

Marks of a Healthy Church

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[0 : 00] It's fitting we're on the Great Commission.

! He who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth has commissioned us. In this lesson, Dr. Dever shows that God established the church so that we might fulfill His Great Commission. Matthew 28, 19-20. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Okay, let's watch this video together. Let's watch this video together.

Okay, I did not look at the answer key, so we're going to answer these questions together. I think we can do it.

[1 : 23] Number one, Jesus' command that we go to all the nations was an unforeseen event in redemptive history. False. Question two, in the Greek, the one imperative verb in the Great Commission is go.

Oh, make disciples, sorry. See? Thank you. Question three. Question three, our relational nature reflects God's triunity. Question four, the Great Commission is fulfilled primarily through individual evangelism.

False. Five, the first local church that resulted from the day of Pentecost was the church in Jerusalem. And number six, the church is meant to display God's D, all of the above, glory, gospel, character.

Okay. Discussion questions. We have four. And I have microphones if you have an answer. Somebody.

Okay. Okay. Yeah, you almost got knocked over last time. Okay. Question number one. Why is the church an essential aspect of evangelism?

[2 : 45] How essential has the church been for your growth in grace? Dan has a microphone. Paul has a microphone. Why is the church an essential aspect of evangelism?

How essential has the church been for your growth in grace? Mike. When he was talking about that, I thought the church is made for that because of the different gifts that God has given the members. I have been asked before to help disciple, help raise up an individual, and I'm a total failure at that. That's not the gift that God gave me.

I am an exhorter. I like to do different things. I like to get people here, and I am so happy that we have men and women here who are good at discipling, at bringing them up, teaching them, and all of that.

That's why I think the church is so important because all of the gifts that are required, God has gifted the church with. No one individual is going to have all those gifts.

[4 : 00] Yeah. Good. Good. So, yeah. The church is able to collectively disciple one another, and I think we see that.

You know, you talk about a kid that grows up in the church, you know, and throughout their life in the church, they're disciplined by different people along their walk.

That's good. Who else? Why is the church an essential aspect of evangelism? How essential has the church been for your growth and grace?

I think, you know, obviously the church is an essential aspect of evangelism because who else is going to go and make disciples if not the church, right? Who else is going to tell people about Jesus Christ if it's not followers of Christ?

If it's not the church? I don't know. There's other para-church organizations, but it's our responsibility, right? That's why it's so essential that we be the ones who are busy about making disciples.

[5 : 11] Does anybody want to answer the last part of that question? How essential has the church been for your growth and grace? Wes? Well, before I started really attending church regularly, it was kind of the Christmas and weddings and funerals and Easter and all that kind of stuff, and I was not growing in grace.

It was just totally stagnant. And then when I had a change in my life where we started going to church every Sunday, sitting in the front, taking notes, that's when I've really grown in my whole Christian walk, learning what I'm supposed to do just because I'm getting the instruction and I'm seeing other people around me, the way they act and things like that.

That's where my real growth has come because I've been attending church and just seeing it with my own eyes and hearing it from the platform. Yeah, good. So that kind of speaks back to what Mike said too, is that there's a place for individual one-on-one discipleship, which is good, but when you come into the doors of the church, you're being disciplined every Sunday in your Sunday school class, even if you're the one teaching the class, because when you're teaching it, I mean, you've got to be prepared so that you know what you're talking about.

And even in that preparedness, you're growing in your knowledge that you can share with others.

When you come and when we sing, the songs that we sing in worship, the scripture that's read, the sermon that's preached, it's all intended to help us grow and be disciplined, right?

So that's a huge thing. Hopefully anybody who goes to a church can look back over their time in the church and say, I've really grown here as a result of all of these different things.

[6 : 54] All right, let's move on to question two. Throughout the Bible, God initiates relationships with his people. How does this help you understand your role in the Great Commission?

Throughout the Bible, God initiates relationships with his people.

How does this help you understand your role in the Great Commission? Wes?

I'll take a stab at it. Well, just as an example, how God is reaching out to the different people that he was using, Abraham and, like you said, Noah and Paul.

He went after him. So that's an example to us that we can't just sit back in the church and expect people to just show up. We need to talk about it and go out and share with other people, make those connections ourselves.

