

Good evening. I'm here; you can say "good evening" back. Good evening! I'm not on a screen or anything; I'm right in front of you, just so you know. How is everyone doing tonight? Good. Well, if you have your Bibles would you grab them and turn with me to the book of 1 Thessalonians? We're going to be coming out of there and also John, chapter 13. So if you want to put a bookmark there and be ready to turn there. If you don't have a Bible there should be one around you, or you can share with your neighbor. Just peer over their shoulder. Whatever you need to do to get to the Word you can do that.

While you guys do that, I'm going to address some of the looks I'm getting from people. I'm getting like, *Matt got shorter. He got a lot tanner this past week. Something is going on.* I just want to tell you I am not Matt Chandler. My name is Tate Madzima. I am one of the members of staff here at the Denton Campus. Beau is out on sabbatical and he asked me to preach tonight, so I'm here in front of you guys preaching.

My role here is the next generation ministry. I work with the next generation ministry, which basically means I work with kids from 0-18 and the parents who raise them. So usually on a Sunday (except for this service because we don't have Little Village or Kids' Village) I'm in the Little Village hallway calming crying babies and making sure everything is going well down there, or I'm in Kids' Village teaching or even teaching in Little Village. Because of that, my mind was working and I was like, *How can I incorporate sock puppets and felt boards and a Jesus storybook Bible to my sermon?* It just wasn't working. But next time I come up here I'll have sock puppets for you guys. It'll be awesome.

That's who I am, and usually when I teach in Little Village or when I teach in Kids' Village, I give the kids an opportunity to ask me a couple of questions just so they can get to know me a little better, get to know where I'm coming from, and kind of connect so they're not staring at me going, *Who is this guy?* But because this room is so big, I'm not going to be able to let you guys ask me questions, so I'll address a couple of things I think are important for you guys to know. Hopefully they *are* important.

I was born and raised in Zimbabwe. If you're trying to find that on a US map, you need to ask your geography teacher why they failed you, because it is not one of the 50 states of the United States. It is in Africa. I was born and raised there, grew up there, until the age of 19. Then I applied to go to UNT. They accepted me, so I flew here to Denton (well, to Dallas) on August 5, 2004. Today is August 5, 2012 so I've been here for eight years. Today is my eighth anniversary. You can clap if you want to. Just so you know,

I'm here legally. No one is going to tackle me and take me to INS or deport me. I'm allowed to be here. I'm allowed to speak to you.

So I've been here eight years. I've been a member of The Village for five of the eight years. I've been attending here, been part of home groups, been part of a lot of the next generation ministries, and have just grown a lot while I've been here. I've made some awesome friends and some awesome relationships. It has been a great time, and what I have to tell you about that, the reason that's important is because Christianity wasn't something that was new for me coming to the States. It wasn't like I landed here and someone invited me to church and I was like, *Oh, okay. This is what this is about.*

My parents were good godly parents...still *are* good godly parents...and they raised us with God being the focal point of everything we did. We went to church on Sunday. We were there when the doors opened until the doors closed, and it's African church so that's 9:00 a.m. to like 3:00, and then you have a lunch break in between. If you think I'm joking, I'll take you back with me and you can experience this for yourself.

I was there every Sunday, one service, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. My parents decided, "You know what? He's getting enough church on Sundays, but we have to send him to private Christian school." So I double-dipped. I went to a private Christian school. I know a lot of you guys aren't parents in here, but if you *are* a parent, if you want to punish your kids and give them no sense of fashion or style, send them to private Christian school, because those uniforms are hideous. I don't ever want to show pictures of my childhood or me in school uniform because it's a train wreck. It's atrocious. So if you want your kids to come out at 18 going, "I don't know. I wear plaid with plaid. That's all I do," send them to private Christian school. They will have that for life.

So that's what I did. That's who I was. Christian school Monday to Friday, Sunday I was in church, and for me that's what it meant to be a Christian. It was you go to church on Sundays, you go to school Monday to Friday, you listen to your teachers, you listen to what your Sunday school teacher tells you at church, and that's what makes you a believer. I didn't really have an understanding of what it meant to actually follow Christ and what it actually meant to be a disciple. For me it was all fire insurance. I know we throw that around and talk about it like it's one of those things, but for me it literally was what it was. I was so afraid of going to hell that I did everything in my power, everything I could, to go to heaven.

