



## **Teach the Word** **John 17:1-8**

If you have your Bibles and I hope you do, let me to invite you to open with me to John 17 as we continue this series looking at what it means to follow Christ and make disciples of all nations. So far we have talked about two components that are involved in disciple-making. The first component of disciple-making that we have talked about is to share the Word. The second component that we talked about is show the Word. The third component that we are going to talk about is to teach the Word.

Before we begin in this text, I want to give you a picture in your mind. A few years ago, you heard me talk about Jim Shaddix who I studied under in New Orleans, he and I went to a preaching conference in Scotland. While we were there we had the opportunity to play golf at the old course at St. Andrews. There were only two of us and we were joined by two other people. It was a man and his wife, and we were asking them about their lives. I asked the guy, "What do you do for a living?" He said, "I play golf." I asked, "Are you on the tour?" He said, "No". I said, "Are you a professional golfer here?" They were from the United States living in Scotland and I asked, "Are you a golfer out here?" He said, "No. My wife is a consultant. She makes really good money and so I just play golf."

It was one of those moments where you are just disgusted with the person who is sitting in front of you. Maybe on two levels, because on one level you are thinking this guy is living a permanent vacation playing golf while his wife takes responsibility for everything in his home. Then there is another level where you are thinking maybe we can learn something from this guy.

I want you to see in that picture of the guy on permanent vacation what I think is a picture of the average American Christian life when it comes to this disciple-making thing. I think there is a dangerous tendency for us to go on permanent vacation in this church culture. We go to worship, we participate in the normal Christian life, we do what the normal Christian does. All the while, the primary responsibility for which we have been saved, we leave over to the side.

You think about it in light of those three elements that we have seen. We have seen two and are going to see another one this morning sharing the Word, showing the Word, teaching the Word. These are elements of the Christian life that somewhere along the way we have gotten the idea that they are relegated to just a few people to do. They are responsible for that. Sharing the Word – That is the preacher's job. He is the one who preaches the gospel, leads them to Christ – that is his job. He does that. Or maybe it is the job that a couple of people in the church that are really outgoing and who like that sort of thing but for the rest of us – that is not for us.

Showing the Word – "You mean I am supposed to have the responsibility to show the holiness and the majesty and the greatness and the mercy, the compassion and the patience and the kindness of God? Dave, don't you realize I am just a work in progress? I

can't do that." Teaching the Word – "Well, that is relegated to those who lead the Bible studies and lead the small groups. Those are the good teachers."

So we relegate these things to certain Christians. What we are saying in this series is that kind of mind set is self-centered, consumer driven, "vacational" Christianity. It ignores the very purpose for which we have been saved and the mission that Christ has given us, the primary responsibility He has given us. What we are saying in this series is that God has given each of us, as His disciples, people who we can share the Word with and show the Word to, and today, we are going to see, teach the Word. What we are saying in this series is we are going to stop farming this responsibility out to the super-mega Christian that really doesn't exist, and we are going to stop farming this responsibility out even to the church as an institution and we are going to rise up as individuals in this faith family and we are going to take responsibility for the primary commandment Christ has given to us before He left the earth.

In the process of doing that, we are going to impact this community for the glory of Christ. We are going to impact this city for the glory of Christ. By His Word and based on His Word, we are going to impact nations for the glory of Christ when we get serious about giving ourselves to making disciples. That is what this is all about. Not "vacational" Christianity. This whole series is about us rising up and taking the responsibility for what Christ has given us. God rid us of "vacational" Christianity.

Now, we are going to talk about teaching the Word this morning. I have got to say from the very beginning, in our mindset, whenever you hear me mention 'Teach the Word', whenever we see teaching the Word mentioned here in John 17, we have got to keep our minds from thinking of teaching and just classroom style settings or lecture formats. When you think of a teacher, you think about a setting like this or a setting even in a smaller room with one person standing in front of the others teaching the Word. But, what we are going to see in Jesus' life was that was not His primary teaching method. We are talking about the kind of teaching in the Christian life that is for all of us as disciples of Christ, not just a few people in the church. So get the lecture, classroom type teaching, get that model out of your mind whenever you hear us talk about teaching the Word.

