

The Great Commission Part 1 - The Equipping

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[0 : 0 0] It's a great joy that we assemble together again, the beginning of this season of learning and sharing. And I pray that you would bless the Ministry of Learners Exchange this year, that many seeds may be planted, that a harvest might be reaped in human lives and hearts.

We pray for a rich and wonderful banquet of teaching and sharing here in this place in the months ahead. And that all might be to your glory and to build your kingdom.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Well, so we thought it would be good to begin the year with a nice guilt trip about everything you're not doing as Christians.

So here we are. Now, I think it's very important to begin. There's a wonderful feeling, isn't there, beginning the new year in September, especially those of us tied to the academic calendar.

My children are in grade one and grade two. And so, you know, I have that feeling of, we've made it, we've staggered across the line and managed to get two children in full-time education.

[1 : 0 9] And I've been beaming all week, you know. I mean, I love my children so much, but it is such a joy to see them both toddle out to school at the same time. And they're doing very well. They're in French immersion, and they speak German fluently and French increasingly so.

And, of course, that's two languages that they can speak right in front of me in, and I don't quite know what they're talking about. But I'm equipped. And if things get out of line, I say to them in German, I know what you're saying!

And they still go pale. So, so far, I still have the upper hand, but I fear that's not going to last. It is a joy and an honor to be asked to speak at Learners Exchange, and even more so to be asked to give the inaugural lectures in this 2006-2007 season.

As this is the beginning of a new year, so to speak, it is only right and fitting that as Learners Exchange embarks upon a new year of teaching, exchanging, and downright arguing with one another, that we should review the Great Commission that Jesus gave to his disciples, and how it bears upon our lives, how it bears upon the ministry at St. John's, and perhaps how it bears upon the ministry of Learners Exchange.

I shall do so under two subtitles. The first here is Equipping, and the second, as I understood it, was Deepening. But perhaps that's changed to Grounding, but it's the same thing. In the first session today, I should like to consider and review what the Great Commission is, what Jesus said, and for us to think together about the role of the Great Commission, and indeed, therefore, of evangelism, in our church's ministry, and in each one of our own lives.

[2 : 4 9] So that inevitably raises questions about how the Great Commission is fulfilled. How are people led to become disciples? How do we go out and make disciples of all nations?

It is about evangelism. It is about your role and mine in that work. And I just want to say, you know, here we are, we're in an evangelical church, and I'm an evangelical minister.

And I come from that as one who has been thrust into a preaching ministry, which obviously is evangelistic at times. But I've never considered myself to be a natural evangelist, and at times, those people who go on about evangelism really get on my nerves.

Nevertheless, when reflecting upon my life, I am grateful for the evangelistic work that led to the conversion of myself and my parents and some other members of my family.

I recently, the last week, my last uncle died. I had seven uncles and aunts, and they all one by one died over the last few years.

[3 : 52] And my last uncle died. And I didn't know that he'd come into a dynamic faith in Jesus Christ in the last ten years of his life dynamic. And I went and participated in his funeral in Chilliwack. And, you know, it was one of those funerals that went on and on and on and on.

But everybody testified to his faith in Jesus Christ. I mean, it was quite extraordinary. I'm so grateful, you know, for evangelistic work in his life. And any time we put a seed of the gospel in someone's life, we're doing eternal work.

I mean, it's of eternal significance. It changes the course of history. And it seems to me that all of us need to consider, here and now, the importance of our own evangelistic witness and how it works together with the wider evangelistic witness of the church.

We're thinking about big things, you know, big tent meetings, big missions, big services, but also the word spoken quietly in someone's heart. The prayer prayed.

The one person led to faith in Jesus Christ. My second subtitle, which we'll look at next week, is The Great Commission Deepening. And here I want to go further and look at the New Testament model of the church and how the way new converts were handled and, you know, what we're supposed to do with people when they become Christians.

[5 : 09] It's one of the things about evangelistic work is it creates more work. And successful evangelism just makes more work. And when you consider, you know, I often feel slightly overwhelmed by reading this, you know, in Acts, you know, when the Holy Spirit falls and they go out and Peter preaches this amazing sermon and people from all over the world are converted.

