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THE NAZARETH PROJECT
Honoring God's Design

Ephesians 4:3-6

September 12, 2007- Wednesday, 6:15PM - Dr. David H. McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message, Honoring God's Design]

Well that was a... a very special and a very wonderful time tonight. And that really wasn't something that we planned or designed to do, but obviously I think the Lord just led in that time for us tonight. And, Rick, I thank you and each of our singers here for just sharing in that time of sharing that song with us tonight. I had not heard that and ah... I loved it and it ministered to my heart tonight.

And so ah... some things that you don't design are absolutely perfect. Some of the best things in life are things you didn't plan to do, aren't they? And then sometimes the things that you design become the biggest disasters in life. Have you found that to be true? That design flaws in life can be a full gamut between catastrophic on the one hand to being very frustrating and confusing on the other. Certainly we've seen the catastrophic effect of design flaws: the levees in New Orleans, the o-rings on the space shuttle. Those are very exaggerated examples of design flaws.

Some of us know what it is to deal with the frustration of de... design flaws in our homes and our offices. Just where people put light switches and electrical outlets. And sometimes when you're at the office you're trying to connect with websites and there are design flaws with those. I don't know about you but I have a continual experience of finding design flaws with pop-tops on things that I'm trying to get open [laughter]. And you know ah... it just seems there are all kinds of design flaws. Recently we've heard about a number of issues related to toys that have been made in China. And I read this week that ah... a new study shows that 550 U.S. toy recalls in the last few years were all related to design flaws and not manufacturing issues. And so design flaws are often at the core of something like that, a massive recall.

Ah... Not long ago, I guess, well, almost a year ago, ah... I received notice on a vehicle that I was driving that there was design flaw, that there was a problem, something that needed to be fixed, and there was a recall. And so I was told and instructed to bring this vehicle back to the dealership. Well the dealership on my vehicle happens to be over in the Mid-cities area and it was one of those times in life where I was just busy and I couldn't find time to get over there. And I was actually making a trip out of the area. I have a couple of interns who were with me who are seminary students over in Fort Worth and so I said, "Listen, why don't you take me to the airport and you take my car over to the Mid-cities and help me get this problem corrected with my vehicle." And of course, I did what you would

imagine; I took the vehicle before we left and I had it all ready to go and had the paperwork in the vehicle, had the car full of fuel so we could know that they could get it over there and get back to meet me at the airport, and all those kinds of things. And ah... after they dropped me off and arrived at the dealership they learned that the design issue was that the gas tank in the vehicle took on too much fuel and that there was a great risk of explosion if something happened with that gas tank.

Well, here I had two seminary students who had an overfueled car and had to decide what to do because the dealer said, "Frankly, we can't touch it until you get some of the gas out of this car." So they made multiple loops around the 820 Loop in Fort Worth trying to get the gas out of my car, learned how to build their prayer life in the event that there could be an explosion [laughter], and ah... basically managed to get the vehicle back to the dealership and back to me.

The only problem was when I got in the car I said, "Guys, help me understand what happened here. I thought you were dropping me off at the airport and dropping my car at the dealership and coming right back. I left you with a full tank of gas and I've got it with about a quarter. What's going on here?" You know, I'm thinking Ferris Bueller's Day Off is going on here, is what I'm thinking. [laughter] But little did I know they put their lives in danger to help to take care of a need in my life and I'm very, very grateful for that.

Well, I say all of that to say that design flaws are a very real and a very regular part of life. And last week I talked to you about a project... a project that I call the Nazareth project. It all had to do with something that a Carpenter from Nazareth came to do. Jesus the Son of God was born into the earthly home of Joseph and Mary, and Joseph was a carpenter. And while Jesus was in that house from the time of His childhood all the way until He was 30 years of age, to the best of our knowledge He worked with His father in the carpenter shop. But Jesus made it very clear that He came to build something... it was simply not something made with hands.

