

December 30, 2018 – Elmont Baptist Church

Message Series: Stand Alone Message

What if?

Text: Ephesians 3:20 and Multiple

2019 is a big year for my family personally, and this church family together. Personally if the Lord allows, I'll complete my 10th year as pastor of this incredible church known as Elmont. Amy and I will celebrate 20 years of marriage. We will have a daughter start her senior year of high school. We will welcome foster children into our home. 2019 is a big year!

For us together as Elmont it's a big year. If the Lord allows, we will celebrate our 150th Anniversary of being a Gospel light in this community. We are planning some great celebrations throughout the year to remember with great thanksgiving the incredible faithfulness of so many over the decades and your faithfulness now. Our Forward in Faith team will continue their work to help us best plan for growth with our facilities and most likely present that plan to you in the fall. We look to invest in our staff and add necessary pieces to grow even more effectively and efficiently into 2019 and beyond that.

As I looked back at 2018, I've even more excited about 2019. We had more people become family members in 2018 than ever before in recent history. That's 20 families comprised of 63 individuals coming and making Elmont their home church. Over the past nine years 131 families, or 428 people, have done that. Counting today's baptism, we celebrate 13 baptisms this year, which is double the national average, and a total of 100 baptisms since Jan of 2010.

As incredible as this past year has been and the past nine years have been, I can't help but think ahead and wonder what all God is going to lead us through in the days ahead.

I know we are proposing some big changes and with big changes there are lots of questions. We have answered the most asked questions, and have given many opportunities to have any other questions answered. Here's what I need you to know - naturally, I'm not a great risk taker. I don't often try exotic foods or even care to travel too extensively, in case they only have strange foods. Usually my "what if's?" are asked in the negative – "what if this goes badly?" "What if this doesn't work out?" I'm not a pessimist, but am naturally a planner and rather conservative in my planning. But as I read the Scriptures, and Christian history, I see a different "What if?" mentality. It's "What if God wants to do more?" "What if God's plan is bigger?" And so, my personal challenge is to begin to ask these questions of my own life and

then help lead this faith family to ask these kinds of "What if's?" rather than the ones we often ask. So as we wrap up 2018 and think ahead into 2019 my ask of you is...

What if Each of Us Strive to be a church that is effectively...

✓ **Caring as Family – "one another's"**

- **The primary activity of the church**
- **Evidence of loving Jesus**
- **Promotes unity, love, and humility**

100 times in 94 verses in the New Testament it says "one another". Right at 60 of these are for the entire church. About one-third have to do with unity, about one-third with love, and about 15% with humility or putting others first. More than anything else we are called to do as followers of Jesus, we are called to do, with and for one another. This is why you can't have a church-less version of following Jesus. The primary activity of the church is living out these one another's with and for each other.

✓ **Equipping in Christ – 1 John 3:23, Eph 4:11-15; Col 2:6-7**

- **So you can love Jesus more**
- **So you can care for one another better**
- **So you don't wander from the faith**

Great example of the difference equipping can make is with our Explore Membership process. Before Explore membership we kept only about 48% of those that placed membership with us. Since we've begun equipping people to understand what membership means at Elmont through Explore Membership, we have seen over 83% stay active and connected in their membership commitment. Equipping matters! We need to better understand our faith and how to keep growing in loving Jesus and one another. If 1 John 3:23 is the goal of the Christian life, then we have to find ways to help each of you live this out more and more. It's never, "I'm doing this well enough", but rather we thank God for what He has done in us to change us, but we ask Him to grow us deeper in loving Him and loving people.

✓ **Proclaiming the Gospel – Matt 28:18-20; 1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17**

- **Because of God's love**
- **Because of Christ's command**

We do this through mission efforts we support and embark upon. We need to this better by equipping and training people in evangelism and missions, and then giving them opportunities to live out that training. Each of you can be a part of that in going, sending, and/or praying. Proclaiming isn't just mission trips and door to door evangelism, but meal to meal. Each one of us can be a part of this by how you eat, and speak, and live, and hunt, and fish, and work, and play, and in all you do. When more and more of your daily activities are done to bring glory to God from a heart that is satisfied in Him, you will be more aware and effective in proclaiming with your words the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thinking it Through...

- ✓ **What are three things you are thankful for in 2018 and three things you're asking God to accomplish in 2019?**
- ✓ **Do you desire to grow through being equipped in Christ for ministry?**
- ✓ **Are more and more desires of your heart and activities of your life done for the glory of God?**

1 John 3:23

23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

Ephesians 4:11-15

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

Colossians 2:6-7

6 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

1 Corinthians 10:31

31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Colossians 3:17

17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.