Has anyone ever seen or put on the production "Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames"? Oh, I see some hands. I see some fist-pumping in the back too. See if you don't know what I'm talking about, God bless you. Seriously. Churches usually put it on around fall festival or Halloween, whatever you want to call it. Basically this production goes like this (at least this is what it looked like when I went to it): You walk into a

church and it's dark and there are red lights everywhere. There's smoke all over the place, and then there are people on the stage who are bound in chains. There are people screaming. There's gnashing of teeth. I don't even know how you do that, but they're doing it, and I swear to you, someone dropped a sulfur tablet in that vicinity because it reeked.

I was just thinking to myself, *Oh no. This is not where I want to end up. This is not going to happen.* So right after that, they do this whole production, it's like 45 minutes, and it just feels like you want to run there and be like, *I don't want to do this.* Then they ask people to come up and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. I was like, *Sure. I'm not going there. I'm going to go receive the Lord.* So I went up there for the sixteen-thousandth time... You know, if they gave certificates for salvation, I'd be winning. I'd have plenty of those, because I was just like, *You know what? I need to be saved again just to make sure it took the first time.*

I went up there and received my salvation. I was like, *Thank you. Not gnashing of teeth. I'm not going to end up in the lake of fire. I just don't want that to happen.* Then I went home, took down all my posters, burned all my CDs (actually it was tapes back then), burnt all my music tapes, like A side *and* B side. If it didn't say Jesus in it, I wasn't listening to it anymore. If it didn't have God on the front with Jesus standing there being like, "Hey, come listen to this music," I wasn't going to do it anymore. So I did that, and that was my understanding of what it meant to be a disciple.

As funny as that sounds, as funny as that may seem, that is really what I lived for for the first six years of what I believed to be my Christianity. I lived for following those rules. I lived for making sure I was doing everything right so I wouldn't be burned. Later on along the way in high school, God changed that. He shifted that. He gave me an understanding of what it meant to be a disciple. He gave me an understanding of what it meant to follow him.

The gist of discipleship for me was no relationship, no love of God; just modification of behavior and making it look like I was cool. But God changed that. He made *disciple* less of a buzzword, less of a churchy thing, because all I thought about *disciple* was when people were like, "Hey, how are you doing?" I'm like, "I'm good. I'm a disciple." That's not what it meant.

Here at The Village, if you've been at The Village for a while, even if this is your first time, we have a thing we call a statement of belief. It starts by saying, "We exist to bring glory to God by making disciples." That's really what I want to key in on, is the idea of being a disciple. Because what I've noticed is we want to go to the *making* of disciples without understanding what it means to *be* a disciple, and you can't make anything if you don't understand how it functions or what it's supposed to look like. With that in mind, I would love for y'all to bow your heads. We're going to pray, and then dive in to the text.

Father, I thank you for tonight. I thank you for all the people in this room who are here to worship you, some who may have been invited by friends, some who have never been in church before, Lord. I just pray, Father, that you open our hearts and minds and ears to hear the Word spoken, to understand what is being spoken. Lord, I pray that it is you who speaks through me and not my words or my agenda that is pushed forward, Lord, and I just pray, Father, that as we dive into your Word today that it resonates with everyone here, that being a disciple is something that when we walk out of these doors tonight it's something we want to seek and want to look like. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

All right, so the question is... *What is a disciple?* If you look in the New Testament, the word for *disciple* in the Greek is *mathetes*. The reason I'm telling you this is because it has implications to the definition of that word. When we think of the word *disciple*, the definition I like to use, the one we're going to look at today, is a disciple is someone who is a student, a learner, an apprentice, and an adherent to a great leader.

See a disciple is someone who follows teaching closely. They're an avid learner of whomever it is they're following closely. They look so much like the person they're following that you can't mistake them for not being a disciple. That's what a disciple is. That's what we're called to be as disciples. A disciple looks so much like that person that it becomes the fabric of who they are. Whenever God calls us to be disciples, he's calling us to look like him.

It looks like this practically. If someone is discipling you, you understand they're wiser and smarter than you are, so if you have an issue at work with some of your workmates, you go up to that person and you're like, "Hey, this is happening with my workmates. I don't know what to do about this. Can you help me? Can you tell me in your wisdom how you would handle this situation?"

