

Walking in the Word

Psalm 1

April 25, 2007- Wednesday, 6:30PM - Dr. David H. McKinley

**[Dr. McKinley, message, Walking in the Word]**

... have a word driven ministry, ah... there's a great effort to display the Word of God. But as I mentioned, I have a print on my wall (I know they've taken that back down) but I have a print on my wall... you can't really read this one very well. But the print that I have is Psalm 1... Psalm 1. And I want to invite you to take and open your Bible to Psalm 1.

Now I didn't get the idea of the message as I walked out the door tonight.[laughter] Just let me clarify that since I'm talking about ah... a few minutes ago. This is actually been something that's been on my heart for ah... several days, actually a few weeks as I've thought about some things that I wanted to share with you. Our pastor is speaking about ah... the subject of prayer, and I don't think you can ever study the subject of prayer that you don't also study the need to know and pray according, not only to the will of God, but the word of God, because the word of God guides us in our praying... and... and ah... Psalm 1 gives us a great word... a great statement on the word.

And I love the psalms. I mean, I have Psalm 1 in my office because I love Psalm 1 but I love the psalms... all 150. Ah... Through my lifetime the Psalms have been as much a... a source of refreshment and a... and a place of shelter as any other portion of Scripture. Ah... It's a record book of spiritual experience. And when you study the Psalms you begin to read the experiences of other people who have shared some of the struggles that you have in life and who have known some of the joys that you have in life. If I had to categorize the Psalms, I'd say the thing that I love about them is that they give personal interpretation to the upsets, the pains, and the disturbances of life.

When I don't really know how to express how I feel, the Psalms can interpret some of those very feelings and expressions for me. They provide interpretation and at the same time the Psalms give expression to the joy, to the gratitude, to the praise of my heart. And when I worship often times I... I'm drawn to the Psalms because the Psalms give expression to my worship. And Psalm 1 is, as though it were, the preface to the entire book of Psalms.

Now I want to ask you a question. How many of you always read a preface when you read a book? How many of you read a preface? Oooo. I've written a book or two. [laughter] I kinda counted on that preface and that's a... that's a scattered response. Let me ask this question. How many of you never read the preface... you just go to chapter 1 to get started in the

book? How many of you? Okay, as though... I thank you for being honest about that. I just want to keep that in mind. Some of us read the preface; some of us do not.

The preface of any book is written in order to set the tone and the theme of a book. And the reason that an author chooses to give a preface is that he wants to give you a taste, he wants to give you a picture, he wants to give you a... a sense of what this book is about and where this book is going to go.

I heard about a man who had picked up a book that had been laying around the house ah... on the subject of communication in marriage. And he thought he would just try to quickly take a look, so he looked at the preface to see if he could pick anything up and his wife happened to walk through the room about the time he was looking at the book... so it's rather impressive. He looked like he was interested in this book on communication in marriage. And he said, "You know, sweetheart, I don't know if you've read this book or not, but I was just noticing that this book says that one of the reasons we have a problem with communication in our marriage is that there's a significant difference between the word count of men and of women." He said, "Did you know that the average man speaks about 15,000 words a day. That's what the author says." He said, "And the average woman... she speaks 30,000 words a day." He said, "Listen to how much more women talk than men! That's why we have a problem!" She never looked up. She said, "You know why, don't you?" She said, "Men never listen and they have to repeat everything they say at least twice to ever get a man to hear it." [laughter] He was so stunned by her response, he looked at her and he said, "What?" [ha] [laughter] You know, I mean we sometimes don't realize that ah... that we're not always getting [clap, clap] what we need to get, and not hearing what we need to hear!

And just as there's a great contrast between the way men and women live their lives and communicate and do pretty much every else, there is a comparison and a contrast that is presented in Psalms 1 that really opens the door for us to the life that God wants us to know, to understand and to live. I've entitled this message tonight "Walking in the Word". Because really what Psalm 1 begins with is a taste... a theme development... the truth that all of life centers upon the focus of your life, the center of your life. And whatever your life is centered on, whatever your life is focused on, then you can really tell what your life is and your life is about. Let's read Psalm 1 together.