In John 17 and we will pick up in verse 13. We have been studying for the last couple of weeks verses 6-12. I want us to pick up in verse 13 and see what Jesus prays for His disciples. He says,

*[Father] I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth (John 17:13-17).*

## **How Do We Teach The Word To The People God Has Given To Us?**

Now, how do we teach the Word to the people God has given to us? I want us to see this on a few different levels. I want us to see it overall and the main thrust that we are seeing there is it was reflected in the ministry of Christ. I want us to narrow it in and see a few

things in these specific verses and then I want that to lead us into how does this look in you and me making disciples of all nations.

### **We value God's Word as a gift.**

Let's start with the first, kind of a broad overview, but a picture of what Jesus is communicating here. How do we teach the Word to those God has given to us? First of all, we value the Word as God's gift to us. This is a theme that we have seen repeated at different times in John 17. It says it there in verse 14 which we just read. Jesus says, "*I have given them your word*" (John 17:14). In other words, the word that you gave me. It is the same thing we saw up in verse 8. He said, "*I gave them the words you gave me*" (John 17:8). We are seeing this thing over and over again. The Father gives to Jesus and Jesus gives to the disciples.

The focus here is on the fact that He has given them His Word. The Father's Word has come to Jesus, and He has given it to His disciples. The disciples knew where Jesus' words came from. They knew with certainty. It says earlier, they believed, they obeyed your word and they believed that those words came from you. They knew the author of those words, the originator of those words. They knew that these words were a gift from the Father. Over and over again, these guys in their walks with Jesus on this earth were saturated with words from the Father. There are at least 66 different times in the Gospels alone where Jesus—these are the only ones we have recorded—where Jesus directly quotes from the Old Testament and shares the Father's word. What does this mean for us? That is in addition to over 100 allusions in the Old Testament in conversations with others. These guys were saturated with the Word over and over again. It was a gift that was given to them.

I want us to think about this on a couple of different levels. First of all, when they received God's Word and valued it, they knew that this was revelation from the Father, God revealing Himself. So, the first thing we need to realize is that God has revealed His will to us. That is the picture that we are seeing all throughout Jesus' life and ministry with these disciples that He was revealing the Father's will to them almost like they were in on a secret. The revelation is at the heart of this thing. This is not just some natural possession. This is just like, if you are wearing a mask and you took off the mask, it would reveal who you really are. The word that Jesus gave, the word we have in front of us, is God taking off the mask and revealing Himself to us. "You want to know how I think, you want to know how I work, you want to know who I am, and you want to know how I work in your life. This is my revelation to you!" That is a divine thing.

We see that all throughout the Gospels because Jesus would often talk. He would speak. He would teach and there were crowds of people that had no clue what He meant. Obviously, we know that Jesus was a master-teacher, a master communicator. But sometimes, we have this glorified image of how the people may have responded. You know all those parables that He shares in the gospels that sometimes are kind of weird, kind of hard to understand? We have got this image of people just sitting back, hearing a parable and giving Him applause. Wow that was incredible! That is not the picture that we see. You don't have to turn there but just imagine you are in the crowd. Listen to this. This is the parable from Mark 4. You are in the crowd and Jesus said: "*A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come*" (Mark 4:26-29).

"Wow. Did you hear that?" No, they didn't understand that. These people had no clue many times what Jesus was saying. What did Jesus do over and over again in the gospels? He

would look at His disciples. They have got blank looks on their faces. They are clueless. He would pull them aside and say, "Okay, you guys are wondering what in the world I just said. Well, let me let you in on this." He shares the parable of the sower. He spends three times as much time explaining the parable to these guys than He did giving the parable. These guys were let in on the revelation from the Father. This is the Father's will for you. They were not left to wander around in a fog wondering what the Father had said and what Jesus was saying. He was giving them His words, revealing His will to us.

I want us to think about that in light of... Fast forwarding 2,000 years to today, one of the most common questions in the church, the most common questions that people ask in the church is often, "how do I know God's will for my life?" What is God's will for my life? Almost like we are wondering around in a fog thinking, God, if you would just show me your will, I would do it. But I don't know how to know your will. Ever wondered that? If you have, I want to free you up today. The majority of God's will for our lives has already been revealed to us. It is right here in His Word. He has given it to us. We are not in a fog. We have 66 books that we know are the revealed will of God.

