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**Indianapolis Church of Christ
Ed Powers, Evangelist Speaking at
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Transcribers Notes:

- audience reactions in brackets (..)
- transcribers comments in square brackets [..]
- paragraphs numbered for reference purposes [1]

We called this meeting tonight for a very, very important purpose. I want to be as concise as I can be. I know that sometimes I have a tendency to be wordy and I will try not to do that. I want to be concise and yet I want you to work really, really hard to stay with me in what I want to say tonight. One other thing before we begin, I really want to encourage you to stay here until the end of my remarks. Some of you are going to think that you know where I am going, but you really don't know where I am going. In fact, some of you are probably going to be sure that you know where I am going and you're going to be very disturbed and very worried. But I want to tell you right up front - you don't know where I'm going. You're going to think you do but you're going to have to wait to the end to find out what I am proposing and I think you'll be excited. [1]

In Ephesians 4:1, Paul writes to the church in Ephesus that "I am a prisoner of the Lord and I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling. Be completely humble. Be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit to the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." Paul calls upon the church in Ephesus to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. He calls upon them, setting forth unity in the church as being of great importance. And he goes on, in my opinion, and explains to them the issues that are basic, fundamental important issues upon which unity must be demanded. One body. One Spirit. There's only one. I think if you don't believe that, we may have a problem. One hope. One Lord. One faith. One baptism. (amen) One God, the Father of all who is over all, through all and in all. Now those are basic fundamental things that we can unify on. No doubt about that. [2]

For thousands of years, religious groups have divided over issues and over disagreements which really have very little to do with the things that God calls us to unity on. I think it's important for us to understand what divisiveness is and what divisiveness is not and what causes it. Some of us don't have an accurate understanding of what divisiveness is. We don't have that accurate understanding because of what we have been trained to believe. I want to make some observations here. [3]

1. Disagreement is not divisive. (right) Turn to your Bibles to Acts 15:36. This is about a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas. Then some time later Paul said to Barnabas "let's go back to visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."

Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark with them. But Paul did not think it wise to take him because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them to the work. They had such a sharp dispute that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus and Paul chose Silas and left, committed by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. He went to Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches." [4]

Paul and Barnabas had disagreements. But the disagreements did not lead to divisions in the kingdom of God. Paul went one direction, Barnabas went the other direction. [5]

I fully expect when I get to heaven to see Paul and Barnabas. I expect to talk to both of them and ask them how their work went after they went in their separate directions. I believe that both Paul and Barnabas are going to be there. They had a disagreement, the Bible says it was sharp. But their disagreement did not cause disunity in the kingdom of God. [6]

Sometimes when we hear somebody disagree, especially in an area that seems very, very sacred to us, we can get all nervous. We tend to think that's it. Wait a minute, I think we're being called to divisiveness here. Look, because two people don't see eye to eye on things having to do even with the work of God, it does not mean that there can not be unity among them. (that's right) [7]

2. I want to make a point that criticism is not divisive. Turn to Acts 11, where Peter, after being sent by God to the household of Cornelius and went in and preached to the gentiles and the gentiles were baptized into Christ, Peter came unto some criticism for his actions. The apostles and brothers throughout Judea heard that the gentiles also had received the word of God, so when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, "you went in the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them?" Peter began to explain everything that happened to them precisely as it had happened. [8]

Skipping down to verse 18, "when they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying Also then, God has granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life. [9]

These Jews were critical of Peter going into the house of Gentiles and eating with them. They did not hesitate to be critical. They did not hesitate to call that to his attention, and yet again, I think it's worth knowing that criticism, in itself, was not divisive. It did not lead to division. [10]

3. Further, you probably heard that reservations are divisive. I deny that reservations in and of themselves are divisive. Galatians 2:11, we read about a situation that I believe describes one brother has some pretty serious reservations about how the other brother was conducting himself. Look at Gal. 2 beginning with verse 11. Look what happens here. When Peter came to Antioch, -Paul's talking here- I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. He reminds me of a leader. (laughter) We always know when somebody's clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles, but when they arrived, he began to draw back, separating himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. And the other Jews joined him in hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy, even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all >you're a Jew yet you live like a Gentile among Jews. How is this, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? [11]

I would say that Paul had a few reservations about how Peter was conducting himself. And yet, there is no indication in scripture that the reservations ended in any kind of a split or chasm between Peter and Paul.

And it does not indicate that was the case. Because reservations, in and of themselves, do not cause divisions. [12]

I think it's really important guys that we understand what does and what does not cause division.

In the religious world, divisions can be caused by creeds. The word "creed" means "I believe" or "we believe." Creed is a statement of what we believe. Now a creed can be written or unwritten. Some religious groups write down their creeds. The Methodists have theirs written down. It's called the Discipline. The Mormons have the book of Mormon. The Catholics have the catechism. Various denominational groups have written down their creeds and say, "look, this is what we believe. If you want to be one of us, then this is what you must believe." Many religious groups comb the scriptures, gleaning what they believe to be important. And that's okay, so far. Kind of read through there and certain things jump out at you as being important, can't help that. But what happens is, as a religious group when we glean the scriptures and we pull out everything that we believe to be important, and we haven't necessarily sinned at this point, but when we go the next step we say Now we have the truth. Now we have discovered what really is important. And then we go another step and say We are the only ones who are right. Unless you agree with us, you cannot go to heaven. Unless you agree with us, God is not with you. Why? Because we have gone through the scriptures. We have decided what is important and we have taken our stand on those things. Unless you see it like we do, you can't be in a saved relationship with God. Folks, then we have overstepped our bounds. (that's right) Then we have become divisive. Whether our creed is written or whether our creed is unwritten, you know? Some groups write it down. Some groups don't have it written down specifically, but yet we all know what they are. [13]

We know what we believe. Every religious group knows what they believe. They know what their favorite scriptures are. They are underlined in their Bibles. I have often encouraged people to read the sections of the Bible that are not underlined. Because those sections may be just as important as the sections they have underlined. It's hard to get together, you know. It's hard for people to get together on what is really important when it comes to the many and varied doctrines of the Bible. Division it has caused by people forming written or unwritten creeds, which is a statement of what they believe is important then calling everybody else to agree with it. That is divisiveness. That is sectarian. That what brings out sects. That's what brings about denominationalism. To denominate means to name. To name is to denominate. A denomination is a group with a name. Why do we take a name? We take a name to distinguish ourselves from all other groups. You know, if you look in the Bible, God did not name the church. He didn't need to. Because there was only one. There was only one. Everybody who obeyed the gospel, everybody who obeyed the gospel was added to it, whoever they were, wherever they were, they were added to God's church universal. It didn't need a name. You were just a Christian, you weren't a certain kind of a Christian, you were not a Methodist Christian or a Baptist Christian or a Church of Christ Christian. If you had obeyed the gospel, God added you to his church and recognized you as being a member of his church and there was no need for his church to have a name. [14]

Now we refer to it as His, we call it the Church of Christ, we call it the Church of God, we call it the church of the First Born, we call it the Christian Church. Somebody says well, I object to that. Well, there's no difference between the term The Christian Church and The Church of Christ. One means "of Christ" and the other one means -- it's just phrased a little different way, it means the same thing. There's no difference. And I think it's important for us to realize that denominationalism is wrong. And what causes denominationalism is wrong. [15]

You know, we have divided over the years - the religious world - and even the church of Christ, for that

matter, has divided over the years on so many issues it has been unbelievable. Let me read to you a few issues that the church of Christ has divided over and have gone off and formed new groups. Over the taking of oaths -- some people believe that you shouldn't do that. When you go into court, you should not say I swear, you should say I affirm. And so churches have divided over that. Serving the military. Some people thought that it was wrong to serve the military. Others insist it is okay and divided over that. Capital punishment, using force to defend oneself or one's family, voting for political candidates, serving as a government official, engaging in political activism. Playing cards, (laughter) we're all in trouble. Permitting an unbaptized boy to lead singing in service. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, do you think we can get together on that?. The works of the Holy Spirit. Baptism of the Holy Spirit, praying for healing, the trinity, how God answers prayers, fasting, translations of the Bible, use of "thee" and "thou" in praying, authority of elders, who selects and appoints elders, qualifications of elders, the tenure of elders -- a lot of stuff about elders -- (laughter) deaconesses, enrolling widows, addressing disciples with military or academic titles such as major or doctor, long hair on men, women with short hair worshipping unveiled, midweek contributions, dimming the lights during prayer, use of church buildings for secular activities like Boy Scouts meetings, passing collection baskets, eating in the church building, use of choirs or choruses, integration of races, smoking, contributing to the United Fund, Youth Directors, Youth rallies, Youth Camps, six days of creation being literal days, and so on. That's just really a handful of the issues that we have been divided over the years. What causes divisions like that? Division like that comes when men bind their views of their favorite doctrine and their rules, which God did not make, and then call us to unify under those doctrines and rules. [16]

In my life, the greatest divisiveness I have ever witnessed has been caused in the name of unity. - How ironic. We go through the Bible and we say "this is what we believe." Now, everybody come and believe exactly like we believe and we can be unified. How absurd. How pious. You know that implies:

I have the truth.

I know the truth.

I have arrived.

I have it, you don't.

Anybody doesn't measure up to where I am doesn't have the truth.

Anybody who disagrees with me, if you don't understand the Bible the way I do, then you misunderstand the Bible.

