

A Reality Check
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This message was originally delivered to a small church at the dedication of a new building. The truths spoken are so universal, we decided to put this on the website for all to benefit from what the Lord says about growth through Iverna. Some statements are obviously focused toward this specific church, but please draw out His meaning for your personal situation. jv. ed.

I want to take us to a Psalm today – one that talks about growth in the Lord – Psalm 127. “*Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late and eat the bread of sorrows; for He giveth...*” – many of the translations say this: “...for He giveth His beloved **in their sleep**.” You can begin to expect some spiritual thoughts – and maybe dreams – to come in your sleep. The reason for that is, our spirits are quiet at that time.

Verse 3. “*Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward.*” (Sometimes that’s very hard to remember! ☺). Verse 4. “*As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth.*” Verse 5. “*Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies at the gate.*”

The title of this message is: “A Reality Check.” You have made a tremendous step of faith up to this moment in time. (I’m speaking to this church particularly now, but I am certain as the Lord ministers this to other situations, it totally would be valid as well.) *This* fresh moment in time is filled with as much purpose as your last moment. The last moment was to get the new building in order. This new moment . . . I believe it will happen as quickly as the last moment – **if you put as much energy to it as you have this phase**. This next moment is to *get the people ready*. And then, after that, we’re going to start having children – meaning, we’re going to start bringing in other people – new people who *need* what God brings forth in this place. Do you see what I’m saying? God works through a process.

We’re looking here at Psalm 127: “*Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain...*” Well first, let’s look at just this much: the *house*. Barnes says this Hebrew concept of “house” may refer to any of three things: an ordinary dwelling, the Temple, or to a family, as in “This is the house of...” or, “This is the household of...” We are the family of God, but **we** “*labor in vain*” **unless the Lord builds us**.

How many are tired of trying to be good? ☺ On your own steam? Just plain tired of trying to do everything right? Last Sunday I asked a congregation: “How many of you are just tired of feeling guilty?” I was – not actually amazed – but it was interesting to see how many hands were raised in agreement with that statement. “How many of you just want to be guilt-free? All the time?”

If you read the New Testament carefully, you will see that is Jesus’ intention of coming to earth. Yes, it’s absolutely true. He came and did what He did, lived as He lived, and spoke what He spoke so that we, through His forgiveness, never shall have guilt again. “Well, but I failed in this and fell short in that and...” So? Jesus paid for it all on the cross! The Blood of Jesus Christ is efficacious for every situation. That means the shedding of His blood is sufficient to cover every sin when we come back to Him in repentance. Just come back to Him when you have failed and confess your sins: “I blew it again, Father.” Ask Him to forgive you – again – and He will! That’s a freeing thing! (1Jn.1:5-10).

This church represents that kind of freedom – as expressed in your worship. There’s absolute freedom there. The danger, in a church like this with a worship team like you have, is that we (the congregation) simply become thrilled with watching them – and never enter into that same level of relationship with the Lord for ourselves.

I love to watch your pastor worship! I do! I'd come here just to watch her – and she was calm today. ☺ She was! But when she gets into it – Oh! my spirit rocks! ☺ It's exciting! It truly is! Because the Lord has *built* something into her. Her worship is what it is, not by her Latin heritage, but by what God has done in her and for her over the years – building up her life in Him. She has yielded a few things to grow into what He so desires for all of us.

“Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it.”

There's been no vain labor here – this building is gorgeous! You tore down the old – are you hearing the inference? You've torn out the ugly and have beautified this building until there is no shame in inviting anyone into this place. I commend you. You have worked long and hard to accomplish your goals and it shows!

If we were only talking about the church *building* we'd say: “It's all done!” But you see, I have to remind us of the *three ways* that word “house” is used in the Hebrew Scriptures – the three applications that are theologically sound from the root word of “house.”

The *first* is an *ordinary dwelling* – or, an ordinary *person*, if you will. You can read it throughout the scriptures. If you're a person that doesn't like messages from the Old Testament, go to the New Testament. It'll tell you the same thing: you are the house of God. You're of the household of God. You're the *Body* of Christ. We are His Bride. All of those terms fit.

I think it is applicable to understand – unless the Lord builds us – we just work really hard at being good. We try so hard to do the right things – all the time. We check out our thoughts and behaviors and dig down into our own depths trying to find what's wrong so we can correct it. And when we do that – self-introspection – the enemy freely comes in, because self-exposure without the Lord is an open door for the enemy's accusations.

Remember now, he's the *accuser* of the brethren, Revelation 12:10 says, and he will accuse you to yourself! Be careful you don't open yourself to: “Lord, just show me *everything* wrong in me...” (Do you know how I know not to do that? ☺ Hmmm.) Allow God to reveal what He is after in you, and when He is after it.

When I plead: “Lord, just show me everything...” and He opens me or allows me a glimpse of what He might see that needs correcting, I walk away from Him and make my own introspective checklist. “Okay – He didn't like this... and He didn't like that ... and I'm going to change the other thing...” Am I making sense to you? And I *labor in vain* – “unless the Lord...” Don't you see it? We have to learn to throw ourselves on the Rock! Let Him build you. The other side of that, of course, is allowing Him to do it. Cooperating with what He IS showing you and obeying what He is directing, when He directs it.

“The things I would,” Paul says, “I don't do them! And the things I wouldn't do – yeah, I'm good at those!” (cf. Rom. 7:15-19). Paul just beat himself up for all the things he did wrongly. Then he said, “Who shall save me from this mess?” And the next verse is: “I thank my God through Jesus Christ!” (vvs. 24, 25).

We sing it, and boldly so: “My help...” We sang it this morning – “*My help comes from the Lord*” (Psa. 121:1). From the Lord! He's building you! He is building you – as an individual.

Barnes also let's us know *secondly*, “house” refers to a *family*. Oh, that we could understand that truth in this day and age! Families are so split today. I know families where the husband goes to one church and the wife goes to another. Who knows if the kids even attend anywhere? If they're fairly little, they probably accompany the mother.

