

<iw> = inaudible word

**LA Church of Christ Congregational Meeting
November 11, 2001**

Written Transcription

Kip McKean goes to the podium and speaks:

We gather tonight with the LA family, a part of the kingdom family of men and women who have dreams. We've seen so many dreams become reality over the last several years. The sending out of the Moscow team, and the incredible first year of 850 baptisms, there in Moscow. The sending out of the teams to Vietnam and to Jerusalem. And, of course, just about a year ago, the completion of the Evangelization Proclamation and the Jubilee celebration of <iw>. And then, recently, to be able to know that the LA Church broke the 10,000 disciple barrier. It is surely those times that fill us with joy because we know the Lord is happy and surely our dreams have become reality through his working in our lives.

Tonight, though, is not really a time of joy for us but more a time of tears. Over the last several weeks, Elena and myself have been wrestling with some of the challenges in our marriage and family and we've been wrestling with whether or not it was the right thing to take a step back and go on sabbatical.

After talking with the Gempels and the Bairds, who have always been so key in our lives, as well as with the World Sector Leaders, we've decided that we're going to take a sabbatical from the ministry for the foreseeable future.

Therefore, there will be some changes in leadership in the LA Church. The LA Church will now have as the lead couples, the Fuquas and the Garcias <iw>.

Taking the <iw> Garcias' place in Orange County, Danny and MJ Saltz will be the new regional leaders for Orange County. Also, the model of mature leadership such as the Jerusalem church as well as the Antioch church, we have asked Andy Fleming to serve as the congregational teacher of the church and for Tammy, his wife, be a congregational women's ministry leader. This new team of leadership, the elders, the congregational elders, the Williams, the Bairds and the Webers are going to take a higher profile and more prominence in the decision-making for the church. And we really believe these disciples are going to do an awesome job leading the LA Church.

Secondly, the last couple of years Elena and I have been leading the Middle East World sector, but now of course, of all time when literally the focus of all the nations is upon the Middle East, what a key time for us to be praying for all of our churches, for all of our brothers and sisters in all the countries there.

And so in our quest to be able to find someone that could lead the Middle East victoriously at this hour, we believe that we found the couple that can take the work much higher. We've asked Andy and Tammy Fleming to become the WSLs for the Middle East. [*clapping from the crowd*] They bring incredible expertise - as you well know, they led a mission team to Moscow

and of course spent time in the Soviet Union but after awhile the Soviet Union broke up into 15 different nations. Several of those nations are Islamic nations and they planted churches in all of the Islamic breakaway republics, so they know how to deal with challenges in those areas of the world, and we believe that their radical edge is going to spur on our brothers and sisters in that part of the world in an awesome way. Amen church? [*clapping from the crowd*]

As far as God's global movement and talking a little bit more about the sabbatical, Bob Gempel will come and will detail those things in a few moments. We are excited that the Gempels are not only here tonight but, uh, in order to help us out in our marriage and family they are going to be coming to LA about two weeks out of every four weeks in the month and we super appreciate that kind of sacrifice to really be family and walk with us at this time and really join hand in hand with the Bairds in discipling us and giving us the direction we need to get our lives really back on track.

The question obviously is, "How did Kip and Elena get here?" I believe with all of my heart and believe you do too, that the Bible is the word of God and the Bible teaches that God has made the world not with just physical laws, but with spiritual laws, and when one violates those spiritual laws, then there is a price that is paid. And of course the violation of those spiritual laws is sin. One of the things I believe with all of my heart is that the husband, the father, is 100% responsible for the spiritual happiness of his family. And when a family is not happy, when a family is not spiritual, the father, the husband needs to take the full responsibility there and so it is with me. For the past several weeks I've had to take a step back and say, "What are the sins, my character and my actions, that have hurt Elena and the kids?"

The first sin I've really begun to wrestle with is arrogance. I suppose I've always known that I was very prideful and arrogant but I wasn't really in touch with how this really manifested itself in the leadership of my family. One of the things I see in looking back is that my arrogance manifested itself in thinking that I was always right about decisions in our marriage, decisions in our family. And of course when you have that kind of an attitude, that, that crushes the wife and it doesn't allow her to express her opinions, be in unity with her husband and it crushes the kids. I didn't go after family discipling like I really needed to. Now we have met with the Bairds every week in our typical discipleship partner times but I didn't really get on in there really seeking the help I needed. I didn't ask the questions, I didn't really just get open about my qualms or my reservations, or the things I really need to be wrestling with in my family. And the Bairds have been in there trying to help us, but uh, it is a very sad commentary I think on myself, that I just was independent-spirited and didn't really have discipleship partner time and got down to business in my life, my sins, confessing my sins and helping my family.

