

**Sermon File # 883**

**Scripture Text: Acts 2:42-47**

**Sermon Title: *Back to the Basics!* The Elements of the First Church**

**Manuscript written by Roger Roberts and sermon preached**

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**Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.**

**Sources cited in this manuscript are listed at the end.**

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## ***Back to the Basics!* The Elements of the First Church**

### **Introduction:**

We are departing just for today from our series from Exodus and the Ten Commandments in order to, at the beginning of this new church year, to refocus on the basics of the life and ministry of the church. Open your Bibles with me to Acts 2:42-47, the account of the ongoing acts of Jesus through the Spirit-empowered earliest church. The Holy Spirit came upon the waiting, praying disciples on the Day of Pentecost, empowering them with the miraculous sign of speaking in every dialect of the Jews gathered from all over the world for the Feast of Pentecost. The subsequent Spirit-empowered preaching of Simon Peter is an example for our continuing the work of proclaiming the good news of Jesus, the need for giving priority to the church's ministry of preaching and witness.

As a result of Peter's sermon, 3,000 were added to the church on the Day of Pentecost, swelling this first church's numbers to at least 3,120. All expressed their repentance and the gift of new life through water baptism and were received into the fellowship of this first church (verse 41). Verse 42 is one of Luke's summary statements and the following five verses expand this summary in greater detail.

What they give us is a picture of the essential elements that formed the character and mission of this first church in Jerusalem.

Follow as I read **Acts 2:42-47**.

Vince Lombardi (1913-1970) was one of America's greatest football (American-style, cf. soccer) coaches, having led the Green Bay Packers to five league championships within a span of nine years (1959-67). In honor of his memory, the trophy that is awarded to the team that wins the national professional (NFL) championship Super Bowl game is called the Vince Lombardi Trophy. Coach Lombardi was a powerful motivator and many of his famous quotes continue to be used, not only by football coaches, but by business leaders and preachers (as in my case today!) who seek to elicit the best from players and other participants.

One of Vince Lombardi's famous quotes was the one that he repeated on the opening day of practice at the beginning of each new football season. Before the team would go out on the field for the first practice session, he would stand before them in a large classroom. And mind you, he was addressing a team of men who were exceptionally talented and had proven their skills over the years, most of whom were veterans of seasons of professional football competition on the highest level. But the great coach, disregarding the experience, knowledge and prowess of the players, would simply hold up before them a football. Then he would say, "Gentlemen, this is a football," which was the most rudimentary, basic thing he could say, even to someone who had never even heard of the game of football. From that beginning point, Vince Lombardi would walk them through the essential elements of the game. He understood how easy it is to take for granted and even neglect the basics. To neglect the fundamentals is to lose the foundation upon which any game, education, business and life itself is based (Zwieg).

Today we look at the basics, the fundamental elements of the church, which stand out so clearly in today's Scripture text. As Lombardi said, "Gentlemen, this is a football," I want us to see that our text is a picture of the church that was birthed by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Not all of the phenomena in Acts are to be repeated today. But we are to see the abiding principle behind those phenomena, such as the miracle of languages that shows that the Holy Spirit leads and enables the communication of the gospel to every tribe, language, people and nation. Also, the church of today will not necessarily experience all of the signs and wonders of this first century church. And the economic situation of the Jerusalem believers required a pooling of material resources that was not normative for the church in other circumstances. Yet, with these exceptions aside, the principle elements remain as the standard for the church of today, including IBC Brussels.

In this first, infant church, in its "age of innocence," we see an ideal to which we are called to repeatedly return (Polhill, page 122,). I ask you to join with me as we go back to the basics after looking at the elements of the earliest church. (I'm indebted to John RW Stott for delineating these four elements in his commentary, pages 82-87).

From this description of the church in its age of innocence we see first the element of...

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## Learning

This earliest, infant church devoted itself to the apostles' teaching (verse 42), which seemed to have been given in the temple and also in homes where the people met in smaller groups. The teaching of the apostles included the Old Testament Scriptures but also the eyewitness accounts of Jesus, his teachings, mighty works and of course, his passion, death and resurrection. The apostles, as those who had been with Jesus as his followers and as witnesses to the resurrection (Acts 1:21-22), were given the authority that was later replaced by the canon of all Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments.

