

Church Family Meeting

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Preacher: Cedric Moss

[0 : 00] And I pray that you would enable us to bring glory to your name, not just from what we do tonight, but what we do beyond this night. So we thank you. We pray for those who for various reasons can't be here. And Lord, we thank you for Jen who is participating by video.

We thank you for those who will be watching the video recording and also those who will be listening to the audio recording. And Lord, we pray you bless us all, all the same. We commit our time to you now in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, as has already been foreshadowed, the purpose of this meeting is to share with you changes that are being made to our care groups. But really, the meeting is about much more than that.

And that is because the changes we're making to care groups have a much larger context. We're not just making these changes in a vacuum. These changes are the result of the elders of this church having prayerfully considered afresh the purpose of the church and really, well, the purpose of this church and really the purpose of all churches.

We've been discussing and praying about this that you'll hear about tonight since 2015 in October. And what you'll be hearing is really the fruit of that. And so I encourage you to pay close attention, listen closely, and then make a note of any questions that you might have. We'll take time to answer those questions at the end.

[1 : 48] And what I've done is I'm going to try to, there's a lot of information, so I have a prepared script that I'm going to try to stick to just to share with you what our heart is for these changes.

Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ left this earth and ascended back to heaven. But before doing so, he gave instructions to his disciples about the mission they should be engaged in.

These instructions have come to be called the Great Commission. We find the Great Commission in what we call the Synoptic Gospels.

And that's Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And synoptic means to see together. So in the three Gospels, we get to see together the life of Jesus from three different angles.

And they give us this account, three different accounts. You can think of it like three cameras in one room taking different angles. They give us the account of the life and ministry of Jesus.

[2 : 53] John's Gospel is a little different because John does not give us, he doesn't attempt to give some chronology about the life of Jesus. But instead, he focuses on the person of Jesus and really just gives us selective aspects of Jesus.

And his sole purpose is to show Jesus as the Messiah. And he says, so that you may have eternal life. The account of the Great Commission is to be found in the Synoptic Gospels are as follows.

First, in Matthew 28, 18 through 20. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. And then in Mark's account, in Mark 16, verses 15 and 16, we read, And he said to them, Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to all creation, the whole creation.

[4 : 04] Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And then Luke's account reads as follows, Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

So we can summarize the Great Commission from the Synoptic Gospels in this way, three ways. Number one, preaching the gospel. And this entails preaching the gospel to all people, calling them to repent from their sins, and to believe the good news, which is the finished work of Christ on the cross for sinners, that they can receive forgiveness by putting their trust in him and be accepted by God.

And then second, baptizing believers. Those who believe the gospel are commanded to be baptized. Baptism is an expression of genuine belief in Christ, and it's the believer's first act of obedience.

On the day of Pentecost, for example, when the gospel was preached, many people believed, and what we are told, actually, is that those who believed were baptized.

It tells us in Acts 2, 41 through 42, so those who received his word were baptized, and were added that day about 3,000 souls.

[5 : 43] And the third part is discipling followers. And you notice that even though I talk about baptizing believers, at this particular point, we talk about discipling followers.

And I think this is going to be clearer as we go through what we're going to be talking about tonight.

What you will find is that Jesus invited people to follow him. And there is no indication that every single person he invited to follow him was a believer.

As a matter of fact, there is an indication in John's gospel, in John chapter 6, that quite a number of people who were following Jesus, John calls them disciples.

And you may remember this account when Jesus said to them, except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no part with me. And John records, he says, from that time, many of his disciples went back.

[6 : 45] And Jesus then turned to the twelve and he said, do you want to go also? And Peter said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words to eternal life.

So what is clear is that Jesus had people who were following him who were not true believers. And it helps us to see that when we engage in discipleship, not every single person that we invest in will necessarily bring good fruit.

I mean, the more graphic example would be Judas. Jesus started out with twelve and in the end, one failed and he commissioned the remaining ones plus Matthias.

Well, actually, without Matthias, Matthias came later. So, the Great Commission is preaching the gospel, baptizing believers, and discipling followers until Jesus returns.

That's the primary work of those who believe in Jesus and those who truly follow Jesus. Now, again, as I said, while thousands, countless thousands, followed Jesus during his earthly ministry, many followed for the miracles, some followed for the food, but not all were true disciples.

[8 : 13] Jesus had some true disciples and from those true disciples, he chose twelve men and he appointed them as apostles. And then at the end of his earthly ministry, you remember the commission that we just read, Jesus commissioned eleven of them because Judas had failed and shipwrecked and committed suicide.

But when Jesus gave them this commission, he never intended that they alone would fulfill the commission. Jesus did not intend and could not have intended for them to go to all the earth and preach the gospel.

But when you read the great commission, built into the great commission, is the way that the gospel was supposed to go to the ends of the earth. Because he said, you are to disciple all nations and you are to teach them what I have taught you.

And part of teaching them what Jesus taught them is to make disciples. Part of teaching them what Jesus taught them is to make disciples after him, teaching them to observe the things they had been taught to observe.

So the very nature of the great commission required that it be shared. And that was the Lord's expectation that it would be shared. And the reason it has to be shared is it is a great commission.

[9 : 46] And if we will truly embrace it, we would find, oh wow, this is big and we do need to, we need to share it. Now the book of Acts is the only anointed account that we have in scripture about what church life was like after Jesus ascended back to heaven.

