

Unstoppable

The Christ-Directed Mission

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THE CHRIST-DIRECTED MISSION **Matthew 28:16-20**

If you have your Bibles and I hope you do, I want to invite you to open with me to Matthew 28. Before we jump into our time in God's Word today, I want to give you a picture to kind of keep in your mind as we launch into this study, this series on what it means to be a part of a church that's *Unstoppable*.

I remember, recently, I was doing a camp conference type thing up in Tennessee and part of the week involved white water rafting down the Ocoee River. Just out of curiosity, anybody ever been whitewater rafting before, all right. Some of you have been, a lot of you have been.

Well, just in case you haven't, basically the way white water rafting works is you've got this raft, a boat type thing and it's got room for about six people, two in the front, two in the middle, and two in the back. And then there is another guy who sits in the very back. And he is the guide and his whole responsibility is to make sure everybody lives through the experience and so you like the guide. It's good to have him there.

And we were getting on the Ocoee River that day and it was really high and so we knew the water was going to be really rough, and so I decided the best place for me to be was right in the back with the guide. And so that's where I immediately went, sat back there, right next to him, that way, if I fall off, he saves my life very easily.

And so, Heather and I got on and four others from this conference and we started rafting down the river, and basically, if you have been before, you know what it's like. The people in the front really have all the action. I mean, they are the people that are hitting the rapids first thing, the water is coming up in their face and if you are sitting in the back, you are just kind of coasting along. It's a nice ride, enjoyable, not as intense as it is in the front.

We get down near the end of the river and our guide says, okay, guys, we were coming up on the last rapid on the Ocoee today, and this is the most dangerous, the most intense rapid and he said, "I need a volunteer who would be willing to ride the bull." Okay?

Now, some of you maybe familiar with this terminology. I had never heard of riding the bull before, and I thought, one of these guys, one of these guys from the conference they are stupid enough to go out and ride the bull and I will just kind of sit back here. And so, that's what I was planning on doing, but then they all started pointing at me and said, "David will ride the bull. David would love to ride the bull." And so, I'm thinking, what in the world. It was like this whole conspiracy to kill the conference speaker. And so they said, all right, David, you are going to do it.

And so the guide gets in my face and he says, "All right, this is what you are going to do." He says, "What we need you to do is go up to the very front of the boat." And he said, and I said, "Okay, I can sit on one of those front seats." He said, "No, no, no, no. You need to sit

on the very edge, the tip of the boat. You need to let your legs hang over the front of the boat. And what you are going to do is you are going to reach down there and grab a ring that is down there, a very small ring, by the way. You are going to go grab down to this ring. And we are going to go down the rapids and you are going to be face first, hanging on to this ring with all your life hoping that you don't fall off."

Everybody is like yeah, and I'm thinking, not a chance. Okay. And they are like no, do it, no do it. Except for Heather, Heather is like don't die. And so I go crawling out to the front of the boat. I get out there. I sit on the tip. I put my legs over the front and I reach down and I grab onto that ring as tightly as I can. We start going down into this rapid. And I am hitting the waves just face first. They are coming up right in me. I am in the tip of the boat just experiencing all those waves have to offer and it starts to get pretty rough and everybody is cheering me on, so I start to get a little adrenaline going on in me and I start to think, you know, I have never ridden a bull before, but I have watched bull riders on TV. And I know enough to know about bull riding that those guys who ride the bull, they don't hold on with both hands. Do they? You know, they have one hand loose, so I thought, well, if I am going to ride the bull, I'm going to ride the bull. And so, I'm starting to get a little over confident, and so I let go of the ring with one hand. And I start really riding the bull.

Well, it's about that time that the bull decides he's had enough of me. And so he throws me off of himself. I find myself more under the bull right now. And the boat is literally on top of me. We are going down the rapids. The waves are just piling on me. They are trying to reach in and grab me. Heather is really like, don't die now. They are trying to pull me in, but they can't get me in. I go down the rest of the rapid just underwater, under the boat holding on for dear life.

Finally, we get through the rapid and they pull me in. They don't know if I'm alive. They don't know if I'm breathing. I got water coming out of my nose, my eyes, my mouth. I mean, it's coming out everywhere. And they look down at me and they are like, are you okay? Are you okay? Finally, I caught my breath. And I looked up and I said, "That was awesome." And it was. It was a lot different than sitting in the back of the boat kind of coasting along. I experienced literally, all that river had to offer.

I want to invite you, as we dive into Scripture, I want to invite you to the front of the boat with me. What I mean by that is this, I think most of us are all in the boat. There is a majority of us who have placed our faith in Christ, who have been forgiven of our sins. We have trusted in Him and we are even active in church, as a result, it's a sign of us being here today. We are all in the boat. And even a few weeks ago, we walked from Psalm 67; we walked from Genesis to Revelation about how we were created to make God's glory in all nations.

And what I want to invite you to do is to come from coasting in the back to the front. And I want to invite you to the front of what I believe the church's mission is all about over the next six weeks. I want to invite you to taste and experience all that this river has to offer and I want you to know it's a little more dangerous up in the front and it's a little more risky. But I want you to know from the very beginning, it is worth it.

So, we are going to look at a passage of Scripture from Matthew chapter 28, a passage, I'm guessing, is familiar to many of you. This is one of those passages of Scripture that is very widely known in the church, but receives, I believe, nominal adherence today, in the church. And what I want us to do is I want us to dive in and pray that God, by His Spirit, would give us fresh eyes as we look at Jesus parting words to His disciples.

