

Different To Make A Difference

Speak Boldly – Part 1

Dr. David Platt

August 27, 2006



SPEAK BOLDLY – PART 1 **Acts 2:14-41**

God make us a church that takes you at your Word.

It's a pretty common trend today in churches, and particularly large or mega churches, it's often times the case where the Word of God is minimized and particularly the preaching of the Word of God.

I was in a seminar on church growth in New Orleans a couple of years ago when I was working on the whole Ph.D. thing and I was sitting there in the back and listening to this church growth specialist talk about how to grow a church in the 21st century. And one of the main theses that he was promoting that day was that the role of preaching in the church is diminishing—that as we continue to go forward in the church the role of preaching is really going to become a lot smaller, and music is coming to replace preaching in our generation in the church. And music is going to be more important—a more effective avenue for promoting the gospel in our generation instead of preaching. And what we are going to see is kind of a role reversal. Instead of music kind of serving the preaching of the Word somebody getting up and talking is going to help lead into the music because music's more effective.

Now I was a lowly Ph.D. student, and I didn't want to be bold or arrogant and say what I was thinking, but part of me wishes I would have. I really wanted to ask this particular guy if music is a more effective means of communication in our generation today. I wanted to ask him why he did not sing his presentation to us that day...

There's something about the proclamation of the Word that God has blessed throughout history, and He's not going to stop blessing in the 21st century. The Word and the proclamation of the Word are central. They devoted themselves first thing to the apostles teaching which became basically the crux of the New Testament for us and a lot of that based on the Old Testament. They devoted themselves to the Word and the teaching and the proclamation of the Word. So what I want us to do, is I want us to dive in today to exactly why it was so important to devote themselves to the Word in that day and why I'm convinced it's important for us to do the same thing in our day today.

I want us to talk about the important centrality of the Word and not just the Word, but the preaching of the Word. Now some of you are thinking, "Well, you're going to give us a sermon on preaching. Isn't that your job? Don't you do that? Why do we need to learn about preaching?"

Well, two reasons, number one, I think we need to learn about preaching so we can understand what happens when we come in here and study the Word of God together. We need to understand what we should expect when we come to the Word of God, because there's a lot of people today that are claiming to preach, and the Word of God is nowhere to be found. We need to be a people who know how to differentiate between that which is right

and honoring to God in preaching, and that which is not. And second, we have talked about a missional awakening. We talked about asking God to wake us up as a church culture—particularly here in the south.

I want to share a quote with you from a guy named Martin Lloyd Jones. This is one of the greatest preachers of the 20th century who studied a lot of revival and awakening and saw God do incredible things through His church in London. He said this, "Any study of church history, and particularly any study of the great periods of revival or awakening, demonstrates above everything else just this one fact: that the Christian church during all such periods has spoken with authority. The great characteristic of all revivals has been the authority of the preaching of God's Word. There seemed to be something new, extra, and irresistible in what the preacher declared on behalf of God." If we want God to wake us up, I think we are going to need to pay attention to His Word.

We are using Acts 2.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set

purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him:

"I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence."

"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is hereto this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:1-47).

Basically in the middle of that was a picture of Peter's proclamation. This is the first example we have of the apostles teaching. It's when Peter preached the first Christian sermon.

Five Reasons Why The Word Of God Must Be Central In Our Worship Because of the Word's magnitude.

And so I'd like to use that as a guide to lead us into an examination of why the Word of God must be central in our worship...why it's a non-negotiable for us in worship more than anything else.

In Acts 2 you remember what happened in verse 5 through 13. We talked about it some last week. If you look down at the very end of verse 11 it's getting near the end of the description of different nations that were represented. And the Bible says these people say "*we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues*" (Acts 2:11)! And basically that's most likely an illusion to these different languages doing exactly what we've seen today as far as proclaiming maybe from the Psalms or other scriptures from the Old Testament proclaiming/declaring the greatness of God in all these different languages—verses that would be very familiar to the Jewish people who had gathered there, but obviously coming out in different languages.

