

The End of the Beginning - Acts 28:1-31

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- [0 : 0 0] Good evening. Thanks for coming out. You can open your Bible to two different places, Acts 2 and Ephesians 4, but it's very much a topical message.
- I realize why I don't teach topically, because it would never end. I mean, how are you going to teach on a topic? Like, let's do the topic of love. It's just, it doesn't end. You can always find one more scripture. So I'm going to try and move through this pretty quickly.
- I want to look at specifically, what does the Bible say about starting kind of broad church and narrowing it in a little? And then what is the purpose of church? What's the purpose of this church? What is ministry?
- And we want to know what scripture says about that. The last thing I ever want anyone to think is that what we do here is based off of what I decide or what I think or what I feel. That's not it at all. We want it to be based off of the Lord and his word. So we'll talk about ministry.
- Ministry 101. We'll never get to 102. Maybe someday we'll get to 101.1. I think maybe Paul got to 102. I don't know, but I'm still at ministry 101.
- [1 : 0 9] So Acts chapter 2, at the end of Acts chapter 2, it's kind of giving a synopsis of what's happening at this time in the church. We just finished Acts, so Acts chapter 2 was a long time ago.
- But the Holy Spirit has just come, has empowered the church, and the church is growing rapidly. Then it says in verse 42, And that is our church growth program.
- We have been running it for 18 months, and Lord willing, we will run it until we're raptured. We continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers.
- I love how the doctrine and fellowship are linked together. What is doctrine? Doctrine is just the teachings and truths that were of the apostles. So they continued in the teachings and the truths of the apostles.
- And I can put that up there for you, Acts 2.42. And we have prioritized God's word here, and this is what we do. But we also prioritize fellowship.
- [2 : 1 4] Calvary Chapel is very, very good as a whole at prioritizing God's word, line by line, verse by verse, teaching expositionally, inductively. But sometimes they're not as good at the fellowship part.
- Because we got God's word, what else do you need? All right, go home now. You know, but we found that as we fellowship around God's word, not just we're going to get together for fun, which is great.
- But as a church, we get together around God's word. We've just seen God just do amazing things in our lives and knit relationships together.
- And in breaking of bread and in prayers, breaking of bread could be communion, as well as getting together to eat a meal together and in prayer. And we prioritize that too.

At first, it was like, oh, we'll get together and pray once in a while. Well, once in a while, it never happened. We'll do a Thursday night or a random night. So that's why we swap the Wednesday to Wednesday. I want to make a statement, and then I want to kind of look at a bunch of scripture, go through all this, and end with the same statement and back that up.

[3 : 14] But the heart behind everything we do here at Calvary Chapel Charlotte is to better equip God's people with his word. Everything we do, that is the heart behind it. You say, wait a minute, wait, wait, wait a minute.

Aren't we supposed to like glorify God? Isn't that the first thing? Aren't we supposed to know Jesus and make him known? Well, I tell you what, there's no better way to know God than through his word.

There's no better way to make Jesus known than through his word. And there's no better way to glorify him. Because he said, I've magnified my word above my name.

Good job. He's magnified his word above his name. There's no better way to bring glory to God. There's no better way to know Jesus or make him known through his word. You're not going to find it anywhere else. You're not going to, you know what, I want to make Jesus known.

I want to glorify God, but I'm not going to use the word of God. I don't need the Bible. I'm going to do it without that. It doesn't work that way. So the heart behind everything, whether it's we get rid of the pews and put in chairs or whatever we're doing, the heart behind that is how can we better equip God's people in the word, and how much better can we bring God's people in contact with the word.

[4 : 22] So we want to start by looking at the church. Three things with the church as a whole. One, who directs the church? Jesus directs the church. Nobody else gets to make up the rules. They don't get to say, well, my church is going to be about this.

And that guy's church is going to be about, we don't get to do that. Jesus directs the church. Number two, the Holy Spirit empowers the church. And then number three, the body equips the church.

So I'm going to look at those three things. First, Jesus directs the church. As Jesus was about to ascend at the end of his ministry, he's come back from the dead. He's resurrected. He's there with his disciples.

And he says unto them, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Jesus directs the church. We don't get to. He does. What does he say to do?

Go into all the world and have discussion groups about the gospel. Go into all the world and pick apart the gospel. Go into all the world and deconstruct the gospel. Go into all the world and preach the gospel.

[5 : 18] To preach means to proclaim after the manner of a herald. And it is always with the suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed.

That's the idea. When we preach, we are to go and preach the gospel. You don't do that in a large group very well. You don't have 15 people all together now.

Ready, set, preach. You know, that doesn't really work. That was my little solo. Hope you enjoyed that. That's all you're getting. It's always with the suggestion that there's an authority behind it.

You have something that needs proclaiming. Something that needs to be told. Matthew 28, verses 18 through 20. Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and earth.

Go you, therefore, and teach all nations. It doesn't say go heal all nations. Go perform miracles in all nations. Those will follow, we're told, that the miracles follow those who believe.