I think the second sin that I think took its toll through the years is anger. And perhaps I not, uh, had angry outbursts as much as I've gotten older, and yet I think in growing up the kids saw me in my anger be very disrespectful to Elena. I think that hurt God's *<iw>*, my *<iw>*, and Elena's *<iw>*. I, in essence I just see so many sins that have made me fall short of the mark of where God would want me to be as a husband and as a father, and certainly there are other sins that I've wrestled with. And for those that are close to us, I would pray that you would come to us and share your observations, your thoughts about what we need to work

on, what we need to change. And at the end of the day we are just disciples like everybody else and we need that kind of input. [*clapping from the crowd*]

I think as, uh, [McKean choking up and beginning to cry] we enter this time in our lives [*crowd cheering him on*] we need your prayers. These two sins that are very new to me to struggle with, are self-pity and bitterness. And I know these are lurking right there, right now and uh, I just want you to pray for me and Elena and the kids. Even more than that I really want to beg for your forgiveness. I've been, uh, a terrible example, [*choking up*] I fortunately know that is vital in leadership, is to be an example. I feel I have been a tremendous disappointment to you and I beg your forgiveness. [*crowd is encouraging him, some shouting "we forgive you", "we love you bro", and clapping*]

Some may ask, "Well, did the pressures of the ministry do this to you?" But no, that's not the case. I think if anything it's the pride of the ministry - and for those that are young and you have a dream to be a leader in the church, I, I pray that tonight doesn't at all discourage you. As our church is growing, the need for leadership is increasing. We are desperately in need of young men and young women to fully commit themselves to the work of the Lord, and as you see me and Elena tonight it is because, uh, we didn't walk in the ways of God and I, I would beg you, please don't even think that the ministry was even a part of it. I think that we have for a long time preached that we are the church of the Bible and I believe that and I know you do too. And this is a movement of God and not a movement of man, and I know that is why you got baptized. And so with my failings and my disappointments to you this should not shake anybody's faith. I hope that you would see that even the leader of the movement needs to confess his sins, deal with his life, and.... [*crowd begins to clap*] People like that are more mature in the faith, that have an awesome marriage and an awesome family like the Bairds and the Gempels, a will to drop whatever they're doing and just give up their time and effort to heal us on up and, uh, we appreciate them so, so very much. So again I want to ask for your forgiveness, I want to beg for your prayers, I want you to know that we are very thankful that we get to go on sabbatical to focus in on those things that are hurting us in our ability to share our faith and helping others come to Christ. [*end of McKean's speech, crowd is clapping*]

Elena McKean begins speaking:

"I love the LA church with all of my heart. You are an incredible, incredible group of people, ten thousand strong. [*crowd begins to clap and cheer*] I'm so grateful that we have been able to serve in God's LA church for almost twelve years now. And it is God's church, we are merely his servants, and I'm especially proud of our powerful women's ministry here. [*crowd is clapping*] Of course I'm also very fired up about *<iw>* of our great Latin ministries. [*crowd begins to cheer*] Near and dear to my heart is our dynamic teen ministry and I'm so very, very proud of Jonathan and Carla Perkins and their fantastic leadership. [*Elena chokes up and the crowd begins to encourage her*] I especially pray for the teens to deal with all of this in a Godly way to stay faithful and strong. I am deeply grateful for our sabbatical. We need it, our family needs it. And I'm deeply grateful for Kip and his humility and all that he is giving up for the sake of our family's needs. [*crowd begins to clap*]

As Kip shared, I'm deeply grateful for the Bairds. Al and Gloria have been awesome friends for a long time and they've tried to help in many different areas. I'm really, really grateful for the Gempels, Bob and Pat, and in the early years in Boston they were a great team working together helping us in our lives. And a lot of you know, Bob and Pat's living room is the place where the movement started. They're an incredible couple, so sacrificial and so gracious, so hospitable. We need that at this time in our lives. I'm so grateful for the LA staff, the ministry and the administrative staff, you guys are the best. *[crowd applauds]*

I'm really, really grateful for the Fuquas. Marty and Chris have been friends for almost twenty-five years. They're great partners in the Gospel and of course I am really, really grateful for Peter and Laura Garcia. *[crowd cheers]* Uh, Peter is my younger brother and I have loved him ever since he was a baby. I took care of him a lot and I respect him and Laura so much. I respect their faith and their incredible work in Latin America and what they've done here in LA. I'm really, really grateful for the Flemings and I'll never forget the miraculous experience of planting the Moscow church and I know with you all and the congregational elders the LA church will do just awesomely. You'll be in great hands and will be taken care of. I'm so grateful in Kip sharing that song, God has done great things in our lives and I believe he will continue to do great things in the future. These have been the hardest ten months in our lives because of where we have been at spiritually, and as Kip explained, we got here because of our sins and actually I believe I am equally responsible for my sins. And my number one sin and I share this because... *[Elena begins to cry, the crowd begins to encourage her]*

My number one sin is bitterness and I really want to deal with that sin. It's a scary sin, in Hebrews 12:15 it says that bitterness will cause you to miss the grace of God and defile many. And I do believe my bitterness has hurt Kip and our children and that's usually what bitterness does, it hurts the ones closest to you. I've struggled over the years with the traditional role in the kingdom, of the woman's role, and we've come a long way and I'm very, very grateful and I praise God for the awesome opportunities that there are now for the sisters in the kingdom.

