

# Urban Evangelism and the Holy Spirit in Ephesus

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 08 August 2021

Preacher: Rev. Raymond Hudson

[ 0 : 00 ] We hope that you enjoy this teaching from Christ Church. This material is copyrighted and no unauthorized duplication, redistribution, or any other use of any part is permitted without prior consent from Christ Church.

Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at [ChristChurchEastBay.org](http://ChristChurchEastBay.org). Good morning.

I'm Carrie Moulton, and I'm a member of the Oakland Women's Little Faith Group, and the scripture lesson today is a reading from Acts of the Apostles. While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus.

There he found some disciples and asked them, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? They answered, no, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. So Paul asks, then what baptism did you receive?

John's baptism, they replied. Paul said, John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.

[ 1 : 13 ] On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

There were about twelve men in all. Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.

But some of them became obstinate, and they refused to believe, and publicly maligned the way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him, and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.

This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and the Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured, and the evil spirits left them.

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.

[ 2 : 20 ] Seven sons of Siva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day, the evil spirit answered them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?

Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. When this became known to the Jews and the Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor.

Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly.

When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to 50,000 drachmas. In this way, the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Well, thank you for that reading, Carrie. Christ Church, it's been five Sundays today that our lead pastor, Jonathan, has been away from us, and we've been praying that he's had a restorative, restful vacation with his family out on the East Coast.

[ 3 : 40 ] And I've been super thankful for guest preachers to come like Christine. And today, we'll have Pastor Ray Hudson visiting us today to bring us the word. Pastor Ray is a church planner.

He has tons of church experience, but he's now planning a church here in Berkeley called Our City Center Church. We want us to be a church here at Christ Church that realizes there's so much more going on in the kingdom than what happens here every Sunday.

So we're excited to have him share some about that. A little bit about Pastor Ray. The first time I hung out with him, we had lunch. And I was like, man, this guy's done a lot. He's super experienced, super innovative, super gifted.

He's really good at golf and basketball. And I was like, man, I want to be like this guy when I grow up. And then at one point, we're like, oh, so how old are you? He's only three years ahead of me. So I got a lot of work to do in the next three years to catch up to this guy. But Ray, we're so glad you're here to bring us the word. We got to bring a Pentecostal in to preach on the Holy Spirit today. So we're excited about that.

[ 4 : 41 ] And yeah, praise God for your brother. Please come on up and share the word of God with us. Just on?

Testing? Am I good? Perfect. I'm Ray. And what's your names? Really excited to be here.

It fell off. Oh, well, that would be why. I promise this isn't my first time I've ever spoken. Are we good?

Here we go. Perfect. I do move a little bit. Is that okay? Are you guys okay with that? Yes? Is it okay if I come down? Oh, come on. Hey, thank you guys so much for having me here.

It's always interesting when you meet a crowd for the first time and you're like back on the stage and it kind of feels like, you know, not as intimate. So are you okay if I get a little intimate? For just a few moments and then I will go back to what you guys are normally used to.

[ 5 : 48 ] My name is Raymond Hudson and I am, as he said, planting a church. You're way too kind. I am not that cool. But excited to serve God. Anyone else?

Right? Excited about that? Yeah, come on. He's good. And I really do count it a privilege to be here. Both Andrew and Jonathan, his family, they've been great to us.

We got to meet them. And it's just so cool when you meet a group of people who are different denominations, right? Maybe a few different theological beliefs. But the cool thing is we serve the same God.

Amen? I count it a privilege and I just want to thank, this keeps coming off of me. I want to thank just your church and your team for allowing me to be here and utilizing not just your influence in your time, but your funds.

You guys have actually given to our church in the midst of a pandemic, social unrest. It's been a crazy year, but we're so thankful to be here. And so if you don't mind, I like to pray.

[ 6 : 50 ] And so if you guys would bow your heads. Father, I thank you for today. And I just pray that you would open our eyes. God, that we may see everything that you want to show us. Open our ears, that we may hear you. And I just pray in these next 20, 25 minutes that you would speak to our hearts and challenge us to experience past just the things that we want, God, but all the things that you've called us to.

