

Acts (Part 9) – The Second Wave

Matt Chandler – April 6, 2014

[Video]

Female: In Jerusalem AD 30, Jesus died on the cross, resurrected on the third day, and then ascended into heaven. Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit fell on the apostles, giving them power, purpose, and a plan. Out of joy, the church was born. Empowered by the Spirit, Peter gave his first sermon, and 3,000 hearts were transformed. Hearing, receiving, and repenting, the young church walked in unity and garnered praise. Out of joy, the gospel creates community.

Peter and John then continued to spread the gospel through preaching and miracles, and the church grew by 5,000. In AD 31, Stephen gave a powerful sermon connecting the Old Testament to Jesus and rebuking the people for their hard hearts. Enraged, the people stoned Stephen, making him the first Christian martyr. Around AD 34, on the road to Damascus, the Lord transformed the heart of Saul, a man who persecuted countless Christians, and Saul became Paul.

After this conversion, the gospel continued to spread through the ministries of Paul and Peter. God gave Peter a vision and used him to first reach the Gentiles. In AD 44, King Herod Agrippa I executed the apostle James and had Peter arrested, but an angel rescued Peter, leading him out of the prison. As the believers were scattered because of persecution, the center of operations for Christianity then turned from Jerusalem to Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their first missionary journey.

Through their ministry, the church multiplied. In AD 49, an argument arose over whether it was necessary for Gentiles to follow Jewish traditions and customs, particularly circumcision. The Jerusalem council sent a letter to the Gentiles affirming that circumcision was not a requirement for salvation.

In every day and age, the church faces both persecution and praise and needs gospel strengthening. That gospel strengthening takes place by remembering salvation comes only through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, not traditions, not customs, not good works. This is the message that must move forward, because the mission doesn't stop. Out of joy, the church multiplies.

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If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. If you don't own one, that's our gift to you. Feel free to take that. We are in week nine of our study through the book of Acts. Here's something that is happening now starting this week. What we've shown is a lot of what you just saw, which is the spread of Christianity through the ancient Greco-Roman world.

We know it keeps spreading. We know it keeps spreading because we're in here, and we don't have a lot of ties to being Jews in Jerusalem. We're here because the gospel message continued to spread. We've been covering these last nine weeks how that spread, what was actually going on. Now what's going to happen in week nine (as well as the rest of the weeks) is we're just going to see more of what we've already seen.

We're going to see more people hear the gospel, more people respond to the gospel, more people mock the gospel, more people try to destroy the gospel, more churches planted, more churches that were planted planting churches, and on and on we could go. What I want to do starting this week (and I'll kind of tweak as we move through the rest of this series) is I want to take things from the macro-historic level down to the micro, let you feel this, sense this, smell this in a way maybe you haven't.

What I mean by that is so far, we saw 3,000 people come to know Christ at Pentecost, which is basically, for our help, Mardi Gras. Then from there, we saw 5,000 men become Christians at Solomon's portico. From there, we saw all these other kind of groups in the gospel work in these cities where whole cities began to be transformed by the gospel. In fact, we know historically that by AD 350, of the Roman Empire, 51 percent will proclaim Christ as Lord.

Depending on what side of the debate you're on, my belief is that Constantine did not make Christianity, but Christianity made Constantine. As in, if you are the emperor, you're going to hop

onto what is popular, lest you get stabbed 30 times in the shower, one of which is your best friend. If you don't know Shakespeare, I can't help you.

From there, what I want to do is I want to take it out of these large, clump cities being impacted, and I want to hopefully put it in a place where you can feel some things maybe you haven't felt as we've kind of taken this high macro view of historic and biblical spread of the gospel. I think one of the ways I lament about how many of us approach the Bible is I think we read it wrongly. What I mean by that is we don't use our imaginations when we read.

When I say use our imaginations, I'm not saying imagine something that's not there, because that would be heresy. We're not talking about that, but rather we're saying, as we read the Word of God, put ourselves into it in such a way that we can smell it and feel it and let it shape us and show us what's true about God and, therefore, what is true about us and then be moved by a text rather than just read it.

