

# We Stand For EQUALITY

*What We Stand **FOR**, Week One*

Pastor Brandon Cox

When I was 13 years old ... I had become a Christian a little earlier than that. At age 13, my family quit going to church when I was about 11 or 12. When I was 13, a friend of mine invited me to go to church with him. It was about three miles from my house to the church. He swung by and got me. His family swung by and picked me up, took me to church. It was an evening service so it was already dark outside.

As we're going down the road, I saw something that confused me to no end as a 13 year old. I had a very vague idea of what it was all about. As we drove down Barren River Road in Bowling Green, Kentucky where I grew up, past the home of one of the local wizards for the KKK, I saw a cross burning out in the field and guys standing on the side of the road fully robed and hooded holding rifles. As a 13-year-old kid, I didn't get it, didn't understand it. Went on to Barren River Baptist Church that night.

Within a few weeks, the pastor ... It was a predominantly White church. Probably all White people went there. The pastor preached a message where he called out that KKK group. Mysteriously, the church burned a couple weeks later. They'd found a man with special needs, put him up to it. He took the fall, went to prison. Nobody else paid for the crime.

That was my community growing up. I grew up surrounded by inequality and racism. I went to a high school that was terribly divided. Kids of different color would fight each other over color, over things like that. One day one of those kids left school angry because of a fight. He died in a car accident because he was driving out of control. It was like fuel on the fire and everything just erupted. A hundred kids skipped the next day. They came to school anyways an hour late driving around in circles in the parking lot, honking their horns, calling the kids of the other color out to fight. That's in my lifetime. If you think it's over, it is not. We haven't fixed this. We haven't fixed it.

We're starting a series today that's all about values that I believe are born in the heart of God. They're eternal, timeless values. They transcend American culture. They're around a long time before any Founding Father signed any documents. They've been around for thousands of years, but we human beings just keep messing it up and not getting them.

I want you to understand at the beginning of this message series, this is not a politics series. It's just not. In all honesty, if I'm being really candid, I listen to Republicans and Democrats, Conservatives and Liberals argue back and forth all week and both of them make me mad. That's just my human side. All right.

I'm not a member of either party. This is not a partisan series. People who are Republicans, and Democrats, and every other thing are welcomed at Grace Hills Church equally. Let me say that right upfront.

We're going to talk about some timeless values that we need to get or we will disintegrate as a culture. They're wound around the gospel, but I want us to dive right into them this morning because I know that you, perhaps, grew up there as well. Some of you think, "That's outside the church."

When I was 19 years old, I was pastoring my first church and that's a bad idea. If you're going to pastor a church, wait until you get some experience with human beings first because I didn't. At age 19, we had World Mission Sunday. We're going to raise money to send more missionaries around the world. I brought in the bulletins that day. There's about 40 people in the church and so I did the bulletins. On the cover was a picture of the globe, of planet earth and then it zoomed in group of photos from an African village. All Black children from an African village were on the cover, the photo.

One of my main deacons walked in the building. He was smiling. Good morning. Shook my hand. He looked at the bulletins and he stopped smiling. He started to walk away without taking one. I said, "Hey, what's the problem?" He pointed. He looked at me. He said, "They have their churches and we have ours." My heart was scarred. I lasted there five months. We just didn't get along after that and things went south. It happens. It's here. It's the year 2016 and we're still dealing with this. We still just don't get it. Equality is something that we don't fully understand.

We're going to talk about it as a church today, and you can leave agreeing or disagreeing. We're going to share some scripture today. We're going to talk about why even for the church this seems to still be a challenge. I think lots of churches are coming a long way. That's good and we celebrate the diversity of the human race. That's fantastic but we got a long way to go, a long way to go within our culture to understand God's agenda for humanity. Sadly, Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour in American culture and that's a problem.

Genesis chapter five says this, "When God made human beings, he made them, all of them, every last one of them to be like himself. He created a male and female. He blessed them and he called them human." Until we understand the word 'human' and what it means, we will not value life. He made them human. When Adam was 130 years old, he thought it'd be a good time to start having kids. He became the father of a son who was just like him in his very image and he named him Seth. The human race flourishes after that.