1) *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits at the seat of the scoffers. 2) But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. 3) And he will be like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and whatever he does will prosper. 4) The wicked are not so, but are like the chaff that the wind drives away. 5) Therefore the wicked will not stand in the day of judgment, or sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6) For the Lord*

*knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will (What? Say the last word with me.) perish.*

The Bible says that God wants you to know how to live a life... a life that is completely summed up in the first word of this text. And what is the first word of it? Blessed. God wants you to know how to live a blessed life. Now we talk about being blessed and wanting to know the blessing of God. And we sort of throw that word around in the church world and talk a lot about "God bless you" and "blessings on you" and "I pray for a blessing" and all those kinds of things.

But the Bible really does tell us that God is interested in us living in this realm called blessedness. Literally it could be interpreted to mean happiness. I don't mean in the shallowest sense but I mean in the fullest sense. A life that is whole, a life that is complete. Ah... it's the idea of living a life that ah... has well being. You could even actually say it's a life of success. If you really want to know how life is meant to be lived, then this is the way to live life. And this is the realm by which you can know blessing in your life.

And the psalmist from the very outset says here's the secret to success, to abundance, to confidence, to fullness, to blessing in life. Do you want to know how to do it, he says. Here it is. Let me give you comparison, let me give you some contrast because there are only 2 ways to live. One of those is to live according to a God-centered life, and the other is to live according to a self-centered life. And that is the great contrast in this world... between those who are walking and living a God-centered life focus and those who were walking and living in a self-centered, and therefore a focus that is common to all men here on planet earth.

So the psalmist begins to draw the parallels. And as he draws the parallel, he begins to develop a theme and I want us to trace that theme in these moments tonight.

First, he contrasts 2 pathways. He starts with a contrast and it is a contrast of 2 pathways in life. He says, "Blessed is the man who walks... walks..." What a common thing that is for man, right? We don't crawl around, we don't move on all fours as do the animal kingdom. The distinctive thing that God has made man is the ability to walk. And the Bible uses the term walk to talk about the journey that we make through life. The Bible uses the word walk in a positive way in the New Testament to talk about the Christian life. "That we would no longer walk in the old way, but we are... when we come up out of the baptistery the Bible says we are "raised to walk in newness of life." We're not going to walk according to the same path that we walked on before. So this idea of walking has everything to do with the... the life-style that you live, with the... with the pathway that you take, with the journey that you make.

So he says, "Okay, you want to know how to be blessed?" It has to do with how you walk... with the pathway. But he's very quickly to qualify that walk

by saying “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits at the seat of scoffers.” Look at the progression... walk, stand, sit. That’s what you did tonight, didn’t you? That’s how you got right where you are tonight. You walked in the doors, you came to a row, you stopped, you stood, and then you sat. You’re already standing. You understand what I’m saying here, right? So you walked, you stood, you sat. That’s exactly how you got here tonight.

But the Bible says that there are 2 different spheres that we can walk and live in in life, and one of those spheres... the one that is not the way of blessing is walking, standing and sitting according to the way of this world. I want you to think about this sphere of just living in the world and walking in the world. Because when we do this... when we walk through this progression we begin to see the issue for those of us who want to know what life is really all about. What is it? The sphere of life in which we walk... the walking sphere of the world?

Well, when you are walking according to the sphere of the world, you are approving the pathways of this world. When you’re walking in the sphere of the world, and that’s your orientation in life, you are simply going the path that everyone else is going. You know, if you’ve ever been on a campus, even around this campus, there are some areas where the sidewalks are not poured the way that people want to take the pathway. And so you know what happens is that people begin to walk across it, and before long you have a pathway and everybody goes that same way. It’s just sort of the way that we go. (Let’s get that back up there just a moment if we can.) It’s the idea of walking and by walking in the same way that everybody else is walking, you are approving their way of walking.

And so what it’s saying is is that when you walk in the world, you’re just living according to the same path... the same approval... the same stride of this world. And the Bible says if you walk according to this world... if you let that determine the pathway of your life, you are going to find that your life is ultimately something that is not going to take you to the destination that you want to go.

Next he says not only do we walk and therefore approve the things of the world, but he says you stand. And when you stand, you agree. When you stand, you agree. “Let’s stand together.” “Let’s stand up.” We use that term all the time. The idea of standing together, taking a stand, and doing it with others which means that we want everybody to know that we agree about this. And the psalmist is saying that when you live your life according to the pathway of the world... if you’re walking according to the world, you’re approving of the world, and if you are standing with the world, you’re agreeing with the world.

