and that had then been made available to the public."

Now Paul had previously pointed out to them (verse 4) "*that an idol is nothing at all in this world and that there is no God but one*". Therefore, to eat meat that had been offered to idols - even in the idol temple itself ... think of a first century version of a "*hotdog on a stick*" vendor hawking his wares ... was no big deal.

That is, it was no big deal ... **UNLESS** some younger, more vulnerable believer made it a big deal! In that case, Paul says that he would "*refrain*" ... he would modify his behavior for the sake of the younger believer.

And our *Sonlife Covenant* says that each of us would do the same ...

*"I will **refrain** from any activity or practice of life that might hinder a fellow believer ... I will not make him do bad!"*

We should ask ourselves when about to engage in any controversial behavior ...

*"Might this behavior cause distress and possibly even bring defeat for any of my Christian brothers or sisters?"*

Certainly when the answer is a definite "**YES**" we should refrain - for their sake and Paul would say, "*for Christ's sake as well*".

And now just one remains of our "**Elimination Quartet**" ...

#### **4. I WILL NOT COMPROMISE MY PERSONAL TESTIMONY!**

*"Make **ME** Do Bad" - 1 Timothy 4:12, 15-16*

*"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely."*

There is nothing more cherished for a true follower of Jesus Christ than a "squeaky clean" personal testimony. There is nothing more honoring to Christ than to have the world say of us as Pilate did of Jesus, "I find no fault in him".

It doesn't mean that the world "agrees with us" but it does mean that the world finds us to be people of personal integrity, living lives that are consistent and commendable.

Recognize the powerful platform for witness that such a life provides, our *Sonlife* Covenant affirms ...

*"I will **refrain** from any activity or practice of life that might cause my personal testimony to be compromised ... I will not make me do bad."*

And with that we conclude our look at these ...

*"Four Things that I as a Christian simply will not do" ...*

***I WILL NOT DISCREDIT THE NAME OF JESUS!***

***I WILL NOT HARM THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!***

***I WILL NOT HINDER A FELLOW BELIEVER!***

***I WILL NOT COMPROMISE MY PERSONAL TESTIMONY!***

All that remains is to draw your attention to this ***Final Thot*** ...

A ***final thot*** that reiterates the point with which we began this discussion ...

<p><b><i>Final Thot</i></b> ... Our <u><b>WITNESS</b></u> in the world depends as much upon what we <u><b>DON'T</b></u> do as it does upon what we <u><b>DO</b></u> !</p>
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**Pastor Mark Mikels - August 27, 2006**

**"MY COMMITMENT AS AN AMERICAN - Part One"**

**"My Relationship To My Government"**

Church Under Construction - Behavioral Phase #5

**Intro** ... Our theme these past few months has been "**Church Under Construction**" for we have seen that even as we are engaged in building a church **structure** on the corner of Apple Valley and Ottawa Roads, so the Lord Jesus is engaged in building the church **congregation** that will assemble within it.

And you and I are the raw materials the Lord is using to build that special congregation - He is shaping us and refining us and then arranging us into a spiritual structure that will suit His Purpose in this little corner of His Kingdom.

We have seen that this construction project will proceed through **four distinct phases** ... the **doctrinal** phase where we come to understand the key **teachings** of the Christian Faith, the **behavioral** phase where we will be exposed to key **practices** of the Christian Life, the **relational** phase where we will explore key **inter-actions** within the Body of Christ and finally the **evangelistic** phase where we will discuss our outreach to the world.

So far we have completed the **doctrinal** phase and we are currently right in the midst of the **behavioral** phase.

During the doctrinal phase we carefully examined the statements contained in our **Sonlife Statement of Beliefs** and now in the behavioral phase we are proceeding statement by statement through our **Sonlife Covenant of Behavior**.

Here's what we have covered so far ...

## ***The Behavioral Phase of Construction***

*"I will seek to worship God in **spirit** and in **truth** as a continuous practice of my life and I will commit myself to a regular **study** of God's Word so my mind might be **renewed** and my life **transformed** by its truths."*

(John 4:23-24; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 2 Timothy 3:15; Romans 12:1-2)

*I will make my time, energy, and personal resources **available** for God's use knowing that all I am and have is simply a trust from Him and I will **invest** my finances cheerfully and sacrificially in the work of the Lord, taking the Biblical "**tithe**" as my guideline for giving.*

(Psalm 24:1; Matt. 25:14-18; 1 Cor. 4:1; Malachi 3:10; Mat. 6:19-20; 1 Cor. 4:7)

*I will **endeavor** to give **positive** witness of my **relationship** to Jesus Christ by **word and deed** in **every circumstance** in which I **am placed**.*

(Acts 1:8; Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 2:15)

*"I will **refrain** from any activity or practice of life that might **discredit** the name of Jesus, **harm** the temple of the Holy Spirit (my body), **hinder** a fellow believer, or cause my personal testimony to be **compromised**."*

(Romans 2:24; 1 Cor. 6:19-10; 8:9; 1 Timothy 4:12b, 15-16; Pro. 23:29-35)

That's quite a list of **commitments** ... that's quite a **blueprint** that the Lord is following as He seeks to form us into a spiritual structure that will honestly bear His Name and accurately reflect His Cause.

Today we examine the next commitment that's on the List ...

Here's how it reads:

*"I will fulfill my responsibilities **as a citizen of this land** by:  
respectfully submitting myself to the authorities that God has placed over me,  
carefully informing myself on public issues of moral concern, and prayerfully involving myself in the political process through which leaders are chosen so that reasonable, God-fearing men and women might be placed in all levels of government."*

(Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-3)

You see ... we as members of **Sonlife Community Church** and as followers of Jesus Christ have certain Biblically based responsibilities as citizens of this great nation in which we live.



We cannot be a true Church of Jesus Christ unless we take those responsibilities seriously. Jesus Himself would build us into a congregation of committed Christian Americans.

So what does it mean to be a "*Committed Christian American*" - What specifically are my **responsibilities** as a Christian American to my government?

Our *Sonlife Covenant* identifies three. We call them this morning ...

### **THE ACTIONS OF A COMMITTED CHRISTIAN AMERICAN:**

#### **1. I Will Respectfully Submit Myself ... Be OBEDIENT**

*"I will fulfill my responsibilities as a citizen of this land by ... respectfully submitting myself to the authorities that God has placed over me"*

That action arises directly from Scripture ... Romans 13:1-5

*"Everyone must **submit** himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to **submit** to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience."*

This is ground that we have covered before ... Followers of Jesus Christ have no option but to submit themselves to those who rule over them as long as those who rule over them are not requiring them to do something that is morally or biblically wrong.

Generally speaking, Christ would have his followers obey the laws of the land and respectfully submit themselves to the governors of the land.

Generally speaking, government officials should see the churches of their community as their allies not their enemies.

But there's more that makes up our citizen commitment ...

## **2. I Will Carefully Inform Myself ... Be AWARE**

*"I will fulfill my responsibilities as a citizen of this land by ...  
carefully informing myself on public issues of moral concern."*

Now here's something that the Apostle Paul could not have imagined. In this great land, to some degree every citizen is part of the ruling body. Any law-abiding citizen can run for office and can share in determining who in fact gets elected to office. To some degree every citizen is accountable to God for the moral condition of the country.

It is the responsibility of a Christian American to become informed regarding the state of affairs in the nation and in the part of the nation in which they live *because* our American Constitution gives every law-abiding citizen a say in what happens.

Our Constitution is build upon solid moral principles - principles that have allowed this nation to prosper. I believe that a careful study of the Constitution will uncover grounds for a rigorous defense of things that are morally right.

As I've said before ... the challenge for any Christian in government (especially in national government) is to find "*Constitutional Reasons to do what is Biblically right*".

A government official in this country can never and must never defend his decisions by saying "*The Bible Says*" ... he must defend his decisions by saying "*The Constitution Says ...*"

On local levels the appeal might be "*the contract says*" or "*the ED code says*" ...

And so it is imperative that we, as the most junior members of the governing structure, *carefully inform ourselves* on public matters of moral concern so we know what and where the issues are that our leaders need to address.

In our next message ("*My Responsibility To My Society*") we will focus on several of those very issues but for today we *recognize* the *commitment* to "*carefully inform ourselves*" ...

And now there's one more action that our *Covenant* says a Committed Christian American and we as members of *Sonlife Community Church* will take and that is ...

### **3. *I Will Prayerfully Involve Myself ... Be ENGAGED***

*"I will fulfill my responsibilities as a citizen of this land by ...prayerfully involving myself in the political process through which leaders are chosen.*

Here's the Scripture that suggests such a commitment ... 1 Tim. 2:1-4

*"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."*

Surely if we are to pray for those who are in office it follows that in this country we would prayerfully concern ourselves with the process by which men and women are put into office.

In a certain sense a church should pray as much for the Lord's leading when facing an election as it does when it faces the calling of a pastor.

In both cases they are asking God to fill one of the positions of authority that He has established in the world of men.

So what does it mean to "*prayerfully involve myself in the political process*" ...

Certainly it means "*voting intelligently*" ... it might mean "*actively supporting a candidate*" ... it might even mean "*running for office*" yourself!

And to what end are these "*Actions of a Committed Christian American*" taken?

Consider now ...

***THE ASPIRATION OF A COMMITTED CHRISTIAN AMERICAN:***

That ***REASONABLE***, God-fearing Men and Women be  
***PLACED*** In all ***LEVELS*** of Government!

*"I will fulfill my responsibilities as a citizen of this land ...  
so that reasonable, God-fearing men and women might be  
placed in all levels of government."*

That's what we desire ... that's what God desires ... that reasonable,  
God-Fearing Men and Women be placed in all levels of government!

Men and women who will uphold and reward that which is right and good and  
who will stand against and punish that which is wrong and harmful.

May God stimulate our hearts to take up the call to truly function as  
***Committed Christian Americans!***

May Christ successfully build us into just such a church body - a body of  
believers who function absolutely biblically in relationship to the government  
under which they exist.

To that end I would share with you this ...

***Final Thot ...***

***GODLY*** leaders will bring ***BLESSING*** to the people they ***GOVERN!***  
So ***SEEK*** them out - put them in ***OFFICE*** and  
***PRAY*** for them once they are there!

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - September 10, 2006***

## ***"MY COMMITMENT AS AN AMERICAN - Part Two"***

### ***"My Relationship To My Society"***

Church Under Construction - Behavioral Phase #6

***Intro ...*** This morning we enter into a section of our *Sonlife* Covenant where we could easily spend a month but we're only going to spend a day. It's the part of the Covenant that outlines what I'm calling "***My Responsibility To My Society***" ...

To understand this part of our Covenant we need to acknowledge the truth of ***Today's Key Concept ...***

#### ***Today's Key Concept ...***

The fundamental ***UNIT*** in God's Social ***ORDER*** is the ***FAMILY***.

From the very beginning of time, God (to borrow Dr. Dobson's designation) has had a "*focus on the family*". God created Adam and Eve and instructed them to be fruitful and to multiply and to exercise responsible dominion over all the earth.

God has used family images to reveal truth about His Own ***Nature*** - God the Father and God the Son. Christ has used family images to reveal truth about The Church - it is His ***Bride***.

Jesus referred to the basic dual nature of man when he explained the basis for life-long marriage by saying,

*"In the beginning God created them male and female ... and for this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."*

Man's maleness and woman's femaleness seeks completion and fulfillment - in the blending of the two in marriage that completion is to be found ... and from that blending a family is intended to come and the human race continued and the nature of the church illustrated.

The family is intended to function as a child's first ***school house*** and first ***church house*** - in the family is where a child is to first learn the truths of God and the basic realities of life.

***Ideally***, a family consists of a husband and wife committed to Christ who are rearing their children in the nurture of the Lord - a family where the parents personally demonstrate the very godly traits they would teach to their children.

***Ideally***, this family exhibits a unity and commitment to one another that mirrors the Heavenly Family itself.

This is the kind of family that we at *Sonlife Community Church* would take as our model and our inspiration though we recognize that many factors not always under our control can alter our own experience.

Death can alter that family paradigm ... divorce can as well ... misbehavior of various types can enter in and force the family to move forward in less than the most ideal circumstances.

We at *Sonlife Community Church* both promote the ideal and recognize the realities in the world in which we live ... We at *Sonlife Community Church* are committed to helping every family be the healthiest spiritually that it can be.

And to that end we at *Sonlife Community Church*, recognizing that there are numerous threats to the family in our current American Society, together make the following commitment ...

***My Sonlife Commitment ...***

I will stand resolutely ***AGAINST*** those destructive, ungodly ***PRACTICES*** in our society which threaten the very ***EXISTENCE*** of the God-ordained family unit.

*Here's the point ...*

Things that threaten the clear understanding and the free and proper functioning of the family, threaten the clear understanding and the free and proper functioning of God's Plan for Man ...

In our society today, a biblical understanding of the family flies directly in the face of much that is deemed socially acceptable and politically correct and as a result there is much in our current society that directly "*threatens the God-ordained family unit*".

Consider then with me this morning ***A Biblically-Based Societal Threat List*** - (things that do in fact threaten the very existence of the God-ordained family unit - things that God does, in His Word, directly oppose) ...

I do not intend to discuss them at length this morning but to simply identify them and link each of them to some appropriate Scripture ...

**1. FORNICATION and ADULTERY ... (1 Corinthians 6:18; Ex 20:14)**

*"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body."  
(1 Corinthians 6:18)*

*"You shall not commit adultery. (Exodus 20:14)*

From the beginning of time, there have been kids sneaking around having sex and there have been married men and women cheating on their spouses; however, society today has in many places made it almost standard procedure. The ideas of ***purity*** and ***fidelity*** have become almost laughable to many.

There are segments of our society and places in our country where over 75% of all live births are to unwed mothers - in those segments of our society and in those places in our country, you might as well say that the "*god-ordained family unit*" no longer exists except as a distant memory in the minds of the older members.

This is the result of sexual activity among unmarried people being looked upon as completely acceptable and normal - almost as though there is no recognition that the one activity leads to the other reality.

The concept of *marital fidelity* has also fallen out of mainstream thinking ... marriages routinely break up because one partner has "*found someone else*".

The bottom line of all this is that the concept and the reality of "*family*" suffers greatly and God's heart breaks as He surveys the mess that we as a society of people have made of things.

## **2. HOMOSEXUALITY** - (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27)

*"Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable."*  
Leviticus 18:22

*Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.*  
Romans 1:26-27

We don't need a thousand verses here ... we only actually need one. God is disgusted with homosexual behavior ... It's perverted and sinful. It's not an acceptable "*alternative lifestyle*" ... It's certainly not a form of "*marriage*" - and people living in that relationship do not deserve the designation "*family*".

I suspect that Paul was describing the state of affairs in the world prior to God sending the Great Flood in Noah's day. Mankind had so destroyed God's Plan for man that God simply decided to "*start all over again*" with a new family.

If that was indeed the condition mankind had fallen into, then it's pretty easy to understand why Noah reacted so strongly when his son Ham, looked upon his father's nakedness in the tent. (Gen. 9:20)

***Homosexuality*** destroys family as God ordained it.



Now consider these *other threats* to the family as we list them in our Covenant ...

### 3. PORNOGRAPHY - (Philippians 4:8)

Pornography is sex by proxy - it's watching someone else do what we are not permitted or able to do. Pornography fills the mind with images that arouse improper, unwholesome desires. Pornography will in time make almost impossible the feeling of proper, wholesome desires. Possibly Ham's gaze upon his Father Noah fell into this category as well.

Pornography directly contradicts the instruction in Philippians 4:8 ...

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.*

**Quick test** ... If it arouses passions that can not be properly and wholesomely expressed then you shouldn't be looking at it.

### 4. Spouse and Child ABUSE - (Ephesians 5:28-29; 6:4)

*"In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church" (Ephesians 5:28-29)*

*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)*

Treating any human being under our care abusively is an affront to God who would desire that all men see His Love in our actions. Abusiveness in the home effectively hides that love - sometimes forever.

### 5. DRUG Abuse - (Proverbs 23: 29-33; Ephesians 5:18)

Frequently spouse and child abuse arises directly from some form of drug abuse ... we take things into our bodies that short-circuit the control that we might normal exercise - we come under the influence of things that have no godly connection.

*Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints?  
Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who  
go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles  
in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like  
a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things.*

Proverbs 23:29-33

*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.  
Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*

Ephesians 5:18

If you are going to allow yourself to come "*under the influence*" of anything,  
allow yourself to "*come under the influence of the Spirit of God*"!

Drug abuse destroys bodies - Drug abuse destroys lives - Drug abuse  
destroys careers and Drug abuse destroys families. It's on our "threat list"  
big time.

Warn your children against drug use ... clean your own life of dependence  
upon "*recreational*" drugs (including nicotine and alcohol).

## **6. Convenience ABORTIONS - (Exodus 20:13)**

Let me clarify immediately that almost all abortions performed in this  
country fall into the category of convenience abortions - I'm talking probably  
95% or more. All abortions involve the premeditated taking of innocent  
human life - the very thing that the Bible prohibits.

*"You shall not commit murder" - Exodus 20:13*

Whether our laws currently allow it or not, abortion is wrong - it is a sin  
against God and against the family of man.

## 7. Unscriptural **DIVORCE** - (Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Cor. 7:10-16)

Let me say right off the bat - "*Not all divorce is a sin*" - some divorce is permitted by God though divorce is never commanded by God.

*Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for **any** and **every** reason?"*

*Haven't you read, he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator `made them male and female,' and said, `For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' ? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, **let man not separate.**"*

*"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.*

*I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."*

That's the Biblical position ...

Here's how the Apostle Paul expressed it ...