That's all we have. Anything else is extra biblical. That's what we have. So we consider that to see what did these disciples do in fulfillment of what Jesus told them to do.

I think it's instructive for us that in the book of Acts, the primary name given to believers in Christ is disciple, not Christian.

The first reference to Christian in the book of Acts takes place near to the end in Acts 26.

No, that's a wrong reference. It's not 26. I think it's 11. Yeah, Acts 11.

[11 : 02] I have 26 in my notes. That's wrong. Acts 11. I have it transferred. It's Acts 11, 26. We're told that the disciples, it says that in Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians.

And then the only other time that Christian is mentioned in the book of Acts is in Acts 26, verse 28, where Paul is testifying before King Agrippa and he says to, and Agrippa says to him, in a short time, would you persuade me to be a Christian?

Those are the only two references that we have in the book of Acts, the Acts of the Apostles, that tell us that those who were following Christ were called Christians.

In Antioch, people observed them, saw them acting like Christ and following his teachings and they called them Christians. And then Agrippa knew that that's what they were called, so Agrippa said, you want to persuade me to be a Christian in such a short period of time?

But on the other hand, what we see in the book of Acts is the singular or plural form of disciple is mentioned 28 times in the book of Acts.

[12 : 24] And I think this insight is important because it helps us to see that those who believe in Jesus Christ and follow him are fundamentally disciples.

That's who we are. We're called Christians. Yet it's a fair assessment to say that over time, what believers in Christ are called Christians has overshadowed and marginalized who we are in disciples.

We are disciples and should be referenced as Christians, but that's been inverted and Christian now has overshadowed who we are and who we are supposed to be.

Now, I'm not trying to make a case to say that we should call ourselves disciple more than Christian. I'm not saying that at all because I actually think the witness of Scripture would not even give us warrant for that.

Beyond the book of Acts, we don't see those who follow Christ being called disciples outside of the book of Acts. The more common term is saints.

[13 : 39] But I think the point is that whatever we are called, whether we're called saints, we're called Christians, or even disciples, whatever we are called is important to note what we are to be and what we are to do.

And that is, we are to be people who are disciples in fulfillment of the Great Commission. I think it's also instructive to note in the book of Acts that the first time church is mentioned is in Acts 5 and 11 in the aftermath of the uncovering of the dishonesty of Ananias and Sapphira.

And then by Acts chapter 6, we're able to see that the group of disciples eventually began to be established as churches led by elders and helped by deacons.

So we see this development that's taking place in the book of Acts in obedience to what the Lord told the disciples to do. So it's fair to say that local churches are comprised of disciples who are led by elders with the help of deacons and collectively they are to be engaged in obeying the Great Commission.

So each local church needs to be structured to be able to obey the Great Commission and I think we are sufficiently aware of churches including our own that would be structured in a certain way that does not make the fulfillment of the Great Commission as effective as it actually can be because of the way they're actually structured.

[15 : 26] Some have called the Great Commission the Great Omission because largely rather than focusing on making disciples many churches are focused on getting decisions and again many are structured in such a way that it's just not conducive to making disciples and we've lost sight of the vision of a broad shared responsibility to be engaged in the Great Commission.

So I think there are three particular things that need to happen three critical things to begin to change this state of affairs.

The first is there needs to be a conviction a biblical conviction that the Great Commission is the primary work of the church.

There's a deep conviction in our hearts. The Great Commission is the primary work of the church. And second a discipleship strategy and plan must be developed.

It's not going to happen in a vacuum. It's not something that we need to figure out as we go every single time. Anytime there's something that you will do in an ongoing way it's wise to think about what the process is going to be so you can determine how you can do that in a consistent manner rather than making it up as it goes.

[17 : 06] And so each local church should be charged with determining what this looks like and it shouldn't be a mystery. It should be a shared body of knowledge that all those who are part of that church has to know that this is our approach to discipleship.

And then the third thing that needs to happen is a church must resolve to make whatever ministry changes that are necessary in order to facilitate its discipleship strategy and plan.

In each local church the elders have the overall responsibility for mapping out a strategy for making disciples. And while the strategy and plan will look different from church to church the mission is the same to make disciples.

And this is one of the confusing things when you listen to people talk about churches or you even observe churches. Every single church has the same purpose and that is to make disciples.

They may go about doing that differently. I think the same way we are unique individuals. I think churches are unique in a lot of ways. They're positioned differently.

[18 : 30] They have particular strengths and so forth. But they have the same purpose. Just like us. God has positioned all of us in very different ways. We grew up in different families, born in different countries, had different experiences.

But every single human being has the same purpose. purpose. Every single human being has the same purpose. And that purpose is to glorify God in our lives.

And what happens is we do many things between birth and death. And the overall purpose that we have is to glorify God.

And that's why this whole thing about, oh, I need to find my purpose. I need to find my purpose. purpose. That is really, that's bogus. Because the Bible tells us God has created every single thing for his glory.

That's the first question of the Westminster Catechism. What's the purpose of man? To glorify God and enjoy him forever. So we all have the same purpose, but God will use us in our lives in terms of the different experiences we have, the different abilities that he gives us, the advantages we have, the circumstances he gives us, and we have to live our lives to bring glory to him.

