

Faith on Mission 2015
Tom Rempel – Faith Bible Church
Series: Faith on Mission 2015
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Matthew 28:18-20 / Acts 1:8

As Pastor James has already done, I, too, welcome you to worship this morning, and especially those of you who are guests with us, a very special welcome to you, as well. I want you to take your Bible, and I want you to turn to **Matthew 28**, and if you'd be so kind as to let your eyes find the **18th through the 20th verses** of that, we begin a new series of studies this morning. It's called Faith on Mission. It's kind of like an extended new-attendees class, you get to find out exactly who we are and what we're doing over the next few weeks.

I think it's only fair that I give you a heads-up that if, though this is primarily informational this morning, I trust that somewhere through it will become both inspirational and motivational, but if we get toward the end of the message and it hasn't been working very well, I may throw a Hail Mary, so I'm just giving you a heads-up to get in front of the receiver, just in case.

I'm forth-generation pastor's kid, "PK," and I've seen lots of church life. What we're going to do over the next few months is take the risk of reading the Word regarding church and ask ourselves, "What is it that God wants that we should do? What should our church be?" Having lots of the uncles and cousins and my father and grandparents involved in church ministry, I've seen all kinds. And when I was in my twenties, I got a cynical attitude about church. Basically I felt that church was just kind of a political machine that just ran well.

Probably the best illustration is a story that would be told in Gothenburg of a farmer there who had gotten out of livestock, and once his crops were in the bin and had been checked in at the elevator, he really didn't have a lot to do during the winter and his wife, getting tired of his being in her hair, as they say, around the

kitchen all the time, he went to the shop and decided to spend the winter cleaning up the shop. As he was arranging things and putting the parts back, he realized that he had quite a collection of really good spare parts. And so having gotten it clean, he started to assemble them together. This would go with this, and this would match this. It wasn't a long and had a pretty well-finished piece of equipment, and he had an extra diesel power unit in the back. So he pulled it up, and he hooked it all up, and he tuned it, and he tweaked it, and he oiled it, and it just ran beautifully.

Word at the Swede Café had gotten out that he had created some significant thing out on the farm, and so one day the guys left the Swede Café and they went out during coffee break to the farm. Both sides of the lane, quarter-mile, were lined with pickup trucks, and the barn was actually packed with neighbors who were admiring and OO-ing and AH-ing over this finely-run machine. Until some young farmer way in the back at a moment of rather quiet was heard saying, "But what does it do?"

That's kind of my experience with church. I had that sense that church was well-oiled and it was well-structured, but I have to be honest, I was a bit mystified by, "What does it do?"

My first ministry was in a congregational-ruled church, had deacons, in Denver, and I was called there as the youth associate. We had 650 people that attended that church, and we had a deacon board that was made up of eighteen of the respected men of the church. As the pastor would say on the day after deacon meetings, which were every month and required attendance, he said, "Did you ever notice that our deacons, no matter what it is, whether we're painting the auditorium or whether we're buying a bus or we're starting a new basketball team, that it always seems to be nine versus nine ... with the three staff caught in the crossfire?"

So after two years of ministry there, I had really lost my love for Christ's bride. I loved Him, don't get me wrong, but I thought His bride was really messed up.

So we left Denver in 1976, and we went back home to Cozad.

5:01

I decided that the church, if God was going to do a great thing in the world, I didn't have any doubt about that. I'd read the book, and beside that, and, as I said, I had a bachelor's degree from a Bible college, so I knew God's going to do a good thing in the world. But I could not figure out how He would ever do it with the church. So I came up with a better strategy to help Him out: I would start a home-Bible- study movement because I loved the Book and I loved the Lord of the Book, but I didn't think very highly of His bride.

My father-in-law's business partner invited us to join him at church. We had moved back, and he was a deacon in a Baptist church. That didn't sound very attractive, but after all, they did pay me forty hours a week to sell and install carpet, and, you know, I didn't want to displease Mike, so we went to church with him. We went a couple of times, and it looked pretty much like everything else we'd expected. It was just a well-run machine.