If something is happening at home with roommates or a wife, whatever the case may be, you go up to that person and you're like, "Hey, we're having this conflict. We're not able to iron out what's going on in this situation. Can you help me iron this out?" If your kids are burning your house down, you just go up to that person and you're like, "Hey, my kids are crazy. What do I do about these crazy children?" That person has the wisdom because, one, they probably have the life experience, but two, they are tied in to who God is, so much so that they know how to answer those questions. That's what a disciple is.

The other definition I want to point you to for the word *disciple* comes out of that statement of faith that I referred to earlier. In our statement of faith it says that a *disciple* is a person who has been reconciled into relationship with God through new birth by trust in the gospel, and is subsequently growing in the love for God and the love for others.

Paul's letter to the church of Thessalonica where I had you turn... He writes a letter to a group, a church in Thessalonica he had started. On one of his missionary journeys he started this church. He had a burden for this church. He loved this church. The purpose of him writing this letter was, first of all, to commend them on their steadfastness in how they listened to the gospel and had it applied to their lives. The second thing he was writing to them about was to exhort them to continue to progress with the love they had for God.

So as we turn there and read it, I want to address a couple points from that text, and then kind of push us forward into understanding what it means to be a disciple, and kind of lay the table for next week when we will talk about making disciples. So if you'll join me reading in chapter 1, we're just going to read through the entire chapter.

**"Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.**

**For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."**

See what it tells us here in the first chapter of Thessalonians is that being a disciple cannot be separated from the gospel. It comes with a full understanding of the gospel, a full comprehension of what it means to live in light of the gospel. That's one of the things we talk about. If you're here every week you know that when someone is up here preaching they talk about the gospel. They talk about the implications of the gospel to our lives and in different areas of the things we do. So I figured I wouldn't be the only person who came up here and didn't explain what the gospel was.

When we talk about the gospel, this is basically what we're talking about: God in his infinite wisdom creates the world. He creates the earth perfect and sinless. He speaks everything into being. By the word of

his mouth things come into fruition, come into being, perfect and in harmony. He looks at that, he looks at his creation, he looks at what he has made, and he says that it is good. Then he creates Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, and he puts them in that garden to live in that garden, to enjoy the fruits of that garden, and to live in harmony with and walk with God.

When he puts them on the earth, he asks them to be committed to one thing. He gives them one rule to be committed to. That is to not eat of the fruit that is in the middle of the garden. That's the one thing he asks them to be committed to. But if you guys know your Bible, or if you know anything about being in church, you know it didn't take very long for that to be broken. It didn't take very long for the Serpent to swoop in, tell lies to Adam and Eve, for Adam and Eve to believe those lies and end up eating from that fruit, and end up being uncommitted to what they were supposed to be committed to.

Then brokenness enters the world. It fractures everything. It doesn't just fracture the world that is created; it fractures us. It filters down to our hearts. We have hearts that are sick and dirty with sin, as the language we use in Little Village and Kids' Village states. It means we become sinful. That perfect state the world was created in is no longer perfect, and now we are separated from God. The great thing about that is that it wasn't something that surprised God. He wasn't like, *Oh my gosh! Plan B or Plan C. I don't know what to do.*

The Bible tells us that before the foundations of the earth were laid, before he created anything, he had already put together a plan of redemption. He knew what would happen in the garden. It didn't take him by surprise. It wasn't something he was unprepared for. He knew he would send his Son to walk on the earth, live on the earth for 33 years perfect and sinless, and at the end of that 33 years he would be tortured, bruised, beaten, hung up on a cross to die, for his body to be broken and for him to shed his blood for the forgiveness of our sins. That was the plan of redemption God had from the beginning, and that's the plan of redemption that played out.

So now for people who profess to be believers, for people who profess to love and trust God, we have an inheritance. In Romans, chapter 6, verse 23, it tells us that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus Christ comes and dies and he gives us this gift. He gives us forgiveness so that now if you claim to be a believer, if you claim to love and trust God, God doesn't see the separation you have from him; he sees the blood of Jesus that cleanses you from that separation.

The gospel doesn't end there. It doesn't just end with Jesus going to the cross, dying, and being raised again. As we continue, we understand there will be a consummation of all things, where all things will return to that perfect state where God had intended it, where we will have a new heaven and a new earth,

and we will have new perfect, sinless bodies, where we will be able to glorify God forever. That's the gift God gives us, and that gift is the gift of becoming a disciple.

