

Value 4 - Making Disciples

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[0 : 00] I'm going to tell you about my devotions this morning. Because sometimes, as I'm reading through the Bible, I think I've told you before, I read through the Bible every year. Sometimes, God uses the timing of my devotions to the lost.

God spared nothing to reach the lost. God spared nothing to reach you.

In that chapter is the story of the lost lamb. You know the story? The shepherd leaves the 99, they're in the fold, to go and find the one that's lost.

And when he finds it, he rejoices, and he tells his friends, look, I found the sheep that was lost. That was you at one time. That was me. Then he tells a parable of the woman who lost a silver coin. I heard it said that silver coin wasn't just any silver coin, but it was part of her dowry. It was a very symbolic coin, not just money.

[1 : 26] And she lost it. She tore apart her house in order to find that silver coin. And when she found it, she reached out to her friends, and look, I lost this coin, but I found it because it's so precious to me.

That's the heart of God for you and me. And then the most important picture of God, I think, in the Bible is the story of the prodigal son.

The son leaves his family, leaves his father, takes his inheritance prematurely, basically telling his old man, you know, I wish you were dead, but since you're not, can I have my money anyway? And he goes and squanders it. He realizes his condition. He realizes that he's lost. He knows the character of his father, or he thinks he does.

So he works up a speech. God, I'm not worthy, or God, Dad, I'm not worthy to be your son anymore, but can I at least be a servant? Because anything's got to be better than this.

[2 : 44] Picture this scene. Put yourself in the shoes of the prodigal son who has rejected God, but realize you're lost.

And maybe you thought you were hopeless. As you're walking up to the family farm, expecting a cold reception, your dad leaps to his feet, runs to you, embraces you.

Says, welcome home. That's what God does for us. He kills the fatted calf. He throws a party. Because his son who was lost has returned.

His son who was considered dead, they didn't know where he was, is back to life. That's God's heart for the lost. And he spared no expense.

God demonstrated his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners. What? Christ died for us.

[3 : 51] That's Romans 5.8. God gave everything to reach you and to reach me, to bring us back into the fold, to welcome us back home and into his family.

He has the same heart. And what we're going to talk about this morning is that the way he is determined to reach people who are lost is you and me.

God works through us to touch the lives of the people around us and draw us back in, draw them back in. And to show them what a great and glorious opportunity they have to be welcomed back into the family of God.

So that's going to be our focus this morning. And that was all my devotions. What a cool way to start the day, to be reminded that I'm loved. So as I was preparing for this message, I realized there are two themes that run through most of my sermons.

Not just in this series in Mission and Values, but over my sermons for years. And certainly back to the time that you've known me. Can you believe it's almost been a year? March 27th was when Kara and I came to visit.

[5 : 05] And here we are. But there's two themes that consistently run through my messages. One, Eliana, you can actually leave that slide up. The making disciples one.

Thank you. The first one is acknowledgement of reality. I can't tell you the number of times I've heard preachers at various churches, various places, shy away from the reality of life as it is. Or the life that we have to deal with. The fact that the matter is, brothers and sisters, life is hard. It's harder than we ever thought we could ever imagine. I was thinking this week about the idea that, you know, I just turned 60 in January and the thought ran through my head.

You know, by 60, I thought I would have had to figure it out. I actually thought that at 30, 40, and 50 as well. You know what I didn't take into account? I finally figured out a few years ago.

Actually, I do have everything figured out at 60. For people who are in their 40s. So if you're in your 40s and you've got struggling with something, I can probably help you with that. Because I was 40.

[6 : 13] I survived my 40s. And I'm still standing. My kids are walking with the Lord. It's a good thing. I could probably help you out there. But 60? I've only been 60 for two months.

I don't know anything about this. And that's part of why life is hard. It's because we have yesterday figured out, but we're still going toward tomorrow. So life is hard.

And why is it hard? For one thing, there's challenges. These are good things. Think about when you got married. You were excited. I was excited. I was thrilled to be getting married.

I caught the girl. But there were challenges. I can remember not having enough money. Because I didn't know how to handle money.

Then we had a kid. And then I had less money. And then we had two and three and four. Then we had no money at all. Those were all joyous occasions.