And God, we love you and we praise you. It's in Jesus' name. Amen. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. And so you find that in Matthew. And what Jesus said was, he said, my father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, your name, thy kingdom come, and thy will be done.

Today, we're going to be venturing through the book of Acts. And we're going to talk through what God's kingdom is and how he wants to utilize his kingdom to impact our areas of influence. And so what I love about being in rooms like this is there's so many of you that have people that you're going to engage and interact with that I will never meet.

And that's okay. There are people that you're going to engage with and interact with that will never show up to Christ's church. And that's okay. But I believe that when we utilize our influence to build God's kingdom, then the gospel is taken from a central location of Christ's church in Berkeley.

And it expands to the outermost areas of our world. And so is that exciting? And so I hope today that as we leave here, we leave here with a passion to utilize the things and the giftings and the influence that God has given us to impact the kingdom of God.

[ 8 : 28 ] And so my name is Raymond. My parents came here all the way from Pennsylvania. So they're here today. And then if you don't mind, I like formalities, like to keep things a little bit light.

Although I enjoy theology, I like to talk about just the practical ways that we can use scripture in our lives. Is that okay today? My beautiful wife, Rachel, do you want to stand real quick? And we have four kids who listen to us all the time.

Anyone know what I'm talking about? Right? And so one of those beautiful children is still sitting here with us. And so her name's Gabriella. Why don't you stand? Come on, Gavs. I know she's

nervous. That's our daughter.

And she keeps me humble and helps me out, keeps me patient. How many of you guys know your kids help you to be patient? Right? There we go. And so, again, so excited to be here.

And what I want to do today is I actually want to, in the book of Acts, and it's so funny, we were talking, and I'm like, man, there's a lot in this passage of scripture. A lot of theological things within this passage of scripture.

[ 9 : 38 ] And so today, I hope to take a portion of this scripture and then apply it to how we can utilize it to transform our communities. Is that okay? At City Center Church, our mission is to help people know and love Jesus and place them at the center of everything.

And how many of you guys have heard of the Tilden Hills? Right? Just right behind us. And it's super foggy in the Bay Area. And back in April 2019, I was praying, and I asked God, like, what's going to make us different as we come into Berkeley?

Man, you guys have been in here for now over 13 years. Is that right? Close to there? Yeah?

Around there? 10 to, let's say 10 to 13. Is that not amazing? In a city that wants nothing to do with church.

And I don't know about you, but when you think about your areas of influence, the places that God has placed you, there are people who are hostile to the gospel. Anyone know what I'm talking about? Right? Hostile to the gospel. And so we ask ourselves the question, how do we truly utilize our influence to build God's kingdom?

And what does that look like in an area like Berkeley that can be so hostile to the gospel? And so I asked that when God said, hey, I'm calling you to the city of Berkeley. And my first thought was, am I committing career suicide to plant a church in Berkeley?

[ 10 : 51 ] Right? And so I talked to a few of my pastor friends. And I'm up in the Tilden Hills, and it's a foggy, foggy morning. As we all know, it's foggy in the Bay Area all the time.

And it was a foggy morning, and I'm in the Bay Area, and I'm driving up in the Tilden Hills, which is kind of scary. Anyone been up there, right? It's a little scary up there. And as I'm driving, it's super foggy.

It's hard to see. And I feel like God stopped me, and he says, the job I'm asking you to do is easier than you think. We all know it's not easy, right, to plant a church.

This is before knowing there was going to be political, social unrest in our nation. And he said, I don't want you to try to go save people, but I want you to help them to see me through their fog.

And he said their fog could be their political viewpoints. Their fog could be aspirations. Their fog can be preconceived notions about faith, right?

[ 11 : 49 ] Like, but I want you to help them see me. And so it brings us to our outcome for our church, which is we want to love and serve people so hard that when they interact with us, they rethink their preconceived notions about faith.

