

The Explosion of the Church

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[0 : 00] At the beginning, somebody's missing a nice black leather Bible. Does that look familiar to anybody? Raise your hand so I can embarrass you.

And for everybody, if you'll just take a moment to write your name in your Bible at this time so that I can get it back to you when you leave that. Otherwise, the person that's too embarrassed to get this is right here, okay?

The problem is you won't be able to look up anything this morning. Well, some of you realize we ran out of verses in Colossians.

And I had in my mind set that I was going to go in this direction and through various different instances this last week, God challenged me to go in a different direction.

So, please open your Bibles to the Acts of the Apostles. Page 1160 if you have Paul's version.

[1 : 11] We're going to look together at the explosion of the local church there at Jerusalem. And we'll be picking different verses to read from the book.

But let's stand as we read the first three verses. The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up after he, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen by them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Let's pray. For me, it's always exciting, Father, to start a new book and to work our way through something that we sense is really relevant to us today.

I pray that, Father, we'll get more and more familiar with your word so that no matter where we open up your word, we sense it is so relevant for each and every one of us just today.

We're confident that it won't go back to heaven empty, but that it's going to accomplish all that you set out for it to do. That's our prayer. In Jesus' name, amen.

[3 : 00] You may be seated. Some interesting things keep popping up in the news, but I want to talk to you a little bit about history.

It just seems that when you talk to young people, young people will say, history was one of the most boring classes that I had to sit through.

Anybody willing to be honest? Raise your hand and say amen to that. Mason, bless his heart, said he thought that just now.

So he's really excited about this series in Acts because he knows it's going to be boring the rest of the way through. Back in 2 Kings chapter 22, there was a young man, a boy in fact, a teenager, who became king, and he hadn't heard what the Bible had to say about history.

Somebody read it to him, and he broke down before the Lord. He was the greatest king that Israel or Judah would ever have, including David, Solomon, anybody else, and his name was Josiah.

[4 : 27] He immediately set out to rectify the problem of getting out God's word. You see, God had pronounced doom on Judah if they didn't walk with God, and Josiah goes on the throne preceded by kings who were not walking with God and had to realize that God's judgment was about to fall on this kingdom.

He was now to be king over. And it broke his heart that they had to find a copy of the scriptures in the garbage in the temple.

So often, history is treated that way, pushed in the background, and yet Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 that these things that you'll read about in the Old Testament were written as examples to us.

In other words, when you go and read in the Old Testament, which many consider to be boring and not practical and not relevant, God says everything that is there has an illustration for you today.

And we haven't done our job studying it until we arrive at what he's trying to teach us from, indeed, history. So often we get into problems with our schooling because we have no backdrop of biblical history.

[6 : 04] We don't know how the world got here. We don't know how people got here. We're doing everything we can to keep it in existence the way it is.

And we go on and on without realizing how it got here in the first place, how it currently is being held together, and all of those answers are given to us locked away in the history book of the Old Testament that lots of times we tend to ignore.

When we get into the New Testament and it talks about the church, most of us don't know much about the history of the church either. And therefore, anything that happens at church is just okay because we have no reference point.

We do the same thing with our nation. There's legislation going on right now to eliminate huge chunks of history because for whatever reason, guys like Thomas Jefferson and George Washington ought to be screened because they had slaves.

Remember, history tells us what happened. It's not our job to rewrite it and eliminate pieces of it. We're documenting what took place, how we got it.

[7 : 29] So, knowing the Constitution, knowing that we are a republic, all these kind of things, the average student today knows nothing about what I'm talking about. Part of that is teaching.

My friend, if you are not excited about what you're teaching somebody else, don't bother to teach. history is an exciting study in God's word and any other place if the teacher's excited about it. I remember my first Western civilization class I had in high school back in Plymouth, Indiana and this lady had to be about 150 years old and she wasn't quite five foot, never been married and she was mocked because she had so many cats in her house.

And she sat up there the very first day and said, we will never have a discussion in here. Without great. That was my time killer.

