



SECRET CHURCH 2021
Session 2
David Platt April 23, 2021

Unknown speaker: Father, we come humbly before you, having now seen this Great Imbalance. O God, would You open our eyes, open our hearts, change the way we view the world, change the way we view the purpose of our lives and churches in this world. Lord, the harvest is plentiful. Open our eyes to over three billion people in over 7,000 people groups who have never heard the good news of Your grace in Jesus, who are born, live and die having never encountered a church or follower of Jesus Christ—and the number is increasing, Lord.

So we pray, O Lord, we plead that You would change us in these next few moments and show us ways we a*re contributing to this great imbalance. Give us wisdom, by Your Spirit, to understand how You are calling us to change. Replace our pessimism with possibility. Replace our comfort with conviction. Replace our fear with faith, O Lord. No matter the cost, may we be willing to spend and be spent for the sake of the nations for Your glory.

We pray that You, the Lord of the harvest, would raise up among us laborers for the harvest field. Use our lives, uses our churches, use our resources to cause Your gospel to go to the nations, to go to places where the gospel has not gone, that Your glory would be multiplied throughout the earth. Give us a holy discontentment, until the blessing of Your gospel is made known to every nation, every tribe, every people, every language on this earth. Just as You have promised, Lord, You will bring it about, so that Your way may be known on the earth—Your saving power among all nations.

May it not be said of us that we stayed in the safety of our holy huddles, the comforts of our church cocoons, but that we leveraged our lives to spread Your glory among all the nations and that by Your power we worked to rectify the Great Imbalance and obey the Great Commission. Give us wisdom. Give us boldness. Give us courage. Show us how to use our lives toward this end. Lord, it is in the mighty, marvelous, magnificent, matchless name, the name that is above all names, the only name that is worthy of all our praise that we pray. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

David Platt: All right. Session Two of “The Great Imbalance.” How did we get to this Great Imbalance? That is a really important question. If you think about it, it’s not like we are randomly sending resources around the world. If that was the case, then we’d send around 40% of our resources to the unreached, but we’re only sending 1%.As we’re about to see, many systemic factors at work in the world

are keeping us from getting the gospel to the unreached and keeping us from obeying the Great Commission.

Let me put it this way. If I took a two-year-old toddler and put two buckets in front of her—“Reached” and “Unreached”—and told her to put 100 blocks in either bucket, they would do a better job of dividing out the blocks than we have. Random would be far better than what we’ve done. We are intentionally, maybe unknowingly, avoiding the unreached, the people who have the least access to the gospel. Which leads me to conclude that there are not just systemic factors at work in the world; there are spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms that are working nonstop to keep this Great Imbalance in place. Ephesians 6:12 is clear. *“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against authorities, against cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”* Second Corinthians 2:11 says we must not be outwitted by Satan or ignorant of Satan’s designs. And mark it down—he has designs.

In Matthew 24:14 Jesus says, *“This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”* Satan does not want the end to come, because the end is bad news for him—really bad news. Revelation 12 tells us he will be thrown down into everlasting torment and he knows his time is short. This means he and all the demons of hell are doing everything they possibly can to keep the gospel from going to all the nations. We need to realize this.

There is a reason why three billion people are unreached. There’s an adversary who wants to keep them all in the dark. He’s working nonstop to keep people in the light focused on places where there’s already light. So this second session is all about how we got here and what we need to see differently, in order that we can say what we do need to do differently. In the third session, we’ll look at what we need to do from here.

In this second session, we’re going to start my asking how can we, you and I, every follower of Jesus and every church, rectify this Great Imbalance? Here’s where we need to start. First, we must change the way we view the world, specifically in three ways that we’re going to dive into. Then second, we must change the way we view our lives, specifically looking at nine ways. So that’s the outline for this session.

A GOD’S-EYE VIEW OF THE WORLD

We need to see, as best we can, the world as God sees it. You ask, “Well, how’s that possible?” Let’s look at the world through the eyes of Jesus in the Gospels. Specifically, there’s one story at the beginning of Mark’s Gospel that perhaps more than any other captures the Christ-like, God-like sight we need. Let’s read this whole story from Mark 2:1-12:

And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

I love this story. Just picture it. A crowd crammed into this home, overflowing through the door. Inside Jesus is preaching to eager listeners, including scribes who are trying to figure out Who this disease-healing, demon-delivering Teacher is. Suddenly four friends show up with a paralyzed man on a mat. They want to get in the house, but nobody will let them in. Just imagine people at the door, looking back, making eye contact with the man on the mat, with his friends around him, then turning back around without even budging.

When pushing and prodding won't work, the friends decide to get resourceful. Just imagine the conversation, as the first guy says, "Well, why don't we just climb up on the roof?" The second guy says, "A lot of good that will do, genius. Jesus is inside, not outside." To which the first guy replies, "Yeah, I know that, bro. Let's just take the roof off." To which the third guy says, "You can't just take a roof off." The first guy responds, "Why not?" They look at each other, then finally the fourth guy says, "I don't think we have a better option. We've got to get our friend to Jesus. If that's the only way, let's do it."

So they climb up on the roof. It's commonplace in a home in that day to sit or stand or lie down on the roof to sleep on a cool night, almost like we might picture a deck, sturdy enough to walk on. So imagine you're inside and you hear footsteps above as you're listening to Jesus in front of you. All of a sudden you hear an odd noise and dirt starts falling on your head. First it's a little, then it's a lot. It's not just falling on you; it's falling on people all around you. Jesus Himself is dodging it. The roof is coming down. You can only imagine the owner of the house screaming, "What are you guys doing to my roof?" We don't know for sure whose house it was, but I'm pretty sure that if it was the home of Peter's mother-in-law, she was about to have another headache and would need to be healed again.

Suddenly, when the roof starts to open up, the sun starts to peek through. By now, Jesus—despite His authoritative teaching—has lost everyone's attention. More dirt falls, more tiles are removed, until a massive hole is formed in the roof. Mark's description in the original language here depicts a major

demolition job. The text literally says they “unroofed the roof.” Once this hole is made, there’s a long pause, as everybody waits to see what happens next. That’s when a mat, which is likely tied with ropes at the corners, is slowly lowered down and on it is a paralyzed man, now lying in front of Jesus’ feet. No one speaks a word inside, nor outside for that matter. Notice how Mark does not record a single word spoken by the friends.

I can just imagine Jesus looking down at this man, then up at his friends through the hole in the roof. What expression is on their faces? Are they nervous or anxious or smiling? I would assume they’re sweating. They catch their breath and are waiting to see what Jesus is going to do. We do not know exactly what these friends look like, but we do know that whatever Jesus saw was the face of faith. Jesus says to the man, “*Son, your sins are forgiven.*” Which is pretty odd, when you think about it, because the man did not even ask for that.

This is what we know. We don’t have all the details. We don’t know for sure if anyone else said anything. We do know that it was common belief in that day that physical suffering was attributable to personal sin, but we do not know if this man’s paralysis was tied to a specific sin in his life or if it was something he was born with. All we know is that Jesus makes a pronouncement in that moment that shocks the crowd. This man has sins and Jesus has authority to forgive them.

Which leads the scribes to wonder in their hearts, “The penalty for blasphemy is death. This Teacher deserves death.” While the text doesn’t tell us they said that out loud, Jesus saw that in their hearts. So He turns to them and says, “What’s easier? To forgive sins or to heal paralysis?” After a pause He says, “I’ll show you that I have authority to forgive sins.” He turns to the paralytic man and says, “*Rise, pick up your bed and go home.*”

Just imagine, to the amazement of the crowd crammed into that home, to the disgust of scribes sitting there on the floor, to the delight of four friends peering down through an unroofed roof, the man stands. He stands and immediately picks up his bed and runs out of the room. The crowds move for him this time. You can imagine his friends running down from the roof, jumping up and down with their friend, shouting as they race home, with a demolished house in their wake, full of people who, now for the first time, speak in this story and say, “*We never saw anything like this!*”

1. We must see the needs among the nations.

Is that not an awesome scene? So, what does it teach us about how we need to see the world? First, we must see the needs among the nations. This is the constant refrain throughout Jesus’ life and ministry. He saw the crowds and they were hurting. He saw their diseases, afflictions, pains, oppression, struggles and sin. This is what Mark 2 is highlighting for us; we need to see urgent spiritual needs and

spiritual ultimate needs. This paralytic man's ultimate need was not to stand to his feet, but to be forgiven of his sin.