You know all the important doctrines we believe are all pretty clear to us. If they weren't clear to us they wouldn't be our important doctrines, would they. They'd be someone else's important doctrines. [17]

It's time to realize, folks, that there are many, many doctrines and teachings and educations and examples in the Bible that there are people out there who look at the Bible and they have different ones than we do. You say, well, they're wrong. Are they? Are they wrong on all those and we're right on all of them? Is that what we're doing? Is that what it takes to be unified? [18]

You know, tonight we're going to discuss some issues. And these issues are going to scare some of you to death. I told you not long ago I was going to start saying what I thought. And some of this is going to scare you to death. And some of you, here's what you're going to do, I'm going to tell you. You're going to run ahead of me. Again, I'm going to warn you, you're going to think that I'm going to say something that I'm not getting ready to say. Some of you are going to accuse me being divisive before you hear the end of my speech. Some of you are going to become divisive in your own thinking. Cuz you're going to have experienced some those things I talk about and some of you probably, the truth be known, wouldn't be opposed to getting a lynch mob and lynching somebody if you knew who to hang. (gentle laughter) [19]

But I want to encourage you not to run ahead of me tonight. I want to encourage you to stay with me, you to listen to me and instead of coming to the conclusion that you know where I'm going, which you don't. I want you to stay with me and think with me about some things. We can change this church. I want to talk to you about ridding ourselves of legalism in this church. Somebody posed this question the other day: they said "well, you know, I'd like to believe that we're really going to do this, but how serious really are we?. I=m having trouble believing we are really serious because we've talked about these things before.@ And that probably describes some you - like oh ya that=s good, we=re talking about law, we talking about doing away with legalism." But are we really serious about it? Or is this talk? [20]

And I want to assure you tonight that we're very serious. (amen) As a staff we have studied. We have put in hours upon hours upon hours of study. Not just myself, but other staff members: Roger, Andy, Brian, many others, have put in at tremendous amount of study. We have had numerous discussions. We've made some decisions in our lives.. In fact, I'm standing up here to tell you tonight that the staff has made some definite decisions about our lives. Decisions that are going to change our lives forever. My life is never going to be the same . . . after tonight. [21]

And it=s my prayer that your life will never be the same after tonight. Lord knows, some of you need a different life. (amen) You need a different life than what you have had. You say, "I don't know if it=s ever going to come -- I just don't know if it's going to happen." Well, that's a decision that you're going to have to make. There are some things that stand in the way from ridding ourselves of the legalism that plagued us as a church and has robbed us of our joy. It has made living a Christian live a burden and not a joy. It has made us a poor example to people who look at us and who observe our lives. It has made us wonder, all of us at times, are we going to make it to the end? Can we do this? Can we hang on? AI=m getting tired.@ We=ve seen so many people, guys, fall by the wayside and some of us have looked at ourselves and said, Aam I going to make it?@ There are some things that stand in the way. We're serious. And you're going to have decide if you are. [22]

John 8:32, Jesus said, Ayou will know the truth and the truth will make you free.@ Let me say this before we go on any further. Don't ever be afraid of the truth. (amen) I made up my mind a long time ago, then I kind of went back on it. And now I'm going back and reclaiming it that I made up my mind when I saw the truth in God's word, I was just going to do it. (amen) Whether it was popular, whether it was unpopular, whether people understand, whether it got me in trouble, no matter what the consequences, no matter what it cost me. Too many of us, we look at the Bible and we say, "well, here's what it says, but I wonder what's going to happen to me if I do it." And we say, "well, hmmm, let's test and see which way the wind is blowing." Let's run this idea up the flag pole and see if anybody salutes. And if they don't we=ll slip it right back down real quick. [23]

Jesus said you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. I want to tell you, I haven't been free for a long time. I haven't felt free for a long time. Let me confess my sins to you tonight, because I have not felt free for a long time. But I have felt free in the last two weeks. I have felt free because once again I examined the truth and I have made my decision that I could stand on the truth. (amen) And that was true whether any of the staff decided to stand on the truth and it ƒs true whether any of you decide to examine the truth. It flat doesn't matter to me. It matters to me for your sake, but it doesn't matter to me for my sake. Because I am going to do what is right. (amen) Because the truth sets us free. [24]

1. One of the things that stands in the way of ridding ourselves of legalism is the fact that rules, and doctrine have been and are being legislated for us outside of this body. Let me read it again. Rules and

doctrine have been legislated for us outside of this body. In 1988, we were approached by the Chicago Church of Christ with the proposal of being reconstructed -- the church here in Indianapolis. It took in the previous four years to that I felt that the church here had done pretty well, but I was along with most of the people who were members of the church at that time, I was totally open to the church doing even better. Between 1984 -- I came here in '84 -- between 1984 and 1988, this church grew from about 200 in attendance. Until we were beginning to have about 600 in attendance. I didn't think that was bad, but I was very open and very anxious for that to be even better. Chicago Church proposed that we reconstruct the church. And, honestly, I did not know what that meant. I believe that many of you did not know what that meant. I moved to Chicago and had kind of a bumpy time, the hardest time of my life. A lot of good changed took place in my life. A lot of things that needed to change, a lot of bad things happened too. That=s just life. That's the way life is. [25]

I was in Chicago for 2-1/2 years and I then came back. When the plea was raised to reconstruct the church, the plea was at that time unity through relationships and cooperation. That's what I was told when I asked about what are the relationships. What is the relationship between the churches going to be? It=s going to be a relationship of unity. I'm all in favor of that. Through relationship and through cooperation. And guys, I going to say to you that's good. (yes) One of the things that has just wreaked havoc in the Kingdom of God is fact that we have not worked unity. And, frankly, I was very, very excited at that time to work on unity through relationships and cooperation. [26]

I want to tell you tonight that in the last several years some things have changed. We are now under a very rigid system of government. It resembles the Catholic church in its organization. We're in a system that pyramids down from the top with a man at the top with the World Sector Leaders underneath him and with Pillar Churches under them and with Model Churches under them. It is a very organized and very strict and rigid system. There are obvious advantages to that. You know, there are advantages to the military. You know, the military can do some awesome things because it is very organized. And because it is organized, it can do a lot of things that it could not do nearly as well if it were not so organized. [27]

What we have today is not a system of unity through relationship and cooperation. What we have today is a system unity through uniformity. (that's right) In short, this church is under the direction and the control of the church in Los Angeles through or by the way of the church in Chicago. You say, why are you saying this? I'm saying this because I want you to understand something. There are many things that go on and have gone on in this church that really aren't up to us. Things such as our special missions contribution. And there was a time when we had a special missions contribution because we had the idea we wanted to do it. Because we wanted to be involved in the missions. Today we have a special missions contribution because we are expected to have a special missions contribution. The amount that we give is not an amount that is decided upon by us, by the leaders of this church or by you, the members. But it is an amount that is decided upon by the folks who oversee us in L.A. This year the amount is \$254,000. That's the amount that we are responsible for. I had no input into that. We weren't asked. We were assigned a time period in which it must be given. And it is expected. [28]

Our giving per member is monitored on a weekly basis, the expectation is that we should give \$30 per member. And we don't do that. We average giving about \$25 per member. When you figure in the diversity of this church, the number of teens that we have, the number of senior citizens and the number of single moms and the factors that factor in, that's what we give. And we feel pressure as leaders. We feel pressure about that . . . because the expectation is that we should be giving \$30 a week. [29]

Our attendance is monitored on a weekly basis. We report on weekly basis by phone the attendance of this church. And we are rated "bad," "good," "great," or "awesome." Now I think our attendance has been good lately. We are setting attendance records. We have the highest average attendance that we ever had last month. We averaged a thousand and fifty some in attendance. We had 2 weeks last month when we went over 1100 in attendance. I was fired up about that. The truth is that's bad because of a formula that has been come up with that is applied to us, so we get "bad," "bad," "bad" on the side of our stat sheet which we send in each week. [30]

Leaders and members are available to the churches that are over us at their discretion, not ours. Sometimes we have run into problems because we have been expected to send some of you places that, frankly, you didn't want to go. And that put us in a bind, and so we come to you and talk to you and said "you need to go. You go." And, you know, sometimes we needed to pressure people to go where maybe they didn't want to go, or maybe they did not feel lead of God to go. And I think that's one of the areas where the staff to really needs to repent because we have pushed sometimes in areas where we shouldn't have. And sometimes we pushed harder than we should have in an attempt to meet the expectations that were placed upon us as a church. [31]

Now I stand up here tonight to simply say, now please don't imagine that you know where I'm going. Some of you are already sitting back there saying "you're being divisive." Look, it is not divisive to tell the truth. (yes) It depends on what we do. . . with this. That's where it becomes divisive in my book. [32] I believe God's plan is not unity through uniformity . . .

[Side 2 of Tape 1]

Accept him whose faith is weak without passing judgment on disputable matters. (Romans 14:). You say, "well, now, who is him whose faith is weak?" Him whose faith is weak is usually whoever disagrees with us. (laughter) And what is a disputable matter? That is a matter that he disagrees with us on. "One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man whose faith is weak eats only vegetables." What we going to do about it? "The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not. And the man who does not eat everything, must not condemn the man who does." Why? "Because God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant?" Let me tell you something, folks. When you judge your brother, when you judge your sister, when you try to force more scruples about whatever on your brother or your sister, you are judging someone else's servant. He is not your servant. He is God's servant. One thing that we all have in common in this room is that we are not the servants of one another. This church does not exist to serve me. You are not my servant. You do not exist to serve your Zone Leaders. We are leaders, we're there to lead you and motivate you, to guide you, and help you. But you are not our servants. You are God's servants. (amen) [33]

When you judge and try to bind scruples on someone, you are judging someone else's servant, namely God's. "To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand." Why? "for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man considers one day more sacred than another." What day do you suppose that is? The Sabbath. "Another man considers every day alike." You know, what are we going to do? At the leaders meeting we talked about this the other day, what we're going to do is Andy starts wanting to celebrate the Sabbath, starts wanting to keep the Sabbath all of a sudden. He's really convicted and says "I want to keep the Sabbath." And I said, "well, Andy, I think that's ridiculous." Look at what the Bible says. "Each one -- each -- should be fully convinced in his own mind.. He who regards one day special does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord and gives thanks to God. He who abstains, does so to the Lord for he gives thanks to God. Not one of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live,

we live for the Lord. If we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or we die, we belong to the Lord." (amen) [34]

The Bible calls us to unity through accepting the diversity, even diversity that has to do with what we believe about scriptural issues. Now let me make this point. I am not talking here about the gospel. I'm not talking about the gospel. I'm not talking about God's plan of salvation here or how you get in Christ. We've got to get together on that. But I'm saying after we get in Christ, we're going to have all kinds of different opinions about what the Bible teaches. And guys, some of you have thought that unity consists of just stopping what you really believe about what the Bible teaches, just brushing it off, just stopping it and saying "I'm just kind of hold on to the party line here, or whatever the position of the church is, you know. That's my position." I've been in studies before where the guy doing the study would look over at me when the guy who we were studying with would ask a question, he'd look over to me and say, "well, what do we believe about that, Ed?" I would say, "what do you mean, what do we believe about that?" [35]

Chapter 15:5 (Romans) Look at it. "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus." Let me throw this in here just for free. If you'll go and study out the passages in the Bible that deal with unity, you will find that almost all those chapters which deal with unity, deal with unity on one subject. And the subject is Christ. (amen) That's what the Bible calls us to unity on. Christ. The big controversy in the first century church was not all these fiddlin= things that we get all caught up in today, the big controversy was is Christ who he says he was? That's what the gospel deals with. That's what men and women are called to decisions on. The gospel. Was Christ who he said he was? Did he do what he said he did -- and what is our response to that, well look, that is what the Bible calls us to unity on. [36]

