

Below is the pastoral prayer I was asked to lead last Sunday. Many of you have requested a copy--so I am sharing it with the rest of you as well in hopes that it will be an encouragement to your life and your faith. For those of you not from Mid-County, the occasion was our annual Remember and Behold, and time when we remember what God has done for us over the past year, and behold his goodness and faithfulness to us.

## **Pastoral Prayer**

### **THANKSGIVING**

Father, we are thankful today. We thank you for being there when there are wide grins on our faces, and for being there in our moments of unstoppable tears-to care for us, to comfort us, to stand beside us, to encourage us, to love us, to shape us.

We thank you for Calvary. We know it means love that we didn't deserve. We know that each nail was for our sins, our failures, and our wrong priorities.

Thank you for a message of hope in a world that has long ago buried hope and struggles only to survive.

In a world that knows hatred, fanatical terrorism, arrogant behavior, perverse actions, and loveless relationships, we thank you for love.

Thank you for our successes. Thank you that the generations to come will be influenced in France for the kingdom of heaven because our generous giving went beyond what was either asked or expected.

### **CONFESSION**

At the same time, we must confess to you, Father, that we have not lived up to your expectations or to ours.

At Caesarea Philippi our Lord taught that what really tears lives apart are pagan attitudes, values, and traditions. We confess that we have become a pagan country where the institutions of government see you as an embarrassment, rather than as a source of strength. Many of us helped that to happen because of loyalty to party labels or by voting selfishly for far less important issues. That has caused us to elect people who use their office to showcase perversion and destroy the reliance on you that our great men of government have had for years. In doing this, we are as guilty as Judas who betrayed you. In upcoming elections, we want to do differently.

We confess that as a church we have allowed many of our priorities, values and attitudes to be molded by what society views as important, rather than by the truths you have taught us. We know we can't be a truly godly and dynamic church until that changes, and we ask you to help us change.

We've become wrapped up in ourselves and unable to see that people are really lost without you. We haven't faced up to how horrible that is. We've listened to our culture and concluded that most people are OK, that token obedience, merely saying "Lord, Lord," is enough to get us to heaven, and you've told us it's not. We confess that we haven't truly confronted in our hearts the heartbreak of a lost world.

We confess that we haven't had a burning passion to reach lost people. We're too wrapped up in ourselves and our own worlds to reach out. We become very vocal when things don't go as we want, but are strangely silent about what you want. We confess that we have spent time on the insignificant, but have not made the time to pray. We confess to you that we have not been on our knees. We have not had our hearts touched by human suffering or spiritual tragedy.

## SUPPLICATION AND VISION

Father, we don't care about being the kind of church the religious world thinks is good. We want to become the kind of church you desire.

We want to deeply care about the friends and neighbors around us. We want to look beyond superficiality into the bankrupt core of peoples' lives and proclaim a message of hope that we holds as true in the depth of our being.

We want to be a church with a clear reason to exist.

We want to see the blackness of sin and the light of hope. We want to reach people and change lives.

We want to be generous in a way that astounds people!

We want to be a church where ministries are know by their successes, not by their failures.

We want to have shepherds who don't let the clear message of who we are and what we should be get pushed aside because we're too busy with other things. We want shepherds who have a heart for the lost, a passion for the church, a deep knowledge and an uncompromising conviction about the word of God.

We want to have deacons who have more than a title-they have the commitment that goes with a servant heart. We want to have deacons who take their jobs seriously, and carry them out faithfully. We want to have deacons in whom the spirit of Christ lives and prompts them to love when others would have already quit loving; that prompts them to serve with a passion, commitment, ownership, and godly sense of responsibility that honors you.

We want to have teachers who study your word seriously, present it with conviction, and challenge us to be a different kind of people. In the words of Karl Wendt's song, we want to have leaders who will lead from on their knees.

We want to be people who know the word, and who let it change our hearts from the inside out.

We want to be people in whom the love of Christ truly dwells. We want it to be obvious that in us there are different hearts, different values, different goals, and clear conviction. Father, deliver us from being too much like the world. Take the thinking of post-modernism out of our hearts and let us be content to seek your face.

We want to be men and women of faith who are not afraid to trust and never afraid to proclaim.

We want to love you with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength. We know that this is the first and greatest charge to us as people of God, and we want to be people who keep first things first.

We want to love our neighbor as ourselves. We want to do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

We want to set a different standard from the world around us, sing a different song, follow a different leader so that the unbelievable unconditional love of Christ would become real to people.

## WE REMEMBER

This is a day we have set aside to remember and to behold...to remember your goodness and to behold you power at work among us.

We remember your kindness to us this past year as individuals and as a people.

We remember your unfailing love that has always stood beside us.

We remember the struggles with sin-the failures and the victories.

We remember the Bible classes taught.

We remember the children nurtured.

We remember the deaths, the births, the daily cycle of life where you've stood beside us.

## WE BEHOLD

And we acknowledge to you that we behold your goodness every day.

We behold your steadfast and unfailing love upon which we can lean like a rock when we've lost everything else.

We behold the great plans that you have in store for us if only we have the faith, courage, and conviction to be different from the world and be godly people.

We behold your faithfulness.

We behold the power of the cross and know that the battle will be won by not by people who amass the greatest power, but by people who are so unselfishly committed to Christ, that they take up their own crosses and lay down their own lives.

## OUR PRAYER

Father, lead us forward in your will and not our own.

We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

This prayer was led at a gathering of the Mid-County church, St. Louis, Missouri, at Kirkwood Park on September 1, 2002, by Dale Lundy, a shepherd of the church, and joined in by the assembly of people present.