The third Sunday we were there they said, "Would you be willing to teach one of the adult elective Sunday school classes?"

I said, "Well, I guess." You know, I did go to Bible college, and I was a youth pastor, so I could probably do that.

You need to understand that I was at this point, now, I was twenty-six-years-old. When I became a youth pastor, I was twenty-four years old, and I had all the answers. And I could not figure out why eighteen deacons weren't wise enough to see that all they had to do was ask the recent Bible-college graduate what the answer was and receive it. By the time I was twenty-six, I should have published my first book because at that point I DID have all the answers.

So I started teaching the book of Acts in Sunday school, and I had a cynical spirit and chip on my shoulder, and I would open up, and I would say, "And then God did, and then the Spirit did."

Then I would pause in the middle of it and I'd say, "WOW! That's what they did, why don't Baptists do that?" And the first time I did that there was kind of one of those, but, you know, when you're twenty-six, you think you've hidden your negative spirit better than that. By the third Sunday instead of doing that, they started saying, "WOW! That's a good question. Why don't we?"

By the end of that, God showed up for a decade, and he blessed that little church, and he gave us salvations, and he gave us just a glorious season of grace.

But I began my ministry in one of the wonderful seasons of church history, and that was the church renewal movement of the seventies. Lots of us were feeling like, "The church is just a well-oiled machine, but what does it do?" So we started looking at the Bible and saying, "Why don't we put the paperbacks on the shelf and read the Bible. And if it says to do that, let's do that and see what God will do?"

A year ago Linda and I, you graced us by allowing us to go to Moody alumni week in Chicago. The president of Moody is a gentlemen that I had met years ago when he pastored in Omaha, so I'm kind of a fan of Paul. He's my age and a little older, a University of Nebraska grad whose heart also was broken last night in the last second, I'm sure, and his son is in his twenties. So you have a boomer and millennial, and his son is a pastor associate at a church in Madison, Wisconsin. And it turns out that Paul and his son were having the same kind of dialogue my dad and I had back when I was starting to question the Scriptures and the church. Sometimes the tension ... and I didn't mean any disrespect toward my father at all. It's just like church had just become such a routine that I just had these questions, and it was hurtful for him to hear them, though he, too, would work with the same book and all that.

And Paul and his son had been going through that. So they decided they would write a book together on the church. And they did a panel discussion on it. It was great, and I bought the book. That was the whole point. "We'll do a panel discussion and

everybody will feel like they need to buy our book, and we'll live off the royalties forever and ever, amen."

I bought the book, and that evening we were we were heading home. We got to Midway airport, and, the kids always laugh, but if you travel with Linda, you must be at the airport at least seven hours before plane departure because there's a high probability you're going to miss your flight. She just always says, "There's plenty to do in the airport."

10:01

Let's just get there, and we don't have to worry. So we rode the "EL" out, and we had quite a bit of time. So I read the book at Midway airport. I got done, and I put it in my bag, and Linda said, "So what did you learn? What did you see?"

And I said, "Nothing new." I said that the interesting thing is that the millennial was asking the very same questions we asked when I was twenty-something. The only difference is they have better technology."

So I'm just giving you a warning. Over the next few weeks we're going to open the Book. We're going to challenge each other to take the risk of asking the "What if" and the "Why" questions. It'll threaten because, quite honestly, there are some things that I prefer in the church, and I think I can come up with enough biblical justification to make you think I'm right in the process. But Faith Bible Church after twenty-two years has sometimes, maybe, just become a well-oiled machine. But some young person in the back needs to say, "But what does she do? What does she do?"

If you go our church's website you'll find on the welcome page a statement, it's been there for years and years and years, and it hasn't changed.