### ***Words from the Lord ...***

*To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.*

### ***Words from a concerned Pastor ...***

*To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified (brought under a holy and beneficial influence) through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified (brought under a holy and beneficial influence) through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean (possessors of nothing but an ungodly outlook on life), but as it is, they are holy (possessors of a godly outlook and hopefully a genuine godly life).*

*But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.*

*How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband?  
Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?*

There is no guaranteed that he/she would have ever "come around" -  
you've done what you could and now it's over.

There are legitimate reasons why some marriages end in divorce - both God and our government are concerned that those affected by such divorce suffer as little as possible - from guilt and from financial deprivation.

However, most divorce in our country today is not of that sort ... people divorce generally because "*it didn't work out*" and that's not a biblically sound reason and those kinds of divorces definitely undermine the entire concept of secure family life ... it's that kind of thinking and that kind of almost casual action that we are committed to teach and stand against.

And now one final thing that threatens the "*God-ordained family unit*" and something that actually underlies all the rest of these "*family threats*".

We call it in our *Covenant* ...

#### **8. Self-Centered INDIVIDUALISM - (Philippians 2:4-5, 19-21)**

Self-Centered individualism first raised its ugly head in the Garden of Eden when Satan convinced Eve and then Adam that watching out for themselves was much better than letting God watch out for them.

"*What's in it for me?*" is the key and frequently only concern of the self-centered individual. Self-centered individualism ignores and discounts the needs of others - when those others are family members, the family suffers greatly.

The success of the family depends upon a broader outlook ... in fact, the family is the very laboratory where such an outlook is to be practiced.

Hear these words from the Apostle Paul ...

*Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus ...*  
(He actually sacrificed himself for us)

*I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.*

Resisting self-centered individualism is fundamental to protecting the family unit as God ordained it to be.

In conclusion then ...these ***eight practices*** of our current society are practices against which we as a Church Body are committed to resolutely stand.

Standing resolutely against these practices means teaching our children the true Biblical standards and demonstrating to them in our daily lives the true Biblical realities.

It also means opposing the things in our society that contribute to these practices ... might be by prayer, it might at times be by protest, and it might at times be by our participation in the election process.

***Final Thot ...***

A solidly committed Christian Community is ***SOCIETY'S*** best friend!

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - September 17, 2006***

## ***"MY COMMITMENT TO MY CHURCH"***

Church Under Construction - Behavioral Phase #7

***Intro*** ... Today on this Anniversary Sunday we come to the conclusion of ***Phase Two*** of our personal Church Construction Project - the ***Behavioral*** Phase.

During the past seven weeks, using our *Sonlife* Covenant as our guide, we have identified ourselves as "***People*** committed to participating in Worship and Word", and as "***People*** committed to functioning as faithful Stewards of God's Resources" and as "***People*** committed to maintaining a credible and positive Witness for Christ in the World" and as "***People*** committed to serving as responsible Citizens of this great Nation in which we live" and as "***People*** committed to standing resolutely against Family and Society Destroying Behaviors."

These are 24/7/365 types of commitments ... they require constant vigilance and diligence - they define the type of people that Christ would have us be and the type of character that Christ would have His Church possess.

Today, on this 12<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Sonlife Community Church* we come to the final commitment contained in our ***Church Covenant***. It's our commitment to the Church itself and it reads as follows ...

### ***Our Sonlife Covenant ...***

I will regard this local church and its various ministries as a sacred priority in my life, granting it preeminence over all institutions and agencies of secular origin. I will pray for its leaders, submit myself to its authority and give myself to its ministry as God gives me strength. I will involve myself lovingly in the lives of my fellow believers in this church, recognizing that we are all "*one body*" and desiring that we all become mature, attaining to the "*whole measure of the fullness of Christ*".

(1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:4-9; 1 Thess. 3:1-2; Heb. 10:25; Heb. 13:17.  
1 Corinthians 12:7, 27; Ephesians 4:13; Galatians 6:1; Hebrews 10:24)

Consider with me this morning ...

***Five Key Commitments Characterizing a Sonlife Church Member:***

These are ***five key things*** that we (in effect) say that we will do each year when we sign our "***membership agreement***" and without these five things being done, *Sonlife* Community Church would be a church in name only - certainly not the place Christ would have it be.

***1. I Will Hold My CHURCH In Highest ESTEEM***

(1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:4-9)

*"I will regard this local church and its various ministries as a sacred priority in my life, granting it preeminence over all institutions and agencies of secular origin."*

That's quite a mouthful ... it's actually a rather old-fashioned statement. It harks back to the days when the church was much more the center of community and family life.

It arises from an acknowledgement that there is something precious and unique about a local body of believers - a group of born-again people who have bound themselves together as fellow-followers of Jesus Christ.

It arises from the understanding that no "*institution of secular origin*" - no club, no fraternal order, no society or fellowship - can or should replace the church family in the hearts of its members.

It's a statement that arises from Scriptures like these:

*"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple."*  
(1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

*"As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- you also, like living stones, are being built into a **spiritual house** to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."*  
(1 Peter: 2:4, 5, 9)

There is no other body of people anywhere on earth that can compare to the Church of Jesus Christ ... it's a work of God and it's a work for God. It stands alone in our admiration and participation. We rejoice that God has dotted the landscape of this country with thousands of such local assemblies!

For us, this unique local body of believers is *Sonlife Community Church* - for the past twelve years it has established its place in the hearts of its members. We commit ourselves to recognize it as the unique work of God that it is in the midst of this fallen sinful world.

## **2. I Will PRAY For Its LEADERS - (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2)**

*"Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith." (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2)*

Without the prayer support of its members, church leaders frequently just "muddle along" ... they, like anyone else, can become discouraged - they can lose perspective - they can wonder if anything worthwhile is actually getting done - they can come under attack and be tempted to lose heart.

Our covenant recognizes that reality and calls upon us all to pray for those who provide leadership for this particular church body. Those prayers are much needed and truly appreciated.

## **3. I Will SUBMIT Myself To Its AUTHORITY (Hebrews 10:25; Hebrews 13:17)**

*Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

Simply showing up on time and on the right day shows submission to the authority of the Church.



Here at *Sonlife* Community Church it also means being willing to "do church" the way that we "do church" ... *worship* and *cell group*.

(*Illustration*: Just this week a couple that had been in our fellowship almost from the beginning informed me that they had started attending somewhere else because they just didn't feel "connected" ... now they were a couple who absolutely refused to become involved in any cell group - they attended Sunday morning only ... though the years, I have been actively involved in shepherding them through a series of difficult moments - but they had never actually bought into the way that we "do church" here at *Sonlife*.

They had never (to use our phrase of the morning) consciously submitted themselves to our authority - that is, to the way that we do things and as a result they didn't experience what so many of this congregation experience - close personal caring supportive relationships with their "cell-mates". I wished them well though it was hard to see them go.

I know that there will be others - I know that when we open our new building, there will be numerous ones who will come to visit who will not stay because they will chose not to submit themselves to our way of "doing church" as a "Cell-Based Church".

Recognizing that we present a somewhat unique approach to church life is one of the reasons we have adopted the concept of a "*one-year renewable membership*" ... Each year, each one of us makes the decision (among other things as well) whether or not to "submit ourselves to the authority" that is, to the unique ministry style that characterizes *Sonlife Community Church*.

It's a day that will never cease to excite me and frighten me as Pastor of this Church.

And now having made that commitment to submit to the authority, we then come to this fourth commitment contained in this portion of the *Covenant* ...

#### 4. I Will GIVE Myself To Its MINISTRY - 1 Cor. 12:7, 27; Eph. 4:13

This commitment grows out of a recognition that every believer has something to offer to the rest of the body. Hear these scriptures ...

*"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.  
Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."  
(1 Corinthians 12:7,27)*

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists,  
and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service,  
so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in  
the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole  
measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)*

It seems to me that if we read that passage properly, Paul is saying that the leaders of the church are to prepare the people of the church for "**works of service**" and that the first and possibly even primary focus of those works of service is "**the members of the church itself**" ... and the **end goal** is that the entire congregation of believers - all of them - become fully mature and functional as Children of God and as Followers of Christ.

To that end every member of the congregation has been given by God certain "**gifts**" or "**ministries**" of the Holy Spirit ... and the first use of these gifts is to bless and build-up the members of the body.

Here at *Sonlife* Community Church we believe that our **Cell Group Structure** provides the environment in which that kind of ministry can happen or at least be stimulated.

In the Cell Group, knowledge of one another and understanding of one another's life circumstances is gained - we get to **know** one another.

And in the Cell Group genuine bonds are created - we get to **care** about one another.

And as a result, emotional momentum is built that carries into the fulfillment of this fifth and final commitment ...

**5. I Will INVOLVE Myself Lovingly In The LIVES Of Its MEMBERS**

(Galatians 6:1-2; Hebrews 10:24; Hebrews 12:15; Hebrews 13:1)

*"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2)*

*"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:24)*

*"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up." (Hebrews 12:15)*

*"Keep on loving each other as brothers." (Hebrews 13:1)*

People who know each other and who care about each other will just automatically get involved in each other's lives.

And with that observation having been made we make the transition next week into the **Third Phase** of Our Church Construction Project ... The "**Relational Phase**" where we will carefully examine the way the Bible says we are to "**One Another one another**" that is, how we are to get lovingly involved in one another's lives.

**Final Thot ...**

It's **PEOPLE** who make or break the **LOCAL CHURCH**.

Resolve to be a **MAKER** not a **BREAKER!**

# THE RELATIONAL PHASE

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - September 24, 2006***

## ***"THESE PEOPLE ARE SO SPECIAL TO ME"***

Church Under Construction - Relational Phase #1

***Intro*** ... Today is the day that this whole series "*Church Under Construction*" starts to be fun ... I say that because today is the day that we actually begin to talk about the kind of life that the family of God is intended to enjoy and I firmly believe that it was from the heart of Jesus that Walt Disney stole his key description of Disneyland - "*the happiest place on earth*".

God never intended Disneyland to be "*the happiest place on earth*". He intended His Family - Christ's Church - to be that place. Scattered throughout the New Testament is an entire collection of descriptive phrases that highlight the kind of life that members of Christ's Church are intended to experience.

And believe you me ... anyone who experiences the kind of relational life that the New Testament describes will be living an incredibly happy and blessed life.

Are you ready to check it out? Or do you already know it to be true?

***Now here's the deal*** ... these blessings only come to those who are confidently living their lives inside the security of the church structure Christ is building ...

Now that structure requires a ***foundation*** ... and we have seen over the past few months that the ***foundation*** upon which Christ's Church is built and upon which we stand as we live our Christian lives is formed out of the Basic ***Doctrines*** of the Christian Faith.

That why we spent eight weeks or so working our way through our *Sonlife* Statement of ***Belief*** - we've come to know exactly what it is that Christ is building His Church upon - we've come to know just how solid a foundation we stand upon.

Those who reject or deny these basic Christian doctrines are unable to enjoy the blessings of the family life because they have not yet entered into the structure ... they have not yet committed themselves to take their stand upon the foundation that underlies the structure itself.

They are still on the outside looking it - they might observe the happy family inside but they will not share that delight themselves until they definitely decide to come in.

*Now there's a second thing* ... in addition to a solid *foundation*, this structure that Christ is building called "*The Church*" also requires a well-laid out *framework* ... a carefully defined set of behavioral standards that establishes the understood *boundaries* within which the family life will be enjoyed - the walls and ceilings, if you will.

To that end we spent several more months working our way through our *Sonlife* Covenant of *Behavior* - a series of statements that define the *boundaries* of the Christian Life - a series of statements that define as well the *family* that will be sharing this home together.

And now, finally, we are ready to talk about the quality of the life Christ intends to be experienced inside this well-designed, carefully constructed structure He has built.

We are ready to move into the *relational phase* of His Construction Project ... it's in this phase of Christ's work that His House becomes our home.

I want you to imagine that each of the messages in this section of our series is taken from plaques that might be found hanging on the kitchen walls - you know like the Pennsylvania Dutch wall hanger that says, "*Kissing don't last, cooking do*".

Each of these messages will focus on one *Biblical Relational Directive* that, if followed, will cause the church family to truly be "*the happiest and the most blessed place on earth*".

We might call them the "*One Another Directives*" of the New Testament.

The truth is ... if followed, they will make your own personal family a pretty happy place as well.

So then lets consider ...

***Biblical Relational Directive #1 ...***

***"Be DEVOTED To One Another In BROTHERLY LOVE"***

***Romans 12:10***

Now who wouldn't be happy and feel blessed to live in a place where everybody is devoted to you ... where everybody thinks you are pretty special ... where everybody treats you like you *are* someone special?

***Now turn it around*** ... who wouldn't be happy and feel blessed to live in a place where all the people you are devoted *to* also live? Everyday you would get to hang around with the people that you think are the greatest!

What a blessing that would be.

The family of God - the *church* - is to be just such a place.

Notice the family terminology that Paul uses ... "Be devoted to one another in "*brotherly love*" ... here Paul employs the Greek word "*Philadelphid*" ... it's because we are "*brothers in the Lord*" that this devotion is possible.

We are to see one another in relation to the Lord to whom we are absolutely devoted - thus our devotion to the Lord spills over to all those who belong to Him.

Here at *Sonlife Community Church* this devotion should express itself both *generally* ... we are devoted to every member of the Body ... and *specifically* ... we are devoted to every member of the particular Cell Group or family group to which we belong.

Human beings who are devoted to one another - who are genuinely delighted in one another's company - not only feel blessed, they attract **attention**.

Now though we might all have a pretty good idea already of what it means to be "*devoted to someone*" or to a "*group of someones*", let me flesh it out just a bit more by sharing from other New Testament Scriptures ...

### ***Three Examples Of Devotion In Action ...***

#### **1. ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER ... Romans 15:7**

*"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you,  
in order to bring praise to God."*

People who are devoted to one another, accept one another just as they are ... we might say, "*warts and all*". It doesn't matter what they look like - what they dress like (within reason) - how much education they have ... how big or small their bank account is ... what background they come from.

The thing that makes them acceptable is that they share a bond with us in Christ ... they have been accepted by Christ just as we have been. We didn't earn His Acceptance and our fellow believers don't need to earn ours. It comes automatically with their entrance into the family.

To use our image of the moment ... acceptance comes to every person "*living in the house that Christ is building*".

Now keep in mind that all those who are, in fact, living in that house Christ is building have already shed themselves of a lot of otherwise unacceptable things ...

They have shed themselves of their own intellectual **pride** - they have accepted **God's Word** to be the **final** word on all matters it addresses.

***Listen carefully*** ... God doesn't tell us to accept or be devoted as brothers to those who deny the clear teachings of the Christian Faith or who are still in the process of coming to grips with it.



To them we witness and for them we pray as we seek to lead them to faith in Christ. Then we *love* even as Christ has loved us but we can't yet "**accept**" them for they are not yet members of the family.

They are still "*outside the house*" as it were - they are the lost and "*acceptance*" is something that is conditioned upon their decision to yield heart and mind to Christ.

Those living "*inside the house*" are those who have shed themselves of their own intellectual *pride* - they have accepted *God's Word* to be the final word on all matters it addresses.

They have also *shed* themselves of their own willful, sinful *ways* - they have adopted for themselves the *lifestyle* laid out in the Scripture.

They are seeking to live a life that is pleasing to God and thus are highly motivated to follow the guidelines for living laid down in the Scripture. (Perfection is not in view here but persistence is.)

Thus those who are "*living in the house*" - those whom we are to "*accept as Christ has accepted us*" are those who have (to use the terms that we find familiar) embraced both the *Doctrines* laid out in our *Sonlife* Statement of Belief and the *Standards* laid out in our *Sonlife* Covenant of Behavior.

It's those very life decisions that underlie our sense of devotion to every house member ... we accept them sincerely - warts and all - because we can distinguish between that which is substantial and that which is merely superficial.

To feel accepted in Christ and by Christ's People is a marvelous feeling. To communicate acceptance to those around you - to those you know are your fellow believers - is an almost magical thing. It creates in the midst of this highly competitive and suspicious world a very happy place.

Now here's a second example of "*devotion in action*" and it surely is easier to do once we have learned to "*accept one another*" ...

## 2. LIVE IN HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER ... 1 Peter 3:18

*Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.*

One way to live "*in harmony with one another*" is simply to refuse to let every little thing become a big deal ... (**example** - you come in on Sunday morning and someone is "*sitting in your seat*" ... now that presents a real potential "*threat to harmony*"!

It also presents an opportunity to practice saying "*No big deal*" and simply go sit in "*someone else's seat*" and let them also participate in this Biblical Directive!

However, the best way to "*live in harmony with one another*" is for us to consciously keep our focus on the things that we all hold in common - our common faith in Christ and our common commitment to live lives that are pleasing to Him.

When we do that we just automatically "*live in harmony*" because we "**are**" in harmony ... we are like "*peas in pod*" ... and there's nothing that feels better - that can better generate feelings of gratitude and happiness than to truly be "*living in wholehearted harmony*" with your fellow man.

And it all comes of "*being on the same page*" and "*valuing the same things*" and "*experiencing the same reality*" ... and in this fallen world, God intends it to happen in the Family of God - the happiest place on earth!

And now we come to a third and final example of devotion in action ...

It's an action that pretty naturally occurs when people who "*Accept One Another*" and who "*Live In Harmony With One Another*" - when people who are "*Devoted To One Another*" - **encounter** one another ...

## 3. GREET ONE ANOTHER ... Romans 16:16

*"Greet one another with a holy kiss."*

Now, of course, the form the greeting takes must be culturally determined ... (kissing may not be the most acceptable form) - the point is, there is warmth and delight communicated when one member of the Family of God sees another.

Think of the person that you cherish more than any other ... think of how your heart leaps when that person comes into view.

Do you not run to greet him or her, especially if you spotted him/her before he/she spotted you?

Anyone watching can tell pretty easily how you feel about the person you have just "greeted".

Now, members of the same household of faith should feel something like that for one another when they encounter each other. The thought process might go something like this ...

