

V. Global Ministries Conference 2023
Tell the Wonderful Story
“The Great Commission Fellowship”
3 John 5–8
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
March 5, 2023 • Sunday Morning Sermon

III John 1:5-8 says [5] *Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, [6] who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. [7] For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. [8] Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*

The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord abides forever. May His Word be preached to you.

This is a very special service for us at Briarwood. I like to call it the sending service. In fact, I like to call it the ‘hurry up and come Jesus’ service. Now, why would I say that? Did you know there's only one thing left to happen before Jesus returns? It's not rebuilding the temple in Israel. The one thing is for the Gospel to go to all the nations so that the elect of God from every tribe and nation will be brought into a saving relationship with Christ. When that happens, the trumpet blows and then He comes. That's why I call this the ‘hurry up and come Jesus’ service. It reminds me of the prayer John himself gives – Come quickly, Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:20). I want Jesus to come quickly. I know it will be at His perfect timing and I know what must happen.

Peter says ‘Hasten the coming of the Lord’ (II Peter 3:12). Well, how can I hasten the coming of the Lord? It is by engaging in what has to be done before He comes. What has to be done before He comes? It is the evangelism of all the nations with the Gospel and that's why I love this service, because it gets us further toward that day when Christ shall return by engaging in that which needs to be done, whereby He does return. So this is a very special time. This conference helps us see how we can be involved personally, prayerfully and financially in international world evangelism missions. I want to walk through with you in the Scriptures why we do this so you understand why we do this.

Years ago, in the founding of this congregation, long before I arrived here, in 1960, it took three or four years to get our first missions conference. Then the leadership of this church, made a decision early on that world evangelism and missions locally, regionally, nationally and internationally was one of the principles in developing the budget is that \$0.50 of every dollar would leave here for evangelism, discipleship, church planting, church revitalization, leadership development and deployment for Christ’s Church around the world – locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Because of that, we have two conferences on missions every year. We have a national and an international missions conference. Forty percent plus of the tithe here goes for fulfilling the Great Commission locally, regionally and nationally. But the faith promise gets us to the 50%, and the faith promise goes 100% to the cause of international evangelism and missions.

Our faith promise is that time where we as a congregation, individuals in as families begin to work through asking the Lord by faith, what do I believe God will give to us that we can give beyond the tithe and as we are led to that number, then we promise the Lord when He gets it to us, it gets through us. Then our global missions team makes sure that we support

missionaries who are engaged in leadership development, evangelism, discipleship, Bible Translation, Church planting, and/or Church revitalization. This is not for someone who wants a cross-cultural experience so they can become a missionary. No, they have a mission to do that's faithful to the Great Commission and they've been gifted and called to do it. Then we pray for them, hold them accountable, encourage them and support them personally, prayerfully and financially. This is our moment that we enlist in the Great Commission.

I call it the enlisting in the Fellowship of the Great Commission or the Great Commission Fellowship. My area was history and my son's area was English literature. So little did I know that he had fallen in love with this literary group called the Inklings, but I found out pretty quickly as he began to explain to me how I was poverty stricken, because I didn't understand C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien and all of these guys. I remember doing the reading and trying to catch up, going to the movies and getting him to go with me to interpret everything for me. I was drawn in immediately to this fellowship of the ring and how each one contributed, each one supported the other, and how at the end they were rejoicing because the mission was accomplished, the task was done. I cannot tell you how much I long for that day with the Savior, with those whom He has brought from every tribe and nation and we began to tell the stories of the fellowship and the journey we've all been on to accomplish that mission in and for and by Christ.

That's where we are. Our theme this year is how we're supposed to be engaged in evangelism to bring Christ to them by bringing them to Christ. But there are places I can't go, where I don't know the language or the culture yet there are those who do know the language, who do understand the culture, who are gifted and can go there and we can be a part of the Great Commission Fellowship as we send them there.

