

## Global Gospel

Sent Out

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## SENT OUT 2 Timothy 3:12

**David Platt:** Brothers and sisters, our God is great. We behold His beauty, and we extol Him. He is great, and greatly to be praised. I want to introduce you to the stage for the next year. A little bit of background about this stage: It cost zero dollars, and what that means is members of the Church of Brooks Hills could be found over the last two weeks dumpster-diving all across Birmingham, and so this trash is the fruit of their labors; just the evidence of God's grace and the gifts He's entrusted to this faith family. A couple of architects in this faith family and an interior designer of this faith family came together to give us this picture.

And as I look at it, I'm reminded and I want to remind us that this is not a set for billions of people in the world. This is home. If you have been in a slum in India, or somewhere like that, you recognize, you know how real this is, whether it is the broken bottles that are security on the top of the walls, the tin and the wood just put together. This is reality, and the goal for the next year is to keep this picture before us to remind us every week when we gather together that the world does not look like two-eighty culture Birmingham, Alabama. The world looks very different, and the God we worship is our God and their God, worthy of our worship and their worship. And so thank you guys for all the hours you've put into this and for the picture that we have as a result.

I want to invite you to pull out the booklet that you received when you came in. It says Persecution on the front of it, and I want to invite you to open up. I want to give you a little explanation into this picture. If you've not already read through it, I want to invite you not to necessarily read through it right now, but I want you to open up to that first page on the left. It gives you an overview of where we're going over the next few weeks. On the right, it gives you a little bit of information about persecution, and there's an area for message notes.

What I want to do right now is to focus on this area, and I want to give you a glimpse of where we are headed over the next few weeks as we think about a global gospel, and I want to put before you a picture of how global gospel and proclaiming a global gospel plays out in our faith family. And so there's going to be some things on the screen, just a few notes that I want to kind of put before you at the very beginning, right now, in order to help us get a framework of where we're going to go over the next few weeks. So, in that area, if you want to write these down and just let them soak in.

## One Mission...

### Make Disciples of All Nations

One mission, two contexts, three emphases. One mission: Make disciples of all nations. This is the mission that is before us that Christ has given to us as His church. We talk often about how we're tempted to do everything except for the one thing Jesus told us to do in

the Great Commission. He never told us to build buildings, organize programs and events; He told us to make disciples, so we got to figure out how to give ourselves to that mission.

Now, focusing on the last part of that statement, of all nations, how can we, in this room in Birmingham, Alabama, as a community of faith in Birmingham, Alabama, how can we really make disciples of all nations, impact all nations for the glory of His name? How can we carry this out individually and as a faith family?

## **Two Contexts...**

Well, when you think about all nations—two contexts. That word, all nations—“panta ta ethnē” in the original language of the New Testament there in Matthew 28:19 (the Great Commission). Literally means, “all people groups”, ethno linguistic people groups. It’s not really nations when we think of political boundaries and nations. It’s people groups. We’re going to unpack this some more in two weeks, but think with me for a second about two contexts:

### **Reached Peoples**

First, reached peoples. Two contexts. One mission, two contexts. The first context is reached peoples. In other words, people who have been reached with the gospel. Not necessarily just Christians, but people who live in areas where they have access to the gospel, where there is a church that is proclaiming the gospel, where people have the opportunity to hear the gospel; they’re reached with the gospel.

### **Un-reached Peoples**

The second context is un-reached peoples. They tell us over a billion and a half people making up thousands of people groups, still today are un-reached with the gospel. Not only have they not heard it, but they do not have access to it. They’re born, live and die, most of them, without ever even hearing the gospel. They’re un-reached. And so when we think about making disciples of all nations, we’ve got to realize that there are two contexts here. There are places where the gospel has gone and places where the gospel has not gone, so how can we as a faith family impact both reached and un-reached peoples with the gospel; do disciple-making in both?

## **Three Emphases...**

That leads us to three emphases. How do we carry this out? And it’s based on our understanding of disciple-making.

### **We Equip the Church**

First, one emphasis: We equip the church. This is, obviously, just talking about reached places, because un-reached places don’t have a church to equip. So, reached places, where there is a church. Our primary responsibility is to equip that church, to serve alongside that church. We’ve got to be careful in the way we do missions or understand missions not to see us going into other contexts around the world, bypassing the church there, and just going and doing our own thing. That would be foolish for us to bypass the agent that God has promised to advance his kingdom through in a community. We go to the church, and

we equip them. We work through the church alongside the church. We are servants of the church.