What I just described is a lot like the movie *The NeverEnding Story* versus just reading the newspaper. With that said, I want us to look at some individuals, how they came to know Christ, and see if we can't learn some things about God and learn some things about ourselves looking at it. Let's look at Acts, chapter 16. We're going to start in verse 13. If you've read ahead and go, "Chandler, you're leaving out some significant portions of the story," yeah. I am. Sorry. This is in Philippi. Verse 13:

"And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God.

The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.' And she prevailed upon us." Let's talk Lydia. Here's what we know about Lydia.

We know she is religious, and she is moral, and she has done very well for herself in the domain of fashion. She is from Thyatira, which is a massive port city in the ancient world, and she is in Philippi. It might be helpful to think maybe New York and London, maybe Hong Kong. Cities that

would shape the economic force of the world are Thyatira and Philippi. She has a house in both of these joints. She is doing well.

We know she is religious. She has rejected Roman paganism. "There are not a bunch of gods. There's one God, and I think these Jews are on to something." She is morally conservative, upright, and she is going to Bible studies on Sabbath. Here she is at this Jewish Bible study. They've just put in the equivalent of some Beth Moore, Priscilla Shirer DVD. The women there are being fed when Paul rolls in.

Paul begins to speak, and the Bible says Lydia's eyes are opened. Her heart is opened, and she hears Paul, and she is baptized. What you have here is a wealthy businesswoman who is an extremely successful businesswoman who is moral and religious and at church but is not necessarily a follower of Christ. She is morally upright, and she is actively involved in church, but she has not laid her *yes* down and said, "I am a follower of Christ, and my life will be shaped by following Christ."

Yet it's in this space that Jesus steps in and saves. Such were some of us. When I say that, I don't mean some of us were women with houses in London and Paris who were in the fashion industry and lived moral lives. I'm saying this was some of us in that we were religious and morally good according to the world's standards (whatever those are). This is where Jesus found us. We were Christmas/Easter people. We were church folk. We would have defined ourselves as Christians, saw ourselves and, in comparison with others, we looked really good.

Then in the middle of that, Jesus saved us. He rescued us. There was a turn there from us no longer just being church folk to all of a sudden going, "My whole life is about him," laying my *yes* down and following after him. Let's do this. If that's your story, your testimony, why don't you raise your hand for me? "I was quasi-religious, moral, and God rescued me in the middle of that." Okay, keep your hands up for a second. You shouldn't be ashamed of this one.

Let's look around. This is us. I'm putting my hand down. That's not my testimony. You can keep yours up if that's you. These are our Lydias, *per se*. From there, let's do this really quickly. How many of you know people who are in that category like you once were like you can acknowledge this?

You know people right now who are moral people, kind of good people, would even define themselves as Christians, but there's no real fruit in their life that would testify they actually are

followers of Christ. Look around. We almost all know people similar to that, partly because we were like that once. The next woman I want us to look at has nothing in common with Lydia outside of her gender. Verse 16:

"As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination [she is demon-possessed] and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.'

And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers."

This is a bit of a confusing text, because if we read it straight, it looks like she is kind of like Flavor Flav to Public Enemy. Right? Am I all by myself here? Okay, so what it means is if you just read the text, it looks like she is following Paul and Silas around here going, "Yeah, boy!" when they preach the gospel. By the way, I know I lost half of you there and gained half of you. I'm willing to pay that price.

I'm so sorry. I don't know. That's not in my notes. I don't know where that comes from. In the end, what she is doing is she is mocking and being a distraction to the furthering of the gospel. She is not trying to support but rather distract. Paul gets fed up with it and just turns to her. The Bible says he got annoyed. I love it, because that's real talk, isn't it? He turned around and cast out the demon, and it went.

I wrote in *To Live is Christ, to Die is Gain* that I believe this slave girl became a Christian and joined the church at Philippi. Some of the pushback I got on the book was nowhere in this text does it say she believed or she was baptized like it does everyone else who becomes a believer. Yes, nothing explicit, but there are a couple of things that are implicit that lead me to believe she was converted in this exchange with the apostle Paul, namely the teaching of Jesus Christ around how the demonic operate. With that said, let's look at Matthew 12.

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And

when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation."