*"Here is one of my own family ... here is someone who believes as I believe - someone who seeks to live the same way I am seeking to live.*

*Here is someone who reinforces and confirms everything about my own commitment as a follower of Jesus Christ ... Here is someone to whom I do not have to explain myself - or defend myself ... Here is someone who doesn't consider me to be weird or old-fashioned or out of step with the times or living in some sort of fantasy world.*

*Here is a brother or sister in Christ - a member of my own local fellowship - one who has committed him or herself to the very same belief system and behavioral standards that I have. How fortunate that I have encountered him or her - how good it makes me feel!"*

Those kinds of feelings should only be multiplied when we enter the fellowship of a Sunday Morning or into the smaller fellowship of a Cell Group.

*"These people are so special to me ... I am devoted to them ... I am blessed to be part of their company - they help make this place for me at this time, the happiest place on earth."*

**Final Thot ... Our *DEVOTION* to God will be revealed by our *DEVOTION* to the members of our *CHURCH FAMILY*.**

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - October 1, 2006***

## ***"I WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR THEM!"***

Church Under Construction - Relational Phase #2

***Intro*** ... Last week we entered into the third phase of this spiritual construction project we are involved in ... the ***relational*** phase.

I said last week that this is the phase "*where the fun starts*" for this is the phase where we begin to focus upon the quality of life that is to be enjoyed by the family of God that lives inside the "Church" (the house) that Christ is building right here in our midst.

During this phase of construction we will be examining several ***Biblical Relational Directives*** (the "*one anothers*" of the Scripture) that describe the kind of life God intends his family to experience.

Last week we considered ***Biblical Relational Directive #1*** ...

***"Be Devoted To One Another In Brotherly Love"***

Romans 12:10

The title of last week's message arising from that directive was ...

***"These People Are So Special To Me !"***

***Today's Meditation*** is entitled ... ***"I Would Do Anything For Them!"*** and it grows out of ***Biblical Relational Directive #2*** ...

***Biblical Relational Directive #2*** ...

***"LOVE*** one another ...

***AS*** I have ***LOVED*** you, you are to ***LOVE*** one another."

John 13:34

Last week's directive also included the concept of love but it was "***brotherly love***" - a love based on family connection and affection.

In today's directive Jesus uses the word ***Agape*** (Divine Love) ... and that choice stimulates the observation expressed in ***Today's Key Concept*** ...

***Key Concept ...***

***"AGAPE*** has more to do with ***DOING*** than it has to do with ***FEELING***."

***Agape*** could be defined as "***well-intentioned benevolence***" ... the desire to see its object benefited or blessed in some necessary way.

***Three quick Biblical Examples ...***

***Biblical Example #1*** ... perhaps the most familiar verse of all.

*"God SO LOVED (agaped) the world that He GAVE ..." - John 3:16*

God's ***agape*** saw man's need and stimulated decisive action ... He gave His own son as a solution for man's need. He set in motion things that would allow man's need to be met.

***Biblical Example #2*** ... the events surrounding the last supper.

*"He now showed them the full EXTENT of His LOVE" - John 13:1*

As an object lesson of ***agape*** in action, Jesus humbled himself and took upon himself the task of a lowly servant and "***washed his disciples' feet***".

***Agape*** says ...

*"If there's a need in the lives of those I love and I can meet it, I will".*

Now it was in the context of that incredible service to his disciples that Jesus gave the relational directive that we focus on today ...

*"As I have (just) demonstrated my agape to you, you are to agape one another."*

It's interesting that John used the expression "***full extent of his love***" to describe not Jesus' incredibly noble sacrifice on the cross but to describe his incredibly lowly sacrifice at the table.

Is it possible that it takes "*more love*" or a "*fuller understanding of the nature of agape love*" to do the menial thing than the extraordinary thing?

It's almost as though John were saying ... "*If Jesus would stoop to wash our dirty feet, there's nothing he wouldn't do for us - how great must be His Love!*"

The menial task doesn't get the notoriety, the menial task doesn't require exceptional ability, the menial task doesn't promise great result or benefit ... it simply needs to be done and usually can be done by anyone - even by the Son of God!

There is simply no missing John's intention ... we are to "*agape*" just like Jesus "*agaped*" - if there's a need we can meet in the lives of those we love, then we are to meet it.

***Biblical Example #3*** ... the incredible sacrifice on Calvary

*"Jesus LAID down his LIFE for us " - 1 John 3:16*

The Apostle John who, of course, experienced that final supper with Jesus wrote many years later to a brand new generation of believers ...

*" This is how we know what **agape** is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives (our possessions, our comforts) for our brothers."*

***Agape*** establishes a priority that says, "***You are more important than me***" - if what I have can meet your needs, then I will put "*my stuff*" at your disposal. That's exactly what Jesus did as he "*laid down His life for us*".

***The Communion*** we share together this morning is intended to remind us of that incredible ***agape*** love Jesus demonstrated on the cross.

It is also intended to remind us of the ***directive*** Christ gave us to so love (and serve) one another.

***Final Thot ...***

People committed to ***LOVE*** are people committed to ***SERVE***.

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - October 8, 2006***

## ***"WE KEEP EACH OTHER GOING!"***

Church Under Construction - Relational Phase #3

### ***Intro ...***

Today as we continue the process of becoming "*The Church that Christ would have us be*" - as we continue to grow in our understanding of why the church of Jesus Christ could rightfully be called, "*The Happiest Place On Earth*" - we come to ...

### ***Biblical Relational Directive #3 ...***

***"ENCOURAGE One Another"*** - Hebrews 10:25

This directive now begins to give some specific instruction to us as Christ continues to construct us "*relationally*" ...

In a sense, He would be saying to us, this is one way that you show that you are ***devoted*** to one another and this is one expression of the ***agape*** that you have for one another ... this is one way that you demonstrate that "*these people are so special to me*" and that "*I would do anything for them*" ...

***Encourage them and be encouraged by them!***

Consider with me first of all this morning ...

### ***1. THE DEFINITION OF ENCOURAGEMENT***

The title of the message today suggests one positive result of living in an environment of encouragement ... "*We Keep Each Other Going*". But how does encouragement actually do that - what does it actually mean to "***encourage one another***".

According to Mr. Webster, to encourage means ...

"To give **COURAGE**, **HOPE** and **CONFIDENCE**"

Now who of us would deny that a life filled with ***courage, hope*** and ***confidence*** would indeed be a "*happy life*" and that a place filled to the brim with ***courage, hope*** and ***confidence*** might well be called the "*happiest place on earth*"?

God tells us through His Word that His Plan is for us to gain such *courage*, *hope* and *confidence* through our association with one another!

*Now here's the point* ... the very presence of this *Directive* in the Word of God suggests that these qualities that make for joyful living are not just naturally found in our hearts or in this fallen world.

This directive would strongly suggest that there will be times when we will run out of all of them and that only by the "*ministry of encouragement*" can they be re-gained.

Think with me now about ...

## **2. THE CIRCUMSTANCES CALLING FOR ENCOURAGEMENT**

### **\* COURAGE IS NEEDED IN THE FACE OF FEAR**

Fear, anxiety, worry, fretfulness can immobilize us all ... We stop dead in our tracks and we retreat into some hiding place when we get good and scared. Life scares some people more than others.

*Believers* do not allow each other to be overcome by fear and fretfulness - they "*en-courage*" (provide courage to) one another by their presence and their faith-filled words.

### **\* HOPE IS NEEDED IN THE FACE OF DESPAIR**

Despair, like its baby brother discouragement, is another immobilizer. Like a dart from a zoo-keepers tranquilizer gun, despair can completely paralyze us once discouragement has slowed us down.

*Believers* in good relationship with each other recognize the "*slow-down*" long before the final paralysis takes place ... they revitalize and re-energize the discouraged and would-be despairing one with their presence and with their timely words of hope.



**\* CONFIDENCE IS NEEDED IN THE FACE OF DOUBT**

**Doubt** is the most subtle of all of these circumstances ... it's hard to tell when someone has begun to lose faith in their ability to maintain - usually they have to tell us.

However, **doubt** (being subtle) is perhaps the most dangerous of all - it's not generally linked to a particular circumstance like fear or even despair might be. Doubt is more a state of mind - a lack of assurance that affects every circumstance that comes along.

**Believers** living in a healthy relationship with one another do not allow each other to fall into the clutches of **doubt**. They free their fellow believer from such a prison of the mind by their presence and their confidence-restoring words of encouragement.

**Fear - Despair - Doubt** ... who hasn't been there? This fallen world and the god of this world (the Devil himself) would seek to bring us there and keep us there.

And when we are faced with such a struggle, **encouragement** from a fellow believer is truly a "*Gift From God*".

**Consider** one outstanding **Biblical Example** ... 1 Samuel 23:15-18

While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

*"Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you.  
You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you.  
Even my father Saul knows this."*

The two of them made a covenant before the LORD.

**Courage - Hope - Confidence** ... Jonathan provided them all as he counseled his friend David and as he did so, he turned David's feet back from the path of *Fear - Despair* and *Doubt*.

Now the truth is that almost every day we encounter things that could divert our steps in that downward direction - almost every day we can find ourselves (like David) in serious need of some encouragement ...

And if it's true for us, then it's also true for our fellow believers and thus it's highly likely that almost every day we will find ourselves (like Jonathan) encountering someone desperately in need of encouragement.

And so ... having made that observation, let's now consider...

### **3. THE FREQUENCY OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

*"Encourage One Another DAILY" - Hebrew 3:13a*

God knew from the very beginning how this fallen world would work upon man ... He knew exactly how Satan would seek to destroy the Church that Christ would build ... He knew how susceptible His People would be if they had to face those attacks alone.

And so He devised a way to "***Keep Them Going Strong***" even in the face of such sinful and satanic opposition - He formed them into a fellowship, a family of faith, and he instructed them to watch out for each other and to "***Keep Each Other Going Strong***".

And he said, "***Do it every day***" ... for you never know, if today might be the day when your fellow-believer is brought face to face with a potentially paralyzing circumstance - a circumstance that might cause him/her to give in to *fear*, or *despair* or *doubt*.

And now as we close, let me share ***one more thing*** that God says on the subject of *encouragement*.

Consider with me ...

#### 4. THE CONSEQUENCE OF NON-ENCOURAGEMENT

Now this consequence is in addition to losing *courage* and *hope* and *confidence* - this consequence comes to the one who, having lost those three great treasures, now sinks even further into a condition that is frequently irreversible.

God's Word calls it ...

*"Becoming HARDENED By Sin's Deceitfulness"*

Hebrew 3:13b

When trouble or significant challenge comes into our lives, sin would seek to get us to say ... *"I'm doomed - All is lost - Why even try"*.

And if there is no one there to counter those words, we can easily believe them and they can take possession of us.

*Consider* a second Biblical Example ... 1 Samuel 27:1

*But David thought to himself, "One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines."*

This time there was no Jonathan to come to his rescue ... David gave in to *fear*, to *despair* and to *doubt*.

His situation was desperate and he came up with a plan that demonstrated his desperation - He would seek refuge in the enemy's camp!

And it all started with the sin-inspired thought...

*"One of these days, I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul."*

To use our phrases of the morning ...

*"I'm doomed - All is lost - Why even try"*.

*Now here's the point*, God's Word would make ...

If those sin-induced thoughts take root and establish a foothold in our lives, we will become *immune* to encouragement ... we will resist or reject the attempts made by others to "*encourage us*" for we have become "*hardened*".

We will brush off their words possibly as "*too little too late*" or as being "*uninformed and therefore worthless*" or with the typical "*been there, done that*."

A *hardened* heart is an *unreceptive* heart.

Is it any wonder God says ...

*"Encourage One Another Daily" ... "Don't let anyone get hardened"*

God knows that those who are encouraged in the Lord daily ...

*"Keep On Going Strong No Matter What".*

Oh, what a delightful place is the Church of Jesus Christ when it's functioning as it should and each of its members confesses regularly ...

*"These People Are So Special To Me"*

and

*"I Would Do Anything For Them"*

and

*"We Keep Each Other Going".*

***Final Thot ...*** Consider God's Encouragement GOAL for the Church.

"Every CHRISTIAN encouraging some other CHRISTIAN every DAY and every CHRISTIAN being encouraged BY some other CHRISTIAN every day!"

Who will it be for you ***TODAY?***

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - October 15, 2006***

## ***"WE MAKE EACH OTHER BETTER!"***

Church Under Construction - Relational Phase #4

***Intro*** ... One of the most complementary things and most coveted things that can be said about a professional athlete is ... "***He makes those around him better***". Usually those to whom those words are addressed wind up in their respective sports Halls of Fame ...

In my lifetime, it has been said of ***Magic Johnson*** - he made every member of the Showtime Lakers better because of his play; it was said of ***Michael Jordan*** - he lifted and practically willed his teammates on several Chicago Bulls teams to championship level; and it has also been said about my personal favorite athlete ***John Elway*** who on numerous occasions brought championship efforts out of a bunch a pretty average players.

Each of them has been enshrined in the Hall of Fame not only because of their personal skills but also because of the effect they had upon those around them.

If there had been a Hall of Fame in the first Century and if Christianity had been considered a sport, then ***Jesus Christ*** would have made it in on a unanimous first round ballot because there has never been a player in any venue to whom this designation more rightly belongs.

***Jesus*** made everyone associated with him better ... He elevated their game to levels they never thought possible - he took a motley assortment of fishermen and rebels and government workers and visionaries and practical, hard-nosed "***I don't believe it until I see it***" types of people and built them into a team of men who "***turned the world upside down***" playing the game he taught them to play.

He turned cowards into heroes - doubters into believers willing to die for their faith - he turned common ordinary working men into world-class proclaimers of the Gospel and administrators of His Church.

*And now here's the thing for us today ...* He says that we should "*play our game*" the same way that he played his!

He says in effect that we should be able to look around at those with whom we share this Christian experience and say (as the title of this message puts it) ... "*We Make Each Other Better*".

Here's the way, one of Jesus' most well-known protégés, the Apostle Paul, put it in his letter to the Thessalonian Church ...

***Biblical Relational Directive #4 ...***

***"BUILD One Another UP" - 1 Thessalonians 5:11***

Now that's our *fourth directive* in this series of "*relational messages*".

It's added to the first three which were:

***"Be Devoted To One Another"***

***"Agape One Another" and***

***"Encourage One Another"***

Each of those "*directives*" can be expressed in the form of a personal reflection ...

***"These People Are So Special To Me"***

***"I Would Do Anything For Them"***

***"We Keep Each Other Going"***

And now to those three we add today's reflection ... "*We Make Each Other Better*" or to use the exact Biblical wording "*We Build One Another Up*".

That *Biblical Directive* and resulting *Personal Reflection* zeroes our attention squarely upon ...

***Today's Key Concept ...***

God calls us to play significant *ROLES* in one another's

***SPIRITUAL GROWTH!***

To some degree, all of us in this room this morning (who are committed to this particular local fellowship) are dependant upon the others for our spiritual growth ...

***We will not reach our full maturity in Christ without them.***

On the other hand, all those others are equally dependant -

***They will not reach their full maturity in Christ without us!***

Those twin realities lie at the heart of all these "***relational directives***" ... We need one another ... we can't become all that Christ would have us be without each other - we are engaged in a "***team sport***" and we cannot be successful playing alone.

***And so the Word of God instructs us ... "Build One Another Up"***  
***"You build me as I build you!"***

This morning I want us to consider ***Two Strategic Roles*** God would have us play as we build one another up - as we "***make each other better***" ...

***First of all, consider ...***

### ***1. THE ROLE OF INSTRUCTOR - providing INFORMATION***

*"I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to **instruct** one another."*  
(Romans 15:14)

***Notice*** how Paul works his way through that Scripture:

***"full of goodness"*** ... Your intentions are positive and loving as you seek to involve yourself in someone else's life - you truly do "***cherish them***" and are only "***seeking the best for them***". You truly do desire to "***encourage them***" and help "***keep them going***".

***"complete in knowledge"*** ... No matter who you are, there is someone in this room who knows less than you about something relevant to the Christian Life ... your knowledge is more "***complete***" than theirs.

It may involve ***Christian Truth*** ... something the Bible says that they have not heard or have not remembered and yet applies to their current circumstances.

It may involve ***Personal Testimony*** ... some situation where the Lord or the Lord's People provided for you in some significant way - particularly in your personal conversion.

***But be sure of this*** ... there's a "*completeness*" in your personal knowledge that the Lord can use in the building up of someone else.

Pray every day that the Lord will "*hook you up*" with someone who needs to know what you know about Him and His Gracious Workings.

And when He does, be ready to assume the role of "*instructor*" in their lives for you possess knowledge that can "*build them up*".

***Now consider with me secondly this morning***

## **2. THE ROLE OF MOTIVATOR - providing STIMULATION**

*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)*

Now that's what those ***Hall of Fame*** athletes that I mentioned at the beginning of this message were particularly good at ... they knew how to motivate their teammates and their methods were as different as they were ...

A playmaker like ***Magic Johnson*** motivated his teammates by his uncanny ability to get them the ball at the very moment that they were prepared to take a comfortable shot - they knew that if they got to their spot, he would get them the ball and they would have an excellent chance of success - they worked hard to get to that spot!

A passionate competitor like ***Michael Jordan*** motivated his teammates by bringing such intensity to the court that they simply threw themselves into the flood of energy that he brought and played at levels beyond what they had ever done before.



A never-say-die quarterback like **John Elway** simply kept plays alive by evading would be tacklers until even the slowest receivers could find some open spot on the field where he could get them the ball. They learned to never give up on a play and as a result they participated in many memorable moments over the years.

Each of these "**Hall of Famers**" stirred their teammates - spurred them on - by their own **example** to high, high levels of achievement.

And so, of course, in the most important game of all, did Jesus Christ.

He said to his followers ...

*"As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34*

In other words ...

