

How to Build a Church in a Sinful City

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Grab your Bibles and let's go to the book of Acts, Acts 19. As we've been looking a lot at the epistle to the Ephesians, somehow I missed a very important message connected to that and that is the founding of the church in Ephesus and the model that gives us for founding churches today. We have, if you're in my circles, it's just almost baffling and astounding how many different viewpoints and ideas and novel, creative, clever, gimmicky things that are going on to "start and grow or build churches." But I submit to you, brethren, that God's method for planting his church has not changed in 2,000 years because it's his church. I'm not trying to build a modern church. I'm not trying to plant a cool church or a relevant church or whatever it is.

I told you this story a long time ago that when the Nelson brother up in Waynesboro up in Wayne County, Tennessee who works with us now in partnership, brought a group of people here, it was years ago and he said, "I heard about you guys and I wanted to come and learn what you guys are doing. We're starting a church and we're trying to start a contemporary church." And I said, "Well, we're trying to start one or build one that looks 2,000 years old," because the Bible is written 2,000 years ago. And he's the same brother and, again, I've told you this many times but I just get so tickled when I just picture it in my mind because he's a crazy guy and he's crazy looking, forgive me but he is. But they used to do a big spook house up there every year and they'd try to have a big spook house at Halloween and he always ran the chainsaw. He was the chainsaw massacre guy and he had been following our broadcasts and he came to me after following the broadcast and he said, "Brother Jeff, I used to chase people all over Wayne County with a chainsaw trying to get them saved and lo and behold it's the Gospel that saves people all along."

God doesn't need chainsaws, amen? He needs, what people need is the Gospel. What people need is preaching. And when we plant churches, the real task is to get a God-called preacher. That's the task. I mean, it's good to have families go and help the church plant, it's good to have prayer walks, I assume, though I can't find that in the Bible, it's good to do a ton of things but what you need is a preacher, someone who preaches the word in the power of the Spirit. That's the key and if somebody will just go do that, I guarantee you God will start a church. He will save men under that ministry.

So let's look at this together. Ephesians 19. We'll just look at verse 1 for our foundation stone and then look at several other verses but it says there...I'm sorry, did I say

Ephesians? Acts 19 is where we ought to be. Acts 19:1, "It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples." Now here he is on his second touch in Ephesus but working further to build and establish the church there and Ephesus was an exceedingly sinful city. Ephesus was much like what we see in our Western civilization today. All of these things, again, as I said a week ago, all of these ideas of we're progressing into something new as we embrace all these new ideas, especially this perverse sexual revolution that "the liberal progressives are promoting, this is a new era and a new day," it's not new at all. All we're seeing in America is the embracing of ancient paganism. This stuff's all been done before and Ephesus was a city of antiquity that was full of sin and wickedness. It was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia. The population was probably about a quarter of a million, maybe a little more than that, and it was the political and commercial city or center rather, of a large and prosperous region. It had a large, or rather it had a large port and was the chief commercial link between Rome and the East. It was a cosmopolitan city; a lot of people from a lot of places there; something of a melting pot of nation and ethnic groups. You had Greeks and Romans and Jews, Jews and Gentiles mingling freely in the streets there in Ephesus. Just a little bit of everything.

I think one of the things that's interesting was it was a big entertainment center. It had the largest of all Greek open theaters and the theater there in Ephesus would hold about 25,000 people on 66 rows of seats and the stage was about 120 feet wide, and in addition to that theater, they had a great stadium there where they held chariot races, gladiator fights, wrestling matches, sometimes even with wild beasts. You know, some of our forefathers of the faith were put in those stadiums and eaten by wild beasts just for being Christians. They thought...that was their idea of amusement. Isn't it interesting they got more and more brazen and hardened in their cruelty and I can see our country going down that same type of path.

The most prominent structure in Ephesus was the temple of Diana. There was a great main street that was marbled and it was lined by these elaborate columns and then you had this temple of Diana or Artemis, as it was called. It was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Looking at the foundation today, the anthropologists and archeologists tell us that the temple of Diana was 425 feet deep, 250 feet wide and 60 feet tall. It was a magnificent and beautiful structure and it housed the statue of Diana or Artemis and the belief was that she came down out of heaven, this huge statue came down out of heaven and Ephesus was considered the guardian of the temple of Diana. And as you probably remember, one form of worship there was to go and have sexual immoral practices with the hundreds and hundreds of priestesses who served in the temple of Diana.

