



HILL COUNTRY
BIBLE CHURCH | AUSTIN



Let's Change the World

Tim Hawks, HCBC Lead Pastor

January 13, 2013

Good morning. Last week we addressed the topic of the shooting at the Newtown, Connecticut school, and for those of you who missed that message I would encourage you to go back and get it. I don't think I've had any more feedback of any message I've given more than that one, and it's very important that we get that. And, and what we did when we looked at that last week is we realized that the problem we have in our nation and in our world is actually bigger than the Newtown, Connecticut school shooting. It's actually huge, it's a big problem. It's a problem of proportion that not only just kind of overshadows Newtown, Connecticut, but it's a historical problem. It's been going on throughout the history of man, and it's embedded in our root cause, and that is the problem of evil.

And last week we began to understand from the scripture that there's an evil presence in our world, it's personified in the devil or Satan himself and its aim

is to destroy human life. In other words, we don't live in a neutral world, a neutral playground where everybody's just out to have a good time and occasionally we bump into each other and people get hurt. We live in a world that has embedded evil in it and people's lives are at risk. Now we could look for a political solution to that, some governmental leader that would come along and solve those problems. In fact, you would think that after the last 24 months we had done enough to find a political solution, right? The longest campaign in presidential history has just taken place costing \$2 billion just for the campaigns of the two men running for president. Six billion (\$6B) total was spent on all federal elections, and with all of that 93 million Americans who are registered to vote didn't even bother.

Half the registered voters in our country don't believe that a political solution is possible. And for those of you who did get out and vote and you feel good about yourself, things have changed so much in Washington already, right? Like they came right back together and solved all the problems? We can continue to look for something to solve our problems and hope that someone can step in and do that, and so I'm kind of wrestling with this. All through November from Thanksgiving forward and into December I keep thinking, you know what is it that we as a church need to do? What as a people do we need to do? And this phrase that God just kept speaking back into me, kept coming back over and over again and that phrase was "Let's Change the World." Washington can't change the world. The United Nations can't change the world, so Hill Country Bible Church, let's change the world.

Now while that's kind of settling in on you and you're thinking what in the world is wrong with that guy, um you're just kind of letting that settle in and you're kind of thinking about it. Let me just say that over the course of this year from a teaching perspective we've got some great stuff coming up. Pastor Russell has been working with me to develop our year long sermon plan, and let me just lay it out for you really quickly. We're going to spend the next few weeks in a series called "Commissioned", and that series is going to take the statements of Jesus to His followers from the time He rose from the dead until He ascended to heaven. What did Jesus say during those 40 days and then how does that affect us. So we're going to look at that first.

Then we're going to go into a series looking at "The Three Hours That Changed the World." The miracles that occurred during and after the crucifixion, what took place during those three hours that we need to know about. And then after Easter we're going to do a Bible overview - yes, you heard it correctly. In 11 weeks we're going to cover the whole Bible. And so this is a great time for those of you who say "I never really understood how the Bible all fits together, how it all works, what's the big theme," we're going to cover all of that. For

those of you who have friends who say “Oh the Bible is full of contradictions, it doesn't make any sense, it's a bunch of ol' mumbo jumbo,” challenge them to come and find out what's actually in the Bible. We're going to be looking at that.

And then during the summer we're going to spend the summer months looking at God's plan for the family. God's plan for husbands, and wives, and children, and singles. How does this all work together and how does this all work together and how can we find a sense of human thriving in the institution that God has created for us to be the most sacred, special, and nurturing environment known to humanity. So we're going to look at that.

In the Fall we're going to do a series called “Explore God”, and I'll talk a little bit more about that later, but there are about seven questions that everybody has that are the big questions about the truth of whether Christianity makes sense or not. We're going to be looking at those. Great opportunity for you to understand the reason behind your faith.

And then we're going to wrap up the year in the book of 2 Thessalonians. And 2 Thessalonians is a book that talks about the end times. And we didn't do that discussion in 2012 because we wanted to make sure we gave the Mayans, you know, a full opportunity to really make their case. And now that we've gotten past that we're going to spend some time looking at the whole idea of what would we expect to take place in the end times, how would we understand that, and there's a lot of people interested in that so that's how we're going to wrap up the year.

