

CHURCH OF THE HIGHLANDS

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# Higher Heights - Anniversary Sunday

[Full Transcript](#)

Mark Pettus  
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*Duration: 40:47*

## Celebrating 25 Years of God's Faithfulness

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- 0:12 This is crazy. It really is exceedingly abundantly above anything that we were asking or thinking. Before there were campuses, buildings, or services, there was a calling, a mandate from Jesus himself. On February 4, 2001, a miracle was born. In the first 10 weeks that we had church, 170 people got saved.
- 0:38 From day one, this church has existed to fulfill the Great Commission. Hello, I'm Chris Hodges, pastor of Church of the Highlands. To go, to make disciples, and to lead people to Jesus. God has stretched me and taught me in ways I never knew he could. My life is going through a tremendous transformation, because I just feel like I'm just getting started. Church building is where we're at. The trustees have located a piece of property. I can't hardly even believe that I'm standing here doing this right now. Dear Heavenly Father, we love you, dear Lord. We're just in awe of you and what you're doing here at Church of the Highlands. Here I am, Auburn campus.
- 1:18 Oh, I guess five days until service. Campus pastor slash tile man. One tile a day. Pretty exciting what's happening down here at Auburn. Good morning, River Chase. I wanted to formally announce we have hired Pastor Blake Lindsey. But we especially want to greet our newest campus, Tuscaloosa Highlands Montgomery. Watch Huntsville, come on. Today we launch our 11th campus. They just decided we can just get some people together. We'll start our own campus. An unauthorized Shoals campus began. Come on, let's welcome the Shoals, everybody.
- 1:54 Every small group. We experienced freedom. We became small group leaders ourselves. You can feel the power of prayer. Every prison. And Joe told me. Every day, I pray for you. That little statement, it really changed my life right then. And for 25 years, one thing has never changed. It's always been about people meeting Jesus. He brought me back from the dead. I was overwhelmed by this peace that I had never experienced before. And now, my life is really living. I felt I had no purpose. And now, I know that I have purpose. Me and my wife, we're pursuing the call of God on our life. This is incredible what God can do if somebody go all in.
- 2:43 I'm just so grateful that I get to be a part of this miracle. And through this church, I get to be connected to purpose and calling and mission. God is with us. I've never been so free in all my life. I just gave Him my heart and I asked Him to be my Lord and save me. By getting baptized today, I declare that the old man has died and the new man has died. has died. The new man has raised to walk in newness of life.
- 3:08 Every campus community has been built around one pursuit, seeing the lost found. When Pastor Chris asked who wanted to give their life to Jesus, I remember when I finally raised my hand and that was when I decided I'm all in. Give me a year of your life where you go all in. Give me a year where you do everything that we do. And he said, give me a year and I guarantee you, your life will change. And I just bought into it. I joined the growth track. I felt like the message was directed right at me. I was thinking to myself, man, I gotta have more of this. I gotta get more of this. And I knew at that moment, I need to give my life to Christ.

3:47 Because every number is a story. Prayer works and God can change anybody. Yes, Jesus is my Lord and Savior. That was that breakthrough moment. A family restored. My children, they do not see that struggling drug addict that they once saw. A life transformed. A life transformed. The answer is Jesus. He stepped in and completely transformed my life. A purpose discovered. I am doing exactly what God put me here to do. A soul saved. I was in a dark, dark place and God touched me in such a miraculous way. Campus by campus, city by city, Jesus has been changing lives. I want to say to both of you, I couldn't believe in you more. Pastor Mark and Jill Tettus.

4:32 We are grateful for where God has brought us. And we step forward believing that the best days of ministry are still ahead. If you want to know what the next 25 years are going to look like, it's other people who aren't here yet, knowing God, finding freedom, discovering purpose so they can make a difference. Praise God. Praise God.

