



JESUS CALLS PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN

Part 18 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 4:42-5:11 | February 21, 2010

Luke 4:42–5:11

⁴² And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, ⁴³ but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” ⁴⁴ And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

^{5:1} On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” ⁵ And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷ They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” ¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

INTRODUCTION

All right, Mars Hill, we continue in Luke’s gospel, investigating the man who is God. If you’ve got a Bible today, we start in Luke 4:42–5:11. You get a twofor today. To catch up on the week that I went to Haiti, we’re gonna slam two sermons together, so you’re welcome. And here’s the big idea: I’m gonna try and make you do anything, right, for Jesus. That’s my big goal.

Christianity is a belief system and a lifestyle. And for some of you, it’s just a belief system. “Yeah, Jesus is God, loves me, all my sins are forgiven. I’ll be home checking my Facebook status.” It’s also getting up out of the chair, turning off the TV, reordering your budget and doing some things for Jesus with Jesus because he loves you. And so that’s what we’re gonna look at today; we’re gonna look at the lifestyle of Jesus: How did he live, what did he give himself to, what did he do, what does that mean for you.

1. POUR YOURSELF OUT IN MINISTRY.

So here’s where we’re gonna start. I’ll tell ya how everything begins in Luke 4. A little before our text, Jesus has a really big ministry day. And so point number one is: Pour yourself out in ministry. This is a sick, dead, decaying, dying world. Everything in this world is to encourage you to love, worship, adore, idolize, serve yourself. Church is every morning looking at the god in the mirror and making sure that that god gets everything it desires, and if not, you go into depression, anxiety, grief, sadness, narcissism. I’m telling you the way out. The way out is love of God, service of others. If your life is about you, you should be depressed ‘cause you’re wasting your whole life. You should be having anxiety because you are wasting your whole life. You need to give your life to what Jesus gave his life to: The glory of God and the good of others.

And Jesus pours himself out in ministry. Early in Luke 4 we look at Jesus gets kicked out of Nazareth, and he ends up in Capernaum, Simon Peter’s hometown. He goes to the synagogue, and he preaches, he preaches. That alone is exhausting. Some have said that preaching an hour is equal to one day’s work at a typical job. And I’ll tell ya, preaching is exhausting if you do it with any sort of enthusiasm, right? Yesterday I preached all day in L.A. I’ll preach all day here today. Tonight I will sleep like a Calvinist. It is real work. It is real work.

So Jesus preaches, and if that’s not exhausting enough, the crowd comes to hear him, they all have questions and prayer requests, and they have needs and discussions. So like every preacher, he’s gotta meet with people, pray for them, encourage them, serve them, and then a demonized guy comes up. I don’t know if you’ve ever cast a demon out of someone, but it’s complicated and a big deal and can be exhausting. So then Jesus casts a demon out of a guy. Well, now people got a lot of questions, ‘cause this was a public event. So now more people are surrounding Jesus, and he’s already a bit of a rock star on tour, and he’s in Capernaum.

Well, to get a break then he goes to Simon Peter’s house. Does he get a break? No, because Simon Peter’s mother-in-law has a high fever, she’s sick,

perhaps even near death. So Jesus heals her, more exhausting ministry. Word gets out, “Hey, this guy preaches, casts out demon and heals people without a co-pay.” Next thing you know, there’s a real crowd surrounding Peter’s home, lots of people are coming. “Pray for me, teach me that. I got a hangnail.” You know, “Fix this. They’ve got a demon. Help, help, help.” Jesus doesn’t get time for a nap. Jesus doesn’t get time for a meal. Everybody’s coming, this is exhausting. It’s exhausting. Absolutely—just the devastation as a preacher and a minister of just the absolute pain in people’s lives is, in and of itself, exhausting.