*"do for one another what you have seen me do for you".*

**The Apostle Peter** picked up on that when he wrote in 1 Peter 2:21 ...

*"Christ suffered for you, leaving you an **example**,  
that you should follow in His Steps"*

And when we get right down to it - that's still the most effective way to "*spur one another one*" ... **Be an example** - a faithful, passionate, informed example of a follower of Christ.

You seek to be an example for me and I'll seek to be an example for you and together we will "*make each other better*".

You approach me when you see something that needs to be addressed and I'll approach you ... we will be one another's eyes and ears and as a result, the cause of Christ will flourish in our midst!

**Final Thot ...**

The building of a **LIFE** just like the building of a **CHURCH** is  
intended to be a **GROUP EFFORT!**

**Pastor Mark Mikels - October 22, 2006**

**"WE COME CLEAN WITH EACH OTHER!"**

Church Under Construction - Relational Phase #5

**Intro ... "Church Under Construction" ... that's what we are!**

In fact, the pace of construction has now reached a feverish pitch as Christ rushes to ready this congregation to enter the structure that is rapidly moving toward completion at 13324 Apple Valley Road.

**We** are building a **building** - **Christ** is building a **people** - People who will use that building as a gathering place for fellowship and worship as well as a headquarters for ministry. It's essential that the **people** be as well constructed (as well put together) as the **structure**.

In our personal spiritual construction project we are halfway through **phase three** ...

We have completed the **Doctrinal** Phase ... where we carefully examined the major beliefs of the Christian Faith which form the **foundation** upon which we stand.

We have also completed the **Behavioral** Phase ... where we sensitively discussed the basic moral standards of the Christian Faith which form the **framework** within which we live our lives.

The current phase that we are halfway through is the **Relational** Phase ... where we are discovering the **quality of life** that Christ would have us enjoy as we share our lives together.

In this phase of construction we are being shaped by a series of **Biblical Relational Directives** ... Specific directions from God concerning the way that we are to inter-act with one another.

**So far He has directed us to ...**

**"Be Devoted To One Another"**

**"Agape One Another"**

**"Encourage One Another" and**

**"Build One Another Up".**

If we merely carried out those four relational directives faithfully, we would be in pretty terrific shape as a congregation. We would be well on our way to being "*the happiest place on earth*".

However, there are three more of these directives that Christ would have implemented in His Church and let me say that these final three are absolutely dependent upon the presence of the first four.

You might say that the first four establish a necessary context for the final three ...

*So then*, as we are *devoted* to one another and *agape* one another and *encourage* one another and *build up* one another - as we have created among ourselves a community that we enter with great delight - let us consider now ...

***Biblical Relational Directive #5***

***"CONFESS your SINS to one another" - James 5:16a***

*Confess your sins* ... what sins? Does any of us still sin? And if we do, does it matter? Hasn't Christ died for all of our sins? Hasn't God already in Christ forgiven us for every one of them?

Well, apparently our sins *do* matter and apparently God desires that we not only recognize our sins *as* sins but that we bring some trusted person into that recognition with us.

Now there's perhaps nothing quite so difficult as that ... it's hard enough to swallow our pride and confess our sins to God but how much harder is it to *openly* admit that we have sinned - that we have willfully disobeyed the Lord in some way or another!

Why would God direct us to do such a difficult and uncomfortable thing?

*Consider with me this morning ...*

## ***FIVE INCREDIBLE BENEFITS OF CONFESSION:***

**1.** Confession officially puts our sin "***ON*** the ***TABLE***" and brings to a conclusion the Holy Spirit's Work of ***CONVICTION***.

Keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is the supreme example of One who is ***devoted*** to us and who continually ***agapes*** us and who would seek to ***encourage*** us and who would do anything to "***build us up***" ...

It's in that incredible context of support and love that He brings to our attention those things that would prove detrimental to our continuing growth in grace - it's in that context we are to understand the use of the word "***conviction***" - a word that has nothing at all in common with the word "***condemnation***" ...

***Conviction:*** The Holy Spirit saying to us ...  
"*Here is something **WRONG** that needs to be **DEALT** with.*"

***Confession:*** *Us saying to the Holy Spirit ...*  
"*You are **ABSOLUTELY CORRECT**.*"

That's exactly what ***confession*** is ... confession is us agreeing with God about the true identity of the thing we have done - it's ***sin*** ... it's something wrong that needs to be dealt with.

***Confession*** gets our sin out into the open where it can be seen for what it is and where others can assist us in dealing with it. That's a powerful positive ***benefit*** that God wants confession to accomplish in our lives.

**2.** Confession salvages the ***ENERGY*** that would have been put into ***RATIONALIZATION*** or ***DENIAL*** and directs it into ***RESTORATION***.

The words ... "*I was wrong and I need to do things differently*" replace the words ... "*I didn't do it*" or "*I couldn't help it*".

There's a lot of mental and emotional and spiritual energy expended when we try to cover-up or explain away our sins ... our willful violation of some Biblically commanded principle or practice.

It can feel like a thousand pound load has been taken off our hearts when we finally just come right out and say, "***I was wrong***".

It adds a very important piece of information to that confession when we say, "*God has convicted me that the thing I did was wrong*".

That statement communicates that we are sensitive to the Spirit within us and that we have heard His voice and sensed His discomfort and that we are prepared to ease that discomfort by dealing with the very thing in question - the sin that we have committed.

To have our feet put firmly on the path of correction or restoration is a tremendous blessing whenever it happens - confession provides that blessing for us.

Now here's something else I want us to think about before we move on to discuss ***benefit #3*** ...

Our "***confession***" sends a wonderful and sometimes relieving message to those who know us best ...

If our "***sin***" was something that they already knew about, then our confession has saved them from the never desirable task of confronting us about it ... the Holy Spirit has beat them to it and they can simply support us in the task of restoration. They don't have to convince us or debate us or get frustrated or distressed in any sense because of us. Our confession brings them a sense of relief.

If our "***sin***" was something that they had known nothing about, then our confession has made them aware that our relationship to the Holy Spirit within us is both genuine and productive - a delightful awareness that causes them to treasure us all the more.

And those twin effects of relief and delight prepare them and us to experience the ***third benefit*** of confession ...

**3.** Confession unleashes a powerful spiritual **DYNAMIC** when we confess our sins to those who are **DEVOTED** to us!

*"Confess your sins to each other and **PRAY** for each other"*  
(James 5:16b)

To the degree that our confession causes our closest Christian brothers to cherish us all the more - to that same degree, our confession will stimulate them to an even increased focus upon us and upon our particular need in their prayers.

They will pray that we gain victory over this particular sin; they will pray that we be specifically protected from the **Evil One**; they will pray that our minds will continue to be renewed so that our lives will be more and more conformed to Christ. They will immerse us in prayer ... effective prayer, wonder-working prayer. How good is that!

And as that prayer on our behalf pours forth from those who are devoted to us - from those who truly agape us - from those who would desire to encourage us and see us become stronger and stronger in the Lord ... the fourth benefit of confession begins to unfold:

**4.** Confession initiates a life-renewing spiritual **PROCESS** as a result of those who are devoted to us praying knowingly for us.

*"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be **HEALED**." - James 5:16c*

**There we have it** ... sin creates disease in the spiritual realm and sin frequently as a result creates dis-ease in the physical realm.

Prayer for spiritual health and healing - for oneness and wholeness within the heart of man - is automatically a prayer for physical health and healing as well.

A person living in harmony with the Spirit and thus in compliance with the Word of God is a person who will avoid much of the physical and emotional breakdowns that afflict those out of harmony with Him.

Doctors have maintained for years that over 80% of our hospital beds are filled with people whose physical ailments have emotional roots.

Emotional sins like anger, wrath, bitterness, fearfulness, resentment, unforgiveness, hatred, impatience create an environment of stress within the body that is highly destructive.

Just imagine what the replacement of all those things with the ***Fruit of the Spirit*** would mean to a person's physical and spiritual well-being ... things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

When we confess our sins to those who are devoted to us and they begin to pray for us, there is set in motion a ***healing process*** that can work its way through every part of our being. It's the ultimate benefit that comes from confession.

***Confession*** - what a scary and yet wonderfully beneficial thing ...

- \* It puts our sin on the table and brings to completion the convicting work of the Holy Spirit,
- \* It salvages the energy that would have been put into rationalization or denial and directs it into restoration,
- \* It unleashes a powerful spiritual dynamic (prayer) when we confess our sins to those who are devoted to us and
- \* It initiates a life-renewing spiritual process (healing) as a result of those who are devoted to us praying knowingly for us.

Now there's one final benefit of confession that I would suggest to you this morning.

I alluded to it earlier but let's see it directly identified ...

5. Confession protects us from **DAMAGE** wrought by **UNCONFESSED** sin.

*"When I kept silent, my **BONES** wasted away ... my **STRENGTH** was sapped" - Psalm 32:3-5*

**Unconfessed** sin - sin that we know about, sin that we are refusing to deal with, sin that we are either consciously harboring or merely avoiding - creates havoc in the heart of a born-again follower of Jesus Christ.

Our new man is not equipped to co-exist with willful, purposeful, frequently prideful sin. It's an offence to him; it's an offense to the Holy Spirit within us.

Willful sin and a refusal to deal with it set up internal shockwaves that like an earthquake rumbling deep in the earth create damage in far-flung places.

David said that even his bones hurt ... his energy was gone - he was feeling physical consequences as a result of his sin. He was in a bad way.

But he found a solution ... verse 5

*"Then I said ... I will confess my transgressions to the Lord."*

And David did just that ... more of the details of his confession and the results of his confession are recorded in Psalm 51 but suffice it to say this morning ...

David was **restored** to the path of blessing.

Immediate **confession** - confession that happens as soon as we become aware of our sin - provides the surest protection from the damages wrought by unconfessed sin.

Within the Church of Jesus Christ, within the context of a devoted, loving, close-knit body of believers, God would have us confess our sins to one another that we might be wonderfully and gloriously healed and wonderfully and gloriously blessed!

**Final Thot ... CONFESSION** - Indeed, it's **GOOD** for the **SOUL!**



# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - October 29, 2006***

## ***"WE LET EACH OTHER OFF THE HOOK!"***

Church Under Construction - Relational Phase #6

***Intro*** ... It's a wonderful and yet scary thing to be part of a relationship ... It's wonderful because we know we don't have to "*go it alone*" and it's scary for the very same reason - we're not allowed to just "*go it alone*" - to just "*do our own thing*" - to be responsible solely for ourselves and to have to worry about no one but ourselves.

We are connected to others - we're in a relationship - and that can bring both delight and distress, both joy and pain.

Way back in the beginning God Himself announced that "*It is not good for man to be alone*". Man alone eventually gets lonely ... man alone eventually gets frustrated because man was not designed to function as a solitary unit - Man was designed as a relational being and is most fully man when he expresses himself in genuine, human relationships.

Sin, of course, has seriously bugged man's basic operating system and no where has the system crashed any more dramatically than in the area of relationships.

Just read the headlines ... at the heart of every tragic human event is some type of relational malfunction. People can't get along and as a result things go tragically wrong.

Now in the midst of all of this relational meltdown and the resulting "*fall-out*" that it creates, we find a singular institution that stands apart from all the rest.

It's a place where people are ***devoted*** to each other, where they genuinely ***love*** each other, where they continually ***encourage*** one another, where they consciously ***build up*** each other, where they trust each other enough to even ***confess*** their sins to each other!

It's a place like no other ... it's a place that causes those on the outside to seek admission ... it's a place that by its very existence causes people to believe that there can be more to life than just existing.

It's an awesome place ... it's been called by some of its people, "*the happiest place on earth* ... and no, it's not Disneyland, that place of **temporary** delight - ***It's the Church of Jesus Christ!***

The Church of Jesus Christ contains within it the means to counter-act every fallen human impulse ... through the power of its Gospel, it completely transforms the sinful human heart and creates a fellowship of born-again believers that rises far above the world around it.

It's this incredible Church of Jesus Christ that is being constructed in our midst - Christ is shaping and fitting us into an awesome family of faith - he is building us into a fully functional relational body composed of people who are **devoted** to one another, who are **lovingly committed** to one another, who continually **encourage** one another, who consciously seek to **build up** one another and who trust each other enough to even **confess** their sins - admit their failures - to one another.

We haven't just stumbled onto these things ... Christ has instructed us, directed us even, in His Word concerning the type of life that He wants us to enjoy together in this incredible relationship called the "*Family of God*" - the Church of Jesus Christ.

Today we come to ***Biblical Relational Directive #6*** ...

***Biblical Relational Directive #6*** ...

***"FORGIVE one another"*** - Ephesians 4:32b

*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other ...*

The Apostle Paul is saying that "*things in the church are different than things in the world*" ...

Here in the Church we do not hold grudges against those who have in some way hurt us or offended us.

Here in the Church of Jesus Christ we do not seek revenge upon our fellow believers for things they either unintentionally or intentionally do ...

Here in the Church of Jesus Christ we practice *forgiveness*.  
We "*let each other off the hook*".

You see, Paul knew, even as the Christ who inspired him knew, the truth of *Today's Key Thot* ...

*Key Thot* ...

***FORGIVENESS*** is a key to the ***SUCCESS***  
of any long-term ***RELATIONSHIP***.

Without forgiveness, the Church of Jesus Christ would not survive, let alone thrive, for inevitably, "*whenever two or three gather together, someone will spill his milk*" - someone will mess up and cause some degree of distress to the others.

And when that happens and when it happens enough, some of those others will be tempted to retaliate in some way ...

*"Throw him out, take away his milk privileges, make him lick up every drop, teach him a lesson he'll never forget!"*

And in the expression of those negative, vengeful judgments, the "*happy place*" called the Church of Jesus Christ takes a terrible turn.

For our Church to survive, let alone thrive, God wisely says, "*We must practice forgiveness ... Forgive One Another*".

Don't hold grudges against one another, don't allow yesterday's **actions** to ruin today's **attitudes** ...

Don't allow your heart to fill with **resentment** or **bitterness** because of the way someone has treated you.

Practice **forgiveness** ... Allow forgiveness to **guard** you from bitterness!

**So then**, as we would seek to heed **God's Directive**, consider with me ...

### **THREE KEY QUESTIONS CONCERNING FORGIVENESS ...**

#### **1. What Is Our MODEL For Forgiveness?**

**"GOD'S forgiveness in CHRIST"** - Ephesians 4:32c

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not **grieve** the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you**. Be imitators of God, therefore, as (His) dearly loved children ... (Ephesians 4:29-5:1)*

It's one of the greatest feelings in the world to be "**Let off the Hook**", isn't it - to have really blown it in some way, perhaps to have failed someone in some important matter and to have them say,

*"Forget about it - it's okay and you're still okay in my book".*

That's what God has done for us in Christ ... He has said (in essence) to every repentant sinner who has ever come on his knees to him ...

*"Forget about it ... I've taken care of it in Christ.  
Accept what I've done for you and you'll be fine."*

It's almost impossible to experience that kind of ultimate forgiveness and not become a forgiving person yourself.

I say, "*It's **almost impossible***" for some Christians do manage to pull it off. Even though they have received God's eternal forgiveness in Christ, they find (on certain occasions) a less than forgiving spirit within them.

And for them this next question becomes a relevant one ...

## **2. What Is The CONSEQUENCE If We REFUSE to Forgive?**

**"GOD will not FORGIVE us!" - Matthew 6:15**

*For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14-15)*

Now that's a potent consequence ... on the surface it would seem that our very salvation is riding on our willingness and ability to forgive.

However, that understanding would lead us into either a kind of "**works righteousness**" (I earn my salvation by my demonstration of forgiveness) or into a "**conditional salvation**" (My salvation is only good as long as I continue to practice forgiveness).

Both of those possible explanations of this passage do damage to the clear Biblical teaching that "*salvation is a gift freely given by God to those who by faith willingly receive it*". (Rom. 6:23, John 1:12, Eph. 2:8-9)

I believe that the clue to the understanding of this statement of Christ is tucked away in the passage we read from Ephesians 4 ...

***Let's look at it again ...***

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not **grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, with whom you were **sealed** for the day of redemption.*

*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you**. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ...*  
(Ephesians 4:29-5:1)

Did you find the hidden clue in that passage - a passage that identifies many of the things that make forgiveness both necessary and difficult?

*"And do not **grieve** the Holy Spirit with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."*

Though our salvation is secure ... we have been sealed - marked - branded - identified - as God's own spiritually born children - our behavior can bring ***grief*** to the Holy Spirit who has been placed within us as our comforter and teacher and enabler and friend.

And there is no behavior that grieves Him any more deeply than our unforgiving attitude toward one another ... An unforgiving attitude denies the central reality of our faith - that we have been graciously and completely forgiven of all sin by a loving Heavenly Father.

An unforgiving attitude communicates our lack of understanding and maybe even a lack of appreciation for what God has done for us!

No wonder such an attitude brings grief to the Holy Spirit.

***And here's the point*** ... when the Holy Spirit is grieved within us, some significant things change.

Our special fellowship, our comfortable intimacy with Him changes ... We have offended Him - We have grieved Him ... His ability to fellowship with us is compromised for our actions are denying the very basic upon our fellowship is built ... the gracious, freely given forgiveness that we have received from God.

And so, let me now paraphrase the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in light of the additional revelation that we have received through the Apostle Paul ...

*"If you do not forgive those who sin against you and allow them to be restored to your fellowship, then the Holy Spirit will not forgive you and allow you to be restored to His Fellowship."*

A break in fellowship with the precious Holy Spirit of God is the consequence of an unforgiving heart ... that's ***serious stuff!***

**So** ... we have seen that Forgiveness is **directed** by the Father and that Forgiveness is **essential** for continued Fellowship with the Holy Spirit. But that doesn't make it any easier to do, does it?

Well, what if I could show you this morning a way to make forgiveness easier, that is, a way to make forgiveness necessary less often?