I am convinced that 95% of God's will for our lives has already been revealed to us. It is right here. Now obviously, this book doesn't tell us exactly what career decision to make. It doesn't tell us exactly what family decision to make with this issue or that circumstance. However, I am convinced that if we would give ourselves to the 95% that God has revealed to us, maybe, just maybe He would be faithful to show us the 5% that we don't know yet. He has revealed His will to us. We don't have to wander around in confusion.

Isn't it ironic? That is one of the most common questions we ask in the church today while all the while we are giving nominal adherence to the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations? He has said, "This is my will." And we have ignored that and the most common question we ask is, "What is your will for my life?" It doesn't add up. What is His will for our lives?

We live in the wealthiest part of Alabama. His will for our lives is to sacrifice our resources for the poor and the needy. That is His will, guaranteed! We don't have to ask. It is there. We have to stop ignoring His will. In our lives men, we don't have to ask what His will for our lives is. His will is for us to out serve our wives, to love them in such a way, just like Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. We are supposed to do the same thing. That is His will for our lives, give ourselves to her.

The Dongxiang people group in the northern provinces of China, 595,000 of them, hundreds and hundreds of mosques, not one church, not one Christian, not one missionary, no gospel, no witness, no Jesus, and we are sitting over here saying, "What do you want me to do, God?" "Give yourselves to the will that I have shown to you. I have revealed my will to you."

I wonder sometimes, particularly over the last couple of years, I have really wrestled with this traveling into underground house church settings in Asia and seeing believers gather together in small rooms for literally 12 hours a day, sitting on little stools. If you get there early enough and you get a seat, you get a stool and you sit there for twelve hours studying the Word. Why are they so hungry, risking their lives to do that? Why are they so hungry that when you go to their worship service, they look at you and they say, "We want you to preach – no short sermons – we want at least two hours in the Word tonight." Why is there such a hunger?

As I wrestle with that, I can't help but think as I looked around those rooms and I see people who have been delivered out of an atheistic philosophy that has left them to live

their life on their own, many of them animistic. Witch doctors in these villages are very prevalent because everybody is concerned with how they can be okay before the spirits and before the gods – so many superstitions – and they come into the knowledge of the one and only true God who has revealed His Word to them – they long for His Word. It means something to them. They realize that this is the revelation of God to us. He has revealed His will to us. That is good news!

Not only has He revealed His will to us, but think about it like valuing God's Word as a gift. He has entrusted His truth to us. Now in this passage, what we see is Jesus saying, "*I have given them your word*" (John 17:14). Then He says, "Your Word is truth." This is the theme we see throughout the book of John. Twenty-five different times John uses truth and refers to truth from the mouth of Jesus and other places. This is a theme that is over and over again repeated. His Word is constantly equated with truth. Remember John 8:32, "*You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*"? That whole passage is framed with the fact that His Word is truth equating His word with truth.

What He says to these guys is, "I have given them your words, Father. I have given them your truth. I have entrusted it to them." The implications for disciple-making are huge. Jesus is saying here, don't miss it, that all the truth you have entrusted to me, I have perfectly and completely passed on to them. I have not added to it. I have not taken away from it. I haven't said, "You know Father, you should have added a few things here. Let me give some more help to make sure they get it." No He said, "All the truth you have given to me, I have given them your word." That is exactly what disciple-making is all about. It is about us saying, "We have been entrusted with truth, with the very words of almighty God and we are going to rise up and be a people who preserve that truth and multiply that truth to the generations that come behind us." It is not going to stop with us. It is not going to be this person's job or that person's job or the institutional churches job. It is going to be my job to make sure that truth is passed down, just as Jesus did that in others lives.

