

I am sitting in the room with a group of Christians. It's a living room. I'm sitting in front of the fireplace. And this is a small group of Christians who want to have a church. Now, that's not a church like a pew and a steeple. This is a church like a church. I'll be talking to them, actually, out of 41 years of working with churches that meet in homes. And they're more than just churches that meet in homes. They're quite unique. But tonight I am going to draw upon 53 years of experience and talk to you about a lot of things. I'm going to pick up where I left off.

I want you to look at the kind of house church or home church you don't want. In fact, you don't want to be like all of them. If there's ever been an exception to this, I've never met it. It's a group of Christians who come together. They're in a living room. I don't know who the fellow is that leads them. I've met about seven or eight different kinds of people who start one. Sometimes it's an amateur. Sometimes it's a preacher who wants to start a church that meets in homes.

There are some things that they have in common. There are probably somewhere between 7 and 30 people. The man who's speaking has been reading his New Testament. He probably really feels like he knows a lot about the Bible, which is the biggest problem he's got at all. The people come in, and they bring an old hymnal, or maybe they don't bring in a hymnal. They bring a Bible, that's for sure. The singing is worse than I can describe it. It's beyond appalling. It's beyond miserable. Everybody's stiff, just stiff, uncomfortable. But he believes in something, and he believes in this: he believes that he will teach them the Bible. They will respond greatly. The only problem with that supposition is that it started 200 years ago and hasn't worked yet.

The reason is as simple as it can be. If somebody is wondering whether I believe in the inspiration of Scripture, the answer is yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, and yes. I'm reminded of a story a friend told me, and I think he made this thing up himself. He said he was walking along the road when he met three people sitting beside the road, crying terribly. One of them was the Bible. The second one was Mary. The third was the Holy Spirit. So, he came in and asked them why they were crying. And this is the answer they gave. "All three of us were intended to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and because of the ways of men, each and every one is being glorified themselves." Yes, and I think that's really all I need to say.

Let me explain to you where we get this idea. It's the Bible. And if we preach the Bible and teach the Bible, everything will happen, and it'll all be wonderful. Modernism rose at the beginning of the 20th century. Some of America's great seminaries and colleges at the time were struck by something called modernism. They came out with some of the oddest, craziest ideas. And they had no archaeological reason for this. They said, well, let's see, Galatians was written in the year 250 A.D., and Matthew was probably written around 200, and Revelation was probably written around 300 or 150, and at best 90, and so on. They were all forgeries, and they don't know this, that, and the other. And, you know, it doesn't matter what archaeology turns over. They're going to keep on teaching that until the day they die. Pepperdine Seminary, hello. You're going to be

doing that until the Lord comes, with everything in this world and a way of proof beyond proof beyond proof. And those students will be going out of there not believing in the Scripture.

So, there was a reaction to this, and the reaction was it's the Word, it's the Word, it's the Word, it's the Word, and Jesus slipped off the side of the stage. And you can hear men preach days and weeks and months and years, with the Lord Himself sort of like salt and pepper on your table when you're eating; the Lord gets mentioned every once in a while. Maybe a parable is told or some moral story or something like that, but it's the Scripture.

I'm going to tell you all something. I know a little Hebrew. I know a bit more Greek. I know a bit of Latin. I'm one of the most highly educated theologians the world has ever known. I have outlived just about everybody, and I have been in the Scripture...I can't say every day of my life because I think sometimes I skip Sunday. And without the centrality of Christ out of those Scriptures, you don't get anything. That's number one.

Number two, the church today is spiritually dead. The minister's dead spiritually. He is. His people are spiritually dead. They don't know an experiential faith. I can almost hear one of them screaming at the top of his lungs, "We don't trust our feelings; we depend only on the Word of God." That's not what you're really saying. You're saying that there are three things: those who are the doers, the feelers, and the thinkers. And you're a thinker. You look down on the feelers and the doers. You have your own little world here, and you're teaching the book...actually, it wouldn't matter what you were teaching. You would be frontal lobe. You would be analytical. You'd put things together and use big words.

Now, there is something besides doing, feeling, and thinking. It has to do with the Spirit, and nobody has any idea what that even remotely means. Now, I honor my seminary professors. I think I've dedicated two or three books to them by now. I sat under one of the greatest Greek teachers in the world, and he also was my New Testament teacher. He was a godly man. But my seminary gave me absolutely not a single day of how to know and touch the Lord Jesus Christ. And you move that over into a home Bible—I'm sorry, not a home Bible class, but a home church—and you've got this man who's been told all his life it's the Word, it's the Word, it's the Word, because it grew out of this reaction to modernism, but Jesus got left out experientially and in centrality.