In fact at one point in a discussion with His disciples, Peter became the point of a very significant question. Jesus said to Peter [Matthew 16:13-18]: *"Who do men say that I am?" And Peter said to Him, "Some say that You Elijah and some say that You are John the Baptist." But he said, "I say to you thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Peter, you're right and upon this foundation," He said, (Matthew 16:18) "I will build My church."*

And Jesus made it clear that the Nazareth project... what the Carpenter came to do was to build something called the church. And the church is the plan and the church is the product of what Jesus came to do on planet earth. It was His redeeming mission to call people out of the darkness of slavery and sin and to bring them in to the kingdom of His light. And so the church is a group of called out people and called together people for the purpose that God has planned and that God has designed.

There are many people who would say that there is a design flaw with the church today. Many people would say when you look at the hyp... hypocrisy, the dysfunction, the division, the irrelevance, the ineffectiveness of the church; that there’s a design flaw with the church. But the church is not a freak though the church indeed, bears many flaws; flaws that are attributed to you and flaws that are attributed to me. That’s why I’ve said, and you’ve heard our pastor say, if you ever find a perfect church, don’t join it, because you’ll mess it up! You’re going to take some baggage with you.

Now the fact of the matter is you’re not ever going to find a perfect church, and the reason you aren’t, and the reason that I won’t, and I won’t ever build one and I won’t ever be a part of one, is because we are all flawed by sin. But the plan and the purpose of God is not flawed.

And in the book of Ephesians chapter 3 and 4 (and I invite you to join me there again tonight) we begin to see something of how the unfolding plan of God is being realized in and through our lives as members of the church of Jesus Christ. Jesus said [Matthew 16:18], “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” My church will be a force to be reckoned with; my church will be a fortress of strength, of power and of truth.

And yet today many times we lose sight of the mission, the function and the purpose of the church. And so in Ephesians 3 and 4 Paul describes the fundamental nature and the purpose of the church. And while the church in purpose and function is not flawed, churches with people can be. And certainly church buildings can be, Amen?

I mean would you not admit with me that some of the weirdest buildings you’ve ever seen in the world were designs of churches? I... I don’t know about you but you talk about buildings that can be freaks! Church buildings can be freaks, but the ministry and the organism of the church is not. Let’s begin reading... Ephesians chapter 4, verse 1:

1) I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling of which you’ve been called, 2) with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another, (Look at verse 3; read it out loud with me) 3) eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Right here at that place we understand God’s intended design. And what is God’s intended design for the church? It is that the church would be a connecting community. God calls us out of the world and God calls us together in... as a group in the church, and the purpose of that calling is to connect our lives to fulfill His purpose in the world. And God’s intended plan is that we would see and understand that out of great diversity comes a marvelous unity. No other group in the whole world tries to gather people from such broad diversity of origin, or background as does

the church. And the Bible says that the church ... in the church we are bound together with other believers by the Spirit of God. That's why it says we are to *"maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

We are, in this room tonight, individual believers. I don't really know your status spiritually. I do know clearly that according to the Scripture there are two categories of people sitting in this building tonight: saved and lost... saved and lost. Some of you have indeed come to the place in your life where you know and have experienced the saving power of Jesus Christ. The Bible says [Ephesians 2:8]: *"For by grace you are saved through faith; that not of yourselves: it's a gift of God: not of works, lest any one of us should boast."*

And we are here tonight with a heart of gratitude and thanksgiving that we have been saved through the work that God did for us in His Son Christ when He died on the cross 2000 years ago, and when we received Him into our hearts as our Lord and Savior. I don't know if you were saved on a Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday or again on Sunday. But what I know is that if you are here and you have received God's grace and called upon His name, you are saved. The Bible says [Romans 10:13] *"for whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be (What's the word?) saved."*

Now the opposite of being saved is being lost. And the Bible doesn't say there's anything in between. You're not half saved; you're either saved or you're lost. If you're adrift at sea, you either are rescued from the perils of the water or you're going to ultimately drown. And you're either saved or you are lost! And so the Bible says that we are in one of two categories.