Or as we phrase it in our third and final **Key Question** ...

### **3. How Can We MINIMIZE The NEED To Forgive?**

**"BEAR** with one another" - Ephesians 4:2

*"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of The calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, **bearing with one another in love.**" (Ephesians 4:1-2)*

*"Bear with one another" - "Make allowances for one another" - "Cut each other some slack" - "Don't get so easily offended" - "Seek to minister help and healing rather than criticism and judgment".*

**The truth is** ... our need to forgive is in direct proportion to our tendency to get offended ... those who get easily offended are forever needing to practice forgiveness for people are offending them all the time.

So don't be so quick to feel offended or slighted or betrayed or disrespected ... *"Bear with your fellow believers a bit"* and see if your insides don't churn a bit less.

Paul put this whole message together with these words found in his letter to the Colossian believers ...

*"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **Bear with each other and forgive** whatever grievances you may have against one another. **Forgive as the Lord forgave you.** And over all these virtues put on **love**, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. **And be thankful** ..." (Colossians 3:12-15)*

**Final Thot ...**

**FORGIVENESS** is a by-product of **GRATITUDE** and **LOVE**.

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - November 5, 2006***

## ***"WE HEED ONE ANOTHER"***

Church Under Construction - Relational Phase #7

***Intro*** ... This morning, in preparation for Communion, I would draw your attention to the final and arguably the hardest "*One Another Directive*" of them all ...

And yet, if we view it properly and if we are experiencing the reality of the first ***six directives*** we have examined, then it's perhaps the most logical and practical of all ...

It's a directive designed to keep us out of trouble - it's a directive that is given for our good.

It's a directive that seems pretty natural in a context where people are ***devoted*** to each other, where they genuinely ***desire the best*** for each other, where they consistently ***encourage*** each other and seek to ***build up*** each other, where they are comfortable enough with each other to ***confess*** their sins and admit their failures to each other and where they practice genuine ***forgiveness*** towards each other.

As the ***seventh*** then in such a life-affirming list of directives, consider with me ...

### ***Biblical Relational Directive #7 ...***

***"SUBMIT to one another."*** - Ephesians 5:21

***"Submit"*** ... when I hear that word my mind goes back to my childhood and to numerous skirmishes with my older brother where each of us was determined to make the other cry "***Uncle***".

He was older, bigger and stronger but I was stubborn ... it was easier to make me cry than it was to make me cry that humiliating word.



**"Submit"** ... Webster says it simply means to *"yield yourself to the authority of another"* - to allow someone else to determine or at least influence the course of your life. It's not necessarily a negative or a demeaning thing ... it certainly doesn't have to be a humiliating thing.

In fact, in this Scripture, it's intended to be a **helpful** thing - helpful to us individually and helpful to the Body of Christ collectively.

In this phase of our spiritual construction, I'm placing it before us as the **final** thing in this long list of things designed to build us into the relational body Christ would have us be.

**So** ... for our good and for the greater good of our church family, the Word of God directs us to **"Submit to one another"**.

**Three key questions** come immediately to mind ...

**Key Question #1** ... To **WHOM** Am I To Submit Myself?

**"My FELLOW BELIEVERS - My PEERS"**

This directive (like the six that preceded it) is focused upon the Church of Jesus Christ - specifically upon the local expression of that Church.

We here in this room who are committed to this local fellowship and who are thus linked to one another by that commitment are the focus of this directive.

I am to submit myself to **"My Fellow Believers - my peers"**

Notice that this is a **general** submission ... this is not the specific submission that God says should exist between a wife and her husband, or between children and their parents, or between slaves and their masters or even between church members and church leaders. The Bible talks about those submissions in other places.

Here Paul is talking about submission to "*My Fellow Believers - My Peers*" in the family of faith. We are all included in this directive just like we are all included in the previous six.

***Key Question #2 ...***

What Is My MOTIVATION For Submitting Myself?

"My REVERENCE For CHRIST"

I submitted to my older brother as a kid because he was bigger than me and stronger than me and actually meaner than me. He made me submit.

This expression of submission is not like that at all ... this is a voluntary yielding of ourselves to the will or directives of another.

Now why would I do that? What would motivate me to do that? Paul says that I submit to my fellow-believers because of ...

***"My Reverence For Christ".***

He's saying that my feelings of reverence for Christ - my awe of Christ and of His profound plan for my life - cause me to submit to my fellow-believers.

***The point is ...***

When I connect these people in my church family with Christ - some of the reverence I have for Him just naturally transfers over to them. I see them as representing Him - living for Him - bringing Him in some more tangible way into my daily life.

I see Him in them and therefore I find myself yielding myself to them even as I would yield myself to Him.

***To whom do I submit myself? - "my fellow-believers, my peers in the faith"***

***Why do I submit myself to them? - because of my reverence for Christ"***

And now "***Key Question #3***" ...

***Key Question #3 ... WHEN Should I Submit Myself?***

***"When they COUNSEL or CORRECT Me."***

Under what circumstances should I be most conscious of submitting myself to my fellow-believers? In what settings ought I be most sensitive to what they are saying to me?

When they *counsel* or *correct* me!

You see, in situations where I am in need of direction or correction, Christ might well choose to speak to me using the vocal cords of my church family.

One of the most life-changing decisions I ever made came as a result of just such a moment ...

I was the Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Apple Valley - I had been the pastor there for over 15 years ... I had become intrigued with and had begun to embrace the concepts of ***Cell Group Ministry*** - I was beginning to sense that the entire life of the church could be and perhaps should be structured around such ministry.

Without really knowing it, I was seeking counsel and direction from the Lord concerning the next steps in implementing those Cell Group concepts.

And right at that moment, the Chairman of the Church Board, came into my office and said, "*Pastor Mark, I believe the church needs a change in leadership*".

Now those could have been deflating words - they could have been fighting words - in many ways, those are the words that any pastor anywhere most dreads hearing.

But on that day, at that critical time in my life, they sounded to me like words from Jesus Himself.

Jesus was counseling me through this Spirit-Sensitive man concerning the next step in my personal ministry ... I would be leaving First Baptist Church and heading in a new direction.

That new direction turned out to be *Sonlife* Community Church and I will forever be grateful to Sam Johns for allowing the Lord to use his vocal cords that life-altering Monday morning.

Who knows what all the Lord desires to communicate to us regarding the direction our lives should take - on one hand, he may desire to send us some word of *counsel*; on the other hand, he may need to bring us some word of *correction*. In either case, to hear and *heed* the voice of those who speak for Him is an extremely wise thing to do.

In fact, as we have seen this morning, the Lord Himself directs us to do just that ... *Submit to One Another*.

And now as we conclude this meditation let me just share with you "*the key condition*" that allows this "*submission*" to function effectively.

***The Key Condition ...***

Be so in *TUNE* with *CHRIST* that you recognize His *VOICE* when He *SPEAKS* to you through those *AROUND* you."

The Lord Jesus once said ... "*I am the Good Shepherd ... my sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me.*" (John 10:11a, 27)

Daily Communion with Christ - abiding in Him and with Him - is the way to stay "*in tune with Him*" ... the way we put ourselves in position to benefit from His ability to speak to us through those around us.

And when He speaks and we hear words that are consistent with Him, we are to "*submit ourselves to the direction we are receiving*" for it will always be in our best interests to do so.

***Final Thot ...***

***SUBMISSION*** is the ultimate demonstration of ***REVERENCE***.

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - November 12, 2006***

## ***"THE UNIVERSAL EVIDENCE"***

Church Under Construction - Relational Phase #8

***Intro ...*** So how do you know when you have entered a "real church" - a "true church" - an "authentic expression of the Body of Christ"?

Jesus himself said that there is one single, irrefutable, universal evidence that those who claim to be his followers are in fact genuine.

That universal evidence - the evidence that is found wherever on this planet the Church of Jesus Christ is found - is identified in

***Today's Key Scripture.***

***Today's Key Scripture ...***

***"By this shall all men KNOW that you are my DISCIPLES ...***

***John 13:35***

Let me paraphrase and amplify this tremendous statement.

Jesus is saying ...

*"By this... by this single, irrefutable, universal evidence ... the unbelieving world, the doubting, questioning world, the cynical, judgmental world will be forced to acknowledge that you belong to me. This evidence will stand up in any court of human opinion ... this evidence will stand up under any kind of scrutiny ... this evidence will convince more lost and lonely people than anything else you can offer."*

So what is this - "settle it once and for all" evidence? Jesus identified it in the second part of ***Today's Key Scripture*** ...

***"By this shall all men know that you are my Disciples, if you love one another ..."***

That announcement from Jesus Himself gives rise to *Today's Key Concept* ... a concept that you might have to mull around a bit before you completely embrace it ... a concept that challenges some of the standard strategies churches have adopted over the years.

So prepare your heart and your mind as I unveil it for you ...

***Today's Key Concept* ...**

Outside the **CHURCH**, it's more **STRATEGIC** that people know how we **TREAT** one another than that they know what we **BELIEVE** or how we **BEHAVE**.

Here's what I mean ...

Powerfully worded statements of **doctrine** can seem like the rantings of a fanatic to those whose minds and hearts are still shrouded in darkness.

Purposefully practiced standards of **behavior** can seem coerced and contrived by those whose lives are still controlled by the flesh and influenced by the world.

Jesus is saying that the one thing that can't be seen as mere rhetoric and that certainly cannot be attributed to manipulation and pressure is a genuine caring, loving relationship between people.

And when those loving relationships are exhibited among a diverse set of people - people who have no "**normal**" reason to care for each other- even the most jaded, cynical, world-battered person is forced to look to something "**abnormal**" - something "**more than natural**" - something even "**supernatural**" to explain what they see.

In a phrase ... Jesus is saying

**"Reality always trumps Theology and Ideology"**.

Or as the old saying that I've mentioned before puts it ...

***"I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day!"***

Hypocrites can preach great sermons and frequently do - Only genuine believers live them!

Jesus would opt for reality over theology any day of the week ...

*Theology* alone is mere **statement** - *Ideology* alone is mere **standard** ...  
*Reality* demonstrates the validity of both the **statement** and the **standard**.

*"By your loving relationships", Jesus is saying, "the whole world will come to appreciate the fact that what you say **about** me and the way you live **for** me is, in fact, an outgrowth of the **abundant life** you enjoy **through** me!"*

**Key Question ...**

So how does the **WORLD** (your world) get to know  
how we **TREAT** each other?

**1. We SHOW Them ...**

**Remember ...** *"I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day"?*

Here are several ways that we can *"show the world around us something of the way we relate to one another"*:

**\* By Our FAITHFULNESS in ATTENDANCE**

This is the part that most of us sell short ... we simply do not understand what an impact it makes upon a watching world when we make attendance at church and cell group a priority in our lives. The people who know us gradually get the idea that these *"meetings"* with our *"church friends"* are absolute givens in our lives. We just do not miss and that fact can arouse curiosity in them.

Those of you who host cell groups ... when your neighbors see the cars arrive at your home week after week, they get the idea that there's a pretty serious bond that you have with these people. Those who know you best come to know that things that they want you to be involved with must be scheduled around your *"church commitments"*.

Now here's another way that we can "*show the world around us something of the way we relate to one another*":

\* By our **AVAILABILITY** for **SERVICE**

Those who know us best come to know that if our "*church friends*" need us we will drop anything to meet the need ... they might even envy the relationship we have with those to whom we seem to be so committed and who seem to be so committed to us.

Now here's just one more way we can "*show the world around us something of the way we relate to one another*":

\* By our **STABILITY** during **CRISIS**

Now this is a by-product of having positive, affirming, comforting relationships in our lives. People with solid loving relationships know that they do not go through any crisis alone - they are surrounded by others who are committed to them and who are available for them.

They know that their "*safety net*" remains in place even though something most undesirable has taken place and as a result, they display a level of stability that seems remarkable.

These are things that the world around us - the world that knows something of us - can clearly see about us. They see that our connection with our "*church friends*" seems to make quite a difference in our lives. They might begin to believe that there's something to this "*church thing*".

However, like in any witness situation, "*showing them*" can only go so far ...

They can "*see*" some of the results of our relationship but they are left to draw their own conclusions about the actual nature of it unless we move on to the *next step*.

## **2. We TELL Them ...**

*"We use the very words we have developed over the past seven weeks."*

**We tell them** at every genuine opportunity - that means, whenever they bring it up. When they make some comment about these "*church people*" who come by my house - these "*church people*" that I hang around with so regularly - these "*church people*" whom I seem to drop anything to go help.



When they either directly ask or imply the question "***What gives?***" we can use the very words that made up the sermon titles of the past seven weeks and say ...

- \* These People are so ***SPECIAL*** to me;  
*"I really enjoy getting together with them!"*
- \* I would do ***ANYTHING*** for them; they would do anything for me!  
*"We watch out for each other and take care of each other"*
- \* We ***KEEP*** each other ***GOING***  
*"I feel encouraged and stimulated just being around them!"*
- \* We ***BUILD*** one another ***UP***  
*"We're committed to seeing each other become better people!"*
- \* We Can ***COME CLEAN*** with each other  
They are a bunch of people that allow me to "*get things off my chest*" and help me "*deal with the stuff*" that's not right in my life.
- We let each other ***OFF*** the ***HOOK***  
*"When I honestly and openly admit my bad stuff to them, they are always forgiving and supportive - they cut me a lot of slack."*
- We give ***HEED*** to one another  
*"Now because of the kind of relationship we have, I really take to heart what they say to me and, as a result, I've seen some real positive changes in my life."*

Now that's what Jesus Christ is hoping that every member of His Church will be able to say to an outsider - that's the kind of stuff that would cause many of those "*outsiders*" to want to become "*insiders*".

That's the kind of stuff that could cause an outsider to ask ...

*"How can this be - how can people relate to one another in such an incredible loving, caring way?"*

Now that's the very question that will launch us into the next phase of our personal construction - the ***Evangelical Phase***. ***However*** ... for today, suffice it to say that ...

<p><b><i>Final Thot</i></b> ... More than anything else the <b><i>CHURCH</i></b> of Jesus Christ is A <b><i>RELATIONAL</i></b> Body. That's where and how it all begins!</p>
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THE  
EVANGELISTIC  
PHASE

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - November 26, 2006***

## ***"Sonlife EVANGELISM"***

Church Under Construction - Evangelistic Phase #1

***Intro ...*** Today we begin the fourth and final phase of our "***Corporate Construction***" - the ***evangelistic*** phase.

Consider ***Today's Motivating Scripture*** which will serve as the "***motivating Scripture***" throughout this final phase of Construction ...

***"For the Son of Man came to SEEK and to SAVE what was LOST."***  
(Luke 19:10)

Seeking and saving the lost is the ultimate passion of Christ's heart and so it will be the passion of any church that He has personally constructed!

All of us were lost at one time ... perhaps some of you here this morning still are lost but at least you are in a place where it's regularly explained how you can be found.

Christ would have each of us become proficient in giving that explanation to those who are open to hear it.

Now that will be our focus in ***Phase Four*** of this Series - the ***evangelistic*** phase ... "***Learning how to share your faith***" ... and we will learn to share our faith in a way that is ***consistent*** with the Church that Christ is building.

So as we begin this ***evangelistic*** phase, let me recap just a bit ...

When we began the third phase of this construction - the "***Relational Phase***", I said "***This is where this construction project starts being fun***" because I knew that it's during the ***relational*** phase that we would be focusing upon the incredible life that Christ desires his Church to enjoy together inside the behavioral ***framework*** and upon the doctrinal ***foundation*** of the structure He has created.

This Christ-designed and Christ-desired Church Life is a good life - a truly abundant life characterized by loving, caring, supportive, nurturing, forgiving, inspiring, hope-generating, satisfaction-providing relationships.

I said, on that Sunday morning some two months ago, that it's not Disneyland but the Church that God intends to ***actually*** be the happiest place on earth - the place where He would want His Children to most want to be!

And so we have spent these last two months discovering and discussing the various "*one another*" passages of the New Testament and in the process we have seen just how much God counts on each of us to "*keep one another going and growing*".

And as a result of that two month effort we have formulated ***Seven Relational Affirmations*** that express the heart of any believer who is enjoying genuine ***New Testament Church Life***.

In our new building we should have these posted in a place where everyone who enters the building can see them. Here's how they go. Call them ...

***"My Sonlife Relational Affirmations"***

1. These people are special to me; I really enjoy getting together with them!
2. I would do anything for them and I know that they would do anything for me!
3. We keep each other going; I feel encouraged and stimulated just being around them!
4. We build one another up; we're committed to seeing each other become better people!
5. We come clean with each other. They are a bunch of people that allow me to '*get things off my chest*' and help me '*deal with the stuff*' that's not quite right in my life.
6. We let each other off the hook - when I honestly and openly admit my bad stuff to them, they are always forgiving and supportive - they cut me a lot of slack.
7. We give heed to one another. Because of the kind of relationship we have,  
I really take to heart what they say to me and as a result,  
I've seen some real positive changes in my life."

Over these past weeks (and the years that preceded them) I have formulated within myself what I'm expressing as ...

***Today's Key Conviction ...***

Anyone who has experienced genuine **NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH LIFE** is wonderfully **PREPARED** to reach out to the **LOST**.

People who are experiencing genuine New Testament Church Life are excited to share that life with others ... It's the most natural thing in the world for them to desire that their family and friends find the same wonderful life in Christ and with Christ's People that they have found ... They are naturally motivated to share their faith and the life it provides ... All they need is some help with the words ...

So what words *can* we use to explain the Gospel - the Good News - of Christ to those who are lost? What do we say once we have gotten past the basic invitation to "*Come see what I have found*"?

Over the next five weeks - the last five weeks of 2006 - we will examine the "***Five Key Truths***" that make up a ***Sonlife Evangelistic Presentation***.

