

“Mission” // Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary // John 15:16

Prayer for 9-11

- In the midst of all this, I got a letter this week from a couple of Summit members on the field, serving in a Muslim country, who left to go after 9/11 telling me that they’ve seen another person baptized in there. “We joked about me recording it and posting it on the internet; he knew I was kidding, but he said that he is not afraid because he is doing nothing wrong. He is only doing the right thing.” He asks that we pray for this guy’s fiancé who is open to what he’s doing, but has not herself received Christ yet.

The revolutionary idea of the gospel is that we don’t change by focusing on a list of what we should go and do differently for God, but by dwelling on the news of what God has done for us. ***Changes imposed on the outside are like bending metal...***

I’ve used lots of analogies this series, but one of the most important is the one that Jesus Himself uses here in John 15 of spiritual fruit. If you abide in Me; He says, if you rest in My love (vs. 9); you will produce abundant fruit. **“Spiritual fruit” is not produced by focusing on the fruits themselves.** Spiritual fruit happens in the same way physical fruit is produced: when a man and wife conceive a child, they don’t come together thinking about the mechanics of making the child. This chromosome has to go here and the fertilized egg needs to be implanted on the wall... God has designed it so that a man and woman come together in a moment of loving intimacy, where they are focused on their love, and the fruit of that is the gospel. It’s the same way with spiritual fruit. We don’t produce spiritual fruits by focusing on producing them. When we become intimate with the doctrines of the gospel we begin to produce fruit.

According to Jesus, right believing produces right behaving.

Now, one objection: We all know people who believe the gospel who don’t bear fruit, right? That’s because in the Bible, there are two kinds of belief.

- Mental acknowledgement: belief the demons have, and tremble.
- Then there is belief in the heart: which is the kind of belief speaks of here in John 15. It’s an intimate knowledge of, and abiding in, the truths of the gospel.
- Think of the analogy again of producing physical fruit: My wife won’t get pregnant just by being in the same house. For me just to live in my house with my wife would not have gotten her pregnant. Even if we never left the house, just being in the same house with her isn’t going to do it. That takes a different kind of relationship. You tracking?
- Many of you don’t produce spiritual fruit because your relationship to God consists of being in the same room with Him.
- And not only do you not produce spiritual fruit, but you are not really disciples of Jesus. And I need you to understand this: a faith that does not change is not a faith that saves either. Casual, cultural “I accepted Jesus in my heart when I was 8 so I’m good” faith is not a faith that saves. **The faith that saves is a faith that sees that Jesus is more worthy than anything else on earth and that surrenders everything to follow Him.**

Today we’re going to look at how abiding in the gospel produces a fervency and boldness in mission. Those who really believe the gospel become fervent in their commitment to take it with others.

- **WHEEL** *Belief in the gospel produces fervency in mission.*
- I got inspiration for this message from my daughter:

- **Kharis and Abdullah:** “Dear Lord, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to die on a cross for our sins so that we could be saved; and thank you for leaving us the Holy Bible so we could all know about it. In Jesus’ name, Amen.” Can I get some chicken? While she is praying, I was kind of proud of her, kind of like, “Please shut up. Please shut up.”
- Here’s the thing: she believed it, so of course they need to know it. And I’m going to pray right now that they get that. **It really is that simple.**

John 15:16: Here’s where we start in John 15, and then, as usual, we’ll be supplementing what He says here from other places He talks about this in John 13–17. (Remember, John 13–17 is like a unit and John 15 is like a summary.) Let’s actually go back a few verses and start in vs. 13:

[John 15:13] Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. **[14]** You are my friends if you do what I command you... **[16]** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹

3 things Jesus teaches us (that if you really believe them) lead to boldness and fervency in mission (God’s plan; God’s promise; God’s love):

1. God’s plan

- **Vs. 16:** He chose us for this purpose.
- He had a plan for us, and this was a big part of it. We would go and bring forth fruit in the world. And not a few of you, *all* of you. If you are chosen, and the way you know that is you are His follower (you would never have believed in Jesus had He not revealed Himself to you), one of His major purposes was bringing fruit through you in others.
- We were God’s plan for accomplishing His mission of reconciling others to Himself. Martin Luther used to say that it wouldn’t matter how many times Christ died if no one ever heard about it. Salvation is a gift you have to receive, and you can’t receive it, you can’t put faith in it if you’ve never heard about it, and we are the only way they will hear about it.

