



The Pursuit of Discipleship

Hunter Hall – February 1, 2015

Good morning, church! It's a joy to be with you today. I love local weekends, a time when we can come together as a family and just consider some things locally here. Just together, we can have a conversation. We can dialogue back and forth. It's such a privilege and a joy to be with you here today. My name is Hunter. I'm the campus pastor here at The Village Church, Plano Campus. It's good to see you.

Today, I just want to consider the richness of this mission that we are called into by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. So go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 28. It's a familiar text, hopefully, to us as we consider this mission. If you don't have a Bible, there should be a black, hardback one around you somewhere. Feel free to take that Bible, use that Bible. You can take it home. We won't track you down. We won't think you're stealing. That's our gift to you.

If you're new with us today, maybe this is your first time joining us, again, I just want to say welcome. I'm glad you are here. I just want to catch you up on where we've been as a church for the month of January. Every January, we preach through a series on prayer. So this past month of January (I guess it's February now), we preached on three topics that are dear and near to our hearts as The Village Church: *racial reconciliation, the nations, and the sanctity of life*.

These three things are important for us to consider, that we're praying toward, that we're considering how we might engage into these areas. If you missed any of these sermons, I would highly encourage you to go grab the podcast or jump on the website. Take a listen. I know for me personally, the Lord did a really good work in my heart as he reminded me, as he pushed me toward deeper waters and being a man of prayer, a man who participates in these things and a man who models maturity toward these areas.

As I was thinking and praying about where we needed to go this weekend as we look back to January, as we look ahead at the beginning our James series next weekend, I had a thought. If I were

to summarize this past month in thinking about these three things, I think I would argue that all three of these things are discipleship issues. Those things are not the gospel, right? The gospel is the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and our trust, our hope, placed in him. That's the good news of the gospel. But our understanding, our engagement, in these things is motivated by the gospel. They are a direct result of our understanding of the gospel.

So our understanding as disciples of Jesus Christ to make disciples of Jesus Christ drives us to step into these arenas and share the hope of Jesus. It's about discipleship. Here's what I mean: We preach and teach on racial reconciliation because we as believers have been reconciled to God through the shed blood of Jesus. Now we are ambassadors of that same reconciliation to a divided world. We don't just preach for civil justice. Racial reconciliation is a gospel-motivated discipleship pursuit.

Take the sanctity of human life... Matt didn't just preach on that so that we might have a political rally and get all fired up from that standpoint. No. We preach on that because Jesus came to bring life and life to the fullest. As believers, we understand that because we were once dead in our transgressions and have been made alive in Jesus. The sanctity of human life is gospel-motivated discipleship pursuit.

Then take the nations... Michael Oh preached here a few weeks ago, and he didn't just come share cool stories so that we might get excited and give some money in a distant endeavor across the globe. No. We preach on the nations so that we might be stirred up to go to the nations, to share the hope, to share the message of Jesus Christ.

All three of these things are gospel-motivated discipleship pursuits. So in coming out of this month, I just want to take some time together today to encourage us, to remind us, that we have been called to a life of pursuit. It's a pursuit of discipleship. This calling is not just for us in this room. Believers in Jesus Christ globally, in every church, in every nation, are called to the same pursuit to make disciples.

So I want us to start today at a high level, considering some things that are kind of high-level, broad-ranged topics. Then I want to drive down before we talk about specifically here what discipleship looks like here at The Village, I want to drive it down locally to some application. You're in Matthew 28. Let's begin reading in verse 16.

"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, '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.'"

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for your fresh mercies this morning in our lives. I ask, Holy Spirit, that you would move in this place, that you would move in our hearts, that you would move on our property, that you would pour yourself out, that we would be awakened, that we would be alert to how you want to move and what you want to say to us today.

I just pray that as we consider your Word, God, as we look at it and read it and meditate upon it, that we would not simply be reading words on a page but that we would be believing the truth. As we sang earlier, before you the risen Lamb, our perfect spotless righteousness, that those wouldn't just be songs we're singing but would be realities of our hearts and lives. So Holy Spirit, have your way in this place today. We love you, amen.

What is the point of the church? What is her mission? That's the question we need to answer this morning before we look at the specific out-workings of discipleship. What is the mission, purpose, and the point of the church?

