

Guest Speaker during You Are Sent, Vol 3
Follow the Pattern: A Vision of Kingdom Growth

Thank you for your partnership

General intro of our family and work

I love where the Lord has allowed me to step into the current series of your church in the book of Acts.

What an exciting series you're in as a church - You are sent! And I love this current theme you're in...Planning to go, willing to stay. I trust that God is working in the lives and hearts of many of you during this series and I have enjoyed following along with you all as a church.

We'll be picking up today in Acts 20:1-6.

The casual bible reading approach will probably cause you to overlook the gem that is contained in this passage. Admittedly, Luke seems to be fast forwarding through the events and the most summarized of fashions. But I'm willing to bet the disciple makers in the room with an eye for leadership development will appreciate the fruit of Paul's ministry on display here.

Read Passage and pray

To get our minds warmed up a bit this morning, I want to ask a few questions. What's the legacy of Mercy Church going to be? What's the summation of your life gonna look like? Since we've all been watching the Olympics recently let me ask the question this way... who will you be passing the baton of your ministry on to in the future? Will those disciples know what to do when you pass the baton to them? What's it going to look like when you get toward the end of your run.... Who's going to be there on your team? Who will be taking your place when it's time to hang it up? Where will your disciples be working? Or better yet, will there be any disciples there with you? Who will they be impacting? Where will you be sending them? Which people groups will be engaged and locations reached with the Gospel?

In this passage, Luke gives a very brief overview of Paul's team activity but seems to slow down to make mention of the coworkers that have joined Paul from some of the key areas where Paul's ministry multiplied.

Behind each one of Paul's coworkers mentioned here is a story of how God worked through Paul and His missionary pattern to the point of them joining Paul's apostolic team. The picture Luke is painting here is an incredibly committed group focused on a common task. This morning, we're going to zoom out for a moment and look back to see how Paul was able to assemble such a team. We'll see that Paul had a clear plan for ministry and the pattern he

followed was reproducible. He entrusted this same pattern of ministry to his disciples and they followed the pattern set before them.

That's what I want to discuss with you all today

Big Idea: Commitment to a Biblical pattern of missionary work results in wide spread advancement of the Gospel among all peoples and places through the disciples we make.

My aim is to inspire you as a church to not just have mission activity in your church calendar, but mission would be identity of your church. My prayer is to inspire you as a disciple maker to not just have mission activity on your check list but mission would be what defines your life and dictates your calendar.

This morning we're going to discuss three things we need to fulfill the Great Commission

1. We need a Big Vision.

- A bit of background on Paul. Most of us are probably familiar with Paul's former life as a persecutor of the church. But let's examine His vision for ministry for a few minutes
 - In Acts 9 the Lord described Paul as a "chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."
 - In Acts 13 We see the Holy Spirit instructed the church in Antioch to release Paul and Barnabas for the work He had called them to.
 - They immediately go through the regions of Asia preaching the Gospel in new places.
 - As we'll discuss in just a moment, the pattern of ministry we see on display by Paul comes immediately following this call to go to work.
 - Paul, articulating his call to the Roman Church in Romans 1 calls himself *an apostle set apart for the Gospel of God...through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.*
 - Paul caught the vision of God and understood His call in light of God's vision. The order of this is vitally important for all of us to get today..
- What is God's vision? We see this clearly in Revelation 7:9-10
 - *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*
 - God's plan for fulfilling this vision is seen clearly in the Great Commission. His disciples taking the gospel to all peoples – all ethnic groups.
- As I'm reminding you of these things, I want to draw your attention to the reality of the area of the world that my family and I have been called to serve.

