

Mission Critical: A Belief and an Activity

Next Sunday will be three years since the most amazing thing happened in my life and in my wife Cindy's life. Cindy. We became grandparents. We think our grandson, Beau, and our grand-



daughter, Margo, are the two most amazing people on planet earth! Seriously! We really do! Cindy and I would have no problem talking to you for hours and hours about these kids. We love them. They are special to us. We have countless pictures and videos that we would be more than happy to show to you. Every grandparent listening to me right now, knows what I'm talking about. When there is someone we adore, someone we love, someone that we think is so special, we cannot help but talk

about them. We want to make them known.

Through Jesus we have come to know the God of the universe, who loves us. And He is good, and wise, and strong, and faithful. He is beautiful beyond description. When we see and understand God rightly, we cannot help but talk about Him. We will want to make Him known. Which is exactly what we are called to do. We are called to make God known to our family, our friends, our neighbors, really anyone who will listen! This is what we are called to as a church.

Over the past few weeks, as we have been looking at the heart of a disciple, we've talked about the three great loves that ought to be growing in the heart of someone who is following Jesus as a disciple – love for God, for one another, and for our neighbors. Our focus has been on self-assessment. How are you doing in these things? Where do you need to grow? These three love commands, however, are not only for personal reflection, they also address what we as a church are to be about. We are called to help others come to know our great God and then make disciples of Jesus who love God, one another, and their neighbors. This is what we are to be about as a church. This is our mission.

This morning I want to look briefly at this mission, but then I want to spend most of our time, thinking about two things that critical to this mission. I would call them mission critical. When something is mission critical, it is essential, it is necessary to the functioning of an organization. And so I want to talk about a mission critical belief and a mission critical activity. But let's look first for a moment about what our mission actually is.

I. Our Mission is to Make Disciples (Matthew 28:18-20)

In Matthew 28:18-20, we find what has been called the Great Commission, which contains some of Jesus' very last words to his disciples and ultimately to us. We read this:

¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰

teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Now, there is a lot that we can talk about, but the main thing I want you to see is that Jesus calls His church in every place in every time to be about the business of making disciples. *Go . . . and make disciples of all the nations.* This is the central command in this passage. At the very core of why Faith exists as well as any other biblical church is to make disciples.

The starting point of this, of course, is sharing the Good News of the Gospel. We want to help other come to know our amazing God. We want to help people understand what Jesus did for them through his life, death, and resurrection so they might enter into an eternal relationship with Him. And once they do, we are to baptize them. This is what we will be doing next Sunday as part of our service. I think there will be 7 people baptized. And then we are to teach them to obey everything that Jesus commanded. This is what we are doing today. It is what we are about in Rooted, in our Life Groups, in the NextGen programming, and it is what we are to be about in our families and with our friends. And we believe that if we can make disciples who truly love God, one another, and their neighbors, that we all well on the way to teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded.

This is what we are to be about. All that we do is to be towards the end of fulfilling this Great Commission that Jesus gave to the church. Now, there’s a lot that we could talk about in terms of how we are to go about this, but what I want to do in the rest of our time is talk about a mission critical belief and a mission critical activity.

II. A Mission Critical Belief

Let’s talk about the mission critical belief first. This belief is communicated through the whole story of the Bible. It is found in a clear and succinct way in Matthew 6 where Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. In Matthew 6:9, Jesus says this:

⁹ *“Pray, then, in this way:
‘Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
¹⁰ ‘Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.*

Now, Jesus is going to go on to teach us how to ask God for the things we need. But before we go to any of that, Jesus teaches us that our prayers should be rooted in a foundational belief. It’s a mission critical belief. And that belief is that **life is all about who God is and what He is doing.** Who is God? He is the one in heaven whose name is to be honored. And so we are to pray, *Hallowed be Your name.* That’s not a statement; it’s a request we are to make. When God’s name is *hallowed* it means that He is rightly honored and respected. And so we are asking that God

would so move, that people in all the world would see God as God; that they will rightly honor Him.

Jesus also tells us that our prayers are to focus on what God is doing in the world. He is extending His kingdom reign in this world causing His good and perfect will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. His kingdom reign was initiated at the coming of Jesus, and it is now being extended through the church as we proclaim the Gospel causing more and more people to come to know and honor God as God and live as his disciples. This is what God is doing in the world.

This is the mission critical belief: life is all about God and what He is doing. Life is not about me. Life is not about achieving the American dream – having a nice job; a nice home; a nice car; some nice hobbies; a nice family; a nice retirement. Life is about God and what He is up to in this world. This is a mission critical belief.

You know what God showed me of this past week? He showed me that at times what motivates me is just the pastor's version of the American dream – to be a nice pastor, helping lead a nice church, doing a nice work. At the root of the American dream, or the pastor's version of the American dream, is comfort. It's about just having a nice, comfortable life. And I can get sucked into that desire.

But here's the thing about the mission to which God has called us of making disciples of all the nations. It's hard work. It requires great effort. It requires sacrifice of time and financial resources. It requires moving outside of our comfort zones. It likely means a reordering of our priorities. If we don't have the mission critical belief that life is not about me and my comfort, but rather that it is all about who God is and what He is doing then we won't make the sacrifice. We won't move outside of our comfort zones. We won't reorder our priorities.

If we are going to be faithful to the mission that God has given us, we need this mission critical belief: Life is all about God and what He is doing. Now, there is also a mission critical activity.

