

Celebration Services (July 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

## "Signing the Church Covenant"

### INTRO ..... Being Clear & Being Committed

- the "Signing" of the Declaration of Independence
- When You Become a U.S. Citizen — You take a VOW ...

"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the armed forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God." "Oath of U.S. Citizenship"

- When You Get Married
- When You Join the Church

- An Age in Need of Clarity & Commitment

#### ... *When One Says, "I AM A CHRISTIAN" — What Does That Mean?*

"most Americans do not have strong and clear beliefs, largely because they do not possess a coherent biblical worldview. ...Millions of Americans say they are personally committed to Jesus Christ, but they believe he sinned while on earth. Many believers claim to trust what the Bible teaches, but they reject the notion of a real spiritual adversary or they feel that faith-sharing activities are optional. Millions feel personally committed to God, but they are renegotiating the definition of that deity. .... "In fact, one reason why beliefs fluctuate is that most Americans' hold few convictions about their faith. ... Most Americans have one foot in the biblical camp, and one foot outside it. They say they are committed, but to what? They are spiritually active, but to what end? The spiritual profile of American Christianity is not unlike a lukewarm church that the Bible warns about." David Kinnaman, The Barna Update (May 21, 2007)

"The notion of personal holiness has slipped out of the consciousness of the vast majority of Christians. While just 21% of adults consider themselves to be holy, by their own admission large numbers have no idea what "holiness" means and only 35% believe that God expects people to become holy." George Barna Update (Dec 20, 2006)

"American Christians are not as devoted to their faith as they like to believe. They have positive feelings about the importance of faith, but their faith is rarely the focal point of their life or a critical factor in their decision-making. The fact that few people take the time to evaluate their spiritual journey, or to develop benchmarks or indicators of their spiritual health, facilitates a distorted view of the prominence and purity of faith in their life." George Barna Update (Dec 20, 2006)

"When asked what he saw on the horizon regarding Americans' faith,... Barna listed three general patterns he expects to gain prominence in the coming years.

Diversity. There will be new forms of spiritual leadership, different expressions of faith, and greater variety in when and where people meet together to be communities of faith. Ecumenism will expand, as the emerging generations pay less attention to doctrine and more attention to

relationships and experiences. Barna predicted that there will be a broader network of micro-faith communities built around lifestyle affinities, such as gay communities of faith, marketplace professionals who gather for faith experiences, and so forth. George Barna Update (Dec 20, 2006)

- o **The Church is Made up of Diverse Individuals**
  - Different Religious Backgrounds
  - Different Cultural Backgrounds
  - Different Personality Backgrounds

THE CALL TO BE A CHRISTIAN IS A COMMITMENT THAT INVOLVES:

1. **Forsaking** (Separation) — Breaking Allegiances (w/ sin patterns ... traditions ... false religions)
2. **Death to Self** .... then Resurrection (New Creation)
3. **Faithfulness to a Calling**

In All these "SIGNINGS" — People are Moving from INDIVIDUAL TO COLLECTION

## THE CALL TO UNITY

*Unity (def)* = The state or quality of being one; singleness. The state or quality of being in accord; harmony. Singleness or constancy of purpose or action; continuity: (*American Heritage Dict.*)

For the Church to be United— we must be Committed to ONE THING

### JESUS PRAYER FOR UNITY .... JN 17

v. 1-5, 24-26 .... *The ONE PURPOSE that Provides the BASIS For Unity* — The Pursuit of the Glory Of God

Col 1:16 For by him all things were created , in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him.

Isa 43:21 the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

***The Answer to Marital Conflict*** — both being Surrendered to do What Glorifies God  
***The Answer to War & Personal Conflict*** —  
***The Answer to Poverty & Hunger*** ....

v.9 ... *Jesus Prayer for Unity is NOT FOR THE WORLD — but for the Church*

**v. 11, 20, 22-23 .... Jesus' Request for UNITY**

**v. 11-19 .... 2 Things Needed for Unity**

1. Separation from the World .... "they are not OF the world"
2. Submission to the Truth .... the Air We Breathe — the Atmosphere of the Church

Why Does a Commitment to the Scriptures Matter?

Why Do Biblical Patterns and Practices Matter?

***What's This Got to do with Signing a Church Covenant?***

- It Declares a Breaking of Allegiances with MAN-CENTERED Methods & Motives
  - Conflict Resolution – **Man's Current Ideas or That Which Glorifies God?**
  - Marriage " " " " "
  - Purity " " " " "
  - Finances, Materialism, etc. " " " "
  - Wisdom " " " "
- It Declares Our Submission to the Truth .... We're All Setting Our Compass to TRUE NORTH

***What's At Stake in What We Believe & How We Live?***

**1. The Glory of God**

**2. A Compelling Revelation to the World .... "So that the world may know" (v. 21, 23)**

- ***May Know What?***— What's The ONE THING that Jesus is Praying for, for the World?

.... "that the world may (believe & know) that the Father sent me"

— This is Shorthand for the GOSPEL(Explained by Christ and Proclaimed by the Apostles)

**Jn 3:16-18**

**Acts 4:8-12**

1 Cor 1:21-25 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men

- What Has God Appointed as a "MEANS OF REVEALING" the Gospel? .... Unified Believers

CONSIDER PAUL'S FREQUENT ADMONITIONS TO THE CHURCH

Phil 2:14-16 Do all things without grumbling or questioning, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life

**1Tim 3:14 - 4:16**

**Eph 5**

**2Tim 2:14ff; 3:1-8; 4:9ff**

*What Am I Saying in "SIGNING"*

- *"I'm Committed to Live My Life for the Glory of God"*
- *"I'm Committed to Do My Part so that the World May Know Him"*