See a disciple establishes for us a vertical relationship with God. It allows us to be connected to him as sons. If you were here last week, if you listened to the sermon last week, Matt came out of 2 Peter and he talked about how when you become a believer, when you start to love and trust God, you become a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a chosen race, a people for his own possession. That's what God calls you to. That's the gift of being a disciple. God is calling us to be like him.

It's not an arbitrary call. It's not like, "You do whatever you think is right; you do whatever you think is necessary." No. He has it mapped out. He sent Jesus to be the author and perfecter of our faith. If you read in the book of Hebrews, it tells us that Jesus walked this earth as the author and perfecter of our faith. He endured temptation, he endured suffering, and still went to the cross as a perfect, sinless being. So being a disciple is not the reinvention of the wheel. It is following closely to the map, to the blueprint Jesus has for us.

What I want you to hear today is that we cannot love others if we do not love God. So much of our focus in our culture is to do, do, and do, and it is not to love God the way he calls us to love him. We want to meet with all these people on Monday, we want to go to this place on Friday, we want to do all these Bible studies, which inherently may not be bad things, but if that's what you're focusing on, if that's what you want to use to prove you love God, then your vision of what it means to love God is a little bit off. Paul was commending the church in Thessalonica for their steadfastness in the way they loved God, for their steadfastness in standing on the gospel and realizing that in the gospel they get all they need.

The first point I want to draw you guys to tonight after our 20-minute intro is that a disciple is reconciled to the Father through commitment to the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. As I've already talked about, Jesus had disciples. They walked with him. They went with him everywhere. He had 12 of them. For three years of his ministry, these men were everywhere Jesus was. They walked with him. They ate with him. They slept where he slept. They watched him heal people. They watched him pray. They learned to pray from him. They were sent out by him.

Not only were they walking with this magnificent man who was doing all these awesome things, who was conquering all these things they couldn't even imagine doing, who was enduring all these temptations, but they were walking with God. That's a point I don't want to get lost on you. They weren't just walking with just any ordinary man; they were walking with God, for the Bible tells us Jesus was fully God and fully man.

These disciples were looking up to God himself. They saw God walk this earth, they saw him endure all these things, and they had a blueprint to follow. They were never apart from him. The commitment to Jesus means that nothing about their lives was hidden from him. Nothing about what they did could be hidden from him because they were with him every single day, and he saw them in their flaws and in all their good stuff.

So if we go to verse 2 of the chapter I just read, it says, "**We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.**" *Steadfastness of hope*, basically meaning that... The word *steadfast* just means that no matter what is thrown at them, no matter what trials come their way, no matter what persecution comes their way, they were steadfast in who they loved. They were steadfast in who they had hope in.

Because they knew that to be tethered to God was all they needed. It didn't matter what the culture was throwing at them, it didn't matter what people were saying about who they were. It didn't matter what people wanted to identify them with. Their identity was so rock solid planted in who God was and who God was calling them to be that they were steadfast. Paul was commending them for this steadfastness because it wasn't an easy thing to do.

As we continue to read, in verse 4 it says, "**For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.**" God chooses us. I could go to a bunch of other places in the New Testament just to illustrate the point of God choosing us, but I'm going to choose three for the sake of time.

In Romans, chapter 8, verse 29, we hear it says, "For those he foreknew he predestined." That basically means that those he already knew he already chose. In Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 8, it tells us that salvation is a gift of grace so that no man can boast. We have no boast in our own ability to save ourselves. We have nothing to cling on to that says we did this, but God is reminding us, "I gave you this gift and I sustain you with this gift." In 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 5, it tells us that we're not sufficient on our own but God is our sufficiency. God is the one who makes us who we become as disciples. It's nothing we do by ourselves.

It doesn't matter how many times you prayed that prayer as a kid, how many times you opened the little door. Like I said before, if I had certificates, I would be winning. This was my thought growing up: *You know what? I'll say that prayer, I'll open the little door in my heart, Jesus is going to come in, we're going to sit on the couch, we're going to talk, and we're going to hang out.* Then Sunday night comes. I punched my

brother in the face, and I'm like, *Jesus walked out the back door. He's done. He's gone. That's it.* That was my understanding of what it meant to be saved.