Three thousand people in that day. I mean, what the heck did they do with them all? So, you know, it creates more work. And so, I want to ask about how we ought to structure ourselves not just so that people are made Christians but so that they might grow as Christians.

There are many different models out there in the Christian world for this kind of thing and it might be helpful for us to think about that for ourselves. Are we as people attuned to thinking about that? Not just about making Christians but about growing them as disciples.

Is your small group attuned to thinking about that? Is it open to that? Or is it just, are we just about ourselves in my own spiritual life?

And my intention is not for us to fill our entire time that we have together with words. I am anxious for us to work together on these matters for the collective wisdom of Learners Exchange to be brought to bear.

[6 : 23] I think we as the leading adult education thing in St. John's have a duty to think about these things and then tell St. John's what it ought to do. So my expectation is that we will exchange learning together and come up with something that we can tell everybody else we need them to do.

You are, after all, the most august body here at St. John's. So let's do our work. And so, at the end of this morning I'm going to ask you to spend a few moments on your own considering two questions. How can you express the Gospel succinctly and how were you brought to faith and perhaps to share that with us.

Welcome, latecomers at the back. Javier Zeltecagi, hi. Obviously, you'll be my sister. Let's think about the Great Commission and the biblical picture of ministry in the church.

You've got the Great Commission in front of you. The church has perhaps the oldest mission statement or vision statement in the world.

I mean, there's nothing like it. It is the Great Commission. Very often churches get themselves tied into knots about figuring out what their vision and mission ought to be. One of the things I love to do, I guess it's an occupational kind of thing, is I love looking at other churches' websites because they tell you such a lot about what those churches think they ought to do.

[7 : 45] And whenever churches advertise to have pastors, I love to read through their profiles, what they're asking for. Very often churches have a really clear sense of how they're trying to corner their bit of the Christian market.

Some churches are social activists. Some churches emphasize the beauty of their music. Others, the up-to-dateness of their technology.

And actually, being the evening service minister, I'm aware that contemporary churches often try to out-technologize one another. You know, we've got better PowerPoint than you have, we have a better website than you have, and we use more up-to-date technology than you do.

And the good thing about being St. John's is we're completely off the map on technology, so we don't even try. Often churches are desperate to find their place of relevance in the world, desperate to find out what it is they're supposed to do, how are we going to survive?

How are we going to adopt a vision, a plan that will guarantee our survival in our little bit of the world, wherever we are? But we have a vision. We have a mandate, which was given to us by Jesus, which is as fresh and as relevant today as it was when he first uttered those words of the Great Commission.

[9 : 01] And it's everywhere in the New Testament. It's in all the Gospels and it's in Acts. Matthew 8, 28, of course, is perhaps the most familiar. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely, I am with you always to the very end of the age. Or in Mark, go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Or in Luke, we have, this is what is written, the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you. That's you. And in Acts, again, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Let's think about what this means. You notice, first of all, at the beginning of this focusing on Matthew, he says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go. So, the authority of God the Father for his salvation plan for the world and the cosmos and everything in it has been given to Jesus.

Authority was delegated to Jesus and he instructs us to go out and make disciples of all nations. There's authority here and it's the authority of God delegated to Jesus and then we are sent out to go.

[10 : 38] The command, the only command here is to go and make. Go and make disciples. So, of course, that is the work of evangelism. It's make disciples of all nations.

So, he sends the disciples out but following on from that is this work of initiation and discipleship. Look, it's go and make disciples of all nations but then baptizing them, so initiating them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

So, they are initiated into the Trinitarian faith, into the apostolic faith and teaching them everything I have commanded you. Interesting, isn't it?

So, there's that work of going and making but then there's that work of baptizing and teaching and it's teach everything I have commanded you. We are teaching them the words of Jesus, teaching them the apostolic faith.

So, first, you want to see that the command is go and make. That is the work of evangelism. Second, we want to notice that Jesus sends his disciples out.

[11 : 44] The emphasis is upon going out, beginning at Jerusalem and then Judea, Samaria, and spiring out to the ends of the earth. Go and make disciples of all nations.

