

Servanthood - Requirements of Ministry

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of servanthood in ministry, the primary purpose of the church, and the need for spiritual maturity and a deeper understanding of God's sovereignty.

Duration: 1:19:43

Scripture: Acts 19:8

Topics: "Servanthood"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his past approach to building the church and realizes that he had been making a fundamental mistake. Instead of seeking to build the church of Jesus Christ through dynamic preaching and programs, he realizes that the focus should be on teaching and showing the knowledge of God's Word. He shares how, when he became the pastor of Calvary Chapel with only 25 people, he decided to make them the most knowledgeable people in God's Word in the area. The speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer, studying the Word, fellowship, and breaking bread together as the vital functions of the early church, rather than the activities that have become prevalent in churches today.

Transcript

Father, we just look to you tonight to give us ears to hear what the Spirit would say to the Church. Lord, we just thank you for the many opportunities that you give to us to know you better and to serve you. And Lord, we want to serve you in whatever capacity you have ordained.

So we pray that you'll guide us and you'll teach us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. Last week we dealt with the subject of the minister.

This week we'd like to deal with the subject of the ministry. A couple of things that we did not mention when talking about the minister is that Jesus said, if any of you want to be the chief, let him become the servant of all. And Jesus set the example for all ministry when he took and girded himself with a towel and went around and washed his disciples' feet.

And he said, do you see what I've done? More than just wash their feet, he had set for them an example. For anyone who wants to be in the ministry, the word itself signifies servant. Now, I don't know how we've gotten things so twisted in our thinking, but there are so many times people who are involved in the ministry think that people are to minister to them.

And they come in with the kind of an attitude of, well, who's going to, you know, shine my shoes and buy my gas and looking for people to minister to you? You know, don't I get a 10% discount? I'm a minister, you know, and as though you're some kind of a special, you should have special privileges and special treatment kind of a thing. Not so. The true minister is one who serves.

Now, God prepares us for the work that he has in mind for us to do. Paul said in talking about our salvation, it's not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship created together in Christ Jesus unto the good works that God has before ordained, that you should walk in them.

Now, to me, it is comforting to realize that God knows exactly what he has in mind for me, for my life, for whatever ministry he might have for me. God already has known, does know, has always known that which he had planned and purposed for me to do and to be. And in the meantime, God is working in me, preparing me for that work that he has already before ordained that I should fulfill for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, when you get to my age and you're the other side of the hill, it's easy to look back upon all of the trials, upon all of the hardships, upon all of the testings, and say, oh, I can see what God was doing. I can see how God was working in my life. Oh, I see the reason for that experience.

For, from my perspective, I can look back and see how God was preparing me, working in me, preparing me for that work that he had in mind for me to do. Now, believe me, I had no idea what God had in mind for me. In my wildest imagination or dream or ambition or hope or whatever, I had no dream or idea what God had in mind.

In fact, when I was in seminary, we were taught that you can only hold, on a consistent basis, 5-6 of the seating capacity of your church auditorium. So, in designing your auditorium, you need to design a little larger than what your actual needs are. In other words, you take your needs and add one-sixth, and you take what your goal is and then add a sixth, and you will be able to maintain only 5-6 of the seating capacity.

So, when we built the first chapel, we built it for 300, 300, because my dream was to one day pastor a church of 250 people. That was my ambition, my life's goal and desire. Now, I have been pastoring for some 17 years, and I had never attained that, but I thought, oh, how glorious it would be to have a church of 250 people.

So, according to the rule book, build your auditorium for 300, you know. I had no idea what God had in mind, no concept at all. In looking back at the 17 years of hard labor with very little to show for it, I can see how that, in all of that, God was preparing me for the work that He was wanting to do.

He allowed me to experience failure for 17 years, as I followed every program that came down the pike, as I used all of my skills and abilities that I had developed and learned in college, and then later on through experience, and He let me run on the treadmill for 17 years to prepare me for the work that He had in mind to do. Until I was so sick and tired of the treadmill, I was so sick and tired of church programs, I was so sick and tired of pushing people, I was so sick and tired of artificial life support systems for practically everything in the church, I determined that I was going to let everything die a natural death and not keep the life support systems on anything. If it doesn't and can't function on its own, let it die.

I'm tired of trying to keep these programs alive in the church. I'm tired of trying to build the church. When we came to Calvary Chapel, after 17 years of pastoring, there were only 25 people.

For the 17 years that I've been pastoring, I always worked apart from the church in various jobs. When I first came down to Pastor Calvary Chapel, I was doing mobile home repairs, building cabanas and cleaning trailers and repairing trailers and all, because the church could not pay me adequate to take care of the family needs. We had three kids in high school.

