



## Ordinary Time

Travis Cunningham – May 27, 2018

---

Good morning. If you have a Bible, go ahead and flip with me to Acts, chapter 1. If you didn't bring a Bible, there should be one in the seat back around you. Keep that Bible. That's our gift to you. While you're flipping there, let me go ahead and introduce myself. My name is Travis Cunningham, and I've had the opportunity to serve here at the Flower Mound Campus as a groups minister for the past few years. It has been one of the great joys and privileges in my life to serve alongside you, to serve our city, to be on mission in our city, and to do gospel ministry here together.

In addition, I am one of your church planters here, getting ready to be sent back to California to Rancho Cucamonga to plant StoryChurch there. We are so excited and so thankful that the Lord is using you all to send us. I think we need to understand that. When Rob and I talk about being sent, it's not this organization called The Village sending us but the people, because the church is the people of God. So we are thankful that through your prayers, through your finances, through some of you picking up and going with us, we're going to see the gospel planted in what is currently a gospel wasteland. I'm super excited for that.

We just finished up our kingdom series last week as a church. Pastor Matt closed with talking about Pentecost. We spent some time in Acts, chapter 2. He built the idea around...*What do we do now?* How are we kingdom participants here and now in the time and place we find ourselves? We celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit upon God's people. Last year we equipped you all with what's known as the *Seasons Guide*. Hopefully you have one of those. The resources team knocked it out of the park with that one.

What we're doing there is trying to follow the historic church calendar to enter the story of Jesus more fully. You should know that Pentecost marks the beginning of what is known as *ordinary time*. Here is how we describe ordinary time. While the name can be confusing, *ordinary time* is anything but a break from entering the story of Christ. Whereas Advent is about the coming of Christ, Epiphany the manifestation of Christ, Lent the temptation and death of Christ, Easter the

resurrection of Christ, and Pentecost the Spirit of Christ, ordinary time is about the mission of Christ.

The church is empowered by the Holy Spirit and sent on mission to make disciples. It is ordinary because it is about living out the mission of God in ordinary, everyday life...our homes, neighborhoods, communities, workplaces, and to the ends of the earth. As a part two to last week's sermon, I want for us to consider together what it looks like to be a people who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are now just living on ordinary, everyday mission together.

One of those things we need to realize coming into this is some of those things we described...our homes, our neighborhoods, our workplaces and communities...can become so routine to us they can begin to dull us. They can begin to lull us to sleep, and we can become indifferent to the mission of Christ because we're just so used to the mundane, everyday of life.

What is clear about ordinary time is that the Holy Spirit empowers us to see those things as opportunities for gospel mission, not distraction to gospel mission. So I want to consider together what it looks like to be on ordinary, everyday mission. Let's read Acts, chapter 1. We're going to be in verses 6-8. I'll read and then pray.

**"So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'" This is God's Word for God's people. Let's pray.**

Father, we thank you for your Word. We thank you that by your Spirit you enable us to see it, understand it, and be obedient to it. I pray that you would do that in us today, that we would see Jesus Christ exalted in your Scripture and then be compelled from what you teach us in your Word out of this place to go share Jesus with more people. We can only accomplish that by your Spirit's power, so we pray that you would send your Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Again, Matt has established Pentecost has come. This is a historical event for the people of God. The Holy Spirit has come upon his people. The promised and long-awaited one is here. If you have been united to Jesus Christ in faith, that is true of you. Each of you who is a Christian has the Spirit

dwelling within you. The question, then, we must ask ourselves is, "What does this mean for me? What does this mean for us?"

What Luke tells us here in chapter 1 of Acts is that disciples of Jesus Christ are empowered to be witnesses of Jesus to the ends of the earth. We see that really clearly. The context we have of this story is Jesus spending his last moments with his disciples here on earth before he ascends to the right hand of the Father. These are the last moments with them and the last words he would speak to them.

In verses 4 and 5 he tells them, "Just wait on the Spirit. He will come. Pray. Wait. Fast. Seek. He will come," and he has indeed come. But then the disciples ask an ironic question. They ask him in verse 6, "Are you now, Lord, going to restore this nationalistic, this political power to the kingdom of Israel? Will you finally restore us to our place of prominence?"

That question is a bit funny or a bit ironic because these disciples had just followed Jesus for three years. They had heard all he had said. They had watched his miracles he had performed. They saw all he did in his day-to-day ministry, and they still didn't quite get fully what Jesus was after. That's really good news for me. I've been following Jesus for 11 or 12 years now, and all too often I ask Jesus the wrong questions or I'm seeking the wrong things.