[6 : 15] But go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Why do we put such an emphasis on teaching? Why is our men study, our ladies study, our young adults study, our Sunday study, our Wednesday? Why is everything about teaching? Because we didn't make this up.

Because this is what Jesus commanded. And truth is conveyed through speech. Jesus didn't say go into all the world and show them a picture of me. He didn't say go into all the world and act out.

You know, that's as close as you can get to acting too, Panama. He didn't say, he said go into the world and teach. That's conveyed through speech. Now, whether that is written speech or whether that is spoken, it is through communication.

I can't, you can't feel the gospel. He didn't say go into all the world and convey the gospel through a hug, through feeling. Now, that's part of it, for sure. But I can't convey truth to you by a touch, right?

[7 : 18] It doesn't work that way. So Jesus is the one who directs the church. Where do we get this idea to teach and preach? It's because of Jesus giving that direction to his church.

Number two, the Holy Spirit empowers the church. I only have one scripture for this because I think it encapsulates it so well. Acts chapter 1, verse 4. The disciples, they've witnessed the resurrection of Jesus.

They've been trained with Jesus for three years. They've been with him personally. They've heard his teachings. They've seen his miracles. He's breathed on them and said, receive you the Holy Spirit, which means that they are born again.

They're ready to go. They're like, yes, Jesus, let's do this. And Jesus, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but that they should wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, you have heard of me.

And what is the promise of the Father? It's the Holy Spirit. It's like you would think they have everything they need. I haven't had three years personal, person-to-person discipleship like that with Jesus to hear his teachings, to see him interacting with people.

[8 : 29] And here are the 12 apostles that are going to run the church. And Jesus says, no, you need to be empowered. Did Jesus give them direction? He did. But he said, the only way you're going to fulfill that direction is by being empowered by the Spirit.

We want everything we do here to be Spirit-led, to be Spirit-empowered. Just because Jesus says, go and teach, go and preach, we don't want to just make this up. Well, this is how we're going to do it.

We want the Holy Spirit to be the one directing. You see that then all throughout the book of Acts with Peter, with Paul. They know their mission, but they let the Lord direct their mission.

And then number three, we're equipped in the body or the body equips. And this is where you can turn over to Ephesians chapter four if you want. We're going to read a bunch of verses there. So Jesus directs the church and then he empowers the church.

He says, all right, here's your mission and here's the ability to do that. But where do we get the equipment? Well, that's in the body. Ephesians chapter four, beginning in verse one.

[9 : 27] Paul says, I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all.

That's a lot of oneness. But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. What is he saying there? He's saying there's one body and one Spirit and one Lord, one faith.

There's a bunch of you, but it's all the same God directing. It's all the same Spirit. He makes the point that there is this oneness and this unity that is to be endeavored after. When you have an endeavor, it's something that you are pursuing or going after or striving for.

We are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But he says there's all of this oneness, but then, hey, each one of you individually is going to be given a measure.

[10 : 34] It was given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. There are different giftings. It's the same oneness. It's the same Lord. It's the same Holy Spirit who then is going to give different gifts. But don't lose the oneness.

Your gift doesn't compete against their gift, against my gift. It's all working from and back towards that same oneness in unity. How do we have that unity?

Only in the Spirit. It's only found in the Holy Spirit. But it's meant to be experienced in the body. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 11, if you jump down, the intermediate verses, Paul's talking about how Christ ascended and descended into the lower parts of the earth.

And then when he ascended back up into heaven, he gave gifts unto men. And then he says in verse 11, he describes some of those gifts. And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Christ, we're going through Ephesians on Saturday mornings at the last day of the month when we do men's discipleship. And sometimes I read it and I go, why are we doing Ephesians? It's like, man, there's so much to unpack from one verse to try and move through this, keep continuity.

[12 : 02] There's a lot here. So we were told in the beginning of Ephesians 4 that from this source, from this oneness, God gave gifts unto the children of men. And here are these gifts.

He lists them as some apostles. Well, there aren't apostles today like there were back then. They're not speaking with biblical and doctrinal authority, speaking forth divine revelation, new revelation, like new scripture.

If you run into someone who says they're an apostle, well, just shake their hand and don't wish them Godspeed. They're not. But apostle also means sent or sent one.

And we have sent ones today. We have missionaries, right? My daughter's a sent one. She's in the missions field. There are those who are sent. There are those, I think, who God sends to the church specifically for a specific time.

You say, maybe Billy Graham, maybe Chuck Smith. Maybe they were those that God sent. Maybe Dave Hunt at a specific time for the specific message. And some prophets, that's just to speak forth with divine revelation.

[13 : 02] So it doesn't mean you're going to necessarily speak the future. That's happening today in the body as well. And evangelists. Those that are called, specifically gifted to go out and be that herald to proclaim the message.

And then some pastors and teachers. I like how that's combined. Shepherds and teachers. The shepherding comes through God's word. If you ever have a shepherd, if I ever go really kooky, or you go to another church, and the shepherd's like, well, I'm the shepherd.

