December 28/29, 2013

Living a Different Story

Numbers 13-14

Pastor Tim Bohlke

It's great to be with you this morning and really, for me truthfully, it's a privilege to be here on this stage with you this last weekend of 2013 as we look ahead to 2014 and what God may have in store for us as individuals, as families, and as a church.

One of the things we love to do as a family during the Christmas season is go to a movie, and at this year's movie there was this fantastic scene in it. The main character has been pursuing this famous photographer all over the world, and he finally catches up to him in the Himalayas, and there's this great moment that they share together. This photographer is known for capturing epic, exotic, incredible moments all over the world. And here he is positioned on a mountain face and he's looking across the valley to the other, and his camera is focused there. He tells the guy, "I'm waiting for a snow leopard to emerge." It's hardly ever seen in the world; it's one of the rarest animals in the world and even more rare that they'd show themselves.

A few minutes into this scene, a snow leopard, in fact, comes out and kind of gazes across the valley; it looks like he's looking right at him. And the guy's saying, "Well, aren't you going to take the picture?" There's this anxious moment. "Take the picture!" And the photographer leans back and says, "You know, sometimes I don't do that. Sometimes a moment's so powerful and so significant that I don't want to mess it up by messing with this camera." And in the next few seconds he just kind of leans back, and there's this beautiful few seconds of quiet where they both just kind of soak in the moment—a really cool scene!

It reminded me in a very different way of a moment I had earlier this year. I love music and love to go to concerts, and one of my favorite newer groups happened to be touring through Lincoln somehow. They were scheduled at Pinewood Bowl and ended up shifting the concert to Pershing. It was the Lumineers. We were at the back of the arena and partway through the concert they came up and hit their biggest hit, and the place was already loud but now it's going crazy, right? And the whole crowd just emerges and stands up! Anybody that wasn't standing is now, and hundreds of cell phones come out and everybody's taking pictures and recording. I mean, you could just see it all over the arena. And this is their moment, right? This is the band's significant moment. And the lead singer stops right in the middle of the song and says, "Listen, everybody," he says, "How about this? How about just for tonight you don't live in the past; you don't try and capture this moment for the future? Just be in this moment with us right now and just enjoy what's going on." Pretty soon all of the cell phones go down, and I'm just saying maybe mine was out and I put it in my pocket too and soaked in the moment with these guys.

Life is filled with all kinds of moments—moments that make us pause and just be in that—that are so powerful we need to be there—moments that bring life meaning—moments of significance. Sometimes there are moments that just are fun and make us laugh, right?

I don't know how many of you were here at the Christmas Eve service, but the worship team surprised some of us with that elf dancing video, you know, and just maybe some of our faces were imposed on the elves that were doing their thing, and this last elf did this kind of spin move. It was kind of ironic that that was my face on that elf with the story I was going to tell you this morning.

Several years ago my oldest son was playing basketball at Lincoln High, and this particular game was one of their last home games and they were playing against East. The gym was full—crazy energy, lots of fun. You're soaking the moment in as a dad, right? And a couple minutes before halftime I see two students heading my way from the student section and I'm like *Uh-oh.* They come over and sit down and say, "Mr. Bohlke, we're having this dance contest at halftime, and we're going to have two students and we hope two dads. And we're going to play a little music, and then we're gonna have each person individually just take a few seconds and give us their best dance move, and then the whole gym is going to applaud for who they think is best. That's how we'll pick the winner." I'm like, "Yeah, right…not happening."

So I dug in, but they were very persistent. And I had another dad of a player next to me, so I said, "I tell ya what: If John does it, I'll do it," just thinking *no way.* And John just looks at the guys and says, "I'll do it." (*laughter)* And I'm like, *Oh boy…perfect.*

So for reasons unknown to me to this day I decided to follow through and march out at halftime. The students go first and they, of course, kill it. I mean they're great and they do their thing, and there's loud applause, lots of energy. At this point I'm in a cold sweat, feeling sick, and I think my only play is to let John go first and he'll bomb, and then I can bring it home at the end, right? That's the best shot I got.