1 Cor. 1:10 They said -- keep your finger in Romans 15, and turn to 1 Cor. 1:10 very quickly. 1 Cor. 1:10 has been the scripture that is being used over and over to call us to unity on virtually anything and everything that he considers to be important. Leaders, myself included, have used this passage to call the church to unity on whatever we wanted to call to unity on. But I want you notice what he's really talking about here. Verse 10 - he says: "I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought." Has this passage ever bothered you? No divisions among you? Perfectly united in mind and thought? How can we do that? How can we be perfectly united in mind and thought? And I asked that question once and it was explained to me, Awell, the way we do that is we just all give up our opinions and we adhere to the opinions of our leader or the person who is over us. And then we can be perfectly united in mind and thought. Oh, really? I think what we are is perfect Astuffers@ when we do that. (that's right) And we become perfectly frustrated people and sometimes perfectly angry people when we do that. When we stuff our real feelings, and don't feel free to express them and don't feel free to disagree. So, what does it mean, then? Here's what it means: "My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: one of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos", another, I follow Cephas"; and another, "I follow Christ." Now we've got a problem, folks. You know, we've got people in the church disunified on what subject? Christ. You have people who say "well, Paul, he's my favorite teacher." And "Apollos, he's my favorite." And somebody else says, "well, I love Cephas, he's so emotional." And somebody else says, "well, Christ, he's my favorite." Look, Christ is not in the same category as those others. And he makes it clear. What he is calling them to unity on. He says, "is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you, except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas, beyond that, I

don't remember if I baptized anyone. Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power." That's what he called to unity on. He calls us to unity on the subject of Jesus Christ. Check it out in the scriptures and you will find out that is what we are called to unity on: Christ and the gospel. [37]

Back to Romans 15:5 "May God, who give endurance and encouragement, give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." How? "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." How are we going to have unity? Well, let's say a group of men sat down and say, "this is what we believe." Like the Methodist Church has done, like the Catholic Church has done and like every other denomination. Let's have a group of men sit down and say, "this is what we believe" and then let's just forget about studying our Bibles, let's forget about learning the meaning of truth, let's just say "we're all going to have unity through uniformity." We're going to have unity because we're just going to forget about our opinions, we'll forget about what we believe, and we're just going to buy in. Folks, I deny that is unity. That is denominationalism. (that's right) "For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews, on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy." Jews and Gentiles both in the kingdom of God. Both in the kingdom of God, Jews over here who want to keep the Sabbath. Gentiles over here, wanting to eat meat - offered to idols and offending the Jews. Everybody, you know, having a trouble, you know. Jews can't hardly Acut@ these Gentiles. Gentiles can't hardly Acut@ the Jews. And he says, look, how are we going to deal with this? Well, let's just go off and set up rules and doctrines and then we'll just demand that everybody give credence to those. No. He says, "accept one another." Once you're in Christ, folks, it's not the end of the world if somebody disagrees with you on some doctrinal issue. If you don't understand that, you're a legalist. [38]

Turn to Gal. 1. I want you to notice something here. You know, if we're not going to have unity through uniformity by way of authority, then what is the solution? Somebody might ask, "well, what was the church like in the first century?" Look, I want to make this statement. And, again, don't get nervous because of the truth. I want to tell you something, the truth -- the church in the first century was not organized like we have the church organized today. [39]

Gal. 1:15 Paul said, "But when God set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man." Now, you can't do that today. I think I'll go over and plant a church in Columbus, Ohio. - - "Bro, what are you doing, have you lost your mind?" Well, brother, I just thought I'd go over and talk to them for awhile while I'm here. "Bro, you=d better get on the next plane and go to Chicago. And we need to talk." Paul says when he was called by God to preach the gospel, he said "I did not consult with any man. Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles -- only James, the Lord's brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie." Three years Paul worked in the church evangelizing the Gentiles without consulting any man, without being tied into any structure, without being under the authority of any other man in the kingdom. He preached for 3 years. You say, "well, then what happened?" Chapter 2. "Fourteen years later..." You say, I bet now, after 17 years that they got this thing organized finally. "Fourteen years later, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles." He said he went up to Jerusalem and tell them what he was teaching to the Gentiles. You know, share my study series with them. "But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for

fear that I was running or had run my race in vain." And when I got there, I looked around and decided to figure out who the leaders were, you know, and those that seemed to be leaders, I got them off privately and shared what I was doing among the Gentiles. I wasn't going to drop a bomb, you know, on the whole mess there. So I went in and got together with those who seemed to be leaders. You know, if somebody came into this church and they looked around, he wouldn't have to say he got together with those who seemed to be leaders. We the leaders very well defined. You know, it's very well defined. It appears that it was not quite so well defined or so evident to Paul. "Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek." I think Paul was pleasantly surprised to find that there had been progress made in the last 14 years and a lot of the wrangling was taking place concerning circumcision evidently died down and these Jews did not require that Titus be circumcised. You know, earlier Paul circumcised Timothy to keep from being offensive to people like this. But now that kind of died down and they were no longer trying to bind their scruples on him. They were no longer trying to say, "look, you gotta do this," you know, to keep us happy? "This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. As for those who seem to be important--whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance--those men added nothing to my message." I think that's interesting. He said, "Hey, I shared with them what I was doing among the Gentiles and they added nothing to my message." They didn't say, "Hey, you need to change this. We're studying two different studies and we're not teaching exactly the same thing. You need to change your this and teach exactly what we are teaching. He said, no, they didn't add anything to my message. "On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles." Isn't that amazing? Here they're not connected together, really, in any way. But God is working in Paul's ministry and he's over here working in Peter's ministry too. "James, Peter and John, those @ - -now this is interesting-- Are reputed to be pillars...@ James, Peter & John would be World Sector Leaders in the world today. "James, Peter and John; to Paul they were reputed to be pillars - AI've heard about them.@ They gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews." This is a good arrangement. "And all they asked..." was that we use the same study series, send a special contribution, participate in the health plan, send an administration fee in, subscribed to Upside Down Magazine, that is all they requested. And said we could have fellowship. "All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do." [40]

Folks, the church was not tied together in the first century like it is today. Now you say: ADoes that mean it's wrong to be tied together the way it is today?@ No. But it also means that it is all not to be tied together in this way. It's a matter of judgment. It's a matter of opinion. God does not say how the church needs to be tied together. [41]

1 Cor. 16:12. I want to give you another example. Paul writing to the Corinthians. He says, "Now, about our brother, Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity." You don't have here a system where people are being controlled when there can be no freedom of diversity, where there can be no saying "no, I can't do that right now." Or, "no, I can't give that right now." Or, "no, we can't accommodate what you are wanting right now." Apollos was free. He was free to say, "no, I'm not willing to go right now." I don't think that would fly today the way we have the church organized. But that's the way the church was in the first century. [42]

In Acts 15 you find a tremendous example. And I won't even take the time to read that right now. You find a tremendous example of two churches working together, cooperating together to solve a problem. Oh, let's look at it. "Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers, >unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.= " Unless you do it our way, you can't be saved. "This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done" I want you to notice here, and now you can also consult Acts 1 and Acts 6, if you want to do some additional reading on this subject, the church was involved in making important decisions in the first century. It wasn't a group of leaders, meeting in caucus and deciding what we need to do and then going out and just informing the church and saying, "here's what we're going to do." That's the way we do it today. [43]

And the argument we offer for doing it that way is we say @the church is a kingdom, not a democracy.@ And that sounds real good. The only problem with that is it is not true in the context that we're using. The church is a kingdom. It describes God's relationship with the church universal. God is the king who sits over his church. That has nothing whatsoever to do with the operation of local congregations of the church. Nothing. God is the king over his kingdom, the church. Part of his kingdom is in heaven. Part of the kingdom is still on earth. And there is no indication that in the first century that God choose a man to be the @king@ over the church and to have people under him, and then people under their authority and people under their authority. That's not in the Bible, folks. You might not like it. You make like it or you might not like it, but it's not in the Bible. [44]

The church was involved in making important decisions. "Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses." Notice who these people are -- they are believers who belong to the party of the Pharisees. Guys, that wouldn't be tolerated in the church today. Here's some people who have different opinions. They're out of step. They're not in line with what the some other people in the church believe. What are we going to do with them? "Now, look, you've got to line up or you're out." No. They were believers. They still have Pharisee blood running through their veins. And they weren't going to let go of their circumcisions. They wanted people be submissive to the law of Moses. That's crazy. I think a lot of people knew that was not a good idea. But yet, they weren't thrown out of the church. They weren't ostracized. They weren't told, "Look, you're not with it. You're not part of the kingdom." They were different groups in the church. There were people who believed different things. They had different opinions about doctrinal issues. [45]

"The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: >Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now, then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.= " The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. When they finished, James spoke up..." and gave his opinion. Verse 19: "My judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead

we should write them, telling to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood." Let me tell you something, folks, this was almost nothing when compared to people (who almost?). Very, very minimal requirements. In fact, my opinion is, based on studying the New Testament, based on what we studied tonight, that even if the people do not go along with this, I'm not convinced that people were going to be thrown out of the church. They were writing there, trying to go for an agreement. Trying to resolve this in a way that was acceptable to everyone. The church at Antioch and the church at Jerusalem, working together. Not one lording it over the other. Not one being in authority over the other, but working together to solve a problem that existed. And that's the way I see it. (Amen, preach it, come on, Ed....) [46]

The problem is unity from uniformity by means of authority are many. I'm not going to cover them all tonight. I'm going to mention two or three.