And this is where we realize that the way to impact nations for the glory of Christ is through strong church, through us being strong in this context. This is why, one of many reasons why but I want us to see it, it's why we need and want strong marriages, and strong families, and holiness and purity, and intimacy with God, because we want to be strong in the gospel for the sake of platforming and proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth. We will not impact nations for the glory of Christ if we are a puny church, so let's not be puny. Let's be strong in Christ and let's equip other churches not to be puny; to be strong. In Birmingham and other contexts of the United States and in contexts around the world, we equip the church, first emphasis.

### **We Empower the Poor**

Second emphasis: We empower the poor. We have, obviously, talked a good bit about this, the reality that our brothers and sisters, thinking about the church in many contexts around the world, do not have sufficient food or water or medical care. They are starving to death, and if they are our brothers and sisters, then that changes the way we do church here.

Also, among un-reached peoples or peoples who don't have the gospel, even, then one of the ways we take the gospel to them is not just in word, although that is a non-negotiable. Not just in word but also in deed. In word and in deed, and so we empower the poor.

Let me pause for just a second before we go to the third and tie the first two together. In areas where there is a church, we empower the poor through the church. Again, we don't bypass the church and do our own thing over here, helping. We go through the church. The church is the means by which we're empowering the poor.

### **We Engage the Lost**

But that leads us to the third emphasis, and that's to engage the lost. Now in reached context, where there is a church, obviously there's still people who don't know Christ there, and so we go and we proclaim the gospel to those who are lost but we do it through the what? Through the church. You're catching on, like this is important. As long as there's a church and we work with, alongside serving the church reaching the lost, but then there are un-reached peoples, where there is no church, and so we have the responsibility to engage un-reached peoples with the gospel by establishing the church, by planting churches where there are none. So, that's the overall picture: One mission, two contexts, three emphases.

Now take a step back, and here's the good news. God is moving across this faith family, has been, and is raising up men and women across this faith family who are taking steps that maybe a few years ago they had never thought of taking before. And I praise God for how so many across this room have gone out of your comfort zone, taken steps that you did not necessarily envision yourself taking before. You've gone to places, been in contexts where you had not imagined before, maybe for a short term, maybe for a long term. Some people go in short term giving 2%, and realizing they would rather give 98% and come back for a 2% visit every once in a while to Brook Hills.

You want to know something exciting? At the beginning of this year, at the beginning of 2009, Brook Hills had ten of our members living overseas proclaiming the gospel in other contexts – ten at the beginning of this year. Do you know how many we have now? Twenty-one. We have more than doubled over the last six months alone, and we have a few more that will be commissioning before the end of the year. By the end of the year, 25, and that's not where it stops.

There are 50-plus, 52 I think is the latest number? Fifty-two people who have met with Jonathan, the global disciple-making pastor, saying, "We want to get overseas. Help us figure out how to get there," and working through how to get there most effectively. So, the number is just growing. That's a really, really exciting thing.

The bad news is, that creates all kinds of problems, like really good problems, but issues that have to be addressed nonetheless, because now we have to really start to think through, "Okay, how are we going to do this?" because there's one school of thought that would say, "Well just go and see where people go, short-term, mid-term, long-term. Go all over the place," but I think there's a danger, especially when it comes to short-term missions – and this is like anything else in life – to do a lot of things and not really do anything well. And there's a danger in short-term missions to go and do something for a week and then leave, and then really not have much long-term fruit from that. In fact, sometimes, we can actually promote unhealthy long-term effects.

So, how do we do short-term missions with healthy long-term impact? How can we as a faith family, instead of just scattering and hoping something sticks, how can we begin to put strategic focuses on strategic places among strategic peoples, whether it's reached peoples or un-reached peoples? What would it look like for Brook Hills to say, "Okay, there's thousands of people groups without the gospel. Here's a few of them. We're going to make sure that these people groups get the gospel and they're infiltrated with the gospel. We're going to start there and we're going to move on." What would it look like for us to begin to have some laser focus in some different areas in the way we send, in the way we give?

You know it's interesting; one of the things we've discovered over the last few years is that when people figure out that Brooks Hills is passionate about the nations, it creates the floodgates for requests for funding. Everybody knows a missionary somewhere. If I were to poll the audience this morning, everybody knows a missionary, and missionaries are doing great things, and so I get on my desk either letters, calls, or emails every week. I get a couple every week – and I'm not even the global disciple-making pastor; he gets more than I do – saying, "Hey, I hear you're passionate about the nations. Here's how you can support this." What we found is, oftentimes, when you say, "We're not able to support all of these things," then people walk away and say, "Well, obviously, Brooks Hills is not passionate about the nations because they did not give to this..."

And it creates an issue where – and this is the beauty. I mentioned a few weeks ago that because the local church has for far too long farmed out disciple-making in all nations to Para-church organizations, we've said, "We're going to do other things. We've ignored the one thing you just told us to do."