So the first thing I want us to focus on is: Why should the Word of God be central in our worship? Number one, because of the Word's magnitude. Because of the Word's magnitude. I want us to break this up into basically two parts that we need to be reminded of when it comes to the Word as it comes out here in Acts 2.

Remember the significance of God's revelation.

Number one, we need to remember the significance of God's revelation. The significance of God's revelation. That is what the Word describes. It is the revelation of God. It is God revealing Himself to His people through His Word. They're declaring the wonders of God. How do we know God? We hear God's revelation. We speak God's revelation. And this is huge for an understanding of why the Word must be central in our worship. We need to remember the significance of God's revelation.

You see two things. Number one, God reveals Himself as the Word. You remember this? John 1:1 through 14 talking about Jesus. "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (John 1:1). Not, "In the beginning was the 'drama'," or "In the beginning was the 'musical piece'," or "In the beginning was the 'interpretive dance'." That's not what starts off there in John. "In the beginning was the Word." God is actually revealing Himself, with His son described as the Word. Now if His son who is God is the Word, then God is showing that He reveals Himself as the Word of God. This is how God is showing Himself to us. So first of all God reveals Himself as the Word.

Second, God reveals Himself through the Word. All throughout Scripture we see God revealing Himself to His people through His Word. Let me show you an example. Hold your place here in Acts 2. We're going to be turning a few times as usual. I want you to turn back to the left to 1 Samuel—Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel. It's right before 2 Samuel. I want you to look at 1 Samuel 3. I want you to see a picture of a time when the Word of God was not very prevalent—maybe very similar to our day today when the Word of God was not respected. I want you to see the importance of the Word coming to His people and God revealing Himself through the Word.

I want you to look at 1 Samuel 3:1. This will kind of set the stage. This is Samuel as a boy. Some of you may remember this story. It's Samuel and Eli, and Samuel is kind of working under Eli. Verse one in 1 Samuel 3 says, "*The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under*

Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions" (1 Sam. 3:1). And visions literally means, "revelations". God was not revealing Himself. The people were not listening. God is always revealing Himself through creation, but His people were not listening. And "the Word of the Lord was rare." There was a problem in that day.

So I want you to look at what happens by the end of that chapter. Samuel responds to God's call. And look at verse 21. I want you to pay attention very closely to this verse. The Bible says "*The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through*" (1 Sam. 3:21). His what? "Word". God reveals Himself through His Word. That's how His revelation works.

Now this is key for understanding worship. We were on a staff retreat with the worship staff a couple weeks ago. The way I describe worship: Worship involves a rhythm of revelation and response. God reveals Himself and we respond. It's not just us coming in and singing, listening and leaving, no, it's seeing the revelation of God, seeing His greatness and His glory—whether through songs or through preaching—seeing His glory revealed and then responding to that with our songs or with our lives or with our commitments or with our offering and the different things we do in worship. That's what's involved in worship. And so what God does is He reveals Himself as the Word and through the Word. All throughout the New Testament we see God working through His Word.

Hebrews 11:3 says God created by His Word. All throughout the New Testament with Jesus: Mark 4:39 Jesus speaks the word and the seas are calmed. Mark 1:25 Jesus speaks the word and demons are cast out. Mark 2:10 Jesus speaks and sins are forgiven. Luke 18:42 Jesus speaks and somebody who is blind can now see. Luke 7:14 Jesus speaks and a dead guy comes to life. Romans 10:17 tells us that when we place our faith in God for salvation that's a result of hearing the Word of God. God works through His Word. There is power in the Word. If it's raising dead guys to life and giving blind guys sight, and it's casting out demons, and it's calming seas that are raging, I think maybe it's something we should pay attention to in the contemporary church.

If we want to see the power of God then we've got to see that He reveals His power through the Word. That's the significance of God's revelation. That's what's going on when we study the Bible together. We are looking at the Word. Without the Word we don't have worship. Because if we don't see God revealed to us then what do we respond to?