So, I determined that though we just had 25 people, I would make them the most knowledgeable people in God's Word in this whole area. I was just going to teach them the Word of God and just teach them to be the best. Actually, there is a scripture that says, teaching and showing.

Paul is talking about his ministry to the Ephesians in Acts, the 19th chapter. He's talking to the others. He said, how that for the space of three and a half years, I taught and I showed.

It's sort of show and tell kind of thing with a ministry. your life has to be the example of what you're saying. And God began to make these people the most knowledgeable people in this area, as far as his word was concerned.

And as they began to grow in the knowledge of God, they began to share that knowledge of God with others. And others became interested, and of course the rest is just a matter of history what God has done. And in looking at it, I realized that the basic mistake that I had been making for so many years was that, number one, I was seeking to build the Church of Jesus Christ.

Through programs, through contests, through all kinds of devices, I was seeking to build the Church of Jesus Christ. And yet, when Jesus was talking about his church to Peter, he said, upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Now, there are two ways to build a church.

One, by program. And if you're that hype type, you can hype the people up in a program, and you can set your goals, and you can push, and you can push, and you can push, and you can get a crowd of people. But I have discovered that if you strive to gain, then you have to continue to strive to maintain, and that can kill you.

There are so many pastors around the county that are just being driven into the ground because they're striving to maintain, because they strove to gain. Now, when you don't strive to gain, you don't have to strive to maintain. So that the words of Jesus are really true.

When he said, my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. People are always saying, I don't know how, you know, you can, you know, pastor a church that many people. I don't either.

But in reality, I consider that I have an easy yoke. I have a light burden. Because we didn't strive to gain, and thus we don't have to strive to maintain.

It's in the Lord's hands. He's the one that did it. It's his responsibility.

And recognizing that, of course, the 17 years of failure were important. So that when God did his work, there's no way that we can take credit for it. Because we know what we can do with our best efforts.

Fail. And we know what God can do when we get tired and over the hill. And, and just, we can see what God has done, and rejoice in what God has done, and not try to take credit for it.

Now, in the whole experience, I came to a very drastic change of philosophy in regards to the church. And I think that this is extremely important. As we talk now about the ministry, the church, the purpose of the church.

Once a year, when we were in seminary, Oswald J. Smith, the pastor of the People's Church in Toronto, Canada, one of the greatest missionary giving churches in the world, would come to the seminary and have a missionary emphasis week. And I was very much taken by Oswald J. Smith. He's a very dynamic man.

As a dynamic, he had, of course, the late Oswald J. Smith, he had the People's Church that his son Paul now pastors in Toronto as always been a model church as far as its missionary giving. I read, I think, every book that Oswald J. Smith wrote. I availed myself of every opportunity to hear him speak.

And one thing that he kept emphasizing over and over again, and it was emphasized over and over again in the seminary that I attended, I can just close my eyes and hear him say it now. The primary purpose of the church is the evangelization of the world. The church exists to evangelize the world.

And that was just drummed into my head. And I believed it. I believed it for years.

That the church exists primarily to evangelize the world. That's the primary purpose of the church. And thus, for the first 17 years of my ministry, I sought to evangelize the world.

And most of my sermons were evangelistic sermons. I endeavored to preach God's good news to the people. My wife sought to help me.

And she'd say, Honey, you're just not dynamic enough. Now watch Billy Graham. He doesn't just stand behind the pulpit, he moves around.

And of course, in those days, he would pick up the microphone and walk back and forth across the platform with a microphone, you know, and stand there and hold it out in front of him, you know, and said, Now watch him, you know, he moves around, he's active, and he's dynamic, and, and you just aren't dynamic enough. So, I decided that I would try to be more dynamic. And as I was preaching my message, I decided to emphasize a point I would walk over to the side of the platform, you know, and give it the old emphatic, you know, and So, I walked on over to the side and started to give it the emphatic, and I became so self-conscious that my mind went blank.

And I couldn't even remember the point I was going to make, and I was just standing there, and I really couldn't think of a single thing to say. And I stood there for just a few moments, trying to think, but my mind was just playing games with me and just, you know, flipping up blank cards. So I had to walk back to the pulpit and look down at my notes and get myself back together, you know, and that's the last walk I took and the last time I tried to be dynamic.