The disciples are empowered to do that by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as we read in Acts. They've spoken other languages quite miraculously. Peter gave this fantastic sermon which reflected in a biblical theological way.

Those who read Learners Exchange a year ago will be well-versed in their biblical theology, I'm sure, having did that a year ago. He reflects biblically, theologically on the role of Christ as expressed in the Old Testament and preaches from the Old Testament of Christ to these people.

And that first intake of believers represented a broad cross-section of nationalities and languages, Jews and Gentiles. That is very significant see, it represents the progressive unfolding of God's salvation plan that he promised in the Old Testament in which he brought to a climax in Jesus and which he will roll to an end when Jesus comes again.

At the time of Abraham when God made his covenant with Abraham, he promised a land and a nation more numerous than the stars in the sky, a blessing for all the nations in the world.

[13 : 11] That is the kernel of the whole thing, that blessing, that promise. He created his people Israel, he redeemed them from slavery in Egypt, he sent the prophets to speak to them, he sent Jesus who came out of Israel, who ministered in Israel and then sent his disciples out.

So that promise came true when Jesus sent the disciples out. That is the pattern worked out by God, the creation of a people, a blessing which begins with them and then goes out to the whole world.

That is what Jesus fulfilled in his earthly ministry, he confined himself mainly to Israel. And then when he sent the twelve out in Matthew 10, he sent the twelve out on a mission and he said do not go amongst the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans, go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.

So in chapter 10 of Matthew he sends them only to the lost sheep of Israel. But after the cross, after the empty tomb, after, Jesus says, go out and make disciples of all nations.

See, the blessing promised by God was brought to fruition by Jesus and unfolded completely as God said it would. And it continues to unfold today, but unfolding ever since.

[14 : 32] And we also now want to notice that in this work, Jesus promises to be with us. He says, I am with you to the very end of the age. You will be my witnesses.

He is going to be with us. Or in Acts, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. We want to notice therefore that Jesus is involved in this work, and by his Spirit empowers us to do gospel ministry.

We can't do it without the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers us to fulfill the Great Commission. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot fulfill the Great Commission.

He is with us in this work, because it is his work. This is God's plan. It is his thing. This is what God has established.

This is what God wants, what he calls his people to do. And so he is with us in a very real and personal way. And he does that by sending the Holy Spirit.

[15 : 37] Isn't that extraordinary to you how Peter is turned into this amazing preacher, preaches this extraordinary sermon. Three thousand people are converted in that day.

The Holy Spirit empowers the disciples to go out and obey Jesus. But it is very interesting when you look at Luke and Acts, you can see how the Spirit and the Word go together.

As I say on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were dramatically empowered to begin the work of evangelism. It's dramatic.

Peter becomes a powerful preacher. People are converted. There is power there. They speak in other languages. People hear the gospel clearly. But, you look at Peter's sermon in Acts, it's very clear that he had a developed biblical theology, which he got from Jesus, in which he was able to interpret the Old Testament in the light of Jesus, and from the Old Testament, because it's all he had, he hadn't written the New Testament yet, he could preach the gospel.

Now, how did that happen? Did the Holy Spirit zap all that information into his head? No. Jesus taught him. But to think of what Jesus was doing with the disciples all that time, he was teaching them.

[16 : 51] And we see some of that teaching work, for example, in Luke 24, the Emmaus Road episode. We see Jesus teaching the Bible to them, and showing them how he is the key which unlocks the Bible, how the Bible speaks of him.

And so, in the Great Commission, we are to teach. We are to teach people to obey his commands. We are to teach people the words of Jesus, the commands of Jesus.

The apostles had been taught by Jesus, and they are to teach their converts. See, that's the truest sense of an apostolic succession. The words and teaching of Jesus he taught to the apostles, and they teach to the church, and we continue teaching to this day.

And so, Jesus is with us in a powerful and personal way, through his spirit, but he also equips us through his word. We have everything we need to make disciples.

disciples. Very often we're less thinking, if I need to take another course, I need to do something else, well, it can be very helpful to take courses, it can be very helpful to get trained, but we do have everything we need to make disciples.

