

# The Great Commission in the Life of the Church

sermonaudio.com

*Guest Speakers*

By Pastor Rocky Wyatt

**Bible Text:** Matthew 28:18-20  
**Preached on:** Sunday, April 21, 2024

**Providence Church** 2146 Buford Hwy Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

**Website:** [www.providenceduluth.org](http://www.providenceduluth.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch](http://www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch)

Pastor Ty Blackburn. And we're delighted this morning to have a special guest with us bringing the word of God. Rocky Wyatt is the president of XL Ministries. He's a man who's served the Lord in many places. He started out as a youth pastor and then an administrative pastor at Countryside Bible Church in Fort Worth, Texas. Pastor Tom Pennington, many of you know that church and Rocky's been a part of that ministry and then started XL Ministries more than 30 years ago. It's a ministry aimed at training and equipping pastors within the local church. And so when I heard about his ministry from a friend, I was just intrigued because it's been a burden on my heart that this is the way it should be done, we should be training within the church. And so, getting to know him, have the opportunity to talk with him on the telephone, then we went to a conference back in February, three of us of the elders, and got to experience a conference with XL Ministries on elder leadership and just came back so excited and encouraged; just the right tools and the right ministry for where we are as a church. And then just the friendship of this brother, his passion for Christ. We've had a wonderful time with him. I love him dearly, so thankful for his heart and he has been a blessing to us already this weekend. The 49 guys yesterday at our men's conference, and I think about the same number, Ladies Leadership Luncheon, looking forward to that. But the Lord is really encouraging us and this is going to challenge us today to what it means to be a disciple. Rocky, come and share with us, brother.

Pastor Rocky Wyatt. Good morning. It's great to see you, Mark. So exciting how the Lord uses us. We don't deserve it. He doesn't need us, but man, is it exciting what he does. So thanks for sharing. That was tremendous, effect for when I speak on the Great Commission. I mean, you'd think God might've planned that.

It's good to be with you this morning. For those that weren't in Sunday school, I come to you from Colorado, the mountains of Colorado. I live up just over 9,000 feet in Colorado. So if you've never been there and you'd like to see the mountains, you can get my phone number from Ty and come visit us. Love to see you.

My heart is that the church would become the church that God intends it to be and to understand why he left us here as Christians, and I think sometimes with the Great Commission, which probably you've all heard, and so it's like, "Really? Again?" I'm not sure most churches comprehend the vastness of the Great Commission and I think it's

important to understand that so that at the end of the day, you can say Providence Church is a Great Commission church, that that is being filled out in the life of the church.

So the Great Commission in Matthew 28 verses 18 to 20 says,

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

So what does this look like fulfilled in the lives of individual Christians and then in the life of the church corporately? Well, we'll begin with that first part where Jesus came and spoke. Who's he speaking to? His disciples. Okay, keep that in mind, because that's going to be important. We're going to spend a lot of time there. But he's speaking to the disciples and he says to them first, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Now, folks, it's important to understand for those who have truly come to Christ, that at that point of conversion, regeneration, you are no longer your own. Your life is not your own anymore. It's not your freedom to do what you want, to fill your time with whatever you want to fill your time with. Life is no longer about you. In the Scriptures in Acts 20:28, Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders, he says, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He," what? "Purchased with His own blood." "You have been bought," it says in 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20, "or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." In Ephesians 1:13 and 14, it says, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." Or in Titus 2:13 and 14, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people," what? "For His own possession, zealous for good deeds." 1 Peter 2:9 says it this way, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Why? "So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." And so biblical Christianity at the Great Commission begins with understanding the authority of Christ in our lives. We are now his possession. Our goal in life is not to check off our bucket list. Our goal in life is to fulfill his mission for his glory.