Alright, now that's what we have in our home meetings. That's about the same thing you have on a Sunday morning, except you sing better on a Sunday morning because you have a choir leader. Then you bring that into the home, and honest to goodness, it's not like I've only met one or two. You're looking at somebody who probably has known as many ministers as anyone living today, and I'm going to back that up and prove it. I know how we think, whether we're at a dinner table talking together, or at lunch at a cafeteria in the seminary, or when we're alone, or on the telephone. It doesn't really matter where we are. We all look pretty much the same.

I just visited one of the oldest, revered seminaries in America a few days ago. I went into the seminary bookstore, and I never saw so many books with the word theology on them. We will refight the Reformation from then until now, and all the issues, and all the teachings, and so on. But if that seminary actually turned out men of Christ, that seminary would be on the lips of everyone.

I even know of one of the colleges in my own denomination that had a man like this, and he was the president of it. He began teaching the students how to know the Lord, getting those kids praying and touching the Lord. This was a long, long time ago, and they removed him from the college almost immediately. I don't know why. Because he didn't fit; that was a college, not a seminary.

Now, I say this to everyone who ever hears this. You're not prepared to raise up a home church, for it's a whole different world. I'll tell you what this world is like. First of all, it's a community. These people right here in this room, they gossip about one another. They go home and complain about one another. They tell stories about one another. They'll even go so far as to say, did you know that Mary is really in trouble? She and her husband are really having a hard time with their two kids; they're drinking beer and whiskey, and we should really pray for them. They actually get to know one another. And I'll tell you something else; that's one.

Number two, you can't teach the Bible. Furthermore —number two, this is still number two— you don't know it. I'll tell you why you don't know it. You don't know it because it's arranged in chaos. And if you ever learn it in the order in which it happened, you'll probably have to leave the ministry. That's just knowing the story. So, you're disqualified for raising up a church, because there's nothing spiritual, and you don't know the Scripture. What you're going to be doing is preaching sermons and pretty things. I will stand in front of every Bible scholar on this earth and say, you do not know the Scripture if you do not know the New Testament in its chronological order, with the events and times and places. Because when you do, everything changes. So, if you wish to do this, learn the story. Learn the New Testament in the order in which it was written. Then you might be able to say you know something about the Scripture.

There is also a third thing, and that's just the evangelical mindset. It doesn't matter what denomination it is, or anything else, or where you go. It's one mindset. You're going to have to deal with it sitting in that living room, and it has to be pulled out, and that's not easy to do. One reason is that the one doing the pulling down also has that same mindset. It takes some humility for all of us to sit down and realize we have a need.

Two passages of Scripture nullify the idea that only teaching the Bible will do it. One of them is, “Without the Father I can do nothing, and without Me you can do nothing.” It is Christ, and it is Christ, and it is Christ, and it is Christ. He can be known, and He can be touched, but you're going to have to know Him and touch Him first. And that New Testament must become a great revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone.

Eventually, you will run out of things to say, and eventually you will turn to legalism because God's people that you're working with are so thick-headed, and they're so sinful, and they're so rebellious, and they're so wrong. You were given the worst group of people God ever put together in one house, and you're working with them, and you're giving up on them, and they're not obeying the Word of God like they're supposed to, and the Bible says if you obey the Word of God, and this and this and this will happen.

Then it won't happen, because it's a bootstrap religion. You're asking them to do something outside of "without Me you can do nothing." You cannot do anything without it being Christ, Christ, Christ. So, I would say to you all, you have to start somewhere else, and the first place you start is on your own life.

Now, there are some other things I would like to add to this little chat with you tonight. I have never met a home church that had outreach. Ever. Anywhere. Exceptions? Yeah. The ones that I started. Well, Gene, what makes you so hot? Very simple. I'm the world's leading authority on the subject. I may not have any other claims to fame in the world, but I wrote the largest-selling book on soul winning that's ever been written or sold. And you know, I'm wrestling with something I never thought, as long as I lived, that I would ever wrestle with. I am actually thinking about, not with a great happiness either, writing something about how to win people to Jesus Christ. Maybe I can start it off by saying how a home church can lead souls to Jesus Christ. There is such a thought that has not even entered the mind of man.