[19 : 51] So same purpose for everyone, but how we carry that out may differ. But how we carry that out is not our purpose. So the same is true for churches. Churches may have different circumstances than they do, and they are called to be involved in the Great Commission, but at the end of the day, the purpose is the same.

And this is why there's no need to be competing because God has given all churches the same purpose, and then based on the people they have and the providence of God and all the other things, they fulfill that purpose.

I said this earlier and I want to just elaborate on it again. the Great Commission contemplates a decentralized approach for its effective and eventual accomplishment.

The Great Commission contemplates a decentralized approach for its effective and eventual accomplishment. Yet the church, by and large, has taken a centralized approach to ministry.

And it's centralized primarily around the pastors and a few key people in the church. But really that, and see, here's what I know. I know for many of us, because what I'm talking about at this moment is all that we've known largely, we've seen it.

[21 : 24] Everything is just centralized around the pastor. And you know, this has been a troubling thing for many, many years for me. And I've actually had this thought in my head for many years, and I just didn't have the courage to do it, but I have thought, you know what, I'm just going to not show up on one Sunday morning.

And just see what happens. Just see what people do. because so often, things are just so built in and structured around the pastor.

And I'll tell you this, though that is our reality as well, that's not my heart. And because that's not my heart, that's why we're talking about this tonight.

I desire to see ministry in this church, the great commission in this church, to be decentralized. I desire to see men and women whom the Lord has saved, to be engaged in this call that he has given to them as well, to make disciples.

And so, I pray that you hear my heart tonight. Over the past almost year and a half, as I mentioned, David and I have been thinking about and praying about disciples.

[22 : 50] discipleship. And I can tell you, I don't know if there's been something that has been more weighty, something that has been, I felt just so helpless to really think through what is this going to look like in a church that's established in so many ways and doing things in a certain way and our mindsets are set in a particular way.

what would this look like to make some of the changes that we feel the Lord is calling us to. At the moment, our Sunday morning gathering is the primary context where the discipling that we do takes place, followed by care groups, followed by prayer times, corporate prayer and pre-service prayer.

And we're grateful to the Lord for what he has done in the context that we have for discipleship. We really are. Though I would say that's not the ideal in terms of the end all and be all, I think a fair assessment would be overall that we've done well.

Many of you, your lives show that you are mature, you're not able to be swayed with all the winds of doctrine that blow and you're rooted and you're grounded in Christ and that is a wonderful thing and we're grateful for that.

Yet, as David and I evaluated discipleship in our midst, we have seen the need to do more. And, again, we have grown in our conviction that the Great Commission is a shared responsibility and therefore it cannot be centralized around ourselves and a few members.

[24 : 48] It must be decentralized and shared by the elders and the members. believers. And I think this is a very important philosophy that needs to be embraced by us as a church.

This can't be just my conviction or David's conviction. Each one of you needs to get the conviction, the honest conviction that when you look at scripture and when you look at what the Lord has called us to do, he's not called us to this thing where you have a whole lot of spiritual spectators and then you have some spiritual actors who do most of the moving around and all the other things that happen in a local church.

So, it means that we must disciple members and equip them to engage in discipling others in accordance with the Great Commission. Let me just say a few words about effective discipleship and then we're going to look at a handout that I want to give to you.

Effective discipleship is reproductive discipleship. But for various reasons, not all who profess faith in Christ and pursue the journey of discipleship will equally mature and be equally productive.

That's just the reality of life. You know this thing about, oh, everyone is equal and that's not true. God did not give us all the same abilities. He gave us different abilities and he gave us different talents and he gave some of us particular strengths and he didn't give it to others.

[26 : 28] And some of us have particular weaknesses that others have as strengths. So, we're different. And a wise God sees nothing wrong with that. And so, even as we consider discipleship, it's going to look different for us.

Apart from abilities, it's season of life and availability and just varied circumstances that we face.

And certainly, God's providential call on a person's life. all of these variables will cause discipleship when we engage in that process to look different from one person to the next.

However, even though that is the case, it still remains the duty of the elders to seek to encourage those entrusted to their care to be engaged in discipleship to whatever degree possible for them.

Whatever season you're in, whatever circumstances you have, whatever opportunities you have to try to maximize those opportunities for discipleship.

[27 : 42] And again, it's going to look different. So, the whole idea is that we don't look at other people, but we look at our life and say, am I, to the best of my ability, obeying the great commission?

One of the things I want to talk about as well is success. What does success look like in discipleship? How do we measure success?

Success cannot truly be determined or even primarily determined by the number of people who attend our gatherings on a Sunday morning or any gathering for that matter.

Instead, success must be determined by the extent to which we are faithful to make disciples and teach and equip them to make disciples in return in fulfillment of the great commission.

As the early disciples did this, the church grew. The church multiplied. And in our case, although we desire numerical growth, numerical growth is not the goal.

[28 : 54] That's not the goal. That should be the result. We pray it is the result. But the goal is to make disciples. And so we'll pursue that goal and how we do in achieving that goal will determine success for us.

It's important for us to ensure that our discipleship strategy is compatible with the realities that our people face.

We all have family and work responsibilities that absorb most of our time. And therefore, the structure and the schedule of the church must be reflective of those realities as we think about how do we fulfill the great commission.