Then we see in Jesus' response in verse 7 that he responds to them not in anger, not in frustration, not with disappointment or sadness but just a gentle correction of what they need to be concerned with. He says to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority." In other words, "Don't be concerned with that. That is solely under the Father's jurisdiction." Then he continues in verse 8 and says, "But you will receive Holy Spirit power."

What I want us to camp out in and think about today is what it looks like for us to concern ourselves with the things Jesus commands us to be concerned with and not concern ourselves with things that are outside of our own scope of authority and jurisdiction. What Jesus clearly commands his followers to be concerned with is spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Our concern is to be Spirit-empowered witnesses of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. He's going to give us four aspects of what that means. First, he's going to tell us *we are all witnesses*. Secondly, he's going to tell us *we are witnesses of Jesus*. Thirdly, *we are witnesses to the ends of the earth*. Fourthly, *we are witnesses by the power of the Spirit*.

First, let us consider what it means that *we are all witnesses*. A couple of weeks ago, there was a going-away party for a family that has been here for the past six years. The Lord has called them to go back to their hometown to be on mission there. We were able to celebrate all the Lord had done in and through them in this place. At the tail end of the party, they got to sit in the middle of a cloud of witnesses saying, "The Lord was good to us through you."

There was a constant theme of all of the words everyone spoke, the theme of, "You are a grace-driven, Spirit-empowered, gospel-intentional couple." These were some of the things we heard. One neighbor of theirs said when this couple moved into the neighborhood they came over immediately to their house and began game-planning a schedule for prayer and evangelism in their neighborhood.

Another person said he and the husband were having a meeting, and the husband had to leave that meeting early because he had to go home to share the gospel with the cable guy who was at his house. Another person said it was kind of fascinating to see this couple move into the neighborhood and immediately begin spearheading this Fourth of July festival for their town that would draw people out of their homes into relationship for the sake of gospel advancement.

Another woman said how she was just amazed how the wife every day would pray the simplest of prayers, "Jesus, let me be your hands and feet in the city today," and as Jesus gave her opportunity she stepped into those opportunities. Another couple said (and this was spoken in all sincerity, no flattery), "We want our kids to grow up to be like you." My wife and I were driving home afterward remarking about how abnormal that night was.

Then the gentle conviction of the Lord came to us and reminded us that's not abnormal; that should be completely normal of every single person who claims Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If any one of us were to be uprooted from this place and sent elsewhere, there should be family and friends gathered around us saying, "The Lord was good to you and to our city through you," because disciples of Jesus Christ are grace-driven, Spirit-empowered, gospel-intentional people.

There should be story after story after story of the Lord using us in our neighborhoods, in our homes, in our workplaces, in our communities. This is on display throughout the entire book of Acts. Jesus gives this command to his disciples, and they take it very seriously. We see the word

*witness* 13 times throughout this book, and a cursory scan will see it's connected to everyday, ordinary ministry of proclaiming Jesus to anyone who would hear his name.

It's almost like the disciples became disciples and they had a job description and their job description had just one word on it. It said "Witness." You'll notice the word *witness* is in the plural here. This means Jesus wasn't looking out at his disciples and then singling out, "Matthew, you can be a witness, and, John, you too. Peter, you make the cut. Everyone else, I want you to stand back on the sidelines and just cheer them on as they go." Rather, he was giving an inclusive command for all of his followers and all who claim to be his disciples, because all disciples are witnesses.

But here's my problem. Maybe you share in it as it pertains to being a witness. One of my thoughts is I begin to think this is for some sort of super Christian, like a Navy SEAL-type Christian, an elite, the Christian who has finally arrived. I look at the Bible and I'm like, "Well, of course Paul was a witness; he's Paul. Of course Peter was a witness. I know he messed up a lot throughout the Gospels, but he still is Peter."

Or in our day and age, "Tim Keller is the Christian pope, so of course he's a witness," or "John Piper's brain lives on a completely different plane than mine does. Of course he'll be a witness. Those guys are all a different class than me, right?" Wrong. Same Savior, same Spirit, same call. Or I go over *here* and think, "Well, I'm not gifted in that way, so I'm not called to be a witness." Think about how silly this sounds.