But for those of us who have been saved, we have been gathered together and connected together through the work of the Holy Spirit and we are individual believers, but nowhere does the Bible ever say that we are independent believers. Be sure that you understand this. We are individually believers in Jesus Christ. No one can be saved for someone else. I'm not saved because my parents were saved. You don't become a Christian because you're born into a Christian family. You simply have to understand that it's an individual, personal decision and moment in your life that you hear and respond to the call of God that you might be saved. We are saved individually.

But we are never saved independently. That means there's no sense of I'm one, I'm an island, I'm all unto myself. Because to be saved is to be called out and called to a relationship with Christ, but it's to be called into and connected with other believers. This is God's intended design.

And the spiritual work of salvation results in our being gathered as many into one. And that's the amazing work of God's love and God's grace; is that no matter how diverse, how different, distinct we may be.. no matter how divisive our backgrounds, ethnicities, races or cultures may be, when we are in Christ we are brought together by one Spirit to become a part of

the church of Jesus Christ. And God puts us in relationship with one another in order that through that plan and design God would be glorified.

What does the Bible tell us in Ephesians 3:20? "20) *Now to Him who is able to do abundantly above anything that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us (plural), 21) to Him be glory in the church in Christ Jesus through all generations (that includes this one) forever and ever. Amen.*" So it's all about being gathered together by the Spirit.

But let me say this to you. The Bible doesn't say that we build unity; the Bible says that the Spirit is what gives us unity. We're not told to make the church a united body; we're told that we are united by the Spirit and that's why the Bible says in chapter 4 or... yeah, chapter 4, verse 3 that we are to maintain the unity of the Spirit. It's not our unity; it's the unity that the Spirit has established and the Spirit has given us. Our goal is to understand that that's who we are and that's what we are in Christ, and then we are to maintain it, then we are to guard it, then we are to honor that unity in our lives. And that is much easier said than done.

"To dwell up above with those that we love, O that would be glory. / But to live here below with those that we know, well, that's a different story." Right? I mean it's one thing to think about who we are in Christ in the heavenlies; it's another thing to try to understand who we are and what we are relationally here.

Maybe you've heard the story about the man who was stranded on a deserted island. He managed to survive. And finally after a period of months a rescue team came and found him and were able to extract him from that island. But when they got there, they noticed that there were three dwellings on that island and they thought that was a little bit much for just one man to have three dwellings! And so the rescue team looked at the man and said, "Sir, what in the world are these 3 buildings?" He said, "Well, that one's my house right over there." He said, "That's where I live." He said, "And that one? That's my church." He said, "And then this one... that's my other church that I went to after it split from the first one and my feelings got hurt." [laughter] I mean, you understand that, don't you? We can't even get along with ourselves, much less trying to get along with one another!

And so the Bible tells us though that we have to understand that we are united in the Holy Spirit, that the nature of the saving work of Christ is to take us out and to bring us together, and to make us one in Christ; and we are now a part of the body of Christ, the family of God; the church that is the church of the living God in this generation. And we, therefore, are not a conglomeration of independent people who agree on certain things; we are a part of a living organism, life and light of one another. And just as my body is the ultimate expression of many different parts being brought together, existing interdependently, so it is in the church that we are interdependent in the Spirit of God and in the saving work of Christ.

So what is God's intended design of the church? That out of many would be one, and that that one body would exist for one purpose and that is to give glory to God. That's God's intended purpose.

But the second thing that I want you to see is that God has provided for us in detailed specification. If we're talking about the Nazareth project and this thing that Jesus is building, we not only need to understand what the intended design is... that out of many would come one... we need to understand the nature of that oneness, and that there is specification. Here, beginning in chapter 4 and verse 4 the Bible says:

4) *There is (are you ready?) There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your call: 5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6) one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.*

What is the number that is repeated over and over in this passage? [one] "One." Seven times we're told about "one".

Now today we don't do a lot of study in the Bible on the subject of biblical numbers and numerology. But if you do study the Bible, you will find that there is significance to the matter of numbers. Some people say, "I hate numbers; I hate Christians who talk about numbers." But God even named a book in the Bible Numbers, so God's into numbers; He has numbers of all kinds.