We can't be indifferent to those realities. And so we try to take these into account. And in order to give priority to discipleship in the context of the great commission, I think it would be necessary for us to make some changes to what we are currently doing.

And the major change that we are making is that in addition to what we are doing in discipleship currently, there is a need for us to put in place a more formal process for discipleship.

[30 : 25] I mean, each of us should know if, for example, you meet on a Sunday morning or whenever you meet a young believer or you lead someone to Christ.

You should know, okay, what is the process that I want to take this person along to help them to grow in their new relationship with Jesus Christ?

As I've tried to give an example, an illustration of what we are seeking to achieve, you can think of it kind of like a spiritual high school diploma.

One of the things that each country does is they say it is mandatory for you to go to school up to a certain age. Here at 16.

Up to 16, you have to be in school and there's a body of instruction, experiences that they hope those children would get. Now, of course, there are people who go beyond that and they go to tertiary education.

[31 : 30] And in our particular context, what we've been thinking about, and this is what we've given a lot of time to, to say what would it look like? What would be the body of instruction and the experiences that we would want a new believer or a believer who's not been disciplined to have?

In other words, that spiritual high school diploma, what would that look like? And obviously, the same way when you go to schools, they have all kinds of different ways that they fulfill this requirement that the government gives them.

They use different publishers and they have different approaches to doing that, but they have the same goal of imparting to these children this knowledge that they want them to have at the end.

As a matter of fact, the government gives them a syllabus and then those teachers determine what textbooks they're going to use and how they're going to fulfill teaching.

through that syllabus. In order to implement the process of formal discipleship that we have looked at, we need to make some changes to care groups.

[32 : 51] Some of you may find that you don't need the classes that we'll be doing because you, by God's grace, you've been discipled, rather by yourself or by others.

And this may not be necessary for you. I don't think that's going to be the case for most of us. But what I would encourage you, those of you who will find that you don't necessarily need the body of instruction and experiences that we have put together, I would encourage you to take Jesus' attitude.

When Jesus went to John the Baptist to be baptized, he didn't need to be baptized, and John told him that. Jesus said, baptize me to fulfill all righteousness.

In other words, Jesus wanted to identify with those whom he came to save. And because we will be supporting and guiding and encouraging people who would be, over the years, involved in this discipleship process that we have, it would be good for all of us to know the material, to have been exposed to it so we could really help those people along.

So, let's now talk about the changes we want to make, and we have some handouts. I didn't want to give them to you because I know if I'd given them to you at the beginning, some of you would be reading while I was talking.

[34 : 15] So, we'll give them up now. I won't identify who I think would be reading, but could we just do them in two groups? Could somebody else help Anika? So, we can get them out pretty quickly.

Thank you. All right.

Let's walk through this. Care groups resumed meeting on February 8, 2017.

The plan is to have three meetings in the month of February, meeting, but starting in March, care groups will only meet once per month during the last week of the month. So, March going forward, we'll just be meeting the last week of the month.

And I say the last week because the day could vary based on the group. The structure and content of the meetings will be adjusted to reflect the intention of discipleship, making efforts we desire to see take root in our small groups and in the lives of those who participate.

[35 : 55] Number two, discipleship foundations classes. starting on the first of March, we will seek to use the first, second, and third, and sometimes the fourth, where a month has four, five weeks.

But in most of the months, first, second, and third, Wednesday of each month for discipleship foundation classes. In thinking through the content of discipleship classes, three classes are being proposed that will comprise the planned discipleship track that we expect all those who call Kingdom Life home to take.

Now, what we're going to be doing obviously initially is we want to take everyone who's a part of the church now through those, through the, through these classes.

The first one, Discipleship Foundations 1 is a seven-session class that is alternatively called the Sermon on the Mount.

The class focuses on the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7, and the goal of Discipleship 101 is to help participants to know and live out the Sermon on the Mount as disciples of Christ.

[37 : 19] The Sermon on the Mount, in many ways, is the constitution of the Kingdom of God in terms of how we are to live as citizens in it in a foundational way.

Obviously, there are other parts to that. We can consider those other parts, laws as it were. But Jesus said something very interesting when he was finished with the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said this.

He said, whoever hears these sayings of mind and does them, I will tell you who he is like. And he goes on to talk about the man who, about two people who build.

One builds on sand and the other builds on the rock. And he says, the one who hears his sayings is the one who built on the rock. The storms of life would come, but his house, the house of his life will stand.

And so, we would be wise to spend time in the Sermon on the Mount. And seek to incorporate it in our lives and to live it up.

[38 : 24] Because Jesus says, that's where the stability comes. He says, whoever hears these sayings of mind. He wasn't talking about the future things that he was going to say. He was talking about what he had just said.

And this is why we are beginning with the Sermon on the Mount to cause us to be acquainted with it. I'll tell you that a lot of times when you are talking with someone and maybe they're facing some issue, some circumstance, almost always there's something in the Sermon on the Mount that addresses it.

Almost always you can point them to what the Lord has called us to do. And so, it's so amazing to me that of all the different things that Jesus could have put into the Sermon on the Mount, the things that he did put in really are critical for us and we should pay attention to them.

So, that's Discipleship Foundations 1. And then the second class is Discipleship Foundations 2. And this class is called The Walk.

