# The Vision Of The Church

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Preacher: Pastor Ken

[0:00] I read a quote from the Pennsylvania School Journal some time ago. It was written some time ago, and I probably also read it some time ago.

It said, the poorest man is not he who is without a scent, but he who is without a dream. Nehemiah has been quite the study in recent weeks, and we only looked at two chapters of the possible 13. I'd encourage you to take time to read through the book of Nehemiah in the coming week. You'll really gain an appreciation for what he endured and went through to accomplish the vision that he had from God.
The vision and the leading that God had given him beginning in Nehemiah 1, and how it plays out through the end of his writing in chapter 13.
We took from it just what we gained in the first two chapters on this mini-series concerning the vision of the church.
[1:08] These past three weeks have been talking about how do we go about obtaining a vision or seeing a vision. It starts with hearing the Lord, right? We need to be in the Word of God. We need to see what God's intention is and desire is and purpose is for the church as we move forward.

It goes with evaluating, as Nehemiah did, evaluating the situation, what's going on, what's the reality that presently exists, and what is the work that needs to be done moving forward?
So Nehemiah, we saw that practically played out as he was praying for, and that's a big thing too, right? That I didn't mean to overlook, but it's prayer. Prayer is so significant and important as it relates to the health of a church and the vision and the intent of a church moving forward.
We must be in prayer, fervent prayer, undeniably. And it's not just something that the leadership of the church does.
It's like, no, we're not like the representatives of the whole, and when we pray, it's kind of credited to your account or anything like that. No, we are the body of Christ, and we are to pray, and we need to pray together.
[2:22] And we need to pray fervently for God's clear discernment and direction. And we need to evaluate what's happening, what's going on, what's our reality, and what do we need to do moving forward?

Always, always, always with a biblically-centric view to what we do. We always do what we do for the glory of God based on His word and not based on man's feeling and opinion.
And that's what Nehemiah did as he prayed and sought direction and desire. And God gave him opportunity to pursue the dream and vision that He'd given him for Jerusalem, for rebuilding the walls, for making an inhabitation once again for the people.
As we were looking in Nehemiah, it reminds us that when it comes to carrying out a vision, it's not an easy task.
Because remember, he had Sanballat and Tobiah and others who were scoffing. How could they come here? Who cares about the Israelites? Why are they here?
[3:43] And as you read, as you continue beyond chapter 2 and chapter 3 and following, you'll see how those individuals and others attempt to thwart the work that Nehemiah and the people who had returned with him were there to do.

And they were there to do it for the glory of God. And these people wanted them to stop. And it's not an easy task. It requires a lot of hard work and sacrifice to see it done.
In the 18th century, there was a German sculptor by the name of Johann Heinrich von Daniker. Did I get that right? I didn't talk to my wife ahead of time. She may not even know this guy exists. At the height of his career, he decided to do something very special with his gift.

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He dreamed of shaping a piece of lifeless stone into a statue of Christ that would come to life as a witness to his world. He chiseled and scraped and polished the marble for almost two years.
When he was convinced that a statue carried the likeness of his Lord, he wanted to test the statue on eyes that would not lie. So he went out to the street and brought in a young girl.
[4:53] And he took her into a studio and set her down in front of the shrouded sculpture.
Uncovering it, he asked her, Do you know who this is? No, sir, she replied, but he must be a very great man.

Daniker knew that he'd failed. The statue was good enough for kings and nobles, but it wasn't good enough to be a testimony of Christ. He was discouraged.
He was disheartened. He was depressed. But he knew he had to try again. So he set his hand to the task. It took him six years this time.
Every day, painstakingly shaping, carving, and polishing. Finally, once again, he felt he was done.
And again, he brought in a child as his first critic.
He took off the shroud and asked her gently, Who is that? She looked up at it for a moment. And the tears began to gather in her eyes as she folded her hands across her breast and said, Suffer the little children to come unto me.
[6:00] That's when he knew. He got it. But it took a lot of work. His purpose and intention of glorifying, giving praise to God and honoring him took eight years of hard work.