[7 : 11] I remember just being thrilled at the birth of each of my children. But then realizing the burden is getting heavier and heavier and heavier. There's our jobs. There's our hobbies.

There's the things that we do that are good things. But they're taxing. They take a toll on us. They're hard. We would think even things like sharing our faith or following Jesus would be easy because these are things that God wants us to do.

But they're not. Because life is hard. So those are the good things that are taxing. But then there's the hardships. The things that are difficult.

Trivial stuff. We moved into an apartment right in the middle of COVID with Kayla and Manny and their one child at the time. And Kara and I. And we moved into this apartment to discover the stove didn't work.

And I got excuse after excuse after excuse for months. That stove never worked. It was a trial. Not major in the scope of my life.

[8 : 18] But it was a trial. We have difficulties of sickness. Of disappointments. Of broken relationships. Things that weren't even our fault.

But still they didn't work. We have to deal with illness. Major illness. Minor illness. But things that undermine our ability to achieve the things that we think God has called us to do.

Life is hard. And the questions just keep coming. The hits keep coming. Have you ever felt like that? You just think you've got... Okay, I'm going to get through this and it'll be okay and then the next one comes.

Or I'll get through this and then the next one comes. I'll get through this and the next one comes.

That's life. Life is hard. And then there's the big questions. The big questions.

Who am I? Am I just Kara's husband? Am I just Josiah, Luke, Micah, and Kayla's dad? Am I just a pastor, Tri-State Church?

[9 : 22] Who am I? We ask those questions and those questions never disappear as we go through life. What's my identity? Where's my value? What's my purpose? Why am I here?

Am I just occupying space until I die? If nothing else, I hope that what comes out of the sermon this morning is the realization that that is absolutely not true.

You have a purpose and it's a great one. But we ask that question. We ask about our mortality. How should the fact that I'm going to die one day affect how I live today?

What difference does that make? And there's a question of our autonomy. Do I have free will? Do I have the freedom to decide to live the life that I want to live?

Or am I just the product of my environment? Am I just a puppet on a string? These are big questions and they're not easily answered. And those are woven through our challenges and our hardships.

[10 : 20] Life is hard. It's very difficult and hard to understand. So that's the first theme that has been woven through my sermons. Life is hard. I don't want to shy away from that.

But the other theme that I hope you've heard is the gospel is good. And it's better than we ever could have imagined.

It's far broader. It's deeper. It affects every part of our lives. As a matter of fact, the gospel shows us how to navigate the way through our challenges.

It shows us how to navigate our way through the hardships. It gives us the answer to those existential questions that we have to face and wrestle with. The gospel that Jesus died on the cross for us to deal with sin, to take the punishment that we deserved, to give us the righteousness that we did not deserve, and then to invite us into a relationship with him through which we learn how to live.

the gospel is greater than we could ever imagine. Paul wrote at the end of chapter 3 of Ephesians that God is able to do abundantly beyond anything that we can think or imagine.

[11:52] That's the gospel. That's true in your life. That gospel is so great that also in Ephesians chapter 2, Paul said that we're going to spend all of eternity finding out how kind God actually is, how good he actually is to us, to you, individually.

It's a customized program. It's not one size fits all. It's a sovereign God who loves you, who sent his son for you. Put your name in that space.

God sent his son for John Hopkins or for your name. The gospel is greater than we can imagine. And we need to own that because that's the only way we can face the hardships of life.

So those are the two themes and we're going to come back to those at the end. But remember, the gospel, above all else, reconciles us to God.

We were separated from him and now we're back just like the prodigal son was welcomed back into his family. That's our life. That's the glory that we have before us.

[13:15] Now there's a couple of caveats to the gospel, some conditions. We experience the fullness of what the gospel offers to the degree that we walk with Jesus.

Do you remember me talking during our Mark series about why God sent his son as a suffering servant first and then the triumphant king would be coronated much later, still future for us?

Remember we talked about the fact that we aren't ready yet? That God is preparing a people for his own possession which includes us? And so as we walk with Jesus, as we strive together to become more like him, we are being remade, we're being molded into his image, we're being made like him so that we're ready to rule with him, to be part of his kingdom in fullness.

So we go through this life now to learn what it means to walk with Jesus. We go through what we endure in this life now so we can learn how to walk with Jesus.