I've struggled with the pressures that have come on our family, the persecutions, the death threats, and I haven't always been open about them and it's led to bitterness. And I've struggled with not always feeling protected by the kingdom at times, and it has led to me having a victim mentality.

My second huge sin is the lack of unconditional love. I've been critical, I've been over-corrective with our children. I've neglected to meet their spiritual needs. My third cardinal sin that we talk about in the movement, it's a big one, is assuming that we're so strong, it is pride assuming that our kids will be strong and Satan has been after us, after our children. And I realize that I need discipling more than ever. I realize that we need discipling more than ever. No matter how long you've been a Christian, stay in discipling relationships. *[crowd applauds]*

I want to express how grateful I am for the Gempels coming back into our lives. It's a huge sacrifice for them to be here two weeks out of the month, as Kip shared, and it's a sacrifice for them being here with all the work they have back in Philadelphia. I know we need more than one couple to disciple us - we're just too much for the Bairds. Please forgive us for the

bad examples we've set. Please pray for us to become more like Jesus. I love you all very, very much and kindness and faithfulness to God be with you. [*crowd applauds*]

Kip McKean returns to the podium to speak:

The last part of Psalm 126 says "Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams of the Negev." There's a chance in the future that we might be invited back to be a part of the leadership in the LA church. I know Elena and I always dreamed that when the kids were away at college, we would go back to the Third World and spend our remaining years there.

Right now it is not the time for us to focus in on the future, right now it is time for us to focus in on marriage and family. It's also a time when as a church there's a crisis. This is when the church has really got to show who it really is. I really want to encourage you as brothers and sisters in the Lord to pull together during this time. Don't let anybody's faith get shook. You see, this is a time to get behind the Fuquas, the Garcias, the Flemings, and the congregational elders.

The Bible teaches that this transfer from discipleship to leadership, John the Baptist said it, I must decrease and Jesus must increase. And so it is with you in leadership. It's, it's a time for those of you all that were loyal to us, we appreciate that, to transfer your loyalty to the new leadership. To get behind the Fuquas, to get behind the Garcias and the elders, and then and only then that God would be glorified and even greater things then await the LA church. Again, thank you so much for your patience, we beg your forgiveness. Pray for us. [*crowd applauds*]

Al Baird begins to speak:

It's a very sad night. You can't know the things that took place that Kip described, without others being a part of the responsibility. Gloria and I have disciplined Kip and Elena for a number of years and we certainly have to own our share of the responsibility. We have and will continue to apologize to Kip and Elena for letting them down in disciplining them and not in every case speaking the truth in love. I think that not only should we apologize to them, we need to apologize to you. Because you gave us the charge of watching over Kip and Elena and their lives and we basically failed in that role, in not disciplining them in the way that we should.

I think in looking back and examining places I have failed and the sin I've been guilty of, I think one of things that I am responsible for is assuming. Now this is a cardinal sin in disciplining, is assuming. I always assumed that Kip and Elena's kids and family would do great because they've been so great in building churches and in everything else. I always assume that everything will work out and obviously that's not the case. It was a very serious, serious mistake on my part.

I think along with that is, is second-guessing myself, second-guessing my own judgement. Very seriously, the sin on my part is not getting more input. Now we have great congregational elders. Working together with the Williams and the Webers has been a great joy. There's tremendous wisdom there but I have not sought as much input from them as I

should have. I think, uh, very seriously on my part is just not putting a high enough priority on the McKean family. Obviously responsible for many important things, I've been given a very important charge. I feel like, uh, again I let God down, I've let the McKean's down, and I've let you down. I want to - very very seriously want to - beg you for your forgiveness. [*crowd applauds*]

Gloria Baird begins to speak:

As I really look at this situation and see my own sin, um, the scripture in Psalm 120 strikes me, verses 3 and 4, "If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you is forgiveness, therefore you are feared." I'm so thankful that we don't have to be, I don't have to be overwhelmed by my sin because I know that God will forgive me when I repent. And we have asked Kip and Elena for forgiveness and I have asked them specifically to forgive me of the sin of insecurity. For not speaking up when I needed to. For not being confident enough of what was taught me and shown me that I would push through it in saying something that was maybe uncomfortable to say and not being sure enough of what God wanted me to do. And that sin has hurt and it has not been speaking the truth in love.