#1 When we have unity through authority, when we have the arrangement we have today, churches are inadvertently damaged. I want to emphasize "inadvertently" because I want to make something clear here. I am not calling anyone's heart into question here tonight. I believe that the people responsible for this structure have pure hearts. I believe they love God. I believe they are dedicated to God. I believe they serve God. They sacrifice for God. I believe that with all my heart. I have no bones to pick with them. I do not criticize their hearts. But I deeply, and it has been by experience, that churches are inadvertently damaged when you have an arrangement where a church 2000 miles away is responsible and has under its authority a church clear across the country that they really know very little about. [47]

I think it's just human nature to all of us to be focused on our own problems, on our own needs. Everyone has this problem. But I want to tell you something, folks. If you had a pile of money in your back yard, you might make your decision, "look, I want to have character and I want to work for a living," but I want to suggest to you that when things got tough and when you had an unexpected expense, you're going to run out to that pile of money and you're going to take some. And when you get agreeing, of establishing a business that you think is really great, you're going to run out there and get some money from that pile and you're going to say, "let's go and do it." And the problem comes in if that money happens to be in your neighbor's back yard instead of yours. And it belongs to him. And you say, "well it doesn't belong to anybody. I mean, God -- the resources in God=s kingdom doesn't belong to anybody." You're right. Doesn't belong to us. And it doesn't belong to anybody else. It belongs to God. (that's right) The question we have to deal with is how do we determine how to use the resources that God has given us. The money? The people? The talents? Whatever we have, how do we use it? What's the proper and correct way to use it? [48]

We have one church. It has authority, total authority over another church. I think that somebody might say, "well, we don't believe that we have total authority because there's a lot of things that we don't interfere in." But the truth is, guys, they interfere in what they want to interfere in. (that's right) I mean, whatever they deem to be important, becomes important. Kind of like your Dad, you know, when you grew up and whatever he thought was important, was important. Maybe it didn't seem important to you, but it better get important to you. Why? Because you're under his authority. So whatever he says is important, is important. [49]

The last 5 years, I want to give you an illustration. In the last 5 years, twice other churches have come in and have taken from this church the best leaders that had been raised up to serve this church.. and I could name names and it would sound like the hall of fame. He said, "well, what's your beef? Are you against sending the leaders to other churches to help plant churches?" No. I'm for that. I believe that with God.

we will work together to get this world evangelized. I'm not saying we want to horde all our leaders and horde all our money. But here's what I'm saying. I believe when you go out you lead a person to Christ, when we go out, when we lead, in a year, if baptize a couple hundred people into Christ, I believe that we have an obligation to those people. (that's right) I don't believe that you baptize people into Christ and then fail to provide for them the discipling that they need. When we baptize somebody, we're bringing a spiritual infant into the spiritual kingdom of God. And we have obligations to that person. You bring a spiritual infant into the kingdom of God, then you put him in a situation where you cannot put a leader over him who can meet his needs, who can help him with his marriage, who can help him with his kids, who can help him with his finances, who can help him grow as a disciple and reach maturity so he's going make it to heaven. If we're not able to do that, the bottom line is that somebody falls away and goes to Hell. And not just somebody but many to somebodies. And so the consequences are bigger than what we realize. I am not against giving leaders, but I think a local church needs that the leaders, at least, need to be involved in being able to be able to say sometimes, "no, I can't help you right now. Maybe we can help you later, but not right now." If we're just a pile of money, a pile of resources that can be visited at any time, we're going to be depleted. I'll tell you what. This church has done, I think, very well under the circumstances. I want to tell you this. This church has been (inaudible) (clapping, laughter) We're working pretty hard. We've been hurt, guys. We've been hurt inadvertently. This church has been hurt by the taking of leaders. Sometimes we are hurt by the expectations in terms of money. Other churches have been hurt. [50]

Let me tell you, I'm going to tell you the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. That I, as long as I have been with this church, the truth is that I have filtered, I have filtered. I have not passed along to you everything that has been passed on to me. I have tried to protect you from legalism as best I could. And I'll be the first to admit that sometimes I have given in to the pressure and I have done some things even in this church that I am ashamed of and I need to repent of. There are times that I have pushed the staff too hard. In fact, I believe that there are people who maybe could be in the ministry today who got out of the ministry because maybe I pushed too hard. And I'm sorry about that. One of the reasons that I pushed too hard was because I was being hard pushed. [51]

[End of tape 1, side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1:]

... It has been devastating through this system. The top leaders and the sharpest and best people were raked off the top and moved to Chicago, leaving behind the people who were weak, the people who couldn't move, many of them left behind guilt ridden, having been told "you're not a disciple because you weren't willing to move." The church was left behind without adequate leadership. Folks, I'm sorry - I'm sorry, I'm in big trouble, but I don't believe that's right. (applause) [52]

The church in Chicago that sent 200 plus people to L.A. in the last 2-1/2 years. Not of their choosing. 200 plus -- not just people -- leaders. Not of their choosing. But because those people were expected -- I'll give you an example: last month the Chicago church was contacted by the L.A. church. "We need you to send 12 people that we can use in the Cross & Switchblade Ministry." The church in Chicago called the churches here in the Midwest -- we're one of them -- we need 2 from you, 2 from you, 2 from you, 2 from you and we'll send 4. We put out the word and said, you remember, we made the announcement, we had 3 people volunteer, 2 of them backed down. We went to some other people, asking them. Can you go, will you go, would you be willing to go? We had no takers. We sent the one guy that we had. Out of the 7 that were sent from the Mid West churches to be interviewed by someone in L.A., 5 of them were rejected

and only 2 chosen as being the kind of people that they wanted. They were looking for particular people. Only 2 were chosen. That was upsetting to the church in L.A. So the person who came to do the interview called Kip and told him he was disappointed with the people that we had sent. Kip called Marty and told him that he was disappointed. Marty called Ron Drabot and told him he had dirt on his face and told him to bring it to our attention his disapproval over the fact that we did not send the kind of people that they wanted. So then we were called and the rebuke is passed on to us. And why I'm saying this to you, guys, what I'm saying to you is this: we have lost a spirit of unity through cooperation and through relationships. We're now involved in a system that revolves around expectations. [speaking as ICC leadership] AYou owe us. You owe us. It's your responsibility, your God given responsibility to send us the leaders we want, the money we want, whatever we want to get the job this done.@ And I'm saying that churches are being inadvertently damaged. I'll give you further evidence later on. [53]

#2 I believe another problem of unity through uniformity by means of authority is that error which originates at the top is spread uniformly throughout the churches. And we have all, those of us who have been around very long -- now some of you don't have the slightest idea of what I am talking about tonight OK, nothing I've said has made sense to you because you've just been baptized recently -- all you've known is this church, and hopefully, you've been well treated, you're happy -- just relax. Some of you know very well what I'm talking about. Error which originates at the top is spread uniformly throughout the churches. [54]

You know, when you can't say no to policies and teachings, when you don't have that freedom to say "no, this violates my conscience, I can't do that." You say, "well, you can do that though. You can say no - this violates your conscience." - Yah, if you want to move. Some of the error which is originated, that we've seen, we have lived through the teaching that you must obey your discipler in all matters, including matters of opinion. Many of us have lived through that. Many of us were almost killed by that. We have lived through the eight and ten on one discipling - i.e. lynch mobs. We've buried our heads in our hands and cried and wept and said I'm sorry, please forgive me. And somebody would look back at us and say ABrother, your not there yet.@ [55]

I'm telling you, people were damaged. We went through the life talks, the reconstruction and people were damaged. And so it is with this kind of a system, error originates from the top and spreads uniformly throughout the churches. And folks, that's not right. [56]

#3 Leaders are robbed of their zeal to be inquisitive and to study the scriptures. That happened to me. I would be excited, you know for the last several years, if I was preparing to preach a sermon I'd be excited. But you know, I came to grips with this the other day, the fact is that my personal Bible study, and so far as getting in the word and saying, Aokay, God, what do you want to say to me now? What do you want to do? What big change do I need to make in my life?@ -- I lost that. Why? Because it doesn't make any difference what God says to me. Because the discussions and the policies and the doctrines and the changes in many cases have to filter down from the top to the bottom - they can't start with me. They can't start with me learning what God says and going out and being a man of God and saying, "look, I'm just going to do this." Which I am doing it now, but for years I have not. I have had to set back and say, "Eah, well I know what God's saying but if I do this, I'm going to get fired. Or if I preach this, I'm going to be in big trouble." And guys I say that a system like that is not good. (applause, come on Ed) [57]

The second obstacle and, by the way, let me throw this out. I'm talking about myself tonight and I'm also speaking for the staff. Because our staff, our staff is totally unified with me on the things that I'm talking about with you tonight. I'm not speaking for you, though. You're going to have to make a decision for

yourself about the direction that your life is going to go in the future. But the second thing that I cannot do anymore - personally that I cannot subscribe to is the teaching that only those who are members of the Int'l Church of Christ are saved. (cheers, applause) [58]

Some of you are bothered by that, you haven't even heard what I've had to say. I believe that teaching results in failing to understand the difference between the gospel and the many and varied doctrines of the Bible. There is a difference between the gospel and the doctrines of the Bible. I used to teach and preach that if two people disagreed that both may be wrong or one may be right and the other may be wrong. But that both cannot be right. And the truth is that is not true. Because the Bible teaches us in Romans 14 that both can be right in the eyes of God if both are fully convinced in their own mind, even though they differ and even though they hold different opinions on a matter of doctrine. They can both be made to stand by God, both can be right. We're not going to understand all the doctrines of the Bible alike. [59]

1st Corinthians Chapter 15 and verse 1 - - And you still don't know where I'm going. I know, I know some of you are totally convinced you know where I'm going. You're totally convinced that I'm going to recommend in a little bit is that we break away from the movement. You're totally wrong. [60]

1 Corinthians -- I think that's the cowardly way out -- "Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain." [61]

Now, notice what he said. You are saved by the gospel. But that does not mean you can disregard the rest of the word. You've got to hold firmly to the word or you can fall away, lose your salvation. I'm not saying the doctrines of the Bible aren't important. I'm not saying that for one minute. But he says it is by the gospel that you are saved. "For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures." Skip down to verse 18 or verse 11 - verse 9. "I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them -- yet not I, but the grace of God was with me. Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed." [62]

Folks, when you went down into the water to be baptized, you were asked a question or two relating to your faith in Christ. You were asked if you believed that Jesus is who he claimed to be. And you were asked if you were willing to accept him as the Lord of your life. And you said yes. And based upon those vows, upon those commitments, you were baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins. You arose a new creature. You arose with many things to learn, with a lot of growing to do, with a lot of things that you didn't know, with a lot of things that you'll never know. But you were saved as a result of the gospel, not all of the doctrines in the Bible. [63]