In John 14, Jesus makes an absolutely astounding statement: **[John 14:12–14]** “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. **[13]** Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **[14]** If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

- On one level, that seems like an absolutely absurd statement, doesn’t it? Who could do *greater* works than Jesus? Anybody? I mean, how could that be? He raised the dead. We can never preach with the power or insight that He did; we can never have closer communion with the Father or receive greater answers to prayers like He did.
- So, what did Jesus mean—greater works? Be serious, Jesus. He means greater works in terms of *quantity*. Now that Jesus was ascending back to Heaven, the Spirit of God would no longer be contained in Jesus; He would be the present power in every believer. Every believer would have access to the mighty power of the Spirit, and the net effect of every believer ministering in the power of the Spirit is greater than if even Jesus Himself had stayed here personally to minister. Would you think about that?
- What if Jesus could have stuck around and planted a church in Chapel Hill where he preached and healed? You think that would be effective? I think it might.

¹ Whenever something else is not on the screen, have (15:16) up by itself. I will be continually referring to it and it needs to remain on the screen the whole time, except when something else is being displayed. After that point has been made, put back up John 15:16.

- That would not have as much potential as 6000 members of the Summit Church full of the Holy Spirit ministering in His power.
- I think there is a question in that for our church, and one for you as an individual.
- For our church:
 - Are we structuring our church in a way that recognizes this reality? I feel like a lot of churches are set up as if the Spirit of God resides in a gifted leaders, and the rest of you should just come and sit at our feet and bask in our anointing?
 - Now, you guys know that I don't want to take away from the fact that God has specially gifted a few of us in the church to bless you (Eph 4 said that God would do that); but that said, the whole point of John 14:12 is not that the Spirit of God would reside only, or even primarily, in a handful of leaders, but that He would reside in *every* believer.
 - That means that if we really believe this verse, we are going to structure our church so that the focus is on equipping you for ministry, not just gathering you in here to listen to me.
 - Our greatest ministry effectiveness is not what I do in here, but what you do out there.
 - I've explained to you that of the 40 miracles in Acts, 39 of them happened outside of the church.
 - I've often pointed out that Eph 4:11 says that God gave pastors to the church for the purpose of "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry."
According to that verse, who does the ministry? Saints. Who are the saints? Not me. I'm a paid professional. I get paid to be good. You're good for nothing. Who are the saints? Say it: We are. That's why I tell people when I became a pastor I left the ministry.
 - Here's a really practical consideration: **People who are searching for God today don't usually start in church today.** Most people today are seeking spirituality outside the church. So the place where the power of Jesus first intersects with the world is not through me in here, but through you out there.
- So, that leads me to a question for you:
 - How much do you see this verse being played out in your life? Are you seeing God speak through you to others? Are you seeing Him answer huge answers to prayer through you?
 - This is why he chose you. **"God is a spiritual tornado.** He will never pull you in except to send you out. He will never bless you except to be a blessing." If you get sucked into the vortex of His power it's because He has a plan to powerfully send you out. Like a tornado: chosen (drawn in) to be sent out.
 - ~~Church like a huddle~~
- Before I move on to our next point, I want to point out that sometimes a church's success can keep it blind to how poorly individual members are living out the mission of God in the community. Our church has grown by 30%. We can look around and say, "Wow. We've been blessed. We're evangelistically successful." But that doesn't mean that each of you are. You might be hiding the fact that you're not fruitful by just being a part of a church that is fruitful. The church is being fruitful... are you?
 - **Here's an unknown goal at the Summit:** *we want more people in small groups than in service on the weekend.*
- According to these verses, the greatness and permanence of a church's fruit is in direct proportion to how well they raise up and empower their members. Churches that are built around the personality and ministry ability of one or two leaders will *quickly* fade when that leader is off the scene. Churches that raise up and empower the members for ministry have fruit that lasts forever. **That's why we say we judge our success by sending capacity as much as seating capacity.**

