



# The Secret Place of the Most High

Restoring the Presence of God in Our Lives

From the elders

# Agenda

*A report unlike any we've done before*

- The Lord is watching his churches
- Bay Area Church of Christ: has it changed you?
- Where we are
- What's next?

# Introduction

- This is not a recap of what's going on.
- There is a lot going on. We think that's great.
- Be a bulletin reader and you will know a lot more
- The elders want to communicate with the congregation.
- This will be a different kind of communication.

# The Lord is watching His churches

Letters to the angels  
of the churches in Revelation

Ephesus  
Smyrna  
Pergamum  
Thyatira  
Sardis  
Philadelphia  
Laodicea

# Ephesus

- your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance
- you cannot tolerate wicked men
- endured hardships
- not grown weary
- you have forsaken your first love--repent
- overcome and receive right to eat of the tree of life

# Smyrna

- afflictions and poverty
- yet, you are rich
- you will be persecuted
- overcome, and you will not be hurt by the second death

# Pergamum

- you live where Satan has his throne, yet you remain true
- but you have people who hold to Balaam's teaching
- repent or I will fight against them
- overcome, and receive hidden manna, and a white stone with a new name

# Thyatira

- your love, faith, service, perseverance, and doing more now than at first
- but you tolerate Jezebel—teaching that led to sexual immorality
- I search hearts and minds
- I will repay each according to his deeds
- hold on to what you have until I come
- overcome and do my will to the end, and I will give authority over the nations

# Sardis

- you have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.
- wake up. strengthen what remains
- I have not found your deeds complete
- remember what you received, ...obey it ...repent
- some there are worthy
- overcome, and be dressed in white, name in the book of life, will acknowledge your name before my father and his angels

# Philadelphia

- I know your deeds
- you have little strength, but you've kept my word, not denied my name
- you kept my command to endure patiently
- I will keep you from the hour of trial
- hold on to what you have
- overcome, and I will make you a pillar in the temple of God, I will write on you the name of the city of God and my new name

# Laodicea

- you are neither cold nor hot
- I am about to spit you out of my mouth
- you say, “I am rich,” but you are wretched
- buy gold refined in the fire and white clothes to wear, salve to put on your eyes so you can see
- I rebuke and discipline those I love. Be earnest and repent
- overcome, and sit with me on my throne

# To the Churches

- I know your deeds
- I search your hearts
- I know where you live
- I am pleased with your devotion
- Your unfaithfulness will have consequences
- I discipline those I love
- I greatly reward those who OVERCOME!

# Make it personal

- What has this church meant in your life?
- What are your best memories?
- How have you changed?

# Our Best Memories

- Many great teachers and preachers
- Love in action, *countless* selfless acts of kindness involving sacrifice--for someone who needed it
- Great moments in the life of the church
- Prayers answered by God in His way
- Great trials, great victories
- Good works that are hidden

- Have you been touched by these blessings?

# Do you have memories of...

- Foyer fellowship
- Dinner on the grounds
- Financial seminars
- Teen devos
- Tim, Aurelio, Chad, Tom
- CIA mission trips
- Lord's Supper talks
- Vacation Bible School
- Deacons
- Teen work camps
- Helping orphans in Guyana
- Humans vs. Zombies
- Alex's Restoration class
- Mt. Dora and EEM dinners
- Cantatas
- Reaching out to lepers in India
- Men's Retreats
- Women's Retreats
- CIA lunches
- Baptisms
- 2-Mile Ministry
- Door-Knocking
- Over 9,000 prayer requests on Vital Concern since 2003

# Do you have memories of...

- Small groups
- CIA Picnics
- Honoring graduates
- Dinner on the grounds
- The Yellow Book
- Old picture directory
- Raul and Who Jesus Is
- Prayers for Paul Price, Gary Lambrecht, Dale Larson, Jim Perham, Holly Haynes...
- Prayer and fasting
- Funerals
- Meals for sick
- Weddings
- Friday night men's prayer
- Dinner with the elders
- Teacher appreciation banquets
- Lads to leaders
- Military table
- Greeters at the door
- Work days, building repairs
- Weeks at Bible camp
- Teen tubing trips
- SonQuest
- Lads to Leaders

How have you been changed?  
Can you say, this church is where...

- I met Jesus.
- I learned about eternal life.
- I learned to search out what the Bible really teaches.
- I learned how to *love* God.
- I saw how important God's word is to me.
- I made a true friend.
- I began a spiritual journey.
- I led my family in the Lord.
- I was comforted in sorrow.

# How have you been changed? Can you say, this church is where...

- I saw God's hand in my life.
- I reached out to someone in need.
- I got weekly encouragement.
- I sang about God and forgot about everything else.
- I was struggling and someone who cared enough to help found me.
- I read my Bible, and I wanted to read more.
- I revealed some secret sins, and God lifted my burden.
- Someone cared enough to correct me.
- I chose to never give up.
- I learned how God answers prayers.

# How have you been changed? Can you say, this church is where...

- I learned to care about lost souls around me.
- I learned how to teach the gospel.
- I heard a sermon I'll never forget.
- I realized I'm a player in the cosmic battle between good and evil.
- I became less critical of differences.
- I became more concerned about what God's word clearly teaches.
- My understanding of God's grace grew.
- I found out what my gifts are and started to use them.

How have you been changed?  
Can you say, this church is where...

- I prayed for others, and others prayed for me.
- I was persecuted at work, but I didn't care.
- I shared in the joy of people being born again.
- I really blew it, but they forgave me.
- I helped a kid who was struggling.
- I received a card when I was having a tough time.
- I taught a new disciple to stay on course.