This past week something was sent to me through social media that was encouraging to me. It's an elder in this church and his daughter where he was talking about how he was asking his daughter what was she learning in the Globe Conference, our children's missions conference that's been going on. She said to him "Daddy, you know that, for you're either a missionary or a mission field." That's a touchdown. We just scored. She got it and I was so excited when I saw that I almost turned in my Presbyterian credentials and went Pentecostal for a moment. It was so exciting to see that she understood that when you become a Christian, you come to Jesus, to follow Jesus, who then says, 'Go bring others to Me' – come, follow, go. Once you become a Christian, you become a missionary.

The question is, how do we join this Great Commission Fellowship? That young daughter got it right. There are two things to join the Great Commission Fellowship. Number one, you are to become a missionary. You're no longer the mission field. Once you've come to Christ you now go into the mission field, but you're not the mission field. You're a missionary. You turn your heart to your home to tell them about Christ – your children, your parents, your extended family. You turn your heart to the world – your business, your class, your school, your team. How can I go and become a missionary, a witness for Christ?

When you're a witness for Christ there are two dynamics about being a witness. A witness is what you are and a witness is what you do. A witness is what you are with your life as you attempt imperfectly but intentionally, to bring the life of Christ to bear in their lives through what He's doing in your life. Now witness is a noun in what I have just said but then you witness as a verb when you verbally share Christ with them. Both of those are to be involved in our life. Once you've come to Christ, you've not only come to Him, you not only follow Him, but now you bear witness of Him verbally and visually with your life so that you

become a missionary. Then you want to enter in to becoming a missionary partner, or, as John calls it, a fellow worker with the truth – missionary partner. That's Pauline language where John and Paul both call us into a partnership or fellow workers for when others go and we help them get there, we become partners. When they get there, we get there – we become partners with them.

I am thankful to the Committee for encouraging us and giving us Psalm 145. Our conference speaker actually took that Psalm and developed it for us – this notion that we will speak to the generations, to the nations of the greatness of our God. He was telling us that missions, to be vibrant, vital, persistent, and penetrating, it is to be doxological. Worship is the foundation of missions. We speak from the overflow of the greatness of God, His love for us, and our love for Him. It is worshiping churches who become intentionally and intensely mission churches, because what now fills us up overflows from our heart to the world. We speak from the heart of the greatness of God to tell the next generation of the mighty acts of God in redemption that they might be saved.

I want to take this further. Worship is the objective of missions. We want to win people to Christ so that the praise of God will cover the Earth as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14). If you know the Lord as Savior, then the Lord's Day is the ultimate moment of your life for it is the rehearsal for eternity – gathered worship. You wouldn't be participating in the Lord's Day with the ability and desire, together with God's people, to worship in spirit and in truth if Jesus had not sent some missionaries to you. John Piper said on this, "Missions exists because worship doesn't." Hopefully, Mr. Piper will not be upset about me adding a corollary to this; Missions exist because worship doesn't... for people will not worship until the Gospel gets hold of their heart, until then, we will continually and intentionally fall short of the glory of God, and we will exchange the glory of God for the worshiping of the creature and the creation. But the corollary is this; Wherever worship exists, missions existed before for somebody brought the Gospel so that people were saved and desired in their heart to say 'no' to falling short of the glory of God and now to say 'yes' to the praise of His glorious grace. That's because of His grace.

Interestingly, is Psalm 145 becomes illustrated for us that out of the worship and the greatness of God, we now tell the world of the great deeds of God in redemption. Psalm 145 is likely the last Psalm David wrote but in Matthew 28 after the resurrection of Jesus prior to His ascension, when He gathers His disciples on a mountain in Galilee, He gives them the Great Commission. How long are you supposed to do this? The church exists to make disciples of all the nations to the end of the age. That's why we're here and we can't do it without the Holy Spirit. That's why Jesus said, "I'll be with you to the end of the age." So Christ from Heaven gives us His Spirit to empower us so we can fulfill the mission of making disciples of all the nations. When people are evangelized and discipled, what happens? They become worshipers. As we stated earlier, worship is the foundation of missions. Missions flows from worship and it is the object of missions. It produces worshipers in spirit and in truth, when they get converted.