5:03 Praise God. You can be seated at all of our locations. What a God story. And that video is very emotional for me looking back and just story after story after story. And I just got to stand here in the first few moments and the first thing out of my mouth in this message on our 25th anniversary is all glory to God. Come on Highlands. It is the name of Jesus, the power of God. And so welcome to our 25th anniversary celebration. And really that video is what we're here to celebrate. All that God has done. I want to officially welcome all of our locations, the Highlands family. We love you. Anyone joining us online or on demand.

5:40 And of course the men and women of our correctional facilities in Alabama and in Georgia. Come on Highlands. Let's put our hands together. Welcome our amazing church family.

5:49 And yeah, just thank you Jesus for this story. I just want to start right there. And then secondly, I just got to stop and say thank you to you, Pastor Chris and Ms. Tammy for your yes to God and your yes to coming to Birmingham, Alabama and planting this church. Can we honor our founding pastor? We love you with all of our heart.

6:07 And I just got to say thank you to you as well. This is the best church on planet earth. We've been looking back at values over the last few weeks here at church. Starting with prayer. Back early in January. Thank you for being a pray first church. Thank you for being a church that believes in the power of relationships. Thank you so much for being a church of stewardship, of generosity. And the miracle of Highlands is the fact that people come and they sow into this and God uses it as only God can. So thank you for, for believing number one, for worshiping God that way, but believing in the vision. And thank you for saying yes to purpose.

6:39

**Matthew 28:18-20**

*Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'*

7:02 Y'all ready for that? So if you have your app, you can open it up. If you want to take notes today, we're gonna start with a verse. It was actually in the video. you just saw from Matthew 28. Go ahead and put it on the screen, guys. A scripture that is known as the Great Commission. And this was the really, as Jesus was getting ready to ascend, this was the final instructions of our Lord and Savior. As he is, you know, as he was really empowering us to be the church, he was making sure we had clear vision on what it means to be the church. And this is what Jesus says again in Matthew 28.

7:33 Then Jesus came to them and said, all authority in heaven on earth has been given to me, therefore go. Everybody say go. Therefore go. So again, it's all authority has been given to Jesus. He is that name above all names. And then he's saying to us as his people to go. And we have a mission to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you. And now check this last part out. This is the promise. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. Beautiful clarification. from our Lord and Savior, making sure we knew exactly what to focus on as the church.

8:12 And I just love that last part. And honestly, the greatest miracle in the first 25 years of Church of the Highlands is God has been with us. And that is the greatest miracle, that God has been faithful. He has been with us. And he is a good God. And I know that's because he's a good God. But also, church, we can't miss this. We have stayed focused clearly on the Great Commission. And I just want to declare here in year 25, as we look towards the future, we have been built on as a church. We are going to stay built on as a church. That this is a great commission church. Can I get a better amen in church today?

## The Great Commission: Our Unchanging Foundation

8:45 That we will be focused on what's on God's heart. And so today we are celebrating the first 25. But in these next few moments, I would love to turn us as a church towards the next 25. Y'all do know that God's just getting started, right? Y'all do know the best is yet to come, right? That's, Jill read that verse earlier, that he can do immeasurably more. And so I want us to lean into that today. And in my heart today, today's kind of a doorway from where we have been, and we're so thankful for it, but to where God can take us. Philippians 1 .6, I've been sharing the scripture. It's just on my heart right now.

9:14

### Philippians 1:6

*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.*

9:47 And so today, if you'll allow today to be this over these next few minutes, let's let this be a refresh, kind of a day one experience for all of us. We were raising lights earlier, and some of you have been here for over 20 years. I celebrate that. I even see my friends Katie and Deborah Bowles right here on the third row, literally from day one. So many people who've been here. Others of you, this is your first day here. But for all of us, if we can, over these next few moments, let's let this be a fresh day one, and really to remind ourselves, fresh and new, be rebaptized in what God has called us to do as a church.