Get her to talk about something and then we won't cover any of the content for a test. I'm saying this because I now know she's dead and no longer can get a chance to hear this.

[8 : 50] But she says, we'll never have discussion because I know everything about history and you don't know anything and I don't want to have a discussion with somebody who doesn't know anything about history.

But you know what? I learned more about history from her than anybody else. As you think back, you need to be excited about not only what you're teaching but why it is vital for somebody to sit in your class and listen to it.

And therefore, a pastor needs to do the same thing. So as we talk about biblical history, we talk about a nation. Just this last week, they were talking about taking out of the curriculum history so that we have plenty of time to discuss how we're throwing it out to write our own history.

And then our church's history. There's a number of you that have never watched the little video that's going on in the foyer that briefly gets you caught up with the history of this church.

And most of you are saying, hey, who cares how it got started? We just go there because it's convenient or kids go there. You know, we have different reasons. And the history of how it got here doesn't mean much to us.

[10 : 21] Why should the history of a church mean something? Because you learn how and why it got started. And then you look at what it is today and ask yourself, are we going forward or backwards?

Because you see, nothing stays the same. When you are treading water in a river, carefully watch the bank.

because as much as you're treading water, the scenery is changing. You're going down with the current. When a church is not moving forward, it is not staying the same, it's going down.

We're going to see how it all happens tonight. I encourage you to be back for our study in 2 Peter. So we don't know much about it, so we can't really evaluate where it's going.

And then what's a little bit surprising, all of our interest in our own ancestry. Like it's important for us to know what country we eventually came from.

[11 : 37] You know, we're 20% Irish and 14% English and 20% German and all this stuff's mixed together. I don't know what that's supposed to do to us, justify why we have tempers or why we worry or anything else like that, but we're all interested about where we came from.

I'll never forget our oldest son was pleading with Jane to find out what our ancestry is. So I was concerned why Nathan wanted to know that.

Well, because Jane has such a dark complexion and black hair, she's got to be Indian. And if she's really Indian, we might be getting some money out of this.

That's right, my children are not perfect. But we're interested in that little wedge of history, and some of us even know when we got here to this country.

Like that's some kind of a wonderful pearl to go back. I know in my office I have my ancestry all the way back on both sides to Europe, and it's up there, but I don't think I've looked at it one time since dad gave it to me.

[13:06] But dad spent lots of research going into all the history so that I would have that at my fingertips. And as we look at that, the more he studied it, the more interest he had in it.

And that's the way it is with your Bible. The more you study it, the more interest you're going to have in it. And so as we look and begin this book that many of your Bibles call the Acts of the Apostles, it is actually the story of the foundation of a local church.

It is God's only institution for reaching a world for Christ. Today, the prominent thought is, especially with church online, we don't need to be part of a local church.

I can serve the Lord and worship God on top of a mountain somewhere. My friend, you're surrounded with things God put there, and yes, it ought to instill worship all week long, but God commands us to be part of a regular attender of a local church because that is God's chosen method for reaching the world for Christ.

Now, if that's already true, how is that documented in scripture? And, of course, God says, I'm glad you asked that question. The whole book of Acts tells us how everything hinged around the establishment and the starting of local churches.

[14:51] Why that's important to us is because we have churches all over town, and we don't even know how they got here. Why is there so many in a tiny little town?

Have you ever asked yourself that? Peter is going to take over a little church of about 120 people. It is not long at all before that little local church of 120 people turns into a church of thousands. thousands.

And right off the bat, we're kind of interested in how in the world Peter pulled that off. How in the world did you get those people there? I imagine that Peter got up and said something that was very pleasing to his audience so they'd come back.

Well, God recorded his message where 3,000 people got saved, and in essence, what he said is, you guys killed Jesus. In fact, if you read the message in Acts chapter 2, it is the kind of message that should drive everybody out of church.

[16:12] Because our idea of church today is a place to go where we feel better in it. But it's not at all what we see happening in Scripture from the very first church on.