Our ultimate need is never physical; it's always spiritual. But what do we all need more than anything else? Acts 2:36-41 says we need to repent in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. This is why we have been commanded to proclaim Jesus' words in a world of spiritual need, to speak the gospel that has power to save people's lives for all of eternity.

This is what Paul asked the church to pray for him in his spiritual battle, "*...that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak*" (Ephesians 6:19-20). Making disciples starts with proclaiming the gospel. Why? Because people's greatest need is reconciliation to God, on this earth and in eternity.

We're prone to think, "Yeah, yeah, but what about people who are physically suffering?" We're going to talk about that. That's obviously part of the story here in Mark 2. But don't miss the ultimate point. We have been commanded to keep people from eternal suffering in hell which is depicted in Luke 16:19-31 as a place of anguish and torment. Sure, we want people to be free from suffering on this earth in so many ways, but ultimately we want people to be free from suffering forever in eternity.

So if we're going to see the world as Jesus sees the world, we must start by seeing urgent spiritual needs, which are ultimate, and we must see urgent physical needs, which are evident. This man was lying on a mat in Mark 2 and he could not walk. The man in Luke 10:25-37 was beaten on the side of the road and he needed help. We have been commanded to display Jesus' love in a world of physical need.

Look at Romans 15:25-29. This is right after Paul writes about his ambition to get the gospel to unreached people in Spain. Then he says that before he goes there, he plan on going to Jerusalem to deliver an offering to the church there that was experiencing famine. So it's a picture of urgent physical need. Throughout the Bible we have been commanded to care for people amidst earthly physical suffering. If we do not, James 2:15-17 says, we do not actually have faith:

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

When we look at the world in light of God's purpose for the world, we must see the needs among the nations, both spiritual needs which are ultimate in a world of sin, and physical needs which are evident in a world of suffering. We need to see both spiritual and physical needs among the nations, as much as possible, as God sees spiritual and physical needs among the nations.

2. We must see the barriers to reaching the nations. Spreading the gospel in a world of urgent spiritual and physical need is not easy. In the words of 1 Corinthians 16:9, “*There are many adversaries...*” Specifically, there are many barriers that make the unreached hard to reach. I always say, “Unreached people are unreached for a reason. They’re hard to reach.” In many situations, they’re dangerous to reach. All the easy ones are taken. I do not say that jokingly. There’s a reason we’re not sending more people and money to unreached places, because it’s a lot harder to do.

Think about various barriers to reaching the unreached. There are natural barriers, geographic barriers. It’s hard to get to remote villages in the Amazon or deep in the rugged terrain of Afghanistan. Just follow Paul’s journey after writing Romans. As he traveled from Corinth to Jerusalem to Rome, we see all kinds of natural barriers (Romans 15:23-24). There are political barriers, like we see throughout the Bible (Daniel 3:1-6; Acts 4:13-18; Acts 18:12; Revelation 13:16-17). There were kings who set themselves up against God, leaders who opposed and attacked the people of God, governments like we see in Revelation that work against the spread of the gospel. Think of conflicts, wars and corruption. All these things obviously affect our ability to make disciples and multiply churches among the nations.

Then think developmental barriers, like economic instability, lack of education or access to clean water or medicine. All these factors affect reaching the nations with the gospel (Acts 18:1-3; Acts 19:21-27).

Then think about social barriers—slavery, trafficking, violence, crime, ethnic tension, religious persecution, urbanization—all of these present unique barriers to making disciples and multiplying churches (Acts 16:16-24; Acts 17:1-9).

We have not even gotten to linguistic barriers (Genesis 11:1-9; 1 Corinthians 14:10;). There are over 7,000 languages spoken around the world today; approximately half of them still have little or no Scripture. Obviously that barrier has to be overcome at some point if we’re going to make disciples and multiply churches. That hinges on people having God’s Word.

Amidst all of these barriers, there is almost constant persecution in unreached places. These are not places that welcome missionaries. These are places that reject and kill Christians for even speaking about Jesus. In many places it’s not the government that will kill; your family will do that far before the government will get involved.

So put all that together and no wonder they are unreached. Jesus prepared us for this in Matthew 24:9-10. The church modeled this for us, starting with Stephen in Acts 7:54-60 and his martyrdom. The Bible actually promises us this in 2 Timothy 3:12: “*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*”

So, God, open our eyes. The adversaries and barriers are many to making disciples and multiplying churches among all the nations.

3. We must wisely consider what it will take.

This is what I love about the story in Mark 2, because barriers did not stop these four friends from bringing a man in need to Jesus. And those barriers cannot stop the people of God today who are serious about the Great Commission. If we're going to be serious about the Great Commission, then we must wisely consider what it will take to meet needs—ultimate spiritual needs and evidenced physical needs—and to overcome barriers.

I love Acts 20:22-24 where Paul says, "I'm going. I'm driven by the Spirit. I know it's going to be hard. Imprisonment and afflictions await me." He continues, "*I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I have received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*"

God, give us that kind of faith in the church today. Help us wisely consider what it will take for us to meet needs and overcome barriers with faith that is confident.

Think about these four friends in Mark 2. They knew Jesus could help their friend. They believed that if they could just get their friend in front of Jesus, something amazing would happen. Do we believe that? If we can just get the gospel to these places and people groups, something amazing will happen. These guys in Mark 2 were scrappy, resourceful, even a bit reckless, no barriers standing in their way. No crowd, no roof. They demolished a house to get their friend to Jesus. These friends loved this man. You do not go to measures like they did in Mark 2 for somebody you don't care for. Imagine that man, lying on that mat, while all these crowds of people were running to this home where Jesus was teaching. Praise God for four faithful friends who saw that man in need and did something about it.

God, give us confident faith, compassionate faith. Raise up a compassionate church that sees unreached people in need and does something about it with faith that's creative. God, give us creative, resourceful, scrappy, even reckless faith.

Think about this: their faith was contagious. Mark tells us very little about this man lying on the mat. I try to imagine myself lying on that mat, word gets around that Jesus is teaching in the house up the way, everybody starts running, but I'm stuck until four friends say, "We're going to take you to Jesus, because He can help you." I think their faith would encourage my own. "Maybe Jesus can help me. Maybe He will."

So I'm lying on that mat outside the house, the crowds are looking at me but won't let me in. I think I'd be discouraged. Then I'd look over at my friends talking, pointing up at the roof, hatching a plan. They come back and tell me their crazy idea. I think my faith would be encouraged. Then I'm lying there on the roof, watching them dig a hole in it, strapping ropes to my mat, lowering me down. I would be looking up in their eyes, seeing their determination. Their faith is bolstering my own with hopeful anticipation.

Then there's the moment when my mat settles on that floor and I look up in the face of Jesus, with the expectant faces of my friends in the background. I think my heart would be filled with faith in that moment. Their faith is contagious. Their faith affects this man in need, it affects Jesus in meeting that man's need.

God, give us contagious faith that believes Jesus is Who the nations need. All people and all nations need Him. May it be evident to the peoples of the world that the church believes You're good, great and glorious, and that You can meet their deepest needs. God, give us faith like 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, that says, "We'll do whatever it takes to bring the nations to Jesus."

I want that kind of faith in my life. I want to fuel that kind of faith in my family and in the church; faith that sees the needs among the nations, that sees barriers to reaching the nations, saying, "We're going to meet the needs. We're going to overcome the barriers with faith that Jesus is able to do something amazing when we do. When we bring people from the nations to Jesus, He will show His goodness and grace, His power, glory and love in ways that will astound and change people's lives."

Right now, I want to introduce you to a tool that Radical has been developing to help fuel this kind of sight—seeing the needs, seeing the barriers—and in order to fuel this kind of faith. The team is thinking, "Let's meet these needs, let's overcome these barriers, let's make the grace and glory of our God known among the nations."