Now what we've done in the discipling ministries -- turn to Matthew 28:18. The Great Commission. This is our great commission. You know, in Mark's account there's a great commission. In Luke's account there's a great commission. Have you ever heard those used? See, those don't say or make the point that we want to make and this seems to. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." We have read a lot into this passage. We have interpreted this as saying "you go and the first thing you do when you meet a person is you make him a disciple." And we said, "how do we know what that means to be a disciple?" Well,

what was done is we combed through the entire New Testament, we found every passage that deals with what it means to be a disciple and we said, "this is what it means to be to be a disciple, therefore this is what a person must know if a person is going to really become a disciple and then we can baptize him." And we've said if he didn't know any of these points, and we've all done in the studies, you know, we study with a guy and we've got this negative feeling, you know, that he really did make a commitment to God, but we'll search in there and dig and we'll try to find one area where he did not understand or he didn't know what it meant to be a disciple and we'll say, "see there, you didn't know. You didn't understand you didn't really become a disciple at all because you didn't even know what the Bible taught on this. So, how can you possibly have become a disciple?" [64]

Folks, I'd like to point out to you that when the church of Jesus Christ in the first century went through its period of its greatest growth, the Bible had not even yet been written. The passages on discipleship that we have gleaned from the study of the NT scriptures had not even yet been written. The first century Christians did not have a pocket edition of the NT they could carry around with their Bibles and highlight the passages on discipleship. They had to depend upon the public reading of the scriptures and glean what they could. And what we have read into this word "disciple" is not what this passage says. "Go and make disciples." You know, we're going to have to make this passage jive with the other synoptic accounts of this passage in the other gospels. In all fairness, we have to. They have to be saying the same thing, I mean, they were all there - they heard it. They all wrote down their own rendition of it. All the copies are inspired. They've all got to mean the same thing. [65]

"Go make disciples." What is a disciple? The word "disciple" means a learner. Go and make people learners about Jesus. Then what do you do with them? You baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I think we all agree that's where salvation comes. Then what? Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. When does that come, guys? Now, be honest. You might not like this, but be honest for a minute. When does the Bible say that people would be taught everything that God had commanded the disciples? Before or after their baptism? (after) It was after. I want you to notice what we have done. You be careful here, because you're going to stand before God some day and your going to give an account for what you teach people. And I know some of you are very, very loyal to some teachings that you have held to for a long time, but it's time to get honest because you're going to stand before God some day. Here's what we've done. We have front loaded this whole thing. We have gone through and we have taken all of the scriptures that we believe are important in the Bible and we brought them all over here, pretty much our entire doctrine, and we have made that the study series that we teach people before we will allow them to be baptized. [66]

Not just the discipleship study. The word study, the church study, the kingdom study if we think they need it, the persecution study if we think they need it, the light and darkness study, the Cross, the Holy Spirit study, #1 and #2 if we think they need it. And then sometimes when we get all done and they have said, "yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes" to our entire doctrine and agreed everything that we stand on because we teach it to them, we teach it all before we allow them to be baptized. And the truth is at any point they disagree and we reach an impasse, we're taught [that] you don't study with them any more. [67]

I want to ask you a question. When you reach an impasse on some point that has nothing to do with the gospel and you refuse to study with a person any more, have you chosen not to study with him because he has rejected the gospel? Or because he has rejected some point of doctrine over which maybe we could possibly disagree and both go to heaven. We not only teach our whole doctrine before we let somebody be baptized, but we also feel free to do what was done just a couple weeks ago in a church. A college student was being studied with and went through the whole study series. He was fired up and wanted to be

baptized. The guy who studied with him brought him in to his leader and said, "Bro good news, so and so wants to be baptized." The leader began to talk with him and question him and find out if the guy is ready. And one of the questions that was asked was: "Has he pledged a fraternity?" Well, yes. Bro, you need go talk to him. You need to go talk to him, you need to tell him that he can't pledge a fraternity. Well, why? Because he's going to get involved in a lot of sin. He's going to get involved in a lot of sin, he's going to get involved in a lot of drinking and he's just going to fall away anyway if he joins a fraternity. He's just going to fall away, so you need to go tell him he can't do it. So they went and they talked to the young man. And they said "you can't join the fraternity. We won't baptize you." He said, "my father was in this fraternity, my brother was in this fraternity. It's a family tradition and everybody expects me to be in it. Look, I'll be all right." No, you can't be baptized. He was likened to the rich young ruler - as the story went. He went away sorrowful. Why? Not because he rejected the gospel. Not even because he rejected some point of doctrine. We withheld salvation from someone because he would not agree not to join a fraternity. I've read this Bible from cover to cover and it doesn't say a blessed thing about fraternities. [68]

[Gal. 1:6] "I am astonished!" said Paul to the Galatians, "that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned. As we have already said, so now I say again, if anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned. Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God?" I would suggest to you that I'm not trying to win the approval of men right now. (chuckles, come on Ed) [69]

Mark 16 -- this is Mark's account of the Great Commission. Do you believe Mark's account is just as good as Matthew's account? "He said to them, go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be condemned." I want to suggest to you that there is not one example in all of God's word of anybody going through a protracted study before they were allowed to be baptized into Christ. Now you find it. If you don't like it, I mean, you'd better get used to it because it's the truth. Now I've heard how we explain it away - they knew more about discipleship than we do now days and everything. The truth is that we have changed the gospel from the simple message that was preached in the NT to which people could respond and be saved. We have changed the gospel to include our entire doctrine and if someone disagrees on any point of it, we don't allow them to be baptized. And I'm saying it's wrong. [70]

Now what am I saying? Am I saying that we shouldn't study the Bible with people? No, I'm not saying that. I'm not saying we shouldn't -- I think the discipleship study is great. I think all the studies we do with people are great. That's not my point. My point is for us to say, "look, we're the only ones saved because we have figured out what's really important in the Bible and we've made it all a part of what we teach and we withhold salvation, fellowship, and heaven and God and everything else from you unless you accept exactly what we have deemed important. Unless you see it exactly like we do. It's very egotistical. [71]

I'm not saying don't study. I'm saying you can't bind what God did not bind. (that's right)

Turn to Acts 2 -- that's the one we all love isn't it? You know what we taught in Acts 2? I want you to notice verse 22, beginning in verse 22, I want you to notice what was preached in Acts 2. "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth, 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." He quotes David. Verse 29: "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God has 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 Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life. 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 said, "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....." I've heard here "with many other words" that must be where he taught the discipleship study. It says, "with many other words he warned them, and he pleaded with them..." Tells us what he did with those many other words". "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." Folks, I suggest to you that these 3,000 people were not only baptized without going through a protracted study series, but they were baptized without even having a one-on-one conversation with anyone. They were baptized as a result of responding to the preaching of the simple gospel. [72]

What are you saying Ed? Are you saying that it's not important to be a disciple? No. I'm not saying it's not important to be a disciple. I think it is. And I'm thankful for the discipleship study. But I can say no longer that a person who makes more out of Matthew 28: 19,20 than AGo and make learners of all people, teach them about Jesus Christ.@ [teach them] What? That=s got to refer to the gospel. That's what Mark=s account referred to, that's what Luke=s account referred to. It=s the gospel. That what was preached in every example of conversion in the Bible. The gospel. Not all the doctrine. The gospel. Guys, we have to get back to the gospel. (amen) The simple gospel of Jesus Christ. If you=re messed up on some point of what it means to be a disciple, I can no longer with a clear conscience -- look I have done it many times in the past -- and say "you're not saved" because you don't agree with me on every point of doctrine. Acceptance of the gospel brings salvation. If the right position on all of the perceived important doctrines of the Bible brings salvation, then my question to you is: Who is saved among us? Because you do not hold the right position on every single example and doctrine in the Bible. [73]

Third:

2 Cor. 9:7 tells us very clearly - and these last two points are not lengthy. And I'll tell you this, 2 Cor. 9:7 tells us very clearly how we are to give. It says, "each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Now that=s right here guys. [74]

And the third thing that I think hinders us from being out from under the legalism that has bound us and robbed us of our joy is the practice of giving by compulsion. The Bible clearly says here that giving is not to be done reluctantly or under compulsion. My question to you is this: how can we as individuals give not under compulsion when we, as an entire church collectively are compelled to give a random, specified amount? The point, guys, is not that we don't want to give to missions. This church gave to missions big time before it was ever expected or required. This church still wants to give that the gospel message can be preached. But we can no longer, and the staff agrees with me on this, we can no longer give credence to the practice of giving by compulsion. You say, well how have we done it? This is one of those areas

where I have really tried to protect this church. I get up here and I try to explain things, because we are given an amount to give. You know, we have to give 15 times our regular weekly contribution. We are responsible for that amount. We had nothing to do with setting it. That's what we have to send. [75]

So what do we do? We come to you and say, "pledge, tell us what you're going to give to special contribution." And we add it all up and come up with \$100,000 short. (laughter) And then what do we do? Well, we get all the leaders together and say "go back to your people, back to them again and ask them -- tell them we're not there yet -- ask them can you do better, can you give more." And so we go back and say "can you do better?" Some people say yeah, I can do better. Others say no, I can't, it's all I can do. And so we add it all up again. And we're still about \$75,000 short. So we say, look, go back one more time and tell your people that we have to reach our goal and you have not done your part yet. Go back, talk to them again and get in there and talk to those people, you know, who you think maybe they have not given as much as they should have give. Have a personal talk with them and try to see if they can give more. So the leaders go back, and the leaders hate this, but they go back reluctantly and they come back to you and they have a talk with you "Can you do better?" So we add it all up again and now we're a little closer but we're still not there. So we go back and say, "okay, since we're not there yet, we gotta go out and we've got to have yard sales, we've got to have a garage sale. How many of you can work out at the Indianapolis 500 booth? How many of you can do the Gus Macker Tournament? Because we've got to get there, we've got to get our goal. And so people sign up to do things that they really don't want to do. And they go out and they do these things and they sweat their brains and we come back and we're still not there. We're still about \$50,000 short. So what do we do then? Well, then we say, "well, let's all go out and have a walkathon." And go knock on the doors in our neighborhood and ask our friends and neighbors, you know, to give money to God's work. And so we go out and do that, we knock on doors. Then we go out and walk around in circles, you know, on Sunday afternoon. And finally, we scrounge together enough money to send out to L.A. to meet our obligation. And folks the truth . . . [76]

[Tape 2, Side 2]

... probably the best time we ever had. It happened at a time when we wanted to cooperate but were not being taxed. I don't think duty was nearly as influential as it has become now that expectations are assigned to us. Duty. Guys, I've got to be honest with you. I don't believe to the penny that I have given to the special missions contributions since 1986 since it began to be required and an expectation of something that I have to do and something so many times my regular weekly contribution -- I don't believe that a penny of that I have given has profited me anything. I'm glad that it profited the church, I'm glad that souls have been won, but I don't believe that it has profited me anything. Because I have not given out of a heart overflowing with love and gratefulness to God for what he had done for me. And I can no longer condone that practice of giving by compulsion. [77]