"I don't have the gift of service, so I'm going to sit over here and let you serve me. I'll never serve you, because I'm just not gifted in that way," or "I don't have the gift of faith, so when I'm facing obstacles in my life I cannot overcome I never have to believe God for anything, because I'm just not gifted that way," or "I don't have the gift of mercy, so as enemies push down on me I don't have to be kind to them. I don't have to extend the kindness of the Lord to them, because I'm just not gifted that way."

That sounds so silly, because all Christians are called to serve. All Christians are called to live by faith. All Christians are called to be merciful as the Lord is merciful. In the same way, all Christians are called to be witnesses whether or not you are gifted in that way. At the root of both of those thoughts for me is this false truth that I just don't have what it takes. In doing so, I'm saying to Jesus, "I'm not going to do what you've called me to do because you have not equipped me to do what you have called me to do," and that could not be more false.

To not walk out in my calling as a witness is disobedient and sinful. So, friends, let us all see today that every single one of us who has been saved by Jesus Christ is a witness. Every one of us. So now, truly, the question becomes...*What does it mean to witness?* I'm a huge Lakers fan. I was born, and the first outfit that was put on me was an Eddie Jones jersey. I got to grow up in one of our golden ages in Laker Land. I got to witness five championships. Mavericks fans, I'm sorry. Maybe one day you'll experience what that means.

When I grew up, naturally I became this huge Kobe Bryant fan. Then in 2003, this 18-year-old, 6'8", 250-pound monster of an athlete from Akron, Ohio, burst onto the scene, and he was dubbed "King James." He was sponsored by Nike, and Nike began this campaign where they just said the one word *Witness*. They made tee shirts and bracelets and hats.

In this campaign, what they were marketing was this fact that "What you are witnessing in LeBron James is probably a once-in-a-lifetime talent. It's probably a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Don't fight it. Just enjoy it. Just watch it. Just witness all he is doing and accomplishing." As a Kobe fan, naturally I was indignant toward that, because he hadn't earned what Kobe had earned, but what we've seen in the last 15 years from LeBron is nothing less than stunning.

When we're talking about being Spirit-empowered witnesses, there are similarities there. When we are witnesses, *we are witnesses of Jesus Christ* and all he has done in our place and all he is doing in this world. We get to sit back and watch it and enjoy it and witness to it. Luke writes in his first book... If you don't know, the books of Luke and Acts are one book in two volumes written by the same author. He says in chapter 24, verses 44-49...

**"Then he [Jesus] said to them [his disciples], 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them,**

**'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.'**"

Do you notice all of the similarities in language there? In verse 48, Jesus uses the same word *witness*, but he connects it with this phrase *of these things*. What things? All of the things he had just explained, that the Scriptures would testify to the person and work of Jesus Christ, testify to the gospel of Jesus Christ, that the Son of God would enter humanity and live that perfect life God commands all of us to live and where we so fall short of it.

But Jesus did not fall short of it, and he did live that life. Then he stepped in our place, took on our shame, took on our sin, took on our failures, and absorbed the Father's wrath in our place as our substitute. He died in our place but would not lie dead but would be resurrected on the third day, and through repentance of our sins we can receive the forgiveness of the Lord, and not only that, but we receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

This is what we are witnesses of: the person and work of Jesus Christ. In the same way we have witnessed LeBron's career for the last 15 years, Jesus' disciples have witnessed Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. This is a historical life. It's a real life. This actually happened. Not only that, but we witness the power of the gospel unto salvation.

In the same way LeBron fans have been in my ear for 15 years saying, "Just enjoy it. Don't fight it. Revel in it. Just enjoy it. It won't happen again," we get to go around to our friends and family and communities and workplaces and neighborhoods, saying, "Look at Jesus. Look at all he can do. Look at all he has done. Are you broken? You can have healing. Are you orphaned? You can be adopted. Are you an enemy? You can be a friend through the person and work of Jesus Christ."

Luke tells us in chapter 24 that this gospel is to be proclaimed. It is to be preached, to be heralded, to be spoken to all people. This is what Spirit-empowered witnesses do. How about we just call it *evangelism*? This is how author and missionary Mack Stiles defines evangelism. He says, "Evangelism is teaching (heralding, proclaiming, preaching) the gospel (the message from God that leads us to salvation) with the aim (hope, desire, goal) to persuade."