I want to introduce you to what we're calling STRATUS. It stands for "Strategy for Unreached Synergy." It's a tool for the church to see the needs among the nations, to see the barriers to reaching the nations, in order that we might give ourselves wisely to the Great Commission. At the center of this tool is something called the "**Stratus Index**." So watch this video with me, then I'll explain it a little bit more.

Video: Today over three billion people in the world have zero access to the gospel of Jesus. The reason for this is complicated—very complicated. Each people group has a unique set of reasons they have not heard the gospel. However, there are hundreds of organizations, ministries, governments and NGOs, all working to impact humanitarian issues around the world. Some of these organizations sit on top of incredibly detailed data about these issues.

We created the **Stratus Index** to bring all of that data together for the sake of reaching people who need to hear the gospel. The **Stratus Index** utilizes trusted data from over 35 sources, sources like the Joshua Project, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, even the CIA. We've taken key factors like natural barriers in Nepal that keep missionaries from just physically getting to people. Or political issues in China that keep the gospel from spreading on a national level. Developmental issues like the lack of clean water in Somalia. Social issues like women's rights in Iraq or child trafficking in India.

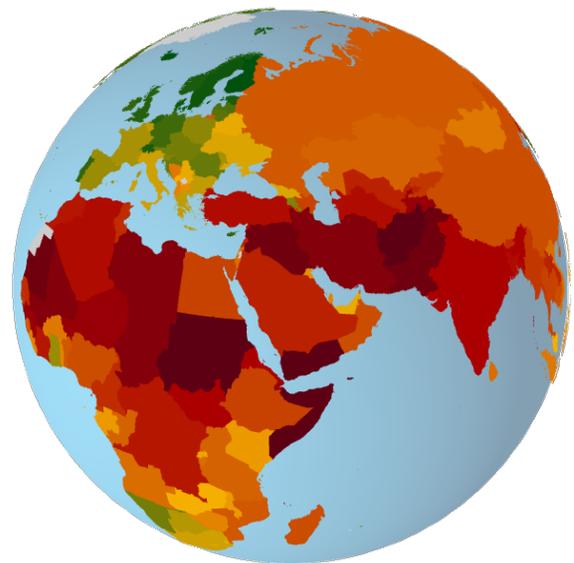
All of this data comes together and we pair that information with people's access to the gospel. The tool crunches the numbers, then every single country is given a **Stratus Index** score. For example, right now, if all the factors are taken into account, Afghanistan ranks number one on the **Stratus Index**, meaning the data tell us that the Afghan people not only have the most urgent spiritual needs with little to no access to the gospel, but they also have the most urgent physical needs.

It's all about bringing a new perspective to the ways we go about doing missions. The **STRATUS** tool is simple to use, so we suggest you just dig in and get to work. Accomplishing the Great Commission will not be easy, but we've been commanded by God to take the gospel to all people groups. It's our prayer that the **STRATUS** tool will help you, your family and your church as you endeavor to be obedient.

David: As we can tell, this tool offers a glimpse of the world that's not been seen up to this point. So I want to give you a brief overview now, then once Secret Church is over, you'll be able to dive into this free tool online all you want. We just want it to be available to the church, and Lord willing in the days to come, it will be available in multiple languages, so we can serve the church across the world as we focus on getting the gospel to the nations. The only reason it's not up now so you can look at it is because I do not want you playing on it while we're walking through the Word.

So as you've heard, we take in hundreds of data points on the nations from several sources, like World Bank, WHO, the UN, Fragile States Index, Freedom House—all kinds of sources—to give a physical picture of the nations. Then we've combined that data with spiritual data about the progress of the gospel among different nations, in order to help us see the world more like God sees the world in terms of urgent spiritual need and urgent physical need. We do this in such a way that any follower of Jesus can see where these needs collide most.

We created the **Stratus Index** that ranks the 200 or so countries in the world in terms of urgent spiritual and physical needs. So basically, where are the most urgent needs with the barriers to reaching those places? Like developmental barriers, natural barriers, political barriers, social barriers—all the barriers we just saw and talked about from the Word. When you put them all together, where are the hardest to reach places in the world?



The darker red they are on this map, the more unreached and harder to reach they are. The more green they are on this map, the more reached, and in a sense, the easier to reach they are. Not that there's any person in the world who is easy to reach, but looking at this data relatively.

You'll see a list of countries on the **Stratus Index**. At the top of that list is Afghanistan. Then Somalia, Yemen, Maldives, Sudan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Mauritania, Mali. You can click on any one of these countries and find out information about the spiritual and physical needs in that place. You can click on a video that will lead you to pray for that country. You can see all the people groups in each country.

You can see all the different data points with different barriers that must be overcome if we as the church are going to make disciples and multiply churches in these places. You can do this for any country in the world.

You can also look at the world through the lens of specific factors. You can toggle data points on and off to find places in the world asking, for example, where there's the least clean water and least access to the gospel. The whole map will then change to show places that have the least clean water and the least access to the gospel. Or ask for the least freedom and the least access to the gospel. Or hundreds of other factors you can explore.

In the end, you will see that the church is spending tons of resources in sending many missionaries to more reached places—the green and yellow places—right up there in the hundreds. It's not that we need to ignore those places or stop doing ministry in those places. We want to encourage the church in those places for sure. But we desperately need to change where we're sending money and missionaries at some point. We need to reach the red people groups. We need to rectify this Great Imbalance, so **STRATUS** is designed to open our eyes and help us see the man on the mat, to see the nations who are in need, so we might rise up in confident, compassionate, creative, contagious faith. It will help us ask, "What's it going to take to meet those needs, overcome those barriers, make disciples and multiply churches in all these red places? What's it going to take so they will enjoy and exalt God in all of His glory?"

That's what we're living for, right? Every Christian, every church, has the purpose to enjoy and exalt God in all of His glory among all the nations. Not just some—all of them.

So God, help us to see the world as You see the world. It's a huge step.

A GOD'S-CENTERED PERSPECTIVE OF OUR LIVES

So we need to see our lives as God sees our lives. If we're going to rectify the Great Imbalance and accomplish the Great Commission, we need a God's-eye view of the world, then a God-centered perspective of our lives. In Luke 15:3-7 we read about a God Who leaves the 99 to go to the one with supernatural love. He pursues the one who is lost. He does what it takes to find them.

We need to see our lives as a picture of that kind of love in a world of urgent need, reflecting Him. This means we need to change the way we view our lives. We need to do this specifically in nine ways. We're going to run through these fast, so hang with me, because every one of these is important.

1. We must replace a limited, local focus with an expansive, global vision.

Whenever anybody talks about global mission in the church, people inevitably say, "What about the needs right around us here? Why are we talking about the needs among the nations when there's so much need in our nation right here? Shouldn't we just focus here?" The answer is: not if you believe the Bible. Hopefully we've seen this from cover to cover in the Bible already, from Genesis 12:1-3 to Revelation 7:9-10 and everywhere in between.

Here's the other part of the story we have not looked at yet. It's also evident from cover to cover in the Bible that the global purpose of God has always faced resistance from the comfortable people of God. From the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-4, where they refused to scatter for the spread of God's glory. They tried to stay in one place for the sake of their own name. But God says in Genesis 12:1-3, "No. I want My blessing to spread to the ends of the earth." Then in Isaiah 56:3-8, God sets up the court of the Gentiles as a place for the nations to come and pray and behold His glory.

By Mark 11:15-19, the people of God had set up shop in that same court. They were basically saying, "We're going to make a prophet for ourselves, but the nations can go to hell." In Acts 11:1-3, Peter receives criticism for sharing the gospel with Gentiles, with other nations. So God's people are trying to establish laws for the Gentiles to follow (Acts 15:1-5) in order to receive the gospel of God's grace.

