

Bay City Wesleyan Church
April 17, 2016

Sunday Morning 04-17-2106

Part 2a of Advancing Deliberately: A Proven Plan to Stop Drifting and Start Growing - Following Jesus does not need to be complicated and incomprehensible to regular people

GIVE US YOUR TESTIMONY

<http://bible.com/events/21733>

We believe there are four essential areas for Advancing Deliberately as we follow Jesus. We can stop drifting and start growing when we focus on these areas:

- 1.LOVE² (Love to the second power)
- 2.GIVE
- 3.PRAY
- 4.DEPEND ON JESUS

This message grows out of questions and thoughts generated by the Holy Spirit as I participated in Bible studies and prayer times over the last couple of weeks.

Acts of the Apostles 4:23-37 NLT

As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: “O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying, ‘Why were the nations so angry? Why did they waste their time with futile plans? The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah.’ “In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will. And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness. All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means “Son of Encouragement”). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

What drives this church to our knees?

The early church responded to the demand for silence by praying for boldness and miracles.

What does this church ask for when we pray? Are our requests big and bold?

1 Samuel 1:1-28 NLT

There was a man named Elkanah who lived in Ramah in the region of Zuph in the hill country of Ephraim. He was the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, of Ephraim. Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah did not. Each year Elkanah would travel to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of Heaven's Armies at the Tabernacle. The priests of the Lord at that time were the two sons of Eli—Hophni and Phinehas. On the days Elkanah presented his sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to Peninnah and each of her children. And though he loved Hannah, he would give her only one choice portion because the Lord had given her no children. So Peninnah would taunt Hannah and make fun of her because the Lord had kept her from having children. Year after year it was the same—Peninnah would taunt Hannah as they went to the Tabernacle. Each time, Hannah would be reduced to tears and would not even eat. "Why are you crying, Hannah?" Elkanah would ask. "Why aren't you eating? Why be downhearted just because you have no children? You have me—isn't that better than having ten sons?" Once after a sacrificial meal at Shiloh, Hannah got up and went to pray. Eli the priest was sitting at his customary place beside the entrance of the Tabernacle. Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to the Lord. And she made this vow: "O Lord of Heaven's Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the Lord, his hair will never be cut." As she was praying to the Lord, Eli watched her. Seeing her lips moving but hearing no sound, he thought she had been drinking. "Must you come here drunk?" he demanded. "Throw away your wine!" "Oh no, sir!" she replied. "I haven't been drinking wine or anything stronger. But I am very discouraged, and I was pouring out my heart to the Lord. Don't think I am a wicked woman! For I have been praying out of great anguish and sorrow." "In that case," Eli said, "go in peace! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him." "Oh, thank you, sir!" she exclaimed. Then she went back and began to eat again, and she was no longer sad. The entire family got up early the next morning and went to worship the Lord once more. Then they returned home to Ramah. When Elkanah slept with Hannah, the Lord remembered her plea, and in due time she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I asked the Lord for him." The next year Elkanah and his family went on their annual trip to offer a sacrifice to the Lord and to keep his vow. But Hannah did not go. She told her husband, "Wait until the boy is weaned. Then I will take him to the Tabernacle and leave him there with the Lord permanently." "Whatever you think is best," Elkanah agreed. "Stay here for now, and may the Lord help you keep your promise." So she stayed home and nursed the boy until he was weaned. When the child was weaned, Hannah took him to the Tabernacle in Shiloh. They brought along a three-year-old bull for the sacrifice and a basket of flour and some wine. After sacrificing the bull, they brought the boy to Eli. "Sir, do you remember me?" Hannah asked. "I am the very woman who stood here several years ago praying to the Lord. I asked the Lord to give me this boy, and he has granted my request. Now I am giving him to the Lord, and he will belong to the Lord his whole life." And they worshiped the Lord there.

What drives this church to our knees?

When she could not have a baby, Hannah prayed to God and cried and cried — inconsolably – until God heard and answered her.

What does this church ask for when we pray? Are our requests big and bold? Do we ask Jesus to do the impossible for us?

1 Samuel 2:1-11 NLT

Then Hannah prayed: "My heart rejoices in the Lord! The Lord has made me strong. Now I have an

answer for my enemies; I rejoice because you rescued me. No one is holy like the Lord ! There is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. “Stop acting so proud and haughty! Don’t speak with such arrogance! For the Lord is a God who knows what you have done; he will judge your actions. The bow of the mighty is now broken, and those who stumbled are now strong. Those who were well fed are now starving, and those who were starving are now full. The childless woman now has seven children, and the woman with many children wastes away. The Lord gives both death and life; he brings some down to the grave but raises others up. The Lord makes some poor and others rich; he brings some down and lifts others up. He lifts the poor from the dust and the needy from the garbage dump. He sets them among princes, placing them in seats of honor. For all the earth is the Lord’s, and he has set the world in order. “He will protect his faithful ones, but the wicked will disappear in darkness. No one will succeed by strength alone. Those who fight against the Lord will be shattered. He thunders against them from heaven; the Lord judges throughout the earth. He gives power to his king; he increases the strength of his anointed one.” Then Elkanah returned home to Ramah without Samuel. And the boy served the Lord by assisting Eli the priest.

What drives this church to our knees?

What does this church ask for when we pray? Are our requests big and bold? Do we ask Jesus to do the impossible for us?

What songs of praise grow out of the answers to prayer we receive?

Acts of the Apostles 26:9-18 NLT

“I used to believe that I ought to do everything I could to oppose the very name of Jesus the Nazarene. Indeed, I did just that in Jerusalem. Authorized by the leading priests, I caused many believers there to be sent to prison. And I cast my vote against them when they were condemned to death. Many times I had them punished in the synagogues to get them to curse Jesus. I was so violently opposed to them that I even chased them down in foreign cities. “One day I was on such a mission to Damascus, armed with the authority and commission of the leading priests. About noon, Your Majesty, as I was on the road, a light from heaven brighter than the sun shone down on me and my companions. We all fell down, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is useless for you to fight against my will.’ “‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. “And the Lord replied, ‘I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. Now get to your feet! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and witness. Tell people that you have seen me, and tell them what I will show you in the future. And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God’s people, who are set apart by faith in me.’

What drives this church to our knees?

What does this church ask for when we pray? Are our requests big and bold? Do we ask Jesus to do the impossible for us?

What songs of praise grow out of the answers to prayer we receive?

What is your story? How would you give your testimony to others?

1 Corinthians 3:5-9 NLT

After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building.

What drives this church to our knees?

What does this church ask for when we pray? Are our requests big and bold? Do we ask Jesus to do the impossible for us?

What songs of praise grow out of the answers to prayer we receive?

What is your story? How would you give your testimony to others?

How do you plant the seeds of Jesus' grace in others? How do you water? How do you ask the Spirit to make it grow until they follow Jesus too?

I believe the Holy Spirit wants this truth to captivate our lives:
His grace changed you so his grace could change others through you.

What will it look like when the need for boldness and miracles drives this church to our knees?

What will we feel when this church makes big and bold requests? When we ask Jesus to do the impossible for us?

What will the songs of praise that grow out of God's answers to prayer sound like?

What will people hear when you tell your story? Imagine the range of emotions you will feel when you give your testimony to others.

What do you think will happen when you ask the Spirit to make your testimony grow until others follow Jesus too?

What will it look like when we long for spiritual babies with the passion of a couple seeking a new baby?

FIRST STEPS:

- Pray for boldness
- Ask questions and listen to answers
- Prepare to give your testimony - to tell your story (BC + At the Cross + AD)