I want you to know, I'm telling you now, and I said to you before, I never met anyone in all my ministry, in citywide soul-winning campaigns, who knew how to know the Lord. I taught a man how to win people to Christ, and he took it and was so good at it, and he turned his church into a soul-winning church. He was hired at my seminary and put in charge of evangelism. Today, he's been there so long, and he is idolized because he can tell people how to win people to Christ. They have actually set up a chair now; you don't know what that means, but they have endowed a chair of evangelism, and it carries his name. He's one of the oldest professors there at that seminary today, and he is the most revered professor there because he knows better than any man how to lead people to Christ.

I held a citywide campaign in his city, and he was the one who got the ministers to invite me there. He was the local head of the campaign, and it took. It was one of the few things that did take. Now, for some reason, I do not know, they have moved away from personal evangelism, and I don't know why that happens, but it does. It always moves away. One reason is that it's as scary as it can be to walk up to somebody and say to yourself, "I want to talk to this person about the Lord and lead them to salvation." What do I do next? In fact, what do I do first?

And you're not going... a house church, a church that meets in a home, will not grow. The reason is, one, you're stuck on teaching the Bible, not Christ. Second, you don't know how to lead people to Christ. And thirdly, they don't know how to lead people to Christ, and you're not

leading people to Christ. Therefore, you're not even a church. You're a bless-me club. Now, I'm not going to put anyone in this room under condemnation. I will never ask you to go out, knock on doors, and lead people to Christ, but I will accept volunteers.

So, I'm going to tell you a few stories. I think I was 25 when I wrote a book entitled Here's How to Win Souls. I'm also the fellow that not only put it in print, but I also took it out of print. It was a little bit mechanical, but it was an honest book from somewhere. I taught for a long time, calling it soul winning for cowards, because that's what it was for.

Do you have any idea how critical preachers are, how snooty they are about everything but their own ministry, how fault-finding they are about everything but their church? Can you imagine a ministerial alliance in a city agreeing to vote, a unanimous vote, to invite a perfect stranger to hold a citywide campaign in their city? I want you to know, and you don't know this, that's impossible and doesn't happen.

Because of that book and the book that I wrote right after it, I was invited to some of the largest cities in America to hold citywide campaigns. I'll tell you what we did. I'll take Houston as an example. About 200 churches invited me to that city. We took the city and divided it up into four pieces. We took the four largest churches in the city in four different places, and for one week, I taught the people how to lead people to Christ. I taught them how to visit, go into homes, and talk to people face to face. That was one-fourth of the city, and they all went out and did door-to-door evangelism that led people to Christ. Then the second week, the third week, and the fourth week. I talked with the pastors about how to set up visitation and how soul-winning visitation works. It's one thing to knock on the door and invite somebody to your church. It's another thing to invite yourself in to lead people to the Lord.

I was standing with the man who was president of the Southern Baptist Convention—by the way, I have a picture of being with him, a gentleman named Dr. Autry, who was head of the Department of Evangelism for the entire denomination. We sat there discussing how this could be put into every church in the denomination I'm part of.

The book sold in the thousands. I walked door to door in cities all over this country and took pastors with me. We also came back and reported; you never saw Christians so excited in their life. They were almost speaking in tongues. “I led somebody!” And pastors the same way. I want to tell you something again. It takes an awful lot of confidence in a human being for a group of ministers to do that. And just for the record, in the six or seven or eight years that I did this, I don't know of a single—yeah, I can remember one person who told me that someone else said something critical about me. Now, I never heard a single critical word about this man. I could still be doing that same work today. But now I'm talking to you, a little group of Christians here. And I'm just going to tell you a few things.

I've already promised you I'll work with you and leave you, that you will hear Christ. You will be shown how to experience Christ. You will share Christ. Now that's virtually unheard of. When's the last time you've ever been to a Christian meeting when anybody and everybody in the entire building that was called church was free to stand up and talk and talk about the Lord? I've never been in that place. I tried to do it one time, and just before the meeting started, it was one of those mega churches. They booked everybody into different groups of 20 so they could feel free to share in 20, maybe 30, 40, 50. At the last moment, the pastor panicked, got his staff together, and put one in every group to make sure a leader was present, and it died right there on the spot.

