



Show the Word **John 17:1-8**

Good morning. If you've got a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to John 17. How do you make disciples of all nations? What does that look like in our lives here in Birmingham? I've gotten emails this week and I've had conversations with many of you saying things along the lines of, "I've been a Christian for 40-50 years, why have I not heard this? How have we missed this, it's so central in the church and in our lives?" I don't know the answers to all those questions, but I can give you a little glimpse into my own life if we just back up to about five years ago to a trip that I was on, a mission trip in Honduras.

I had been on numerous mission trips before that, but this trip was different in that it was tied to the process of disciple-making and for the first time I began to really see in that context what disciple-making really looks like. I saw the realities of a lost and dying world in a way I had never seen them before and then came face to face with the fact that I was created to have an impact on that world.

I remember sitting in an airport in Honduras on the way home, after having seen that with my mentor at the time. His name was Jim Shaddix, and as we were sitting there, it was one of those moments where both of our jaws were on the ground and we were thinking, how have we missed this? And for the first time really wrestling, at least in my own life, with the question, what does this look like? Not just in Honduras or in other nations, but what does this look like as we flew back to New Orleans.

I began to wrestle with that and I began to see it as I studied Scriptures all over the pages of the Bible, the fact that we were created to impact nations for the glory of Christ. It is there from cover to cover. I began to see that central plan of Christ to make disciples, and what that looks like in our lives. I began to look at my own life and began to realize that maybe somewhere along the way I think I might have done some disciple-making, but it had been done more accidentally than intentionally. I thought, why do I need to be accidental with the plan of God as opposed to being intentional with the plan of God.

It drove me into the church where I began to see that maybe disciple-making is more accidentally done than it is intentionally sometimes. I began to realize that we have the tendency to outsource disciple-making to seminaries or outsource disciple-making to parachurch organizations, and they're the ones who help lead the way and how that looks where it should be at the heart of the local church.

So, you fast-forward five years, and for some reason God has given me the privilege of being the pastor of a local church. Almost a year ago we dove into Scripture, almost a year ago exactly on this Sunday morning we dove into Scripture and saw how the glory of Christ is won. We see that God desires to make it known through us and to all nations. We talked about how some people might think that it's idealistic, but what we're saying is, "Those who say it can't be done should get out of the way of those who are doing it."

What does it look like when we put disciple-making at the center of the local church and at the center of our lives? What does that look like tangibly on a day-by-day basis? It's deeper than where you're going on a trip or what ministry you're involved in. This is what our lives look like on a daily basis.

So, we're walking through different components of disciple-making. Last week, we walked through the first one, which a little review. Let's do a little quiz here, to see if you were here not just physically last week but maybe even spiritually! The first component of disciple-making is to? Share the Word! So we're here to Share the Word. That's one component of disciple-making.

Just out of curiosity, how many of you had someone lead you to faith in Christ? Anybody have someone lead you to faith in Christ? Okay, that's a lot of us, if not most of us who are believers. The question we need to ask ourselves is, "How are people outside this building going to come to know faith in Christ then, if not through us, through us sharing the Word with them?" We talked about how that is a non-negotiable facet of disciple-making. What I want us to do this morning is to dive into a second component of disciple-making, which is not only to Share the Word, but to Show the Word.

Now, on a tangent here, let me say that these are not necessarily chronological steps that you take—you do number one, then number two, number three, and number four, now you're making disciples—that's not the picture here. The picture is, these are all facets that we see in Jesus' life as He poured His life into His disciples. He set the example for us to do the same thing in other people's lives. So, sharing the Word and showing the Word and the others that we're going to see over the next two weeks are all going to come together.

How Do We Show The Word To The People God Has Given To Us?

I want us to look at John 17 and see what it meant for Jesus to show the Word. Remember the Word is at the center of disciple-making, the Word made flesh, Christ making His life known through us as we show the Word. Look at John 17:6. This is Jesus praying for His disciples and He says,

I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled (John 17:6-12).

Now – disciple-making. We talked last week about how Jesus has given us the people; He has invested people into our lives. We are surrounded by people in our spheres of influence. We have the opportunity to impact for the glory of Christ. He's given us the words; He's

given us the authority to share the Word with them. Now I want you to see how part of sharing the Word with them involves showing the Word to them. I want us to think about people that God has entrusted in our lives, to show the Word to, and what that means.

We display His character to them.

First of all, I think it means that we display His character to them. I want you to see how this unfolds in this prayer that Jesus is praying. From the very beginning in verse 6, you go back up there and it says, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me."

