

Acts (Part 12) – The Role We Play

Matt Chandler – May 11, 2014

[Video]

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.

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, and the enraged crowd stoned him, 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.

In AD 44, King Herod Agrippa the First 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 turned from Jerusalem to Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their first missionary journey.

On his final missionary journey, Paul traveled through Galatia, Phrygia, and Ephesus, encouraging the disciples in the cities. He then spent three months in Greece before traveling to Jerusalem where he was arrested. Paul is then sent to Rome for trial, but the ship wrecked on the island of Malta. When he finally arrived in Rome, he lived there in two years before Nero ordered his beheading. After 28 chapters, the story of Acts came to an end, yet the story of the gospel didn't stop there.

Out of joy, the church multiplied. In AD 80, Christianity spread further to the countries of France and Tunisia. Twenty years later, the first Christians were reported in Algeria and Sri Lanka. By AD

150, the gospel reached Portugal and Morocco. Christianity found its way to Austria in AD 174, followed by Switzerland and Belgium. In AD 328, the gospel reached Ethiopia.

Almost 200 years later, Pope Gregory the First sent Augustine of Canterbury and a team of missionaries to present-day England, and within the first year, they baptized 10,000 people. In AD 635, the first Christian missionaries arrived in China. In AD 740, Irish monks brought the gospel to Iceland, but it wasn't until AD 900 that missionaries reached the country of Norway. Out of joy, the church multiplied.

By 1200, the Bible was available in 22 languages. In 1491, missionaries arrived in the African Congo with the first church located in Angola. A few years later, Kenya reported its first known Christians. Meanwhile in Spain, Pope Alexander the Sixth wanted to send Catholic missions to the New World. As a result, Christopher Columbus took priests with him on his second journey to the Americas.

In 1531, Franciscan Juan de Padilla started his mission work in Mexico City. By 1550, John Calvin sent French Protestants to reach the people of Brazil. In 1640, Jesuit missionaries finally reached the Caribbean, landing on the island of Martinique. Out of joy, the church multiplied. The early 1700s saw the rise of the Great Awakening in America where both George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards stirred revival throughout the colonies.

In 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention formed in Augusta, Georgia and decided to take the gospel out west. Thirteen families settled on the Texas plains, establishing Holford Prairie Church. By 1882, the church had grown to 37 people and had to move into town, creating First Baptist Church of Lewisville.

The church multiplied in 1962, planting Lakeland Baptist Church who in turn planted Highland Village First Baptist Church in 1978. Then, in 2002, Matt Chandler became the lead pastor, and the church became known as The Village Church. In 2005, The Village planted Providence Church in Frisco. Multiplication then spread along with City View Church being planted in Keller just a year later.

In June, 2007, The Village and Grace Temple Baptist Church united, and the Denton Campus was born. Due to a huge amount of growth, the Highland Village campus moved to a larger building, a vacant grocery store, and became the Flower Mound campus in 2009. That same year, the third

campus formed as The Village merged congregations with Northway Baptist Church, becoming Dallas Northway.

In 2011, the gospel multiplied further through The Village, planting The Door Church in Coppell. In 2012, The Village purchased a building for its fourth campus in Fort Worth, and the next year, the campus held its first service. Also in 2012, Matt Chandler became the president of Acts 29, an organization whose mission is to plant churches that plant churches.

In 2014, ever-increasing multiplication continued, sending Blake Chilton to plant Declaration Church in Bryan-College Station and Steven Lee to plant Redeemer City Church in Washington D.C. Then several years of prayer and searching were answered with the purchase of a building in Plano that will become The Village's fifth campus. Now today, we look forward to our Denton campus multiplying out to become an autonomous church.

Looking back on our history, all the way back from Acts to present day, we see the church multiplying. As bearers of the good news, God calls each of us into the story and mission. Sometimes it is hard. Sometimes we must leave friends and family behind. Sometimes we must give up our comfort. But whether we go, whether we stay, whether we pray or offer support, we are all wrapped up in this joyful call to take what started in Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. We are part of the next chapter in the story. What role will you play? Out of joy, the church multiplies.

[End of video]

It's good to know our roots. It's a good thing to know that our faith is not a blind faith but rather is historically informed and rooted deeply in not just the last 2,000 years but really going back to the creation of all things. I'm always encouraged when I can think on the fact that I'm a part of this line that goes back a long, long, long, long way.