So to this day I have no idea what the man did, but within seconds the energy in the gym was at the highest level, and there was a standing ovation from the student section. The place is going crazy. I don't know what he did, but it was going crazy, and I'm as close to passing out as I've ever been in my life. *(laughter)* I'm totally blank on whatever I thought I was going to do, and the only thing I could think to do at that moment was that I'm going to perform a break dancing move that I've seen very skilled people do. And I'm going to go down on my back and do the spin and then get back up. It's gonna be great, and that's it. That's the only thing I can think of.

So the announcer comes on and says, "Hey, you all know Drew Bohlke? Here's his dad, Tim Bohlke." And *bam!* I went down on my shoulder, stuck flat on the floor right into my shoulder, hurt like crazy. And I was flat on the floor and kinda tucked up in the fetal position and kinda crawled around on the floor with my feet. *(laughter)* And I did a half-spin and I came in direct eye contact with my daughter who is in the stands, who had this look of horror and shame at the same time. In fact, she was here last night and said it was the most embarrassing moment of her life. That's how bad it was.

So there's moments like that—moments that stick with us—and that stuck with me for a long time, and it will be longer now that I've told you the story. Moments that stick with us. There are moments and decisions that we make in those moments that can affect the trajectory of our lives for sure and help us sometimes live better stories in those moments.

This morning we're going to take a look at two people who lived very different stories with their life. They lived significantly different stories. In fact, the decisions that they made and the moments they seized helped them live radically different stories than their peers. It's the story of Caleb and Joshua in Numbers 13. So we're going to take a look at that—and I obviously love stories. I think there is so much we can learn from them, and that's why I love movies and music and a great piece of art. And I love a walk in nature because I think there's always a story that can be told, and you kind of hear and listen and process it through differently. Sometimes the light switch goes on when you hear a great story, and you learn something different. In fact, that's why I

think there are so many great stories in the Bible, and we're about to dive into one of them, and why Jesus taught so much in story and parable, right? In fact, there's a moment where his disciples asked Jesus, "Why do you talk in story so much?" and in Matthew 13 we listen to his response. He says, "Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings come." That's why I tell stories—to create readiness, to nudge people toward receptive insight. So as we head into this story, pray with me and then we're going to dive in:

> *Lord, thanks for the moment. Thanks for this last weekend of 2013. I pray that You will give us a readiness in our hearts to hear and listen to this story in a different way, and I believe there's a word You have for each of us as we dive into the story of these two great heroes of the faith. Amen.*

So first, a little back story to this epic story: The nation of Israel has been in slavery in Egypt for generations, and God chooses Moses to go back and free the people. And through a variety of circumstances, incredible signs and miracles, God softens Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh, the leader of Egypt, decides to let the people go. And so Moses launches and leads this massive exodus out of Egypt for the nation of Israel. They come up and they camp by the side of the Red Sea. Pharaoh changes his mind, sends his armies after them to wipe Israel out. God sends a pillar of fire to hold the army at bay and opens up the Red Sea—literally opens up the Red Sea—and the nation of Israel passes through.

When I heard that story when I was a kid, I'm thinking *a few hundred people passing through, right?* We're talking about hundreds of thousands of people. This is an incredible moment! The sea opens and the whole nation passes through. The sea closes on the army of Egypt and destroys them, and this nation now starts to proceed on their journey to the Promised Land. They see God perform miracle after miracle, incredible provisions of food and water. And now they've come right up to the edge of the Promised Land. Okay, this is the place! This is what God has been telling them forever! This is what the whole thing has been about is they're coming right up and this is their moment to cross over! Are they going to believe God or not?

As they come up to the edge and they're evaluating what to do. Through a set of circumstances Moses picks the 12 best leaders of the day to go over and spy out the land. And keep this in mind: These are the best of the best—12 tribes of Israel, one leader from each tribe—the best of the best! Included in these 12 are Joshua, son of Nun, and from the tribe of Judah, Caleb.