But don't miss it. If the Word is not central in our worship when we come in here week by week and we may sing and we may get feelings, we may respond, but if we don't have the Word first then what are we responding to? We are responding to our emotions, we're responding to the entertainment that we've created in this room and we've missed the whole point of worship. Without the Word there is no worship. Without the revelation of God as the Word through the Word we can't worship. So we take the Word out—our worship becomes hollow. Remember the significance. It is a non-negotiable of God's revelation.

Remember the seriousness of man's proclamation.

But not just the significance of God's revelation, I want you to remember the seriousness of man's proclamation. The seriousness of man's proclamation. And this is where we get into the proclamation of the Word. And we come back to Acts 2. What we see happening...verse 14 says, "*Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd*" (Acts 2:14). You can circle that word "addressed". It literally means to speak seriously or to speak with gravity. Peter did not stand to tell a joke that day. Peter did not stand to give a nice talk. Peter stood and addressed the crowd with seriousness and gravity in his voice. I want us to unfold why it was so serious to see Peter standing and proclaiming the Word.

Well first of all, the preacher and his responsibilities here in Acts 2:14 and my responsibilities today...The preacher exposes the voice of God. And we are going to dive into this a little more in-depth in just a minute, but the preacher's job is to expose the voice of God...to reveal the Word of God...to show the people the Word of God. And that's exactly what we're going to see Peter do in just a second.

The preacher exposes the voice of God and then second, the preacher exalts the greatness of God. The preacher exposes the voice of God and the preacher exalts the greatness of God—shows the wonders of God and helps explain those wonders to His people.

If you look through this whole sermon it is a radically God-centered sermon. Look what happens...you can circle these different times when Peter talks about what God has done. Verse 17, in the last days God says, *"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him"* (Acts 2:22). Listen to verse 23, this is a pretty startling statement, *"This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge"* (Acts 2:23). "God was the one who gave Him over to you."

God is the one who poured out His wrath on His son on the cross. This was not an accident out of His hands that men took Jesus and crucified Him. It was God's set purpose and foreknowledge to pour the wrath of sin out on His son instead of you and me. It's not a man-centered way to preach, it's a very God-centered way to preach. Look at verse 30, *"He was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne"* (Acts 2:30).

Verse 32, *"God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact"* (Acts 2:32). Then he comes to the climax in verse 36, *"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2:36). God has done all of this. Now, it's at this point that I want us to take a step back and begin to think about how this relates to our day. The preacher's job is to expose the voice of God and exalt the greatness of God.

So the first question I want to ask us when it comes to our worship and particularly our preaching. Is our worship and our preaching man-centered or is it God-centered? You see we have this tendency to come into corporate worship and to be thinking about having our needs met and walking away thinking, "What did I get out of that? What did that experience have for me?" And we want to see how the Word of God applies to our life and there's nothing wrong with that, but at the same time, many times, in our emphasis on trying to find out how it applies to us we bypass the very focus of the Scriptures and worship on the person of God and not on us and we begin to look at worship and the Word through man-centered, not God-centered eyes.

Let me give you an example: I want you to hold your place and turn with me back to the first book in the Bible: Genesis 39. I want to give you an example of how many times we as preachers contribute to a more man-centered look at worship and the Word.

As you are turning back there we are going to look at a story that may be familiar to you—Joseph and Potiphar's wife. If you'll remember, Joseph worked in Potiphar's house. God had given him favor in Potiphar's eyes and raised him up, and Joseph had a lot of responsibility there. As a result when Joseph was in that house he began to face some temptations and one particularly in Potiphar's wife.

Now he resisted that temptation; he ran when she came to approach him. But he was framed basically and put in jail. What happens is after he was put in jail, he works there with a couple of strange characters and prophesies some of their dreams and gets in a little bit of trouble for it. Then finally he gets out of jail and back in Potiphar's household.