Being "the church" is our passion.
Understanding from the bible that Christ loves His church,
died for His church, and offers hope to a hopeless world

through His church, we desire to be a Christ-centered,
Spirit-enabled, God-honoring Body of believers
devoted to growing as a biblical church!

What happened over that decade was, I learned to love His bride and found out that He doesn't have a Plan B. It's all about the church. So I want to invite you, challenge you, to go with me into the Scriptures over the next several weeks and look at His bride, the church. But the scary thing is we might come to one of these:

What if our church succeeds at everything it is doing...
But...we discover we are not doing the right things?

What if it's working, it's really going pretty smooth, but when we read this, and we look at what's going well, what if at some point we conclude we're succeeding in the wrong things?

All that we do at Faith Bible Church must align itself, must center itself, on this verse you have your Bible open to because you want to mark it up ...

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have (it should've been two words somebody should have edited it [the PowerPoint slide!]. It looks like an iPhone advertisement!) commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

I've got lots of books on my shelf that I used to dust, and after this long I just ... if man came from dust, is returning to dust, there are lots of people either coming or going into my office right now. But I used to grab a book, flip it over, read who recommended it on the back, go to the forward, and then dive into it. And I would hope that somewhere in the first three chapters, the author would arrest me, that is, he would pull me into the narrative. I don't give four chapters to anybody. If you haven't got me by three, I'm out, the book's on the shelf collecting dust, and we're on to something else.

Now I have found out, I've wised up over the years. I still flip it over, I read who recommends it. I look at the forward, and then I read the last chapter. If I read the last chapter and I like the way this thing resolves itself, I'll go back and get caught up in the narrative. When you read the Gospel of Matthew, you've got the converted IRS agent who sits down to write his memoirs of his time with Christ, and it's easy when you start at the beginning. You start out, and you're going, "WOW!"

He went online and did a genealogical research and found out what the family line of Jesus was. And you're really taken in by the holiday story of these foreigners coming with really nice bathrobes riding on not two-hump camels like, you know, family sedans, but one-hump sports models. And they arrived there, and they boil all of their gifts down to something that they can contain in two hands like that, and they give it to Him.

15:06

And then you get caught up in the whole thing where the Adversary takes Him out in the wilderness and starts throwing assaults at Him, and He counters every one of them with, "But it is written ... but it is written." And He silences his opponent with the Scriptures. And then you read in the narrative, and literally, if you allow your yourself to get immersed in it, you are jaw-dropping stricken by the miracles. I mean, let's be honest, you're not seeing those every day. And so you're totally taken by that.

Then you begin to hear Him teach and you're saying to yourself, "I have never heard anyone teach with such authority." And then you've got the Bible know-it-alls confronting Him and challenging Him, they can never box Him in. He is so smart. He is so swift that He always pushes them back. And so as you're engaged in the journey, you suddenly realize that the momentum is picking up pace, and the opposition is increasing. And so when you get toward the end of the story, you're not totally surprised, but you're certainly sickened of heart that the hero of the story is murdered on a Roman cross. Once you get there it's just kind of like, "Why don't I just close the book and go?"

Then you read a little further, and you find out that the women went to the tomb, and when they got there, the grave was open. It was empty. And you go on to read and find out that lots of graves were open. And they were empty. And if you're the author, you're thinking, "That's a great place to end this story."

But if you go to the last chapter first and go back, you find out that what he ends with is a commission. "Go into all the world." And when we go back and look at the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, it seems like every single one of them includes a two-word statement which is, "Go, tell. Go, tell."

So if Faith Bible Church is actually going to be doing the right things, then somewhere in there has to be the "Go, tell." Look at how many times He says that:

Mark 16:15-16

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, But whoever does not believe will be condemned."

"Go into all the world."

He says it again ...

Luke 24:46-47

"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem."

John 17:18

"As You sent Me into the world,
So I have sent them into the world"

And then He bridges the second volume of Luke's memoirs with ...