But it doesn't matter how many times you think you opened that door. It doesn't matter how many times you think you invited Jesus to come in and sit on the couch. Really, it's about when God chooses, and when God chooses he chooses. It has nothing to do with you. Being a disciple is no different. God initiates it. God doesn't leave us there though. He gives us power through his Holy Spirit to be conformed to his image. That's what a disciple is: one whose appearance and life cannot be separated from the one they follow.

As I was thinking about this, I thought about how there are so many identifiers in our culture that we want to be tied to, that we want to be. If you live in Denton you want to be a hipster. There are like 20 people in tank tops right now. I can point them out but I won't. Or you want to be really conscious of the environment. You have like 20 recycle bins at your house and no trash can. Or if you're in high school you want to be cool. You want to be popular. You want to be athletic. There are so many identifiers of who we want to be or what we want to look like.

The thing is, God gives us one identifier. He calls us to be one thing, and the one thing he calls us to be is a disciple. The problem comes in with our lack of commitment. Now a lack of commitment isn't something that started in the 2000s. It isn't something that's new. It really started in the garden like I said before. Adam and Eve were meant to be committed to one rule, and they were unable to be committed to that rule. We are meant to be committed to God when he calls us to be his children, but we have an inability to be committed to that.

I wanted to point that out in our culture. I really like to study culture, get statistics on culture. If you're one of my friends, if we ever talk, you know I use stats to back everything up. If we're talking about sports and you're like, "The Cowboys are the best team ever," I'm like, "They won two games last year. What are you talking about? They're *not* the best team ever." I like stats to back up what I'm saying. So I went to search for stats for our commitment to see if we were really committed, or if I was just making this up.

George Barna is a guy who does a lot of research in the Christian circles. He asks a lot of questions about our culture and how Christianity fits into our culture. In 2006 he did some research. He went out and asked a bunch of people whether they were believers or not. The answer came back like 7 out of the 10 people he asked if they were believers or Christians or whatever word he used, were like, "Yeah, I'm a Christian." This is just in America. So 7 out of 10 Americans would say they're Christians.

He was like, *That's interesting. I need to ask deeper questions to really find out if they know what it means to be a Christian.* So he asked them, "How many of you are committed to having a deeper relationship with

God?" Of those people he asked that question, of those people who claimed to be believers, 54 percent came back and said, "Yeah, I would love to have a committed relationship with God. I would love for him to change me."

So if I'm looking at this room right now and I split it right down the middle here and say that everyone in this room is a believer, it means that this half of the room is committed to becoming disciples, is committed to following closely the teaching of God, committed to adhering to his teaching, and this side of the room is just like, *You know what? I can do it on my own.* Fifty-four percent. Half of all the people who claim to be believers are actually adhering to what they claim to believe.

His conclusion was this: "These figures emphasize how soft people's commitment to God is. Americans are willing to expend some energy in religious activities such as attending church and reading the Bible, and they're willing to throw some money into the offering basket. Because of such activities, they convince themselves that they're people of genuine faith. But when it comes time to truly establish their priorities and make a tangible commitment to knowing and loving God, and to allowing him to change their character and lifestyle, most people fall short. We want to be spiritual and we want to have God's favor, but we're not sure we want him taking control of our lives and messing with the image and outcomes we've worked so hard to produce."

That's our attitude. That's the attitude of one in every two people who profess to be believers. It's so opposed to what a disciple is, because a disciple is committed. That's a challenge I want to put before you guys today. How committed are you? Is your commitment the sum total of the amount of services you attend during a year, multiplied by the amount of times you pray before you go to bed, divided by the amount of times you pray for your food? Is it how committed you are to turning on KLTU or Power FM when you're driving to work in the morning? Is it how committed you are to listening to a sermon while you jog or work out?

Our commitment shows us how much we love God. The position we have in our hearts says, "Yes, I am a believer, but since you've saved me, I can take it from there." We went through the book of Galatians earlier on this year, and at the beginning of the book of Galatians Paul commends the Galatians for listening to the gospel he preached to them and for understanding it, but when we get to Galatians, chapter 3, he opens up and says, "**O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?**"

Who has told you that the salvation you gained as a gift has now become something you can own for yourself, and something you can tailor to how you want to do things? That's not what a disciple is. A disciple isn't someone who's like, "God, I can take it from here." A disciple is one who understands, *I have to be less so God can be more in my life.* We have to take the call to being a disciple seriously, and

therefore take the call to being holy seriously, because those two things are connected. God calls us to be holy for *he* is holy. We've gone four weeks talking about holiness, and holiness is part of being a disciple because it is calling us to be more and more like God, being more and more transformed to look like him.