So let's pick up the story, and we're going to read a little bit. It's Numbers 13. We're going to start in at verse 17. Feel free to follow along. I'm going to speed-read this a little bit and skip over, so just listen if you want to because we're going to get through this, but I think we need to have the context of this whole story to pull out what we want to from it. So let's start in verse 17:

> **When Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said to them, "Go up there into the Negev; then go up into the hill country. See what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong *or* weak, whether they are few or many. How is the land in which they live, is it good or bad? And how are the cities in which they live, are *they* like *open* camps or with fortifications? How is the land, is it fat or lean? Are there trees in it or not? Make an effort then to get some of the fruit of the land."**
> (*NASB, Numbers 13:17-20)

So the spies (verse 21) went up and spied out the land. Verse 23:

> **Then they came to the valley of Eshcol and from there cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes; and they carried it on a pole between two *men*, with some of the pomegranates and the figs. That place was called the valley of Eshcol** (which means *Great Cluster Valley* because the place was so rich and so fertile—just what God said it would be; it took two men to carry one branch)**, because of the cluster which the sons of Israel cut down from there. When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days** (and remember that significance of 40 days)**, they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh, and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. Thus they told him, and said, "We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit."** (Vs. 23-27)

But in verse 28, here's the thing, and the story changes; I mean the story takes a turn at this point:

> **Nevertheless…**

In some of the other translations it says, "The only thing is…" which I love. It's like, *okay, it is what we said; it is what God said; it's rich, it's fruitful, it's incredible, but the only thing is: there are giants that live there.* There are a lot of people. So continuing on…

> **Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified *and* very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there** (it's a very large race; the other translations talk about him as a giant)**. Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan."** (Vs. 28-29)

Then Caleb calls for silence. He quiets the people before Moses. So you get a feeling that this thing is getting into an uproar. Caleb calls for silence and says this:

> **"We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it."** Vs. 30)

At that moment that's all we hear from him. I mean, isn't that amazing? I mean that's all we hear. He's seen the same things as everybody else, but *we should, by all means, go up and take possession of it.*

> **But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us." So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of *great* size. There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight." (**Vs. 31-33)

Now isn't that something we can relate to? So these guys say, "We have become like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we are in the enemy's sight as well." Isn't that what happens when worry and fear set in? I mean I know it has for me. I can think of specific times in my life that the obstacles in front of me get so magnified when worry and fear set in, and it becomes almost

impossible. Probably some of you are in that spot right now where you just can't see through it. *How can I possibly get through it?* And it's a step back in perspective to remind us that God's in the story and, when we take Him out of the story, we become like grasshoppers, and the obstacles become like giants, right?

So continuing on here, we're going to go into Numbers 14, and just a few more minutes here to catch this story. Numbers 14, end of verse 2, the people say:

> **"Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" So they said to one another, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt."** (Numbers 14: 2-4)

Wow! Are you kidding me? After all they've been through, after all they've seen, after all their generations before them have gone through in the land of Egypt, it's easier to return to slavery than to fight for freedom? There are more of you in this room that could speak to this than I could, more powerfully, that freedom has a cost, right? I mean there's sacrifice. I mean there's loss; there's struggle. Freedom—and the freedom to follow what God calls us into and leads us to—is tough, and there is sacrifice. It can be really tough.

> **Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel. Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey.** ("We'll have them for lunch," other translations say.) **Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them." But all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Then the glory of the Lord appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel.** (Vs. 5-10)

After this moment comes this really cool, beautiful, relational conversation between Moses and God where Moses is advocating for the people and says, "Please forgive them again." And what ends up happening is the Lord shows up and says, *"I will forgive them, but what's going to happen is this nation is going to be turned back to the wilderness for another 40 years until a whole generation has passed that resisted and didn't obey me at this moment. And by the way, the spies—they're dead, except for Joshua and Caleb. They're the ones that will see the Promised Land."*

So there's this moment there again, and we're going to read this last verse where God is saying, *"I will forgive them, just as you said, Moses. But surely, all the men who have seen My Glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put me to the test these ten times, they by no means will see the land that I swore to their fathers. But…*" And the closer, verse 24:

> **But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it.**

And later we find out Joshua will be able to come into the Promised Land, too.