Here's what we find. We have Jesus teaching, "Here's how the demonic works. If an evil spirit is cast out and something doesn't move in to that space, then that evil spirit will not just return, but it will return with some friends. The person will be worse off *after* than they were *before*." Her owners have realized after the spirits have been cast out that they can no longer make any money. It appears that something has moved into the house. That's why I say I think our sweet little slave girl here is in the family of God.

If I were to ask right now, "How many of you were demon-possessed fortune tellers who happened to be slaves?" my guess is there would be maybe two of you. That's what I love about The Village. There would probably be two of you going, "Dang it! Yeah." How about this? How about we kind of tease this idea out a little bit.

My guess is there are not a lot of former slave girl, divination, fortune-telling, demon-possessed people. Maybe there are, but here's really the heart of her issue. Either by her own steps or by the force of others, she has given herself over to a type of licentiousness and depravity that has now consumed her life. I love that this girl's story is right after Lydia's, because it's so different. Lydia is put together, driven, brilliant, savvy, wealthy, well known, well respected. Jesus steps right into her mess and saves her.

Then right after that, it's this girl. Completely busted up. Taken advantage of. Abused. Given herself over to licentiousness. Jesus steps right into that space too. Some of us have no way to relate to Lydia. We look at Lydia, and we're like, "Sheesh! That's nice." For us, Jesus found us in darker places than a first century Beth Moore Bible study. Jesus found us in the nastiness of drugs and alcohol, the nastiness of a type of sexual licentiousness that wreaked havoc in our world as we treated ourselves cheaply.

For some of us, God met us in the middle of just some of the most horrific, dark things we can imagine. For some of us, we can't relate to Lydia, but as we hear about Jesus stepping in to this dark space, we can go, "That's where he found me. In the middle of addiction, in the middle of despair, in the middle of darkness, he stepped into my uncleanness and ransomed me." How many of you

would say, "That's my story"? Okay. Look around. Keep your hands up. Why are you guys so quick on that? Look around. These are our non-Lydias.

There is one more here. What ends up happening here is Paul and Silas are arrested and brought before the rulers. The rulers decide to put them in jail. They call a jailer, and they tell the jailer, "Put them in jail, and we'll deal with it." The jailer doesn't just put them in jail but puts them in the innermost cell and puts them in stocks and chains. The innermost part of a prison in the first century in ancient Rome would be a part that was a little bit lower than the rest of the cells. All the human waste would kind of run downhill to this kind of inner place.

Then they put them in stocks. Stocks are forcing you to be in a position that your body naturally doesn't want to be in. You're sitting there in human waste, and your body is being stretched and contorted in ways it was not meant to be. The jailer didn't do this by order but did this by desire. The brother is a little bit busted up. Then we read starting in verse 27.

By the way, repeatedly in the book of Acts I've tried to bring this to your attention. If you want an earthquake in your location, just lock up one of the apostles. Jesus just isn't having his men in prison. You lock up one of his boys, and there is going to be an earthquake. He doesn't need Jason Bourne to break anybody out. There is no *Oceans 11*. "Let me pick my guys." There's just a rumbling of the earth, and all the doors swing open, and our bros just walk out. It happens again. We'll pick it up in verse 27.

"When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God."

Here's the Bible over *here*. Inerrant Word of God. I'm over *here*. Historically speaking, in major Roman metropolitan areas like Philippi, jailers in these jails were almost always former highly decorated Roman soldiers who, as a gift of retirement from the front, were given these jails to run. A couple of things. Rome is not known for handing out daisies and stickers to people. They were a brutal, brutal tyrannical regime.

In fact, historically speaking, there are records of multiple cities being sacked, destroyed. As a deterrent from any type of rebellion, there are a couple of places in history where we read of the Romans crucifying up to 20,000 people...women, men, and children...on the walls or on the roads leading into the city so if you lived in the outskirts (you lived up in the hills, you lived out on the plains...you were what they would call in the first century a pagan, country folk) you would not band and try to dare rebel against them because you've seen what they are capable of.