It's a 12-session class and its content will be taken from Stephen Smallman's book entitled The Walk. And the goal is to ensure, to try to ensure that participants understand that followers of Christ are called to walk to a walk of lifetime discipleship.

[39 : 52] And the book really is an excellent resource in particular for new believers. This is the book that we're going to be using. This book was written by a very wise pastor, a man who has had a lot of experience in leading churches and in discipling people and just a wonderful, highly acclaimed resource.

And then, third, this one we didn't feature it as a class. It's more of a seminar. This one, Discipleship Foundation Seminar and also called Spiritual Gift Seminar.

And this will be a weekend seminar, a Friday evening. and half day on Saturday to help attendees to understand, explore, and embrace the spiritual gifts that God gives to his people.

This will take place, the plan is to let it take place midway between Discipleship 2. So, in a particular weekend, after like the sixth session, we will be doing that.

We have not identified the exact resource that we're going to do. We're thinking maybe that may be a live seminar that we may do, but that needs to be finalized in the coming weeks.

[41 : 12] We hope to do that. But this is really to help us to see that God has given every single believer gifts. And there's a wide range of gifts that we see in Scripture.

And we want to teach on those and encourage people to consider prayerfully what gifts God has given to them and then to encourage and help them to activate and exercise those gifts.

Discipleship Foundations 3 is a 12-session class that is called The Habits of Grace. And the class focuses on practicing the spiritual disciplines of reading God's Word, prayer, and living as a member of a local church body.

What happens in the walk, these ideas are introduced in the walk, but they're really expanded upon in this particular book, Habits of Grace.

So this is more like an introduction to Habits of Grace. The Discipleship Foundation classes will run consecutively with a break of one or two weeks between each class.

[42 : 34] And again, we know that people's schedules would be varied throughout this year, so the plan is to record the sessions both by audio and video so that any missed sessions can be made up.

But we would encourage you as much as you're able to try to be here for the live sessions because then you get to participate in discussions and so forth. The last of the classes, Discipleship Foundations 3, is expected to be finished by the second week of November.

Now, let's talk about discipleship groups. This is something new that we're adding. When we're finished running the Discipleship Foundation classes for 2017, so around the second week of November, we will be introducing discipleship groups.

Our goal is to be a church where members are committed to being and making disciples. And discipleship groups are a strategic part of fulfilling this requirement.

Here's a description of how the groups will work and what they are. Discipleship groups will not replace care groups, but will be connected to care groups, and both will have a different meeting frequency.

[44 : 00] Care groups will continue to meet once per month. For the rest of the weeks, discipleship groups will meet on a day and at a time that works for the discipleship group leader and group members.

I'm going to read through it real quick. I know you'll have questions as we go along, and so the quicker I read through, I think the more questions will be answered, and then we'll answer all the questions at the end. There will be no change to the constitution of our care groups, except for new persons who become a part of the care groups through a discipleship group.

Care groups will continue to be the context through which we care for the church body at large. In addition, care groups will also be a context where further envisioning and equipping for discipleship will take place as discipleship group leaders and members meet together in care group once per month.

Discipleship groups are like subgroups of care groups. So, there will be multiple discipleship groups in a care group. Care groups will have one scheduled monthly meeting, and the other weeks, discipleship groups will meet.

Unlike care groups, discipleship groups where we have men and women in the same group, discipleship groups will be gender specific, meaning that we will have separate discipleship groups for men and women, with men leading men and women leading women.

[45 : 36] A person does not have to be a Christian to be a member of the discipleship group. This is what I touched on earlier. He or she only needs to be interested in learning about what it means to follow Jesus.

And let me stick a pin right here. I said I was going to do that. Let me stick a pin while I remember this. A lot of times, we actually cause what I would call fraudulent professions of faith.

Because we give people the impression that we will have nothing to do with them until they pray a prayer, until they make some kind of a commitment that they're going to be a Christian. And we push them along the path sooner than they are ready.

And for some people, they need to get on the journey, and they need to learn what Jesus said, and they need to be challenged by what Jesus said, and then make a commitment. In this book, Stephen Smallman, who wrote *The Walk* as well, he shares some great stories about people.

This one, he has a story about a 65-year pregnancy. He's talking about persons on a 65-year journey before they actually came to Christ. Some great stories that he shares about how people actually come to Christ.

[46 : 52] So there will be no requirement that oh, you have to be a Christian, to be a part of the discipleship group. The point is this. You know the person is not a Christian, you don't ask them to pray.

You know, you don't relate to them, and you relate to them exactly as they are, taking their questions and trying to help them along and pointing them to Christ every time.

the learning that the person really needs on the journey will come through the discipleship foundation classes and the discipleship group meetings.

notice that discipleship is a journey, so it isn't necessary to wait for the person to profess faith prior to being disciplined.

People profess faith at different points along the discipleship journey. Jesus simply invited his original disciples to follow him. our discipleship groups should all be ready for a formal launch in January 2018, but we don't have to wait until that date.

[48 : 10] As we meet people who do not know Christ or who are believers and are in need of being disciples, we can say to them, follow me. We can do that. As I follow Christ, of course, we don't say to people, follow me as an end in itself, but we can say, follow me.

I'm tempted to keep interjecting more things, but let me just keep reading. Number four, discipleship group leaders.

The leaders of the discipleship groups will be men and women who have completed the discipleship foundation's classes and are desirous of leading a group. The discipleship group leader can start with one or more person.