Para-church organizations have risen up and done a lot of great things that need to be done because the local church has not been doing them, but the problem is there's a paradigm that's unhealthy that develops during that process that says the local church now exists to keep Para-church organizations alive, when the opposite is actually true. It's not that's there not a place for Para-church, but Para-church actually exists to help platform the work of the Great Commission in the local church.

So, what happens? This is the exciting thing, the beauty of it. What happens when God is doing it in a local church? Well, that's where we're beginning to shift our thinking and think through, "How do we send and how do we give our resources?" And so this is just a small step, and you could download right now – it went up this morning on our Web site – a five-page description of how we're beginning to look at sending and giving. As elders and

leadership, the staff have prayed through this, how we're beginning to look at giving and going in the days to come. That's stuff that will be unpacked over the next few weeks,

But I want us to see the excitement, as well as the caution, the danger. Just think about it with me, one example. Wouldn't it be just like the adversary to, when God is raising up – okay, 25 people who are living overseas by the end of the year, 50 more people who are wanting to go in addition to other great organizations that members in this church are leading. Wouldn't it be just like the adversary to take these 100 or so people, representing all across our faith family, and get us divided over who's going to get how much support? And, all of a sudden, a really good thing in the people of God can become a very divisive thing, and so we must be on guard. And what we've been working to do is figure out how can we best put laser focus on some strategic places and strategic people for strategic reasons, and, at the same time, give flexibility to how God might lead other members in the faith family to do a variety of different things.

So, all of that to say over the next three weeks we're going to be looking at these three emphases. This morning: equip the church; next week: empower the poor; and then, engaging the lost. And this morning you are going to have the opportunity to get to know Jonathan, who is our global disciple-making pastor, and he is going to lead us through a text that has been, in many ways, the theme of his life and family's life, and I've asked him to give us a bit of a glimpse into his life.

Over the last few years... This is a guy, a brother who, years ago, after being involved with this faith family, took his wife and newborn daughter into the middle of Central Asia, a place that's very hostile to the gospel, and lived in a small, tiny room with a Central Asian family and began sharing the gospel. This is a brother who has literally traveled around the world and has been in reached contexts and un-reached contexts. This is a brother, who I just want you to know is more respected biblically, theologically, missionally and personally than just about anyone I know, and I want you to see – to know, because you'll see, how God, by His grace, has entrusted this brother and his leadership to us. He and his wife, Carla, and their three precious kids are a gift to us, and he's going to serve us in thinking about equipping the church this morning.

Next week, I'm going to pick up where we leave off in Luke 10 and think about empowering the poor, and lead us in that, and then, together, two weeks from now, we're going to tag-team thinking about engaging the lost around the world. And so I want to pray for him, I want to pray for us.

What you've got in this booklet is something we're going to do every week. We really wanted to put a face on equipping the church, empowering the poor, and engaging the lost, and so there are different ones of these spread throughout the room. You might have a version that talks about a girl in India, you might have a version that talks about a brother in Pakistan, or you might have a version that talks about a woman in Columbia.

And what is it is it's an attempt to take the church, particularly this week, the persecuted church and put a face on that before us. You can read the story in the middle here, which has area for you to take message notes in Luke 10 today, and then, at the end, you'll see the conclusion of that story.

And then, you'll come to a prayer guide that is intended – we wanted to provide you with a guide that you could use in your individual or family worship all this week to keep the church, and particularly the persecuted church, before you.

I want to encourage us as a faith family all throughout this week to be praying continually through these prayer guides for our brothers and sisters around the world, particularly those who are persecuted. That's the focus this week; the goal of this is to help put a face on that, and we'll do the same next week with the poor and the lost. I wanted this to come alive in us.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this command, this commission to make disciples of all nations. We thank you for a gospel that has saved us and is worth giving our lives to proclaim. And I pray, oh God, I pray for this entire faith family, and particularly for the individuals across this room as we each think about how we can make disciples of all nations with the gifts and the skills and the passions that you've entrusted to each of us. God, help us not to neglect this command. Help us to give ourselves to it, for your name's sake in all the world. We pray for your blessings on Jonathan as he leads us in your Word; your blessings on us as we hear it and receive it and respond to it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Jonathan B:** It is an overwhelming privilege for my family to be a part of what God is doing in this faith family. To hear, before we were a part of this faith family, serving out in Central Asia, about what God was doing in this faith family for the sake of all nations, and how you were sacrificing redesigning your lives in the way we go about church for the sake of serving the world. It's an incredible privilege for our family to come and be a part of what God is doing, to come alongside this faith family and continue to fuel what God is doing among you.

We moved here in the spring after spending the last five years out in Central Asia working among an un-reached people group called Tajik. There are approximately 16 to 20 million Tajik around the world. They're spread mostly across Central Asia in the countries of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and into Western China. They are .0126% Evangelical Christian.

