

Vision 2009

Sunday a.m., January 4, 2009 Calvary Bible Church, Hanover, PA

*“When there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint,
but the one who keeps the law, blessed is he!”* Prov 29:18 (NET)

ENGAGE: As we start this New Year many of us are reminded of our need to get some exercise. As Bob H. recently shared in his testimony at a Men’s breakfast, he shared this advice on physical exercise:

It is well documented that for every mile that you jog, you add one minute to your life. This enables you at 85 years of age to spend an additional 5 months in a nursing home at \$5000 per month.

I joined a health club last year, spent about \$400. Haven’t lost a pound. Apparently you have to show up.

I have to exercise early in the morning before my brain figures out what I’m doing.

I don’t exercise at all. If God meant us to touch our toes, he would have put them further up on our body.

I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me.

Now physical exercise has some value (1 Tim 4:8). Being physically fit can help us in our overall well-being. As we start this New Year I want to help you understand the overall direction for where we are going as a church.

Calvary Bible Church has had an exciting fifty-four years of ministry. But what would God like us to do to increase our fruitfulness and effectiveness for Him in the coming three to five years?

At Calvary Bible Church, **our vision is to equip God’s people to make a life-transforming impact upon secular people in the Greater Hanover area through the message of Jesus Christ.** As we look at the world around us we are reminded that we live in an increasingly ungodly society. Yet the darker the world becomes, the brighter we can shine for Christ.

As we begin this New Year we remember our future is not in the hands of politicians or self-appointed social revolutionaries. Rather, our future is in the hands of **the Source of real hope and change in existence—the Lord our God.**

FOCUS: This morning I want to remind us as a church family that: **The fulfillment of the Great Commission demands an ever-increasing intentionality.**

SET THE STAGE biblically: Solomon observes in **Proverbs 29:18** that where there is no prophetic revelation there is chaos, but those who keep the revelation contained in Scripture find blessing. (Cf. NET notes on Prov 29:18.) *““When there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but the one who keeps the law, blessed is he!”* Prov 29:18 (NET)

The Hebrew word “vision” (from the verb **חָזַן** [*khazah*, “to see”]) refers to divine communication to prophets. The prophetic ministry was usually in response to the calamitous periods, calling the people back to God. Without them the downward rush to anarchy and destruction would have been faster than with these prophetic calls from God. How can you and I experience heavenly bliss, the inner joy that comes from knowing we are right with God and experiencing his blessing? We must keep the revelation contained in Scripture.

For us as a church this means we must keep Christ’s mission before us. **Based on Matthew 28:18-20 are mission as a church is to seek the lost and equip the found.** Christ came to seek and to save the lost. We must not be content to come to church ourselves, and minister to one another, and lose sight that **our objective in coming to church and growing in Christlikeness is so that we can more effectively seek the lost.** While we still have much yet to do, we have become more intentional these past couple of years in equipping the found. As a church we need to become more passionate though about seeking the lost.

PREVIEW: This morning I want to set before you **three strategic focuses** that summarize where we are going as a church.

ANNOUNCE the passage: As we contemplate God’s will for us as a church, it is important that we remember that **God is with us**. Jesus told his disciples, *“I will build my church and the gates of Hades [i.e., the power of death] will not overpower it”* Matthew 16:19 (NET). **We need to continue to be stretched as a congregation, to be able to adapt how we do things as a church to reach hundreds more of the thousands around us who are lost and on their way to hell.**

Matthew the apostle begins and ends his gospel with a reminder that God is with us. Matthew’s Gospel begins with the prophecy that the Savior’s name would be “Emmanuel, that is, ‘God *with* us,’” (1:23, in which the author has linked Isa 7:14 and 8:8, 10 together) and it ends with Jesus’ promise to be *with* his disciples forever. Matthew wants you and me to remember that Jesus is with us as we go and make disciples; and that Jesus is God! For our Scripture reading this morning we are going to read responsively. Please stand as we read Matthew 28:16-20.

^{28:16} *“So the eleven disciples went to Galilee to the mountain Jesus had designated.*

ALL: ^{28:17} *When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted.*

^{28:18} *Then Jesus came up and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

ALL: ^{28:19} *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

^{28:20} *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

ALL: *And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

This morning I want to set before you **three strategic focuses** I believe summarize where we are going as a church.

Strategic Focus 1: We need to reach an ever-increasing percentage of the Greater Hanover area with the gospel message.

