

# The Great Commission and the Church

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning again. Please turn your Bibles to the book of Acts chapter 2. This morning we begin in verse 42. We'll conclude in 47.

! And I'm continuing the sermon series on the Great Commission. This is part three. In part one, we considered the words of the Great Commission from the lips of Jesus as he was ascending back into heaven. And then in part two, we considered the necessity of the power of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to fulfill the Great Commission.

And this morning, we'll be considering the church in the Great Commission. So I want to begin reading from Acts chapter 2, starting in verse 42.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship and to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

[ 1 : 42 ] And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to their number day by day, those who were being saved. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your word, and we pray that you would open our hearts to both hear and heed what you would say to us from your word.

Lord, Lord, would you grant to us to recognize the connection between the church and the Great Commission and not to see them as two separate realities.

Father, I pray that you would grant me the grace to be faithful, to be true to your word. And I ask, O Lord, that through the power of the Holy Spirit, you would grant me the unction and the ability to bring your word to your people.

And Father, we thank you that you promised to watch over your word and to cause it to accomplish the purpose you have sent it to. So, Lord, we ask that you would do that now as we open your word.

[ 3 : 05 ] In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. If you followed international news at all this week, at least over the last two days, you would have no doubt heard about Andrew Brunson.

For those of you who may have not heard, Andrew Brunson is an American pastor who was imprisoned in Turkey for the past two years. And he was finally released on Friday.

Pastor Brunson lived in Turkey for 23 years. He pastored a small Protestant church of 25 members. And according to Wikipedia, he was arrested in conjunction with the arrest of tens of thousands of others from military, civil servants, educators, dissidents, and journalists.

And prior to his arrest, he was applying for permanent residence in Turkey. Now, in the face of it, a story like this wouldn't really grab your attention.

[ 4 : 19 ] It wouldn't grab your attention because, you know, this American pastor, he's serving as a missionary, 25-member congregation. It wouldn't grab your attention. But when you consider this man and the credentials that he had, I believe it would grab your attention.

Pastor Brunson achieved his bachelor's degree from Wheaton College. It is considered one of the best universities in the United States, certainly the best Christian university in the United States and even around the world.

He then went on to the respected Trinity Evangelical Divinity School where he obtained his master's degree. And then he went on to Erskine Theological Seminary where he obtained a master of divinity degree.

And finally, he went to University of Aberdeen in Scotland where he obtained his PhD. Now, with those credentials, some of the largest churches and the best seminaries would have been available to this pastor.

They would have welcomed him. And so it does raise the question, why would a highly qualified pastor like this man choose to turn this back on academia, turn this back on some of the largest churches in the U.S., great opportunities for him as a Presbyterian pastor, and choose to go to serve as a pastor missionary in Turkey?

[ 5 : 57 ] Where after 23 years, he would have a 25-member church. And why would he even stay in the face of such slow growth?

Almost one new person added per year. Why would a man with these kinds of credentials, an American citizen, choose to go to Turkey, a place where he was guaranteed to have very slow growth in his ministry?

I think the obvious answer to that is the Lord directed him. I think we all know that we generally do not embrace anything that's going to be slow and hard and difficult.

That's not our tendency. Only the Lord could have put it in his heart to go and serve in Turkey initially and then to stay for some 23 years.

And then, even in face of the results that he was getting, to determine to become a permanent resident of that country. But I think there's another reason that Pastor Brunson did this.

[ 7 : 17 ] It's a three-word reason, and it is the Great Commission. Pastor Brunson clearly understands the Great Commission, because the Great Commission does entail sacrifice.

We will not fulfill the Great Commission without making sacrifices to different degrees. And God calls us to different degrees of sacrifices.

And I believe that Pastor Brunson also recognized that these were souls. The Great Commission, the aim of the Great Commission, is the souls of men and women and children.

Souls that hang in the balance of eternity. Souls that will spend eternity in one of two places. Either with God in heaven, or in eternal torment in hell.

And it's clear that Pastor Brunson understood that the Great Commission included, more than simply preaching the gospel, it also included the establishment of churches and seeing people disciplined.

[ 8 : 39 ] And that's why he was willing to remain in Turkey for some 23 years, faithfully pastoring a small group of people. who had come out of the world, saved by the grace of God, and into the church.