Again, it's not sweet. They're not sweet people. I don't know what this jailer had seen. I don't know what he had been a part of. Historically speaking, men who see grotesque things up front and are a part of those things in combat have issues. In fact, many of our young men come home even now from Afghanistan, Iraq, some of these very difficult places with what we now call... It's been called something as far back as war goes, but we call it now Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

They come back, and they're just aggressive. They're violent. They can't get out of their head what they've seen or maybe even what they've done. What marks them is a type of bitterness and anger over something that has happened or something they've been a part of but they don't want to own. It is evident from how he responds to the simple order of, "Put them in jail" by instead torturing them, belittling them, and dehumanizing them that this brother is bitter and angry and violent. Yet even into that darkness, Jesus steps in and saves. That's the story of some of us.

Some of us were angry. We were bitter. Things happened to us early on in life, or we participated in things early in life. We didn't want to own it. It wasn't our fault we did those things. That caused anger to grow in us. That caused bitterness to grow in us, and yet God stepped in and saved us from that anger, from that aggression, from that bitterness. If that's your story, would you raise your hand? Okay.

My hand is up now. Earlier I was like, "That's not me. I'm helping you." Now I'm not helping you. Now I'm testifying. Come on, former angry folk. Let's go. I know you're there. You're getting angry right now that I made you do it again. God keeps stepping into these messy places and saving. He

keeps calling out. He keeps ransoming out. Not only have we been saved from these places, but there are people we know who are still stuck in these places. God's ransom and rescue of us out of these places is meant to now use us as ambassadors back into those places.

It's a beautiful thing to watch God save. We don't have full-on time for this, but many of us kind of see ourselves as a bit of a hybrid. "You know, I have a little Lydia in me, but I'm a little bit of a slave girl. I definitely have some of the jailer. I'm not full-on. I see what you're doing here, Matt. That kind of doesn't encapsulate my story." It doesn't have to. It's proving the point I'm trying to make.

We were all sheep who had gone astray, and the Good Shepherd came after us. What I love about this story is that one who was mocking God was rescued out of her mockery. One who was filled with bitterness and anger and was pointing that bitterness and anger toward the people of God... Jesus didn't light him up for that. He didn't have the earthquake swallow him up. He didn't even allow Paul to let him murder himself.

He was going to commit suicide because he had failed in keeping the prisoners in, and yet Paul, who had been tortured by this man, refused to let him kill himself. Such is the grace of God that invades such dark spaces and says, "Nuh-uh. Nope. You're mine." It's unreal! Then from there, there are a couple of groups that begin to come to know Christ.

Now I have two rants for you in this sermon. When I get to them, I'll move over here. Take notes or don't. It's not part of the sermon, but they have to be made. From there, Thessalonica. We're now out of Philippi and on into Thessalonica. Again, God is just saving people, planting churches. Churches are growing. In verse 2 of chapter 17, in Thessalonica, here's what we read.

"And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.' And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women." In verse 10, we've moved on to Berea. We were in Thessalonica just for a bit. Now we've moved on to Berea. Listen to this in verse 10.

"The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to

see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men."

There is a rhythm starting to be established here, and I want to draw your attention to it, although I won't address it directly with a great deal of length until the fall. Here's what I want you to notice. Where the gospel of Jesus Christ is fully and faithfully preached, strong, gifted, driven women flourish. They are drawn to it, and they flourish. Now the narrative outside of our walls is that Christianity is repressive, but nothing and no movement has done more for the welfare, the growth, and the flourishing of women in culture than the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nothing.

"What about feminism?" Feminism, in its early form, was driven by gospel principles and served the purpose of what Christians call the *imago Dei*, all of us being made in the image of God. Male and female. He created them equal yet distinct. I'm not talking about goofy feminism now, but its roots were, "We're equal." They're drawn to it. Do you see what's happening here?

These women are intelligent, gifted. They keep saying they're in high standing. The Bible is making a point that these are not just kind of weak women. "Okay, this way." That's not who they are. They're bold. They're brilliant. With gladness, they're in glad submission to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Where something other than women flourishing in God's design is taught, the Bible is not fully being taught.

I will say men and women, although completely equal in value, have been given by God distinct roles to be played out for both of their good and the good of the family and the good of the church and the good of humanity as a whole. How does that play itself out? Well, I told you. Quit asking me. It's fall. We're doing that in the fall. That's rant number one, so we're back to the sermon.