So that's where we're going during the course of the year, but we're starting today on this “Commissioned” series. I want to lay out before you what I believe God is calling us to do as a church this year that we can change the world. Now before we explain practically and specifically what each of our parts are, let me give you three big over-arching ideas that I believe are true and I believe give us the capability of being involved in changing the world.

So the first idea is this: I believe that **“Jesus Christ is the hope of our nation.”** So if you were to think of all of the problems that exist in our nation, in our state, in our city, in the world in which you live -- the neighborhood, the friends, the businesses. And you were to think of what those big problems are, if you were to catalog those in your mind. I want everybody here just to take a moment to get in your head, like what are the one or two or three things that I would say these are big problems that need to be fixed. I mean there's lots and lots of them, so let me just give you some examples while you're thinking of the ones that you would say are the big issues in your mind.

The breakdown of the American family. Conflict between husbands, wives, teenagers, kids, generations seems to be a big huge problem in our community and in our nation. Do you realize that from 1900 to 1960 the number of kids that grew up in the absence of one of their two parents stayed roughly the same for 60 years at 9% of the children. Which meant 91% of the children grew up in a home where both mom and dad were present during their growing up. Since 1960, so in the 50 years since that time, that number has risen to 26% grow up either missing a mom or missing a dad in their years as they grow up. Now every statistic, this is a, I know that even me mentioning this to a lot of you is not a politically correct statement. People ought to be able to do whatever they want to, they should be able to marry whoever they want to, not get married, have kids the way they want to, do it however they want to. But every indicator in society, health, economics, education, future stability, emotional stability indicates that a child who grows up with mom and dad both present does better on every scale across the board. And so that's a big problem in our society, right? That's a challenge that we have to face as a group of people.

In addition to that we could take on the issue of poverty. One in five people in the state of Texas, one in five kids in the state of Texas lives below the poverty level. So we've got hunger, we've got economic unemployment challenges, underemployment challenges. We've got immigration challenges that we've been wrestling with that we still face. We've got conflict between management and labor that are ongoing issues, a struggle. In addition to that we've got neglect and abuse. Sixty-six thousand (66,000) children in the state of Texas in 2009 were mistreated by adults. Sixty-six thousand (66,000), over 1,700 in Travis County alone. In Austin we are above the national average for violent crime, and that's continued to grow over the last 12 years. We've got a lot of problems, right? A lot of issues.

Now let me turn this just a little bit – let me ask you a question. What percentage of these problems that we've talked about and others are the result of sin? What percentage are the result of sin? I know you guys are thinking 'This is a trick question,' and you're doing your math. Like 72%, 69 – what, what? I would say 100% of the problems are due to sin. You say 'Whoa, wait a minute.' Well let me rephrase it, let me say it another way. If everybody in the city of Austin, everybody in the state of Texas, everybody in the United States got up tomorrow morning and decided to live like Jesus Christ, how many problems would we solve? You see, we wouldn't have marriages breaking up. We wouldn't have kids that are not being fed. We wouldn't have problems with labor and management sitting down and working out an equitable, fair solution for work environment and pay. Those things would go away, right?

We wouldn't have any criminals. There would no crime, no corruption, no government officials pontificating. If everybody in the United States got up tomorrow morning and decided to live like Jesus it would completely change our whole world, right? It would change the culture of our whole world. The problem I think we have is we have underestimated the impact of sin. Sin is not simply getting certain parts of the Bible wrong. Sin is not simply running a few moral stop signs along the way. Sin is a destroyer of human lives. It destroys health, it destroys relationships, it destroys work, it destroys economics, it corrupts education – sin impacts every aspect of the human being and the human experience.

In addition to that sin is intrinsic or internal. In other words, you can do reforms, like you can try to change things and make some good in doing that, but ultimately if the problems are in here (pointing to the heart), fixing things through economics which I'm, I'm I think there are good economic things and bad. Through education I think there are good approaches to education and some that aren't so good. Legislation, there's some legislation that's good and some that's not so good. I'm not in favor of saying let's not try to fix the system, but if we fix the system and fail to fix the source we're going to repeat the problems. They will pop up someplace else.