I don't know what it's like to be a sculptor. Just watching people do it even a little bit is like, oh man. But every day, scraping, polishing to make it look the way you want it to.
And he wanted to do it for the glory of God. And I share that to say this, is that when it comes to vision of a church, and ultimately, you know, carrying out the purpose of a church as laid out for us in the Word of God, it's a lot of hard work.
It's not easy. It's not going to be easy. There's going to be people who are naysayers and who are like, oh, this is ridiculous. You shouldn't do this or that.
Or you're doing it wrong or whatever. They have their opinions. The fact is that we continue not because of our own selves and our own accomplishments and desires, but our desire is to honor and glorify God in all we do and all we think and our whole purpose and being.
[7:27] So as we come together as a church on a Sunday morning, you know, why do we gather here? Why are we here in this building? Why does this building even exist?

Well, I'll tell you why. So the saints can gather as is determined, as is commanded in Scripture, for the saints to gather for the building up of each other, for the shaping of each other into Christlikeness, to prepare us for the work of ministry.
It's like a weekly boot camp. You're coming here to get prepared for a greater task and work that happens outside these walls. Now, I'll say one of the most important, if not the most important, ministry of the church is the preaching of the Word.
Because it's through the faithful preaching of the Word that people are equipped and trained. You learned. I'm going way off script here.
So those of you who have to leave early, just to let you know, you won't be here till the end. So we had a devotional time with our family. I think it was last night's devotion, actually.
[8:40] And it was about, ultimately, it was about desiring God. Right? And the point that I brought up to the kids was that, you know, when we pray as a church, when we pray as individuals, think about what we're praying for.

Right? I'm not going to go through the list, you know, that we have a prayer request. But we're constantly praying for people to be healed. We're praying for people to be comforted.
And we're praying for these things that ultimately are temporal in its longevity. How frequently do we pray for the spiritual well-being of an individual?
How frequently do we pray for people to know God? I was telling them last night, I've been, for whatever reason, over the last several months, I've had this, like, insatiable passion to read and learn more about the Puritans.
And it's just like, the more I read, the more I'm just in awe of some of their lives and where they're at. But constantly, over and over and over again, no matter what their circumstance or their trial or their hardship, their prayer wasn't, Lord, make this go away.
[10:07] Help me feel better about this. Their prayer was, Lord, help me to know you more. Help me to know you through this.

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And to draw closer to you through this. And I thought of a song by Casting Crowns called Healer. And in the words of that song, And the words of that song is, you know, more than the healing, we need the healer.
More than the comfort, we need the king. More than what our temporal desire and want from being the pain that we want to alleviate from us, we need God more than anything else.
And that needs to be, like, ultimately the big focus. Whatever we do in our life personally, in the life as a church body, it is to desire God above all else.
And as we desire Him, and as we seek Him, and as we pray according to His will, that was it, 1 John 5, verse 14. Now, this is the assurance.
[11:24] This is the confidence we have that when we come before Him and we pray according to His will, then He hears us. And as we desire God more and we grow closer to Him more, our desires are going to become what His desires are.

And so as we're going through this little series on the vision for the church, and we're going to look today, what does Jesus expect of the church, and how did the apostles carry it out, and what does that mean for us?
Those are the three questions we're going to look at, give you a head start. If you want to write that down, what does Jesus expect of the church, number one? Number two, what did the apostles do? And number three, what does that mean for us?
And as we think on these questions and we consider this very issue, the vision of the church and the future of First Baptist Shapley, first and foremost, it must be to know God more and to draw closer to Him, to know His Word intimately, so that when we come to Him in prayer, it's not going to be about, Lord, this is what I want.
God, I want to see 100 people here. Lord, I don't want to deal with the budget that we're constantly not meeting. Lord, we need more money. We need more people. We need more of this. We need more of that. I don't want that to be the focus.
[12:34] I don't want that to be the desire. And I'm telling you, it's not the desire of my heart. It hasn't been the desire of my heart for years, at least 10, that I don't care. No, ultimately, personally, I want to know God more and I want to draw closer to Him and I want what He wants.