With this said, now I want us to look at how the apostle Paul began to engage cities and, specifically, how we should interact in the cities we live or dwell. Let's look in Acts 17, starting in verse 16.

"Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols."

I love this because it helps me explain (or at least have a grid) for the things I will oftentimes feel for us. Not just *think* for us, but *feel* for us. You have Paul in Athens. He is looking out at the city of Athens. The Bible says he sees all these idols, and he becomes provoked. He becomes incited. He

begins to be filled with passion. Let me tell you why it's so important for a Christian to be provoked and how a Christian gets provoked.

To be provoked for a given area is to see how the men and women in that area have chosen a pursuit that will end in bankruptcy and destruction and to be moved with godly sorrow, compassion, and love, to engage those people for the good of their lives with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that's impossible if you don't understand what the Bible says.

This is what God has for you. If you don't see the beauty in God's creative design, you'll never be provoked in the world. You'll see the world's values and the world's definitions as ours, and you'll never be provoked in spirit. To be provoked is to see the beauty of what God has for people and that they're not even pursuing it (or they're pursuing some counterfeit of it) that will absolutely lead to bankruptcy and destruction.

If you're not provoked in spirit, you don't see that distinction, you haven't gotten into the Word of God enough, you haven't sat under good teaching enough, you haven't pursued what the Bible says is beautiful so you might see it, understand it, and feel it you'll never be provoked. Almost all you do will revolve around people being projects and guilt. Not love, not compassion, not long-suffering, not being hospitable, not genuine relationships built on love and trust. Instead, projects and scalps.

That's not what we do. We are provoked in spirit. There is a godly grief in our hearts. "There's more for you. There's more joy to be had. There's more life to be walked in. There's something better than what you're now pursuing. Don't you know? Can't you see it's not working?" We plead, and we walk patiently. Why? Because we're provoked. You'll never be provoked if what the predominant culture says is the norm. You say, "Yeah, that's the norm."

If culture gets to set our definitions, we'll never be provoked in spirit. The slave girl will always be a slave. Lydia will always be religious and moral but not free. The jailer will always be angry. We must grow in our knowledge of what God calls beautiful. We must be strengthened in what the Bible lays before us. It's how human beings flourish. We must trust that he is smarter than our age.

See, every generation has to wrestle with this. You realize your grandparents thought they were nailing it, right? Jim Crow South. Jacking stuff up all over the world, but they were progressive. Is it really a big stretch of the imagination that we're doing the same thing right now, or have we figured

it out? Have we unlocked the code? After thousands of years of human history, "We got it. We're going to take this thing to where it's supposed to be."

Are you serious? We're just smearing stuff under the illusion of progress. No, human flourishing doesn't occur when we progress past things. Human flourishing occurs when we gladly submit to God's creative design. To know that design becomes imperative to feel provoked for a city, which leads to love, compassion, godly grief, and the willingness to with great hospitality walk with people for long periods of time. From here, from this provocation, Paul begins to engage. Let's look at him engage. Verse 22...

"So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: 'Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, "To the unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.'"

Here's what Paul has done. He begins to notice as he walks around the city of Athens that there is a cultural framework in place (i.e., they are extremely religious). In fact, in some other ancient writings I read once that somebody said it was easier to find a god in Athens than it was a man. So you want to talk a church on every corner? Athens would be like, "Give me a break. We have six or seven temples on every corner."

So religious are they in a polytheistic culture that just in case they might have missed a god that he might get angry and he might blow everybody up, they built an altar to the unknown god just in case somebody angry showed up. They were like, "No, no, no. That was you. No, this is you right there, god of the week. I'm sorry! We didn't know your name. Billy? Okay. All right. See?" That's how nervous they were.

Paul steps in to that cultural norm, that cultural grid, and he says, "I perceive that you are very religious. In fact, I saw this altar to the unknown god. It happens that I know him! I'd love to tell you about him." Then he begins to deconstruct. See, in any given culture, there's a framework in which that culture operates. Let me tell you a bit about ours. Let me tell you the gods of... I think we can go all of Dallas, but let me in particular call out Highland Village and Flower Mound.