Now last week I introduced you to an interesting concept. It was a quote by Malcolm Muggeridge, the British journalist. He said "All news is old news happening to new people." In other words each generation thinks that the problems today are happening to them didn't exist before, or the experiences today didn't exist before. And Solomon said "There's nothing new under the sun." Those of you who majored in history or study history you know that's true, right? You know that's true.

Well let me say it a different way. Let me put it out there for you guys in a different way. I would suggest that there are no new reforms, only new people trying old reforms. Let me ask you millennial, millennials. I mean obviously it's a given that the baby boomers screwed up the world. Right? Do you remember who the baby boomers started out to be? They were hippies. Arguably the greatest movement for societal reform in the history of the United States. They reformed sex. They reformed drugs. Washington State, Colorado, your heritage came from the hippies, right? They've reformed the way government operates. They did all kinds of things to try to transform society because the generation before them had screwed everything up. Every generation comes along and says "Oh, see the problems." "We can fix those." That's why after World War I, the League of Nations was formed to end all wars. And 27 years later the League of Nations was folded after World War II and the United Nations was formed, and guess what? We have had no wars since the

United Nations was formed, right? (congregation laughing) Folks, let's laugh at ourselves. How dumb can we be? Okay, it's good – the things that we're trying to do to fix our society, as good as those efforts might be, at some point in time we've got to think deeper than that. There's something broken in the heart of humanity. There's a sin problem and who is the answer to the sin problem? It's none other than Jesus Christ. It's none other than Jesus Christ. And I believe that we as a church are underselling Him. We are underselling Him. What did Jesus say in John, chapter 14 verse 6, I'll put it up here for you.

Jesus says *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

In other words, the way to get to God to solve our sin problems, to get the power to change, to have the divine spark to intervene in our life, that comes through Jesus. And Jesus says "I am the way." What Jesus is saying is I am the solution to all of life's problems. Look to me, I'm the solution. Jesus says I am the truth, I am the answer to all of life's greatest questions, and I am the life. What Jesus is saying is, I'm the fulfillment of humanity's deepest desires. Look for it in materialism, look for it in the applause of culture, look for it in a relationship and you're going to be disappointed. It comes through me; I am the life.

The people in your neighborhood that are struggling in their marriage, guess what they need? They need Jesus. The teenager who's struggling with depression -- every 16 minutes in the United States another person takes their life. You know what they need? They need Jesus. We need Jesus in every aspect of our lives, and in the church oftentimes we don't recognize the fact that we actually have the hope for every single problem and we're not delivering it. We're the Jesus bringers. And so if we want to change the world the Jesus bringers have got to bring Jesus to the people in our community and in our nation.

Second principle here is that **"Every person in America matters to God."** Every single person in our country matters to God. God cares about every one of them. Regardless of the color of your skin, regardless of your age, of your gender, regardless of your past. Every single person matters to God. Let me tell you that from a theological standpoint. Three passages of scripture, the first one is John 3:16 – you guys know this one. Put it up here for you:

"For God so loved the world," loved the world "that He gave His only be - one and only Son." God loved the world, the people in the world "that he gave His Son, Jesus Christ, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

God loved the world so much that He gave His Son for them. Some of you guys may have come out of a background that taught that “the world” there doesn’t mean “world.” It’s talking about a certain group of people in the world. So let me give you a couple of more passages of scripture – we could do this all morning. The second one is in 1 Timothy 2:3-4. Timothy writes:

“This is good and pleases God our Savior who wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth.”

The gospel is offered to all men, it’s God’s desire that all people would come to Him. People matter to God.

One more, 2 Peter 3:9:

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise as some understand slowness.”

The context is the end of the world coming, God’s judgment coming, why is God delaying, why He is not ending this mess. He says:

“He is patient with you, not wanting anyone.”

Who would that include? Everybody, right?

“not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

God cares about each and every person. When you look at the people in our city, in your neighborhood do you understand that God loves them. That He sent his Son for them. That He cares for them. That their problems, that their pain, that their struggles, that their confusion is something God understands and He sent his Son Jesus Christ to help them. Do you get that?

