I. **INTRO:**

A. **Missions Card** - Steven & Aryn Caligiuri. (Serve in Spain; cross cultural studies; Gathering place & Art gallery; here today in the info booth)

B. **Simply Christmas** - 1 of the Crafters yesterday gave all her proceeds to Burma($233); *1 of our S.S. Classes* had a bake sale last Sun.; Jake is mowing lawns; Jorie having a birthday party instead of gifts, donation to Burma; The *Runner family* took the $ they were going to spend on Christmas Cards & postage & will be donating it to Partners Ministry(email greetings instead); Many are saying instead of $ on a gift for them personally to use that to donate.

II. **VIGILANT PRAYER!**

A. **PRAY!** (1-6)

B. (2) Prayer consists of a **persevering will** (earnest), an **alert mind** (vigilant), & a **grateful heart** (thanksgiving).

1. Pray **continually** with mental alertness. And let **thankfulness** be your environment for good informed praying, concerning what God has done, is doing, & is **going to do**.

2. Whatever the attitude of the body, the soul should always be on its knees. (Maclaren)

C. **Vigilant** - implies alertness, avoiding all drowsiness & sleep. Watchfulness.

1. We are not to watch **ourselves** (that would be depressing);
   We are not to watch **Satan** (that would be distracting);
   We are not to watch **our sins** (that would be disheartening);
   We are to keep our gaze **fixed on Christ**.

D. (2-4) **Pray also for us!** - Let’s move from the *church of Colosse* to the *church of Murrieta.*

E. **Church Update:** Where are we at? Rumors.

1. Back when we were seeking to develop the **new property** we had a **line of credit** to draw from. We chose instead to **save the interest payments** & use our cash reserves.

2. **Problems:** [1] There was the possibility of **selling our property** by this last fall (fell through) [2] Tap the **line of credit** when we needed it (do to economy, bank withdrew our line of credit)
3. **What now?** We went as long as we could without reducing staff. I talked to senior staff back in August that this year we were going to have a projected shortfall of about $474,000. *{When our attendance was up we hired to that size; since #'s have come down, we never downsized}* 

a) Its our boards desire to have the school & church both sustain themselves & not be dependent on the other.

b) Our giving is about $10,000 lower weekly, & so it is only right for us to make both spending & staff reductions.

(1) Maybe some of you need to be encouraged to participate in your weekly giving which is for you to pray about; but what WE need to do is “Not spend more than what God provides!!!”

(2) We need to adjust to what God is providing. If He provides less, we need to spend less.

4. **Staff Reductions:** Hardest, because we're not a business, but a family.

a) Some were led to resign; others are feeling the Lords leading in other directions; others have been reduced to 2 days a week, starting Jan 1.

b) Pastor Dan has helped in this process by voluntarily cutting back his days here to 3 days; Pastor Larry is picking up those duties.

(1) Dean is pursuing other employment; Pastor Bill & Janet are praying about a possible church plant in the Valley;

(2) **Youth Department:** Armando is praying about a church plant in San Bernardino; Dominic is looking at a couple options, but desires to still lead the Junior High; Todd is looking at a few options also.

5. **Results? Volunteerism & Partnership** (*Core Value: Participation, Encouraging all believers to discover & use their unique ministry gifts*)

a) Maybe it was getting to easy to “get a pastor/staff to do it”?

b) We need to get back to a volunteer run church, not staff led.

c) This is where each of you will be challenged to step up, discover, & use your unique ministry gifts!

6. I’m very excited about what God is going to do for our future; but also we as a staff are absolutely sick & emotionally spent regarding these needed changes.

7. **May I ask for your sensitivity to our staff that will be leaving?**

a) They have feelings. Worries, fears, & questions about their family & future.

b) And for those who have rebuked me (not to my face) for “getting rid of” such top notch guys, sometimes you have to release some of up your best.

c) **Focus on the Family** had to lay off 149 employees; CCCM 300.

d) PRAY for us!
F. (3) Paul prayed not for an open prison door, but an open door of ministry.
   1. We’re not seeing the answer as a big fat check to meet the needs; we’re asking God to help us get to that place where He wants us in reference to stewardship.

G. So vs.2-4 have covered, Be Prayful; Watchful; Thankful; & now Fruitful.

H. (5) Watch your walk! (then, Watch your mouth!)

I. Walk in wisdom means to live a life of conduct in such a way as to impress & win them that are without.
   1. The Christian is the worlds bible. They’re watching to see whether there is any reality in our religion.