There's something missing in that kind of separation. "Well, I like this church because..." "And I like that one..." What a wonderful thing if families would come together and pray to find out: "Where do You want us to go to church, Lord?" Find out what His direction is, and then settle into the congregation, the Body, with great support of that place, its vision and leadership. Bring the children along, allowing them to grow up hearing the same things the parents hear!

We must come back to *family-spirit* because if we don't take care of our own children in the natural realm, forget it in the spiritual realm.

I've been in the church a long time. You know the truth of that. I've been in church-work almost all my life. During that time, I have seen parents who would just ignore their children throughout the week – absolutely no prayer with them – no Bible reading encouraged alone or together – nothing spiritual during the week at home – but anger and resentments are allowed to build up there because of that kind of neglect. Then on Sundays, those same parents would come and volunteer to be – children's workers. ☺ Trust me – I have seen it multiple times!

Now, these same parents would do all the right things according to the Nursery or the Youth Department or Sunday School or in whatever specific area they choose to serve – where their own children are. They would do all of the right things: help the kids do this and this and this – on Sundays. But there's a *spirit* that is so loud when you're dealing with children. There's a spirit *in you* when you're serving – particularly with children because they're so sensitive – a spirit that ministers far louder than your nice words – or any little clay thing you're helping them to make.

God is after something higher from this congregation. You have known that from the very beginning, haven't you? Pastor stands up here during worship and dances and clicks the little castanet and all the no-no's in some churches – and she doesn't care. Actually, she couldn't care less what *people* think about all that – because God has spoken to her: "Just honor Me and I'll take care of everything else."

That's a – I want to say "gutsy" – but I'm not going to use that kind of vernacular. ☺ She is a bold and courageous little lady. Your pastor knows when she hears from God. And she's been given a mandate from Him to have a church that is real in worship. If you don't want to worship in excellence, you're going to be miserable in this church ☺ because she's walking you through praise right now – just walking you through praise. She's taking you to a higher level of worship – one that is not common in this Valley. Now, that's the good news. Do you want to hear the bad? ☺

The bad news is: if you, *as an individual*, have not been built by God, and you have only learned to function in the worship service – without that same level of response to God being displayed in your daily walk – the power of testimony will never go outside these doors and no one will believe you when you tell them: "The glory of the Lord is manifest in this place." That's because the people you meet out there in the world around you see your life evidencing everything other than what you say!

That's what's happening in this moment. He's building individuals. If you withhold your tithe, your giving, your offerings – if you don't treat your husband or wife correctly – if – all these things – if your life is not changing and *being built by the Lord* – the people on the outside of this building are seeing **that** and there is no life-changing testimony – even if you take finely-crafted flyers around that say: "Come to our church – this is what's happening here that's wonderful!"

People don't care what you *say* about your church, because the first Bible they read is – you! If you go the extra mile on the outside of this door – if your co-workers see the joy of the Lord on your face – if you're not using the same language that those who hate your God use – if. . . . Are you there? This sounds like an old fashioned Pentecostal sermon, doesn't it? ☺ That's okay – maybe we need to return to some of that kind of exhortation.

So first, the emphasis right now is on the individual – it's not on this church as a whole in this moment. The emphasis of the Holy Spirit is on *every individual*.

Secondly, it's on your family. If you have kids that are away from God, you should hit your knees every single day on their behalf. But don't pick up guilt: "Oh, if I'd only done this..." or "I'd only known that..." You can't do anything about the mistakes of the past now. Are you going to beat yourself till you die? No. But you can ask the Lord to forgive you – that you weren't wiser back then – and pray: "But now, Lord, wherever they are – whatever age they are – married or single – go after my kids!" ☺

When my son was away from the Lord as a young adult, I prayed fervently – *fer-vent-ly!* The way I prayed was: "Lord, let every friend he makes be a Christian and let him not even know it at first – not until they show it in their lives!" ☺ And I prayed: "Lord, let him work for Christians." Shortly after that prayer, I received an email from him saying that he had landed a great job. Then several weeks later he wrote again, "Mom, my boss is a born-again Christian!" ☺

Let God do it any way He wants! Because they're not going to come back to Him just because you preach at them! So, you go to God on your knees and He'll do a great job of handling every situation! "Go get them, God! Don't let them go or do... They're hooked, Lord – now, reel them in!"

When we do that – when our families are in order.... Now, your family is *in order* if those who are way from God are being prayed for every day – by you. Your family doesn't get into order when you *see the results* of your prayer. It's by faith! That's how God sees us – finished, completed, builded (Oh! How I praise Him for that!). It's because of and through the finished work of the cross that He sees His children! Does that make sense to you? Does that set you free? You see, your family's not in order if they're away from God and you're *not* praying for them.

What *we* have to do is cooperate with the Lord – through prayer. We have to ask Him to get involved in their lives (Mt.7:7,8). We always have to do our part. We could sit back and say, "Oh yeah, we support you, pastor – do whatever you can with this building." But it would never have gotten finished. Well, I'm not sure about that completely. The work might well have been completed, knowing your pastor, ☺ but they needed your help and your involvement. And that's the way life is today.

Reality checks for Christians are few and far between. They are, in fact, rare! That's why the world doesn't believe our testimonies. We tend to say one thing (too often inflated or exaggerated) and actually live another! The people around us can see the difference – and will not want what we have – if it isn't working! What we ought to be doing is making sure our lives live up to what we testify – that's what I mean by "a reality check."

This is a terrible time to be alive. Do you know that? It's a wonderful opportunity to witness, but it's. . . . It is just a pain to live in these times! It's so hard to maintain our testimonies. Don't you ever want Him to *beam you up?* ☺ But we're here – and it's now. I mean, may I be honest enough to say this? "We're *stuck* with this generation! All three of them alive today – or four. These are tough times! It's hard to walk the Christian walk.