I could go on and on with story after story in Scripture, but maybe the clearest example is one of God's prophets in the Old Testament who totally missed the heart of God. Let's contrast Jonah with Jesus. When God called Jonah to go to the Ninevites, who were enemies of the Israelites, and proclaim a message of repentance there, what do we see? Clearly, Jonah wanted his way more than he wanted God's will (Jonah 1:1-3). This is exactly the opposite of what God told him to do. Why? Because he desired the good of his nation more than he desired the gospel in other nations (Jonah 1:8-9). Can I say that again? He desired the good of his nation more than he desired the gospel in other nations.

Is that possible among God's people? Is that possible in our hearts? Absolutely it is.

Keep going. He failed to connect the mercy of God in his life with the mission of God in the world (Jonah 2:9-10). He claimed—even celebrated—salvation, yet he wanted to keep it to himself. He disconnected the mercy of God in his life and the mission of God in the world.

Keep going. He knew the character of God in his head, but he neglected the compassion of God in his heart (Jonah 4:1-2). Is it really possible to know the truth of the gospel in our heads but miss the love of God in our hearts?

Ultimately, Jonah was more concerned about his own empty desires than he was about others' eternal destinies (Jonah 4:8-11). He was so sad and disappointed that he did not have a plan to shield him from the sun one day that he didn't care a rip about hundreds of thousands of people in need of God's grace for eternity.

So contrast Jonah with Jesus, as the Gospels do (Matthew 12:38-41). Instead of reluctantly preaching to sinners in need of God's grace in other nations, Jesus relentlessly pursues sinners in need of God's grace in all nations (Luke 15:8-10). He seeks the lost with His life, even to the point of death.

Instead of merely going to a city filled with His enemies, Jesus gives His life on a cross for the sake of His enemies (Luke 23:32-38). Instead of helping people in Nineveh temporarily avoid the just wrath of God, Jesus brings people in all nations eternally into the joyful worship of God (Revelation 7:17). Jesus loves, pursues, lives and dies for the sake of the nations.

So contrast Jonah with Jesus, then ask which of these will characterize you and me? Is it the spirit of Jonah that prioritizes care only for our people, that says—whether out loud or through our actions—we care about people right around us in our country, who are more like us? Or will we be characterized by the Spirit of Jesus, Who passionately cares for all peoples (Acts 1:8)?

Will we be marked by the spirit of Jonah, being content to let other nations go to hell, as long as we can keep our nation and be comfortable in it? Or will we be marked by the Spirit of Jesus, Who is committed to leading people from every nation to heaven? This is the heart of Jesus, Who, by His blood, gave His life for the sake of people from every tribe, language, people and nation (Revelation 5:9-10).

We live in a church culture today, and many of us live in a country today, where we've prioritized ourselves, where our greatest concern is the preservation of our nation. I'm not saying I'm not thankful for my nation and God's grace on it in so many ways. But my nation will not last forever and the purpose of my life is not ultimately to preserve it. The purpose of my life and your life is to enjoy and exalt all the glory of God into all the nations.

If we're going to rectify the Great Imbalance and obey the Great Commission, we must replace a limited, local focus with an expansive, global vision. That's number one.

2. We must replace an either/or approach with a both/and approach to urgent spiritual and physical need.

This is so important because as we see needs in the world, there are some who would say, "We just need to look at spiritual needs. Where do people need the gospel? We need to focus on getting the

gospel to them.” But if those people in need of the gospel are starving, or they do not have clean water, or they’re being trafficked, or they’re in the middle of war, then surely we need to consider those physical needs at some point. How we can show the love of Jesus to them?

On the other side of the spectrum, there are Christians who would say, “We need to focus on physical needs regardless of the gospel. We have to give our attention to those physical needs without ever proclaiming the gospel.” Neither of these approaches squares with the ministry of Jesus or the church in the New Testament.

Acts 11:19-26 focuses on the spread of the gospel in the founding of the church in Antioch, but then verses 27-30 focus on care for physical needs in the church in Jerusalem. So both/and. We’ve already talked about both the spiritual and the physical needs that Paul is focused on in Romans 15:20-28. Also in Luke 4:17-21, Jesus is talking about the gospel with implications for the poor, the prisoner, the blind and the oppressed.

When you read the Bible, you come away not with an either/or approach, but a both/and approach that realizes we must be ultimately, but not exclusively, focused on urgent spiritual needs. People’s spiritual needs are ultimate. This is the picture in John 6:25-35. People’s ultimate need is not for physical bread on earth, but the spiritual bread of life that is found through faith in Jesus.

To use a similar contemporary example, a water filter can help provide someone clean water, which is good and needed. But that water filter cannot get anyone into heaven. Only the gospel can do that, which is why we must be ultimately, but not exclusively, focused on urgent spiritual need, while we must intentionally, but not exclusively, responsive to urgent physical needs.

So we do not ignore urgent physical need. We’re compassionate in the face of such need, just as Jesus was throughout His ministry, for example in Mark 5:24-34. We must intentionally respond to the people’s physical needs as we reach people with the gospel. This is what we see in Acts 3:1-10. Also, we must care for people in the church. A mark of the church is that we give sacrificially to meet each other’s needs.

What does this mean for us as we think about needs in the world? It means we rightly give attention to urgent physical needs in places with less urgent spiritual needs (i.e. reached places). Just because a place is reached does not mean we ignore it. This is the picture we see over and over again in the New Testament. They took up an offering for the church in Jerusalem in the middle of a famine. All the churches were pooling their resources to help them. This is a good, right and biblical thing to do, giving attention to urgent physical needs among our brothers and sisters in Christ (Galatians 2:7-10).

At the same time, we also rightly give attention to urgent spiritual needs, in other words (i.e. unreached places), even if they have less urgent physical needs (Acts 16:9-10). Just because the Emiratis are extremely wealthy and physically well off does not mean we ignore their need for the gospel as an

unreached people group. We rightly give attention to giving the gospel to them, even though their physical needs are not as great.

The point in the end is ultimately, correcting the Great Imbalance will require intentional focus on both urgent spiritual and physical needs. I would add especially in places where both of these needs collide, like those high **Stratus Index** countries.

This is where I think about the feeding of the 5,000 in Matthew 14:13-21, another awesome story. It's a picture of Jesus and His disciples that teaches us about the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus in a world of urgent need. Let's reflect the compassion of Jesus for those in need. Let's rely on the resources of Jesus. I love it when the disciples say to Jesus, "This is a desolate place, and we do not have anything to feed all these people." That's like standing in front of Niagara Falls and saying you can't find anything to drink.

Jesus looked at them and said, "They need not go away. You give them something to eat." The emphasis in the language here is on "you." They responded, "We only have five loaves of bread and two fish." Now do not miss the point. Jesus was calling these disciples to do something they could not do in their own power, with their own resources. He was teaching them to recognize their own insufficiency and at the same time to realize His complete sufficiency.

He does this in two ways. First, He meets needs in us, which is evident in Jesus' proclamation later that He's the bread of life. He's the One Who has what our souls need to be satisfied. He also meets needs through us. Think about it. If the point of this story was only to show Jesus' ability to meet needs for people, He could have called down bread from heaven. Then the people would have seen in an even greater way Who He was. But instead, He prays and asks for the Father's blessing, then He calls His disciples to His side. He does not give out one piece of bread in this story. Instead, He gives the bread to the disciples and they distribute it.

We're not told exactly how this miracle took place. Our imagination is kind of free to wonder about how five loaves suddenly, or maybe slowly, began to multiply from His hands to their hands. And that's the picture—the hands of Christ serving the hands of the disciples, then the hands of the disciples serving the multitudes in need. Jesus uses His disciples to meet needs in others. So think about this in light of the need we're talking about in the world right now.

You might be tempted to think, "What can I do about this? I have so little." Do not think that way. You're standing at Niagara Falls. Don't you see that there's plenty of water? You know Jesus and He wants to use your life, with all the resources He's given you, to meet others' needs, to meet needs among the nations.

As we look at these needs, spiritual and physical, let's rely on the resources of Jesus to meet those needs. Let's receive the blessing of Jesus as we meet those needs. Can you imagine the blessing of being

involved in this miracle? You see five loaves and two fish, you start passing out food, loaf after loaf and fish after fish appears for thousands of people. Where's it coming from? Just imagine the joy and elation associated with that scene.

