

Mobilizing the Church

I. INTRO

A. Over the last few weeks, we've been unpacking why we exist as a church

1. We exist to glorify God

- a) We were created worshipping God and to worship God, to reflect him in all that we do - to give him the honor that he deserves.
- b) Sin marred that great mandate, but now, in Christ (and only in Christ), we are actually able to glorify him as His Spirit transforms us and uses us, reflecting his image

2. We exist to glorify God by being disciples

- a) We talked about how being a disciple is to basically to become like Jesus
 - (1) It's about being with Jesus
 - (2) It's about becoming like him in his character and mannerisms
 - (3) It's also about doing the things that he did

3. We exist to glorify God by being disciples who make other disciples

- a) One of the key parts of being a disciple who comes more like Jesus, then, is to make more disciples
- b) Jesus wasn't just starting a Little Rascals club - he is establishing a kingdom
 - (1) It is spreading and he wants all men and women everywhere to glorify his name

4. We exist to glorify God by being disciples who make other disciples of all nations

- a) Last week, while 4 of the elders were in Central Asia, Steve spoke on how this Good News isn't just for our neighbors, but for the whole world.
- b) This isn't new, but has been the case since the beginning.
- c) God wants to bless ALL nations, and there are still SO many that do not know the love and grace of God

B. The impossibility of Central / South Asia

1. We just returned, 24 hours ago, from the least evangelized place on earth.

- a) Hundreds of millions of people
- b) Statistically, almost no witness
- c) Martyrdom is commonplace (1 person every two hours in nation)
- d) Spiritual warfare is more tangible than you could imagine
- e) WILL PICK A PRAYER TIME SOON

2. So we are called to make disciples of our nation, that nation, all nations. But how? How do we do it?

3. You might be tempted to respond, "By making disciples who multiply..."

- a) Yes, of course, and there are certain things ALL of us should know

- (1) This is what we teach in Hub 101 / ABCs
 - b) But you're not me. I'm not you. Some of you will never preach a sermon in your life. There are things you will do, which I will never do.
 - 4. There's another layer. We need to equip you to be... you.
 - 5. Dallas Willard, one of the greatest spiritual formation thinkers of modern history used to say, "Discipleship is becoming who Jesus would be if he were you."
 - C. We will make disciples who reach all nations by mobilizing them (equipping and organizing for service) to hear, obey, and share in their uniqueness
- II. Ephesians 4:4-16
- A. *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*
 - 1. **We are one in Christ**
 - 2. Church, there's no caste system in in God's house
 - 3. There's no hierachy based on gifting, bank accounts or anything else
 - 4. There's one gospel that saves, one Savior, one bride (the church)
 - B. *But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*
 - 1. **We are one, but we are also unique → unity doesn't mean uniformity**
 - C. *Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith...*
 - 1. When Jesus ascended from these lower places, the earth, he distributed gifts via the Holy Spirit, and these gifts are... people!
 - 2. **You are a gift to the church, and so am I. A gift to equip the church so that it can do what it needs to do. Love God and make disciples!**
 - 3. You have a different gifting from the person next to you, most likely
 - 4. Paul doesn't give an exhaustive list of gifts here, which has led scholars to debate whether he is actually talking about gifts (skills given by God to build the church) or positions within the church.
 - 5. Let me explain briefly. Transport yourself to Paul's day - the Bible is still being written, the early Apostles are still alive.
 - 6. **APOSTLES** were the men who wrote the Bible. They walked with Jesus, ministered with him, and were uniquely chosen by God.
 - a) "Big A" apostles don't exist anymore
 - b) But I do believe there are apostolic TYPES of people (church planters, missionaries, spiritual entrepreneurs, so to say)