Peter is going to go on to head up that church at Jerusalem for a season, and he's going to be spearheading a ministry to Jewish people and Samaritans.

Samaritans were individuals who were a mixed race, part Jew and part something else. And by the way, they were the most hated people by the Jews.

They lived up in an area north called Samaria. Peter is going to initiate the gospel going to those two groups.

And then later on in the book of Acts, it switches to Paul, another apostle. Peter doesn't stop doing what he's doing. It gives us flashes like history does, and to another apostle because his ministry is going to go to Gentiles.

[17:30] That's important to us because most of us, almost everybody here is a Gentile. In other words, a Gentile is somebody who's not a Jew. Those are pretty despicable people to the Jews too.

And so Paul now is going to go all over the the ancient world where planting churches so among any people group that he comes across so it becomes a hub where people hear the gospel and come to know Christ.

During Paul's lifetime, the gospel will go all the way to Britain. It will go all the way to the northern part of Russia. It will go all the way east to China.

And it will flood the continent of Africa. And the method that is spelled out in the book of Acts is an individual leading people to Christ and forming a church so that they in turn lead their communities to Christ.

and then go and plant other churches. That's the whole strategy. And that's the history of the church. Now, some people think that a better title for the book might be the act of the Holy Spirit. [19:00] There's a problem with that. In John 15, 26, Jesus taught his disciples that the Holy Spirit when he comes, he will testify of Jesus.

He won't draw attention to himself. And so, to some degree, that kind of a title misses the mark. Another one group have over history called it the power of prayer.

prayer. That's an interesting study because as you go through the book of Acts, there is not one decision in the entire book that is not first bathed in prayer.

It's actually documented in the history. They prayed and this happened. They prayed and this happened. They prayed and this happened. They came together to pray. You'd be hard-pressed to find any prayer meeting going on in this community in almost any church.

And even the church at Grace, a very, very small percentage of people gather to pray together.

[20:20] But you know what? We all would like the same results of the church in Jerusalem. we miss and we think that we have something relevant in our culture that will do the same thing that God can do.

When a church grows without it being bathed in prayer all the way, it's what man can do.

You can provide entertainment. You can preach sermonettes. You can have all kinds of things by way of programs that nobody else has. And more than likely, you can pull some people from other churches because you've got the greatest show on earth on Sunday.

But when God builds a church, he begins on the inside changing lives with people coming to know Christ. The gospel is absolutely the critical component of church growth.

If people are not coming to Jesus Christ, something is in dire straits in the church. So the power of prayer would be a good relevant thing.

[21:41] We need to keep in mind that the book of Acts was really part part of another book.

The gospel of Luke and the book of Acts used to be one volume. Then it got to be known as Luke 1 and Luke 2.

That's about 300 A.D. And then it got separate titles for both. Even though the author of Luke and Acts is the same person.

Who is this guy named Luke? First of all, he's a Gentile doctor. He's not a Jew. As we look at who this individual is, he is Paul's personal physician, joins Paul on the second missionary journey, and travels with him over the second and third with all of his imprisonments, is his personal physician right up to the moment Paul is executed.

So, Luke is a vital piece of what Paul does and is our first missionary doctor. There's missions today that center in the mission field on medicine.

[23:10] The very first person that got that all started was this guy named Luke. It was written about 60 A.D., so this is written about four years before Paul is put to death.

It is the only book that is continually being written today. Because if it is the history of the church, my friend, this chapter ends with the rapture, and that hasn't happened yet.

Now, in understanding a Gentile physician, he writes the book to Theophilus.

And in Luke, chapter 1, verse 3, he calls him most excellent Theophilus. Theophilus means friend of God.

Theophilus is a Roman, a high-ranking Roman official, and Luke, they're both Gentiles, and Luke, that name was given to slaves.

