

EXTENDING THE VISION

Rick Warren

I don't know how to tell you how much I love Jesus Christ, how much I love this church, how much I love you. I'm overwhelmed. I'm humbled. I'm in awe. All I can say is, You've come a long way, baby! A long way from that little apartment with seven people.

The Bible says, "*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*" It also says the opposite is true, "Where there is a vision the people flourish." This church is proof of that.

Twenty-five years ago, sixty strangers showed up in Laguna Hills High School for a dress service of Saddleback church a week before Easter. I shared what I believed at that time was God's vision for that fledgling church. I read it a couple weeks ago but I would like to read it again. On March 30, 1980 in front of sixty people who did not know each other I shared this, the original vision of Saddleback church.

"It is a dream of a place where the hurting, the depressed, the frustrated and confused can find love, acceptance, health, hope, forgiveness, encouragement and guidance.

It is a dream of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with hundreds of thousands of residents in South Orange County.

It's the dream of welcoming 20,000 members into the fellowship of God's family (Remember I said this in front of sixty people.) loving living, loving learning and living in harmony together.

It's a dream of developing people to spiritual maturity through Bible studies, seminars, retreats, small groups, and a Bible school for our members.

It is a dream of equipping every building group for a significant ministry by helping them discover the gifts and talents that God gave them.

It's a dream of sending out hundreds of career missionaries and church leaders all around the world and empowering every member for their personal life mission in the world.

It is a dream of sending out our members by the thousands on short term projects to every continent.

It's a dream of starting at least one daughter church a year.

It is a dream of at least fifty acres of land. On this would be built a regional church for Orange County with beautiful yet efficient facilities including a worship center seating thousands, a counseling and prayer center, rooms for Bible study, training, and prayer and recreation areas, all of which will be designed to minister to the total person spiritually, emotionally, physically and socially. And set in a peaceful inspiring garden landscape with bright flowers and beautiful trees and pools of water and sparkling fountains and flowing streams.

I stand before you today and I state in confident assurance that these dreams will become a reality. Why? Because they're inspired by God."

Friends, Saddleback family, that vision has been fulfilled! God is faithful! So we're going to file that one. You ain't seen nothing yet!

The last couple of years I've been quietly asking the Lord, What next, Lord? What do You want me to do now? What's Your vision for the next 25 years? What do You want to do with this amazing group of people that You've brought from all over America and all over the world to build this church family called Saddleback, the

most amazing church I've ever heard of. What do You want to do with all of these people now that are here, that You've brought and You've matured. What's next, Lord?

The purpose has never changed. Twenty-five years from today we're still going to be doing the same five things we're doing now. Bringing people into fellowship with Jesus Christ and into His family, building them up to spiritual maturity, training them for their ministry, sending them out in mission, helping them live a life of worship. The purposes never change. But God is an innovator. God is a creator. He's always doing something new. God says this in the book of Isaiah 43 *"Do not cling to the events of the past or dwell on what happened long ago. Watch for the new things that I'm going to do. It's happening already. You can see it."*

So today I stand before you on this beautiful day to share with you the next vision. Where are we going now? It is a dream of three things. It is a dream of global expansion. It is a dream of total mobilization. It is a dream of radical devotion. I want to say as I stand before you today with absolute and confident assurance that as sure as I was 25 years ago when I shared that first vision knowing it was from God I stand before you confidently right now and say to you, *all of you*, God is going to use you to change the world. God is going to use you to change the world!

Some of you will say, "Rick, that's a pretty big target. That's impossible." I heard that line 25 years ago. I heard it when we had seven people. So today let me share with you just a little bit of a glimpse. I'll give you more of the details next week and the future weeks.

1. I dream of global expansion of God's kingdom.

Matthew 6:33 Jesus said this *"God will give you all you need from day to day if you live for Him and make the kingdom of God your primary concern."* God says this: I want My kingdom to be number one in your life. Before your career, before your hobby, before your relationships, before your retirement, before everything else. God says I want first place in your life. King James says, *"Seek first the kingdom of God."* Then God makes an outrageous promise. He says, *"I promise, I guarantee I will meet every one of your needs if you focus your life on My kingdom."*

Today I dare you to accept that challenge. I dare you to accept that challenge!

That brings us a couple of really important questions. First, what is the kingdom of God? And second, how do I get in on it? How do I be involved in it?

First, what is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is God's people, doing God's purposes on God's planet. That's it. It's not a place. It's not a thing it's God's people, doing God's purposes on God's planet. That's why we pray as Jesus said in the Lord's prayer, *"May Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."* Why do we pray that? Because on earth, God's will is not done perfectly. But in heaven, God's will is done perfectly. So we say God, we want Your will done here as it is done there. That is the kingdom of God. It's living a life of goodness.

The kingdom of God has four features.

1. The kingdom of God is multinational. The Bible says this *"People will come from all over the world to take their place in the kingdom of God."* God's building a family that's not just Americans. It's for every nation and we're going to spend eternity together.

2. It's powerful. The Bible says the kingdom of God is not just talking, it's living by God's power. What does that mean? It's something we do. Folks, it's time to stop dreaming; it's time to start doing. It's time to stop debating; it's time to start doing. The kingdom of God is more powerful than any business, any corporation, any government, any politics. Pope John Paul II proved that to the economists in eastern Europe. The kingdom of God is far bigger. It outlasts everything. It's multinational. It's powerful.