I want what He wants for me from His Word that is clear. And I want us to be in that same bandwagon. That's not the word I'm looking for, but the same vehicle moving forward.
I want it to be that we know God in His Word and we seek to live it out in obedience. And does that mean meeting together? Yeah, yeah, it does. Because He commands that.
Hebrews 10, 23 and following. Expectation. Ephesians 4, 11 and following. Expectation. That we gather together and we meet together and we be equipped together for the work of service that happens outside these walls.
And so we're going to look at it. And you know, this is not going to be exhaustive. This is not going to be exhaustive. And it would take us probably years to go through exhaustively in Scripture what it is. What does Jesus expect of the church and His followers?
[13:41] What did the apostles do? What was written in the epistles? I mean, there's so much we can gather. I'm just tipping the, I'm just touching the tip of the iceberg. And now it's enough for introduction.

Unexpected. It's not even written here. But I just felt like God was leading me to share that with you. You know, we need to, we need to seek God. We need to seek His Word and we need to know His truth.
So, you're in Matthew? You're there with me? Because we're going to pick up some verses here. What does Jesus expect of the church?
So, we talk about the vision for the church. What is the vision for the church? Ultimately, the question should be what is God's vision for the church? Because I don't care what I think. It doesn't matter to me what my, quote, vision is.
What does God want? What does Jesus expect of the church? And I've harped on this and it hopefully will be the last time I say it anytime soon. Many ministries spend lots of time and energy trying to determine what is best for business.
[14:44] The focus is more on how to generate numerical growth. How do we get more people attending? How do we get more money? No, we're focusing on how do we use the money? And we should.

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No, stewardship is good. We need to do that. But the focus is so much on numerical growth than spiritual growth through accomplishing the Christ-given vision for us in Scripture. I think I shared this before.
I was in a meeting one time at a church and somebody referred to individuals and I was so appalled by this.
They referred to individuals as tithing units. Promise you. That was the term that was used. My jaw hit the floor and I had to kind of pick myself up.
I could not believe that that was the term being utilized. And I praise God that in time they were convicted of that stance and that view but in that term.
[15:44] But there are people out there who do that. They call themselves the bean counters, right? And we can't focus so much on numerical growth as spiritual growth which is what the church is all about.

So as a result of this many models have been developed. Many books have been written as to how to experience growth in the church. And to refresh myself I went on ChristianBook.com so Christian Book Distributors.
I went on to their website and I went into their search box and I clicked specially books only. I wanted books. I didn't care about anything else. I know there's other material videos and all that.
I want to know just books. I typed into the search church growth for books. And would you believe there were over 8,000 hits on products they have related to that topic?
Church growth 8,000 hits. Now there's probably like you know you probably got you know one product in like seven different languages that come up and all that stuff. But the point is 8,000 hits on church growth for books on church growth in that regard.
[16:55] So I compared. I said I'm going to do a little comparison here. So I did church growth. I did another one another search where I typed in purpose of the church.

Right? Because don't we want to know what that is? Like really as Christians shouldn't we want to know what the purpose of the church is? I mean we come here regularly. We gather together regularly.
I mean don't we want to know we're kind of doing it right? We should know what the purpose is. So I did. I typed that in. Church growth 8,000 right? Purpose of the church 3,900.
So what that tells me on a superficial level without really going in deep is that people or at least sellers and marketers and authors care more about the growth of a church numerically than they care about the actual purpose of the church being carried out.
Two to one. Right? You're talking almost two to one ratio. Purpose of the church versus growth of the church. Man-centered church growth has proven to be a time-wasting, money-guzzling, an energy-consuming matter, and an unnecessary distraction to the ministry which Jesus has called His followers to.
[18:12] And I want to consider what we see in the book of Matthew. And we're not going to, again, this is not exhaustive because we're just jumping from verse to verse to verse. Look at Matthew chapter 4, verse 19.