[24:22] It's a Gentile name given to slaves. So we know that Luke was born a slave. But this is what would happen. Theophilus, a slave owner, when they saw a brilliant little boy, they would take that little boy and what they would say to that little boy is, if you apply yourself, I'll send you away and you can become a doctor or anything you want with the understanding that you have to come back to this community and for several years practice your profession here.

It was the way they built back into their community. More than likely, Luke was a slave to Theophilus, but he was brilliant. And so Theophilus took him under his arm and sent him away to school.

He comes back, a medical doctor, was Theophilus' personal physician until the second missionary journey when he became Paul's personal physician.

As I said, he joins Paul on the second missionary trip. You can find it in the narrative as you go through the book of Acts. Remember, Luke is writing the book of Acts, so when you come across

the word we, that means Luke's included there, when he says they, Luke wasn't there. So that's how you follow it through the narrative, and it begins in Acts 16 verse 10 in the town of Troas. Okay, so for the purpose of the book.

[26 : 18] when we get the letter to the Colossians, the letter to the Ephesians, the letter to the Philippians, all these different letters, they're all going to churches that Paul has planted with the realization they were to be hubs in bringing their community to Christ.

And to keep them on track, Paul would correspond to these churches with letters. And so as you think about what the purpose is, that when the gospel is sidetracked from any of these churches, the church gradually falls into apostasy.

And so Paul is constantly keeping the churches that were planted from falling away from the Lord. and the way that you see apostasy take place is when a church loses its passion to lead people to Christ.

Why did Paul put 1st and 2nd Thessalonica up clear to the top? Because wherever Paul went in Asia Minor, that little church had sent somebody in every little big city in Asia Minor, somebody had been there from Thessalonica telling them about Jesus Christ and how to be right with God.

It was what he called their labor of love. And so as we see the purpose even of our church was the same purpose embedded at Jerusalem with Peter and embedded in all of Paul's churches that he would later plant.

[28 : 09] as we see this purpose unfold, just remember that when you read in the Old Testament, people say, well, where was the church in the Old Testament?

You realize that the majority of people in the Old Testament lived all within a region the size of the state of Texas. There weren't people groups over here or over there.

all of them, for the most part, lived within a region the size of Texas. What did God do with Abraham?

He took him out of Ur, planted him where all the, there were three great civilizations through the Old Testament. There were the Assyrians to the north, the Babylonians to the east, and the Egyptians to the southwest.

As you look at those three civilizations what tied all three together? Roads that all intersected at Jerusalem. God literally brought the world to Israel for them to hear about the one true God that by faith they need to place their trust in.

[29 : 27] People go back and say the Old Testament people were saved differently than the people are saved today. That's absolutely false. Paul remarks in Romans that Abraham, which was long before there was a Jewish nation, that Abraham was saved by faith just as you and I are saved by faith today.

So there was no difference in the gospel. They look forward to him coming the first time, we look forward to him coming the second time. Now as we think about the reality, when we get closer to the New Testament, what's happening?

People are now living all over the place. God does not change his message, but he changes his method. That's why we can't belittle the church, because that's God's method today for reaching a world for Christ.

It all is supposed to germinate out of the local church. So we can't say we don't need the local church. God says it's absolutely vital.

There's so much to learn. Now in Acts 1 8, please, hopefully your Bible is still there, but you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

[31 : 12] If you have a footnote on that, it tells you that that Acts 1 8 is the outline for the entire book. And the outline of the book, the first seven chapters of the book of Acts are going to all be about establishing the church at Jerusalem.

Chapters 1 through 7. It takes a time frame of about two years. Satan is now going to attack this church with heavy persecution to squash it.

God is going to allow persecution to spread the gospel. In other words, to get the people and Jerusalem to start reaching out, God actually moves them out with persecution so that they go to different cities and villages and share the gospel.

Remember Paul, when he has this encounter with God, he's on his way up north to Damascus where churches had already gotten.

So as we think about Peter, he's the key man in the first seven chapters. And keep this in mind. If we are interested in reaching the world for Christ, the light that shines the farthest shines the brightest at home.

