

12 November 2013

On Sunday, Nov. 3, I preached a sermon that was both an update and an invitation to our ***Building to Change Lives*** proposal titled, “The Purpose for My People.” If you were there that Sunday and heard the sermon, you don’t need to read any further. However, if you missed the sermon, this letter is an attempt to fill you in on what you missed.

I started my sermon looking at Exodus 7:16—where God tells Moses what to say to Pharaoh: “The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness.” God repeats that exact phrase five more times in Exodus (8:1; 8:20; 9:1; 9:13; 10:3). This phrase captures God’s overall purpose for the Exodus.

But not just the Exodus—that’s been God’s purpose in every generation. The Exodus story is just a smaller picture of the larger story and larger purpose of God in human history.

See, God created us to worship him. Now, the message of Jesus tells us that God did not create because he wanted to GET love and glory (because he already had that perfectly within himself as a perfect oneness of community/Trinity). God created us in order to share his perfect oneness and share his joy and his love and his glory and the beauty of who he is with emotional, volitional, intelligent beings who would enjoy it.

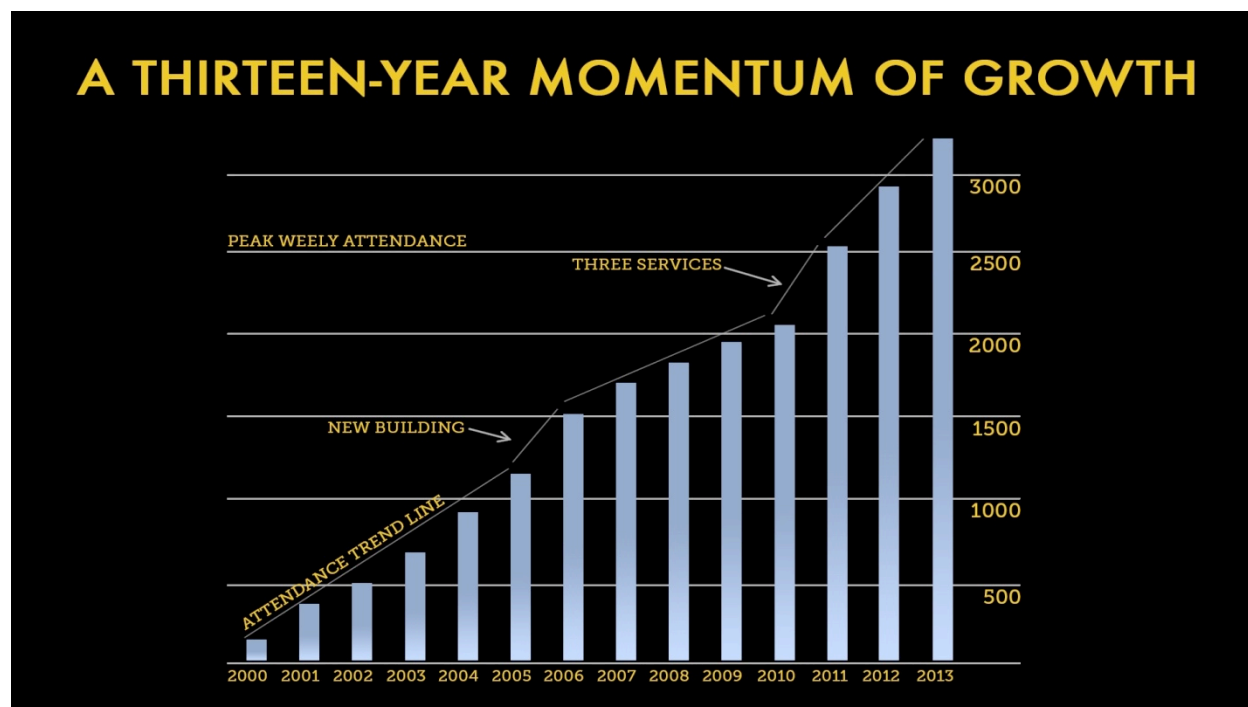
This has always been God’s heart—since the very first sin entered the human condition and permeated this world with brokenness—this has been God’s determined purpose—“*Let my people free, so that they may worship me.*” And we see in Exodus a picture of God’s determination even to *part the sea* to free his people to live the life of true freedom and true worship he created them for—created *us* for.