And then, of course, it says sit. And the word sit reminds me of acceptance. I’ve accepted it. This is where I am, this is where I stay, and therefore, I have this whole sense of sitting and accepting, sharing the park bench of life with others. And the Bible says that those who do this

according to the counsel of the wicked, along the way of sinners in the seat of the scoffer, living according to the mindset of this world is the sure way to never know blessing in your life. Because the Bible says "Blessed is the man who does NOT do these things."

"But..." that's the word of contrast... but instead what does it say there? "His delight is in the law of the Lord." So let's look at the delight... the idea of something in which we delight. I love the fact that the word delight is used because the word delight is not something you think of outwardly but something you think about inwardly, right? When you take a mint and put it in your mouth, after you've had maybe a piece of garlic toast, or you do ah... you have maybe a strong cup of coffee, there's a... there's a sense of refreshment, there's a sense of delight in that mint. Or when you have a morsel of food that is, I mean, just indescribably delicious and you put that on your tongue, there is a delight that goes on inside.

And the Bible says by looking at 2 people you may see them as just walking along in life. But there are some who are walking according to this pattern, but there are some who are walking on a different way. Because their mindset and the direction of their life has everything to do with that in which they delight.

I love what Warren Weirsbe, the Bible commentator, said, when he said, "What you delight in is what will direct your life." What delights you will eventually direct you... direct you, so be careful what you enjoy. And here the psalmist says if you want to know blessing in life, then walk in a specific area of delight. Let everything in you be impacted by this delight so that it impacts everything outside of you. And what is it that this one delights in? It says he delights in the what? Law of the Lord.

What are talking about when we talk about the law of the Lord in the Old Testament? We're talking about the...? The Word of God. We're talking about the Bible, as it is the Word of God. And therefore, the Bible says "Blessed is the one who delights in the law of the Lord, and in His law (in God's law) the Bible says "he meditates day and night." Meditates... what does it mean to meditate? What is meditation?

Now I know we've had a lot of different ah... oh, strains of religions and philosophies and self-improvement movements that talk about meditation and it's all about trying to reduce your stress and trying to ah... clear your mind and ... and trying to focus your energies and trying to tap yourself. But the Bible is very clear. When God wants us to meditate, He doesn't want us just to take an inward journey. It's an inward experience but it's not an inward journey. He wants us to meditate in the Word of God. "His delight is in the law of the Lord and in His word... in His law does he meditate day and night."

So what is meditation? Meditation is to the soul spiritually what digestion is to the body. And just as when you eat food and you digest it and it

becomes the source of strength and of energy and wellbeing in your life, so it is that when you begin to meditate on the Word of God that the Word of God begins to become your source of life, strength, sustenance and sufficiency.

Can I tell you what one of the great tragedies of our day is? That church is filled with people who are spiritually anorectic and biblically bulimic. They taste, they gather, but it never is absorbed. It's never really taken in. It's never really processed and utilized to create strength and maturity and stability in their lives. And the result of that is that we have weak, emaciated, depreciated believers. Because we're not rightly related to the Word of God. The blessing of the Christian life is not biblical exposure, it is biblical digestion and meditation... letting the Word of God get in you and letting the Word of God ultimately shape and ultimately make you the person that God would have you to be.

I just want to ask you a question. Are you assimilating the Word of God into your life? Do you practice biblical meditation in your life?

I am very grateful that you're here tonight, and giving me the opportunity to speak with you and to share with you and... and to teach you tonight. And I'm thankful for every form of biblical teaching that we have that is a part of his ministry. We are strong on the Bible and we want to get people into the Bible. But it's not enough to just do it in this fashion. It's not enough to come, sit down, take notes [tap], and say, "Okay, got it! [tap]", put it in the Bible, take it home, do it again [tap]... do it again [tap]! It needs to get from the page [tap] into the heart. And therefore it's important to have some reflective thinking scripturally in your life and to process the Word of God in your life.

A number of years ago my pastor Adrian Rogers gave me a little list of questions to ask every time I would ah... read a passage of Scripture or study the Bible, and it's been a... a really helpful thing to me. I wrote it down years ago and... and sometime when I take a passage... a short passage I'll ask myself these questions because they help me to get the Word of God from simply being something I've been exposed to, to something that I am meditating on, digesting and assimilating into my life. Let me just offer these to you tonight.

If you want to receive the word of God with a reflective spirit then ask yourself these questions. When you read the Bible is there a promise to claim? Is God telling me something about Himself, something about His work, something about His world, positively or negatively, that I need to identify and that I need to embrace? Is there a promise to claim?