- 10:18 The way I want to do this is going to be kind of fun. So back in August, we did our first meeting for today. So we got together as a team, and we began to dream and really pray about what today would be. We want to make sure, really, we honor the moment. This is a big moment, 25 years in. And so we have a whole list of things. You'll hear about some of these even later on today that we wanted to do on our team. But we're going to do a whole list of things that we wanted to do on our 25th anniversary. But one of them that got put on the list was that 25 years in is a good time to really refresh your brand.
- 10:44 And when I say brand, I mean the look and the feel of Highlands. Even in the business world, it's kind of a moment where you want to take a look at all that. And by the way, this is something we have done over the years. Pastor Chris has led us through this several times. In fact, I brought a picture of our entire experience as a brand, kind of the journey of the the brand. You can see right there where we started in 2001, and then 2011, 10 years in, kind of refreshed that. And you can see the different colors and expressions of that over the years. I saw this actually on Pastor Chris's Instagram, and then I saw it in the video earlier.
- 11:15 I do want to just highlight, this was our very first mailer as a church. This got sent out to thousands of homes in the Birmingham area at that point. Can y'all notice something? There's a lot of purple and gold on that mailer. And I mean, he would say that's because that's the color of heaven, but we also know there was another motive right there. And so we have reached a lot of people
- 11:38 But anyway, so that's kind of a moment that makes sense. And so I, you know, this whole year, by the way, I've been learning everything on the job, as you've probably noticed. And so I've never gone through a brand journey. So I started asking around and everyone was like, hire a consultant. Obviously, this is a big job. You want to get some expertise. And Jill and I just began to pray. And I cannot, I can hardly even describe to you how it was literally like a word from the Holy Spirit that no one from the outside could really dig into the feel and the mission and the heart of the church of the Highlands. That it had to come from the inside.
- 12:08 And so we walked back to the team. And even though this was a huge undertaking, we just said to the creative team and to really the whole Highlands team, we said, hey, you know what? God's called us to walk through this process together. That this would be shaped from people who have heart and soul all in conviction here at Highlands. The team rallied around that. And honestly, it's been an incredible journey. Went way beyond a brand journey. It's really a chance for us to re-walk through the vision as a church. And that's what I want to do for you today. I'm excited, by the way, to show you the brand. Would y'all like to see the brand?
- 12:34 You're going to have to wait because I'm going to preach it first. And then you're going to see the brand. And then you're going to see the brand. And then you're going to get to see it. All right. But it all starts with our foundational verse as a church. This is where we got our name. If you're wondering where Church of the Highlands came from, we are not Scottish. It actually came from Habakkuk 3:19. The sovereign Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer. He enables me. It is through his power, his strength that we are able to tread on the heights. We say it this way. We believe God has a spiritual journey for all of us that takes us to higher heights.

## Refreshing the Brand from the Inside Out

13:06 God always has more for us. God always has a journey in front of us. And we get to take that journey one step at a time. So this is why I have on the stage today kind of four expressions of this journey, kind of these four mountains right here. And by the way, I didn't realize they were going to put a mountain behind me, which I'm pretty sure that's Mount Chehaw. I'm just going to go ahead and claim it right there. I feel very seen right now. But these four kind of mountains represent the know God, find freedom, discover purpose, and make a difference journey that God has for our church. That's the language that we put around really honestly living out the great gospel.

13:36

**Habakkuk 3:19**

*The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.*

14:03 John 10 gives us a beautiful kind of unpack. Jesus unpacks it well for us. He says, I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me. And that word know there, this is critical for us to catch this. It's not like knowing in our mind. It's not about knowledge. The word is actually a Greek, in the Greek, the word gnosko. Tell your neighbor gnosko. You probably just spit on your neighbor. They'll forgive you, all right? So it's not about head knowledge, church. It's about heart knowledge. That God wants to make sure we realize that this is about a real relationship with him. And I grew up kind of in a church that it was more about the knowledge, honestly, and it was really, salvation was more about a transaction with a church and maybe even like a new worldview or, come on, fire insurance.