But when you read and study the Bible some of the things that you learn about numbers in the Bible is that you learn that two in the Bible is number of witness. Whenever Jesus sent out His disciples, He sent them out two by two; they were to be witnesses. Whenever there were appearances of angels or appearances of... of those that the... the time of the Transfiguration was Moses and Elijah. Two is the number of witness in the Bible.

Three in the Bible is the number of God... Father, Son and Holy Spirit... the Triune God. And three is the number of God.

Six is the number of man. Man was made on the sixth day. We know that ultimately at the end of time that the mark and the sign of the antichrist will be 666, the ultimate expression of the flawed and the evil nature of man.

We also know that forty is a number of significance in the Bible. When the children of Israel were brought out of the land of Egypt and were in the wilderness because of what they did and of what happened, they ended up spending forty years in the wilderness, wandering. How many days and nights did Jesus spend in the wilderness when He was led to be tempted of Satan? It was forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. So see, forty is the number of testing in the Bible.

But seven... seven is the number of perfection. The Bible says in creation that on the seventh day God rested; that God had completed His work. It is the number of completion; it is the number of that which has rested, and so therefore, when we read these seven “ones”, we are reading the seven essential elements of our oneness in Christ. And what does the Bible say that it is? Let’s say them out loud together; they are on the screen for you. Say them with me: One [body], one [Spirit], one [hope], one [Lord], one [faith], one [baptism], one [God and Father]. The power and the importance of the number one! And it is at this point of the oneness that we come together. You cannot be a Christian... you cannot be a believer without becoming one with these things.

If you take out a one dollar bill and look at the symbol and the seal, the American seal on the back of that dollar bill, there in the ribbon in the mouth of the eagle you will read the Latin phrase that we all know so well: *E pluribus Unum*. What does that mean? That out of many, there’s one... out of many there is one.

I was reading an interesting commentary by Chuck Colson a few days ago and he simply wrote these words and I want to share them with you, applying it to American society, but I think there is a connection to what I’m saying tonight: “In 1782 the Latin phrase *E pluribus Unum*... out of many, one... appeared in the Great Seal of the United States. But what happens in our society when we neglect and even deny the importance of one, that is cultural unity. And we emphasize the importance of many... that is individuality, which today is often called diversity. As a renown social scientist learned, nothing good comes out of it. In his essay entitled Bowling Alone published some years ago, Robert Putnam documented how... our increased tendency to go it alone in our modern society. And when we do this, instead of having civic participation that marked earlier eras, there is a decrease in social unity, there is a decrease in strength, and Putnam argued that it affects adversely every part of the American Democracy. He did a study with 30,000 interviews that led him to conclude that virtually all measures of civic health are lowered when we emphasize diversity over unity.”

Now that’s a cultural statement. That’s what’s going on in America today. We no longer care about the responsibility of the whole; instead we are exaggerating the opportunity of the individual. May I say to you that that’s exactly what happens in the church today. In this independent America in which we live, we tend to see church as just something to be consumed, that we come in and out of, do our thing; it’s all about me. And the problem with the church today is that we have begun to exaggerate the part and to fail to understand the whole.

And what Paul is saying here is that there is a specification that we are whole in Christ, with one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father who’s over all, through all, and in all. So there is the importance of understanding our unity.

Puritan John Trapp said, "Unity without verity (that is truth) is no better than conspiracy". And it's so important that we understand this unity. Let me just quickly walk through these 7 "ones". Why? Because they're in the Bible. That's a good reason, isn't it? And that's what we're here to study tonight is God's Word. And so, let's see what it says.

It says, first, there's "one body". It doesn't say that this is an organization because the church is not an organization; the church is an organism. And we are alive and vitally connected and interdependently ... interdependently connected to one another. Listen to the Scripture... 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 13: "*For where... for in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we're all made to drink of one Spirit.*" Look again in Romans, chapter 12 and verse 5. The Scripture says: "*So we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.*" So we are a part of this body.

