

I Am Convinced – OCC 2018

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, November 19, 2017

Main Theme – Examining vital themes related to Operation Christmas Child on our OCC Sunday.

WORSHIP & PRAYER

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Upcoming Events (Regular)**
 - Men's Ministry – Saturday AM, December 8, from 9–10am
 - Women's Ministry – Tuesday, December 11, from 6:30–8pm
 - Please See 'Bulletin' for Further Details of Ongoing Ministries

- **Upcoming Events (Special)**
 - OCC National Collection Week – November 12–19 (Tomorrow is Our Final Day)

Following service, we will need help bringing these shoeboxes downstairs for packaging, etc. Please pray for a safe journey today, as all of the shoeboxes (up here and down stairs) will be transported to Shrewsbury. From there they will go to the Distribution Center in Baltimore (and from there all over the world)!

- **Upcoming Events (Holiday)**
 - CYC Christmas Play – Friday Evening, December 21 (Time Yet To be Announced)

- **Upcoming Events (New Ministry)**
 - New Creations – Ministry Starting Wednesday, November 28 (6:30pm) **PRAYER...**

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work
 -Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

PASTORAL THANKSGIVING

I would be remiss if I failed to take a moment to THANK this assembly. Thank you for the recent Pastor Appreciation Day. Thank you for the cake, the card, all of your encouraging words and the more-than-generous gift. You make my ministry a joy, and you have always shown such kindness to me and my wife.

Thank you for ten years of service (where did the time go?). May the Lord bring forth many, many more years of fruitful ministry and connection! THANK YOU!

OCC PRESENTATION

Today is OCC Sunday! This is the day the shoeboxes are due. Allow me to say TY to many ppl:

- Thank you to Ruth D. for your leadership, diligence and vision
- Thank you to the CYC workers, children and youth (packing party)
- Thank you to the volunteers who served at our Drop-Off Ctr. this year
- Thank you to individuals and families who worked to lov. pack shoeboxes
- Thank you to those ind. and families who financially contributed to OCC 2018

Our combined efforts have helped to make this a tremendous year! Total number of boxes?

At this time, I want to pray over these boxes. Ruth – would you join me up front, please?
I'd also like to invite all of the children up to lay a hand on these boxes as we pray. **PRAYER**

NOTE – CHILDREN TO REMAIN IN SERVICE FOR THANKSGIVING MESSAGE 2018 (SET THE BAR...)

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-OPENING REMARKS-

As always it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these weekly moments of worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you today (particularly on this joyous OCC Sunday). Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

This morning I would like to open with an EXTENDED VIDEO CLIP (compilation of 2 videos):

Video 1 – Considering OCC from a MACRO perspective (growth of global ministry over 25 years)

Video 2 – Considering the ‘transformative’ impact OCC/The Gospel has had from a MICRO level

NOTE – Let’s turn our attention to the screens for app. 8–9 minutes.

-SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1-

When you read the letters of the apostle Paul, he often made BOLD statements concerning his faith in the Lord, His promises and abiding biblical realities. I would like to consider a few of the statements of Paul that illustrate what I mean...

KEY – Follow along closely and hear the CONVICTION of this man’s faith:

Romans 8:35, 37–39 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? [RHETORICAL Q. – No one shall be able to...]

37 . . . In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am **persuaded** that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

NOTE – Paul had faced formidable natural and supernatural enemies over decades of service. Paul had faced extreme difficulty and duress (in service to God). But Paul knew that Christ’s love proved stronger (i.e., no ‘force/power’ could separate him from the love of Christ). Paul was convinced of the LOVE of God.

-SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2-

Philippians 1:3–6 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being **CONFIDENT** of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

NOTE (v. 6) – Paul lived with the conviction that God finishes what He starts. i.e., Paul possessed an abiding trust in the power of God to transform and sustain until His divine work is accomplished (according to His glorious purposes). Paul was convinced of God’s POWER.

-SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3-

Philippians 1:21–25 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 **CONVINCED** of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith.

NOTE – Paul longed for heaven, but he knew that his life on earth served to advance God’s kingdom/strengthen the Church. The Body of Christ still had need of him! Knowing that God had a work for him to accomplish, Paul committed his life to serving God and others. Paul was convinced that the Lord—and his ministry before Him—had PURPOSE.

-SETTING THE STAGE PT. 4-

2 Timothy 1:9–12 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

9 He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am **CONVINCED** that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

NOTE – Paul suffered greatly throughout his ministry (more than we may ever know). But he lived with the conviction that these momentary troubles worked to produce an eternal glory, which God worked to safeguard/guarantee. Paul was convinced of the glories of ETERNITY.

TRANSITIONS

KEY – In summary, Paul was Persuaded of; Convinced of; Confident of...

- God's LOVE
- God's POWER
- God's PURPOSES
- God's ET. REWARD

Q. BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU, CHRISTIAN?

Q. What are YOU Convinced of TODAY? Confident of? Persuaded of? "Actively" Assured of?

Q. What biblical promises, principles or abiding realities UNDERGIRD your life of faith in God?

KEY – Do NOT dismiss these questions lightly. They must be considered, for your answers give shape and direction to nearly every facet of life and living (as they did for Paul). Do you wish to tap into the life and life to the full Christ offers (and Paul experienced)? It is going to require a deep, abiding and ever-increasing set of CONVICTIONS.

NOTE – BORNE OF what we witnessed in these VIDEOS, I would like to identify some convictions worthy of consideration. These are points that I think we should ALL reflect upon (i.e., things we should become convinced of; persuaded of; confident of and more). These are things I am 'going deeper' in (personal level).

LET'S DELVE IN.

POINT 1

POINT 1 – The SOVEREIGNTY of God

Q. To What Degree are we CONVINCED of the SOVEREIGNTY of God?

Q. What is the sovereignty of God? What does it mean that God is ‘sovereign’?

NOTE – If you were to look up the word ‘sovereign’ in the dictionary, you would find words and phrases like “superior,” “greatest,” “supreme in power and authority,” “rule,” and more. But the way I like to think of God’s sovereignty is simply that, “God is in CONTROL.”

This speaks to the fact that there is NOTHING that happens in the universe that is outside of God’s influence and authority. It speaks to the fact that God is at work, ORCHESTRATING circumstances and events in accordance with His will. Though it is beyond our complete understanding, even the schemes of Satan and the sinfulness of man operate within the bounds of God’s permitted will [cf. the Book of Job; Betrayal of Judas, etc.].

KEY – God’s sovereignty is particularly COMFORTING to those in Christ. Consider the following...

Romans 8:28 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

28 And we know that in **ALL** things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

NOTE – Consider the sovereignty of God on DISPLAY in the VIDEOS we saw.

1) At the MACRO level (VIDEO 1)...

Consider the sovereignty of God in orchestrating the establishment, development and furtherance of OCC over the course of 25 years. Consider all of the variables that had to be in place for such a ministry to exist/develop (call of God, financial provision, open doors of favor, etc.). Consider all of the ‘coincidences’ that likely took place over the years that were NOT ‘coincidences’ at all!

2) At the MICRO level...

Consider the reality that God orchestrated events in such a way that a 9-year old Yulia received the exact box that she did, packed by the right person, at the right time, and containing the right gift and hand-written message to melt her heart. What did it take to make this happen?

APP – Consider that God already knows where each of THESE boxes (along with millions of others) are going, and how many were packed by just the right person, with the right items, to impact just the right person at the right time!

Romans 11:33 (NIV)

33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

APP. Consider the reality of God's sovereignty in YOUR life...