Now, some of you, in your translations it might have, "I revealed your name to those who you gave me." Even in the NIV, which is what I am reading out of, you go down to the bottom and you'll see a note that says, "In the original language of the New Testament," that's actually what is written here, it literally says, "your name." But why does the NIV translate it 'you?'

Well, basically, it's because they go together. All throughout Scripture, and especially in the book of John, what we're seeing is that the name God refers to the character of God, His person, who He is. So for Jesus to say, "I have revealed your name to these disciples," what He's saying is, "I have revealed your character to them, I have revealed who you are to them." In the old economy, God revealed Himself to His people by dwelling among them in the temple and the tabernacle. Then you get to Jesus, and God reveals Himself up close and personal, face-to-face, in the person of Christ. He says, "I have revealed you up close and personal."

Remember back in the Old Testament, God's name. Moses says, "Who will I tell them sent me?" God says, "Tell them, I Am, sent me." That was His name. Think about how that is up close and personal in the book of John. John 6:35, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life to those who are hungry." To the blind, in John 8:12, he says, "*I am the light of the world.*" To those who were hurting, in John 10, he said, "I am the good shepherd who cares for his people." In John 11:25 he says to Lazarus, "*I am the resurrection and the life.*" In John 14, he says to his disciples who are wondering, "Are we going to get lost in the shuffle?" He says, "*I am the way and the truth and the life.*"

Jesus was God up close and personal to these guys. If you want to see a picture of the goodness, the grace, the mercy of God, you see it in the face of Jesus. He didn't reveal it in some glowing, one moment, "Here's my splendor." What he did was over a process of three years with these guys He continually, on a day-by-day basis, revealed God and His character up close and personal to them.

Now here's the problem. You get down to verse 11 of John 17, and Jesus says, "I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you." So, if God, up close and personal, is about to check out of the world, then how is the world going to see God up close and personal anymore? That's where you and I come in. I want you to see two truths unfold.

First of all, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we are all His representatives in the world. We are all his representatives. This is not just for the super-Christians. For every single one of us, we have—catch this—the responsibility from God to show His character to the world. This is not a responsibility of the church as an institution has, this is a responsibility of the church as individuals all across this room has. We are God, up close and personal, so to speak – His goodness, His mercy, His grace, seen in us in the world. That is the responsibility that God has entrusted to us, and it's a huge responsibility.

How are the people in your home, or in your workplace, or in your schools, how do people in your neighborhood, in this community, how are they going to see the character of God? How are they going to see His unending love? His perfect patience in the middle of suffering and trial? How are they going to see His overwhelming compassion for those that nobody else cares about? How are they going to see His patience and His kindness and His goodness in the face of evil? How are they going to see His courage in the face of trial? How are they going to see those things if not in you and me?

God has given us people in our lives, just like He gave these disciples to Jesus and said, "You reveal my character to them." I am convinced that God has given each of us, people in our lives that He has said, "Reveal my character to them, demonstrate me to them." If those people in your life and in my life don't see the character of God in us, where are they going to see it? In their DVDs? On television? On the Internet? In politics? In corporate America? If they don't see the character of God in us, as His representatives, where are they going to see it? This is huge.

This is where we begin to rise up and realize that we can no longer shirk or evade our responsibility to show the character of God to the world around us, and the people that God has given to us. Now some of you are thinking, "Well that's a tall order, I'm supposed to show the character of God? The love and the mercy and the grace of God? The patience of God and the kindness of God? I'm supposed to do that? I can't do that, I'm not that far along in my Christian life yet." On the contrary, we are all His representatives.

Second truth, we have all of His resources. Don't miss this. Everything that Jesus revealed to His disciples, the Father had given to Him. Look in verse 10, Jesus said, "*All I have is yours, and all you have is mine*" (John 17:10). So the Father had given everything to Him. Then look down at verse 11, as He prays in the middle of that verse, "*Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name*"—your character – same phrase we saw up in verse 6—"*the name that you gave me*" (John 17:11). "You gave me your character; you gave me your person." Verse 12, "*While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name that you gave me*" (John 17:12). Everything that Jesus had, the Father had given to Him.

Now at this point we're thinking, "Well that was Jesus, He's a little different than us. You know, He was God, and we are not. So how does that apply to us? How can you say that we have all these resources?" Here's the good news. Everything that Jesus had from the Father, He promised to give to you and to me.