Fourth and finally:

Standing in the way of this church not being legalistic is facing the constant pressure of arbitrary expectations, statistics, and quotas which rob us of our proper motivation. The point of the Bible is supposed to be loving God and loving man. It's supposed to motivate everything we do. What I'm saying to you guys is that we are under the pressure of so many arbitrary expectations in the statistics and quotas that many of us find it is almost impossible to keep our hearts pure and really focused on loving God and loving people. We are required to report on a weekly basis to Chicago, zone by zone, statistics which regard to our attendance, our contribution, number of baptisms we've had that week, what our budget is, what our average giving per member is, predicted increase in members for the coming week, the actual

increase of members for the week just past. Our attendance is analyzed as to whether it is bad, good, great or awesome, according to a formula that has been compiled. Considering the number of children we have, the number of visitors we are expected to bring and the number of members that we have, we have compiled what is a bad attendance, a good attendance, a great attendance, or an awesome attendance. Our contribution is analyzed by zone. Calculated how much the average giving per member is, not only in our whole church but in each individual zone of our church. It is evaluated. Expectations are passed down through the leaders and all of us have been guilty of passing those expectations along. The pressure is felt by the leaders from me to the staff, to the Bible Talk Leaders, the missions team leaders, the house church leaders, whatever we happen to be calling them at the time, and it's passed on down to you. And the result is that it has turned us into a group of people who generally do not tend to be properly motivated by the right reason, motivated by the means that God wants us to be motivated by. We've been robbed of our joy. And that's why we always have to pump up the church. It seems every time we get together, we've got to pump that thing up again. [78]

I got a letter here, another letter I received this past week. Here's a portion of it: "I've been in this church for 9 years. I've seen so many changes -- good and bad. When you've had the courage and conviction to change some of the long-standing practices that have always troubled my heart, the freedom it gives me makes me want to do more for God. My prayer for you and Bobbi is that you will always have the courage to change whatever the Spirit directs you to change. (amen) On Tuesday we had the best Zone meeting ever. We talked about knowing God and the atmosphere was worshipful and genuine. It was inspiring. My heart was so encouraged by Roger sharing his desire to just love God and love people. More than anything, I want to be able to lead my Bible Talk group and share my faith in Christ without a hint of a thought of statistics or any other legalistic thinking hindering my [?].@ (applause) It goes on -- AWhen I=m sharing my faith with impure motives it becomes a burden and God has never blessed it." And, folks, I say amen to that. [79]

The other thing that has happened as a result of the pressure of arbitrary expectations, statistics and quotas is that many people have been wounded when we have failed to measure up to those expectations. I know of one church in the movement, and I don't know if the practice is still going on, but it went on at one time and may still be going on, for all I know, I know of one church in the movement that actually put in place the policy of removing from the membership any member who was not fruitful in at least two months, they were removed from membership. Guys, I'm telling you that kind of stuff wounds people. It hurts people. [80]

Also, I believe that these statistics and this pressure fosters a works mentality in us that robs us of the motivation of love. We studied Romans 12:8 and following in the lesson I preached two weeks ago. where God teaches us that love is the fulfillment of the law. That's the purpose for all of the commands. And, guys, I just want to say that I don=t know, I mean I don=t know how I can say to Andy, say, "look, Andy, I want you to share your faith tomorrow because you love God. And that's all I want to motivate you. I want you to be motivated by the fact that you love God. And I'm going to call you tomorrow night and see how it went. But I want you to do it because you love God. And if you don't do it, I'm also going to set your hair on fire but, (laughter) but I don't want you to think about that". That=s an unhealthy motivation. Now you concentrate on love. I think it is almost impossible to focus on love when we fear the repercussions that will come from failing to measure up to the expectation. [81]

We had a great staff meeting the other day and what we shared really broke my heart because people got real honest. Man, we sat down on the floor and we got honest. And people felt free to talk and say what they thought. And some of the staff people shared, they said look, the truth is that when somebody falls

away in my zone, that my first thought is there goes my money. So now I've got to go baptize somebody to take their place - or now I'm not going to get my goal. Guys, God forbid that leaders ever have to lead like that. God forgive. I want us to be at the point where when somebody falls away that we can sit down and genuinely cry for no other reason other than the fact that we love that person. (applause) [82]

In the movement, leaders are pressed and pressure to baptize, especially at the end of the month. We had the leaders scheduled to come down from Chicago to preach to over 200 teens gathered for a teen retreat this weekend. They agreed to come two, three months ago. Agreed to come. Two days before the retreat, they called and said "I can't come." Why not Bro? [response from Chicago] "Cuz, it's the end of the month and they don't want me to come because we're not having a good month and they want me stay to see if I can't get more people down." Guys, that is legalism. (that's right) As if it matters whether somebody is baptized on Feb. 28 or March 1st. (applause) [83]

[?] leaders repeatedly say at the end of the month "We need him to go down. Motivate the people, motivate them. Get in there and study with this guy, study with him, move him along man we need him to go down." Well, he hasn't even been to church yet. Well, get him out to the mid-week service. Keep him up til 2:00, 3:00 in the morning, you know, if you have to. Do whatever. You know, we've done that some of us. We've gone in. Keep people up til 2, 3:00 in the morning. He's sitting in there going "What in the world are we doing here? What's it all about?" He doesn't even know it's the end of the month. We know. See, we're judged on a monthly basis. And guys when you're judged on a monthly basis like that, what it does is it ties our hands as leaders and it forbids us too many times from doing what is really best for the church in the long run. Guys, we've tried not to give in to this stuff. We've tried, but we've failed. The fact that we've even tried has resulted in this church doing better than others. (applause) [84]

. . . I just want to make a point here. I told you, I'm going to say everything that's on my mind tonight. Years ago when I came here, the church in Indianapolis and the church in Cincinnati were about the same size. In fact, the church in Cincinnati was a little bigger. And now, 10 years later, the church in Indianapolis is nearly twice the size of the church in Cincinnati. You say, why is this? Because we have at least tried to do what is right about these legalistic things. And those who have been over us have not entirely had their way with us. (amen) Last year this church grew more than any other church in the entire Mid West, including the Chicago church. (applause) I'm not saying that to put down anybody. I'm saying God blesses us when we try to do his will. And what I'm also telling you is that it's getting hard. It's getting hard to fit in to a legalistic system and do what's right according to our conscience. [85]
[The above paragraph plays a very important part in the ICC leaders response. - jv]

The 4th and final point I want to make here under what this pressure of expectations and statistics and quotas does to us is this: over the long haul, the older churches in our movement are in trouble. Now that's the truth. You might not hear that, but I have the statistical information. We boast of growing as a movement is 16% last year. The truth is that most of that growth came in churches that were in one of two categories: they're either new churches that have been planted that have not been around a long time where people have not yet had the opportunity to be burned out by the legalism, or the growth took place in churches that were overseas in countries where there are more people wanting to study the Bible than there are disciples to study the Bible with them. Places like Moscow and Kiev and Novosibirsk and St. Petersburg and Manila and places like that. Also in that number is the church in L.A. which imported, literally, hundreds and hundreds upon hundreds of leaders -- which is artificially extenuated their goal -- nobody can keep up with that, the rest of us cannot do that. That's where the growth has come from. And you look at the churches like Chicago -- the church in Boston grew last year. The church was probably 4,000 members grew by 200. The church in Chicago had a negative growth last year. The church in New

York grew by about 102 or something like that. The churches in San Francisco and San Diego and Atlanta, churches of 2-3,000 in attendance grew by less than 100 last year. Well, what does that tell you? It tells you that this legalism is catching up with us. It=s catching up with us. The older churches are paying the piper. And it's got to change. [86]

I'm not saying, in conclusion, I am not saying that I want to leave the movement. I'm not saying that we're right and now we discovered all the truth and everybody else is wrong. Because if we say that, then we're no different. I'm not saying that the movement, the churches, the people in the movement are lost and going to Hell. I'm not saying that. I think that they are some of the finest people on the face of the earth. I believe that. If they are doing what they are doing, and I believe that they are, out of love for God and love for their fellow man, and I believe that is their motivation. I believe that love covers a multitude of sins. I am not saying that they are lost. I am not saying that we don't want to be a part of them. [87]

[This point was stated in the beginning and is restated here. Again, very important to remember. - jv]

But this is what I am saying. Hebrews 10:26 "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sin is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." [88]

My life has changed. After this message tonight, you can be sure of that. But my life has changed. I have made the decision to change my life. Why? Because I no longer can willfully sin. I can not willfully participate in things that I know are wrong according to the scriptures. I am not saying that everybody who doesn't see it the way I do is going to Hell, because, hey, if they have a clear conscience before God, then God bless them. Because I'm probably wrong about a lot of things, too, in my life. So, praise God. When I walk by their room in heaven, when I get there, I'm going to tiptoe because they think they are the only ones there. I'll tiptoe by so as not to let them know that I am there too. [89]

I can no longer go on like this. I can't. I have decided. I can't. The entire staff has made that decision. Every person on staff, I want you to stand up. All of you. (applause) [?] it=s very courageous that they have made this decision. And the decision that we have made is this: we ask you as a church tonight what direction do you want to go in the future. Keeping in mind that I am not talking about leaving the movement. What I am talking about is saying, "look, we want to have fellowship, but these things we cannot do. We cannot be under your toe of authority anymore at the expense of hurting the church, at the expense of souls, at the expense of violating our conscience." (amen) [90]

We need to know - as a church, what direction you want to go. I know that there are some of you here tonight whose loyalty to the discipling movement is probably undoubtedly so strong that you probably haven't heard a word I have had to say for a long time. Because you have probably tuned me out a long time ago. And there are probably some of you saying, "no, I don't want to go in this direction. I want to hold on to what I have always believed." And I want to say this to you: I totally respect your right to make that decision. I do not sit in judgment of you. I do not condemn you. I do not say your not as good as me. Nothing. I wish you nothing but the best and love God and love people and do it with a clear conscience. There are those of you undoubtedly who say tonight "I've got to go in this direction because if I don't, I'm going to die." And guys that=s me. I've got to do this. I have to do this if nobody else in this room did this. And our staff feels the same way.