But who brings us together in this body? The "One Spirit" and that's the second thing. Not only are we one body, we are one Spirit. Now that is... the Spirit speaks of the things that is not only seen, but the things that are not seen. And the work of the Spirit is to indwell the believer and to unite us as believers to fulfill God's calling and purpose in our lives. F... excuse me, Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 19 and following says: "*And what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us that believe, according to the working of the great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him...*"

I just realized, that's the wrong passage. That's a great passage, by the way. You ought to write that down, but that's not the one I was trying to read from tonight! [laughter] So I got to do a quick look here and see where I made a mistake. How about we look down in chapter 2, verse 19. Okay, chapter 2, verse 19. I found it! Whew! I like it when I find my place and I'm not in the wrong Book! [laughter]

It says: "19) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. 20) *built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone. 21) in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22) in Him you also, being built together, are a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (One Spirit!)*

So we have one body, one Spirit, and then one hope. What is the hope of every believer? It is the hope of the consummation of our faith, the coming of Jesus Christ; that we will be gathered together in one. The Bible tells us that the Spirit of God is our guarantee of this hope. It says in Ephesians 1:14 (and this is the right passage) "*...who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire the possession of it to the praise of His glory.*"

No interestingly enough, the first three things that are a part of divine specification... the body, the Spirit and the hope... are all found in the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The next thing is that have "one Lord... one Lord". Not one Savior. He is the Savior, but He is the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is the ultimate authority in all things. In Philippians 2 the Bible tells us concerning Jesus that [Philippians 2:9 9) *God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name, 10) that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is (say it) [Lord] Lord to the glory of God the Father.*" Jesus is Lord.

So there's the work of the Spirit building us in body and hope and indwelling us; there is the work of our Lord Jesus Christ who is our Savior. That's why the early church would never say Caesar is lord; that's why they were willing to die, that's why they were willing to be imprisoned, because they would not go along with the culture and say Caesar is lord. They said Jesus is Lord! [Acts 4:12] *"And neither is there salvation in any other for there's no other name under heaven given whereby we must be saved."*

So the Bible says there's one Lord, and then the Bible says there's one faith... one faith. When the Bible says there's one faith, it's not talking about the experience of faith... believing in..., it's talking about the substance of faith... what we believe. It's what we would read about in the book of Jude chapter 1, verse 3. It says: *"Beloved, although it is... we... I was very eager to write to you about the common salvation, I found it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."*

It's the faith... the faith of our God and Father that is expressed in the work of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. What is this faith that is the faith that is rooted in the Gospel? That Christ Jesus died for our sins, that He was buried and raised again on the third day according to the Scriptures. It is the faith of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So there's one Lord, one faith, and then one baptism... one baptism. What is this baptism? Well, many of course, would say that it's the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We're baptized by one body ... by one Spirit into one body. Well I believe that this is actually a reference to the baptism that we experience and that we evidence as followers of Jesus Christ. And the reason that I believe that it is true is because there is only one baptism; it is the baptism that comes after a person has confessed Christ as their Lord and Savior and as an act of obedience to Him. It is the initiatory right of the testimony of a follower of Jesus Christ, and when a person is baptized they are marked as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, set apart no longer to live for themselves but to live for Christ. One baptism. And baptism is a picture of what Christ came to do.

Do you see the... what's happening here? There's the work of the Spirit: one body, one Spirit, one hope. Then there's the work of the Savior: one Lord, one faith, one baptism. And then it all comes together in one God and Father of all; the Sovereign One who is over all and through all and in all. We're talking about the total authority of God. We're talking about His power, His activity, and His work in and through us. And this is the specified character and the cohesive core of the Christian faith. Our unity is built on what God has done for us, and that we are a believing community in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you don't believe these things, you're not a believer. I know that's a real straight-forward statement but it's what the Bible teaches. This is the core... one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This... these are the seven essential elements of what has made us one in Christ, and we are a believing community. That's why we preach the Bible [tap]. That's why we share the message of Christ with the world. That's why we're not just a social organization or... or just a... ah... or just a ministry. We are here to fulfill God's mission and it's the mission of the message of salvation in the Word.