How many of you guys would agree that if we can't get them to at least rethink their notions, right? It's hard for them to even introduce them to Jesus. And so it's not that we don't want to see people's lives transformed, but God said, hey, how do we just help them see him through the fog?

And that's why I love this passage of scripture in Acts. And so if you've got your Bibles or your liturgy, we're going to hone in on verses 8 through 12.

I enjoy the NLT version. And so if you have a different version of Bible, please use that. But I'll be reading from the NLT. And in this small portion of scripture, I believe there is both scary things that you could see in this passage of scripture, but I hope that I can demystify this portion to challenge you to say there's some practical applications to our daily lives.

Is that okay? And so this is what it says in Acts chapter 19, verse 8 through 12. It says, Paul went. And I like to pause in different portions of scripture.

[ 13 : 05 ] How many of you guys ever read over something and then you read it again and you missed what was in it the first time? Anyone know what I'm talking about? And so I just want to take a slow journey through this portion and then we'll move into some points.

And so it says that Paul went. And what I love about that passage of scripture as we're thinking about building God's kingdom in our daily lives is although you guys are sitting here in Christ's church and it's cool, which is nice.

How many of you guys like the breeze coming in? And as we sit here today, I would encourage you that God is actually sending you into your areas of influence.

Not to jump ahead in my message, but I want to tell you that God actually cares about the places that you go to work every day. God cares about the places that you eat at.

God cares about the barista who got your coffee order wrong last week, right? Or the person in front of you that's driving and cutting you off. God cares. Maybe that employee that you have who's lazy.

[14:02] Anyone got any of those? Right? God cares. And so I love that Paul understood that every place that he was going was to be on mission for Jesus to build his kingdom.

And so here it says that Paul went. And so then it goes on. Paul went to the synagogues and preached boldly for the next three months.

How many of you guys would agree that if you went to your areas of influence, let's just say your job, and you stood on a desk and you started preaching boldly, there might be an issue. Right? And so I love that as we look at this passage of scripture, that God actually has something uniquely specific for each and every one of your influences.

And so what I would challenge you with is to say, although you may see this and start with maybe weariness or fear, because you're wondering, how do I utilize this passage of scripture in my daily lives, I would encourage you that it's less about what he said, and it's more about what he did on a daily basis, which is he took the gospel into every area of his life in a bold way.

And so it says here that he preached boldly. Just a wisdom point, do not stand on your desk at your work and start proclaiming the gospel.

[15:21] Now, you know, maybe there's places of your work where you can do that, but I think I would challenge you to be wise and maybe talk to Pastor Andrew about if that's something you should do.

But he says he preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. I love those three words, kingdom of God.

And I think when we get a true understanding of God's kingdom and what God's kingdom wants to do, not just in our church, but in the areas of influence that we're in, we will be more effective as believers and followers of Jesus.

And so then the passage goes on. But some became stubborn, rejecting the message. Does that sound like an area we're in right now, right? Some became stubborn and rejecting the message and publicly speaking against the way.

Okay. So Paul left the synagogue and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at the lecture halls of Tyrenius. And again, as I look at this portion of scripture and you'd ask yourself, well, how does that apply to me?

[16:30] And I would encourage you with the fact that what we can learn from this section right here is that wherever Paul went, he took the kingdom with him.

Would you guys agree with that? As you look at this passage, wherever Paul went, he took the kingdom with him. Now, the way in which he utilized the kingdom was based off of the context he was in.

So the great thing about this is he knew his context. His context was they were preaching there. They were declaring. They were proclaiming the gospel. And so we have to be understanding of the context that God takes us.

And so then it goes on. Verse 10. And this went on for the next two years so that the people throughout the province of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord. Verse 11 says this.

Now, this is an interesting portion of scripture. And not knowing where your theological thoughts are on this, I would hope to help to demystify what you're reading here to also encourage you to say that God wants to do some miraculous things to each and every one of you.