It is at this point, I know there are some of you who as we have been talking about disciple-making, you have been a little uncomfortable. "What do you mean I am supposed to make and have disciples, people that God has given to me?" Some of you, there is a rub there that sounds kind of arrogant, a little self-centered. This is where we realize that this whole disciple-making process, ladies and gentlemen, does not revolve around you passing on your opinions and your experiences and all your thoughts on a variety of issues. This whole thing called disciple-making revolves around you passing on the Word of God, His truth, those who come behind you, to the people that are around you.

That is not arrogant. The height of arrogance is to fill our conversations day in and day out with talk about business, sports and latest gossip. That is arrogance, meaningless conversation and that will lead to us making disciples of us. God, help us to put the Word at the center of our community, at the center of our lives, in such a way that it flows from us. We don't make disciples based on our experience and our opinions and our thoughts. We make disciples based on the Word of God.

You have heard us talk about this. Even as a faith family here at Brook Hills, you hear over and over again the Word is at the center of what we do. If we are going to err on one side, we are going to err on the side of faithfully preserving and communicating and multiplying this truth because if we don't, where will we leave the people that come behind us? With our thoughts and our opinions? The Word is the center of our community. It is the center of this mission. We have been given a great trust. God make us faithful with it.

So, we value God's Word as a gift. This is the starting point. Now, I want us to dive into specifically these three verses and see some of the effects of God's Word.

### **We experience the effects of God's Word.**

First of all, we value God's Word as a gift. Second, we experience the effects of God's Word. I want you to see one effect in verse 13, one effect in verse 14, and another effect in verse 15 through 17. Look at verse 13, *"I am coming to you now, but I say these things"* (John 17:13). "I give you these words," I think referring mainly to what He has just said, ever since John 14 all the way to John 17 here, *"I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them"* (John 17:13). The first effect of God's Word is that it satisfies us in the world. We are seeing Jesus talk about the disciples compared with the world and He says, "I have said these things so that my joy would be in them; so that my satisfaction would be theirs."

This is really interesting. In the verse or two before verse 13, it is kind of a bleak picture talking about how Jesus was doomed to destruction, talking about how they were going to be in a world of evil. Then you get to verse 14 and it says the world is going to hate them, but in verse 13 you have got this light, kind of like a mountaintop, the tip of the iceberg with darkness surrounding on both sides. What you have got is a great picture of the Word, of joy. No matter what the world says, no matter what the world brings, "I say these things that they might have my joy within them." He had emphasized this back in John 15. He said, "Remain in me and my words remain in you and you will have my joy and it will be complete in you." What we've got is a picture here of the fact that the disciple's joy would not have to be dependent on the sinful pleasures of the world. The disciple's joy would be based completely on the inward spiritual resources that are found in God's Word and that is good news for us.

I was talking with a lady when I was traveling this past week. She was talking about some of the trials that she has had recently in her life. She told me about how she had a new job. She said, "I think this is going to be the answer. I think this is the job that is going to make everything right for me and my family." I looked at her and I said, "I am excited about your job with you, and I think that is a great thing but what happens when something falls apart there?" I was able to share with her that there is a rock in Christ who supersedes any circumstance or job that may come her way. Isn't that good news for us?

Isn't it good to know that this week, no matter what happens, that you and I don't know what is going to happen this week? Isn't it good to know that no matter what happens, the inward spiritual resources of God's Word will be our sustenance, will be our joy? That is why it says, *"Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"* (Matt. 4:4). This is our feast. This is our sustenance. We live on this and when confusion hits, when anxiety hits, when we don't know what is going to happen next, the Word satisfies us in the world. That is good! The Word is good! So, that is one effect. It satisfies us and gives us joy.

The second effect: the Word separates us from the world. I want you to see this unfold in a very interesting way in verse 14. Jesus says, *"I have given them your Word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world"* (John 17:14). Basically, what Jesus is saying here in the original language of the New Testament is pretty clear, "I gave them Your Word, therefore the world has hated them just like they hate me."

He emphasized this is John 15:8 all the way to John 16:4. He talked over and over again about how they would be set against the world, separated from the world, how the world—

and that's a strong term, but He says it pretty clearly—would hate them. This is another one of those themes that we see all throughout the book of John. Most often when John refers to the world, whether it is in the mouth of Jesus or someone else, it is referring to the world in rebellion against God and rebellion against God's truth.