Look at this. It continues throughout the rest of this chapter. Look at what Jesus says in verse 14, He's talking about His disciples and he says, "*I have given them your word*" (John 17:14). "Same word you gave me, I gave them your word." Look over in verse 22, Jesus says, "*I have given them the glory that you gave me*" (John 17:22). We have the glory of Christ given to us. Verse 23, "*I in them and you in me*" (John 17:23). Don't miss it here, the Father is in Jesus and Jesus is in us. That means all the Father has is in us. Look down in verse 26, the very end, it says, "*I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in*"—who? "*...in them and that I myself may be in them*" (John 17:26). Jesus' whole ministry, this whole process of disciple-making was Him imparting His life, Him giving away what the Father had given to Him into the lives of these guys.

This prayer comes at the conclusion of a long conversation that Jesus had with His disciples as He prepared to go to the cross. If you turn back a couple chapters, go back to chapter 15. Let me just show you a couple places where you can underline some things that Jesus said,

"I am giving these things to you." Look at the resources He gives to His disciples, look at John 15:11. He's about to start talking about the difficulties they're going to go through, and He says this, *"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete"* (John 15:11). We have the joy of Christ given to us.

Look in chapter 16:33. He has just finished talking about the trouble they're going to go through, and He says, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace"* (John 16:33). "I give you my peace." We have the peace of Christ given to us, which comes from the Father. *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33). We have His peace, we have His Word, we have His glory, and we have His joy. Look back in chapter 14. Listen to what He gives us there. Chapter 14:16. He's preparing to go to the Father and He says, *"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth"* (John 14:16-17). "That is what I give you." *"The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you"* (John 14:17-20).

This is the picture. Jesus is giving us everything He has. All that He had He poured out into the disciples. All that He had He pours out on us, even through His very Spirit, His presence living inside of us. This is huge. It is exactly why Jesus said to His disciples, look back up at the same chapter verse 12, look at this verse, *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me"—who trusts in me—"will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it"* (John 14:12-14).

If there is anything I've learned over the last five years, from this journey that God has been taking me on, it is that God has promised to bless His Word. He has promised by His very character to bless His plan. He has promised to give every resource we need to see His plan accomplished. There is no way else you could describe what happened in the disciples' lives, what happens in my life, what happens in our lives, when we give ourselves to the plan. He has designed it so that He provides the resources so that it is accomplished. That's why I can say to you with complete boldness and complete confidence that when we give ourselves to the plan of God we will see the result of God. When we give ourselves to making disciples, guaranteed, we will impact nations for His glory. We will impact Birmingham for His glory. When we give ourselves to His plan, He has given His full sponsorship behind it. Matthew 28:18, before we get into the Great Commission he says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." The good news is that authority now lives in you.

So we cannot sit here this morning and say, "I can't be his representative because I am not able to do it." You are more than able to do it that is a lie from the adversary. You have every single thing you need to represent the character of God to the world around you. The question is, "Are we going to step up and take responsibility to display that character to them?"

This is where we realize it makes complete sense now. We know our culture, we know that there are thousands of churches in Birmingham alone, and we know that this world is longing to see a demonstration of Christ that accompanies our explanation of Christ. Especially here, in what we call the "Bible Belt" and the southeastern United States. I am convinced that our culture is desperate to see a glimpse of the character of God. They've

had their fill of churchgoers who espouse all their conservative views on this or that issue. No matter how true they might be or no matter how aligned with Scripture they might be, they have heard enough explanations of those issues. What they long to see is a demonstration of the liberal, generous grace and mercy of almighty God. Their hearts long to see that.

It was Jesus' whole method. What we see in the Gospels is not Jesus sitting down with His disciples and saying, "Some of you have wondered what God is like, pull out your pen and paper, and I'm going to give you a list of His attributes. First of all, He is Jehovah Jireh, which means He provides." Instead, He showed them the provision of God up close and personal. What we'll find is that when we begin to demonstrate the Word to people around us, it will enhance our credibility when we Share the Word.

What happens when our lives become the gospel track? What happens when it's not a pamphlet we give out, but it's our lives that we show? Here is a picture of the character of Christ.

I want to read you a letter that we received after evacuating from New Orleans with the hurricane. You've heard me talk about the French Quarter ministry there. Listen to this letter. The guy writes:

I doubt if you remember me, but about a month ago I came to your French Quarter breakfast, only once and then to your church for the Sunday morning service. I came to the breakfast on blind faith. One of your regulars, Dwayne, who I met on the street the night before, convinced me to come in hopes that I could find help getting home to my family. I was very reluctant to go to the Quarter as I thought I would only find more misery in the form of alcohol and drugs. I really didn't think anyone would help an unknown alcoholic or addict on the street. The message at your church that morning was members sharing their mission experiences. I was so impressed with the way your church welcomed me into your company, a complete stranger straight off the street. I was even more impressed that members of your church were more concerned with helping those that couldn't help themselves than they are with owning the grandest church building or wearing the finest clothes. You and all the members of the church offered me many valuable assets, food, clothing, temporary refuge, and even money to get me home. You allowed me into your church in the company of your families. What really impressed me was that you shared with me the greatest part of your life, your most valuable asset, your faith. The work your church members do requires taking risks, and acting on faith to do the right thing. I'm grateful you are willing to take that risk and give people like me hope. I just wanted your crew to know that the seed you planted with me has sprouted. I am three weeks free of alcohol and drugs, I know that might not sound like much, but it is an accomplishment for someone addicted for 30 years. I am leaving in the morning to go to a Bible based treatment program in West Texas for a year. Thank you for bringing me to this turning point. I look forward to becoming a productive citizen again.

What happens when they see Christ in us? When they see that Christ makes a radical difference in the way you give what the Father, the God of the universe, has entrusted to you. May our lives be a demonstration to accompany our explanation. Our evangelism, our sharing the Word, will take on a whole new shape because people will be drawn to Christ as they see in us.

Don't you believe that? He is irresistible. He is good. He is gracious. If we would let the original disciple-maker that lives in each of us out, then He will draw people to Himself. The question is, are we going to take responsibility for showing the Word? Display His character to them.

We live for His glory through them.

Second, not only do we display His character to them, but second we live for His glory through them. Here's where I want you to see, chapter 17, come back with me to John 17:9-10. These two verses here, they almost seem like, "What's he really saying there?" You can almost skip over them, but they are loaded with meaning.

Look at verse 9, Jesus says, *"I pray for them"*—talking about the disciples—*"I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them"* (John 17:9-11). So there are the bookends on these two verses. "I pray for them," "Glory comes to me through them." What is He trying to show us here about disciple making? I think a few different things.

As we think about Jesus and the way He poured Himself into these guys, I think He's showing us first of all, when it comes to the people that God has given to us by His grace, put in our lives, in our spheres of influence, first of all, we set our focus on them. Jesus said, "I pray for these twelve guys, that's who I'm praying for." He would go so far as to say that He's not even praying for the world, and we'll get to that in a second, but He sets up all of His focus on them. "I pray for them."

Here we are at the end of Jesus' ministry. It's almost a little surprising, that if you look at His life and His ministry that He spent with these guys, He actually spent more time with them as time progressed than less time with them. You would think they would start to get it and He could take off some time with them. But that's not the case. He had to have more time with them. If He has only got a week left, He is spending all the time with these guys. Jesus spent more time with these guys than everybody else in the world put together. His focus was completely on them.

Now why would that be? Maybe it's because building disciples and multiplying the gospel, takes constant personal attention and focus from our lives. We really need to hear this. Maybe this is a process that doesn't happen overnight. Maybe you can't make disciples in the newest and latest fad or program. Maybe this is a slow, tedious process that has ups and downs the whole way through. This is the picture we have in the Gospels. Take this guy from the French Quarter, undoubtedly going to be that way. Doing this thing requires time and personal attention from each of our lives, us focusing on showing Christ and building the character of Christ in others.

Fast forward two thousand years to today, and what you see is that discipleship is most often referred to as a program in the church that involves an hour class a week. Whether you call it Bible study or Sunday school or whatever, we limit discipleship to what happens in that one hour in this one particular classroom. The world was Jesus' classroom and He was modeling this to them day in and day out, week in and week out, in all of the things that He experienced in His life. If we think that we can "can" that and put it in an hour then we are deeply mistaken.

Think about it, even when somebody comes to Christ, a new Christian, what we often do is put them in that class and think, "Well now they're going to grow because they're in the

class." But, all of a sudden the new Christians now find themselves learning in the class a bunch of legalistic priorities they're supposed to follow. But what they're missing out on is the living relationship where they see those truths modeled day in and day out. All of a sudden they are left on their own to wander through the struggles and trials that a new Christian has because they don't have that living relationship, somebody pouring their life into them at that point. How are they going to make it? It's no wonder, and the evidence is there that half the people who come to faith in Christ and join the church end up falling away. Even many of us who have been in the church maybe all of our lives, still lack a deep knowledge of how to study the Word, how to pray, and how to share our faith.

Why is that? Because we have tried to do, on an assembly line basis, what it took Jesus to do in three years with these twelve guys and even one of them was lost. We can't just churn this out. We can't come up with a new fad to make this happen. This is your life being set, focused on pouring into others. It takes time. It doesn't happen overnight. What we've got to decide is whether or not we are going to live for the momentary applause of popular recognition with a new fad, or if we're going to live for the reproduction of our lives for the generation after us and the generation after us and the generation after us. That's where the multiplication of disciple-making starts to come in. As we set our focus on them, let them see our lives.