Now, at this point if we were going to preach and to worship with Genesis 39 kind of driving our worship, then there are different options we could take. There are a lot of practical lessons we could learn from Genesis 39. I have heard numerous sermons to students based on Genesis 39. Be pure. Be holy. Be like Joseph. Resist temptation. And that's certainly one practical lesson we could get. And there are other practical lessons. It would be better to have business experience before you get thrown in jail. That's a practical lesson that we could get from Joseph's life. Be careful whom you tell your dreams to; it may get you into a little bit of trouble. That's a practical lesson that we could look at from Joseph.

But here's the deal...what I want you to notice is that in Genesis 39 there is one phrase that is repeated 4 times. I want you to see it with me. Verse 2, Genesis 39: *"The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant"* (Gen. 39:2-4). I don't know if you noticed it, but two times there in verse 2 and in verse 3 the Bible says that the Lord was with Joseph. The Lord was with him. Over in verse 21,

"While Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did" (Gen. 39:21-23).

Four times the Bible mentions that God was with Joseph. Now here's the question: At this point we could approach this text and begin to talk about all the practical lessons that deal with our life, but if we do that we'll bypass the main point. Who is the hero of this story? Is it Joseph or is it God? God's the hero of this story. God is being credited here with every single one of Joseph's advancements. Everything that Joseph did was based on the fact that God was with him...whether in his humiliation—God was with him...when he was exalted in Potiphar's house—God was with him. Now that will preach.

No matter what happens in your life...no matter how confusing or difficult it gets...there's a God who is sovereign over every circumstance and He never leaves you or forsakes you. You're never alone. And if I'm preaching to students. I want students to hear, not "Go and be pure. Now go do it like Joseph." I want them to hear that in the middle of the temptations they face, God is right there with them giving them strength to withstand those temptations. And when they get home and their family is being torn apart and mom and dad are fighting...God is right there in the middle of that with you. And though it may be a struggle, and it may be difficult, in the end God is going to use that which is evil to bring about that which is good...which is the whole picture that we see in the life of Joseph.

That's a God-centered way to look at Scripture and we miss that if we come to it with man-centered eyes. Does that make sense? This is the revelation of God. This book is primarily about Him—not us—and so when we come in here to study the Word of God and to worship God through the revelation He has given to us, then our focus is on His greatness and His majesty and His mercy.

Albert Einstein, obviously a brilliant scientist, knew more about the universe than probably all of us in here put together. Charles Misner, scientific specialist in general relative theory....he wrote one time about Einstein and his lack of interest in church. And I want you to hear what he said. It's a pretty humbling thought. Misner said,

The design of the universe is very magnificent and shouldn't be taken for granted. In fact, I believe that is why Einstein had so little use for organized religions. Although he strikes me as a basically very religious man. Einstein must have looked at what the preachers said about God and felt that they were blaspheming. He had seen much more majesty than they had ever imagined, and they were just not talking about the real thing. My guess is that he simply felt that the churches he'd run across simply didn't have proper respect for the author of the universe.

Ladies and gentlemen...my job week in and week out is to stand before you and give you a glimpse of the glory of God, and the majesty of God, and the mercy of God, and the holiness of God and His Word because I'm convinced when we see His glory we will become more like Him and we will begin to honor with Him with our lives. And it's not dependent on me coming up with some opinions that are going to promote that. It's depending on me just revealing the glory of God through His Word...exposing the voice of God...exalting the greatness of God.

Now here's the deal that whole exposing the voice of God...Some of you may have seen, I don't know if you saw the whole A&E biography thing that you watched on DVD, or that kind of thing, but my title down at the seminary in New Orleans has been Assistant Professor of Expository Preaching. And some of you thought, "What in the world is that? What's he going to do when he preaches?"

I was actually preaching at a conference recently where I was being introduced and the person introducing me stood up and said, "This is David Platt. He's the Assistant Professor of Suppository Preaching at New Orleans Seminary." Expository! Expository preaching! All that means is that when a preacher stands he exposes the voice of God. He doesn't expose his own voice. He doesn't give his own opinions and his own ideas. Nearly 4,000 people will not gather today to hear the opinions of David Platt. If so, you have chosen a bad way to spend your Sunday morning. However, if I stand up and expose the voice of God then it is more than worth your time.