So you need to check with me about the type of clothes you wear, and if you can have TVs, and what you can watch. There's churches. I grew up with people who went to churches like that, and they were in bondage to that. Because that's what the shepherding movement was.

But how do we shepherd? Well, it tells us right there. Pastors and teachers. Pastor, teacher. Shepherd through God's word. You don't want to know my opinion. You want to know what God's word says.

And you better hope that I'm giving you God's word, not an opinion. But for what reason? For the perfecting of the saints. That word there, perfecting, means training or equipping.

[14 : 04] To equip the body. To teach a person a skill or type of behavior through regular practice and instruction. What do we come here to do? Through regular practice and instruction.

To learn to walk in the Spirit. To learn to walk with the Lord. To put on Christ. To put off the old man. That's done in the body. So God has specifically given these people, these positions, these callings, to perfect, to equip the body.

For what purpose? If you look at verse 12, it tells us, for the work of the ministry. That's not saying those callings are for the work of the ministry. They're for the perfecting of the saints to do the work of the ministry.

To edify the whole body of Christ. So as we're equipped through God's word, the whole body gets edified. And the whole body is then equipped for ministry.

God's word equips the saints for the work of the ministry. And for the building up of the church. That work that then we are equipped for results in maturity through the knowledge of the Son of God.

[15 : 14] Till we all come unto the unity of the faith, unto the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect, complete, whole man. Unto the measure, the stature, the maturity of the fullness of Christ. That work results in maturity through the knowledge of the Son of God.

The byproduct of that knowledge is the unity of the faith. As we all gather together, as we continue to grow in God's word, there's a unity that happens in the faith. The same collective faith we're all hearing together through God's word.

If we only got together once in a while and came with different views and opinions, and we're just sitting home and I'm reading in one area of scripture and you're in another, and we come together, it's not that we're not unified, right?

But we're not unified in a way where we're able to equip one another. Because we're not allowing God to equip us in unity. We're allowing God to equip us in individualism, separately.

It's when we come together as a body that God is able to equip us in unity. That's why we have the same heart and the same mind. So that we can get together and go, you know what? Man, I think we could do this to better reach people with God's word.

[16 : 20] And we're not going to have a whole, you know, maybe this ball team is against that ball team. And they're like, oh, no, no, no, no. That's not what we're going to do. We're going to do fundraisers and bake sales. And I was like, well, where'd you get that idea?

Well, we want to get the same ideas from God's word. John 17, 21, Jesus says, Do you want to have a good outreach program to the world?

Man, be unified. Be unified in Christ. Do you think Jesus and the Father were ever at odds with each other? I don't think so. That doesn't mean we don't have different opinions or anything like that or different ideas.

But where is the unity? It's in the spirit. So we are those three things. Jesus directs the church. The Holy Spirit empowers the church.

And the body equips the church. But how are we equipped? What is the equipping? Well, I obviously have been alluding to it. We're equipped by the spirit and by the word. For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

[17 : 29] God equips his children. He equips them in the spirit and with the word. Paul writing to the Corinthians. He's writing from Ephesus and he's writing back. And he's like, do you remember when I first came to you?

He says, brethren, when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

He didn't pull out his PhDs. He didn't pull out his whatever. He says, all I wanted you to know about me is the gospel. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

We're equipped in the body by the spirit and the word. What was Paul doing in verse four? He was speaking and preaching. Paul was there in Corinth to teach the people. Why were the people gathering?

[18 : 29] Wasn't just because they wanted to have a big fellowship meal, but it was to hear God's word. So Paul says, I wasn't there in the wisdom of man's words. So how was he there? What was his speech in his preaching?

It was in spirit and power, the demonstration of spirit and power. How is God's power demonstrated? How does God demonstrate his spirit? And through his word. Paul said, you were able to verify that my teaching and preaching, that it was God's power and it was God's spirit.

It wasn't me, right? We want to know that God is speaking through his word. The word of God derives its power from the spirit of God. It doesn't do any good to just read this and not have the spirit of God behind it.

There's a lot of churches out there that do it. A lot of them, goofy ones today, that'll grab a scripture and try and prove how it shows that God is actually not gender.

He has no gender. And that Jesus was actually, I don't even want to say because it's so blasphemous, right? They'll take a scripture. Well, that's what this verse means. Man, that verse doesn't have any power behind it.

[19 : 32] It doesn't have any spirit behind it by just yanking it out of context and trying to twist it. So the word of God derives its power from the spirit of God. 2 Timothy 3.16, Paul writes and says that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, is profitable for what?

Doctrine, teaching, reproof, correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished into all good works. Perfect and thoroughly furnished, completely equipped, equipped, all needs supplied for what you are called to do.

We are all called to something by the Lord as disciples. We'll look at that in a little bit. The way we are equipped is in the body and through God's word. Yes, of course.

It doesn't, it's just as bad to neglect gathering together. Like Hebrews says, do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together. So I'm going to just stay home.