The church was devoted to...

*Teaching the converted...*

As we noted two weeks ago, as a result of Peter's sermon, 3,000 were added to the church. These were people who had fallen under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and came to repentance that expressed itself in water baptism. These people were willing to publicly identify themselves as followers of Jesus. No doubt some of them had, before their conversion, even called for Jesus' crucifixion and were those for whom Jesus had prayed from the cross (Luke 23:34). We see, as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit, genuine conversion, i.e. transformation of lives.

In our evangelical, free church tradition we have emphasized the importance of a regenerate church membership, of being a congregation of people who can testify of a saving relationship with Jesus. Early in the history of the church, perhaps since the time of Emperor Constantine (272-337), the church erased the distinction between Christianity and Christendom. All citizens were baptized soon after birth, and to be a citizen of the earthly kingdom automatically meant one was a member of the church. And hence a citizen of the now "Christian" kingdom of the Roman Empire was a "Christian", even if not a true Christ-one, one who truly belonged to Christ by faith.

Although we as evangelicals require that church members be professing Christians, we cannot assume that all who profess faith have been genuinely converted. Jesus gave us the parable of the "cheat" growing up with the wheat to say that it is unavoidable that the church be entirely free of those who have the outward signs of believing but lack the genuine nature of a child of God (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43). He also told the parable of the net, with good and bad "fish" (Matthew 13:47-50) as well as describing those who could give outward displays of faith and ministry but who never knew him and would be consigned to eternal destruction (Matthew 7:15-23).

For us to go back to the basics, we must first make our "own calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10) and then seek the salvation of those among us who have never experienced the converting power of the Spirit who alone makes us new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17). One reason that many churches experience disunity and spiritual

impotence is that many in their membership have simply made a decision and voiced a profession of faith without any conversion that brings the *possession* of faith.

This earliest church was devoted to teaching these new converts...

### *To become disciples*

Thousands had been truly converted, and the core of 120 disciples, who had heard Jesus' Great Commission before his ascension back to heaven, realized their responsibility to make disciples of these converts by teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). Those who were already disciples, learning-followers, realized the need to disciple others (2 Timothy 2:2). The Great Commission is not about evangelism only, but involves the work of reproduction—teaching and guiding others who can also become witnesses and disciple-makers.

The church is to be a school of discipleship—"Following Jesus 101." As John Stott noted, the Holy Spirit opened a school in Jerusalem that day and there were immediately 3,000 people enrolled in kindergarten (page 82, above citation). Sadly, many evangelical churches are content to evangelize without helping babes in Christ take even their first steps in the Christian life, let alone kindergarten.

In the past three and a half years the birth and development of our grandchildren has been of major interest to Nancy and me. We realize how crucial are good obstetric doctors and good hospitals, with well-equipped and well-staffed birthing suites. For the remainder of their childhood, until they are ready to live on their own as responsible adults, our grandchildren will need the nurture, care, discipline and instruction of their parents and others who will be a part of their development into mature persons. Of course I think my age three and a half years grandson is small enough to skip to the fifth grade, It's nevertheless essential that he first get the basics provided in preschool and kindergarten.

A church that gets back to the basics stresses the importance of making disciples, to bring everyone under the teaching of God's word, through expository preaching and systematic teaching as well as one-on-one spiritual direction. How easily the church can stray from making strong disciples and can birth people into the kingdom who are left alone to struggle with their new faith, much like an abandoned orphan child! As Henry and Melvin Blackaby explain, "God has no orphans" (page 3ff).

We must get back to the basic of learning. And the next important and basic element to which we must return again and again, which is so evident in this infant church is that of...

## **Loving**

Although the word "love" does not appear, this passage simply reeks with the aroma of love. These earliest Christians obviously were seeking to obey the Great Commandment, to love God entirely and others as themselves (Mark 12:28-3. See Bock, page154).

This brand-new church was experiencing...