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses (right here) in Jerusalem and in all (the surrounding area) Judea and (in no-man's land) Samaria, and (you're going to go) to (all of) the end of the earth.

That was the great commission.

So all of that centers faith: "Why do we do what we do?" and raises the question, "If we succeed at the things we are doing, will we have succeeded in the things that are right?"

We summarize. And with the elders we appreciate many of you have been praying for us down through the summer. We've been wrestling with the strategic plan. And the purpose of that is to be able to define what we believe God wants Faith Bible Church to be, not just this year but five years from now, ten years from now, fifteen years from now, and twenty years from now. When y'all gather here for sixty minutes of honor and remembrance of me, and I'm already up there celebrating, and you're all gathered here, that the church leadership has a conviction about "This is what God wants Faith Bible Church to be." So we have summarized our convictions at this point with these, and this will form the preaching outline for the next four Sundays, all right?

20:02

The first one is ...

REACHING

... as many as are called to eternal life ...

Acts 13:48

The wonderful story is the Apostle Paul is preaching the gospel, going primarily to Hebrews. And the Jewish people, they just rejected it, sounds like heresy, they don't want it. So he turns and he starts presenting these same truths to the Gentiles, and they're, like beside themselves, going, "WOW! God would save even us?" and they rejoiced and it says ...

Acts 13:48b

... and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

The second, then is ...

BRINGING
... all to maturity in Christ Jesus ...
Colossians 1:28

... in order that we might be able to present every man every woman every child complete in Christ. Part of our responsibility, our mission, is to see to it that when God by the Spirit leads you through those doors and you become a part of the functioning Faith Family, that during that time you're with us, you become less like yourself and more like Jesus. You start growing up spiritually. You become conformed into His image. The weight of that is that we have to give an account for every single one of you.

I have nightmares about **Hebrews 13:17**. It says that the elders, the leaders of the local church of his bride, will one day stand before Him and give an account of all of those that He entrusted to their shepherding care. It's just like, "All of them?"

On Friday Linda was describing some new people that she had met here at church. And she said, "You know them and they know you." She gives me their name, and I'm just like, "I haven't got a ... there is no bridge between that name and a face in my memory." It's just like, "I don't get it."

"No, really, you see them all the time. You're talking to them all the time."

I said, "I don't know who they are."

And she goes, "Yeah, you do know them."

And she went through this whole ... I won't tell you how she described them. It was very flattering ... unlike how she describes me, "I'm looking for my husband and he looks like that. He's short, squatty. He looks old. It looks like I'm hanging out with my grandfather."

And everybody goes, “Yeah, he’s over there in that

Finally, I said, you know, Linda’s still a grandmother, so she’s still on Facebook where, you know, she hasn’t moved on. “Do you have a picture on Facebook?” And she showed me, and I go, “Oh, Yeah, I know those people.”

And I was thinking about that, and in **Hebrews 13:17**, I have nightmares about standing before the Lord. And He goes, “OK, tell me how you did it, shepherding so and so.”

(SNAP! SNAP!) “Name doesn’t register. You wouldn’t have a digital photo or something, would You?”

That’s the responsibility of the church. That’s the responsibility of shepherds, that we would serve, that we would love, that we would minister in such a way that everyone grows up to become less like themselves and more like Jesus.

And then ...

EQUIPPING
all to serve and many to lead
Ephesians 4:12

We’ll spend some time on that.

When you trust Jesus as your personal Savior, at that moment the Spirit of God invests in you a unique spiritual enablement. It’s supernatural. It’s not natural. He gives you the ability to bless the rest of His body by working through you in special ways and in special purposes for their strength and their glory. And so we’re going have to talk about, “What does it mean to have spiritual gifts, and how do we use them?”

I have to say with ten grandchildren, the delightful part is for Linda and I to watch them grow, fall in love with Jesus, and start maturing a little bit. It’s amazing how early in their spiritual journey we can look at each other and smile and say, “We know

what the spiritual gift is. God's given that, so our responsibility as a local church is to be developing that."