[32 : 52] Let me say that again. The light that shines the farthest is the light that shines the brightest at home. You know, lots of times we can get so excited about missions and so much money going into missions and we neglect home base.

home base is constantly being strengthened and growing so that we can be more involved in seeing the gospel go to more parts of this world.

When we look back at just the history of the church, just taking on a couple church planters in Ethiopia, to the 46 now that we take on, there's just a few people here in the entire church that could financially afford that endeavor.

But by doing it together as the church grows healthy here, we now can make a huge impact over there. So, Jerusalem is the place where it starts.

It then goes to Judea and Samaria, which is chapters 8 through 12. That takes approximately 12 years. And here, we see the beginning of a transitioning from Peter to Paul.

[34 : 17] This records churches being planted all up and down what we call Israel today. The last part out of most parts of the earth are chapters 13 through 28.

And by the way, that church and the planting of churches continues on until the rapture. And we're actually part of that. The focus there is mainly on Paul.

And it's taking the gospel to Europe, Asia, and Africa. World evangelism. Now, as we get into the book a little bit, it's important to understand that when Jesus is teaching the disciples, especially before he was crucified for those several chapters in John, the thought is, were they paying attention, and did they actually do what Jesus had commanded them to do?

The gospel of Matthew concludes to go and preach the gospel to every creature.

Not only does it say it in Matthew, it says it in Mark, it says it in Luke, it says it in John, and says it in Acts. No doubt what God's mission is, what God's purpose is, but in that it says teaching them to obey all things whatsoever I commanded and lo, I am with you always.

[35 : 51] That's how that passage concludes, and it outlines for us what discipleship's all about. You don't disciple people who have never given their life to Christ.

Discipleship begins when you lead somebody to Christ. It's the first step of discipleship. And then the person who has given his life to Christ is then challenged to become part of a local church. It is there under the teaching of the word that they learn to obey what God's word has to say. And then the third step we see illustrated graphically in the book of training faithful individuals to carry on the work after those individuals are gone.

Why is Acts so important to me right now? I've spent a lot of time thinking, where will grace be in 30 years?

Hard to say, isn't it? My heart for grace is this, that up in heaven I continually hear people coming to know Christ here at grace.

[37 : 24] that I hear the angels rejoicing and I ask them, what's going on? Some more people got saved to grace. Reaching a world for Christ isn't Tim's purpose, it's God's word.

So as we think about evangelism, it's not surprising that right off the bat, evangelism takes place in the first seven chapters. When we get down with the seven chapters, there are over 8,000 people saved.

My friend, why does God document the numbers? People say, well, it doesn't matter. God's not concerned about numbers. That is absolutely contrary to scripture.

God is interested in numbers. He numbered how many he fed. twice. And he especially numbers those who come to Christ.

Hundreds more in Judea and Samaria, in chapters 8 through 12, and the uttermost parts of the earth. It is staggering what takes place.

[38 : 42] Do you realize that when Paul breathes his last breath, there's only been one other time that the known world all knew about who God was.

Can anybody tell me when? Oh, creation, yeah, that'd be good. When all the known world knew of the one true God?

King Solomon's reign. Isn't that something? We so dish on Solomon, but that was the last time that the known world knew of the one true God until Paul in the book of Acts.

God got great truths in it. Acts chapter 2, you know, it's supposed to teach us after we come to know Christ, what should we expect out of the local church?

And lo and behold, that's all spelled out too. So they met together in Acts chapter 2 verses 42 through 47 with four things. First of all, teaching. People say, well, you know, Tim, I don't agree with all the services we have at Grace.

[39 : 53] Sunday school, Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday. You know, where in the world did you get all that? My friend, if you go back and study the scriptures, they met every day to be taught God's word.

And guess what they knew that you don't know? Most of all the Jewish boys had memorized the Pentateuch. Man, just start reading the book of Numbers and see how far you get.

They had it memorized. They had Psalm 119 memorized. They had the book of Lamentations memorized. You would think, well, we already know a good portion of that.