Matthew 28:16. The Bible says, *"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go"* (Matt. 28:16). Now, just a side note here, whenever you see Jesus going to the mountain, you know it's something very important. It signifies an important message, Matthew 5-7 Sermon on the Mount. Then Matthew 17, right in the middle the transfiguration happens on the mountain. We see Jesus coming to the end of His life on earth, at this point and He says, "I'll take you to the mountain."

Important message, it says, *"When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 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'"* (Matt. 28:17-20).

What I want us to do is to divide this passage up into three different sections. What I want us to see, the power of Christ and the plan of Christ and then the presence of Christ. Here we go.

The Power of Christ

Let's start with first, the power of Christ. This is the part of the Great Commission that we often browse over. Get to the meat, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations"* (Matt. 28:19). What we've got to realize that everything Jesus is saying here is hinging on the fact that He has all authority in heaven and on earth. It's been given to Him.

Now, if Jesus says He has all authority in heaven and on earth, then what does that mean is not under His authority? That pretty much covers it. He's got it. He says, "I am Lord over everything. I have authority over heaven and earth." He had died on the cross, rose from the grave, conquered death, sin, and the grave, and therefore He was Lord over everything.

Jesus is Lord of our lives.

I think this means two things, number one, He is Lord of our lives. He is Lord of all of our lives in this room.

You know, I find it interesting sometimes, people come up to me and they say, "Dave, I've decided to make Jesus Lord of my life." What's wrong with that statement? You really didn't have a choice in the matter. Jesus is Lord of every single one of our lives, what does the Bible say? One day every knee will bow in heaven and in earth and under the earth and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Every single one of us will one day bow our knee and call Jesus Lord. The question is, will we do it now or will we do it when it's too late. The question is not is He Lord of our lives. He is Lord of all of our lives. The question is have we submitted our lives to His Lordship?

Now, what does that mean? Basically it means we have surrendered every right to determine the direction of our lives. We have surrendered every right to determine the direction of our lives. If He is Lord and we have placed our faith in Him and trusted Him to save us from our sins, that means, we no longer call the shots in our lives.

And I want to speak real frankly to you. Men, you don't call the shots in your family anymore. You don't call the shots for what you do with your career or your ambitions. It's

not about what you desire anymore. Christ is calling the shots. You have surrendered the right to determine the direction of your life.

Students, as you think about your future, where you are going to go to school, what you are going to study, what you are going to do with your life. It's not up to you, it's up to Christ. He is calling the shots. You are second in command. We've surrendered every right to determine the direction of our lives. You have surrendered the right to determine the direction of The Church at Brook Hills. It is not in your hands. It is in the hands of the one who has authority over this church. He is Lord of our lives. This is going to be huge. This is where all this thing is headed to when we come to the end today, so keep this in mind.

Jesus is Lord of the nations.

But second, I believe it means He is not only Lord of our lives, He is Lord of the nations. He has all authority in heaven and on earth. And what I want you to see in Scripture this morning is how this had been prophesied way back in the Old Testament and it's fulfilled when we see the end of the New Testament, completely. And this is kind of a mid-point right here.

Hold your place here in Matthew 28 and turn with me back to the Old Testament to Daniel. I want you to underline a couple verses in Daniel that I think are huge for us understanding what it means for Jesus to have all authority in heaven and on earth. Daniel 7, what we are about to read is what the Old Testament calls prophecy. This is a word that foretells something in the future. This was spoken hundreds of years before Christ came on the scene, before Matthew 28:18 said, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

But I want you to see what Daniel had prophesied. Daniel 7, look with me at verse 13 and 14. Listen to what Daniel saw in this prophetic vision. Underline this and think about how it relates to what we are talking about over here in Matthew 28. The Bible says, *"In my vision,"* verse 13, *"at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man"* (Dan. 7:13). You can circle that phrase right there—"son of man." This is a term that basically means: someone who is human, yet has a heavenly origin. "Son of man", has human, but also has a divine facet, that's exactly who Christ is. He's human, but He's divine.

I saw one like the son of man... Now look, this is talking about Christ, *"coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence,"* and listen to this, *"he was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed"* (Dan. 7:14). That's talking about Christ. There is one who is going to come. He is going to have all authority, sovereign power, dominion. And all peoples, all nations are going to worship Him as Lord.

Now that's what Daniel said, hundreds of years before Matthew. Now, I want you to go with me to the end of the Bible. Revelation 7. I want you to see what Daniel has talked about here coming to a culmination, Revelation 7. This is talking about a picture of where all of eternity is headed. And please catch this because this is huge for our understanding of Matthew 28. Look at Revelation 7, last book in the Bible, Revelation 7. Read with me starting in verse 9. This is John talking about what he sees all of eternity headed towards. He says, "After this," in verse 9, *"I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one can count"* (Rev. 7:9). And here it is, *"...from every nation, tribe, people and language"* (Rev. 7:9). That sounds a lot like Daniel 7.

...standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.' All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: 'Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!' (Rev. 7:9-12)

All of eternity is headed to this picture, when every nation and every tribe and every language will bow around the throne of the Lamb who was slain and the Lamb who won the ultimate battle and they will sing His praises because He is Lord. He has all authority, sovereign power over all creation.

Now, when you come back to Matthew 28, you begin to think about what this means for the Great Commission. I believe there is two main implications. Number one, I want you to see that this right here is why we go. This is why we are going to look and making disciples of all nations and why we need to say in our lives, this should be the integrating overriding priority of everything we do. In just a second we are going to dive into this mission and what it's about, but I want you to see the why from the very beginning, this is why we go.