Now, I'm going to tell you what else you're in for. Stay with me and don't get too shocked. We're going to take a religious census of this entire area. We'll keep on going out further and further. I needed to find a book on how to take a religious census. I wasn't sure that one existed, and I finally found one. To my utter amazement, it was by...Gene Edwards. But we're not going to do it that way. We're going to do it differently. We're going to leave a form if they're willing to share some background, but most of all, would you be interested in meeting in homes with a bunch of Christians in a nondescript way? Christians who are not emphasizing anything. We'll do that again and again and again until everybody in this community knows we're here. We'll take it to the end of the street and go to all these housing developments that the Lord just gave us personally to draw from. Do not say yes to me unless you're willing to do this, because this is what we will do. I will go door to door. Will I be alone? I have one volunteer. He and I will go door to door. Don't even think about it. Don't even consider it. It is our business to win people to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm not through with my story. I'm going to tell a bit more. One of the books I wrote found its way into the hands of a gentleman named Bert Pierce, head of evangelism for the Assemblies of God. When I was in the seminary, the Pentecostals, the Assemblies of God, had no seminary. So they put their best-trained men in my seminary, and on the day I graduated, a whole flock of Assemblies of God ministers received their doctor's degree in theology. They went back to Springfield to start an Assemblies of God seminary, accredited in all of those things. Shortly after that, I was doing what I did, and the Assemblies of God Department of Evangelism invited me to Assemblies of God headquarters. Then I began getting invitations more than you can shake a stick at, teaching the Assemblies of God how to run a visitation program and lead people to Christ.

So if you're not Pentecostal, you're looking at the guy who's partly responsible for their explosive growth. I have to tell this in all humility whatsoever. I got off the plane. I had just left the East Coast. I got to the West Coast; I hadn't slept in days, and we had plane trouble. I went to the cab driver, gave him a big bunch of money, and said, I'll take any ticket you get. Get me to such and such hotel, and do it immediately. I ran up to the second floor, and there were all the leaders of the entire Assemblies of God and seasoned people, including people you wouldn't even believe

that were in there. There was a gentleman there by the name of C. M. Ward, who spoke on a national radio program. That was before television, folks. Not the kind of television we have now. It was still black and white back then.

Bert Pierce said, "He's not here." I walked in the door to hear, "not here," and I spoke to those people. They're so genuine and so beautiful. They accepted me into their bosom immediately. Soon after, I was introduced as Gene Edwards, a spirit-filled, speaking-in-tongues Baptist minister. Man, I miss that part.

So, anybody who's listening to this, I have two or three things to say. Teaching the Scripture is not going to do one bit of good. It'll drive you and God's people insane. Second, a large part of what we do, and what people doing home churches do, turns out to be legalism. I don't know of any home church started in the last 40 years that is still meeting, except those who have settled down to a little 15 or 20 or 25 people with a man who considers himself some sort of Bible scholar, and he's now into his 10th or 15th or 20th year teaching them the Bible.

Forget it. They are people stuffed with information, and this is not a church. The church is aggressive. She's unrelenting. She's doing everything they did in the first century. And you, sir, need to learn how to know the Lord, and probably somebody to teach you how to win people to the Lord. And, sir, you should start proclaiming Christ, not the Bible. And you, sir, should go ahead and have a fit, but you're wrong if you think that I'm otherwise in this. I just saw someone having a fit. This is going to be the Bible, Bible. "I have put my word above my name." It's a Scripture you will often hear quoted. That's an Old Testament passage. What "word"? The Hebrew scrolls? Not likely. In the days of Jesus Christ, it has been estimated that there were probably no more than 25 to 50 complete Old Testaments in all of the world. They were read on Saturdays, taken out of a locked box, and put back again until the next Sabbath. That just might be a reference to God Himself or His incarnate Son.

Now, there's something else the church should do. She should take care of her members. Then I want to talk to all of you about this, because this creates a major problem. The world is full of broken people and broken lives, and needy people. When you all get together and get to know one another, you find out what Pogo found out. We have met the messed-up people, and they are us. Here comes that problem, that line. Do we interfere in one another's lives? Maybe not. Do we reach out to help one another who are really, really in bad shape? And they need help.