So a group will be as small as one and, well, two persons, the leader and one person, or six persons, the leader and five other persons.

So one to five, we try to keep the groups smaller just for more focused attention. people in the group as members will be for those who have not gone through the discipleship foundation's classes.

[49 : 34] In November 2017, those persons desirous of leading a discipleship group will be given brief but sufficient training to enable them to engage in disciples, in making disciples in small group contexts of one to five.

The primary resource for this training is the book Beginnings by Stephen Smallman. But we'll go through this book a little differently than we go through the other materials.

So that training will look a little different. Now one of the things that's probably coming to your mind is, well, that's a lot of reading. Yeah, that's a good bit of reading.

But you know what? It is worthwhile reading. It's a good investment. And it's an eternal investment. And we oftentimes invest in many other things that really are going to end when this life ends.

And so this is something I encourage all of us to welcome and to be committed to being a part of. And as we do it together as a group that's much easier to get through it.

[50 : 40] care group leaders, by example, are expected to be engaged in discipleship.

They will lead a discipleship group and their care group. Because again, care groups are meeting once per month and discipleship will be taking place in discipleship groups in another way.

Number five, cost of the resources. The cost of the books and other resources will be borne by Kingdom Life. This is a part of our investment in fulfilling the Great Commission by making disciples.

Further, we don't want the cost of the materials to be a barrier to keep anyone from the discipleship journey. Our only admonition is that the resources to be used are stewarded well.

That should be our stewarded well, not and. beyond the transition. Once the discipleship groups are up and running, we plan to offer the discipleship classes in an ongoing way on Sunday mornings for those who are new to the church or who, for whatever reason, have not done the classes.

[52 : 00] And the proposed time for those classes will be 8.55 a.m. to 9.55 a.m. And the classes will be scheduled to run at specific times during the year, and people will be invited to sign up.

Conclusion. This is a work in progress, and we will no doubt make adjustments along the way. We need to continue to pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance and wisdom as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples.

So that is what we propose to do, and we're now open to any questions that you might have.

I know it's a huge change, and I know we have different constitutions. Some of you may say, wow, I like this. Others of you may be recoiling, because maybe you're not from a constitution point of view outgoing, and don't see yourself, you know, needing others and so forth, but I want to encourage you to just put all those aside and just ask the Lord to help us, because really, though this may be new, this is biblical.

This is biblical. The centralization that you see that takes place by and large all around us, it's not biblical.

[53 : 31] biblical. It's not normal. That's not what the Lord has for us. So I'm just excited about the opportunities that we have, you know, that you are able to meet a person, and the Lord prompts in your heart, invest in this person, and that you can do that.

Okay, questions? Could somebody help me with the mic? questions? Real quick.

We have like half an hour. Questions? Okay, let me ask some questions.

Is it clear? Let me ask it differently. Anything not clear for you? If something is not clear, could you indicate what isn't clear and we can try to clarify it?

Okay, I'll keep talking until somebody wants to ask a question. I know, it seems like a conspiracy. Don't ask a question, we get out early. But I'll keep talking so you can ask a question.

[54 : 55] You know, for some of us, if you think of yourself in a discipleship group context, you know what? Maybe your best time to do this is a Saturday.

And that's fine. Or maybe your best time to do this is a Tuesday. or Friday. And that's fine too. So basically what we're doing is we're going to free the first three weeks of the month.

And you are able to really take that seriously. And see, this requires us being mature. That we're not going to goof off for three weeks. And there may be a particular week where things just don't work out.

And maybe the person who you had planned to meet with or get with, they weren't interested anymore, they couldn't make it for whatever reason, and that's fine. But what this does is it gives the context and the freedom for us to make disciples, to go out and be involved in the Great Commission.

And that begins with meeting people. And sometimes it may look like just meeting with a person and getting to know them and talking with them, maybe for weeks, even before you break Scripture with them.

[56 : 11] But think about it, suppose in one year, all of us, or the majority of us, just invested in one relationship, just one person.

Who knows how the Lord would use that? So let's really embrace this and trust the Lord for it.

Okay. Questions? None? All right. Well, I don't have anything else to add.

But here's what I would say to you. Questions may arise along the way. And we encourage you to ask those questions.

Send an email. Dennis. Dennis has a question. We don't want to get it recorded. What's that?

[57 : 09] Yeah. Yeah. I'll repeat it as well. How quickly will the recording be available if you are to miss the session?

That's a good question. We will endeavor to make them available quickly. Quickly. No, no, no. If that person, I would say assiduously. I would say assiduously, but no.

And that doesn't mean anything. Assiduously now means slow. Whenever you're assiduous, that means slow. I mean, it ain't happening anytime soon. So quickly means that we will try to do it very quickly. Yeah, I see no reason why they couldn't be available the very next day because the recording is done.

It's just a matter of uploading it. Right, John? Yeah. Yeah, we can get it done. So that would be the commitment. The commitment would be next day.

Yeah. Any other questions? Jesse? The groups you said would be divisible by gender, but would they be separated by age or location or spiritual journey besides that?

[58 : 29] Good question because it actually allows to clarify several things. Yes, as he mentioned, it's separated by gender, but in terms of the discipleship groups, remember that that's primarily each of us getting involved in the Great Commission.

