

Setting Our Course

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

Date: 05 January 2014

Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0 : 00] Pastor Saul and I have a written thank you to you as a congregation for your kindness and!

I want to make a brief comment to tell you how thankful we are that God in His kindness has allowed us to minister here and to know much of your generosity and your thoughtfulness to us. Your Christmas gift certainly was one that your generosity is always surprising. How's that? It doesn't sound wrong, but it's like, wow, what a kind people.

I'll never forget many years ago when I first prepared to go into ministry, I talked to three different pastors, and one of them was Bill Good, who is with the Lord now.

And I said, Bill, would you give me some advice on pastoral ministry? He said, it's simple. He said, love your people. God will take care of the other details.

[1 : 30] I'm still working on my part. And you are a wonderful people to serve.

Well, let's turn in our Bibles this morning. That's a wonderful thing to say, isn't it? Let's turn in our Bibles this morning to John chapter 14.

And I'm going to take a little bit of time to get there. But by way of background, historically, at the first of the year, one of the things we do in our fellowship is we talk about some clear objectives, things we want to target, things we want to work at.

And I don't know about you, but I like New Year's because in some ways they give you an opportunity. When the New Year rolls around, we have an opportunity to reset, kind of target things. That's something I'm going to work on this year. And I trust that you as an individual have some objectives and some things that you want to make progress at.

[2 : 32] And we as a congregation are the same way. We want to think about those things that are pertinent and valuable and things that we want to focus on as a people. You'll remember that a number of years ago, we went through and we put together a set of core values.

And you will see them kind of roll behind on the screen on a fairly regular basis, reminding you that we have a deep and abiding commitment to God's Word. We have a commitment to prayer, to family, to God's honor.

And we have a commitment to seeing people come to Christ. And out of those, in the last several years, what we've done is we've actually taken time to break out a couple different specific targets, objectives that are going to fall under each one of those headings.

This year, we're going to go about it a little differently in that we are going to narrow our focus. And I can tell you in advance that instead of having two or three different objectives that are going to fall under the five headings that we've given to you in the past, we're only going to have two that we're going to focus on.

And I trust that the outcome of that is that these two things that we focus on together really get woven into our fiber as a family of believers.

[3 : 48] And they really do genuinely make a difference in how we use our time, all of us, not just a couple. Well, Pastor, I think he's working on that one. And maybe a couple deacons are doing it.

But these things that we're going to target become really a thing that weaves in and is recognized in all of our people. There are things that God helps us do fairly well.

And that's true. I am looking forward sometime in February to preaching on stewardship. And I will tell you in advance, I don't preach on stewardship because it's a desperate moment for our fellowship.

You are a generous people beyond expectation and understanding. I don't count the offering. I want you to know that. I don't even know who gives what.

But Pastor Saul comes and says, wow, did we exceed the budget plan for last year? We're close, a couple thousand dollars off. But you know what? That doesn't count all the other giving that comes

in.

[4 : 50] It's a blessing. And when I preach on stewardship, it's not going to be because we're desperate and we're crawling around here in abject poverty. It's to remind you this is what God has to say. You are a people that sing enthusiastically.

Do you know that? Now, by the way, that's not because you're coached, but that's because I trust because you're spirit-filled. Because you know what it says in Ephesians? It says that when we're spirit-filled, we sing.

It's appropriate. I think the things that we're going to target this year, though, are areas that we do as a fellowship need to continue growing in.

And I pray that you will mark these things and you will make them a matter of prayer and you will work at them yourself. I think about a little line in relationship to what we're going to talk about from T.S. Eliot.

And I don't want to recite a poet just for the sake of, well, pastor knows poets. Forget that. But here's what he says. He says, That's a very interesting statement.

[6 : 07] Most of us think that not having anything to do is just the cat's meow. I mean, that's where you want to be, right? But here's the truth. We were not hardwired from creation to sit around on our hands and do nothing.

In fact, when we have an inordinate amount of time to sit around and do nothing, guess what happens to the little pea brain I have and you have?

It goes wobbly. It becomes obsessed with details that are irrelevant. It becomes self-focused in professional navel-gazing. It creates a lot of unhappiness and tension that God really has not planned for us.

And so, when we come to the beginning of a new year, we go, okay, all right, what are we going to work at? What is it that we want to do as a family of believers? And we're going to talk about that this morning.