When we look at this verse in Matthew, the imperative there is to make disciples, but it's important to understand that he's speaking to disciples, and at this point, he has already explained in great detail what it means to be a disciple. So let me be clear, it's important to understand that it's easy to call yourself a Christian but when we meet the Lord, the only thing that's going to matter is if he calls you a Christian. Being a disciple is being a Christian. They're one and the same and so it's important for all of us to ask ourselves,

"Am I a disciple of Christ?" Because keep in mind, Matthew 7 is clear that knowing what it means to be a Christian, knowing the gospel, knowing the Bible answers doesn't mean you're a Christian. It's responding to that life-changing truth that leads to you becoming a Christian, which leads to you following Christ as a disciple. And so, so I'm going to explain discipleship and I'm going to use two key words. So for those with short memories, these are the two words I'd like you to remember when we're done, okay? Two words. Jesus used them often. In Matthew 4, beginning in verse 18 to 20 it says, "Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' Immediately they left their nets and followed Him." Mark 2:13 and 14. I know some of you are trying to keep up with the passages. I'm sorry, I'm going to go fast because I got some ground to cover. Mark 2:13 and 14, "He went out again," Jesus did, "by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them. As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, 'Follow Me!' And he got up and followed Him." John 1:43, "The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me.'" In Luke 9:23, Jesus "was saying to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.'" Follow Me. You know, I suppose when they heard that, "deny yourself and take up your cross," they were probably wondering about that, but not long after, when they were looking at their Savior elevated on a cross, you can bet that drove that home.

In Matthew 8 verses 18 to 22, it says, "Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side of the sea. Then a scribe came and said to Him, 'Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.' Jesus said to him, 'I mean, usually we'd say, 'Oh, really? That's great! Let's go!' I'll follow you wherever you go. Jesus says to him, 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' There's a response to, right? 'You're going to follow Me? Think about it. Think about it.'" "Another of the disciples said to Him, 'Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.'" Here's comforting words. What's he saying? "You can't wait around for the inheritance and take care of the family business. You're going to follow Me? Follow Me now." Jesus is saying, "Stop making excuses. If you're My disciple, follow Me."

In Matthew 19:16 to 21, "someone came to Him and said, 'Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?' And He said to him, 'Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.' Then he said to Him, 'Which ones?' And Jesus said, 'You shall not commit murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father, mother; you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?' Jesus said to him, 'If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.'" Well, see, Jesus is getting to the heart of the matter with this man, because is it wrong to have money? No. It's wrong to love money. And for this man, he had money. What do you think Jesus is getting at? This man loves money more than he loves Jesus. He has competing loves in his life and Jesus

said, "Get rid of the competing loves and come follow Me." What did the man do? He walked away. He walked away.

You know, it's easy to read this in a story about this man, but you guys, I think one of the greatest, the greatest distractions in the Christian life are people who say they want to follow Christ, but they have competing loves and competing loves prevent us from being the disciples that God wants us to be. You know, the greatest commandment is, what? It's to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. You understand that means that you love God more than you love your wife, your husband, your mom, your dad, your children, your grandchildren. You love God supremely, more than any other person. And folks, the only way you can love other people the way you should is to love God supremely. When you love God supremely, you will trust him with all your other loves even when he does things you don't understand. I received a text last night when we were having a dinner together. I was their youth pastor probably 25 years ago and I get a call. The man is in his early 40s, he has a number of kids and they were just adopting another one and he died in his sleep. Is God good all the time? Of course he is, because we love God supremely and does he know what's best for that man? Does he know what's best for his dear wife and those children? Of course he does. But if you don't love God supremely, you will grate and you will become bitter when things don't happen the way you want.

See, when he talks about following me, it's no competing loves. In John 21, you remember, Peter had a rough time around the crucifixion, right? And when it was all said and done, and our Lord is talking to him in John 21 verses 18 and following, "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." I mean, this is a missionary call, "So Peter, just so you know, things are going to get rough and then end really hard." He said, he was saying to Peter signifying what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he said it to Peter, "This is the way your life's going to be, and this is what's going to happen to you," then he says to Peter, "Follow Me." I love Peter's response. He turns around and sees the disciple Jesus loved, John and he says, "Lord, what about him? What's going to happen to him?" And Jesus says to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me." That's what he says, "You follow Me."

John 8:12, "Jesus again spoke to them, saying, 'I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.'" In John 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." In John 12:26, "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."