The Great Commission text is found in Matthew 28:16-20 which says [16] *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. [17] And when they saw Him they worshiped Him, but some doubted. [18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Who is He commissioning here? He is commissioning the disciples. What were they doing when He gave them the Great Commission? In Matthew 28:17 it says 'when they saw Him, they worshiped Him,' Out of a worship service comes the Great Commission. And then they go into the world and men and women are liberated from the guilt, shame and power of sin and increasingly from the practice of sin – anticipating that great Day when we'll be delivered from the presence of sin and they worship to the praise of His glorious grace.

So how do I become a part of this Great Commission Fellowship? Number one, be a missionary. Focus on five people. I don't know whether they would be in your classroom, your fraternity, your sorority. I don't know whether they're in your team that you play on, your neighborhood, your workplace, your workmates. I don't know where they are, but who are your focused five that you're praying for God to prepare them and open the door for you and others to bring Christ to them to bring them to Christ? Be a missionary.

Secondly, be a partner with those who are going where you can't go and doing what you can't do, but you can be a fellow worker with them. When I prepared this message, it had ten points and for the last two weeks now, I've worked on it to get it down to seven for you, and I'm just going to give them to you right out of this text from III John as I draw out some things from this partnership language that John uses. The context here is that John is commending these people because some missionaries came to them that they didn't know. They talked with them. They got to know them. They gave them hospitality, and then they sent them on in an appropriate way and John is affirming that. In that he is now instructing us, but there were actually some leaders in this church that were so self-absorbed they tried to prevent the support of the missionaries.

I am so grateful that God has given us elders, deacons and the founding pastor of this church who has now gone to be with the Lord. I have had the privilege to see our elders and deacons embracing this opportunity to become fellow workers so we don't have the problem that John's correcting in this church he is addressing, but as John's correcting this problem, he gives us some insights. I think you may find them helpful to think about as you pray about how the Lord wants you involved in missions.

Number one, our support is a faithful thing and it is a good thing. That's the first thing he says. Our support, our engagement, our enlistment in the Great Commission beyond being a missionary, partnering with other missionaries, he calls it a good and faithful thing.

III John 1:5-6 says [5] *Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are* [6] *who testified to your love before the church. You will do well (good) to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.* In other words, it's not only a faithful thing, it's a good thing to engage in the Great Commission Fellowship of supporting those who are taking the Gospel to places that need it. But we can't get there. But we do get there when we engage with them. When you hear language like this, does your mind tend to think on anything in specific? According to I Corinthians 4:1, what is required of a steward? A steward is to be found faithful. This is a matter of stewardship for us. When the when you get to heaven for your stewardship judgment, not salvation judgment, Jesus has taken care of that, but for your stewardship judgment, what is it you want to hear on that Day? 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' What we're about to do is a mark of stewardship. It is a faithful thing, he says, to send them on in a manner worthy of the Lord. It is a good thing that we do.

Number two, it is an effort. Our support requires intentional effort. It doesn't just happen serendipitously. You need to think through it, pray through it. You need to be informed. This isn't just a tip of the hat. This isn't just something that goes by the wayside. I like to say it this

way; to do the Great Commandment and the Great Commission you have to have a great commitment to live your life for Christ and in Christ. It has to be done intentionally.

Number three, our support sends them for Christ. When you come to Christ for salvation, you follow Christ as your Lord and Savior, who then sends you to go for Him and He gives you the ability and the resources to send others beyond you – sent ones – to send others even further than you can go and when they go, you go. When we engage in this, we are sending them for Christ. So we who have come, follow, go and are sent, we now can send others for Christ and participate in it.

Number four, our support is a testimony of our love for Christ Himself. According to III John 1:6, they are who testify. In other words, there is now a testimony. You have a faith promise testimony. I pray for that constantly. I do not pray for the amount of time you spend in prayer or the amount of engagement personally or your faith promise numbers. I pray for you to get engaged so that you have a testimony and that testimony is not about you – it's about the Lord who testifies to your love before the church. III John 1:6-7 says *[6] who testified to your love before the church. You will do well (good) to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. [7] For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.* We now, by our support personally, prayerfully, financially, bear testimony of our love for Christ Himself and then they bear testimony of what Christ has done by His love in us.