If you have your Bibles, let's grab them. Matthew 28. We'll finish our series in the book of Acts in our time together today in the book of Matthew. If that seems strange to you, I hope it isn't strange to you. We're going to look at really the Great Commission or what Christ calls his people or his church to do. This is actually before he says the big Acts 1:8 verse that we've come back to over and

over again, that his disciples would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they would become his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth.

We know that Jesus speaking those words to those men and women has actually borne the fruit of us being in this room. As the video showed, it kind of spread and grew. Here we are, and we have really a reason to celebrate here this morning because through the last 2,000 years, there has been a multitude of forces that has tried to crush, squelch, or make us disappear. The more pressure that is put on the bride of Christ, the more pressure that is put on the church, the more she seems to grow.

Even with what appears to be increasing hostilities in our own time and space, one has to think that maybe we're about to see something spectacular from God as the temperature gets turned up. I've just never been a pessimist. It's not really in my DNA. I'm just really hopeful that as things grow seemingly more hostile that we see the church just strengthened and grow and be more and more serious about the things of God. What I want to do is I want us to read the Great Commission.

A little sidebar conversation. If you're not a believer, you're a guest with us, let me tell you our desire is that you would become a Christian. That's what we want. We want you to repent of your sins, trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all your sins, and find the fullness of life that can only be found in him. That's what we believe. Before I read this, and you're like, "What?" we want to see you become Christians. That's why you were invited, why we're glad you're here. We are hoping the Holy Spirit would open your heart unto belief.

With that said, let's look at this text, Matthew 28, starting in verse 18. This is the resurrected Jesus Christ. Been crucified, was in the ground for three days, was *resurrected*, not *resuscitated*. Are you tracking with me? Those things are not the same thing. He wasn't dead for 90 minutes and hung out in heaven for a while and then came back to tell. That's not what happened. Don't think I'm dogging those books that I'm dogging.

Sidebar. General rule, just so we can remain theologically healthy, if someone goes to heaven, and they get back, and it was all about them, that's not where they were. If somebody goes to heaven, comes back, and it was all about God and all about God's glory, and it was still spectacular because God was there, and he was unbelievable, and it was terrifying because the presence of God was there, yet in that terrifying place, I was filled with awe and joy, then you know maybe. If you just got to get on a swing with Pappy, then I don't know that's where you were.

With that said, back into the sermon. Sorry, that was a sidebar. I'm back in. Matthew 28, starting in verse 18. Here's what it says. **"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'"** I've said this before, so let's just do it. It doesn't matter what he says next at this point. **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."** This from the man who has beaten death. This from the man who told a storm to stop storming and it listened. This from the man who drove out demons without argumentation.

Let's have a little time of confession here just so we can learn each other. How many of you like those weird kind of *Paranormal Activity* movies? It's okay. It's a safe place. You like them. You just kind of like to watch them. All right. Okay. Raise your hand. My guess... I don't watch them. They freak me out. Plus, that's Tuesday for me. That's just what we do at the office. I don't want to watch what I do at the office when I get home.

In the middle of those movies, my guess... If I think back to the older ones like *The Exorcist*, *Rosemary's Baby*, they always bring in some priest or preacher, and they try to come in and argue with the demon, and they end up getting worked. The girl's head spins around. Pea soup is flying on everybody. They're quoting Scripture with a cross. They're terrified.

That just never happens to Jesus. In fact, they're mortified of him. First of all, they're the only ones who actually get his identity right in the New Testament, right? Jesus is walking the earth. People are like, "Oh, we think maybe you're John the Baptist reincarnate. Maybe you're Elijah or one of the great prophets." The demons are like, "We know who you are, the Holy One of God. Have you come to destroy us before the appointed time?"

In fact, Jesus is always shutting their mouths so they don't give him away. There is never any argumentation. There is never, "Flee!" and them going, "Make me!" That didn't happen. Crawl up the wall, you know. That has never happened. Jesus commands, and they obey. Why? Because all authority on heaven and on earth has been given to him. You want to talk natural law? He has the authority. You want to talk about cellular level stuff? He has the authority. You want to talk about demons and angels? He has the authority. "All of it belongs to me."