Now, you guys, you think about those two words, "Follow Me." They imply some very crucial theological truths because when I'm not in Christ, I'm living my own life, right? I'm just doing what I'm doing. I'm living my life. And then God in his kindness opens my eyes to the truth that somebody graciously shared with me and God gives me understanding, and so now I repent because I recognize my sin makes me an enemy of

God. And so, so "Follow Me" means I'm going this way and I turn. That's repentance. I'm turning from my own way. And then it implies faith. Why? Because now I believe Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. He is the one that I must follow. It implies Lordship because I'm saying, "Whatever path You take me down, Jesus, I will go. Whatever path it is, I want to go down the path that You want me to be on to accomplish Your eternal purposes."

Repentance, faith, Lordship. You know, there's a big deal today about, "Well, is repentance necessary for salvation?" Listen, if you don't understand you are an enemy, you're not going to understand reconciliation. "Follow Me." It teaches all of those truths. So folks, the message is given to disciples. It's given to those who've come to understand their sin. They understand that they've been purchased with a price. They understand now that their sole goal in this life is to follow Jesus. That's it. Every day. Every moment. Everywhere. In every circumstance. In 1 John 2:6, it says, "the one who abides in Him," that is, in Christ, "ought to walk in the same manner as He walked." That's what it means to be a Christian, a disciple. In John 8:31, "Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.'"

You see, salvation leads to transformation. There are too many people looking back when they're eight years old and they wrote in their Bible they'd become a Christian and they're not living like a Christian, but they say, "Well, look, look!" Jesus is not looking at what you wrote in your Bible. He's looking at how you live out the truth of the Scripture. People are believing in a simple false gospel that says, "I just want to go to heaven." That's just another selfish pursuit. No, no, we're enemies of God who have been reconciled through the incredible price of the Son of God. We're not our own. We're not our own.

In John 13:35, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if," what? "You have love for one another." In John 15:8, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." We're not talking magnifying glass here. Anything in my life? We're talking much fruit and the fruit comes as a result of God's work in your life and through your life. You can't do that without him but he makes that happen in the lives of his children who walk with him.

You see, a disciple is a person who's living a life that other people can follow. If they follow you to work, they can act and react the way you do because you're living in a pattern that's honoring to Christ. To be a disciple is to love your wife as God has instructed and for you as a wife to respond to your husband as God has instructed. We ought to be able to go into your home and see what your home is like and follow your example because you're a disciple. We ought to see how you care about your neighbors and how you want to minister in your community because you're a disciple. We ought to be able to follow that. See, this begins, the Commission begins with disciples. It doesn't begin with talking to people who call themselves Christians. It talks, it's talking to people who are. They're followers of Christ. Because otherwise, you simply know the truth and you guys, you think, you read those verses, "Lord, Lord," you know, and he says, you know, "Depart from Me, I don't know you." And you say, "Wow, that's awful. I can't

imagine what that'd be like." Listen, God has told us, what's our responsibility to the unsaved? Share the gospel. Well, you can know that and never share the gospel in your entire life. That's knowing the truth and not living it. You can know what God has said about his word and how you need to be students and love it, have a passion for it, but that doesn't mean you do it. That knowledge is self-condemning when it's not life-changing, right? I'm just telling you, it's easier to get into trouble than you think and it's easier to know the truth than it is to live the truth. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ." That's what we desire and we don't live perfect lives, you guys, but even in our pursuit of Christ, they see when we struggle with sin, how we respond to that and desire to grow and confess and be all that God wants us to be.

So that's where it starts. So I'm speaking primarily to you here today, then, who are disciples, which the Bible also calls Christians, to those of you who have been transformed in such a way that you don't just know about following him, you are following him because that's who he gave the Commission to. That's who he gave the Commission to. So then, the verse as you read, Brother Mark, Revelation 7:9 and 10, I have in my notes to remind us, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"

You guys, I'm concerned that even within the evangelical church that most people who claim to be Christians are not following Christ. Most actually never share the gospel. I've heard people say, "Well, you know, that's just not me." It's like then you're not saved. Say, "Well, you know, I just show Christ by my life and then I tell them the world's going to go to hell," because your life does not communicate the truth of the gospel. Yes, live the life, but open your mouth and tell the truth because how do they know to repent and believe the gospel if you don't tell them? We're here for that purpose. When he says, "Go therefore and make disciples," he's making it clear that as a church we come together, we're unified, we love each other, we serve together, we prepare for what? To go out and proclaim the message of hope to a world that's lost and dying.