Some of you are going to be thinking, well, why should I, in my life here in Birmingham, why should I sit in my work place or in my home or my community, why should I be about one thing in my life? Making disciples of all nations, why should I do this? And the only reason is this, because He is Lord of every single person in Birmingham. And He is worthy of all of their worship.

That's why we give ourselves to this mission, because we are convinced, in our hearts that the people we work with and the people in our homes are people that need to know that Jesus is Lord and Jesus has paid the price for their sins. He has died on the cross and rose from the grave and He deserves all of their worship. That's why we go, not only in Birmingham, but also in other places.

People have asked me, even well meaning Christians, who are close to me ask me, "Dave, why do you go to the Sudan?" Don't you know that's dangerous? Don't you know there's a lot of risk in going to a place like that? Why would you leave your wife for a couple weeks, risk not coming back in order to go to the Sudan? Why would you do that? Why would you even consider doing that in this room? Why would you consider packing your bags, whether short term or long term, and moving to Africa or going on a trip to Africa.

Here is why you go to Africa. You go to Africa because there is 3,000 tribes that are worshiping animistic religions that are completely devoid of God and Jesus Christ is worthy of all of their worship. He is Lord of the nations. Why should you consider going to a place like Japan or Laos or Vietnam? Here is why, because there is 350 million Buddhists in those countries today who are following Buddha's rules and Buddha's regulations and Jesus Christ alone is worthy of their worship, not Buddha.

Why should you consider going to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka? Why would you go there? Why would that even be a consideration in your life? Because there is 950million Hindus there that are worshiping more gods than you and I can even fathom and there is only one God who is worthy of all of their worship. His name is Jesus.

Why would you go to the communist countries like China, North Korea, others, why would you go to a place like that? Risk going into a place like that, here is why, because there is over a billion people in those nations that have grown up in an atheistic philosophy that says there is no God and there is a God and He is worthy of all of those people worship.

Why should The Church at Brook Hills be concerned about going to the Middle East with the gospel? Why should, brothers and sisters, students consider the dream of their life being going into the Middle East to share the gospel? Why would we even consider that? Here is why, because there is over a billion Muslims today who are fasting and giving alms and making holy pilgrimages to Mecca and praying five times a day to a false god and Jesus Christ alone is worthy of all of their worship.

That is why we go. Because in our hearts, we see that He is Lord. He is Lord of the nations and we want to make His lordship known. That's why we surrender everything for this mission. Not only that, not only do I want you to see the motive for us going, but I want you to see this next truth under there, not only is this why we go, but I want you to see that this mission is guaranteed.

The beauty of what we have seen in Daniel and then in Matthew and then in Revelation is the fact that you give yourself to this mission. You are part of a mission that is truly unstoppable. Mark it down, every tribe, every nation, is going to bow around the throne and call Jesus Lord. The question is, "Is The Church at Brook Hills going to get in on it?" The question is, "Are you going to get in on this mission?" It's guaranteed. You know. You know the end from the beginning. You know that Christ has won. He is victorious.

And this is huge for our understanding of what we are about to look at. What we need to realize is that God does not need you and me specifically. And He doesn't need The Church at Brook Hills in order to accomplish this mission. I want you to hang with me here. Don't miss this.

I remember one of these recent trips I had where I was in Asia and going around to some different places and hiking and doing some difficult things that were trying me in different ways. And I remember having my quiet time one time in the mountains and I started thinking, "You know, I'm really doing something good here." It's kind of one of those moments where I started thinking, "You know, God, God must really be happy to have me on His team." You ever thought that before? Maybe you are not as carnal as I am, but I started to think that.

It was one of those moments when God said to me, "I'm going to accomplish this mission with or without you." He does not involve us in this mission because He needs us. He involves us in this mission because He loves us and we have the privilege of experiencing, being apart of this thing. And so I want to invite you, Church at Brook Hills, do not let this mission pass you by. And I want to invite every single family that is represented here, do not let this mission pass you by. It's guaranteed. There is the power of Christ.

The Plan of Christ

That sets the stage for what's next, the plan of Christ. Now, when you come to the plan of Christ here and begin to think about this passage of Scripture, "Therefore," in light of that, *"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" (Matt. 28:19-20).

In this entire passage of Scripture and the original language of the New Testament, there is only one imperative verb. Here is why this is important, just in case you are a little far away removed from English class. An imperative verb is a command verb. When my wife gives me an imperative that is a command. I do it, okay, right there. I need to do it at least. In this passage of Scripture we see one imperative. It's the imperative, the command, around which this entire passage revolves.

Now, when you look at those verses, you may have your Bibles open there. What is the imperative verb? Our first thought is that it's 'go'. But actually in the original language of the New Testament, that is not the case. 'Go' is actually a participle, much like baptizing and teaching them to obey everything commanded you. It helps describe what the imperative is. There is one command in this passage and it is make disciples of all nations. And that is the mission that we are talking about the next six weeks and that's the mission that Jesus is talking about in this passage. One mission, our mission, make disciples of all nations.

Jesus says to these disciples, and the implication is to all of us who have placed our faith in Christ. You have one mission in your life and no, it is not to make money and it is not to be successful and it's not to have a comfortable family. And it's not to live nice. It's not to retire well. It's not to get a good education, not that any of those things are bad in and of themselves, but we have one mission in our lives. Each one of our lives—if we have placed our faith in Christ there is one mission that supersedes everything and it's making disciples of all nations. It is the mission around which Jesus commands us to let our lives revolve.