[7 : 55] God uses us to initiate the contact a lot of times. Now you look at, like, Scripture. Paul saw the resurrected Christ, right, when he was called.

But then he went, as one who was called, to go share the gospel with others. I believe in the stories that we're hearing coming out of the Middle East where to share the gospel means being arrested or maybe even killed.

And you've probably heard the stories like I have. IMB reporting back of Muslims having visions and dreams of a man in white hearing and, I believe, seeing Christ calling them.

So I don't believe that God doesn't make himself known in that way. But primarily, and we see it in different ways, but primarily it's using you and I to go and share the gospel.

And again, it's not our doing it. Can't cause anybody to be saved, right? That's all of God. It's all according to his sovereign plan and will.

[9 : 03] But, you know, I think for all of us here, I would say, maybe not, but I would venture to guess probably, that you heard the gospel from another person.

So that person God used to initiate that conversation with you, right? And so in the same way, we're to do the same thing.

Be the one who initiates the conversation because, you know, honestly, your unbelieving relatives and friends and whatnot, maybe they will approach the subject with you and say, hey, tell me more about what you believe.

But more likely than not, it's you who's got to share the gospel with them. And it's going to be you who initiates that conversation.

And it should be us, right? Because the Lord calls us to go and make disciples. Those are a lot of, the action is on our part to be the one actively initiating, going and making disciples and teaching.

[10 : 14] So he didn't say, you know, go to a community and just be really good people and draw interest from them and, you know, maybe they'll start asking you questions.

I mean, there's a lot of activity that he expects us to be a part of in initiating these conversations where we hope to share the gospel. And that's our role in the Great Commission.

Let's move on to question three. Paul.

In the video, I really enjoyed how he emphasized how God is a relational God and that he develops relationships.

And I was raised in the church. I was in the church before I was even a believer and have been either officially or very in a relationship, been mentored or even unofficially mentored by many individuals over time.

[11 : 44] And those relationships have been critical for me being a more mature and more well-rounded Christian.

And none of us, except for Christ and the Holy Spirit, have all the fruit of the Spirit and have all maturity. We're not there yet.

None of us are. And something that I lack, maybe Brother Willard can provide another believer, a new convert. And we need one another in order to really disciple and teach people how to, new believers and young believers and middle-aged believers, how to walk more closely with Christ. None of us have it all. And it is up to all of us together to encourage one another to do that. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It takes everyone in the church doing their part, fulfilling their role.

Yeah. If it was all on one of us to kind of. And I like your point because I think sometimes in the church, people will look to maybe somebody they feel like is gifted in evangelism.

[13 : 04] Well, he's the one who, or she's the one who we send out. They do the evangelism for it. They'll have the time to look at the staff and be like, well, that's your guys' job, you know, to be the ones to go and make disciples.

But that's not how it worked. I mean, that wasn't the sole task of the apostles, that to be a part of the church meant to be, you know, growing in Christ and helping others to do the same in going and making disciples and sharing the gospel.

Who else? In what ways are you challenged by the apostles' understanding of the Great Commission, especially in regard to the responsibilities they gave to every believer in the church? Mike. I think two things I'm encouraged by here, going kind of back to the former question about God initiating those contacts and those relationships, I don't have to fear because God's already prepared some people to hear what I have to say.

And, of course, that does put the onus back on me to actually do that. But on this, I think we oftentimes as a church, particularly today in America, we fail in that we do not give responsibilities.

[14 : 26] We accept them as members. We praise the Lord for that and expect them to show up and do whatever it is God's asked them to do. It doesn't work that way. I am tickled to death when we get people who are joining our church where one of the first things they have to say is, where can I help?

And I know that thrills you, too. And, you know, there's many areas. But most of us sit back and wait to be asked to do something.

And I think that may be a failure of our churches today is we don't engage people to actually get to work. And I would love to see that program done.

And I would love for somebody who knows how to do it to do it. But I think that's one thing that is an encouragement to me is that when God calls a person to a church, he will give them a responsibility and a job to do.

Yeah. And I think that's our job to help them find that. Yeah. Yeah, I agree. We all have spiritual gifts. And we're to use those gifts in service to one another, right?