This begs the question: What was different about these two? What was so distinctively different that helped them rise to the moment and seize the moment that was in front of them? What was distinguishable about Joshua and Caleb—so different than the rest of the great leaders of their time? What was it? I'd submit to you a couple things this morning:

One is that you can see it in their words, and (as I studied that and you read more of the text before and after this story) these guys had great memories. They remembered. They remembered what God had done. They didn't forget. They didn't let circumstances in front of them cause them to forget. They had great memories. They remembered the stories of their fathers through the years and held them tight in their heart. They remembered what God did in delivering them out of Egypt. They remembered what He did at the Red Sea. They remembered that God came through again and again against incredible circumstances and with provisions. They remembered that He promised them, "This is your land, and it's time for you to take it." This wasn't crazy recklessness. They were just following God. *This is your land; it's time to go.* They remembered.

I can't in good conscience be with you this morning and not give us a time to pause and remember what God has done. Given this story, we have to remember. There's power in remembering. I'm going to give you a couple minutes to remember where God's story has uniquely intersected your story. But before I do that, I want to share a memory of mine over the last couple months that has given me great strength as I think about 2014 and where we're heading.

You've heard us talk a little bit about some leadership events we do for pastors and business leaders and different people—*Rhythm in Twenty* and *Rogue*. A little over two months ago we were finishing up a *Rhythm in Twenty* group for younger leaders from all over, in Colorado. It was the third time with these guys, and it was the last afternoon we were together with them. We gave them a couple of hours in the mountains, and one of the guys comes down and says, "Tim, I wrote something about what God's done in my life over the last couple years. I don't even know who that guy was two years ago, but my marriage was on the ropes. We weren't gonna make it. The ministry I was involved with, I was ready to walk away, and my faith in God was shaky at best. I was in trouble. And I don't even know who that guy was, but God has radically changed my life. And I just wrote something and I really wanted to read it to the guys. Could I?" And I said, "Absolutely. We'll gather them around." And he said, "And by the way, several years ago I was baptized, but truthfully, I don't even know what it meant at the time. Would you baptize me in the stream and just help me mark this moment?" And my first thought was y*es*, and my second thought was *this is gonna be cold.* It was cold! But what an awesome moment!

What you're about to see is this guy's words, his voice—his words that he wrote—and then it culminates in a scene that we caught on video when we were able to baptize him at that moment. There is strength and courage that comes when we can remember what God has done. So take a look:

Audio from Video:

> "It's been three years since I've been in this place. The rock that I sit upon is still the same, but somehow I'm not. I don't recognize the guy I was at the start of this. As I look around now, I see death, lots of dead trees, perhaps a symbol of what I used to be. But although I'm surrounded by broken, tattered, destroyed and dead logs, I'm not one of them anymore. I've

never felt more rejuvenated and alive. I've never felt my load to be so light. The Lord has shown me a new path, and it looks much like the waterfall—alive, free-flowing, refreshing and vibrant, rhythmic, peaceful, unstoppable. Year one of *Rhythm*, I came to this rock in Estes Park, the same spot, and I made sure I picked a place far from the river where I couldn't see it or hear it. I didn't want anything to do with it. It was too powerful. It was too hard to see something that powerful and alive when I felt dead. But this third year as I sat, I wanted to be a part of it. I sat in the middle of the river where water was flowing all around me because I now see myself a part of that power, that freedom, that rhythm. It's been a journey, but I wouldn't trade a minute of it. Now as I take the last step, I sense the horizon and I know another journey awaits. And this last adventure will be catalyst for this new journey. But knowing the Lord is with me, I will go wherever He leads, and wherever He leads I will follow."

There is power and strength in remembering. You see it in the words and the actions of Caleb and Joshua. And you see it in us as we remember the times God intersected with our story.

