

State of the Ministry!

January 3, 2021

Dear Partner In Prayer Team,

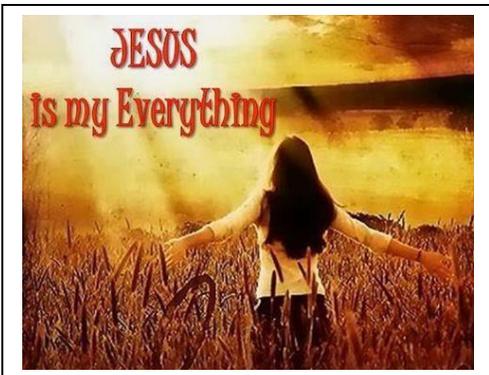
*"For we walk by faith, not by sight."
2 Corinthians 5:7 (NKJV)*



"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21 (NKJV)

"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness." 2 Peter 1:3 (NIV)

Are you ready to get to 2021? As I have talked with so many pastors and people in the community, I think the most important focus is on what is ahead for 2021. Christmas is over, and we are getting ready to start a brand new year. I trust you had a fantastic holiday with your family despite all the craziness with Covid-19. I always take this week and review the year that just ended.



You know what God has been teaching me. "Jesus is our everything!" And for the year ahead, He will provide and give us "everything we need to live godly lives!" As last year came to a close, I began to prepare my plans for 2021. I don't make New Year's resolutions, but there are several things I have been doing for several years that I will share with you. If the events of 2020 have left you feeling like you're in a long, dark alley, please take heart. Our God of impossibilities is still weaving His sovereign

tapestry to accomplish His divine will. Whatever dark alley you're enduring, Jesus is still Immanuel! He is still faithful to use our suffering to accomplish His bigger purposes. And as I review the 2020 year as I annually do with our "State of the Ministry," I want to share with you six ideas that have come across my heart.

1. What are my personal and ministry goals? I usually take some time to develop a short list of personal goals for the New Year. I have them typed on a 4X6 card and put them in several spots so that they are always before me. For this year, I am going to keep the same list as, quite honestly, with Covid-19, everything was thrown off balance. As I've interacted with various pastors in the area, we all joked about how short our business meetings will be this year. With the Covid-19 pandemic, all the churches across America had to drop all their ministries. When we do a year review of all that happened with the churches, none will be saying, "We've had a brake-through in growth!" All the new ministries? There will be none. All the existing programs and outreaches? Shut down. All the worship endeavors? Pulled back. All the youth and

children's ministries? Closed and put on hold. So it doesn't matter if you are a big ministry or small. We've all had our "programs" and ministries pulled out and we are all operating on bare minimum. So I asked myself, "If God knew that this would happen, what is He trying to tell us?" I have come to the conclusion that God is bringing churches all across our nation to ask themselves, "Are we doing everything we are supposed to be doing?" Ask yourself, "What if we don't return to normal church operations, what will happen?" Do we as believers know what our church purpose is? Do we as churches know what our priorities should be? In the New Testament book of Acts, when the church was scattered because of persecution, the church thrived. But what made churches thrive was not how big their meetings were, or the buildings they had. They were the body of Christ without the four walls. So I wonder, "Is God asking believers to evaluate if they know how to operate as a church without four walls?" It makes us understand we need to get back to the basics. If you haven't heard me say this since August, then you haven't been listening or tuning into our church online. So this year, my goals are:

- a. To make sure we love the truth, and the God of all truth!
- b. Fear harming the body of Christ, and forsaking the assembly (Hebrews 10:25). Do you know that 30-40% of churches are reporting a falling away or fall off of so-called "believers" from their churches?
- c. Ransack our hearts and get rid of false ministry motives.
- d. Remember that Palisades Community Bible Church is God's church. And He dearly loves this wonderful bride. He loves it so dearly, that Jesus is prepared and determined to make us spotless and pure before He comes. Scriptures says, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27-ESV). So as I make personal goals this year, they include things like: "Lord, I pray we see people added to our membership and be baptized."

2. What is the word the Lord is speaking to impress upon me this year?

Choose a word for the year. I have been doing this for several years now, and it is a cool exercise. The word I chose for 2018 was "Hope." The word I chose for 2019 was "Watchfulness". The word I chose for 2020 was "Impact."