Our gods are comfort and status, how we're perceived. Our idols, where we worship, are at the altar of comfort, comfort at all costs. "What about me? This is what makes me comfortable. This is what I

want." That is a god who is worshiped in this city. Then the veneer of appearance. We want to look successful. We want people to respect us. We want people to think we're beautiful. That's a god we worship.

Our money and our time and our energy go to those ends: comfort and the veneer. Those things enslave us. Paul steps in to their cultural norm, which is all these idols, and he begins to deconstruct it. Here's how he deconstructs it. Let's look at this. Verse 24: **"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.**

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'"

Let's watch his deconstruction of their cultural norm. He steps into that and goes, "Okay, here's the unknown god. Let me tell you about him. The unknown god is the God of all heaven and all earth." That's deconstruction. "There's not a god of the sun and a god of the moon and a god of the mountain range and a god of the plains. No, this God, the unknown god, is God of heaven and earth. There's not a god of the Greeks and a god of the Jews and a god of the Romans. No, no, no. He is the God of all men everywhere." Then the massive deconstruction kicks in.

"...nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." In these temples, you would have servants. Those servants would serve the golden image. They would feed the golden image. They would wash the golden image. Paul's very clever subversive argument is, "If you have to make his sandwich, he is not much of a god. Right? If when he gets dirty, you're required to wash him, how is he supposed to help you when you're dirty?"

God is not served by human hands, as though he needed anything. Here's the thing about idols. Ready? If it's not allegiance to the one true God, you become a slave to your idol, constantly having to feed it and sacrifice to it and wash it and justify it and make basically an apologetic system around it.

Let's talk. This is rant number two. If comfort and the veneer (how you are perceived) are your idols, think how much you have to feed those idols. If comfort is your idol and the veneer of success is your idol, you're going into debt. Not the good kind of debt. The dumb kind of debt. "You have to look successful to be successful." No, no, no. Looking successful is going to cause some of you to file for bankruptcy. Looking successful is going to cause some divorce in here.

Looking the part puts a type of pressure on you and your family that's ridiculous. You have to feed it! If that's your god, comfort is your god, then when your wife starts getting on your nerves, the blood of your marriage has to be spilled at the altar. "Let me find someone who makes me comfortable. These kids are getting on my nerves. Let me get rid of them and start over and get something that makes me comfortable."

There have to be sacrifices on the altar of our idols. You will feed them. You will serve them, and you will become a slave to them like these poor people in Athens who are feeding statues of gold and are bathing statues of gold in the hope that those things might help them. See, I'll tell you where I'm primarily provoked. I am primarily provoked in spirit (don't get offended, ladies) by our men.

Why are men going to bed these days with so much energy? That's not what God designed you for. God designed you to go to bed tired. Why are you going to bed so strong? We work hard at work for the glory of God. We pull into our driveway. We say a prayer. We go into the house. We love and serve Mama, because the Bible has put on our shoulders by the Holy Spirit of God that our wives would look like well-watered vines, that they would grow in their gifting, that they would feel cherished and loved.

Then we get on the floor, and we play with our kids. We tuck them in bed, and we pray. We lead out spiritually in our homes. Then when everybody is down, we sit with Mama some more, check on her heart, pray, and then go to bed exhausted, wrung out for the kingdom of God. That's not how so many men are going to bed. We have tons of energy. It's why so many of you are getting yourselves so jammed up, because God has not designed you for a bunch of free time. He has created you to make war, and you're punting on that.

A bored man is a dangerous man. "Well, won't I burn out?" Gosh, no, you won't burn out. See, what this weight does is push you into Jesus. Listen, sometimes I pull up in the driveway, and I'm just exhausted. I feel like I earned some couch time. "The Final Four is once a year. Get off me, woman."

Right? I feel like I earned that. Here's what has to happen. I have to pull into the driveway and I have to ask the Holy Spirit for strength.

I have to breathe, open up the car door, walk in, ask how I can serve (not measure what she has done today versus what I've done today), figure out how I can serve her, check on the hearts of my children, which oh, that God would just command us to take care of their behavior. How easy would that be? But to shepherd hearts? I have two girls. Do you know how complex that is? I mean, I'm still trying to figure out the one I'm married to, and now I have little ones.