14:45 But what God has for us is so much more than that. Even as we raised our lights earlier, what we're talking about today is knowing God in our heart. When he comes into our heart, everything changes. Can I get an amen in church today? And as a church, we can never, in these next 25 years, not even one day of our life, we can never lose the passion of just knowing God more, that we would continue, to experience him. I first got saved at 17 years old. It changed everything about my life. But I thank God here I am now, years later, and still getting to grow deeper in my love with Jesus. Anybody love Jesus out there today at Church of the Highlands?

15:18 Come on, we love God. And even our rally cry this year as a church is, we seek God first, that we would always stay passionately in love with God. It is not a got to, come on, church, it's a get to. But it doesn't stop with just our own relationship. We've said it this way for 25 years. We are not a church just for those who are here. We are a church for those who are not here yet. That is why we show that video today, that value of, and more people getting to know God. So if you're going to be around Highlands, you just got to know we're going to do whatever it takes to reach more people around here at Highlands.

15:51

**John 10:14**

*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.*

- 16:25 There's even phrases, you know, like mega church or attractional church. I even heard recently, the attractional church is dead. I'm like, what is the opposite of the attractional church? The unattractional church? I don't want to go to that church. And listen, I know what they're talking about, but listen, and that's not who we are. We are a church that is big because people need to know Jesus. Can I get an amen at church today?
- 16:46 That's what God's called us to. That's the bottom line. This is an expression of what God has called us to, and we're just not going to slow down. So what does that mean for our church? Well, I'm excited today to officially welcome to Highlands, our latest campus. They're meeting right now on the other side of that camera. Come on, Highlands, let's say hello to Prattville, Alabama. We welcome you to the Highlands. And that's actually a picture of them in worship earlier. Prattville, we love you and so excited for what's happening really in the whole river region there in Montgomery. Our new Dream Center construction is underway, and now Prattville, what a dream come true. But we're not finished yet.

## Know God: The Heart of the Journey

- 17:20 For the first time, I'm excited to announce they've actually already been meeting as a launch team, but our next campus is going to launch on March 15th in Peachtree City, Georgia, everybody. Yeah, welcome them. They're watching as well. And just such a God story. I'll share more about it, because Peachtree City has been a God story, and just so excited for that campus. We're passionate about reaching people here at Highlands, but also through other expressions of the local church. And I want to make sure you know that as a church, we are just as passionate as we were on day one about planting churches. We do that through the Association of Related Churches, which, by the way, have now launched 1,202 churches.
- 17:56 Highlands was number one, church plant number one. And check this out. And many of them will actually come and watch this service. These pastors are so connected here to Highlands. If you're watching, we welcome you. Ten churches, and they're going to be the first and they're going to be the first churches that are launching today. Come on, Highlands. Let's say hello to them. We love you with all of our heart. And we're also passionate about building leaders for the church. And of course, Highlands College is our expression of that. And to date, and this is because of a good God and your generosity and that of so many others, we have now placed 1,395 students into ministry who right now are serving God around the world.
- 18:28 We're passionate. Yeah, I mean, let's clap our hands. We're passionate about people knowing God, and we're not stopping now. What does that mean for us as a church? Like never before, church. I'm asking you to be a part of what God is doing here. And just being at church. You know, next Sunday, we're starting a brand new series called Loveology, where we're going to study really the theology of relationships. It's going to be an amazing series for us, obviously, to be at church, but also continue to bring friends. Every single Sunday at Highlands, we will honor God, and we'll create the opportunity for people who don't know Him yet to experience Him. And this next series is going to be a powerful way for that to happen.