I want to take a vote. And you're going to get a chance to express what you want to do. A Ayes@ vote says: we want to retain the staff that we have and we want to move in the direction that you've talked about tonight. ANo@ votes: means that I am uncomfortable with what you talked about tonight. I want to

go back to the old ways that I feel comfortable with, to what I've always believed. In which case, if the majority of the church feels that way, then as a staff, we will be resigning - tonight. We'll be resigning. And -- I'll get your questions in just a minute. You say, "why is that?" Because, frankly guys, if the church -- if this is the direction that we want to go in, I don't think this is something we should sneak up on. I think this is something that we need to be open and honest about. We have an obligation to tell you where we are and what we believe and what direction we will go in so that if you do not want to go in this direction, then you deserve to have someone come in and lead you who is fully sold on the things that I have spoken against tonight. You need to be led by somebody like that. And that's going to be your decision. And we'll give you the opportunity to make that decision. [91]

Before we do that, what I want to do. We're not going to have time for everybody to do this, but in fairness want to give any of you who want to, the opportunity to come up here and say whatever is on your mind. Okay? You agree. You disagree. Whatever. . . [Ed=s wife, Bobbi, comes forward] (cheers) This looks like a setup. (laughter) But I assure you it's not. [92]

Bobbi Powers: Ed didn't know I was going to come up here, but I felt -- I mean, it has been something else around our house in the last few weeks. But I think it was Saturday Ed basically told me what he was really feeling. And, I mean I was mad. I was mad because I thought "I love the movement." I have friends all over the world, you know. I respect him. I love him. It's sincere. And I said "Ed can't we just keep going along like we are, just keep filtering things? Can't you just make it work may be a few years down the road things will change and, you know." But I got the Bible out and I studied. Ed hadn't even talked with me. I didn't know where he was heading. But, I studied things out for myself and I know it's true. And I know Ed has always, in our whole marriage, every time he opens his mouth we're in trouble. (laughter) . . . for years. And I just thought oh, we don't want to do this. But I know it's right. I know that he cannot go on having these convictions and not acting on them. And they are right. I believe with all my heart. I mean, Marty Fuqua and Chris Fuqua -- they are some of our best friends. Ruth and Ron, and Sean Wooten that leads the [?] church. I mean, he's like a son to me. I love him. I love every one of them. I believe every one of those people have sincere, honest hearts. They love God. They're just doing what they think is right. And I don't want to take anything away from them. And I believe they're going to go to heaven. And I believe Ed has learned some things based upon the scripture that we need to change. And I stand by him. Honestly, I wouldn't have the courage to do. I am the one who will go along with the crowd and hope things got better. And I'm very proud of Ed and his courage. (applause) And we sat down with all the kids. They were crying, you know. Derek is like a son to me and I sat down with him today. His brother leads the Kiev church. And I don't know what's going to happen. I love Derek with all my heart. I don't know what's going to happen to us. I don't exactly what all this is going to lead to. But, I know if we follow God's will - I always have been faithful if I follow God, he's going to bless me, bless the family, bless the children and bless the kingdom. And so I'm holding on to the word tighter than ever and I encourage you to go home and study the things that Ed talked about tonight. I mean, you know, I hope you could notes so that we can [?]. So you could go home and study these things out for yourself and come to your own convictions. I don't anybody to go on what Ed says, I want you to go on what God says. And also, if this means that we all resign and you all are part of the discipling movement and we aren't, I want you to realize we still love you. We're happy for you. And if you can do that and be happy, that's all we care about. We only want the church to be happy and to follow God. Basically that=s all. (applause) [93]

Female: My heart's beating real fast right now. I agree with everything Ed said and....[inaudible]

Male: I agree with what Ed said about legalism and all that kind of stuff. And in time, I will feel good[inaudible]..... How can I plan to vote one way or the other....[inaudible]. [94]

Let me answer that question. Because as of tomorrow or probably later on tonight, in all likelihood, I will be fired. OK. You got to understand how this thing works. I mean, get real. I'm going to be fired. Now why? No. I mean, I'm not saying I care. Let me tell you one thing. My first and greatest temptation when I came to these convictions, my first and greatest temptation was to pick up the telephone and to call the person who is over me simply to say "I resign." That was my first temptation. Why? Because that's the easiest thing for me to do. I don't problem - I mean I don't have any problem making a living. I'm not up against it financially. I mean, we can do fine. We won't have to worry about that. And then I thought, well, what's going to happen? What's going to happen to this church? In all honesty, what's going to happen? What can happen to this church is that somebody is sent in here who puts into practice the kind of legalism that, frankly, most of you are not even accustomed to. The truth is you have had a watered down version. And if somebody comes in here, my best guess is that the majority of people in this church are not going to be able to tolerate going back to the kind of things that we've been talking about here tonight. And that being the case, I believe would be a very destructive thing. I think it's better if we can go on to -- this is my reasoning: I think it's better if we can go on together. If we can be unified or 90%-95% unified and then not do what other people have done. Not say what other people have done. Not say, "look, we don't like you anymore. We don't want anything to do with you. We're against you. We're going to fight you. We're going to hate you. We're going to write about you." No. Say "we love you. We want to be a part of you. And we want to be fellowshipped. We want to participate. We want to give to missions. We want to be discipled. We want to come to seminars. We want to be involved. But, we can't do everything that you tell us to do, it is just not right" I believe that could make a difference. I believe it could make a healthy difference. [95]

And my answer to the question -- which is a very good question -- my answer to that question is we can only do that if we are united. If we're united, our staff cannot be fired. They are going to have to contend with us. They are going to have to (applause)between what we've done and what others have done. That's the significant difference. Don't miss that. If we were up to no good, we would just say, "look, we're out man". We don't want to do that. There's potential for the movement of God. You know, one person -- somebody said "why didn't you call Chicago or L. A. first." I say I went through Hell this week. Several people knew about this and I was like -- I thought my phone was going to ring any time and somebody was going to say "what in the world is going on down there?" And I wouldn't get a chance to talk with you. And it was tough. Somebody said, "why didn't you just call up front?" I didn't call up front because one person, one person who steps forward and says "look, I don't agree with this," I want to tell you something, guys, there have been many people in our movement -- good people -- who have stepped forward and said "I can't do this any more. I don't agree with this, I think you're wrong about this, this and this." And they have been disposed of quietly and they are gone. They are out of ministry. They are gone. They are someplace else. And that could happen - here. But together that can't happen. Together we are a force to be reckoned with. We can bring about change. And so, to answer your question, instead of being fired, I've got to ask you to make a quick decision tonight. [96]

Because tonight, when this meeting is over, I'm going to walk into the office and I'm going to call Marty Fuqua in L.A. and I'm going to tell him what my convictions are and where we are as a church. And I'm going to be calling him and saying, "Bro, the church doesn't want me any more, you send somebody in to take my place and provide this church with leadership that they want and the leadership they believe in." Or -- and that is true for the rest of my staff as well. Or, I'll be calling and saying, "Bro, as a church, we have decided that we cannot do these things anymore. It doesn't mean we don't love you, don't want to be a part. But we're not going to do this anymore. We're not going to be under this kind of authority any more because it's not right. And we still want to be a part." Now, you say "what's going to happen?" -- I don't know. They might throw us out. They might disfellowship us. I have no idea. But I do know this: I

believe that the kingdom of God is bigger than the Int'l Church of Christ. (applause) [97]

Female: I just wanted to share when I first came in contact with the church, it was when I was in college in 1978, what I saw it was a system that scared me and I didn't want anything to do with it. But at the same time, I knew it was right. I knew the preaching of the gospel was right. Four years later, I did become a Christian here at Indianapolis.

End of tape

[Tape 3 - Side 1:]

. . . then I got my heart back and I was always protecting my family. And Yes. (applause) [98]

James Burns: Most of you guys already know who I am. I'm James Burns. You know, coming from a long line of religion and the Christian church background all the way through the movement. I've been involved in the movement for 13-14 years. I was in the ministry for two years. You know all the things the movement talks about, and I'm not against the movement, people have great hearts. We all have great hearts. You can have great hearts and still make mistakes. Listening to Ed over there, I started balling. Just to get some freedom. The last few years of my life has been real hell because of the scars that were left because of my following my conscience. And I am very sorry, as a minister of the gospel of Christ, for things that I let myself do. Ed has more convictions about [?] the ministry, Ed and Bobbi, and it scared me to see how much conviction the man had on just standing up for what was right. And when he shared with me, I was shocked with some of the responses that he told me, you know. I was saying - when your a minister for the church you can't say those things. And I would trip. But for the last couple of years [?] with anybody. I was afraid of what I would become again. And that's the truth. I told Andy Lawyer about a month ago I said, Ed, and I know Ed filtered I'm not against it. I know more than other people. I said if they ever bring somebody into the church like it was in the past -- I'm gone. I don't want to lose my love for God. I'm sorry I haven't been a disciple -- I know that. And that hurts me too, but now I feel I've got some freedom to do what's right. [99]

Male: [Roger-west zone leader] I really ask that, because of what I want to share is deep in my heart. I ask that you not give a lot of feedback right now. I just want you to listen to what I have to say. And this is from my heart to you. First of all, I want you to know that what's happened over the last week has been very difficult not only for Ed and Bobby, but for me and Jayne. We have spent much time praying and studying and fasting over this decision. Ed came to myself and to the staff and he came to a few of us, a few of the brothers who lead more of the larger sections of the church, and he told us that he wanted to know where we stood. I want you to know that this isn't something that he got up independently to do. He consulted us because he knew it would effect us. And he told us that he would not do this tonight if we were not in agreement. If one of us were not in agreement, he would call and resign. Because he is not one to call us to [?]. And I respected him for that. I also took very seriously the decision that we were going to make because I know how it would be received and how it would affect our future. And I want you to know after study and prayer, I am in complete agreement with the principles that Ed has laid out here tonight. And I believe that it's the truth. And I had to come to the decision - was I going to base my life on what I believe to be true or upon what was popular and would be accepted. I believe that I have violated my conscience. I know, in leading some of you. I apologize for the way that I have taught and led and conducted my ministry and the effect it had on some of you. I know that I am taking a little longer than maybe I should, but I feel compelled to say these things tonight. You see, I was a part of the reconstruction, but from a different vantage point than some of you. In fact, of the present staff, Jayne and