[18 : 03] We have the Holy Spirit, we have the apostolic teaching, it's quite clear to us. Which is, by the way, when the church ditches the apostolic teaching, one can hardly be surprised when conversions stop happening and churches die.

One of the crazy lopsided things that's happening in some sections of the church today is that they ditch the apostolic teaching, but claim that the Holy Spirit is still guiding them. I just can't see how the Holy Spirit can guide people who are veering off the apostolic teaching.

And how would the Holy Spirit contradict himself? What he has spoken to the church once, would he change now? Seems to me it's crazy. At the same time, when we go overboard on a faith that is too experiential and neglect to learn the apostolic faith, again, we're not going to be effective evangelists.

But I want you to see that this work is what Jesus calls his disciples to. Building the church means making converts. This is the picture in Acts.

God added daily to their number, not just people, but those who were being saved. I often find a lot of the time I say, God added daily to their number. That's not what it says. Those who were being saved.

[19 : 14] God added to our number of those who were being saved. Building the church means making converts. It means doing the work Jesus calls us to do. And it means knowing that he is with us in that work.

He cares very deeply about it. It means going out. The gospel goes out. He is involved in this work.

He supports this work. It is the thing we're supposed to do. It governs the whole structure of how we are together and how we minister together. Now when we get, and we'll look at this a bit more next week, to some of the lists of ministries in the New Testament, we do find a diversity of ministry.

Not everyone is called to stand up and be a public evangelist. But it is all about supporting gospel ministry and dealing with the results of gospel ministry.

Someone has to go out and evangelize. Others have to be on hand to instruct and teach converts. There is pastoral work and administration. But the whole church is about this work.

[20 : 15] It is not about a select group of people doing this work. It is not about setting up a subcommittee of church committee to think about evangelism. It is the mission of the church and Jesus is involved in it directly.

Now I don't know about you but when I engage with what Jesus is calling us to do I feel both excited and challenged by it. It is exciting when you look at Acts and you see just how much Jesus supports this work.

I mean amazing things going on. Mass conversion in that first day. It happened in partnership with the spirit. The hand of God was involved in that. Wonderful gatherings of the people of God coming together and yet of course it got the disciples into a whole mess of trouble and it did probably represent a kind of downgrading of their standard of living and lifestyle.

It brought them into conflict with powers and principalities at work in their society in their age. And yet there is a power there is there not? When we obey Jesus and do his work his power is with us.

And yet in first century Jerusalem just to take an example must have been quite a place to do ministry. That first group I mean they must have felt the camera is on them in Acts and we are very aware of them but you know they must have felt very small indeed in a large ocean of humanity.

[21 : 42] And we might feel the same way here in 21st century lower mainland. The church today seems only to lose its place in the public consciousness.

Our message almost impossible to get across indeed it is repugnant to many even to some within the church. Am I squealing? Someone is squealing. Maybe it's my hearing aid.

We might be encouraged to think about the rapid spread of the Christian faith in other parts of the globe. Indeed the Christian faith is spreading at an incredibly rapid pace around the world never before anything like it.

We think of Nigeria for example millions of Christians and yet even there it is a significant point of conflict between Christianity and Islam. It's not easy being a Christian in Nigeria actually in many places.

We think of the rapid spread of Christianity in Asia but then that teeming continent the Christian presence is about 5%. I mean vast work to do.

[22 : 47] Huge secular and religious systems are lined up to oppose the gospels. Whether it is the might of the Roman Empire or the banality of the Walt Disney Empire the gospel gets quietly shut out of people's lives.

things. We are a very busy people in Vancouver enjoying the fruit of this beautiful place in the world with many things we can do and it shuts out the gospel.

It's a big world out there for us to work in. How do we obey this great commission? Friends, this is what I would like you to grapple with.

Well let's shift though and think now a bit more about the actual task of evangelism. What on earth is it? And I want to throw out for you just a few definitions to get you thinking and share a couple of stories of conversions and then get you to work.

Here's a definition, it's famous from 1918. To evangelize is to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit that men shall come to put their trust in God through him, to accept him as their savior and serve him as their king in the fellowship of his church.