*The gift and genius of unity*

The dynamic in this infant church was made possible only through the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst and within each one of the members. They were as diverse as one could imagine, perhaps even more so than IBC Brussels! Yet they were united by the same Holy Spirit who lived in each one. They were experiencing the unity for which Jesus prayed in his High Priestly Prayer (John 17). They had become the mystical and yet very practical Body of Christ, as Paul expressed it (1 Corinthians 12:12ff; Ephesians 4:1-16). Paul knew that the only solution to the problem of division and pride within the Corinthian church and the only way they would function as the Body of Christ would be to stop flaunting their spiritual gifts and focus rather on the grace of love. As he said in the Love Chapter, without love all else is just noise and empty show (1 Corinthians 13). The most precious and essential element of the church according to the Apostles Paul and John (in his first letter) and the Lord Jesus himself is the love that we must have toward one another.

How easy it is for a church to slip away from this gift and genius of unity, just as did the church in Ephesus, which had forsaken its first love—perhaps its love for God and for one another. These people were diligent and dedicated Christian workers and were zealous for right doctrine and intolerant of moral compromise. Yet they stood under the judgment of the risen Christ, who demanded that they repent and return to their former love (Revelation 2:1-7). Whenever the church becomes divided by factions, disagreements and the refusal to be reconciled, we are opposing the prayer of Jesus, refusing his gift of unity and are grieving the Holy Spirit, whose desire is to make us one in love and in fellowship, and this means...

*True fellowship*

This infant church was devoted to fellowship, *koinonia*, a word rich in meaning that includes “common life, fellowship, relationship with God and others, sharing, participation, and communion,” just to name a few definitions (Hauck, 789ff ). Fellowship, as one scholar has said, is more than friendship but not less (Wright, 45). Christian fellowship should be the very definition of friendship in its deepest and truest sense.

Commenting on the way this church sold and shared the proceeds from their possessions, some note that this experiment in “Christian communism” must have failed, since the Jerusalem church soon fell into need for a special relief offering collected by Paul from other churches. In fact, the believers in the Jerusalem church probably from the outset began to feel the economic consequences of their new commitment to Christ, with the likelihood of many losing their jobs. There is no evidence in the text that this infant church practiced common property ownership by coercion. They were simply motivated by love to share with any and all who had needs. All of this sharing was voluntary, as would be very clear from the bad example of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1ff). (Reformation theologian John Calvin noted that the sharing in this earliest church was not the fanatical communism of the Anabaptists! See page 87).

The simple truth was that the earliest church was so filled with the Holy Spirit that it was the right and natural thing to do, to love as Christ himself loved and as he taught us to love, in practical and sacrificial ways. The church was simply practicing the presence of Jesus in their midst and loved Jesus by loving one another—as Jesus inhabited people. They loved by giving to one another and by opening their homes to one another. No doubt the breaking of bread would have included the practice of Communion, but the Lord's Supper would have been observed in the context of regular meals in one another's homes. Luke in particular notes in his gospel how Jesus used mealtimes, banquets and feasts as times of deep sharing, relationship building and self-revelation. And here the church simply continues "all that Jesus began to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1).

There were no church buildings as such in the earliest churches, with the believers gathering for corporate worship in the temple and for closer fellowship in homes, as we see in our text (46). Through the centuries of church building and focusing upon the gathering of the church almost exclusively in the building, something important has been lost. When a local church grows beyond approximately 30 members, relationships between members and individual accountability tend to weaken. And in a church our size, which is very large by European standards, it is absolutely essential that everyone become a part of a smaller group.

During these next few Sundays you will be hearing more about the importance of becoming a member of an IBC small group. Some of you are already involved in small group ministry and Bible study groups where true fellowship takes place. Of particular value are groups that meet in homes, where the atmosphere is warm and welcoming and conducive to openness and sharing. Our vision as elders is to see home groups that are geographically accessible to all of our people, and are hosted and led by members who are committed to enriching fellowship, prayer support for each other, and helpful, informal teaching from Scripture and life-enriching material. When fellowship, prayer, teaching and mutual encouragement take place in our homes, we'll experience richer fellowship, more vibrant worship, and more willing workers when we gather on Sunday mornings. I think, as we see in the earliest church, home groups are foundational.

When IBC Brussels gets back to the basics we will find ourselves giving more generously and sacrificially to the cause of Christ through his church. We will continue to give generously to the needy among us through our monthly benevolence offering. Also, we will find ourselves hosting people in our homes for meals, not just with Alpha classes, but seizing any opportunity to receive someone seeking friendship and a meaningful, life-changing relationship, which Christ seeks to give. Hospitality is a ministry we all can practice, regardless of our abilities and resources for entertaining, which is altogether a different matter.