Now, I am using that word very intentionally, a command, because that's what's in this passage. And I want you to see that this is not a call, but a command. Please hear me. Please do not miss this. What I'm talking about when it comes to making disciples of all nations is not a call that is reserved to a select few of us. That's how we often look at missions. Well, this person is the one who is supposed to go over to other nations. Or this person is the one who is supposed to go out and be active in sharing their faith and making disciples, that's for them. And so we relegate this to a select few, and say, "Well, they are called to do that." And what I want you to see is that is just plain unbiblical. We have created this dangerous idea of calling. And misconstrued what the Bible talks about when it talks about calling.

I think, when you look at Scripture, I think the Bible says pretty clearly that God gives us a call to salvation. He invites us to place our faith in Him. So the call to salvation. When we respond to that call, there is a command at the center of each of our lives and it is to make disciples of all nations.

Now, obviously I'm not so ignorant to think that this is going to look the same way in your life as it does mine. I'm going to do different things than you are going to do. You are going to do different things than I do. We have different gifts, different talents, different personalities. And so, from this command, we all have different callings in our life. Some are called to different areas to service. Some are called to serve vocationally in the church. Some are called to move overseas. Some are called to do accounting. Some are called to be teachers. Some are called to stay at home. We have different callings in our life, but they spring from this one command—make disciples of all nations.

What I think we do though is we confuse these two. We take the call of God and put it in the version of our command and we think this make disciples of all nations thing is just something that only a few of us do and it's not biblical. I want you to wrestle with this, in your life, you have one command, one mission—make disciples of all nations.

Every single one of us, no exception. If we placed our faith in Christ, then this command drives us. Now, we have different gifts. Some of you love accounting. I don't know why you love accounting, but you love accounting. And so God has given you gifts and talents and passions in that area, but I want you to see that your whole command in life is not to be an accountant. Your command is to make disciples of all nations and God has given you gifts to help that play out in that accounting world.

Some of you have passions in teaching, law, doctors, whatever it may be, architects, construction, engineering, whatever your passions are, whatever your desires are, all of those God has given us to fulfill this command of making disciples of all nations. I know what you are thinking, well, how do you do that? How do you make disciples of all nations?

Well, I am glad you asked. That's what I want us to look at. I want you to see that these participles, going, baptizing and teaching help us understand what it means to make disciples of all nations.

So, I'm guessing that if this command is at the center of all of our lives, it would probably do good for us to know what it means to make disciples of all nations. I'm guessing that if I polled different individuals and asked you, "What does it mean for you to make disciples of all nations?" Some of us may know, some of us may not. Some of us might be kind of fuzzy. Well, I kind of, I don't know. What I want us to see is that if we are going to be good at anything in the church, we need to be good at making disciples of all nations. We need to know how to do this, because it's what Jesus told us to do right before He ascended into Heaven.

Going

So let's start with going. I want you to think about evangelism there. I believe that's what Christ is talking about here. Go and evangelize. And by that, I mean, go into your work place, into your community and tell people about Christ. Introduce people to the love of Christ.

I was down in New Orleans this week and serving in different places in the community around the church where I serve and it was very humbling. There is just wreck and debris everywhere. Scattered trailers here and there with a few people that had come back in.

We had a group that went over to one particular home, this guy working on his home, just works all day and sleeps in there at night. And works all day the next day. When we go up this guy has a background that involves prison and some difficulties in life. I began to share the gospel with him and he places he faith in Christ. He said, "I want the hope that a storm like Hurricane Katrina can't destroy." And so he placed his faith in Christ. That's what going is about. It's about you and I going out, into the communities, into the places where we have influence and sharing the gospel, leading people to Christ.

What I want you to see is we don't stop there. We don't stop there. That is only one component of making disciples. This is where evangelism gets a bad stereotype. Evangelism gets the idea well, you are just trying to get notches on your belt. You lead people to Christ and then you kind of leave them hanging. Wow, come back and tell the church we led this

many people to faith in Christ. And you stop there. That's not biblical. That's not biblical evangelism. We don't lead people to Christ and leave them hanging there.

My wife and I are adopting a child from Kazakhstan and, a little infant from Kazakhstan, hopefully in the next six to eight months. And when we go and get our baby and come back over here, we are not going to sit our baby outside and say, good luck, have a good time in America. That's not what we are going to do as parents. That's exactly what we do in the church, isn't it? Lead people to Christ and expect them how to figure out how to follow Christ on their own, this is where it starts.

Baptizing

What does He say next? Baptizing them. When you think about baptizing, I want you to think about helping people being established in their faith. Evangelize and establish people. That's why baptism is so important. That's why what you and I witnessed when we saw these guys come here, they publicly identified with Christ and with His church. This is huge.

Now, I want to encourage you just as a side note. If you have placed your faith in Christ and have never been baptized, I want to encourage you to take that step and publically identify with Christ and with His Church and with the symbol of being dead in your sin and raised to life. That's what this is about. So we help people get established in the church after we lead them to Christ.

Teaching

And then teaching them to follow, to obey everything I have commanded you. So we've got going, baptizing, and then teaching. We equip them to follow Christ, evangelize, establish people in the faith, and then equip them to follow after Christ. Teach them how to pray. Teach them how to study God's Word. Teach them how to share the gospel.

Now, this is huge and we really miss it here, we miss it big time when we relegate this role, making disciples, teaching people to follow Christ to different programs. And we say, "Well, the institutions going to take care of that." We say, "Well, if somebody is going to come to Christ we are going to help them be established in the church maybe through baptism, but then we'll let a small group teach them how to follow Christ. Or we'll let them just go to worship on Sunday mornings and that will teach them how to follow Christ."

And please hear me, those are both extremely important, both a relational Bible fellowship that you are involved in studying the Bible with community of faith. Coming to worship, hearing the Word of God preached is huge.