3. It's eternal. The Bible says this *"We have a kingdom that nothing can destroy. So let us praise God serving Him with thankful hearts."* It's indestructible. It's unshakable. It's going to last forever. And it's going to cover the planet.

So the kingdom is multinational, it's powerful, it's eternal, and (this is the best)...

4. It's inevitable. God is in control of history. History is *His story*. The Bible says this in Matthew 24 *"The good news about God's kingdom will be preached unto all the world, to every nation and then the end is going to come."* You can argue about prophecy all you want but Jesus Christ is not going to conclude history until everybody He wanted to hear the word has had a chance to hear the word.

But one day God's going to bring everything to a culmination. The Bible says this in Ephesians *"God has made known to us the plans that He decided to complete by means of Jesus Christ. This plan is that God will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together – everything in heaven and on earth with Christ as its head."* If you want to be on the winning side of history, I'll tell you what to do. Stick with the kingdom of God. Because it's going to outlast everything else.

What kingdom are you living for right now? You may be living for the kingdom of self. That's a pretty dinky kingdom if you ask me. You don't have any power at all. You can't even solve your own problems. I would suggest that you would make the king of your life the creator of the universe. The kingdom of God is wherever God is king in your life. That's what it is.

So how can I become involved? Fortunately, we have a great example in Jesus. This kingdom I'm talking to you about, the kingdom of God, is Jesus' favorite theme. In fact He uses the word 167 times. Most of Jesus' stories, He starts off like this, *"The kingdom of God is like..."* and then He tells the story. Because He's wanting us to understand what His idea for us. He's painting a picture of what God is doing. Then Jesus did several things. While He was here on earth Jesus said five things.

1. He shared the good news with other people. The Bible says, *"He went through Galilee preaching the good news of the kingdom."*

2. He trained leaders. The Bible says *"He appointed twelve as apostles to be with Him and He could send them out."*

3. He helped the poor. The Bible says in His very first sermon, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me for He's appointed me to preach good news to the poor. The prisoners will be released, the blind will see, the downtrodden will be free from their oppressors."* Jesus ministered to the marginalized people we like to ignore. The poor, the prisoners, the disabled, the depressed.

4. Jesus cared for the sick. It says *"Wherever He went he healed people of every sort of disease and illness."*

5. He taught the children. Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to Me and don't hinder them. The kingdom of God belongs to such as these."*

Five things Jesus did in the kingdom – share the good news, train leaders, help the poor, care for the sick, taught the children.

For the past eighteen months we have been on a stealth, secret mission project around the world. We've been sending members out – actually over 4500 members somewhere overseas over a period of time the last two years – going out to do what we call the PEACE plan. You've been hearing little snippets about it. Today we're going to unveil it publicly.

But the first thing before I even talk about it is you need to understand that at the heart of the PEACE plan is this theme – the kingdom of God. The PEACE plan is just doing the five things that Jesus did while He was here on

earth. Share the good news, train leaders, help the poor, cared for the sick, taught the children. Doing the five things that Jesus did. It's a strategy of global expansion. Jesus cares about the whole world. The Bible says, *"God so loved the world..."* That's the first part of the dream. The Bible says this, *"Then all the nations will remember the Lord from every part of the world they will turn to Him. All nations will worship Him. All people will bow down before Him and future generations will serve Him."*

As I began to pray a few years ago, "God, what do You want our church to do next?" there were two key events that had profound influence on my life that were unexpected. One of them was the success of the book The Purpose Driven Life. What I found as a result of that book becoming a best seller, I found myself in the public spotlight all the time. I was overwhelmed with interview requests. Honestly it was quite frustrating because I thought it was a distraction from *my* plan for my life. My plan was, "God, I want to pastor one church for life. Saddleback church. Just love these people. I don't want to go anywhere else. Just pastor Saddleback church." And two, help train other pastors. Saddleback and our Purpose Driven network has now trained over 400,000 pastors in 162 countries. When all of these interviews and requests started coming in and I began to say, "God what do You want me to do with this influence? What do You want me to do with this notoriety? What do You want me to do with this fame?" I really didn't know what to do. I did know this. It's not for your own benefit. I don't think God gives you money or fame for your own ego. So I said, "God, what do You want to do with this?"

I began to search the scriptures and God led me to Psalm 72. Psalm 72 is Solomon's prayer for more influence. He was already the most influential man in the world, the wealthiest man in the world, the wisest man in the world and the king of nation. Yet in Psalm 72 it says *"God, I want You to make me more influential. God, I want You to give me more power. I want You to bless my life more. I want You to spread the fame of my name to other countries."* It sounds pretty selfish. Until you read the whole psalm. He said, *"So that the king can rescue the needy, help the poor, defend the homeless, protect the weak, care for the prisoner, defend the immigrant..."* And on and on. He's talking about the marginalized of our society.

Out of that psalm, God said to me "The purpose of influence is to speak up for those who have no influence." I had to say that I had to say to God, "God, I'm sorry. I repent. Widows and orphans are not on my agenda." We live in a very affluent area and the homeless are just not on the streets where I live. I began to search the scripture and I said, how did I miss these two thousand verses in the Bible that talk about helping the poor? How did I do that? How did I miss that? I said, "I will spend the rest of my life speaking up, with whatever influence You give me, speaking up for those who have no influence."