Acts 1:8, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you," and then what happens? It says, "you will be My witnesses. You will be My witnesses everywhere here and outside of here and beyond. You will be My witnesses." That's what happens with the Holy Spirit. You guys, when you become a Christian, does the Holy Spirit come into your life? Of course. Otherwise you couldn't be regenerated. Well, then what happens? You have the Holy Spirit. Now you've been empowered to be his witness to proclaim the gospel.

In 2 Corinthians 5 it says it this way, "all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation," he has entrusted to us this ministry, "namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of

reconciliation." That's what he's done. He's given that to us. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." See, that's the mission of Christians. That's a mission, that we are actively sharing the truth of the gospel, the hope of the gospel, and in and every circumstance the Lord takes us.

Now I want to talk about the practical ramifications of that, because I think for a lot of Christians, we come, we have a great day on Sunday, and then Monday morning we get on with our life and we go to work and we have our appointments and we do our stuff and go to the store and then we go to school. On Tuesday, then Wednesday, then we come back for Wednesday night, maybe a recharge, I don't know, home fellowship, whatever you all have, come back on Sunday for the deal. So let me ask you this question: do you believe God, if you're in Christ, do you believe God has intentional plans for you to minister to other people every day? This could get awkward in a few moments, just so you know. I'm just saying. Of course. God's intentional, right? I mean, he's intentional and so, what you call a business appointment, God may call a gospel opportunity, but if all you think about is the business appointment, and you don't think about the gospel opportunity, then you just, you're not following him. You're not thinking spiritually. You know, when you have the opportunity to go to coffee with a neighbor, you might call it just a time to just visit with the neighbor, but maybe it's a gospel opportunity. But you guys, hey, maybe you get in that fender bender. We call it an accident. What I say is you're going to meet somebody you didn't want to meet and maybe that's a gospel opportunity. A gospel opportunity. You guys, I'm not telling you that you have to go out on the street corner and scream, I'm saying the opportunities are everywhere, every day. You, I mean, are you around people? There it is. It's all the time.

Okay, listen to me, let's get down to some hard stuff. You guys, job interviews, I lost my job. Remember a guy said to me, "Rock, I've been on like on 20 job interviews, nothing." He said, do you understand that at least in some of those job interviews, those guys may have, guys, ladies, whoever they are, may have a much bigger problem than you have because they have a job but they don't have a Savior? Do you realize that God is bringing your life in to intersect with these people one after another, after another, and if all you think about is getting a job, then you could miss countless opportunities for ministry. Countless. Medical diagnosis and it's not the news you want to hear. But you guys, we get so consumed with me and my circumstances and my heart and what this does to me, but God is intentional. We love to talk about God's sovereignty when things are good, God's sovereign when things are hard. And you guys, the truth is that in some of those very difficult circumstances, we find the greatest opportunities for the gospel but oftentimes we're so consumed with what's happening to me that we don't realize while you're in the hospital bed, those nurses and those technicians and those doctors may be as lost as a day is long. Their problem is vastly worse than yours.

But when we focus on ourselves, like we shouldn't go through difficult circumstances and it's like, I mean, Peter, beloved, don't be surprised at the fiery ordeal. Come on. God uses circumstances. In fact, the Apostle Paul, I love this, the Apostle Paul in Philippians, he's in jail. He's writing the letter of Philippians and he says, "My circumstances have turned

out for," what? "The greater progress of the gospel." You see, this life is not all about you and it's not all about me. It's all about him. People say, "But why would God leave my elderly mother where she can't even function in that nursing home?" And it's like, hey, she may not be able to talk, but you can go in there and minister to her and share the gospel with the people that are there.