Let me ask you a question, if you lead somebody to faith in Christ and they begin their walk with Christ, what is going to be the most effective way to teach them to pray? To put them in a Bible study on prayer or for you to invite them into your quiet time and say, "Let me show you how to pray. Let me show you what I have learned about prayer and how I pray every day." Which is going to be more effective?

How about teaching them to study the Bible? Which is going to be more effective, put them in a small group, where they learn how to study the Bible? Yes, that can be helpful, but would it be helpful, maybe more helpful for you to invite them into your own Bible study to show them, here is how I study the Bible. Here are the questions I ask. Here are the things I go through in my Bible study. That's going to be huge, isn't it?

This is a personal investment of our lives. This takes a lot more time. This is actually building relationships. This is actually what Jesus is talking about though. What's going to

be the most effective way to teach someone to share the gospel, to put them in a witness training course? Or for you to invite them to come along side you and you show them how to share the gospel with other people?

Many of us feel very uncomfortable when it comes to this and I'm guessing that a lot of us have never had the opportunity to really be with someone who is active in sharing their faith and learn from them. I remember that's the first time I ever shared the gospel. I got conned into it. It was deception. This guy who was the first guy who really began to do this process in my life began to show me how to follow Christ. He invited me and a friend of mine, we were out of school one day in high school and he said, "I want you guys to go do some go-cart, arcade kind of things with me at this place." And we were like, "Yeah, we're in."

And we got there and he showed up with a video camera and we were like, "Are you going to video us doing go-carts?" And he said, "No. No, what we are going to do is we are going to do all those things and then we are going around to different teenagers and we are going to video them. We are going to ask them what they think about Jesus. What they believe about Jesus." We're like, "Well, can we still do go-carts?" And he said, "Yeah, yeah, we can still do that." And so that's what we did. We go ahead and go play go-carts and games for a little while and then we would go inside and he would start videoing these people and me and my buddy would just kind of stand in the back just looking around waiting for the next game we were going to go to.

And one time he's got his video camera there and he says, "What do you think about Jesus?" This guy is talking, this teenager, and then this guy puts down the camera and he says, "My friend David here has a personal relationship with Jesus. And he would like to share with you what Jesus means to him." And I just came to play go-carts, you know. And right there, in that circumstance for the first time I had the opportunity to share my faith.

And I'll be honest, I was hooked because I had seen it in action and somebody had poured their life into me enough to show me what it means to do this. This is huge. May I ask you a question? I want you to be real honest. I want you to imagine that tomorrow, you have the opportunity to lead somebody to faith in Christ. Imagine that tomorrow that if in your workplace, your home, maybe, your community that tomorrow you have the opportunity to lead somebody to faith in Christ.

I want to ask you a question, "What would you do with them?" What is your plan over the next six months to teach them how to follow Christ? Do you have a plan for that? If I were to talk one on one with you today and I were to ask you what's your plan, once you lead somebody to Christ? If you lead somebody to Christ this week, what are you going to do with them over the next six weeks, do you have a plan? That you could say, "Here's what I am going to do, teach them to follow Christ"?

I am guessing that most of us don't have that kind of plan. And I think that signals one of two things. Either number one it signals that we are not planning on leading anybody to faith in Christ tomorrow, which is problematic, or number two, we are planning to lead somebody to faith in Christ tomorrow, we are planning to leave them on their own to follow after Christ and that is also problematic. We need to be good at making disciples.

Now, this is a huge commitment. This is moving from the back of the boat to the front of the boat. In order to teach somebody else how to pray, you have to pray. In order to teach somebody to study the Bible, you know what you got to be doing? Studying the Bible. In order to teach somebody else how to share their faith, you've got to be sharing your faith,

but isn't this what happens when the community of faith starts to take responsibility for this and gives themselves to this, what would happen in this church of that was taking place?

Multiplying

Just think about it. And the result is, going, baptizing, teaching, and I'm going to add a fourth participle here, we don't really see it in Scripture, but I think it's implied. If you don't like it, then just don't write anything down here, but I want you to see when we go and we baptize and we teach, the result is that we start multiplying. And we evangelize and we establish and we equip people to follow Christ and that means we start to extend our life into the lives of others and what God has done in us, we begin to multiply in the lives of others. I'm not saying that we make clones of ourselves. The last thing that we need is more of us. But we begin to help people experience what it means to become like Christ with the gifts, talents, personalities God has given them and we multiply the image of Christ in them. That's what making disciples is all about.

Problem is, we miss out on this completely. Many times in the church I think we take multiplication and we turn it into addition. And we miss out on the whole point of the Great Commission.

Let me give you an example. I want you to imagine with me, imagine that, we've got a pretty packed house here. Imagine that over the next year, we were able to lead, together, combined together, working together, we were able to lead one person to Christ every day over the next year. Pretty exciting, this time next year 365 people would come to faith in Christ. Imagine we were to continue to do that, this church were to continue to do that next year and two years and three years. 30 years from now, I think 33 years, you do the math, you'd come to about over 13,000 people coming to faith in Christ. It would be pretty exciting. You would make a small dent in the lost population in Alabama. Let me give you another scenario though.

What if just one member of The Church of Brook Hills, just one of us here, over the next year, instead of leading one person to faith in Christ every single day, what if over the next year, you led just one person to faith in Christ, but you didn't stop there. But suppose you took Jesus at His word and you showed them the importance of being baptized and you began to equip them to follow Christ, so at the end of that year, they were able to go out and begin to do the same thing in somebody else's life and you began to take Jesus for real when He says multiply. So the next year, two would go out and four would go out.