- c) These people still exist. I think I am one of them. I wouldn't call myself an apostle, but I will say that I am apostolic in my gifting... a spiritual entrepreneur
- 7. **PROPHETS or PROPHECY** is used in three ways in the Bible:
 - a) Direct revelation from God which became the Holy Scriptures (this type of prophecy is finished and has ceased)
 - b) Revelation from God's Spirit which informs someone of something they shouldn't know (special knowledge), but that knowledge is subservient to Scripture
 - (1) This still happens, but it must always be tested against the scriptures b/c people are fallible
 - c) The bold proclamation of God's truth, applied by God's Spirit — This is when the Spirit falls upon a preacher, and it still happens
- 8. **EVANGELISTS** are uniquely gifted by God to share the gospel. All of us are called to evangelize, but some are very gifted in this task.
 - a) By the way, this is the only spiritual gift that is directed OUTSIDE the body. It builds the body by adding more people to it.
- 9. **SHEPHERDS** are the loving, caring overseers of the flock who nurture it, protect it, defend it, and watch over it
- 10. **TEACHERS** teach the truth of God, the Word of God, to feed the church
- D. Each of these gifts IS a gift to the church to equip it, build it up, mature it so that we as a church can fulfill God's vision → the great commandment & commission
 - 1. Apostolic types see where Jesus' kingdom is not yet manifest, and they feel the burden to mobilize the church to go forward
 - 2. Prophets are able to see with clarity and hear from the Lord in a unique way to speak truth boldly, often exhorting God's people with passion
 - 3. Evangelists teach us how to evangelize better. They remind us regularly of the lost and dying world that needs to hear about Jesus and keep that fire alive in a church
 - 4. Shepherds are needed to love and care for the church, to oversee them with tenderness and walk alongside them, binding her wounds w/ love
 - 5. Teachers instruct us in proper doctrine. They remind us what is true and how, although we are emotional beings, we cannot be driven solely by emotion.
 - a) Many suggest that teachers are a subset of shepherds. Not all teachers are shepherds, but all shepherds are teachers.
- E. **God has uniquely gifted each of us, and we need to embrace the tension of the diversity of gifts and personalities if we are to obey Jesus fully.**
 - 1. Like an organized army, mobilized, we each have a role to play, but I am going to let you in on a secret → it's hard
 - 2. APEs want to go forward, go wider, faster. ST want to go deep, protect
 - 3. There is tension between people and personalities.
 - a) One wants to go deep. One wants to go wide.

4. But this is by the design of our Lord. As we function as ONE body, in our unique gifts, w/ different personalities, walking out loving and grace, the church is able to go both deep and wide.
 5. What often happens, however, is the APEs go to one church and the ST go to another b/c it's a lot easier to be with people JUST. LIKE. YOU.
 - a) Your style, your personality, your passions, your music preference
 - b) You can do that - you just won't mature very far.
- F. Here's the reality: We cannot fulfill the Great Commandment if we all jump into personality silos because showing love in the midst of this diversity is what matures us and strengthens our witness**
1. *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*
 2. Jesus gave us APEST to equip one another so that the church might be built until...
 - a) We attain unity of the faith
 - b) Unity of the knowledge of God
 3. These two thing things unity + knowledge = maturity, fullness in Christ
 4. The opposite of maturity is to be like a little baby, an immature child
 - a) Tossed to and fro by bad doctrine
 - (1) My teaching friends - remember that the vast majority of heresy didn't come from uneducated emotional people, but from the Ivory Towers of scholarship
 - b) Tossed to and fro by human persuasion
 - (1) My apostolic, prophetic friends - you need teachers who love doctrine. Dynamic personalities and cool experiences make for fun stories, but bad theology.
 5. We need one another. As we grow up together, lovingly, and with humility, being patient with one another, we will mature

III. Vision Casting

- A. In my travels, I have heard many stories from the nations
 1. Stories of miraculous movements that are often a mile wide and a quarter inch deep; they often don't last persecution
 2. Stories of faithful soldiers who endure remarkable hardship but never see any new disciples made; they don't multiply