You say, "Well, what do you mean? I thought John 3:16, and we know that, says that God so loved the world?" Exactly! That is the beauty of that whole verse. This is a picture of the world in rebellion against God, rebellion against the Father and His Word and the God of the universe has so poured out His grace on the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him would never perish, but have eternal life. The meaning of John 3:16 is heightened there. That is what the world is.

It is a picture of deception, even way back in the very beginning to the introduction of Jesus, John 1 talks about how He was life. He brought life and light. He talked about how the world rejected that light. Obviously, that is the picture that leads up to the crucifixion, which is about to happen in John a rejection of the light.

So, what you've got is a picture here. Jesus said, "I have given them my Word." It is almost like, if you could imagine, you have a kingdom and you've got the kingdom now full of rebels who are against the king, and Jesus calls out these men and they are loyal subjects of the king. If you have got a kingdom full of rebels against the king and you've got some loyal subjects to the king, you don't have a lot of parties happening between the two. In fact, you have the rebels wanting nothing to do with those loyal subjects, ignoring them, turning off everything they said. That is the picture here. I am not trying to paint it bleaker than it is. That is the picture that we are seeing here in John 17. The end of the story is the loyal subjects of the king who give their lives for those who rebelled against the king.

Now, I want us to fast forward to our lives today. You don't question that we live in a culture, and it is not new, a culture that rejects truth. We live in a culture where relativism is the cry of our day—"What is true for you, okay, but it is not true for me. There is no truth." If you claim to have truth, then you are arrogant. You are narrow-minded. You are closed-minded. I wish I could give you more comforting words this morning but if we are going to cling to this truth, it will separate us from the world. The disciples took this truth into their culture, penetrated the culture with this truth and turned their world upside down. It has power, it bears fruit when we stand with this truth, proclaim truth with compassion and let the truth do the work. That is what He is showing us here.

This is one of the issues that is really close to my heart and studies. How can we most effectively proclaim truth in our culture today, suffice to say at this point we cannot shirk back from this responsibility. We have the truth of Christ entrusted to us and we will not be silent with the truth because the truth gives life, eternal life. So, just know the Word satisfies us in the world, but it also separates us from the world.

Third, the Word sanctifies us for the world. That is what we see really clearly in verse 17. "*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth*" (John 17:17). Some of you are thinking, "What does sanctify mean?" Basically, it means to set apart or dedicate to a particular purpose, consecrate mainly to God, showing His character. Set them apart, make them holy. Now I am going to talk next week more about what this whole sanctification thing looks like and I hope we will begin to see our view of sanctification transformed a little bit.

But, instead of focusing on the meaning of sanctification, I want us to study the means of sanctification, which is the Word. He said, "This whole thing, sanctify, it happens by your Word." It is the fuel that makes us holy. It is the fuel that keeps us in the character of God.

It is exactly what Jesus is praying for here. He says, "Keep them in your character; protect them in your character by your Word." The Word is the fuel that makes being a disciple of Christ and makes disciple-making possible.

In fact, it is what He said back up in verse 15. He says, "*My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one*" (John 17:15). How do you protect them from the evil one? By your truth, Your Word is truth. You protect yourself from the adversary through the Word. The disciples had seen this modeled.

Remember back in Matthew 4:1-11? Jesus was tempted three times, face to face with the evil one, the devil. He is tempted three times. Every single time He is tempted, He says the exact same thing in response. What does He say? He says, "It is written," and then He quotes from the Old Testament. Now here is the question. Think about it with me. Jesus is tempted three times. Each time He says, "It is written." Do you think that in those circumstances, those temptations, He had to quote Scripture in order to ward off that temptation? Do you think it was necessary for Him to quote Scripture? I don't think it was. I think Jesus was the kind of guy who could say anything at that point and it would become Scripture. He had that kind of power. He is that good! He could say anything, and it would become Scripture. Did He have to quote Scripture? No.

I think Jesus is setting an example there for us that in order to be pure, in order to show the character of God, in order to do this disciple-making thing, the Word must be at the center of your life. It is the tool, the means by which you are sanctified. It makes sense.