[17:32] And so it says this. God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. And I would pause there. And what I want to encourage you with is that God's miraculous hand and the amazing things that he does, a lot of times we look at that as, okay, it could be raising of the dead or someone being healed.

But I would argue that the greatest miracle that God does is when someone chooses to go from death to life, spiritually. Would anyone agree? Where God makes a decision to invade the life of a person and they make a decision to say that I'm going to give my life to Jesus.

And in the city of Berkeley, when someone makes a decision for Christ, is that not a common day miracle? Come on, listen. And so I would encourage you today that as you hear and listen to this portion of scripture that God wants to do common day miracles in each and every one of your lives. Amen? And so in the midst of that, the verse goes on and it says, when handkerchiefs and aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases and evil spirits were expelled.

Mind if I pray over the reading of the word? God, I pray today that you'd open our eyes, God, as you want to show us some things about our own lives and open our ears, God, that we may just hear so clearly what you want to say to us.

[ 19 : 02 ] And it's in Jesus' name. Amen. I like to say this, that if you didn't get anything else out of my message today, here's my main point that hopefully you can hold on to and apply to your daily lives.

If you're taking note, I'd encourage you to write it down. And it's this right here, that the greatest miracle the Holy Spirit wants to do through you is based on your areas of influence.

I'm going to read it one more time. The greatest miracle that the Holy Spirit wants to do through you is based on your areas of influence. If you study the life of Paul, you know that he was theologically trained.

He was that of a high courts when it comes to Pharisees. Like he had a lot of knowledge. And so his area of influence at this time was utilized in the synagogues.

And I would encourage you today that the miracle that God wants to do in and through you has nothing to do with you standing on a podium and proclaiming in your office that Jesus is risen, although that God may give you the opportunity for that.

[ 20 : 04 ] But I would encourage you that it's the person sitting next to you in your cubicle who just needs to know that they're loved. Anyone agree? It's the neighbor who's far from God and they never mow their lawn.

Come on, somebody, right? And it's hard to love them. But God has placed you there uniquely, specifically, and we may never be there, but God's placed you there for a specific task.

And so I'd say it again, that the main and the greatest miracle that the Holy Spirit wants to do through each and every one of us is based on our areas of influence. I know why you all are here today.

And I believe that each and every one of us in our lives want to know, how do we truly build God's kingdom? You want to know what I'm talking about? Would you agree with that?

That when you come to church or you interact with your pastors or your deacons or your elders, you want to know, man, how do I actually take the gospel that's preached to me every single week? And how do I apply that to my life?

[ 21 : 05 ] And how do I truly build the kingdom of God? And the answer to that is, what is my purpose? And I believe that God has created each and every one of us on purpose for purpose.

And what we learn from this passage of scripture with Paul is that he utilized and understood what God was calling him to do. And he was unashamed of it. If I think we would be honest, living in an area like we live in, sometimes it's hard to be bold in what we believe in.

Anyone know what I'm talking about? Don't worry. There's no, this is a judgment-free zone. Anyone know what I'm talking about? Right? It's hard to truly stand firmly in what we believe when everything is attacking it.

And so this is what I believe God is wanting me to say to you today, which is this. He did not place you in your jobs. He didn't place you in your neighborhood. He didn't place you in the city of Berkeley by chance.

He didn't. And I think that sometimes we place our jobs and our ministry in separate areas. And I believe today that if we will realize that God has actually created you in your area of work on purpose for purpose, that there are miraculous things that he wants to do in your areas of influence.

[ 22 : 21 ] And the most miraculous is when one of your friends comes up to you and says, man, I know that, man, you've been praying and I know that you're a believer. And right now, my mom is sick.

And I don't know what's going to happen with her, but I know you pray. Would you pray? Has anyone ever had a circumstance like that where you've got a friend who's far from God, but something happens in their life and they come to you because they know that you are a believer.

And I believe that that is the, right there is the opportunity where you can help someone rethink their preconceived notions about faith. I believe that that's one of the greatest miracles.