J. Those who are outside - The unsaved are outside the family of God, & it is our task to bring them in.
   1. Effect witness involves walking wisely. Be alert to every opportunity.

K. Redeeming the time - “buying up the opportunity”. Letting no opportunity be lost, using every occasion wisely to impress & if possible lead them to Christ.

L. (6) Watch your mouth!
   1. Be careful what you say & how you say it.
   2. Your conversation is to be suited to each person.
      a) It calls for Christian graciousness & sensitivity to the specific person & situation.

M. Seasoned with salt - it should have such a spiritual flavor that it will never be bland, but forceful & telling, wholesome, free from all harm, & capable of inspiring others with moral & spiritual blessing.
   1. :-( Bland Christian speech! - spiritual platitudes, lines that have been used too often, it has become dull, “have faith”, “God knows”, “it’s a God thing”.
      a) Jesus didn’t use these! Have content, depth, salt!

N. CO-WORKERS! (7-14)

O. Aristarchus - There’s a time to be active for Christ, & other times “sitting in prison cells of inactivity”.
   1. An old woman, full of action & activity, was laid aside, & her friends wondered how she could possibly bear the inaction after her constant restless service. When they asked about this, she replied, “When I was able to do it the Lord said, ‘Betty, go here,’ & ‘Betty, go there,’ but now He says, ‘Betty, lie still & cough.’”
P. Paul names 6 men who were working at his side & encourages them in the Lord.
   1. I’d like to honor & thank a handful of guys:
Q. (17) Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.
R. Bill - Remember when Bill & Janet got married, had Breanna; worked here since 1994; building projects & many remodels, all forms of counseling & benevolence, started & for years involved w/Sat morn mens prayer; hospital calls & home visitations, bereavement ministry, seniors ministry, weddings & memorials.
S. Dean - Came on with us when he retired from phone company; ran our bookstore for years; Events coordinator of Harvest Festival for many years; father/son fishing trip; Christmas/Easter; & community outreaches] been coordinating the facility use & church calendar. Love Dean’s friendship, he’s been a big brother to me, taught me a lot about hunting & fish (“we need to go quail hunting today after work, you need it!”).
   1. And to honor him, I got 1 more quail than he did! :-) 
T. Todd - The plodder. has been here for probably 17 years; does counseling; College & Career; Singles; & started & runs a very successful Divorce Recovery.
U. Armando - committed to me for 2 years & has been here for 7; has done a wonderful jo with our High Schoolers & raising up leadership; also a great preacher(did our Sunday Night study for a few years). Has had a yearning for San Bernardino for years.

V. Each of these men have made this church what it is today…& I am so thankful for them.
W. I asked God one question on my spiritual day (Fri. Nov.21st) “Is this of you?”
   1. It was confirmed in my heart that day.
X. I also want to think my advisory board: Des; Mike; Dan; Larry whom I love & trust & appreciate the wisdom God has given these men.
   1. We have prayed, thought, strategized, & fretted together over all these decisions..for months.

Y. Closing Blessing! (16-18)
Z. Grace be with you! Paul ends with the blessings of God’s Grace to be upon us!
   1. We’re always so afraid of cheapening God’s grace.
   2. Let me end with this exhortation from a “Robert Farrar Capon”.
AA. You’re worried about permissiveness - about the way the preaching of grace seems to say it’s okay to do all kinds of terrible things as long as you just walk in afterward and take the free gift of God’s forgiveness...While you and I may be worried about seeming to give permission, Jesus apparently wasn’t. He wasn’t afraid of giving the prodigal son a kiss instead of a lecture, a party instead of probation; and he proved that by bringing in the elder brother at the end of the story and having him raise pretty much the same objections you do...
[He’s angry about the party. He complains that his father is lowering standards and ignoring virtue - that music, dancing, and a fatted calf are, in effect, just so many permissions to break the law.] And to that, Jesus has the father say only one thing: “Cut that out! We’re not playing good boys and bad boys any more. Your brother was dead and he’s alive again. The name of the game from now on is resurrection, not bookkeeping.” Robert Farrar Capon, Between Noon and Three

BB. This Wed night “The Original Grinch”;
   Next Sunday “Jesus wanted NOTHING for Christmas!”

CC. Christmas 7pm “Simply Christmas”
   Christmas 11pm “Simply Givers, Simply Receivers” (Candle Lighting)