Look where he goes next. No pun intended. **"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples...'"** Let's just talk. This word *go* here... I think encapsulated in this word *go* here is that angst in us, that desire in us

for our lives to matter, for our lives to be filled with adventure and excitement, to leave our mark, to participate in something greater than ourselves, to be on a winning team. All of that angst that is in all of us is caught up in this word *go*.

This is God saying, "I do have some purposes for you." This is God saying, "I have uniquely designed you. I have uniquely placed you, so go." And do what? "Make disciples." Here is what we must know. He didn't say, "Go and make converts." He said, "Go and make disciples. Go and make followers of..." The goal of our going is not, when all is said and done, just to have people who say, "Yeah, I believe in Jesus," but rather have people who, by their lives, follow him.

"Therefore, since all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, go and make disciples." Where? "Yes." That's his answer. "Where are we supposed to go?" "Uh-huh. Yep." That's Jesus' response. Let's look at it. **"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."**

He bracketed the Great Commission. I don't know if you saw it, but he says, **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."** Then he lays out these commands. At the end, he goes, "And I'm going with you. I'm not sending you out to accomplish this on your own. I'm going with you. You're going to need to remember that I'm going with you because there will be days that it's difficult. There will be days that it's costly. There will be days that you want to shrink back. There will be days you want to hide. Just know I'm with you, and all authority is mine."

This is where Christian fearlessness should take root in the heart of the believer. He's with us. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he's with us. Your rod and your staff protect me. Right? He's always there, so there should always be confidence in the Great Mission to go and make disciples of all nations because he's always with us, and all authority is his.

Really what I want to talk about today, in light of where we've been in Acts and in light of where we're going as a church (I'll share some of that here in a bit), one of the things I want us to think about and talk about this morning is how this kind of plays out the, "All authority has been given to Christ. Go therefore and make disciples." Whether that is as you go or if it's, "Get in your plane and go," it really doesn't change the essence of what God has called us to.

I want us to look at this call at a micro level or what this should look like for us as Christian individuals. Then I want us to look at this at a macro level. I want us to look at this via the lenses of how we are accomplishing this as an organization. I want us to talk organic, how you're doing this as an individual, and then I want to talk about this as organization, how The Village Church has wired in order to accomplish this.

Let's start micro level. Let's start on the ground. This is you living your life day in and day out, alarm going off at 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning, whenever you get up. You get your cup of coffee, either going big time with the French press or doing your two-second Keurig. Then getting in your car, heading to work, working hard at work, and then back home. In the midst of all of that, in the daily routine of life, how are we to live to meet these ends?

I think one of them is a no-brainer. You know I'm going to say evangelism eventually on this one, right? We'll get to that one, but let me tell you one I think proceeds it and might be just as important. Repeatedly throughout the Old and New Testament, the followers of Christ are commanded to be hospitable, to show hospitality. I think Martha Stewart hijacked this word from us because at one time, *hospitality* had this really kind of deep-rooted meaning. Now, I feel like it's a dinner party. I feel like it's decorating the dining room table for seasonal decorations.

In the Bible, it's so much more than that. Yes, it includes dinner, but it is not just a dinner party. Hospitality, biblically speaking, is loving strangers, treating fellow believers, widows, orphans, unbelievers, the poor and needy, missionaries, foreigners, immigrants and refugees, even your own enemies as though they were your family. That's hospitality. Hospitality is to walk alongside of people for an extended period of time so the glory of Christ might be seen and embraced by them.

It is a longsuffering openness to share our lives. When Christians walk with genuine, gospel-centered hospitality, none of the labels the secular world wants to lay on us have a chance at sticking. When we don't, they all do. Are you tracking with me? If my home is open to people who are of a different race than I am, and I have good friends I walk with, who my children play with, then could anyone ever call me a racist?

How would that be possible when some of my better friends are African Americans and Latinos? How could I ever be accused of that? Because I'm doing life *with*. "Oh, so you're saying you're just friends with them so you can't be accused?" No, I'm saying I'm friends with them because the gospel informs that my relationships shouldn't be homogenous.

One of the dangers that occur in larger churches is all the pastor's friends, for whatever reason, start to become millionaires. It's a weird thing. I need to make sure that those who sit around my table at my house aren't people who can give something because the gospel would bid me that way and bid you that way. If we would do life with homosexual men and women, walk with them, have them in our home, walk alongside of them, be friends who disagree, then could that label of homophobe ever stick? No, it couldn't. This is hospitality. This is gospel-informed, "I'm in this with you."