Ministry opportunities are everywhere. They're everywhere. In the opportunities in our country, people have thought, "Well, we don't suffer in this country because we're in the United States." Yeah, but the Scriptures tell us in 2 Timothy 3, "All who live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." It's not because we live in the United States that you don't suffer persecution. It's because we don't follow Christ. It's because we're not obedient because if you're obedient, there's going to be consequences to that. That's what it means to be a Christian. That's part of what we do.

And so in the Great Commission, Jesus, in some of his last words to his disciples, is making it clear that this is what life is about now. And you guys, you see that lived out in the Book of Acts, don't you? I mean, what happened? What happened? In the book of Acts, they start sharing their faith, and thousands of people believed, and it was just peaceful as could be. No. Thousands of people did believe, but for those who were sharing the gospel, it was brutal. It was brutal. They were put in prison. They were harassed. They were run out of town. You watch, you know? I mean, Paul, he goes to Thessalonica. He's there a few weeks. Why does he have to leave? Because they're going to tear him apart. And what does he do? "God, if that's what missions is, I'm done." No, he goes to the next town, does the same thing. People from Thessalonica chase him down there and run him out there. What does he do? "Really? This is ministry? Yeah. Now that gets me to the next town where God obviously wants me." That's what he did. That's what he did.

And so you have these circumstances that God brings into your life, but they're all intentional. So when you wake up on Monday morning, you have to pray, "God, give me eyes to see the opportunities today for gospel ministry. Help me to see people like You see them. Help me to have the courage to open my mouth about the gospel. Help me to be faithful to the charge of begging people on behalf of Christ to be reconciled with God." We've got to share the gospel and then as we share the gospel, the passage makes it clear that there are some that will believe because God is determined to save. There will be some that believe and so now this starts a progression that's very important in the life of the church.

So now, like in our prayer meetings, you know what the prayer meetings are like in the American church for the most part? I'm just saying this by experience. I'm not saying it reflects you. But prayer meetings are often, okay, we have prayer requests. Okay, we're going to pray for your mom, she's sick, and your dad, he's sick, and she's traveling. And we have all of this, everything that's very physically oriented. Okay, now I'm going to offend some here, but I want to make clear what I mean, okay? I understand that we can cast all our cares on him because he cares for us. I get that. But folks, everything we think about should have spiritual objectives because the truth is grandma at some point is going

to die. That's reality and so if she's sick, we mostly want to know is she a believer, and if not, we want to pray for that. And if she is a believer, we want to pray for the testimony that she has as she walks down this difficult road. And if she's not able to communicate any further for the testimony we will have as we minister to her and have the opportunity to interact with other people. You understand? We pray for travel, pray for travel. Read the prayers of Scripture. You can pray for travel, but pray for the opportunities for ministry, gospel ministry on the travel, pray for the opportunities with the people you can engage with as you travel.

You guys, our lives are about gospel ministry otherwise, honestly, the church becomes like a Lions Club or something, you know, it's just associate, we come together and we just have a spiritual element to us. It's no, the church is a life-changing place that we're coming together, we're talking praying for souls I have a business meeting with them tomorrow. I'm hopeful to have an opportunity for the gospel. You know, pray for my family members. I'm going to reach out to share with them. They need the gospel. I mean, we need to be, our focus, our prayers, our hearts need to be absorbed with spiritual priorities. Please take that in context. We can pray. Many of you know my first wife died. I get it. But she honored the Lord in a life of terrible suffering. She was a testimony till the time she took her last breath because she knew God was good and even in her decades of physical misery, she loved her Lord and served him.

So I'm really not trying to be unkind to the hard things of life, I'm saying that God has given us priorities that everything comes under and we must not lose sight of them. Folks, when we talk about then people coming to Christ, see them as we're living as disciples following Christ, now we bring them into the church because we want them to be obedient in baptism and we want to teach them all that God has commanded. So we bring them in the church and what do they see? Christians arguing and bickering over silly things? No, no, God forbid. They come in and they see people who are very different from one another but have a common bond in Jesus Christ. And they come in and they see the unity of the church, and they see the love of God, and they see the love for one another, and they see people who are serious about learning their Bibles and learning truth so they can share truth. And they come in, and in Ephesians 4 it says, now the church participates in instructing them and equipping the saints so that they now can serve in the body of Christ, so that now they're a part of what God has called his body, the church.