To hear from Him and to hear His Word...to expose the voice of God...unfold the voice of God before you...I liken it almost like going to the Grand Canyon. My wife Heather and I went there last spring. You go to the Grand Canyon...you don't have to do anything to make the Grand Canyon beautiful. All you have to do is take people there. Take them out on the ledge and look out and you've got it. That's all I think I have to do as a preacher.

Take you to the Word, open it up, open your eyes, here it is. I don't have to make it great! It is great! I don't have to come up with something new or innovative to put before you. It is good! It is gracious! It is merciful and I just want to give that to you! Because here's the deal...put them together...we expose the voice of God and we exalt the greatness of God.

How do we magnify God? We magnify God by magnifying His voice. It's what a microphone does. What I'm saying is magnified throughout this room by this (microphone). It magnifies what I'm saying. We magnify God by magnifying His voice. But here's the deal. If we're going to maximize/magnify the voice of God then that means we must minimize the voice of

man. If we are going to maximize what God is saying we need to minimize what God is not saying.

Now that places some pretty strict restrictions on how we handle the Word of God in our worship. It's very easy to abuse this and begin to switch that around and the voice of man begins to take the place of the voice of God and the attention begins to be drawn to the man, the preacher, and to be drawn away from the glory of God who is revealing Himself in the Word.

One example: Nehemiah, one of my favorite books in the Old Testament. You come to Nehemiah 1 and you see the picture of this guy who begins to sacrifice everything to go and rebuild the people of God and the walls and then the people. Nehemiah 8. Now that's a book that if you were to go to the Christian bookstore today, or you were to get on the websites of churches all across you would find all kinds of books on leadership based on the book of Nehemiah.

Leadership principles...this is God's textbook on leadership some would say. So if we want to learn how to be a leader, even in the secular world, we go to the book of Nehemiah and that's where we learn leadership principles. And so what many people have done is taken the book of Nehemiah, which I'm convinced just like the story of Joseph, the hero of this story is God, all throughout this thing we could walk through...maybe one day we will...

Chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 4:15, verse 20, chapter 6:16, chapter 7:5. Over and over and over again God is the one who is doing the action. God is rebuilding. God is giving strength. God is the hero in this thing. Nehemiah is being used by Him.

But I want to read you a verse—you don't have to turn there—but I want to read you a verse from Nehemiah 13. I want you to pay attention closely. And I want you to imagine that we were doing a leadership study on Nehemiah.

"Moreover," the book says in verse 23, "In those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah" (Neh. 13:23-24).

So here's what Nehemiah did. Nehemiah says,

"I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God's name and said: "You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves" (Neh. 13:25).

Now, is this a good leadership principle? When you become angry go to your people, get in their face, yell at them, then take the hair off of their heads and just literally rip it out? Be glad Nehemiah is not your senior pastor. "Well of course David, it would be ludicrous to use that as a leadership principle from the book of Nehemiah." Don't miss this...at this point you are deciding which leadership principles you will use and which leadership principles you won't use from the book of Nehemiah, and you are now maximizing what you want to say and minimizing what God has said. Does that make sense? The preacher's job is to expose the voice of God so that we exalt the greatness of God.

My prayer is that we will be a people who want to see more of His greatness week in and week out. That we don't want to be entertained. And we don't want to hear stories. That we want to see the greatness of God. We want more of His greatness and less stories...fewer stories. I'm praying that God will raise up students from the Church at Brook Hills that would go to conferences. And when they hear somebody just telling stories and making people laugh the whole time they would complain because they haven't seen the glory of God revealed in His Word...that across the board that we would long for His glory in the Word.

The seriousness of man's proclamation. Do we realize the gravity of this thing? There are some who would say that preacher's today need to lighten up and be amusing, and be funny. Can you imagine, "Lighten up, Peter? Don't tell them they crucified the Son of God? Say something funny? Say something witty, Peter?" I come in here and I know that in this room there are marriages that are falling apart and on the verge of divorce. And I know that there are single moms who are struggling with the school routine and how to do it on their own because the guy has left them on their own.