You see one of the things that I would say to people here who call themselves “believers,” followers of Jesus Christ, if I’m truly a disciple, follower of Jesus Christ it seems like my heart would be for the same thing that His heart is for. My love would be the same as His love. My passion would be the same as His passion. And I would suggest to you that we as a group of people and as individuals will never ever be like Jesus until our heart breaks for people who don’t know Him. Until people matter to us and their eternal destiny matters to us in the same way that it matters to Jesus, we’re not going to be like Him. I would also suggest that the reason why the church has been so anemic in reaching this nation, and we’re losing ground in the United States. The reason why? Is because we as a church do not love our nation, love the people in it like

Jesus does. And until we get a heart for people, until we begin to believe that God loves people, He cares about those people, the ones that are not like us and the ones that we don't like. God cares about them. Until we get to that point we're not going to see The Church of Jesus Christ change our nation. We're not going to reach it with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The third truth is that **"God calls us to pursue His mission together."** God calls us to pursue His mission together. Let me share with you guys something that is very disturbing to me. On a given Sunday morning, Hill Country Bible Church has somewhere between 5 and 6,000 people coming to attend worship.

On Easter, excuse me, on Christmas Eve, just a couple of weeks ago. On Christmas Eve we had over 11,600 people come to our Christmas Eve service. That's a lot of people. Some of you guys tried to get into a couple of those services and had trouble getting in, right? Our association, we've planted 23 churches in greater Austin and we have five more scheduled to be planted in 2013, bringing the total to 28 churches. On Easter of last year, 19,000 people worshipped in one of our churches. Nineteen thousand (19,000) people. And you know what? As much as people look at that and say "That's an incredible success for an American church and an American movement in a city," that's not a drop in the bucket compared to the 1.7 million people who live in Central Texas. And since Hill Country Bible Church was founded 26 years ago the number of people that live in Austin that are un-churched has grown in percentage. At that rate The Church of Jesus Christ will become smaller and less impactful year after year after year after year.

You say, 'Well Tim, what are you saying?' Well I'm saying this: God is revealing to us that Hill Country Bible Church is not the answer for this city. But The Church of Jesus Christ is the answer for the city. In other words, it's not about our church and what we're going to do. It's about His church, the whole thing and what we're called to do. I want you to see this in scripture.

If you'll grab your Bibles and open them to John chapter 17, the context of this is Jesus Christ is just about to go to the cross. The last thing He's going to do before He goes to the cross, before He goes through His trials, He's with his disciples, the final thing He does is He prays for them. And you'll also notice in the prayer He also prays for us, the people that would come after. And I want you to see what He prays for. Because what Jesus prays to the Father for about us is very important. In verse 20 He says this - this is Jesus praying to God. He says:

"My prayer is not for them alone." that's not for the disciples that are there alone, it's not for them alone, "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,"

So I'm also praying for the ones who will hear the gospel from them and the ones that will hear the gospel from them and through generations, all the way up to us. In other words, this is His prayer for us He's praying. And here's what He prays:

He says *"that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."*

In other words, the ability of Christian people to come together in unity to love each other relationally and to go on mission together is a testimony to the world around that Jesus Christ really came from the Father. In other words, it moves us out of the concept of being a club or a do-gooder organization of humans that have just kind of banded together to believe our beliefs, to enjoy one another's company and to do some good things together. It takes on the characteristic of the supernatural. This is of God and the founder of this is actually sent by God. That's what unity produces. He goes on:

He says, verse 22 *"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one --"*

In the same that the Father and the Son are one, so much that we call the Trinity one God. That unique tightness, purpose, mission, love, relationship, thinking together, working together. He's saying:

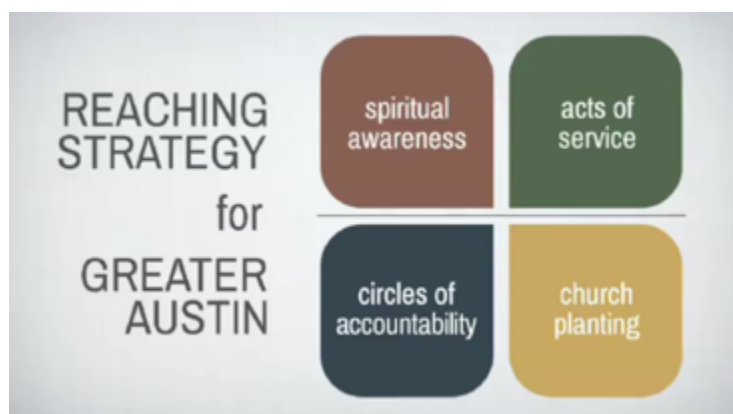
"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one -" in them, "I in them and you in me - so that they may be brought to complete unity. To let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

Whoa. So while churches across Austin, across the United State are all operating under their own agendas, while pastors don't have relationships with each other, while we're all kind of doing our own thing, and boasting of our own doctrinal purity and our own success, and having our own special worship styles, and all of those kinds of things . . . Jesus is praying "Would you guys get together. Father would you bring these people together because the world out there doesn't care whether you're charismatic, non-charismatic, covenant, dispensational, Calvinist, Armenian. Whether the worship leader has contemporary hair and pointed shoes or whether he's got a big ol' white tie and

a white suit and stands up there and does this (motioning his arms to show how a music leader directs music). Whether your history started in Germany or whether it started in Jerusalem or whether it started down the street in a strip center. The world doesn't care about that. What they care about is guys, if you guys have a supernatural origin we ought to see a miraculous love, an incredible unity. We ought to see a teamwork approach. That's what the world's asking for. That would validate what God has built within us, the body of Christ.

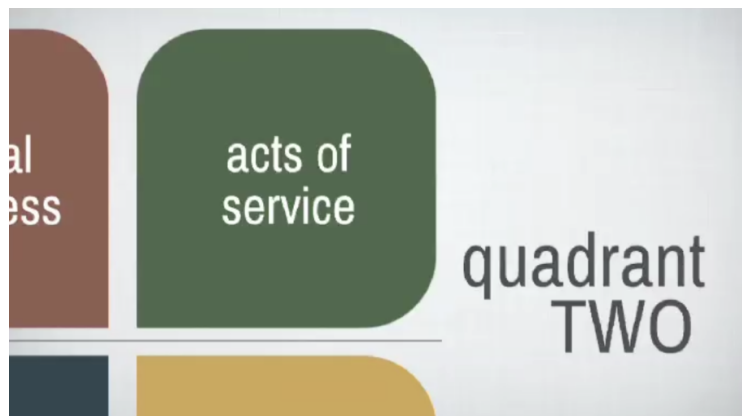
So what would that look like? What would it look like if the church in Austin began to do that? Well we're actually starting that. So a few years ago we got together with several pastors from key churches in town and we began to pray together, build relationships with one another, support one another. In fact every Sunday morning I get text messages from pastors around the city telling me they're praying for me. We started that. And then we started asking the question "What would the church do together?" Not some big symbolic service where we all come, isolated from the rest of the world and just kind of do our own thing together and then everybody goes back home and says "Oh yeah. Look how much unity we have." But actually began to work together, do ministry together, what would that look like. So we developed a strategy for how the church could work together to reach every man, woman, and child. And I'm going to give you that strategy in about 2-1/2 minutes.

Okay. It's going to take about 2-1/2 minutes for me to lay this out. It's a complicated strategy because when you think about reaching every man, woman and child through the diversity of the number of churches that are in



our city, mobilizing them to go on mission while they maintain their own distinctives and their own leadership, that's challenging to do. So here's what we would do together. Not just talk about it, but actually do something. So we developed a 4-quadrant strategy. Each of those quadrants represents activity.

The first one is spiritual awareness. Is it possible, is it possible that at any given time we could get the attention of 1.7 million people in the city that God is present in Austin, that God is moving and you ought to pay attention to Him. And at the same time mobilize the church to be prepared to engage in spiritual conversations with people during that period of awareness. That's spiritual awareness.