Now, because the denomination that we were in had evangelism as that constant goad, when we filled out our reports, the very first little box was how many souls saved, the second one was how many baptized and all. And, you know, you were always measured by your effectiveness in winning souls to Jesus Christ. If ever you were to be considered for another church, a larger church, they would always get out the records and see, you know, how many people had accepted the Lord and how effective you were in your evangelism and all.

And you knew that that was the criteria, so, man, you know, you really push to get people to accept the Lord, and your sermons are all evangelistic, and you count, you know, the little kids that raise their hands and all of this kind of stuff, you know, because you got to look good on the reports. Now, one of the most frustrating things that I found in the ministry was that oftentimes the Lord would give to me a fantastic evangelistic sermon. Oh, man, it was so powerful, it could convince the hardest sinner that he needed to repent and receive Jesus Christ.

And I would be so excited with the message because, man, surely no one can resist coming to Christ when they hear this message. And I'd go to church on Sunday night with this message burning in my heart, and I'd look around and I knew everyone by first name. There's not a sinner in the house.

And if you want to know something that's really frustrating is to have a powerful evangelistic sermon burning in your heart and not a sinner to preach it to. They're all saints. Well, that would upset me.

And so I would start adding a little bit to my sermon that wasn't in the notes about how they were failing in their Christian walk in life. If they were doing what God would have them to be doing, they would have been inviting their neighbors and friends to church this evening. You're not really being witnesses for Jesus Christ.

You're just taking it yourself, enjoying it yourself, but you ought to be out witnessing to others and sharing the gospel with others. And I was beginning to lay on them their failure. Well, they knew what I was saying was true.

They knew that they weren't all they should be. And of course, they'd start getting the guilt, and of course, at the end, then you put a recommitment. You're no use asking people to be saved, so you ask them to really commit your life to the Lord and all.

You've got to get someone forward, you know. Make the appeal general enough, you know. Because, well, that's just the way it was.

The measure of the success of a sermon was always measured by the amount of emotion that was demonstrated at the altar after the sermon. I mean, that's how you tell whether a sermon is successful or not, you know. How many people were saved, and then how many are really crying, you know.

And that's where you measure how powerful a sermon you preached. Now, what I was very successful in doing was creating a lot of guilt-ridden, frustrated saints. Guilt-ridden because, man, I was laying the guilt trip on them.

You know, you're not what you should be. And they knew it. Oh, I know I'm not.

Oh, God, I'm such a failure, you know. But also, they were frustrated. God, I want to be better.

God, I want to serve you. God, I want to be a witness. But I don't know how.

I don't know how. And you see, it all came back to me. They didn't know how, because all they knew was Jesus died for their sins.

All they knew that they were to repent from sin and receive Jesus Christ. That's all I ever preached to them. In a hundred various forms, but basically, that was the message.

So they didn't know anything beyond repentance, receiving Jesus, being baptized. That's about all they knew. Come get hands laid on you if you get sick.

They knew nothing about the walk in the Spirit. They knew nothing about growing and maturing in Christ. Because I never taught them those things.

So I was guilty of keeping them in spiritual infancy. And then jumping on their cases because they were still little babies. When they should have been grown up by now.

You've been around here for years, you know. You're still sucking your thumbs and shaking the rattles. And you ought to be mature and grown up.

But you see, they could not mature on what I was teaching them. Or preaching to them. Now, I only had a certain number of evangelistic sermons and so it was necessary that I changed churches about every two years.

Because in that length of time, when you have services on Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night, you can just about run out of evangelistic messages. And I finally ended up in Huntington Beach and we were there for two years. And I really didn't want to move because we really liked Huntington Beach.

I had a good job with Alpha Beta working in the packing house there. They had a store in the packing house. I was working in the store and I had excellent hours.

And then I was working for Smith's Mortuary in Huntington Beach. And I was going out picking up bodies. And it was pretty neat because I got five dollars a body and the music came in real handy, you know.

The money. Then I was driving the flower car or preaching the sermon or singing the solos or whatever they needed, you know. And we loved Huntington Beach.

It was a small little town, 6,000 people and, you know, we knew everybody in town and they all knew us. And we were really, of course, going down and surfing every morning and just really loving it. And I didn't want to leave, but I'd run out of sermons.

My two years was up. So, I came across, I didn't come across, I was in my library the whole time, but I started reading Griffith Thomas' book, The Apostle John. Now, one of the hardest things I always had in the ministry was finding a sermon for Sunday morning and Sunday night.

That was always hard. Because when you're looking for a text and you got this whole Bible to look through, man, that's an awful lot to look through to find a text. And I would usually go through and just read and try and find text for my sermons.

The hardest thing was finding a text, finding something to preach on. Well, he had some real classic outline studies of 1 John. All outlined and everything else.