And what I want to do for just a moment is I just want to look at why the Holy Spirit is here. Real quick, I'm going to go through three passages of scripture. And so the first one is John 14, 15 through 16.

And Jesus says this, if you love me, keep my commandments and I will ask the father and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever with the spirit of truth.

[ 23 : 26 ] John 16, 17 says this, but in fact, it is best for you that I go away because I don't, because if I don't, the advocate won't come. If I do go away that I will send him to you.

John 16, 17. And the last verse I want to read is in Acts 1 through 8. And it says this, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses telling people about me everywhere in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. I believe that God sent the Holy Spirit, yes, to be our advocate. But what we see here in Acts chapter 1, 8, when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, you see that Peter in the next chapter preaches and over 3,000 people get saved.

And so what I like to encourage people with is the fact that one of the greatest miracles that the Holy Spirit wants to do in and through you is to utilize your life to bring someone to Jesus.

Would you agree? To utilize your life to bring someone to Jesus. And so as we move through here, I want to answer this question as we are going to be coming close to our closes. What will stop us from using our influence to build God's kingdom?

[ 24 : 42 ] I want you to think about that today is what will stop you specifically from utilizing your influence to build God's kingdom? And so I want to connect a verse of scripture that's found in Genesis 11, 1 through 4.

And this is what it says. At one time, all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylon and settled there.

They began saying to each other, let's make bricks and harden them with fire. In this region, bricks were used instead of stone and tar was used for mortar.

Then they said, come, let us build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky.

This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.

One of the biggest issues that I see in scripture, and I think we'd all agree, is that pride destroys a nation all the time.

[ 25 : 48 ] And a person. And so what is the very thing that will stop us from building God's kingdom and utilizing our influence for it will be our own pride.

And so what you know about this passage of scripture is the world had fell into the same trap generations of generations. Far from the original garden, these cities represented arrogance, tyranny, and wickedness.

This world was the world's hub for human pride and idolatry. They were wanting to make a name for themselves.

They were wanting to make a name for themselves. The builders sought fame through idolatrous ambition, but God chose to give Abram a famous name because of his humble obedience.

Today, what will stop us from utilizing our influence to build God's kingdom is being okay with building our own kingdom over God's.

[ 26 : 49 ] Being okay with building our own kingdom over God's. What I love about Acts, as Paul is preaching boldly, and you're seeing the miraculous happen, is that he chose to build God's kingdom over his own name.

You'll see in scripture where Paul says, man, I've done all of these great things, but none of that matters with the knowledge of knowing Jesus. And I believe that God wants to do miracles in your own lives to see people's lives transformed.

But the greatest thing that's going to get in the way of that is us choosing to build our kingdom over God's kingdom. Choosing to make our names famous over God's name.

It's so interesting. The Holy Spirit speaks to me in different places, in sometimes weird places. I'm going to come down off the podium again. Anyone like movies?

Yeah? Okay, great. We're okay with movies at Christ Church. Just wanted to make sure. I wanted to be clear. I wanted to be clear. Because I told him I want to honor and be mindful of the space that

I'm speaking.

[ 27 : 53 ] Has anyone heard of the movie Creed 2? Yeah? Okay. Has anyone watched that movie? It's like some people are like, yes, yes, yes. Andrew's not looking. Look for it.

Look for it. No. Yeah, so I watched that movie. I was with my wife and we were in Danville. So I was an executive pastor of a multi-site church in the East Bay. And we're coming out of this movie Creed 2.

I thought it was a really good movie. And my wife has given the, I enjoyed it. And we're coming out of the movie. And babe, I don't know if you remember this. We're coming out of the movie. And as I'm leaving the movie, I just feel God stop me and challenge my heart.

And my wife will tell you. I literally said, babe, I need you to stand over there. I need to get my phone out because God is speaking to me. And at that moment, as God is speaking to me, he makes this statement that has crushed me and also has challenged me.