III. A Mission Critical Activity

When you think about the mission that God has given to us of making disciples of all the nations and the reality that what we are talking about is the work of seeing people who now may have no interest in God, coming to a place where they believe in and actually follow Jesus. And that what we are talking about is seeing lives that are being transformed from a self-centered, self-focused life to actually loving God, other believers and their neighbors, this is nothing short of a miracle. It requires a work of God in the heart of a human life to bring this about. And so there is a mission critical activity and that is this: **Prayer motivated by the glory of God.**

Last week we spent some time in John 15. I want to return there and specifically look at John 15:7-8. In chapter 15, Jesus been talking about how spiritual fruitfulness in our lives can only happen as we remain closely dependent on Him and obedient to His word. And it's in the context that Jesus says an amazing thing about prayer. He says:

⁷ *“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

It is an amazing invitation! It’s an amazing promise! The reason Jesus can make such a promise is that as we abide in him and his words abide in us, his desires become our desires. Therefore, our prayers become what he would pray. And so of course they will be answered.

Jesus then says this:

⁸ *“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.*

It is our prayer that leads to this fruitfulness. Jesus doesn’t specify what the fruit is that he is talking about, but I believe that he is talking about the fruit of changed-lives; of people coming to faith in Christ and walking as disciples. Just a few verses later, in verse 16 Jesus says:

¹⁶ *“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.*

The fact that Jesus talks about going and bearing fruit suggests that he is not talking here about the spiritual fruit of our own character, but rather he is talking about the fruit of changed lives – people coming to know Jesus as Savior and then walking as Jesus’ disciples. And when this kind of fruit, the fruit of a changed-life, happens, Jesus says in verse 8 that God is glorified. God’s name is hallowed when this happens. His kingdom is extended when this happens. His will is increasingly done on earth when this happens.

Now I could have just made the point that prayer is the mission critical activity, because it is. If we are to see the fruit of a person coming to faith in Jesus and then growing as a disciple, it will require God to work. And so we must pray. And Jesus tells us we can pray. We can boldly ask for our friend, or our family member, or our neighbor to come to faith in Jesus and God will work in response to our prayers. And when He does, His name will be glorified.

Our prayers must be motivated by the glory of God. That is the only thing that will sustain our prayers. Praying for the salvation of someone you know is hard work. Praying for another person to become a disciple who loves God, one another, and their neighbors, is hard work. It requires time and energy and persistence. And if it is not motivated by a desire to see God honored and glorified our prayers simply won’t be sustained. Our prayers must be motivated by the mission critical belief that life is all about God and what He is doing in the world.

And so I ask you, are you engaging this critical activity of prayer? Jesus says ask! Ask and it will be done for you. Are you asking God to bring people to a saving faith in Him? Are you asking God that your child, or your neighbor, or your friend would become a disciples who is increasingly being confirmed to the image of Christ in how they love God, one another, and their neighbors?

Let me give you two simple ideas for how you can engage this mission critical activity of prayer. First, **use the BLESS model**. Sam shared about this simple pattern for sharing our faith a couple of weeks ago. If you didn't hear that let me review. "B" stands for Begin with Prayer. "L" is Listen. We seek to be good listeners when we are with people. We are present to them. "E" stands for Eat Together. You find ways to go deeper by having a meal together or coffee or whatever. "S" stand for Serve. Out of love we seek to serve others in helpful and meaningful ways. And the second "S" stands for Share. We hope at some point that we will have an opportunity to share how God as worked in our lives.

We hope that all of us live lives where we are blessing those around us in this way. And the starting point for this kind of life-style is prayer. Jesus said ask and it will be done for you. And so in response to Jesus' promise, we make it our habit to pray for people in our lives who are far from God. My encouragement to you is that you would identify 2 or 3 people that are on your BLESS list for whom you will consistently and regularly pray.

Here's the second way you can grow in engaging prayer for the mission. **Pray with the church**. Because this is hard work, it can be very helpful to do this kind of praying with others in the body of Christ. And so this can happen as you get with a friend. Together, you can pray for the people on your BLESS list. Or it can happen in our life groups as they gather. It can also happen when we join for church-wide prayer. Once a month we gather for prayer as a church and at the very core of why we gather it is to pray about the mission.

It just so happens that we are gathering for our monthly church-wide prayer gathering tonight. We will meet on Zoom from 6:30-7:30 pm. Maybe tonight would be a great night to join with the church to pray. You can find the Zoom link in events section of the Church Center App.

God has given us a mission. It is to go and make disciples of all that nations. If we are really going to be about the mission, it will require a mission critical belief: Life is all about God and what He is doing in the world. And it will require a mission critical action: Prayer motivated by the glory of God.

Earlier this week I reached out to a friend whose life models everything that we've talked about today. And though he would say he is still on a journey to grow in these things, it is clear to me that lives out this mission critical belief and activity. And he has done so in a sustained way for a long time. And so one of the questions I asked him was, how does he stay in a place where God and what God is doing in the world is really the reigning passion in his life. He shared a lot of things, but one thing he mentioned was being captivated by who God is. He said:

. . . looking at Him, contemplating His character and His goodness, remembering the ways we've seen Him act in history and in our own lives, acknowledging His magnificence, His unrivaled nature, His all-satisfying person, and savoring it, delighting in it.

Just like grandparents, who out of absolute delight over their grandkids, can't help but want to talk about them and make them know, my friend cannot help but want to make God known. He is captivated by God's character and His goodness, his all-satisfying person and because of this he lives life on mission with God.

I mentioned earlier that if we are going to be engaged in the mission it is hard work. It will require great effort and the sacrifice of time and financial resources. It will require moving outside of our comfort zones and a reordering of our priorities. My friend has experienced all of this. There has been great effort. There has been great sacrifice of his time and resources. He has not been living for comfort or the American dream. Some would probably look at his life and think the sacrifice has been too great or the effort required too much. But without a doubt, I know that my friend would say that whatever it has cost him is worth it, because God is worth it.

Amen.