Then two years ago, I took a trip to South Africa where I taught The Purpose Driven Church training by satellite. It was simulcast into 400 sites across Africa to about 100,000 leaders. While I was there I began to ask, "God, what are the biggest problems in the world? What are the giant problems in the world that nobody seems to be solving?" I call them the Global Goliath's. Problems that don't affect millions of people – problems that affect billions of people. What are the ones that affect billions? What are the five biggest problems in the world?

As I began to ask that question, I began to say, "God, I believe You get the most glory when we take on the biggest problems." As I traveled around the world I talked to literally thousands and thousands of leaders – business leaders, political leaders, church leaders. I came to the conclusion when I kept hearing five things over and over and over. Five global problems.

One, spiritual emptiness. They don't know God loves them. They don't know God has a purpose for their life. They don't know they're not an accident.

Two – this is a surprise to a lot of people, the second biggest problem in the world – egocentric leadership. Leaders who think that the followers are just for them instead of vice versa. The world is full of little Saddam's. They're in every country. They're in every church. They're in every business. They're in every homeowners association. They're everywhere. You give a guy a little bit of power, it goes to his head and all of a sudden he thinks he's king. And he stops thinking about what's best for the people and starts thinking about what's best for *me*.

The third major problem is poverty. Half the world lives on less than two dollars a day. Living in southern California it's easy to forget that.

The fourth is disease. It's amazing to me that most of the world is still suffering from diseases that we found the cures for or we found how to prevent in the 19th and 20th century and this is the 21st century. That's inconceivable. Why haven't leaders stepped up and said, Enough is enough! We are going to eradicate this disease. Why don't they do that?

Then the fifth major problem is illiteracy and education. Half the world is still functionally illiterate.

These five problems are so big no government can solve them. The United Nations can't even solve these problems. They're so big. The only thing big enough to solve all these problems is the network of millions and millions and millions and millions of churches all around the world. Baptist churches, Protestant churches, Pentecostal churches, evangelical churches, and every other kind of church. I can take you into a thousand villages that don't have a school, don't have a clinic, don't have a fire department, don't have a grocery store, don't have any government, don't even have any business. But they have a church. What, I began to dream, would happen if we began to mobilize millions of small groups, tens of millions of small groups in millions of churches from village to village around the world to begin to address the five global giants?

As I began to look at those five global giants I began to see that those are the five things that Jesus did in the kingdom of God. They're not new problems.

This is the strategy behind the PEACE Plan. It's the strategy to mobilize millions of small groups in millions of churches to attack the five global giants with the five-point strategy. I'm not going to go into all the details today but just let me just review the plan – the P.E.A.C.E. Plan.

Where does that come from? It comes from Luke 10. Jesus said, "*When you go into a village, (when He sent the leaders out) you find the man of peace.*" In every village there is a man or woman of peace. It might be the woman of peace. In that person of peace He said when you find them you begin to work with them and if they're open and they're receptive and they bless you, you bless them back and you stay there. He said if they're not interested in what you're doing you dust the dust off your shoes and go to the next village. Who is the man or woman of peace? They're open and they're influential. In every village, in every home, in every business, in every government there is a man of peace or woman of peace. And by the way, they're not necessarily Christians either. When Jesus sent them out none of the people were Christians as He was sending them into a village. They could be something else or nothing. But they're willing to work with you.

What do you do once you find the man of peace?

P – Plant a church

E – Equip the leaders

A – Assist the poor

C – Care for the sick

E – Educate the next generation

In the weeks and months ahead and this fall we're going to do a whole series on this in our church of how we do each of the letters.

Planting a church. How long does it take to plant a church? One day. I've done it hundreds of times. Saddleback church started in one day.

A couple of years ago I introduced the people who started Saddleback church on a Sunday morning. They were a group of about eight or nine people. I asked them, “How many of you knew anything about how to plant a church?” not a hand went up. “How many of you were a brand new believer? Or were not even a believer yet?” Every hand went up. “How many of you think this is the greatest thing you’ve ever done with your life, starting Saddleback church?” Every hand went up.

If you know how to be a small group, you know how to plant a church.

I don’t know if you know this or not, but Saddleback has started 36 churches here in Orange County. Thirty-six different churches. You can do this. In the days ahead we’ll talk about this. Like a bookstore that sent their employees out for ten days and started 131 churches overseas. You can do this.

Equip leaders. You say, I don’t know anything about leadership. If you’re a Saddleback member, believe me, you know more about leadership than most pastors in the world do. There are 2.1 million pastors in the third world, the developing countries – 1.9 have no training at all. One time when I was in South Africa I said, “Take me out to a village. Show me some churches.” As we went out to a village we went up to this little tent church. They met in a tent. Seventy-five people. They had 25 orphaned by AIDS and 60 adults. They didn’t know I was coming. As I walked up to that church the pastor came out and came up to me and said, “I know who you are!” I said, “How do you know who I am?” He said, “You’re Pastor Rick!” I’m in the middle of a village. He said, “I get your sermons every week.” I said, “How do you get my sermons?” We put them on the Internet. We charge Americans for them, then translate them and give them free to the rest of the world. I said, “How do you get my sermons? You don’t have water or electricity here in this village.” He said, “They’re putting the Internet in every post office in South Africa. Once a week, I walk an hour and a half down to the post office and I download your sermon and then I teach them to my church. I just want you to know you’re the only training I’ve ever had.”

When I heard that I said I’ll give the rest of my life for guys like that. Just think of all the teaching and all the training you’ve had here at Saddleback church that you could be sharing with other people.