So tonight is the Super Bowl. We all know that, right? Okay. Super Bowl Sunday. Maybe you're watching it. Maybe you're not watching it. Maybe you're boycotting it this year because you're a Cowboys fan and you think they got ripped off. Any Seahawks fans in here? Yeah...one or two. Any New England ball-deflator fans in here? Brave if you are. I'm just joking! I don't know anything about it. I just heard it somewhere so I thought I'd say it.

But it's the Super Bowl. It's the pinnacle of the sporting experience. There's so much hype. So much entertainment. It's all over the place that honestly, companies know that 110 million people are going to be watching this thing tonight. So they are paying like \$4.5 million for a 30-second commercial, knowing that someone is going to buy their product. It's crazy. There's so much

entertainment, so much excitement. Concerts, and there are going to be so many chicken wings consumed this weekend.

But when it comes down to it, the Super Bowl is one team trying to score while the other team is trying to stop them. When you take away all the glamour, all the hype, all the excitement, all the shows, and everything else, that's what the Super Bowl is. So in thinking about the mission of the church... If you were to get down to the bottom of it, take away all the programs, all the equipment, all the lights, all the sound, the church's mission, the point of the church is to glorify God by making disciples. That's it. To glorify God by making disciples. That's every church across every nation in every setting. Glorifying God and making disciples.

That may sound like a simple game plan, but let me just tell you, that is a weighty call on the church. It's weighty. It's not easy. Because our natural drift is to not glorify God. In our flesh, when we are just living on our own, we're not just automatically making disciples. That's not how we're bent. That's not how we're drifting toward. You don't drift that way. Our drift is to isolation. Our drift is toward ourselves. Our drift is toward our comfort and what we want and what we think we need. But the mission of the church is glorifying God and making disciples. It's outward focus.

The danger is that so many churches can fall into this habit because making disciples, like I said, it doesn't happen on accident. Discipleship is an intentional pursuit. It takes focus. It takes attention. It takes at times of being reminded of the purpose. So let's look here in this text, Matthew 28, because Matthew is going to help us understand and frame up some things for us in regard to discipleship and what it looks like in our lives.

You'll notice this text is actually the last paragraph of Matthew's gospel, which means everything that is taking place here occurs after the arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. These are the final words recorded in Matthew. Everything previous in Matthew's gospel has been leading to this moment. We see right off the bat here that the disciples were told to go wait on the mountain for Jesus. Remember, the disciples had not yet seen Jesus with their own eyes.

If you'll remember, both of the women named Mary went to the tomb on Resurrection Sunday. An angel appeared to them and gave them an incredible status update that, "He is no longer here. He has risen indeed." So they ran off excited but fearful. As they're running off, they encounter Jesus, and they grab hold of his feet and worship him. Jesus tells them, "Go tell my disciples to go to the mountain in Galilee and wait for me."

So in this text, they got the word and went to the mountain. Now I don't know how long they were there. Like even if it was just a few seconds, my guess is that it felt like a lifetime to those guys. Their teacher, their leader, was arrested and crucified and they saw him placed in a tomb. Now they hear that he wants to come see them. My guess is that some of them are going, "Is this a hoax? You can't be serious." Then there are others who are so excited and so giddy that their pacing around. They're looking around. They're looking off in the distance, wondering, "Is he coming? Where is he? Where is Jesus?"

Then off in the distance, they see the shadow of a man approaching. They squint and strain their eyes, and they look. He gets closer and closer. Then before them, they see Jesus, the Christ, the resurrected King. What was their response? Worship. They worshipped him. They worshipped Jesus. Not just because they saw him with their own eyes, but because all of their fears, all of their struggle, all of their wrestle with the promises he gave, were alleviated.

Before them stood the One who didn't just talk the talk, but the One who walked the walk. When he said he was going to be crucified and on the third day he would rise again and he would rebuild his temple, that is the One who stood before them, and he was the proven, risen Son of God. They worshipped him. So Jesus comes up to his disciples and speaks an incredible word of power. This is how you start a conversation. This is what Jesus says to them when he comes up to them.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Again, that's how you start a conversation. Such assurance. Such boldness. Jesus just laid down the ace of spades and trumped every other authority imaginable, and that statement has massive implications because all of us in this room know that in a Genesis 3 world where sin reigns, there are some pretty strong influences, some pretty strong authorities in this life.

Jesus comes in, and he steps into this space, and he says, **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."** All authority, which means Jesus has authority over every area of life, over all of nature, over every disease, over all the devastating deaths, over demons, over angels, over the nations, over racial tensions and divisions. Jesus has been given authority over everything.