There is a promise [tap,tap,tap] in this passage that we're studying tonight. The promise is... is there's a blessedness [tap] to the one [tap] who delights [tap] in the law [tap] of the Lord [tap] and meditates [tap] in His word [tap] day [tap] and night [tap]! That's a promise! And there's also a promise that says that those who walk in the path of the sinners and

those who live... stand there and sit there are not going to know God's blessing in their lives. So there's a promise positively and negatively even in this text. Is there a promise to claim?

Is there a lesson to learn? Well certainly that's true of this text tonight. You could look and identify some lessons and maybe one of the simplest things you can do is when you read a passage of Scripture write down one statement, one lesson that you want to remember. And maybe keep a record of those lessons so that you can review them and... and take them away and... and go across them in life.

Is there a blessing to enjoy? Maybe I just need to stop and realize that God is giving me a blessing [tap] in his word that I need to enjoy [tap] and I need to begin to experience in my life.

Is there a command to obey? Is there something that God says: Don't do that; do this. This is the way of the Lord. This is the will of God. Is there a command for me to obey?

And then is there a sin to avoid? How important it is to be reminded that the Bible gives us warning signals. Just as you know when the light turns yellow and then suddenly is red at an intersection, you must stop unless you want to risk the reality of injury or even a fatality! So it's important that when you read the warning signals of the Word of God and you see the red light in the Word of God that you need to not just say, "Yeah, I know that. You need to do that in order to keep yourself from injury and catastrophe in life... Is there a sin to avoid?"

And then is there a new thought to carry with me? Is there something that I need to get; that I need to take away; that I need to really hold on to today, and let that new thought be something that will help me to see life differently. Maybe sort of a new lens of looking at life, a new way of looking at others? Is there a new thought to carry with me?

There are great promises in God's Word about the quality of life that is associated with His Word. In the book of Joshua chapter 1 and verse 8, God spoke to Joshua and He said:

8) *This Book of the Law* (Not only Joshua himself, but to all of the nation) shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then... then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good (what?) success.

You want to know how to be successful in life? You want to know how to be blessed in life? You've got to understand there are 2 pathways and one pathway is in the sphere of the world and the other is in the sphere of the Word, and God says, "If you want blessing and success, walk in the Word." Contrast the pathways.

Now, let's compare 2 pictures. We've done that with the 2 pathways that are mentioned here, now we need to begin to compare some pictures. He talks about this man who's blessed, the one who's not... who follows the world's path, the one who is who's in the Word, and then this is what it says about the one who's blessed. Verse 3:

3) *He is like a (what? Let's all say it together...) He is like a tree.. a tree planted by the streams of water, that yields fruit in its season, it's leaf does not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.*

You see, he begins to talk about a picture. You want to know what the life is gonna look like of the person who is living in the sphere of the Word? He said the greatest way I can tell you is he's going to be like a big beautiful tree.

Spring has recently sprung for us. And aren't you just amazed right now in the cool of the day, in the evening time when you're out driving, how that the lush greenery of the trees and all of the foliage and everything that's go... it's just kind of changed the community again. I mean, as you drive along... as you ride by, you see this beauty and you love it and you just think, "Man, I... I love the life of Springtime!" And then in particular there's some big beautiful trees that are planted by streams of water, and they're strong and they're healthy. Well that's exactly what the Bible says about the person who lives in the Word of God. It says he will be like a tree; he will be planted.

What does that mean? That means stability. To live in this world is to not know any stability. But to live in the Word of God is to have stability even in some of the greatest moments of anxiety and even tragedy in life. I didn't say insulation. I didn't say you don't have pain. I didn't say you don't face storms. Even the greatest trees that are planted have storms! But the Bible says that even in the midst of those experiences there's stability in life because we're planted by the streams of living water.

And then the Bible speaks of productivity. "He yields forth fruit in it's season." That there's a sense in which there's just constant fruit coming in this life because the life is rooted in the Word of God, and it has water to live and water to produce.

Derek Kidner, the biblical commentary, said "The promised immunity of the leaf from withering is not independence from the rhythm of the seasons, but freedom from the crippling damage of drought." You're not going to live with drought... drought that would keep your crops, your fruit, your foliage from bearing, because regardless of whether it's a good season or a bad season, the reality is is that you have a life source that will make a difference.

So he speaks of stability, he speaks of productivity and then he speaks of longevity. He says when you live in the sphere of the Word, he said, here's the picture. It's a life of stability, productivity, longevity. "Whatsoever



he does shall prosper.” It’s going to remain. It’s going to abide. It’s going to matter. It’s going to continue.