Karen Mains, writer and wife of a well-known American pastor, David Mains, writes in her book, *Open Heart—Open Home*, that "True hospitality comes before pride," and that it "has nothing to do with impressing people, but everything to do with making them feel welcome and wanted." She recounts how that her life was a succession of hosting church activities in their home, after which she would get the house back into shape, even though she is not a housekeeper by nature. One time she had

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postponed the onerous task of cleaning up after a church event and the house was a mess when a lady from church dropped by to visit her:

“Hospitality before pride...I reminded myself dismally. Determined, I welcomed the woman with warmth, invited her into the unsightly rooms and refused to embarrass her with apologies. I consciously let go of my pride. [The visitor’s response amazed her.] ‘I used to think you were perfect,’ she said, ‘but now I think we can be friends’” (quoted in Fernando, 135)

The church must return to the basic of love, without which we lose our credibility and authenticity and become just a “resounding gong and a clanging symbol”—all noise and no action (1 Corinthians 13:1).

As Coach Lombardi said, “Gentlemen, this is a football,” so our text says, “Brothers and sisters, this is a church”—one that is learning, loving and also...

## **Worshiping**

This was a church that was caught up in the worship of God and the risen Lord Jesus. They experienced corporate worship in the temple courts and also house worship as well as their individual walking in the presence of God. Their worship was done...

*With a sense of awe*

“Everyone was filled with a sense of awe,” says our text (verse 43). This was not just the awe of outsiders toward them, but the believers themselves sensed the awesome presence of a holy God and the risen Lord Jesus in their midst. Indeed, the Holy Spirit was working powerfully through the apostles, which everyone was noticing with a sense of wonder. But I believe what we have pictured in our text is a sense of reverence and fear of the Lord that should characterize every child of God and church of God.

John Piper notes that this sense of awe and reverence before God was the key to the entire life of the church. If we are a God-fearing people, who hold him with a sense of reverent awe, we will have no problem in sharing our material possessions. When we live with an awareness that we are in the presence of a holy, loving and all consuming God, we have no problem relating rightly to one another or in worshiping with a sense of purpose (Piper, 1).

In church life today we have trivialized God and made him into our resident therapist and indulgent “grandfather.” What a difference there would be in our personal living and in our church life if we actually realized and practiced what we profess and preach to be true, that the holy God is actually in this place! We would be like Jacob who said, “the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.’ He was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven’” (Genesis 28:16f).

This church and every church that emphasizes the basics, worships seriously...

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### *Through praise...*

This earliest church was a worshipping, praising people. God was in proper focus, which meant that all of life for them was in the right focus and perspective. Because God was held up to his place as the Almighty, there was no problem or power or earth that could intimidate them. Because they worship the God they loved and feared they didn't need to fear anything or anyone else.

The highest purpose of this church was to worship God, to glorify and enjoy him forever, as the Westminster Shorter Catechism says. They lived in a spirit of joyful celebration and their worship together expressed it. Their worship was not for their enjoyment. Such "worship" is not really worship but entertainment with therapeutic value, which gives no pleasure or glory to God. Our worship is for God's pleasure, glory and honor, which means he accepts whatever style of music or form of liturgy that focuses on his honor and is done with a whole heart and as the best that we can offer him.

The worship of this first church was a joy-filled and joyful celebration that the risen Christ, through his Spirit, was actually among them. In the words of David Mains (mentioned above), this church welcomed Christ to their worship and praise, which was done for his honor and pleasure (See David R Mains, *The Sense of His Presence*). This church worshiped with a sense of awe through praise...

### *And prayer*

How is it that the church, God's house of prayer for all nations, can relegate this priority action and privilege to a place of lesser priority and even neglect? (Luke 19:46). Our text seems to imply that there were standard prayers used by the church, perhaps from the Psalter (verse 42, "the prayers," as translated by the more literal ESV). This church was to face the immense task of gospel proclamation and mission expansion, plus the hostility of society and the forces of Satan and thus depended absolutely on the weapon and resource of prayer. Prayer was their vital link to their relationship with God and the only way they could hope to join God in his mission to their world.