They met every day, you know what, because they had knowledge, but they didn't have understanding and they didn't have wisdom. If you're in your quiet time, notice how Solomon emphasizes that as we get started in the book of Proverbs.

And so they came together every day. They couldn't get enough of this book. Second, fellowship.

And by the way, that's why pastors need to be trained.

[41 : 10] Because they are given the responsibility of teaching the word of God. It is not something anybody can do. Then there's fellowship.

This is an interesting one because we can't think of fellowship apart from food. And food can be a part of fellowship.

The word koinonia is common sharing. that's being involved in a body where it's okay to talk about the hurts that you have and somebody really cares.

It's the reality that we irritate each other when we come together and people do and say wrong things about us and that's okay because I need to learn to handle that.

That's part of fellowship. And then you'll find in the book of Acts it's also financial. People realized they were sojourners in a strange land that they were far too attached to this world and you saw incredible things happen financially.

[42 : 32] And then it says they met together together say I pray all the time Tim good but are you praying together which is what he commands here.

There's an advantage of coming together to pray especially praying for lost people. And then worship we just basically we redefine fellowship so it can be donuts and coffee and we've redefined worship to mean music when 80% of the time it has nothing to do with music.

The word worship means to give worth. How does God illustrate worship in the early church? Do you realize it wasn't with music?

It wasn't. Does that mean music is bad? Absolutely not. Colossians tells us singing songs and melodies. But how God illustrates worship in the first church was with the sacred moments or the ordinances of baptism and communion especially communion.

That gives worth. Even when we think about that, well, you know, let's hurry up and get it done to say we did it. And that's the take you'll see in most churches today.

[44 : 01] And therefore, God's illustration of worship falls by the wayside. The last thing that I want to point out through the book of Acts that we're going to get a chance to see, Christ has trained 12 people.

One's a casualty. When you spend time investing in somebody else's life, you might say, I'm not going to do it anymore because this person became a casualty.

My friend, welcome to the group. Christ had a casualty and nobody can do it better than he can. Paul had a casualty.

Remember who it was? Demas. Why does God spell out the casualties? Because if you're interested in leadership training, you're going to have casualties.

but you're also going to have miraculous success stories. Christ pours his life into 12 people.

[45 : 08] One's a casualty and the other 11, we think, how in the world do they have the sense to come out of the storm? And the book of Acts tells us how they did it.

But what is interesting about the book of Acts, it's really not all about Paul or Peter all the way through, which kind of discretizes the Acts of the Apostles.

It's about the baton getting passed to the next generation. So much of what I do is hopefully I pass the baton on to someone else who will continue to do reaching people for Christ. Those 11 men stepped up to the plate. Again, I encourage you to read Fox's book of martyrs. In the very first part of it, they tell you how these individuals all died and where it is. If you look at a clock, you will see numbers 1 through 12 on a clock extend the lines and you'll see where every one of those disciples ended up dying and reaching their world for Christ. [46 : 31] But you know what? If all of it was done with the disciples, do you realize none of us would be here today? None of us. those 12 took people with them to train them so that it continued on long afterward.

2 Timothy 2.2 which you see again on the chart out there in the foyer. So, we're introduced to the Apostle Peter. Who did he take under his wing? A guy that you would probably not jump to and connect. Barnabas took on James. Remember the half brother of Christ? Peter fills in the blanks for James who will become the senior pastor at Jerusalem. There's another guy Barnabas. He's related to Barnabas. He's related to Mark. It tells us also that sometimes in our own families the people we disciple are people from our family. [47 : 48] What a beautiful we know the story of Barnabas because he starts the first missionary journey but we forget who in the world got Barnabas there.

It was Peter. Immediately Peter grasped the idea that what he was doing in preaching this will not continue on if I don't pour my life into individuals because Peter's not going to stay at Jerusalem. What's going to happen to the church at Jerusalem when he leaves? Silas is another one. We know him with Paul but he's with Peter first.