Church, we need to let that resonate within our souls today. That doesn't need to be just a statement we hear in our minds and then move on from. That for your fear, for your anxiety, about

the things in this life, the struggle and wrestle you have in this world, that statement has the power to shatter those fears. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus.

When someone says something like that, I know for me, I'm listening. Right? If someone is going to be that bold and direct and say something that massive, I don't care what comes after it, I don't care what that person tells me to do, I don't care where he asks me to go, whatever it is, I'm listening and I'm going to follow that word. Right? And here is what he says in verse 19, **"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."**

We know this right here. This is the core. This is the apex of this text. This is the Great Commission. **"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."** This verse is on coffee mugs. It's on t-shirts. It's on billboards. There are slogans built around this verse. If you grew up in the church, chances are you knew this verse before you could tie your own shoes. But my fear is that we make this verse just that. That it's just a cool verse to quote to our friends to show how trendy, to show how missional, we are. And we miss what Christ is actually commanding here.

Because here's the deal: It's weighty. It's dangerous. Christ says, **"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."** He's not posing a question here. He's not approaching his disciples and saying, "Hey guys, good to see you. Would you guys want to go make disciples? Is that something you'd be interested in doing? Do you have time for that?" Jesus isn't even suggesting that they should go make disciples. No. It is a direct, intentional command to go make disciples.

Several years ago, Isaac Wimberley and I went up to Chicago to lead worship for an inner city urban ministry because we're so urban. It was a great trip. I'll always be grateful for it. But the year we were there, a guy by the name of Francis Chan spoke. If you don't know Francis Chan, grab some of his books. He is an incredible man of the Lord. He was teaching on the Great Commission. He was teaching on our obedience as Christians to follow in the Great Commission.

He gave this illustration that I want to share with us today. He said, "Let's say I go to my daughter and I tell my daughter, 'Go clean your room.' Sometime later I hear my daughter walking down the hallway past my office and I hear her say, 'Go clean your room, go clean your room, go clean your room,' over and over again. And I ask her, 'Hey, babe, did you clean your room yet?' And she says to me, 'Dad, I haven't yet. I really wanted to make sure I memorized what you told me to do before I actually did it. So I memorized it. You said, 'Go clean your room.'"

Then the next day I see my daughter writing on a piece of paper, 'Go clean your room.' And I ask her, 'Babe, have you cleaned your room yet?' And she says, 'I haven't cleaned my room just yet. I'm almost there, but I really wanted to make sure I understood what you meant when you said for me to go clean my room. So I'm looking at the grammar. I'm breaking apart the sentence.'

Then the next day I see her gathered with a group of her friends in the living room, and they're praying. Afterwards, I say, 'Babe, have you cleaned your room yet?' And she says, "Dad, I am so close. My friends and I thought it would be wise to gather and pray about cleaning my room before I actually went and cleaned my room. So I'm so close. I'm just about ready to do it."

Then Francis said, "All the while, the room never got cleaned." And church, this is what we do with the Great Commission, is it not? More often than not, we want to talk about it, we want to study it, we want to memorize it, we want to build Bible study curriculum around it, and we don't go to the nations to make disciples. We can talk about it until we're blue in our faces, but it's time to stop talking about it; it's time to start acting.

Disciples of Jesus are called to make disciples of Jesus. It's a calling to be intentional with our words. It's a calling to be intentional with our actions, intentional with our beliefs. This is the pursuit. This is the pursuit of discipleship. Disciples of Jesus make disciples of Jesus. That's it. The text means what it means. Go make disciples.

Then what I love about this text... I love what Jesus says. He eliminates all excuses for us. He didn't just keep it at a high level in an ethereal great philosophical idea that we should go make disciples. No, he tells us how to do it. Three things he tells us to do. First, go. I think that is not only implied; it's an action. That we have to go. You don't accidentally make disciples.

This is the first part of the pursuit. There's an action required. We must go. We must be on the move in making disciples every single day, whether we're driving to work, whether we're going to school, whether we're joining a gym, whether we're jumping on an airplane to go on a mission trip... That where we live, work, and play, our eyes are fixed on opportunities to make disciples. We have to go.

Because I don't know if you've observed culture around us lately, but it is sprinting in the opposite direction of the Lord every day. The world is not going to sit around and wait for us to make

disciples. It's not going to hold back. It is going to continue to go in the ways of the world. So we have to be a people who is intentional about our going.