But in light of all the beauty of that truth and in light of all the goodness that is seen in that picture, there’s another picture. What does it say? Verse 4, “but the wicked are not saved.” He takes a whole verse to describe this full life, this life of the tree, and then he takes 2 words to describe the other life. “Not saved.. not saved.” In fact, he says instead of being like the tree, he says he’s like the chaff.. the chaff which the wind drives away.

Chaff is something that is useless. It’s there when the wheat is being harvested and the heads.. the grain of the wheat that are used to be ground to create bread and substance and sufficiency falls down but the chaff is sort of a ... like a shell, like a husk that just floats. It’s thin, it’s useless, it’s a drifter. And here 2000 years later chaff is still chaff. That’s still what it is. Nobody knows what to do with chaff. It’s just chaff.

It’s kind of like the pollen in the early time of Spring. Did you see the time not long ago when you go out and you walk near any puddle, any lake and there was just like a film on it because all the pollen had just..? Well, that’s kinda of what chaff can be like. It’s just.. it’s airborne, it’s light, it’s a drifter. And the Bible says that the life that’s not rooted in the Word of God is like chaff, blown here, blown there.

I heard about a little boy who ah.. was walking along a street.. was in a day when they often would have these scales out in public, and we have some of them now but not as many as we used to have around. And there was a man who was an extremely large man who decided to check in on the scale and check his weight. He got up on the scale, dropped a few coins in and the little boy watched with wonder, thinking, “Whoo! I wonder what he’s going to do to this scale.” And he weighed in at 40 pounds. The little boy realized he weighed 50 pounds. He couldn’t believe it. He grabbed his mom’s hand; he said, “Mommy, mommy, look at that! There’s a man and he’s hollow!” [laughter]

You know what? People without Christ are hollow. They’re shallow, they’re hollow and they cannot find anything but chaff in life. And that is the picture of life without Christ. I didn’t say that I have a lot of things. I didn’t say that I had a lot of chaff, but it’s all chaff. It’s just something that comes and something that goes. Something that’s here and something that’s gone. And so this incredible contrast is there of the shallowness, the hollowness of the chaff of a life that all it does is spins and churns in nothingness in this world.

The Bible speaks in the New Testament in the book of Matthew chapter 3 the message of John the Baptist who said, “*I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I’m not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and*

*fire.” And then listen to what he says of Jesus. “His winnowing fork is in His hand. He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn. But the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” That’s what the Bible says [strike] the picture is of the life without God; of a life that is not God centered.*

We read and we hear the word wickedness and we read it in this passage and we only think of people who are vile... people who are despicable. But when the Bible speaks of wickedness, it’s not really talking about just what somebody does in their lifestyle. It’s talking about the condition of their heart. And for any person who is without Christ, they are at the core a person who is self-directed instead of Christ-directed, and the result of that is a life of emptiness and finally a life that will face judgment. This is a very serious matter. And the Bible draws the... the contrast, and the Bible draws the comparison.

The wonderful news is that God can take chaff and he can make trees out of it. And when the world can do nothing but see the chaff blowing around, God can take what was once chaff and He can make it a tree.

I want us to end tonight by considering the possibilities... the possibilities that are seen here in verses 5 and 6. He says, “The wicked will not stand in the day of judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.” But then verse 6 says, “*For the Lord knows the way of the righteous.*”

God knows you. God knows your way. For those who seek to live in the sphere of the Word, there’s a great promise that comes with that, and that great promise is that God sees you and God knows you. God guides you. God protects you. God provides for you. God watches over you. And tonight I want you to know that if you are a person who is seeking to live your life in the realm of the Word, one of the greatest things that you can know... for all the things you don’t know about life is because you live in the realm of the world... Word. “*God knows the way of the righteous.*”

Maybe you feel lost right now. Maybe you think God’s forgotten you right now. Maybe you feel that in some way that ah... God has not come through in your life right now. I want you to know that if you’re walking in the sphere [tap] of the Word [tap], “God [tap] knows [tap] the way [tap] of the righteous.”

Now the final words are harsh. “The way of the wicked will perish.” Strong, specific. A wasted life, a life that never really mattered. I didn’t say it didn’t stir and it didn’t have visibility. I just... never had any weight. But to live and to walk in the Word is to live with a life that carries weight.