Everything from 2020 was a "hit and run" type of year. We were so blindsided. I played around with several words for 2021. I thought about: "PREVAIL." It's a cool word and what intrigued me were the synonyms and opposites of the word. The synonyms are: overcome, conquer, be victorious, and triumph. Some other words connected with prevail are: abide, endure, obtain, persist, rest, and stand. Some opposites of prevail? Fail! Lose! Give up! Forfeit. I also thought and prayed about "UNSTOPPABLE!" I also thought a bit about "STRONG!" But the word that keeps coming back to me is "EVERYTHING!" First of all this isn't much of a word. These are the best synonyms for "everything," include: the universe, every little thing, aggregate, all, all things,

totality, and barrel, the whole schmear, the whole...!" What are opposite words of everything? "Nothing." So why "EVERYTHING?" Because God and Jesus must be, and are our "everything!" This is a perfect word for my life this year in light of my goals. I'd love to hear what word the Lord will have you use this year.

It is so amazing, so beyond the scope of how we tend to think about why things happen in the way they happen, and so different from the way that we assess our lives, that it is hard for us to grasp God's full scope of controlling everything.

a. The Bible declares that God controls the forces of nature. "He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; He puts the deep in storehouses" (Psalm 33:7). "Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are you not He, O Lord our God? We set our hope on You, for You do all these things" (Jer. 14:22).

b. The Bible declares that God rules human governments. "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for You judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon the earth" (Psalm 67:4). "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He will" (Prov. 21:1).

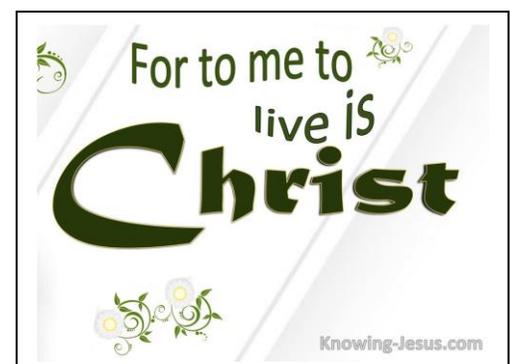
c. The Bible says that God controls the details of our individual lives. "And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place" (Acts 17:26).

d. The Bible declares there is nothing that is not under God's control. "At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him who lives forever, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, 'What have you done?'" (Dan. 4:34-35).

Therefore, during 2021 "everything" in our lives will be controlled, cared and planned for by our "everything-God!" God exercised His sovereignty over all things in order to set up the right time and right place for the sovereign Son to be born as a man, live perfectly, die acceptably, and rise victoriously. By sovereign power He assured that "everything" would happen according to the plan formed before the earth was created. By His sovereign will He continues to ordain and work "everything" for us. Guess what? "Everything" is working this year for His coming. I don't know when that is, but I am willing to do "everything" I need to do to be ready. Will you?

3. What are the verses then for our 2021 New Year?

I felt the Lord leading us with two passages of Scripture. First, "Jesus, He is our everything!" So the first verse for our 2021 is: *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to*



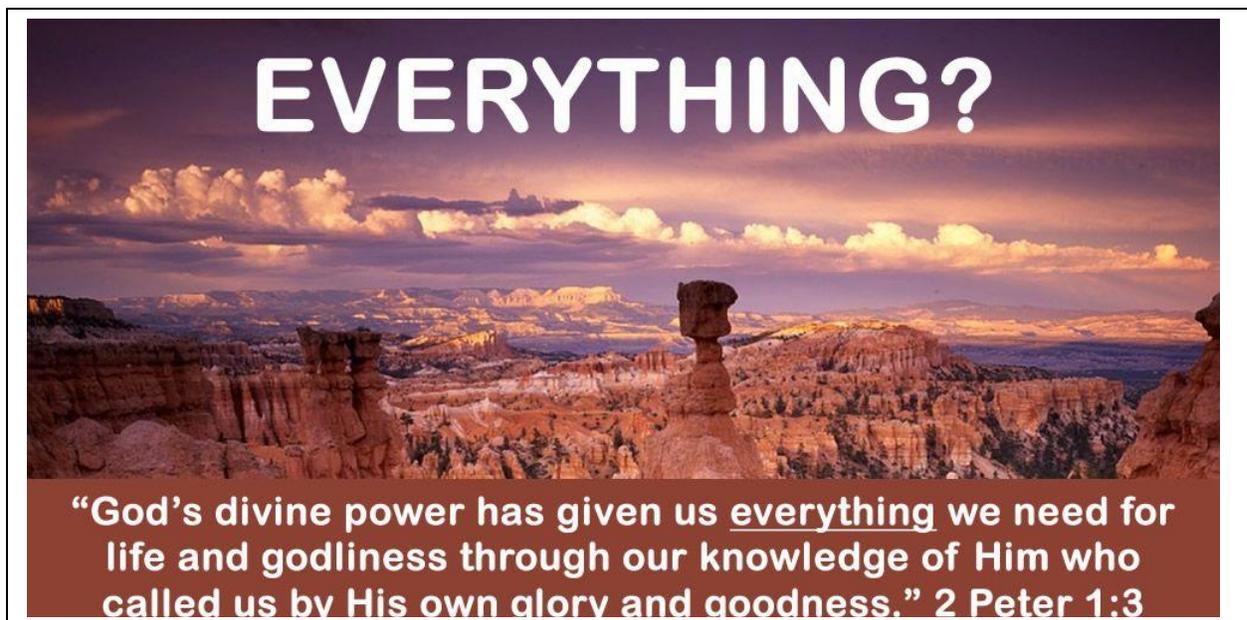
die is gain.” Philippians 1:21 (NKJV) Just like the verse from last year really came true “as we walked by faith”, I know that this year we will be saying, “Jesus is my everything, for me to live is Jesus!” I also copied some great other translations of this phrase. Notice the different emphasis that this little verse gives us.