And you know what? I would not be surprised if he goes back, if he's allowed back. It wouldn't surprise me that even, in spite of all that he went through, the imprisonment for some two years, where it is said that he lost some 50 pounds while in prison.

Wouldn't surprise me if he would willingly go back. And perhaps it's sad to be away, in spite of all that he went through.

Brothers and sisters, there's an unbreakable link between the Great Commission and the church. And that's because obedience to the Great Commission produces the church.

Because it is in obedience to the Great Commission that the gospel is preached. And when men and women obey the gospel, they come out of the world, into the church, and they are to be disciplined.

[ 10 : 03 ] That's what God does. He calls people out of the world, into the church, and he places them in local churches like this. And this is exactly what we see in the book of Acts.

Starting on the day of Pentecost, it's recorded in chapter 2 that Peter proclaimed the gospel. He obeyed the Great Commission. He proclaimed the gospel to those who were there.

They started in Jerusalem, and this is the first Christian message that we have recorded in Scripture that was preached in the church. And some 3,000 souls were added to the church on that day.

And I think this is a very important thing for us to see because this is the way it's supposed to happen. The gospel is to be preached, people are to believe, and they're to be added to the church. But today, there are many people who believe that the gospel is preached in a vacuum, believed in a vacuum, and people don't need to belong to a church. There are some people who would profess to be Christians, and they sit at home on a morning like today, and they'll watch television, or they'll observe something on the internet.

[ 11 : 21 ] Or there are others who will just visit around, and wherever their fancy leads them, and they're not committed to a particular local church. But brothers and sisters, as widespread as that is, that is subnormal.

That is not what we see revealed in Scripture. What we see revealed in Scripture is in obedience to the Great Commission, the gospel is preached, people believe, and they're added in to a local church.

In this passage that we just read, what we see is the resulting church life of the people of God. And what we, I should point out is that even though I refer to this as the church and church life, church is not mentioned until later on in this book.

In chapter 5, verse 11, but when you read it, you will notice that the same people they're talking about in chapter 5, verse 11, is the same people they're talking about right here in verses 42 through 47 of Acts chapter 2.

It is these same people who are the church who started their life together through obeying the gospel.

[ 12 : 38 ] And so this morning, what I want to do in our remaining time is I want to consider the relationship between the Great Commission and the church. And this is the main point, the overarching point I want us to see this morning.

The church is a community of disciples who are saved through and for obedience to the Great Commission.

We're saved through the Great Commission. We are saved for the Great Commission. We aren't saved through the Great Commission and then we rest and allow some other people to fulfill the Great Commission to bring more people to Christ the way we have come to Christ and we have become a part of the church.

No, we have been saved through the Great Commission and we are saved for the Great Commission. Every single person whom the Lord brings to himself is captured under the command of go into the world and make disciples.

And actually, the language of it really says as you go into the world, not so much get on a plane and go to Turkey as Pastor Brunson did, although the Lord does tell some people to do that.

[ 13 : 52 ] The general command to all of us is as you live this life, as you go into the world, make disciples. And to tease it out a bit more is as you have opportunity, you are to go into the world as you go and you are to make disciples.

What we see from this first account of the preaching of the gospel, the salvation of people, and the beginning of the church, we see that the Great Commission really produces what I would call Great Commission churches or Great Commission disciples.

That's what happens when the Great Commission is obeyed. And so I want to now, in our remaining time, consider four marks of a church that is produced by and for obedience to the Great Commission.

The first mark is teaching. Churches produced by and for the Great Commission are marked by apostolic teaching.

And we see this in verse 42. It says, and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. Now you'd remember the first sermon in this series, we looked at the Great Commission from the lips of Jesus and this is what Jesus said in Matthew 28, beginning in verse 19.

[ 15 : 26 ] 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. teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

Jesus, in the Great Commission, commanded that as we make disciples, we are to teach them and that's what we see the apostles doing. We see that once the church was gathered, they were teaching and those who are part of the church were devoted to that teaching.