You want to know how to get rid of people in the church? Start messing with their weaknesses. I will give you an illustration, and this person, of course, does not exist, and you've never known such a person. Let's say his name is Joe Smith, and he has been to Bible school. He wants to teach, and he's drooling at the mouth, "Teach the book," because if you do that, you know, so-and-so. Nothing about his life is right, but he knows what he learned in the seminary. But he abuses his wife; he blames her for everything. Now here's the Bible teacher, and he's in the meetings, and what he's doing to his wife is awful. He's doing it with Bible verses, and he's just

doing that up here out of pure meanness. He's got one foot firmly planted in the world and one foot in the church. He smokes pot. He plays pool. Goes to the meetings. Wants to teach the Bible. He treats his wife like chattel.

Do you want to know how to get rid of him? Simple. Confront him with his conduct toward his wife, and he will disappear. Like Casper's ghost, he will no longer be there. This is a hard problem. We will wrestle with it forever. But you cannot imagine how many home churches that don't exist today because they did something that you're not going to do. There's a problem, and somebody finally has to deal with it. It is so gross, beyond anything probably anybody in this room could even hope to imagine. Then something gets so horrible that it is outside the bounds of anyone, and then some brother, or brothers, someone finally sits down and tries to deal with it. And the minute he does, that church is about to die, because whatever is done, there is a good number of people in that body of believers who say, "What you did was not Christian. That wasn't Christian. That wasn't Christian. You shouldn't have done that."

We should have gone ahead and taken this bank robber who bootlegs, makes a living doing drugs on the side, who sells drugs out of his kitchen, and you ask him to either stop doing this or stop attending the meetings. That wasn't Christian. Gene, you know that never happened. Oh yes, it did. And yes, some said it wasn't Christian. Well, you want to be a church? Yes. There's not one of us but sometimes or other we'll have needs that need to be met. Some of it is love. Sometimes it is care. Sometimes it is helping. Sometimes it's something that's really negative and has to be said. Are you going to be willing to not split a church because you don't think they did it in the way Jesus would do it?

I want to talk to you about that. I think you're right as long as you're in the four Gospels, because in the four Gospels, there wasn't a church. And it's really curious that the only time the Lord ever clearly spoke about the church in all four Gospels, He was explaining how to excommunicate people from the church. If I am not speaking to you the truth, then you write me a letter and prove my point, and I'll send you ten silver dollars. That's what He spoke about. Read it and study it really carefully.

But anyway, there is Jesus, the loving, caring One who puts up with everything. You go over in the epistles, and you've got a different world. You don't have to read the letters. Just read the last chapter of all of them. Just read the last chapter, except Revelation- just all the other epistles. Just read the last chapter. They're constantly dealing with problems, and hopefully they're doing it all in grace, and so will we.

Now, I'm trying to talk you out of taking this step forward. I'm going to touch on something else. I think I'm about to put my foot into a quagmire that I'm going to regret, but I'm going to hold my nose and jump in. We should meet one another's needs. You will fall in love with one another because you will fall in love with the Lord Jesus Christ, and it just follows. You fall in love with all His other sons and daughters. And it just happens that way: The church should heal.

Now, there is only one way that is interpreted, and that's the Pentecostal way. We heal; that means we do this. Well, that's not the way we're going to heal. We're going to do that, but that is so callous. You're a perfect stranger. I put hands on you, and you either do or you don't get healed. I don't know. I go off to the next city, and I tell you about how there were thousands there, and they came forward, and this one fell out in the Spirit, and this one did this. I have no idea whether those people got healed.

Now here's my definition of a healer, and we shall go by it. A healer is someone who prays for the sick. If they get well, fine. If they don't get well, we'll keep trying. We'll pray for them, and we will look for other solutions. You don't have to do that. Just go ahead and make noise. It doesn't matter. Okay. Try to find someone willing to do that. This comes back to messing with somebody's life. I was explaining to the brothers today that my view of healing in the church is Luke-arian.

Luke-arian? L-U-K-E dash A-R-I-A-N. That is a man who can heal people. He can work miracles. He can raise one man from the dead. He is known for signs and wonders, and standing right beside him throughout his ministry is an MD to take care of him and others. What frustrates me, I think more than anything else in the world, isn't that strange that this would frustrate me? Nobody ever asked me to heal them. Now, I'll go ahead and say the thing that we're all supposed to say at this moment. It's not me that heals. It's God. It's Christ. It's the Lord. And praise God and all that. But somebody's got to pray. Nobody ever asked me to pray one.