The second one – acts of service. Is it possible that The Church of Jesus Christ could identify one or two systemic problems in Austin that nobody has a solution for that would actually change the destiny of the people in our city if we were to tackle those, that would be big enough that everybody in the church could give a little bit of attention to

it to solve a problem. Acts of service.

The next one is circles of accountability. Quadrant three is circles of accountability. What if in every little area of the city, like Cedar Park, the pastors who pastor churches there came together, became friends, started praying for one another, and then began to ask and answer the question “What would it look like for us to work together to reach every man,



woman and child in that area.” And while the pastors in Cedar Park are doing that, the pastors in Pflugerville are doing it, the pastors in Dripping Springs, the pastors in North Central Austin, the pastors in the Allandale area -- that literally

throughout the city, areas of the city, circles of accountability are forming where pastors begin to ask and answer the question “How can we do this together?” My guess is that wherever you live, whether it's in an apartment building, whether it's in a house. Wherever you live there are other people who are in close proximity to you who are believers in Jesus Christ, who attend other churches who could help you as you work with the other people from Hill Country and other churches to really begin to pray and love on your neighbors. But nobody has ever given you permission to do that. Nobody's ever given them permission to do that, and so we have little pockets of isolated people not realizing that we're all working on the same mission -- can we do it together? That's circles of accountability.

And then the final one is church planting. It's church planting. With the growth of the city of Austin with no conversions at all, just keeping up with the



number of people that are coming into Austin, we could plant two or three mega churches every year and not keep up with all of the people. We need a lot of new churches.

So let me go back and give you some specifics in just two areas. I'm not going to give you all four, just two.

Let me take the acts of service. We've decided to take on as the systemic problem of third grade literacy. If every child in the schools that make up greater Austin could read at grade level by third grade, it would literally change the whole city. It would change the crime rate, it would change the drop-out rate, it would change the economics of our city, it would change the future of our city not to mention all of those individual children that are coming through. There are 206 elementary schools from Georgetown to San Marcos. What if each one of those elementary schools was adopted by a church or a group of churches to ensure that we had enough people that were given one hour to forty-five minutes a week to sit down with a kindergarten, kindergartener, first grader or second grader helping them with their reading skills. We could change the whole face of it. If 200,000 Christians would give one hour a week on an ongoing basis we could literally change the city. And we've got that many people in the churches if we work together, right? So far we've adopted 67 of those schools, which means we're one-third of the way to actually doing something to change everything in our city. That's just one of the problems.

What if The Church of Jesus Christ started doing that? We could make a difference, we could change the world, right?