- I don't want the Summit Church to be a shadow of my ministry abilities; I want the Summit Church to raise you up, its members, to change the world!

2nd thing Jesus teaches us:

2. God's promise

- When He says, "I chose you to bring forth fruit," that is an implicit promise: He will bring forth fruit in you. I love that. That gives me such confidence.
- He even, John 17, prayed for it.
 - **[John 17:18]** As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world...
 - *Imagine if I told you that Jesus was praying for you.* I told a guy the other day I was praying for Him. He said, "Wow, pastor praying for me. That's like the big leagues." I need all the prayer I can get myself. I'm just like you and my prayers are not any more special to God than yours. But if Jesus were praying for you, that's the big leagues. He is praying for you to be fruitful.
- Boldness in mission comes from believing His promise for it.
- **Question: What word begins the great commission?**
 - "Go." Wrong. (rude?) **Matthew 28:19**, "Go into all the world," is preceded by vs. **18**, "All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth." "Therefore," he says, "Go..." **The Great Commission begins with the great promise.** And our going is empowered and sustained by His promise.
 - You wonder why we go all over the world... the reason is because when Jesus says, "I will build my church of people of every tribe and tongue," we believe Him.
- In fact, let me show you this: He goes on to say **[16] You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.**
 - This is amazing. God has appointed you to be in places where you'll ask great things, impossible things, in His name and He'll give it in response to your faith. Let that soak in. You were called and placed in a certain location to ask great things of God for the people there.
 - Concept at our church we call "**intercessory faith**"
 - The blessings of God are released by faith. You see this over and over again in the Gospels. **Woman comes to Jesus to ask for a miracle...** Jesus says, Why are you asking me? She says, "Because you are full of compassion and mercy."
 - When you pray, you're not just God's tattletale—hey God, did you know this was going on), but believing God: It's like you're bridging the gap between His infinite willingness and their great need
 - What if the reason God is not working in your context is because there is no one there to believe in His willingness to do so?
 - **Matthew 13:58** **And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.**
 - What if the only reason God was not working was there was no one to believe Him? God is infinitely compassionate for all peoples of all types. We have to be in their lives to believe on their behalf.
 - This is what the 4th part of the gospel prayer is all about: **Gospel prayer, part 4: "As I pray, I'll measure your compassion by the cross and your power by the resurrection."**
 - I want you to believe that on behalf of others and be the bridge. Pray for them!

- Before I go on to our final point, here's what I want you to see. God's command for us to go is shrouded in promise. The reason many of you have never been bold or consistent in your witness and your involvement in mission is you've never believed this promise.
- Jesus says: I chose you. I placed you in this family. This suite. This dorm room. Doesn't that give you confidence, even when it seems like their hearts are hard and closed?
 - **Think Peter walking on the water.**
 - If Peter thought it was his idea, easy to doubt. "Hey, maybe Jesus won't hold me up. Maybe He thinks this is a dumb idea."
 - But if he rests in the fact that Jesus was the one that told him to get out of the boat, then He can think, the Jesus who called me out here won't let me drown!
 - Same with you. I'm in this relationship, having this conversation, confronting this person, praying about this situation, not because this is my idea that I'm trying to get God on board with, but because He told me this was His intention; He sent me out here and He'll hold me up!
 - **LETTERS?**

The last thing Jesus shows us that gives us boldness and fervency in mission:

3. God's love

- For us. Jesus said, You are my friends and I laid down my life for you. He chose us and came after us, not when we were looking for Him. "Chose us" means that we had no interest in Him at all and He came after us.
- How can we really believe what the gospel tells us about why we are saved, and what the fate of others is without Christ, and do nothing?
- Church, we are God's plan. We are the only way they'll hear.
 - If you study the book of Acts, you will see that there is not a single instance of the gospel being preached any other way than through a human instrument. You see angels showing up and doing various things to help them, but the gospel itself is always preached through a human instrument.
- **Rhonda...** How could you believe that?
 - What if looked out in the road and saw my daughter playing in the road, she had her headphones on and she was oblivious to the fact that a huge truck was coming at her, would I not start screaming and running to move her...
 - Is our situation any different? How can we do nothing?
 - **Charles Spurgeon** was once approached by someone in his congregation who said, "Pastor, I'm having trouble with understanding how people who have never heard about Jesus can't be saved." Spurgeon said "That is a troubling question. But here's an equally troubling one, "How can those of us who have heard about Jesus, and do nothing to take the gospel to those that don't, *How can we be saved?*"
 - Do your kids know? Parents know? Do your roommates know? Who could you do nothing?
- **My screensaver in Indo:** People who died without Jesus
 - Mission is an act of obedience, yes. It's also an act of love
- This is not something for a few. It is for all of you. It's not something you do when you go into the ministry; it's something you do now.
 - We ask potential missionaries here: Who is the last person you led to Christ? Uhh... nobody. Why are you going across the world to do what you're not doing right here?

Can I tell you why many of you don't do this?

- **Some of you care more about what people think about you than you do someone's soul.** How could we?

- Even more than that: What about Jesus? He died to save you, make you His friend. Don't you care about pleasing Him?
- **Some of you don't really believe the gospel.** You say that you do. How could you? Your casual, apathetic approach to this speaks louder than your creed.
- **Some of you don't know anybody who is unsaved.** Live in a Christian bubble. A simple step is just to have your neighbors over for dinner. Expand your circle to include people outside the church. Everybody should have unbelieving friends as a part of their lives. Here's what I know: If you know lost people, and you really believe the gospel, then you'll be sharing with them.
- Another reason **some of you give is lack of training.** We haven't done the best job as a church at equipping you, but we're taking steps to change that.
 - ***On our blog all week:*** Helps for evangelism. Our small groups later in the year are going to be doing a study.
 - ***But, honestly, I don't buy the "lack of training" for very long.*** If it's important to you, you'll find a way to get trained.
 - If you knew one of your kids was trapped in a burning building, and no one else was around, would you use the fact that you're not a trained fireman as an excuse to not even try to help them?
 - ***And how hard is it really?*** Let's say you were trapped in a building, and a fireman picked you up and drug you out to safety, and as you sit there on the sidewalk, someone comes up to you and asks you what happened? You may not know much about the fireman, but you can say, "I was dying and that man saved me."
 - The gospel is that Jesus stepped in the way of the wrath we deserved and suffered the penalty for our sins and saved our lives.
 - If you know and love the people around you, and you believe the gospel, you'll figure out a way.

Conclusion:

- God saved you for this purpose. This was His plan. He gave you His promise. Have you begun to follow Him here? This is part of what it means to follow Jesus. Are you all in?
- Everybody bow their heads, let me lead you in a prayer:
 - For people you know.
 - People you can invite next week to DBAP. I'm going to preach the gospel, simply to them. Heart of the city. Great opportunity to bring people to an event in a non-church setting where it will be a great event and the gospel will be preached and lots of people will get baptized.
 - Have you received Christ?