And as we get better at that, the gospel unfolds like a flower and you see more and more and more as you go. and we experience more of the gospel as we share it with other people.

[14:46] I know I've said to individuals of you at different times, maybe I've said it from the pulpit, but my reason for loving to preach is very, very selfish. My learning accelerates when I'm studying for a sermon.

I'm an okay student if I'm just reading for myself, but it's nothing if I'm studying and looking through a passage and trying to understand it and then in the speaking of it, my understanding grows.

I think that's by God's design and I don't think I'm unique in that. I think that's true of all of us. So as we take what I just talked about, as we acknowledge that life is hard, as we take hold of the fact that the gospel is greater than we can imagine and then share it with other people, not only are we fulfilling God's plan for our lives, but we are also putting ourselves in a position where God is going to show us more.

In the sharing of it, we learn more. And so I want that to be in your mind as one of many motivations as to why you want to share your faith with other people.

So you've got your Bibles, you're open to Matthew 28. Now before we leave this slide, I want to point to something out. You see an open Bible. You see people gathered around and you can't see it easily because the words are there, but this Bible is open and people are pointing to it.

[16:10] Someone in the background is praying. There's some things about making disciples there. The Bible is central. Prayer is central. Community is central. These are all tools that God uses for us to be able to share the truth of the good news of the gospel with the people around us.

That image was carefully chosen. I can take no credit. That's all there be. But it perfectly encapsulates what I'm not going to talk about this morning.

I'm not going to tell you how to make disciples. We don't have time. Let's talk to you about it. And that opportunity will come as we go in the future, in future weeks and as we develop small groups and that sort of thing.

But that image really captures the method of making disciples. So, Matthew chapter 28. Turn there in your Bibles. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, this is the disciples, saying, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

[17:26] there is a lot there. Let's pray together. God, thank you for your love for us that while we were still sinners, you sought us out.

You invited us into relationship with you. You gave us your Holy Spirit and now you're sending us out. God, I pray for each one of us as we think about what it means to be sent, that we would take that to heart and that we would see it not as a burden but as an opportunity and a privilege.

God, I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So let me tell you what I don't want to see come out of this sermon this morning. Kara and I attended briefly a church in San Antonio, huge church, big old Baptist church.

They did all their small groups on Sunday morning and their age segregated. So Kara and I went to this class that was people in their mid-50s to their mid-60s and we were there for probably two or three weeks before we just decided the church wasn't a good fit.

But every week I'd listen to people share prayer requests and the one thing I heard over and over and over again was a right heart expressed in a, dare I say, wrong way, a misunderstanding.

[18:46] Every week these people beat themselves up about being afraid to share the gospel. Oh, I should have talked to so-and-so but I chickened out. Oh, I had this opportunity and I missed it. Oh, I've got this friend who's going through a hard time but I don't know how to talk to him about Jesus.

It feels weird. It's uncomfortable. I feel pressure and despite the pressure on me, I don't know what to do. I hope that by the end of this message you recognize that those brothers and sisters, though they had a good heart, they wanted to reach people with the gospel, they were doing it all wrong. They were making it harder than it needs to be. And I want you to see that as part of this being sent out in Jesus' name. So let's go through Matthew chapter 28.

These are Jesus' last words. verse. The only further addition that we see is in the first chapter of Acts that we'll get to in a few minutes.

But Jesus is really focused on this is the most important thing, guys. Pay attention. Listen to what I'm saying. So Jesus says, first of all, all authority has been given to me in heaven and earth.

[19:54] So what is authority? authority. Now first of all, remember that all throughout Jesus' ministry that was one thing that was questioned over and over and over and over. What gives you the right to do the things that you're doing?

What gives you the right to say the things that you're saying? How dare you? You're just a man. You're just a young man. That was one of the attacks and one of the most consistent attacks on Jesus.

Who do you think you are? Where do you get this authority? That question is settled definitively here. He let, you may remember us talking about this, He let the disciples even struggle with the question of His authority.

Here, okay guys, I'm finally answering the question. All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth. So what is authority? This is from the Oxford Languages Online Dictionary.

Authority is the power or right, Jesus has both, to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience. the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience.

[21:04] That's the authority that a police officer carries. If he turns on his lights, you better pull over because he has the right and the power to give orders, pull over, to make decisions, to pull you over, whether or not to write you a ticket, and to enforce obedience.