a. Our source is Jesus: “For to me, to live is Christ [He is my source of joy, my reason to live] and to die is gain [for I will be with Him in eternity]. (Amplified Bible).

b. All that is important comes from Jesus: “To me, the only important thing about living is Christ. And even death would be for my benefit.” (ERV)

c. Our purpose comes from Jesus: “Christ means **‘everything’ to me** in this life, and when I die I’ll have even more.” (GW)

d. And hope for Jesus: “For living to me means simply ‘Christ’, and if I die I should merely gain more of Him.” (J. B. Phillips)



As I was reading and thinking about the Lord’s coming in these last days, I chose the second verse from 2 Peter chapter 1. *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.” 2 Peter 1:3 (NIV)* In this year to come, Jesus will give and provide everything we need as a church and as believers. In fact, I think this is the way we get back to the basics of our faith. By His divine power, the Lord has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of the one who called us by His own honor and glory. These two verses will be harder to learn, but I think we should make it our goal. There are six points I want to emphasize to be “Everything as a Church to be strong in 2021!” And I will be preaching them from 2 Peter during the beginning of the New Year. Here are our “six everything’s”:

1. We have **every grace** to live Christ!
2. We will have **every prayer** answered!

3. We have **every promise** for growth!
4. We have **every member** serving as ministers!
5. We have **every relationship** to live together! (That's discipleship).
6. We have **every hope** for these end times!

I also believe these six elements are needed to be a church! So we are asking ourselves not only do we live and do everything for Jesus, but are we doing everything as a church we should be doing?

I am starting the year preaching in the New Testament book of 2 Peter. Jesus was born to give us life. The Christmas story we just finished has all the drama of a death-to-life story, because the baby in the manger came to die in order to give life to all who believe in Him. If you have placed your hope and trust in the Messiah, Jesus, you know He came to give you life. But here is the burning question: "What do you think that means?" I think many of us have a strong belief and understanding in salvations past, the forgiveness we have received in Christ, and many of us have a pretty sturdy hope of salvation future. But we are not as sure about the present benefits of the work of Jesus in the here and now. I'm afraid that many of us have a big gap in the middle of our understanding of what God will do in this the now of 2021. Our verse in 2 Peter 1:3 reminds us that our past sins are forgiven, and yes, we have a future hope in heaven, but "everything" we need right here, right now is here! Jesus came so that we would have everything we need to fight the discouraging battle with private sin. Jesus came so that we would have everything we need to have a peaceful relationship with our angry neighbor. Jesus came so that we could stand against the temptations of racism and prejudice. Jesus came so that we could forge a marriage of unity, understanding, and love with our spouses. Jesus came so that we could parent our children with patient wisdom and grace. Jesus came so that we could face the realities of life in a fallen broken world without doubt or despair. Jesus came so that we would be granted not only the promise of daily forgiveness, but also the promise of fresh starts and new beginnings. Jesus came so that the hate in our hearts would be replaced with love and the anger in our hearts would be replaced with peace.