I need your forgiveness for that, as I need their forgiveness, because it's kept us from being what we needed to be to Kip and Elena and their family. As Al said, we have seen how much we all need other people in our lives and I think I'm seeing that I need more input. I've needed more people around me to tell me when I am secure, insecure, when I am holding back, when I am saying things in an unloving way, not loving deeply enough. And we pledge to you and commit to you that we will stand firm with God and his word, and we will stand firm with Kip and Elena and their family. And we will with God's help, make the changes that we need to make, to help others make changes as well. And we need your forgiveness, and we beg you for that, we thank you for that *<iw>*... [*crowd applauds*]

Al Baird speaks again:

You know, uh, the damage that is done here is not just done here to the McKean family, the damage is also done to you because I know that a lot of you are asking right now, "If the McKean's being who they are and having great discipling around them are having problems with marriage and family, what chance to do I have?" Well, I thought of the answer to that question because it is an easy answer, because of what I just shared with you and what Kip and Elena just shared with you. The combination for instance, on the one hand when Kip feels like he's always right and on the other hand, I'm assuming he is right, you don't have discipling taking place. You have very poor discipling taking place and that's what happened in this case, there has been poor discipleship. And so I want you to take great courage and hope that when you do it God's way it works.

Gloria and I are recommitting along with Bob and Pat to do it the right way. Kip and Elena are recommitting to do it the right way. The last thing I want to say to you is I'm sure Gloria and I are not the only ones making this mistake in discipling relationships. I think it's time for all of us to re-examine our discipling relationships, for us to commit ourselves, we will speak the truth in love, we will go by the word of God, we will have victorious marriages and families and a great *<iw>* [*crowd applauds*] with God.

Again, one of the things I'm very encouraged about is being back together again with Bob and Pat Gempel. And to explain a little about what the sabbatical is all about, Bob is going to come up at this time and share with us. Bob Gempel.

Bob Gempel speaks:

Kip's already shared with you many of the leadership changes their sabbatical entails. I wanted to share with you what this means at the Kingdom level. But before I do that I would like to double back and define what we mean by sabbatical. The term sabbatical is borrowed from the academic community. It simply means a leave of absence granted to an individual for the purpose of rest or study or some other pursuit related to but independent of that person's customary responsibilities. It's granted with the expectation that the individual at some later date will resume the normal responsibilities of his role. So that for an example, when a college president take a sabbatical, he's no longer involved in the day-to-day activities of the college, yet he still remains the college president. Accordingly, during this sabbatical, Kip and Elena will step aside from their day-to-day responsibilities in order to devote themselves to working on their marriage and family dynamic. In the meantime, the World Sector Leaders have asked me and Al Baird to lead the WSL group. Kip will continue to be a part of the World Sector Leader group and will be involved in any major decision regarding the fellowship of our churches. [*crowd applauds*]

We are deeply grateful for the powerful ways God has used Kip and Elena to build the kingdom into what it is today and for the tremendous sacrifices they have made in the process. So many of us would not be Christians today if it were not for them and their impact in our lives. What they need most during this difficult time in their lives are our prayers and our encouragement, and we're confident that by God's grace their best years in the kingdom are ahead of them. Pray for all of us that we become everything that God wants us to be. God bless you and thank you.

Al Baird comes forward to speak again:

When we were together here just a few weeks ago on September the 21st, when we originally scheduled our time together, it was to celebrate reaching 10,000 disciples in Los Angeles. But because of the events of September 11th, it wasn't really appropriate to have a great celebration time. You know, as this is a difficult time for Kip and Elena, they're always thinking about other people and they're always thinking about you. And so at this time in the spirit of not being able to celebrate before, but really wanting to celebrate now, Kip and Elena are going to come and make some presentations. [*crowd applauds*]

Kip McKean comes to the podium and begins to speak:

We'd like for all the regional leaders of the LA church and the <iw> and the <iw> to come on stage please.

You know it's an incredible thing, an historic thing to think now the church has ten thousand fired up disciples for Jesus Christ. [*crowd cheers, applauds*] You know, historians have said the church in Jerusalem, the church in Antioch, perhaps got to be twenty-five, thirty-five, even

fifty thousand disciples, and so ten thousand means we're just beginning. Amen? And so kind of keeping in mind that the, uh, leadership and certainly regional leaders have done an incredible job amongst us, and the idea of building out from here, um, I thought of a scripture in Luke 5:4 which says, "Put out into deep waters", and really that's the challenge Elena and I want to leave the church with. And so with idea that they have helped to captain the fellowship of the LA church, we kind of have a nautical theme for our gifts. And so at this time if we could have the portal clocks given. Each of the regional leaders, and the Perkinsons, and the Roses, will receive a portal clock with a little plate engraved that says, "Los Angeles Church of Christ, ten thousand disciples, September 1, 2001, Put out into deep waters." And I hope that tonight we appreciate the Hollands in the AMS of course... *[crowd begins to cheer loudly as McKean is calling the various regions/sectors of the LA church - names and locations he calls out inaudible on tape]*