[24 : 00] This is a church of England, 1918 definition. To evangelize is to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit that men shall come to put their trust in God through him, to accept him as their savior and serve him as their king in the fellowship of his church.

Our own Dr. Packer suggests the following revision. To evangelize is to present Christ Jesus to sinful people in order that through the power of the Holy Spirit they may come to put their trust in God through him.

In italics we put on the word may as opposed to shall. Because that's quite right, isn't it? In the end we're not responsible for how people respond, we're simply responsible to speak, to witness.

Or the 1974 International Congress on world evangelism. To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the scriptures and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the spirit to all who repent and believe.

Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism. I like that. To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the scriptures and that as the reigning Lord he now offers forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the spirit to all who repent and believe.

[25 : 37] Now there's a kind of definition that many would find difficult to follow in the church today. Isn't that quite right? It isn't just spreading the love of God and nor is it spreading the guilt of tradition.

It is spreading the good news that is the gospel and of course it focuses on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and that what he offers us in life now.

That he offers us forgiveness of sins, he offers us the spirit and that he calls us to repent of our sins and believe in him. That's what evangelism is, isn't it?

It is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Jesus Christ as savior and Lord with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God.

And is that any different in first century Jerusalem to 21st century Vancouver? I think not. To evangelize. The verb is used some 52 times in the New Testament, 25 by Luke, 21 by Paul.

[26 : 41] It means to announce, to proclaim or bring good news. Very simple. In Luke 4, Jesus reads from Isaiah chapter 61 and says, The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Notice that the proclamation of the good news was linked to a demonstration of that good news. Jesus is sent by the Father to this world, not merely to conduct a preaching tour, but to show the reality of the living God in a way that powerfully impacted the lives of the people he met.

See, Jesus' words are not just empty words. He does not just talk, he does. You cannot separate Jesus' proclamation from his actions, the teachings and the healings, the words, and of course the sacrifice on the cross.

And I think for all of us, being equipped for evangelism, we're in a community together.

[27 : 55] It's not the responsibility of any one of us, it's the responsibility of all of us, and it really needs to be the thing that we're about as a community. And we work together on that.

The guy who does the big evangelistic talk, and each one of us together, we work together in this work. And so all of us need to be ready to explain the gospel in different ways when necessary.

It's not the same for everyone. We encounter people at different places in their journey. Some people, you know, for whom the shutters are way up high. Other people who are so broken down by some circumstance in their life suddenly are open.

Other people who are journeying towards being ready. And in the end, each person has to decide for Jesus Christ on their own. That's not our responsibility.

Some will be rejecting. Some will have to think about it. The transaction is not always completed in one fell swoop. Usually it's a process, figuring things out.

[29 : 02] And so for all of us, we need to be able to succinctly and appropriately explain the gospel when necessary. Do you know what it means? How do we lead someone to Christ when they're ready?

How do you know? We have to know our own story. How did you come to faith? What does it mean to you to be a Christian? We all have different stories. It doesn't mean we didn't all have to have dramatic conversion experiences from the degradation of sin in order to have a good story to tell.

What does it mean for you? Have you thought about that? Are you ready with that? That's part of the homework we want to do in a minute. Can you explain the gospel? Because evangelism is a very wide-ranging thing.

It is a big task. It's a very human task. You don't know where people are at. But if someone is on that journey, if they are responding to God's call in their life, you can be someone who helps them along and maybe who clinches the deal.

But ultimately, in the end, it's between them and God. You had a fellow converted at evening service. And in the end, it was him and God. I mean, they just figured it out in the end, those two.

[30 : 10] Some people helped him on the way. But it was something coming together about something you heard in a sermon and the music and just the cross there at the back of the building. Click. We baptized him this summer.

And what are some of the things that are helpful? Do we want to become seeker-friendly, like Willow Creek, for example? I just throw that out there. Maybe we should be seeker-friendly. We don't want to have services that offend anyone.

We don't want to have prayer books anymore or things like that. No, we want to be seeker-friendly. Or maybe think of the Billy Graham Crusades.