- But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

I Peter 2:9

- CHRIST is first
- Darkness to Light
- Sin to Righteousness in Christ
- Death to Life
- Orphans to Sons
- Lost to Saved
- All about embracing God's revolution in our lives
  
- HAVE YOU BEEN CHANGED?
- EMBRACING GOD'S REVOLUTION IN OUR LIVES

# Where we are

- We've been blessed by the love in this fellowship.
- We are encouraged and have joy because of the good deeds of so many here.
- We are thankful, very thankful.
- So let us not grow weary in doing good.
- But knowing **the Lord is watching**, let us be like Thyatira and do even more.
- Let us become mature disciples.

# Where we are

- We're not there yet; we still struggle; we're still growing.
- Life happens.
- We do what we don't want to do (Rom. 7).
- Sometimes we're just going through the motions.
- Sometimes the hurts, the failures and the disappointments are big.
- Sometimes we try to fix superficial differences and imperfections in each other.
- Sometimes we disagree.
- Sometimes we don't see the hurting around us.
- Sometimes we move away from God.

# Where we are

- Our relationship with this church will improve
  - *if* our relationship with God gets stronger.
  - *when* our relationship with God gets stronger.

# Where we are

- **So sometimes, we really need the presence of God restored in our lives.**
- In fact, we can never get enough of it.
- If we have it, we have everything.
- God is here; we want more of God.
- We elders know WE need more of God's presence.

# What's next?

- We ask the congregation to go with the elders into the *Secret Place of the Most High*, and *keep* going with us, and never ever stop.

# The Secret Place of the Most High

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Psalm 91:1 (KJV)

*Secret place (Hebrew, Cether): shelter, covering, secret place*

# Blessings for those who dwell in the Secret Place from Psalm 91

- He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.
- Under his wings you will find refuge.
- His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day
- A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.
- No harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.
- You will call upon him, and he will answer you; he will be with you in trouble, he will deliver you and honor you.

# Why?

- So that the Lord builds this house

Unless the Lord builds the house,  
its builders labor in vain.” Ps. 127:1

# Where is this place?

- Where is the Secret Place of the Most High, the place where God is and He communes with us?
- Let's start in the Old Testament.

# Where is this place?

God directed Moses to have the ark built as a place of meeting and communion with God.

**“And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee** from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”

Exodus 25:22

# Where is this place?

**David knew how important it was to have the presence of God in Israel.** Its absence was a crucial problem during the tumultuous reign of Saul.

He [David] then said to the whole assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you and if it is the will of the LORD our God, let us send word far and wide to the rest of our brothers throughout the territories of Israel, and also to the priests and Levites who are with them in their towns and pasturelands, to come and join us.

**Let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we did not inquire of it during the reign of Saul."**

I Chronicles 13

# Where is this place?

David's joy was unbridled when the ark was brought back. Since God was now present in the way he had prescribed for Israel, David led much singing, dancing, praising and sacrificing.

“As the ark of the covenant of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David dancing and celebrating, she despised him in her heart.”

I Chronicles 15:29

# Psalm 139

Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I make my bed in the depths, [a] you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle on the far side of the sea,

even there your hand will guide me,  
your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me  
and the light become night around me,"

even the darkness will not be dark to you;  
the night will shine like the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.

# Where is it now?

- God is everywhere.
- Jesus is with us always until the end (Matt. 28:20)
- He is not far from each one of us (Acts 17:27)
- The Spirit of Christ dwells in us (Rom. 8:9).
- The Lord is there when we gather in his name (Matt 18:20).
- We are seated with Him in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6)
- We can enter the Most Holy Place with confidence (Heb 10:19-22).
- We can be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
- So in Christ, the presence of God waits for us to draw near.

# The way is open

The way to the Most Holy Place is open to us.

Therefore, brothers, since **we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place** by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,

and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Hebrews 10:19-22

# How do we know the way?

- The moment we were baptized into Christ, we entered the Secret Place of the Most High.
- It just takes time for us to recognize we are there, and what kind of place it is.
- And to learn how to abide there.
- It's part of mature discipleship that we can't miss.

# How to abide in the Secret Place of the Most High

- Like Elijah, we need to find God in the stillness.
  - Not in the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a still, small voice.
- Hebrews says to draw near to God “with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith”
- His Word should fill us
- We need to wait on Him
- Jesus went there again and again in prayer
- Each of us must find it
- God will commune in His way with each; we should not expect uniformity or compare with others.

# What this will look like

- We will search the scriptures
- We will *ask for hunger and thirst* for God's presence. (We know He will grant this, because it is according to His will.)
- We will hardly do anything without prayer
- We will seek His kingdom first
- We will long for God day and night
- We will always walk in His presence
- Some are already there—WONDERFUL!

# Then what?

- Whatever God wills
  - In us
  - Through us
  - Around us
- Glory to God!

# What we can leave with today

- A call to a deeper relationship in our lives
- A commitment that the elders will lead in this way and in this direction
- An idea that should grow more important in our conversations at Bay Area Church of Christ
- A concept to search out in scripture
- A challenge to pride
- A strategy for your alone-with-God time
- A way to live conscious of His presence
- A holy habit to learn—always returning to Him—whether for an hour or just a moment
- A lifeline in times of trial

# What we can walk away with today

- Our updated strategic plan: pray more, rely more on God to direct our steps, and keep working on His plan
- Because of God's promises to those that dwell in the secret place of the Most High.

That's more and better than anything  
we could devise or achieve.

Lord, help us to find and continually restore  
your presence in our lives.