

# God wants Christians for ‘officiating crew,’ Evans tells The Gathering

March 30, 2015

WACO—Standing near the end zone of Baylor University’s McLane Stadium and comparing life to a football game, Dallas pastor Tony Evans insisted Christians must act as a divine “officiating crew” to interpret God’s rules in a chaotic world.



Pastor Tony Evans of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas gave the keynote sermon at The Gathering. (Baylor University Photos) Evans preached the keynote sermon at an evangelistic event called [The Gathering](#) March 29 in Waco. About 35,000 people assembled on a warm spring evening to sing, pray and worship.

“This is God’s house tonight,” declared Ramiro Peña, pastor of [Christ the King Baptist Church in Waco](#). Peña and Temple businessman Drayton

McLane launched the idea for The Gathering, designed to bridge racial, denominational and socio-economic barriers and promote Christian unity.

“It is awesome to see the body of Christ coming together,” Peña said, acknowledging race and denomination often split Christians apart. “Tonight, there is one church in Waco, Texas. ... Waco will be known for the unity of churches working together.”



Ramiro Peña, pastor of Christ the King Baptist Church in Waco, launched the idea for The Gathering, along with Temple businessman Drayton McLane. The event reflected the unity of 40 Waco pastors from various backgrounds, who teamed up to bring together all kinds of Christians from across their community and beyond, McLane told the audience.

Noting the huge crowd gathered on Palm Sunday, McLane urged, “We should think again of the importance of Jesus, our risen Savior.”

That risen Savior calls on his followers to engage the world and make a difference for Christ, stressed Evans, pastor of [Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas](#).

Pointing out the context of the event—Baylor’s new 45,000-seat football stadium on the banks of the Brazos River—Evans described how football teams clash on fields across America. The only reason the games function is because another team, the officiating crew, maintains order by implementing the rules.



The Palm Sunday event reflected the unity of 40 Waco pastors from various backgrounds. “The rules come from up there (the league office) and not from the chaos on the field,” Evans observed.

“You and I live in a chaotic world. ... And God is looking for an officiating crew,” composed of Christians who understand God’s rules and interpret them clearly, forcefully and unambiguously amidst all that chaos, he said.

Christians who make good members of God’s officiating crew are “folks who are in the world but not of the world,” he added. They are clear about their loyalty to God and God’s rules for righteous living and are not confused by the desires and intentions of people on earth.

“Officials do not don the jerseys of the teams in conflict,” Evans said. Instead, they wear their own black-and-white uniforms, which distinguish

them as impartial judges, who are loyal to the rules of the game, not to one team or the other.

“We need people who will stop representing the conflict on earth and start representing the kingdom of heaven,” he urged.



Counselors pray for people who made spiritual decision at The Gathering. Unfortunately, “God’s officiating crew has gone rogue,” he said of American Christians. Rather than following God, Christians often seek to please people from their own race, class or political party, “and it’s creating chaos ... on the field of play.”

Christians also need to commit more time and effort to the cause of Christ, Evans insisted.

In a typical college football game, the ball is at play only 17 minutes, he said. But those 17 minutes are set in a larger context: The game officially lasts an hour, but it takes about three hours to play. On top of that, fans take two or more hours to come and go from the game.

“If you will give all day to watch the Baylor Bears play for 17 minutes,” then Christians should give generously of their time to serve their Lord, he

exhorted.

Likewise, they should be more loyal to their Savior than to their team, added Evans, who wore a gold Baylor ball cap with the school's interlocking green BU sports logo. He motioned to worshippers all across the stadium wearing similar Baylor gear, and he noted how sports fans support their team through good times and bad.



“If you will give all day to watch the Baylor Bears play for 17 minutes,” then Christians should give generously of their time to serve their Lord, Evans exhorted the crowd. “If you’re not going to apologize for your football team, don’t apologize for your Savior,” he said.

Bryce Petty, the Bears’ star quarterback the past two years, addressed the crowd via video.

“Growing up, my mom was a youth minister,” Petty said. “My faith was always handed to me. ... My label was ‘Bryce, the football player.’”

That label suffered during his early years at Baylor, when he was a third-string player, he reported, confessing, “I had nothing to hold onto.”

But Petty received guidance from Chris Womack, a former staff member at [First Baptist Church of Woodway in Waco](#). Womack told Petty, “Football is what you do; it’s not who you are.”

“There’s a lot of truth to that,” Petty said. “At one point, football will end. ... There’s peace about allowing God to take control of your life. You don’t have to have a football field to glorify Christ ... I am a brother in Christ.

“Football will end. ...  
But who I am in  
Christ will never end.”



Another famous Wacoan also testified via video.

Joanna Gaines and her husband, Chris, star in [HGTV's \*Fixer Upper\*](#) show. She talked about the loneliness and doubt she felt as a bi-racial Korean-Caucasian child on the first day at a new school.

“That’s where the lie was sown: Who I was wasn’t good enough,” she said.

But God was faithful and later said, “Joanna, I have a job for you,” Gaines reported. She found that job in Magnolia Market, a home products store. They closed the store so she could spend more time with their children. And then she heard God say, “Jo, it’s time ... to reopen your store.”



Israel Houghton and New Breed performed at The Gathering. Now, they run Magnolia Market and also star in *Fixer Upper*, which provides her with a platform for making a difference in others' lives, she said.

"God has a purpose for me. But he also has a purpose for you," Gaines insisted. "Fix your eyes on Jesus and follow that truth."

The Gathering also featured Israel Houghton, a Grammy-winning worship leader, and a 900-voice multi-racial choir.