If you don't comply, you're in trouble because he's backed by the full authority of the city of Dubuque, Dubuque County, state of Iowa, the U.S.

government. He carries that authority. Jesus has supreme authority. All things in heaven and earth are under his authority. authority is our supreme authority.

There is no place that Jesus is not in charge. Nowhere. Now that begs a question. People ask this all the time. Well, if God's in charge, why do bad things happen?

Why are children born with birth defects? Why do people have cancer? Why does the economy crash? Why am I unhappy?

[22 : 20] Is God really in charge? I'm going to read to you from Hebrews chapter 2 and it's going to pop up here on the screen. Hebrews chapter 2 starting at verse 7.

You have made him for a little while lower than the angels. You have, this is talking about Jesus. You have crowned him with glory and honor and have appointed him over the works of your hands. So this is from the Old Testament, Psalm 8, looking forward to what would happen with Jesus after he was raised from the dead.

God has appointed him over the works of your hands and have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in subjecting all things to him, now this is the author of Hebrews writing, for in subjecting all things to him he left nothing that is not subject to him, but now we do not see all things subjected to him.

Wait, what? Wait. He left nothing that is not subject to him, but now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. So which is it?

Is he in charge or is he not in charge? There's a phrase I want you to keep in mind. Already, but not yet. Jesus has all authority.

[23 : 37] He's the king of kings and lord of lords. He will be revealed in all of his glory, all of his power at the end of the age. It says that in Revelation 19.

That's the name that's blazoned upon him. King of kings and lord of lords. All authority is his. But now we do not see all things subjected to him.

that's a good thing. That doesn't undermine his power. What it does is it demonstrates God's grace. Because at that moment in time, when Jesus fully comes into his own, where he's coronated as a king, the opportunity for repentance is past. The door is closed.

And a new age will begin. But the time for repentance is now. The already is that Jesus did all that needed to be done to establish his authority.

[24 : 38] He died on the cross. He was buried and he was raised again. And in being raised again, he was declared the king. But God in his wisdom has delayed the full implementation of his government over creation to give us time to turn to Christ.

grace. The not yet is grace. Now it doesn't always feel like grace. Remember what I said earlier, life is hard. We feel overwhelmed by things, by the circumstances of our lives.

But that's grace, brothers and sisters. It's grace in the fact that it gives you a chance to get to know God better. It's grace in the sense that it gives people who do not yet know Jesus the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel.

If it wasn't for that grace, you and I would be doomed. So it's all ready, but it's not yet. All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth.

Jesus then went on and said, go therefore. 2 Corinthians 5 20 talks about what he meant when he said go to us.

[25 : 46] Therefore, indicates we have been sent by Jesus as his envoys, his ambassadors. 2 Corinthians 5 20.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. As though God were making an appeal through us, we beg you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. Really important.

We are ambassadors for Christ. Christ, when ambassador goes somewhere, when our ambassadors go out throughout the world, they carry all the might and power backing and authority of the United States government.

Their residence, their offices, that's sovereign U.S. territory, wherever it is in the world.

whether it's with our allies or with those who are not so much our allies. Every place we have a consulate, that's sovereign U.S. territory. The ambassador has all the authority of the nation that sent him.

[26 : 57] So, if we are ambassadors for Christ, what's the authority that we carry? We carry the authority of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. we have the authority to speak.

We have the authority to act. We don't have to ask. We don't have to wonder, is this appropriate? Is it not appropriate? The answer is yes. The answer is simply yes.

You're being sent. You are a sent one. to wherever you go. And we're going to come back to that in a few minutes. But you are sent out with the full authority of Jesus to share his love, to deliver the gospel message to everybody who crosses your path at any given time.

You just have to exercise it. Because you are already authorized as Jesus' ambassador. And then Jesus goes on and make disciples of all nations.

Each of us has been given this command. It's not to a select few. It's not to the church as an organization. It's to each of us. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

[28 : 10] Now we're going to clarify something. Now if you remember, we've quoted often, we're going to quote again, our mission statement is we exist to glorify God, walking closely with him, striving together to become more like Jesus every day.

that's our mission as a church. It's not go and make disciples. It's not.