Can it be a coincidence that they picked up leftovers and had 12 baskets full left? Twelve baskets of bread in the hands of 12 disciples—how awesome is this? How exhilarating, that together they could be the hands and feet of Jesus, seeing His power at work through you in a world of urgent need? This is what God desires to do through our lives, our families, our churches. It all starts with replacing an either/or approach with a both/and approach to urgent spiritual and physical needs in the world.

3. We must replace a focus on reached mission fields with a focus on reached mission forces.

The third way we must change our perspective on our lives is to replace our focus on reached mission fields with a focus on reached mission forces. Here's what I mean by that. From the very beginning of Jesus' ministry (Matthew 4:19) every follower of Jesus is called, designed and commissioned to be a fisher of men. So when we reach people with the gospel, they become fishers of men. They go from being a mission field to being a mission force.

This is simple, basic Christianity from the very beginning of the New Testament. Now, let's apply that to the green and yellow parts of the map we looked at. Places that were once mission fields are not mission fields in the same way anymore. Yes, there are more people in every place in the world who still need the gospel, but in those reached places it's time for those mission fields to become a mission force. God designs mission fields that have been reached to become mission forces that are engaging the unreached.

Think about Antioch. People in Antioch were first reached with the gospel in Acts 11:19-26. Then two chapters later, they were sending out missionaries to unreached places (Acts 13:1-3). That's the way God has designed the church to work. The problem is we keep going back to mission fields. I think about U.S. Christians going to work in Latin America, where the gospel has already gone, where disciples have already been made and churches have already been multiplied. It's time for us to see Latin America, not as a mission field for us to send missionaries to, but a mission force that is sending missionaries around the world. This is the task of missions. It's what we see Paul and Barnabas going out from Antioch to do (Acts 14:21-23). It starts with entry into a place, establishing a presence among unreached people, men and women, missionaries, sent out by the Holy Spirit of God to establish a presence, to live and work among unreached people.

There they do evangelism, proclaiming the gospel to unreached people. They do discipleship, teaching people to obey Jesus. They're focused on healthy church formation, planting biblical churches

among the unreached. They do leadership development training, training pastors for those churches and missionaries to go out from those churches. Then the original missionaries who came to that people group can then exit, moving on together—now with new believers, new missionaries and new churches alongside them—to reach more unreached people.

That's what's happening in the Bible. It's what Paul is doing in Romans 15:18-24. He's exiting, now with a host of Christians in his wake, moving on together for the spread of the gospel in new places. In God's design, the missions field becomes a missions force. When we realize this, we start to realize that many of the greatest laborers for the harvest field are currently in the harvest field (Matthew 9:37-38).

Let me give you an example. At the turn of the 20th century, the Korean peninsula was less than 1% Christian. Missionaries went there, the gospel began to spread in such a way that 100 years later, at the turn of the 21st century, there were ten million Christians in South Korea alone. Then South Korea was second among countries in the world, behind only the United States, in sending missionaries. Which is pretty remarkable when you realize South Korea is only the size of Florida and California combined. This means some of the greatest labors for the harvest field today were in the harvest field just a generation or two ago.

What if the greatest mission fields of today are designed by God to be the greatest missions forces of tomorrow? Church, let's believe this. Let's believe that God, by His grace and in His power, can take a country like Afghanistan—less than 1% Christian—and through us sending missionaries with resources and the gospel there, then 100 years from now, there might be ten million followers of Jesus in Afghanistan, sending out missionaries around the world.

You say, "Is that possible?" That's exactly what God did on the Korean peninsula. And He can do it again, if we believe He can do it again and we give ourselves to it. So instead of merely going to reached mission fields while we ignore the unreached (which is what we as the church are doing right now), we must go with reached mission forces to engage the unreached. This is a massive paradigm shift that must take place. We must stop going to reached mission fields while ignoring the unreached. Instead, we must go with reached mission forces to engage the unreached. We must partner together in the gospel. Think of Philippians 1:3-5, that the nations might enjoy and exalt God in all of His glory.

4. We must replace a flawed ROI (return on investment) with a fixed resolve to complete the mission Jesus has given to us.

I'm going to use an illustration here from one of our brothers who I work alongside in Radical, who has spent the last 25 years of his life in the hardest reached places in the world, high up in remote mountain villages. He sat across the table one day with a donor who wanted to fund some water projects

at a substantial cost. This brother shared with this donor the need for clean water up in these villages he was going into, along with the gospel, because none of the people had heard the gospel. Most of them have never heard the name of Jesus—never even heard His name.

The donor said, “Well, I can get this many wells dug in _____” (I won’t mention the specific country, but a country that’s green on the map). “I can get this many wells dug in this country for this amount of money, for the support of churches there.”

Just to give you a picture of how green this country, it’s 83% professing Christians, one of the most Christian countries in the world. The donor said to my friend that I work alongside, “Hey, can you imagine that return on investment?” And my friend began to explain to this donor that these mountain villages are a bit different from that particular country, that there are actually mountains there. There are not roads to go up into them. It’s a lot harder to get to these villages and to get clean water there. There would actually be resistance at every turn because these villages are very opposed to the gospel. Then the donor walked away and said, “I want to be able to see more wells for the money I give.”

That is a picture of a microcosm of the main problem that has led to 99% of our money going to reached places in the world—a flawed ROI, a flawed return on investment. We in the church have focused our giving on places where we can see the most returns in the fastest amount of time, the most impressive numbers to report to givers and donors, the best stories to share in our churches. If we want thousands of people being saved in an open-air evangelistic event in South America or Africa, or thousands of churches being planted at amazing speeds, then we’re going to keep focusing on those reached places. Remember, that’s the problem.

We have thought the Great Commission was to make as many disciples as possible when the Great Commission was a specific command to make disciples among all the people and all the nations of the earth. If we do not realize this and change our perspective, then we’ll keep celebrating numbers of disciples and churches in reached places, while we keep ignoring what Jesus has commanded us to do among three billion people who have not even heard His name.

Here’s the deal. You’re probably not holding an open-air evangelistic event in Afghanistan or Somalia or Yemen. In your life you’re not going to see thousands of churches being planted at amazing speed, with all kinds of physical needs being met and a political/developmental/social structure that is supportive of the church. So here’s the question. In light of the constant theme in the book of Acts of following the Holy Spirit’s leadership to press on to more and more places, no matter what it costs, are we willing to go to the hardest places with the Holy Spirit in our day? Are we willing to meet the toughest needs in the world around us in our day? Needs in Yemen? Needs in North Korea? Are we willing to engage the smallest, most remote people groups in the Amazon jungle, the Himalayan mountains or the North African desert? Are we willing to endure the longest challenges?

The question we must answer is, “Do we as the church have the stomach to keep pressing on and stay focused on reaching unreached people in places, when the stories and the numbers do not come pouring in as we would like them to?” Brothers and sisters, we must replace a flawed ROI with a fixed resolve to complete the commission Jesus has given to us (Acts 18:9-11, 19:21, 20:22-24, 21:1-14, 21:37-36).

5. We must replace the desire for quick success stories with devotion to slow, sustainable strategies.

Making disciples and multiplying churches in the red, hardest to reach places will not happen overnight. I should add that even in those places, we will be tempted to short-circuit the Great Commission—to do evangelism, but not discipleship. We have movements making disciples, but without gathering those disciples together in churches where we’re training pastors for those churches that will lead them. We must remember that more and fast is not always better than less and slow.

Look at Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:1-15 and 4:14-21, describing his work in planting churches as being like a spiritual parent to the church. Any mom or dad knows that parenting takes time. It’s slow, it’s tedious, it’s frustrating, it’s hard—with all due respect to my kids whom I love. We need to remember we must be faithful to the task before us regardless of size and speed. Paul’s words at the very beginning of 1 Corinthians 4 are so important (4:1-2). Success in this task is not about having the best numbers to report or the best stories to share. Success in this task is about being found faithful to do what God has called us to do—when things are going fast and when things are going slow. Absolutely.