This is Jesus speaking to Peter and Andrew. We'll start in verse 18. While walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who's called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea for they were fishermen.
Verse 19, And He said to them, Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men. Jesus' intention on calling these two fishermen to be His disciples was not about establishing a welfare ministry or by filling the coffers or follow Me and I'll show you how to be better fishermen and to make that profit.
No, no. He said, Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men. His intent and purpose was for these two men to reach other men with the gospel that He would teach them.
And in case you're wondering, Well, was the gospel even there? You bet. Look two verses prior.
Verse 17. From that time, Jesus began to preach saying, Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. There's the gospel right there.
[19:30] Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And as Jesus lives His life and He is discipling the disciples and as He will eventually die, be buried, raise again, and ascend.

And then you've got the whole book of Acts. The gospel becomes a little more refined and definite. But it starts here. The gospel, at the heart of the gospel is always repentance. And that's what He's going to teach Peter and Andrew.

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Go and share this message of repentance. And guess what? That's what John the Baptist's message was about was repentance. And you know what? In the book of Acts, we're going to get there. What was the message of the apostles about?
Repentance. Repentance, repentance, repentance. What's the Christian life about? Repentance, repentance, repentance. I can take you to one passage after another through Scripture.
Repentance. Turning from the way in which you live naturally in this world to living in a way that is pleasing to God and supernatural in its intention and purpose.
So Jesus calls Peter and Andrew to become fishers of men. Now turn with me to Matthew 5, 13 through 16. He says, You are the salt of the earth.
[20:43] So this is the Sermon on the Mount. You're the salt of the earth. But if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It's no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

You're the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.
In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give you lots of money and make your bank account fat. No, no.
It's not about you, right? They can see your good works and give glory to your Father who's in heaven. Jesus refers to His followers as the salt and the light, no, the salt and light of the world.
He calls His followers to be distinct in the world. That's really what we're getting at with salt and light. It's a distinction that stands in, you know, counter to what the world stands for.
[21:47] And they're not to compromise that distinction. Salt, when it's lost at saltiness, what good's it for? Nothing. When you blow out the lamp, there is no light.

You're to be distinct and different than the world. So, you know, preaching a gospel, being distinct and different in the world, Matthew 7, verse 24 through 27.
It was really hard to get out of the Sermon on the Mount, by the way. I was like, oh yeah, oh this, oh that, oh that. I said, no, we just got to get to the end here. 7, verse 24.
Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock.
And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell and great was the fall of it.
[22:52] Jesus calls his followers to live in obedience to his words. Obedience to the word of God will bring stability in your life as a Christian. It'll bring stability when you're following what God's expectations are and living it.

Turn away to Matthew 10, verse 16. Matthew 10, verse 16.
Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. So be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they'll deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.
I'm going to pause. I'm just going to stop there because I do have a lot more to go. But, you know, you continue on in this, you know, following 16 through 25, you get that true followers of Christ must expect to endure hardship.
They must expect hostility. And speaking directly to his disciples, he said, look, you are like sheep in the midst of wolves. That's not a good place for a sheep to be.
[24:13] A sheep? A sheep? Yeah, I guess so. That's not a good place for a sheep to be, is it? In the midst of wolves. Hungry, ravenous. Man, we just need the next meal and there it is.

And he tells them, you know, beware of men. They're going to deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues and you'll be dragged before governors and kings for my sake to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.
For my sake. When these things happen, it's not necessarily for you. It's for God's glory. Now, it's for you in that you are being molded into the image of Christ, that you're sharing in the sufferings of Christ.
But it's for God's glory. The Christian life does not promise great ease and comfort, but great cost and worldly loss. We talked about that a little bit this morning in Sunday school.