These are times when comedians make fun of the church in general and of us (Christians) in particular. It seems as if, in their repertoires of jokes, the jokes about "us" are the funniest of all. Let me ask you a question: How is it that a comedian can use the same language we use? Don't pretend you've never heard them do that. (We want to think or pretend we're so innocent. ☺) Of course you have heard the world use our peculiar language. You can't turn on the television without hearing the same words coming from them that we use. "Well – he got born-again."

Not long ago, I had the television tuned in to the contest of dancing. Soon there was a couple that came out to perform, and in their choreography they were mimicking the *movement* that is somewhat characteristic of black churches. So, they were doing their dance – and hey! They were good! ☺ The

music was great too. When they were finished performing, they took their places before the judges and the emcee said, “Well, what do you think?” and called the first judge by name. His response was so interesting to me. He shouted: “Hal – le – lu – jah!” with all the inflection in just the right places.

The camera went to the next judge and the emcee said to her: “What do you think?” And she declared, “A – men!” with great enthusiasm. Then the third judge jumped in too with the same lingo: “I’m saved!” The whole audience applauded and shouted in agreement! Why? That should have been a foreign language for them – because it’s the language of the church. But no, it wasn’t unusual. It is a common thing in our hearing – we who look and act so much like *them*, yet we use our little churchy phrases – “Oh! Hallelujah!”

We’re so careless – because they watch a life that doesn’t measure up to “Hallelujah!” You know what the word means, don’t you? It’s actually like saying: “Praise to Yah!” Or, “Praise You, Jehovah!” But the world around us sees in too many of us a life that cheats – just like they cheat. A mouth that curses just like they curse. A sense of humor that guffaws just like they do and when they do. Are you with me? Do you see it?

This week, while I was watching today’s message grow in my spirit, I thought “Oh, this is so bad to come in to dedicate a church and beat you up.” ☺ But I promise we are living in that next dimension where the Holy Spirit has directed a huge spotlight on His Church and the reflection is heavenly! Praise God!

You see, there are times when the Lord covers us. He really does. He just covers our failings. We get by with. . . . How many know, we as individuals, generally, have gotten by with – a lot! – and the Lord doesn’t let anyone else find it out. How many know that but don’t want to admit it? ☺ Yes, I see you out there! ☺ But there are times when He pulls back that divine covering and says, “You can live the life now because I’m in you and I am the Life! ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life’ (Jn.11:25) and you don’t have to live like the world! You can live in it – and *should!* But you don’t have to live just like them. You’re different. You’re Mine!”

Now, we’re not going to buy a bunch of houses all together so we can have a communal-living thing where we never have to touch sin. You are dispersed out among the company – *deliberately* – and on purpose – by the Lord. It’d be fun to take a map and just dot where everyone lives. We’d all look at the lighted map and be amazed. “Hey! WOW! Oh, WOW! Look! We’re stretched way out there! Well, where do you work?” And we’d all respond and then put up those lights too.

So – why do you suppose it is that we reach out so far across this geography? Because He wants *illumination* of His glory – everywhere. Ev-’ry-where.

You’re not supposed to be a different person when you come here on Sundays than you are any other day of the week. I mean, you may *think* you are. You know – you can have it bad out there (*be bad even* ☺) and then walk into the church on Sunday and *muster it* up to say: “Glory to God! Let’s sing! He’s so wonderful!”? Not so to be. The Lord looks down from where He sits and – do you know who He sees? He does see how you were out there – all week long. Stop and think about that. Oh, it does get quiet in here.

Except the Lord – build me. Build me up. Strengthen me. Oh, yes. I have to cooperate with Him. Every song we sang today led us toward this. “I’ll cooperate with You, Lord. You are everything! You’re my help! I look to You, Adonai!” But that same heart has to be mine on Monday – and Tuesday – and Wednesday – Thursday – Friday – and Saturday.

You men – and women – that work out there with the godless... that are employed out there in the godless world – where everything is *acceptable*. . . . I’m not just talking about swear words and that kind of thing. I’m talking about *philosophies* that are shared freely – other ways of thinking and living –

many contrary to what we believe. And there we are – right in the midst of all that. Did you ever feel like, you just needed a bath when you left your job? Because of all the stuff you heard and encountered?

I have to tell you this as “Mom”: Be ready – because it is going to get worse. You see – it’s just there – the filth. That is the simple truth. Without the divine and direct intervention of God, that condition is not going to diminish. The programs on television these days are not just cute or funny. They’re cleverly constructed to present *evil without fear* – to present *filth as normal* – and things as *funny that take away all the principles of purity*. You be wise about it. Don’t fall for all of that. And don’t go home and kick a hole in your TV either! ☺ Just learn a little bit of discipline – and understand that we need to speak as loudly with *our* living as they speak with their presentation for all to see.

The house – an individual – just a common house.

The house – a family.

The house – the House of God.

I believe the Lord wants to build in us – *a new respect* – for the House of God. I watch things go on during services that truly grieve me. In many places – whether in a big church or a little church – there is a lack of I see people looking around and writing things down – and I’m not talking about sermon notes. ☺ They get up from the middle of a pew and go out down the central aisle, come back twenty minutes later and cause all sorts of distractions. They just don’t pay attention to the leaders on the platform and show little or no consideration for the others seated near them. There simply is no longer a healthy respect for the House of God. There’s no sense that when you step inside the sanctuary, God is there to meet you.

I hear some of you thinking out loud: “Well, I have Him in me all the time and I don’t even have to go to church...” Maybe you do – but there’s another whole blessing in attendance and participation where His Body meets. It’s a plus blessing of His presence when His people gather together. That’s not only my personal opinion – that’s the Word of God: “*How blessed is it when brethren dwell together in unity*” (Ps.133). Furthermore, He says, “*I’ll be there. I’ll be there in the midst of them. I will be there in the midst of them*” (Mt.18:20, paraphrased). That’s why it’s easier to get blessed in church than it is at home – because there are many of us together, full of His Spirit and moving in faith.