So all of this is a picture of the great cosmopolitan city. Very commercialized. Very materialistic city. Very sex-crazed city. And a city full of superstitions. So here the Apostle Paul comes into that kind of context and you might ask, "How are you going to build a church, Paul, in that place?" I submit to you the same way you build a church in any place. There is not one plan for Muscle Shoals and the Bible Belt and one plan for New York City because it's somewhere different. When you hear that stuff, you must

reject it. God's word has the clear guidelines for how he wants his work performed. The means of achieving God's work are important; they are not optional. Now, there are some variations, of course, some room for creativity but nothing like what we see a lot of folks doing today.

So what's the ordained method of God the Apostle Paul carried out so carefully as he was establishing a church in Corinth? Well, 1. Preaching the word. Preaching the word. Notice what it says in Acts 19 and keep your Bible finger there, your Bible finger. Well, just any finger. If you've got a Bible finger, you can use it but just keep your finger in Acts 19 as we'll go some other places, alright? But we'll look at this area primarily. But in verses 8 through 10 it says, "And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God." Then there are some people there that got hardened and then verse 10 he says, "This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." So what was Paul's modus operandi? What did he do over and over and over and over again? He kept preaching and teaching the word of God. That's how you reach a cosmopolitan, modern, radical, sex-crazed, superstitious, materialistic, commercialized city or anywhere else. Preaching the word of God.

Now, this is Paul's third missionary journey, by the way, and his second visit to Ephesus. Just to get a little more of the context here, look at Acts 20, if you would, a couple of pages over, verses 20 and 21, how he, at this point, is reflecting back on his entire ministry there and he goes to nearby Miletus, which is close to Ephesus, he calls the elders of Ephesus over to himself and he says in Acts 20:20, "how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Jump down to verse 27 of chapter 20, "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." So on and on, Paul continues to emphasize the practice of preaching and proclaiming the word of God.

Now, as you know, we've sent out quite a number of guys to plant churches quite a number of places and I'm like a broken recording as they say, "Pastor, as we go out there, you know I think we'll do this and I think we'll do that and I think I'll go to coffee shops and meet people and I think we'll do this at the mall and I think we'll do a barbecue and have friends over." All that's good but I keep telling them, "Get you a little podium or sit behind a chair or do something, even if it's your family and one guy who you got in off the street, but proclaim the word of God. Open your Bible and proclaim the truth of God and just be, if you will in the world's eyes, foolish enough to believe that it's the preaching of the word that will save souls and build the church." That was Paul's method. Now understand, Paul was a well-educated man. He was very aware of the high cultural entertainment theater type of communities that existed in these cities like Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, but he determined, this is his words, to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

So flipping back again, if you will, to verses 8 and 9 just to show you, of 19:8 and 9, just to show you how tenacious he was about this methodology. In verse 8, again, he's "in the

synagogue continuing speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading about the kingdom of God," but look at verse 9, "But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus." So here we have people who are not receiving his preaching and teaching. Now, what we might hear today from so-called church growth and church plant experts is, "Well, you see, in a place like Ephesus, they're just not going to receive cold, straight, even impassioned preaching of God's word. You're going to have to do some different stuff." Here's what Paul thought about that, "No, if they don't receive my preaching and teaching, I'm going to turn my back on them and I'm going to go somewhere else." Wow, that's pretty strong. Paul was not going to cast his pearls before swine. To hear the preaching of the word was a privilege and Paul realized they'd been hearing it and they don't want to receive it, so if they refuse God's word, then I refuse to stand here and preach to them, and he went somewhere else, the hall of Tyrannus and preached there.

You know, just as a point of application here as we think back on Jesus' ministry, we remember going through the Gospel of Luke, and of course in the other Gospels, that there were two types of people who refused to receive Jesus' ministry, his preaching and teaching ministry. First of all, was his hometown people. We see a record of that in Matthew 13. We'll not turn there for time but remember as he was preaching there, they said, "Isn't this Joseph the carpenter's son? Don't we know his family members?" And then it said, "And the people took offense at him." To which Jesus replied, "A prophet is not without honor save in his own hometown." He said, "They just saw me grow up, they just can't accept that I'm the God-sent Messiah, that I am God's one true prophet." So his hometown people were just too familiar. Familiarity breeds contempt and the Bible says also he didn't do hardly anything there among them because of that unbelief. So Jesus himself pulled back from ministering to people who would not receive his preaching and teaching.