I love how Peter captures the "now-ism" of the work of Jesus Christ for each one of us. "His divine power has granted us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). With the heart of a good pastor, Peter started his letter to people who were facing hardship with a reminder that in Christ they had already been given everything they needed to face whatever they were facing. He said that they had been given everything they needed for godliness. How often do you ever wonder, can it be possible to really become more godly? Now what is this thing called godliness? Godliness is living a God-honoring life between the "already" of my conversion and the "not yet" of my final home-going. Peter knew how important and life-changing it is to know and believe that Jesus came so that we would have all that we need to live as He intended right now. Understanding and believing this will change the way we live. If we do not carry this identity with us, we will look to people and things to give us

identity. If we do not have Christ's hope, we will look for hope where lasting hope cannot be found. If we don't carry this assurance with us, we will live with unrest in our hearts. If this reality isn't the foundation of the way we approach life, we will live on a constant search for wisdom and strength. The ultimate fight, Jesus, was given so that you and I would have all the things we need to face all the things we encounter between the moment we first believed and the moment of our last breath.

But I want to say more. The right here, right now grace of Jesus frees us from those things that tend to capture our hearts and derail our living. He came so that we would be free from the power of:

a. Fear. Many of us are afraid of being known or afraid of honestly facing what's inside us. Many are afraid of the next year politically. Many are afraid of the Covid-19 and yet also the cure and vaccine. Here's the good news of the right here, right now benefits of the birth of Jesus. There is nothing that could ever be known, exposed, or revealed about you or me that isn't covered by the present grace that is yours because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We have every grace!

b. Regret. Many are rendered timid or even paralyzed by choices, failures, and sins of the past, and when we are, we carry around a heavy load of guilt and we tend to hide in shame. The right here, right now forgiveness of Jesus not only liberates us from the past, but also welcomes us to fresh starts and new beginnings. We have every great and precious promise to live on.

c. Discouragement. Many of us are simply overwhelmed by what's on our plates. We feel unable, and we think we are doomed to failure. God's right here, right now grace assures us that God will never call us to responsibility without also giving us what we need to what He has called us to do. Everyone in the body of Christ are ministers ready to serve Him.

d. Denial. Many of us are tempted to grab for peace by denying the dark things that are still inside us and the struggles that are outside us. But the right here, right now grace of Jesus frees us from having to play monkey games with the truth. Jesus words assure us that whatever we're facing, we're not alone and we have help that is way beyond our limited personal resources. He hears and answers our every prayer.

e. Desire for control. Many of us wake up each morning wishing we had more control so we could free ourselves from what we find difficult. The right here, right now grace of Jesus assures us that He is coming soon and we have every hope for the future. Our lives may be out of our control, but they are always under His control. I pray that we will learn that abundant life right here; right now where we live every day is ready for us. "We have everything in Jesus!" And He is our "everything!" Will you make it your verse of the year? "For me to live is Christ- my everything!"

4. Am I willing to establish my devotional plan for the year? Besides my Bible reading, which is a priority; I sit down and choose several devotionals to read through. There are several devotionals I have used for several years in a

row, but this year I am going to work through:
The Throne of Grace, John Bunyan
The Holiness of God, R. C. Sproul
Being a Pastor, Alistair Begg and Derek Thomas
The Power of Prayer, E. M. Bounds

We often don't know how God works on our hearts when we start to learn about other men and women of faith from the past. I encourage you to find some small books about believers. You may even come and look through my office to see if any appeal to you. I would gladly give you some, or let you borrow them.

Let me give you a great illustration of just what I found out about E. M.

Bounds. His name is Edward McKendree Bounds. He was born in northeastern Missouri on August 15, 1835. His father was an original landholder in the county seat of Shelbyville. He came to know Jesus through the teachings of John Wesley. By the age 24, he changed his calling from lawyer to preacher and served in a small church in the town of Monticello, Missouri. Note that he lived in a time of national crisis. During his years, the Civil War broke out. Even when he lived on the wrong side of the racial issues, he served as a chaplain



for the Confederate Army. He witnessed terrible bloodshed in battles under General John Bell Hood, and even served as a Confederate prisoner. After the war, Bounds found a small pastorate in Selma, Alabama. He was married in 1876 to Emma Barnet, and they had a son and daughter. His wife died after eight years of marriage, and he remarried and had six more children. Some of the children died in infancy. He served at churches and ministries in St. Louis, and finally moved to Washington, Georgia. Here he spent the final nineteen years of his life engaged in intercessory prayer, writing, and itinerate revival ministry. He typically arose at four o'clock every morning to be alone with God in prayer, usually praying until seven o'clock. E. M. Bounds died in 1913 at the age of 78. He was never known or published through his life. We only have come to know his books and writings after his death when Claude L. Chiolton brought Bound's nine books on prayer to publication. This is what Claude said of Bounds: "These books are unfailing wells for a lifetime of spiritual water-drawing." This is what E. M. Bounds said about the priority of prayer: "*The more praying there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil everywhere. Prayer in one phase of its operation is a disinfectant and a preventive. It purifies the air; it destroys the contagion of evil. Prayer is no fitful, short-lived thing. It is no voice crying unheard and unheeded in the silence. It is a voice which goes into God's ear, and it lives as long as God's ear is open to holy pleas, as long as God's heart is alive to holy things. God shapes the world by prayer.*" (*Prayer is a Keynote, Purpose for*

Prayer, pg. 11).