Yesterday, I preach, I’m in downtown L.A. at the Orpheum Theater, preaching, and then it’s meet people and then preach and then meet people and preach and meet people. And it’s this long line and it’s: “I was raped.” “I was molested.” “I was abused.” “I’m addicted to pornography.” “My wife’s in the bathroom, she doesn’t know that I also have a girlfriend, what do I do?” It’s “I’m a newly-converted Christian, what do I do with my gay boyfriend who doesn’t know Jesus?” “I cheated on my wife, and my girlfriend is pregnant.” And “I have gonorrhea, syphilis, and I want to get married and have kids, is that okay? Do I need to tell my fiancé that this is what I’m dealing with?” It’s like, “Seriously, really?” Like, “This is happening.” And it’s like, “Okay, we’ll just deal with this, and then I’ll go preach and then we’ll meet and preach and meet, and I’ll tell Jesus you said ‘Hi,’ ‘cause I’m gonna be there quickly at this pace.” But that’s ministry, right? That you preach, you teach, you pour yourself out, people come.

2. REST AND RECOVER IN SOLITUDE.

That’s where Jesus is at. I mean, he is exhausted. He has worked really hard. He has poured himself out. So then what does he do? Number two: Rest and recover in solitude. I’m gonna do this tomorrow with the Driscoll nation. Luke 4:42, “And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place.” So Jesus gets up early, like before everybody else gets up. “I’m gone. I’m leaving.” And some people there, I’m sure they’re like “He seems very rude. Now that he’s got a megachurch, he’s just not very accessible.” And I’m so glad that they didn’t have iPhones ‘cause they would have had a Jesus iPhone app like, “Where is he? Where? There he is, we’re gonna find him.” Right? You know somebody would have invented that thing. So Jesus is like, “I gotta get out of here. I gotta get a break. I need to go somewhere else.” And it’s not that he doesn’t love people, and it’s not that they don’t have needs; it’s just that, as God become a man, he can only be in one place at one time. He’s gotta get something to eat, he needs to find a bathroom, and at some point, he needs to get a little bit of rest.

So ministry is you pour yourself out, and then the tank is empty and you go to be with God to fill it. That is rest and recovery in solitude. So let me hammer solitude. Let me say this: You have no business enjoying restful solitude unless you’ve poured yourself out in ministry. Rest in solitude is a gift that God gives to those who have poured themselves out in ministry. That’s the way that it works. Now let me tell you a little bit about solitude. It is fasting from people, crowds, hurry, worry, busy, noise, activity; that’s what it is. Another thing about solitude: It is a routine, not a lifestyle. If your whole life is into silence and solitude and Sabbath and resting and refreshing, you’re lazy, you’re a bum, you’re worthless. Jesus loves you, but the rest of us are struggling, right? You’re not doing it—and see the whole American myth is: “I want to make enough money to just not have to work and retire and then just stand before Jesus and take a beating, because I am supposed to serve passionately,” give your life away until the end. The great dream of “Well, I just want to get to the point where I don’t have to do anything.” There is nothing in the Bible that encourages the American dream/nightmare. You give yourself away, and then Sabbath and solitude and rest and refreshment, that’s a gift for those who pour themselves out. It’s not a lifestyle. It’s you empty your bucket, you go to get with God, so that he can fill your bucket, so you can go empty it out again. That’s life, that’s the way it works. And this is true whether you’re in paid or unpaid ministry, that’s life.

Now additionally, this will be easier for those of you who are contemplatives than activists. There’s basically two kinds of people when it comes to the spiritual disciplines. The contemplatives are thinkers and feelers and ponderers and considerers. Silence, solitude, prayer, fasting, journaling; they love that. Now the activists are doers, right? The contemplatives, they live in their heart and in their head. The activists, they’re all about the hands and the feet. “Get it done. Get up. Go. People are going to hell. Move, move, move, move, move! Evangelism, missions, serve. Go rebuild that house, pray for that person, go get that done.” And what happens is if you’re an activist, then being a contemplative is hard, because you’re like, “There’s people to see, there’s things to do. People are going to hell, there’s work to get done.” But like Jesus you gotta say, “And I gotta go get my bucket refilled, otherwise I’m no good to them at all.” And you gotta schedule that and you gotta plan that and you gotta protect that and you gotta make that happen.