Praise God. So many of you are doing such a great job of this. There is a large group of men and women here who work alongside Chin refugees here in Lewisville. You want to talk about longsuffering. If you have to walk with people who don't know the language, help them get jobs, support them as they go along, it's long. It's hard. It's a bit grimier than we want it to be, and it's hospitality. It's good gospel work.

We have a growing number of men and women who are beginning to walk alongside an organization called YoungLives which walks with teenage mothers. My older sister got pregnant when she was a junior in high school. It was one of the more difficult, derailing, soul-snatching moments of her life, and she needed people to come alongside of her and encourage her, love her.

She had family support. Many of these young women we're trying to encourage don't even have that. A lot of our families are getting involved in this. It's longsuffering. It's grittier than you think it's going to be. Don't go romantic on me now. "That sounds so sweet." No, it's grimier than that, and it's hospitality. It's what God has called us into because God has been unbelievably hospitable to us.

How do we walk in the Great Commission as the people of God? We show hospitality. We give to the poor without any expectation of repayment. We treat families, refugees, enemies, immigrants as though they were our own family. Think about that. *As if they were our own family.* We do so because the gospel bid us into it.

The second thing (and I won't spend hardly any time at all on this) is we share the gospel. We evangelize. Again, I think I've said this before. I just want to say it again because I feel like there is so much anxiety around this. It's not complex. You don't have to be offensive. It's, "How can I pray for you?" "I don't really believe in God." "I'm not asking you to believe in God. I just want to know how I can pray for you."

Then the good secular hypocrisy will be exposed. "Sure, man. Will you pray for me? I have this deal at work. My wife and I... Here is the spot we're in. I have a kid who has lost his mind. Will you just pray for me?" Then pray. Circle back around and go, "I've been praying. How are things going? As I was praying for you, this verse from our Bible came to mind. Here, I just thought it would encourage you. Why don't you read it?"

My experience has been that the next thing I know, I'm in a conversation about the Word of God with someone. "What does that mean? How does that work?" There is never anybody losing their mind. "How can I pray for you?" "How *dare* you, sir?" I've just never had that happen. It is that simple. Share the gospel with people. Evangelism.

The third way... This is micro level Great Commission. You have *show hospitality*. You have *share the gospel*. Then let's just call it *faithful presence*. Here's faithful presence. There is a story of a new convert to Christ coming to Martin Luther, who is the father of the Great Reformation. He comes to him and says, "Hey, I have just become a Christian. How am I to faithfully serve the Lord?" Luther asked him, "Well, what do you do?" He said, "I'm a cobbler. I make shoes," to which Luther said, "Then make a great shoe and sell it at a fair price."

"You're a Christian. What are you going to do now that you're a Christian? You make shoes, so I'm not telling you, 'No longer make shoes, and go to seminary.' What I'm telling you to do is make a legit shoe and sell it at a fair price." Faithful presence is us, as men and women, fulfilling our God-given obligation to work hard, to seek to serve all, and to walk in a type of humility, lowliness that is attractive to the world.

For all your evangelism and all your hospitality, it vanishes the second you're a bum at work. You're the guy who doesn't finish his projects, the guy who doesn't turn anything in on time, the woman who is constantly late to meetings. Right? All your hospitality and sharing the gospel vanishes if you're the guy or girl at work who everybody has to work around because you're lazy. This is faithful presence. We make a good shoe and sell it for a fair price. We don't take advantage of the poor. We work hard. We encourage our bosses. "Well my boss is a dog." Well every now and then, you encourage a dog. This is how we're to do it at a micro level.

At the church level, we've kind of organized to help us, as a church, operate this way. Here is something I thought of when I was writing this. When I was in my 20s, I had all these desires that I

wanted to see happen, but I hated institution and structure. What happened is God started giving me those things. We had to create some structure around it, lest the vine not be able to grow any more up the trellis.

If you're in here and you have that kind of weird American, "Institutions can't be trusted," I would tell you that all the desires of your heart are nearly impossible without institutional help. Someone has to organize. Someone has to build systems. Someone has to create on-ramps and off-ramps for all you want to actually happen. It's one of my favorite conversations with young church planters who remind me of my ignorant self.