In our struggles, all of us have struggles with certain sins, certain temptation if we try to fight those struggles and come face to face with the evil one or the adversary and try to fight those temptations apart from the Word, then we will fall flat on our face. Guaranteed! Try to do this thing on our own, in our flesh, we need the Word to give us sanctification. Just like Jesus to be able to have that Word hidden in our hearts and in our minds that when we face temptation to gossip and begin to talk about others in this community and this church in a way that you know doesn't honor Christ, to have in your mind automatically, "Wait a minute, I am not supposed to say anything that is not useful for building up others according to their needs in Christ Jesus," Ephesians 4:29. It will empower you in that temptation and enable you there.

You struggle with your tongue and say things that you always regret and you find yourself saying things, things come out of your mouth that you know doesn't honor Christ. When you face those temptations, you are going to be a lot worse off if you don't know the Word than if you have the Word hidden in your heart and you are able to say, "You know, James 3 says:

*[The tongue is] a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be (Jas. 3:6-10).*

Now, are you going to be better off if you know that? The Word is the fuel that God gives us. Why did He say in Psalm 119, "*How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word*" (Ps. 119:9). Two verses later, "*I have hidden your word in my*



*heart that I might not*" (Ps. 119:11)— do what? "Sin against you." This is the fuel that we have in becoming fully devoted followers of Christ and in showing Christ and teaching Christ. If we try to do it apart from the Word, we will fail miserably. We are foolish to think that we can live this Christian life and accomplish this mission part from His Word. His truth sanctifies us in the world. We need His Word. You will not get sanctification from TV, DVDs or the Internet. You will not get sanctification from all those things. You will find sanctification in the Word. We have got to have it.

So, we value His Word, His gift, and we experience those effects. Now, that mainly deals with how we follow Christ as disciples of Christ. We value His Word. We are seeing the example of Jesus here. But, how does this look now, not just in my life, but in others' lives? That is what disciple-making is about, right? Not just living my Christian life for me anymore. I am living for the sake of others.

### **We reproduce God's Word for the salvation of others.**

So, how do we teach the Word that has been given to us? We value it, we experience it effects, and then third, we reproduce God's Word for the salvation of others. All throughout this chapter, three times mainly, we have seen the Word referred to as belonging to God. It comes from Him. You look in verse 8. It says, "*I gave them the words you gave me*" (John 17:8). In verse 14, which we just read, "*I have given them your word*" (John 17:14). Verse 17, "*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth*" (John 17:17). Over and over again we are seeing this picture of the Word coming from God.

But then look what happens. Check this out in verse 20. He says, "*My prayer is not for them alone*"—not for the disciples alone—"I pray also for those who will believe in me through" (John 17:20)—your message, your word? No, it says "their word, their message." There is a shift here. Don't miss it! Over and over again Jesus says, "I have given your Word to them," and now He says there are going to be people who believe, who trust in me through their Word that comes from me that comes from you.

Are you seeing the succeeding generations of disciples that are being pictured here in John 17? The Father gives the Word to Jesus. Jesus imparts the Word to these disciples exactly as He had been given it, and then what do these disciples do? They lead others to accept the Word, to believe the Word, to trust the Word, to obey the Word. Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." This is the most incredible privilege we have to take the words of a living God and begin to pour them into others, to begin to take what Christ has entrusted to us and not just receive it from Him, but to reproduce it through us.

We listen in order to teach the Word. The disciples knew that when they received the words, accepted these words, and obeyed these words from Christ, that they had a responsibility to pour it into others. They were not just receiving it. They were reproducing it. So we listen in order to teach the Word. I want us to think about what that looks like. Let me give you two illustrations.

Journey with me first to the Sudan. You walk into a mud hut. There are church leaders that are sitting around. Automatically, they stand up out of respect for the one who is about to teach them the Word. You sing a song and then you sit down. We begin to teach disciple-making from the Word. As we are teaching disciple-making, the whole time I am teaching, I hardly ever see their faces. Is it because they are sleeping or because they have stayed up late in their mud hut the night before because they were daydreaming? No. You never see their faces because they are writing down every single thing you say. They come up to you afterwards and they say, "Teacher, we believe that we have a responsibility to take

everything you have taught us, translate it into our tribe's language and teach it in our tribes." When they listened, they were listening to reproduce—to teach the Word.