Number five, our support affirms their dependance upon Christ. The day of planting a church, even in Western civilization, what's historically been known as Christendom, because of the influence of Christianity and doing a church well with people knocking down the doors to attend is gone. We have to be missionary churches filled with missionary members who can't expect applause and patronage from the world. They're not going to give parades or line up. We have to go with the love of Christ to them. We have to go compelled by the love of Christ for them. Our support affirms our missionaries dependance upon Christ. The government is not going to send them. Society is not going to send them. Secular nonprofits are not going to send them. Christ's Church sends them and we are His church. They go out accepting nothing from the Gentiles, that means Christ supplies everything, and He supplies everything for them through us as we enlist personally, prayerfully and financially.

Number six, our support makes us partners or fellow workers with the truth both here and where they're going. We don't send them to do something we don't want to do here. We're missionaries here, but we can't do it there so as we're workers of the truth here, we're working with them there. Now in the text John basically says, 'Now let me finish my little sermonette and give you a take away.' Here is John's take away. III John 1:8 says *[8] Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers (partners of the Great Commission) for the truth.* This is the Great Commission Fellowship as we who do the truth here for Christ are able to do the truth there through them who have gone out in the name of Christ proclaiming the truth of Christ.

Number seven, our support is both our privilege duty and our delight. There's an interesting word there. It's an ethical word. We 'ought' to do this. Now, we don't do this for our salvation. All that's necessary to save us has been done by Christ, but we ought to do this for them in the name and out of our love to Christ. And there is no greater delight than to love Christ. Jesus says, 'If you love Me, you will keep My commandments' (John 14:15). Send the Gospel to the whole world. This is our great fellowship of the Great Commission. It is our duty. We ought to do it and it is our delight. We want to demonstrate our love for Christ through His church, sending these missionaries to the world for the glory of our Triune God.

Here is your takeaway. How do you enlist in this Great Commission? Number one, is personally. How can I engage personally? Number one, you may want to spend some time in prayer. Has God called you to be a cross cultural missionary? That's a very special gift. If He has let our global ministry committee know and they will start a process to help you evaluate your calling. Secondly, God may be gifting you to be a sender even beyond faith promise. If so also contact our global ministry committee and they will show you how to do this. You may not be sent, but you may be a sender that you know how to oversee, how to vet, how to pray, how to encourage and to guide this church so that we can engage with fulness of expectation and anticipation of what God's going to do.

I was in Uganda my first time and there was a man named Stephen, who was there in Kampala. It took three hours to get from Entebbe to Kampala and Stephen and three others came to pick me up to take me to my speaking engagement. By the time I got there, there were hundreds of teenagers packing a bombed out auditorium that had been bombed out in the various wars with Obote and Idi Amin, but it was filled to overflowing. Jet lag left me in a heartbeat. They just filled that place up. I got to know Stephen who became a minister in the prisons and he said, 'I get the biggest crowd in the morning because I'm the first one there but then I lose in the next three prisons.' I said, "Why?" He said, 'The Muslims beat me.' I said, "How?" He said, 'They have a car. I walk.' I said, "Well, we'll get you a car." He said, 'No. Takes too much time. Get me a bike. Get me a motorbike for I can beat any car in my motorbike.' Praise the Lord for faith promise giving for we were able to get him that motorbike and I wish you could have seen the fruit of his ministry for the next seven years. I'd always get a note back saying 'I beat him again.' It is amazing what God does with this.

So personally engage and another way to personally engage is a short term missions trip and there's all kinds of ways you can establish relationships with these missionaries. By the way, personally engage when we have our missions conferences for this give you the chance to meet some of them. We have currently 260 missionaries. When you meet them you can find out their email address, how to zoom, how to keep in contact and maintain communication. One of the best things you can ever do is to at least every couple of years use one of your family vacation weeks, and go on a short term missions trip. I promise you, it's better than Disney. It'll make unbelievable investments in the lives of your children.