Then, of course, another group that would not receive Jesus' ministry was the Jewish authorities. We see that all through the Gospels and these Jewish authorities could not receive his teaching because they had already set themselves up as his authority so they were not going to humble themselves under Jesus' authority because they had already established themselves as the authority in the church or in the profession of believers there in Jerusalem and Israel at large.

Now, the most damaging thing one can do is to harden his heart against the preaching of the word of God. I remember years ago when we seemed to always have some little schism, some little faction, some little critical group in the church, and I would often plead with those people, "Even if you don't like me, don't teach your children to resist the preaching of the word of God." It's not about me ultimately. If God has ordained preaching as the primary means of saving your child's soul and sanctifying his soul after he saves them, please don't do that. Please don't do that. And I would exhort you that same way today. Be careful even if in any way that you bring disdain because, you know, a child's natural heart is bent toward rebellion and if you tell him you can dismiss the man

of God, then you are causing a domino effect of resistance and barriers in his heart to the very thing God wants to use to save his soul. You just must never do that.

A few thoughts here that I looked this up some time ago but I thought it was very applicable here. Some years ago, the Wall Street Journal had an article entitled "Mighty Fortresses: Megachurches Striving to be All Things to All People," and in the article they go on to describe one church where the entire ministerial staff put on their leotards and did a wrestling match for the Sunday morning service so they could draw a crowd "to win them to Jesus." Boy, that would be a sight, wouldn't it? Now, they didn't make this up. This is not that uncommon anymore. One of these churches bought a new half a million dollar, not sound system, it's important to have a good sound system, but a half a million dollar special effects system producing smoke, fire, sparks and laser lights. They sent some of their employees to Bally's Casino in Las Vegas to learn how to run the equipment. The article continues and says, "He packs his church with such special effects as cranking up a chainsaw and toppling a tree to make a point. The biggest Fourth of July fireworks display in town and a Christmas service with rented elephants, a kangaroo and zebra and the Christmas show features 100 clowns with gifts for the congregation's children." One church, it noted, had a church pamphlet and on the cover, the outside of the pamphlet, was the pastor in a bunny suit and he's sitting there dejectedly on a big bass drum; he's in a bunny suit and he's looking sad on his drum and the caption reads, quote, "When the power bunny runs out of energy to keep going, going, going," then you open the pamphlet and on the inside it says, "The Easter message can give you the power for living, living, living. Nothing outlasts the resurrection power of Jesus Christ." How absurd. So then you see this pastor on the inside second flap in his bunny suit but now he's smiling ear-to-ear and marching with vigor, beating his drum with enthusiasm. So I guess the message in essence is: come and base the eternal destiny of your immortal soul on this pastor who acts like a clown.

This is not unusual. It's even humorous that now every couple of weeks at least to a month, I hear about another "good church" having an Elvis impersonator in their pulpit on Sunday morning. I'm going to go ahead and say it: he probably does better than some of the preaching they've been hearing. But nevertheless, that's the kind of stuff that's just, it's just amazing. I know that there's a fad going around now to get people baptized and they call it "take the plunge" and you put hot tubs out on the parking lot and you just send out vast announcements to come and take a plunge in the baptistry and be saved. And these kind of outlandish gimmicks, those things are blasphemous. First of all, that kind of thing would be blasphemous to the holy and divine ordinance of believer's baptism and it's a dishonoring to the Christ and the Gospel that should be preached. Friends, when we've got to do this kind of shenanigans to get people interested, how are you going...I'm in my 35th year, how are you going to keep finding stuff to do for 35 years? Nonsensical, idiotic stuff that so dishonors the dignity and the integrity of the message and of the Christ of the message.

Now, some ask the question, "Well, if these new methods are gaining prominence, should we be concerned? And, pastor, do the Scriptures teach that anything goes as long as the Gospel is clear and as long as people are responding? Or, pastor, is style by itself neither

good or bad? Is style just neutral as long as the message is right?" Well, turn over right quick to 1 Corinthians 2, would you go there? 1 Corinthians 2 and look at verse 1. 1 Corinthians 2:1, Paul writing to Corinth, now Corinth would be very similar to Ephesus, a very up-and-coming, sophisticated, full of theater and stadiums and superstition, a sex-crazed community, to say the least, because Paul had to deal with that very issue quite substantially in his letter to the Corinthians. Here's what he says to them, 1 Corinthians 2:1, "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God." Now, they were very used to philosophers and teachers using great splashy oratory, if you will, to be impressive, and Paul said, "I stayed away from even trying to sound sophisticated in my speech."