And so the church is committed to training, which is very exciting for me because my heart is so much there, right? That is Christians, I think a lot of Christians are afraid to share the gospel because they couldn't defend the critical doctrines of the Christian faith. I would suggest to you that most elders and most evangelical churches could not defend their own doctrinal statement if their life depended on it. I'm not saying they're not godly men. I'm not saying they're not faithful men. I'm saying the church has stopped training and so they've not been equipped because the church is not taking that effort to say we need to learn these things. Listen, if your kids come to you and say, "Hey, why do we believe the Trinity?" The answer is not, "Go talk to Pastor Ty." Teach them the truth. It's the critical doctrine of the Christian faith.

And so as Christians, we've got to stop the casual, passive Christianity. I'm working with a man. He's an elder in a church. And he came to me and he says, "I'm not qualified I just realized." And it's not that he's character disqualified, but he doesn't know his Bible and theology. And I said, "Well, you can either quit or you can learn, and I'd prefer you learn." And he said, "But I've never been a good student." I said, "Well, I don't care. That doesn't matter. It's time. It's time." His first language is German, but he's here in the States. You know what he did? He said, "I want to learn." You should have seen how neat it was when he taught an adult Sunday school class on the Trinity.

See, the church is a place to be equipped to learn your theology, to understand truth so that you engage with people outside of here. I mean, it's not a problem to share the gospel and to answer theological questions because you've worked hard to study to know so you can make a difference in the name of Christ. That's what we're doing in the church. But let me take it a step further and I'm going to talk about some things that happen in the Book of Acts, but I don't really have time to hit all of this, but you'll follow and then you can read the Book of Acts. What happened? What does it look like in the Book of Acts when the Great Commission is being fulfilled? Okay, so it's interesting because in the Book of Acts, when the Great Commission is fulfilled, first of all, the disciples are busy proclaiming the gospel, often under great opposition. And what do they say about that? They're told to shut up, and he says, "I can't stop preaching what I've seen and heard." You know, they're in prison, what are they doing? Singing praises to God. You see, we are living in a culture where hard things are happening, hard things in my life and everything. Life is not about you. I get it. We all go through hard times. I get it. But you guys, ultimately life is about the glory of God and if everything was the way we wanted it in this life, we might get the impression this is heaven. Just want you to know, thank God it's not. This is not heaven. Don't think it is. That's yet to come. This is the battlefield. Okay?

And so in Acts, you see the gospel going out and being fulfilled in Acts 2, Acts 5, Acts 4. Yeah, but it just continues. You read the Book of Acts, evangelism, evangelism, why? Because the church understands a disciple makes disciples. That's what we do. People who call themselves Christians don't necessarily make disciples but to Christians, fake disciples. Well then, as you follow the Book of Acts, it is very interesting, first of all, we expect suffering, but also as the church grows, thousands of people become Christians, they begin to plant churches, right? Churches begin to be established and when churches are established, they need leaders. Do they have leaders? Yes, they appoint elders in every church. You see, part of the disciples' mission, you notice the disciples seldom travel alone? Why? How do you think Timothy got trained, Titus? They're being trained by the leaders of the church.