[15 : 31] Not to keep to ourselves or to, I don't know, elevate ourselves in any ways. Those gifts are meant to be given. That's why we receive them.

But, you know, I think, you know, Mike said something that's true of a lot of churches in America today is that people don't want to make the commitment.

So they expect that in church, too. I'd rather just come and get my fill for however long I want it and then be out of here. And they like to come in anonymously and leave anonymously.

And, in fact, I had a conversation with somebody close to me. And they were a couple that was looking for a church. And the husband's comment to me was, well, we're not looking at smaller churches because they'll ask us to do more.

And I was like, man, that says a lot, though. That says a lot. I think that's part of why some of the megachurches that are out there, again, not to be a megachurch isn't a bad thing.

[16 : 36] But some of them, many of them tend to be that large because they give those people what they want. Come here. You know, we can count you.

And we can count your money. And you don't have to do anything. We'll do it all for you. We'll make all the decisions for you. Just come and sit and, you know, just be present.

But don't be too involved. And some people, unfortunately, that's what they want. And yet when, you know, like we look at Scripture and we see, well, you know, in the church in Acts chapter 2, it seemed like these people really knew each other really, really well.

And they really wanted to be with one another. And they were all, the Lord was adding to their number. And it wasn't just about any one of the apostles individually.

I mean, collectively, they were together and committed to Christ. And that's what the church should be. These people knew each other very well. These people loved each other very much.

[17 : 41] And it wasn't one of those things where you could show up and be anonymous and leave anonymous without anybody wanting to know who you were or caring that you were there. Willard? I was just thinking, the thought came to mind.

I have been told a good number of years ago when I was at McCopan that church in Tyro, Kansas, a small little burp in the road, but a large Christian church or Church of Christ, one of the two, required, was a requirement of church membership.

If you're going to be part of that church, you have to get plugged in. And whatever you're plugged into, you have to be active in that. So that's the other shoe, you know.

But, you know. Other thoughts that came to mind with that, you look at Matthew 28, you know, the Great Commission, but you also look at Acts chapter 1.

And that, I was trying to think how those two fit together time-wise, but it appears as if they piggyback each other. You know, he tells them in the Great Commission, but then he says, you shall receive power.

[19 : 00] After that, the Holy Ghost has come upon you, and you will be witnessing for me or witnesses of me throughout the world. And that, of course, is a picture of the scattering of the church in the days following Pentecost.

And so that's an automatic, to me, that's an automatic thing for the believer. When the Spirit of God is in control of the believer, God will use that life to bear witness to those that God leads them to bear witness to.

And that that should be the natural response of the life of the believer. Yeah. Good. Good answer. Anyone else?

In what ways are you challenged by the Apostles' understanding of the Great Commission? Especially in regard to the responsibilities that they gave to every believer in the church? Some people are, I believe, they're gifted in evangelism.

They just have the gift of, like I believe my wife is one of them. I've seen others. They just have a way of not being awkward whenever they talk to people, but they have a way of being able to steer the conversation to the gospel.

[20 : 25] You know, whereas other of us are thinking, I'm going to share the gospel with this person. Hey, what's your name? Have you ever, you know, heard about the gospel before, you know? And hey, you're going and you're sharing.

And even if it's awkward, I mean, you know, God will use that. If God's going to save that person, He'll use that. But for most of us, I think especially in our culture today, where it's just, you know, we're more wanting to be isolated, or we just don't, we're just not as friendly maybe as we used to be.

But for a lot of us, we feel inadequate when it just comes to one-on-one evangelism. For whatever reason, maybe it's not, you know, you're concerned that I don't know enough, even though you do, or you just think, I don't know how to, I just don't feel confident.

But isn't there something different whenever you're doing it with your church, or you're doing it with another person? I feel like it is. I feel like there's more confidence.

I know in seminary, they required us for an evangelism class to witness. And a lot of times, we would go out in groups, and we'd go in twos, and I just felt we were more bold when we were together.

[21 : 50] And so, yeah, right. Okay, yeah, you do the, you pull out the track, and then I'll jump in at this point. But, you know, but even still, I think, and, you know, that's something we need to consider, too, for our church is with these engaged things.