I wanted to read you something. I wasn't planning on doing this, but this week as I was preparing more for this, a piece of my journal that I had torn up and thrown away, this part kind of came out at me and was still in my journal. And I wrote it last summer before that happened. But I was discouraged. I had a tough stretch of work, and it said:

"The last several months have been tough—disappointment, discouragement for sure. This God thing is hard. I feel like giving up. I don't know if I'm ready for the four Rhythm in Twenty events we have this fall. I don't know if I can do it. Sometimes this God thing is just too hard."

And wow, am I glad I didn't give up! I mean am I glad I didn't cut and run like I felt like doing last summer. Now we've got this memory and many others that say God is at work. Keep going! Keep going! The sacrifices are there. That's okay. Keep taking the steps.

We're not done, but I do want to pause right now and give you a couple minutes to reflect on this. In the program you were handed coming in, there's a slip in the middle of it, and on one side it says "*Remember".* If you didn't get one of those, that's fine. If you've got a piece of paper, grab a pen. The ushers are going to come and give you a pen if you need one. This is what I'd like to do. In the quiet, just for a couple minutes, remember the time maybe in the last year that God has really made Himself real to you and write it down. What was the moment? What was the context? Where was it at? Maybe it's a few years ago. Whatever comes to mind, write it down and mark the moment here. So just take a couple moments and do that.

(Pause)

I would love to give you more time, and I hope you'll take more time around that question because that's foundational I think—you know, foundational to this story and foundational for us. It's a great time of the year to do it, to reflect back because there's power and strength in having a great memory.

Now what else about Caleb and Joshua? Well, they were willing to step out. They didn't step out in crazy recklessness because they knew what God wanted. He promised us all along, but they were

willing to step out. That clearly distinguished them from the others. And they had to know it wouldn't be easy, right? I mean remember Caleb's words here. He says (Numbers 14:8),

> ***"If God is pleased with us, He'll lead us into the land, a land that flows with milk and honey, and He'll give it to us. Just don't rebel against God. Don't be afraid of these people. Why, we'll have them for lunch. They'll have no protection, and God is on our side. Don't be afraid of them."***

What it doesn't say is there wouldn't be loss and struggle, right? I mean following God, as many of you know, is not always easy. And in this situation, as they would engage the enemy, and we see this 40 years later when they come back; I mean there would be battles. There would be struggles. There would be loss. There would be sacrifice. There would be families grieving the loss of their sons lost in battle, right? I mean it wasn't going to be easy, but it does say God will give it to us. He has promised us. They were willing to engage, and that clearly set them apart. They were willing to step out and follow God in that way.

Their minority report, so to speak, to Moses and Aaron and the people had God right at the center. The majority report—the 10 and the 12 spies—talked about grasshoppers and giants, no mention of God in the picture. The minority report of these two had God in the center. They saw the same things. They knew the obstacles; they knew the struggle that was going to await them. But it mattered not, because God had promised them, and God was at the center of their story. That was what made them different.

Last thing that's really clearly spelled out in the text here about Caleb and Joshua, and it's that they had a unique and passionate pursuit of God that distinguished them from the rest. Check out Numbers 14:24:

> **But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it.**

I want to read you another translation of the same verse:

> **But my servant, Caleb, this is a different story. He has a different spirit about him. He follows me passionately. I'll bring him into the land that he scouted with his children and he will inherit it.**

Caleb was different. He had a passionate pursuit of God that distinguished him from all the rest. His whole life probably led to that moment. His passion readied him for that moment to make this decision and try to lead out the people the way they were supposed to go. His passion readied him. His passion and pursuit of God readied him for that moment. His passion made him ready to endure the 40 years in the desert. As God said, "You're going to go back for 40 years in the desert and wander. The time is not right until this whole generation has passed." Was anybody more ready to be complaining? I mean, can you imagine? I mean, Caleb and Joshua's story here; I mean you'd understand it, right? I mean they said they were going to do what God wanted them to do, but no one else did. They were commissioned to the desert for another 40 years. Did they complain? You don't see any sense of that at all. What they did was: *God told us to do that, and we're gonna do it. Now God says to go to the desert for 40 years; we're going to do it.* Their passion followed God no matter what the circumstance. Their passion not only allowed them to endure those 40 years in the

dessert but to flourish. What we see later is some evidence of what Caleb did during those 40 years; he invested in the next generation. He invested in the younger generation and the nation of Israel, preparing them for their moment when they would come up to the Promised Land. So he flourished. His passion let him do that.