Now it's quite interesting that it would use this language that they were devoted to the apostles' teaching because these individuals, most of them were, they would have either been Jews who had been converted or Gentiles who had converted to Judaism and now they had come into the church and so they would have a broad background of the Old Testament and all of the laws and one may think they didn't have any need to be taught but they needed to be taught.

They needed to be taught now in a Christian way with Jesus having died and been buried and resurrected, what the apostles would do is the apostles were now proclaiming the gospel in light of

this revelation of who Jesus is and what Jesus did.

So the apostles were essentially interpreting the Old Testament through the grid of the person and the finished work of Jesus Christ and that's what we see Peter doing right here in chapter 2.

[17:12] You would notice in chapter 2 in verses 16 through 21 Peter interprets the prophecy of Joel. He says, what you saw happen today, he says, this is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel.

And then also in verses 26 through 28, Peter goes on and he actually interprets that the reference here is Jesus being written about by the psalmist David.

David. This would have been very contentious to the Jewish heir because they would have concluded that David was only talking about God the Father himself but Peter says, no, he is speaking about the Lord Jesus.

And then further on in verses 34 through 35, again, David explains that, Peter explains that David was writing about the Lord Jesus.

So what Luke does is Luke was the author of the book of Acts. Luke is observing the life of the church and remember, he is not doing this kind of like watching it as it goes.

[18:37] Luke is actually summarizing, as it were, the life of the church and what he observed of them over time was they were devoted to teaching. They were devoted to the apostles' teaching.

And we can rightly call this apostolic teaching or apostolic doctrine. And that's not this popular thing that's out there where there are a lot of guys who are styling themselves as apostles and they pride themselves in coming up with new ideas and what they consider clever sayings, quoting themselves and expecting other people to quote them.

That's not what we're talking about when we talk about apostolic teaching. Apostolic teaching is the words of Jesus Christ taken together with all of the Old Testament Scripture and really with all of Scripture.

That is apostolic teaching. So when we find ourselves standing squarely on the Word of God, that's apostolic teaching. That's being faithful to the faith that has been handed down to us over the generations.

We don't improve on this. We don't add anything to this. And this is one of the important things for us to grasp in a time where people are worshipping newness.

[19:57] There are people who worship novelty. They want to hear new things. They have itching ears to hear something new and something what they would say fresh and different. But brothers and sisters, our story is an old story.

It doesn't change. And faithfulness calls us to not try to improve upon it. It cannot be improved upon. We are to receive it and we are to transmit it.

Being as faithful as we can not to add to it, not to take anything away from it. An apostolic teaching is Christ-centered.

It is not man-centered. It is not me-centered. It is centered on the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

And when we think about the marks of the Great Commission on a local church, the church that it produces, I believe that this really is in many ways the foundational mark because it is the grid through which we learn everything else.

[21:07] And I hope you'll see that this morning. The other things we're going to talk about, they have to be rooted in sound doctrine. They have to be rooted in sound teaching. It can't be rooted in strange ideas where we come up with things and we say things.

You know, one of the things I'll say is this, and I'm going to move on. I think it's important for us to recognize that the things that you hear in a church, you should be able to have some reference to it in God's word to say amen to it.

It shouldn't be things where a person just says something out of the clear blue or totally unrelated to scripture and they say things that you cannot establish in the word of God.

And by virtue of who they are and their stature and everything else, you're supposed to accept that. That's not apostolic teaching. That's not the foundation on which we are to be built.

That foundation is shaky foundation and you cannot build your life on that. So, apostolic teaching is this first mark that we see Luke telling us that the early believers devoted themselves to.

[22:28] So, when I asked you this morning, how about you? The early disciples were devoted to apostolic teaching.

How about you? Are you devoted to apostolic teaching? And the reason this is so important is that a person can have no hope of growth or no hope of progress in the Christian life without being devoted to the word of God as it is taught in the life of the church.

To do otherwise is to almost think that you could grow and progress physically without nourishing your body. our spiritual lives are the same.

We're to be devoted to apostolic teaching, devoted to the word of God. And we do that in contexts like this where we're gathered as a church or when we are in smaller groups in our discipleship groups.

It's also expressed in our personal devotion to the word of God on a regular and indeed a daily basis where we are opening God's word for ourselves, for the good of our souls.