- South Asia Brutal facts
 - 1.7 Billion People
 - 1975 Unreached Peoples
 - 237,000 die every single day (nearly 3 people every second)
 - Most, if not all, dying never having heard about the Love of God found in Jesus.
- Going back to the Sermon Series
 - Are you planning to go? Willing to stay... You should be willing to stay, ONLY if you feel the Lord is directing you to stay. The assumption of the majority of new followers of Jesus in the Gospels is that people pick up
 - Example – Demon possessed man told to stay in Mark 5
- Paul said in Romans 15 after the end of his third journey: *...“From Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of Christ, and thus I make it my ambition to preach the Gospel, not where Christ has already been named.”*
 - In other word, Paul’s vision was to go where the church wasn’t
- Some of us need to need to be reminded of this reality because we need to get serious about increasing your prayer, giving, and sending toward missionary work.
- Others of us need to embrace the call from the Holy Spirit to go and do the work that He’s called us to.

Once we have a Big Vision...

2. We need a Biblical pattern

- I realize there are likely any number of things that might come to mind when I mention we do missionary work. I’m here to tell you that it grieves my heart that we the church often don’t have a clearer picture of what He’s called us to be a part of together...
- Paul followed a pattern of ministry that we can clearly see in Acts 13-20. He makes reference to his perspective on his ministry in a few places that I believe give us helpful clues about his approach the missionary task.
 - In 2 Timothy 2:1-2 – Paul says to Timothy, “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses [quite possibly the same group of leaders mentioned in Acts 20:4] entrust to faithful men [and women] who will be able to teach others also
 - Paul obviously expected his disciple Timothy to remember the core teachings and pattern of ministry taught to him by Paul, entrust those teachings to faithful people that would teach others... that would teach others.... That would teach others... and so on.
 - Either Timothy had an incredible memory or Paul’s teaching were simple and repetitive in nature so that they could be reproduced by others.

- In 1 Corinthians 4:16-17 – Paul says to the Corinthian church, “I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.
 - Paul’s way of life and core teachings were taught in every church he started and visited and were reviewed and retaught by Paul’s missionary team members as well.
 - Put simply, Paul exemplified what he taught and his disciples replicated his way of life and teachings to others.
- So what was this pattern that Paul followed? Wouldn’t it be awesome if we had strategy plans. His blue prints? Well, we kind of do when we look at Acts 13-20... I want to show you this morning that Paul had six main components that make up his patterns for missionary activity. We call these components the Core Missionary Task.
 - Engage the lost through prayer and strategy development
 - We repeatedly see Paul engage new peoples and places in the Acts journeys
 - We must take the Gospel to unreached peoples and Places. This is the heart of the missionary call
 - We need to gain a heart for the task of missions to the Unreached through Prayer
 - Elisabeth Elliot, author and wife of the late Jim Elliot, once said “Prayer lays hold of God's plan and becomes the link between his will and its accomplishment on earth.”
 - Mawasi prayer example
 - Gain access to those people through strategic planning and implementation
 - Prayer itself is one of the greatest engagement strategies for open doors to the gospel
 - Research – we take a list of Unreached peoples everywhere we go and try to learn about ways we can work together to get the gospel to them
 - Learn barriers of the Gospel among those people
 - Prepare yourself and go
 - Send others
 - The sad reality regarding missionary sending is, that approximately 80% of Unreached peoples of the world live in the 10/40 window, while a staggering only 3% of global missionaries currently work in that same 10/40 window...
 - Friends, something’s got to change..
 - Evangelize the Gospel faithfully and contextually
 - Everywhere Paul and his teammates went, they shared the Gospel upon arrival. The Gospel never changed but it’s clear that they knew the Gospel well and he knew the audience he was speaking to well.
 - We must faithfully share the gospel in culturally appropriate ways. I think in the times we’re living in, we must see this more clearly than ever before