Do we desire the gospel to spread fast? Second Thessalonians 3:1-4: *“Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored.”* I mentioned Acts 1 earlier, because that chapter tells us that after Jesus’ entire ministry on earth, He only had 120 people who had actually stuck around and done what He told them to do. Thirty-three years: 12 disciples, one of whom fell away, plus a little over 100 others. That seems pretty small. But there was something God was doing in the less and slow, that in His wisdom would resound to His glory around the world.

What if every one of us as a disciple, every one of our churches, just multiplied once over the next ten years? We’d say, “Well, that does not sound very fast. Surely we can do better than that.” Just do the math. If you start with the smallest, most conservative estimate—500 million evangelical Christians in the world. Research would show there’s a lot more than that, but let’s just start there. If every disciple and church multiplied one time every ten years, you would literally reach the entire world, all the nations, in the next 40 years. Reaching the entire world for the gospel in the span of a generation sounds pretty glorious.

This is what I love about John Paton, a missionary to the New Hebrides, a cannibalistic people group. I'll tell you more about him later. He said:

Plant down your forces in the heart of one tribe or race. Work solidly from the center, building up—with patient teaching and life long care—a church that will endure. Rest not till every people and language and nation has such a Christ center throbbing in its midst with the pulses of the new life at full play. Rush not from land to land, from people to people in a breathless fruitless mission. The concentrated common sense that builds for eternity will receive the fullest approval of God in time.

Ah, that's so key. In our contemporary church world—at least in the West where we want to say, “We're going to reach this many people by this date”—we need to stop and replace our desire for quick success stories to devotion and slow, sustainable strategies. And “devotion” is the right word here, which leads to number six.

6. We must replace our fear of the world with faith in God's Word.

For far too long, we have let fear in so many ways—fear of the unknown, fear of the foreign and unfamiliar, fear of harm, fear of Muslims, fear of being alone, fear of failing, fear of not having enough money when we retire, fear of not being able to do this or that keep us from making disciples of all nations with faith in God's Word.

There's a sense in which this fear is not all our fault. Part of the reason we fear is because we have not been taught well about places and people around the world and all that's involved in reaching them. The point is we're not the first among God's people to be afraid like this.

Numbers 13:25-33 and 14:1-4 is in your Study Guide, but we do not have time to dive in deep now. So here's the anatomy of fear that was evident in God's people when He told them, “Run into the Promised Land.” Instead they retreated. How does fear like that happen? It starts when you disregard the goodness of God. God's people totally forgot how He had brought them out of slavery in Egypt to get to that point, how He had promised them abundance, if only they would trust His goodness. Then we doubt the greatness of God. These people doubted God's ability to overcome the barriers before them.

Here's how that happens. You magnify potential problems and you minimize powerful promises. They said, “These people are like giants. We cannot do this,” all the while forgetting that generations before, all the way back in Genesis 13:14-18 and 15:13-16, God had promised to give them this land, but they turned back from the Promised Land. If you disregard the goodness of God and doubt the greatness of God, you inevitably disobey the Word of God and ultimately you disqualify yourself from the blessing of God. They completely missed out on God's good purpose for their lives (Number 13:45). Brothers and sisters, may this not be us in our day. Let's put aside all fear of this world, putting our faith in God's Word. The anatomy of faith that was evident in Caleb and Joshua in that story (Numbers 14:5-8).

You believe the goodness of God and you trust the greatness of God. Here's the key. Where others see an obstacle, you see an opportunity. Caleb knew the people of the Promised Land were no match for God's people with God's power (Joshua 15:13-14).

God, help us to see like this. When we see barriers in the world, God, help us see opportunities for the display of Your power and Your grace.

That's faith.

While others worry about man's power, you're confident in God's presence. You believe the goodness of God and trust the greatness of God, so you obey the Word of God. You can't sit still. You can't retreat, not with the commission God has given you. You're not content with ignorance of need. People of faith can't just stick their head in the sand and pretend like everything's perfect. You're not even content with knowing about need. You don't look at information on the **STRATUS** page and think, "Well, that's helpful information." No, you are only content when you're doing what God has said to do in order to meet needs. You're showing your faith by your works, James 2:14-18 says, and when you do that, when you walk forward in faith like that, you experience the blessing of God (Joshua 14:10-14). Don't you want this? Don't you want to spend your life on the purpose for which the good, great, glorious God of the universe has called you, with His Spirit inside you—His Spirit Who is a river of living water, welling up to eternal life. Let's do this, church. Let's replace fear of this world with faith in God's Word.

7. We must replace casual Christianity with passionate love for Christ.

Casual, nominal, cultural Christianity will not get this job done. I know there are many people thinking, "Wait. So this Secret Church is for missionaries, pastors, I don't know who, but it's not for me." That's because we have so diluted Christianity and the mission of Jesus Christ that we don't all see this as the purpose of our lives. I do hope we see it in God's Word though.

To be a Christian means to live with a radical abandonment for the glory of Jesus among the nations. That's what it means for every one of us, to follow Jesus. Look at the Bible. Those initial disciples in Matthew 4 left everything to follow Jesus. The word "repent" there is to renounce your former way of living. Jesus said, *"If anyone comes to me and does not his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."* Skip down to the end of this passage. *"Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:26-27, 33).

Think about what that meant for those original disciples. We're going to talk in a minute about what this means for our lives, but for them, the initial call to follow Jesus was a call to leave behind everything that was familiar to them, all that was natural to them. They left behind comfort for

uncertainty. Jesus did not even say where they were going; He just said who they'd be with. Followers of Jesus don't always know all the details about where they're going, but they do know Who they're with.

They left behind their comforts and careers. This was the abandonment of their profession for these guys, at least temporarily. Feel it from their shoes. Leaving behind comfort and careers, completely reorienting their life's work as a disciple of Jesus. Their possessions—they dropped their nets. These guys were not the economically elite in their society, but the fact that they had boats and a successful trade as fishermen shows that these men had much to lose in following Jesus. We find out later that they likely still had a boat and various other things, but the reality is that at this moment, they followed Jesus with nothing in their hands.

Possessions, then position. This is big. This is one of the things that set Jesus' disciples apart from other disciples who would have followed rabbis in that day. The disciples would attach themselves to a rabbi to promote themselves. It was a step up the ladder toward greater status and position. But that was not the case with Jesus' disciples. This was not a step up the ladder; this was a step down, as they would eventually find out, when they followed the Rabbi, the Teacher, the One Who was tried and killed.

They left behind their families. James and John left their father. They're not the only ones we're told that did this. In Luke 9:61-62, Jesus tells a potential disciple, "Do not even go back and say goodbye to your family." Families, friends, safety. This was a Rabbi, a Teacher, Who later said to these same men, "I sent you out like sheep among wolves. All men will hate you because of Me. If they persecute Me, they will persecute you also." They were abandoning their safety.

Obviously following Jesus means abandoning our sin. And following Jesus means abandoning ourselves. This is the message we know becomes central for any and every prospective follower of Jesus. "If anyone is going to follow Me, he must deny himself" (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). That's where following Jesus starts. In a world where everything revolves around self—protect yourself, promote yourself, preserve yourself, take care of yourself, advance yourself—Jesus says, "Crucify yourself." So many professing Christians have bought the idea that all you need to do is make a decision, pray a prayer, sign a card, become a Christian, then keep your life as you know it. Don't buy that; it's not true. If you become a follower of Jesus, you lose your life as you know it and you gain a whole new life.

I want to be really careful here. I would not say, based on the whole of the New Testament, that all followers of Jesus must lose their career, sell or give away all their possessions, leave their family behind, basically die for the gospel. But the New Testament is absolutely clear on this. For all who follow Jesus, comfort and certainty in this world are no longer our concerns. Our careers revolve around whatever Jesus calls us to do, however He wants to use us in each of our careers, to spread the good news of His Kingdom.

Your possessions are not your own. My possessions are not my own. We no longer live for material pleasure in this world. We forsake material pleasure in this world in order to live for eternal treasure in the world to come. That could mean any one of us selling or giving away everything we have. Position is no longer our priority.

When it comes to family, based on the whole of the New Testament, we're commanded to honor our parents, love our spouses, provide for our children. We do not use passages like this to justify being a lousy husband or dad or whatever. Our love for Jesus, as you see in Matthew 10, should make love for our closest family members look like hate in comparison.