And then finally to do all of that, everything we do, this whole Great Commission thing that we'll look at in Matthew ... and as you are saying, "Isn't this a really long introduction into the sermon?" And you're exactly right, yes, it is!

When we look at **Matthew 28**, we have to realize that all of the activities that we do for fulfilling the Great Commission are done for the glory of God, alone. So it says ...

Ephesians 3:20-21

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, ... ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus

Doing all to the glory of God alone!

... all for that purpose.

So let's come back to where we center our ministry.

24:57

Matthew 28:18-20

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore and Make Disciples of all nations, Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

THE "GO."

"ALL AUTHORITY." What authority is, is simply that God in His grace has placed every power and every person under His purposes in His son the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want you to take your Bible and go over if you would, to **John chapter 17**. I have a host of references that you'll pick up on over

the next few weeks but in **John chapter 17**, this is where he gave the commission said ...

John 17:18

As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

He begins it by saying ...

John 17:1-2

¹ When Jesus had spoken these words, He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You, ² since You have given Him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him.

“You have given Him **AUTHORITY** over all flesh,” which means when Jesus says, “Go ... all authority’s been given to Me to go,” what He is saying is that the people who go are under the authority of Christ. You and I. We submit to Him. He rescued us by paying the debt we could not pay, setting us free. And having done that, He now owns us. You don’t sit around and say, “Do I want Jesus to be Lord or not.” He is. He’s Lord. We align ourselves because He has authority over us.

He says in **Ephesians 1:20-21** and again in **Ephesians 6:12**, He has also given Him authority over all the rulers and the principalities and the powers of the world. So every angel and every demon answer the Christ. He has authority over all. He has authority over Satan. The Devil can’t do one thing that Jesus does not permit him to do. He has all authority.

It also means then that He also has authority over the very people that He will bring into your life to share this Good News with. So we rejoice in the fact that as many as are called, believe. That they will come to Him because He has authority over them. He will use you, but He will draw them to Himself because He has the authority over them.

So he says ...

Philippians 2:9-11 ...

9 ... (He has seated him at his right hand and He has placed Him in authority over all things and as a result of that) 10 ... every knee (will one day) bow ... 11 ... and every tongue (will one day) confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of ... the Father.

It's going to happen. That's his authority. So when we do, as a church, as people, what he has called us to do, we do it under the under the commission, as it were, of his authority.

The second one is that we are to **"GO."** We are to GO. Now I want to say this was the harder part of the first five years of our history together. There was frequently a stiff-arming of this one. Again, my church-renewal reading of the Scripture and thinking about it convinced me that every local congregation, every local representation of the Bride of Christ ought to be actively engaged in sending people out with the Good News. It ought to be a sending church.

But in the early days there were those in influence who said. "Well, but, you know, the Word in the original means, "as you are going." So we as a church don't have to send anybody. It's just like, "When you're out there, you just do it." But he tells us that we are to GO for the simple reason the people are not going to come to us. You can't just sit in your living room, and you can't just sit in your Sunday school class, and you can't just sit in your office, and say, "Well, you know, if God is drawing people to Himself they will find me. After all I am on the internet, and I've got business cards, and if they want answers, they'll come to me."

He says, "NO!" I want you to GO."

That's because this mission that He's called us to is relational. We have to go out where the people are, so He's saying, "GO." And over the years how God has worked that is, for us, is that He has used us in our neighborhoods. He's used us with the people next door, the last place. And it's kind of interesting, I said this in the first hour, and I looked up and the people that sold us our farm-

house on South Street were sitting in the third row from the back. I didn't want to live at 5845 South Street. I don't want to be there where everybody can see me. In fact, I wanted to be in some really hard-to-pronounce cul-de-sac in Lincoln someplace. And I said, "You know, we were going live in Country Club. I had a house all picked out, and Scott Rediger outbid me on it, and I got

So I ended up at 5845 South Street.