And I looked at those and I thought, wow, those are neat outlines. And I counted them. And I realized I had almost a whole year of Sunday morning sermons.

And I was really excited. So, I announced to the people that we're going to start a study in 1 John on Sunday mornings. And I started this study of 1 John.

Well, the people started to grow. They started to mature. They were getting something besides evangelistic sermons now.

I wasn't laying the heavy guilt trip on them anymore. And as they started to grow, their lives started being witnesses. And their friends started to come with them.

And they began to get excited about the Word. And by the time I was through with 1 John, our church had doubled. And we didn't have any contest or anything, which we were always pushing in those things.

I had a professor, of course, as I got into 1 John, I found that I didn't like all of his outlines. I started making some of my own outlines. And, man, this was exciting.

Started buying other commentaries on 1 John. And started going through public commentary. Really doing some background study and all.

And it really became, to me, a very exciting thing. I learned so much. So then, a professor in seminary said, if you want to revolutionize a church, study the book of Romans.

So, I thought, well, that will be exciting. Let's study the book of Romans. And I'll tell you, it revolutionized me more than the church.

Because I came to an understanding of the grace of God that I had never had before. It also revolutionized the church. But through this, I realized I didn't fit with the denomination.

I knew that I was going to have to make a break. God was developing His work in my own life. I was reading in Corinthians, where one says, I'm of Cephas.

Another says, I'm of Apollos. Another says, I'm of Paul. It's Christ divided.

And I saw that this party spirit was really spiritual carnality. This, you know, emphasizing denominational loyalty and all this kind of stuff. This is only pandering to people's party spirit, which is carnal.

You're failing to see the whole body of Christ. I read where G. Campbell Morgan said, I have discovered that the more spiritual a man becomes, the less denominational he is. And I found myself becoming very undenominational.

Just seeking the kingdom of God. And seeking to serve the kingdom of God and not just, you know, our little church. Well, God began to revolutionize, of course, my own ministry.

It became a lot easier. I didn't have to go through the whole Bible to find a text anymore. I knew where I was going to have to preach from, and so I'd just do all my research and study in that area.

A lot easier to preach out of just consistently going through books than it is to search the Bible. And, of course, then we labored on within the denomination. We were transferred to a large... Suddenly we had a lot of baptisms and everything else, because the people were growing.

And so the supervisor sent me to a larger church. And we had started this new method of teaching, so we just continued it. And God blessed this church that we were in, and so they sent us to another church.

And about that time, I realized that I just don't fit their mold anymore. You know, it's time to get out and go on my own. Now, all of this was a radical departure for me, because somehow, slowly, I had gone away

from the concept of the primary purpose of the church is the evangelization of the world.

And I almost felt subconsciously guilty, because I wasn't preaching so many evangelistic messages. But this was so natural to me, so easy for me to just teach. And then as I was reading in Ephesians chapter 4, the Holy Spirit really opened up my eyes to the real purpose of the church.

And I began to see that the real purpose of the church was not... The church did not exist to evangelize the world. The church did not exist for evangelism. But the church existed for the church's sake.

Now, Paul is saying here, beginning with verse 7, Every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore, he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and he gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above the heavens, that he might fill all things.

And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. So these various gifts, or ministry gifts, for what purpose? For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry. And I began to see that the church existed for the purpose of the perfecting of the saints.

You see, unfortunately, most of my sermons were for the person who wasn't there. The person who should have been sitting in that pew, but was home. He was the one that I was really lambasting.

But he wasn't hearing it. Just these poor precious saints that came out to get fed tonight. They're hearing it, but they don't need it.

They don't need the beating that I'm administering. They're there. I'm decrying how horrible it is that the churches are empty.

People don't go to church, and who am I telling, but these blessed people that are there. And so I began to minister to the church. Forgetting about numbers.

Man, from the time I could remember, from the time I was a little kid, they always had a Sunday school board up there, and how many we had in Sunday, school this Sunday, and how many we had last Sunday, and how many we had a year ago, and what the offering was. We took the Sunday, we took the board out. A lot of, of course, there were a lot of cries.

You see, I was revolutionary, and a lot of these people are traditional, you know, and, oh, we've always had a board up there, you know, all this kind of stuff. I said, get your eyes off of numbers and get your eyes on Jesus. You know, let's forget about numbers.

Let's just get into the Lord. Let's become perfected. Now, the word perfect in the Greek is literally a full age or full maturity.