And a couple that really does so much behind the scenes in making sure that we are integrable, to a lost world, to make sure that we are above criticism in our finances, Gene and Marianne Rose. Can we now have the congregational elders and Flemings come up front please. I think something that would be exciting for future study is the changes of leadership as the church matures. When a church is small it is usually spearheaded by the young evangelist for a while, and as it matures in order to represent the people, the church forms elders and has congregational teachers and prophets, and these men and women come together collectively to form a consensus leadership that is in touch with all the different elements of the congregation. And I think that you are especially blessed to have as congregational elders, the Williams, the Bairds, and the Webers working side by side working with our new congregational teachers, Andy and Tammy Fleming. *[crowd applauds and cheers]*

Finally I would like the Fuquas and the Garcias to come forward. Now I wanted to give these two couples very special gifts because they are taking over the helm of the LA church and we're going to get behind them. Amen, church? They are the captains of the ship and so they have very special gifts.

For Peter and Laura we have a model of Columbus' ship, of which he sailed, the Santa Maria. Of course Marty being the history buff that he is, I'm sure he already recognizes his ship. This is the USS Constitution, known as Old Iron Sides and I'm not suggesting that as a new nickname for Marty. But this ship is now docked in Boston and so it has kind of a double, uh, meaning there, but uh, on each of the plaques it also says " Los Angeles Church of Christ, ten thousand disciples, September 1, 2001, Put out into deep waters."

The Lord has done great things for us, gave us the 10,000, but you know, the church in Tokoyo sets an incredible example for us. They're not just the largest church in Tokoyo, but they are the largest church in the history of Japan. And so they are defining Christianity for the whole nation of Japan. The church in Moscow is not just the largest church in Moscow, but the largest church in all of Russia, and so in that sense it's defining Christianity for Russians today. In our church with 10,000 disciples, with 15 to 16 thousand every Sunday morning, we are not the largest church in North America. But this is the charge given the lead evangelist, the elders and the regional leaders: it's time to put out into deep waters and for the LA church not to just become the largest church in LA, but to be the largest church in the

history of North America! And so along with our sister churches it will define Christianity in this generation in North America and the world! [*crowd uproariously cheers*]

Ten-minute intermission

Chris Fuqua begins to speak:

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Chris Fuqua and I'm married to the awesome guy back here, Marty Fuqua. Most of you know us as the leaders of the campus ministry in the church. We're very excited in getting to know the other nine thousand of you. Please give us a while to learn all the names.

I want to share a scripture with you from Exodus chapter 15. Uh, this has been a very challenging time for the McKean family and also all of us who love them. As Elena shared, we have known them for twenty-five years and I owe them so much. I'm so grateful to them for my salvation. Kip was my campus minister and baptized me while I was a junior in college. I'm grateful for my marriage because they really worked hard to kind of get Marty and I interested in each other, very grateful. I'm grateful for the ministry training that they gave to me. I was the first woman intern in the Boston church, single woman intern and, uh, I thought Kip was absolutely crazy for asking me to do that, um, he said, "Sister if you don't do a good job we won't have any more." So, I felt the pressure. I'm so grateful for so many things. I want to share with you some of the things briefly that I have learned from Kip and Elena. And I picked this passage of scripture in verse 13, of Exodus 15 says it all. "In your unfailing love, you will lead the people through every deed, in your strength you guide them to your holy dwelling, you bring them in and plant them on the mount of your inheritance...forever and forever."

This is the song of Moses and Miriam and the thing that sticks out to me about this passage is that I was studying it in my own personal time with God, the unfailing love of God, the unchanging love of God, and as a woman I need things in my life that are never going to change. I need God in my life to be the stability, especially during difficult times. I remember shortly after I became a Christian, about six months later, the woman who reached out to me fell away from the Lord. I remember going through a difficult time with my own family as they struggled to understand my commitment to God. I remember going through difficult times with my finals as a college student and in all of those times Kip and Elena taught me that the most important thing was to hold to the unfailing love of God.

I appreciate Elena. She trained me to be a woman with strong convictions, who's willing to talk about them and yet is strong enough to submit to God and to others. I think when we go through difficult times, sisters, it is a challenge from God to examine what we are made of. To examine what our faith is built on. I know in these difficult times we are facing as a congregation that Kip and Elena and God himself would want us each as women to examine our foundation with the Lord. To make sure that we're close to God. That we are really

holding to his unfailing love, and to really re-examine our relationships with one another. This is a time that we can get strong. We're so excited about serving with the Garcias. I know there are not a few Latino brothers and sister who do not find this to be super exciting. [*crowd cheers*] We pray that we could be God's servants as we lead you. We pray that we can be humble and we solicit your prayers. We love you very much. Thank you. [*crowd applauds*]

Marty Fuqua comes to the podium to speak:

Turn in your Bibles to the book of Isaiah chapter 55. Our wives are going to be sharing tonight and Peter and I are going to be preaching a little bit tonight. It is Sunday night, it is Veterans Day tomorrow, and so I know you are fired up to be here to hear some preaching of the Gospel. Tonight has undoubtedly been unsettling. It can shake us up when things happen in our life that we don't foresee. I want to share with you tonight some things from the pages of God's word. They are pages you can depend on. They are rock solid, they aren't going to change and we don't need to worry about that at all. The first point is the word of God itself.