What does that mean? That means about one or two in every 10,000 is actually a follower of Jesus Christ. That means that most Tajik are born, live their entire lives, and die without encountering a Christian and with having little to no access to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For the last several years, we have been leading a church planting team, a team that began just as six adults who were planting their lives among the Tajik to make disciples and plant churches among this people. God has brought us here now, to come alongside this faith family and continue to help equip each of you to use your God-given gifts and abilities to make disciples of all nations. We have been incredibly encouraged to be a part of what God is doing through this faith family, to impact all nations for the glory of God.

I desire to continue to fuel what God is doing in each one of you. See, each of us is to use all of our gifts, our skills, our abilities, our talents to continue to make disciples of all nations. God has uniquely equipped each of you to play a decisive role in the spread of His kingdom to the ends of the earth. Your purpose as a doctor, as a plumber, as a lawyer, as a teacher, or as a preacher is to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. We must see our lives against that grand design. God has created you for the sake of the nations.

If you would please, turn with me to Luke 10:1-24. While you're looking for this passage, I want us to step into the context. The author of Luke highlights several key themes throughout the book of Luke, and then again in Acts, with the same author. He shows us that Jesus came as Messianic king to deliver the poor, the needy, and the downcasts. He also highlights Jesus' mission to seek and to save the lost. Both of these themes are ever

present in Luke 10, and we'll be hearing about it this week and next week. Both these themes come out of this passage.

Let's look together at Luke 10 and read it together, verses 1 through 24:

*After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.*

*"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.*

*"The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."*

*The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*

*In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."*

*Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Luke 10:1-24).*

Powerful passage.

When we first moved out to Central Asia, we decided that we were going to approach our task of making disciples and church planting by living out as literally as we could what was found written in the passages of scripture. As we began to search the Bible to guide us in this process and in this task, this was one of the passages that God showed us that we needed to live out. So many times, we read through the missionary passages in scripture and we go right past them, thinking they only apply to the apostles, or to Paul, or to the early church. We decided that we were going to give it a try. We were going to take a chance. We were going to take the Bible at face value and live this passage out, and I believe that all of us have been commanded and commissioned to go and make disciples of all nations. All of us should ask ourselves how are we called to live out Luke 10? How are you called in what God has called you to do to make disciples of all nations? How are you called to live this passage out?

## **Disciples Sent on a God-Directed Mission**

I think there's some things that we need to see that are grounded in this passage, that come out when we begin to look at it with this lens. First of all, disciples, you and me, disciples sent on a God-directed mission. In these verses is a great overlap with the sending out of the 12 that's found in Luke 9 and in Mark 6 and in Matthew 10, but these instructions weren't given just to the apostles. They were given to the 72 unnamed disciples, much like you and much like me.

Jesus, sent by the Father, sends out the 12, sends out the 72; He then conquers sin and death and commands the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. At Pentecost, 120 are sent out in power through the Holy Spirit to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. All nations.

John 17:18 says, "*As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*" Jesus sends His disciples – you and me – out to make disciples of all nations. As disciples, you and I are "sent ones." We are sent purposefully to make disciples of all nations. We must go to our communities right where God has placed us. We must go to our city that we live in. We must go cross-culturally, and we must go to the ends of the earth.

God is the reason we go. It is a God-directed mission. We go because we serve a master who sent us out on His mission. The mission is God-directed, so how do we go about following His directed mission?

### **Jesus Directs His Disciples to Count the Cost**

First of all, we see in these passages that Jesus directs His disciples to count the cost. You say, "Where was that in scripture?" Well the very first two words, "After this." After what? If you look right above, in the end of Chapter 9, what you see is the context that this passage comes in.

You see three followers of Jesus, who did not count the costs and resisted Jesus' command in Luke 9:60, "*But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom...*" Staying, not going, can be identified with safety, comfort, stability, security, control, and clear expectations, but going often means sacrifice, blessing others, personal risks, unreasonable hope, real fear, and radical faith.

In the sending out of the 72, we see the commitment demanded at the end of Chapter 9 lived out in those that went out, the 72 that Jesus sent out. There's a stark contrast

between the resistance of the three and the obedience of the 72. We cannot be sent out on a God-directed mission until we have first counted the cost of discipleship.

### **Jesus Directs His Disciples to go in Community**

Second, Jesus directs his disciples to go in community: The phrase, "two-by-two." Two-by-two, what does this mean? This is the most basic unit of biblical community. What we see here is biblical community at its core. We must remember that Biblical community and biblical mission are inseparable. Jesus directs us to take a team approach to mission.