So the purpose of the church is to bring the saints into a full maturity in their walk and in their experience with Jesus Christ. This is something I had never done for the saints. My messages were not designed to do this.

There was nothing consistent about my preaching at all, except its inconsistency. Because, you know, this week I'd be inspired by a text in Genesis. Next week I would have a message out of Ephesians.

The following week, out of Jeremiah. And the following week, out of Revelation. And the following week, out of Isaiah.

And the following week, out of Mark, you know. And you're just jumping all over and the people are eating hodgepodge every Sunday. Nothing consistent.

No plan by which they can have a consistent growth in their knowledge and their understanding of the Word of God. But when I started going through books and doing book studies, by the time we were through with that book, they had a good understanding of what that book was all about. There was a consistency in their growth now.

They were being fed a diet that promoted growth, spiritual growth in the believer. And then, of course, we started to do this through the Bible so that the people can get a bird's eye view of the whole of Scripture. I asked my congregation, most of them had been Christians, going to church all of their lives, and the average age was probably 30 or so.

I said, how many of you have read the Bible all the way through? And you know, not one raised their hand. I said, we're going to start reading the Bible all the way through together. We'll start in Genesis and we'll take the first 10 chapters of Genesis and we'll go straight through.

Now the people began to get then that overall view of the Word. And it helped them to better understand then the particular sections of the books that we were studying. You see, if you have a single piece of a puzzle, jigsaw puzzle, and you look at that one little piece and you try to figure out what in the world is this all about? I don't understand these colors.

I don't understand these little leaves. I don't understand, you know, this. That just doesn't make any sense to me.

But if you have the whole picture and this is the last piece, when you fit it into its place, then you see how it relates to the total picture and you say, Oh, yes, I see. It all makes sense. Now, you see, too often people are picking out one little verse and saying, I don't understand this, you see.

I don't understand how God could command Abraham to offer his son as a living sacrifice. Well, you take that one little part and of course you don't. But if you fit it in with the whole picture, you see that it's beautiful.

You say, Oh, wow. It's exciting when you see how it fits in the total picture. But that's the problem.

People are taking just isolated parts and trying to understand them and you can't. You need to see it in its whole. So, we started teaching people the Word of God as it says here, the perfecting of the saints, bringing them into full maturity for the work of the ministry, for the edifying, and the word means to build up, the building up of the body of Christ.

I'd never done that in my ministry before. I'd never been interested in doing that in my ministry. I never thought of doing that in my ministry before because the primary purpose of the church is evangelization of the world.

I was more interested in the guys in the bars that weren't coming to church than I were these people that were there faithfully Sunday by Sunday. And I was really neglecting the church because of this burning

desire to win souls for Jesus Christ. But I wasn't really effectively winning souls for Jesus Christ.

So, I was frustrated. The people were frustrated. Now, what we discovered is that as the people began to be strong in the Word, as the people began to understand the Scriptures, as they began to grow in their own experience in Christ, as they began to mature in Christ, Christ became their lives.

So that witnessing was no longer some difficult thing that they had to do. It became a very natural thing for them to do. Witnessing became just very natural.

You just, you know, because Christ is your life. So, if you're going to share anything, what are you going to share? You're going to share your life. And as they began to naturally witness, rather than nervously, you know, do you know the four spiritual laws? You know, and going through a program, their witness became a very natural thing.

And as a result, people began to come and accept Christ. For, you see, the body was being perfected for the work of the ministry. They were beginning now to minister as they had come into this maturity in Christ.

So, I came to a realization. Number one, sick sheep cannot beget sheep. They can't reproduce no matter how much you beat them.

And what I was doing is beating sick sheep week after week. I also found there's a corollary. Healthy sheep just reproduce naturally.

It's the natural function of a healthy sheep to reproduce. So, as the sheep became healthy and strong, they just began to reproduce. It isn't something you have to push them to do, or encourage them, or coax them, or whatever.

It's just a natural function of healthy sheep to reproduce. So, evangelism of the world is the byproduct of a healthy body. If the church is strong and healthy, there will be evangelism.

People will be being brought to Jesus Christ. So, my whole emphasis of ministry changed, and the whole philosophy of the church changed. I saw the purpose of our gathering together.

We don't gather here to evangelize the world. We gather here to be built up in Jesus Christ. We gather here to be brought into a maturity in our walk with Him, and in our relationship to Him.

Whole change of philosophy, as we began to develop healthy sheep. Now, Paul says that this is why God has given the evangelists, prophets, pastors, teachers, apostles. This is the purpose of the whole thing.

To perfect the saints for the work of the ministry, the building up of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the complete man, into full maturity. Bringing these people into full maturity. Now, you have a Bible class.