- We often teach that there are three areas we need to grow in in order to share our faith more regularly
 - Confidence – grow in your belief in the power of the Gospel.
 - Competence – grow in your ability to accurately and effectively communicate the Gospel
 - Commitment – grow in the discipline of proactively and regularly sharing your faith
 - Simple daily centering prayer – God, open my eyes today to see the opportunities to witness to your goodness in my life”
 - When we face opposition, we don’t stop sharing. We simply, like Paul, go on to the next person or place.
- Equip new believers to be obedient to the faith
 - Paul typically spent long days and nights with new believers encouraging and strengthening them in their faith
 - We must faithfully disciple new believers.
 - Consider this the responsibility entrusted to the church but to be carried out by you, the individual.
 - In our context, we have a short term and long term discipleship training that we pass on to all of our church planters. The most effect ones are those that follow that pattern and systematically disciple their new believers and consistently call them to be obedient to what they are taught.
 - Discipleship takes great patience and a lot of time. There is not short cutting this one
 - One of the most seasoned missionaries I’ve ever interacted with once said, “Most church plants never get started because of the lack of robust follow-up in early discipleship of new believers”
 - Let that sink in for a minute...
- Establish Healthy Reproducing Churches in new places
 - Wherever Paul saw new believers, a church was born in that place
 - We must gather new believers together for the building up of the church
 - Let me ask you... if widespread persecution broke out in this area and you were forced to move to a place where there were no churches, would you know how to start one?
 - That’s exactly how the church in Antioch was started...
 - Everywhere Paul and his co-workers went and people believed the gospel, a church was started and were instructed to follow this same pattern.
- Entrust the advancement of the Kingdom to the next generation
 - This is Leadership Development
 - Paul developed two main types of leaders
 - He and his teammates appoint local elders in the churches they started to continue equipping the disciples for the work of the ministry

- He enlisted coworkers to help him in the core missionary task to strengthen the disciples and reach new places. The men listed here are part of this category of leaders that traveled with him to new places and strengthened believers in churches he had started.
- Exit to partnership
 - Paul never planted himself anywhere as the pastor of these churches. None of his co-workers were ever given the title “elder” of the churches he planted either.
 - Paul’s work was foundation laying. His plan was to entrust the completion of the task to local believers to follow the pattern he set before them.
 - Paul maintained contact and partnered with the churches he planted and partnered with them in a number of areas for the continued advancement of the Gospel among unreached peoples
 - Praying, giving, sending

Now that we see the pattern Paul followed,

3. We need to boldly implement the pattern together

- a. One of the main case studies we like to do with new teammates on the field is on Paul and his coworkers. In this study, we examine how Paul view his call and His teammates. Each time I do that study with a group I always refreshed by how much Paul seems to want and even need to include his team members in the work that he is doing.
- b. I think it was Spence in a sermon earlier in this series that mentioned he used to see missionaries as like the navy seals of Christians...
 - i. I’ll never forget a couple years ago I was on a Zoom call with the college group from one of your sister churches.
 1. I’m a prime example of this.
 - ii. We are ordinary believers empowered by the Holy Spirit and His grace to do the work he’s called us to do.
- c. The passage we read together gives the impression that Paul’s team was working together and on the same page for what they were to do even in volatile situations.
- d. One of my dear colleagues on the field always says, “You gotta have a plan and you’ve gotta work the plan.”
 - i. This same colleague has labored faithfully for 15 years and is currently seeing thousands of house churches planted every single year through his key national partners.
- e. God’s shown us the biblical pattern for ministry. We just need to follow it and trust the Holy Spirit to do His work.
- f. In our context we have simple tools or methods that we train national brothers and sisters in each one of the components above.

- i. If you don't have simple tools for how to engage the lost, evangelize, equip new believers, establish new churches, and entrust the work to new leaders... you should start working on that today. I'll be here all day if you want to talk more about this.
- g. By God's grace. In 2020, my team saw 1,975 new believers, 766 baptisms, 135 new groups started, and 28 healthy churches form. 59 different people groups have been touched by this work. Nearly all of that work was done by our national partners that are following the biblical pattern.

Conclusion:

All of us probably have a mentor or school teacher that was very formative for who you are and how you think. Mrs. Knox was my high school history that revolutionized learning and my approach to education in general. She was always high repetitive, to the point of being annoying sometimes, to make sure we got highlights of the lessons she was teaching us. But I was grateful because I was always ready for her exams.

You've probably heard someone say before... Sermons don't change lives. Sentences change lives. That's true. You've probably also heard people say, more is caught than taught. That's true too. Simple statements and simple Patterns change lives. My prayer today is that your church doesn't just have mission activity, but mission would be your identity. May you have a big vision, follow the biblical pattern, and implement the pattern.