And the statement was, you're more prideful than you think. Isn't it hard when the Lord speaks to you and you're like, ooh, you know, it just kind of gets you on the inside.

[ 28 : 56 ] He said, you're more prideful than you think. And I remember as I was walking there, my wife will tell you, it was like 10 minutes. And I'm just writing down and journaling because I thought, man, I'm humble.

Anyone ever thought that? Man, I'm humble. And God was challenging me there. And I remember as I was writing and praying and thinking, and what God was challenging me with was this understanding that you're the only hindrance to the great things I want to do in your life is your own pride.

Right? Because what we do, I think, in life, and I don't know if you've ever done this, anyone ever traveled before? I know there's been a pandemic. Anyone recently? Right? So you travel and what do you bring with you?

Suitcase. Right? Some luggage. And I think there, and God was saying to me, is there are times in my life where I've put things in my God suitcase that I said, this is for God's glory.

And what I had to realize it was that it was actually to build my own name. Right? You ever do something that you think you're saying, hey, this is for God, but it's actually to make yourself look good.

[ 30 : 11 ] Anyone ever been there? Come on, right? Thank you for the hand. And so I remember as I'm writing and listing, and he's just like, man, like there are things that I have said this is for God.

But then realizing it's actually has not been for God, it's been for myself. And God is like, you're more prideful than you think. And so as we think about God wanting to utilize our influence, right, the places of work in ministry, in business, in careers that he's placed us, the very thing that hinders that is our own pride.

Because what we're looking at is how do we make a name for ourselves and not realizing that God's actually placed you in this job and career to make a name for him. Right?

And so God is saying that the very thing that will hinder the miraculous, right, you look at Paul and you see that, okay, there was a handkerchief that touched his body and people's lives were healed. That's just what God did for Paul in that moment. But the miraculous thing that God wants to do in your life today could be that. But I know for sure it is that he wants to utilize you to impact your friends.

[ 31 : 20 ] He wants to utilize you to impact the areas of influence that he placed you in. And he's not asking you to stand on a podium and declare and proclaim because the greatest proclamation of our faith in God is how we live our lives.

Amen? Amen. And so as we are coming close to our close, do you guys do like keyboard while like near the end of the message?

Or I don't know if you guys do that at all, but if you did and you're okay with playing, I mean, is he not like the greatest piano on the planet or something? Come on. It's funny, it's a side note, wasn't in my notes, but I walked in today and you never know what type of music you're going to get when you show up somewhere.

And I came in and he was just, can I say this? He was getting it. And so, so good, Pastor Eric.

Here's one of the hardest questions that I deal with in my life. And I still have to ask myself this.

[ 32 : 26 ] And I don't know if I really have a good answer. I think I have a good answer. Do you ever feel like you think you're better than what you are and then you're like, ew, you're not there yet. And

so, here's the hard question that God asked me is this.

If no one knows your name, but I served God faithfully and had a great family, would that be enough? If no one knew my name, if no one understood what we were doing and no one was like, oh, this is great.

And no one knew my name, but God knew me and I was just faithful with my husband. I mean, my husband. We are in Berkeley, but my wife, I have a wife. She's there. With my wife, faithful with my children, would that be enough?

And it'd be easy to start by saying, yes, that's okay, right? And your job's, like if no one knew your name and your job, if you never rose to be the VP or the CEO or you never got a raise, but people just knew that you were faithfully serving God, would that be okay?

And I think we could all agree that that's a hard yes. I mean, like hard to say yes, right? It's hard to say yes. So as we get ready to close, I want you to know that Jesus wants to use you to build his church.

[ 33 : 39 ] Would we all agree with that? Jesus wants you to build his church. As you look at this passage in Acts, you can go through that entire chapter. I'd encourage you to read it this week. There are so many crazy, amazing things that are in that passage and maybe some freaky things, right?

Some things that you're like, yeah, like that's hard for me to grasp, but I would encourage you with this, that the foundation is true. God's heart is to be in relationship with people.