There are thousands of lost people who matter to Christ, who are not in his family yet. God is counting on the witness of this church to burn brighter than ever in these next three to five years, to be a **beacon of hope** to people who are lost and facing a Christless eternity.

As I think of the Greater Hanover area I’m reminded of Jesus, who looked at the spiritual needs of a city and started crying. Jesus’ compassion for the bewildered and helpless people around him caused him to view them as sheep without a shepherd (cf. Matt 9:36). **I think as God looks at our immediate community and the greater Hanover area, he weeps as well.**

Application: As the starting gun for this New Year goes off, **let’s charge** into a future marked with **evangelistic intensity**. It was evangelistic intensity that fueled the launching of this church. **The kingdom of God advances one life at a time.** It happens when your heart and my heart are **changed** and **we see lost people as Christ sees lost people** and we understand that there’s a heaven and there’s a **hell**, and real people go there forever.

We are called individually to **love lost people**, build relationships with them, and when the opportunity presents itself, share a bold witness for Christ. God wants to use you to see others come to faith in Jesus Christ.

ILL: I was encouraged to read a report from one of our missionaries, Craig Miller recently....

To assist us in reaching an ever-increasing percentage of the Greater Hanover area with the gospel message **we are forming and equipping an evangelism team**. This team will assist in helping to follow up with contacts of unchurched or unsaved individuals and families we have through various ministries of the church—such as Awana, Men’s & Women’s Ministries; Youth Ministry, among others. **More information on this team will be given in the next few weeks.**

A verse God desires to be on each of our hearts is Rom 1:16: “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*” Rom 1:16 (NET). [Note here, Greek refers to anyone who is not Jewish.]

*****The Gospel still changes hearts and lives.** That’s why you are here today; because someone told you that Christ died for sinners and rose again the third day. You put your faith in Jesus Christ, and God changed your heart. Let’s get the good news about Jesus Christ out with frequency and with power like never before.

Our vision statement includes this statement: We envision a church...where we are reproducing ourselves—both through expanded worship services as needed, as well as being sensitive to opportunities for church planting; where we partner with others for the furtherance of the Gospel.

At our elder/staff retreat in September there was excitement about the potential of our taking part in a church plant. We are currently in the preliminary stages of seeking to determine God’s direction for us in this regards. Do we in two to three years down the road look at spinning off 150 people or so for a new church plant in a strategic surrounding community within thirty to forty-five minutes of here? Do we target our Samaria, such as helping to establish **a Bible church among the Hispanic community?** Do we assist with say a church planting effort to start a Bible church in the Baltimore or Harrisburg area?

What we are certain of is that God does want us as a church to be reproducing ourselves. A step in that direction may include a more intentional effort to make Calvary Bible Church known in our community. Apart from the website, and a small yellow page ad, there is little we have done to make our presence known to new people coming into the community. **We can do much more to be more intentional in this regards.**

Since we reached approximately 85% of our seating capacity eighteen months ago are attendance has leveled off. **At some point to continue to grow we will need a second morning service.** Moving to a second service could also potentially be a step in a process leading to a new church plant.

Parking plays a role in this as well. Our parking lot near our main entrance is regularly overflowing on Sunday mornings. If you are a regular attendee here at Calvary and are physically able, it would be helpful if we could have more of you parking help behind the church (and on the opposite side of the main entrance) to make additional room in our front parking lot for guests and those with physical needs.

God is concerned about the thousands of lost people in our community. God has given us so much here as a church body. Let’s be more intentional in reaching our community with the gospel.

Strategic Focus 2: We’re going to move the congregation of Christ-followers toward community, spiritual maturity, and full participation within the life of the church.

Let me tell you briefly what we are doing to move us as a congregation of Christ-followers toward community, spiritual maturity, and full participation within the life of Calvary Bible Church.

As church leaders we recognize that **the fulfillment of the Great Commission demands an ever-increasing intentionality.** To fulfill our mission of seeking the lost and equipping the found we need to have ongoing evaluation of what we are doing and prayerfully seeking the Lord’s direction in how we can be more effective and fruitful as a congregation.

With this in mind **we are seeking to develop and implement an intentional training program of discipleship.** Our goal is to help each of you become more like Jesus Christ. We want to promote and help you pursue godly character by encouraging the renewal of the mind.

Two years ago the **Discovery Series Bible study** was introduced. This two year study of the Bible provides a good foundation for us as Christians. In addition beginning next Sunday (during Sunday School), **Mike Mathias will be teaching a study of the foundational teachings of the Bible.** This class would be excellent for new Christians or those wanting to know more about the Basic teachings of the Bible, as well as a helpful

review for others.