Assist the poor. We’re going to assist them not just by giving them handouts but by teaching them skills that are appropriate for their villages. As we learn from other churches all around the world, we learn what works for a village and we pass it on. We learn what works in South America and we pass it on to Asia. We learn what works in Asia and we pass it on to Europe. We learn what works in Africa and pass it on. We help each other.

We had a man in our church that taught some guys how to start a business. He loaned them a little bit of money and they now have businesses going. The Bible says when you lend to the poor it’s like lending to the Lord and God will repay.

Then Care for the sick. Did you know that right now 30,000 children die every single day in the world from malnutrition and mostly preventable diseases? Thirty thousand a day! That’s a tsunami every week! There’s only one thing big enough to deal with that. The churches. Sometimes we hear statistics like that and say, “God, why don’t You do something about that?” and God says, “I’ve been asking you the same question! Why don’t you do something about it?” We have God’s plan to bring relief.

The Bible says that true religion is caring for the widows and the orphans.

E – Educate the next generation. The Bible says, “*Teach the children how to live so they’ll remember it all their lives.*” I remember one time I was in a little township. This little church had a school. They were caring for those orphaned by AIDS. I said, “What do you need more of? Teachers? Buildings? Curriculum? Books? What do you need more of?” He said, “We can get teachers. We can hire them for ten dollars a month. No problem. We just don’t have anything to teach them.” That’s when we began to experiment with these different kits. Clinic in a Box. Business in a Box. School in a Box. Leadership Training in a Box. Even Church in a Box.

As I said, we've been testing this in 47 countries over the last couple years. Our goal is that every small group in our church will adopt a village somewhere in the world for two years to begin to build PEACE plan – to find the man of peace and begin to help with the PEACE lan.

But it's going to be a lot bigger than that. It's going to be a revolution. Over the years as we've been training all the 400,000 churches around the world we built a network. There are literally tens of thousands of other churches waiting to do what Saddleback's been testing the last two years. That's why we need to build a new Ministry Center on our campus. We need to take the existing Ministry Center and turn it over to Purpose Driven and The PEACE Plan. They've got so much going on around the world they need that building and another one for their staff. Next weekend, that'll be a part of our offering.

What is the vision for the next 25 years? I'll tell you what it is! It is the global expansion of the kingdom of God. It is the total mobilization of this church. And third part it is the dream of a radical devotion of every believer.

I choose that word "radical" intentional. Because only radicals change the world. Everything great done in this world is done by passionate people. Moderate people get moderately nothing one. Moderation will never save the global giants.

The Bible says this in Titus 2:14 *"Jesus gave His life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us and to make us His very own people who are totally submitted (not partially, not casually) totally submitted to doing what is right."* The reason why I love this church and I love you because this is not a church of moderately nice people. It's a church of people who have sold out to the cause of Christ and the plan and purposes of God.

How do we go to the next level? Quickly let me tell you what we're going to do.

1. We have to adopt God's agenda.

That means we lay aside our agenda and focus on God's agenda. What is God's agenda in the world? The kingdom of God. Expansion of the kingdom. He wants His lost children found. God has never made a person He didn't love. If you're alive God made you to love you and you matter to God. You're not an accident. In fact, it's not even an accident you're here today. God brought you here so He could say to you, "I love you." And He wants everybody in His family. The Bible says, *"God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."* As I've said many, many times if you want to know how much God loves this world, look at the cross. With His arms outstretched and nail pierced hands, He said, "This much! This is how much I love the world. I'd rather die than live without you." That's how much God loves you and every other person in this world.

People say, "Saddleback's just gotten too big." They just don't get it do they? They don't get it! We don't grow for our benefit. We grow because everybody needs to know the love of God. Actually the bigger the church gets the more problems, the more headaches, the more heartbreaks, the more hassled, the more stress, the more parking problems! We don't grow for our benefit. It takes unselfish people to grow a church. And that's why I praise you today because you've been that unselfish person. You've parked a mile away. You've gone to other services. You've saved the best seats for friends. You're allowing Saddleback to grow. You don't grow a church with selfish people. You only grow a church with unselfish people. We don't grow for our benefit. As long as there's one person within driving distance of Saddleback church – and then the whole world! – who doesn't know Jesus Christ has a plan for their life, we will keep growing. We're not going to stop.

The church that doesn't want to grow is basically saying to the world, "You can go to hell! We're all happy. We're all saved. You can go to hell!"

In the next 365 days, 231,000 Californians will die. Most of them will die without knowing the love of God.

In the next 365 days, 2.3 million Americans will die and most of them will go into eternity without hope in Jesus Christ.

In the next 365 days 54 million people in the world will die and most of them go into eternity without any hope.

That's why the Bible says *"Live life with due sense of responsibility. Not as those who don't know the meaning and purpose of lie but as those who do. Make the best use of your time."*

2. The second thing we've got to do is abandon all distractions.

If you want your life to count, I can tell it to you in one word – focus. Focus your life. Not these fifty things I dabble in but this one thing I do. Or the word "purpose." Have a purpose in your life. It's like a laser. Light diffused doesn't have much energy but light focused can cut through steel.

You can't tack on God's agenda to everything else you want to do. You have to decide. Am I going to go with my plans for my life or am I going to go with God's plans in life. I'm constantly asked, "How does Saddleback keep growing these 25 years?" The answer is, we are focused. We're the most focused church I know. We focus on five things and that's all we do. The purposes of God.