Some of you are doer, doer, doer types. You’re gonna burn out, you’re gonna get frustrated, you’re gonna be ineffective, unless you, literally, just block out your time, go to the woods, turn off your laptop, turn off your cell phone. Get your break, get with Jesus, pray, get your bucket refilled, get your Bible open, sing some songs. And some of you are contemplatives and you do that too much. You’re always thinking about things that could be done, but you don’t do anything. You write nice blogs about things that other people should do, and you tweet things thinking that somehow in “Twitterland” others will just obey you and do it, because you added a verse to it or you said, “Thou shalt.” All right, and it’s the issue that some of you contemplatives, you gotta get up, man, put the book down, because you can’t see a lost and hurt, dying world through that book. It’s time to put it down, get your boots on, get in the game, get something done. That’s the way that it works: Action and then rest to replenish you to go back to action. For those of you who are contemplatives, you do too much resting, chilling, Jesus time. Those of you who are active, you need to schedule it, you need to make it happen.

Now, this is different than isolation. Solitude is a good thing, isolation is a bad thing. Isolation is where you don’t want a roommate if you’re single. If you’re married, you don’t want to really go to heart and have deep-level conversations with your spouse and kids. It’s where you don’t want to go to community group, you don’t want to be a member of the church, you don’t want anybody in your business. Isolation equals danger. Solitude is: You’re in your community group, you’re in your church, you’re serving, you’re doing your job, working, going to school, pouring your life out and occasionally you withdraw to enjoy the other disciplines: rest, prayer, Bible study, worship, journaling, more of the contemplative side of life.

THREE KILLERS OF SOLITUDE

Now let me say this: There are three main things in my experience that don't allow the kind of solitude that Jesus enjoyed.

1. THOSE PEOPLE

Okay, number one are those people. Jesus has those people. That's what Luke just told us. The crowds came around him, they kept following them, they were following him everywhere. They wouldn't leave him alone, they just had to be with him. They were those people. Have you seen that old movie *What About Bob?* Okay, it's like that. Now let me tell you about those people. Those people are always needy, always demanding, always hurting, everything's a crisis, it's always urgent. "You're the only one. I can't do it without you, please save me." You're like, "That's not my job. I'm not savior, I'm servant." And these people they call and they text and they e-mail, and sometimes in the same minute they call. You're seeing it and you're like, "I cannot answer that. It's them. They are gonna take my life. I'll let it go to voice mail." And then they text, "Did you get my voice mail?" And then they e-mail, "Did you get my text about the voice mail?" Those people. And then they show up at your house. Right, in every social network, group of people, every community group, every circle of friends has that person, that person. Some of you say, "We don't." Well, then you're it. You are. I hate to break it to ya, you're that person. Ha, ha. Everyone in your community group now likes me more. Yes, true story. There's those people.

2. NOT PLANNING IT

Another thing that kills solitude, number two, is that it is not planned for. All right, I mean, if you just go, go, go, go, go, go, go, and you don't plan for a bit of a break, it never does come. So this is where you put it on your calendar. To be honest with you I've been on a—it's been crazy. It's been a 6-week sprint. Preached in a lot of states, I've been to another country, it's a little goofy. And I'm coming up on that time where I really need that day, so I've got it scheduled and I'm gonna mark it out. But if I don't mark it out, it never happens. Some of you know it, you've got a job, you lead a community group, you're serving in ministry, you're married, you got kids. You got little league's comin', soccer's already here. You know and unless you say, "I gotta take a few hours this day, I gotta take a half a day or a day this day, I need to go out to the mountains, I need to get with Jesus, I need to have my bucket refilled," it will never happen.

And if you don't know what to do on those days, there is a series of blogs on how to get a day of silence and solitude that they actually put at marshillchurch.org. It's all free, kind of lays out the theology of a day of solitude to get with God and also gives you a journaling template that may be of help and service to you.

3. TECHNOLOGY

Those people, not planning it, and number three: technology. Technology is gonna kill solitude. You can go the rest of your life, and through technology, never be alone again. Never be alone again. Cell phone, laptop, Wi-Fi, car radio, TV at home, Twitter, Facebook. I mean if everybody was honest they're Twitter account would always say, "I'm Twittering," 'cause that's really what you're doing, all right. You live in this world where you can be connected, plugged in, communicating with others to the neglect of God continually. You could go the rest of your life without ever hearing the voice of God because there's too much noise, or talking to God because you're too busy talking to everyone else. And so it is turning off the phone, it is shutting down the technology, it is actually going out to be alone with God, to read your Bible, pray, repent of sin, journal, worship, go for a walk, enjoy his creation, get some time with the Father.