I remember, just practically, in my own life, when I moved down to New Orleans. I went down there to study under a guy named Dr. Jim Shaddix. He was a professor in preaching, and I would take every class I could with Dr. Shaddix. I would sit there and take copious notes the whole time. That was good, that was valuable, but what I learned real quick was, it was good to be in the classroom, but what I could learn from this guy outside of the classroom was even far more valuable. He started inviting me and Heather to come over and eat at their home, and see him interact with his family, to see him as he traveled and preached on the road. I would go along with him and listen to him.

He was a big runner. He was one of those guys, some of you are like that, that think running is fun, just to do it, for no reason, but just to run, I'm going to go run one day. I'm just not that kind of guy. I've got to have some sense of competition to get me going, I just don't find fun in the running. But, Jim Shaddix was a runner.

So one day I came home from classes, and there we are in our little seminary apartment and I'm changing into shorts and a t-shirt. Heather says, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm going to run." She said, "You're running?" I said, "Yeah!" She said, "Dr. Shaddix is running isn't he?" I said, "Yeah, uh..." So, "Whatever Dr. Shaddix does, David does." So, I start running, and it only lasted about three weeks, but the point is, this guy began to pour his life into mine. He began to invest in me.

I was preaching at this conference this weekend here at the church. There is a guy in the youth group that comes here. He comes up to me afterwards. I had met him once before but I don't hardly know him, he says, "You studied under Jim Shaddix didn't you?" I said, "Yeah, I even ran with him." He said, "I could hear Jim Shaddix all over your preaching." It was one of those realizations as I thought about these truths, that my life is a product of somebody else investing their life in me.

Now what happens when a whole faith family gets a hold of this, and we start doing that in others lives? Do you see how the gospel starts to multiply? Maybe Jesus knew what he was talking about! So set your focus on them, and not just set your focus, but then, second, see the world through them.

Second, see the world through them. He looks at them, He says, "I am praying for them, I am not praying for the world." Now how do you reconcile that? John 3:16, "*God so loved the*"—what? "The world." Jesus, God in the flesh, "I'm not praying for the world." Well why not? You love the world. Why would Jesus say, "I am not praying for the world?" Why would He go out of His way to tell us, "I'm not praying for the world?" He does it, not because He doesn't care about the world and He doesn't want the world to come to know His Father's love, but what He is doing is He is praying for these guys because they are going to be the means by which the world is reached. He's seeing the world through them. He knows He's about to go to the Father and it's their lives that are going to have impact on the world from this point on. So He prays for them because everything is dependent on them taking the gospel, taking the Word and showing it and sharing it. That's why He prays for them. This is so good, and it's encouraging and this is comforting for us.

I used that French Quarter illustration. I remember when we moved down to New Orleans, I started going down to the French Quarter, and I'd come back, and I'd say, "Heather, I'm from such a different background than all of these homeless men and women and tarot card readers. I'm from such a different background than they are, and I don't know how to reach them with the gospel." I started wrestling with that. I'd come home and I'd be like, "Maybe I need to get some tattoos. It will enable me to be more effective." In one of those moments when I'm so zealous for the gospel and my wife just kind of brings me back down to earth and says, "Let's pray about this one, Dave." How could I reach all these homeless guys with the gospel?

But then I began to realize, it's not about me getting tattoos, thank you Lord, it's not about me getting tattoos, and making the gospel known among these hundreds of people in the French Quarter, myself. It's about me pouring my life into a couple of guys who are homeless, and seeing them begin to take the gospel and make it real and meaningful in their context. So all of a sudden, I begin to see the homeless community through the eyes of these guys, a couple of them that I am pouring my life into. That's good news! We start to see the gospel multiplied as you pour your life into this person who has that sphere of influence, and this person that has that sphere of influence. That's what Jesus is doing right here, and not just here but around the world.

I have told you some of my struggles with trying to learn the Mandarin language. But then it hits me. As I am trying to learn the Mandarin language, I realize, I can speak fluent Mandarin. And I'm not just doing wishful thinking here, I can speak fluent Mandarin. Here's how, because there are house churches in East Asia this week who are downloading these sermons, and who are preaching them in house church networks all over that area, Mandarin being spoken there. That was easy!

The same thing with the Urdu language in India as I email back and forth with Zemir, this Muslim background believer, who emailed me over the last couple of weeks. As the Lord brings it to your mind, I encourage you to pray for him. One of his friends was killed recently for proclaiming the gospel by militant Muslims. It's really hurt the growth and expansion of the gospel there. But I have the opportunity to proclaim the gospel in Urdu through Zemir. See the world through them.