Journey with me to Honduras. The first sermon I preached, I remember in Honduras, there were guys sitting on the front row. They are feverishly writing down every single thing I said. Afterwards, they come up to me and they said, "David, that was a great sermon. We can't wait to re-teach that to someone else." I thought, man that must have been good until I realized they say that to everybody who taught them the Word. They realized that the Word given to them was not for them it was for the sake of others.

I want you to think about how that changes the way we listen because it is very easy for us to come in this room. We could tune out or we could even come in order to receive. Okay, I want to learn from the Word today. I want to walk away saying I have learned something new today. I have got something new today. But I want to remind you that is a self-centered way to listen this morning because you are listening for your sake and nowhere in Scripture are you told to listen and to receive from Christ for your sake. Over and over again we were told to receive from Christ for others' sake to pour His Words into them to show His glory to others. Now we are listening in a God-centered way.

Do you realize how this flies in the face of how we listen and how we operate? How many times have we said or have we thought, or heard someone else say, "Well, you know, I am not at a point right now where I can teach. I am at point where I need to receive. I need to grow. I need to learn." That is ridiculous logic. It is absurd. You say, "Well what do you mean?"

Think about it with me. After our time today in God's Word, studying this passage of Scripture, who in this room would be best equipped to go and re-teach this, reproduce this in somebody else's life? I would. Well, why is that? Well, because I know this stuff better than all you guys because I spent the time studying this in order to be able to teach it. So, it is ridiculous to think that well, I am just going to learn and receive and not teach. Those who teach are those who receive and learn the most. Does that make sense?

So, could it be that our knowledge of the Word will stagnate. We will only go so far in our knowledge of the Word if all we are going to do is receive it in our Christian lives. We are destined to live a life in the Word right here. However, when we rise up and begin to take responsibility for making disciples of all nations, teaching the Word, then now we have got to know the Word. Now, we have got to go to new depths because other people are now depending on us to hear the Word from us. We grow to new heights as His disciples as we make disciples. Does that make sense? We listen in order to teach the Word. This changes the way we listen and it pulls us out of self-centered Christianity and thrusts us into God-centered, others-centered Christianity because we now are not just listening for us we are listening for others. That is what disciple-making is about.

Think about it. What if this faith family was to take the Word that we study on a Sunday-by-Sunday basis and you were to translate it into your sphere of influence? Sure, you don't have a tribe, but you do have a people that I will never meet. You do have a people that you can communicate more effectively to than I ever could. What happens when the Word, the seeds of the Word, that are thrown out all over this room now begin to be reproduced at other places in this community? Now the Word is filling this community and it promises, Isaiah 55, "It will bear fruit!" It will sprout. It will grow. The question is, "Is it going to stop with us?" It is going to be confined to what goes on in this church building? God, may it not be so. May the Word infiltrate this community. We listen in order to teach the Word.

Now tie this together with what we have talked about for the last two weeks. We listen in order to teach the Word and then second, we look for opportunities to share the Word. You don't have to go preach the sermon. You don't have to lead a small group Bible study. That may be one option. But, what if God really does have this thing rigged? And what if He is divinely going to bring people in your path this week, your home, your neighborhood, your workplace, your school, what if He is going to bring people in your path this week that He wants to hear His Word that He has been teaching you, whether it is here in this room, whether it is in small group, whether it is in your personal Bible study that He wants to teach them, not through me but through you? When you start to open your eyes and say, "God, how can I share your Word today? How can I take what you have taught me and begin to pour it into others?" You see how the seeds of the Word are now multiplying as opposed to being confined to what happens in an hour and one-half on a Sunday morning? We look for opportunities to share the Word.

Then third, we live in a way that shows the Word. Don't forget, the whole foundation here is the Word being made flesh, incarnation, the Word in action, the Word in a picture, in Jesus that when He teaches, He says, "I am the Way and I am the Truth. I am the Word. See the Word in me." This is good news!