No, I'm just going to take in information online, read my Bible alone. Well, you will grow. Okay. But it's just as bad to do the opposite. To be like, well, I don't really read my Bible on my own. I go to church and the pastor just tells me stuff and I believe it and live by it.

[20 : 47] Okay. You'll grow to an extent, but you won't be thoroughly furnished. You won't be completely equipped. They work hand in hand. All scripture is given by inspiration of God.

It's by the spirit and by the word that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished. You see, the gathering of the body is for the equipping of the church with the word of God for the purposes of God.

Why do we gather? It's so that we can all be equipped with God's word for God's purpose. That's the reason the church exists, the church body, especially in America and in the West.

The idea through the 50s, 60s, 70s was the church existed to preach the gospel. And every week the gospel is preached. And it's like, you need to bring your friends and bring your unsaved relatives and bring your neighbors.

And why isn't this church got more people? And we need to get attendance up. And every week the gospel is being preached and the gospel is being preached. Okay, but you're not going to grow once you've heard the gospel and accepted the gospel.

[21 : 45] If I preach to you again, you need to repent of your sins and be born again and confess Christ as your Savior. And come down here to the altar. I know there's some of you. Come on, Eddie, get down. How many times do you do that?

My mom told me when she was growing up, she would always sign the little card that they would pass around every week. Did you get saved? Because she wanted to make sure she was saved. So she signed it every week. Like, I'm a middle child with a guilty, middle child guilty conscience complex.

And like, man, growing up, every time there's an altar call, I thought, oh, man, I should probably go up. Even now, if I give an altar call, I think, man, I should probably go down there. But that doesn't look good, you know. But the gathering of the body, what is the church for?

It's to be equipped. It's to be mature. It's to be able to be used by God for God's purposes. If you want to be used by God, you have to first be equipped by God. You know, we went through, I went through the School of Ministry in Calvary Chapel up in New York.

I was 19 and 20. Two years, School of Ministry program. That's where I met Sue. And learned to teach the Bible. Fell in love with it. Loved it.

[22 : 52] An inductive Bible study blew my mind. I was like, I can understand this. I can do this. And I wanted to go into ministry. At 17, I felt God calling me into ministry. Just radically got a hold of my life.

I'm like, man, I want to serve the Lord. It was a lot longer, years later, before the Lord called me to pastor a church. He had to equip me.

I couldn't just say, well, I want to go do this. And I feel it's a calling. I'm going to go do it. You have to be equipped. God's only going to call and use people who are equipped. We are equipped through God's word.

We're equipped in the body. We are equipped by the spirit and the word. How are we equipped through God's word? The call to teach God's word. The primacy of God's word. And the substance of God's word.

The call to teach God's word. Hebrews 5, 4 says, And no man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. This is talking about priesthood. And it's comparing Jesus, the priest after the order of Melchizedek, with the Levitical priesthood.

[23 : 57] And it's saying Jesus didn't take that to himself. He's a priest who was called after the order of Melchizedek. Now, pastors aren't priests, and there's no comparison whatsoever. The point I'm making here is that there's a calling, that no man takes this to himself.

I didn't just wake up one morning and go, by golly, let's go start a church and see what happens. Because I thought I would be at the church I was at for the rest of my life. And I told people that.

This is where we're going to be forever. I'm a number two guy. And summer of 2022, the Lord was like, nope. He did a work as a work of my life where I realized the Lord could use me and would use me in spite of my shortcomings.

I thought he had to fix all those shortcomings. And instead, he just said, no, I'll use you in spite of them. Are you okay with that? It's like, all right, Lord. And then I had to admit to myself, man, I want to pastor a church because God's calling me to that.

I want to, Lord, I want to do that. First Corinthians 9, 16, Paul says, for though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of for necessity is laid upon me. Yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.

[25 : 02] Paul's like, I'm not doing this because someone hired me. I'm not doing this because, you know, they give you nice watches and, you know, I didn't, no one gave me this and they pay you well. He says, I'm doing this because this is all I can do because God has put this on me.

In Acts 20, 28, Paul has called all the pastors from Ephesus to the shore of Miletus as he's heading back to Jerusalem. And he says, take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.

Who made them overseers? Man, it's the Holy Spirit who did it. To feed the church of God, which he's purchased with his own blood. No man takes this unto himself.

Why am I saying this? To be like, well, I'm called by God. Not at all. To point out the fact that the only reason I'm doing anything that I'm doing is because I believe God's called me to do it.

And because I believe God's blessed this by his Holy Spirit. I take it very serious where he says, take heed to the flock over which God has made you overseers to feed the church of God.

[26 : 05] Most of my day in life is thinking about ministry, even at work. It's like, man, when's the next time we can get together? There are many teachers better than me who could do this better than me.

But God has called me to be responsible. So I can't abdicate what God's called me to do unless he tells me to do that. I can't just step aside and say, yeah, whatever.

Because I'm not answerable to myself, to any abilities, to anyone else. I'm answerable to the Lord. 1 Timothy 4.14, he writes to Timothy.