So the Exodus story is a picture of the larger story of human history. This was God’s reason for being born into humanity forever in the person of Jesus and doing the miracles he did. For teaching all he taught. For dying for our sin and rising for our own eternal resurrection—when we will truly and perfectly know the joy of living in God’s glorious presence forever.

That’s the ongoing *exodus* that God is always doing through his church until Jesus returns. That’s what God is doing in the lives of all his people. That’s Christianity. That’s the gospel. That’s why Christ came! And that’s always our overarching purpose as a church. God has always been

using his church to “free my people,” so to speak, who will glory in true worship of the true God forever in his kingdom on earth. That’s what heaven will be.

And that’s exactly what God is doing and has been doing for 13 years in the lives and people of this church—AND what he wants this church to be committed to being and doing for our city and this world. Ever since the mission of The Crossing began almost 13 years ago, God has been working to rescue/free more and more people to worship the True God.



The above graph shows our growth each year—specifically of people in the auditorium—not including the several hundreds in our Crossing Kids and Crossing Students ministries on Sundays. Just since moving into our building in 2006, God has nearly tripled our weekly attendance. As a result, our facilities—once large and spacious—are bursting at the seams.

Our Crossing Kids (infants – 5th grade)—where kids are being engaged with the love of God and being inspired to worship him—actually surpassed maximum capacity about two years ago. Since then we have had to close classrooms that reached maximum capacity. In fact, we have had to close over 100 classes this year already. When you have to turn away kids from church on Sunday mornings, many families just don’t come back. You can’t build a “My People” when you’re turning away kids from church.

Our Crossing Students has almost doubled over the last three years. Middle school (6th – 8th) has 120 students and leaders cramming into two small trailer classrooms. We now have as many as 140 high schoolers (9th – 12th) and leaders cramming into two classrooms in the trailers as well. Of course, even for our adult classes and Bible studies, we are very limited in the number of classes and studies and the number of people that can be in them.

So here's where we are. In February of 2012, we presented our ***Building to Change Lives*** proposal to our church family—a challenge to take a risk and make a sacrifice together to do what it took to keep being the kind of church that could welcome more people God wanted to bring. It was a huge challenge before our church that would require God to touch our hearts with his sacrificial love and his vision for what he wanted to continue to do through this church.

Then in March 2012, over 900 families and individuals committed a remarkable \$9.8M toward this project over a three-year period—by March 2015. That was just shy of our needed goal at the time. We needed to raise \$10M in three years. It would cost more than that, of course, but that was the minimum we needed to raise to get started. The breakdown of the number of people committing to give a certain amount over three years looks like the following chart. Notice what we “needed” vs. what we actually received.

TOTAL GIVING REQUIRED TO REACH \$10 MILLION					
COMMITMENT	# NEEDED	# RECEIVED	COMMITMENT	# NEEDED	# RECEIVED
\$750,000	2	1	\$20,000	40	20
\$500,000	2	1	\$18,000	45	12
\$250,000	3	4	\$15,000	47	31
\$150,000	4	6	\$12,000	50	19
\$100,000	6	5	\$10,000	53	61
\$75,000	12	5	\$5,000	60	157
\$50,000	12	19	\$2,500	90	189
\$35,000	18	10	\$1,000	75	208
\$25,000	24	29	\$500	50	114

Notice that half of the almost \$10 million in commitments came through large commitments (\$50,000 and over). But also notice that through many, many smaller but still *very significant* and sacrificial commitments, a huge critical mass of people—many of them younger people/families—so largely responded! So we received enough “smaller” commitments to overcome the lack of needed larger commitments. That’s the advantage of a larger church—when everyone gets on board in some way we can accomplish big things! (It’s why we were able to give more than \$500,000 this year to local and international ministries.)

And because of many giving significant amounts up front toward their three-year commitment, it became possible for us to begin immediately on the construction and renovations to expand our auditorium and foyer (which we have done). That cost was about \$2M. That’s been spent. That’s done.

So this past year we’ve been finalizing the plans for the rest of the project. We always said that we would not truly know the total cost of the rest of this project until after the full designs and the competitive bidding process was completed. And now that that’s been completed, we now know that the rest of our building project will cost \$11.5 million, but not including the chapel.