Isaiah chapter 55 says...The word of God says here that you can depend on the message and the power of the word of God and it will impact people's lives just like God said that it always would. The word of God was powerful yesterday, it is powerful today, it will be powerful tomorrow. The word of God speaks to the needs in people's lives today and tomorrow.

We hear much talk of community, of thousands and thousands of people who need the gospel of Jesus Christ, who need the message of God. They needed it yesterday, they need it today and they will need it tomorrow. We've got to walk out of here tonight as a church in the faith, full of confidence in the word of God. And you say, "Well, we've had Kip as an evangelist for so long, we don't know about you two jokers. What you're going to bring to the table with you?" You know, considering the nautical theme, Peter and I are just hoping the first thing you don't do is make us walk the plank. But you know, as great as an evangelist as Kip is, this church was not built upon the personality of any man. I didn't get baptized in the name of Kip. I believe it was in the order of God and the Son and the Holy Spirit, are you with me right there? [*crowd begins to applaud and cheer*]

I know for me when I come to church there is a lot of great things that happen. I love the singing, fellowship is always fun, seeing people. All of these things are important in my life. Communion is a great time to focus in on and remember the Lord and the sacrifice he has made for me. But the preaching of the word of God, that's what turns my heart. Isn't that what turns your heart? We've got to walk of here as a church convinced. Listen, the power and the word of God is everything it's always been. I need it in my life and friends and neighbors need it as well.

Point number two, look in your Bible to Numbers 32, things that you can depend on. Things that will never be untrue. Numbers chapter 32:23, "But if you fail to do this you will be sinning against the Lord and you may be sure that your sin will find you out." You know this is one of those passages in the Bible that's so clear that you can't misunderstand it. There are a lot of passages in the word of God that are very comforting to us, about God's love, God's forgiveness and God's grace and you know what? Those are great and we need to love those

passages, we need to memorize those passages, but every once in awhile you need to look at passages like this too. Because it, it is a spiritual truth.

There are a lot of things in life that you can't depend on, the weather, even in Southern California, it rains sometimes. There are things in life we wish were absolutely sure things and sometimes they really disappoint us. Our country right now is going through a time where we felt we were absolutely safe and now for most of us in the room there is a sense of uneasiness. Everything we thought that was absolutely safe, maybe it isn't. So we can't even be sure about that. Even your favourite sports team, as much as you would like to believe that a game is a sure thing, that's why they play the game. But you know what? The Bible says that you can be sure of this, your sin will find you out.

We need to talk about the circumstances here because there are lessons each and every one of us as disciples need to learn. Kip and Elena were extraordinarily humble in sharing the different sins in their lives. They are to be commended for that. On the other hand there could be a tremendous overreaction. You also say well, yeah, yeah, yeah, you mentioned pride and oh yeah, there's bitterness but what was the big stuff? Let me tell you something guys, that is the big stuff.

There should be no sense right now of any one of us as God's people of judgment towards the McKeanes. There should be, though, a look at our own lives. Where are you at tonight? *[crowd applauds]* What's going on in your heart? What's going on in your marriage? What's going on in your parenting? What's going on with your Christian walk with one another? You can be sure of this, your sin will find you out. It may be next week, it may be next month, it may be next year, it may be five years, it may be ten years, but you can be sure of this: your sin will find you out.

I think tonight as a congregation of God's people we need to rededicate our lives to be the kind of people God has called us to be and to make sure we are dealing with sin in our lives. All of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Let's make sure that sin never dominates our lives. That when we sin, we confess, we're open, we move on. But I tell you, brothers and sisters, you better walk out with a sober feeling tonight about this point: your sin will find you out.

Turn your Bibles to Matthew chapter 7. Point number 3, I want to bring to you tonight as a congregation. You can depend on in your life that you are going to suffer. Matthew 7 beginning in verse 24, most of you know it so I am not going to take the time to read it. But it's the parable in, uh, on the Sermon on the Mount of the wise and foolish builders. Now we all know the story. Jesus said there's one guy who built a house on sand and there's another guy who built a house on rock, and he said the storms came and the house that was built on the solid foundation stood the test that the storm brought into its life. And the house that was built upon the sand was destroyed. But Jesus said that when the winds blew and beat against that house it fell with a great crash.