This is an important distinction. It is a core value. And the difference is the command to walk with God, the command to glorify him, the command to become more like him is given in Ephesians 4 to all of us.

The command to go is given to us individually. And here's why it matters. If Tri-State Community Church, our mission was to make disciples, my job, John's job, Tim's job, would be to develop programs to reach people in Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa, the rest of the U.S., out into the world.

It would be our responsibility to figure out how we're going to reach those people. It would be our responsibility to do that work. So it inappropriately elevates us organizationally, and it really makes the focus more about marketing.

[29 : 38] How are we going to draw people in? By the way, this was the approach in the church from the mid-70s all the way up until recently. We need to draw people in because the American church misunderstood and thought, oh, our job is to make disciples.

No, it's not. Our corporate responsibility is to walk with Jesus together, to glorify him together, to become more like him together, so that individually we can go out.

Because not only does it artificially inflate the role of the church, it diminishes you as individuals. in a sense, it gets you off the hook because you just become volunteers in the pastor's program.

We tell you what to do and you go out and do it. It diminishes what you can do. It also builds fences that shouldn't exist for you to reach the people who you're going next to every day.

But nope, if it's a church's mission, you're waiting for us to tell you where to go. You're waiting for us to tell you how to do it. You're waiting for us to develop the programs. And it frankly doesn't work.

[30 : 55] From the late 90s to the early 2010s, the Evangelical Church in America saw the greatest flight of people from the church in American church history.

We lost so many people that more people left the church in America than came into the church in both Great Awakenings combined. And I'm convinced it's because of this misunderstanding.

Tri-State Community Church's mission is not to make disciples. It's your mission. It's my mission, not as Pastor John, but as just a plain old guy who goes to Charlotte's Coffee House, who goes to Hy-Vee, who goes to Walmart, who walks to a park.

It's our mission. And when that happens, the gospel goes everywhere. You're not inviting people to Tri-State Church anymore.

You're inviting people to Jesus. That's what matters. That's what matters. You're inviting people to Jesus.

[32 : 10] You're inviting them to experience what you experienced, to see what you've seen, to taste and see that the Lord is good. You just have to extend an invitation to meet Jesus.

So we're to go and make disciples of all men. And where should we go? Everywhere. In Acts 1-8, Jesus said, you will be my witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

Picture concentric circles. This is your starting circle. What can you reach? What's right there? And then it goes out to Dubuque, to Dubuque County, to Iowa, to the United States, and then to the uttermost parts of the world. We need to be thinking locally.

And I mean literally locally is within the reach of your arms. and then acting in all the other circles. We need to be actively engaged. We need to be praying for God's work.

[33 : 15] Consistently asking him not only to reach people that are outside of our reach, but to be open to the possibility that he may be sending us to go there. And there might be across the street,

across the county, or across the world, but we need to be open to God's call to go.

Because he's sending us. Go, therefore, and make disciples. We should be informed. We should be praying. We should be willing to go.

And what are we doing? We're making disciples. Several weeks ago, I talked about one of our core values, our first one. We want to be followers of Jesus. We individually want to be a follower of Jesus.

We want to answer that call. Remember? Jesus said to the fishermen, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. That's the same invitation he makes to every single person when the gospel is extended.

Follow me and I will do the transforming work of your life to make you a fisher of men, to be someone who draws people. What we're doing in making disciples is we're continuing that process. [34 : 30] So somebody led me to Christ. Somebody gave me a booklet that helped me understand the basics. And ever since, I've been doing the same thing. And I'll tell you what, when I first started, it was bad.

I was not polished. I wasn't smooth. I didn't understand anything. I can remember sitting in my bedroom trying to read my Bible. Actually, I was reading a book, and the book had this gibberish in it.

In parentheses, the author made a point in the parentheses was this obscure word I'd never heard of before, then a number, then a colon, then another number, and a dash, and another number. What the heck is that? What's this code? So I started digging through other books that I had that my parents had around the house. Nobody explained it to me.

That's how raw recruit I was. By the way, if you're wondering what I'm talking about, that's the reference. So the word is the book of the Bible, the number before the colon is a chapter, and the numbers after the colon are the verses.

[35 : 37] I learned that. I learned stuff. You can learn stuff. But you know what's interesting? I accepted Christ in a Sunday evening all by myself.