I guarantee that you will find it worded differently than others you may have been exposed to in the past but it's a Gospel Presentation that is comprehensive, consistent with our studies and hopefully compelling.

For the remainder of this message, I would like to lay out a ***Biblical Context*** for our consideration of that gospel presentation ...

***1. Consider Jesus Initiating DECLARATION.. Matthew 16:18***

*"I will build my Church and the Gates of Hell will not prevail against it."*

We have looked at this verse again and again since the beginning of this "*Church Under Construction Series*" ...

Any discussion about reaching the lost must begin with the understanding that Jesus has gone on record as desiring the development of His Church - His Body - on earth.

He wants lost people found - He wants them returned to the place of Fellowship with God that man once knew in the Garden of Eden.

He wants their sins to be forgiven and He wants them to be spiritually re-born so they can participate eternally in the life of the Family of God. He wants them to connect with one another in the *earthly version* of that Family -the Church.

Jesus is committed to building that Church in every place, and out of every type of people on the face of the earth.

His Church requires and demonstrates God's supernatural power. His Church is the gift he will someday offer to His Father as the fruit of His Labor. *Therefore* the Building of the Church of Jesus Christ is the *goal* of all evangelistic endeavor ...

As we seek to win the lost we are assisting Christ in the fulfilling of His Initial Declaration ... *"I Will Build My Church"*.

## *2. Consider secondly Jesus' INTENTIONS ...*

- \* That the love of the MEMBERS of the church for one another would show their LINK to Him ... John 13:35

*"By this will all men know that you are my disciples ... if you love one another."*

Jesus envisions a direct correlation between members of a Church Body loving each other and unbelievers identifying those church members with Him. There's more to that than meets the eye - there's a spiritual dynamic at work in that process. It's a process that Jesus is counting on to get His Church constructed.

Suffice it to say, when the members of a Church Body *do not* exhibit love (positive relationships) toward one another, the whole process of identification breaks down.

So in a nutshell, we are to "*live the Gospel*" ... "*live the sermon*" as it were before we "*preach it*". In fact, there's a sense in which Jesus is saying that if we simply "*live the Gospel*" ... love one another ... the unbelievers will fill in some of the most important blanks on their own. They will connect us with him and there will be much less that we actually have to say. Jesus intends it to work that way.

Now here's a ***second*** thing that Jesus intends to happen in this process of preparing the lost to be found.

***He intends ...***

\* That the good ***DEEDS*** of the members of the church will reflect ***POSITIVELY*** upon His Father ... Matthew 5:16

*"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*

Without a doubt, the Church of Jesus Christ is to be a "***force for good***" in the world in which it finds itself ... Members of the church are to forever have their eyes and ears open to the needs of those around them - both to those inside and to those outside the church family.

What Jesus is saying is that the "*behavior of the church body*" lays the groundwork for evangelism ...

Our ***love*** for one another and our ***good works*** in the world cause unbelievers to ***identify*** us with Christ and to think ***positively*** about God Himself. Both of those things ready people's hearts to hear and receive the Good News of the Gospel!

So far this morning we have reminded ourselves of Jesus' ***Initiating Declaration*** and we have reminded ourselves of Jesus' ***Basic Intentions*** regarding the conduct of his followers in the world.

He wants His Church Built (He wants the lost found) and He has indicated the conditions necessary for effective construction to take place - love one another and focus on doing good works.

Now *thirdly* and finally this morning ...

### 3. Consider the Apostles' **DIRECTIVES** ...

\* Ready Yourself To **EXPLAIN** - 1 Peter 3:15

*"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone  
who asks you to give the reason for the **hope** that you have."*

Here's where words finally must come out of our mouths ... it takes words to explain the behavior that the people around us have seen.

Our behavior (our hopefulness) in the midst of life's uncertainties has caught their attention ... they have perhaps also linked that hopefulness to the fellowship that we seem to cherish with our Church Family and when they measure themselves by our standard ***they fall short***.

They perhaps feel at times hopeless or disconnected and so they ask - "*What gives*" - "*Why do you seem to handle these things so much better than I do?*"

And when they ask, Peter says that we are to "*be prepared to give an answer*." We are to be prepared to explain what it is that we possess that provides for us the kind of life that they have observed us living.

Now added to what the Apostle Peter has said, the Apostle Paul added his directive in 2 Corinthians 5:11. We express it this morning as ...

\* Do Your Best To **CONVINCE**

*"Since we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men."*  
2 Corinthians 5:11

***That's our goal*** ... to give an explanation of our life - a presentation of the Gospel - that is credible and understandable and hopefully convincing to the unbeliever who has raised the question. That "***Gospel Presentation***" will be our focus for the remaining weeks of this series. What do we say when we want to explain to someone what it means to be a Christian?

Everything we have studied to this point is ***preparation*** for these final weeks; everything we have studied to this point is ***essential*** if our evangelism to be effective for as our ***Final Thot*** expresses it ...

<p><i><b>FINAL THOT...</b></i> "<i><b>Sonlife Evangelism</b></i> <u><b>DEPENDS</b></u> upon and <u><b>FLOWS</b></u> from A "<i><b>Well-Constructed Church Body</b></i>."</p>
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**Pastor Mark Mikels - December 3, 2006**

**"MAN'S ORIGINAL POSITION"**

Church Under Construction - Evangelistic Phase #2

Genesis 2:15-25

**Intro ...** Last week we entered into the final phase of our "*Church Under Construction*" series of messages - the **evangelistic** phase.

In the introduction of that message last Sunday, I shared with you the following observation:

"People who are experiencing genuine New Testament Church Life are excited to share that life with others. It's the most natural thing in the world for them to desire that their family and friends find the same wonderful life *in* Christ and *with* Christ's People that they have found. They are naturally motivated to share their faith and the life it provides. All they need is some help with the words ..."

"*All they need is some help with the words*" ... providing that "*verbal assistance*" is what we will spend the final weeks of this year doing.

You see, sooner or later "*words*" - accurate words - are going to be necessary if the unsaved around us are to understand what it is that we have found in Christ and how it is that they can find it also.

And so I draw your attention to **Today's Key Concept** ...

<p><b>KEY CONCEPT</b> ... "<i>Sonlife Evangelism</i> depends upon and flows from a "<i>Clearly Articulated <u>GOSPEL PRESENTATION</u></i>."</p>
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It's imperative that you and I be able to concisely and yet somewhat comprehensively explain the nature of our faith when given the opportunity to do so - to be able to make what we call this morning, a "**clearly articulated Gospel Presentation**".

And to that end, I have formulated what I would call our *Sonlife Gospel Presentation* - a **five point summation** of the awesome, life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's this Gospel - this Good News - that the Apostle Paul said he was not ashamed of because it contains within it the very power of God to bring salvation to all who will embrace it.

The Gospel contains the Good News of Jesus Christ - it is the best news that anyone can ever *hear*. It's the best news that anyone can ever *share*!

*Now here's the deal* ... though any person anywhere at anytime can simply fall on their knees and cry "*Lord Jesus, save me*" and be saved, the truth is, the more a person knows of Christ before crying out to Him the better.

A fuller understanding of the Gospel can protect such a person from doctrinal error and from some of the Devil's subsequent attacks.

Also, honestly, a somewhat fuller understanding of the Gospel is usually necessary to *bring* a lost person to the place of commitment because apart from that fuller understanding of the Gospel, a person is only getting a part of the story and it's through an appreciation of the *whole story* that man's *mind* is informed and his *heart* touched and his *will* activated.

It's in conjunction with that "*fuller understanding*" that the *Holy Spirit* can most effectively do His Work.

It's a tremendous privilege then to be the one to communicate that "*somewhat fuller understanding of the Gospel*" to someone who is desiring to know - it's also an absolute necessity, for as the Apostle Paul once put it ...

*"How can they call on Him to save them unless they believe in Him and how can they believe in Him if they have not heard about Him and how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?"* (Romans 10:14 NLT)

So then, let's invest the next several weeks in learning how to "*tell the story*" ... how to explain concisely and yet somewhat comprehensively, just what our "*Good News*" is all about!

Our *Sonlife Gospel Presentation* begins with a *definition* of man and a *description* of man's original state. It answers the questions,

*"What is man?"* and *"Why is he here?"*

*Here's how it goes* ... Keep in mind that there will be *Five Points* in all ...

**KEY TRUTH POINT #1 ...**

*"Above everything else, Man is a RELATIONAL Being designed for intimate FELLOWSHIP with His GOD, with His FELLOW MAN and with HIMSELF. (Genesis 2:15-25)*

It's incredibly important what we chose as the "***Starting Point***" for this most important story for our starting point will determine our ending point; and we want our story to end at the right point - at the very place where God wants man to be - forgiven of sin, restored to fellowship and functioning as a "*well-constructed Christian*" in this fallen twisted world.

My suggestion is that we start our story with Man ... "***What is man?***" and "***Why is he here?***" Our understanding grows out of the Biblical Account of man's creation. ***Genesis 2:15-25*** ...

Man has been designed by God as a ***relational being*** ... our entire *Sonlife* Church enterprise is built upon that understanding of man.

Man has been designed for fellowship with:

*Something **bigger** than himself*  
*Something **like** himself*  
*Something deep **within** himself.*

Or as the ***First Point*** of our *Sonlife Gospel Presentation* puts it ...

*"Above everything else, Man is a relational being  
designed for intimate fellowship with His God,  
with His Fellow Man and with Himself."*

Consider with me briefly three incredible ***blessings*** that come to a man who's enjoying the fullness of his relational potential.

\* Intimate Fellowship with Our **GOD** produces  
a sense of **CONFIDENCE**

Adam cooperated with God in the completion of the creation - the naming of all animal life. There was no sense of stress or apprehension. They were two beings in perfect fellowship working on a common task.

A confident, comfortable relationship existed between them and that's what God ***designed*** man to experience ... a sense of perfect ***confidence*** in his relationship with God.

\* Intimate Fellowship with Our **FELLOW MAN** produces  
a sense of **CONNECTION**

Unlike the animals, Eve provided Adam with a sense of compatibility. She was "*like him*" - absolutely identical to him in essence - whereas the animals were only similar to him - there was no compatibility, no genuine, whole-self, connection with them.

*"Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh"* Adam had described her. She is another like me ... "*She shall be called woman for she was taken out of man*". Now that's the ***second blessing*** God designed man to experience ... a sense of perfect ***connection*** in his relationship with His Fellow Man.

\* Intimate Fellowship with Our **INNER SELF** produces  
a sense of **CONTENTMENT**

Adam and Eve functioned in the Garden without a shred of self-doubt and with never a moment of self-loathing ... Nothing they did caused any degree of inner turmoil or second-guessing. They were completely secure in their thoughts and their deeds and their evaluations.

*" They were completely naked and were not ashamed."*

As Moses wrote those words centuries later, he no doubt marveled at that reality. That's the third blessing God designed man to experience ... a sense of perfect ***contentment*** in his relationship with His Inner Self.

Indeed man started out pretty good, wouldn't you say ... God's original design wasn't bad ... in fact, it was awesome.

Our ***Gospel Presentation*** must begin by informing people of ***Man's Original State*** because as our ***Final Thot*** expresses it ...

***Final Thot ...***

One must understand mans original **CONDITION** before one can  
fully appreciate man's current **PREDICAMENT**.

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - December 10, 2006***

## ***"MAN'S CORRUPTED CONDITION"***

Church Under Construction - Evangelistic Phase #3

Genesis Chapter Three

***Intro*** ... Let me begin today's message by referring to the ***Key Concept*** with which we began last week's discussion ... It's the ***Key Concept*** that underlies this entire final set of messages in our "***Church Under Construction***" series.

### ***KEY CONCEPT ...***

***"Sonlife Evangelism*** depends upon and flows from a  
***"Clearly Articulated GOSPEL PRESENTATION."***

You see, sooner or later there comes a time when people need to hear the "***Good News***" about Jesus Christ - it's not enough for them to just "***see***" the "***Good News***" lived out in our lives.

Now the Bible makes it clear that we are to first "***live the good news***" but then when people ask us about the "***hope***" that we so obviously possess, we are to be ready to "***answer them***". (1 Peter 3:15)

Last week we began to look at our ***Sonlife*** Gospel Presentation - a presentation that hopefully is clearly articulated. ***Five Key Truth Points*** make it up. Last week we examined the first of the five ...

***"Above everything else, Man is a relational being  
designed for intimate fellowship with His God,  
with His Fellow Man and with Himself."*** (Genesis 2:15-25)

We noted last week the ***three incredible blessings*** that man enjoyed as a result of being created as this incredible ***relational*** being ...

Intimate Fellowship with His God produced a sense of ***Confidence***  
Intimate Fellowship with His Fellow Man produced a sense of ***Connection***  
Intimate Fellowship with His Inner Self produced a sense of ***Contentment***

Adam and Eve enjoyed truly blessed conditions in the Garden of Eden!  
Man's original state was incredible Good!

That's our ***starting point*** for evangelism ... that's the first great truth that we want people to know ... God's original plan for man and man's initial experience in this world was nothing but good - Adam and Eve literally enjoyed "*heaven on earth*".

However that blissful state did not last for long - a fact that we are all painfully aware of ... life in this world - especially in the lost world around us can by no stretch of the imagination be characterized as "*heaven on earth*" ...

Any comprehensive Gospel Presentation must clearly articulate what happened to change things so drastically and so we come to ...

**KEY TRUTH POINT #2 ...**

**"*SIN* has drastically and tragically affected Man's ***ABILITY*** to relate ***INTIMATELY*** with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."  
Genesis 3:1-13**

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman,

"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and ***I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.***" And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"  
The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

***Genesis 3:21-24 ...***

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

And at that point, as the poet Milton expressed it, ***Paradise was lost!***

What I want us to see this morning as the ***second key truth*** of our Gospel Presentation is that sin drastically and tragically affected each one of those ***three great blessings*** that man enjoyed as a relational being.

I would call them this morning the ***Three Drastic and Tragic Consequences of Sin ...***

\* Sin has drastically and tragically altered man's sense of **CONFIDENCE** before ***GOD*** - "I was ***AFRAID*** so I ***HID***."

Guilt is a terrible thing - none of us feels entirely comfortable acknowledging it either to ourselves or to others. Guilt produces the exact opposite reaction of that produced by confidence.

***Confidence*** draws us into fellowship - ***Guilt*** drives us from fellowship. Adam lost his sense of confidence before God ... with the opening of his eyes to discern good and evil, he realized the great gap that now existed between him and his God. He understood perhaps better than before God's incredible Holiness and Purity ... He understood as well the significance of his act of disobedience. He had to know that there would come a showdown - a moment of reckoning - but he sought to put it off as long as he could so he "***hid himself***".

There's not a thinking person anywhere who truly deep down considers his life acceptable to a perfectly holy and righteous God.

Every religion of man is built around the attempt to "*appease*" or to "*placate*" a God who harshly judges those who fall short of His Standards.

Adam was just the first of all those who, having sinned, have sought to avoid the gaze of a righteous God.

Consider this honest outburst from the Prophet Isaiah expressed some centuries after the time of Adam when he was granted a vision of the Holiness and Majesty of the LORD God Himself ...

**"*WOE* to me - I am *RUINED!*" - Isaiah 6:5**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

**"*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.*"**

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

**"*Woe to me!*"** I cried. **"*I am ruined!*"** For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

Adam was only the first in a long line of human beings who have sought to hide from the presence of a Holy God - to hide from the ONE whose righteousness causes them great distress. Suffice it to say, sin drastically and tragically altered Adam's sense of ***confidence*** before God.

That, of course, would have been bad enough but the effects of sin didn't stop with the ***God-Man Relationship***.

Secondly we see this morning that ...

\* Sin has drastically and tragically altered man's sense of **CONNECTION** with His Fellow Man - "She **GAVE** me some fruit."

One of the more tragic signs that connection with our fellow man is lost is our willingness to "*throw them under the bus*" if necessary to save ourselves. "*Better her than me*" no doubt thought Adam.



How common it is for us to point the finger at those around us when things go wrong ... how easy to seek to divert attention from ourselves to them. How glibly we even use information gained in confidence to protect ourselves.

And as a result, we learn to protect ourselves from those around us - we avoid disclosure; we avoid intimacy; we walk carefully in every human relationship because we know that at any given moment these people might turn on us and sacrifice us to save themselves.

Sin brought doubt and suspicion and mistrust and even deception into every human relationship.

And when sin works its way all the way to its logical conclusion we find human beings fitting the description of them given by the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 1 verse 31 ...

"They are **SENSELESS, FAITHLESS, HEARTLESS, RUTHLESS.**"

*That's pretty bad* ... no sensitivity - no loyalty - no compassion - no consideration of the affect their behavior has on those around them.

Now while only a relative few human beings arrive at the ultimate expression of these traits in their lives, all fallen human beings have the tendency to head in that direction and the expression of that tendency has sabotaged countless human relationships over the years.

*And now*, one final drastic and tragic consequence of sin ...

\* Sin has drastically and tragically altered man's sense of **CONTENTMENT** within himself - "*I was **NAKED.***"

It's not only from God and from their fellow human beings that sinful men and women learn to hide ... they learn to hide from themselves as well.

It's a painful thing to honestly acknowledge our own fallen tendencies and limitations - to realize that the person we are in reality is a far piece removed from the person that we would either like to be or that we feel we ought to be.

"*Being naked and **NOT** ashamed*" was man's original state but sin changed all that ...

Now with eyes open to things never before contemplated, Adam saw his nakedness as a bad thing - a vulnerable thing - an uncomfortable thing ...

He took steps to deal with his discomfort; he covered himself up with the best thing he could find - a bunch of fig leaves.

Man's inner sense of contentment has certainly not returned as the years have rolled by and as his rap sheet of misbehaviors has increased.

Here's how the prophet Isaiah expressed it ...