[ 23 : 51 ] And you know that one of the marks of genuine conversion is a desire for the word of God. One of the marks that God is at work in our hearts and in our lives is that he is causing us to be aware of a hunger for the word of God.

To read it, to meditate upon it. And when we do that, when we read God's word, when we meditate upon God's word, we grow in our assurance, we grow in the assurance that we belong to Jesus Christ.

So let me ask or let me offer to you just a few suggestions on how we can grow in being devoted to teaching, being devoted to the word of God.

The first thing is this, that we need to prioritize for ourselves daily reading of God's word. Prioritize opening God's word on a daily basis.

Make it a practice. And we know that the things that we tend to do are things that we have a pattern with in our lives. The things that get done are the things that are on our schedules, the things that are rhythmic for us.

[ 25 : 12 ] And one of the things we need to do, if we're going to grow in our devotion to teaching to the word of God, we have to find ourselves in a regular way reading and considering and meditating on the word of God.

And one of the ways we can do that is have some kind of a Bible reading plan, some plan that will get you regularly reading in and through God's word.

There are many of them available on the internet, and if you are having a struggle to find something, reach out to me, I'd be happy to try to help you to choose one.

The second I would say is to demonstrate and grow in this commitment to teaching and to the word of God is to take full advantage of opportunities to sit under the word of God, the teaching, the preaching of God's word.

And, for example, as we're doing this morning, and when we do that, we will grow in our affection for the word of God, we will grow in our devotion for the word of God.

[ 26 : 30 ] And the third one I would mention to us is this, third and final, we need to commit by the grace of God to obey the word of God.

The enemy of our souls is not impressed if all we do is read God's word, even memorize scripture, but we don't obey it.

He's not impressed. And we grow in our devotion to the word of God when we, by the grace of God, obey what we find in God's word.

The light that God shines on our path, we need to be those who would live it out on a daily basis.

We need to be those when we come to God's word and we find that our lives are contrary to what it says, that we would be quick to repent and ask God for the grace to change.

the second mark of a church produced by the Great Commission that we see in this passage is the mark of fellowship. In verse 42, we're told that those who were saved on the day of Pentecost were devoted to the fellowship.

[ 27 : 45 ] fellowship. Now what is this fellowship that they were devoted to? I believe that we get insights into it when we look more closely at the word that Luke chose to describe this fellowship that these disciples were devoted to.

It's the Greek word koinonia. Koinonia. koinonia. And this word is the word that they would use when individuals went in business together, they were in partnership together.

It speaks about having a shared life together. It speaks about belonging to one another. It speaks about a mutual kind of knitting and joining together.

That's the word that Luke chose to describe this life that he observed among the early disciples. And it's important to notice that fellowship is not something we produce. We can't produce fellowship on our own. Fellowship is something that God produces through the Holy Spirit when he saves men and women, brings them out of the world, into the church, and he joins their lives together.

[ 29 : 02 ] He places them in a body. And they have this thing called fellowships. And see, when we recognize this, we would then, that it is from God, we are then better positioned to embrace it and to see it as truly from the Lord, a joining of our hearts and lives together from the Lord.

Verse 42 of Acts 2 tells us that these disciples were devoted to the fellowship. Not to fellowship, but they were devoted to the fellowship, the shared life that they had together, the shared life that God gave them.

And see, let me just say this, you know, there are a lot of groups that meet pretty regularly just like churches meet. Rotary meets like once a week and they spend maybe two hours together and Kiwanis would meet and other service groups would meet and they have some pretty strong relationships.

But God didn't join them together. Jesus Christ didn't die for Rotary. Jesus died that men and women would be saved and brought into the body of his bride and that their hearts would be knitted and joined together.

Something that we could never do ourselves. And the beauty of it is that it is in the church where these strong bonds exist with people from different backgrounds, from different ethnicities, people with all kinds of differences and we see them living that life, that shared life in the context of the local church.

[ 30 : 56 ] But part of our challenge today is that we live in a world that is very individualistic, a world that embraces individualism as opposed to embracing the fellowship, this shared life that God has given to us through the Holy Spirit.

And it's so easy to do that because the world in which we live is self-centered, not the fellowship centered, not what we see here in Acts chapter 2.