Over these past two years we have begun to expand the opportunity to study the Word of God together in a smaller group context and share life together. May I encourage you to take part in at least one of these contexts where you can get together regularly with fellow believers to study God's Word together, pray for one another, **and share with one another. The Beth Moore Bible study, Discovery Bible Study, and Divorce Care, and regular prayer meeting** offer this opportunity. **The Precept Bible study** offers the opportunity to study God's Word in-depth.

The bottom line on moving you toward community is this: We desire to lovingly foster biblical community in such a way that every one of you have one or more people with whom you feel the freedom to go to for support, encouragement, sharing of struggles, accountability, and prayer. We need one another.

We also want to continue to move forward this year in **encouraging each of you to full participation within the life of Calvary Bible Church**. Last year we took a Sunday School quarter and several messages to encourage each of you to be involved in serving someplace here at Calvary Bible Church. It was encouraging to see an additional **seven to eight per cent** of the congregation commit themselves to being involved in serving here at Calvary.

APPL: We want to continue to help every person recognize the privilege and responsibility we have to serve one another in the body of Christ. You don't want to stand before a Savior who shed his blood for you and say, "I never committed myself to the body of Christ at Calvary Bible Church. I never found my spiritual gift. I never put on a uniform and became a part of the serving core of the church." You don't want to have white, unstained, uncalloused hands when you put your hands in a blood-stained hand with a hole in the middle of it. (Cf. Hybels)

On at least a yearly basis we plan on offering training in helping every person understand what God's Word says about spiritual gifts, and helping people discover their spiritual gift(s). Then we want to assist each of you in experiencing the joy and fulfillment that comes from using your spiritual gift to serve the body of Christ here at CBC. If you are not presently involved in serving and/or don't know what your spiritual gift is, look for information in late spring about an equipping opportunity in spiritual gifts. **Pastor Rick and Pastor Garry will be offering training in this area of spiritual gifts later this year.**

***Friends, we are going to be persistent in challenging you to **identify your spiritual gift**, then get off dead center and get in the game. Because if you are in community, growing in personal spiritual maturity, and a full participating serving member in the body of Christ, this next year and beyond is going to be exciting. This is your best shot at doing something wonderful with the coming months and years of your life.

Life includes the routine of making house payments; and raising our kids, and doing all the other everyday duties of life. But in the midst of your routine, let's make sure we are doing what counts for eternity. **What are you going to do that's great for eternity?** What are you going to do that's great for the kingdom of God? What are you going to do that is going to make you feel proud when you stand before your Savior someday with calluses on your hands, saying, "I was a player"? (Cf. Hybels)

Our goal is that each of you that calls Calvary Bible Church your church home is using your spiritual gift in some way to minister to the body of believers here. We've got a membership system we believe honors God. It's right out of the pages of Scripture (using the acronym WIFES)—**Worship, Instruction, Fellowship, Evangelism and Service**. These are things that every Christ follower wants to have in his or her life.

If you are **unwilling** over time to throw your hat in the ring and to say "I am willing to get in the game and commit myself to the church that God has called me to, to be a responsible member of this place" then, please, go sit in another church. Listen, friends. We need that seat opened up for someone who's going to come to Christ and get disciplined and join a group and grow in full maturity and become a participating member here, because **this is not about club membership. This is about redeeming the world.**

There is a lost and dying world. And it is not going to be reached by folks who just sit on the sidelines.

We have to turn a congregation into a mobilized army of people who, in the name of Christ, will become players and servers and prayers and givers to achieve the objective that God has in mind for us. So that's where we're going together. (cf. Hybels)

[GIVE RESULTS FROM CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY]: In mid-October many of you took a survey that was designed to help us compare the overall spiritual maturity of the congregation from one year to the next. Before I show you the results from that survey, I want to help you understand the four phases of spiritual maturity that the survey is designed to help to measure.