Piper says that we in many of our churches today play more than we pray (Piper, 3); yet nothing is more fundamental to the Spirit-filled life and to being a Spirit-filled church than prayer. The disciples, simply by watching their Master, realized how they needed to learn to pray and to make prayer a priority. When they said, "Lord, teach us to pray," I think the disciples were saying to Jesus, not only "Lord teach us *how to pray* but also teach us *that we ought to pray*" (Luke 11:1). Getting back to the basics means we will realize that prayer is as vital to our spiritual life as breath and oxygen are to our physical life. And God works through the prayers of his people, praying in the Spirit, to accomplish his great work. Prayer "joins heaven to earth," and we are called to be "heaven and earth people" (Wright, 45).

The final element in the basics of the church is that of...

## Witnessing

The number of believers was growing at a phenomenal rate, with the three thousand who were baptized on the Day of Pentecost, and then with sustained daily growth (verse 47). In this first and truly missional church, everyone seemed to have a role to play in the spread of the good news of Jesus and in the growth of the church, whether through preaching and direct proclamation or through the support role of prayer and building up the fellowship and “body life” of the congregation. Behind this widespread witnessing was the fact that the people in this amazing first church were...

### *Enjoying favor*

I find an interesting parallel between the favor this church enjoyed and the that of the Israelites during the time of the plagues in Egypt at the time of their deliverance from captivity, when they received silver, gold and clothing for their journey (Exodus 11:2f; 12:35f). The Israelites enjoyed the favor of the general population. It was Pharaoh and his officials who persecuted them. Similarly, the persecution that the apostles and others in the church were to soon receive was not from the general population, but was rather at the hands of the leaders of the ruling religious establishment of Judaism. These leaders were the ones threatened by this burgeoning new movement of the Christian faith. But in general the church had a positive impact and witness to the surrounding community and enjoyed their respect and even inspired in these outsiders a sense of awe over the signs and wonders done by the apostles (verse 42).

Although there seemed to be a falling off of the place and use of certain signs and wonders (miracles) as the Book of Acts progresses, I don't think we can limit the power and ways of God to a certain time dispensation. God still performs signs and wonders, although it seems that once the church and the gospel became established, their use seemed to diminish. But the most important sign and wonder which the Holy Spirit continues to perform is the wonder of a transformed life. The unconverted people around you need to see the change that Jesus Christ is making in your life. This is what will capture their attention and cause them to want what you have.

When the lost world begins to see the people of God as those who love them our love for one another, a love and concern that was quite remarkable in this first unconditionally, then they will listen to the gospel message. When we relate to one another with generous, agape love, there is “an attractiveness that draws other people in” (Wright, 47). They will take note of such a church. This is Jesus' strategy for world evangelism, our love for one another, as we read in the gospel:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. *By this all men will know that you are my disciples*, if you love one another” (John 13:34f).

Tragically, many in North America particularly, think of the church as those who argue, dispute and split off from one another. Also, many evangelical denominations in my home country are identified by the general public, not because of our being a

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people of compassion and zeal for the gospel but as being against certain moral issues. We are more known for what we are *against* than what we are *for*.

Here in this post-Christian environment, it's important that outsiders and unbelievers be able to see that we are a people of unconditional love and acceptance of all people, with a desire and even a passion to see them experience the same love and fellowship that we enjoy and to be transformed by the Lord Jesus as we are being transformed. People are looking for meaningful relationships and the church of Jesus Christ should be the most obvious place where love and acceptance can be found.

Unsaved people, who have little or no knowledge of the gospel, need to know how much we care and not how much we know. As someone said, people will not care how much we know until they see how much we care. And people don't want to think of themselves as a number we are trying to get into heaven. Somewhere in Dallas Willard's writings he said that the church has it wrong by trying to get people into heaven. Instead, he writes, our focus should be in getting heaven into people, sharing with them the very life and goodness of God. This means that, as with the first church, we will be...

#### *Experiencing growth from the Lord*

We can do our best to try to get people into heaven, but apart from the Holy Spirit, all we can do is produce decisions that may not reflect genuine conversion. Only the Holy Spirit can get heaven into people, those whom he alone can convict of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). Our text tells us that "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (verse 47). Often I have been forced to realize that I have led people to decisions for Christ and to join the church whom God has not converted nor has he added them to the church. These spurious "deciders" usually dropped away from the fellowship of the church or became difficulties in the fellowship of the church (1 John 2:19).