Something that is so scary to me is just how fast time flies. My twins turned two on Friday. We had a little party for them. I was looking through old pictures from just a couple of years ago when they were born and in the hospital, and I just thought, "Man, where did the time go? That felt like yesterday." If you're a parent of young children in this room, the days are long, but the years are short. Amen?

But time flies. Again, it's February 1. January is over. Where did it go that we now only have 11 months left in 2015? Time flies. I get so frustrated at myself when I think about all of the opportunities I could have had if I had been intentional about my going to make disciples. I don't want to look back on my life, I don't want to look back on the life of our church, and think, "Man, we missed it. We missed it. We just didn't make disciples well." We have to be intentional about going, about chasing after those who are running in the opposite direction from the Lord.

Then Jesus says we have to baptize. He says to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I don't have time to spend a lot of time here, but baptism is this. This is what we believe at The Village. Baptism doesn't save you. Christ and Christ alone through his death, burial, and resurrection, his shed blood, and our hope and trust placed in him. That's salvation. That Christ is the author of our salvation, not baptism.

But baptism is important. Baptism is a picture or symbol of a person's identification with Christ. Baptism is part of our obedience as disciples of Jesus. If we were to look into a bunch of different texts in the New Testament, here's what we would find. The New Testament doesn't know of disciples of Jesus who have not been baptized. Disciples of Jesus are baptized. It's part of this pursuit of discipleship.

If you're newer to The Village, we have a baptism class here at 9:00. We'll have another baptism class on February 15. You can come learn what we believe and why we believe what we believe about baptism. If you're a believer in this room and you've not yet been baptized, my encouragement is simply to please don't walk in disobedience to this. This is a good work. This is your role as a believer to model, to put before others, to declare to others that you have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

So we must go, and we have to baptize, and then Christ says the third way we pursue discipleship is by teaching. He says that we are to teach others in the ways of the Lord. That they would observe all and know all and grow in all of the commandments that Christ has given us. I think this is kind of hard for us to walk out, to play, to live in.

You may be reading this and thinking, "Hunter, I don't have the gift of teaching. I can't do that." Here's what I would suggest: Don't think of teaching as you starting a systematic theology class in your home for your neighbors. In fact, please don't do that unless they ask you. How many of you have young children in here? You are teaching every single day of the week in your home.

Those little eyes are watching you. How you live and how you respond to adversity and how you treat your spouse and how you handle your finances...you're teaching them every day. And you're either teaching them to observe what the Lord commands or you're teaching them to observe what the world commands. Those eyes are watching, parents.

So don't think of teaching as you standing up and presenting a lecture; think of teaching as you walking along side someone, modeling what a mature disciple of Jesus looks like, holding others accountable, pointing them in the direction of the Lord. Again, you don't have to have the gift of teaching to obey this command. Remember who Jesus was talking to in this text. His disciples were not scholars. They were not the sharpest tools in the shed. They were fishermen. They were farmers. They were the average Joes of the day. So let your mouth be filled with the promises of the gospel as you engage, as you go, as you baptize, and as you teach, and as you pursue others in this mission.

This is high-level stuff, right? This is what should mark every believer from every nation in every church. Disciples make disciples by going, by baptizing, and by teaching. But now I just want to take few minutes and bring it down here locally here at The Village Church to just talk about our specific mission. Again, if you're new here today, you came on a great Sunday. You're going to see who we are and what we're about. We're going to pull back the curtain and just take a look at what our mission is specifically here at The Village Church.

Our specific mission here at The Village Church is to exist to bring glory to God by making disciples through gospel-centered worship, gospel-centered community, gospel-centered service, and gospel-centered multiplication. If you're a covenant member, someone who attends regularly, that should not be new to you. I feel like we drive that home all the time. It's in every one of our

teachings. It's in our classes. It's in our meetings and our gatherings. But if you are new, this is who we are as a church. This is what we are about.

You may be looking at that going, "Man, that is so repetitive. Why not just say worship, community service, and multiplication?" I would say you're absolutely right that it's repetitive. We do that on purpose. That we have a tendency as humans to forget things so we want to make sure that every area of our lives, every area of our church, is saturated and motivated and is the foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel is not a won-and-done truth. You don't ever move on from the gospel. So in our worship, in our community, and our service, and our multiplication, we have to be, we must be, gospel-centered. That's what we preach. That's what we pray for. That's what we strive for. That's what we teach. We want to be intentional with these things because there is a type of worship that is not gospel-centered, right? We can declare extreme worth in our cars, in our homes, in our friendships. That's not gospel-centered worship. Gospel-centered worship is centered around the person and work of Jesus Christ, our resurrected Messiah, the One who holds authority over all things.