And he says, neglect not the gift that is in you, which was given you by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery, or the elders, the pastors. Meditate upon these things. Give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.

What's he saying? He's saying, look, if God has called you and gifted you, and he's called all of us and gifted all of us, and we should be willing to give ourselves to that, and then the evidence of that will work out in our lives.

[27 : 10] You know, we did youth ministry for a little while. I always said, I was a senior pastor masquerading as a youth pastor. It was fun.

I enjoyed it. I am glad it's over. We passed a bunch of Berks tours, the Christian tour buses. We used to take one to go to the youth retreat, and Kitty was like, man, I miss those youth retreats.

I'm like, I don't miss those youth retreats. I don't miss that. You know, I love little kids, little babies. Love them. I don't want to be in a nursery.

Man, my sister, we used to have Tuesday morning ladies Bible study at the church we were at up in New York, and I had Monday and Tuesday off. My older sister, she would drop off her kids. They were a little younger than mine. On Tuesday morning, and her and my wife would go to Bible study.

I didn't give them snacks, and I didn't change their diaper. I'm like, how you come is how you go. So, I was just like, whew. But I love to hold little babies.

[28 : 08] Oh, it's great. But, you know, some of us are called to some things, but we all have a calling. And as we give ourselves to that, it'll be evident. If we try and shoehorn ourselves into a calling where God hasn't equipped us, it won't be evident.

2 Timothy 2.2, And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to do what? Teach others also. Why is Calvary Chapel all about teaching God's Word?

Because all I can find in the Bible is that the Bible is about teaching God's Word. I don't see them doing anything else except teaching God's Word. That everything is around that. And then lastly, for this section, the primacy of God's Word.

Nope, there's two more for this section. Sorry. The primacy of God's Word. God's Word is paramount. 1 Timothy 4.13, Paul says, Until I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine.

That is the primary thing, Timothy. You didn't tell him, Timothy, until I come, man, entertain the sheep. You better have some good programs.

[29 : 13] You better have a good barbecue. Maybe a car wash or two. What about a bounce house? Until I come, give attendance to reading, exhortation, and doctrine. 2 Timothy 4.1-4.

I charge you, therefore, before God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing in his kingdom. Preach the Word. Be instant, in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

For the time will come when they will not endure the teaching. They don't want that. So you know what? I like it when you do the AirPods giveaway. That's fun. Maybe I'll give away a car in the parking lot.

I'll give away Lance's. You know, maybe we could... I like that kind of stuff. You know, they have... There's a church. There's one website. I'm not even going to tell you what it is. That'll just kind of talk about all the crazy things going on in the church.

There's this one church. They do movie month where every week is a different themed movie. They have Star Wars where you can get your picture taken with Chewbacca. The pastor is dressed up as like Han Solo or something.

[30 : 15] They had Minions movie day. I mean, this is... And people coming to church. Woo-hoo! They got thousands of people at that church. I bet there's an extremely high turnover rate too. 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 23.

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. Foolish and unlearned questions. That's why we stick with the Bible. That's why I don't have a lot of stories and illustrations.

Not too many. Because I don't want to end up in a place that's foolish. You know, we've been to... We've done small groups and community groups.

And we went to one that... Love the people. It's great for fellowship. But the... It was pretty shallow. The conversation.

Because it kind of just be opened up. What do you think about this scripture? What do you think about this scripture? And that's great to have discussion. But if you don't have an anchor in the word and in doctrine, and you're just kind of like, well, this is what I think about it, and this is what I think about it, you may arrive at some truth eventually.

[31 : 18] But it ends up being a lot of questions without answers. 1 Corinthians 14, 26. Paul says, How is it then, brethren?

When you come together, every one of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation, that all things be done unto edifying. So when Paul's going through the chapter on gifts of the Spirit, this is not a good thing.

I've read books that say, well, this is how you should order your church. But this isn't. Paul is saying, How is this, brethren? Why is this? That every time you come together, it's just kind of like mass chaos.

Everybody's got to say something. Everybody has a teaching. Everybody has a revelation that all things be done unto edifying. Why do we primarily, why is God's Word primacy on Sunday morning?

Why don't we have opportunities for people to speak in tongues, for people to have spiritual gifts exercise, for everybody to speak something? Nothing wrong with that. But we want to give the primary place to the primary thing, which is God's Word.

[32 : 19] If I wasn't a pastor, the church and churches I've gone to did that. I wasn't going to go to a church that was like, you know, 15 minute chicken soup for the soul.

And then, you know, meet and greet and go home. I wanted to go somewhere where the primary thing was God's Word. The substance of God's Word.

So that was the primary thing that we, it is the teaching of God's Word, the call to teach. God's Word is primary. And then lastly here, the substance of God's Word. Hebrews 5, 12.

So as for when the time, for when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat.

We want the full substance, the full counsel of God's Word. We don't want to be those that are just really shallow. Isaiah 28, 9 through 12. Isaiah writes, Whom shall he teach knowledge?