Now to do this is gonna be a discipline. I'll give you two things that I think might be of help to you. One: Jesus did it. Two: You will die without it. I don't know how to motivate you more than that. One: Jesus did it. Two: You'll die without it.

So number one: Pour yourself out in ministry, like Jesus did, to the glory of God and the good of others. Number two: When your bucket's empty, pull back, get a break. Pull back, get a break. I was not very good at this. I blew out my adrenal glands. I had massive health complications. I absolutely hit the wall a few years ago, and I've had to really put in a rhythm of silence, solitude, getting some time with God. I've had to change my diet, forty-two vitamins a day. It's a lifestyle orientation, because so many of you have found that really you don't have a job, whether it's ministry or not ministry, it's a lifestyle. It's an all-consuming, ever-present, continually-demanding lifestyle. And the myth is it will get better in the next season and the next season never comes. So for me, it was a decade of just go, go, go, go, go, go, go, until I broke. And I would have said, "I did it for Jesus." No, I did it foolishly, I did it selfishly, I did it arrogantly, I did it proudly. Today I get more done, but I sleep better and my health is in a better condition and part of it is that silence and solitude, because you get busy working in your life, but you don't get time to work on your life. Pull back, take a look at it. "Jesus, where am I at? Where are we? How am I doing?" And then reengage back into it. And so it is, in every way, working in your life, and then working on your life, pouring yourself out in ministry and then getting some time with God to clear your head and get your bucket refilled.

3. PURSUE YOUR CALLING, NOT YOUR POTENTIAL.

Number three, here's what Jesus does: Pursue your calling, not your potential. That's the big idea. Luke 4:42, the second half of the verse through 44. "And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, but he said to them, 'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.' And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea." So Jesus comes out of his silence and solitude time, his desolate day, and what happens is everybody says, "Glad you're back, here's the to-do list. We saw ya heal people. We started this little healing ministry. We saw you cast demons out. We got a line of people who have demons. You preached a good sermon. We're renting a stadium. This thing is ready to roll, all plugged in. Here's your job description. Set up shop here in Capernaum. We're ready to go." Jesus says, "No, no." You say, "Why? 'Cause those are bad things?" No, those are perfectly good things, but they're not the things that Jesus was called to by the Father.

And he clarifies his call. He says, "I must preach. I was sent." So he's a preaching missionary, that's his call, that's his thing. What he's saying is, "I'm not against healing, but I'm not starting a hospital. I'll heal some people along the way. I'm not against casting out demons, but I'm not gonna set up the

weekly exorcism show under the big tent. I don't mind praying for people, but it's not gonna be me doing, you know, 60, 80 hours a week of praying for people. I'll pray for people along the way. I'm gonna heal some people along the way. I'm gonna cast out some demons along the day, but here's the big idea: I can't set up shop here in Capernaum. I gotta go. I gotta go to this town and this town and this town. I gotta preach in this place and this place and this place. I gotta open the Word of God. I gotta proclaim the grace of God. I gotta call sinners to repentance and I gotta get on the road. I gotta go introduce people to the truth. That's what I need to do."

And what can happen is, and this is true whether you're in business or ministry, you pursue your potential instead of your calling. I was reading even a *Harvard Business Review* article recently, I love that magazine. And they said that what companies do is, they get arrogant. They'll succeed at one thing and then think they can do anything so then they take something on that is out of their specialization and they fail miserably. Why? Because they're pursuing their potential, not their calling. They're chasing all the opportunities rather than the handful that they should. What is true of organizations is true of individuals. You have more things you can do than things you should do. If Satan can't make you sin, he will keep you busy, not doing bad things, but neglecting first things. That's a tactic, that's a trick, that's the way that he works. And so they come to Jesus with a list of actually decent things to do. And Jesus says, "No, that's not my calling. I'm a preaching missionary. I gotta go. I gotta go preach to some new people."