And what about John Mark? Another relative who will write a gospel all under Peter's tutelage. Isn't that something? Notice that Peter really gets it. Now Barnabas then turns around and guess what he does?

[48 : 54] He goes out and gets somebody that nobody else wanted. By the way, if you're looking for somebody to disciple, they're all over the place. They're people that nobody else wants.

Nobody wanted to touch Paul. So Barnabas goes and gets him and takes him to Antioch and literally holds his hand as he gets involved and then takes him to Jerusalem introducing him and giving him opportunity in Acts chapter 15 and on and on and we know what happens with Paul's life, but we forget who it was that disciplined him, Barnabas.

So what does Paul do? Paul took an extra missionary trip because the first one kind of blew up in his face. He got sick and he wasn't going to have any quitters with him.

He was going to have high profile go-getters. And so when the second missionary trip was about to happen, he says, I don't want Mark. He quit. God's word is just filled with gracious stories where he sees us not for what we are, but what we can be in Christ.

And so God uses another man, Barnabas, to rescue Paul. And then rescue Paul's castaway mark.

[50 : 27] Who does Paul pass the baton on to? Flaman, Silas, Titus, Onesimus, a host of other people. Does he have a casualty? Yeah, just like Jesus did, Demas.

But you know who took his place? Timothy. who he had led to Christ and had spent most of the time with.

It took the second missionary journey before it got to Paul rather than him getting around to all these churches and getting them all started that none of them were going to make it if he didn't train leaders.

And Timothy was one of the very first ones that he endeavored to do that. So we're seeing all this stuff happen and can it work? Well, that's the story of Acts that we're getting into.

Just several quick applications here. In studying God's word, you'll always find, even in the history books, timely, since God's word is always timely.

[51 : 33] God tells us heaven and earth will pass away, but his word never passes away. It is always relevant. I have a mechanism that goes off in my mind every time I hear somebody say culture.

Well, it was the culture back then. Every word of your Bible is God breathed. There is no culture in it.

It's timeless words from Christ. Christ. And we need to treat each part of it with that kind of emphasis. Hebrews tells us, for the word of God is living, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged

sword, piercing even and dividing asunder of soul and spirit.

It concludes, it is the center of their thoughts and intents of the heart. It tells us everything about God and it tells me everything about me.

that's why I need to get into it. And that's why it is just as timeless for Josiah to read it as it is for you and I to read it today.

[52 : 51] It is not culturally dated. God's purpose did not shift between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It was always salvation by faith, never by keeping rules.

Secondly, what made the first church thrive will make today's church thrive. There are all kinds of seminars and conferences for pastors and leaders to go to about how to make your church grow. Several years ago, we went back, several leaders, and we sat in on a discipleship and how to disciple the church. I was appalled how unbiblical the strategy was.

My friend, if discipleship is a mandate from God, then he probably spelled out how to do it. We don't need to think up and vent something else to get the church to grow.

We don't want the church to grow because of our novel methods. We want the church of Christ to grow because we acknowledged that God's got to grow it.

[54 : 15] And God grows it when people humble themselves and come together to pray. Why does God put the stats in there?

Just to show us what growth looks like when God does it. It blows us away. When we think about what is the next step for grace, our tendency is to look at what we can do.

This is his church. We ought to be praying and asking God to do what he wants done down here rather than telling God what we want done.

the question is does it work? God says just pick up your Bibles and read the book of Acts. Third getting accurate facts and then clearly passing them on is vital if tomorrow is to be as fruitful as the past.

If we don't take seriously building our lives individually and to other people this church has no future. It doesn't because all of us are leaving this planet and in the wake of us being gone who have we equipped who have we passed the baton to carry on embracing the purpose and passionate about leading people to Christ.