This has been a horrendous week for me – just the pits! One of those weeks I’d like to forget – and am glad it’s over! When your Pastor stands up here and declares: “Faith! Let’s talk about *faith*! We bought this building with no money and we fixed it up and we didn’t have any money to do that and...” And she stands up here and declares, “Faith!” What happens to me? That’s a spoon – and it stirs up my own faith and I can agree: “Yeah, me too, kid!” ☺

We do that when we’re with each other. We just stir each other. Faith is contagious, you know, and it is important for us to encourage and exhort one another in these things.

I have a friend in ministry who is here today that is preparing to venture out into a whole new area – going to Minnesota (I’m so sorry for you – do you know there’s snow up there! ☺). Susan is to start a prison-work they’ve never had before. I’m sure she’s heard from all kinds of people wondering: “You’re leaving your home? Why are you going so far and what if they don’t... and what if you...? Oh, Susan, don’t go – what if...?” It’s just faith. If God says it, there’s no vote! It’s just, “Yes, Sir!” You see, we’re in the Army of the Lord. And the thing to do is to *hear the order right!*

Why build? “*Except the Lord build the house...*” Why build?

I want us to read a few statements and consider the truths we discover in them. Take time to think about what you are reading – one statement at a time. I pray you receive some revelatory insight as the Spirit moves on your understanding.

1. “The soul of man, which was formerly the habitation of God [in the Garden of Eden] is now in a state of ruin.” Or, “the soul of man that was *one with God* is now in the state of ruin.” It’s the soul – the mind and emotions, the conscious will and intellect – that part of man that relates to the world around him/her. It is *ruined* (by sin) when you compare it with how God created it to be.
2. “The ruins of this soul must be repaired (renewed, regenerated, made alive) that it may once again become the habitation of the Spirit, because the Spirit of God [when you’re regenerated or born again] is God Himself *dwelling in you* as He dwelt in Adam at creation.” It has lost its ability to communicate or relate to God because of this *sin*, and must be made able to function again.
3. “Jesus Christ is the only foundation upon which this *house* (this *person*, this soul) can be rebuilt.”
The only foundation!

There is no other foundation upon which we can build our lives and be successful. Go through your New Testament – get a concordance. You’ll see I’m not exaggerating. You just can’t build your life if you don’t build it on Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. Everything goes up from that cornerstone. The plumb-line is established in Him and on Him. Nothing will be the “right anything” if you don’t build your life on Jesus Christ. The measurements will be all crooked and out of alignment. You’d be crazy if you don’t build your life on Jesus Christ.

4. “The doctrine of *God’s grace* is the model plan according to which the building can be raised.”
It’s His grace – totally undeserved favor, freely given by God to the regenerated person.

I say to my friend, Tom, who works in the construction field: “Tom, I want you to come and build for me such-and-such.” The first thing he has to do is look at the rough ideas for what he’s going to build. “You want me to add on here and you want it to be a free-standing building. Okay, what else do you want?” The second thing he does is to develop a plan for this building – a design – to meet my satisfaction. The third thing he has to do is figure out the materials that it will take to construct the building. You see – building is a process. One – two – three.

If you think we can call you forward in a church meeting, lay hands on you, and *make you instantly mature*, you’re wrong. We can lead you to Jesus Christ, and at the time you surrender your will to Him, you are *instantly* born again. You are born into a different kingdom than you were in before (Col.1:13,14) – a different realm. That is simply: add water and stir. It’s a fast thing! And, if you ask Him to fill you with His Spirit – that’s a fast thing too! It happens when you ask.

But everything from then on takes dual cooperation – you together with God. And that isn’t an easy path. I say with all my heart: “Lord, I’ll go all the way with You. You lead and I’ll do it.” And the first step I take puts a thorn through my foot. ☺ You know what I mean. So, while I’m sitting down pulling out the thorn, I’m mad at Him ☺ and I tell Him so: “I gave my life to You. I promised I’d follow where You led me. What is *this*?” What do You want?

I pull out the thorn – stand up – I’m still mad – but take a step and – I’m instantly healed! “WOW!” – or “Glo-ry!” ☺ (“WOW” is just as good – if it comes from the heart. ☺) And I’m ecstatic! “Lord! All right!” I sing: “I’ll walk with You, I’ll trust You, Lord...” And I’m ready to move again. I go – and I go – and I go – and I get into another *if-y* situation – and I’m mad again. That’s because we have an erroneous concept that if we give everything to Him (I’m preaching to the preacher right now ☺). . . . If we give Him control of “us” – our lives – and we trust Him and adore Him – we have this idea that life should run fairly smoothly.

But when He smoothes it out – are you ready for this? ☺ Yes or no. When He smoothes it out, it’s iced over. ☺ And now, instead of thorns, you have a slippery way! ☺ Did you ever try to make forward progress and as you take one step, you slip back two? Take one step forward and slip back again. See, that’s His ice rink. ☺ How else are you going to learn to depend on Him?

You're not on this job because you're good. ☺ You're not *off* a job because you're good. ☺ “*Not I, but Christ liveth in me*” (Gal.2:20). “Thank You for the job, Lord.” “Thank You for – this... Thank You for – that... Thank You for... Thank You, Lord...” We need to come back to giving *thanks* to God for all He hath done! That way, when we come to the House of God, we will be so God-conscious – pity parties won't have a place!

5. “When we are re-edified, each person is to be a Temple of the Lord, made [listen now] made *inwardly pure and outwardly righteous*.” “When re-edified...” Edify in the Scripture means “to build up” – and that's what the prophetic word is supposed to do – “supposed” is the key word in that statement.

Pause a minute and think about that. He's trying to purify us within – that we might outwardly be righteous. Now, try to reverse the order of that. [Pause again long enough to consider *that*]. I believe that there are thousands of people today, Sunday – in our own city – going to church some where, *feeling* very pure – just because they chose to attend a church.