Now, here's how you get a sense of your calling, it has to come in silence and solitude. I don't think if Jesus hadn't had that day—or however long it was—of silence and solitude with God the Father to pray, to go back to Scripture, to journal, to listen, to clarify his call, I don't know if walking back into Capernaum, he would have had as much clear focus. "I can't do this and I can't do this, because God told me to do that. God the Father told me to do that." And see, that's you. That's you. People always come up to leaders in the church, "I don't know what to do, I don't know what—" You know what? You gotta go get with God. And you gotta look in the Bible and say, "Well, who am I like in the Bible? Maybe that will help indicate some of my skills. Where are my passions? What am I interested about? What am I good at? What things has God already used me for? Where do I see a need? Lord Jesus, what is it that I need to be doing? All right, where are the niches and corners of your kingdom where my involvement could be most effectively utilized, that I could really be a help to others and the forward progress of the gospel and the betterment of my church?"

And that comes from getting time with God, and I tell you that as a guy that my whole life comes out of this. I mean this is down at the roots for me. God saved me at the age of 19. I was a sinful guy like everybody else and Jesus saved me. I was reading the Bible. I was convicted of my sin. And Jesus is God and he died on the cross and he rose for my salvation, and I belong to him now. And I remember reading Romans 1, I wrote it down verse 6 where it says "And you also are called to belong to Jesus Christ." And God called me to himself in that verse. And after that I was wondering, "Okay God, my whole life's changed now. I belong to Jesus, these aren't my hands, these are Jesus' hands. All right, this is Jesus' body, this is Jesus' life. Whatever I make, that's Jesus' money. These days, those are Jesus' days. Jesus, what do you want me to do? I'm yours now, I belong to you." I remember being at a men's retreat praying, "God, just tell me what you want me to do." And God actually audibly spoke to me. And no, this doesn't happen all the time, and I'm not gonna give you a double-back money guarantee that if you take a day, God's gonna show up and talk to ya. I can't make God do anything, but here's what he did for me. He said, "Preach the Bible, marry Grace, train men, and plant churches." Four things, clear as day.

Some have asked, "What did it sound like?" Authoritative, that's what it sounded like. I've had people say, "How do you know that was God?" That seems like something God would say, right? Preach the Bible, marry the pastor's daughter, plant churches, and train men. I think, yeah, that was the red line, that was a direct call.

So that's what I've been doing ever since. So when opportunities come or things come, it's like, "That's not bad, but that's not me. That's not bad, that's not me. This is what I need to do. I preach the Bible. I train men. I plant churches, and I still like Grace." That's what I'm doing. And for you, you need that kind of clarity, and this might come over time, this might come out of study, this might come out of experience, but it's retreating from your life to focus on your life to get clarity to reengage in your life and pour yourself out in ministry.

But here's what happens for those who don't have a sense of calling: They exchange busyness for fruitfulness. Christians do it all the time. "I'm busy, I'm so busy. I'm stressed out. I'm always going." Yeah, but you're not fruitful, you're like a crazy person. Oh yeah, you're frantic and frazzled and busy and sweating and active and stressed and accomplishing two heaping handfuls of jack squat. You know, you're not getting anything done or you're doing ten things poorly rather than two things well. And the key is to be fruitful, not just busy. Too many people exchange busyness for fruitfulness. Jesus had that absolutely set before him. "Jesus, we'll keep you busy." He pulls back, and says, "No, that's not my calling. I need to be fruitful. I'm a preaching missionary. That's who I am. That's why the Father has sent me."

FOUR WAYS TO LIVE YOUR LIFE

Now, here I'll show something to you from Wayne Cordeiro, he's a Foursquare pastor. He's got this little chart in a book called *Leading on Empty*. And it's a good little book for those who are burnt out in ministry. I read it every day. Just kidding. But I've read it a lot. It's very good. He says there are four ways to live your life.