Summary: In studying the New Testament we see Jesus used an intentional, sequential process to make disciples organized into **four phases: a phase of attraction; a phase of developing basic Christian habits; a phase of deployment in leading ministry; a continuation of intentional growth and ministry for a lifetime.** Some of the results found from a survey of over 1000 evangelical churches in the United States is that it took one pastor and 100 church members one full year to win only 1.66 persons to Christ and their church. 66% of the members haven't changed one Disciplemaking habit to be more Christlike in over five years. Also they found "There is absolutely **NO** correlation between the length of time persons have attended church and their spiritual maturity." **We need to focus not just on our church activities (preaching, SS, holding worship services, leading Sunday evening service), rather focus on the product...the disciple, becoming pro-active and intentional about the Great Commission, not settling for the status quo.**

Note the four phases Jesus used to make disciples:

Jesus Used Four Phases to Make Disciples				
	Come See	Follow Me	Be With Me	Remain In Me
Scripture	John 1:38-39	Mark 1:16-17	Mark 3:13-14	John 15:4
Time	3 months	9 months	22 months	Lifetime
Task	Attract and win	Establish basic Habits	Deploy and continue growth	Build others and continue growth

SUMMARY OF FOUR PHASES OF DISCIPLESHIP

Phase One: "Come and See" (recorded in John chapters 2-5)

Five distinctives of this phase: (1) low commitment; (2) organized around events rather than being a process; (3) focus on beliefs and "point-in-time behaviors (like baptism), but never focuses on habits or character (which require high commitment, discipline, and sequential learning); (4) stronger emphasis on attraction than on training; (5) two-fold goal of phases was to bring the disciples to a personal belief that Jesus was the Messiah (today, we would say the goal was salvation) and to build enough commitment so these disciples would be able to enter the next phase.

Phase Two: "Follow Me" (disciples called to follow Jesus and invited to be involved in ministry)

Distinctives: (1) heightened commitment; (2) focus changes from basic beliefs to basic habits, habits that require intimacy with and accountability to a disciplemaker; (3) shift on part of the disciples from interest in ministry to involvement in ministry (but not to leadership in ministry); (4) intent changes from bringing the disciple to salvation to making the disciple a fisher of people.

Phase Three: “Be with Me” (twelve chosen to BE WITH HIM and that He might send them out to preach; until this phase Jesus never once mentioned the Cross, dying, severe persecution, or the need for intense commitment, but from the beginning of this phase all these issues begin to be discussed and increase to a crescendo at Christ’s crucifixion)

Distinctives: (1) Heightened commitment, a commitment to the death; (2) transition from ministry involvement to ministry leadership; (3) continuation of the intentional growth process, but now with a focus on more advanced habits and character; (4) an even greater need to spend quality time with a disciplemaker.

Phase Four: “Remain in Me” (disciplemaking is not a two or three year process of filling in the blanks in several curriculum books; it’s a lifelong process of filling in the holes in a life. it is never finished. It is always intentional. It lasts until we go to heaven.

Distinctives: The big idea of the “Remain in Me” phase is not that it is different from the “Be with Me” phase. The big idea is that discipleship does not end after three years. Instead it should continue, just as intentionally, for the rest of our lives.

Here are the results from that survey:

Doubling of Those Functioning in Phase Three “Be with Me” Disciple

The results of the “Spiritual Life Journey” survey indicate that there has been significant spiritual growth in relation to how the congregation is actually functioning from this year compared to last. Specifically there has been almost a doubling of those who are functioning in the Phase 3, “Be with Me” (training and deploying in leading ministries) phase of ministry.

	Come and See	Follow Me	Be with Me	Remain in Me
CBC 2007 Functioning	13%	60%	12%	15%
CBC 2008 Functioning	12%	51%	25%	12%
National Norm Functioning	15%	68%	8%	9%

Twenty-five percent of those who completed the survey are functioning in this phase of ministry, compared to twelve percent the previous year as the chart below indicates. Thus, among the congregation at CBC a significant number appear to be developing growth in the character of Christ as they develop in ministry service, Scripture study and application, and preparation to be a disciple-maker. The result is that overall a substantially greater percentage of the congregation of CBC appears to be functioning at phases three and four of discipleship compared to the national norm.

What factors of the strategic envisioning process could have impacted our congregation to this extent with regards to the substantial percentage increase in the number of you functioning in the “Be with Me” phase of discipleship? **What has encouraged approximately ten percent more of you to move to this third phase or stage of discipleship, which “hinges on developing a routine of personal spiritual practices that feed a**

growing intimacy with Christ?” What did God use to bring about growth in these believers? [mke just summarize material below... don't go into as much detail as listed here.]