“What'd you do today?” “Uh... I went to church.” At times they say, “I went to the House of God.” My question follows: “Was He home?” ☺ Some people never check to see if He's there. ☺ He gave us the key so we just unlock the doors and go in – and do our own thing. And that is so sad.

How do we build? We know *why* we build: just look at our five statements. “Man” is in a desperate state! And we need help. Left to our own devices, we are building a whole generation headed for disaster (if we, in our human culture, have not already arrived there). We need to build our lives on something substantial – something that will last – something that will bring us fulfillment and satisfaction – and success. What we need is the grace of God and the intervention of His hand in our personal lives. We need to build on Christ, the Rock.

So – how do we build?

First, we can see that those who build their lives on Christ's Word build on the Rock. You remember the story, or parable, in Matthew 7. There are two men – each builds a house. One built on rock; one built on sand. The houses looked identical from the ground up; they were equally beautiful in appearance. The one built on sand went up faster – because that builder didn't bother with establishing any real or firm foundation. He didn't blast out anything hard before he raised the structure (Selah!). It was simply: “Hey! Put that thing up! Oooooo-weeee! That is one gorgeous edifice!”

“Bring in so-and-so – they'll draw a crowd.” Ah-hem, ☺ Hear it, now – we have to make these truths practical in application or they don't help us.

“Keep this going – and keep that going – keep the other thing going. Be people-pleasers and this thing'll get bigger and bigger – and people'll be impressed: ‘WOW!’”

Then there's the little one over there. The building *looks* the same – but: “Man, it took them *forever* to build that thing!” [Maybe that's because they drilled down deep and sank the footings and ...] “Aren't we glad we built on the flats! We got this ‘baby’ up quick!” ☺ That's fine, my friend, until there's a storm. “Hey, no problem.”

The two looked alike. But when the winds blew and the floodwaters grew higher and higher; when the deep waters and trials of life began to overwhelm them, the house – the life – that was built on sand simply fell apart. It couldn't stand up under the stress. Its lack of foundation easily gave way. It wasn't solidly built. Are you there? **Because the floodwater just goes to the foundation.**

If we could get hold of this truth, it'd be worth our whole time together – it'd be worth the four hours that I'm going to preach... ☺ **When the storms come they hit the foundation.**

I'm going to say it again and you're going to get it this time. Picture what the floodwaters do to a house in the natural. When the storms come, the first thing they hit . . . (the high waters – the storms of life) . . . they go directly to the foundation. That ought to make you shout: Hallelujah! Because ***nothing can get to me unless it first hits my Rock!***

My life is built on Christ. I may get hit with the wind, and stopped with the waves, and reel in a few places, but the whole truth is: when you get all through slapping me around, I'm still there – I'm still standing! “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and His righteousness!” So, when those storms come, we can say, “Ya gotta hit Him first!” Glory to God! Shout it out!

How do we build? Believers are built up on the Word of God. And we're also built up ***in Christ***.

Individuals are exhorted to “*build themselves up on their most holy faith.*” Jude said that in verse 20. Jude, the brother of Jesus. “*Building up yourselves....*” Then he adds: “*Keep yourselves in the love of God*” (vs.21). Do you know what that actually is saying? From the original Greek language, basically it means: “*Keep yourselves in love with God.*”

“Keep yourselves in love with God and build yourselves up...” Build *yourselves*? We just said we couldn't build ourselves, but that He did the building. Well, He's talking to the building now. The building is up – that's you. Now He says, “*Build yourself up – on your most holy faith*” (paraphrased). “Keep on growing up. Get taller. Get stronger. Build yourself up.” On what? Faith? “On your *most holy faith.*” But, faith in what? Faith – that He built the building. “Lord – this is – of You.” “This is – the Lord's work.”

When we sing “Holy Spirit, Thou art welcome in this place...” I always gesture with my hand over my heart: “in this place, Lord.” Welcome Him. He'll always show up. In fact, He lives in you. He's just down inside you. You have to call Him once in awhile: “Holy Spirit, rise up from within!” “*Build yourself up on your most holy faith.*”

I believe God's going to build us up – for the **Church is the sole witness of Jesus Christ**. Really ponder that one. Your spirit ought to be saying, “WOW! That's – amazing! What a real truth!” And it is a “WOW!” *We* – are His... What was that? His Body? That's a double “WOW!” We are His *Body* – the only way He can reach out to the world.

We cry out in desperation when we observe the condition of our world today: “Where are You, Lord? I can't see You! You need to be down here on earth. Ohhhhhh, Lord.” And He so confidently responds, “I'm there! My whole Body is there! I'm up here (the Head) trying to get them to do what I say!”

In the natural, I think they call it *Saint Vitus Dance*, don't they? When you can't get the body to do what the head is trying to tell it to do? ☺ Hello.

Jesus declares, “You are My witnesses” (Ac.1:8). That was not a suggestion, my Friends. It was not a question: “Would you please be My witnesses?” No. He said to His disciples, “You go and make other disciples (Mt.28:18). You are My witnesses. If they see Me at all, it will be through you.”

There's so much “*woo-woo* stuff” going on today, Church – in the church. There really is. And I don't want you ever to even tiptoe toward *woo-woo*. Do you know what I mean by that? Yes, I believe you do. The crazy stuff that people (even some honest believers!) think has to happen in order for us to know (or experience) the presence or the glory of God.

Let me tell you a story – a true story. My dentist, who happens to be a Christian, recently related this to me, and I asked his permission to share it publicly. Do you remember a number of years ago when people were declaring that the Lord was filling their teeth with gold? Some of you knew about all that. It was supposed to be “evidence” of the manifestation of God’s mighty presence.

A lady came in to my dentist’s office and flaunted: “See this gold tooth back here? The Lord filled that!” He told me, after looking at it carefully, “I didn’t want to discourage her and say anything negative, so I just looked at it.” But then he said to me, “Iverna – it was the lowest alloy of gold that there is.”