We go wherever He says to go, knowing that because self is no longer our god and safety is no longer our priority. As followers of Jesus, we resist sin. We risk our lives in obedience to Him.

So I ask, are these things true in your life, in my life? It's really true that to follow Jesus is to leave behind. Or maybe a better way to put it is to lay down all things, in order that we might live for one thing: to glorify the King. Why? Because of Who He is. Follow this.

Please do not miss this. All this may sound extreme, until we realize Who we're following and that He is worthy of every bit of our life and so much more. Look at Matthew 13:44. A man finds a treasure hidden in a field that he knows is worth more than everything else he owns put together. So he covers is back up, goes and sells everything he has. People are saying to him, "You're crazy. Why are you selling everything you have?" He says, "I'm going to buy that field over there." They say, "You're crazy. Why are you going to buy that field?" He smiles and says, "I have a hunch." He smiles, because inside he knows that he has found something worth losing everything for.

Brothers and sisters, in Jesus we have found Someone worth losing everything for. Jesus is that good, He's that great, He's that glorious, Being a Christian means abandoning everything for His glory, gladly and with joy. To be a Christian is to live with joyful dependence on the grace of Jesus, the One Who takes the initiative to choose us (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). He's pursued us. Why have you and I been reached with the gospel? Why was I born into a part of the world where I've heard the gospel pretty much since the day I was born? Can I just say the obvious? I had nothing to do with where I was born. It was the pure grace of God. Why was I not born in a remote mountain, where I've never heard His name? The only answer I have is the grace of almighty God. It's the only answer you have too.

Not one of us has the gospel in our hearts by our own merit. We have the gospel by His mercy. Jesus said, "*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you*" (John 15:16). He takes the initiative, by His grace, to pursue you and me. He pursues us and He provides the power to use us (John 15:5). God promises to give you and me everything we need to bear much fruit for Him in this world, so that He gets the glory through us.

Do not miss how good this is. We see what Jesus does with these initial disciples. Who would have thought Peter, the disciple with the foot-shaped mouth, would one day preach the first Christian sermon and lead 3,000 people to Jesus in one day? John would write books and letters contained in the New Testament that would still be used to lead people 2,000 years later. James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew would scatter to the nations proclaiming the good news of God's Kingdom. These guys would literally alter the course of human history forever, yet they did not look like a world-changing task force. That's the beauty of God's design—to take weak, humble, lowly meek sinners like Peter, Andrew, James, John—and you and me—enabling each one to do far more than we or anyone else could ever imagine, to the praise of His glory.

God, may it be so in me. May it be so in you. May it be so in us. To be a Christian is to depend on the grace of Jesus.

To be a Christian is to live with faithful adherence to the person of Jesus (John 6:60-69). When so many in the crowd are looking to dilute what it means to follow Jesus, we need to realize we're not casual listeners here. We're not convinced listeners. Even the demons believe in Jesus. No, we're committed, lifelong learners and followers. Jesus is our life. To be a Christian is to live with total trust in the authority of Jesus, saying, "My life and every part of it belongs to You." Galatians 2:20 states, "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*" He's the Master of every domain in our lives (Luke 5:1-11). He's the Lord of every detail in our lives (Colossians 3:1-17).

Ultimately, to be a Christian is to live with urgent obedience to the mission of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-0). Again and again we see that every follower of Jesus is a fisher of men; every disciple is a disciple maker. This is for all of us, for the spread of God's glory in all the nations. This is an unconventional plan that requires a universal response. There are no spectators in the mission of God. Not one of us is intended to be on the sidelines.

Everyone should be engaged in this task, with all of us knowing the cost of following Jesus and obeying this commission is great (Matthew 10:37-39; Luke 9:23-24). He's made that clear to all of us. The cost of not following Jesus and disobeying this Great Commission is far greater (Mark 10:21-30). Whenever Jesus calls His disciples to a cost, He calls them to treasure that will last forever.

So, God, help us to live in this world for treasure that will last forever.

We must replace casual Christianity with passionate love for Christ if we're going to rectify the Great Imbalance and obey the Great Commission.

8. We must replace doctrinal weakness with biblical conviction.

We must not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord Who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8-14). We must know Whom we have believed. We need deep conviction about the greatness of God. This is what prompted Isaiah to get a glimpse of God in all His glory(Isaiah 6:1-8). This is what John wrote to the church about when they were being persecuted in the first century for proclaiming the gospel. John told them about the glory of God in Revelation 4:1-11 and 5:1-14. I so wish we had time to read, study and meditate on these texts. Go back and do that on your own.

We must have deep conviction about the greatness of God:

- He sits at the center of the universe.
- He dwells in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16).
- He's surrounded by unending praise. At every moment, multitudes of angels and all of creation are shouting His praise.
- He's the just Judge of every single person and we will all stand before Him.
- He's the only hope of mercy for every single person.
- He is holy above all. There is no one like Him. He is holy, holy, holy.
- He has power over all.
- He's the omnipresent.
- He's omniscient.
- He's infinitely timeless.
- He is infinitely glorious beyond our ability to comprehend.
- He is supreme above all things (Psalm 31:15).
- He is the sustainer of all things.
- He is sovereign over all things, including you and me (Psalm 31:15).
- Jesus is the conquering Lion promised in Genesis 49:8-10, from the line of David (Isaiah 11:1-10).
- Jesus is the slaughtered Lamb Who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).
- His worth is undisputed.
- His work is unforgettable.
- His worship is universal.
- He enacts judgment.
- He ensures salvation. Beyond, His glory, knowing that

The glory of God beckons us to receive salvation and know:

- Know that God holds the future glorification of believers in His hand.
- He also holds the final damnation of unbelievers in His hand. Which means we must cry out for the mercy of God or collapse under the judgment of God.
- The glory of God motivates us to accomplish this mission (Matthew 28:18-20; Philippians 2:9-11). Why go to all the nations? Because God is worthy. Because Jesus is sovereign and reigns as the risen and exalted King with all authority in all the nations. We

know one day every knee will bow in heaven, on earth and under the earth. We know every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

So why do we go to Muslim nations? Because Mohammed is not worthy of their glory. Jesus alone is worthy of their glory. Why do we go to Hindu nations? Because the 300 million gods being worshiped in Hinduism are all false gods. Jesus alone is worthy of their glory. Why do we go to Buddhist nations? Because Buddha does not deserve the glory—Jesus does. Why do we go to atheistic nations, animistic nations, to every nation? Because there is a God, His name is Jesus and He alone is worthy of all glory. People who believe God is that good will give their lives in making His goodness, greatness and glory known. We need deep conviction about the greatness of God.

We need deep conviction about the necessity of the gospel, that there's one God and one Mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:3-7)

We need deep conviction about the necessity of God's provision in the gospel. Jesus alone is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:5-7). No one comes to the Father except through Him. Salvation is found in no one else. There's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10).

We need deep conviction about the necessity of our proclamation of the gospel. If we do not proclaim it like we've seen it tonight and if they do not hear it, they cannot be saved. Luke 24:45-48 says part of the essence of the gospel is the proclamation of Jesus' name to all nations, to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). We've seen it in Romans 10:13-17: *"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"*

On top of all of this, we need deep conviction about the horror of hell. Now, what does the Bible teach us about hell? God tells us it's a lake of fire (Revelation 20:15), a place of ultimate justice (Revelation 19:1-4). Jesus tells us it's a place of fiery agony (Mark 9:43-48). People say, "Isn't that just figurative language? It's not literal fire, is it? Isn't that symbolic language?" I don't know for sure, but even if we assume for a minute that fire is symbolic there, what's it a symbol for? Nice winter retreat? Peaceful vacation getaway? No, it's a symbol for a terrifying place to be. Remember, the whole purpose of a symbol is to express in words something that cannot be expressed in words. It should bring us no solace to think that maybe this is symbolic language. Jesus tells us hell is a place of fiery agony.