Do you know today that most pastors in evangelical churches never train another man to be a pastor in his entire life? Do you know that most churches never train men in their church to become elders? I'm talking evangelical churches. Do you know that most churches do not have any significant process to train a man or a woman to become prepared to be missionaries? Most churches don't do that. They have passed it off. Well,

how do you fulfill the Great Commission? It says we're to equip the saints in Ephesians 4, for the work of service. You guys, that's everybody in the church and every position in the church. That's the church's responsibility. I am not an anti-seminary guy. I am an anti the church not being primarily responsible to train people. You can use resources, but don't send them away and think you've done your job, you guys, because ultimately in the church, as this church evangelizes and new converts come in and you're equipping them for the work of service, some of them are going to become deacons and elders and lady leaders in the church and some are going to say, "I want to do ministry vocationally." And you're going to train them and then you're going to start saying, "Hey, hey, God has given this guy who's so gifted, we're going to train him here. Let's go plant a church out here where they're struggling and you gotta drive an hour and a half to find something." That happens in the context of the local church. When I meet with pastors and elders, I often say, "Hey, have you ever wondered why when it says we're supposed to equip the saints for the work of service, we're willing to do it with everybody except elders slash pastors and missionaries?" And they just go, ee, that's awkward. But it's true. Seminaries cannot prepare people for ministry. Seminaries can be helpful, but they're not always required. The church is essential.

And so it's a congregation. What I'm saying to you is here's the progression that I think is so exciting, that first of all, you've got to live as disciples, follow Christ, so that when you're coming together as a body to talk and to pray, you're praying about spiritual things, spiritual priorities. Otherwise we get caught up in pettiness and it just gets, I mean, you know, I love the verse in Philippians, "Do all things without grumbling or complaining." That verse wouldn't be so hard if it didn't have the word "all" in it. I mean, the church can be a place for people to complain. It's like, really, no, no, no, no, no. Our mission is much bigger than that. But I'm telling you, the thrill of the church when everybody who is a true disciple is out doing their work and then coming back in and then people begin to get converted, we say, "Well, it doesn't seem like anybody's coming to Christ today." It's like, "Well, who's sharing Christ today?" We see those new converts start coming in, then we see the life in them, begin to train them as they're obedient to the Lord, and then we start developing leaders and you start looking at some of these young guys and you watch them, whereas God calls them to ministry and you watch them train in your church and be capable of teaching and shepherding. And then all of a sudden, you're not looking for somebody else as somebody going to send to missions, but you're going to send them and you've equipped them and you love them and you know them and they're a part of the life of your church. It becomes a passion of the church. You see, if the church doesn't get to the point where you train leaders at that level, you just kind of get to a point where you're at and it just stays static. But the church is not intended to be static.

So one thing that I would just like to mention, because I think it's helpful, is, you know, in recent years, the world and our country has gone through some hard times, right? And in part of that, during the COVID season and all of that, I was still traveling and doing some work and it's very interesting to me, it's very interesting that in visiting different churches, I found that there were people that were extraordinarily passionate about wearing a mask, I know this is going to wear you out or not wearing a mask. Getting the vaccine, not getting the vaccine. And through all of this time, I hear Christians who are

very, very passionate about politics. Very, very passionate. In fact, it's been interesting to me that there are a lot of people that they were willing to talk about things boldly in ways that were just amazing. I mean, it's just like this. I mean, they were so passionate about it in ways I never saw them passionate about the gospel. What's that about? What's that about? Because our passion is for the gospel. We watched silly things like that divide the church. You know why that happens? It's because people are not living as disciples of Christ. It's because they're not living as disciples of Christ. It's because their agenda becomes higher than God's agenda. It's because they forget to see the lost and know that God is in control of all of those things. Our mission is to minister to people in the midst of all the misery and show them we have hope. We're not panicked.

Now, don't raise your hands to this question. I always try to warn you if I'm going to ask a question you don't want to respond to. Don't respond. For those of you that are news addicts, you keep that turned on day and night, listen to me: you never know what part of that's true or not. You never know. So what I would suggest to you, if you want to really know what's going on and what's coming, I found this book that provides all the detail you need. When I talk to people who they spend the hour after hour watching the news, they're miserable and they're worried. You guys, we know where it's going, and we know how it's going to end.

So all of those other things, they're a diversion from the Great Commission. Yeah, if you get all occupied with politics, diversion from the gospel, you're willing to talk about those things, but you won't talk about Jesus to the lost. You're willing to be passionate about all those medical choices. You know, make your decision. Just make your decision. Leave people alone and go share the gospel. Do something life-changing, not divisive. Be the church. Fulfill the mission of the church. That's what God has said. And folks, I'm telling you, when you get on course and you get serious about the gospel and you come as a church and you're sharing about gospel opportunities, I'm telling you, there's no other life like it.