Letter #2 (first one lost, in it she told me she was going to witness, I responded with encouragement)

Dear J.D.,

I really don't think I'm going to be a champion for God. I told the kids in my neighborhood about Christ and they just didn't believe me. They laughed at me and I felt like a jerk, a fool, and a stupid coward. I didn't know what to do. What really made me look like an idiot was when I cried, got on my bike and left. And every time I think about it I feel so bad. And I don't want to go back up there again. When you wrote back to me I felt like all of this was going to O.K. It didn't.

Your Friend, Laura Beth -Forgot my address? 112 South Deerfield Circle Salisbury, NC 28147

Jd

I read the scriptures that you said on your letter and 1 Samuel was talking about David and Goliath; David defeated Goliath with no armor, because he knew he was protected by God. Well, when I went up to those people, I didn't feel it. But before I went up there, I wanted God to help me, I wanted God to give me the strength, courage, and the power to witness to these people. I felt it, in my body that God was working inside me. But Jd, I went up there and I losted it, I-I losted all of that feeling inside me, I was scared, I freaked out. I also read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, what does it mean?

When you said "Keep tossing the rocks, and let the giant fall when God chooses Never give up!"

Are you telling me to go back to those people again? - I don't think so Jd. I mean if I try to go to another person and witness, I'll probably mess up to. The lesson that was in your letter, we go, and people laugh, but we don't care, cause the power comes from God.

Jd, like I said, I didn't feel it. And I don't think I can witness to anybody again. I'm sorry Jd, I'm a loser.

Dear Jd, IT IS A MIRACLE!!!! You WILL NOT believe what happened to me!!! Jd, I don't know what just happened to me 30 minutes ago, but I know God had to do something to do with it. Jd, the people that I witness to came to me, and I didn't even know why they were at my house, but one of them said something like, "Laura Beth, I want to tell you first, that I'm sorry that I laugh at you cause you were talking to us about your God, but when you got into that part about Hell and stuff, it kind'a freaked me out. So, I kind'a want to know about this "God." So I said, "GREAT!" and I ran upstairs to get my bible and I showed them Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. And I explained that once you accept Christ as your personal Savior, He'll never kick you out of heaven, if you steal, drugs, kill, any of that stuff that is bad is wrong, but you ask Him for forgiveness, He will forgive you. But you just can't do what ever you want that is bad like the examples I have given you and then say "I'm sorry God, forgive me, Amen." And then do the same thing the next day. Let's say you just lied to someone and don't confess, when your in heaven your going to come before God and He's going to say, "Why did you do that." And you won't get an award, but if you do get an award, you're going to kneel down and place it at Jesus' feet. And I went on about Hell, and I saw that she was crying and just tears were running down her face and I knew she needed somebody, So I hugged her and she said, "Laura Beth, save me, don't make me go to Hell don't let God do this to me!" I said, "He won't, if you accept Him as your Savior." So we said a prayer and I made sure that she understood what I just said to her. And she did. Jd, I owe you one man, If you didn't get me back on track with God, I don't know where I would be right now. And that girl wouldn't be saved today.

P.S. Thank you Jd, you are the best friend I ever had, and don't think I could ask for a better one.

Laura Beth

Bullpen:

John 17:18, where Jesus is praying for us: **[John 17:18] As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world...**

- We've got a long way to go on this one, Summit, but this is the value we are chasing after! Raising up leaders, not just gathering an audience to hear a leader. We're not primarily an audience; we're an army.

[John 17:18–21] As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world... [20] I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, [21] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

- If you study the book of Acts, you will see that there is not a single instance of the gospel being preached any other way than through a human instrument. You see angels showing up and doing various things to help them, but the gospel itself is always preached through a human instrument.

Boldness is behavior based on belief.

[17] Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. [18] As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. [19] And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

[20] "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, [21] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:17-21 ESV)

I don't want you to feel beat up and guilty about this. Here's the question I want you to consider: Does your involvement show that you really believe the gospel? Because if not, it's probably not a behavior problem, it's a belief problem. If you'll connect how you abide in the gospel, this will change automatically.