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And as I mentioned earlier, I've been reading, this morning I woke up and I read Fox's book of martyrs and I'm going to tell you something, I'm thankful to God that I'm, that he's put on, you know, on my heart to read through this book.
[25:27] Not because it's a particularly encouraging book in any other way than seeing people who are faithful to the truth of Scripture in the light of them losing their life and everything for holding to it.

And some of the, I'm sure I'll share with you some of the accounts in coming weeks as I continue through the book. It is impressive. It is amazing. Not so much what they endured but knowing that they were going to endure it and they continued anyway.
You must expect hardship, to endure hardship, willing at all costs to live the truth. Then Matthew 28, skip 18 chapters because there's so much.
Like I said, we can spend years just digging it out. What's our purpose? What does Jesus expect from us? Matthew 28, 19 and 20. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and 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.
The Great Commission, it's a threefold command given by the Lord after His resurrection. Make disciples. Get others to follow along as well. Tell them the truth. Tell them to repent.
[26:50] Go make disciples. Baptize them. You got people who have repented and are believing in Jesus and are following Him with their life? Baptize them. That's a public proclamation.

To be baptized is to publicly proclaim your faith. I believe Jesus is the Son of God. I believe that He died for my sins and He rose again from the dead.
And I believe I am forgiven because of that. That's what you're doing. When you stand in the waters of baptism, you're making that proclamation publicly. That's what we do, right?
We fill up the tank, warm it up for six days because it takes forever. So we don't want you to have shock. And you stand in the waters and you proclaim safely, safe distance away from electronic stuff but close enough that the microphone could pick up your voice.
Make a proclamation of your faith in Christ and you're baptized. That's what baptism is all about. And then teach them.
[27:54] Teach them the Word of God. Don't teach them your thoughts, your feelings, your opinions, your ideas. Teach them all that I have commanded you. What is all that He has commanded us?

Well, let's dig in. Typically, you start in the New Testament but let's be honest. Jesus is God so even the Old Testament says Word too, commands and such.
But we usually start in the New Testament. Teach them all. And then turning to Acts 1 verse 8. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.
So Jesus had already promised in John 14 to send the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to be with His disciples and to teach them. The Holy Spirit is said here to be a source in Acts 1a is to be a source of empowerment for Jesus' disciples to be witnesses to all people.
So what does Jesus expect from His church? To make disciples by being witnesses of Jesus. To baptize those disciples who are now identifying with Jesus and to teach those disciples all that Jesus has taught and said.
[29:10] That is what Jesus expects from the church in a nutshell. Right? Like I said, we're not going deep. Read the letters.

Read Paul's letters, the epistles. Read Peter. Read James. Read Hebrews. Read Jude. And even in Revelation, what is it that Jesus expects from the church? Well, it's all fully revealed in those passages.
And what I mean by fully is it's what we have. It may not be what we want. but it's what He shares and tells us to do. So what do you see in the book of Acts? What did the apostles do?
Well, in Acts 2, you could read verses 32 through 42, but I'll just read a few verses here. Acts chapter 2, I'm going to start in verse 32 and then jump to 37. This Jesus, so jumping in the middle of a sermon here, always dangerous, but we understand it.
This Jesus, God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Turn to verse 37. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do?