So I've said all that tonight to say that we must understand God's intended design, and we must see and we must understand something of what I would call these specifications... His detailed specifications for us.

That brings me to the final thing and that is God's measured place. And it's really from here over the next two weeks that we're going to be understanding that the church is a serving community. We're a connecting community through the Spirit; we're a believing community based on the foundation of these seven essentials, but we are a serving community for the glory of God. Chapter 4, verse 7 says this... that *"Grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift."*

God has given you grace, and God has done a work of grace in you that He might through you allow you to become a minister of grace to other believers, and to a lost world. And God has measured a place that is just right for you and a place that is just right for me, and the work of the church is to help to build up and lift up and help each other to find that place and to fulfill that place in the work of Christ in the world.

As you grow in Christ if there is not an increasing awareness of your place and function of service in the body of Christ, something is wrong. Because while the church is a believing community, God's not interested in just filling your head with biblical facts; God wants to engage you in this Nazareth project, engage you in this work. And therefore, He's measured a place for you and we must become a part of a... a [an] organization, a manufacturing plant that's getting people into that place of ministry and helping people to fulfill that ministry for the glory of God.

I love this statement by F. W. Robertson who said, "It is not the possession of extraordinary gifts that makes extraordinary usefulness, but the dedication of what we have to the service of God." And God just wants you to dedicate yourself to Him, and God wants you to serve Him, and God wants you to serve His church, and God wants you to understand that you are connected and you are built in to this community for a purpose. And this community exists to help you fulfill that purpose in and through your life.

I think this is something that we are learning and expanding and enlarging in the vision of our church in these days. I realize tonight a lot of what I've shared with you is specification oriented; it is instruction in its orientation. And good instruction is important. You know you get in trouble when you don't read instructions, don't you, right? And part of what we have to do is to go through the process of understanding God's instruction for us.

But in our church in these days one of the things that we've learned is that we just can't keep growing out if we're not constantly growing up. And as God entrusts to us greater mission and greater ministry and greater influence, we have to keep building up and engaging people in the work of Christ. The significance of Prestonwood church is not the seating capacity or the numerical quotient of this church, it's the number of people that are being built and engaged and that are ultimately being established in ministry for the glory of Christ in every form, in every function. Some of those are very profile, some of those are completely unknown. But it's a church that's being lived for the glory of God.

God has taken us beyond the borders of this church; He's doing that through broadcast ministry, He's doing that through the expansion of a global outreach that we're involved in, and He's doing it in a regional fashion, allowing us to move from just this location to another location that's in the north. And as the church continues to grow and to go through different seasons and stages of life, we have to keep expanding and enlarging our vision of what the church is and what the church does.

Five years ago when I joined the staff of Prestonwood there was a need... there was a need to gain and to grow in an understanding of what it meant to build community. And we established this connection service at that time so that what we could do every week would be to move from the simple diversity of a move to a new community and a move to different service orders and times and have a mid-week gathering that would completely be focused on building community. And I think we've been able to do that with a significant amount of joy and effectiveness and gratitude, and I thank God for that and for so many of you who are a part of making this happen. And that ministry must continue... building community in the family of God.

But at the same time it's time for us as a church to enlarge what we do and how we do it. For the last five years we have exclusively said anything that happens on this campus on Wednesday is going to happen in this worship building. But we understand now that as we are growing up and growing out

and meeting other needs in other places, that we’ve got to enlarge our base of training and do a greater job of equipping people for the work of the ministry.

And so... as a part of that in the weeks to come, we’re not only going to continue to have a common gathering like this called the Connection Service, but we’re going to have a number of classes and equipping modules that are going to come into place that I’m going to encourage you and challenge you to sign up and to be a part of.