Evangelism is teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade. This is what we are called to do, friends. We are called to the work of evangelism as Spirit-empowered witnesses. So let's talk for a minute about what it looks like to do evangelism in our specific time and place that we find ourselves.

My wife and I are originally from Los Angeles, and then we spent some time up in Portland, Oregon. About four years ago, we moved down to Texas, and you could say we experienced a little bit of culture shock. I like to say I went from being the most conservative person in California to the most liberal person in Texas with one move. One of the most fascinating aspects of the culture shock is the Christian subculture that exists here that just doesn't exist where I'm from.

Where I'm from, there's a social cost to being a Christian. There's almost a social gain to being a Christian where we find ourselves here. One example of that is when we meet new friends or neighbors in California, as we begin to get to know them and they ask, "What do you do for a living?" and they find out I'm a pastor, it usually means end of relationship. However, here in Texas it has been a very different experience.

We had a lady who moved in below us at our apartment complex, and when she found out what I do for a living she began to bless me in the form of chocolate lava cake way too often. We had to cut her off. It was like she would wait for me to come home from work and look out the window and be like, "Hey, he's back." She'd pop out her door, and as I was getting ready to go up the stairs she would hand me that, and then she would say, "This is to enable you to do the Lord's work." I'm a double pastor now, so we need some of that.

It's funny, but then I would start gearing my conversation, saying, "No, no. We're all called to do the Lord's work. Not just me; *all* of us," and start redirecting the conversation there. But family, we do face a problem. Some of that hostility and post-Christian environment we see up in the Northeast and now on the West Coast is making its way here, and I think a lot more rapidly than we realize.

That is why we, as a church, have been talking a lot about what it looks like to live on the margins of society. We can take heart, because the gospel always advances from a place of subversion and the people of God always thrive on the margins. We don't need to despair; rather, we just need to realize some of our historical ways of living as the people of God are changing. Not fight it but step into it for the sake of gospel advancement.

When it comes to being Spirit-empowered witnesses, we need to begin to reorient the way we practice evangelism. What I mean is it's becoming increasingly less common for us to come into contact with people who have any understanding of the Bible, of the Lord, of the people of God, of Christianity. What's becoming more common is to deal with people who have no idea about the things concerning God and his people.

So some of our ways of doing evangelism in which we calendar an event and invite to that are going away. Instead, we must be a people who are mobilized for ministry in the everyday, ordinary things of life, because a mere invitation to an event or program is unlikely to yield much fruit. Tim Chester and Steve Timmis in their book *Everyday Church* tell us this about evangelism:

"If we could place people on a range of one to ten depending on their interest in the gospel, where one is no interest and ten is a decision to follow Christ, lots of evangelism assumes people are at around eight. We teach our gospel outlines. We teach answers to apologetic questions. We hold guest services. We put on evangelistic courses. We preach in the open air or knock on doors. All these are great things to do, but 70 percent of the population is at one or two."

Let me put it this way. The front door of this local church is no longer the place we gather in week-to-week but the homes we all scatter to from this place. Do you realize that your home is a gospel outpost in your neighborhood and it is now being used as the front door to the people of God and to this local church? We must rethink the way we do evangelism. It's no longer a calendar event we schedule and invite to but, rather, it becomes a part of every event that is on our calendars.

Every event is to be used for the sake of the Spirit's work. So as Spirit-indwelt kingdom participants, we see our homes, our finances, our workplaces, our families, our calendars as missionary ammunition to accomplish the mission of God here on earth. Let me offer up two really simple ways we, as The Village Church, can step into this.

First, let us be a people who are known to build real, honest friendships with people who are unlike us, with people who are not believers. As the people of God, we need to rediscover what it means to be friends, to build friendships. Not in such a way that tells those who are not believers, "My relationship with you hinges on the fact of whether or not you decide to follow Jesus."

Yes, put your cards on the table. You want them to follow Jesus, but if they choose not to, will you still love them? Will you still spend time with them? Will you still care for them? Will you still invite them into your home? I hope so, because these are image bearers who are dignified and worthy of relationship because they are made in the image of God. So, church, let us be a people who pursue lost people in our city, in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods, and then invite them into our lives in real friendship.

Secondly (and this is connected), let us be a people who practice real biblical hospitality. Friends, if you want to invite my wife and me over to dinner, we would gladly accept that. Just make chocolate lava cake. But if we do that, let's call that *fellowship*; let's not call that *hospitality*, because in the biblical sense, hospitality is welcoming the least and the last and the lost, the marginalized, the outcast, the lonely into our homes, into our lives, into our families, around our tables.