Oh please! Do you think, if the Lord really filled a tooth, it would be the lowest kind of gold you could use? So he said to her, “Well, I do a better job than the Lord!” ☺

I asked if I could share this story because these kinds of testimonies, *when given to the world*, make us – and *Him* – look crazy! If that had been a true manifestation of God – a great miracle – fine! But it wasn’t a *great* miracle. The same thing is true with this sparkly stuff that’s supposed to dust people when they’re more spiritual than others, or supposedly more anointed. So, tell me, is “the glory” demonstrated by gold teeth or sparkles?

What another story? ☺ Yes or no. Okay – I was the speaker at this particular meeting and the ladies seated in the front just kept staring at me and grinning. They were just – staring while I was speaking – sort of “dumb-struck.” ☺ Pretty soon I saw – God knows this to be the truth – one of the ministers poke another minister and that minister looked up too, then they both were – well, they were just beaming at me. Now I thought, “Either I put my lipstick on crooked, or something looks really funny to this congregation.” ☺

I finished my message – walked off the platform – and sat down in the congregation. The person who took over at the podium said with all the emotion her quivery voice could muster: “Ohhhh-hhhh-hhhh – the *glory* is in this place. How many saw it?” And hands went up all over the auditorium. I’m telling you the truth: I could have had *anything* from that group that I wanted. ☺ They acted like I was some special, holy creature from God Himself. As I walked through the crowd, it was like I could have said, with great superiority: “It’s okay. You may touch me.” ☺ They were just ::Oooohhhhhh:: ☺

When I went to the ladies room, in the mirror I could see my whole forehead was sparkling – just – sparkling. ☺ Now, I didn’t know why. So I took my hankie – and easily wiped it off. Yep. It came right off (better keep that hankie! ☺) And I honestly didn’t know an answer or explanation for what the flecks were that sparkled.

The next time I was getting dressed to speak, I was putting on the same lotion I had used on that earlier occasion and it contained... ☺ yes, you’re right! Some sort of sparkly stuff imbedded in the lotion. Mica flakes or some such thing. Glitter. Who knows? ☺

I told you that story humorously, but honestly, that’s exactly the way it happened. And – isn’t that sad? Sad that I had inadvertently used some lotion with whatever was in it (I have never used that lotion again, I promise you! ☺) but so sad that the visible, tangible sparkles were able to give the impression of – *the glory of the Lord*. If you can’t tell that the glory of the Lord is on me (or on others anointed by the Lord) without a visible sparkle – then I will get more lotion ... ☺ You know that’s not true! I’m teasing you!

The point is: all we need to realize is – **He’s the head and we’re His Body**. And **we’re the only hope of God’s glory filling the earth!** The way that happens (the manifestation of His glorious presence) isn’t by falling off the chair when His presence is here – that’s *family*. That’s what we do when we’re together. Do you understand? It’s okay – that those *things* do happen – when we’re the family coming together to worship Him. But those don’t happen often – and if they began to happen all the time, I’d say, “Sit down.” ☺

But when there's a visitation of the great *power of God*, lots of different things happen! People have been slain in the Spirit while I preached, and one was healed of breast cancer just hearing the Word of God! Nobody laid hands on her, she just *believed*. That's wonderful! It truly is! And that's the way it ought to be in our meetings – IF I LIVE IT OUTSIDE THIS PLACE!

We are built with a purpose – and that is to worship God “*in Spirit and in truth*” (Jn.4:24). I could spend an hour on that alone: “*In Spirit and in truth.*” His Spirit and our true hearts.

Now, there also are some things that God hates. I love the way the wise man wrote it in Proverbs 6:16-19. He said, “*These six things the Lord hates.*” And then he thought of another one, and added: “*Yea, seven are an abomination to Him!*”

What are they? Listen to His list: First, “*A proud look.*” He hates that. We sometimes wear it in our posture as well as in the expression on our faces: “I'm better than this guy.” All non-verbal, but we really don't have to utter a word. Or, maybe it's more innuendo: “I just don't believe what they...” Or sometimes it simply gets said: “Well, we have some people that we kind of help out, but, you know, I hope you don't think it represents us.” GOD HATES THAT!

I don't want anything in me He hates! I promise I pray that often! I want nothing in me that He hates! It's scary to me! Because I have the fear of the Lord in my heart and spirit, and I work very hard not to draw His wrath or judgment.

The second thing God hates is this: “*A lying tongue.*” He hates lying – in any form. Now, you may say, “I don't think I'm a liar.” Okay. How about this? Are the words of our praise – and worship – really truthful? Think about that before you form a response in your heart. We sing all the right words: “I trust You, Lord – I'll live for You. You're all I need. . . (and I want these things too).” ☺ No wonder the Father has to look for worshippers. The Bible says, in John 4:23, “the Father *seeketh*” those who will worship Him in truth.

Now if you're a parent, you'll understand this next statement: “Don't say it to me if it isn't true. I'd rather not hear it.” I'd rather not hear the words “I love you” – I really would – than to find out those were words not lived, or not expressed in your living behavior. That's double pain. In fact, in this list, so much does God hate lying that He mentions it a couple of times.

And then Jesus said, “If you really love me, you'll keep My commands” (Jn.14:15). It's impossible for me to disobey Him six days a week and then come to praise Him in church on Sunday, because my good intentions *then* – my wonderful words and songs – just don't go through the ceiling.

It has become very quiet in here. Yes, unusually so. ☺

Or, how about this? Are the “words” you speak to others – remember the title of this sermon? “A Reality Check.” Are the words you speak to others – the words that you represent as being from God – are those words really His? Or yours?

I believe that we are going to come into a realm of the prophetic utterance that is superior to anything this generation has known! But I also believe we need to be trained in that. The real prophetic isn't just a thought that comes into your head that is given the right to be preceded by “Thus saith the Lord.” It isn't something you *perceive* about another individual which gives you a right to say: “I have a word from God for you.” The fear of the Lord is going to come back to the Church in such a way that you had better be very cautious!