One of the most powerful agents for evangelism is the life of Jesus lived out in community. See, Jesus called a team and sent out His disciples in a team. Paul and others followed His example. We are not meant to go on God's mission as lone rangers. In our Western individualism, we must not miss the consistent pattern throughout scripture, throughout the New Testament. We are meant to go in ministry teams. In Central Asia, we always worked as a part of a ministry team, and I can testify to you that you can endure much greater suffering and persecution and difficulty and hardship when you are held up by your co-laborers, your partners, your teammates, your biblical community.

Through the diversity of talents, personalities and giftedness, ministry teams are able to accomplish much more than when all of the individuals just work separately. God intended us to be a part of a body, the body of Christ, and He directs us to go in community.

### **Jesus Directs His Disciples to Prepare for His Coming**

Third, Jesus directs His disciples to prepare for His coming. In these verses, we see that Jesus appoints and sends out the disciples to go into every town and place where He Himself was about to go.

Now I know that Jesus is a risen savior, and that there is no place that He is not or He has not already gone. But in a real way, the mission of God is still about preparing the way for Christ to come into the lives and into the communities that we go into. We cannot cause lives, families or communities to be transformed in our power but only in the power of God. God has designed His mission in such a way that He sends out His disciples to prepare His way. We seek to make sure that there is nothing in us that would hinder God from working and using us as agents of transformation in the lives and the communities to which we go, but, ultimately, God is the actor. God sends us out to prepare for His coming.

### **Jesus Directs His Disciples to Respond to Urgent Needs**

Next, Jesus directs His disciples to respond to urgent needs. The term harvest in Biblical language is Biblical language for the great needs around the world. Acts 4:12 reminds us that "*there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*" No other name. We say here, "For the sake of the lost, for the sake of the poor, for the sake of the church," but what are the global realities of the lost, the poor, and the persecuted? We'll be talking about the lost and the poor in the coming weeks, but what is the state of the Church around the world?

There are over 200 million brothers and sisters, evangelical Christians around the world, in over 50 different countries that regularly face various degrees of persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ. Christians are severely persecuted in North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, Maldives, Pakistan, and Somalia.

You see, the ultimate goal of persecution is to silence witness. In this country here, where we have freedom of religion, we often remain silent. We remain silent. But I want to tell you

something, when you remain silent, you do not identify with the persecuted. You identify with the persecutor. You silence yourself and identify with the persecuted.

As Christ followers, we are part of a global body of Christ, the Church. We must show unselfish concerns for the needs of our brothers and sisters around the world. We must recognize that there is a way to be the church here for the sake of the church there. We must begin by boldly proclaiming the gospel each and every day, right where God has placed us in our neighborhoods, in our communities, and in our workplaces.

You can take that booklet this week and use it as a guide to pray for the persecuted brothers and sisters around the world. John 4:35 says, "*The fields are white for harvest.*" The mission is urgent. Harvest doesn't wait. Harvest is now. A God-directed mission requires us to respond to urgent needs of the lost, the poor, and the persecuted.

### **Jesus Directs His Disciples to Pray for More Laborers**

Next, Jesus directs His disciples to pray for more laborers. It's interesting. In light of these overwhelming realities of lostness, poverty, and persecution, God's response is to send you and me. His response is to send out more laborers.

We must pray for more laborers, but this is not an either/or. We must pray as we are going to labor in His fields. This command given by Jesus here was given to those He had already sent out. This isn't either/or. We are all called to make disciples of all nations. We must be praying that God will continue to raise up more laborers as we go. We don't have to choose between praying or going.

God's answer to the urgent needs around the world is to send His disciples, you and I, to respond to those needs. Prayer is an absolute necessity in the accomplishment of a God-directed mission. Our team in Central Asia literally mobilized thousands of believers around the world to pray for the Tajik people every day. Our original team was made up of only six adults. Six adults, 20 million Tajik un-reached.

We encouraged these thousands of people back in the United States, across Latin American and Western Europe to pray for God to raise up laborers. Today, there are dozens of people a part of the Tajik team across Central Asia. I believe that didn't have to do with our ability to recruit, or our ability to lead. I believe that that growth in laborers came as a direct result of prayer. More laborers are still needed in His harvest. We must pray for more laborers to be sent out into that harvest, as we go out into the harvest ourselves.

As disciples, we are sent on a God-directed mission. Jesus directs us to count the cost, to go in community, to prepare for His coming, to respond to urgent needs and to pray for more laborers. Then, we begin to transition in verse 3. It begins with the command, "Go." That's the imperative, "Go." That's His command at the beginning of verse 3. But then He goes on to give instructions on how to go.