I was 15 years of age when I first started to seriously study the Word of God. And I want you to know that today as I stand before you, I hold one of many Bibles that I now own and Bibles that have marked times and seasons in

my life. But I stand before you tonight to tell you that the greatest [tap] thing[tap] that has every [tap] happened [tap]in [tap] my [tap]life [tap], and the greatest blessing of my life is knowing this Book, loving this Book, and seeking to live according to the truth of this Book. I am far below it's standard, and everyday in my life I'm reminded that I don't get up as a preacher, put it on the ground, stand on it and say, "I'm standing on the Word." I remember everyday that I stand under the Word of God. And there is always a distance between where I am and where I want to be according to this Book.

But I want you to know [tap] I am convinced[tap] as much[tap] as I have breath[tap] in[tap] my [tap] body [tap] tonight that this is the secret and the source of success and blessing in life! And I want you to walk in the Word, to pray the Word, to eat the Word, to live the Word! That the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ would mark your life, would mark this church, would mark this ministry, and that we wouldn't simply be a big building that has a few people who are living in the Word and a lot of chaff blowing around! But that we see God taking the chaff of this world and transforming lives, and that this place is a place where trees of all ages and stages are growing to spiritual maturity that bring forth fruit and stand as a witness and a testimony to the life that Jesus gives! Amen? Amen!

*Father, I thank You tonight for Your Word. And I thank You for this time of study together, and I thank You for the friends who've gathered here and shared with us tonight. I thank You, Lord, for the power of Your word to bless, to enrich, to protect our lives. And I thank You, Lord, for those who even in this room know and are learning what it means to live in the sphere of the Word of God. In particular I thank You tonight for Bret and Melissa McCrary and I thank You for this moment that we have, that we're their witness of the Word and the blessing of God in their lives. In Jesus' name. AMEN*

I want Bret and Melissa to come and join me here for just a moment. You see their pictures in the worship guide here tonight. Bret and Melissa are in their very last few days in the Dallas community because they are getting ready to ah... make a journey of life, walking in the Word, that's going to take them to a new location, a distant land, a different culture, another language. So many different things. They came here ah... to be able to attend seminary and Bret has been at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and has also been working on our staff here in our education ministry and administration ministry during those days. Melissa has been working in our pastoral office and has been our receptionist in that area. And they have had a sense individually, collectively of the call of God upon their lives. And they've answered that call and they are new missionary appointees.

And so I want to just take a moment and ask a few questions and have a chance for us to bless them and to pray for them tonight. But I want to just ask each of you to tell me a little bit about your calling, and how you got into missions. I mean, how did you end up thinking this way,

getting beyond the borders of America, getting beyond the things that were normal, comfortable, cultural in life? What really made you want to take this step in life?

MELISSA: *For me, ah... I grew up in church. And I grew up doing what was then called Mission Funds in GA's and is now called AWANA. You know, so I was learning about missions, but it was something that I always wanted to go and visit those people.ah... It really wasn't until I was finishing college and had my own plans for life, I had my own ambitions and the last few months God just really changed all that and said, "You're not going to go do this. You're going to go do My thing." And He called me into International Missions and I went for 2 years and I served in northern Africa. So that totally changed my life and after that I was hooked. That's just what I wanted to do.*

BRET: *I met the need... I grew up in a Christian home, I grew up in the church there. I never really heard much about missions, and if you were to have asked me in high school what I thought a missionary was, I would have said it was somebody who couldn't hack it in America. And that was my honest belief. And then in college I had the opportunity to become part of a very missions-founded church and be able to ah... just take part in [unclear] and just felt, you know, the immediate calling on my life, not just to get on [unclear] but make that my life's work.*

McKINLEY: Can you tell us a little bit about who you're going with?

BRET: *Ah... we're going with the International Mission Board which is part of the Southern Baptist Convention and is supported by both the property program which Prestonwood gives to. So we are 100 percent supported and even through the tithes and offerings... offerings you give. They go... some of it goes right to [unclear].*

McKINLEY: That's exactly right. Part of the way that ah... we are involved in missions is that a portion of ah... every gift that is given here goes to support our Mission Board's agencies, our seminaries for training. All of that is a part of this large network that we are involved in. And ah... we are thrilled to be able to not only have the fellowship that we have in the Lord as you being a part of our church family, but also the partnership in this work. And because you have been approved and have been appointed as Southern Baptist International Board appointees, as you mentioned you are going to be sponsored completely which is wonderful. But you certainly still need the sponsorship of prayer. You need the partnership of our love and ah... our awareness. Can you tell us a little bit about what you're going to do... where you're going to go?