You know what's interesting, you do the math and the same timeframe we saw 13,000 people come to faith in Christ over there in this scenario you would see over 4 billion people come to faith in Christ. Maybe Jesus knew what He was talking about. Do the math, church. Is it the dream of this church to grow to 5,000, 10,000 people? If so, your dream is too weak. God wants to use this church and the families here to lead millions to faith in Christ.

I believe that. You say it's idealistic, no, it's the plan of Christ. It's why in Acts 1, 120 people gathered together, the Holy Spirit came down on them in Acts 2 and the rest of the chapters that follows show how these 120 people, not the sharpest tools in the shed either, they turned the world upside down for Christ. How do you do that? You do that because they had seen disciple making in Jesus. They began to multiply their lives in the lives of others. And they began to impact the nations for the glory of Christ. This is the plan.

I mean, think about it. You've got a picture there that I think will help you picture this. You have 6.2 billion people, that's a lot of people in the world. How can your life impact nations for the glory of Christ? Well, you go. You lead people to become followers of Christ, Jesus'

followers, they become believers. But then, you make a disciple. You baptize people and they become established as disciples of Christ. And then you don't stop there, you begin to teach them to follow Christ so they become disciple makers. And then you start to multiply and that's how The Church at Brook Hills, based on the Word and the authority of Christ, can impact nations for the glory of Christ.

Now, is this a plan worth getting in on? I think so. It's unstoppable. It's guaranteed. The plan is outlined right there. But let's be honest, we are tempted in the church today to do everything except for the one thing that Jesus has told us to do here. Nowhere is Scripture, nowhere in the gospel do you see Jesus tell us to build colleges, universities, or seminaries. You say, "Well Dave, you get a paycheck from one of those." I do. You are exactly right, but Jesus didn't say to do that. Nowhere does He say to establish Sunday schools or small groups. Doesn't say to do that. Nowhere does He say to construct buildings. Never says that.

Now, I'm not saying that those things aren't good. I'm saying they can be very good. Jesus didn't tell us to do those things. He told us to do one thing, make disciples in every part of the world. And as long as a small group or a seminary or a building is helping us to be more effective in making disciples in every part of the world then go for it. But as soon as get focused on those things and we ignore the one thing He has told us to do, we have missed the whole point of our mission as a church.

Now, and I want to ask you a question that is going to kind of help bring this home. I want to ask you a question. I want to ask you, are you a receiver, or are you a reproducer? Are you a receiver or a reproducer? In order to illustrate what I mean by that, I want to take you with me to the Sudan.

We go into the Sudan and our goal there is to train church leaders in disciple making. Now, I thought, when I initially signed up for this trip we were going to go to the Sudan and preach to masses of people, lead people to Christ, that sort of thing. And the guy who was leading the trip says, "No, Dave, we are not going to do that." He says, "What would be more effective, for us to come in..." and we could attract the crowds, no doubt. "What would be more effective, for us to do that or for us to train some leaders who can do that with the crowds who live there?" And I said, "Well, that's a good point. That would be more effective."

We are not going to come in and white man save the world. We are going to come in and we are going to train, what we do is we limited our time to church leaders who could speak English, only those who could speak English because we doubled the amount of material that we were able to teach them. Church leaders who were going to be able to go and teach these things to others. And so that's what we did.

I would walk in every day to this mud hut, a bunch of guys, Sudanese church leaders crammed into this mud hut. It was amazing. I remember walking in and immediately all the guys in there would stand out of respect for the teacher. It just blew me away. Let me tell you, that's never happened in a seminary classroom in the United States, but anyway, I walk in and these guys, my heroes in the faith in so many ways.

I remember one guy sitting up to my left. Older man, he's practically blind because he spent the last three years translating the Scriptures into his tribe's language. Amazing guy.

We would sing and then we would sit down and I would begin to teach them disciple making and as we were going through that, the whole time I was teaching them, I hardly ever saw

their faces. Hardly ever saw their eyes, why? Because they were sleeping? Because they were daydreaming? Because they just weren't paying attention? No. They had their heads down writing down every single thing I said. They could come up to me afterwards and they said, "Dave, we believe we have the responsibility to take everything that you have taught us, translate it into our language and turn around and teach it in our tribes."

That is why Christianity has quadrupled in the Sudan over the last 20 years, even amidst civil war because people were saying what Christ gives to us is not just for us, it's for others. And it changed the way they listened. They listened because they were ready to pour it into somebody else. Because they were giving their life to multiplying. It's the same thing I saw in Honduras.

I remember my first trip to Honduras, I went there and I was preaching my first sermon. There were some guys sitting on the front, just sitting there writing down every single thing I said, intently. I remember, they came up to me afterwards and they said, "David, thank you for your sermon, we can't wait to re-teach that to someone else." I thought, "Man, that must have been good." Until I realized they said that to everybody they heard preach God's Word because they listened not just for themselves, they were pouring it into other people.

And so I want to ask you, let's be honest, are we receivers or reproducers? How many of us can honestly say that we are listening to the Word of God with the intent to teach somebody else what we have heard, this week.

I wasn't here last week and I had someone talk about covenant marriage. How many of you could re-teach that sermon to me? Pour it into me because you were listening not just to receive, but to reproduce?

This changes the way we listen. It changes the way we look at our Christianity. Many of us are good at coming into a worship service, sitting and even if we listen, we are listening to be fed and to receive and that is a self-centered way to listen. It's a self-centered way to receive the Word of God. What happens when we become God-centered and we say, "You know, what's entrusted to me is not just for me. It's not just for the people here. It's for the nations to know how good He is." What happens when we stop receiving and we start reproducing?