## **Disciples Go as God-Dependent Messengers**

### **Go Defenseless and Depend on God's Protection**

To sum it up, disciples go as God-dependent messengers. Disciples, you and I, go as God-dependent messengers. Jesus says that He is sending us out as lambs in the midst of wolves. You see, we are called to go defenseless and depend on God for His protection. We are called to go defenseless and depend on God for His protection.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to go with my family to Old Baker Farm. There, we saw a little lamb. There's nothing quite as innocent and defenseless as a lamb. Other animals will step away from you. The little lamb came right up to our kids and began to lick their fingers, utterly defenseless. I can't even imagine one of those little lambs in the midst of wolves.

Jesus is telling His disciples that the mission of God involves risk, and we are to depend on Him for our protection. You know all too often, we have remained as sheep, or as lambs, among other lambs, and then we begin to look at persecution and suffering and think that it's abnormal, but rejection and persecution are the normal part of mission. The risks are real, and in order to accomplish a mission, we will have to face real danger.

If you look at Matthew 10:16, when Jesus sends out the 12, He adds at this point in the narrative that's very similar to this here, the phrase, "*Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.*" We can be wise. We go defenseless, but we go wise. We mitigate risks as much as we can, but, ultimately, we must remain faithful to the task that God has given us. We go defenseless. The message of Jesus Christ is never brought through force. Look at Jesus as our example.

When we lived out in Central Asia, we lived in some of the most dangerous places in the world. We did not take unnecessary risks. We did not do things to try to provoke God's protection. But in order to accomplish the mission, we had to take real risks. Daily, we had to depend on God's protection. Whatever task God has given to you to accomplish in the mission of God, I know that you can depend on Him for His protection. We must depend on God's protection to accomplish His mission.

### **Go Vulnerable and Depend on God's Provision**

Next, we see that we must go vulnerable. We must go vulnerable and depend on God's provision. The phrase, "Carry nothing," shows that the mission of God is urgent, exceedingly urgent. We must take haste and travel light. God will provide for our needs. If we go from a place of vulnerability, then we have to depend on God for His provision. We have to.

You know, whether we recognize it or not, we are all utterly dependent on Him each and every day anyways. When we go, our focus should be not on supplying our needs but on accomplishing His mission. Resources do not drive the mission of God. Obedience drives the mission of God. God provides resources, He does; they are to fuel mission. But often, these resources only come after we have stepped out in obedient faith to what He has commanded us to do. All too often, we'll have forgot to front our obedience.

In Central Asia, we stumbled across a movement of God among the deaf in Central Asia. Despite being the poorest of the poor in an extremely persecuted country, a handful of deaf believers had grown into a movement of over 35 deaf churches across the country. About 15 years earlier, a believer had shared the gospel with a deaf couple through their hearing sons. These sons had grown up to help lead this movement. This couple began by saying, "There are others. There are other deaf who have not heard the gospel," and they began to seek out everyone in that town and share the gospel with them. When they had reached out to everyone in that town and about half of the deaf believed in that city, they said, "I know a village. I've got to go and tell them that they are not condemned by God but that He loves them and has a plan for their lives."

This began to spark an itinerant movement among the deaf that we were able to just come alongside. Despite persecution, they were able to share openly and freely right in front of the secret police because the secret police didn't know how to read sign. Isn't that just like

God and what He does? You have a government trying to suppress, but you have God finding His way in an obedient people, not waiting on the resources but following in obedience what God has called them to do.

We were able to come alongside this group and help build some micro enterprises. I mean we're talking businesses that took \$200.00 to start, to help continue to fuel what God was doing among them so that they had a source of sustainable income to continue to go itinerantly, to be obedient to the mission God has given them. We were able to provide resources to fuel their obedient response. You know when we moved away from this city, they were already sending the first deaf missionaries to neighboring countries. Isn't that exciting? We must go vulnerable and depend on God for our provision.

### **Go Sensitive and Depend on God's Discernment**

Next, we must go sensitive and depend on God's discernment. We have to depend on His discernment. This whole reference to a son of peace and peace may be a bit difficult for us to understand from our cultural perspective, but essentially Jesus is telling the disciples a culturally appropriate way for them to discern who God has prepared for the message. They are to look for a son of peace, a man of peace. Who is God working among? God will give us discernment when we go with sensitivity and are looking for where God is at work.

We must go with the sensitivity to different cultures and depend on God for his discernment. As an outsider, you must first be received by someone within the community in order to share the message. This reception by the son of peace, or man of peace, is the gateway to the rest of the community.

When we first arrived in Central Asia, we prayerfully decided to take this approach quite literally. We showed up and found a translator, and began to walk around town. We began to meet people, explain that we weren't from there, sit down and drink a cup of tea with them, and begin to explain that we needed a local family to teach us how to live, how to survive, how to make friends in this community. Within a few days, we had over ten invitations of families who wanted to open up their homes for us to live with them. We prayed about it, and, without the translator, moved in with a local family that spoke no English and lived with them for ten months.