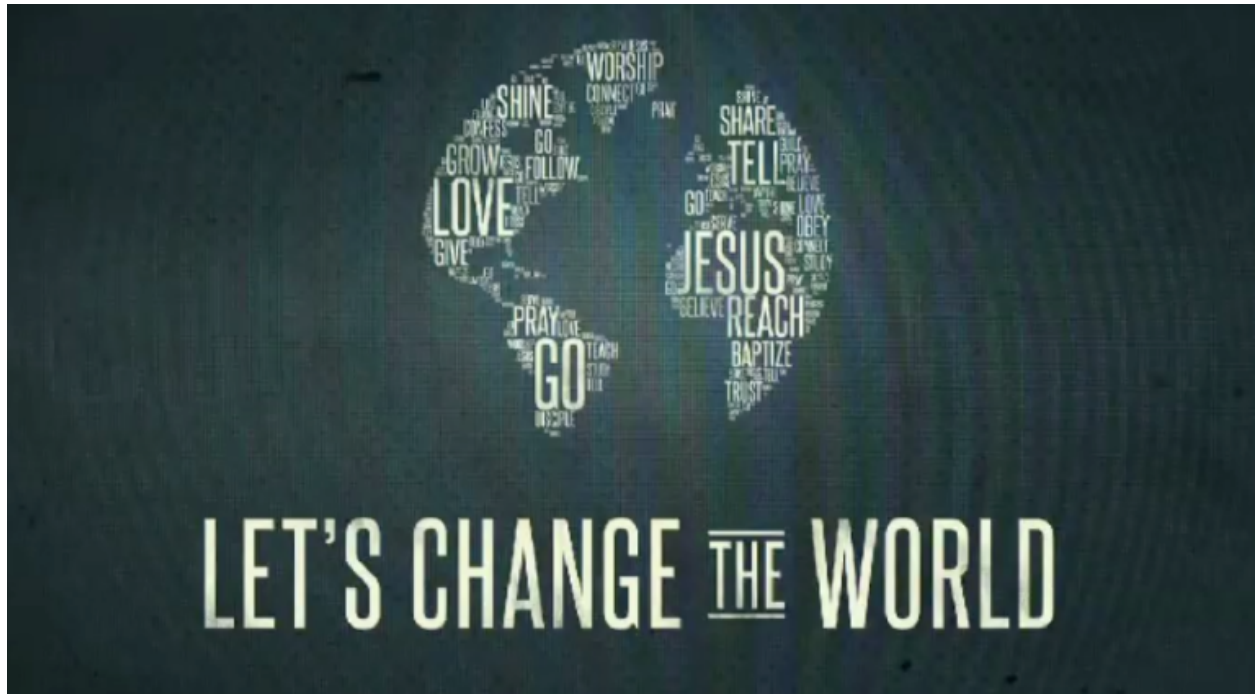
The second area that I want to mention is the spiritual awareness. This year we're going to do a spiritual awareness campaign called "Explore God." We're in the process right now of recruiting churches to participate. Our goal is somewhere between 100 to 150 churches that will be on board with us, somewhere in the neighborhood of 100,000 believers that will be participating in this. In July we are going to blanket the city with marketing raising questions about God. At the same time we will have trained every one of you in how to have a simple spiritual conversation with someone who's interested in it. Just as simple as that, with the goal that we would have 400,000 spiritual conversations, and of the 1.7 million, at least 400,000 of them would have a spiritual conversation raising the awareness for God in our city. We're looking forward to this. This is going to be revolutionary, revolutionizing our city.

We're also going to do a sermon series in September going over those questions encouraging you to invite people from your work or from your family or from your neighborhood into a small group where we're going to give you a great website, great video, great discussion questions to begin to engage people in who Jesus is and what does the Bible say, and is there a God and why is there evil in the world and helping you begin to just have conversations, to let the Holy Spirit work in people's lives.

Now those four quadrants might seem pretty complicated, and I promised that I would get down to the level of saying what it is that you can do. So let me say it. You want to change the world this year? Here's what you can do. If each person that's part of Hill Country Bible Church would simply love their friends, their neighbors, the people they come across enough to engage them with the gospel. If each person that's part of Hill Country Bible Church lead one or two people in 2013 to faith in Jesus Christ and disciple them in what it means to know and love Jesus. If everyone here did that and every believer in every other church in Austin did the same thing. And every church in every major city in the United States lead their people to do the same thing. And every church in every nation outside of the United States lead their people to do the same thing. Just reach one or two people during the course of the year and disciple them into a deep relationship with Jesus. If everybody did that, you know what? We would see over a billion people on this planet come to faith in the next 12 months. Do you think that would change the world? Do you think that would change the world?

You say, 'Well what if they don't do it?' And I say to you what if they're already doing it and we're the slackers? Think about that. What if they're already

doing it and we're the slackers. They are doing it in India. They're doing it in China. That's happening outside the United States in Latin America like crazy. We're the third largest mission field on the planet because we think everybody's either evangelized or doesn't care. And if we, if we do that . . . can you do that? Can you do that? Will you do that? If you'll do that we're going to help you this year because we're going to change the world in 2013.



At this time we're going to stop and focus on the one who makes this all possible, Jesus Christ. And so as we prepare our hearts I'm going to dismiss the servers to go get ready to bring the communion in. So I'm going to let you guys go. For the rest of us, I just want to give you something to begin to meditate on, so, to really begin to allow your heart to meditate in preparation. God loved you so much, He loved you so much, that He sent his Son Jesus Christ to suffer and die on your behalf. As you think about that, think about the people around you that he loves as well. Ask Him to break your heart for them.

Let's bow our heads as we prepare our hearts.