This is proof in my mind, from my own experience, that God is at work in the heart of a new believer. I woke up the next morning with two things on my mind.

I want to read the Bible, and I want to tell people about Jesus. Where'd that come from? By the Holy Spirit. And it was raw, it was rough.

I rediscovered some old heresies that had to be corrected, but my heart was to tell people about Jesus and to know him more. And God honored that.

God is compelling you to do the same thing, to go and make disciples, to teach them, to obey everything. Come to that, I'm getting ahead of myself. So we're sent to make disciples, not converts, disciples.

[36 : 40] Important distinction, because there's a part of this that's kind of inconvenient. When you share the gospel with somebody and they come to Christ, even if they don't come to Christ, you're actually stepping into a new relationship.

You're becoming a friend. And often that friendship is what leads to someone coming to Christ and becoming a disciple in their own right. But you need to recognize it's not just a matter of handing a tract, which has value.

It's not just praying a prayer with somebody, it's sticking with them for the long haul because they're now your brother or sister. Don't misunderstand me. If all you can do is have a touch of a tract or a quick God loves you, that's good because God is at work in that person's life.

You're one of several touches. It's not only all on your shoulders. But don't shy away from the sensitivity of, this guy's my neighbor and if I introduce him to Jesus, I'm going to have to do a Bible study with him and it's going to get messy and pretty soon we're going to have dinner together and I don't want to do that.

Do it. We're called to make disciples. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I just want to say a quick word about baptism.

[37 : 56] Baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality. We're baptized because we've made the choice to accept Jesus' invitation to follow him. Now in American culture, frankly, baptism isn't that big of a deal.

But there are cultures today around the world that when someone is lowered in that water and comes back out again, they're making a declaration. Just like those of us who are baptized in

America do, we're making a declaration.

I've decided I'm going to follow Jesus. I'm going to obey him. But for us, it's a celebration. You go out to lunch and you enjoy fellowship together. In Nepal, in India, in China, in Nigeria, in Iran, that decision to go down under the water and come back up is a public declaration that I am following Jesus and your life is in danger from that moment on.

The world knows the significance of baptism. We are to go baptizing people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is all in and he expects us to be as well, to be all into following him.

And then we're to teach them to observe all that I commanded you. Like I said before, we're making disciples, apprentices to Jesus, not just converts.

[39 : 18] We're teaching them to obey. Now, why would we do that? I've had people actually say to me, you're just putting a burden on people. Let the Holy Spirit do that work. If we don't teach them to obey what Jesus commanded, we're not giving them the tools to enter into all that the gospel offers.

Does that make sense? I'll give you an example. I beat this one to death because it's so obvious.

There is a verse that you see all over the place. I've talked about from the pulpit. John 8, 32, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

Sounds good. It's only half the truth. And that half the truth can actually really hurt somebody because they're thinking, oh, I will know the truth because you told me I believe Jesus and it will set me free from whatever I need to be free from.

But that's the second half of the verse or of the sentence. The first half is, if you remain in my word, then you are my disciples, then you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

If we don't teach people and show them, here's the Bible, let me walk with you and teach you how to read it, teach you how to understand it, they're not going to have that opportunity or it's going to be a heck of a lot harder.

[40 : 41] God does work through his Holy Spirit, I'm living proof, but he does that work through us, teaching them to obey. And where's the start?

Our core values are all commands of Jesus. Teach them to follow him, teach them the basics, to read the Bible, to pray, to be in community.

Teach them to cultivate love for God, teach them to cultivate love for others, teach them to make disciples, teach them to seek unity.

Those are the things that Jesus commanded. And as we teach people to do those, they begin to grow and they start sharing their faith as well. And before long, you've got another one that's in the fold and another one and another one.

By the way, one other thing, there's no line that you have to cross before you can start making disciples. Not at all. I came to a Christ on a Sunday, I was sharing my faith on a Monday.

[41 : 51] That's not me bragging, that's the Holy Spirit just saying, John, you need to speak up. That was God's work. I was not qualified. That doesn't matter. God was using me already to share my faith.

God wants to use you in that way. So if you think, well, I don't know the Bible that well, that's okay. Share what you can, and then when it gets too hard, get somebody else involved.