You see in both houses, in all of our lives there are going to be storms of suffering, difficult times that we go through in our lives. I don't suppose anybody likes to suffer and if you do, then you may be have some other problems. No one enjoys suffering for heaven's sake and it

is almost as painful to watch people suffer that we love. For many of you who are not necessarily close to the McKeans, this may not be an experience you experience tonight, but let me tell you something, for the Fuquas, for the Garcias, for many of the staff that have been with them for many, many years, it's hard to watch people you love suffer. Those of you who are parents know when our children suffer, when they are sick or something is wrong with them, we almost wish we could be sick in their place. We almost wish we could take their suffering upon us. It's hard to watch people suffer, yet brothers and sisters, we need to understand that suffering is part of the Christian experience. Look over at, Jesus says something here to all us that we better listen to. John 16:33...He says that you are gonna have trouble in the world, in our time of life. There are going to be times in each of our lives where it's going to get tough. Look to Acts 14:22...He says we must all, all of us, we've got to go through times of trouble. Times of hardship, times of suffering.

Turn to Romans chapter 5, Romans 5:1...verse 3. Flip over to James chapter 1:2... I'm telling you tonight that the truth of God's word that you can depend on is that in your life you are going to suffer. You are going to have hardship, you are going to have trouble in your life. For a lot of us we look at times like this in our lives and ask what's wrong? And surely we may have done things that brought on the suffering. But suffering is a part of the Christian experience that if you ever hope to reach maturity, you'll have to learn to embrace. It has to be something not, not only that you only understand is going to be there, but when you see it begin to happen in your life you have to say, "OK, God is working on my heart, God is working on my character, God is developing me as a man of God, as a woman of God, and I need to endure this seeing God working in my life. Developing parts of my character that are not developed." When it is easy and not developed, when things go nice and calm in my life, I need this in my life.

Let me tell you something, at the time of suffering it is very difficult to have that perspective. But it's a truth that a lot of in our life, because we are Americans this goes so counter-culture. You see, you want to believe that we can grow and have it real easy. "There's got to be an easier way to study for this test." "I don't want to go and read that book," so what do you go and do? You go and get the Cliff Notes. There's got to be an easier way. You say, "I just cannot balance my checkbook." There's gotta be an easier way so we get software for our computer. I mean we try to get a failsafe mechanism. "Oh I can't remember what number I wrote that cheque on," so we get the cheques, that if write on it, it writes it down for you. "There's gotta be an easier way, I mean if we just microwave that thing?" That's who we are as Americans, we're always convinced there is an easier way.

In this area of life, there is no easy way. You must suffer and you must learn to embrace it now. *<iw>* the wise and foolish builder because that indicates there was a choice. You see if you suffer for doing stupid things, you're just dumb. [*crowd laughs*]

They say the first step to insanity is continuing to do the same and expecting different results. The truths that the Bairds and McKeans shared tonight, I pray to God that you listen to. Because there is a wise *<iw>* disciple, and that is to surround yourself with people that can help you. People that have uh, uh, lived longer or have more experience in that area, whatever area that may be, and you better listen to them because if you don't you will pay the price. Not only will you pay the price, others around you will pay the price for you and with

you. That's just being dumb, that's just being a foolish builder of your life. What life are you building? How sound is your life? Are you being disciplined? For many of us we want to say that "I'm being a disciple, I'm a Christian, I am in God's Church." But are the principles that should lead you toward maturity really happening in your life? Or are you just going to church? You know for many of us we have glaring needs in our lives. But we don't listen when people try to help us. That's foolishness. A wise builder surrounds himself with people that will help them become what they need to become.

In my life in the Northern Federation World Sector, I have Reese Neyland and Marty Wooten as the elders in my life. I need them in life. I need them observing my attitude. I need them observing my family. I need them observing my children - what's going on with me, how I treat people around me in the relationships I have. I need someone looking over my shoulder and dare I say I'm not the only one in this room who needs it. You need it too. [*crowd applauds*] I'm so comforted as Peter takes on leading the congregation that we have a consensus group of leadership. That we meet together and we talk about all the issues that need to be talked about, decided as it pertains to leading a congregation. We have the congregational elders: the Flemings, the Galangs, the Perkins, and of course the Garcias and the Fuquas. I mean we're all in there banging around together about what we need to do and where we need to go. How should we lead this great congregation of God's people? Then we have all the region leaders, men and women talking back and forth in consensus. We need that kind of help in our lives!