Isn't that such a picture of the gospel? We were the least, the last, and the lost, and God invited us to his table. We were beggars who had no meal, but he now lets us feast on the Bread of Life. Let us act like Jesus in our city and practice real hospitality. Our city needs it. So then *where* are we witnesses? Acts 1:8 is incredibly clear that *we are witnesses to the ends of the earth*, because Jesus loves and died for the sins of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, and he shows no partiality in extending salvation to all who would call upon his name.

He establishes that here when he says, "In Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Friends, while those are geographic locations, what the author is trying to get at more than just geographic locations is people groups. He's trying to get after the ends of the earth represented by people groups. We see that in Luke 24. Matthew tells us the same thing in chapters 24 and 28. Mark tells us the same thing in chapter 16.

John tells us in chapters 20 and 21, and then Revelation 7 paints this beautiful picture of what heaven will look like if we, as God's people, would step into our roles as Spirit-empowered witnesses, where every tribe, tongue, and nation is surrounding the exalted Christ, worshiping him forevermore in unison, because God's plan from the beginning was to be a global God of a global people under our global Savior.

When he establishes his covenant with Abraham in Genesis, chapter 12, he says, "I will bless you so you can be a blessing to the nations." From day one, the opening pages of the Bible, we see that God has the globe in his mind. As a church, what we need to know is that Jesus has no prejudice based on race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, location, political party, or family of origin when it comes to salvation. Instead, he intends to use us, each of us, to make disciples of all nations by bearing witness to Jesus Christ.

The only way we can accomplish that is for us to apply the gospel to the deep parts of our hearts. First, we need to repent and ask the Lord to rid us of any ethnocentric thinking. Do you realize that

almost everyone sitting in this room this morning is what the Bible describes as the "ends of the earth"? We *are* the Gentiles. We *are* the pagans.

We are about as far from Jerusalem as it gets. North Texas is not the pinnacle of the gospel, but praise God that millions of men and women throughout church history picked up their lives and moved and said, "I will share the gospel with others. I will learn their language. I will be a part of their cultures. I will get to know them, and I will share Jesus with them." If they didn't do that, the gospel would have never reached us, friends. So let us play our role in that.

Secondly, we must repent and ask the Lord to rid us of any indifference or apathy we have toward the unreached people groups of the world. I was really sobered this week. Brian Walck (our director of global missions) shared with us that three billion is the number of people in the world who have little to no access to the gospel. That's 42 percent of the world's population. Three billion image bearers who will live their entire lives and die without ever hearing the good news of the God who loves them so much he sent his Son to save them.

Friends, we must commit our time, our talents, our treasures, our lives to getting to those three billion people who do not have access to what we're doing right now. My wife and I have the opportunity and privilege to support some church planters throughout the Middle East, and the reports we get from them are so encouraging. We call these places *closed countries*, but the reports we are getting could not be more in contradiction to that. The gospel is exploding across these countries.

Last week, I had the opportunity to meet with Dr. David Garrison who spent 30 years on the field in primarily Muslim countries. He reports that since 2001 there have been 69 movements of the gospel among the Arab-speaking world, and here is how he qualifies a movement: 1,000 confessing, baptized believers in one specific language or people group or a fourth-generation church plant in that same people group.

Friends, we have been praying for revival, and the Lord is bringing it. Let us open our eyes to it. Let us see it. Let us get behind it. Let's give to it. Then, ask the Lord if he is calling you to go be a part of this. I think some of us in this room today... All too often we stand up here and say, "We want to go to the ends of the earth, but not everyone is called to go there." Yes and amen. However, I think some of you *are* called to go, and to not go is to be in disobedience, but to go is to be obedient and realize obedience is always tied to joy.

Friends, we want to help you get to the ends of the earth. This week we have Go 101 meetings coming up in which you can learn how to do that. They are this coming Wednesday and next Sunday. You coming is not you signing up to go, but I hope you do learn some more information and find ways in which you can participate and be a part of this whether you go or not. We want to do this. We are committed to being a part of reaching the unreached people groups.

The second way you can get behind this is we have four church planters going to very specific locations where the nations are present, and each of us, our teams, our people, need you to continue to pray fervently for us that the Lord would bring a harvest, give to us so we have the ability to be unhindered for gospel mission, and then if the Lord compels you, go with us. We need more gospelites willing to witness Jesus in these locations.