Hugely impactful in lives, aren't they? I've got a couple of conversions that I thought I'd share with you. I was reading Michael Green's autobiography, his spiritual autobiography, some of his reflections on 50 years of Christian ministry.

And it was wonderful reading his account of his conversion experience. You all know Michael Green, don't you? I associate Michael Green with this church so closely. He, of course, was at Regent for a number of years and came here in the early 80s and led a mission.

[31 : 18] Wonderful evangelist. But he recounts his own conversion experience while still at school. And it's interesting that what came together for him was an awareness of his need. But hearing the gospel clearly spoken by a speaker and then a conversation with someone privately in a boathouse who led him to Christ.

See, it's both, isn't it? It's this big picture of someone saying this is what the gospel is, which he was at a point of being able to hear. And then someone seeing that and taking him aside and privately leading him to Christ with tears and repentance and just encouraging him in that first step he had taken.

I'd love to tell you about the wonderful mission that was held here in St. John's in about 1981, celebration in the city led by Michael Green.

And this was a point where my parents were converted to faith in Jesus Christ. We were faithful Anglicans of the local sort. And we went to church every Sunday in a church where we were not taught the Bible in a particular way and did not have a clear grasp of what the gospel was really all about.

In that year, it was 1981, and I was younger than I am now. I'm actually still in elementary school. And I began to go to Vancouver Christian school for a number of reasons.

[32 : 43] And there we all began to encounter a very different kind of Christian than we had experienced before in our local congregation. We met people who had manifestly had a relationship with Jesus Christ, a relationship that stood out.

And at the time, it seemed, it was like, wow, you know him. And it was strange. It's not what we were used to. We were used to the slightly more British stiff kind of thing, you know, on Sunday sort of thing.

Peace be with you. Yep. These people loved Jesus passionately and prayed to him freely. We hardly had words to pray. And it was quite funny because I was the first Anglican to go to that school and got an intense amount of evangelistic activity from all my other grade six people who were convinced I was not saved.

And they were probably right. But I remember, you know, only in the Christian school could you spend your recess being evangelized instead of bullied. But, you see, these are people for whom being a Christian was not just a Sunday thing, but the whole of their lives.

It was the overriding characteristic of their lives. And none of us had ever seen anything like it. I remember we started watching 100 Huntley Street, because I was really big then. And we were, I just remember, you know, kind of before school, squirming is the way these people talked about Jesus.

[34 : 08] Funny, isn't it? We could talk about God and things at arm's length, but they talked about Jesus in this passionate, living way. And I think for all of us, I'm sure for my parents and certainly for me, in my sort of 11 year old kind of way, I think it's 11, however old I was then, we kind of began to see that we were missing something.

And we were missing out. There was a whole other dimension to this Christian thing that we hadn't kind of got. But what? And then you're asking questions, well, how do I, how do we get what it is you have?

You see these people having this thing and this calling in your heart, this desire in your heart. I want to have that. How? How do I get it? Where? And these are the kind of questions that our local church, our minister, who was a good pastor, could not answer.

Never answered. This is not where things went. And we need to know how. Well, it seems so simple now, but when you're on the other side, it's not simple.

And someone invited my parents to go to this mission going on at this church with this speaker from England, Michael Green. And they came on Monday. And they made me come on Tuesday.

[35 : 22] And I think my sister, who's here, had to come as well and shuddered through the whole thing. They went on Thursday. They went on Friday. And there was instantaneous tapes you could get.

It was cassettes. You could get them immediately afterwards. They got all the cassettes. And you know what? They still had them. In fact, we were tidying up my parents' house a bit. And I found the cassettes. They're still there in the drawer by the phone in the kitchen.

1981. And somewhere along the line, I don't know when, in that week it happened for my parents. That thing called conversion. They heard the gospel clearly explained.

Their eyes were opened. They were shown the way. They were told what to do. And they responded. The gospel clearly, relevantly, passionately explained.

And in that week they moved from being pretty good Anglicans to becoming Christian. And it was both dramatic and not. It was dramatic because that week marked a turning point for them in their lives.

[36 : 29] The turning point. Really, they divided their lives around meeting Michael Green. There was nothing quite like it ever since that Michael Green week. But it also marked the beginning of a lifelong process of discipleship.