I’m thankful for the opportunity to minister the Word of God to you. I’m thankful that we have a platform to use other gifted people to do that and we are going to do that. Basically for the last five years it’s been exclusively a service and it’s been exclusively me. In the years to come it’s going to be a more diverse platform of that, where we will use other people with gifts, mine included and where we will have various ways of teaching and training people to be a part of this ministry.

These additions and these adjustments through the Connection classes and what we hope to be in a year to come even a life development curriculum that will train leaders and train ministers through this ministry in the mid-week fashion to make us effective for the glory of God and the testimony of Christ in this place and beyond. That’s why we have classes going on at the North Campus right now.

In the month of October I’m going to be at the North Campus ministering there. Jarrett Stephens is going to be here, one of our great ministers and gifted teachers and he’s going to be doing the service, but at the same time there are going to be a host of around nine, ten, eleven classes that will be available. And information about that is in your worship guide and I want you to be aware of it and I want you to sign up for it. And whether you’re in a service or whether you’re getting equipped for service, I don’t want you to miss these opportunities.

[You] Say why are we doing that? Why would we change anything? Because our life and our ministry keeps changing. We’re no longer just one church in one location. We’re one church in multiple locations. We’re a church that needs to use the gifts that God has given to it to build up the body as God grows it. And it’s just good stewardship. It’s good stewardship to use gifted people in our ministry to build up parts of the body. It’s good stewardship to teach you how to take your gifts and use your gifts for the glory of Christ. It’s good stewardship when we’re here and the lights are on and all the ministries are functioning, to use this building to the max on Wednesday nights just like we do on Sundays. That’s good stewardship!

We’ve been doing a lot of that all kinds of days of the week... you know, everyday. We’ll keep week-day ministries, but we’re trying to focus and consolidate what we’re doing in ministry because we believe it will help us to be more effective. And we’re not simply going to focus on the needs that we had yesterday. We’re going to keep looking at the opportunities that God

has given us for tomorrow. And because we believe that tomorrow’s challenges and tomorrow’s responsibilities and tomorrow’s demands in being the church of God and fulfilling our calling is so great, we’re going to begin to focus on not just building community but equipping people for ministry with a very specific and a very tactical means of doing that. And it’s all going to be to the glory of Jesus Christ.

You know on your ah... computer it’s a pretty regular thing that you have to do system upgrades, isn’t it? You have to go through a process where just every now and then you just gotta upgrade [tap]. And if you don’t upgrade, you know what happens? You just have slow functionality or you have no functionality!

And I have to tell you that if we don’t keep upgrading what we’re doing and how we’re doing it in ministry, we will be limited and inhibited to the purpose to which we’ve been called. And I want to remind you that this is about the Nazareth project. It’s all about God’s purpose and God’s plan in us and through us and beyond us for the glory of Christ. And so I hope that you will help me to help others to make all of these things happen that we can be the church that God would have us to be.

And next week I’m going to talk... come back and talk to you a little bit more about equipping. And we’re going to continue the third message in this Nazareth project series and talk specifically about how God’s design that we’ve talked about tonight moves into an operation and a function of growing and building gifts that work together for the glory of God. So I hope you’ll be back next week [tap]. I’d sure like to see you then, and we’ll be back in the book of Ephesians chapter 4 and share this time together. Amen? [Amen] Amen. Thankful for that tonight. Let’s pray together.

Lord, thank You for Your word and thank You for the opportunity of opening and learning and understanding more about who we are and what we’re called to be in Thee. And Lord, I pray that You would use these days... days of growing us in community and enlarging us in ministry, and expanding us in influence, to be a part of the work that ah... You allow us to share in this generation for the glory of Christ. Lord, we know that all of life is about Your glory. We know that in order to live for Your glory You give us grace. And I pray that grace would be experienced and ministered and shared in this evening as we’re together. Thank You for Your love. Thank You for Your power. Teach us what it is to pray. Teach us what it is to serve as Jesus has laid down His life for us. For we pray in Your name. AMEN

Thank you, thanks for being here tonight. God bless you. I will look forward to seeing you next Wednesday evening when we gather together.