But before we go there, the reason I have you in John chapter 14, verse 15 is because I think it's really important at the beginning to understand what really motivates the believer.

[7 : 20] I want you to read with me John chapter 14, verse 15, and mark what it says. If you love me, if, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

So, as we take up this text, we understand that what Jesus is making very clear is that if we love him, the outcome is that we're going to obey what he has to say.

I am struck by the cause and effect relationship here. Do you follow what I'm saying? It's like, if, then. If you turn the key on your car, guess what you hope happens?

Yeah, if, then. I expect it to happen. It should follow. And here is Christ speaking to us as believers, and he makes it profoundly clear.

He makes it undeniably simple. This business of loving him has a consequence or an intended outcome, and it means that we who love Christ walk and do what he asks.

[8 : 24] Do we do what he asks because we're pathologically afraid that he's going to put the whipping on us? No. No, not at all. We do it because of our love for him and our desire to please him.

And so, I want you to understand this morning as we pick up the text that really what I want us to start with as we think about what do we want to accomplish this year is the starting point of recognizing that if we are here this morning and we do love God, we know God, there's a natural desire for us to grow in pleasing him, and we want to know what it is that's important.

It really isn't a small thing for us to start out dealing with the motive of our behavior. In fact, when you really stop and think about it, the Scriptures take a great deal of time to make motive the first thing that it teaches us before it deals with behavior.

That should be the characteristic of our ministry to our children, wouldn't you say that? Help them understand that the reason they are obeying us is not because they're terrified about the way we will deal with their disobedience.

And by the way, I'm not suggesting that that should necessarily be off the table. But the first and most important thing for you to teach your children is that obedience is to flow from love.

[9 : 59] And God goes out of his way to make this clear to us. Let me go back just for a moment to the passage that I recited to you at the beginning before I came up to pray. I said, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the

heavenlies.

The apostle takes three chapters to explain what the blessings are that every believer enjoys. And then following that, having laid the groundwork on the goodness and the mercy and the love and the kindness of God, he then calls us to do reasonable things that are in keeping with obedience and are profitable.

And so this morning, as we think about what is it that he wants us to do in this coming year, I want you to recognize that at the beginning, appropriately, I want to draw attention to the fact that at the start, when we talk about what the year is going to be marked by, we want to be very careful that we do have a love for God.

You know, you can manipulate obedience for a period of time. How many of you have discovered that? You can manipulate, you can threaten, you can put pressure on an end. You better do this or...

[11:16] And guess what happens eventually? If that's the only tool in your kit, your child grows up and says, Hey, when I'm 18, guess what?

I'm out of here. Or the person who is being manipulated with that in a work environment or something, they say, Hey, I'm not putting up with that. I'm going somewhere else. And when we see people rely on force or reward, how many of you have been in a store before, and you have a parent who is being terrorized by a child?

It's always very interesting to see. You know, I would like to interfere when the mom says, Well, if you stop crying, I will let you have those Cheerios.

My thinking is I would say to the child, Hold out. You can do better than Cheerios. You know, it's like, Hey, since you've got her moving, go ahead and press forward.

Lord, I'm not settling for Cheerios. I'd like an iPad. You know, while we're at it, let's do a car. And we've all seen that, right?

[12:28] You can kind of prompt a certain level of behavior by terror. I kind of put it this way, the carrot or the stick, right? Do you realize God doesn't do that?

He calls us to obey Him because of our love for God. And so this morning, as you think about this with me, I want you to recognize the Bible's clear.

The Bible calls us to obey because of our love for God. And as we think about the thing that we're going to look at as we move forward in this, I would venture to say that when the truth really is known, there's a greater number of us in our fellowship here today that really will need to work more conscientiously and more diligently at the things we're going to talk about.

And unless our hearts are prompted by an unrelenting pursuit of the love of Christ, we won't get far. I do want you to understand that while the Bible commands us to love God, the Bible also makes it clear that loving Him is a fitting response.

It's a proper, it's an appropriate response to His character and His worth. And understanding this order is really critical. Let me give you a couple of illustrations so that this stands out in your minds as we think about it.

[14:00] I want you to think here of what we find in Deuteronomy chapter 6. And for some of you may have the passage already memorized in your mind, but if it's not memorized, can I encourage you to do so?

But I also want to encourage you in the interim to go ahead and turn to the passage in Deuteronomy 6. Deuteronomy is Moses' closing sermons.