Isn't it comforting to know that Jesus did all that He did in His teaching, all the Father's work, and He had no PowerPoint capabilities whatsoever? I know we find that hard to believe but He didn't. He had no fancy pictures. He had no teaching outlines. His life was His very method. His life necessitated His teaching. All the disciples had was a Teacher with them who modeled before them what He wanted them to learn. His life was His method and the Word infused His relationships with them, infused His life with them. That is the picture we are going for.

What happens when instead of infusing our relationships at work, at school, at home, and our neighborhood, instead of infusing those relationships with our opinions, our thoughts, talk about business, sports and the latest gossip, instead of infusing with that what happens when the Word of Life begins to infuse those conversations? What good are we to the people around us this week if we have the Word of Life and all we talk about is the trivial matters that so infuse all of our conversations on a week-by-week basis? What good are we?

We are not that good. His Word is that good! So listen to the Word here, small groups, on your own listen to the Word in order to re-teach it, in order to pour it into others. Then, look for opportunities to share that with other people and then in the middle of it all live in such a way that people see the Word being played out. This is disciple-making at work. It is not just the responsibility of the preacher or the Bible study teacher. It is the responsibility of disciples of Christ to teach the Word of Christ.

## **So What Now?**

So, where does that leave us and how does that look in our lives? I want to ask you some questions. First of all, who can you teach the Word to? Who has God given in your life that you can teach the Word to? In your home? Obviously, that starts in the relationships that are closest to us but not just there. We don't want to confine the Word to the homes that are represented here. We want to take the Word into the community. Who has God given you in your life? Not that you can preach a sermon to, but you can take what Christ is doing through His Word and begin to let it flow through you.

The second question, how can I teach the Word intentionally? This is not something that just happens accidentally. This is intentionally. Disciple-making is not something we are going to accidentally do. It is something we are going to intentionally give ourselves to.

Really the ultimate question we probably need to ask is this, "Will the Word stop with me or will the Word spread through me?" Faith family, The Church at Brook Hills that is the ultimate question I want to ask you this morning. Will it stop with you or will it spread through you?

I want us to do something a little different in order to see that picture illustrated. I want to invite some folks to join me up here that I think are going to give us a pretty clear picture of what we are talking about this morning of how this looks not just listening to receive, but listening to reproduce. I want you to see a picture of those who have had the Word poured into them, reproduced in them and how they are taking that Word and reproducing it in others. I want you to see both sides of this picture receiving and reproducing. I think these guys are going to be able to illustrate it for us pretty good.

(Children are quoting the books of the bible and the following scripture verses)

*"Don't you know who made everything? Haven't you heard about Him? The Lord is a God who lives forever. He created everything on earth. He will not become worn out or get tired. No one will ever know how great His understanding is. He gives strength to those who are tired. He gives power to those who are weak. Even young people become worn out or get tired. Even the best of us trip and fall but those who trust in the Lord will receive His strength. They will fly as high as eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not grow weak." (Isaiah 40:28-31)*

*"My thoughts are not like your thoughts and your ways are not like my ways announces the Lord. The heavens are higher than the earth and my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts. The rain and the snow come down from the sky. They do not return to it without watering the earth. They make plants come up and grow. The plants produce seeds for farmers. They also produce food for people to eat. The words I speak are like that. They do not return to me without producing results. They will accomplish what I want them to do. They will do exactly what I sent them to do." (Isaiah 55: 8-11)*

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42-47)*

Do you see the picture here of those who have had people teach the Word to them? Who've received the Word because others have reproduced the Word and it didn't stop with them. Parents, people in this faith family who have poured the Word into others. A 4 year old does not memorize Acts 2:42-47 on their own. Let's reproduce more and kids will say this Word will not return void in me. It will bear fruit, it will produce results. The Word, it's good! It's

worth being reproduced, not just in our kids, although definitely in our kids, it's worth being reproduced all throughout this community. It will bear fruit, the question is, will we receive it and will we reproduce it? Will we take responsibility to teach it, to infuse our lives with it?

**Permissions:** You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

**Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:** By David Platt. © David Platt & Radical. Website: [Radical.net](http://Radical.net)