Are we really sharing the gospel like we ought to be? And, you know, there's different things that people say about evangelism is caught. It's not taught.

I think there's something to that. But, you know, maybe that's something we need to be thinking more about with our engage events is more intentional about sending out in twos to, you know, like Christ did, and, you know, teach even our young people how to better share the gospel.

But, you know, I just, all this to say, I think, when we're doing it as a church, I think there's a feeling of more confidence in what we're doing.

You know, there's greater boldness because we're together in this. And, anyhow, just an observation. I don't know if anybody has any others. All right.

[23 : 15] Willard. I wasn't going to say anything else. Okay. I was going to be like Forrest Gump. That's all I've got to say about that. But I'm like the credit card lady on the TV.

One more thing. Yeah. You know, it's a beautiful thing when you go two on two. God puts that together because it's almost like preaching because you feed off of one another.

As God, you're sitting now with some folks and with the attempt to share the gospel, and God lays it on the heart of one of the two of them to begin speaking, and then as the conversation continues, he directs the other one as well to share some thought that the first person didn't have.

That's a great thing. And if you've never experienced that, it's a joy. Whether the person responds positively or not, when you walk out the door and leave, you know that God's used you, and you find joy in that.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that's true. Yeah. I may have shared this story before. I had a good friend in Leavenworth, and we decided, you know, we're going to, there's an apartment complex not far from the church.

[24 : 37] Let's just go knock on all their doors. And so that was our goal, and we did. And, you know, there were some really good conversations, and there were some where, you know, we had the door slammed in our face.

But even that was not, it wasn't so bad. Yeah. You know, and I think people are afraid of that, but, you know, because we had that, like, hey, we, it was heartbreaking for us because we're like, you know, we were at this person's door, and we were ready to share the gospel with them, and they wanted nothing to do with us.

So it breaks your heart, but it's, and you grow closer to those people as well. Like me and him got really close in doing that in a way that I don't think we would have otherwise. Yeah. I think it's more success two-on-two personally than I have by me just going out by myself.

Because, you know, when the preacher's there, you know, it's the preacher. You know, they always spawn positively, and then when you leave, it's all gone. You know, so. Yeah. Yeah. It's true.

That's all I've got to say. For now. For now. Yeah. Paul? I like, too, how he emphasized in the video the fact that the evangelism and the Great Commission is more than making a convert.

[25 : 55] It's making disciples. And you do not make a disciple at one point in time. You make a disciple over time. And so the Great Commission involves, yes, that first planting the seed and maybe harvesting that soul and that conversion experience.

But it's much more than that. It's that teaching to observe all things. And that's, once again, why it requires the church, because someone may be extremely gifted in evangelism.

But that may not be me, but I may be better at helping someone, once they're converted, growing in knowledge of the word or in some other aspect of the Christian walk.

And so it's a process, and not everyone is going to be involved in every step of the process. And that takes the whole church to get them to that.

Yeah. That's a great observation. Yeah. There was something I was going to say, but I forgot.

[27 : 09] But, I mean, that's it. Oh, I knew what I was going to say. If I just keep blabbing, it'll eventually come. I like that comment, too, because he drew attention to decisions and how, especially as Southern Baptists, you know that we've always been real big on decisions.

How many decisions were made at Falls Creek or wherever. And not to say that those decisions weren't genuine, but, you know, that's only part of the Great Commission.

You know, there's more to that. And I think sometimes we can get so excited about the numbers that we forget the other aspect of, well, where are they now?

You know, like wondering about the million people that have disappeared between 2000 and whatever to 2018. Like, where did they go?

Were they in another church? I think we're in another church, maybe. Maybe. But how does just a million people just disappear in a short period of time? I doubt they all died, you know?

[28 : 17] But I think it's because we sometimes get more focused on the decision and aren't nearly as focused on, well, okay, the disciple aspect.

You know, how do we, let's help this person grow. Wes? It's also, it's like any network marketing thing.

Just to get someone to sign up doesn't make you, doesn't do anything for you. It's got to continue on. So just making a decision is great. But if you don't teach them how to evangelize also and how to follow Christ, then it just stops right there.