Now you see. Are you catching it? Local, global, bring them together? Now, what we do here on a daily basis has the opportunity to impact the world for the glory of Christ. Man, this is a good plan.

Set your focus on them, see the world through them, and third, stake your life on them. This is where it gets really, really good. Stake your life on them. Jesus has said, "Glory has

come to me through them, they are my glory. I have lived for them." He has staked everything on these guys. Some would say that was not a wise decision, but He did, He staked everything on them. So what does this look like in our lives?

Well let's take a bridge here from Jesus, and let's go to a guy named Paul. I think Paul shows us this. Turn to the right with me to 1 Corinthians 10. You've got to see this. Here are some verses that I'm guessing some of you are very familiar with. But you've got to underline them, or put a little note beside them because you're going to see, maybe a familiar verse, but you're going to see disciple-making at the center of it for maybe the first time. Look at 1 Corinthians 10:31. It is a very common verse. Paul, the guy who is writing this, says, "*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God*" (1 Cor. 10:31). So we do everything, we drink orange juice to the glory of God. We do everything for the glory of God.

Now what does that look like? Well, that's what he says next, "*Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way*" (1 Cor. 10:32-33). Listen to what he says. This is the heart of a disciple-maker, "*For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved*" (1 Cor. 10:33). He is living for the sake of the glory of Christ in others. Now listen to what he says in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*" What a bold statement. For Paul to come on the scene and say, "You guys, follow me, and you will be following Christ." Some of your translations say, "Imitate me, and you will be imitating Christ." Is that a bold statement or what? For you to say to people in your sphere of influence, "Follow me, and you will be following Christ." Are we supposed to say that? Isn't that a little bold? No, that's exactly what we're supposed to say. That is the essence of what this whole thing is all about.

It's not just a moment where Paul was feeling pretty confident. Go over to Philippians 3, he says the same thing again. Look at Philippians 3:17. Underline these verses, make a note. This is a picture of what it means to stake your life on showing others Christ, he says, "*Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you*" (Phil. 3:17). Follow my example. He comes down to the end of this chapter, and he says, in verse 20, "*We eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord*" (Phil. 3:20-4:1).

Paul looked at the believers who were in front of him in this letter and he said, "I love you, I long for you, you are my crown, you are my joy, you are my life." When you get down to verse 9 in Philippians 4, he says, "*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you*" (Phil. 4:9). He says, "Follow me, follow me and you will be following Christ."

That's a bold statement. Some of you are thinking, "Well I'm not supposed to be able to say that, that's too arrogant." It's not arrogant. It's arrogant to sit back on the sidelines and to shirk our responsibility to show the way to Christ, and leave the world on its own to see His character. That is arrogance. That is self-centeredness. It is humility. It is deep humility, to say, "I am going to lay down my life so that you see Christ in me; so that you can imitate and follow me and you will be following Christ." That is a whole new level of Christianity that God calls all of us to.

Turn over to 1 Thessalonians. You have got to see this one. Look at 1 Thessalonians 2:19 and 20. Listen to this, I referenced this one last week, I want you to read it, maybe underline it there. Paul is speaking again, he says, *"For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy"* (1 Thess. 2:19-20).

Did you catch that? Paul says, "When the Lord Jesus comes back, and I'm held accountable for what I've done with the gospel He has entrusted to me, and the mission He has entrusted to me, my joy will be you, your lives, living for the glory of Christ." He says later in chapter 3:8, and this is the summation of the whole thing, he says, *"For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord"* (1 Thess. 3:8) – the emphasis being on "you." Did you catch that? "I live," Paul said, "because you are standing firm in the Lord." My life is staked on you standing firm in the Lord. If you don't stand firm in the Lord, then I miss out. So we live for the sake of others to see the glory of Christ, to show the glory of Christ. We set our focus on people, and we see the world through them, and we stake our life on them.

I know those of you who are parents in here know what that's like, with a child, to live for them. I know that in my own life, with my mom and my dad. The biggest smile on my dad's face was when I was doing what Christ had called me to do. What happens when we love like that in this world? What happens when we live for each other? Now we're getting to the heart of New Testament Christianity. It's not this routine we go through on Sundays to come to a place; it's the people that we are living for. Live for His glory through them.

We nurture His holiness in them.

We display His character to them, we live for His glory through them, and third, we nurture His holiness in them. Come back to John 17. When you come to verse 11, and you see Jesus offer a petition, an individual petition, prayer, for these guys. He starts off in verse 11, he says, *"I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father"* (John 17:11).