30:00

In over twenty years God has continually brought Jesus-needing people to be our neighbors. He just opens up conversations, and He puts us there. He did that. You say, "I want don't my kids to go to that school. I want them to go to that school, but for some reason they're stuck in this school." Could it be that God says, "I've got enough Light shining in that school, I need the Light shining in this school." You say, "I hate my job. I don't want to go to work there. I hate working there, but you're there because God needs the Light THERE.

The point is that we are to go, which literally means, just be Jesus in your square mile. Wherever you work, wherever you live, wherever you shop, wherever you celebrate husker losses, wherever it is you go, see it as Jesus would see it. And when you see it that way, feel what you think Jesus might feel. And as a result of that, just do what Jesus would do. I mean, just GO. It's pretty simple. That was the shocking thing. I read the Word, and they just went, and GOD DID. We're going to do to communion together, so

You got to go because they will not care how much you know until they know how much you care. It's incarnational. God could have sent any number of angels with the Good News, but He became flesh. He pitched His tent among us. We HAVE TO GO.

The second one is that we have to MAKE DISCIPLES. Making disciples is simply, and we'll pick it up over the weeks, it is simply inviting someone else to follow Jesus right along with you. A disciple is a follower. He is one who submits to learning, who

takes the authority of the teacher and believes it. And so making disciples is not like a really BIG challenge. It's just that it takes relational investment. It takes time. It starts with you because you cannot share Good News until you yourself ARE Good News. Having become Good News, you take the risk of exposure, so that they can see IN you. As he says in ...

1 Peter 3:15

(be ready at all times to give an answer)
for the hope that is in you.

So they have to see something different in us, and over our time together, I just have to say that many times what God has chosen to use to put the spotlight on the hope that He is given is really hard times. Lots of you have been, or presently are, in really hard times. I mean, who doesn't have hope when all of their children are on the dean's list, and all of their kids are starters on their ball teams, and all of their kids are candidates for either homecoming king or queen, when everything is just going really good? Who wouldn't want that Jesus?

But when your train goes off the rails and the wheels fall off the wagon, when the really hard times come, he said "be ready at that moment to give an answer for the hope that is in you."

One of our elders puts it this way, "Discipleship is making men not moving people." It's not programs. That's what I say, Faith Bible Church could be a really well-running machine. "Well-oiled" sounds good, impresses a lot of people, but what if we're really successful at the wrong thing?

The right thing is making men and women who are passionate followers of Jesus.

And then He says, "BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father and the Son the Holy Spirit." Baptism is a crisis of conviction and commitment. It's a line you cross. It's lost its punch for us. Last Sunday we had some great times, and when one young family came all the way down with their little ones over here, I thought it

was delightful. I know it probably bothered you, because you thought the two-year-old was going to climb into the tank, you know, and want to go swimming. So as soon as she headed that way, I could just see this corporate gasp like, “AHHH,” like that. And when her sister went after her, I could see a lot of you were going, “That should never happen.” You don’t understand. That dad wanted his babies to see a baptism.

34:58

He chose that seat so they could see someone crossing the line.

Baptism is just kind of like a take-it-or-leave-it thing, anymore. But it wasn’t for them. When they submitted to baptism, they publicly declared that, “I have changed my allegiances. I have shifted my confidence and my trust. I am no longer going to follow where I once followed. I’m following Him.” In most times it cost them everything.

In the second year of Faith Bible Church’s history, God in his grace brought us a young, single professional woman from Trinidad. Her father was one of the leading Hindu gurus of Trinidad. She came to Lincoln at her dad’s request to visit a family member. When she got here she met a believer who introduced her to Dean Hatfield. I’m just giving you a heads-up. If anybody introduces you to Dean Hatfield, you just as well pray now, because you’re going down! He’s going to lead you to Jesus.