Three things I've underlined there. To be like himself. God made humans to be like himself. What does that mean? Well, I can tell you this. It has nothing to do with physical appearance. It has nothing to do with color of our skin, or height, or weight, or male, or female. It has everything to do with the fact that God feels, and thinks and acts. As he's creating creation, he says, "I need a part of my creation to reflect what I am like, that I feel, and I think and I act."

He made human beings and put within us the capacity to think, and to feel, and to act. It makes human beings special because you were created like art that God made to show himself to the rest of creation just as he revealed himself in the scriptures perfectly, reveals himself in nature through its complexity and its beauty. He reveals himself through humanity as we think, and feel, and act. Sometimes we refuse to feel, and we act, and we get in big trouble.

We reflect the nature of God and humanity is special because of that. Dogs don't do that. I like dogs. I've had dogs, but I've never once seen a dog sit and watch a documentary, and process it, and then feel deep things and decide to go join a nonprofit as a result. Humans, however, think, and feel, and decide things. Sometimes our decisions are terrible, but that's who we are. We reflect the glory and the image of the creator. Every last human being on the face

of this earth, I don't care where you were born, or what color you're born, or what religion you were brought up in, or what you went through as a kid, you bare the image of God. You have inherent dignity, and worth, and value.

Let me just throw this out there. All humans bare the image of God. We reflect his glory to the rest of the world. Secondly is this. Because of our reflection of his image and his glory, all humans possess equally infinite dignity, worth and value. All humans, every last one of us regardless of our experiences, regardless of the decisions that we've made, even those who among us have made terrible decisions and committed crimes, we're still human. Human means something. It shows something about God. That's an element of our theology I think that's been missing for too long. We are human and human means something.

Then, finally, and this is the one that may be get me in trouble, but there's a verse. The verse, we'll have to get in trouble. We are one race of one blood reflecting many ethnicities. When we talk about racial issues, I think it's a mistake to say it's one race against another because Acts chapter 17 and verse 26, Paul is talking about creation. He says, "He made from one man ... " He uses a word that can be translated Adam. It's a generic word. One mankind, he made from one mankind every nation. The word 'nation' is from the Greek word 'ethne.' We get the word 'ethnic' from it. Every ethnicity from one man, from one person. We are one race, many ethnicities. That is scripture. Again, if you don't like that, argue with Paul. When you get to heaven, march right up to him. Jesus will settle it. There we are.

That's God's vision for the human race. He said, "I wanted to create a people with intellect, emotions, and will which show me off to the world, would show people the dignity, and worth, and value that I put into creation." We reflect God and we share his glory and his story as we live as humans, as we embrace one another. That's the way God made it. Puts Adam and Eve in the garden and the early chapters of Genesis.

It doesn't take long for us to mess it up. Cain kills Abel because of jealousy. Since that day, since the earliest recorded histories of mankind, we just can't seem to get along, can't seem to get along. Can't get along in Bowling Green, Kentucky between miles and three miles away. Can't get along in Central Arkansas where I led my first church. Can't get along in America right now, obviously. Can't seem to figure out how to love and respect each other even when we might disagree about political issues, to respect each other enough not to kill each other. It's a problem and it comes from sin.

The fact is every last one of us has sinned, and sin has led to at least three things that are destroying us. The first is fear. Sin creates fear. It leads to fear and fear is what causes us ... I'm going to be a little cheesy here and use quotes several times on purpose so I'm not misquoted. I'm going to say quote. Fear leaves us to stick with our "own kind." It's less fearful. It's more comfortable, safer. If I just stick with people that are like me, they come from where I come from, they look like me, they think like me, they talk like me, that's easier than learning what life is like through someone else's eyes. Fear makes me stick with my own.

Pride makes me think that my own is somehow better than your own, whatever that is. Pride, it's what does that and we humans do this. Thinking that my own people are better than your people is a problem. It's a problem. We demonstrate this in lots of ways, sometimes ways that are harmless.

For example, I'm a Razorback fan just because I've moved here and didn't have a team before. I thought, "Well, these people seem to really love the Razorbacks so I may as well just fall in with them." I'm a Razorback fan. Some of you

came here from Oklahoma, or from Texas, or from [Mizzou 00:11:45] country or wherever as I'm naming them off. You feel different things. You're going, "My Razorback people are better than your [inaudible 00:11:52] people." Maybe that's harmless. We do the same thing within our culture when we go, "My Southern people are better than your Northern people. My White people are better than your whatever." We take our people and we say, "My culture is better."