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[30:19] And Peter said to them, repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And in verse 40, it says, and with many other words, he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation. Repent. Be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
Repent. Repent. Repent. The purpose of this sermon by Peter was to show that Jesus is the Christ and to encourage people to repent and to be baptized, to believe.
They were then devoting themselves. We see in verse 42 of chapter 2, they were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. They had church meetings. That's what they were doing. They were gathering to be encouraged, to hear the preaching of the Word, to fellowship together, to build each other up. In Acts 3, verses 17 through 21, I'll read verses 17 and 18.
[31:22] And now, brothers, so this is Peter's sermon again. And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance as did also your rulers, but what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

The purpose of this sermon by Peter was to show that God has fulfilled the prophecies about Christ in Jesus, who will return at the appointed time. So what are they preaching?
They're being witnesses of Jesus. Acts 4, verses 19, 20, and 33. But Peter and John answered them, whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge. For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard. And then down to verse 33. And with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.
Peter and John claimed that they had to speak about what they had seen and heard. They had to be witnesses for Jesus. Acts 5, verse 42. And every day in the temple and from house to house they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.
[32:40] Even after being threatened and even after being beaten they continued to proclaim Jesus as the Christ. Acts 7, we're not going to read any of this, verses 52 through 56.

You see Stephen pointed out that they had killed the Christ and testified that he saw him standing at the right hand of God. Stephen again preaching about Jesus, being a witness for Jesus as the Christ and calling people to repentance.
Acts 8. I'm just going to read verse 4. Now those who were scattered, remember the persecution by Saul, scattered people out of Jerusalem and those who were scattered went about preaching the word.
These people went about preaching the word. These are followers of Christ. These are believers. These are those in the church who once the persecution started they went they went out. But they didn't go in order to save their skin.
They went to, yes, to be safe, but also to preach the word of God to wherever they went. And then you see Philip in Acts 8 fulfilling that in Samaria and on the road to the Ethiopian eunuch.
[33:57] And we see that those who believed were baptized. In Acts 9 we see the conversion of Saul who eventually becomes the apostle Paul.

Right? We see his conversion on the Damascus road. And what's, it's just, it's still, it's striking to me to this day, to this moment. In verse 20 it says, and immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogue saying he is the son of God.
Saul wasted no time. He didn't feel like he had to go through some class. He didn't feel like he had to be prepared more before he would go and share the gospel. As a new believer in Christ, Saul goes into the synagogues and claims that he is the son of God talking of Jesus.
He bore witness. He knew what Jesus required of his followers, what his desire was for them, which was to go and be a witness. In Acts 10 you see Peter went to the Gentiles to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ from whom forgiveness of sins is offered.
And they believed and were baptized. I stopped there. right? I mean we can go 11, 12, 13. You go through the three missionary journeys of the apostle Paul.
[35:22] You can read through his letters and epistles and all that stuff. What is the purpose? What is the intent? What is ultimately the goal for all believers is to proclaim Christ wherever they are, whenever they're there.

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that's our goal. That's our purpose. That's what Jesus expects of his disciples. That's what the you see the apostles and others doing in the book of Acts.
So what what talk about the vision for the church, right? Well, what will First Baptist Shapley do? What will we do people? this is my statement.
This is my hope. This is my desire. First Baptist Shapley will make disciples by being witnesses of what Christ has said and done for us. And these disciples will be baptized as a public proclamation of their identification with Jesus Christ as their Savior.
And these baptized disciples will then be taught the Word of God and equipped to go make disciples as well. That's a start, right?
[36:28] I mean, this is not the end of this series. This is really the beginning. The last three weeks in Nehemiah and Isaiah 6 were actually what I call like the pre-vision series. Now we're talking about the vision.

What's our purpose and intent? To go make disciples and baptize them. That's what we need to do. And the question comes, well, how do we do that? And I get confused by that question.
I'll be honest with you. I'm very confused by that question. How do we go about making disciples? What did they do? What did they do? Anybody? What?
What? Oh. So how do you make disciples? Well, you've got to be involved in the lives of non-believers. What else did they do? What?
I thought I heard somebody whisper something accidentally. They learned. They preached the Word. They gathered. They preached the Word.
[37:29] They baptized these new converts. And what did those new converts do we saw in Acts 9? Preached. Right? It's a sick cycle, people.