And he's preaching his heart out to people that he's going to leave. Deuteronomy chapter 6 is also known, if you had gone to a Hebrew school growing up, you would have learned this as the great Shema.

The word Shema refers to hero Israel. I kind of recite the part that it bears on. And it was something that the Israelite, the Jew, was supposed to say in the morning and the evening.

If you really wanted to kind of die on the upswing, are you following me? Your last words as a Jew should be the Shema.

[15:04] Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God. There is a God. And he has something to say. And you need to listen.

The Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord with all your heart. Do you follow that? That's how God introduces the expectations that follow.

He says, listen, I'm God and you're to love me. There in 5 and 6 and the passage in Deuteronomy, he says, you'll love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart. Guess where the word of God is to be? It's not to be in a Bible that's sitting on the shelf or on our iPad that we can, we know it's there.

I heard a person say to me one time, well, I've got nine copies of the Bible on my, you know, my iPad. Well, good news. Are you doing anything with any of them? You know, the question is not do you have the technology and do you have the information, but is that information making a difference?

[16:14] Yes. And we should understand that when God says to us that you are to love him, he is calling us to a fundamental responsibility that is absolutely essential to our well-being.

I want you to look at another passage in relationship to this. Turn over in your Bible to 1 John. We're going from one end of the Bible to the other, basically. 1 John is right towards the very back of the Bible.

And in 1 John 4, verse 19, let me read this to you. It says, We love him. How many of you know the passage? We love him because he first loved us.

Do you know what that's telling us? I want you to listen because this is important to understand. The only reason we love God is because of all that he has done to love us. The expectation that the word of God places on us as believers of loving him is nothing other than an appropriate response to how he has loved us.

I don't know if any of you were following what's been happening in North Korea. The third, the current president for life, chief, whatever his name was or is, he's a young man, 30-something like that.

[17:40] Dennis Rodman's going over there to do basketball camps and stuff. Important information you need. But this young man decided that his uncle was not trustworthy.

And so what he did was he had his uncle killed. He threw his uncle in a cage and had him eaten alive by dogs.

Do you think people are afraid of that young man? I think so. I think so. Do you think everybody in that country of North Korea loves that guy?

Now, if you wanted to ask a professional question while you're in North Korea, and he would come out and say, Do you love me? What would people say? Choice on one hand. Dogs. The other say, Yeah, I love you.

What do you think? They had one of these, I think they had his birthday or something like that. No, no, no. It was when his father died, there were some individuals in the military that were not grieving enough.

[18:48] And so what they did was they strapped them to a 105 millimeter howitzer shell, you know, pulled the wire way back, and then electronically put the shell off.

And guess what happened? That kind of prompts us to really love, right? God says, No, no, no. The reason you love me is because of who I am and what I've done for you.

We love him because he first loved us. Remember the consequence or the connection, though? The Bible makes it clear.

If you love him, you're going to keep his commandments. We'll look at 1 John 5, verse 2. It says, By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. This is how we show it. And incidentally, one of the things I want you to remind yourself of is the commandments that God gives us. There in verse 3, it says, For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.

[19:50] Hey, listen to me. Do you follow what I'm saying? When God gives us instructions, what does it mean that they're not burdensome? It's a little bit like a parent who's going through the process of teaching children not to touch hot stoves.

How many of you are working on that right now? You know, it's the hot stove time. You know, I saw you there, Natalie. You know, what happens when you say, Jasper, don't touch the hot stove. You know what Jasper's thinking? My mom is all about cutting into my fun time. I mean, it's like I gotta do naps. I have to eat carrots.

You know, there are lots of bad things in my life. And one of them that I'm not gonna let her run is the hot stove business. I'm touching it. You know, Natalie turns her back, and guess what happens?

She doesn't know when the stove was touched, but you know what she knows? She knows the consequence. Mom, that hot stove is really bad.

[20 : 53] Yeah. When I tell you something, it's for your good. You see, when God tells us things, he tells us things for our sake.

So let me come back around to the question, really, that's the heart of the starting point we make, is that we're gonna talk about things we gotta work at, but my interest is this, is do you love him? Do you honestly love him? If you do, then the things we talk about next will become dominating and directing.

Because here's the deal. Genuine love is more enduring, it's more controlling, and it produces fruit that's undeniable. And so if you are growing in your love for Christ, one of the things that's gonna play out is that that love will become evident.