Jesus said this in Luke 9 *"Anybody who lets themselves be distracted from the work I plan for him is not fit for the kingdom of God."* So let me ask you: what's distracting you from total commitment to a loving God? What's distracting you?

Legion tells us that Nero fiddled while Rome burned. I see Christians all the time fiddling around while the world goes to hell. And we really don't care. Paul says *"I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step."* Then in 2 Corinthians 6 he says this, *"Please don't squander one bit of this marvelous life God has given us."*

Accept and adopt God's agenda. We avoid all distractions and appropriate God's power.

Let me be very clear about all this. This plan that we're going into the next 25 years The Purpose Driven Peace Plan, there's no way we can do it on our own. It cannot be done in human power. That's why governments and businesses can't do it. You can only do it in God's power. The Bible says this, *"We're not saying we can do this work ourselves. It is God who makes us able to do all that we're able to do."*

I'll be honest with you. The last 25 years here at Saddleback weren't easy. They weren't easy! You want to know how many times I wanted to resign as pastor of this church. Every Monday morning. That's not true... It's actually every Saturday afternoon before the six services start. That's when I get PMS – Pre Message Syndrome. And I think, "Surely God, somebody could do a better job of this than me."

So what's kept me going? God's power! God's power in my life. So if you want God's power in your life you must care about what God cares about. He wants His lost children found. We appropriate God's power.

3. We ask in faith

The Bible says this, *"Humanly speaking it is impossible but with God everything is possible."* I remember when Saddleback went out to buy 72 acres of prime property in Orange County. Everybody said, "Who does that church think they are?" Wrong question! The question is not who do we think we are. The question is who do we think God is. The size of your God determines the size of your goal.

For many of you this next week it's going to be the biggest step of faith you've ever taken as you make a faith commitment to extend the vision. That's going to be a stretching of your faith. I wish I could tell you all the stories that have been in the mail just this week of people learning to sacrifice in faith.

4. Finally, we have to answer God's call.

I want to share a passage with you that really changed my life in the last two years. It's in Isaiah 49. This guy, Isaiah, is a minister, a prophet of God. He's very discouraged. He says, "I don't think my life amounts to much. I've had a lot of success but I don't think my life amounts to much." He's very discouraged about his service to God. God's antidote to Isaiah's depression is not, "I'll cheer you up," and gives him a pat on the back. God's response to Isaiah's discouragement was this, "Isaiah, you're not thinking big enough. You need to expand your perspective. You need to enlarge your vision. You need to think bigger than you've ever thought before in your entire life." That's God's antidote. He says, "I don't want you just to be a prophet to Israel. I want you to be a prophet to the whole world. I want to use you in the whole world." Isaiah 49:6 God said this *"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to only restore the tribes of Jacob (that's Israel) and bring them back. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring My salvation to the ends of the earth."* He says "Buddy, I want you to think about the whole world." I love it in the Message paraphrase. He says, *"I am setting you up so that My salvation goes global."*

If you've missed everything else I've said the last twenty minutes I want you to hear this: Church family, Saddleback members, Saddleback family, there is no doubt in my mind that for these last 25 years God has been setting us up. You, me, everybody else here in this stadium. Setting us up and setting the thousands and tens of thousands of other Purpose Driven churches up to bless the entire world. First, He has blessed us. Now we're blessed to be a blessing. He's given us a stage and a place and a base to launch out worldwide.

God is looking for people to use. God looks down on this stadium right now, whether you're in the sunshine or the shade, He's got his eye on you. The Bible says this in 2 Chronicles 16:9 *"The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him."* That's radically devoted. God is looking for people to use. That's why He bought you here today. You're not here by accident. Of all the people in the world God could have brought here, He brought you here. You're not here by accident. God knew on this day, April 17th, 2005 that you'd be setting in a sunny stadium in southern California so He could get your attention to say, "I am going to use you! Not somebody else – you!" He is looking for people to use. If you get usable God will wear you out!

This is God's call to you today. There's four possible responses to God's call.

You can be like Moses and say, "Who? *Me?*" That's what Moses said.

You can be like Jonah who said, "Not me."

Or you can be like Habakkuk who said, "Why me?"

Or you can be like Isaiah who said, "Send me!"

I believe with all my heart God wants you to be like David who said this – Psalm 40:8 – *"I desire to do Your will, God."* Will you make that your desire?

I'd like you to take your programs, open it up to the page that has the picture of the "A", the red "A" on it. There are three verses I want to talk to you about.

The Bible says this in Matthew 16 *"Jesus said, 'If you want in on My plan you will forget yourself, carry your cross and follow Me. For if you try to save your life for yourself you're going to lose it. But if you give up your life for My sake you'll find it. Would you gain anything if you gained the whole world but lost your own soul? Is there anything more valuable worth exchanging your soul for. One day I will come again in the glory of My Father, with the angels, and I will reward each personal according to what they did.'"*

Next verse, *“When Jesus wraps this all up, it’s your faith not your goals that God will have on display because you kept on believing that what you’re looking for is total salvation. Do you realize how fortunate you are? Angels would have given anything to be in on this. So roll up your sleeves, put your mind in gear and totally ready to receive the gift that’s coming.”*

Then Jesus says this, *“I guarantee that anyone who declares publicly (that means right in front of all these people) that they belong to Me, I will do the same for them before the angels of God in heaven. The person who rejects Me publicly I will also reject before the angels of God.”*

I think it is in God’s humor – no accident – that this service is being held in Angel stadium. Notice that all three verses mentions angels. He says that if you’re ashamed of Me publicly I’ll be ashamed of you in front of the angels.