Believers can live knowing that everything is 'Father Filtered.' i.e., Everything happening in your life is allowed by a God who loves you and desires what is best for you. A) If you are suffering by your own poor decisions, God is sovereignly allowing you to experience the cost of your waywardness. B) If you are suffering in service to Him (challenging season or opposition), He is at work to ensure that it will not be beyond the grace He provides. C) If you are blessed and highly favored, it is because God has seen fit to lead you into such a season. D) If you are fruitful, it is because God is the One who gives the increase!

Romans 8:28 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

28 And we know that in **ALL** things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Q. TO WHAT DEGREE ARE YOU CONVINCED OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD?

POINT 2

POINT 2 – The LOVE of God

Q. To What Degree are we CONVINCED of the LOVE of God?

Let's think back to the testimony of young Yulia for a moment (VIDEO 2). Consider—once again—the orchestration of the Lord in ensuring that the 'right' box was sent to her at the precisely the 'right' time.

Q. What drove God to sovereignly orchestrate this small yet transformative act? HIS LOVE

NOTE – God loved Yulia and wanted her to come to the knowledge of the truth, as He desires for ALL of humanity to be saved! Thus, His sovereign work. God's love moves Him to desire for ALL to be saved...

1 Timothy 2:1–4 (NIV)

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

NOTE – Let us never forget the love of God...

John 3:16–17 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

16 For God so **LOVED** the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Q. To what degree are YOU convinced of the love of God?

-It's one thing to say that God loves Yulia – it is another entirely to realize that God loves you
-It's one thing to say, "For God so loved the world" – It's another to say, "For He so loved ME"

NOTE – It always saddens me when I come across believers who fail to recognize how much God loves them. It saddens me when I talk to believers who are not convinced of God's selfless, sacrificial and unconditional love towards them. My heart breaks when people are not **CONVINCED** within their own hearts.

KEY – Child of God – Consider...

1 John 3:1 (NIV)

1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

QUOTE – "The love of God is such that He would have sent Jesus to die for just you."

Q. TO WHAT DEGREE ARE YOU CONVINCED OF THE LOVE OF GOD?

Romans 8:37–39 (NIV)

37 . . . In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am **persuaded** that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

POINT 3

POINT 3 – The DIFFERENCE WE CAN MAKE TOGETHER

Q. To What Degree are we CONVINCED that WE can work to change the world?

1 Corinthians 12:12–27 (NIV)

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

15 Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

KEY 1 – The HUMAN BODY is a singular unit comprised of many distinct parts. Each part has its own unique function and distinct contribution that contributes to the whole. When the human body works together in harmony, it is amazing what can be achieved! A truly wondrous creation with remarkable capacities!

KEY 2 – The CHURCH is LIKE a body. It is a singular unit (there is ONE Church) comprised of many, many distinct parts (people). Each believer in Christ has their own unique function and distinct contribution that contributes to the advancement of God’s purposes for the whole. When we work together—in harmony—it is amazing what can be achieved.

Q. Why do you think the Bible calls us to operate in unity and harmony CONSTANTLY?

Ephesians 4:1–3 (NIV)

1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Philippians 2

1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

John 17:20–23

. . . ‘may they be one as we are one’ . . .

Q. What can a divided church accomplish? (About as much as a divided human body).

Q. What can a unified church operating ‘in, under and through’ Jesus Christ achieve?

NOTE – Consider what OCC’s accomplished globally as each member works together (MACRO)

Q. TO WHAT DEGREE ARE YOU CONVINCED OF THE DIFFERENCE WE CAN MAKE (COLL/CORP)?

POINT 4

POINT 4 – The difference YOU CAN MAKE in this world

Q. To What Degree are we CONVINCED that God can use you to change the world?

-The preceding point emphasized the power a GROUP can have in this world.

-This point emphasizes the power that one INDIVIDUAL can have in this world

KEY – I was touched by VIDEO 2 in some respects a bit more than VIDEO 1. I love what VIDEO 1 presents—25 years of a global ministry. But I love the more PERSONAL touch of VIDEO 2. That one young girl was greatly impacted by the ministry/act of kindness offered by one person (another young girl across the world).