It's interesting. I traveled to Russia a long time ago and I woke up ... We stayed at this church. When we would get up in the mornings, they would serve us breakfast. They served something kind of interesting. They served grits. I thought, "These are my people." I like grits. I don't care if you put butter, salt, sugar, cheese, bacon, the list goes on. Everything in grits is good as long as it's not green or healthy. Grits. These are my people. Right next to it, they have raw tuna on the table. You know what? I ate that, too, because I like that, but it would be easy for us to go, "You guys need to come and experience our culture. It's so much better than your culture." That's just the tip of it because we dive down a little bit deeper, and we really lose respect for where people come from and what their stories are. That's pride and it creates a significant problem.

Then there's hate. Fear, I think, produces pride. Pride leads to hate and hate lead us to mistreat others on the basis of our differences. I somehow for some reason have the right to strike out at you because we're different, because my people are better than your people so I need to do something about your people. This is not just an American problem. This is anywhere in the world. If you travel to any country, I guarantee you will find ethnic tension sometimes about people who look just alike. There are countries in the world where people who are born curdish don't like the people who are born wheyish. I don't know. There's people. I can't remember the other.

I can remember listening to the story of a lady in Moscow who is from Romania. She said, "I've had a time here because they don't like Romanians in Moscow." I think, "Well, you guys look just alike. You talk just alike." "Yeah, but we're different ethnicities."

You just go anywhere in the world and you'll find that. It's tragic. Why is that? Sin is wrapped up in the human heart. It's infected us. It's spread to every last one of us. Instead of valuing each other, and loving each other, and understanding each other, we just keep pushing each other away and deciding I need to stick with my own because my own are better and yours deserve something worse. That's where all of these comes from.

Guess what? God who created it better to begin with will fix it. He absolutely will. He has a plan and we're going to talk about that plan. I'm going to talk about about that plan from a historical perspective, not just how he might be fixing it now, but how he's been fixing it from the very beginning. He makes human beings and they immediately start fighting. They immediately start splitting apart, rejecting God, rejecting each other.

In Genesis chapter 12, God taps a man on the shoulder named Abraham and he said, "I'm choosing you. I have a job for you. Israel is going to be my specially chosen people for a task." What's the task? Well, again, that's been lost over several thousand years. Originally, here was the task. In Genesis 12, the original assignment to Abraham was this. All the families on earth will be blessed by you. There's not a hint of Israel is better. There's very much a hint of Israel has a message to share.

All the families of the earth will be blessed by you. What does he mean by that? I think, first, he means I'm going to give you my word. I'm going to give you my law, my gospel, my good news. You're going to spread it to every nation. They didn't do that. Instead, they kept it, added to it, wrote a bunch of rules in the margins, obeyed those rules and then looked down on everyone else who didn't obey those rules. That's what Jesus came into. That's ultimately part of what got Jesus killed. They didn't take the law and spread it throughout the earth. Instead, they kept it in Jerusalem. Israel fails by the time Jesus comes. All families of the earth were not been blessed yet.

Now, ultimately, I think he also is including in that one ... He says, "All families of the earth are going to be blessed through you." I think he has in mind his lineage which leads to Jesus. That the Messiah, the Savior, the Deliverer is going to come from your lineage and through your family because of Jesus, all families on the earth are going to have a chance to be saved and redeemed. God is still doing that but Israel didn't complete the mission of taking God's law and good news and spreading it.

Jesus comes, dies on the cross for our sins, rises again and starts something we called the church. He gave the church a mission: to continue the work of bringing people together around the good news, a restoring, and a healing, and a redemption of humanity.

He writes to the church in Galatians chapter three, it says five, I think, but it's chapter three, verse 28, "Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, equal." Humanity is supposed to be equal but we're not because we don't want to be. The gospel will restore equality because for all of us, we're a shared creation, a shared guilt of sin and shared possibility of redemption in the blood of Christ. "Faith in Christ Jesus makes you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman." You are equal.