I were the only ones that moved here from Chicago to help do the reconstruction. I apologize to you tonight. And especially the West zone, for harshness, for quick judgments that I did not have all the truth on to make. After the life talk, I would make judgments about your life. And I apologize for that. You know, I ask that you forgive me because I seriously have repented and confessed this before God and ask that you forgive me. I felt like I was becoming something that I did not want to become. I went through a difficult time in the ministry here after my time of reconstructing some of you. I then later got reconstructed. That was very difficult. I stood in groups, discipling groups, much like Ed described. But what I want to share is that was a very difficult time in my life. Not only did I consider giving up the ministry and consider giving up being a Christian and had very bad thoughts, even suicidal. I vowed at that time that I would never return to such a leadership. [100]

Since that time, with Ed's coming, I've been refreshed. Ed's leadership, with my personal relationship with him. I'm feel very loyal to Ed. But at the same time I want you to know that this decision is not based upon my loyalty to Ed. It is based on my loyalty to God's word and to the truth of God. I ask for your prayers that I'll never return to that type of leadership, to that type of life. I've committed myself to rid myself of both personally and in my leadership of legalism and I pray for the wisdom to know how to lead in such a way that will glorify God and not bind burdens on people. I want to make the necessary changes to live this way. I have felt free this week after making the decision from study that I have made. But I, along with Ed, believe that if we do not make the decision together as a church, that I will not have the freedom to lead in this way. That is my opinion, but it is based upon experience that I have had - both in Chicago and the reconstruction and in other talks with other ministry people. I am prepared tonight, if you vote no, to resign. I want you to know that I took some time to get up here, but that's not Ed speaking for me. That is my conviction, my plan. If you decide to do that, I will have no ill feelings toward you. But, I must live with my conscience. I must live before God, I am going to stand before God's judgment some day. And I am not going to violate what I believe is the truth and right. And I am not going to treat people in an unjust way. In a loving way, I have decided I am going to live my life to lead whatever ministry God blesses me with by loving people and loving God in the way that I believe are in the scriptures. I thank you for listening to me. God bless you. (applause) [101]

Ed: In a minute we're going to start passing out the cards. And I want you to be clear about this. A "yes" vote is to retain the present leadership, a "no" vote is to have a new leadership come in that would be continued in the direction of the discipling movement, basically unaltered. So "yes" is a vote for this present leadership and a "no" is a vote against it. For those -- I'd like for you to give us another 15 minutes. I know that it is late. I am very conscious of that. And I'm going to ask that the people who share that they take no more than 1 minute apiece. I'm going time you and I'm going come up and touch you after 1 minute, gently. But if you absolutely have to leave, fill out a card before you do and let's put an usher at the back of each aisle and you can give them to them. And for those of us who can stay, we'll pass them to the aisles and collect them in just a minute. But, I'm going to ask the people who speak to speak no more than 1 minute. I think we'll have maybe 10 people speak and then we're going to have to cut it off. OK? [102]

Male: This is the first time--the thing I want to express--I praise God for this church. You know 8 or 9 years ago when I saw people who were committed with all their hearts to God and they...and I believe there have been a lot of things that have gone this way and that way, but I believe the leaders of the movement, they still love God. And I feel that we need to go apart. You know, something that I think a lot about is the statistics and the pressure that [?]... I am so thankful that times I went through making an impression on my life. I'm so thankful that the people in my life did not pressure me "you have to do this, you have to do that, you have to do this." You know, that wasn't the case. And I pray to God for people

that loved me enough, just to love me and deal with my problems and my feelings and the things I had to deal with and that's what love is about. And I believe that we are a church that loves God. And if you love God, God will lead us. [103]

My name's Tom Zike, from the west zone, and I think it's great. So I'm just going to tell you that I've been around for probably 10-11 years and seen the church go through all kinds of things. And yet, the reason I came to church is mostly because I really wanted to love God. I wanted a real relationship with God. And I feel like that God controls the movement and I guess what I want to say is that I also feel like almost everybody here in saying "amen." This is what I've been hoping for. I'm not going to say that I knew that all these things were wrong with the church. But I did always know that my motivation wasn't there. I'm trying to love God. I'm trying with all my heart, but it's not happening. And I really believe that Ed has hit the nail on the head tonight. And I think what we have to do as a church is we've really got tonight pray to God that God will protect the church and that also the church here will lead the way and others will join in. (applause, cheers) And that this will be a positive thing in all the world and that this won't be negative. Okay. Thanks. [104]

Male: I agree with what Tom said and I also feel like that the biggest part of being here, thinking about that, that God is going to use this church as that catalyst to make change. You know, when I'll be working on my van, getting it running properly. I've had to change the alternator, I've had to change the fuel, the gas filter, had to change the gas pump and it's finally running. But I had to fine tune it. If I didn't make those changes, it wouldn't run properly. And I really believe that God and the Spirit is moving in this church to make some fine tuning in the kingdom of God. I appreciate Ed. I still think that -- when I first met Ed I thought to myself "what is this brother going to do?, this short guy here, you know." How is God going to use this brother? And I'm so thankful Ed for how God is using you. And it's a scary, scary thought. But just trust God and trust God will work in what we want to do in our convictions. That it's going to be all right. I look at some of the faces here and there's tears, I don't know whether it's fear or joy or what, but let's just trust God with it. [105]

My name is Mark Ross and I'm from the West Zone. And I don't have any message to persuade anyone to go one way or the other tonight. All I have to say is something more for myself and my feelings is that this is really does scare the tar out of me. This is a significant point in my life and this is my family. These people, you know, around here are the reason I come back early from my parents' house on Sunday morning when it doesn't make any sense why I'm doing it. Because you guys are my family. I'm scared that my best friend might want to go one way and I might want to go the other way. And I just want to say that I'm going to stay here in Indianapolis. If anyone, if it violates your conscience and they feel like they have to move some place else, to Chicago or something. I just want you to know that I still want to be your friend. I hope that we can still share with each other and be best friends and understand each other. Because I definitely don't feel anything bad towards you. And I hope we can still have a great friendship. And that I always remember every person in this room being my family and we'll spend time together many times over the next years, and we'll just enjoy one another. [106]

Male: I want to thank Ed and all the other leaders for doing what they've just done. It really excites me to know Ed. I personally have got to share something with everybody in my ministry - that I apologize that I have done. I have taken night classes at IVY Tech right now, I didn't have to take it at night but I was tired of being hounded for this or for that. And everybody kept telling me "well just stay in there Bob, you know this is where you need to be." And I've been saying to everybody that I've thought over a hundred times about just falling away. I think about it almost every time I go to a meeting of the body. But people like Andy Lawyer and Ed and Homer and Neal, just all these guys. I just feel the love from them and it

makes me want to stay in the group. But, deep down inside I=ve been feeling like I=m nothing, I feel like I=m a ball of nothing, just a shell without anything around - you know? And Ed, I just really want to thank you for finally doing what I believe is right. And helping me to feel like now there is something to look forward to. [107]

Male: [tongue in cheek] I=d better check my watch to make sure I don=t go over there legal limit here. The sermon three weeks ago, was one of the most exciting things that has happened to me in my Christian life because I=ve been hurting for years. I was really excited about it. ...it just really drove it home to me. And I was thinking, my Gosh, I'm totally improperly motivated. Then I started thinking: Where did I lose it? Where did I lose it? And I starting thinking back and back. And I thought about it at the time, actually it was during the reconstruction. When I was not being disciplined they had lost track of me. And I had a good relationship with God so I just happy and started sharing my faith. Eight people were baptized into Christ in eight months as a direct or indirect result of my sharing my faith with people that I had met. I didn=t know at the time, but I was doing better than people on staff were doing. And lo and behold get into the reconstruction and they asked if I wanted to lead so I went to the first couple of leaders meetings and I was basically turned into twice as much the son of hell as they were at that point. And I ceased being fruitful for the longest period of time after that. And it bugs me, it really bugs me and I've seen a lot of things happen. And it has really scared me. And I believe that the churches are like people. And the simple fact that we have 800 improperly motivated people who are not doing that much here and we multiply that by the number of congregations in the Midwest shows you that the problem [?] And you'll know the servant of God by the fruit. And I believe that if we stand on some convictions here we'll get a chance to turn this around. And really become fruitful and shine and set an example for the other people that we know. [?] [108]

In addition to that I=d like to say that I've known Ed, I=ve probably known Ed longer than Bobbi. And I have never met anyone anywhere at any time that I trust more than Ed Powers. ... This guy has always been ...from the scriptures and God's word. I'm sorry that there=s been times that I've doubted that. Even in him I=ve never seen him stray from the things he believes in through God=s word. And I uphold him for his courage and for doing this. And my fear, my fear coming here tonight, was that the announcement was going to be made that Ed was leaving and going to Chicago or L.A. or Dallas or someplace like that. And in the event that happened, I knew what would come to replace him. And my mind was made up if that was the announcement tonight I was going to [?]. ...inaudible... I'm glad that it's working out the way that it is and I think [?]. [109]

Ed Powers: I want you to put your name on these for us to, I don=t want any stuffing the ballot box here. So put your name on the card. And if you abstain from voting, put your name on the card and send it in and we will count it as a "no" vote. Okay? [110]

Well, I don't know what else to do. I think you've got to go with what you think. I told you we'd shut off at 9:30. We're going to have to do that. I'm sorry that you haven't had the opportunity to hear from everybody, but I want you to go ahead now at this time. Make your decisions. Let's pray and we after we pray, let's have some one lead us in song while we pass these in. And then we will announce the results to you. [111]

Father, we love you. And we want more than anything to do your will. We pray that you would move in our lives tonight, that you would give us wisdom in making this very important decision. Father, we pray our hearts will be pure and there would be no wrong motives on the part of anyone here tonight. And I pray, God, that you would have your way in what takes place here tonight. We really want that more than

anything else in the world. Please move in the hearts of these people right now. That is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen. (amen) [112]

Let us go ahead and sing a song and then we'll count these.

Yes votes to retain the present leadership. No means we resign.

[End of tape 3 -side 2 blank]

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Notes and comments by J. V.:

The result of the vote was: 596 yes, 6 abstained, 1 no.

Following this meeting I stayed around to observe. Ed did indeed go to the office after most of the congregation had left to call Marty Fuqua. Even though Marty was not home, Ed tried repeatedly to get a hold of him. Finally at about 1:00 a.m. Ed left a message for Marty to call him the next day and we all went home.

Other follow-up tapes or transcripts that will be available:

Leaders meeting Tuesday evening March 1, 1994

Congregational meeting Sunday evening March 6, 1994

Congregational meeting Tuesday evening March 8, 1994

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