Four implementation goals established out of the strategic envisioning process, which began to be implemented just over a year ago, appear to have contributed to the increased number within our congregation functioning in this third phase of discipleship. There is overlap between two of these implementation goals as it relates to one of our strategic initiatives. The first goal relates to **the “Church Assimilation (Discipleship) Process.”** An additional goal that has some overlap to this one related to providing **multiple opportunities for people to get involved in biblical community.** One objective here was to review and expand opportunities for people to be involved in biblical community.

One of the strategic initiatives related to these goals was to significantly increase our focus on quality run growth groups. Expanding the interactive Bible study options for our congregation to engage in an interactive study of God's Word appear to have helped increase the overall spiritual maturity of our congregation. These increased opportunities, especially over the past sixteen months, for a significantly greater number of people to be involved in quality interactive Bible studies is perhaps the greatest catalyst for the significant movement of approximately ten percent of the congregation to more of an abiding relationship in Christ.

Two other implementation goals consisted of **intentional evangelism training** and the **mobilization of the congregation.** Specifically, the objective related to evangelism is to design a process to equip our people, both individually and corporately to take the initiative to “seek the lost” both in our local community and throughout the world. The objective in the mobilization of the congregation is to help every member of Calvary Bible Church discover and use their spiritual gift(s) in ministering both to the body here at CBC, and other areas as God directs.

The emphasis earlier on the spiritual giftedness of each believer and responsibility and privilege to serves combined with the ministry fair resulted in a significant number who signed up to serve in one or more ministry. Along with the exposure to the various ministries and ministry leaders **the ministry fair** resulted in **approximately 15% of our members signing up to serve in one or more ministry. How exciting to see this and know that approximately one-half of those who signed up were getting involved in ministry at CBC for the first time.** Ministries that saw a substantial number of people indicate their willingness to serve included: Ushers/Greeters (twenty), Women's Ministry (sixteen), Communion (fifteen), AWANA and Kid's Camp (eight), Building/Grounds/Maintenance (seven), Mission's Ministry (seven), Choir/Orchestra/Drama (seven), Vacation Bible School (five), and Baptism Assistant/Vehicle Driver/Office Volunteer (five).

Another area that may have contributed to the increase in Phase 3 Disciples is the **number of people who were involved in short-term mission opportunities this past year.** While each year at least one short-term mission trip is planned this past year nearly 5% of the congregation was involved in one of three mission trips. Each team that went was involved in a several month long discipleship process in preparation for their ministry. These mission trips contributed as well to the spiritual maturity within the congregation.

Significant Increase in Long-Term Spiritual Maturity

Another result that comes from comparing the congregational snapshots from last year to this is the **significant increase in the long-term spiritual condition of the congregation.** This year a greater percentage of the congregational in each of the four phases of discipleship described their long-term spiritual condition as growing, compared to one year ago. **Overall the survey indicated that 38% of the congregation's long-term spiritual condition was growing compared to 27% the previous year.** In addition, survey results revealed that the long-term spiritual condition of those backsliding had decreased from 49% the previous year to 32% for the current year. The long-term spiritual condition was determined by comparing what phase of discipleship those completing the survey were currently in, compared to what phase they had been in **three years previously.** Long-term spiritual condition results from the survey are shown below.

Long-Term Spiritual Condition	2007	2008	Ntnl Norm
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Backsliding	49	32	44
Static	24	30	25
Growing	27	38	31

Slight Increase in Current Spiritual Condition

The survey results also indicate a slight increase in how the overall congregation views their current spiritual condition. Overall, sixty-one percent of the congregation view their current spiritual condition as growing compared to fifty-eight percent the previous year. These results were derived from the question on the survey that asks, “During the last six months, I feel my spiritual life and commitment to Christ, as evidenced by my **changed behavior**, has been: (a) quickly sliding backward; (b) slowly sliding backward; (c) staying about the same; (d) growing slowly; (e) growing quickly.” In addition to the three percent increase in those who viewed their current spiritual condition as growing over the past six months, those who viewed their current spiritual condition as backsliding declined from eight percent to six percent. Comparing the results from 2007 to 2008 with the national norm is shown below.

Current Spiritual Condition	2007	2008	Ntnl Norm
Backsliding	8%	6%	7%
Static	34%	33%	29%
Growing	58%	61%	64%

Based upon the “Spiritual Journey Evaluation,” wise and prayerful implementation of the strategic envisioning process appears to have been used by the Lord to increase spiritual maturity on the part of our congregation. **The strategic initiatives initiated thus far appear to have helped bring a doubling of the percentage of the congregation functioning in the Phase Three stage of discipleship (Remain in Me).** The strong focus on quality run growth groups with the provision of multiple entry points appears to be one factor that has helped more of the congregation develop the habit of spiritual practices that feed a growing intimacy with Christ. In addition the emphasis on mobilizing the congregation for service seems to have assisted in the development of growing Christians in discipling others, continuing ministry service, and, if so gifted, leadership skills.

