

Busted by an angel

It is an honor to be with you in chapel this evening. To stand in this awesome place that has been consecrated to the service and worship of our Lord and savior. As I stand here I am reminded that there have been many other servants of the most high god which have attempted to express in our feeble language what God is like, what he requires of us and how He wants to commune with us. I know that the current faculty and cabinet are an awesome group of scholars, teachers, mentors, & fellow travelers. I have been told that they are ... however, very unique for instance I understand that Dr. King reads his Bible backwards! That Dr. Attig has been here since Academy boulevard was a dirt path, that Dr. Powers has written a commentary, Dr. Stelting has done all the work required, except one paper to have not one but two Dr.s degrees! Wow! Oh, and I almost forgot, Dr. Matson has done so much with so little for so long that he is now qualified to make something from nothing! This qualifies him to recommend you for your district license.

For those of you that do not know me: I am here on a mission which I currently articulate as: "Propagate excellence in leadership through the advancement of Passionate Spirituality, Profound Knowledge & Ethical Conduct."

Before I preach I would like to give a testimony!

When you are in His will – You are always doing better than you know!!

This evening the message is titled "Busted by an Angel".

What is your perception of angels? Are they beautiful white beings that float on the air? Are they bouncers there for your personal protection? Do they laugh when you make dumb mistakes? How do you view them?

I am not sure how old he was ... he was old enough to know right from wrong ... old enough to have his own opinion on everything ... old enough to get into trouble ... ☺

His mother had told him that he could not have any cookies until after lunch ... but, she was in the basement, the cookie jar was ... maybe within reach

Let stop here and give you what I consider a bit of wisdom ... Intellectual acceptance does not necessarily mean behavior modification! Ex. Smoking, eating, behavior on church boards, etc.

This was in the late 1950s or early 1960s. they had these big **cookie jars which were made to look like cows** ... maybe you have seen them in the antique malls ... any way he pulled a chair over to the counter and stretched as far as he could to reach the cookie jar ... and was just able to grab the **cows tail** ... he was able to take off the lid and grab an **Oreo cookie** ... as he went to put the lid back ... suddenly he became aware of footsteps coming up the stairs from the basement to the kitchen ... he turned to look ... and there was angel! ... as he saw her he was startled and jumped ... the cookie jar fell to the counter ... amazingly the lid did not come off the jar did not break ... however, as he looked into the **eyes of his angel** the cookie jar continued to wobbled around and around and around ... in Sloooooo motiooooooon ... and then slipped of the counter to the floor with a huge crash ... breaking the jar and sending black Oreo cookie parts all over the kitchen. **HE was busted!!!!!!!!!!!!!! He had been caught!!**

I know this is a true story because the boy was me and the **angel was my mother!** I didn't know at the time that she was an angel! Most of you have never met my mother. But I know that you have "**entertained angels unawares**" and you have **some looking after you today**. In later years I came to realize that my mother was an angel ... oh I know she was not a "real" angel ... **but, she loved me, she protected me, she supported me, she loved me, she encouraged me, she interceded for me, she chastised me, she loved me, she gave me confidence ... BTW did I say she loved me?**

I don't remember exactly ... I know that I had to clean up the **mess** ... maybe even punished ... I do know that the **cookie jar was never mentioned again** and most importantly my **Army Sergeant father was never apprised** of the situation. **Mysteriously, a new cookie jar that my mother professed to like much better appeared on the shelf**. I still remember the last time I saw this "angel" ... she was in a hospital bed in her home ... ravished by disease ... unable to talk ... but those big eyes ... those big eyes ... that could not focus on anyone else in the room ... were softly and tenderly contemplating me and who I was ... **AGAIN I WAS BUSTED!! It was mysterious, indescribable, wondrous ... I wanted to fall down and worship at this angel's feet!**

I knew I had to refocus and redouble my efforts to live up to the unwritten expectations!

Let's look for a few moments at what the scripture has to say about our Christian expectations.

Look at the screen and follow along as I read the first 5 Verses of Galatians chapter 6.

There are three things we are told to do in verses 5&6 they are:

1. Make a careful exploration of who you are
2. Make a careful exploration of the work you have been given
3. Sink yourself into your work

This evening I want to focus only on the first of these three. I know that part of why many of you are here at NBC is to ***fine tune your call***. I have ***no real concern about you sinking yourself into the work***. In the ***crazed competitive, mad workaholic world we live in called America***, the American Dream has been so marketed and ingrained into our psychic that most of us will blindly overwork ourselves!

But I want to focus on the first issue.

BTW, another bit of wisdom for you. I believe that the MAIN issue in the church today is not how to grow the church, what style of music should we have, or even ... I know this is blasphemous ... or even what we teach! The main issue is that our pastors and members of the family of God do not know WHO THEY ARE!!!