And again, this joining of our lives together, this fellowship that we have, it's not just about spending time together and enjoying good food together and having conversation, that's wonderful, we enjoy those things, that's certainly a part of it, but it's so much more than that.

It is the joining of our lives together in the new community, people of God, produced through the obedience to the Great Commission and for the obedience to the Great Commission.

You realize that the reason that we are together as a body, yes, we are together to bring glory to God, but in a functional way, the reason we are the church is for the Great Commission.

[ 32 : 19 ] that is fundamentally why we exist as the church, that together we will fulfill the Great Commission.

We will be disciples who make disciples. And what does this fellowship really look like in a practical way that these disciples were devoted to?

I think the way it looked was an expression of mutual care, and we see it in verse 44.

We're told that people were selling possessions and belongings and they were giving to those who had need. We're told it was expressed in the attitude that they had towards the things that they owned.

They were marked by generosity. And this is not social welfare. It's not that. This is what we would call, this is biblical fellowship.

[ 33 : 25 ] This is being devoted to the fellowship. And you know that in the same way when we think about this devotion to the fellowship, in the same way that we think about the generosity that's expressed when those who have meet the needs of those who don't have, it is the same, that same spirit that motivates that kind of generosity should also motivate us to live our lives in such a way that we are good stewards over the resources that the Lord entrusts to us, so that we are not wasteful, so that we aren't irresponsible, so that we aren't a burden unnecessarily on others because we are considerate of the fellowship.

We're considerate of this partnership that God has joined us into. And we recognize that our lives are not lived in a vacuum. How we live our lives affects one another.

You realize that sometimes because I may, for example, be irresponsible with resources the Lord entrusts to me, that sometimes when there are opportunities to respond to the needs of others, I'm

not able to.

Or, to put it another way, sometimes because I've been irresponsible in how I've handled resources the Lord has entrusted to me, others then have to make sacrifices that didn't have to be made because I've been irresponsible.

When we are devoted to the fellowship, we do all that we can for the good of the fellowship, not to harm the fellowship. Because we are joined together by God in this intertwined body.

[ 35 : 18 ] So let us, by the grace of God, let us, one, recognize and, two, embrace the fellowship that we have, having been saved out of the world, brought into the church, and having our lives joined together as brothers and sisters.

And verse 42, Luke tells us that the early disciples were also devoted to the breaking of bread.

Now, what does this refer to? Does this refer to people who just really like to eat?

Or is it referring to something else? But I believe we get some insight into what it means in verse 42, what breaking of bread means in verse 42, as we read further on in verse 46, where it says, And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.

Now, there are theologians who have studied the meaning of these words and tried to study them in the historical context. And what they have told us is that, at least some of them, who would hold to the view that it wasn't purely about eating food in a vacuum, but they would say that this was about the Lord's Supper that was combined with a larger meal, a fellowship meal, a love feast of sorts when the church actually got together.

And so I think the larger mark, more than just they loved to eat together, was this commitment they had to gathering together.

[ 37 : 07 ] because the food that they shared and the coming to the Lord's table, it was as they gathered together. So what I have done for this third mark, instead of calling it the breaking of bread, I've called it gathering.

So the third mark of a church produced by the Great Commission is a commitment to gathering. It's a commitment to gathering as the people of God, both publicly, we see that they were in the temple, and then privately in their homes as well.

And again, they would have commemorated the Lord's Supper, reminding them of the sacrifice of Christ, and then also enjoying food together as they commemorated Christ as well.

And when we think of this, they would have done this on a weekly basis. And so in a regular way, they were being reminded of this.

You know what was happening as they did that? Their life together was being strengthened. The life together that they had in Christ, they were growing in it, and they were being strengthened in it.

[ 38 : 25 ] And when we grow together, we strengthen our common life. Now, I know for a lot of us, you have some people that say, well, you know, I'm just more like a very private person.

I'm very personal, and I don't really like to be with people that much. I'm more of a loner. You ask anyone in my family, they'll say, I'm more of a loner.

But you know, when we come to Christ, and we come into the church, those are values that are really contrary to what the Lord has called us to, and by the grace of God, we need to grow, and we need to seek to change.