Equality is a biblical God thought up idea for us to carry out in our world. It just is, but the church has kind of blown it. I'm speaking in general. I love the church. I'm not disparaging the church. I think the church is the hope of the world. Don't misunderstand this, but the church isn't perfect because guess who leads it? Human beings like me. We still mess up and make mistakes. Our fear is getting in the way and so forth. The church has yet also to complete the mission that God has given for us and that shows. It shows in many ways.

How is this going to end? What does God do next? Well, the third thing is this. It will be completed in heaven. It will be completed in heaven. God's plan to restore the equality and unity in the human race will be completed in heaven. That doesn't let you off the hook. Don't go, "Yeah, we're okay now. We'll get there and it'll be equal." No, as believers and followers of Christ, we bring the kingdom on earth. We spread it around us. We're to bring God's will and God's heaven here where we live. We're going to come back to that.

Listen to Revelation seven speaking of the end of the age in verse nine, he says, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number of all nations," that's the word 'ethne,' ethnicity, "all ethnicities, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed with white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, saying, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

I love that passage. I think that passage probably makes some people uncomfortable. Here is why. Sometimes our vision of what great worship is all about doesn't necessarily look like God's vision of what great worship is all about.

God's vision is this. People who have been rescued and redeemed from every tribe, every ethnicity, every color, every country, every language, every group, every family on earth, all of them together, throngs and multitudes of them praising God in heaven. If you can't get along with people who are different than you here, you're not going to enjoy heaven as much as I am. I'm not going to enjoy it as much as other people who've done far better than me at this. Heaven is a place where God welcomes human beings redeemed by the blood of Christ through repentance and faith into his presence to praise him. There, we will be equals. There, nobody will get shot anymore. We'll finally get it.

I think our challenge is to bring it here, to bring it here. It's a broken world that we live in, but I think that we ought to have a vision for what it can be. That vision ought to be inspired by God. It ought to be shaped by scripture. It ought to be informed by a proper theology and a theology rooted in scriptures like these, how God made us equal, how he seeks to redeem us into equality and how he seeks to complete the plan in heaven where people are equal. It ought to matter to us. As we're processing every hashtag on Twitter, we ought to be thinking how can I look at this through the lens of a God that desires equality? How can I look at this through the lens of a God who sent his son Jesus to die for everybody and doesn't prefer one group over another or show favoritism, but instead understands the heart and values, the humanity that is us. That's where we are.

I told you where I grew up. That was the culture that I grew up and it was strained ethnically speaking because of decades, and decades, and decades of people not getting along. Then a few years ago, Angie and I moved to Southern California. It was an interesting thing because we moved to Laguna Hills. That's where I took up pro surfing and that kind of thing. I never surfed. I never will. You don't want to see me in a bodysuit mainly. Anyways. Sorry off track.

For the first time, we attended church on Sunday. We went to the mall. We moved into a neighborhood where everywhere we went, we seemed to be the minority. It was interesting. Predominantly within our neighborhood were African American and Hispanic. Primarily within the malls that we would shop at were Asian American. That was the burgeoning population of Asian Americans there. Within our church, within Saddleback Church where we came from, it was a colorful, wonderful place. 67 languages were spoken on one Sunday as people would come up and say, "Jesus loves you" in their own language. 67 languages in one church. A little sliver of heaven.

Angie and I used to rejoice about it. I would say, "I'm so glad. Instead of growing up with the tension ethnically that I grew up in my community that our kids get to grow up here." Then we moved back to Arkansas. Here we are.

On the basis of what you know about scripture and all these things that are true, I want to give you five challenges for your heart. These are practical. These are simple but they're very hard, at least they're hard if you've never tried them. Just five simple challenges on the basis of what you know about humanity and redemption. Here they are. Number one is this. You need to welcome people into your world who are different than you. Welcome people into your world who are different than you.

I live in Southwest [Bentonville 00:23:06]. There's a story in the paper not long ago that Walmart and the surrounding industries have transferred in 250 families from India. That's been five or six years now. With those 250 families from India came the building of the first Hindu temple in Arkansas. We have a choice to make. We can be afraid of that. We can shut them out of our lives or we can say, "They're human made by God, just as valuable, just as

much dignity, just as much worth as anybody else that I know." If we have failed to get to India with the gospel, maybe God is bringing India to us for us to love them and share that with them.