I'm going to tell you something else. It's a Santa Claus request. Come over and put your hands on me. You don't cost anything. There's a good chance, or some chance, or a little chance that I'll get healed. If I don't, I'm going back to the doctor. Well, I'm Luke-arian. I believe in doctors. We will never say give up all your pills or trust God, and he'll heal you of your car wreck where you brought you back together and sewed you together in five places. Or some rare Chinese disease nobody's ever heard of that is absolutely incurable, and then go back to what you're doing. No, I will not pray with you under those conditions. I will tell you this: you go to your doctor; you do everything the doctor can do. But if you're going to ask me to pray for you, then you are going to give me your you will give your life to me, and I will tell you what to do. The chances are excellent that you will be healed. I don't live in the first century. I know disease was rampant in those days. But disease is rampant today, too.

When I was still in the seminary, I tried to get a job in the hospital. I didn't want to study medicine so that I could learn something about—obliquely learn about—diseases and healing. Now let me explain. I was 18 years old. I was not married. I had never pastored a church, and I believed in healing, but I also believed I needed to know everything I could about it. I have spent my entire life seeking to learn healing, how to cure any disease there is on this earth. Now I cannot tell you I know everything there is to know, but I'm not chopped liver. Probably healing will stay in the church. I'm not Pentecostal, and I don't wear silk clothes with \$5,000 diamond

rings on my hand, and I will not hit you so hard with my hand that it will break you. I want your life.

You want to get healed? I want you to get healed. Then we're in this thing to the bloody end. I am very, very tired. No, I'm very, yes, angry, not tired. I am angry at watching friends of mine die who have never once asked me to turn to me for their healing. I'm speaking about this tonight for the very first time. If I raise up churches, if I preach Christ, if I travel, if I present the Lord, if I show God's people how to know Him and touch Him, then I ought to have some small part in the acreage of healing. If I don't, then somebody should question me. Not only does no one question me, but they never ask me. But you're going to get the entire spectrum. No, I don't know as much as your doctor knows, but boy, I know an awful lot your doctor has never heard of. And when I see that you're willing to give it a run, you, me, and the church will do all sorts of things to teach you well.

You mean including cancer? Leukemia? Of course. Yes. What? What? Everything except...with the only exception...90-year-old people who want to get healed so they can get out of bed for another 30 years. I'm sorry. I'm not much into raising 90-year-old people. I won't ask you to heal me when I'm 90. I might be asking for grace. I might even be asking you to be healed of something immediate in my life, but I'm going to calculate the fact that at night I should have a few things breaking down at night. So it's very difficult for me when someone...my great-grandmother, the only great I ever met.

I told y'all this the other day. I just met her twice, once as a little kid. I've got a picture of her. I was in Louisiana, and she asked me to come over and pray for her. Well, I was 18, and she asked me to pray that she'd get out of that bed and get well. She was just a little this side of the age of dirt and water. I prayed this ridiculously long prayer. And she, that old Irish woman, she chewed me out one side and down the other, lying there in that bed, infirm, just at death's door. And she reamed me out. You don't believe in prayer. You don't believe in faith. You don't believe in God. You don't believe God can heal. She taught me some lessons that day. There will be an opportunity for healing, and you will have the opportunity to decide whether healing belongs in the church. If it does, there should be healing.

Now, let me say something else: you'll take care of one another. But every one of you is going to have to decide and set up your perimeter of how far that goes. We will not intrude without permission. Sometimes we'll not intrude at all because we know the answer is already no. I'm not talking about healing now. I'm talking about everything.

Saints, the deep depth of the needs that we have in our lives cannot even be calculated. We are blind to them, rebellious, and resentful. When you mess with me, I've got my feelings hurt. What do you dare say that I'm a kleptomaniac? Dare you say that you should stop hitting your husband? Or whatever there is. I think I'm going to touch on one more thing here.

Certainly this is just a very, very small portion of it. I do think that the day you see me walk out of this street, going door to door, you will know that we're in business and we mean business. I think I've already told you some of the things we're going to do—a lot of things on people's doors. You can do it really quickly. It doesn't take long to cover a large piece of...possibly one of those little hooks maybe you ever have on the door that hooks on your door? It'll be our little message. We're going to have the nicest website in the city among Christians. It will be a doozy, and it will be so different.