Concentrate on those that are there, in bringing them into a full maturity. May God deliver us from the bondage of numbers, and counting heads. What's more important than the number that is there, is the quality of the word that is coming to them.

That's what's important. To make sure that if there are one or two there, that they are being enriched in God's truth and in God's word. Unto the fully matured man, unto the measure of the stature, the fullness of Christ.

We're to bring them on into the image of Jesus Christ, through the word. That they no longer are like children, who are tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, and by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. A church that hasn't a strong biblical base, a strong biblical teaching, these people are going to be the praise for every piper that comes along tooting some new doctrine.

And believe me, the world is full of these guys. Guys that just sit and think and think of some new kind of a gimmick, in order to attract people to themselves and to their ministries. And if people are not strong and taught in the word, if they are experience oriented and all, you may, you know, develop a program that you can... There is here in Orange County a floating congregation.

You know, and they just float from one meeting to another. And, oh, everything's cooking over here right now. You know, they all float over there.

And then, you know, they get sort of fed up with that one, or it gets old. And then they hear, oh, over here it's happening. You know, and poof, they all go over there.

And here this guy's wondering what happened to my congregation, you know. And there's several hundred here in Orange County that are floaters. They have no foundation in the word.

They have no real understanding of the word. Every new little gimmick or whatever comes along, toot, toot, toot, you know, there they go. Sad.

Because they become victims of these men, who through their cunning craftiness are just waiting there to deceive them. And, boy, they get taken. You know, these guys, they'll get up with these offering pleas and all.

And, you know, God is just broke. You know, he's filing bankruptcy next Monday. Unless, you know, you give tonight.

And these poor little suckers get fleeced everywhere they go. You know, Jesus said, feed my sheep, but so many are out there to fleece the sheep. So many, they look at a, they measure a congregation, and they can tell you just how much money they can milk out of that congregation.

In fact, they come down here to Calvary on Thursday night and see this place full, and they can't believe that we don't take an offering. You know how much you can get, you know. We're not interested in what we can get, we're interested in what we can give.

Now, if we are faithful in giving, God will also be faithful in supplying for us. When God guides, God provides. God doesn't need our help.

God doesn't need our support. We need his help and his support. I wouldn't serve a God that I had to support.

But speaking the truth in love, and there's the secret. Sometimes the truth cuts. Sometimes the truth is harsh.

But we've got to speak it, but it's important that when we speak it, that we speak it in love. Speaking the truth in love, that they may grow up into him, into Christ, in all things. Now, there's another passage of Scripture in Hebrews chapter 6 that the Lord used to confirm this whole new philosophy of the church that

he had given to me.

It was such a change from what I had been taught and schooled and had drilled into me, that it was awfully hard for me to not feel guilty for a long time for not preaching evangelistic sermons. But in Hebrews 6, he declares, Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on into full maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, the laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. Now, this we will do if God permits.

Let's quit preaching the hellfire and the resurrection of the dead and all of this. Let's go on into a full maturity. Let's take the people into full maturity.

Let's not be laying again over and over and over and over these first principles of the doctrines of Christ. Having laid them, it's important that we lay them, but let's lay them, but then let's go on. Let's develop the people into a full maturity in Christ Jesus.

And that, of course, can only be done through the Word of God and a consistent study of the Word of God. Now, the early church was by far the most successful that the church has ever been in all of its history. The early church, within its generation, had reached the then known world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul, in writing the Colossians, said, And the word of Christ which has come to you, which it has in all the world. They had reached the whole world. They started out with just 120 on the day of Pentecost.

But soon the whole world was touched with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We've been going downhill ever since. Now, a part of the reason for this downhill trend is the fact that we have sought to substitute seminaries, education, and all of these things for the Holy Spirit.

We really don't need the Holy Spirit anymore, you'll hear taught and declared. They needed the Holy Spirit then because they didn't have the seminaries, seminary training. And thus they needed the Holy Spirit.

But now that we have these marvelous educational institutes and all, we don't really need the power or the help of the Holy Spirit anymore. God's just sort of turned the job over to us. And that is, in my mind, one of the reasons why the church is failing.

Now, the unfortunate part is that those who claim the Holy Spirit, the gift and the power, are so weak in the teaching of the Word that the people remain very shallow. Because the Pentecostal church's greatest weakness is the lack of the teaching, solid, consistent teaching of the Word of God. You can go and get preached at.

But preaching is really for the unconverted. Once a person has received Jesus Christ, they don't need to be preached at anymore. What they need to be is taught.