In 1939, in a stadium much like this, in Munich, Germany, they packed it out to young men and women in brown shirts for a fanatical man standing behind the podium named Adolph Hitler, the personification of evil. In that stadium those in brown shirts formed with their bodies, a sign that said “Hitler! We are yours!” And they nearly took the world.

Lenin said “Give me one hundred totally committed men and I’ll change the world.” And he nearly did.

A few years ago they took the sayings of Mao, Chairman Mao in China, put them in a little red book, and a group of young people committed them to memory, put it in their minds and they took that nation, the largest nation in the world by storm because they committed to memory the sayings of Chairman Mao.

When I hear those kind of stories I think what would happen if American Christians, world Christians, or just the Christians in this stadium, the follows of Christ would say, “Jesus, we are yours!” what kind of spiritual awakening would we have? If we took the Bible as seriously as they did that and committed it to memory, what kind of spiritual awakening would we have in our world.

God took seven people and formed Saddleback church and grew it to this. Today we have a new vision and we have a whole lot more to start with than just seven people. By the way, do you know what the word “angel” means? It is the word “messenger.” That’s what an angel is. An angel is a messenger. God says, “I want you to be My messenger of My love to the whole world. That’s why I brought you to Angel stadium.”

If today you’d say, “Rick, I’m in. I’m in for the next 25 years. I may have not been here in the early years but I’m not going to miss this one. I saw what God did with seven people and now it’s a worldwide movement with hundreds of thousands of churches. I’m not going to miss this next one. Whatever it takes, I’m in. God’s purposes, God’s church, God’s plan. I’m in! Whatever it takes I’m saying to God today, Whatever it takes.”

Jesus said I want you to do this publicly. What I want you to do is take this card and in just a minute if you’d say, “Rick, I am willing to serve God’s purposes in my generation.” I want you to open it up to the sign that says, “Whatever it takes.” I want you to say, this is my commitment before God in front of everybody else. I’m in. I would invite you to stand quietly and hold up “Whatever it takes!”

Look around right now. D. L. Moody once said, “The world has yet to see what God can do through one person who is totally committed to Him.” I’m looking at a stadium full of people who are saying, “Whatever it takes, God. Time, talent, money, energy, effort, vision. God, whatever it takes. Whatever it takes, that’s what I’m going to do.”

I believe today we are making history. We're making history that's going to start a movement that's going to start a new reformation in the church of God and a new church awakening in our world. Our world needs it. Today if you've said, "Whatever it takes," you're saying publicly "I'm in, God! I'm in."

I'm going to read to you Angel Stadium Declaration. I want us to read this aloud together on this holy day as we commit ourselves. I want us to read this with great enthusiasm as if the whole world needs to hear it because they do. The Angel Stadium Declaration, April 17th, 2005:

"Today, I'm stepping across the line. I'm tired of waffling and I'm finished with wavering. I've made my choice. The verdict is in and my decision is irrevocable. I'm going God's way. There's no turning back now. I will live the rest of my life serving God's purposes, with God's people, on God's planet, for God's glory. I will use my life to celebrate His presence, to cultivate His character, to participate in His family, and demonstrate His love and communicate His word. Since my past has been forgiven and I have a purpose for living and a home awaiting me in heaven, I refuse to waste any more time or energy on shallow living, petty thinking, trivial talking, thoughtless doing, useless regretting, hurtful resenting, or faithless worrying. Instead I will magnify God, grow to maturity, serve in ministry, and fulfill my mission in the membership of His family. Because this life is preparation for the next I will value worship over wealth, "we" over "me", character over comfort, service over status, and people over possessions, position, and pleasures. I know what matters most and I'll give it all I've got. I'll do the best I can with what I have for Jesus Christ today. I won't be captivated by culture, manipulated by critics, motivated by praise, frustrated by problems, debilitated by temptation, nor intimidated by the devil. I'll keep running my race with my eyes on the goal, not the sidelines of those running with me. When times get tough and I get tired, I won't back up, back off, back down, back out, backslide. I'll just keep moving forward by God's grace. I'm Spirit led, purpose driven, and mission focused. So I cannot be bought. I will not be compromised. And I shall not quit until I finish the race. I'm a trophy of God's amazing grace. I will be gracious to everyone, grateful for every day and generous for everything that God entrusts to me. To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ I say, However, whenever, wherever and whatever You ask me to do, my answer in advance is yes. Wherever You lead and whatever the cost, I'm ready. Any time, anywhere, any way. Whatever it takes, Lord. Whatever it takes. I want to be used by You in such a way that on that final day I'll hear You say, Well done thou good and faithful one. Come on it and let the eternal party begin."

Turn that flap over and register your commitment. We want to end today with communion but before we do I want to bring a couple of guests forward and I want you to give a warm welcome to. Most of you know that last month a number of African countries in preparation for The Purpose Driven PEACE plan launch. We've been praying and studying and searching for just the right country that we could partner with for our first national model of cooperation between government, businesses, and churches for the PEACE plan. We believe that God has led us to focus on the African country of Rwanda as the first national model for the world of partnership together between government, business, and churches to do the Purpose Driven PEACE Plan.