That is a completely different mindset and mentality than most of us have. I want to encourage you, what would happen if what happened in here on Sunday mornings began to be reproduced throughout Birmingham and throughout all nations. Wow, this is the beauty of the thing.

Here is the biblical truth, and I pray that you are convinced of this in your heart. The biblical truth, you were created. You, not just the person beside you, in front of you, behind you, you were created to impact Birmingham and all nations for the glory of Christ. It's not an either or. We take this missions thing and think, "Well, I am going to stay in Birmingham, other people will go over there." No, it's a both and. We are involved in a global mission. All of us created to impact Birmingham and all nations for the glory of Christ.

And I'm just convinced that if God's people started taking God at His Word and said, we are going to give ourselves to this plan. And we are not going to be enumerated with the masses and the programs and all these things, not that those things can't be good, but the center of our lives, the center of our families and the center of our church is going to be one mission, making disciples of all nations. If we took Him at His Word, I just wonder what He would do.

There is the plan. Make disciples of all nations. What does that look like in your life? Thankfully, the passage doesn't stop here because let's be honest, this is tough. How is my life going to have a global impact? Going, baptizing, teaching, these are tough things to do. They are not things we feel comfortable and they are not things we have a lot of experience, many of us, doing. How do we do this?

The Presence of Christ

Well, thankfully, we have seen the power of Christ and the plan of Christ, but now we come to the presence of Christ. And I want you to see this. I want you to see the importance of Christ's presence in this passage. If you... We won't go there, but Matthew 1:21-22. Just write that down and go look at that sometime because Matthew begins his introduction to Jesus in Matthew 1, and he says there is one who is coming whose name is Immanuel and that name means what? God with us.

Now, that's how Matthew starts his Gospel, his introduction of Jesus. We come to the end and see Jesus saying, I am with you always, to the very end of the age. So this is a pretty big emphasis that Matthew is giving us here. That this mission is dependent on the presence of Christ in us. I want you to see, we are compelled by the impulse of an indwelling presence. Christ lives in us. His heart beats with our hearts and when that happens, when that truly happens and we start to give ourselves to making disciples of all nations and we rely on His presence and we need His presence.

See, here is the thing, we know from Scripture, other places in Scripture, we know that God has promised to be with His people. That's a guarantee. All of us that have a relationship with Christ, we know that God will never leave us nor forsake us. We see that all over Scripture. So why does Jesus say this here?

I think what He is saying, please hear me. In the original language of the New Testament here. Jesus is saying, "Not that there would be any doubt about whether my presence is with you, but you are never going to realize the power of the presence of Christ in your life and in the church until you are fully surrendered to this mission."

We will never realize His power, the power of His presence, until we are fully surrendered to this mission. Jesus is saying, you get yourselves on the front lines and you start making disciples of all nations. Church at Brook Hills, you start doing this. Individual families, you start doing this. Students going into school saying, "I am making disciples of all nations." You are going to begin to depend on the presence of Christ and see the power of His presence at work in your life in ways that you never could have realized.

I guarantee it. He has promised to show His presence. You know if you have been involved in leading people to Christ. Or if you have been maybe on a mission trip somewhere, or if you have been involved in making disciples of all nations. You know that it is in those times that you are really aware of the need for the presence of Christ.

I remember going into the Sudan. It was a heart searching, heart wrenching trip in some ways, knowing that I was going into a place that had been bombed recently and being able to sit down and talk with Heather about some of the risks involved in this trip. And it was difficult.

I remember we flew over into Kenya. We spent a couple nights in Kenya before we went into the Sudan. And the night before we were going to go into the Sudan, the guy who was leading our trip got us together and said, "Guys, there are some risks, some danger in the Sudan that we haven't talked about that we need to talk about." We were like, "Oh great." And so he begins to share and he says, "Guys, you need to realize that there are a lot of snakes in the Sudan."

Now some people think snakes are cool. I am not one of those guys. Not a big fan of snakes at all. The guy says six of the eight deadliest snakes in the world live in the Sudan and he begins to go down the list one by one; the green mamba, the black mamba. This snake, that snake. And we are just sitting in there quiet as can be, just sweating and he kind of laughs, almost like it was funny, it wasn't, but he said, you know, we've got a snake kit, but if you get bit, these snake kits were not made for these snakes. He said, "We'll just," he said, "if you get bit, we'll pray and see what God does."

He begins to share a story about how one Sudanese guy had told him, he was walking his cattle down a path in the middle of the African bush there. And there was a green mamba hiding out in the trees that came down and bit four of his cows in a row, refilled instantly. And all four of the cows just fell over dead, right there on the path.

Well, needless to say, we didn't sleep very much that night. Didn't sleep at all that night. I stayed up memorizing Psalm 91 because it says, "You'll trample upon the lion and the serpent." Okay, and you will trample upon the cobra and so I memorized the whole Psalm so I would be ready when I went in. And so I remember when we got up the next morning, got into our plane, flew into the Sudan, kind of landed on this makeshift airstrip in the Sudan. Got our stuff, took a hike to a river which is a whole other story. This is a river, a crocodile infested river and there was a canoe that we were supposed to cross to get to the other side of the river, and the canoe has a name on the side of it. The name of the canoe is the Mayfloat. Okay.