Let us be a church that desires a legacy that outlives every single one of us, that outlives the name on the wall, the building we meet in, the staff on the website, the people in the chairs. Let us be a church that says, "We are committed to living for Jesus, multiplying disciples, dying, and being forgotten for the sake of the glory of Christ." Let us be that church.

As I was studying this week, I found myself becoming heavy or burdened. I looked at the task I was called into. I began to evaluate my own life in light of that. I looked out at the unfinished business in the world, and I started becoming a little bit discouraged, because I became acutely aware of how totally unable I am to accomplish this task, how totally unable *we* are to accomplish this task.

Then the Spirit of God used his Word to remind me that he dwells within us and empowers us for this task. Yes, we are unable, but he is able. Yes, we are weak, but he is powerful to accomplish this. Without the Spirit of God we would have no option *but* to slip into despair, but, friends, we have no room for despair because we have the Spirit living within us.

*The Spirit empowers you for everyday, ordinary mission* where you find yourself in a few ways. First, he is powerful in your weakness. As you are a weak and humble vessel, you can pray and ask the Spirit to move powerfully through you and then watch him show off the glory, the might, the majesty, and the power of God through you. He is faithful to do that.

Secondly, the Spirit is powerful to give us wisdom with our words in the work of evangelism...what to say, what not to say, when to say it, how to say it. He gives us grace to be a people whose speech

is seasoned with salt. He's able to call to mind specific Scripture that will minister to very real people facing real situations in which the real Jesus wants to show himself more powerful and better than those situations. Where we are inadequate with our words, our strategies, our eloquence, all of those things, he is powerful to use it.

Thirdly, the Spirit gives us boldness in our witness. Like my friend who every day prayed, "Jesus, let me be your hands and feet in this city." As he gave her opportunity, the Spirit gave her the boldness and the courage to step into those things, even if she did so awkwardly, like I do so often. He's powerful to give us courage to not worry about our reputation, to not worry about what others think of us, to not worry about how perfectly we're expressing these things, but to just say, "Look at Jesus Christ."

Then finally, the Spirit empowers us to magnify Jesus. John 16:14 reminds us the Spirit's purpose is to glorify Christ. J.I. Packer has called the Spirit's work a *floodlight ministry*. In the work of evangelism, the Spirit empowers us to take the floodlights of our lives and shine them directly on Jesus Christ. This is good news for me. I don't know about you.

As I build relationships with unbelievers and they get really close to me and really close to my family, like behind the façade of who I am trying to present myself to be, the *real* Travis, do you know what they see? They see a guy who is striving for holiness but way too often falls short. They see a guy who sins against them and against others and against the Lord. They see a guy who is weak. They see a guy who is needy.

What I get to do with the floodlight of my life is shine it on Jesus Christ and say, "Praise God the gospel is not about *my* perfection but about *Jesus'* perfection. Praise God the gospel is not about *my* power but about *Jesus'* power. Praise God the gospel isn't that Jesus comes and saves people who have finally attained a certain level of perfection, but he saves the worst of us, fully and freely and forever."

The Spirit empowers us to take the floodlights of our lives and say to our friends who are not believers, "Please don't look at me; look at my Savior. Don't look at me; look at Jesus." Do you know what's really cool about the Spirit's power? He and his power are available to all of us all the time. Those of us who are believers in Jesus Christ have the Spirit living within us, always available to us. We can call on him at any time and he's powerful to use us.

Way too often, so many of us become functional deists, confessing with our mouths that we believe in this powerful God but living day to day as if he doesn't exist. Church, let that never be an accusation made about us. May we be a people whose testimony is crazy, unbelievable things are happening in our midst, and we can't explain it because we couldn't fabricate that. That was the Lord. May that be true of us. For that to be true of us, we need to yield ourselves to the Spirit, submit to his power, not try to control, and let him move.

Friends, as I begin to close, I want to convince you of something. I want to convince you that you cannot live the fullness of life Jesus promises you apart from being a Spirit-empowered witness. I want to convince you that you cannot enjoy Jesus fully apart from doing the work of evangelism. Here's how I like to think about it.

Before my daughter was born a few years ago, we went all out preparing her bedroom. We call that *nesting*, right? Our wives are not birds. Let's not call it that. So we go all out preparing her bedroom. The first thing we want to do is paint the walls, so we go down to Home Depot and look at that wall that has those 43 billion different colors on it, and of course none of them worked for what we needed, so we decided to create our own color, which is really cool that you can do that.