So, and I know it may look a little different for you unless you have a network of relationships that maybe you can tap into, but that would be more so in your case, basically saying to someone, follow me, as it were, or let me open my life to you.

And you'll be spending time with that person, seeking to disciple that person, wherever that person is on the journey. Now, you may meet somebody else who may be more initiated than that person in Christianity and other kinds of things, so you'll be meeting with them, but the goal would then be to try to direct them along the discipleship path in terms of the courses that will be available here.

But we'll try to support, the care group leader will try to support you with those persons, because one of the things we are hoping that takes place in the care group meetings is we'll be reporting, we'll be talking about people we are meeting or talking with and getting prayer for those people and getting support for those people.

You may have a person in your group who is maybe a skeptic and has a lot of questions. Is the Bible true? And all these other kinds of things. So you'll be maybe trying to gather resources to really help that person.

[60 : 08] So the discipleship group wouldn't be so much those of us who are here already meeting together, but it would be those of us who are engaged in discipleship, connecting with new believers or unbelievers and seeking to disciple them in a support kind of way.

Because again, the primary path will be what we are doing on a Sunday morning after we think beyond this year, the classes will be having on Sunday mornings in an ongoing way.

However, that doesn't mean that there may not be a situation where maybe we're not running the Sermon on the Mount class for another two months or something.

Or maybe we have done it and we are going through the other ones and we're not going to cycle back to that for a while. You can take that person through the Sermon on the Mount. You may even take the person through the resources that we have here so that we don't have to necessarily wait until that comes back.

And this is just some of the tweaking that we actually need to do so that person doesn't have to come to the class if they have been brought through it by you in your group.

[61 : 23] Does that make sense? Or did I lose people on that? What's that? Very much lost. Okay. All right. Let me clarify this.

Let me clarify this. the goal is that we will on Sunday mornings after this year, the classes, we will structure them.

Let's say we'll start with Sermon on the Mount and that will run for say seven weeks. After that runs and we do the second one, which is going to run for 12 weeks.

Just imagine we're down the road, maybe in the middle of that, and you meet someone. And this person, you want to take them through the Sermon on the Mount. You could do that.

Rather than waiting for us to plan the Sermon on the Mount, which really would probably be the next year, you could lead that person through the Sermon on the Mount and they don't have to come to the Sermon on the Mount class because you'd be able to say they've done the Sermon on the Mount.

[62 : 26] And the same thing with the other resources as well. So let me just say it this way. This is not in the notes that you have, but this is certainly part of the thinking, that there can be a dual track to getting a person instructed along the discipleship path that we have through the formal classes that we'll be having on a Sunday morning and in the context of your own discipleship group context.

Does that make sense? Okay. I'm going to go ahead. I think perhaps the question revolves around the reality that not everyone is going to be a discipleship group leader.

And as a result of that, you might, you will perhaps find it necessary for persons who are members of the church, but are not discipleship group leaders, to be along with someone who is a discipleship group leader.

So from a practical perspective, you might have the leader, one or two other persons, and then someone else. Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

And see, that's one of the pieces. What we're talking about here is what is ideal. But the reality is, as Lyndon said, not everyone, for any number of reasons, may be a discipleship group leader, especially right away.

[64 : 05] So then what do we do to think through that? And what he has indicated is certainly a logical way to deal with that, and that is to encourage those persons who are not leading a group to be working with someone else who is leading a group, who says, hey, I want to be a group leader.

They go through the training, and they are prepared to lead a group, or someone else who has done the training, but for whatever reason, they just don't have anyone that they are serving with, working with, yeah, working that way.

But remember that our care groups will still be our affinity groups, so we do have connections there as well, and it would be possible for you to link up with someone else in your care group and do a discipleship group together if you're not leading a discipleship group.

Yeah, so that's good clarification, Linda. Does that clarify, Jess? Yeah, okay. Those are good questions because they help us to broaden the discussion.

I mean, and clearly, we have not thought of every single detail and every single scenario, but certainly we will do our best to do what is practical and what makes sense and what would serve the overall goal.

[65 : 24] But I must tell you, I'm just excited about the opportunities that we have to do this. I'm thinking back to 1980, 1989, 1990.

1989, 1990. A pastor, a much older man, he's dead now, gave me a book. And the book was Let My People Go.

And the whole idea about the book was really that pastors and churches, in the way we do church, had God's people in a spiritual Egypt.

Just had them like in prison, that they weren't being released to be engaged in the Great Commission, to be engaged in the work of the Lord. And the whole thing was Let My People Go.

And I pray that you don't get the impression that what we are saying is, oh, to do anything, you got to read these books.

[66 : 44] These are just, these are tools, and you know what? At some point, we may change these tools. The same way, in schools, they change books for various reasons. They find better ones.

So we may change, we may change some particular things. But I think a lot of times, we can make the Great Commission more complex than it really is.

I am persuaded, as I look around this room, that every single one of you, even without these particular resources, can have people to come to you and drink from your life, can draw from your life strength and guidance, and you can point them to Christ.

The only thing that would happen is, it would look different for all of us. And it would just be kind of making it up as we go, and it will just kind of be a bit haphazard.

What we are trying to do is we are trying to find a shared path by which we want to do that. still, our personalities and experiences and our insights into the things of God, they will still come to bear on the people whose lives we touch.