[33 : 23] And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from nursing, just as we saw with Hebrews. Comparing it. When you can eat meat, the idea is there's maturity happening. There's growth.

Oh, now I can process this. I couldn't when I could only handle milk. Who will he teach knowledge? Who will he make to understand his Word, his doctrine? For precept must be upon precepts, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little.

For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people, to whom he said, This is the rest wherewith by you may cause the weary to rest. And this is the refreshing that you would not hear.

Why do we teach line by line, verse by verse, precept upon precept? Because this is the rest. This is the place where we find rest for our souls. We want the full substance of God's Word.

Jesus speaking back to Satan who attempted him to turn the stones into bread. He said, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. The heart behind everything we do at Calvary Chapel Charlotte is to better equip people with God's Word.

[34 : 30] Why? Because of all the reasons we just looked at. Because Jesus is the one who decides. Jesus is the one who empowers by the Holy Spirit. He's the one who equips. He's the one who gives the giftings and the callings.

He's the one doing this. 18 months ago, we started the church. And I remember when I was talking with Sue about it, we didn't ask anybody to go with us or expect anybody to.

Eddie and Cynthia foolishly jumped on board. Silly them. And then Elvin and Donna said they were going to come. And then the first Sunday, the Forbes showed up. They were in Vietnam, living in Vietnam that summer or winter, and then showed up.

You know, we didn't start a church growth program. We're doing the exact same thing now that we did then. And God has chosen to bless and grow the work. I would, I don't know how to do anything else and I wouldn't do anything else because this is the work that God has done.

I'm so glad everybody that was there in the beginning was. So there will always be a testimony to be able to say, well, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Wait a minute, Jared. What did God, what did we do in the beginning? What did God bless?

[35 : 35] Why are you trying now, you know, to wear a white sports coat and, you know, no, no, that's not how you bring people in. But we can always go back to what was the work God started and if he's blessing that work and growing it, that's for him to decide.

So we're equipped in the body. Ministry is just an outworking of equipping, right? So we are equipped, we're unified, we're edified, and ministry is the natural outworking of that.

We hear the word ministry, it just means servant, one who ministers. There are three things about ministry I want to look at. One, ministry is for disciples. Again, God's not going to call you to service if you're not equipped to service.

And that each of us have a calling. Every disciple has a calling. Just because God's word is the primary thing in the teaching and the edification of God's word, it doesn't mean like, well, unless you're standing up there, unless you're Jared and Kitty and once in a while Don and Lily, you don't count.

That's not it at all. That's not it. This position here is to serve for your equipping for the work of the ministry. And I've seen that happen already.

[36 : 49] I was even thinking that tonight. This is watching, you know, Donato's working back there and Elvin and different things. Like, I couldn't, I don't know how to do that. I wouldn't have time to do that. It went from being this small and easily contained in my iPad, everything, to being much bigger and seeing how God is equipping his people.

The word Christian appears only twice in the Bible. The word Christians once. This label was invented by the world as an accusatory and derogatory nickname marking Christ's disciples for persecution and often for death.

The word Christian, we use it all the time today. Disciple appears 29 times in 27 verses and disciples is found 244 times in 232 verses.

The word disciple is related to discipline and identifies one who is seriously committed to learn, obey, and follow. Multitudes who think of themselves as Christians live undisciplined lives without any intention of obeying the one whom they call Lord.

A disciple. We are disciples. We're not called to be Christians. We're called to be disciples, ones who follow. Jesus said in Luke 6, 46, and why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

[38 : 04] You know, it's be like, go into your boss and be like, hey boss, how you doing? He's like, you call me that but you never do anything I tell you to do. Oh, well, you know, it's just a title. Matthew 16, 24, Jesus said to his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me, for whosoever will save his life, she'll lose it and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Disciples. Ministry is for disciples. That's why it's important for us to be in the word on our own, to be being discipled by the Lord, by the Holy Spirit, and also for us to be unified, equipped in unity to be able to do the work of the ministry that God has for this church, that God is doing here.

And we each have a calling. 1 Timothy 4, chapter 4, verses 14 through 15. Neglect not the gift that is in you, which was given you by prophecy.

We already read this. The laying out of hands of the Presbytery. We each have a gifting and a calling. We're each disciples. There's not one disciple in scripture that Jesus didn't send, that he didn't send out.

There's not one disciple that came after the resurrection that was not sent, a sent one, that was not being used by God. There is no unsent disciple. There's no disciples who just sit back and don't do anything.

[39 : 29] Galatians chapter 1, Paul describing his calling. He says, but when it pleased God to reveal his son in me that I might preach him among the Gentiles. That was his calling. As God revealed his son in Paul for a purpose.

It pleased God to do that. What was his purpose? To preach him among the Gentiles. You know whose purpose it wasn't? Peter's. Peter could say, when it pleased God to reveal his son in me that I might preach him among the Jews. So they each had a calling.