Well, let's talk about the fruit of love. And I want you to turn in your Bible, if you would, over to Matthew 28, verse 19 and 20. And I confess in the outcome, one of the things that always is very challenging about preaching familiar passages is that you kind of sit there and you think to yourself, I know that one.

[22 : 12] Yeah. What's he gonna show me? A little reminder. Everybody smile, look at me. Preaching is dependent upon the revealed word of God and the spirit of God and the heart of the saint.

So you could have heard the same sermon 20 times in the last week, but this morning God has something to say in this passage and you do well to say, all right, bring it on, teach me what you have for me.

I want to apply it. We could reduce this passage to two simple points. Let me make them and then clarify them if I may.

Love makes disciples and love does it the way Christ instructed. Love makes disciples and love does it the way Christ instructed.

Let's go first of all to the commandment about disciples. Genuine love for Christ leads us to make disciples. I would imagine, I'll never forget, a number of years ago, I was in a fellowship in a church.

[23 : 26] I was part of a church where the pastor would say every morning, I mean, every time we'd get together, he says, we love you today. And being the person that I am, I'd kind of sit there a little sarcastically and think to myself, does everybody here really love Jesus?

How many of you are like that? You know, pastor says something, and you think, yeah, right. But I remember he'd say, we love you today. I would think, I'm having a little problem with that. I didn't want to raise my hand and let the pastor know that, but you know, I know you're probably struggling, some of you here, with really loving him.

if you do love him, it will be seen in the fact that you are making disciples. Now, it may not be obvious in the English translation, but the Greek text in this passage in Matthew chapter 28, verse 19 and 20, actually only has one verb.

I don't want to overplay this because I'm all interested in giving you the cake, not the recipe, but the Greek is important. And the actual action of these two verses that we have in Matthew chapter 28, go and make disciples, is not going.

For you who are looking for a little grammar quiz, you can email me later and I'll give you the details of it. But the point that we want to recognize is that there's really only one thing that dictates action in this passage, and it is the verb, make disciples.

[24 : 55] Going, baptizing, teaching are not verbs. They're words that explain what making disciples takes.

Now, let me make several points in relationship to this text as we're actually looking at it. I want you to recognize that this is a command that applies to every single believer. You follow that?

Should a pastor be a disciple maker? What do you think? Should he be known for that? What do you think?

And I trust that one of the things you know about Tim Knoyer as a pastor is that I get excited about the opportunity of discipling individuals. I love seeing growth in people's lives.

I wake up in the morning and one of the things that I'm interested in is seeing people make progress in their spiritual journey. Discipleship is hardwired into the heart of a pastor.

[25 : 54] But it's not just Pastor Knoyer. Pastor Saul's involved in that. But it's not just Pastor Knoyer and Pastor Saul. It's all of God's people and that's what this passage is making clear.

You go make disciples. I want you to recognize also, and this is an important factor, it is really a central piece of what you do to honor Him.

As I was praying this morning, I was thinking about asking the question, I'll go ahead and ask it since I've introduced it, but I thought about saying, so, Becky Green, where do you really work? What's your job? And Becky Green, obviously, knowing the answer, would say, well, I'm all about, well, Maria, what would she say?

Making disciples! Eh, I got this thing going over at Nationwide. But, you know, it's just a side job. I mean, I'm really about disciple making.

I could say, Pete Simons, what are you doing? He'd say, well, I'm making disciples. Oh, yeah. Is that fair? Would you agree with me?

[27 : 06] Huh? Andrew, are you making disciples? Caleb? Making disciples? You know, got to watch my time.

I said I would quit at an appropriate time. But, why is my wife smiling at me? Can you help me with that? I'll tell you, I was talking to my wife about growing to be a better preacher.

She says, you just need to be shorter. Send her a card. Thank her. You see, we're all in this to be disciple makers.

Isn't that right? I don't know about you, but, but earlier last week, I was reading Dan Byram's missionary letter. And, he and his family are working in Gambia.

And, they are having brain cramp trying to learn the Wolof language. You know? I mean, do you know why they're doing that though? They're doing that so they can make disciples.

[28 : 19] Everything about their life is zeroed in on the thing of discipleship. When they show up at the ferry to get across to the other side, and everybody else is relying on bribes, and they don't pay a bribe to get in front, they're doing that because they're there to make disciples.

when the Gambians pay attention to the way that Dan and Bridget treat each other, and they're really, really curious about that.