Amen? I like to tell people that there are two reasons why you exist. Just two. In the midst of a world where people are trying to figure out what, why am I here? What is my existence? I would encourage you that there are only two reasons why you exist.

Number one, you exist to be in relationship with Jesus, right? If you read the Bible, he created, if we believe in the word, he created us for community and relationship.

So that's number one. And number two is similar. He's created you to help others get in relationship with him. Now that's not to downgrade or downplay your influence in your jobs or your careers.

[ 34 : 43 ] Maybe I'm sure in this room, some of you are doing phenomenal things to impact this world, but I would encourage you that the greatest thing that God wants to utilize your life for is to help people go from lost to found, right?

Look at the life of Jesus. All the miracles that he did was only to help people to go from lost to found. Everyone say lost to found. That's it. That's what he wants.

And everything that he's allowed you to do, all, I mean, some of you guys are probably students here, some of you guys are running companies, and you're doing phenomenal things. But your influence has been given to you by God.

Do you agree? Your influence has been given to you by God. And he wants you to utilize your influence to build his kingdom. So Jesus wants to use us to build a church.

For some odd reason, God's plan for his church is you. For some reason. For some reason, he doesn't want to show up with blaze of glory and do all these miraculous things in our world to help people come to know and just, like, wouldn't that be easier if God just showed up and said, hey, peekaboo, here I am.

[ 35 : 53 ] Right? That would be the easiest thing for him to do. But for some odd reason, the greatest thing that God wants to use is you. And I like to say, and I apologize, crusty, stinky me.

Right? I'm imperfect, but God wants to use me. You're imperfect. If you think you're not, look it to your neighbor and ask them. Okay? You are imperfect, but God wants to use you.

He chose you. Yes, you. He chose you. The places that you're in right now are not by happenstance. It's not. If you're in here and you're in college, it's not by happenstance.

Or high school, like wherever you are at, it's not by happenstance. It is for a reason. So the question you have to ask yourself today is, whose kingdom are you going to build?

As you look at the Babylonians, right? And they built this huge tower of Babel, right? Because they wanted to proclaim and uplift their own names.

[ 36 : 58 ] It was the biggest prideful thing that can be done. But is it not true that we do the same things? Right? Our lives that we build are for ourselves.

And God is saying, I've given you your influence for a reason. I'd ask you today if your life, if your pride, maybe ambitions, maybe selfishness is hindering God's work, what are you willing to do to make a change?

God's kingdom is dependent on both church and the marketplace. It is. As you look throughout scripture, most of the miracles happened in the marketplace.

It happens at coffee houses. God wants to do miraculous. I like Pete's. Any Pete's people? Yes? No? If you're Starbucks, you got to leave now. We're in Berkeley. Pete's was, okay, no.

God wants to do a work in the first Pete's coffee shop that's down the street here. Maybe you frequent there. The grocery stores that you buy your food in.

[ 38 : 14 ] He wants to utilize your influence to impact that area of influence. The law office that you work in. The school, your career, the government. Chick-fil-A, if you're like me, because I love Chick-fil-A. If you're a teacher or a business owner, a barista, superintendent, president, government, lawyer, wherever you are, God wants to utilize your influence to build your kingdom.

Come on, are you supposed to say no there? No, God wants to utilize your influence to build his kingdom. Every good and perfect gift comes from where?

God. I'd encourage you today, don't forget it. Today, I would encourage you as we close, crucify your wants and your desires. Pursue God daily. Daily consume the word of God and consistently utilize your influence to build his kingdom.

Why don't you pray with me? God, I thank you for today. God, I am so thankful that you are patient with us. God, I'm so thankful that you are not condemning of us, as Romans 8 says, that there's now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

But I love the fact that you're constantly and consistently inviting us to be better. So today, as you invite us to utilize our influence to build your kingdom, I pray that you give us eyes to see and ears to hear all the things you want to show us and speak to us.

[ 39 : 42 ] It's in Jesus' name. Amen.