BRET: *Well, we'll be in the Pacific Rim region. I know in the devotional tonight it gives a few fast facts about it. Something we'll be doing that's just a heart for us is we'll be working with Muslims [unclear]people groups, people who have little or no access to the Gospel. Not just from IMB missionaries but any great projects. And so just our heart is there to*

*work with these people and lay the... lay the groundwork and the foundation for love [unclear]*

McKINLEY: So the Pacific Rim is where they're going to be. You've got this picture, you can read a little bit about some of the possibilities that are there, and then ah... I want you to tell us a little bit about how long you're going to serve.

MELISSA: *We'll be serving a 3 year term that starts ah... May sixth. So that's our initial hope is to do the 3 year time and then come back for 6 to 8 months before returning for a 3 or 4 year term. Our... our hope and our goal is to be full missionaries where you spend about 4 years on the field, and then about 1 year back at home.*

McKINLEY: So it's really something you're looking at for the immediate future and for long term. But you've also had another step come into your life in this immediate future... talking about footprints. You want to tell us about that?

MELISSA: Well, the same day we found out that we have been appointed missionaries, we also found out we were going to be parents. So it's a little bit of a shock and ah... but we're really excited about the unexpected blessing and ah... our child will be born on the field. We'll have him or her in that country, but... so we're going to have a little missionary baby.

McKINLEY: That's so great! Isn't that wonderful? [pastor claps loudly][applause] Don't you just want to praise the Lord for that in their lives? Amen!

Well, our goal tonight as a church is to put our arms of love [music begins] around Bret and Melissa, a couple we've grown to... to love and have such great affection for and great respect for their life... their walk in faith. And we just want to pray for them, we want to commission them as a church. They've been commissioned to this new task by the International Mission Board, but we want to commission them as a church. We want to love them.

And I'm going to ask our seminary guys who are here who are some of your friends and buddies to come up here, I'm going to ask some of our pastors who are here tonight, our deacon chairman's here tonight. If you're a deacon officer, I want you to come up, and I want some people to just come up and lay [clap] your [clap] hands [clap] on Bret and on Melissa tonight and I want us to pray for them. And I want us to send them in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the promise of the Word of God, with the confidence of the power of the Gospel to salvation to everyone who believes, and to believe tonight that God is going to do great and mighty things through this couple's life.

Ah...I want to pray for the health and the well-being of their baby and this pregnancy. And ah... obviously that could create fear as much as it creates

excitement, but we just want to thank the Lord that His hand is on all these things and ah... we know that the Lord sees and knows the way of the righteous, and that is our confidence tonight. And that's who you are and that's what you're doing. We didn't call you that, Jesus called you that, and we just tonight stand with you to say, "We love you and we thank God for you."

Ross, I'm going to ask you to step over here and voice our prayer. I want to take just a moment. I want you to pray there, if you've got one of those prayer cards, use just a moment to pray for some of those, or pray for Bret and Melissa as these pray here. And then Ross is going to close our service in prayer in just a moment. So let's just pray here a moment together, guys. And you pray there individually where you are. [music continues]

ROSS: *Lord Jesus, we do first and foremost thank You for Bret and for Melissa; for their lives and for the impact that they've had on our church here. Lord Jesus, we pray that Your Holy Spirit will continue to have the freedom to lead them ah... to meet their every need, to protect them as they go. Anoint each step they take, Lord. We pray for the hearts of those that ah... their paths will cross these coming days and months. And as they turn to years, Lord, may the soil be fertile in an unreached area, Lord, where there's much darkness and I pray, Father, that they would bring the light, Father, and many would come to know You through Bret and Melissa's lives and for their work for You. Lord, just bless them in every way. Let them always know and always sense Your presence and God, continue to be their comfort, their encouragement as they seek to glorify You in every area of their life. In Jesus' name we pray. AMEN*

McKINLEY: You know I just want us to stand and sing it one more time before we go tonight. I want to be more like you, Jesus. I want to walk in the Word, I want to be reminded that the Lord knows the way of the righteous and that we can live fruitful, abundant, joyful, blessed lives in this generation in this day. This isn't something for yesterday. This is for today. This is for now. And so let it be true of you as you walk in the way. God bless you in sincerity.

Music begins.