So we got on the Mayfloat, which is a whole other story, go to the other side of the river and once we get there, on the Mayfloat, we get down and there is some trucks waiting for us. And we put all our stuff in and start to pile in when we realize that there is not enough room inside for everybody so they need some of the smaller guys to get up on top of the truck. So they said, "Dave, this is where you come in. We need you to get up on top of the truck." And I said, "Okay, I was really excited to be in the Sudan." So I got up there and we started to drive forward and I looked ahead of me and I see that we are about to go into the middle of the African bush and there are trees everywhere and I began to get the image that I got the night before.

And so I start just raising my hands and saying, "You will trample upon the lion and the serpent. You will trample upon the cobra." And the whole time we were driving, that is what I was doing. And everywhere we went for those few weeks that we were there, just always looking for snakes. Just always aware of the fact that if we are on a trail, there could be a snake. Lying in bed at night, going into this mud hut just like you would picture on a movie and this thatched roof, which basically means, anything that so desires can get inside it. We went and laid down in the darkness of that Sudanese night and have a mosquito net over us, like that would do anything at all. And there would be spiders on the side of the wall, and I can deal with spiders, but we would lie down and be really quiet, but then you begin to hear things above you. And we started turning on our flashlights and looking around. And then we learned it was better just to leave your flashlights off and we would go to sleep at night and just pray God help me to wake up in the morning, oh Lord, thank you.

And everywhere we went, everywhere we went, everything we did, we were constantly dependent on His presence. What I want to say to you is I believe that that is the way the Christian life was intended to be lived. But I want you to see that as long as you are in the back of the boat, you will not need the presence of Christ like that. You won't need it. You won't depend on Him. You won't long to see His presence. But when you are on the front lines and when you are in your work place and in all nations, making disciples, I guarantee you, you will need His presence and you will see His presence in ways that you never could have imagined. His power will be at work in ways that you never could have imagined, here in Birmingham. Do you think singing and getting a feeling is what the presence of Christ is all about?

The presence of Christ is about being on the front lines. Making the gospel known, making disciples, and seeing Him work in miraculous ways that you never could have imagined, changing people's lives and using you to impact nations for the glory of His name. That's where the presence of Christ comes in.

I remember talking with a guy in Indonesia and I asked him, I said, "How did you come to faith in Christ?" He said, "I'm a part of the Batak tribe in northern Sumatra, Indonesia." He said, "There was a day when my entire tribe was Muslim, completely Muslim tribe." He said, "A Baptist missionary couple came to us at one point and they began to share the gospel with us." And he said, "Tribal leaders heard what they were saying and didn't like it and they killed and cannibalized that Baptist missionary couple." He said, "It was one of the darkest days in the history of my tribe." He said, "Years later, another missionary came and brought the gospel to us and this time the tribal leaders said, 'This guy is saying the same thing that those others said. Maybe we should listen.'" And so they did. They listened and they placed their faith in Christ. They were converted to faith in Christ. Within two months, the entire tribe was converted, today, there are 3 million believers among the Batak tribe of northern Sumatra, Indonesia.

So my question for you is, do you want in on this thing or not? I think it all comes down to one question. I want to ask you this morning this one overarching question: are you willing to give God a blank check?

Please hear me. I am not asking anybody to say you are going to pack your bags and move to Cambodia next week. And I'm not asking anybody to say you have all the answers for how this is going to look in your life, but I am asking you to say to God, here is a blank check with my life, with my family's life. And as a student, an adult, senior adult, whoever you are to say, "God, I am giving you a blank check." No strings attached. However I can most effectively make disciples of all nations, I will do it.

Now there is a lot of risk in that prayer. Please don't take that prayer lightly. Who knows what God has in store? My question is are you willing to say, "You are Lord, let everything in my life, and I am going to give myself to this mission"?

Will you bow your heads with me? With every head bowed and every eye closed, I want to ask you, invite you in the time we are about to have where we respond to God's Word because it's important for us not to just hear it, but to have the opportunity to respond to it. I am going to ask you to do one of two things. I know that there are many people here who have never called Jesus Lord. You have never asked Him to come into your heart and forgive you of your sins and you have never surrendered your life to Him I want you to know that He is Lord, He is worthy of all of your worship. He died on the cross for your sins. He rose from the grave and this morning, you can have the opportunity, for the first time,

to submit to Him as Lord. I want to invite you to say, "I want to call Jesus Lord for the first time today." And right here, right now, you can have your life changed for all of eternity.

The second way I want to invite you to respond is for believers here, people who have placed their faith in Christ. There is a command at the center of your life. That is to make disciples of all nations. And I want to ask you to be very honest. Does God have a blank check from you? Does He have a blank check from you, from your family? When you think about career plans, job, where you are in life, does He have a blank check, and is your life right now surrendered to this one command, making disciples of all nations and if it's not, I want to invite you during this time to say to God, "I want to give you a blank check." I pray that you would just say to God, "I'm giving you a blank check. Whatever this means in my life, I want to do it. Whatever it takes to make disciples of all nations with the gifts and personalities, the talents you've given me."

But I want to invite you as individuals, and as a result this collective church as a whole to come before the throne of God and say, "We give you a blank check. We want to make disciples of all nations. We want it to consume us. We want it to captivate us. And we want to impact Birmingham and nations for the glory of Christ." And I want to invite you to give God that blank check for the first time or for the first time in a long time and say, "I'm in."

God, I thank you for this mission. I thank you for involving us. God, we praise you because we know there is coming a day when we will all bow around the throne of Christ and we will sing His praises and God, we want to be used between now and that day to make your gospel and your glory known. God, we want to take you at your Word and believe you when we say that we can impact nations by making disciples. God, I pray that on behalf of all the people here, Lord that you would show yourself in our response today to be Lord of our lives and to be Lord of the nations. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

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