Community and gospel-centered community don't even compare to one another. One is about you. One is about others. Service and gospel-centered service are at complete opposite ends of the spectrum. Service without the gospel framework is exhausting. Again, it's about you. And then multiplication... I don't even know what that means without the gospel in there.

So here's kind of how we've defined this four things. We say that gospel-centered worship is the fuel for our discipleship. It's the fuel for discipleship. So our worship of who God is and what God has done is the fuel that keeps us engaged in the pursuit of discipleship. That God's worth fuels that discipleship. So when we gather in this place, that we are coming in here and we're declaring the greatness, the beauty, the majesty, of our God. That we are saying, "God, you are better than everything in life."

We're being reminded of the power in the name of Jesus to capture the hardest heart, to break every chain imaginable. Gospel-centered worship is both a recharging and a response to the glory of God in our lives. I want to encourage us with this... When we do gather in this place corporately, don't hold back your worship or the Lord. Don't hold back. We should be the most celebratory people as believers. We should have the most things to sing about, the most things to boast about, the most things to brag about in Jesus, in his glory, in his infinite worth.

In our singing, hear me, we're not just singing karaoke songs. We're declaring the greatness of our God, the splendor of our God, the holiness of our God, that we are saying to the nations, "Your love, God, is better than life." That's gospel-centered worship. It's not about us. It's about the glory of God.

Gospel-centered community is the intentional pursuit of being known in community. We say it is the context for our pursuit of discipleship. We were not created for isolation. Rather, we were created so we might be encouraged by one another, exhorted by one another, held accountable by one another to one another. So our gatherings, this place is not just a place to attend. We firmly believe it is a people we belong to.

This might sound romantic, but it's tough. It's messy. It's frustrating a lot of the time. You're going to hurt someone else's feelings. Someone is going to hurt your feelings in this. Iron sharpening iron is a lot more intense than we like to think of it. It's not some little hitting around of swords and iron. No, it's a grinding. It's a working. It's messy. It gets heated. But in the same breath, I'll say it is 100 percent worth it to be known in community...100 percent. I'll take all the frustrations and all the messiness and all the difficulty knowing that my brothers know where I am with the Lord. That they have my back. That I have their backs.

Tim Keller says, "To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is a lot like being loved by God." It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense. It humbles us out of our self-righteousness. It fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us. It's messy, but it's worth it.

This works out in The Village Church in home groups and recovery groups. Historically, we haven't had recovery groups here at the Plano Campus yet. We haven't even been open five months yet, so this February 4, we are launching our recovery ministry here at the campus. If you're in need of community desperately, if your marriage is on fire, if you're struggling and wrestling with things, come up here on every Wednesday night going forward at 7:00 p.m. here at the campus in the fellowship hall. Jump into a recovery group. It's available.

If you're looking for a home group, February 15, we'll have Group Connect here. Come meet home group leaders. Jump into a home group. Again, it's not going to be a cakewalk, but it will mature us

and shape us in our lives as followers, as disciples, of Jesus, in our maturing in our pursuit of discipleship.

Then we have gospel-centered service. If worship is our fuel and community is the context, service is the overflow of discipleship. We believe maturing believers of Jesus serve one another not to be noticed, not to be recognized, not to get a pat on the back or a badge from the church but because they realize their time, money, efforts, and energy are not means to an end in and of themselves. Those were gifts from the Lord to be used to serve one another. To lay your life down for the greater good of another person.

Service and gospel-centered service are two separate things. Gospel-centered service is content with staying behind the scenes, with staying on your knees scrubbing the floor to make sure someone else doesn't trip and fall over a wet ground. It's serving on a parking team when it's raining outside, when it's cold. That's the mature gospel-centered service.

You can jump on a greeting team or on a welcome team here at the church. We don't want to just be consumers. We don't want us to get in this mentality that church is about us, that church is about what my preferences and desires are. I have to get in and get out because I have so many things I have to do.