This is the only time in the Gospels that we see Jesus refer to the Father with that term, not that He hasn't always been holy, but He emphasizes His holiness, why? Because He goes on to pray, *"Protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me"* (John 17:11-12). He prays to protect and keep them.

Now these words, if we had time, we'd dive into John and see, but most often this whole "keeping, protecting" idea is not as much intended to talk about physical protection as it is to spiritual protection that's tied to all we've seen here. Protect them in your name is what He's saying. Keep them showing your character. He said, "I have continually shown your character to them, I have kept your character constantly in front of them." So as He prays for them, He prays that these guys would continually display His character. He has lived and nurtured His holiness in them and now He prays that God would keep them solid in that.

What we're seeing is a contrast between the disciples and the world. It's a contrast we see all throughout John 17. We'll dive into it more two weeks from now, but the contrast is there. What we're seeing all throughout this chapter is that when it comes to this idea of holiness, and I pray that over the next two weeks that God would transform our views of holiness and what that word means. We'll see it more in the next two weeks. When it comes to holiness you've got the disciples in the world, and what Jesus is saying here is that we have to avoid two extremes.

Number one extreme, is total separation from the world. By separation, I mean mainly physical right here. Because, yes, holiness in the spiritual sense is separation. We have come out and we are separate, but Jesus is not saying here that His plan involves rescue planes coming in to get the disciples and taking them out of the world. "Gabriel, get the planes ready, we've got to get these guys out because it's a tough place to live." That's not what He prays for. He doesn't pray that the Father would keep them in a safety deposit box so that they are completely preserved from evil and suffering in the world. That's not what He prays.

So we avoid separation from the world. We are in the world, and turn a deaf ear to the needs in the world and say, "The world is really struggling and in a lot of trouble right now." We are in this thing and God has put us in this thing for a reason. So we don't separate from the world, we're not out of here.

At the same time we avoid the other extreme. The other extreme is total saturation in the world to the point where you've got the world, the church and you can't tell the difference. These guys were going to be in the world, but they were not going to be of the world, it says in verse 13 and 14. So they were a part of the world, but the most effective way to make disciples in our culture is not to make yourselves indistinguishable from the culture, which is what some people think. If we are going to be effective, then we become like the world. Not like the world, we're with the world, but not like the world. We're not different just for the sake of being different, just to be these "weird" people, but we are in the world showing the character of God, including His holiness.

We've got to be careful here. If you know much about the church in England, you know it was just over a century ago that a guy named Charles Spurgeon was preaching to packed houses. People were coming to know Christ, and were coming to know the gospel in great numbers. Now about a century later, now, today, in England, the church is struggling. Those churches that may have been full a century ago, many of them empty. How does that happen in one century? Is that a humbling thought or what? As we sit here in a crowded room, to know that in a century from now, this building could be a warehouse for something else. How does that happen? I don't want to over-simplify it, but there's one historian that I was reading about in a biography. He said this: "In England, the church accommodated the drives for money, status, and power and the new order. Secularism had infiltrated the church on a grand scale, at first, as a sincere way to attract worldly people, but gradually secularism became dominant and transformed the church. The church began to look like the world."

If the world can tell no difference when they look at our lives with Christ in them then when they look at lives without Christ in them, then we have undercut the mission of the gospel from the start. That's why holiness is a priority. That's why we live for holiness in each other. The two extremes are total separation and total saturation. The example that Jesus is giving us here is total sacrifice for the world.

What Jesus is saying here is that these guys are going to be in the middle of a world of evil and suffering, and "I'm praying Father that you would keep their character in you strong that they would sacrifice the comforts of this world and the sinful desires of this world to show your character."

I think it really comes down to two main facets when it comes to the world. You've got sin and suffering. Think about it in two ways. When it comes to sin, we want to live holy lives, we want to be pure, we want to reflect the character of God so that we will show this world that there is a God that is superior over sin that there is a Savior who has conquered sin.

The tragedy is that if we live lives where we are doing the same things when it comes to our language and the way we do business and pornography and our marriages, if we are living just like the rest of the world is, then the world looks at us and the glory of Christ is compromised because they don't see a people that are showing that Jesus is superior over sin that He has conquered sin. The people are living the same lives that are enslaved to sin just like everybody else.

So, students, whether you are here at this church or you are visiting, when it comes to purity and the temptations you face to be impure, in your life as a teenager, I want to urge you based on God's Word, to be pure. Not just for your sake, but for the sake of other students who need to see the purity of Christ, who are longing to see a picture of purity and holiness. To see that there is someone who makes a difference in my life. We live our lives, husbands and wives, we sacrifice. Husbands, men, we sacrifice our lives for our wives, we out-serve them, why? So that, the world sees a picture of Christ and His church. So the world sees the love that Christ has for His bride. That's why we do that, our struggles with sin take on a whole new shape when we realize we are a part of making disciples and we are living for the sake of others. Not just in sin but in suffering.