Let me tell you how we structure here to help these ends and to help you walk into these ends. I'll just cover really three. The first one would be our Sending Program. We have a booth set up at our campuses about the Sending Program. The Sending Program is our way to encourage, train, equip, and release missionaries to the ends of the earth as well as church planters all over the country.

Where these things will overlap and where we can send church planters to the ends of the earth, we're just getting. The Sending Program is one of those kind of institutions, structural pieces we've put in place in order to train church planters, to help fund church planters, and then to release them as well as doing the same for missionaries.

If you feel that call, you're interested in that, I would just ask you to swing by out there. You have an Acts 29 booth out there. You have the Sending Program booth out there. Just take some information and start to consider what the Lord might be leading you into. One of the things that is becoming more and more evident to us as a church is that as you give your tithes and offerings, we set aside a pretty large portion to give away. In fact, you can see that in our finances.

We have no secrets here. You can hop on your phone right now and check our finances. You can see where all the dollars that come in go. No secrets. Internally audited, externally audited, all of it is online. No secrets here. Clean hands. We give quite a bit of it away, and it goes to fight social injustice, and it goes to church-planting organizations. It goes to missionaries, and it goes to church planters, and it goes to local ministries, and it goes around the world to push back darkness in the world.

What we've found is the sheer number of men and women that the Lord is raising up here to send to the ends of the earth is outpacing what we can organizationally give. What we want to see

happen more and more and more is smaller sending agencies inside of The Village Church made up of multiple home groups that rally around a given church planter, rally around a given missionary to support them via prayer, via encouragement, and via (at times) finances.

If you're a home group leader, every now and then, you're going to have a man or woman come sit in front of your group, and they're going to lay out before you, "Here's what we feel called by God to do. Here is where we're going. Here is what the church has done. Here is what we still need." They're going to invite you in. This should not be awkward for you. It should not be awkward for them. We are sending them out. The Village Church is not its staff. The Village Church is not her elders. The Village Church is the covenant members of this congregation. That's the Sending Program.

The second thing we're going to continue to do, Lord willing, is where it seems wise to us and right to the Holy Spirit, we'll continue to open campuses. We open campuses where we are already missionally engaged in communities. Are you tracking with that? This isn't a type of colonialism where we think The Village Church is the answer to all the spiritual issues in Dallas. That's simply not what's happening here.

You have to hear this. Where we have covenant members of the church who are missionally engaging in a given area of Dallas, which means there is already ministry happening on the ground. There are people being saved. There are ministries that are woven into that city. Then we will look to, as God provides an opportunity, to open up a campus there. So right now, Plano is online. We're hoping to launch the Plano campus some time this fall.

We're hoping early fall, but when you start talking building stuff, there are things that are just out of your control. Our hope is to launch. There is already great ministry happening on the ground in Plano, Texas. I know for years now, I have tried to tell those of you who are from Plano to quit coming here, and everybody just kind of rolls their eyes and says, "Whatever, bro. Get us a building."

We're moving that direction now. A core team has already begun to meet out there. Ministry is already happening out there. We have now for quite some time done our elder-led prayer out there as well as Group Connect out there. We're looking to launch in the fall and see what the Lord would have for us there in Plano. Where we see that in the future, we'll do that again, Lord willing.

The last one... I'll just say this. I don't feel like I'm over-speaking. Since I've already said it in two different services and no one has challenged me on it yet, let me say this again. I think just maybe last weekend might have been the most significant weekend in the history of our church. Last weekend, our Denton Campus's covenant members, close to a thousand strong, voted on whether or not to roll off and become an autonomous church.

In the ultimate act of multiplication, an existing campus with a building and a staff and a structure who... They're us. They're our brothers and sisters. We have prayed together. We have wept together. We have rejoiced together. We have enjoyed God's good graces together as family. We're in home groups together. We partner to support missionaries together. We are in this together.

They are as much a part of The Village Church as anyone in this room. They voted to the tune of 96 percent to roll off and become an autonomous church. I'll give you the sheer numbers of it, and I'll tell you why it so blessed my heart as a pastor. Of the covenant members who voted, 750 of them said yes, 30 said no, 1 abstained.

That's 96 percent who said, "Let's do it. I'm comfortable here. This seems to be working well. We've gone from next to nothing to well over 1,000 or 1,500 every weekend, but we believe by the Holy Spirit of God and the Word of God that there are better days for it. Although we can't see them and know this is safe, we're willing to step out into the unknown because we believe it makes much of Jesus Christ. It makes us desperate to see him work again in our hearts. We think this is going to be better for Denton and better for us as a church."