1. REACTION

Number one, he says is, reaction. Reaction is this: There's a need, you jump. Someone's hurting, you help. Someone pushes, you submit. Someone demands, and you obey. All right, you're just always in reaction mode. It's go, go, go, go, go; it's not be, be, be, be, be. It's not pulling back to get that time with Jesus. It's letting everybody else tell you who you are, letting everybody else—it's just reaction. It's always chaos, crisis, urgency, no plan, total insanity, life is out of control, that's reaction.

2. CONFORMITY

Conformity is: Fear of man, people pleasing. "I want everybody to like me, say nice things about me, so I function more like a concierge at a hotel. I just sit there with a smile, anybody comes and tells me to do something, I say yes, and I go do it." Obedient, moral, compliant, really nice, super sweet, totally ineffective, getting pushed around by pushy people, demanding people. All right, you're kind of like a golden retriever, right, somebody throws a Frisbee, you're gonna go get it. That's just how it is. "I need you to do this. I need you to do that. I need you to do this about this. I need you to meet with me. I need you to give me that." "Okay great." You're just chasing everybody's Frisbee. And sometimes in church it's like, "Oh, they're so nice. They're so helpful. They're so serving." No, they have fear of man issues, they're people-pleasers, they're co-dependent. They're enablers. They just want everybody to like them. And as a result, they don't pursue God's calling, because they're allowing everyone else to define their calling.

3. INDEPENDENCE

Number three: There are those who are independent. These are Mars Hillians. These are people like, "That's right. So I don't submit to authority. I'm not gonna be a member of the church. I'm not gonna do what a pastor or a leader tells me to do. I'm not gonna get in a community group and have people speak into my life. No way. I'm gonna come in anonymously, I'm gonna go out anonymously. If I don't like something, I'll complain about it but I'm certainly not gonna fix it. I'm independent. "And yeah, I read the Bible sometimes, but if God tells me to do something I don't like, well, then maybe not." Fiercely independent, intuitively rebellious, too-cool-for-school, Mars Hillian. That's us, number three. There's a few of you that aren't, all right, but you guys can have a conference in a phone booth. The rest are almost all in category three. So we could just hammer you and the whole time you're like, "I don't believe in authority." Yes, you do. You're god, that's your authority, that's independence. "I do what I want. I do what I think. I do what I need. I'm in control. I'm in charge. I'm very smart. I'm connected to God. I have my own opinions. No one has a right to intrude on my life or to exercise any spiritual authority over me." That's independence.

4. INTENTIONALITY

Number four is intentionality. Jesus was tempted with the first three. Reaction: Massive need but he didn't chase all the Frisbees. Conformity: Everybody wanted to write his job description but he wouldn't sign the contact. Independence, he could have said, "I'm sick of you people. You know, I cast demons out and you guys don't even let me get lunch. That's not very nice. I went to Peter's house and I had to heal someone. I didn't even get to use the restroom. You know, I'm just sick of it. I don't feel like anybody loves me, anybody cares about me. Everybody's using me." He didn't, he didn't rebel. He didn't go independent. He didn't become jaded like one of those people who hates ministry and hates God's people and is always talking smack.

He went with number four, which is intentionality. Retreat from your life to focus on your life and organize your life and then reengage your life. Pour yourself out in ministry, go to silence and solitude, get some time with God. Think about your calling and your gifts and your convictions and your compassions and needs, and then live your life intentionally. You say, "I can't do this, 'cause God told me to do this. I can't do that, 'cause I'm actually not any good at it, but these are the gifts that God has given me. I'm sorry, I can't do that now. That's not the season of life that that's gonna work for me. Maybe the day will come." Intentionally living your life to pursue the things that God has gifted and called you to, that's how Jesus lived his life.

Number one: Pour yourself out in ministry. Number two: Refreshment, recovering in solitude. Number three: Pursue your calling, not your potential. Don't do everything you can do, do the things that God wants you to do.