Don't have time to go into and unpack all that these verses have about cross-cultural ministry and the way we should go about it, but when we go as God's messengers, we must go with sensitivity and depend on God's discernment to identify where God is at work and how to adapt to the current cultural context He has placed us in.

### **Go Expecting and Depend on God's Power**

Next, we must go expecting and depend on God's power. We must go expecting and depend on God's power. For some of us, the next instruction to heal the sick might make us a bit uncomfortable. We may even ask ourselves if God actually continues to heal in that way today.

Let's get to the heart of what is going on in these verses. What is He saying to us? God's messenger is to proclaim the gospel in word and deed through preaching, proclamation, verbal proclamation, and healing, tangible demonstrations of the gospel. Now, we can tangibly demonstrate the gospel in many different ways through Christian love and action. We can minister to the poor or the sick and the dying. These acts can and do validate the verbal proclamation of the Word. In Central Asia, we also saw God confirm that verbal proclamation with tangible acts of miraculous healing. We serve a God that is still powerful and can continue to heal.

A local friend of my wife showed up at our house distraught and in tears. My wife herded her into the house and sat her down, and, through tears, began to understand what was going on. This woman's adult son had been kidnapped and held for ransom. This woman was extremely poor and didn't have any money to pay the ransom. She was too poor to pay. She assumed her son would just be killed and left dead, as so many others before had.

My wife asked her if she could pray in Jesus' name that this woman's son would be returned to her unharmed. This local friend agreed and said, "Please pray," and so they boldly prayed that her friend's son would be returned to her. Two weeks went by and we heard nothing. We assumed the worst. And one day, she showed up at our house, knocking at the gate, with a huge smile on her face. She said, "My son has been returned to me. My son has been returned to me, and it's because of prayers in the name of Jesus."

She went on to say, "That's not it. We're so scared to stay in this country that we've decided to flee and go to a neighboring country, and we gathered all of our relatives, all of the men and women together, and I stood up in front of all of them and I proclaimed (extreme Muslim context), and I proclaimed," she said, "To all of them that my son was returned to me because of prayers in Jesus' name. And I told them not just that, but do you remember my niece, my niece, who, for eight years, couldn't have children? They prayed in Jesus' name, and look, there's her daughter." She said, "Not just that, but my best friend's husband was dying of cancer, sent home to die; prayers in Jesus' name, he is alive today." There is power in the name of Jesus to confirm His witness. Here was this Muslim woman who had not yet come to faith, proclaiming our Savior's power to heal.

All too often, our expectations determine how we think God can act. God acts to confirm His message. We must go expecting God to act and confirm His message in power.

### **Go Proclaiming and Depend on God's Purpose**

We must go proclaiming and depend on God's purpose. Jesus told the disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God has come near to you. That was about all the gospel they had at that point. Jesus had not died and risen from the dead yet. That's what they had to proclaim, the coming Kingdom, but we now, who have the full vantage of all of scripture must go and proclaim the good news that Jesus has conquered sin and death through His work on the cross. The gospel demands us to verbally proclaim that gospel. Jesus was sent to proclaim that gospel. We are sent for that purpose, as well.

Notice that whether the message is received or rejected, both times we are called and told to proclaim the gospel. The issue of "shaking off the dust from their feet," this is a public way. This is not just a rejection of those people. This is a public proclamation of the Gospel. It is a way to warn those people that their rejection of the gospel has dire eternal consequences. The message must be proclaimed, whether it is received or rejected.

By God's grace out in Central Asia, we saw people come to faith, begin to be discipled, and gather together in local house churches. So many times, we think that Muslims have rejected the gospel, that those people won't hear; they've rejected. And we already, in ourselves, determine who will receive and who will reject the gospel. The truth is that most Muslims have never heard the gospel of saving faith through Jesus Christ. They've never had an opportunity to hear.

As disciples, we are not to take rejection personally. Jesus reminds us that the one who rejects us, you, the disciples, His disciples, rejects Him. We can expect rejection as a part of the mission, but we must trust that God is achieving His eternal purpose through the proclamation of His Word. We go and faithfully proclaim whether received or rejected. You,

in your workplace, in your community, with your neighbors, as you go about your business, are sent to proclaim the good news of saving faith in Jesus Christ. The reception or rejection is up to Him. Trust His purposes.

## **Disciples Participate in a God-Glorifying Victory**

Disciples go depending on God's protection, provision, discernment, power, and purpose. When disciples are sent on a God-directed mission and go as God-dependent messengers, then disciples participate in a God-glorifying victory. When we go on a God-direction mission, when we go and depend on Him for that mission, we, you and I, participate in a God-glorifying victory.