Instead, you say, "I'll give some time on a Sunday or a Saturday night. I'll serve with our children for the glory of God. Not only because there is a need, but because I understand that my maturity, my mark of discipleship, the overflow of this is that I want to serve others. My understanding is that Jesus Christ didn't come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."

We partner with a ministry called Campus Outreach. I don't know if you're familiar with them, but these guys work on the campus of UTD...Ryan Taloa and Josh Thomas. They make disciples on that campus. Our 7:15 service last night... I asked a question. "If any of you have been discipled by JT or Ryan Taloa, will you stand up? If came to the Lord because of them, will you stand up?" About 60 kids stood up. It was unbelievable.

These guys are on that campus, and here's the deal: They need some support from us. Not just financial, but prayer support. I asked them to come and be at all of our services this weekend. They'll be out in the foyer after this service. Stop by. Say hello to them. Let them share with you how

you can help and support them in that ministry. It's a way that you can serve. Whatever you do, whatever it looks like, the hope is that we would be a people who pursue others in our service.

Lastly, we firmly believe in gospel-centered multiplication. This is the result of discipleship. As we saw in our text today, disciples of Jesus make disciples of Jesus. We want to be a church that gives you every opportunity for this to happen. Where this plays out is typically through our short-term mission trips. You can go on our website right now and see all the mission trips that we have in 2015. You can go. You can be a part of something greater than yourself.

The Lord does something unique in your soul when he takes you out of your comfort zone and puts you in a setting that you're not used to. You just come back different. If you don't believe me, ask any one of the men or women in this room who have traveled overseas. Here's my challenge to us as a church. I'll stamp it. It's an official challenge. Go on one cross-cultural mission trip in your lifetime. Just go on one. That's my word to you. That's our challenge to you. Again, we try to make this as simple as possible for you. You can go with your home group. You can go with your family. You can go with your friends. Just go.

Gospel-centered worship. Gospel-centered community. Gospel-centered service. Gospel-centered multiplication. These are the four avenues in which we feel called to pursue discipleship at The Village Church. Let me just close by saying this today: If you feel overwhelmed with all of this, if you feel some anxiety creeping up in your soul as I was talking and we were looking at this text... Maybe you'd go, "Hunter, sometimes I don't even know if I'm a believer. I can't do this. I can't go make disciples. I can't teach. I don't know how to have those conversations. I don't know how to engage in those awkward situations. I don't understand it. I'm fearful."

Let me just encourage you with this one verse. Look real quickly back at our text in Matthew 28. Hold on. Look at this. Check this out. **"And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age."** You see that? The One who holds authority over every authority just gave this certified promise, this promise to his disciples of the command in which he gave us. He says, "In this mission that I am calling you to, in this mission that I am putting before you, I'm with you. I'm not leaving you to yourself."

A few mornings ago, my daughter ran into our bedroom super early, and she was weeping. She ran into our bedroom and jumped in our bed and threw her arms around me and put me in a death grip. I was still asleep so I was kind of waking up and was wondering what in the world was going on.

Someone was screaming in my ear. I said, "Baby, what's going on? What's up?" She just said, "I had a bad dream, Daddy." She's four. "I dreamed that a monster ate Bubba's homework." Bubba is her older brother. "And then Bubba had three legs." I just said, "Huh? What?" Then I said, "Baby, it's okay. Monsters aren't real, and they aren't going to eat homework. Homework is disgusting." She chuckled, but she still held onto me. She was still crying.

After a few minutes, the crying stopped, and I think more than anything, more than me explaining to her that what she was thinking was silly, she just wanted to know that Daddy was near. She just wanted to know that I was there for her, that I was going to be there to just with my presence let her know that it was going to be okay. That as silly as a monster that eats homework is, the truth is I'm with her. She knows that.

So in thinking about this mission, again, if there is fear in your or anxiety, if you don't know what to do or how to step into these conversations, know this: our Emmanuel, God with us, is with us to the end of the age in this call. He's not going anywhere. In fact, he has already gone before us in his divine sovereignty to prepare those conversations. As he pursued us, as Jesus pursued our hearts in saving us and making us his disciples, church, he is now with us as we now pursue others with discipleship. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the work you're doing in our hearts and our lives. I just praise you that you're near today. That we're not in this alone. That you are with us to the end of the age and that is a comfort and a promise that I will celebrate and boast in every single day of my life. We love you, Jesus. I pray that you would continue to move in our hearts. Holy Spirit, have your way, amen.