Hell is a place of conscious torment and anguish (Luke 16:22-28), outer darkness (Matthew 8:11-12), weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30). It's a place of continual rebellion (Philippians 2:9-11), a place of vile association with the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 21:8). It's a place

of divine destruction (2 Peter 3:7). It's a place of complete separation from the goodness and glory of God (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

A.W. Pink writes:

None but one who really knows God can begin to estimate what it will mean to be eternally banished from the Lord. Forever separated from the Fount of all goodness! Never to enjoy the light of God's countenance! Never to bask in the sunshine of His presence. This, this is the most awful of all.

And it won't ever, ever end. Hell is a place of eternal duration, "*everlasting contempt*," Daniel 12:2 says. "*Eternal fire*" according to Matthew 18:8. "*Eternal punishment*" in Matthew 25:46. Revelation 14:9-11, 19:3 and 20:9-10 all say that the smoke of this torment will go up forever and ever. The "and ever" adds nothing to the meaning of that phrase. "Forever" would have been sufficient. It's like God puts those two extra words in there so we do not miss the point. It won't ever, ever, ever, ever end.

Thomas Watson writes:

Thus it is in Hell; they would die, but they cannot. The wicked shall be always dying but never dead; the smoke of the furnace ascends for ever and ever. Oh! Who can endure thus to be ever upon the rack? This word 'ever' breaks the heart.

Does it break your heart? Does it break our hearts?

Jonathan Edwards, preaching on this reality, put it this way:

To help your conception, imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven, all of a glowing heat, or into the midst of a blowing brick kiln, or of a great furnace, where your pain would be as much greater than that occasioned by accidentally touching a coal of fire, as the heat is greater. Imagine also that your body were to lie there for a quarter of an hour, full of fire, as full within and without as a bright coal of fire, all the while full of quick sense; what horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace! And how long would that quarter of an hour seem to you! If it were to be measured by a glass, how long would the glass seem to be running! And after you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing would it be to you to think that you had yet to endure the other fourteen. But what would be the elect on your soul, if you knew you must lie there enduring that torment to the full for twenty-four hours! And how much greater would be the elect, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year, and how vastly greater still, if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years!

O then, how would your heart sink, if you thought, if you knew, that you must bear it forever and ever! That there would be no end! That after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer to an end, than ever it was; and that you never, never should be delivered! But your torment in Hell will be immeasurably greater than this illustration represents. How then will the heart of a poor creature sink under it! How utterly inexpressible and inconceivable must the sinking of the soul be in such a case.

Jonathan Edwards wrote:

When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all; you will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions and millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains.

God have mercy! There are three billion people who are on the road that leads there—and no one has even told them how to go to heaven. God help us. God, wake us up. Give us deep conviction about the horror of hell, the necessity of the gospel and proclaiming it to all the nations, so they might enjoy and exalt You in all Your glory forever and ever.

9. We must replace the idolatry of safety and prosperity in this world with hope and confidence in the world to come.

What's it going to take to rectify this Great Imbalance? We must replace the idolatry of safety and prosperity in this world with hope and confidence in the world to come. In other words, we who know we have an eternal, everlasting home in heaven with God need to stop living like this world is our home, stop living like safety and prosperity in this world is the purpose of our lives.

If you read 1 Peter 1:1-12, you'll see God's Word to the persecuted Christians in the first century, to Christians who were tempted to forsake their faith, to Christians who were tempted to shrink back from the mission, to Christians who were tempted to live for this world. Here's what the Bible tells them to do. It says, "Look back at the God Who called your name before the world even began. Before this world was even created, God called your name" (Ephesians 1:3-10).

Look back at the people in history who have given their lives serving you, bringing the gospel to you. For thousands of years before you were born, then in your life on this earth, somebody loves you enough to bring the gospel to you.

Look back primarily at the King Who conquered sin and death for you, at Jesus, Who spurned this world to die on a cross, rise from the grave and ascend into heaven.

Then look forward. Look ahead to the inheritance that is guaranteed for you (Ephesians 1:11-14). You have a home waiting for you in heaven. Look forward to the glory that will be given to you in just a little bit of time from now—a vapor, a mist, then you'll be there. According to Revelation 3:21, you will sit with Jesus on His throne soon.

Look up at the angels who marvel at God's salvation of you. Then look at all the people from history who are cheering you on, reminding you to fix your eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2). Do all He's

called you to do while you still have time. And ultimately, look up at the God Who will guard and guide you all the way to the end which He promises to do in Jude 24-25.

So in light of all of that, do not live for safety and prosperity in this world. You have a Kingdom coming. It's not just for you—it's for everybody you can bring with you. It's for people from every nation, tribe and tongue. Bring them with you, knowing it may be costly to do so. Actually, knowing it will be costly in this world to do so. Knowing that suffering will come in this world.

But you now know that when God is your goal, suffering is actually a gift. Philippians 1:27-30 says that suffering is granted to you. When good things in this world are taken from you, what does that do? It drives you all the more to God, Whose love and peace and joy will never, ever be taken away from you. This is such a different way to look at this world and life in it, knowing that even when your life is gone, it will not be the end.

Not only does suffering become a gift, but when God is your goal, then dying becomes gain (Philippians 1:19-23). If we do not know where we were going when we die, or if we think this world is all there is, then we would cling to safety and prosperity in this world. But we do not, because we know this world is not all there is. We know that when we die, we will live. God has taken the worst thing that could happen to us and He has made it the very best thing that could happen to you and me.

God, help us see the world as You see it. God, help us see our lives as You see them—all the way to forever.

We're going to take a break, after which we will go into the last session. We're going to talk about what all this means practically for each of our lives. We've got so much in our lives to think about. Right now, one practical takeaway happening at this moment is that we are planting a training center right in the heart of the unreached, focused on rectifying this Great Imbalance and obeying this Great Commission.

So even before we go into this last session, just think about so many in our lives and practically what this looks like. I just want to remind you that we have an opportunity right now to do something right now and I want us to pray in light of that opportunity we have right now. A.D. in a bigger way, in light of everything we've just walked through. So let's turn our hearts toward God together right now before we go into this break.

Unknown voice: Father in heaven, thank You so much. We worship You. We thank You. We praise You. Thank You for your only Son, Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus Christ, thank You so much for Your love. Thank You so much for Your death on the cross. Lord Jesus Christ, thank You that You died for us and You rose from the dead. You bring resurrection into our lives. You seated us in heavenly places.

Lord, thank You so much that You are God of all order—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit—all working together to fulfill the Great Commission. Lord Jesus Christ, thank You so much for calling us friends. You call us children. We are Your children through faith and through the Holy Spirit.

Lord, thank You so much for the leaders, for the people who have a heart and care for the Great Imbalance in this world. In Your name, Lord Jesus Christ, You called all of us to go to the end of the earth. Lord, I ask You to resolve this imbalance, send people to places where they never hear Your name, they never know You, they never feel Your love.

Thank You for the Great Commission. Lord, You called us for that reason. We are here together, to worship, praise and hear from You. Prepare hearts and minds to go and reach people who are in the world.

Lord, I remember when I was in Afghanistan, I was looking for a Bible. I was looking for a Christian. I was looking desperately for years to find someone to know about You, Lord Jesus Christ. I found no one. I had to leave my country where I was born to find You, to know about You, Lord Jesus Christ. You know the harvest is plentiful. Send workers, Lord. Send supporters.

Lord, thank You so much for bringing people together to care for the nations. We care about the Great Imbalance, the Great Commission, to reach every people group in the world. Lord, thank You for the offering that will go to this new training facility. Many people have found You but they still don't know how to worship You properly. Lord Jesus Christ, I know people who lead the home churches, but they cannot explain how You come and bring Your great plan of salvation. You come to their lives in dreams and visions, saving them from the sickness of sin and they start following You. Lord, we ask You for a great discipleship movement among unreached people groups all around the world, especially for Afghanistan, Lord.

We worship You. We thank You. We ask all the blessings over this offering. I ask you to continue equipping us and give us the heart to answer Your calling, Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, we love You. We thank You. We praise You. We worship You because You are worthy of worship. You are the only One to be worshipped on earth and in heaven. Lord, we thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.

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