Verse 2, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching," in other words, the content of my message and the means or the style I used in delivering it, "were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." How many times have I talked to people, I remember of all places I was quail hunting one day and a man was talking to me about how he had begun going to a church and he resisted it at first and he went on and on and on about the magnificent stuff they would put on on Sunday morning with their drama, their multimedia, their lights, the effects. He was just taken in by all of that and I walked away thinking, "You know, he didn't say anything about his sin or the loving, sacrificial, glorious power of Jesus Christ to forgive sinners." It was just that he was amused into coming. He was entertained into buying in like, "Wow! This is neat."

So listen, friend, when the Gospel is the message, the method is not irrelevant. Do you hear me? The method must match the dignity of the message. Method and message must be harmonious. If they are not, then the integrity of the message suffers. I mean, when you're doing funny, rah-rah, entertaining gimmicks to get people "to come to Christ," how are you going to turn around and say, "Now go out into the world and carry your cross and suffer for him." I feel like they would turn around and say, "Now wait a minute, this is not what I signed on for. As a matter of fact, as soon as the church down the road has more fun than this one, I'm going to go down there because you've taught me that's what you go for, wherever the most fantastic stuff is going on." Well, I'm going to tell you something: you find and know the Christ revealed through the Scriptures and you've found the fantastic one; you've found the treasure of your soul; you've found the love incomparable.

So there is a radical inconsistency between the message of a bloody cross and modern, slick, sophisticated, Stephen Spielberg type methods to communicate it. That's why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:21, "God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." In other words, to these Corinthians, they would say, "You're antiquated, Paul. You don't fit. You're not relevant. This won't work in sophisticated modern Corinth." Paul said, "No, but God is well-pleased through his means and method, foolish preaching, at least you would call it foolish preaching, but he's saving souls through it and it glorifies his name."

Preaching is referenced over 100 times in the New Testament, 33 different verbs are used to describe the calling or the exercise of preaching. Let me just run through some of these real quick to show you how thorough this is in the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul, Acts 13:32, "we preach to you the good news." Romans 1:5, "for my part I am eager to preach the Gospel to those who were in Rome." Romans 10:13-14, "'Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" 1 Corinthians 9:16, it was the one thing Paul had to do, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel." 1 Corinthians 15:11, "Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed." 2 Timothy 4:2, "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." 1 Corinthians 1:17, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void." 1 Corinthians 1:21, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." "We preach Christ crucified," 1 Corinthians 1:23. 1 Corinthians 2:1, "we proclaim to you the testimony of God." 1 Corinthians 2:4, "and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Jesus in Mark 4:17, from that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand." Mark 1:38, many were looking for him but they weren't looking salvation so Jesus replies, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." Mark 3:14, "He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach." Mark 16:15, "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.'" Luke 4:8, 10 and 19, the prophesy that was fulfilled in Christ. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor and to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind and to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." And Peter says these words to Cornelius who was inquiring about the truth, Acts 10:42, "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead."

Now, here's the thing, folks: if you're going to preach with all of your heart an expositional, grammatical, historically, contextually accurate word from the word of God in spiritual power, it's going to take all you've got. I know, I've been doing it for over 35 years. It's going to take all you've got. Here's my point: you don't have time to think up tons of slick stuff and entertaining stuff and amusing stuff. And here's the other thing: should persecution come and should we lose a lot of our jobs and should financially we get in a tough place and we can't afford nice buildings and we can't afford nice music stuff and all we can do is find a place to meet, then if you've got a God-called man with an open Bible, you can have a good church. Amen? I mean, what are these guys going to do if times get tough and they can't put on their million dollar shenanigans? I'm telling you, I'm not exaggerating, a lot of these megachurches have multimillion dollar facilities just for their stage antics, not to mention the whole church plant. I am 100% convinced

by the grace of God that if Grace Life Church of the Shoals lost everything we have materially, we could meet somewhere next Sunday morning and I can open the word of God, Brother Tom could lead us in singing, I can preach and we can have a wonderful church service for the glory of God. Amen? We don't even need smoke on the pulpit. It might help if it would hide me a little bit, that might be a little bit of a help, but you just don't have to have that. Again, I try to be gracious in my spirit and say not all of that is always ungodly but, folks, what begins to happen, I've said it over and over again, because I want to see God glorified in his church is that a little bit of that goes a long way toward disorienting people to long for stuff other than the pure, clear preaching and teaching of the word of God and pretty soon preaching and teaching in the power of the Spirit starts being added on just to make sure we're legitimate but the people are actually coming for the show.