Number two, prayerfully engage. Be informed. Find out about the region of the missionaries you commit to pray for. When my son went to Austria years ago, I found out more about Austria I never knew in my life and never even wanted to know in my life, but that was important to me. Once you get invested, your heart takes over. There is a wonderful text in Matthew 6:21 that says 'where your treasure is their will your heart be.' One of our previous missions pastors would tell me 'You see, Harry, wherever you make an investment of treasure, then that is an indication of your heart.' I said, 'Tom, you're right. But let me suggest that where your treasure is not only indicates your heart, it instructs your heart. It begins to bring your interest to something you wouldn't have thought of before.' There are all kinds of prayer requests in our missions book if you need to know how to pray. We also have the second Sunday of every month we have a persecuted church prayer time right here at 5:00 pm.

At Briarwood we have various country flags hanging in our sanctuary and they are not political statements. Flags represent nations at Briarwood. We have a different flag hanging every Sunday because each flag represents the mission field and missionaries of that region we are praying for in the coming week. It's also written in the church bulletin. Get your family involved in this prayer time.

Finally, is that we would be engaged financially in this cause. God, through faith, what do I believe you're going to give me beyond my regular tithe that I bring in worship each Lord's Day? And I promise it'll get through me. Then it'll go 100% to world missions and evangelism through these who are accountable and who are on mission, on message, and in ministry as our committee oversees and cares for them. My wife, Cindy and I have been doing this for decades now. When we got started in Faith Promise here's what we do. You do not have to do this but maybe this will be helpful for you. Every year we take time during the mission conference to bring a focus in praying about this. We have three S's systematically and just like we systematically set aside the tithe, we have just looked at a percentage and try to increase a percentage every year of what we will give beyond the tithe. The first S is we have a system of giving.

Secondly is sacrifice. We budget every year and there will be some initiative we will do that year i.e. the home, it may be this, it may be that. We will find one of those initiatives and just give it Jesus and what we would have spent on that we're going to give to faith promise. Now, I do not have time to tell you all the times that I thought we were sacrificing and God gave us more than we ever thought of. You can't out give the Lord, but we would take one of those things and commit it to Him. It may be a television, a computer, it may be a repair of a something or a remodel or something like that. Just pray about it. What can we give as a sacrifice to the Lord? Sacrifices cost something, right? It's like the hen and the pig who loved the farmer and wanted to give him a birthday present. The hen said to the pig, 'let's give him breakfast. We'll give him ham and eggs for breakfast.' The pig says 'That's a gift for you but it's a sacrifice for me.' Sacrificially, what might you do? I promise you will rejoice.

Thirdly, is supernaturally. I mean, how do you build a tabernacle with gold, silver and rich linens in the wilderness? Well, the way you do this is called plundering the Egyptian for on the way out God caused them to just throw stuff at them as they said "Take this and get out of here. Go!" In other words, God was giving them the resources supernaturally that they would be using to build the tabernacle. The same thing happened in the rebuilding of the Second Temple. The people that were attacking them, the Persian rulers, made them collect money to give to them to build the temple and to pay for the sacrifices that were going to be given there. So what would God supernaturally bring into your life? So our three S's are systematically, sacrificially and supernaturally. Let's close in prayer.

Prayer:

As the Lord is leading you just consecrate it to Him what God is leading you to do personally, prayerfully, financially, systematically, sacrificially, and supernaturally. It's a good and faithful thing you're doing. It's an effort. It demonstrates the testimony of your love for Christ through the church, to the world. It's the way that God affirms these missionaries dependence upon Him. It's something we ought to do, yet it's something we delight to do. People need the Lord, and we love to tell people of the One who didn't need them but loves them and will save them. God, hear the prayers of Your people and strengthen their faith in what You can do in them and through them for Your Kingdom, I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.