As most of you know I am focused on the skills and theories which can help Christian leaders be more effective and allow them to lead by being a servant. As I have been a student of how organizations get work done, studied people and God's word I have come to the conclusion that if we want to be better servants of Christ we need to know who we are.

BTW, another bit of wisdom for you. If you want to understand the bible for yourself, as opposed to others telling you what to believe, start with this simple strategy ... Get a version of scripture with current day language, start wherever you want, but ... do this ... read the first paragraph of a book, then read the first sentence of all the remaining paragraphs ... do this in one sitting ... make it a practice ... it will change your understanding of what God is saying and doing

To understand WHO WE ARE we have to first and foremost know who HE is.

I am not going to spend much time on this I will let your theology teachers and the biblical scholars point you in the correct direction for this. I will only say that He is:

The alpha and omega, the beginning and the end ...

But who are you ... who am I? There are many aspects to this question and the answer lies in a ***lifelong quest and process*** to be moldable by the spirit of God into His likeness ... However, I would like to touch on this by asking one question and beginning to unravel some of the various layers of the truths associated with the question ... WE WILL not be able to answer in it's entirety tonight or even during your time here at NBC!!

The Question? Why were you created? Some of you think you already know the answer to this question. I hope that you do. For some of us that are a little slower to understand and modify our behavior ... let's look at some potential answers:

1. I was created to **make disciples** ... if so who was Adam created to disciple
2. I was created to **do "the work** you (I) have been given Galatians 6:5 ... this is a natural outcome of the Christian life
3. I was created to **commune with and worship God** ... in my view this is the correct answer!!

This purpose is **awesome, wondrous, ... dangerous**

Dangerous because if you don't get it right you wonder off into the quick sand of **idolatry!**

Remember **Moses and the children of Israel** ... lifting up the serpent ... worked well for a season & ??

Communing with and worshiping with God is primarily what you have been created to do by God! **When you worship you rise to the apex of what it means to be fully human.** In fact it is the most **important thing you can do any day!** It is the most important thing you will do this **week ... year ... life!**

HOW DO I COMMUNE WITH & WORSHIP GOD?

It must be what I do on **Sunday morning! CORRECT?**

Help me answer this hypothetical Instant Message that came into my office this week!

YOUR 11:00 service makes me GAG! God.

What would you say? ... Well we like it ... it makes us comfortable ... but wasn't the music awesome? ...

The big question is *who is worship for?* **US or GOD?** What is most important ... how we feel or how He feels about our worship?

Let's look @ Revelation 22: 8-9

Don't Put It Away on the Shelf

⁶⁻⁷The Angel said to me, "These are dependable and accurate words, every one. The God and Master of the spirits of the prophets sent his Angel to show his servants what must take place, and soon. And tell them, 'Yes, I'm on my way!' Blessed be the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

⁸⁻⁹I, John, saw all these things with my own eyes, heard them with my ears. Immediately when I heard and saw, I fell on my face to worship at the feet of the Angel who laid it all out before me. He objected, "**No you don't!** I'm a servant just like you and your companions, the prophets, and all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

Well DUH! We know this ... RIGHT? ... **JOHN IS BUSTED!!** Look @ Revelation 19:10 ¹⁰I fell at his feet to worship him, but he wouldn't let me. "**Don't do that,**" he said. "I'm a servant just like you, and like your brothers and sisters who hold to the witness of Jesus. The witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." **BUSTED AGAIN!!**

Worship is – falling down before the almighty God who redeemed us. It is passionately giving of our adoration and love to Him because He first loved us. It is working on an ongoing relationship with Him even when we don't feel like it.

We are **prone** to *worship pastors, teachers, feelings, styles of worship, even worship it's self!!*

I have heard that an old monk was heard to say on her death bed "what I will miss the most is the mass" ... how foolish is that ... church & worship is to be about being in God presence!!

1. Central everything emanates from worship
2. Christ centered – worship is for Him not us!
3. No Consumer – What does God want from us?
4. Committed to excellence – not good, better, best - **UP TO GOD GIVEN POTENTIAL**
5. Consecration – entirety of our lives really being an act of worship – sacrifice of praise
6. Communion – not one sided

It is easy to get distracted:

Some preachers really are boring

Some services really are bad

Sometimes the design of the service doesn't facilitate worship

However,

Christ centered worship is what we were designed, made, & placed here for **Are you busted?**

If you are busted here today, let me make some suggestions:

1. Accept the concept that our life is to be an act of worship – live each day as an act of worship
2. Worship is about focus – fall down in passionate love, reverence & wonder in the presence of God
3. Be committed to excellence in worship – not good, bad, great ... excellence – giving Christ **your best**