I praise God for it, and I'll tell you why. Let me tell you why this encouraged my heart in this. I couldn't go to sleep last Sunday night after we knew. We tallied up the votes Sunday night. I got the text late and then had a hard time going to sleep. I'll tell you why. I was 28 when this church hired me as pastor. I had very little pastoral experience. In fact, the biggest question was, "Can Chandler do with adults what he has done with college students?"

It didn't take me long to realize it's actually all just the same thing. Here is what I knew. I knew I didn't know anything. There was a type of desperation early on because we were a bunch of dumb kids. We were so hungry though, so hungry to see God pour himself out, so hungry to see God save and ransom. We had angst in our hearts to see marriages put back together and addictions conquered. We were just so hungry.

We would just cry out and pray and plead with God to do something we knew we could not do. My concern, as we've grown older, not just in age, but as we've been here more and more time, my concern is we begin to presume upon the Lord. My concern is that desperation that led us in the early days to wet the carpet with our tears asking God to do something has vanished into, "We're The Village." God help us if that's the truth.

See, you and I, in any little victory God has shown you in this place, are standing on the prayers and the angst of a group of older men and women who were here long before we were. Long before I became the pastor here, there was a group of men who met at a portable building over at the old HV campus. On Thursday mornings, they would lie on the floor on their bellies, and they would plead with God to do something.

They would get up early. It wasn't organized. No pastor drove it. It was just a group of faithful men who said, "You're bigger than we've seen you be here, God. Do something for the sake of your name in this city where marriages are so busted up or the drug issue is so massive." Do you know even now what is going on in this area with heroin and our students? Do you know how massive that issue has become in this place?

I know we have different cities online here, but in Flower Mound, Lewisville, Highland Village, do you know how big heroin is right now? Do you know how many kids are dying? Do you know what type of addiction is spreading? Do you know how busted up...? Do you know how much bondage is out there? This is not the time to lose desperation. This is the time all the more to have it and to plead with God.

I'm jealous for Denton because Denton gets to do that now. They get to lie before God and say, "Please do something. Move. Save. Grow. Mature us." I'm hungry for that heart to be rekindled here. What God has done here is awesome; 160 to 12,000 in 11 years? That's dumb growth, but if God is God, that's nothing. If God is God, what is that but a blip?

Do you know how many people are out there stuck in bondage? Do you know how many people are out there whose marriages right now...? You think all the Mother's Days out there or in here are happy Mother's Days today? Do you know how much loss is out there, how much bondage is out there? Gosh, some of it is even in here this morning. Let me *plead* with you: let us not grow civilized.

Just to kind of end this series, there was a group of men and pastors, evangelical leaders, seminary presidents who caught wind of what we were trying to do and just wanted to encourage us as a church in regards to staying lean, staying missional, and continuing to engage a city. They also wanted to encourage the Denton Campus. I wanted to show you a video.

This video is just men, everyone from John Piper to Dr. Al Mohler to even Tommy Nelson has a cameo in here. They just all wanted to encourage us to continue to engage people with the gospel message and wanted to encourage Denton to grow into all that Jesus Christ has for them. Then we'll celebrate the Lord's Table. I love you more than I can express.

[Video]

John Piper: Hello, Village. The last time we connected like this actually in person, your pastor's life was hanging in the balance. Now some of you may feel like the church you have loved and belonged to is hanging in the balance. I want to give you a promise from God. What makes this promise so special is that it occurs side-by-side in Philippians 4 with a sacrifice.

It goes like this. See if it doesn't apply to your situation. Paul says, "**I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice...**" Underline that word. "**...acceptable and pleasing to God.**" Then comes the promise. "**And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**" The sacrifice and the promise. If any of you are anxious or wavering, God's word to you is to believe the promise and embrace the sacrifice.

Eric Mason: Hello, Village Denton. I'm so excited about what God has been doing there. I remember when that campus was beginning and just all that God was doing in putting that campus together. To now see it transitioning into an independent yet accountable church, I'm really, really excited about that and excited about the leadership of Pastor Beau. He's a shepherd. He's a great teacher of the Word, and he loves God's people.