[67 : 59] So there will be some differences just because we're different people. But in the main, we'll be going down a similar path using those same resources. And what's going to happen is, as we use these resources, and I really don't want to try to oversell them, but they're really good resources.

And as we get into them, I think what you're going to see is that these are wonderful tools. And the more we go through them, the more we're really going to grasp what it is the Lord has for us.

So that's why I'm really excited about this change. I'm excited about what the Lord has for us. The truth is, the majority of Christians, do not think of themselves more highly than they ought.

There's some who do. The majority of us do not. The majority of us think of ourselves less highly than we ought in terms of what Christ can do through us.

In and of ourselves, we should not think highly of ourselves, but most of us think less highly of ourselves than we should with God's help.

[69 : 12] They're kind of like Gideon. Gideon is there. He's hiding, threshing grain in a wine press. And the angel of the Lord goes to him and says, what are you doing?

And he begins to complain and all the other kinds of things. And the angel says, you mighty man of valor, go in the strength that you have. And God saw something very different about Gideon than Gideon saw about himself.

God. And so I want to encourage you tonight. I don't know who you are. I'm not reading faces tonight. I don't know what's going on in your heart. But if you're in any way wondering, can I do this?

I want to encourage you to remember that with God all things are possible. And to encourage you that you're not exempted from the Great Commission. No matter what your constitution is, you are not exempted from the Great Commission.

If the Lord saved you, he has every intention for you to be involved in the Great Commission. Whatever that looks like. To whatever degree you're involved, I pray that you leave here tonight fully persuaded.

[70 : 15] This is what God has called me to do and to do anything else would be to be disobedient because he has called us to this. And so I invite you to pray.

Let us embrace this. If you have questions, if you have suggestions, we make no claim that this is perfect. We see through a glass darkly.

We don't see perfectly. We see darkly. And that's why we have the body. Because then we have multiple eyes to be able to see. So if there's any particular aspect that you think we could improve upon, we can make more effective, we can make it more efficient, we are all there to hear those suggestions.

Amen? All right. It is 720. We're going to close if we have no more questions. Do you have another question, Janet?

Okay. Yes, Jen? Everyone say hi to Jen. Okay. I don't know. I'm not sure if I am able to articulate it, so bear with me.

[71 : 30] Okay. Because the video was off, I don't, I just want to kind of understand the overall goal, end goal, is that we would be equipped for these discipleship tracks, or these discipleship classes, three times out of the month, the fourth week being care groups, correct?

Say that again, Jen. So each month we would have these classes, these discipleship classes to equip us. Mm-hmm. And then the fourth week would be the regular care group meeting.

Correct. Correct. And so the end goal would be for us to be ready by the end of the year than to have small discipleship groups.

That's correct, with the care groups continuing to meet once per month. Okay. And then what would be discussed in the care group meetings would be what you are, what's going to be happening in those care group meetings?

Some core things would be, one, support for those who are leading groups, hearing about what the Lord is doing with the people they are discipling, praying for them.

[72 : 55] We will also sometimes look at the sermon, discuss aspects of that. But really, the bigger part would be to try to envision everyone to continue to be involved in discipleship and just finding ways to really support them in doing that.

So some of the components that we have now, we will continue, but we're tweaking it more in a direction to be very intentional to be about discipleship because that is what the Great Commission is, that is what we've been called to do.

Yes. And I think it will be beneficial and helpful for me. I never was in any formal discipleship one-on-one like that with anyone.

And so I think it will be good for me to learn. I can say that I probably learned some of that as a result of just walking out life together in community.

And so that would be my question. How are we going to continue to be intentional in building community within the church as far as being able to share life with each other, share hard struggles with each other, because I still feel strongly about being able to come alongside of one another in the Christian life.

[74 : 27] Yeah. You know, Jesus called his disciples, and he disciplined them to be able to go on with the Great Commission, but he also, I believe, wanted to walk out life with them in the time that he was on the earth.

So, I don't know, these are just things I've been contemplating. Yeah, that's a good question. And we have actually thought through that. What we really believe is that beyond the scheduled times for care group, and really, it'll just be a scheduled time for care group, we really want to be encouraging groups to connect beyond just the structured time.

So, for example, meeting on a Sunday, getting together, and maybe having a meal or spending time together, that kind of way of connecting.

So, it's not so much just waiting to have your group scheduled to meet, but really to encourage organic connections within groups.

So, for example, you may have a group that may be meeting in a particular week that's not scheduled, whereas other groups may not be meeting, and vice versa on another week.

[75 : 49] So, we will be, especially with only one structured meeting or one planned meeting, we would certainly be encouraging groups to be intentional to get together for the kind of sharing of light that you've talked about.

Okay. Thank you. Yeah, you're welcome. And I hope you see that this will be not overly scheduled. we will seek to make it more manageable.

Okay. That's, I want to be closed in prayer. Who would like to close us? Who's eager to leave? Eager to leave?

You can pray. I guess, let me take that back, because maybe you wanted to pray and you're not eager to leave. So, who would like to pray for us? Who would like to pray for us? Yes.

Yes. Yes. Yes. We'll have two prayers then. We'll have two prayers then.

[77 : 50] We'll have two prayers then.

We'll have two prayers then.

We'll have two prayers then.