The proof is in the genuineness of it all that lasts to this day. They still love the Lord, even in old age. They didn't become raving lunatics, but they did change.

Their lives divided by that mission. And they knew that it happened. Talked about it for years. And in a nice little kind of connection, after I moved to England and was studying there in the 1990s, I ended up training for the ministry at Wycliffe Hall at the same time that Michael Green came on staff there.

And we became very good friends because we were in the same fellowship group. And I loved telling him about that. Because, of course, you know, for him, an international evangelist going around, he did hundreds of these things.

Hundreds of them. But for my parents, it was everything. It was as if it was the only one. So I definitely encourage the having instantaneous tape transmission.

[37 : 37] That's the key thing. How do you assess the success of evangelism and mission? I don't think they signed a card or filled out an assessment form. I don't think St. John's would find in a box somewhere, you know, a little tally with their names on them ticked off.

They didn't join this church. There's no number in a file somewhere that records their conversion. But it happened. And its effects are eternal.

Enormous. In all sorts of incalculable ways. For one thing, I became a Christian and here I am. And you see, I think it's wonderful how what comes together, the big meeting, the passionate explanation of the gospel, the relationships with other Christians, the call, the public gesture, is the place of quiet conversation, teaching, invitation, leading, bringing people to Christ.

Christ. They were ready. How can we know? We can't know. So we do the work. Which is something of my own Christian story.

I grew up in church and loved church from a young age. And was also a good Anglican. But after my parents really got going as Christians, they dragged me along to some of these things.

[38 : 59] And as I said, I was at this Christian school and began to see there was something missing in my life. And I think what I saw, though, I was a good kid. My sister's nodding her head at the back. I was good. I went to church every Sunday.

But what I began to see was, especially back in the 80s, we talked a lot about being born again. I'm not sure if that's the phrase we use now so much. But you know what I mean. I began to see that whatever that was, I wasn't. I was manifestly not born again.

I was a good kid, but not born again. And we don't perhaps use that term so much now, but it became clear to me that I was not born again and that in particular I had not made Jesus my Lord and Savior.

I had not submitted my life to him. That was the thing that in time crystallized for me. Kind of having to hear the gospel several times over a period of some time. And I suppose I could have just done that.

in my own room in the quiet one night. But I didn't feel like I knew how. And I remember wanting to be told how to do that. And it was at some, I can't even remember where it was, some youth-based evangelistic event.

[40 : 01] They were all sitting on the floor of some gym somewhere. I know it was on the floor. And some speaker had done the big talk and told us to pray the prayer. And I did.

It's the story. And sitting there on whatever gym floor it was, I responded. He told me what I had to do. And I was ready that day to do it.

And I still divide my life by that day. Because although I was a good kid who never skipped out of class or smoked, went to church and sang in the choir, yet I had not done this one step.

And I realized that my Christian life truly did not begin until I did so. But you see, praise the Lord that someone did that good old fashioned work of giving an evangelistic talk with the old fashioned prayer at the end and said, this is what you have to do.

And praise the Lord, someone drove me to that thing. Some friends, I guess. And again, it was a process of hearing the gospel being proclaimed kind of over and over again until it clicked that I hadn't done that.

[41 : 07] That that wasn't true for me. So as in conversion, as in theology, someone once said to me, the thing about theology is you have to keep on talking till the penny drops. That's right.

So it is with evangelism. You have to keep on talking till the penny drops. It's a process. People along the way, talking to me about Jesus, talking about faith, defining the essentials of it all, and then someone there to lead me into the kingdom.

I was ready. Who's to know when anyone else is? So I leave you again with the words of Jesus. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in teaching them everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. those things I want to do so with you because after saying that to the faith, who can worship me, I teach you in prayer prayer.

[42 : 12] Shall we continue so, say, how come you listen to your hear our song and about heaven? Ephesians love you, for that yay. I hope that I feel like, there are simply tää people who say. In My bag, I love you. It's a errado. In Utah. That's what I think about that. It's a possessed.

I have never seen at that. What this is about?