We will let people in this town, this end of town, know that we're here. We will have a clear, distinct beginning. I cannot guarantee that those who lead our land to Christ will even come into this room. I cannot guarantee that. We live in a world of choices. We live...one of the choices is, "Give me a fire insurance policy, and then I'll not wait." Do you understand what I mean by that? You all do, I know. I'll get saved, and now Jesus won't send me to hell, and I'm right here. My fire insurance policy.

There's something else I want to say to you. I want to say this to anyone who ever listens to this. When you are dead, you need no maintenance. There are two kinds of deaths. One Sunday morning, church death that's the first one- and you can go every Sunday; you have the same thing, the same ritual. You never get up. There's just down. Sometimes there's a beautiful joke, a beautiful song, maybe a weekend—this is so good. The church, as she is in reality, is up and down. Otherwise, she's not real. I have been part of a church that did not let you be down. That was virtually a sin. So everybody gets into this game of being up. No, you have the right to hit bottom. But that does not necessarily imply the church is now dead just because you are.

Churches will have dry spells. When a church that's up gets a dry spell, people leave by the hordes. And the only thing I can say to them is, God bless you, get out of here. I'm looking at a group of people I really sincerely believe don't fit into that category. I will say this to everyone who might hear this. There will be low times, and when there are low times, you've got to understand that doesn't mean God has left us. If you're always up or always doing well, there is something really strong...it's not realistic. It's not human. Is there anyone in this place that never gets down or discouraged? Is there anybody? Anyone in this room who does? The opposite.

A church can be that way. I'm building this just a little bit. I'm not talking to anybody in this room. I'm talking about the people who are listening to this. I'll tell you something, sir, you don't know. If you begin to have a successful home church, of which there are probably ten in this whole nation, you will have people coming in, and they're so excited they've never seen anything like it, but they're going to notice something else, too. They want something like this with them running it, and they will do what never happens in an institutional church: they'll rip your fellowship to pieces and never bat an eye in doing it. The only thing I can say for them is they do not understand the word "flesh," because you can't do that except in your flesh. No, that's going to happen. And when it happens, you're going to come under fire. They tell us that the negative

word is nine times more powerful than the positive word. And they're going to listen; they're going to be listened to, and they will leave. And you, sir, will no longer be on a picnic. And you're going to learn what it means to go through agony and suffer.

I'm going to tell you something else. The first time you attack your attackers, you'll leave the ministry. We've had enough people defending their ministry, which only shows you're not really a servant of God. You're a servant of yourself. You're an empire builder for your own personal aggrandizement. Throw in money with that, which brings me to my next point: sometimes God starts dealing with a Christian in areas he didn't know existed. I will say that, generally speaking, and don't take me...don't get too alarmed...there is a certain truth in this: that every one of us, which would include everyone in this room, needs to be broken.

What does that mean, Gene? I have no idea, but I can tell you this: your screams can be heard two miles away. There is a brokenness in our nature that we are born with, and I don't have any illustration to give to you, but I always think of people who are greatly endowed with musical talent, and they want to give their talent to the Lord. I don't know of anything worse than seeing God come after someone's musical gift, because that's something God gave them, and they're going to hold on to it, and God can't have it. I believe it was Watchman Nee who said one of the worst things that will ever happen to a Christian is when God comes to take back the gift he gave you. The disposition you have, your life, your whatever you are. Or, in other words, this is a great place to dissect. And it's a wonderful, wonderful place.

Now, for those of you who I have never met, may never, and right now I'm thinking about seminary students, I see you there with your computer. I have something I want to say to you. For the last 45 minutes, I've been speaking to an 18-year-old kid who left college, went into seminary, and has no idea if he'll ever be a pastor of a church, doesn't know how to get one, and is wondering how to make a living. I want to pass that up and say I'm talking to a lot of young men in the seminary and Bible schools today who really want to raise up a house church. Forget it.

With 53 years of being in the ministry, actually, I've been in the ministry 59 years, but 53 of them very active. But with 41 years in planting home churches, churches that don't have clergy, brother, you're not prepared. You can't handle it. Please let someone show you how to know the Lord. Let someone point you to the cross of Christ. Someone who will show you the revelation and the experience of Jesus Christ. You can't find it in your denomination, and you cannot find it in any seminary on this earth or Bible school. You're going to have to be that one rare human being who gets up and says, I'll go to the ends of the earth to find out what God's people were really like in century one. And I don't want so much to preach to them, or be their leader; I want to be one of them.