I talk to him on a monthly basis, regularly, and he always has a massive heart, a deep Pauline heart for you guys. I can't wait to see how God crystallizes the identity of The Village Denton in that

neighborhood and in that city locally, nationally, and internationally. Take care, and God bless. See you guys soon.

Tommy Nelson: To Beau Hughes and all of you folks there at The Village there on Oak Street, God bless you as y'all launch out as an, in a sense, independent church. We've been there since about 1976. May God give you a strong philosophy of ministry as to what you're trying to produce in your church of committed, competent, creative Christians.

May God give you a strong structure of the teaching on Sunday morning, of small groups anyone can do, small groups that not everybody can do, training men in the ministry, trusting them with the responsibility, and may he give you leadership that is orthodox and has moral integrity and philosophical, directional soundness.

May Beau give you the ability to delegate where you need to delegate, keep your personal life virile, always be having fun somewhat, every day, enjoying life. May you be mighty in prayer. If you're not mighty in prayer, you're going to substitute something that is an oar that is going to become a plank. That's dangerous. You don't build on oars; you just use them to move along.

Whenever you don't build on prayer to do great things, now you have to make a church that is just an intellectual church or an emotional church or a church that is always going to use a gimmick rather than a church that is trusting the Word of God to flourish in lives. Lord bless you. Great churches are great for the same basic and simple reasons. I'll be praying for you.

Albert Mohler: I'm really excited about God's purpose in his church, and I'm excited about God's purpose for your church. I believe in The Village Church. I believe in you, and I'm very excited to know what the Lord is going to be doing in Denton, and I'm excited to hear what's going on with your congregation. That word *congregation* is really important. The Lord is going to make you even more a congregation in the midst of this to his glory, and we'll be praying for you as you go. God bless you.

Francisco Bendfeldt: Hey, Denton. Yo soy Francisco Bendfeldt. Los saludo de Guatemala. My name is Francisco Bendfeldt. I am saying, "Hey," from Guatemala. We're one of your sister churches. We've been extremely blessed with a partnership with you guys. Today, I just really just want to send a word of encouragement to you guys into knowing that what you guys are doing in the

transition process from becoming an independent church is really going to be an example to be set literally for the world.

There are a lot more people you could imagine and a lot more churches who, when faced with a situation like you guys are going through, look for churches like you guys for an example as to what to do. People will look up to what you're doing as an example of how to live with a kingdom mindedness. What you guys are doing is not the norm, and it will set an example for churches around the world as to an understanding that the church is more than a name.

It's more than a person. It's a body. It's a reproducing body that will literally reach out to other people and bring them into salvation. I just want to encourage you guys. You're doing a great job. We love you guys, and we're really looking forward to seeing your example as to how to transition well. Love you guys.

David Platt: Village Church, let me join the chorus of many who are grateful to God for his grace in and through you and the history through which he's brought you, the ways he has used you as his people to make his glory known there and in all nations. When I've heard about this move of the Spirit among you and his leadership in this direction for you, what comes to my mind is Acts 9:31. **"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied."**

That's my prayer for you, that you would walk in the fear of the Lord as you walk through this process, as you take these steps toward becoming a church there in Denton, that you would walk in the fear of the Lord, not in the fear of man, not in the fear of the unknown, but in the fear of God and the comfort of his Spirit, following the direction of his Spirit, even pioneering new ground in a sense for many of you.

Even as the broader church culture looks on, that you would follow the Holy Spirit's leadership, and that as The Village Church multiplies, that it would multiply to the glory of God and the making of more and more and more disciples there in Denton and from Denton and all nations.

Mark Dever: Good morning, brothers and sisters at Denton. God's Word in Hebrews 10 tells us not to stop meeting together so we could encourage one another. We thank God for how you've been doing that as part of The Village Church and now the way the Lord has led you to become your own independent church.

By God's grace, I've gotten to know Matt Chandler over the years. Thank God for him. I've also gotten to know Beau. Beau Hughes came and spent some time with us up in Washington a few years ago. He took me for a long walk to see how I was doing, checked on my life, started pastoring me as soon as he met me.

I can understand why you would be a blessed people to have this man given to you by God to pastor you in these days. We're thankful for you. We're praying for you. We literally prayed for you in our elders meeting before, and we'll do that again, Lord willing, in the future. We look forward to partnering with you in the gospel. We thank God for you. God bless you in this step.

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