"*There is no PEACE for the WICKED*" - Isaiah 57:21

But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. "*There is no peace,*" says my God, "*for the wicked.*"

Ultimately it's that "*lack of peace*" - that feeling of "*inner discontent*" - that causes many unbelievers to seek a change in their lives ...

And if they happen to come into contact with a genuine, contented, soul-satisfied follower of Jesus Christ at just that crucial moment, they might well ask the question that we are preparing ourselves to answer ...

***"Why are you not like me?" "How can I be more like you?"***

The fullness of that answer is yet to come but as we close this message today focus your attention upon the truth of our ***Final Thot*** ...

***Final Thot ...***

A man must honestly accept (experience) the Gospel's ***BAD NEWS*** before he can effectively receive its ***GOOD NEWS!***

That's why this ***Key Point #2*** is so crucial ... we can't leave it out.

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - December 17, 2006***

## ***"GOD'S AMAZING PROVISION"***

Church Under Construction - Evangelistic Phase #4

Genesis 3:14-15; 21

***Intro*** ... Once again let me draw your attention to the ***Key Concept*** that underlies this entire set of messages that concludes our "*Church Under Construction*" Series ...

***KEY CONCEPT*** ... "*Sonlife Evangelism* depends upon and flows from a "**CLEARLY ARTICULATED** *Gospel Presentation*."

Now, though it's surely true that most unbelievers would rather "*see a sermon than hear one*" and though it's also true that most believers would probably rather "*live a sermon than preach one*", it is absolutely true that the time comes for both "*hearing and preaching*".

Showing our faith by our life can only go so far ... genuine faith demonstrated in daily living can certainly generate admiration and possibly reflection in the hearts and minds of those who know us.

But faith ***demonstrated*** sooner or later must become faith ***communicated*** ... in fact, the demonstration prepares the way ***for*** the communication - the communication ***explains*** the demonstration.

That's what the ***Apostle Peter*** was getting at in ***1 Peter 3:15***...

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ..."

"*Be prepared to give an answer*" ... a concise yet comprehensive answer ... a clear and precise answer ... an easily understood answer ... hopefully a compelling answer.

That's our purpose in these final weeks of 2006 - in these final days before we "*go public*" and expose our lives more broadly in the public arena - to develop a familiarity with just such a Gospel Presentation or Declaration.

So far we have examined the first two *key truth points* of our five point *Sonlife* Articulation ...

***Key Point #1 ...***

"Above everything else, Man is a relational being designed for intimate fellowship with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."

Genesis 2:15-25

How strategic to begin our Gospel Presentation with a description of man as he was originally designed - to understand man's essential nature as an awesome relational being. Beginning at the beginning also communicates that God had nothing but good in mind when he created man as a relational and volitional being.

***Key Point #2 ...***

"Sin has drastically and tragically affected Man's ability to relate intimately with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."

Genesis 3:1-13

How absolutely necessary to point out the disruptive and destructive affects of man's disobedience - sin has affected everything and not in just some small way. Sin has ruined man - has fatally flawed him - and man experiences the pain of that fatal flaw every day of his life.

Those two key truths set us up directly and effectively to share *Key Truth Point #3 ...*

***KEY TRUTH POINT #3 ...***

"In Jesus Christ, God has provided for Man a ***RELATIONAL REBIRTH*** with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."

This is where the "*Good News*" officially begins ...

This Truth Point grows out of *Three Key Scriptures* ...  
Let's look at them one by one ...

### *Today's Key Scriptures* ...

#### *The PROMISE Given ... Genesis 3:15*

"He will **CRUSH** your **HEAD** and you will strike his heel."

So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; **he will crush your head**, and you will strike his heel." *The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.*  
(Genesis 3:14-15,21)

And so at the very beginning of the new order - the sin and separation and death order - God gave a **promise**.

The world would not be always under the influence of sin and Satan. Someday there would come out of the human race, one who would destroy Satan and his Works once and for all. The implication was that this action of God would make things better for mankind.

In the meantime, God provided for Adam and Eve's nakedness - He sacrificed one (or more) of the incredible animals that he had made and that Adam had named, took the skin and made clothes for them.

And thus began the long wait ... through the centuries, men and women of faith, men and women who remembered and believed in that promise of God and in the subsequent communications of God, watched and waited for **The Promise** to be fulfilled.

That's our first **Key Scripture** ... *The Promise Given* ...

Consider now the **Second Key Scripture** of the morning ...

***The PREREQUISITE Stated ... John 3:3***

"No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is **BORN AGAIN**."

From the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ came the second great **revelation** concerning the Promise of God and the Blessings that would flow from it ...

**Not all human beings** would experience those blessings! There was a condition - a prerequisite if you will.

A **spiritual birth** would be required if one were to experience the blessings that would flow from the fulfillment of that ancient Promise of God.

Jesus shared that revelation with a man named Nicodemus who was an ardent believer in the **Promise** and who had devoted his life to the pursuit of holiness - he was a Pharisee - a respected religious leader.

He was thrown off stride - you could say that he was "**blown out of the water**" by Jesus' words ... He saw this prerequisite for the blessing that Jesus was talking about to be absolutely impossible.

He said straight out ... "*How can a man be born when he is old?  
Can he re-enter his mother's womb?*"

On the day of their discussion, Jesus couldn't share the entire story - there was much yet to be done.

But you and I are now privy to the rest of the story ... We have the answer to Nicodemus' desperate question ... and that answer is given in our **Third Key Scripture** of this morning's discussion ...

***The PROVISION Identified ... 2 Corinthians 5:17***

"Therefore, if anyone is in **CHRIST**, he is a new **CREATION**,  
the **OLD** has gone, the **NEW** has come.

The re-birth is a **spiritual** thing - it renews man on the inside and it comes as one places his or her faith in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. That's what untold thousands of human beings have done and experienced over the centuries since the time of Christ.

At the heart of the Good News of the Gospel is this wonderful fact that sinful men and women can be spiritually "*born-again*" - "*born from above*" - "*changed from the inside out*" - "*placed on the path*" (as it were) toward complete and wondrous *restoration* as relational beings made in God's Image!

Consider now with me this morning the *Three Incredible Restorations* that flow from the *Relational Re-Birth* provided in Jesus Christ...  
And let's just allow the Scripture to do most of the talking.

### ***1. Relational Re-birth restores Man's CONFIDENCE before GOD.***

John 1:12 and Hebrews 4:16 and Romans 8:38-39

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the *right* to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1:12)

Let us then approach the throne of grace with *confidence*, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

For I am *convinced* that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

There's no more "*hiding among the trees*" for those who have become children of God - We have become "*members of the family*" ... Jesus said that we are to begin our prayers by saying, "*Our Father in heaven*".

Nothing need ever again remove from us the *confidence* that comes from this re-birth of fellowship with God!

### ***2. Relational Re-birth restores Man's CONNECTION with MAN***

Romans 12:4-5 and Romans 12:10-13 and Ephesians 2:19-20

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (Romans 12:4-5)

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. (Romans 12:10-13)

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:19-20)

There's an incredible fellowship developed among those who have experienced this "*relational re-birth*" ... They recognize themselves as members of the same family, as parts of the same body, as co-workers in the same calling.

When they look upon one another they do not say as did Adam: "*Here is bone of my bones - flesh of my flesh*" rather they say ... "*Here is spirit of my spirit*" - "*Here is another like me*" - another forgiven sinner restored to fellowship through the faithful and effective work of God in our lives!

And as a result, there is felt a tremendous sense of **connection** with those who make up this incredible spiritual family and it feels good.

And now thirdly and finally this morning

### **3. Relational Re-birth restores Man's CONTENTMENT with HIMSELF.**

Romans 8:6 and Philipians 4:4-7 and Romans 8:16

The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is **life** and **peace**. (Romans 8:6)

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness (your contentment) be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And **the peace of God**, which transcends all understanding, **will guard** your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philipians 4:4-7)

The Spirit himself **testifies** with our spirit that we are God's children. (Rom. 8:16)

Man's entire inner demeanor is affected when he fully embraces this **relational re-birth** ... Deep inside he **knows** that he is a child of God and that all is well. He feels and displays a sense of genuine **contentment**. He has received and is experiencing the "**Good News**" of the Gospel.

**Final Thot** ... God covered **EVERY BASE** and provided for **EVERY NEED** when He sent His Son into the world - nothing less than **FULL RESTORATION** would be acceptable!



# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - December 24, 2006***

## ***"SALVATION'S CRITICAL IMPLEMENTATION"***

Church Under Construction - Evangelistic Phase #5

Revelation 3:20

***Intro*** ... For the fourth Sunday in a row, I draw your attention to the ***Key Concept*** that underlies this final phase - the "***evangelistic phase***"- of our "Church Under Construction" sermon series ...

### ***KEY CONCEPT ...***

***"Sonlife Evangelism DEPENDS upon and FLOWS from a "Clearly Articulated Gospel Presentation."***

***Five Key Points*** make up our ***Sonlife*** Gospel Presentation. So far we have introduced and discussed three of them ...

### ***Key Point #1 ...***

"Above everything else, Man is a ***relational being*** designed for intimate ***fellowship*** with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."

Genesis 2:15-25

### ***Key Point #2 ...***

"***Sin*** has drastically and tragically affected Man's ability to relate intimately with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."

Genesis 3:1-13

### ***Key Point #3 ...***

"In Jesus Christ, God has provided for Man a ***Relational Re-Birth*** with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."

Each of these "***points***" builds upon the other and they all together lead to the key truth point that I would present to you today ...

### ***Key Truth Point #4 ...***

"Man must **PERSONALLY ACT** upon God's Provision if He would **EXPERIENCE** Relational Re-Birth." Revelation 3:20

This most essential fourth key point in our *Sonlife* Gospel Presentation is built upon a most compelling and yet disturbing Biblical Image - an image is found in Revelation 3:20 ...

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

God created man in the beginning not only as a relational being but as a willful being - a volitional being ... a being capable of making choices, important choices, life-changing, destiny-determining choices.

Eve and then Adam made just such a choice ... a choice to disobey God and to pursue an action that seemed at the time to make a lot of sense.

God could have stopped them but He didn't ... God could have made them differently but He didn't ... God could have washed His hands of them but He didn't.

He gave them a *promise* of their eventual deliverance and He set in motion a *process* to deal with their sin until sin one day would be finally and utterly destroyed.

But never were they and never have the untold millions of men and women who followed them been mere uninvolved observers in this ages-long struggle between Good and Evil.

God has always evaluated man according to the willful actions that man has taken with regard to the knowledge God has given him to work with.

God in these last days has granted mankind the fullness of His Revelation regarding His Gospel - His Good News regarding the possibility of man's salvation from the awful devastation brought by sin.

And having granted mankind that revelation, having shown the men of this fallen world the way to experience relational re-birth and regain fellowship with God and with his fellow man and with himself, God then would say, in effect,

*"The ball's in your court - what are you going to do with it?"*

### ***Thus Key Truth Point #4 ...***

"Man must PERSONALLY ACT upon God's Provision  
if He would EXPERIENCE Relational Re-Birth."

This morning I would share with you that there are ***three specific actions*** that man must take if he would have this amazing provision of God, this "*salvation*" provided by Christ, implemented in his life.

**In order to experience this wondrous relational re-birth man must:**

1. BELIEVE the Gospel - involve the MIND ... Romans 10:12-15

Every conscious action we human beings ever take begins as a thought. We conceive something in our minds ... we come into contact with some kind of content - some information to consider.

Now the Gospel of Jesus Christ is divinely given ***truth*** ... it conveys information - it's something that the mind can wrap itself around. It can be formulated and communicated; it can be discussed and debated. It stimulates the mind of man. It contains specific content that man must first come to understand and then come to believe.

Here's how the Apostle Paul expressed it in Romans 10:12-15

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls (specific personal action) on the name of the Lord will be saved."

How, then, can they call on the one they have not ***believed*** in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not ***heard***? And how can they hear without someone ***preaching*** to them? And how can they preach unless they are ***sent***? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

***Notice the sequence*** ... first sending or going, then preaching or telling, then hearing and then believing and then calling.

*Our point* at this point of the message is simply this ... ***action follows information*** - information that is received and believed.

In order for God's salvation to be implemented in a person's life, man must ***believe*** - must wrap his ***mind*** around its truths.

Now there's a ***second action*** that pretty naturally flows from the first.

Once man as a rational and relational being sincerely believes something to be true ... once he wraps his ***mind*** aggressively around something (in this case, the Gospel of Jesus Christ) ... his heart is sure to follow.

And so we come to ***critical action #2***.

After believing the Gospel to be true, after coming to understand its provision and its offer of salvation, man must ...

2. **DESIRE** the Gospel - engage the **HEART** ... Matthew 5:6

Here's where man's heart - his affections - his desires - his inner passion for restoration - expresses itself. The wondrous truth of the Gospel accompanied by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit creates an incredible craving in man's heart.

Here's how Jesus expressed it in the most well-known message he ever preached - the Sermon on the Mount - Matthew 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

***Here's the point*** ... Once a man has wrapped his mind around the truths of the Gospel - once he has come to understand the incredible provision God has made for him through Jesus Christ - there develops deep in his heart an incredible ***desire*** - a ***craving*** if you will - for the ***benefits*** of that Gospel in his life.

To use Jesus' words ... He "***hungers and thirsts for it***".

***Information turns into Celebration** ... He can hardly believe such a thing can be so ... He's like the woman at the well who, hearing Jesus talk about "living water" says "Sir, give me some of that water."*

***Now here's the counter point** ... "If a man doesn't hunger and thirst for the benefits of the Gospel after having heard the Gospel, then he either hasn't fully understood it or truly believed it."*

He either hasn't understood and admitted his own desperate condition or he doesn't believe in God's amazing and wondrous provision. Information (for him) ***has not*** turned into Celebration ...

His mind has not wrapped itself around God's Truth and thus his heart has not been wrapped around it either.

But for those whose minds and hearts ***do get*** "wrapped around the Gospel" ... for those for whom "information ***has turned into celebration***", ***action step #3*** is a no-brainer ...

### **3. EMBRACE the Gospel - activate the WILL ... Revelation 3:20**

Here man gives expression to that most fundamental aspect of his nature ... he is a relational, volitional being.

He has been given by God from the beginning the ability to make choices - the ability to affect his own life by the decisions he makes.

His actions generally reveal what his mind and heart have been wrapped around.

And when a man's mind and heart have been wrapped around Jesus, his will gets wrapped around Jesus too and he acts in ways that reveal his heart's condition - He embraces the Gospel and the Salvation it provides.

And so we see him respond eagerly and positively to the Biblical Image with which we began this message ...

*"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."*

Revelation 3:20

Any credible presentation of the Gospel must make clear that ...

"Man must PERSONALLY ACT upon God's Provision  
if He would EXPERIENCE Relational Re-Birth."

The exhortation of the obedient soul-winner to the unbeliever is ...

*"Wrap your mind around the Gospel, wrap your heart around the Gospel,  
wrap your will around the Gospel ... immerse your whole self in the Glorious  
Gospel of Jesus Christ if you would be saved!"*

How appropriate is the phasing of our *Final Thot* on this Christmas Sunday ...

***Final Thot ...***

Above everything else, salvation is a GIFT - an ACTUAL,  
INSPIRATIONAL, RECEIVABLE GIFT from GOD to MAN!

It's actual because it's real - it was worked out in time and space - it can be apprehended and believed by the mind of man.

It's inspirational because it provides such incredible promise - it can literally transform one's life.

It's receivable because it's not forced upon us - it takes action on our part if it is to become ours.

It's a gift because it's not owed to us or deserved by us - it reflects the loving concern of the One who offers it.

And the one who offers it is God Himself - the One who has invested himself sacrificially in providing for man's awesome need.

Don't allow this gift this Christmas to go unopened - wrap yourself up in it totally ... mind, heart and will!

# ***Pastor Mark Mikels - December 31, 2006***

## ***"SALVATION'S ULTIMATE OPPORTUNITY"***

Church Under Construction - Evangelistic Phase #6

John 10:10

***Intro ...*** For the fifth Sunday in a row, I would draw your attention to the ***Key Concept*** that underlies this final phase - the "***evangelistic phase***"- of our "***Church Under Construction***" sermon series ...

### ***Evangelistic Phase Key Concept ...***

***"Sonlife EVANGELISM depends upon and flows from a "Clearly Articulated Gospel Presentation."***

***Five Key Points*** make up our ***Sonlife*** Gospel Presentation. So far we have introduced and discussed four of them ...

### ***Key Point #1 ...***

***"Above everything else, Man is a **relational being** designed for intimate **fellowship** with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."***

Genesis 2:15-25

### ***Key Point #2 ...***

***"Sin has drastically and tragically affected Man's ability to relate intimately with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."***

Genesis 3:1-13

### ***Key Point #3 ...***

***"In Jesus Christ, God has provided for Man a **Relational Re-Birth** with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."***

Genesis 3:15 - 2 Corinthians 5:17

### ***Key Point #4 ...***

***"Man must **personally act** upon God's Provision if He would experience Relational Re-Birth." Revelation 3:20***

### ***Key Truth Point #5 ...***

***"Relational Re-birth ENABLES Man to enter into and CHERISH Re-Born RELATIONSHIPS with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."***

John 10:10

***In John 10:10 Jesus said ...***

"I have come that they might have life and have it to the full." (NIV)

"I am come that they might have life and that they might  
have it more abundantly." (KJV)

"My purpose is to give life in all its fullness" (NLB)

That declaration from the Lord Jesus is filled with purpose and potential. There's expectation in that declaration; it's a declaration that directly suggests the thought of this fifth and final key point of our *Sonlife* Gospel Presentation ...

"Relational Re-birth ***enables*** Man to ***enter*** into and ***cherish*** Re-Born relationships with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."

***Three Key Words*** in that fifth and final key point ...

1. **ENABLES** - provides all that's ***NECESSARY*** to ***PULL*** a thing ***OFF***.