God has chosen that through the fullness of preaching, men should believe the gospel. But once they believe the gospel, then they need to be taught the walk in Jesus Christ. So there is a place for preaching.

That's to the unconverted. But once a person is converted, then the teaching of the Word of God is what is so vital. So we always look back at the early church as the model.

And in looking at it as the model, the model of success, in Acts, the second chapter, when the church was born, verse 42, after the experience on the day of Pentecost, when all of these people had gladly received

the Word and were baptized, about 3,000 of them, it says, and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' Doctrine, fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayer. These are the four functions of the early church. Number one, the Apostles' Doctrine, or the teaching, the solid teaching of the Word of God.

They continued steadfastly in the teaching of God's Word. Secondly, in fellowship. It's an interesting Greek word that we cannot really translate into English.

We do not have any English equivalent to koinonia. It means a oneness. It means a communion.

It means a fellowship. All of them. Bunch them all up into one.

A fellowship of oneness, where you become really a part of each other. Sharing together the life of Christ. And this is what we need to be developing within the church, the koinonia, the concern in the body for one another, the recognition of the body and its inner relationship to itself, and the importance of every aspect of the body that it be a total, whole body, complete body.

And this is what we need to be developing, is this love amongst each other that comes into a godly concern for one another. The body where one member suffers, they all suffer. Where one is exalted, they're all exalted.

And we begin to really develop this kind of closeness, communion, fellowship, care and concern with each other. That is why I am so strong on home Bible studies. When I left the denomination and decided I was just going to start over again in the ministry from the beginning.

When I left the denomination I was teaching five home Bible studies. And I thought that my ministry was going to be just a teacher in home Bible studies. I thought that's it.

I started contracting and building to supply for the needs of the family and then in the evenings I would go out and teach these home Bible studies. And I was at that time saying, well the church started in the homes and it will probably end in the homes. Because we were seeing such phenomenal results in these home Bible studies.

We were seeing lives changed. We were seeing the real fellowship. The oneness, the koinonia developing among these people within these home Bible study fellowships.

They were fabulous. I loved them. The only problem is the home soon became too small.

More people were wanting to come than what we could get into the homes. We were meeting in a home out in Corona. And these people said, you know, we're just getting fat in the word.

We're just being so blessed. We ought to be doing something. It isn't right that we just sit here week after week and just, you know, get so fat in the word.

We ought to be doing something. So they said, well, let's form a corporation, Corona Christian Association. And we'll start tithing into it.

And we'll sponsor a daily radio broadcast on KREL out there in Corona at the time. 15 minutes every morning. So they formed Corona Christian Association, started tithing into it, and sponsored me for 15 minutes on the radio out there in Corona.

The following Tuesday night, when I went out to have the Bible study, we had been announcing, you know, there's a group of Christians that, non-denominational, just meeting together to study the word of God on Tuesday evening over here at 1125 Crestwood Drive in Corona. When I got there Tuesday night, there was no place to park my car in the neighborhood. I had to park it up the street a ways, in the next block.

And I thought, wow, there must be having a block party here tonight or something. And when I got down to the house where we were having the meeting, I saw the people standing out in the yard, out in front and all. And I said, what's going on? And they said, well, there's a Bible study here tonight.

I said, you mean you're all here for the Bible study? Yeah, you know. Well, we decided then that we better start running the American Legion Hall there in Corona. And out of it, a church grew.

But these Bible studies, great, because they are excellent for the developing of this koinonia. You need the small groups for that. Breaking of bread.

Now, this beautiful thing about breaking of bread, it was far more meaningful to them than it is to us. Eating together is not something that you just do casually over there in that culture, in society. Eating together is really a very significant act.

Breaking bread together is an extremely significant act. It is an act that symbolizes your lives becoming a part of each other. Because I am eating a piece of this bread and you are eating a piece of this bread, so that that same bread that is nourishing me is now nourishing you.

That same bread that is being assimilated by my body and becoming a part of my body is becoming a part of your body. And if a part of my body is now becoming a part of your body, we're becoming a part of each other because we're partaking of the same bread. We're drinking from the same cup.

That is why the Jew would never eat with a Gentile. Because there's no way that the Jew wanted to become a part of a Gentile. Or to have a Gentile become a part of him.

And that's why even in the early church there was a big stink over this. When Peter came down to Antioch and he was eating with the Gentiles before certain brethren came down from Jerusalem. But when they came down he didn't want them to know that he had been eating with the Gentiles because, man, then they wouldn't want to eat with him because you've been eating with Gentiles.