John 15, you go back and you read the last half of it, to the beginning of John 16. Jesus tells His disciples, "You guys are going to go through difficult times. The world hates me, and they're going to hate you. They persecuted me, and they're going to persecute you also." He comes to John 16:2 and 3, somewhere in there, He says, "There is going to be a day where religious people think they are honoring God by taking your life."

He knew that they were to go through difficulty, and it's true. Of those 11 guys, 10 of them died martyrs deaths. What He prayed for was that in the middle of that, they would hold fast to the character of God and that they would trust in Him. Because when they did, they would show the Word most clearly to the world. It makes sense. How did Jesus show the character of the Father most clearly to us? On a cross, in the middle of suffering. This is a sobering thought, and I will be honest with you, as your pastor, I don't realize all the ramifications of it, but I believe it's what Scripture teaches.

If we are going to give ourselves to making disciples of all nations as a church, if we're going to show the character of Christ, then it's going to involve suffering. How can we ever show this picture of Christ to the world if everything always goes right for us? That's tough for us to realize in a culture of affluence, where we get what we want. But if we're going to show Christ to the world, it's going to involve showing His character in the middle of suffering, and don't miss it, Jesus has prayed for us. He prays for us, He intercedes for us. "Father protect them with the same protection you gave your people when you split the Red Sea in half, with the same protection you gave your people when I walked to the cross." The same protection He wants to give to us. But what that means is that we, in this process of disciple-making, sacrifice ourselves for the world.

So What Now?

That leads us to a few questions that I want to ask you. The first question that I want to ask each of you, who has God given you to show the Word to? I want you to think about the fact that the people in your life, in your sphere of influence, are not accidentally there, that maybe, just maybe, God does have this thing rigged, and He has put you in the place you are for a reason. Who can you show the Word to? In your home—not just in your home—

but in your neighborhood and your community and your workplace. Who can you show the Word to?

The second question is this: how can you show the Word? Not accidentally, "Hopefully they'll see Christ in me." How can you intentionally show them the character of God and to plan intentionally how that looks?

The third question, what do you need to sacrifice in order to show them the Word? You say, "What do you mean, what do I need to sacrifice?" Well, if there are some sins that you have been captive to for a while now, some things that you are holding onto, the desires of this world, then I want to urge you this morning to sacrifice them so that the glory of Christ and His character and His holiness might be made known through you.

For others of us, what does it mean to sacrifice? For a lot of us it's our pride. It's our pride of saying, "I've got the plan for my life." We need to lay it down and start to give ourselves to the plan that Jesus has. For many of us, it's our possessions. What do you need to give in order to show the character of God in this community and in the world? For a lot of us, it's our comfort. We cling so tightly to our comforts, and our comfort zone. What do we need to sacrifice in order to display the character of God?

I'm guessing for almost all of us, one thing that we need to sacrifice is our fear. There is a lot of fear that comes with standing up and saying to the people around you, "If you look at me you will see Christ, if you follow me you will follow Christ." I want to remind you that God has not given us a spirit of fear. He has given us a spirit of power, and of love and of self-discipline. He has put His Spirit inside of us. So let's give ourselves to what He's called us to do.

I was praying about how we could best respond to this word today. What I want to do is give you some time. We've hit on some things that are somewhat heavy. Sometimes we have the tendency to pack up and head out of here and we don't have time to digest some of the things the Lord is teaching us. What I want to give you the opportunity to do is to spend some time between you and the Father, between you and Christ, and these three questions. Whether or not you want to write down, "Who can I share the Word with? How can I show the Word? What do I need to sacrifice?" You to begin to reflect on that. Maybe that's just you praying, but I want to give you an opportunity to really think about what it would mean for you to intentionally show the Word in others lives, the people that God has given to you.

Dear God, we praise you for your grace and your mercy. We praise you, Lord Jesus, for showing us God, up close and personal. God I pray for this faith family, for those who are visiting with us today, God as you've given us this plan to make disciples of all nations. God, we pray that you would grant us grace today to show your Word to the people that you have entrusted to us. God show us what that means. God calm our anxiety about that, and God remind us of the resources you have entrusted to us. We pray that in the next few minutes as we reflect, as we pray, as we come before you, Lord Jesus, that you would simply come out as the original disciple-maker in us, and you would help us to get a handle on how this looks in our lives. We give this time to you, in Jesus name, Amen.

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