I know that there are sons and daughters represented in this faith family that are fighting in a war overseas and they don't know when they're going to see them again. I know that there are men and women, mom's and dad's, grandmother's and grandfather's that are suffering from cancer and other debilitating diseases and the family is wondering how do you say goodbye in the middle of this? And I know there's a family in our church who has an 8 or 9 month old child that has been in the hospital all of her life and two parents are at the hospital day in and day out wondering where the joy of parenthood is in this heart-wrenching agony that goes up and down every day. And I'm supposed to come to you and tell you a joke? And amuse you? Say something witty?

2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "*The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.*" Verse 6, two verses later, says the true God is shining light into hearts by His Spirit to show them the glory of God in the face of Christ. The god of this world blinding the minds of unbelievers in verse 4. In verse 6, the true God shining light in hearts. And in the very middle, verse 5, says, "We preach Christ."

There is a battle going on between the god of this world and the true God, blinding minds and shining light in the hearts and in the middle of that is the proclamation of the Son of God who gave His life to conquer sin, and conquer death, and conquer the grave so that we could know His glory and His grace. And people say in light of that in our day, "We don't need to preach sermons, we need to have our preaching less preachy, instead give casual talks about God, have discussions, conversations, casual talks."

Ladies and gentlemen...the god of this world is doing everything he can to blind our minds from the infinite holiness of God and the fact that our sin is infinitely offensive to Him...and that His wrath is infinitely just and His grace is infinitely precious. And every one of our lives, every life in this church, every life in this community is brief and headed to either everlasting joy or everlasting suffering. If preaching does not carry the weight of these things week in and week out on Sunday what will? Television? Radio? The Internet? DVD's? The true God wants to shine light into our hearts and bring us into submission to a loving Savior. And the god of this world wants us to burn in hell. And I will not stand in the middle of that and give a casual talk about God.

I pray God makes us a people that want the voice of God so that we see His greatness and His mercy and His majesty and His holiness. And we submit our lives to His all-conquering love—all-consuming grace. That's why the Word is central in worship.

A Challenge ...

Here's what I want to challenge you to do. I want to challenge us as a church to make the Word central in our lives. And I want to give you an opportunity to say I'm going to be more active in making the Word of God central in my life. And so I want to invite you to say "Today I'm committing to make God's Word central in my life as we make God's Word central in our church." And what I'd like to do—and not all of you have to take me up on this—but what I'd like to do is give you an opportunity and give you a challenge to begin hiding the Word in your heart. It's not an easy thing. It doesn't come naturally to all of us. We're not perfect. That's the whole point though is how can we best in our weakness let God show His strength and I know God wants to hide His Word in all of our hearts.

And so I want to challenge you to begin memorizing. Some of you may just start and say, "Ok, this week I'm going to memorize verse 42." Some of you may be more ambitious and say, "I'm going to memorize the passage." Whatever it may be for you, whatever would challenge you, but I want to invite you to begin doing this.

We are going to devote ourselves to the apostles teaching. We are going to devote ourselves to the Word. And I want to invite you to take a step and say, "If the Word of God is going to be central in this church, the Word of God is going to be central in my life."

I know that I've crossed some lines today by talking about the horrors of hell and what the god of this world is trying to do in all of our hearts to blind us from the truth which is in Christ. And I know that in a room this size there are some of you who have been blinded and you've never opened your eyes to the grace and mercy and holiness and majesty of Christ. And I want to invite you, if that's you, you can open your eyes and see His greatness and His grace and His mercy. And while others are responding I'm going to ask some church leaders to be available here at the front. And I want to invite you just to come to one of them and say, "I want to know the grace of Christ for the first time in my life. I want to see His greatness." And by what He did for us on the cross, for you, on a cross to pay the price for the forgiveness of your sins, for you to have new life you can for the first time see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By David Platt. © David Platt & Radical. Website: Radical.net