As all of you know who've seen the movie *Hotel Rwanda*, eleven years ago that small nation suffered the tragedy of genocide when about a million of those people were murdered in about a hundred days. The man who finally freed the people from those murderers and ended the genocide is now on this stage. He is the president of Rwanda. His name is Paul Kagame. He's a wonderful Christian leader who's been building that nation on hope. Last month President and Mrs. Kagame invited Kay and me to spend four days in Rwanda, meeting with their church and government and business leaders. We became convinced that Rwanda is the country God wants to use as this first model to the world.

We came to that conclusion for four reasons. First, I saw the spiritual depth of their church leaders, those who opposed the genocide. This is a nation who has experienced hell, unimaginable suffering. Out of that fire has come some of the strongest and most mature leaders I've ever seen. And second, because of the spirit of hope and reconciliation I saw among the members, the people of that country. Then third, it is a small country that I believe that God wants to bless in an unusual way. God often through the Bible chooses the small place like He did Israel that other people overlook in order to bless the world. It'd be just like God to take a nation that the world ignored in its time of need and use them to bless the rest of the world.

Finally we met President and Mrs. Kagame, two genuine people of integrity and we learned they were trustworthy. So it is with great honor today I want to ask you to stand with me and give a warm Saddleback welcome to His Excellency Paul Kagame, president of Rwanda.

Good afternoon to all members of Saddleback and the network of churches from around the world. Thank you for that warm welcome. I'd like to thank my friend Pastor Rick and Kay Warren for inviting us to be here with you for the public launch of the Global Peace Plan. It gives us a chance of cementing friendships and making new friends. It was a pleasure to meet with Rick and Kay in Rwanda. They came and saw for themselves. They also told us about the reason of the PEACE plan that you have just had Pastor Rick explain. It is a vision with a big goal, which is to confront the world's biggest problems, but it is practical and it's his goal of using average people rather than just relief. Rick and I agree that each partner – the church, the government and businesses have a role to play and we are better together and more effective when we cooperate. I understand that next month leadership of the most of the major denominations are coming to Saddleback and meeting with Pastor Rick and others to discuss the details of PEACE Plan in Rwanda. I'd like to assure you that they have our support.

As I was saying a moment ago, Rwanda is a country that is emerging from a difficult time. Not only genocide eleven years ago but also from decades of poor leaders that divided the Rwandan people rather than uniting them. Egocentric and poor leadership is one of the major problems of the world. We in Rwanda understand the great need for good leadership because we have witnessed the distraction that poor leadership can hold. I want you to know that we'd like to work with you all and the network of churches especially like Saddleback to be the first national model of the PEACE plan. Of course we'll be happy to work with you in that as well. We'll be more than happy to let you know the opportunities, which are available.

Before I finish, let me extend an invitation to you to visit Rwanda. Come, visit us and with our people and see our beautiful country. Bring your love and bring the message and strategy of the PEACE plan. Together we can create a future of peace. May God bless Rick and Kay. May God bless the PEACE plan. May God bless all of you. Thank you very much!

Also I want you to bring greetings to one of the greatest visionary leaders in Christianity of the last century, the man who founded the largest ministry to prisons in the nations. They're in all fifty states and in 108 countries. Prison Fellowship. I'm happy to announce that we're going to partner with Prison Fellowship and Purpose Driven that we signed yesterday to put 40 Days of Purpose and Celebrate Recovery in every prison in the world. We're going to mobilize the entire network of Purpose Driven churches as part of the PEACE plan to care for the prisoners as Jesus commanded. We're going to do Angel tree in every Purpose Driven church and we've also taken the curriculum that he has written and put that into all of our churches. Give a warm Saddleback welcome to Chuck Colson.

Chuck Colson:

I have to tell you that this is a great day in my life and a great moment. Not only are you celebrating the tremendous things God has done in your lives but the wonderful church and the 25th anniversary, but today I'm celebrating because I'm seeing part of my life's dream come true. This man here... I've come to know the great and near great and those who want to be famous in the last thirty years since I was released from prison and the work I've done in ministry. Of all the people I've met I have to tell you, this guy Rick Warren is the real deal. I've written twenty books in which I've been pleading with the church, giving speeches and writing articles and going on television, pleading with the church to get out of their comfort zones. Get out of the pew. Go do something in the world. Turn the world upside down. People listen to that and read that. But this man has a plan to do it. That's why I'm so thrilled that this day we're going to join hands and work together in that task.

There are three things we're going to do here. One is Purpose Driven churches are going to partner with us with Angel Tree. Last year we had a half million kids at Christmas time, forgotten children, my wife and I enjoy more than anything else all year going to those homes at Christmas time. A little guy comes out and you give him a gift and he says, "I knew my daddy wouldn't forget me." Five hundred thousand kids. With the

partnership that we're announcing today with Pastor Rick and Prison Fellowship we want to give to a million kids. There are a million and a half kids all across the country and save them from ending up where their parents are, in prison.

The second thing we're going to do which is tremendously exciting to me is bring Celebrate Recovery into every prison in the United States and link up with churches. Rick Warren has a heart for the underdog. He cares about the marginalized people of our society. When you go to those prisons you'll see two thirds of the people that are there come from drugs or alcohol and they're trapped. If we can bring them out of that we will turn the prison system of this country upside down.