### **The Disciples' Joy Comes from Serving in Jesus' Name**

You see, in these last verses, the disciples' joy came from serving Jesus' name. The disciples returned to Jesus full of joy from serving the name of Jesus. You see, as disciples, we find our true joy and satisfaction not in what we do or where we do it, but in who we serve. We serve Jesus. We serve a risen savior. True satisfaction comes from faithfully serving Jesus' name.

Notice that the disciples acknowledge where their power comes from. They do not take credit for what God has done. The focus is on what God did, not on what they did. We will find true joy and satisfaction only in surrendering to complete service to Jesus and His name.

### **The Disciples' Power Over the Enemy Comes from Jesus' Authority**

The disciples' power over the enemy comes from Jesus' authority. The phrase, "*I saw Satan fall*" (Luke 10:18), that Jesus uses here, what He does is He pulls back the curtain to this reality, and allows us to see the cosmic reality behind the visible reality that we live in every day.

God, through His son, Jesus Christ, has defeated Satan, has defeated the powers of the enemy; defeated death and sin. Jesus has won the victory over death and sin. In our obedience to go and proclaim the Gospel, we participate in the defeat over the forces of sin and darkness. Wow! You and I get to participate in God's victory over Satan. That's what we do when we go and make disciples of all nations.

We are sent on a God-directed mission to participate in this cosmic battle. He has already won the battle. Our victory is sure. The authority over evil given to God's messengers prefigures Christ's ultimate victory over sin that was prophesied and talked about all the way back from Genesis 3:15, crushing the head of Satan. This is what you and I participate in, nothing less.

### **The Disciples' Rejoicing Comes from Eternal Life Through Jesus**

The disciples' rejoicing comes from eternal life through Jesus. We are to rejoice that we have eternal life in Jesus. Jesus reminds the disciples that there is greater joy in their position in Christ than in their power or authority for mission. The ultimate reason to rejoice is our eternal destiny with Jesus. This is a present and continuous reality. In this life, we are sent out as His messengers on His mission, but one day we, too, will return to Jesus. We, too, will go back and be with Him forever. This world, this life is not our home church. We were created for a heavenly home, and no matter how convincing this world around us may be, this life is not our home. It is but a mirage, an illusion to the real, true, spiritual and cosmic reality. We were created for an eternal purpose and we have an eternal heavenly

home. That is the great hope of scripture, that one day we will eternally be in God's presence.

### **The Disciples' Weakness Causes Jesus to Rejoice in God's Grace**

The disciples' weakness, your weakness, my weakness causes Jesus to rejoice in God's grace. Our weakness causes God, causes Jesus to rejoice in God's grace. Our obedience in this mission causes our master to rejoice, but, ultimately, Jesus rejoices because God uses the weak things to defeat the powers of darkness. Weak things, like you. Weak things, like me, like each of us.

In Hebrews 11, in this great hall of faith, where we see the great heroes of faith, one of my favorite verses – parts of a verse, actually, it's just a snippet of a verse – is Hebrews 11:31 that says, "*They were made strong out of weakness.*" They were made strong out of weakness. May you and I be made strong out of weakness for God's glory. This is the way God works. Right through the whole of Scripture, He uses the weak to magnify His greatness. In this way, only God receives the ultimate glory for His victory. This way, God receives all the glory that He deserves. God is the hero of the entire story. When we go, it is about Him. It is His mission. It is God-directed. We have to be God-dependent, and it is God-glorifying. The disciples are blessed. You and I are blessed to participate in God's ultimate victory.

### **The Disciples' are Blessed to Participate in God's Ultimate Victory**

Finally, we see Jesus calls the disciples blessed. There is no greater privilege than to participate with the God of the universe in His plan to defeat sin and restore all things to right order under Him.

We have an incredible position of privilege to participate in God's ultimate glory. Kings and prophets. It says in 1 Peter, "Angels long to look into these things." We are sent on a God-directed mission. We go as God-dependent messengers, and we participate in God-glorifying victory. Go! Go! Depend on God for His protection and provision and discernment to proclaim the gospel in His power and authority. Your obedience will bring you joy and blessing, and cause your master to rejoice, and, ultimately, bring great glory to God.

It is incredibly exciting to be a part of a church that is on this God-directed mission, a church that is God-dependent and sending out God-dependent messengers to participate in this God-glorifying victory. Let us celebrate together what God is doing in our midst, what He is doing in your life and in the life of those sitting next to you; what He is doing in all of our lives. Let us press on and continue to give our lives to this mission. God is using you to extend His glory to the ends of the earth. May this be your legacy, may this be our legacy as a church, for His glory and for His names sake to all peoples.

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