2 Peter 1:3-4 ...

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

With our relational re-birth comes a divine ***enablement*** ... an ability to experience life on an entirely new level - an ability to "*participate in the divine nature*" ... to "*escape the corruption in the world*".

There's a sense in which Jesus Christ has brought us once again near to the "*Tree of Life*" and has offered it to us for our daily sustenance.

His Gospel has transformed us and enabled us to experience life on this new level - to handle the high powered nutrients provided by that tree.



We are now able to heed the advice of the psalmist who said, "*Taste and see that the Lord is Good*". (Psalm 34:8)

"**Enable**" ... this is the word of provision and potential.

From the moment of his spiritual, his relational re-birth, the new child of God is capable of enjoying the fullness of the life Christ offers.

The **second key word** that catches my eye in that fifth and final key point is the word ...

## 2. **ENTER** - moving into a new **LOCATION** or **EXPERIENCE**

Hebrews 6:1-2 ...

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and **go on** to maturity, not laying again the **foundation** of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

If I could paraphrase this passage a bit and put it in the context of our current discussion, the writer is saying ...

*"Keep moving on toward greater maturity in your relationship with God and with fellow believers and with yourself".*

And keep in mind that that "**greater relational maturity**" stands firmly upon the doctrinal **foundation** and is experienced within the behavioral **framework** discovered in the Scripture.

**The point is** ... there is always more in the Christian life ... there is always more to experience ... even the Apostle Paul would confess ...

"I have not already obtained all this or have already been made perfect, but I **press on** to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."

Philippians 3:12

Or as our own Kenneth Reed loves to say ... "*I haven't arrived but I've left.*"

The word "enter" speaks of **intention** and **action**.

Now that our new relational re-birth in Christ *has enabled* us to experience the fullness of the Life Christ came to provide, our Heavenly Father through His indwelling Holy Spirit urges us to *enter into* that life.

You see, "*growing in the faith*" is as much a *volitional* action as was "*getting into the faith*" in the first place.

"*Enable*" is a word of purpose and potential ... "*Enter*" is a word of intention and action.

And now thirdly and finally in this fifth Key Gospel Presentation Point, the word ...

### 3. *CHERISH* - feelings of *ENDEARMENT* and *DELIGHT*

1 John 1:3-4 ...

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

John message began with *content* ... "*what we have seen and heard*" ... the doctrine if you will.

John continues by pointing out that content can produce *connection* ... "*so that you also may have fellowship with us*".

John then identifies *to whom* we are actually connected ... "our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ".

And finally John reveals the *outcome* of such a connection ...  
"*We write this to make our joy complete*".

Fellowship with God - fellowship with one another results in joy - a *contentment* deep within. We *cherish* such things.

The word "***cherish***" speaks of deep feelings and strong bonds. To cherish the incredible relationships that we have re-gained through our relational re-birth is a most normal and natural reaction.

You see, once we have acted upon the ***enablement*** that God has given and have ***entered*** on into the abundant life that Christ has provided, our entire life becomes centered around and wrapped up in our relationship with God and with our fellow-believers and as a result we sense deep within a level of ***contentment*** and security that we would have never thought possible.

And that inner ***contentment*** communicates to us and to all who know us that we have indeed entered into and have begun to experience the abundant life Jesus said he came to provide.

***And so to recap a bit ...*** Relational Re-birth enables man to enter into and cherish re-born relationships with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself and the end result of all of that put together could be called "*relational fullness or wholeness*" ... ***salvation's ultimate opportunity!***

And now for ***Today's Key Concept*** - a culminating concept ...

### ***TODAY'S KEY CONCEPT ...***

The fullness of the Christian Life is a "***RELATIONAL*** fullness" ...  
a ***SOUL***-Satisfying, ***MIND***-Altering, ***HEART***-Captivating,  
***LIFE***-Focusing, ***DESTINY***-Determining Relationship with  
Our God, with Our Fellow Man and with Ourselves!

### ***FINAL THOT ...***

Spiritual Re-birth is just the ***BEGINNING*** of Spiritual Life - those who enjoy it most fully are those who pursue it most ***ARDENTLY***.

### ***Two suggested New Year's Resolutions:***

Daily Personal ***COMMUNION*** and Monthly ***TITHING***.

**Pastor Mark Mikels - January 7, 2007**

**"A WELL - CONSTRUCTED CHURCH"**

(Concluding Message - Church Under Construction Series)

**Intro** ... This morning we come to the final message - the wrap-up message - of our Church Under Construction Series. And as we do so, I would draw your attention once again to the **Key Concept** with which I introduced this series almost 8 months ago.

**Today's Key Concept ...**

There is nothing in all the world so **ATTRACTIVE**, so **IMPRESSIVE**, so **USEFUL** to God as a well-constructed **CHURCH!**

More than just a **Key Concept** those words express for me a Life-Challenging, Ministry-Motivating, Energy-Generating Conviction.

I have surely come to believe with all my heart that "*there is nothing in all the world so attractive, so impressive, so useful to God as a well-constructed Church!*"

Over these past eight months (and I hope for the rest of our lives) we have heard the Lord Jesus say, "*I will build my church*" ...

He is the contractor on this project and he will bring the task to a glorious conclusion ...

Here's how the Apostle Paul expressed Christ's Purpose to the Ephesian Believers ...

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

This is the Church that Christ is committed to build - this is the Church that He is even now in the process of building right here in this place and throughout the world.

He is building that "***Well-Constructed Church***" - that "Bride of Christ" - that "Family of God" - that "Holy Temple" to be His for all eternity.

It's that "***Glorious Church***" and the Construction of it that we have spent the past 8 months discovering and discussing ...

We have seen that this construction proceeds through ***Four Key Phases***: the ***Doctrinal*** Phase, the ***Behavioral*** Phase, the ***Relational*** Phase and the ***Evangelistic*** Phase

So now this morning, as we His Church, prepare for a time of Communion, let me draw some final observations regarding this Church that Christ would build.

Allow me to share with you this morning ... ***Four Key Characteristics of a Well-Constructed Church*** ... based upon our 8 months of investigation.

***Characteristic #1. A Well-Constructed Church Is Characterized By A Sense Of STABILITY - Its people really know **WHAT** they **BELIEVE**.***  
(Ephesians 4:14 - John 8:31-32)

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Jesus said in John 14:6 ... "I am the Way, and the ***Truth*** and the Life ..."

Anything that Jesus puts his hand to is characterized by a knowledge of and a commitment to the "***Truth of God as revealed in His Word***" and that knowledge and commitment create a sense of ***stability*** - a steadiness - a settledness that's hard to miss.

Christ's Church is solid as a rock and unshakeable even in the midst of world-wide upheavals. It provides a secure and comforting place to be.

***Characteristic #2. A Well-Constructed Church Is Characterized By A Sense Of INTEGRITY - Its people really know *HOW* to *BEHAVE*. (1Timothy 4:12)***

The Apostle Paul was speaking to every member of Christ's Church when he wrote these words to his young protégé Timothy ...

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but *set an example* for the believers in *speech*, in *life*, in *love*, in *faith* and in *purity*."

The members of Christ's Well-Constructed Church exhibit a lifestyle that is above reproach ... They live lives that reflect positively upon the Savior whose name they bear. Their *speech* is unoffensively uttered, their *life* is unselfishly conducted, their *love* is unreluctantly given, their *faith* is unwaveringly maintained and their *purity* is undeniably demonstrated. Their lifestyle generates for them a community-wide reputation for *integrity* ... they are known as people who "*practice what they preach*".

***Characteristic #3. A Well-Constructed Church Is Characterized By A Sense Of FAMILY - Its people really know *HOW* to *RELATE*. (Psalm 133:1-3)***

The *relational* component of the Church of Jesus Christ has been a passionate concern of God from ancient times ... Some 1000 years before Christ came to earth, the Psalmist David wrote ...

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

The people who form the congregation of a "*well-constructed church*" understand that they are not involved in some "*solo performance*".

They recognize that they have been granted by God a "*Relational Re-Birth*" and that their bond with their fellow believers is both essential and functional. They are "*one of the gang*" - they are "*members of the body*" - they are "*fellow-citizens of a brand new world*". They see themselves as "*parts of the whole*" and they define themselves as such.

The thought of living solely *for* themselves or *by* themselves never even crosses their mind. They are immersed in a "**Family**" and they cherish their connection. The disconnected, competitive, frequently combative world around them remarks in wonder ... "*Behold, how they love one another*".

**Characteristic #4.** A Well-Constructed Church Is Characterized By A Sense Of **URGENCY** - Its people really know how desperately their **NEWS** is **NEEDED**. (Revelation 20:15 - Isaiah 53:6)

God's People have never been unaware of the plight of mankind ... the people who form Christ's Church are the most aware of all. Mankind, apart from God's saving intervention, is heading for a hopeless eternity.

Here's how the Apostle John expressed it ...

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. **If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

Four Centuries earlier, the prophet Isaiah, had observed ...

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Every member of a "well-constructed church" understands the *problem* man has and the *provision* God's made. For them there is nothing more important than being available to share the Good News about Jesus - to explain the Gospel in a clear and compelling way. They sense the urgency of the task and they are at all times ready to give an answer when someone asks a reason for the hope they themselves possess.

A sense of **STABILITY** - **INTEGRITY** - **FAMILY** and **URGENCY**  
**Four Key Characteristics** of a "Well-Constructed Church".

**Final Thought** ... Cooperating with **CHRIST** in the **CONSTRUCTION** of His **CHURCH** is life's highest **PRIVILEGE** and greatest **CHALLENGE**.  
Be sure you show up for work every day!

# APPENDIX



# *Sonlife Community Church*

Beliefs

Covenant

And Purpose

*- Experiencing and Sharing the Life of the Son of God -*

## ***Statement of Beliefs***

**1.** We believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, inerrant in the original writings, complete as a revelation of God's will for salvation, and the supreme and final authority in faith and life.

(2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:4, 16-21; John 10:35b; Proverbs 30:5-6)

**2.** We believe in one God, creator and sustainer of all things, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; that these are equal in every Divine Perfection and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.

(Ephesians. 4:4-6; John 1:1-3; John 14:9-11,16-17,26; Mark 1:9-11)

**3.** We believe in God the Father, an infinite, personal Spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. We believe He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

(John 4:24; John 3:16; Matthew 6:9-13; Acts 4:12; John 14:6)

**4.** We believe that Jesus Christ is God's only son, and has precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections as God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. We believe further that He is not only true God, but true man, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. We also believe in His sinless life. His substitutionary atonement. His bodily resurrection from the dead. His ascension into heaven. His priestly intercession on behalf of His people, and His personal, visible, premillennial return from heaven.

(Matthew 1:18-25; Isaiah 7:14; John 1:1-14; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 9:11-15, 24-28; Titus 2:11-14; Acts 1:1-11; I Corinthians 15:3-8, 12-28; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:1-6)

**5.** We believe in the Holy Spirit, His personality, and His work in regeneration, sanctification, and preservation. His ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and implement Christ's work of redeeming the lost and empowering the believer for godly living and service. (John 16:7-11; Romans 8:1- 17; Titus 3:4-7)

**6.** We believe God created man, male and female, in the image of God and free from sin. We further believe man is a sinner by nature and choice, and is therefore spiritually dead. We thus believe that those who repent of sin and trust Jesus Christ as Savior have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

(Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:10-20, 23; Romans 5:12, 17, 19; Romans 6:23; Acts 2:21, 38; Titus 3:4-7; Eph. 1:13-14)

**7.** We believe in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We further believe that this salvation is based upon the sovereign grace of God, was purchased by Christ on the cross, and is received by man through faith, apart from any human merit, works, or ritual. We further believe salvation results in righteous living, good works and proper social concern.

(Ephesians 2:1-9; James 2:14-26; James 1:27)

**8.** We believe that the church is the spiritual body of which Christ is the head. We believe that the true church is composed of all persons who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and expressed saving faith in Jesus Christ. We believe that this body expresses itself in local assemblies where believers associate themselves for worship, for instruction, for evangelism, and for service. We believe the ordinances of the local church are believer's baptism by immersion, and the Lord's Supper.

(Matthew 16:16-18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Acts 14:23-27; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32)

**9.** We believe that each local church is self-governing in function, and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority. We further believe that every human being is directly responsible to God in matters of faith and life, and that each should be free to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience. We also believe in the interdependence of local churches, and the mutual submission of believers to each other in love.

(John 4:21-24; Acts 4:18-20; Romans 14:1-5; Acts 13:1-3,23,27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8:3-4; Philippians 2:1-4; Ephesians 5:21)

**10.** We believe in the bodily resurrection of the saved and lost, the eternal existence of all men either in heaven or hell, in divine judgments, rewards, and punishments. (Hebrews 9:27; 12 Corinthians 5:10; John 14:1-4; Revelation 20-22)

**11.** We believe that the supreme task of every believer is to glorify God in his life; that his conduct should be blameless before the world; that he should be a faithful steward of his possessions; and that he should seek to realize for himself the full stature of maturity in Christ.

(Ephesians 1:3-4; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 2:12; Malachi 3:10; 2 Corinthians 8:7; Ephesians 4:13-16)

# *Covenant of Behavior*

Believing in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and desiring to live in a manner that will bring glory to Him, and having associated myself with this local body of believers called "*Sonlife Community Church*", I do now covenant together with them that...

1. I will seek to worship God in spirit and in truth as a continuous practice of my life. (John 4:23-24; I Thessalonians 5:17);

2. I will endeavor to give positive witness of my relationship to Jesus Christ by word and deed in every circumstance in which I am placed. (Colossians 3:17);

3. I will commit myself to a regular study of God's word so that my mind might be renewed and my life transformed by its truths. (2 Timothy 3:15; Romans 12:1-2)

4. I will invest my finances cheerfully and sacrificially in the work of the Lord, taking the Biblical "*tithe*" as my guideline for giving.  
(Malachi 3:10; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

5. I will involve myself lovingly in the lives of my fellow believers in this church, recognizing that we are all "*one body*" and desiring that we all become mature, attaining to the "*whole measure of the fullness of Christ*".  
(1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:13; Galatians 6:1);

6. I will make my time, energy, and personal resources available for God's use knowing that all I am and have is simply a trust from Him.  
(I Corinthians 4:1-2);

**7.** I will refrain from any activity or practice of life that might discredit the name of Jesus, harm the temple of the Holy Spirit (my body), hinder a fellow believer, or cause my personal testimony to be compromised.

(Romans 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:19-10; 8:9; 1 Timothy 4:12b, 15-16; Proverbs 23:29-35);

**8.** I will fulfill my responsibilities as a citizen of this land by: respectfully submitting myself to the authorities that God has placed over me, carefully informing myself on public issues of moral concern, and prayerfully involving myself in the political process through which leaders are chosen so that reasonable. God-fearing men and women might be placed in all levels of government (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-3);

**9.** I will stand resolutely against those destructive, ungodly practices in our society which threaten the very existence of the God-ordained family unit such as fornication and adultery, homosexuality, pornography, spouse and child abuse, drug abuse, convenience abortions, unscriptural divorce and self-centered individualism.

(1 Corinthians 6:18; Romans 1:26-27; Ephesians 5:28,29; Ephesians 6:4; Ephesians 5:18; Exodus 20:13; Matthew 19:8-9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-14; Philippians 2:4);

***And lastly,*** I covenant that

**10.** I will regard this local church and its various ministries as a sacred priority in my life, granting it preeminence over all institutions and agencies of secular origin. I will pray for its leaders, submit myself to its authority and give myself to its ministry as God gives me strength.

(1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:5,9; Hebrews 10:25; 13:17).

# ***Purpose***

The specific purpose for which this corporation is organized (as expressed in its Articles of Incorporation) is:

***To further the work of Jesus Christ in this world:***

- 1.*** By calling all peoples to embrace Him as Lord and Savior;
- 2.*** By seeking to exhibit His life (***Sonlife***) in the midst of an increasingly secular society;
- 3.*** By engaging in heart-felt, Spirit-led services of worship and praise;
- 4.*** By providing opportunities for individuals to be taught and nurtured concerning the realities of the Christian faith and the responsibilities of the Christian life;
- 5.*** By receiving tithes, offering and gifts to underwrite the work of the Church;
- 6.*** By developing ministries, buying, maintaining and selling properties and engaging in such activities as will assist the church in the accomplishment of its purpose; and
- 7.*** By maintaining an absolute commitment to the Word of God (the Bible) as the ultimate rule of faith and practice.

***Sonlife Community Church***

Founding Pastor - Mark Allen Mikels

Initial Service -September 18, 1994

# *Sonlife* GOSPEL PRESENTATION

**KEY REALITY #1 ... "Above everything else, Man is a relational being designed for intimate fellowship with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."**

Genesis 2:15-25

*God met with them in the Garden ... "Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh"  
"They were naked and were not ashamed"*

**KEY REALITY #2 ... "Sin has drastically and tragically affected Man's ability to relate intimately with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."**

Genesis 3:1-24 ... Romans 3:23

With **God** ... (I hid myself) - With **Fellow Man** ... (She deceived me)  
With **Self** ... (I was naked)

**KEY REALITY #3 ... "In Jesus Christ, God has provided for Man a Relational Re-Birth with His God, with His Fellow Man and with Himself."**

Genesis 3:15; John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21; Romans 5:8

Romans 8:16; Romans 12:4-5; Romans 8:6

With **God** - rebirth into the family of God - new spirit - new capability

With **Fellow Man** - created one body - one new man

With **Self** - to be spiritually minded is life and peace ... abundant life

**KEY REALITY #4 ... "Man must personally act upon God's Provision if He would experience Relational Re-Birth."**

Revelation 3:20; Romans 10:9-10; Romans 6:23; John 1:12

*Exercise **faith** ... (believe) - Stimulate **feelings** ... (desire) - Activate **will** ... (receive)*