- 19:01 All right, so everybody say, no God. But the journey doesn't stop there. We continue, of course, in the second kind of higher heights moment, the second step in the journey. And knowing God never ends, but as we know God, we begin to find freedom. Write that down today. And finding freedom is so powerful. It's when that we get to let go of our yesterdays. It happens when we get honest with God and when we gather in community. And this was something that impacted my life so much here at Highlands. James 5, 16 is a verse we've used to describe really the power of our small groups. The Bible says, Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed.
- 19:37 So only God can forgive us of our sins. Can I get an amen? But the Bible actually teaches that we'll only experience healing from that when we get into community. What a powerful truth. Small groups are way more than a different version of Sunday school. We gather in groups, and of course, we study curriculum. We study the Bible. We grow together. But the real power is the community, the fact that we are together. It's important for us to be in rows on Sundays, but during the week, we got to get in circles where we get to know each other and to make sure you know you are never alone. You are never alone. You are never alone.
- 20:06 You are never alone in this journey. So powerful. My life has been transformed by the power of relationships. But I want to lean in one level deeper, church, that in our generation, this idea of community is not just important for us. It's also important for us as we reach the world that God has called us to reach. And I've been studying the Great Commission leading up to this Sunday. And really, how is the Great Commission accomplished? I spend a lot of time just studying different scriptures. It's really interesting. Matthew 28, we read it earlier. You know, the only way we'll accomplish, the Great Commission is through discipleship. We have to learn to obey. And then we get to teach other people how to follow God.
- 20:42 Acts 1 .8 tells us that we need power. We got to have the Holy Spirit. But John 17 gives us another layer that I think can be missed at times. And that is the power, the evangelistic power of community. This is what Jesus says in verse 21, that all of them may be one. He's praying for us as his followers, that all of them may be one. Father, just as you are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us so that, look at this, the world may believe. When the world sees us in fellowship, we have something you can't have without the power of God. Listen, you can have friendships, but you can't have fellowship.
- 21:17 Fellowship is a Jesus word. Koinonia in the Greek, it's the power of when people who are filled with the power of God come together, we can only have that Christian fellowship. And it is so attractive to the world. Right now, the greatest epidemic facing our world is an epidemic of loneliness. Many of us feel that. I'm telling you, the world feels that. And as we show the world that we gather, again, to grow, to find freedom, but also just the power of community itself. So invite your friends to a Sunday, but I'm telling you, like never before, the front door of this church is also our small groups, where we invite people in and say, you know what?
- 21:48 You're walking through life alone. You don't have to anymore. Can I get an amen? And we bring them into that community. It's more important than ever before. Excited to announce today, of course, small groups are launching. We've been talking about it for weeks. This is not new information, but today is the day where all across Highlands, thousands of groups are launching. You can go on the website, you can

go on the website, you can go on the website, you can go on the website, or even better, the app to find the right group. And again, curriculum, all those things are so important, and we're continually creating more of that. But like never before, it's getting in community that's going to make all the difference.

22:17

**James 5:16**

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*

## Find Freedom: The Power of Community

22:49 That's the heart behind what you're going to experience. As quick as possible, we as a church team coming around you and whatever is going on in your life, the bottom line is we are better together. Come on, church, together we win. We know God. We find freedom. Come on, y'all know the third one. We also what? Discover purpose. Love you to write that down. And just like the rest of these, discovering purpose is a journey. And truly, it's a never-ending journey. And discovering our purpose is directly connected to our spiritual formation. And I want to share one scripture. It's from my favorite book in the Bible, Ephesians. It's from chapter four. It kind of paints a picture of this.

23:26 Put it on the screen, guys. Verses 15 through 16. The Apostle Paul is writing this. Really, this whole letter is written to the church. And he's basically, teaching the idea that maturity or spiritual formation, or we may say discipleship, or just growing in our relationship with God is critical. And it's a never-ending process. There's a beautiful journey that God invites us into. So instead, speaking the truth in love, what he's saying is the more you know truth, the more you'll live truth. We will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is Christ. From him, the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting ligament.

24:00

**John 17:21**

*That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

24:42 That the growth track is a launch pad for a lifelong journey of growth. In fact, we don't just attend the growth track. Come on Highlands, we live on the growth track. It is growth track for life. So what does that mean for us as a church? I'm really excited to announce this today, that today, the first Sunday of the month, we always have step one. Tonight, at 6 p.m. at every location, we are launching a brand, new growth track experience. And I am so excited about this. It's going to continue as always to help you get connected here at the church tonight. Step one, you'll have a chance to become a member here at Highlands and you'll discover your gifts over the next couple of weeks so that you can ultimately get on the dream team.