But many of us we fight it. We say, "I don't want anyone telling me what to do!" Look, at the end of the day you're going to make the decision - that's true. I get such a kick out of people who say, "I don't know about these disciplining relationships, you just control each other's lives." Let me assure you, that's not true. Because there are many, many people for heaven's sake that have made so many disastrous mistakes in their lives in our church. No one is ever making the decisions for them. Listen, disciplining happens when you have a disciple's heart and you want people in your life and need people in your life and you know it. [*crowd applauds*]

Point number four, turn your Bibles to Psalm 46 - things you can depend on:

1. The word of God.
2. Sin will come over your life if you don't deal with it.
3. There are going to be times of suffering in your life.
4. God is in control - **Chill out!** [*speaker's emphasis*]

Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear" - now listen to this - "We will not fear" - listen to all the things he talks about - "Though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging." He says we are going to be secure even when things are shaking and rattling all over the place. Sounds like Southern California, doesn't it? Jump on down to verse 8, look what he says, "Come and see the works of the Lord," in other words he says settle yourself down and look at what God has done -

“Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations, he has brought on the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

The psalmist David says here, “Hey, get a grip! Chill out!” God is in control. In our lives when something doesn’t happen the way we think it should happen we wonder if God is in control. God was in control yesterday, He’s in control today and He’ll be in control tomorrow. You see we get all, “Oh no! what’s gonna happen?” “Oh no! Kip’s not the evangelist of our church, what’s gonna happen?” “Oh no! we got a Latino [*crowd cheers*] we got a Latino and an old wrestler leading our church! What are we gonna do?” It’s like Jesus on the boat, remember Jesus on the boat and he lays down on the cushions in the back to take a nap? Now by the way, if Jesus took a nap it’s OK to take a nap. [*crowd cheers and applauds*] We all want to be like Jesus, Jesus took a nap and he’s taking a nap and the wind comes up and it’s blowing. The waves are getting a little rough and the disciples get all shook up and they come in and shake him and say, “Jesus wake up! We’re about to die! What are you gonna do?!” Jesus says, “Be quiet, be still!” and the winds and the waves settled down and the apostles shut up. And everybody else and anything else making noise, now they had to shut up too. The Bible doesn’t say it, but I think Jesus went back to sleep.

Be still. God’s in control. It is irrelevant whether you understand anything. There are so many things you won’t understand. Why would you want to understand everything? Do you have any idea how a combustion engine really runs? No, you don’t care, you just want to turn the switch and the car starts. You don’t need to know! Do you know how a microwave works? Most of us don’t, I know some of you people do. Most of us don’t, I don’t want to know. I just want to throw my thing in there and it comes out nice, you know what I’m saying? It’s not important that I understand it. It’s just important that it works. Be still, chill, it’s OK, we’re gonna be OK. God will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. This is an important thing in all of our lives. Those of us as parents, “Oh no! Are my kids going to make it?” You know what? I don’t know. I know this - if you don’t start getting some discipling in your life, you’re taking a huge risk. “Is my marriage going to make it?” “Am I going to lose my job?” We do this, we panic about everything. Be still and trust God. He is in control. If we live a righteous life, a good life, the scriptures promise us that we’re going to go to Heaven. Also promises that as we come *<iw>* there will be some tough times.

Point number five, and as I close turn over to Hebrews chapter 6, just a great passage of scripture about the stability we should have as God’s people. Hebrews chapter 6:13, one thing we can depend on: the promises of God. Hebrews 6:13, when God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no-one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself. That’s one of the passages you want to say, “Huh?” There was no-one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself. Why did he need to swear at all? I guess he felt compelled to swear and so he did. Not swearing like cussing, come on, saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” And so after waiting patiently Abraham received what was promised. “Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, He confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things,” now the two unchangeable things are God’s promise and God’s

oath which you can depend on, “in which it is impossible for God to lie. We have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us, we are greatly encouraged.”

Now look at the imagery in verse 19: “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.” He says we are anchored. We all know what an anchor is of course. It’s tethered to a ship by a rope or a chain and the anchor buries itself at the bottom of the body of water into the mud and the muck in such a way there can be all kinds of things going on at the surface of the water but the boat is anchored. Even though it may be tossed around, it is anchored. Our lives sometimes feel like we’re being tossed about and tossed around, but if we are anchored, look at the imagery here, to the Old Testament, to the New Testament comparison, of course this is written to the Hebrew Christians of the first century, he says, it goes into the holiest of holies, it is in the inner sanctuary where Jesus is and it anchors us into the very nature of God. Into the very presence of God. Your life, my life, our lives together sometimes may feel like we’re being shook about but if we are anchored as we are into the very heart of God things are gonna be OK in our lives.

I want to urge us tonight as the Los Angeles church, depend on the power of the word. To be able to accept the spiritual truth that you must get sin out of your life or you are going to pay for it. Number three, that there are going to be times of suffering. Number four, that God’s providence is there, He’s in charge so don’t worry about it and number five, that God’s promises are true and they will come true in my life and your life and in our lives. God bless the LA Church of Christ. [*crowd applauds*]