God revealed that to them. Has God revealed to you your calling? Well, I'm not called to pastor a church. I didn't say that. Has God revealed to you his calling? Well, I'm not called to children's ministry.

Me neither. Has God revealed to you? Maybe you're called to clean the toilet. Has God revealed his calling to you? You know, it says that Timothy to stir up that gift that was given him.

So Timothy knew he had a gift. There's a time and a place that that gift was administered to him through the laying on of hands and a prophecy. God doesn't leave this as an unknown that we have to guess.

[40 : 30] God never leaves his calling in question. And then lastly, ministry is about people. You know, as we've looked at all these things, we've looked at how from the bigger picture of Jesus directing the church, the church being equipped, how God decides to equip the church.

That it's not man's calling. It's not man promoting himself. It's not us trying to make something happen. It's just responding to what God is doing, obeying his word, being equipped through his word. Ministry is about people.

There's no way around it. You know, it's about the body. We can't do this on our own. We don't all show up at church, say hi to everybody, and then go right back home and break out our Bibles.

Ministry is about people. So, John, the Baptist, in John chapter 3, speaking in relation to Jesus, he said, he must increase, but I must decrease.

Decrease. Jesus said in Luke 22, 27, I'm among you as he that serves. There is no you do you in ministry.

[41 : 34] Say, hey, you know what? You do you and I'll do me and it's all good. That doesn't exist. Like, well, you know what? That's just how I am. I like things a certain way. That's just how I am.

You know, I get a little upset sometimes, but that's just how I am. There's no place for that in ministry. None. In Mark chapter 10, verse 42, Jesus called them to him, the disciples, and said unto them, you know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them.

They assert themselves and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you. Whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister, your servant. And whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all.

For even the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. If anybody could have asserted himself and said, that's just the way I am, it would have been Jesus.

Our sensibilities, our personal preferences, man, they're left at the cross. I'm crucified with Christ, yet I no longer live. For the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

[42 : 44] Paul will write in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, he says, so then death works in us, but life in you. Ministry always, always, capital always, comes at a cost. There's always a cost.

The cost of life, there's a cost of time, there's a cost, there's always a cost to ministry, taking up our cross. The motive in ministry is the benefit of others, not myself.

Just as Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. That's the motive. Everything we do, how is this going to benefit God's people? If we take out these pews and we put in chairs and we open up the back more, how is that going to benefit God's people?

Well, you know what? It's going to make us look cool. We're going to look like a bougie church. We'll be really updated. That's cool. No. If we stream, how is that going to benefit God's people? Well, you know.

I could send it to all my friends and relatives. No. How does it benefit God's people? Everything we do, how does it benefit God's people? And ministry is messy, expensive, and without thanks.

[43 : 48] So all of you already serving here at the church, please don't run away. I think we probably already found that out. Ministry is messy. There's a proverb that says, where no oxen are, the crib is clean, but much increase is by the strength of the ox.

You know, if your barn's empty, it stays perfectly clean, but you don't get a lot of work done. You're not going to plow the field. Not much happens. Much increase is by the strength of the ox.

The idea being it's going to be messy. And it's expensive. We're not a business. The church isn't a business and it's not meant to be run like a business. Our goal is not financial liquidity.

Our goal is not to make sure that we're always, you know, meeting our end goals. Our goal is people. Our goal is ministry. Our goal is God's word.

He will supply all we need. He supplies all of our riches, all of our needs according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus. So we move forward by faith. We move forward by the move of the spirit.

[44 : 48] And lastly, ministry is without thanks. I'm not saying that because I want everybody to turn to your neighbor and say thank you. No, I've never felt so loved and appreciated as I do here. But there are times where you may feel like you put a lot of effort into something and you're like, and everybody's kind of like, well, thank you.

And they take one and go. Like, oh, okay. I represented about 12 hours of my life. Our best example is the church we go to where Lillian Keller still go. When we first started on the farm, it was because of COVID.

And we were just kind of winging it, like how to set up chairs and how to set up the sound. You know, Elvin was doing sound. You come full circle, Elvin. Elvin, you're back to a sound board on a plastic table. And we set up chairs and we'd have people that, you know, we'd get there, church started at 10, we'd get there at 8.30.

And then people would show up at 10 and they'd be like, you know what? I think you should set up these chairs different. If you did this and if you did this and if you move this here, maybe you could do this with those screens. And if you thought of this, and my answer was always the same.

It was just like, that's a great idea. We get here at 8.30. And I'll see you next Sunday at 8.30. You know how many times people showed up at 8.30? And we never did anything different.

[45 : 59] I was like, you want to do it? I am all for it. Do it. But I'm not going to do that. So sometimes there's just not a lot of thanks. So we saw that the church, in the church, Jesus directs the church.

The Holy Spirit empowers the church and it's in the body that Jesus equips the church collectively for the calling He's given us. We're equipped through God's word. It's His calling to teach His word.

It's His desire. It's His design. That's what I mean. It's His idea. It wasn't Joel Osteen's idea. He didn't come up with it. It was God's idea and man then perverts it.