And we need to see it as a hindrance to this life that Christ has actually called us to. And the truth is, for all of us, when we come into the church, there are ways in which we are all going to have to grow, things from which we're going to have to repent, and it varies from person to person.

But for some of us, it's in this area of this gathering together and connecting with one another in the context of the local church.

[ 39 : 45 ] But fourth, and finally, and I would add briefly, the fourth mark is that of prayer.

In verse 42, it says, they devoted themselves to not prayer, but to the prayers. They didn't devote themselves to prayer as an idea or prayer as a subject because the truth is, I believe that if you were to poll Christians, if you were to poll this congregation and ask us how important is prayer, I have no doubt that if we put first option is very important and the second option is maybe important and going straight down to unimportant, I believe that we probably get a unanimous response to say that prayer is very important.

But that's not what Luke observed. Luke didn't observe a group of people who considered prayer important. Luke observed a group of people who were devoted to prayer.

When we're devoted to prayer, we don't need to be asked, is prayer important? Because that answer is given through our devotion to prayer.

They were devoted to the prayers and evidently the early church had different times at which they would have been gathering for prayer.

[ 41 : 24 ] They had that time of prayer some three times a day we're told where they gathered to pray. And I believe that as they did that they were expressing two things.

First, worship to God but also they're expressing their dependence upon God. And what God has called us to do as a church in the Great Commission we cannot fulfill without a commitment to prayer.

It is not by might. It is not by our power and ability but it is by the Spirit of the Lord and it is often fueled through prayer.

Personal prayer yes, corporate prayer yes. And if we're going to make meaningful progress in fulfilling the Great Commission as a church we need to be devoted to prayer personally and also we need to be devoted to prayer corporately.

It is through prayer many times that the Lord gives us guidance. That the Lord impresses our hearts he burdens our hearts maybe to talk with someone to reach out to someone.

[ 42 : 43 ] It is as we pray together corporately that the Lord can burden our hearts as a church to reach out to lost people in particular ways. And so may the Lord help us to be devoted to prayer.

prayer. May the Lord help us to take what I know is our attitude towards the importance of prayer and translate that into a practice where we would be devoted to prayer.

Last time I sent out a video I sent out a link to a video in the WhatsApp group chat and I don't know who would have had the opportunity to listen to it but I did ask you to listen to it if you could because I wanted to make reference to it.

It's quite a big story that is happening in the UK but around the world as well because this couple Daniel and Amy McArthur owner of this bakery in the UK this chain of bakery stores they had this situation where a homosexual activist came into the store and placed an order for a cake to be made and requested that on the cake the slogan is put celebrate gay marriage and although an employee took the order when the owners became aware of it they got in touch with the man and told him sorry we cannot put this on the cake for you because this is contrary to what we believe it's against our faith as Christians and he was sued he lost three rounds of the legal battles this went on for four and a half years and just two days ago it was vindicated when the

Supreme Court in the UK ruled that it was not a violation for them to reject putting celebrate gay marriage on a cake because they didn't believe that and freedom of speech is not you forcing someone to say something that they don't believe and what was interesting about the case and they were able to show this that this man was a customer of the store and they served him so they were not discriminating against him because they were already serving him but they just refused to get involved with his ideology and the message he wanted to send out they said we can't put that message on it the reason I commended that video to you is I think that is such an excellent example of what it looks like to serve God in a fallen world and to recognize that sometimes serving the Lord will pay a price for it if you listen to the video one of the things that he said was they were driven by doing what was right people people saying to them look don't fight this you need to just leave it alone try to find the easiest way out and they were committed to doing what was right by the Lord even if it meant losing their business and brothers and sisters this is what discipleship calls us to one of the things that stood out to me as I listened to the interview of this couple is that all of the marks that I talked about this morning were very evident in their lives they talked about the prayer support they had they talked about how it was the word of

[ 46 : 35 ] God that kept them through this whole four and a half year ordeal they talked about the encouragement they received from brothers and from sisters people who were generous with them taking the time to try to help them in this battle one of the great expressions was that as expensive as this was to mount a legal defense against the charge that they discriminated against this man there's an institute called the Christian Institute that funded the entire legal defense of course they supplied lawyers and did everything but this couple was willing to lay all of this down to serve the Lord authentically in this world and in so doing they were a wonderful example of proclaiming the gospel one of the things that really struck me at the end at the very end of the interview is how