It's like, "Boo, I don't know. You have to take this. She is crying. I don't even know why." My son doesn't do that. He furrows his brow and wants to fight. She is just sobbing. Help me. Someone help! Flare. I need estrogen in here in a hurry. Then I'm going to tuck them in their beds. We're going to pray, and then I'm going to sit down with Lauren and check on her heart. I'm going to go to bed tired.

There's no room in there for dumb stuff that jams men up, because there's the call to our wives, there's the call to our children, there's the call to the church, all of which must be answered and will be empowered by the Holy Spirit for us to operate in that. Where you're punting on those things you are opening yourself up for the hooks of sin and your own desire for rebellion. "I still feel like I'm going to burn out." Okay, well, let's chat since we're chatting. Let's be honest with one another.

How many of you have been on vacation? Not with the kids. You went on a legitimate vacation, went to a beach, went to the mountains, laid around, read a good biography, whatever you do. I don't mean to nerd up your vacation like mine. Let's just say you did what you do, and you came home tired. How many of you came home tired from vacation? You came home exhausted from vacation. Okay, so let me say something here. I don't know if you're going to believe me, but your hand should testify that you believe me.

Rest is found in Christ. That's where we find our rest. Our rest is in God's glad acceptance of us in Jesus Christ, not a nap, not a piña colada on the beach. I like that, but that's not going to restore my soul in a way that Christ will restore my soul. I get provoked for men who refuse to step into this. I feel grief for you. I want more for you, and I want more for your wives and more for your children.

Everything works right when men are being men instead of boys who can shave. Oh that we would grow into what God... Men, we're going to stumble. It's hard. God meant it to be hard. That's how

much he loves you. He is going to make sure you couldn't do it on your own. You are going to need to sit in the driveway and pray.

You are going to need to late at night go, "Lord, help me. I will kill somebody. Lord, help me. Help me right now, Lord. Give me a verse. Not that one. Give me another. Nothing Old Testament. Give me something happy. Give me something out of the Psalms. There we go. Thank you, Lord." Right? We are going to have to press in.

Paul steps in. He starts to deconstruct, and he further deconstructs them in verse 29. **"Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man."** I love his argument here. His argument is not against imagination or art but rather that what we create with what God gave us should never actually turn into our god.

In fact, his argumentation is, "How? How could what you make with your hands, the imagination of mind that God gave you...? How can what you made with gifts and talents given to you by God turn into your god? How can you take gold and silver and your imagination and the arts and make them god when all of that was created by gifts God freely gave?" Then from there, he begins to reconstruct.

Here's why reconstruction is so important. If you deconstruct and you don't reconstruct, then everybody ends up homeless. Hope evaporates in an environment that knows everything that's wrong and knows nothing of how to make it right, which is the role of the church for the people of God. It's not just to be on mission but to help maturing disciples continue to mature. Back on the issue of manhood, I tell single men, "Find a wife." **"He who finds a wife finds what is good..."**

"Well, I don't make enough money."

"I don't know what that has to do with it."

"Well, I don't think that's smart."

"What are you talking about smart? God has designed you for this, not to have enough money to get an Xbox One and master all of those before you get married."

"Well, I can't find the *one*."

"Find someone who is godly, makes a good gospel partner who you're attracted to, and get married."

This *one* nonsense is a thing of myth. I always get emails about this. Do you know how I know Lauren was the one? She said *yes* to me. We're married. That's how I know. That's how I found the one. I said, "Will you spend the rest of your life with me?" She said, "Yes." *Bam!* One. Found her. Find your *one*, single men. If you are a man who goes, "Gosh. I think I'm a boy who can shave," then contact us. Let us help you. Let us walk alongside of you. It's called *discipleship*. This is what we're here for. Let us serve you. Then from here, he begins to reconstruct. Look at verse 30.

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Here's Paul's reconstruction after he deconstructed the culture at Athens. He says, "Here's what one must do." Previously, God has overlooked this nonsense, but now he has made a way for us to repent. He will judge the world by the righteousness of a man, that man being Jesus. The good thing about the righteousness of the man Jesus is not only will the world be judged by that righteousness, but God has provided that righteousness for those who will believe to be a covering for them on that day of judgment.