And because she was from Trinidad, and she had become a believer, she called her parents and told her dad. She loved her dad like you can’t believe and told him what had happened, and he was not happy, to say the least. She couldn’t get a work permit, so she would volunteer at the office with us. And every day she would talk to either Pastor Mike or myself about the nightmares of the night before. Systematically, in her sleep she was confronted by every single one of the gods of Hinduism. And she would come in the office and say, “Tell me that thing again. These gods are no gods.”

Finally her commitment to Christ was such that she was going to be baptized, and she told her dad, and her dad said, It's okay if you believe in Jesus. If you're baptized, you need to understand I will remove you from the family will. That meant she would lose her brothers, her sisters, her nieces, her nephews, and who knows how many hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of inheritance. And she was baptized. Those who knew, there wasn't a dry eye among us because it is a crisis of commitment.

If somebody says, "I am willing to walk with you and follow that Jesus with you, but I'm not taking that step, then start at ground zero and share Jesus with them, again. They haven't understood the Gospel. Now, I might be talking to some of us. "I follow Jesus. I own a Bible. I'm here, aren't I?"

"Well, have you ever had the courage to stand with Him and for Him?"

"Well, you know, it doesn't mean the same. I can do it without that."

"Then let me take you back to the beginning. You are an unworthy sinner, in a debt above your *ying yang*. There was no way you could bail yourself out, but He paid the debt for you." Cross the line. Baptize them.

Having done that, TEACH them ... teach them ... teach them the story of Jesus. The disciples, the people were devoted, **Acts 2:42**, they explained. Suddenly the Bible made sense. Genesis to Revelation had a theme through it. It had a thread through it. It had a bloodline through it. And they began to understand it and teach them how all of their life and all of history centers in that One called Jesus the Christ. Teach them that.

That's why BIBLE is our middle name. It's there for a reason. We are Faith BIBLE Church, which means that if we're doing the right things, when we're together this (Holds up the Bible) is open in the middle of us. We want to understand this. Why? Because it's His story. It's not a management manual for business success. It's

not a marriage manual for marital happiness. It's not a parenting manual for raising good kids. It speaks to all of that, but it's His story. You've got to teach them His story, to tell them what God has done for them. And you've got to tell them what God expects them to do. Teach them.

And then He says, "I'M WITH YOU ALWAYS," this constant, continual presence. Practice His presence. How is He with us always? He's about to depart.

John 14:14-17, He says, "Here's how I'm going to be with you.

40:01

I'm going to send another Comforter out. I've been WITH you. He will be IN you. We are always in the presence of the One Who has the ultimate authority. Always. So whatever He puts before us, whatever He invites us to join Him in, whatever He is doing, when we're sharing the hope that is in us with hopeless people, we can't save anybody. And I have to say that was a hard pill to swallow as a parent. I waited twenty-one years of hearing the Gospel before I bowed the knee in my heart to Christ. I didn't want my children to go there, but I couldn't save my children. Only God can save a sinner. I could point them to Him. I couldn't save them. It was tough when I had three kids. It really stinks when you got ten grandkids because you can't save your grandkids. You can point them to Jesus, but you can't save them. But He can because all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth.

So I sat down and wrote four "what-if's." I think over the next several weeks you'll get sick and tired of hearing the "what-if," but we have to be certain that were not succeeding at doing the wrong thing. So let's start, and I don't have these on the wall, so you're on your own.

What if you chose to begin the day going deeper with Jesus? What if? What if you made a decision that "I am going to become Good News so that God can use me to tell the Good News? Keep in mind that the Gospel is not good advice. The Gospel is Good News for hopeless and helpless people. What if you chose today to become Good News? "I am going to follow him more closely."

Let me ask you a second one: What if you began to see the people that live on the other side of the chain link from you as lost souls headed for an eternity either with God or apart from God? A heaven or a hell, forever. What if you saw them not as just nice people, but for the first time when you saw them, you saw them as souls for which Christ died who are going to spend forever either with Him or apart from Him?