Remember when we had John Sittio here during the missions conference, and John Sittio was talking about the fact that when people in, where was he from? This is a quiz, and you're failing. I failed already, but I was checking on you. Well, it's somewhere in Africa. You got me? I mean, he was talking about the fact when African men would come to Christ, they would stop beating their wives.

Remember that? And there were some wives that were coming in for counseling. They were saying, we're feeling very uncomfortable in our marriages because our husbands are beginning to treat us differently.

[29 : 25] What does that mean? Well, they don't beat us anymore. It's like, really? Hmm. Well, you see, here is John Sittio.

Here's Dan Byram who's saying, all that I am doing is designed to help people see Christ so I can make disciples. Well, we do send some people to Africa, and we're hoping to send some people to Jamaica.

We've got Caleb and Charity. They're going in the spring to class, and then later, Lord willing, to Jamaica. We have Pastor Saul who's taking a group of people down there to Jamaica to be involved in missions.

But everything we do ultimately is about making disciples. So let me have you zero in on that word and ask the practical question in your life. Here's the question.

Are you a person who actually is involved in making disciples? Are you? When you are dealing with a problem in your home with your children, are you actually consciously and deliberately aiming towards making them a disciple of Jesus, or are you just aiming at correcting their misbehavior for the moment?

[30 : 46] As you teach them, is your objective to help them grow to be a follower of Christ, or is it just about, well, I want them to grow up and be responsible and have a good job and give me bragging rights on their SAT scores.

That's what I really like, and maybe even graduate so I can brag. No, are you aiming to make them a disciple? I want you to understand that a genuine love for Christ also leads us to go, to baptize, and to teach all people.

So as we move into this coming year, I want you to understand that our objective as a family of believers is going to focus down a little bit on this two-fold target of making disciples by going, by

baptizing, by teaching.

And that means that at the heart of what we're going to be involved in as pastors and deacons and as our family of believers, we're going to be involved in helping our men in this fellowship grow and improve in their discipling work.

Guess where? In their home. And by the way, for some of you, that's going to take some work because how do I do this?

[32 : 12] Well, guess what? The Spirit of God and the Word of God and the people of God can help with that. We're also going to work to widen the range of activities that we're involved in as a church that have a very specific evangelistic objective with the intent of seeing people come to Christ so you can't disciple people that don't know Jesus.

Do you understand that? I've got to tell you, one of the things that I thought was a knock-it-out-of-the-park event this year was trunk-or-treat. And I realized that there were a lot of people that came here only because of the candy.

You know, I thought to myself, how did Jesus feel when about 99.9% of the people that He healed weren't on His side at the cross?

Do you follow that? And so, we're going to work at things like that. We're going to weave it into what we talk about and what we pray about and what we work at that this business of discipleship and evangelism is going to be woven in.

I get excited when I hear people say things like, you know what, Pastor, Maranatha is a friendly church and that's the way it should be. I like it too when people say, wow, you guys sing.

[33 : 34] We should sing. The thing I'm looking forward to is when people walk in and say, you know what, I can't get over the fact that people there always talk about Jesus. You know what, we do talk about the things we really care about.

Last week, there was someone in the lobby and I'm not going to call his name out but he was saying, I'm really having trouble sleeping. I said, try melatonin. Yeah, it's like, you know why I said that?

Because I believe melatonin works for me and if it works for me, it probably worked for you and it's cheap. You can buy it over the counter. It's like, hey, do melatonin. Whenever there's a problem, most of us, if something's working for us, what do we do?

We sell it. Hey, yeah, this works. Try these essential oils. Rub this on the left toe and the right finger and, you know, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Okay. I'm going to get a text on that one.

You know, it's like, okay, thank you. Hey, here's my point. Hey, listen, don't miss it. If it really is important and it really is working for us, we talk about it.

[34 : 50] Listen, I am not here to put a guilt trip on you for the lack of your evangelism because the problem really isn't your lack of evangelism.

if you love me, what? Keep my commandments. How many of you here know that I love Judith?

Reason you know that I love Judith is because I talk about her all the time. if you love Jesus, guess what's going to happen?

You're not going to choke down and hold off. You're going to talk about the lover of your soul.

You're going to share the goodness of the one who's delivered you from the pit, giving you complete forgiveness for all of your sins.

Do you understand that? And is in the process of helping you change to be someone different than you have been. I love telling people what Jesus can do for them.

[36 : 03] And I want you to love him so that you do the same. Let's close in prayer.