The third thing we're going to do. I've had a tremendous burden for the church. That we not only care about ourselves and have our wonderful worship but that we get out and see the world through God's eyes and we understand the world we're trying to evangelize. We cannot evangelize until we understand what the world thinks and what they think wrong. When we can learn how God sees every aspect of life – art and music, science, literature, politics, government – and we begin to see all the world as God's and understand that Jesus stands and says, "This is all mine," we in the church see the world through God's eyes, God's wisdom and begin to train people and that's how we'll see the church change the country. I think that Rick Warren wants nothing more than a Reformation in this country. I'm thrilled that we can go shoulder to shoulder, side by side in pursuit of that. God bless you all as you celebrate 25 years. Let's go on and do bigger things the next 25!

Rick:

One other guest I want you to meet before we take communion together representing 400,000 pastors that we've trained in the Purpose Driven network. Jimmy Davison is one of the Purpose Driven pastors of America. This guy is an amazing guy. He's a senior pastor in Abbingdon, Virginia. They just celebrated their tenth anniversary but listen to this. At Christmas time Jimmy, who started Purpose Driven Church there, they had grown to 5000. They had 5900 at Christmas in a town that only has 8000 people. Last Sunday they had their 1000th person baptized in a membership of 1300 people. He is just an amazing guy. He's bringing greetings on behalf of all of the pastors that have been trained by Purpose Driven. Give Jimmy Davison a warm welcome!

Jimmy Davison:

On behalf of all the Purpose Driven pastors all around the world, about 400,000, we love you and we love you Saddleback! Ten years ago I was so discouraged and burned out. Somebody said, you need to check out Saddleback. I said, What's that? They said, It's a church. I called you and I was so desperate. You sent me your story and I cried through the whole message. All the way back in Virginia I felt like I was driving along with Rick and Kay and Amy as they drove into the Saddleback V alley for the first time. I listened. As you marched to your new property you talked about the great things that God was going to do through you. I listened to you as you met in a tent. I kept hearing jets fly over that would interrupt Rick's message. I thought, this is the most amazing people I've ever heard of. They built church at the end of a runway. Now to stand here and see you face to face... people who have loved me, people who have loved all of the pastors, people who have sacrificed, people who have taken great risks so that ordinary people like me could do God's will. It's more than I could ever dream of.

I told Rick last year, I feel like when I get to heaven the first words out of Jesus' mouth is going to be "Big chicken! Why were you afraid?" I want you to know on behalf of all of these pastors that your faith has inspired us to look past our fears and to follow Jesus Christ. Rick, from the 400,000 Purpose Driven pastors in the world we want you to know that we're with you. We believe in the PEACE plan 110%. Let's do it! Saddleback, on behalf of billions of people who sit right now in despair and hopelessness, let's go for it. God will move heaven and earth to enable you and I to accomplish His plan. To accomplish what Rick has shared with you right now. When people ask me now, "Jimmy, what is Saddleback? What is Purpose Driven? Is it a denomination?" I say no it's a love relationship for the Global Glory of God.

Rick:

We don't want to close without taking communion together. Kay is going to come and lead us in prayer. The Bible says that Jesus Christ on the night He was betrayed took bread and He broke it and blessed it and said, *"This is My body, which is given for you. Do it to remember Me."* It is a symbol of Christ's body. He hadn't even died yet obviously when He said this. But He said "You're to do this as a reminder, in remembrance, of how much I love you. Every time you take communion you remember that I died for you. That's how much I love you. I died for you. I gave My body." If you saw the movie *The Passion* He says He did it all for you. So together, we take communion. This is communion of our family. It's a pretty big church family. Today we take it together. Jesus said, *"This is My body which is given for you. Do this to remember Me."*

In the same way the Bible says that that night Jesus took the cup and He said, *"This cup represents the blood that I will shed for you."* Again, He hadn't died yet. He was doing it in anticipation of the cross. "I never want you to forget the sacrifice that I've made for you. I never want you to forget how much I love you. So I'm giving you this as a reminder to remind yourself that I love you. As you drink this cup I want you in your mind to say, Thank You Lord, for loving me." Do this to remember Him.

Kay: Would you bow your heads and pray and thank God for this incredible day?

Prayer:

It's me, Lord. It's an amazing day with an amazing group of people. We've gathered to tell You that we love You with all of our hearts. Tell you that as a family, as a team, as an army ready to go into the world and do *whatever it takes*. Lord, I pray for these dearly loved friends that we would be people of conviction that we know the truth, that we would not be afraid of the truth. We wouldn't run from it. We wouldn't be ignorant. But we would become people of the word. So knowing the truth we would have strong convictions. That we would stand for something in this world and not wishy-washy. As the covenant said we won't waffle. We won't waver. But we would be people of conviction. God I pray that we would be people of courage with a sense of conviction. Then stand for them no matter what arrows will come our way, no matter what discouragements, no matter what delays, no matter what disappointments in our personal life and in the life of our church. We will not give up. We will be courageous. We will be ready to lay down our lives for You, Jesus Christ, if that's what You ask. Some, You will ask this. But for those of us who may never actually give our lives, help us to be courageous enough to live for You. And, Father, I pray that we would be people of compassion, people whose hearts are broken. That we would just walk around with our hearts in our hands as we see the suffering, many times behind closed doors, in this city and other parts of the world. For us to open our eyes to see, unplug our ears, open our mouths so we'll have compassion in this world in the way that we live. God, I thank You. For the man and woman and young adult the children, the babies, for every person who are part of the family of Saddleback. We love You. It is a privilege. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.