The second point I want to talk about tonight is that a disciple is known by their love for God and their love for others. I alluded early on to turning to the book of John, so if you want to turn there to the book of John, chapter 13. As you guys turn there, I'm going to paint a picture of what's going on in John, chapter 13. Jesus is sitting at the table with his disciples. It's the Last Supper. He's just hours away from being arrested, being tortured, being beaten, ending up dying on a cross with nails through his hands and feet.

Instead of focusing on the pain that's about to come, instead of focusing on all that stuff, he's giving final instructions to his disciples. He gives them a new commandment. In verses 34-35 he says to them, **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

"Love as I have loved you." That's what he's telling them. "Love as I'm about to show you the depth of my love." He's not just giving them an arbitrary, "Hey, this is what you do," but he's about to walk out the processes of the depth of his love. See love is another things that has just become another buzzword we use. We use it for everything. "I love falling asleep in the rain." "I love pizza." "I love lamp." Whatever you want to call it. You love all those things.

But that's not the love Jesus is talking about. The love of a disciple of God *is* the love of God. They're inseparable. God wants us to love like he loves. Not only in an arbitrary, *Oh I need to guess how this happens*. He wants us to love like he loves in the way Jesus loved by laying down his life. As we continue to look through the book of John, if we get to John, chapter 15, we learn that Jesus tells his disciples one other thing. He tells them, **"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."** Not only is he telling them this, he is telling them this and going to show them this in a matter of hours.

See Jesus continues to instruct his disciples that a disciple is marked by their distinct ability to lay down their lives for others; marked by their ability to allow God to work through them and move through them to state that, "Yes, I know these things may be tough, but I know what you have for me works out for my good." When we can love God in this way, when we can be committed to him in this way, when nothing is off limits in our lives to him, then we truly understand what it means to be a disciple. When we can endure pain and suffering and hardship and come out on the other end and say, "I did all these things because I love him who first loved me. I'm committed to him who first loved me, who sent his Son to die on the cross for me," that's when we understand that.

If we're not committed to God in loving him, then what are we inviting people to? We talk about how we exist to make disciples. In Matthew, chapter 28, verses 18-20, which is known as the Great Commission, Jesus is ascending to heaven and he's giving his last instructions to his disciples. He tells them, "Go out, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to follow what I have taught you, baptizing them, and make them disciples. Make them follow me."

As he's telling them that, he knows full well what he's saying to them, because these are men who have walked with him for three years. He's just asking them to go and replicate the same thing he has done with them with multitudes of other people. The other thing is he doesn't leave them alone. In Acts 1, verse 8, we learn that he says, "**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**" He's leaving them with the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit who resides in the apostles is the same Holy Spirit God gives to us when he makes us disciples.

So one of the questions I have to ask you tonight is... *What are you inviting people to when you're inviting them to be your disciples?* What are you inviting them to walk to? What are you inviting them to look like? See I get into these conversations with people where we talk about cloning as if it's a real thing. Well, maybe it is. They've cloned sheep. I don't know if that counts. But as if we could clone people, and people are like, "You know what? It'd be really awesome if I could get a clone, because someone could go to work for me, and then someone could stay at home and sleep, and then someone else could do this."

I'm like, "I don't want any of that. I know me, and I don't want any more of me running around." That's the picture I get when I think about who people are becoming when we are discipling them. See the purpose of discipleship is to point people to God, not to point people to us. The question is, if you aren't tethered to God, if you aren't adhering to God, if you aren't a disciple of God, then those four or five people who you're discipling, those kids who are in your house, those people you go through Bible studies with at work who you're leading, who are you leading them to become? Are they becoming more like God or more like you?

Like I said, I know me and I don't want five of me running around. That's just a nightmare for everyone. It's just a bad idea. The fact is, if we are leading people to become more like us, it doesn't make any sense because we're the same "us" God sent his Son to die for. So when we have people who are following us, when we have people we are pouring into, we want to pour into them so they look like Christ, not look like us. I yearn for a generation of people who understand what it means to be a disciple, who understand what it means to say in the same vein Paul said many times in the New Testament, "You follow me as I follow Christ," who have the confidence to say, "If these guys are following me, I know I am pointing them to Christ. I know I am not pointing them to look more and more like me."