25:19 We'll talk more about that in a moment. But along with that, we've added some things that I think are going to be really important for you in your lifelong journey of spiritual growth. Number one, when you come tonight at six o'clock, and if you've never been, be there. And honestly, if it's been a while, be there tonight. We're going to gather at tables. It's a chance for us to get together. We're going to get together.

We're going to get together. We're going to get together. together. We're going to get together. We're going to get together. We're going to get together. We talked about a moment ago to immediately get into relationship. Every table is going to have a table host.

- 25:40 I'm calling them the concierge of Highlands. They're going to make sure everyone at their table gets connected and walks out of the growth track with clear next steps. And in fact, this is what we're so excited about as a team. Everyone who finishes step three will actually be in hand, be able to walk out with a growth plan spiritually for your life, helping you make sure you take those next steps that God has for you. And what's really cool, this is just the beginning, this version, just the beginning. In fact, we have new curriculum, new experiences around this idea of growth track for life that you'll hear more about as we move forward. A lot of, honestly, what I learned as the president of Highlands College.
- 26:13 Here's the big deal. You have my word. You can grow here for life. There will always be a next step here for you. And God has so much for you as you continue to discover your purpose. And here's the last one. This is what it's all about. We know God, find freedom, discover purpose so we can make a difference.
- 26:31 This is the heart of our God. I mentioned this earlier when I was referencing the Great Commission, but I want to come back to it. What fuels us to make a difference? Acts 1 .8, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth. Here at Highlands, we are boldly, y'all look at me Highlands, we are boldly a spirit - filled church. I'm going to say it a different way. You're at a Holy Ghost church. Why? Because we need power, not for ourselves, but so we can make a difference. And we're going to make a difference.
- 27:02 And we're going to make a can make a difference. And we're going to make a difference. And we're going to make a difference. So we can accomplish the mission. So we can make a difference. We ask the Holy Spirit to empower us so that we can be his hands and feet to our world. And for 25 years, we have called the Make a Difference Life, the Dream Team. And I want to honor PC. He's actually going to be on the platform in a little bit, in a few moments. But so many things about Highlands have impacted literally the world. And this is this language, Dream Team. In fact, all this language that you're hearing today, you'll, you'll go to a church in Europe and hear, know God, find freedom, discover purpose, make a difference.
- 27:35 And globally, you'll hear this phrase, Dream Team. And the power of this phrase is it changed a mindset from all of us. You know, there's just one pastor on stage, and that's the person who's called. And all of us are kind of just out there figuring it all out that we weren't really a part of it. When at the end of the day, it's always been in the heart of God. You're the minister. We're all ministers. And we're not, we're not volunteers. We're on the team. With God. And this is the Dream Team. The things that he made us for, expressing those through our lives has made a global impact. But I want to make something really clear here in year 25.