Call me. Call Pastor John. Call Pastor Tim. Call Pastor Jack. Call Jim Loney. Bring in the big guns. When my folks came to Christ, my dad started reading the Bible before he became a Christian, started asking really hard theological questions, and the guys who led him to Christ couldn't answer the questions.

And so they brought in Dave Michaud. Dave Michaud was the closer. My parents got saved that night because he couldn't answer the questions.

Parents, but Dave never would have met my parents if it wasn't for those guys who weren't as fully qualified. So don't be afraid. You can do it. So go, therefore, make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I've commanded you, and here's the greatest part.

[43 : 10] And lo, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age. We're not doing this alone. We're never alone. We're accompanied by God himself, and the Holy Spirit is working through us to touch the lives of the people we cross paths with every day.

Every day. God is with you. Always. That's our greatest hope.

He's there. And if we pay attention, we can see his fingerprints everywhere. He shows it. So we're going to wrap up with a story from John chapter 9. Turn your Bibles there.

John chapter 9, starting at verse 24. I love this story because I think it's funny. Jesus and the disciples are walking.

They see a blind man, and the disciples say to Jesus, who sinned, the blind guy or his parents? Because their assumption was, if there's something wrong in a person's life, there must be sin at the root.

[44 : 14] And Jesus said, there's no sin. He's just blind. Sometimes that's the case, folks. There's not sin. There's not some root of evil.

It's just the dude's blind. And his life is going to be the glory of God. Jesus heals him, stirs up this big old controversy, because, wait for it, he did it on the Sabbath.

He's surprised. And so the Pharisees are asking, were you the one? And there's this back and forth as the parents. And then we get to the money line, if you will, in verse 24.

So a second time, the Pharisees called the man who had been blind and said to him, give glory to God. In other words, give us the answer we want to hear. Give glory to God. We know that this man, Jesus, is a sinner.

He then answered, this is the blind man speaking, whether he's a sinner, I don't know. This guy wasn't qualified, he didn't know anything. Did you know he hadn't even seen Jesus yet?

[45 : 17] Somehow Jesus healed his eyes in a way that the guy didn't actually know Jesus by sight. Talk about unqualified. Whether he's a sinner, I don't know.

One thing I do know, this is the money line. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see. If that's all you know, I was blind, but now I see. I was lost, but now I'm found. That's all you need to know.

Well, tell me about Jesus. Can you give me the theological basis for your newfound belief? Let's talk about the soteriology and the blah-blah-blah-blah of the thing of the thing of the bob. I don't know.

I was blind and I see. I was lost and I found. That's it. And then the Pharisee said, what did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?

[46 : 24] That's a common question. He answered them, I told you already. And did you not listen? Do you want to hear it again?

I was blind and now I see. Here's the other money line. This is sales 101. If you're selling anything, you have to ask for the sale.

When I sold mattresses, I'd show them the mattresses. They'd say, oh, yeah, this looks comfortable. It's a great idea. You know, 80% of sales are lost because a salesman doesn't say one simple question.

Do you want to buy it? People will walk. Somehow the salesman has to say, do you want to buy it? Oh, yeah. Yeah, let me get out my wallet. So, back to our story in John 9.

Do you want to hear it again? And he asked for the sale. You do not want to become his disciples too, do you? Just do that. I was blind, but now I see.

[47 : 25] I think you're blind. But I know somebody who can help you see. I was lost, but I know somebody who can show you the way.

Come with me and be his disciple as well. That's all I have to do. It's that simple. And what you'll discover as we go into life, as you start sharing that with people.

Your ability will grow. Your confidence will grow. People, most important of all, will be saved. They will come to new life in Christ. That's who we are.

Each of us is people who go out, we reach the lost wherever we go, and we invite them to join us in following Jesus. Pray about it.

Open your eyes and look. Last week we talked about loving our neighbor. There's no greater expression of love to somebody else than to give them the gospel. That's great news.

[48 : 29] Let's pray. Father, thank you that you have amazingly given us the responsibility and the opportunity to share the gospel with the people around us.

You've entrusted the greatest message of the world to the least qualified to give it. And yet you work and people come to Christ. We're living proof of that.

God, I pray that we would be committed as individual believers to sharing the hope of Jesus with everybody we meet in some way, shape, or form. God, I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.