Ongoing leadership development.... Beginning late last summer we began an ongoing leadership development process here at Calvary. The goal of this program is to help raise up and continue to sharpen both present and future leaders for Calvary Bible Church. Presently about 18 men are involved in this.

Reiteration: **We are looking at three strategic focuses** that summarize where we are going as a church.

Strategic Focus 1: We need to reach an ever-increasing percentage of the Greater Hanover area with the gospel message. **Strategic Focus 2:** We’re going to move the congregation of Christ-followers toward community, spiritual maturity, and full participation within the life of the church. Finally:

Strategic Focus 3: We are going to invest a greater percentage of our lives and our knowledge and our resources with those in our community, our nation, and our world.

We desire to be good stewards of all the resources God gives to us. God has blessed us as a church family with many resources. We have a responsibility to use these resources in such a way that we bear much fruit for Christ.

The apostle John remind us, “*For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life*” John 3:16 (NET).

In the Great Commission, Jesus said, “Go out into *the world*.”

God always thinks globally. God acts globally. God loves globally. God redeems globally. His heart breaks for the hurting and the poor and the lost, globally.

The beautiful facility God has provided for us here must never be viewed as boundaries that hold back the explosive work of the Holy Spirit that is so obvious here. **We have an opportunity and responsibility to the world.** This responsibility begins here in our Jerusalem, the Greater Hanover area. It extends to our Samaria. Those in our community and surrounding area that are culturally different from us. Finally it reaches into ALL THE WORLD. By God's grace, we will seek, in the Greater Hanover area as well as various places all around the world, to expand the kingdom of God regionally, nationally, and internationally.

One area where we want to demonstrate God's care for the people in our community is through what I will call: **the Community Care Ministry.** **Jeff Eyler**, outgoing president of our elder board has a heart for this area, and is looking for people to come alongside to help us reach out and show God's care for the poor and the suffering among us, and to seek to meet the practical needs of people. In conjunction with the "Adopt-a-Family" that is a yearly outreach, **we want to see what we can do to minister to people's physical and spiritual needs of hurting people in our community.** We need more volunteers. We're prepared to bring a lot of compassion and relief and hope and help to the poor among us.

We're ready to release more of our lives and our knowledge and our resources. Friends, I have to tell you, the world is waiting and hoping. And when you roll up your sleeves and see God at work among the poor, when you see God at work in a foreign culture or in a church on the other side of the world that we've been able to influence and help a little bit, you will never be the same. **Testimony:** I've found my heart drawn to our missionaries, Ron/Denise Hamme, serving in Thailand since taking part in a mission's trip this past year. I've been made more aware of pressures and challenges they face in ministry.

SUMMARY: These three areas emphasize where we're going together. We're going to reach a greater percentage of our community with the Gospel. We're going to move our Christ-followers toward community, maturity, and participation in the body of Christ. And we're going to invest more of ourselves, our knowledge, and our resources around the Greater Hanover area, our nation, and the world.

There's a famous verse in the Old Testament Book of Esther where a man of God says to Esther, "Maybe in the scheme of God you were appointed to live for just such a time as this."

I don't think it's an accident you are here this morning. I think the whole course of your life led up to a point where you would be saved and growing and enough of a Christ-follower to be sitting here this morning with an expectant heart, excited about where your church is going. I think God appointed you for such a time as this. **And we need you.** We need you to give regularly to support God's work taking place here. We need you to use the spiritual gift God has given you to ministry to fellow believers here. Most of all though, we each need to give ourselves first to the Lord! God is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think. I believe God would be glorified to see us reach hundreds of people here in the greater Hanover area and beyond in the coming years, and then see them intentionally disciplined. But it begins with you and me. Will you join me this morning in putting ourselves back on the altar and saying, "God, I recognize my human frailty and weakness and sinfulness, but I also recognize that your power is working with me. I know you are able to do far beyond all that we ask or think. Have your way in my life. Have your way in our church. Use me for the furtherance of your work here at Calvary Bible Church.

Now to him who by the power that is working within us is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think, ^{3:21} to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Eph 3:20-21 (NET).