Third. What if you started praying every week that God would open one door for you to share the Good News? Just one? Tomorrow morning? You don't have to do its afternoon, the NFL's on, I mean, there's just all kinds of distractions and stuff. BUT, I'll give you a pass on Sunday. Monday morning, you wake up, you're driving to work, and you say, "God, this week just open up one door for me to share the Good News." And on Tuesday you say, "Lord, on Monday I asked you for an open door this week." And on Wednesday you say, "Lord, on Tuesday I asked you for an open door this week." All of a sudden what you'll discover is He is always opening doors for you. You just hadn't seen them.

The fourth. What if you started a **Gospel of John** reading group. I love the Gospel of John. It's the greatest thing. A friend of mine, thirty years ago, said, "Tom, the best way to bring someone to the feet of Jesus is to get them to read John's Gospel with you, and you do it like this. He says in ...

John 20:30-31

³⁰ ... (many other things Jesus did they) are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (in other words, believe that He satisfied everything that was said about Him in the Old Testament), ... and that by believing you may have life in His name.

He is the Messiah, the Son of God and you get life. And so you invite some friends to meet you in a coffee shop on a regular basis. And you say, "We're only going to tackle one chapter at a time. So we're going to read **John chapter 1**. We're the jury. John's the prosecuting attorney, and we're going to ask ourselves, 'Did He make His case?' I'm going to prove to you that Jesus fulfills all the

Old Testament and that He's the Son of God." So you read chapter one, and you talk about Him, "Did He make his case? Are we a hung jury? What is the answer?" The next time you get together, you read chapter two. The next time you read chapter three.

You'll be amazed. You don't have to do anything. You just tell him, "He said that if you read it, He would prove to you that He is what He is."

We're going to take the bread and the cup together, and we're going to celebrate. We're going to start our communicating that message with a corporate preaching. But before we do, over the last couple of weeks I've had the joy of hearing H.B. Charles, Jr., preach twice. H.B. Charles Jr., he started, his dad died suddenly of a heart attack at age fifty-two, and the next Sunday they put H.B. in the pulpit of their church at age seventeen. He can preach like nothing you've ever heard. I heard him use an illustration twice that just hit it. Let me help you understand what we're celebrating here. He said, "What if report cards had come out, and your dad got your report card, and you failed every course?"

Loving the Lord your God with all your heart – big fat "F."

Loving your neighbor as yourself – big fat "F."

Thou shall not tell a lie – big fat "F."

Thou shall not commit adultery – big fat "F."

You shall have no other gods before me – big fat "F."

And then you discover that the headmaster's son took the very same courses you did, and for every course you've got an F, he got an A+.

Loving the Lord your God with all your heart – A+.

Loving your neighbor as yourself – A+.

Don't tell a lie – A+.

Don't commit adultery – A+.

And the headmaster's son, seeing your report card and his and knowing the consequences and the implications said, "I will take your report card, and I will give you mine."

Loving the Lord God with all your heart – A+.

That's the glory of the Gospel. That's what we celebrate in the bread and the cup.

This morning I want to give an extended explanation because we're going to do it differently than we normally have. We're going to have servers both here at the front and at the back. This is a corporate worship experience, but it is personal as well. And so when you've prepared your heart, and you think that you're ready then you will rise and go to them, and they will give you the bread, and then they will be holding the cup. You'll just dip your bread in the cup. When it seems appropriate for your own personal worship of the Lord Jesus, you'll partake of it. When you have, you'll come back, and we'll close our celebration of His glorious grace together in song.

Lord, I thank You so much for Your amazing grace. I thank You for Your wonderful bride, that we have the privilege of being a part of her glory, and that even this Lord's Supper is just more of the preparation of us for that glorious day. Lord Jesus, I thank You for your body which was broken for us and for Your blood that was shed. I'm asking that it's Your Name that would be exalted as we proclaim our faith in Your crucified, buried, resurrected Truth, and we look forward to Your soon return.

Amen