When we are living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and as a church are focusing on Jesus and surrendered to his Lordship, he will add people to us. And those, all of those whom the Lord adds, we are to accept. Those whom God adds may have special needs and challenges that will also challenge us, but they are nevertheless God's gift to us and we are to love and accept and learn from them. And whoever God adds to us, we must ask what gifts and opportunities they give us and what signposts they show us as to what Jesus is doing among us.

God will honor a church that focuses on these basic elements. We may not do everything "right," that is, according to the church growth manuals or the way other churches are doing it; but we must do these basics in order to be a church God blesses.

#### **Conclusion:**

If Vince Lombardi were our pastor and preacher today, he might say to us, holding before us our text, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is a church." And for sure, the Holy

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Spirit is calling us back to the basic elements of the Christian life, of life together in the church. One thing Lombardi emphasized and expected from his players was commitment to the goals of the team.

Twice in our Scripture text Luke uses the same verb (*proskarountes*), translated differently, to express the steadfast devotion of the church to these essentials of being and doing church. The people “continued steadfastly” in doing these essentials (verse 42); and they “continued to meet together,” which means that that they were in the habit of fellowship and worship (verse 46; cf. the admonition of Hebrews 10:25). Perhaps the first thing needed for many here today is to return to devotion or to commit for the first time to the Lordship of Christ. None of these elements can effectively take place with halfhearted-ness on the part of God’s people. The kind of church that was birthed in Jerusalem was no “drive-by” church established for the convenience of half-hearted folk who participated only when they had nothing better to do.

IBC Brussels has been greatly used of God because many of the people love the Lord and his church and express that love through faithfulness. Even though many of these devoted people have been and are expatriates, assigned to live here only a few years, they and you have made IBC your church home and context for expressing your commitment to Jesus. We cannot be the church God will use to the maximum in his kingdom if our people consider IBC as a part-time convenience, as a temporary and partial replacement for their “real church” back in the home country. My prayer and challenge is that we realize that God has planted us here to join him in his kingdom work which he is doing and will do even in mightier ways through IBC. It’s very possible that never again will you and I have the singular, unique opportunities that are given to us here in this church, in this place, at this time. We must be faithful in giving of ourselves.

In a former church where we served in the US from 1973-77, our building was located near the practice facility of a NFL professional football team, the Cleveland (Ohio) Browns. The head coach during part of our tenure there was Forrest Gregg, who, during his playing days, was a star lineman for the Green Bay Packers. Coach Lombardi noted in his book, *Run to Daylight*, that “Forrest Gregg was the finest player I ever coached!” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forrest\\_Gregg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forrest_Gregg)). Forrest and his wife attended our Baptist church on numerous occasions, even though they were Methodists by affiliation, and I had the privilege of visiting with them in their home, where I was surrounded by his trophies that lined the shelves. Gregg was nicknamed “the iron man” by his teammates and coaches because he held the league record for playing in the most consecutive games (188 during 1956-71). A lot of his success and value to the championship teams on which he played was in his consistency and intense dedication.

We serve a cause far more important than that of an American professional football team. You and I are called to be a part of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at work to bring the fulfillment of his kingdom. It’s worth our complete dedication and consistent contribution to its learning, love, worship and witness.

May God guide us and give us grace to get back to the basics!

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**Thoughts and questions for personal reflection and/or group discussion:**

1. What are some of the factors that cause a church (and the individual Christian, for that matter) to drift away from the essential elements?
2. What should be the focus of the church's teaching ministry?
3. What are practical ways the church should go about making disciples (those who follow Jesus and learn from Jesus)?
4. What are some of the signs of genuine love within a church? What are signs that a church may be losing its love for God and one another?
5. What are practical ways that we in our church should express love for one another?
6. How can home groups strengthen the fellowship, discipleship, worship and outreach ministries of the church?
7. How do you define worship and what is worship that pleases and glorifies God?
8. Describe what you see as effective evangelism in our current setting and what is/should be your role in the church's witness to the unconverted?

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