They're a Christian and they die and then that's it. The whole idea is that it's going to grow and other people hear it because the person who witnessed to me about Christ, someone witnessed to him and someone witnessed to that person.

It just goes all the way back to the disciples. So if it just stops with you because I made a decision, great. You really did come to Christ. You're going to go to heaven. But if I don't share it, then it just stops with me.

[29 : 18] So I think that's the whole difference between the decision and a disciple. You need to teach people how to do what someone did for you so that it goes on and on. Yeah, good. One of the church's jobs that we talked about is equipping the saints, right?

Discipling them and teaching them how to disciple in turn. Last question. How is a low view of the church detrimental to believers and unbelievers? How is a low view of the church detrimental to believers and unbelievers?

go on Teresa detrimental views puts a stumbling block in the way of being a disciple if you have a low esteem of the church then our our word of bringing God's word to people is not as looked upon as highly as it should be therefore our word doesn't reach where it needs to reach good if we come in here and act like what we do isn't that big of a deal no you know people are going to think it's not that big of a deal to me either you think you know we should have come here with an expectation that we're going to be disciplined and that we're going to grow but if we act like church is not a big deal or you know we have other commitments that we view as being more important than any commitment to church

I mean that sends a pretty loud message to unbelievers and to the people that we go to church with where our our true priorities lie Wes one of the the big things that is just a real you want in your life is someone to realize that you're different you know something's happening to you and you're not acting the way everybody else does and so when the when the church has low self view whatever you're not making it any different why would I want what you got I got that already so it needs to be something different where you're doing things that most people aren't doing and you're reacting differently to the way things happen to you where other people would just be you know down on everything it's like you're still up and you've got joy and it's like well I mean that's what you really want is someone say what is about you and then you can say well I've got joy I've got Christ in my life so what is that I want that you want you want them to want what you have and if it's just like blah blah any other organization then so what nobody wants what you got so it doesn't really draw anyone towards the church or what you have

Christ good low view of the church means that you have a low view of God's word which means eventually you're not going to look that much different from the rest of the world and unbeliever sees that and you know I don't see the point then it's 730 one final thing I was going to say that I think relates to this has anybody been seeing in the news about the United Methodist Church is going to split and that's not a surprise it seems like it's been coming for a while you have a group primarily here in the United States of America that you know wants to be able to ordain LGBT men and women for the ministry and also perform those kinds of marriages and then you have a group most of them are over that's the church in Africa United Methodist Church in Africa are like no we're not we're not about that we're not we're not going to do that and so now they've reached an impasse and it doesn't

[33 : 34] I mean they're not going to be united anymore and so I just think of churches like that you know part of our job as a church is to make disciples and as part of that is to stand firmly upon the word of God and encourage others to do the same and if we don't you know in any area then we're opening up the door to be able to be the interpreter of scripture and to be an authority over scripture and that's a dangerous path to be on because eventually what it leads to is a church that is no

different from the rest of the world and whose message is no different from the rest of the world's message and it's no wonder that churches go down that path dwindle and die because God is not in that Christ is not in that church the Holy Spirit does not work in that church because that's a group of people who have a low view of the church and a low view of his word and it's worthless in the end to do any kind of good so we'll conclude on that

I'll pray and then we'll be dismissed Lord thank you for these times that we have together thank you for these lessons that we're participating in for the things that we're learning and the ways that we're growing and the conversations that we have where we're able to sharpen one another it's good and so Lord we thank you for all of it we pray for our church that God we would be focused on what you've called us to be to be active in the great commission to be going to be sharing the gospel but not to leave it there to be making disciples to be equipping the saints your people to do the work of the ministry and so Lord we pray for your help in that we pray that you would help us to stay focused on what is important and what is essential for your church to not be concerned with the things that that are not essential for your church that sometimes we tend to get caught up in thinking are more important than they truly are so Lord help us to be discerning and wise and to be diligent and eager to go and make disciples to as we've talked about this morning be totally committed to to what you have called us to be as your people and what you've called us to do as your people and we pray for your help and we ask you to be glorified by what results and we pray this in Jesus name

Amen