I was sharing with the men in Ephesians 2:8 and 9, we're familiar with those verses, "For by..." Wow, something trailed off, but I'm pretty sure those were it. We know this, right? "By grace you've been saved." But verse 10, what does it say? Verse 10. "Yes, we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that He ordained beforehand, that we should walk in them." You understand that when God ordained your salvation in eternity past, he ordained the very works that you are to accomplish in this life while you're here. He planned those all out in advance and so here's the goal, brothers and sisters, here's the goal: you strive to do everything you know God wants you to do in this life in serving him and you will know that when you have done your last task, you are going home. See, the objective is not to retire. The objective is, you know, I'm just going to grow. The objective is, no, I need to finish the work that God has given to me to do. And see for my wife, when I stood by my wife's side, my boys were there, her parents, she finished well. God was done. He finished the work. But as I stood there and watched her go into glory, one thing I knew that was settled in my mind before that moment was that her job was done, but mine was not, which means I need to stay focused on what

God wants me to do. I need to be busy about the ministry he's called me to. And when he's done with me, I'm going home.

That's the Great Commission and you guys, as you do that, you begin to affect more places like Uganda, because you're training people right here, because you're demonstrating the heart for the gospel right here, because you're investing and training leaders right here, and you're putting off the sinful habits of divisiveness and ugliness and saying, "No! We won't do that and be distracted from the Great Commission that Almighty God has entrusted to us." And I remind you, whatever God has made one, Satan will tirelessly try to divide and he will use any one of you willing to participate. Don't do it. We're on a mission. It's a glorious mission. And you guys, is there anything greater in this life than to be used by God in the work that he wants to accomplish? There's nothing that compares.

It's been wonderful to be with you guys this weekend. I know we'll visit with some of the ladies in just a little bit, but I just want you to know, a privilege. Ty, I love you. Love your family. You've been so sweet. Love your church. Praise God for what he's doing.

Let me pray.

*Heavenly Father, You're a good God. I think we would all admit it's easy to be distracted in this life and get consumed with things that are not really Your priorities. Lord, I would pray, I just pray, first of all, for those in this room who call themselves Christians, but really there's been no indication of anything beyond knowledge, that is, the knowledge of Your word has not been translated into practice. Lord, should there be those here that have a false assurance of salvation, I pray that they would come to understand what it truly means to be a Christian, knowing that it is a free gift, but it does involve repentance and faith and Lordship. Lord, might they come to understand that and put their trust in You.*

*For those who are Christians, Lord, I just pray that You would help us to live as You intend and we know You don't at all intend it to be an oppressive obedience. It's a joyful obedience. It's a privilege that we represent the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Pray that You would help us, Lord, to see people like You see them. Lord, help us to have a compassion that You have. I pray that You'd give us the courage that we need as we acknowledge, God, there's times that we're just weak and we're fearful. God, I pray that You'd help us and each of us to really be alert and aware and recognize that circumstances are opportunities. Lord, don't let us get so caught up with ourselves that we fail to see others.*

*I pray for the elders of this church, the leaders, I pray, God, that You give them wisdom in their leadership and in the training that they're doing and are going to do. And I pray that that would be immensely beneficial and I pray that as a result, Christians would be strengthened in the knowledge of the truth and then be committed to following You as You intend. I pray from this church, God, that You would raise up men and women who would be leaders. I pray especially for men that they would be gifted and committed to*

*wanting to become overseers in the church, elders. I pray that You'd raise up those who would serve as deacons. I pray God that You would raise up those who will be trained to be missionaries around this world. I pray that You'd raise up those who will be vocational elders or pastors. And Lord, I pray You'd raise up godly women who would desire to disciple other women in a way that teaches them the importance and priority of truth and how that affects their lives in the most practical of ways. Lord, thank You that You've given to us clear direction, just pray that You'd help us now to implement the things that You've taught us. In Christ's name, amen.*