You see this is the overwhelming fast and rapid movement of churches losing Sunday school and small groups. Do you realize that our 90-95% small group attendance compared to our worship attendance is radically unusual? And I know that. I study churches, I go places and I'll talk to pastors. Most places if they can get up to 40% of their Sunday morning attendance in some kind of small group ministry, they think that's phenomenally good. And I'm not here to beat them up or condemn them but, folks, if you don't have body life, you don't have a church, you've just got sort of a Sunday morning hour and I just commend you for all these years of believing what we've taught you about what the word of God says and standing on it in spite of all the shifting messages and emphases and, if you will, fads and gimmicks, that have come down the pike. Again, there's a radical inconsistency between the message of a bloody cross and slick, sophisticated, Stephen Spielberg like methods to communicate it.

I even have heard this myself and I've heard people refer to it, that some people try to get people to come to church bragging that their church has the absence of preaching. "Come to our church, the music is great. You ought to see how they put on the service, and the pastor is not going to sit up there and preach to you." I guess he does a little talk at the end. I don't know what he does. I mean, it's the absence. Can you imagine with all the clear overwhelming teaching on preaching? Now, listen to your pastor: if you're not fired up about preaching of the word, if it doesn't do something for you, then rebuke your spirit and say, "God, I'm going to line up with you and I'm going to trust your means to grow me even though I might in my humanity enjoy something different. I'm going to stay with the preaching of the word as the mainstay of what I call a Christian worship service."

Well, the preaching of the word is the primary means the Apostle Paul was using but here's....did you keep your Bible finger in there? Did you keep your Bible finger in Acts 19? Here's such a powerful conclusion to the matter on preaching the word in Acts 19:20, "So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." Not the great, clever presentations of the Apostle Paul's ministry was growing. No, not even the crowds were growing. That was happening but that wasn't the point. The word, the word, the word of the Lord was growing mightily. That's why you want a thoroughness in the exegesis and proclamation of the word that God might prove by the power of his Spirit his word, his

eternal word, can grow mightily in the hearts and minds of people and families throughout your community, drawing them to Christ and growing them in Christ.

Well, let's go to a second thing, not only did the Apostle Paul base his ministry of founding the church in Ephesus on the preaching of the word, that was the foundation stone, whatever else may go, that can't go, but secondly: the personal training of co-workers. The personal training of co-workers. If you go back a chapter to Acts 18, look at verse 18 there, "Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow. They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, but taking leave of them and saying, 'I will return to you again if God wills,' he set sail from Ephesus." So here we have Priscilla and Aquila who have been discipled with Paul, co-workers that he used to help him in his church planting efforts. You know in chapter 19, verse 1, the last phrase says "he came to Ephesus and found some disciples." So he finds these disciples in Ephesus, he's already got co-workers that he's left there previously to work with the disciples there in Ephesus and then in verses 8 and 9, we see that he's working and speaking and persuading boldly with the word of God. All of this is training these disciples and maturing these co-workers.

So this couple, Aquila and Priscilla, the Apostle Paul trained for ministry and we find this type of method throughout the New Testament. Jesus, for example, called his 12 and out of the 12 he had three, Peter, James and John, that he spent even more time with and it's interesting to me that Jesus would often pull away from people who had many needs but he always poured himself into his co-leaders because he was equipping them to be leaders of the church. And that's a huge blessing that you have been to me. I have so many good men and good ladies here who are faithful co-workers and I just can't say enough to praise the Lord for your faithfulness in the work. I would guess it would be approaching 25 years, at least 20 solid years when every single event at this church, I was in the middle of it. Now, a lot of that was my own problem, my own pride, my own idolatry of making sure everything's going just right. Now, you need some of that when you're reforming a church. A guy's got to stay on top of things but I was obsessive in it. I admit that. I confess that as sin. But my point is, it was just sort of understood. That's what I came out of, that you've got to be involved in every single thing from the smallest children's nursery thing to whatever the senior adults are doing. We did that for so many years and today, coming into those years where quite honestly I don't have the stuff to do that anymore, not and preach like I need to preach, but I see the staff, the elders, the deacons, our ladies and other men just carrying out the ministry in such an excellent way. I think I feel like maybe Paul felt when he left Aquila and Priscilla and said, "Thank God I've got other things I've got to do, but they will take care of the church at Ephesus until I get back." That's such a blessing to see that development of co-laborers who are not doing it because they love you, though they may love you, they're doing it because they love the truth and they love the Christ you preach. I praise the Lord for that.