It really is. But it's very simple as far as what you're supposed to do. Now how do you do it? How do you get involved in the lives of unbelievers? How do you go, how do you find yourself in the opportunity to share about Jesus?
Unfortunately, there is no cookie cutter answer to that. Because it's unique. It's as unique as the individuals in this room.
It's as unique as the experiences and opportunities that we have individually. Right? So, a lot of my personal life is around believers.
As a pastor, my purpose is to equip you and to help you in your growth in Christ. And yes, as an individual Christian, it is my responsibility as I have opportunities to engage and build relationships to do that as well.
[38:40] But a lot of my experience is with you. I don't go to rock climbing places like Matt Boggs. And like, but, and I would never have an in with that crowd.

They would look at me and be like, nope. But, that's who he's around and who he engages with, interacts with. I'm not a construction guy.
You know, so guys that Eric's around, I don't know if he's a construction guy either. But anyway, whatever Eric does, which is like everything, but the people he's around. They're not people that I'm going to engage with on a regular basis.
I mean, it's not that I won't say hi or shake their hand, you know, have a pleasant conversation, but it's just, that's not my, that's not my personal, you know, interaction. I forget the word, context. That's the word I'm looking for. That's not my personal context. You know, I, I, I don't work with, you know, I don't, I'm not a musician. I don't have a band. Yes, Josh is thankful that I'm not a musician.
[39:45] You know, but I, I don't have a band. You know, I don't have that connection with people. I can enjoy music. I love music. But his context is different. I don't have relationships with veterans in the way that Christine does.

Where she's worked with veterans for however many years. She has a relationship caring for them and taking care of them and helping them along. And then now here, the last, you know, couple years it's been helping, you know, as veterans are dying, helping their families.
But she has a unique relationship with them that I don't have. Or even as veterans themselves, like Russ. Tony. You know, like, your context is very different.
Your opportunities are very different than what I could ever have. So when I say there's no cookie cutter answer, there's not. There's no cookie cutter way to do it other than just to do it in your context with your people and the way you know how to connect with them.

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So I do it the way I know how. And I'll be honest with you, I think I've got the easiest job. Like, you all believe. You profess belief and faith in Christ.
[41:01] I can open this Bible and you're not going to judge me for it. You may judge some things I say. You may judge some things I say and we can talk about it over an open Bible.

And I understand the hardship you guys have. Teachers in public school. Man, oh, I cannot even imagine what you go through, what you have to deal with.
I mean, a little bit because I was a teacher in a Christian school. But again, a Christian school context that I can open Scripture and say, let's talk about this. So it's very different. I think I've got it easier than everyone else.
And what's hard for me is trying to help you figure it out. But I want to do that. I want to do that together. I pray for you often. And as you come to me, I pray for you even more.
You're welcome. Donna's at the lodges all the time with people. They say that when people get older they get more stubborn.
[42:10] I don't know if that's true or not. So that's the context in which she's ministering to people and trying to be Christ to people. William Chalmers Burns was a Scottish evangelist and missionary who ministered alongside Robert Murray, McShane, and Hudson Taylor at one point in his life.

He was a man known for his fervent prayer and faithful preaching. A story is told that when he was 17 he was brought by his mother from the quiet town of, I think I'm saying this right, Kilseth to the city of Glasgow.
His mother was separated from her son while she was shopping. And after retracing her steps she discovered him in an alley with tears streaming down his face. She could see he was suffering great agony and said, Willie, my boy, what ails you?
Are you ill? And with broken cries he replied, Oh mother, mother, the thud of these Christless feet on the way to hell breaks my heart.
The spiritual eyes of young William Burns had caught a glimpse of the everlasting horrors of a Christless eternity. And this vision no doubt helped shape him and his ministry for years to come.
[43:26] My prayer is that the Lord will break our hearts for those without Christ in our area and in our personal context so we will fulfill the vision that Christ has given for the church to be witnesses in the world of his name no matter what it costs.

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