There's a scene in a movie awhile back, *The Perfect Storm,* where there's this tremendous storm coming from the north and a hurricane from the south—true story—it collides into this incredible storm in the Atlantic Ocean. And these lifesavers are heading out because there's a boat that has been lost in it, a small sailing vessel. And they head out into the mess—an incredible thing—forty foot waves, darkness! The waves are so high they're coming up and kind of hitting the bottom of the helicopter at times as they're trying to get them low enough so these lifesavers can step out of the helicopter and jump into the ocean.

What in the world possesses people at that moment to jump out of that helicopter in the dark, 40-foot waves below, putting their lives on the line—in fact, a couple of them died in the attempt? What does that? They'd been through the training. They don't need any more head knowledge. I mean they know what the mission is. It's not that. Passion gets them out of that helicopter—passion for the mission to jump into the darkness, into the mess, putting their lives on the line and saying, "We're going to follow you no matter what." That has distinguished Caleb and Joshua from the rest.

So as we look to 2014, I believe God is inviting us into a different story. I think by remembering, by a willingness to step out, by a passionate pursuit of Him, God is using this story of Caleb and Joshua to invite us to listen, to look, and to think about life differently and to live a different story going forward. For the vast majority of us that is going to be right in the place we work and live right now. But are there some decisions, some moments, some things to think about that we can seize and live a different story that will distinguish us?

So let me pray, and then I'm going to tell you how we're going to finish our time together.

> *Lord, I just thank You for this story. I don't have any words to add to it. Incredible! Thank You for the story and the testament in the life of Caleb and Josh and what it meant to us. Give us the strength; give us the time to remember the unique ways that You have met us, the unique ways Your story has interfaced with our own story. Help us remember. Give us a willingness to step out right in our workplace, right in our relationships, right in our family to follow You, and infuse us with a passionate pursuit of You that's different, that people will know it's different; it's distinguishable. Help us to live that different story in that way. Amen.*

So here is what I'd like you to do. We're going to take another time to pause. On the backside of that sheet is something else. This time of year typically in the past I've loaded up things I wanna work on and goals, and it's hard to get to them and sift through all the stuff. And a while back someone shared with me (and it was a huge insight) to start with a word—a word, a phrase, one step—that God has for you. It really started to change things for me, and I'd like to challenge you to just think about that this morning. Think about a word, a phrase, a step—one step—that you could take in 2014 to help live more passionately towards Jesus going forward. A word, a step, a phrase—that's it. And just kind of pray; send up a quick moment of prayer and just ask God, "*Hey, is there a word that would want to embody my life in the weeks and months ahead?"*

Let me share with you just quickly what, for me, came to mind as I was preparing this thing. Three words: Focus...Simplicity...Pursuit. So as those words came to mind, I started to just unpack them, and all kinds of things started coming from it and I had to kind of slow it down. It has a lot of implications for me. As I looked at the word *focus* and what it meant, other words to describe it: Focus: Bulls eye, center, core, heart, hub, nerve center, point of convergence. That has a lot of implications for my life in the months and weeks ahead. So, focus, simplicity and pursuit: That's what I want the year to be about.

So we want to give you some time. If nothing comes, that's all good, no problem. But I would like to give you some to really think about this—a word, a phrase, a step you can take in 2014. And by the way, I'd just ask you to think about committing to a couple hours to get around this in the next couple weeks as we head into 2014. This won't be enough time we're going to give you, but we want to try it and get it started. I know life is busy and it's hard to do. And some of you, you know, with families and kids, I would encourage you to let your wife go for a couple of hours. Take the kids and give her a couple of hours alone just to get around this stuff, and then trade roles. Make sure you get a couple of hours to really seek God on what He wants you to be about in 2014. So take a couple minutes; work on the other side of that page, and then we'll close our time together.

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