So Jesus did this same thing, always trained a few co-laborers in the ministry and then the Apostle Paul, we see him doing this, and then he passed this on to his understudy, Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men," those are co-workers, his discipleship group, "who will be able to teach others also."

Let me see how much more I've got here. I'm not going to do that. We're going to leave it where we are. But those two factors, now we have a lot of church planting so you need to know what goes on. If somebody were to ask you, "What are y'all about in church planting?" Immediately you ought to say, "We're about getting a preacher. If a man will go and preach faithfully and teach the word of God, we believe that's the key foundation stone." You can have – listen – you can have a million and other even important things to help a church get started but you've got to have the preaching of the word. You've got to. Now, here's the problem with that: I can't make a preacher of the word and you can't make a preacher of the word, only God can call those guys. God calls his own preachers, amen? Why do you think Jesus said, "Beseech the Lord of the harvest that He would thrust out laborers"?

So we need to pray that God keep raising up men, particularly young men, that we could equip and disciple and mentor and help them. Now, we do have a lot of ministry today and I spend most of my time as far as counseling with young pastors who contact us who have been watching our ministry and who have been impacted by it. I talked to a man on the phone just recently and he was telling me how they moved their church to be more biblical. I'm trying to think. I've talked to two or three people out of town. I'm trying to think what city they were in. It wasn't Chicago. There was a businessman from Chicago who's been following our ministry who called and had a good conversation but this man was... Christie, where was that, the associate pastor guy? Do you remember? Well, he was not the pastor, he was just a worker guy. Gainseville, Florida. Thank you. Gainseville, Florida, and I had been talking to them earlier about they were doing some church discipline and they had a man in the church who was just openly wicked and they dismissed him from church membership but he kept coming and trying to convince people to oppose the pastor and so they finally they were calling me and saying, "What would you do?" And I said, "Well, I don't know what you do exactly," but we were trying to help them but they finally met this man and his sidekick on the front steps of the church and told him he could not, literally could not come in, and they were prepared to call the police. So he's been dismissed from the church. If he will repent and not cause factions, he's more than welcome. We'd love for him to keep coming. And they had gone through all of that and then he said this, he said, "The men in our church have used your preaching for two years as our weekly Bible study and that's what stirred us that we need to have a more biblical church."

So when I talk about these cameras and things God uses but, folks, the reason why he uses us is first of all to show that he can do a lot with nothing and I really literally mean that, but we're a church that's walking in it enough that it has validity. I mean, a lot of guys can teach seminars and write books but people need to see churches doing some of it and that gives them the strength to go forward. So I'm saying all that to say we're

having a lot of ministry mentoring and helping but when we have these pastors we're helping or sending out, we've got to send them out knowing they are God-called preachers of the word of God.

Brother Blake K. is our intern and I've heard Brother Blake a lot and I've spent a lot of time with him and he's worked with me at the deer camp. I always take them to the deer camp and if a guy doesn't know how to work hard physically, you don't need to be in the ministry and he does good. He does good. We unloaded 22 tons of gravel the other day. I was on the tractor, he was on the shovel and I did get the shovel some, by the way, but I teased him and I said we're going to put this on video and they're going to put the video on me on the tractor and I'm going to say, "These interns want to know if they can spend time with me and just ask questions," and I say, "Sure, come on out to the deer camp and we'll talk about it." Then I was going to have the camera on him with the shovel and say, "Blake, how's this discussion going?" Well, you ask Blake, we did, we talked all about the things of church and doctrine and application but might as well get something done, amen, while you're talking. I don't believe in this sitting in Starbucks for three hours and talking theology. We can talk theology and shovel gravel and get stuff done. I'm chasing rabbits tonight. I know you want to go home.

But what am I saying? We've got to trust God to raise up preachers. Preachers. Preachers. And then to help those preachers know, preach the word of God, train some co-laborers and God will build a church. You see, people want to think, "Yeah, but..." You see, they want to look to everything but the Spirit using the word to build the church but, you see, what the Bible says, the word of God must grow rapidly and increase, not your ministry, not your methods, not your creativity, the word. The word and that puts a man on his face and saying, "God, if you don't bless the ministry of the word, I'm sunk," and that's a good place to be. Amen.

Well, that's how you build a church in a sinful city, the way the Apostle Paul did it.

Let's stand together, alright?