Paul's reconstruction is, "Repent of your sins and put your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ." Repent. Believe. That's the reconstruction. That is *always* the reconstruction. What happens next we need to get our minds around. We'll just look at this in closing. Verse 32:

"Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, 'We will hear you again about this.' So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them."

Anytime we engage either in personal evangelism or corporately engage a city, here's what you could expect. First, there will be a group of people who mock you. Here's what I know. Even in this

room today, there are some of you who have come. You think I'm a clown. The fact that I have this mic on my face makes you fear for the future of America. You think we're a bunch of weak-minded buffoons. You're smarter than us, and you're dialed in in a way we can never hope to be. You almost pity us.

Okay. We should expect that. Then there's another group that goes, "We'll hear you again on this." I know some of you are here today. Some of you have come, or you've been coming, and you're like, "Okay, this is a little bit different than what I thought it was. Okay, I haven't quite heard it like this." You've been asking questions, and you keep coming back.

Then there are some of you who are like, "No, no, no. I'm already in, Pastor. All the way in. I laid my *yes* down. With all the zeal God has given me, I'm in for the cause of Christ and the mission God has to redeem and reconcile people around the world." Anytime we share, anytime we can engage, you can expect all three of those things to happen. If you haven't been mocked yet, you eventually will. Maybe not to your face, but maybe to your face.

Secondly, there will always be those who are like, "Okay, let me think about that." Then thirdly, some will believe. That's how you got in here. My guess is you were probably those who were going, "Okay, let me hear about that. Let me kind of figure that out. Let me hear more about that." Then God opened up your heart to believe. What's sad is those of us who are unwilling to see number two and number three happen for fear of number one. This goes back to our comfort and our ego idol. We don't want to be looked at as foolish. We don't want to be mocked.

So regardless of the souls that are on the line, regardless of the lostness that's all around us, man, we can't be made fun of. That would be worse than anything else in our world. Then we stay quiet and rob ourselves of the joy of watching God do the most miraculous thing in the universe through our weak and paltry testimony of his goodness and grace.

Earlier we raised our hands, and we said, "Yeah, I'm kind of like Lydia. Yeah, I know people like Lydia. Yeah, I'm kind of like the slave girl. I know people like the slave girl. Yeah, I'm kind of like the jailer. I know people like the jailer." Well, I earnestly believe God has put you here in order to engage them.

In fact, we didn't have time to unpack it, but there in Acts he says that God might seek them and find them, though he is not far from any of us. That's why you are here, so why don't we apologize to

those we haven't shared the gospel with yet and say, "I apologize. I should have done this years ago. I don't know why I didn't. I was just dumb, embarrassed. This is important to me, and I think it's important to you."

Then the second thing is in reading this, it grows my conviction that the thing we're considering with the Denton Campus rolling off to be an autonomous church is right and good. I'll tell you why. What you're seeing happen here is what theologians call *contextualization*. He is contextualizing the gospel to the city of Athens.

Here's what we can agree about. I think we can agree Denton does not have the same vibe as Flower Mound and Highland Village and Lewisville. It's just a completely different vibe. I'm not going to dog or make some hippy reference right now. I'm just saying it's a different vibe, and it's one I'm not uniquely dialed into.

Every once in a while, I take the A-train. We go up. My family and I have a pizza at Mellow Mushroom. We walk down to the square, eat some Beth Marie's ice cream. There's a little doughnut shop down there, a little maple bacon doughnut that's unreal. It sounds gross, but it's legit. We go down there, and we just play on the square and enjoy ourselves and go home. Beau Hughes and that staff live in Denton. They breathe Denton. I know Beau walks to the church from his house, embedded in that neighborhood. They know that place.

It's not the *only* component, but one of the components I believe is driving this forward for us is the idea of that very gifted, godly staff being able to contextualize in a way that engages Denton in a unique way for the glory of God and the good of that church. Might we always be a church that is lean and missional and longs to see men and women come to know Jesus Christ, cities and towns changed by the gospel and contextual, local ministries flourishing. Let's pray.

Father, help us. We need you. We love you. I pray you would stir up our affections. Remind us of how you rescued us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.