Loved ones, I believe this is the great way we should follow. All through 2020, our prayers have been heard and they will be answered. I believe that God is using our little flock on the rock for His prayer power! We need to keep being an “upper-room church of prayer.” I really believe our country is spiraling out of control in a “spiritual civil war.” I honestly don’t know the way out, but only that our American culture is on the precipice of a tipping point. We are killing ourselves through political-correctness. Great things that will happen in 2021 will be forged in the fire of our prayers.

5. Am I willing to keep a prayer Journal? I plan to be more consistent in my journaling. I have two journals. One is a daily journal that is just a short paragraph for my Bible readings. I often write a personal verse and application and record how God is working in my life in this first journal, which continues to record what God is teaching me in my life, especially as I learn the meaning of prevailing in “everything!” The second journal I have been using is a prayer journal. Every week I write down every person I talk to each day, by phone, text, or in person. I pray and write specific requests for each of them; I also use this journal to write my daily prayers for my family. Lori and I have made it our goal to pray together at breakfast. We pray about the day ahead. I encourage you to also start your day doing the same. So here is the benefit: when 2021 ends, you can take the last week of the year, as I did this week, and review all that you prayed and wrote about during the year. It will “blow your mind” about how we walked in faith. It will encourage you immensely! There is no comparison of how this exercise will impact you.

6. Am I willing to do everything it takes to get back to attending church regularly and in person? I know that this year has caused many to attend church virtually. But don’t get lazy. We can attend church during times like this, but at some point, we feel unfulfilled. Why? Because there is something to be said about the “gathering of two or more” in Jesus’ Name! There is an undeniable presence of Almighty God inhabiting the worship and fellowship of God’s people. Do whatever you can to begin to rejoin us. We are starting a church membership class soon. We also have new people responding to join. That is a miracle considering the year we have had. Also God has provided miraculously through this year financially. We have never been better off. Our giving increased through the Covid-19 pandemic even when the attendance has gone down. Isn’t that another thing to praise God for?

I would encourage you to take a few moments before this year closes out to choose one or all of the above steps in your life in 2021. Next week I want to unpack our new theme, the theme verse for Palisades Community Bible Church. Have a blessed end of the year. Thanks for being a part of our Partners in Prayer ministry. I am thankful for you! Please recommit to our prayer ministry. Don’t just read this letter from week to week, contact me and

let me know you are committed to being part of the church prayer team.

Pray with me for this New Year,

“Our precious God and Father, You are in control of everything! And You have given us everything we need. Help us to believe it! We do not stand in this New Year as Israel did in Sinai, or does a dark veil hang between Your face and ours, but the veil has been torn by the death of our divine Lord and Mediator, Jesus Christ. In His Name, we come to the mercy seat all sprinkled with blood. Here we present our prayers and our praises, accepted in Him. We come in the Name of Jesus. He is our High Priest. He is our righteousness. He is the Beloved in whom You, O Lord, are pleased. May our course through 2021 be very clean; may our path be very straight. May we keep our garments unspotted from this world. May we be very tender toward You. May we feel Your faintest admonition. May even the gentlest breath of Your Spirit suffice to move us. Oh, Spirit of God, dwell in us. May we see Christ! Oh, let none of us live a moment for ourselves, but only for Christ. Lord save the careless; save the sinful. Lord God the Holy Spirit, may faith grow in us. May men and women believe in Christ unto the saving of their souls. May their little faith brighten into strong faith, and may their strong faith ripen into full assurance of faith. May we believe Jesus fully, and may we never waver. Bless us Your people. May we rest our God and be quite happy in the thought that You remember our sins no more. Lord, bless Your Word throughout the world. Prosper all missionary efforts. And send Your ‘everything’ to the churches here at home in the States. Remember our country in great mercy, and may You give the blessing to all. Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly (Rev. 22:20). All things are in Your hand. Come quickly! The cries of Your people persuade You; ‘The Spirit and the bride say, Come’ (Rev. 22:17). O our Redeemer, do not delay. To the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, we pray be all glory forever and ever, amen.”

Living in light of “everything” we need,
Pastor Corvin <><