[56 : 05] You know the sad reality is if you watch the video again you'll see the 1040 window latitude longitude it's where 90% of the world lives it's never heard the gospel once you know it's at the very center of it Israel where it all started is the darkest place on earth because it didn't get passed on follow Paul's Peter's whole missionary journey and you now have the 1040 window we're taking the gospel back to who had it first because leadership training was made optional that's an idea if you want to do that that's okay and we treat the same way with our parenting we really think it's the church's job to build

God's word into the lives of our children it is mom and dad's job we're so hot and bothered about what the school is bringing in what else should lost people bring in the exact same thing that is happening it is a call to parents everywhere to take seriously the family altar and getting their kids involved and knowing the word of God bring them to church it is not up to kids to decide whether or not they're going to go to church it's up to you mom and dad it is your responsibility not unless you're just willing to let the kids go to bed whenever they want go wherever they want eat whatever they want watch whatever they want what parent would do that the same kind of parent that leaves it up for a child as to whether or not he wants to go to church dropping kids off and parents not staying what are we telling our young people it is no wonder that apostasy is ripping apart the vast majority of churches in

America how do we get back on track you know it's interesting as you study Peter's ministry in the first seven chapters in Acts chapter 2 21 we read in Peter's message and it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved sound familiar Romans 10 13 Paul says that what is it that grows a church the realization that whoever it is that calls upon the name of the Lord what shall be saved Christ I had I just had an experience this last week person says well we all actually go to heaven because unless we do something really bad because didn't God die for everybody see that's how you abuse John 3 16 for God so loved the world God did die for everyone but he says it's a gift and the gift doesn't become yours until you receive it and how do you receive it well talk to either one you need to acknowledge that

Jesus is actually God that he went to the cross to pay the price for your sin you need to

acknowledge that as an absolute fact now you need to confess with your mouth you need to tell him

that you want what he did for you at the cross to cover your sin and you're inviting him into the throne room of your life to be in charge and when he tells you to do it you're going to want to obey that's what I want to do God says if you confess that God raised him from the dead you might be saved thou shalt be saved we got so many novel approaches how to get into God's kingdom but God says there's just one way and it's the same way Peter said it and the same way Paul said it and the same way Christ said it it's the same way all the way back to the first book of the Bible all of us since Adam and Eve were born going our own way which the Bible calls sin and therefore we're all coming into this world lost an interesting little phrase that might help you understand loss because we hear it lots at church loss does not mean something misplaced lost means something that has been forfeited when I do wrong things I have forfeited a relationship with Christ the one he wanted me to have but God who so loved me went to the cross to pay that debt of everything I've ever done am doing and ever would do and now he's saying I paid for it won't you invite me in we always give the invitation after every service because we don't know how [61 : 56] God is going to use any part of his word but the gospel is on in every verse every passage of scripture and if God has spoken to you and you don't know without a shadow of a doubt where you're going to spend eternity if there is doubt there you do not have the confidence of Romans 10 9 when God says thou shalt be saved it hinges not on how you feel by what it is you have done with his free gift we'd love to help you make that decision you come won't you during this closing song and allow any one of our members of our leadership team to take God's word and show you how to make this life changing decision in essence!

it's what you see written! maybe as you look at your life you've not been pouring your life into anybody you really are not a part of a local church that is aggressively moving forward maybe you want to join this church come up here and I'll guarantee you they'll know what to do by the way we don't have any song and dance for you the only thing we ask is have you given your life to Jesus are you already being obedient then that's exactly what we're looking for maybe you want to join the church they'll show you how to do that there's areas of your life that you know if you were to ask yourself has there to the

Lord than I am right now my friend apostasy has already started in your heart and you know how to get off that if we confess our sin he's faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteous you might need to just freshly rededicate your life to the Lord a great place to do it is right up front before the Lord see a lot you be embarrassed to do that you know what God says when we humble ourselves he exalts us thank you father for your word thank you for the adventure you're leading us down give us an excitement for history since we are coming to understand that our history tells us about our future thrill us father with just getting into your word for those that have decisions to be made prick their hearts to respond in Jesus name amen you come if God has spoken to you