I love to receive a word from God – but I throw out a few that have been given to me personally as from Him. Just because someone says to me, “Thus saith the Lord” doesn't mean the Lord has thus said. ☺ And God as my witness, I often pray: “God, don't let me minister out of my own thoughts, or my own

spirit. Lord, if it isn't a word from You, just don't let it go through me. Show me, Lord – so I don't give it out of my mouth.”

That's because I want there to be an impact in the hearers – and there will be when it is genuinely a word from God. I want *this* message to go clear through to your soul, your mind, your heart – and be the word that cleanses and lifts and lives and brings hope and faith and knowledge of truth and a commitment from you that says, “Alright Lord, I'm giving myself to You! I'm changing some things!” And that won't happen if it's just Iverna speaking.

The same thing is true for you. You can see someone that needs to change something in her life and you can *pretend* that it's a word from God and tell her how to change that thing. But it won't bear the right kind of fruit when it just comes from your good intentions. But if you wait for that word – the authentic Word from Him – when it comes from the Lord, it comes purely and powerfully.

Remember in the opening of this message I gave a word for this particular church. I didn't feel the need to say to you, “Thus saith the Lord,” but I gave you a very definite word from God that you have ended one situation and you're coming into another era. You have completed the renovations to the building. You have it all cleaned up and beautified. You are prepared – with the building. This next period of time – now – this present season – is the *building of the people*. And then there will be another season – a next era – and that will be the producing of children. You're going to have newcomers coming into the congregation.

That's the way it's going to be. There's no question in my mind. I know it's a word from God – because I got it. ☺ You'll know it's a word from God because the same Holy Spirit that gave it to me will quicken it in you! I saw many of your heads nodding in recognition and agreement when I gave it. So then, the next thing we need to do is – we all cooperate with the Word: “Yes, Lord.” That's the correct answer: “Yes, Captain. May it be as You have pronounced.”

(May the above word be an encouragement to everyone reading this message – the Lord has a process and you are in the midst of it. Pray for revelation of what He is doing in your situations, then walk in agreement and harmony with His revealed plan. Allow Him to minister to you, your own specific word of encouragement and instruction as you continue to read. ed.)

We've given so many *false words* in the church over the past decades that people have little or no respect for the real prophetic. I go to meetings where the leaders prophesy by pointing out others. You know. I'm sure you've seen it done. One leader points to someone else, and declares: “You prophesy – you have a word.” And then to another: “*You* have a word – give it.” And to another: “You have a word.” And when the finger points at you, you feel compelled to give it – to give *something*. “Uh, yeah, ‘Jesus wept.’” ☺

I'm not talking about the authentic prophetic gift per se. I'm talking about – God's Spirit-filled people who *think* they are something they are not. Are the words we speak to others in the name of God backed up by the life of Christ in us? Does it really mean anything when you speak forth your word? Remember, we're trying to determine if we are guilty of something the Lord hates – lying.

One of the horrendous things I've been going through for the last three weeks is an on-going situation with a work crew I hired to re-surface my pool and put in new tiles. In my whole 78 years, I don't think I've ever been so consistently lied to by any one person. Seriously. The crew chief would look right at us and say, “I promise. We'll...”

It's a stress-builder, you know? “I promise we'll be here tomorrow morning.” Then you wait all day. You even change your plans to accommodate their scheduling. But because they have broken trust through previous lying, their word means *::pfit::* to me now. “Tell me anything – I cannot believe you!”

In fact, so *carnal* am I that when they said they were finished and I wrote the check for the final payment, I had thoughts of cancelling it. ☺ I mean, I was that upset! It's awful to be lied to – over and over and over – and then one more time just this morning! When they refilled the pool – they were supposed to put that goop in that makes the water stay wonderful. Two days went by and I was scared the whole thing was going to. . . .

It was beginning to turn grey and we called again, and they promised again but didn't show up so we over-chlorinated it. ☺ I thought chlorine would be a good idea. ☺ Then they called yesterday and said, "We'll be there in the morning." "No," we said, "it's Sunday and we're leaving by 10." Guess what. They're not there yet! And I'm quite confident they won't be there later either. You see? That's what happens to people when you lie to them! They won't believe you about anything!

Do you remember this? "Oh! I promise! Cross-my-heart-and-hope-to-die! Stick-a-needle-in-my-eye!" When we were kids we took vows like that! ☺ You didn't do that? ☺ We said those things because we were sincere about our word. It was a different era though. We didn't lock our doors back then. And when we made a binding deal, the contract was a handshake! "I'll be here – you be here – let's shake on it!" And we were both there when we said we would be! But that kind of trust is long gone! The way of truth is gone! The *spirit of deceit and lies* and do-what-you-have-to-do and say-what-you-have-to-say to please them at the moment – that's what's here!

But not for Christians! The Scripture says this: "*But ye, brethren!*" Now I have had. . . . Uh, do you want to know what I was just going to say? I'm not going to say it! ☺ I won't do that. ☺ But I was going to say: "I've had worse 'luck' with Christian laborers than ones from the world. I've been cheated out of more by Christians than..." And I have. It's absolutely true.

That's a real telling representation, don't you know: "Hire so-and-so, they're a Christian." And I want to shout: "NO! DON'T DO IT!" ☺ Why? Because when you've been duped by a "Christian brother" (or sister) there's no recourse! We're just supposed to take it. If *we* hate that, we have to know how much God hates it.

In Proverbs 6, verse 17, God continues His list: "I also hate *hands that shed innocent blood*." Well, what does that mean? This illustration is another very personal one. My granddaughter has just come through a situation that demonstrated this so well: "*Hands that shed innocent blood*."

When she made a job move from one group of people with whom she worked to go to another location to open her own salon (Do you like my hair? She's here – she'll give you a business card ☺). When she left the first place of employment, the owner-managers were so upset they began to bad-mouth her to her established clients when they called for future appointments. She couldn't figure out why these clients didn't come with her to the new place. Why some just dropped off. It took quite awhile but eventually, the nail girl from the first salon said, "I can tell you what's going on here. They're telling people things about you that just aren't true."