That is the yearning I have in my heart. That is the burden I have in my heart for everyone in this room, because if our mission statement, if our statement of faith tells us we exist to make disciples, we want to make disciples who glorify God, not disciples who glorify us, because if we make disciples who glorify us, then we are pulling people away from the God who loves them, the God who has saved them, the God who has given them this gift of discipleship, and we're making them to look more and more like us.

We love God first. We're committed to him first. We desire him first above all things. That's the commitment we have. That's the commitment we're called to. That's who we're called to chase. That's who we're called to look like. So we say we exist to bring glory to God by lives changed, or we exist to give glory to God by making disciples, because that's who we're called to be. My goal this evening was to position us in that manner, because in a week when you learn how to make disciples, what good practices are for making disciples, those things won't make sense if you yourself are not a disciple.

Our attitude, like I said, in making disciples is "Follow me as I follow Christ." Can you say that tonight, that you are committed to following Christ wholeheartedly? Are you committed to him changing your life? Are you part of that 54 percent who says, "Yes, I am now a believer and I want God to change my life. I want him to transform me into a new person"? Or are you of the 46 percent who says, "You know what? I have it from here."

I yearn for us to be 100 percent of people who want God to change us, who want God to transform us, who want God to make us into disciples of him, who are tethered to him in every aspect of our lives; men and women who allow God to rule and reign over our hearts and allow that to filter out of our relationship with him, our vertical relationship with him, to all our horizontal relationships with our families, with our friends, with the men and women who walk with us closely and see us day to day. That's what it means to be a disciple. It means commitment. It means love. Without those two things, our lenses of what it means to love God and be a believer are broken.

So as we move on to a time of Communion, the Lord's Supper, we'll have stations up here and up in the back in the balcony, but as you guys sit there after I pray, I just want you to think about this. I want you to think about the people you are discipling, the people you live with who walk closely with you, who watch you live, who you do life with.

Are they seeing you become more and more like Christ and wanting to become more and more like Christ because they see you, or are they becoming more and more like you? Are you understanding that the mandate of making disciples means we let go of everything else that entangles, and we look to God and

we ask him to make us more and more like him, to conform to his image? Or are we just letting them walk around and look like us and talk like us and just not be disciples of God?

When we come up here to take Communion, the bread is a reminder of the broken body of Christ on the cross, and the juice is a reminder of the blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins. We do that in obedience because Jesus tells us to take the bread and take the juice as a reminder of what he has done, for us to be sober in our remembrance of what he has done, and for it to focus us on chasing after him and not chasing after our own things in our own strength.

So if you're a believer, you don't have to be a member of The Village or anything like that to come and take Communion. It is open Communion. I invite you to come up to the front or to the back and grab the bread and dip it in the juice. If you're not a believer, I just ask you to sit in your seat. It's not going to be awkward. No one is going to point at you or make fun of you or anything like that.

But if you have some questions about what it means to be a believer, about all this I'm talking about, what it means to be saved or what it means to be redeemed, we have men and women in the back who are standing there ready to pray and talk with people. So if you want to go back there, if you have any prayer requests that you would like to be prayed for, there are people in the back to pray with you. After I pray, you guys can come up here, take the bread, dip it in the juice, and we will go back to response in a time of singing. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for tonight. I thank you that you set out a plan of redemption for us way before we even knew we needed it, that you saved us by your own choosing. Lord, I pray for men and women who are in the crowd today, in the audience today, who may not have an understanding of this, Lord. I pray, Father, that you'd open their hearts. I pray, Father, that you'd save them. I pray, Father, that you would choose them to become your children, to become a chosen race, a royal priesthood, Lord.

I just pray, Father, that this word resonates in people's hearts today, Lord. I pray, Father, that we understand that we can't make disciples, we can't carry out the mandate of the Great Commission, if we don't understand what it means to be tethered to you, if we don't understand what it means to be adhered to you, if we don't understand what it means to be a learner of what you have already mapped out for us in your Word. So I just pray, Father, that as we leave this place today, that would be something that is constantly on our hearts and minds, Lord, how we can look more and more like you, and allow that to filter into our relationships with our friends and workmates and families. I pray that in your mighty name, amen.