The primacy of God's word. God gives His word primary place when the church gathers. Paul taught all night, all night, when Eutychus fell out the window and Miletus there, all night long.

He doesn't say they just were together all night. He taught all night. I couldn't do it. I'd run out of being able to talk. And how do you, I guess, that's the thing, teaching line by line.

[46 : 58] I guess you could talk all night. Just keep going to the next thing. And then we saw ministry. What is ministry? It's for disciples. We each have a calling and it's about people.

I say, if you don't know your calling and you have a desire to serve the Lord, man, let's pray. And ask God to show you His calling and impart that to you. Ministry at Calvary Chapel, Charlotte, where the heart behind everything we do is to better equip God's people with His word.

That's the only reason I'm here. And I just, I'm blown away every week because it's like the parable that says the farmer, he's sowed and then he awoke night and day, night and day, night and day.

And it says, and it grew and he knew not how. I mean, I don't know how all this is working. I watch and like the most satisfying thing is like after service, people just talk and begin to pray with one another.

Like it's not like they're like a long line that they need to talk to the priest or something. You know, it's like this, they're equipped. God's word has equipped them. You don't need me, you need God's word, right? We need each other because of the unity.

[48 : 03] Everything we do is for three things in better equipping God's word or better equipping God's people with his word. It's to hear God's word, see God's word and experience God's word.

To hear his word. That's why we just put all this time and money and effort into a sound system. Not because we want to have great production. That's not what the church is about. Now we want to do it well, but we don't want our goal to be like, we want our goal to be that God's word is heard.

See God's word. That's why we upgrade from 55 to 75 inch TVs to experience God's word. That's fellowship. That would be why we would rearrange the sanctuary. That's why we have fellowship time. To hear God's word, see God's word and experience God's word.

Why? Because it is through God's word that we encounter God. So that's kind of my little talk on ministry at Calvary Chapel Charlotte. And I guess that's just who I am and how I'm wired.

So wherever God has put us in our lives, it's just, how it is. It's just like, oh, we need to serve. Is there a place to serve? All right, you plug in and serve, but it's always with that motive of how does this benefit God's people, edify God's people, equip God's people in God's word.

[49 : 15] I just want to look at a few more, a couple more, stick with me, you're fading. A couple more verses just that are specific to when God kind of put on my heart to plant the church.

Two primarily, one that's kind of outward facing and one inward facing. Luke 14, 23 says, and the Lord said unto the servant, go out to the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled. We haven't actually gone into that phase yet.

We have not gone out to bring people in, but that was one of the scriptures that there is a harvest out there and that God, I look at the church like as God's storehouse and he wants to bring in a harvest.

But John 10, 16 is kind of the phase we're living right now. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.

Other sheep I have that are not of this fold. Post-COVID, there's so many people that are without fellowship, they're not being fed and led and that was really the heart. It was like, Lord, there are people out there and they need your word.

[50 : 15] They need that. And that's what we're finding now is God is bringing people and making what? One fold. One unified fold. And Isaiah 61, 4, and they shall build the old wastes and they shall raise up the former desolations and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

I knew that there was a Calvary Chapel Charlotte before this Calvary Chapel Charlotte and the Lord gave me this scripture and I thought, that's cool. There was a Calvary Chapel Charlotte, God raising it up again. I didn't know there was like four iterations of Calvary Chapel Charlotte going back into like the 90s and into the 80s.

I was like, wow, the Lord's raising up the old waste, the desolation the former desolations and then the desolation of many generations. There's been many generations of Calvary Chapel Charlotte.

That's crazy. Then he puts us here. This church has existed in some form since like the 70s. There's been a church here and that here we are raising up the old waste, the former desolations.

God is so good how he just unfolds all of that. So ministry 101, man, it's about God's word and it's about God's people. It's about being led by the spirit, you know?

[51 : 27] So, all right, let's pray. Father, thank you so much for this time, Lord, and Lord, this is one of my favorite topics so we could just continue talking about it. But Lord, we want to be led by the spirit and Lord, I just love that song that I have your word.

It's all that I need and Lord, truly Lord, we have been given the only thing we need for ministry. We don't need a program. We don't need a plan. We just need a person. We need the Holy Spirit.

We need you, Jesus. We don't need the pastor. We need you, Jesus. We need the Holy Spirit. We need you to direct our lives. We need you to keep us unified. We need you to keep us from friction because of our own sensibilities and ideas.

And Lord, we pray that you would continue to bless the work you're doing here and that we would stay humble, that we would keep our hands off of it and let you do it. And Lord, I pray that you would equip us and for each one of us, Lord, that we make our calling and election sure.

If we're here, we're like, you know what? I don't know what my calling is. Man, that we would seek out prayer and know that you will answer. You do not leave us directionless. We love you. We praise you. And Lord, I just lift up Lily.

[52 : 29] I pray for her healing, Lord, that you would just once and for all remove this sickness, Lord. Thank you for your favor and faithfulness. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.