Now, jealousy will do that, my friends. It doesn't matter what their motive is or was – God hates it. God hates that kind of thing! Now, that does happen in the world and we're not too shocked by it, but unfortunately, *it also happens in the church!* What right do we have to speak ill of another brother or sister? "What right?" I ask you! "Who made you a judge?"

I'll tell you the only right we do have. We have a right to go to *THE Judge*. Believe me, I'm taking this whole company to Christ! ☺ To the Lord. "Go get 'em! You said You'd... that vengeance belongs to... So, sic 'em, God!" ☺

I've stated that humorously, but I do expect Him to right the wrong. I really do. Now, He may not choose to do it exactly like I might like to see it happen (in my carnal way of thinking), ☺ but they need

to learn to treat people right or... ::pffi!:: with the business. I won't tell you which salon it is, because I don't have a right to do that. But I do have one right – and it's the only right I have – I can go to the Judge and plead the case.

“God, guard our tongues!” Can you agree with that? “Help us to be honest and trustworthy.”

Number four: God hates “*a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations*” (vs.18). Have you ever disliked someone so much that you laid in bed and *thought* of how you could get even? ☺ Well, not me of course. ☺ I just know *some* people do that. I've heard about it. ☺ “And if only this would happen...” (then through gritted teeth) “and if only *that* would happen. Maybe they'd lose their job – then they'd duh-duh-duh...” Well God – simply put – hates that kind of thinking.

God tells us what kinds of things we're to think: “*Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report – if there's any virtue....*” (Phil.4:8). Oh, I hate that part of the verse! ☺ Of course there's always some virtue! My pool looks good! Well – the water doesn't – yet – but the tile's beautiful. ☺ There's always something you can pull out of the most negative situations and say, “Thank You, Lord, for that!” Like, “Thank You Lord that I didn't push him in when he was standing there by the edge...” ☺ “And thank You for...”

Let's summarize for a moment. The Lord hates anything that represents the enemy. He hates any-*thing*. He doesn't hate *me* – or you. Be sure you get the difference in that. He doesn't hate me when I miss the mark, but He does hate anything in me that is devilish. Anything in me that is not of His character – He has to despise it.

So, Church – as you come walking into your next dimension – and the Lord begins to deal with this attitude and that one and the situation that causes you to seal your mouth when you wanted to scream out . . . All of these things – just know this: you were warned – that *this* was where *He is going to rebuild*.

He's going to do it – rebuild – and it's going to be a tight, strong, secure structure. It's going to be made up of men and women. . . . You're small now – those of you that attend this church regularly. This is a small congregation, but I'm going to tell you this: *you are large in God's eyes*.

You might even be wondering: “Well, why is He after us so much? Why is He delivering this kind of message to *us*?” I can answer that too: *because of what the future holds*. You're going to be giving birth. There're going to be children and I don't mean just little human beings. I'm telling you: there're going to be new born babies of the Spirit.

You're going to open your mouths out there in this community. You're going to open your arms and bring those people into the family of God. But we can't give birth to newborns and set them in the laps of toddlers! God is making us to be “*strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*” (Eph.6:10). Amen. Let it be so, Lord!

So, if you're thinking: “I don't wanna be strong.” Too bad. ☺ He's already ordained it! And when He ordains a thing, He sets circumstances and situations about you that make you either get stronger – or die. ☺

We're not in the old days where we're just *sort of* committed to the Lord. It's a new day! And you see, I've explained here the spirit of the world and what's going on out there. What do you think it's going to take to combat that? Powerful warriors! Powerful worshippers! Powerful men and women who love one another, who function in a united effort – not to build *this* church, but to build His Church – made up of individual believers – made up of us all.

You watch your worship time grow. It's going to rise to another level as a result because we, this day, are dedicating ourselves in a new way. And right now, I'm actually going to demonstrate that that means me,

too. ☺ I've never in my life played a keyboard – but I'm going to try it today. I don't want to experiment in front of an audience, but let me share this.

Some years ago the Lord gave me a song which is so perfect for what we're doing here in dedication of this church building. Shirlee is going to sing it – but she won't sing if I won't play. ☺ So – working something precious in her... ☺ I will sacrifice... ☺ And so will you if you listen to the accompaniment. ☺

This song is where we are today and it has a two-fold purpose. In the first part, we'll dedicate this House; then by singing the second part we'll each dedicate our individual lives to Him. Listen to the words and let it be your commitment.

We dedicate this House, O Lord, to Thee;
May all who enter here see only Thee.
Let every prayer that's prayed be pleasing to Thine ear,
Let every song that's sung, be sung for You to hear.

We dedicate this House, O Lord, to Thee.
May all who enter here see only Thee.
Let the teaching be inspired by the Holy Spirit's fire.
We dedicate this House to Thee.

We dedicate this House O Lord to Thee.
May all who enter here see only Thee.
Let Thy Presence there be known by our guests and by our own,
As we worship and praise, our hearts become Thy throne.

We dedicate this House O Lord to Thee.
May all who enter here see only Thee.
We can only dedicate – Thou alone must consecrate
We dedicate this House to Thee.

I dedicate my life O Lord to Thee.
I'll let my heart be filled with only Thee.
Let every prayer I pray be pleasing to Thine ear.
Let every song I sing be sung for Thee to hear.

I dedicate my life O Lord to Thee.
I'll let my heart be filled with only Thee.
Let my whole life be inspired, by Thy Holy Spirit's fire.
I dedicate my life to Thee.

I dedicate my life O Lord to Thee.
I'll let my heart be filled with only Thee.
Let Thy Presence here be known, as You make my life Your home;
As I worship and praise my heart becomes Thy throne.

I dedicate my life O Lord to Thee.
I willingly submit myself to Thee.
I can only dedicate – Thou alone must consecrate.

I dedicate my life to Thee.