## Discover Purpose: Growth Track for Life

28:10

**Ephesians 4:15-16**

*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

- 28:44 But as we walk out of these doors, we continue to serve. God gathers us so he can scatter us across Alabama and Georgia to make a difference. Hear this from the heart of God today. You're a minister. You're a minister. You're a teacher. You're a teacher. You're classroom. It's your opportunity to make an impact and you're making a huge one. You're in business. You're a minister in business. You're an athlete. You're a minister in that locker room. Mom, you're a minister. Dad, you're a minister. Wherever you go, you're a minister. And as a church, you have my word. We will do whatever we can to come alongside you to make sure you have the confidence and the strength and whatever it takes to accomplish the mission of God on your life.
- 29:21 And together, we're going to make a big difference. Come on, in Jesus' name, we're just getting started. I heard a story. I want to share this and we're going to pray together. And I am going to show you that brand in a moment, the brand that I referenced earlier.
- 29:37 But I heard a story from our Woodlawn location that really embodies everything we're talking about and honestly who we are as a church. This is Sia at our Woodlawn campus who's on the dream team, a part of our worship team. But it doesn't stop with that Sunday expression of worship. This is what I love about this story, that it's the heart of God. It says, Sia is a member of our worship team in Woodlawn. She was recently in an Uber and invited her driver to church. Dream team every day. Nothing happened right away, but she didn't stop loving him or praying for him. Then a few Sundays ago, completely out of the blue, the Uber driver Jay reached out and said, I'm coming to church.
- 30:12 On his first visit to Highlands, Jay gave his heart to Jesus. And the very next week he came back and was baptized. That's the power of dream team every day.
- 30:24 Highlands, it's been an amazing first 25. God's just getting started. And listen, it is messy out there. The world is dark. It is crazy. But in the darkness, the light shines brighter than ever before. Esther 4 .14, these first 25 years for such a time as this. This is our generation. This is our moment. And Highlands, we are not stepping back. We're not even staying put. We are stepping into the higher heights that God has for us. Come on, know God, find freedom, discover purpose, and make a difference. Put your hands together if you're excited for all God has.
- 31:01 And Highlands, welcome to the next 25 years. It's going to be an amazing journey. Okay, so we're going to take a moment in the presence of God just to pray. If you would bow your heads and close your eyes as we reflect. I know that today's a vision, a little different expression Sunday. It's a vision Sunday. But I believe God's at work in this moment. And I want to make sure we create room for that. And maybe you are here for the first time. You've been here for years. But you walked in today and you've recognized, even as we talked earlier about knowing God, that you don't have that real relationship with him. You don't know him intimately.

## Make a Difference: Dream Team Every Day

32:33

### Acts 1:8

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

32:59 This moment is not by accident. And I'm so excited to lead you in a prayer on the count of three. If it's you, lift your hands. One, two, three. Come on, boldly put your hands up. Amen. Right there. I see your hand. Right there. I see your hand. Hand, hand. Right there. Awesome. All across the room. Right here in the front. I see your hand. Praise God. Put your hands down. I want to lead you in that prayer. Just pray this in your heart. Say, Jesus, today, I give you my life. I ask you to forgive me of my sins. I repent. And I confess you today as my Lord and as my Savior.

33:30 God, I ask you to fill me with your Holy Spirit. So I can live for you. God, thank you for those who just prayed that prayer. God, thank you for the work you've just done in their life. The old has gone. The new has come. They are a new creation in you. And God, we as a church bless them today and are so excited for all that you have for them. I also want to pray for all of us today. Even as we talked about the spiritual journey that God has for us, way more than a church, it's the journey that God has for us. To know him and to find that freedom, to get that freedom, to get that freedom, to get that freedom, to continually grow, to discover purpose, ultimately to be used by him.

34:06 What an incredible honor that God has called us to that kind of life. And today is a great moment for us just honestly to recommit to that journey. If that's you today, could you just open your hands in your lap? God, we come to you today grateful for all that you've done, grateful for who you are. But we're also saying to you, God, we recognize today there are higher heights, there is more, and we say yes to that. God, yes to knowing you more. Yes to continue allowing you to set us free. God, thank you that you've given us a purpose. We'll continue to, pursue that and grow in maturity. Ultimately, God, we just want to make a difference with our lives.

34:37 We say yes to you. God, we say yes to being planted here in this house. God, we thank you for these first 25 years. But God, we thank you for the next 25 and all that you have in store. We say yes to all of that. And we love you today in Jesus' name. And everybody said, amen. Can you put your hands together and especially thank God for those who gave their heart to Jesus.

34:58 All right, we've got a few more moments together. And I would ask no one to leave because again, there's more. It's going to be a great close to our service today. But we could not finish today without taking a moment. I could not finish today without taking a moment to invite our founding pastor and Miss Tammy to the stage, not only to thank them, but really to thank God for sending them 25 years ago in the miracle of Church of the Highlands. At every location, can we welcome them to the stage? Oh, come on, Highlands. Let's thank God for our founding pastor.