With a simple toy and a sincerely-penned handwritten letter, one American girl brought utter change to the life of a girl she never imagined she would ever meet. I am sure when she packed her shoebox she prayed, but she could NEVER have imagined what God would sovereignly accomplish with something so small.

One little girl CHANGED the world of another little girl, and Yulia has gone on to tell so many others about Jesus Christ. How many thousands upon thousands of people have been/will be impacted and even reached for Christ for eternity because one girl took the time to pack that shoebox some years back?

NOTE – She was used of God to change the world!

KEY 1 – AS IT RELATES TO OCC, please don't downplay the impact this small token of kindness may have. What if the box that you packed is destined to bring about radical change in a person, a family, a community, a nation! What if one day you get to heaven and you meet someone there that was reached for Christ by the box that you sent!

KEY 2 – Please realize that God can and does use people LIKE YOU to change the world all the time. People like you who are willing to become vessels of God and witnesses of His goodness and mercy. The issue is NOT can God use you, but rather WILL YOU LET HIM?

2 Timothy 2::20–21 (NIV)

20 In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. 21 Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

Q. Are you willing to be a vessel fit for the Lord's use? He is looking for one such as you!

Q. TO WHAT DEGREE ARE YOU CONVINCED OF THE DIFFERENCE YOU CAN MAKE (IND)?

POINT 5

POINT 5 – The difference the GOSPEL of Christ can make.

Q. To What Degree are we CONVINCED that the Gospel truly transforms?

NOTE – The apostle Paul understood the transformative power of the Gospel. He had experienced it firsthand. He had seen it impact the lives of others. That’s why he was UNAFRAID and UNASHAMED as a herald of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Romans 1:16 (NIV)

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

KEY – But the issue is NOT whether Paul was convinced. The issue is to what degree are WE?

Q. Do we possess a conviction that compels us to share?

Q. Do we possess the conviction that eternal matters are truly at stake?

Q. Do we possess a conviction that leads us to preach regardless of consequence?

Q. You know, we SAY that we believe that we are commanded to go and preach the gospel to all creation, for whoever believes will be saved and whoever does not will be condemned (forever), BUT DO OUR ACTIONS REFLECT THAT CONVICTION? What’s the evidence that you REALLY believe that?

NOTE – Let me reaffirm: the Gospel message has the power to TRANSFORM lives.

1) Let me take you back to VIDEO 2 for a moment. What truly changed Yulia’s life WASN’T the stuffed animal or the card. Those were means to an end, in many respects. What changed Yulia was the GOSPEL message she received through the shoebox and came to believe. The stuffed animal put a smile on her face. The Gospel will ensure it stays there for eternity!

2) That’s why we do THIS. That’s why—as VIDEO 1 noted—so many people labor to bring hundreds of millions of shoeboxes to the unreached corners of the globe. It’s because these are vehicles to bring the Gospel to all creation, that people might be saved. They are ONE means by which we fulfill Christ’s Commission!

Mark 16:15 (NIV)

15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

APP. – But they aren’t the only means! They aren’t the only time we must share the Gospel. Let us be a people willing to bring for the message of Christ—that MESSAGE which TRANSFORMS...

Q. TO WHAT DEGREE ARE YOU CONVINCED OF THE DIFFERENCE THE GOSPEL MAKES?

CONCLUSIONS

NOTE – They say that ministry is the *OVERFLOW* of one's walk with the Lord. Thus said, these are areas in which the Lord is calling me deeper. i.e., I am more convinced than ever of the following things:

I am CONVINCED of the sovereignty of God

I am CONVINCED of the abiding love of the Lord

I am CONVINCED of the difference I can make 'in Him'

I am CONVINCED of the difference we can make together

I am CONVINCED that the Gospel of Jesus Christ changes lives

Q. ARE YOU?