And if I eat with you then I become a part of you and you're a part of a Gentile, man. And so it was a heavy-duty thing. And Paul had to stand up and rebuke Peter openly over this because it created quite a dissension there in the church.

Now in this breaking of bread together, in the taking of the bread and taking of the cup, you see, it means that I'm being nourished by Jesus Christ but it also means you're being nourished by Jesus Christ. And if we're both being nourished by the same source, I'm assimilating and he's becoming a part of my life but he's becoming a part of your life. Our lives are becoming a part of each other through Jesus Christ, you see.

This is what koinonia is all about. Becoming a part of each other in Jesus Christ. That's true koinonia and it is expressed probably best in breaking of bread together if you understand the Oriental mind in that.

And in prayer, the fourth aspect of the early church, the prayers. Now, of course, we last week pointed this out as the first characteristic of the man that God uses. He's a man of prayer.

And one of the vital functions of the early church was its prayer, the prayer meetings. Praying together for the common good of the body. Praying together for the needs of the community.

Prayer. Four things. Study the Word, the Apostles' Doctrine.

Koinonia, breaking of bread, prayer. Now, this is what the church was doing. This is what the church was, it didn't say anything about visitation committees, choir rehearsals, or all of the stuff that has become so much of a part of the church today.

Doesn't say anything about any of those. Enlargement programs. Pledge committees.

But down at the end of the chapter, it does say, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Now, here you have the key for the success of the early church. But it is also a key for success for the church today.

When the church becomes what God wants it to be, a place of the study of the Word, a place of the koinonia developing among it, as we enter into that covenant, breaking of bread together, and as we are praying together, as the church becomes what God wants the church to be, then God will do what he is desiring to do for the church, that is, he will add daily to the church such as should be saved. That isn't the church's task to mobilize for evangelism. And yet, over and over and over we hear of mobilization for evangelism.

No. When we become what God wants us to be, God will do what he is wanting to do. He will add daily.

That's God's business. Jesus said, I will build my church. That's his business.

My business is not to build the church of Jesus Christ. My church is not to go out and conscript people to come. My business is to minister God's Word, God's love to God's people through the anointing of the Spirit.

And the work of the Spirit through the Word of God in the lives of the believers of God is the thing that makes for success in a church. Now, there are churches that have the Word, but no Spirit. And they're sterile.

There are churches that have the Spirit, but no Word. But when you get the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God in the lives of the believers of God, then you have a combination that will light a fire anywhere. And it'll grow.

God will add to the church daily those that should be saved. Now, this is not a get-rich-quick kind of a program. This isn't one of those overnight phenomenal successes.

This is more like the penny double. You don't see much at the beginning because you're laying a foundation. It takes a while to build these people up in the Word.

It takes a while to bring them into maturity. And so you're apt to go along for quite a while with just a smaller group. But you're all the while laying the foundation of the Word of God and you're praying and you're developing this koinonia and God is working, perfecting the saints, building them up, bringing them

into maturity.

And then when you hit this level where they begin to come into maturity, then is when they begin to share their faith with others and you get a new group in. And then you start the same thing again, laying the foundations, bringing them into maturity. And then when they get to maturity, they start bringing their friends in.

And soon you're doubling again. And then you work with them as you build them up in Christ and bring them on into maturity. And then they go out and bring their friends.

And you can look at Calvary's growth and it comes sort of in stair steps, spurts, where you start out, first day you make a penny. Second day you make two pennies. Third day you make four pennies.

Fourth day you make eight pennies. Fifth day you make sixteen. Then you make thirty-two.

By the end of the month, you're a millionaire on the penny double system. Now, with the church it's an exponential type of a growth kind of a thing. You don't see rapid, overnight kind of success.

And that's why a lot of people don't follow this because they're looking for, you know, I want success, I want a hundred in church tomorrow, you know. And so get a big evangelist or get a big, you know, name movie star or something. You know, get a crowd, get a crowd.

You get all of these little looky-loos and, you know, these floaters that are going around. But the problem is then you have to get someone more sensational, you know, and bigger name and all, and you get in a trap. And then you've got to strive to maintain that whole thing.

And that becomes a heavy, heavy thing. Better, much better. Just follow the scriptural pattern.

A little slower, but in the long run, it's much bigger and much stronger. Now, Jesus said to his disciples, You have not chosen me, I have chosen you and ordained you that you should be my disciples, that you should bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain. You see, there's two things I want.

Not just to bring forth fruit, I want fruit that remains. Lasting fruit from the ministry. And that will come through the Word.

God bless you.

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