What’s the timeline? Our General Contractor told us that the new Crossing Kids wing should be open by fall of 2014, and the rest of the project (except the chapel) should be completed by the end of 2014. But we don’t control that. So we’ll see.

We are now at about the halfway point in the three-year commitment period. And as God continues to bring more and more people here—and as he seems to be breathing his purpose into us as we try to keep up with what he’s doing—we want to continue to be the kind of church that is willing to make sacrifices and take risks to be used by God to build his “My People” forever. We need to make room for more people in this city that God wants to bring here.

Bottom line: we are building a lot more purposeful space for more and more people to be a part of what God is doing at The Crossing. This plan will allow us to double our children’s space. More than double our middle school and high school space. Double our foyer space and build some great classroom spaces for adult classes for Night Crossing, Sunday Morning Connections Classes, Women’s and Men’s Bible Studies, etc.

But remember, this is not about a building. It’s about our joining in God’s heart to seek and save the lost and to free HIS people to worship the True God and live in his glory forever. God is building his “My People” in and through this church. Hundreds or thousands of years from now, we will NOT rejoice that we sacrificed our earthly treasures to build a building. We WILL rejoice that

we sacrificed so that more and more people could hear and believe the gospel and be with us where we are in the glory of God forever! And I think that's part of what Jesus was getting at when he talked about building treasure in heaven.

So, how can you help at this important halfway point? First, pray. Pray for our church leaders and staff as we seek to follow God's leading and be good and faithful stewards of the people God keeps bringing into the church. Pray for our designers and builders—pray for their skill, effectiveness, safety, and health as they complete the work on this project.

Second, if you can, be sacrificially generous: We are still short of the \$11.5 million we need to complete this project. God has brought our church to this need for sacrifice, but he may have a different plan for YOU. No guilt. No pressure. We do not *have* to do this. We *get* to do this. But not everyone *can* or even *should* at this point. And that's OK.

If you've made a commitment already to this ***Building to Change Lives*** project, please continue to work toward completing your commitment by March 2015. We realized that some of you are going to have to do everything you can just to complete your commitment. We appreciate your sacrifice.

Some of you made a commitment a year and a half ago, and maybe God has blessed you and now you're in a position where you can do more. If so, would you please consider increasing your commitment to help us get closer to \$11.5M? Or, if you've already fulfilled your commitment, would you consider adding to your commitment between now and March of 2015?

Perhaps you began coming to The Crossing after March of last year and you didn't hear much about all this until now. Or perhaps you weren't able to participate financially back then, but God has enabled you to now. Or maybe you're more committed to this church now than you were a year and a half ago. If so, please consider *this* your one invitation you'll receive to join with our congregation as we're ***Building to Change Lives***.

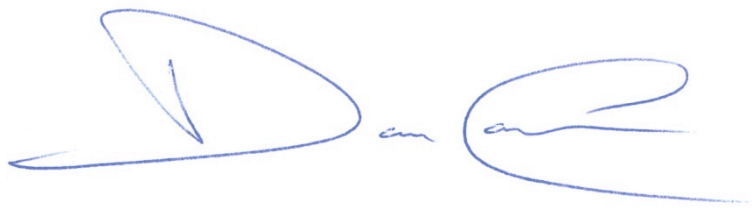
By the way, the chapel is back in play. We originally wanted to build a chapel as a way of providing another space for simultaneous worship services on Sundays to accommodate more people. The bank has told us that if our commitments continue coming in on pace for completion in 2015, we can start construction on the chapel as soon as we can. It could still be a part of this phase of the project. We'd have to raise additional funds in the future.

Let us know where you are by filling out both the front and backside of the enclosed card and returning it to us using the self-addressed envelope. Remember, this is an intention to give—an

estimate of giving—not a contract and not a debt to the church. Your number can change up or down between now and March of 2015 simply by contacting our business office.

Also remember, any commitment to this needs to be above and beyond what you are currently giving to support the overall church ministry. Otherwise it's not going to work because our monthly budget is tight tight tight. We spend what we take in each month.

Looking Forward To the Future Together,



Dave Cover, Pastor at The Crossing

At this point, you should get on our website: buildingtochangelives.com, where you will be able to view an excellent animation of our building plans, and view even more details on this important project.