So we tell the guy who's working there, "We want this coral-type color." He says, "Okay, I can do that for you." He gets this gallon of white base paint, puts it on this machine, shoots a couple of drops of different colors into it, puts a cap on it, hooks it up to this earthquake thing, and then shakes it for three minutes or so. What that machine is doing is mixing all of those colors together and getting it to every corner of that bucket.

After a few minutes, he pulls the cap off. I'm just like, "Whoa! It worked." Then I went to apply for a job there just so I could do *that* all day long. When it comes to us being new creations in Christ, we become like that brand new bucket of paint, that white base. The Lord injects the gospel and injects the Spirit in our lives, and God has every intention of getting those to every corner of our hearts, our minds, our thoughts, our actions. He wants the gospel and the Spirit to cover all that we are. Theologically, we call this *sanctification*, looking and becoming more like Jesus.

What's important to note is in the same way that machine has to shake up that bucket of paint, God sometimes has to shake us up a little bit to get the gospel and the Spirit to some of those edges of who we are. What I found in studying this week and praying through this is that I'm resistant to Spirit-empowered witnessing in a few particular areas. Like, "Okay, Lord. You want me to use my

home as a gospel outpost in my neighborhood? That's my sanctuary. That's where I get my quiet time. That's our protected space, our safe space. That's off limits."

Or, "Lord, you want me to live sacrificially and generously with my finances? You want me to give till the place it hurts a little bit and I have to alter my lifestyle? Lord, we're a one-income family. Come on." Or, "God, you want me to use my time for the sake of gospel mission? What about my vacation? And the Cowboys play on Sunday, so we can't do much there, and our kids are in 407 extracurricular activities, so the calendar is full. We can't do that."

God shakes me up a little bit and covers those thoughts in the gospel and the Spirit and reminds me via his great love toward me in the gospel, "Oh, you don't want to be hospitable with your home? Let's talk about the fact that you were an outcast outside of my gates but I swung those gates open wide and invited you into my home and gave you a family and gave you a room and gave you a meal. This is the gospel. Let's talk about hospitality."

Or, "You don't want to live generously and openhandedly with your finances? What about my generosity, that I would send my only Son and he would give all up to accomplish redemption in your place for you? Let's talk about generosity." Or, "You don't want to use your time sacrificially? What about my divine patience with you? As you rebelled against me year after year after year, I still pursued you, and I most often pursued you in saints who gave up their time to spend it with you, to share the love of Christ with you, and I would use them and the gospel to save you."

So he shakes me up and covers those things, and I get to repent from those things. Beauty is produced from that, and the Lord compels me to use my home differently and my money and my time differently and to see those things as opportunities for mission and for things that matter eternally. I see the Spirit begin to bring about fruit from using those things differently, and I see souls get saved and lives get changed and homes become healed.

I look more like Jesus, and I get to enjoy Jesus more. I experience more freedom in Jesus and more victory in Jesus, and my worship expands, and God gets the glory that's due only his name. Friends, that's what the Lord is calling us to today. He is inviting us into living lifestyles that disciples of Jesus live. We are invited to be Spirit-empowered witnesses of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth, every single one of us whom the Lord has saved.

The question is...*What are we going to do with that invitation?* We can choose to ignore that invitation and continue in boredom or laziness or apathy or we can choose to step into that invitation and say, "Lord, I don't know what this means for me, but here I am. I want to be used by you and then jump on the thrill ride of your life."

Friends, the Lord by his Spirit will use you in powerful ways. I don't know about you, but as I look around, I see so many people and so much suffering around me. I see people who need Jesus. We have the single thing that can change hearts and lives in the gospel of Jesus Christ, so let us be faithful to be his witnesses, here and to the ends of the earth. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank you that you sent your Son to redeem us, to save us, and we thank you that, as saved people, we are also sent people and that we are not sent alone but we have the powerful Holy Spirit living within us, enabling us for this task.

So, God, I pray that you would bless these men and women, you would be gracious to them, you would make your face to shine upon them so they can be gospel witnesses, empowered by your Spirit, from their neighborhoods to the nations. We can only do this, God, if you empower us for that task. So we plead with you to help us for the sake of Jesus, for the sake of his glory, for the sake of his name, for the sake of his renown. It's in his name we pray, amen.