Welcome people into your world, into your neighborhood, into your schools who are different than you. We need it. We thrive off of it. I can tell you from experience, it's better to embrace and love the diversity and the reconciliation of people than it ever is to just stick with "your own."

Secondly, assume the best about people. This is basic. Assume the best about of people. Don't assume that because someone looks a certain way, or acts a certain way, or is from a particular neighborhood just automatically assume there's all this bad stuff behind the skin. There's bad stuff behind all of our skin. Assume the best. I'm just going to believe that this person that I don't know, that I'm not familiar with has the best of intentions so far.

Now, I'm not saying if someone walks up to you aiming a gun at your head, you go, "I assume they're just showing me how nice their block is." I'm not saying that. I'm not encouraging you to be unsafe, but I'm saying when people are around you you don't know, assume the best about them. That's what Jesus did.

In fact, here's something interesting about Jesus. Two things I'll share about Jesus. One is that Jesus went out of his way to find people who are different than him. The story in John chapter four, the disciples, they're going from the north to the south to Jerusalem. Normally, you got Sumeria right in the middle. Now, the Samaritans were people ethnically who were half-Jewish and half-Assyrian from the Assyrian captivity about 800 years before. That's what Sumeria was. The pure blooded Jewish people of 2,000 years ago didn't like the Samaritans because they were different. The quickest, safest route go from one city to another would be right through Sumeria. Guess what you did if you're Jewish. You take the long way. You go to the bypass. That way we don't have to go through Sumeria.

Jesus tells his disciples, "Come with me. I have to go through Sumeria today." They probably bristled. Ultimately, Jesus finds himself at a well talking to a Samaritan woman who's been through one broken relationship after another, married five times, living with number six. Her life had been devastated by all kinds of things. Jesus loved her, and gave her living water, and welcomed her into the family of God along with everyone else. The disciples were being challenged in that moment to think differently.

How do I know that? Well, look at who Jesus picked as disciples. Let's think about that for a second. He picks Matthew. Matthew is tax collector. He is your neighborhood IRS agent. He makes a living from the government. When you talk about legislation that simplifies the tax code, Matthew gets upset. He's going to lose his income because of that. He loves Rome. He welcomes Rome.

Then Jesus picks Simon the Zealot. You know what zealot is? At the time, it would have been a, I'm trying to think of a good way to word this, a Jewish supremacist of the age, of that time, hated Rome, hated Sumeria, hated everybody that was trying to come in, and take the Promised Land, and would kill to get them out. There were a lot of deaths in those days at the hands of zealots.

Jesus grabs Matthew, grabs Simon and says, "Hey, will you guys start a church together?" He spends three years challenging their thinking, and challenging their worldview, and expanding the way they see the world through the gospel. He assumed the best about both of them. He saw something in Simon and he saw something in Matthew

they probably didn't see even in themselves. He uses them to start a church and here we are today 2,000 years later because of the trail that was left from that.

Welcome people who are different. Assume the best. Number three, this is a big one right now. This is just my soapbox, just keep beating this drum. Listen with empathy. Listen with empathy. Here is the difference between listening without empathy and listening with empathy. Listening without empathy is saying that I'm listening. I let you talk but my response is going to be, "You shouldn't feel that way." My response is going to be, "You just shouldn't feel that." When I listen with empathy, I say, "You know what? I haven't lived your experience, haven't lived your story. I don't understand. I'm not sure if I agree or not but tell me where you're coming from. Help me see through your eyes. Help me walk in your shoes."

We struggle to do that within humanity. I think if I put it on a different playing field maybe it will make more sense. Try this in your marriage. You go home this afternoon and your husband or wife says to you, "Man, I'm just feeling so down right now." Let your only response be, "Well, you shouldn't feel that way." See how it goes. Guys you know what I'm talking about. It doesn't go well. Instead you go, "I'm sorry. I don't understand why you might be ... Help me understand. Help me know. That's empathy." We'll try that in marriage.

Let's start trying it just within humanity. I don't understand your political perspective. I don't understand where you're coming from. I don't get that school of thought but help me see the world through your eyes. Help me listen with some empathy.