35:37 Come on, give Jesus all the praise, everybody. Oh, that's pretty good. Now give him what he really deserves, everybody.

35:50 Praise God. You can be seated, everybody. Thank you so much. We feel the love. Tammy and I love you so much. We actually went to lunch yesterday and sat across the table for about an hour and a half and just talked about you guys. We talked, we laughed, we cried, and we remembered all the great things that God has done. And I just want to say to you, we've thoroughly enjoyed these first 25. I was just sitting there, Pastor Mark, I didn't say this in the other services, but I'm planning on the next 25. I'll be 88, but I'm going to be here, everybody. The 50th anniversary of Church of the Highlands.

## Altar Call, Founding Pastor's Blessing, and Commissioning the Next 25 Years

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36:24 Don't count me out yet. So anyway, so I'm excited about that. We are. But you've been an amazing church to lead, really. You showed up, you prayed, you served, you gave. And I want to thank you for that. Every pastor has a dream of pastoring a church like you, and only I got to do it, everybody, because there's nobody like Church of the Highlands. But we do give God all the glory. We refuse to take any of it, not to us, not to us, O Lord, but to your name be all the glory. And I want to say it. I've said it before. I'll say it again. We're not a great church. We serve a great God.

36:58 Come on, everybody, right? Come on, if you really believe in every campus. And you guys know, a year ago this Sunday, we made the announcement that we would transition roles. So I'm still on team, but I'm on team to lead Highlands College. And really felt like the grace that had been on my life for 24 years at that time had shifted to Pastor Mark. And have y'all seen it today, the amazing grace on this man's life, the vision?

37:28 In fact, the more he talked, the tireder I got. No, I'm just kidding. I marvel, honestly, at he and Jill, and I just, I celebrate that. But I'm busy, y'all, building America's Ministry Leadership University. And I'm very excited about it, and I'm very focused on it. I think it's the greatest university in the world. And we really haven't made this vision public yet. We are going going to very soon, but we're not just building a great college here. God's put it in my heart to help there to be at least a hundred of them all across America in other churches, in other cities, because we got to raise up a generation that's going to serve God, everybody.

38:05 And so I'm excited about it. I'm excited about the future of this church. Everything you heard, I've already heard through Pastor Mark, and I give it my big amen. Same God, same church, same mission, just in a new season. And we're committed. We're committed. We tithe here. We're going to worship God here. We're going to serve here. I serve at the pleasure of Pastor Mark here on Sundays and building that university. And we just love you so much. And I asked Tammy if she wanted to say something. She actually told me no at first. I said, baby, how many of y'all would love to hear from Miss Tammy ever?

38:42 Well, I did want to say that I love you all so much. And it has been such an honor to love you and to love this church. And to be here for the last 25 years, I'm just overwhelmed. I'm so grateful to the Lord for

letting me be here. And at the same time, I am so excited that I get to be here for the next 25 years. And I'm so excited for Mark and Jill and what they're going to do here. And just, I can't wait to see the hand of God on them and what's next. And this morning in the One Year Bible, there was just a verse that I read. I'm like, yes, Lord, that is interesting.

39:22 And it's Psalm 26, verse eight. It says, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells. And I believe that's here at Church of the Highlands and the best is yet to come.

39:43

**Psalm 26:8**

*Lord, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells.*

40:13 You don't want to, don't leave early now because they have an announcement of some gifts that are coming your way to celebrate this day. So stay put until they dismiss you because you don't want to miss that. But Father, we're so grateful for what you've done over 25 years. And we do give you the glory. We're going to give you the glory. We're going to give you all the glory, Lord God. God, we're asking for your blessing over the next 25, Lord. God, we thank you for our pastors. God, let your hand be upon their lives. God, we commit this vision to you. Let people be reached. God, let the glory of God be revealed.

40:43 We pray in Jesus' mighty name. And everybody said, amen.