Daniel MacArthur just said that they feel no ill will towards this man none whatsoever a person who was trying to destroy you destroy your business and come out of that and to say I feel no ill will

towards this person only God can change our hearts like that only God can enable us to love where humanly speaking we should hate he said that this man is still welcome into their business but this is what the Lord calls us to the Lord calls us to live as disciples in this world and we're not to live our lives trying to get a result that we want we're to live our lives seeking to please the Lord and let that take us where it takes us and sometimes it does take us to

Turkey where we're imprisoned for two years sometimes it does take us to a place where everything we've worked for is on the line and we can lose it in a moment for serving Christ for being faithful to Christ but he calls us to that but being involved in the great commission requires sacrifice and the truth is for us most of us will go to our graves and we will not even get a hint of the level of sacrifice of Andrew Brunson or Daniel and Amy McArthur we wouldn't even come close to it but God does call us to sacrifice in other ways in smaller ways sometimes laying aside some of our preferences that we may be involved in the great commission that we may serve someone that we can be involved in some ministry that's going to make a difference in the lives of people that we would have an eye for eternity that we would remember that there's going to come a day when all this stuff that seems like it will never end will come to an end and one day we will stand before our Lord and our maker and I believe on that day we will see things as we ought to see them and we would not be wishing that we had done more of this and more of that things that are just passing away and so my prayer for us this morning as I conclude is that we would all take very seriously this connection between the great commission which has brought all of us to Christ some way somehow someone has proclaimed the gospel we heard the gospel and be able to come to Christ and then what we are now called to do as a part of the church that the great commission is not just out there the great commission is in here and the Lord has called us to be disciples and to make disciples and I pray you help us to see what that looks like and is supposed to look like in all of our lives I should have told you that I would take questions I will pray and then if you have any questions I'll right answer them let's pray Father we give you thanks this morning for your word and Lord thank you for this compelling picture of the kind of church community that is produced by the great commission I pray Lord that we would truly be a community of believers that are devoted to teaching devoted to the fellowship devoted to gathering and devoted to prayer Lord I pray that we would never shrink back from any sacrifice that you call us to make for the sake of the great commission if you help us to remember

[ 52 : 06 ] Lord that at the end of the day the great commission is about the souls of men and women that hang in the eternal scale of bread that will spend eternity so would you help us Lord be faithful to the great commission individually and in this local church we pray in Jesus name amen amen have any questions about anything this morning questions could you repeat number three number three was gathering I think we skipped that did we skip it yes did we really how did I do that maybe I didn't announce it yeah what I what I

I think where we missed it was here I indicated that when you read the text it talks about they were they were devoted to the breaking of bread and then I made the point that when you read that's in verse 42 when you go to verse 46 it says they were they were meeting in the temple and they were meeting in their homes and they were breaking bread and receiving their food with gladness of heart and what I was saying was that it didn't seem like it seemed more appropriate to say that what they were devoted to was gathering together in which context that sharing of the Lord's supper and a larger meal took place so it was I understand why you would have missed it because it wasn't as clear as the other points so I'll try to be clearer next time do you have a follow up question no okay anyone else sorry now pastor what are your thoughts on megachurches or pretty very large churches when it comes to trying to foster community

I know we read in Acts we had 3,000 gathered that day but I guess a lot of the practices that we're seeing in Acts aren't done today and I just want to know your thoughts on churches and sizes I think megachurches can really do just what we see here in Acts chapter 2 in the sense that they were meeting in the temple and they were meeting house to house so that would be in a smaller group context because the way the houses were you couldn't get 3,000 persons in any one of those houses so they clearly were meeting in multiple locations so I think that the rule of thumb is basically that the larger a church grows the smaller it needs to become as well so it is doing both of those not just having the big group meetings and then people disperse into their worlds but also to have smaller contacts where people are able to get to know people on a smaller level because you never know 3,000 persons at once and even there we can trust the

Lord the same way the Lord would have brought us into a local church he brings us into a smaller context and we embrace those relationships as well anyone else no okay let's stand for a closing song!  
Thank you.