Number four, be a voice for unity, a voice for unity. There's a movie that came out in the '80s. It's a classic, probably the favorite of every guy in here, called Steel Magnolias. I'm not saying I've seen it dozens of times but hypothetically. There's a woman in this movie ... Some of you have never seen it. You're okay. There's a woman in this movie named Clairee. She's the wealthy town gossip. She's got something to say about everybody. That's how she is. There's a line that she utters in there that reminds me of how Facebook looks today. She says, "If you can't say anything nice about somebody, come sit by me." That's her attitude.

Here's what I think that God would long for from us is to say, "If you can't say anything nice about somebody, you're probably not going to be comfortable next to me because I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear it. I'm not an ally in your verbal diatribe about people that you don't really know, or understand, or love. If all you can do is shout at people and get angry at people that you don't know, and that you don't identify with, and you don't have an ally here. I'm going to be a voice for unity even with people I don't understand."

Welcome people that are different than you. Assume the best. Listen with empathy. Be a voice for unity. None of these are easy or comfortable and can sometimes be very awkward. It can be awkward when we are talking to people that we don't know, that we don't understand. It can be awkward. I think we're going to have to embrace the awkwardness or we're going to kill ourselves as a culture. Be a voice for unity.

Here's number five and this is the most important. Share the gospel with your life and with your lips. Nobody loves people better than Jesus. Nobody loves the people that live around you better than Jesus. Nothing will fix this broken world like the good news of salvation, and healing, and redemption in Jesus Christ. I don't think for a second that there is a political or social solution that is more powerful than the redemption of people's hearts. That when I change

a person, I watch racial supremacy fade away and disappear into acceptance. When I see Christ get a hold of someone who really listens to Jesus and really seeks to follow Jesus, hearts of hatred begin to melt into hearts of at least willingness to listen, if not, full blown love.

The gospel is the story of God coming here for an alienated human race to reconcile them back into unity with himself, to reconcile us through the blood of Jesus into a heavenly people that will enjoy eternity forever. That's God's vision. That's the gospel, the good news. A king has come. He has died for us. He's risen again, throws the doors open wide and says, "Church, I want you to welcome everybody because someday we're going to have a big, colorful, multilingual celebration. You'll be confused because you don't know Spanish or anything else, but, hey, it's going to sound awesome."

I always love it when someone, they'll make up things about heaven that aren't on the Bible but it sounds ... They'll say, "Heaven is where all your dreams come true." No, it's not. It's what God wants it to be. Some people say, "In heaven, we'll all speak the same language." I think, "Did you read Revelation?" Would we know each other's language? I don't know. Maybe. Maybe you'll learn it real quick like you'll take a Rosetta Stone cassette, and you get it first time. I don't know. What I do know is that heaven ... The Bible says, "All languages, thousands of them, various dialects, they'll be sung to God in praise." People of all different origins, and colors, and cultures, and languages, and families, and tribes and we'll finally get it together. We'll finally get it together because that's what heaven is. It's the redeemed from every tribe and every tongue brought together around the Lamb who died for them to celebrate him for eternity.

I can't fix the world. I can't fix what happened in Minnesota, or in Baton Rouge, or Dallas. I can't fix what happened in Ferguson. I can't fix what happened in Selma. I can't fix what happens in Sudan today. I can't fix what's going on with the gypsy people. I can't fix what's going on with the Chinese versus those in the Southeast Pacific who are arguing over waters and about to kill each other. I can't fix the problems between North Korea and South Korea and the jealousy that is there. I can't fix all these tension. I'm just Brandon Cox, one guy living in Arkansas doing life here. I can't fix all that but I can fix me through repentance and faith in Christ. I can start fixing the world right around me. I can work on my neighborhood. I can work on my church. I can work with my friends. I can work with my small group. I can work with my family and you can, too.

I think if we get enough people saying ... Some good change needs to happen and I've now got the answer. I know the gospel. I know what God's intent is. Everybody I meet today is going to be vested with value and dignity because they're human and that God wants us to get along because he loves all equally. He gave his son to die for us all equally and brings us together. If I can embrace that and have a vision for that, then maybe we can start to overcome our fear, and our pride, and our hate, and understand each other, and accept each other and start doing life together like God intends and the way it's going to be in heaven.

There's a savior and his name is Jesus. Nothing else is more important than this one thing, following him and spreading the gospel with your life and with your lips. Let's bow our heads.