- B. It is rare, but we saw it this past week, to see churches and organizations that are pursuing healthy depth, and aggressive expansion
 - 1. This week we saw a snapshot of Ephesians 4 lived out in the least evangelized place on earth
- C. There's much to learn from Eph 4, but let me give you a few bullet points
 - 1. **If we want to fulfill the Great Commission, we need to first live out the Great Commandment**
 - a) We are called to love God, love one another, and love our neighbor // to love God, love the church, and make disciples
 - b) We are so keen to start with making disciples, but we need to begin with loving God (UP) and one another (IN)
 - c) Diversity in gifts and personalities is hard. Some are thinkers. Some are feelers. Some love to pray. Some love to study. Some love worship that is dynamic, others contemplative.
 - d) Brothers and sisters, let us love one another. Knowledge, prophecy, tongues, service is WORTHLESS without love
 - e) You are different from me? Let me love you and learn from you.
 - f) I am different from you. Would you love and learn from me?
 - g) Perhaps it is the case that the Lord has put us together - that iron might sharpen iron → that we both might grow and mature
 - 2. **Great Commission work requires connecting, communicating, and collaborating.**
 - a) When I was on the board of 24:14, we used to talk about that all the time
 - (1) Connecting with one another, communicating needs, working together
 - (2) Breaking down silos created by personalities and preferences
 - b) It is to say, "I am with you, I hear you, let's do it together."
 - c) This kind of collaboration requires humility because you may not think that the person who annoys you can teach you anything.
 - (1) This is pride.
 - d) If we are to accomplish the impossible, we need a complete army full of every role that our Commander and Chief has created
 - e) Should we put all the medics in one group and all the snipers in another? Should we have a platoon of generals and no leader in another?
 - f) We need the diversity of gifts with each of us doing our part to obey King Jesus in our unique wiring
 - 3. If we are to fulfill the Great Commission, we need to be equipped, but the real hurdle is in the diversity of those doing the equipping — learning from one another
- D. In Central Asia there is an impossible task before them.

1. When I sat at the table and they described the situation and posed the question, "What is the solution?" my answer was clear → discipleship
 2. The church sharpening one another, equipping one another, to be the fullness of his body - a pure and spotless bride
 - a) Not a bride with a missing foot or arm
 3. The church in CA knows that to reach their nation they need to work together. It cannot be a movement of a few, but of all of God's people, in their diversity, using their gifts, together, in humility, equipping one another and loving one another, learning from one another
 4. They are discipling one another, empowering one another, mobilizing the church to go and do what only the church can do! And God is moving
 - a) Over 10,000 house churches
 - b) Over 120,000 disciples trained
 - c) But it's a drop in the bucket... more is needed. More collaboration, more prayer, more discipleship... this is God's plan!
- E. This is true of a local church, a regional church, and the global church.
1. We need this first here, and then from church to church
- F. So, friends - what is the Spirit saying to you today? How are you being challenged?
1. How do you stand in the way of your own development b/c of pride?
 2. How are you refusing to learn from another?
 3. How are you refusing to develop your brother or sister?
 4. It is only in mutual equipping that we will see the church reach it's maturity.
- G. Apostolic types: Listen to your accountants when they ask about counting the cost. Those slow to adjust - listen to your apostolic friends when they have vision for what could be. Remember in the Bible when God gives men vision they are almost always rejected in the beginning.
- H. Prayer warriors: Teach us to pray; don't hoard your gift. Share it with us!
- I. Prophetic types: Speak and preach boldly, but weigh everything against truth b/c the Scripture is sufficient for all things
- J. Evangelists: Commit to never going evangelizing again without bringing someone with you. Show us how to grow as evangelists and fan the passion to a flame
- K. Teachers. Teach. Shepherds, love. Counselors, counsel.
- L. We need each other - let's embrace that reality, equipping one another as stronger disciples, and imagine what God will do here and around the world
1. A healthy, mature body, living out the Great Commandment arm in arm in order to fulfill the Great Commission.
 2. Lord, mobilize us and empower us to that end!