4. TRAIN OTHER LEADERS.

And now what Jesus is gonna do, number four, he's gonna add new leaders, 'cause once you're overwhelmed in ministry and everything's growing, as it is at Mars Hill Church, and it is that way at Mars Hill Church. We grew by almost two thousand people last year. We baptized over eight hundred people. We saw, I don't know, maybe a thousand people make professions of faith. I don't even know how many campuses we started. I don't even know. I had somebody this week, I was down in California doing some events. They say, "How many pastors do you have?" I don't know, somewhere between a Miata and a stadium, I don't know, it's in the middle. I don't know, we have a lot, and there's more in the pipeline. And we're looking at starting new campuses and we're planting churches and people are getting saved and hundreds are in redemption groups and thousands are in community groups and yeah, we're a kite in hurricane. The needs are unbelievable.

And when you hit that point, it's then recruiting and gathering and training new leaders to share the load so that more work can be done, and that's exactly what Jesus is going to do next with the calling of Peter, James and John. He does it at the Sea of Galilee; so before we get to the story, let me take you to the geography. Here it is, that is the Sea of Galilee. Okay, I know I look really little. That's the point. The point is that the Sea of Galilee is huge. I don't know about you, but when I read about the Bible and I thought about the Sea of Galilee, I thought well, I got a pretty good arm. Give me a baseball, I could probably throw a baseball across that thing. No way. You get there, it's like thirteen miles by eight miles. It's a huge, huge lake, Sea of Galilee. You're gonna hear a lot about the Sea of Galilee in the book of Luke, so I want you to see how big it is.

I'll show you the next one. You're gonna hear about a boat, a fishing boat that Jesus got in to preach from, in a moment, and that Peter, James and John left to follow Jesus. That is actually on display in Israel. We were there this summer. It is the remains of a two-thousand-year-old fishing boat. So that's from the era of Jesus, it's like the boat that he was in. And what's interesting, today that area is still fertile with fish. There's a lot of fish still in the lake. People are still fishing there. And this is a modern-day boat and what is interesting, it's about the same shape and about the same size as the archaeological find from the days of Jesus. I show that to you so that visually you'll get an understanding of it but here's the big idea as well: Anytime I get an opportunity, I want to reinforce that the Bible is not philosophy, it's history, that these people, places, and things are real, that the Bible is true. So there really is a Sea of Galilee, there really were a lot of fishermen, they really did have a boat, and this is all really verifiable, okay?

That being said, we'll go to chapter 5 and we're gonna read about Jesus recruiting his first official leaders to partner in his ministry. "On one occasion,

while the crowd was pressing in on him—"Crowds around Jesus, lots of people. Why were they there? "To hear the word of God." Let me just stop right there. The basis, the essence, the center, the authority of ministry is the preaching of God's Word. People don't come to Mars Hill 'cause the parking is great, that's for sure. People don't come to Mars Hill because we're the most organized organization that's ever organized, that's for sure. They don't come because of my winsome disposition, that is for sure. But people come because the power and the authority is in the Word of God, that the Bible is true, that the same Holy Spirit who wrote the Scriptures through human authors, works through human teachers to change human lives. That's what our God does and so people are coming around Jesus, because he was preaching the Word of God. And when properly taught, the Word of God is always about Jesus. And I just need you to know that why we're a Bible-teaching, preaching, studying, praying, memorizing, discussing church is because the truth is in the Bible and the power's in the truth, and people are drawn to Jesus and their lives are changed by the power of the Word of God. And at the essence of Mars Hill, we fundamentally believe that, and we base everything on the expectation that God blesses his Word. That's absolutely essential for us. And if you're new, I love preaching to you, I love yelling at you. I will yell at you anytime, I enjoy it so much, but you need to be in the Scriptures for yourself; reading, studying, in community group, considering, pondering, meditating on Scripture, memorizing Scripture; that life comes from hearing the Word of God.

So the crowds come around Jesus. See, I still think there are crowds to be had around the Bible. I think where the Bible is taught, people show up, lives get changed. And there's a massive crowd, it says, around Jesus. "He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret," this is also the Sea of Galilee. The way that it works is that the sea is so big, the lake is so big that different towns have different names for it. So if you live over in this town on this side of the lake, you call it the Sea of Gennesaret. If you live over on this side of the lake, you live in Galilee, you call it the Sea of Galilee. So these are all just different towns, names for the same lake, but they live on a different shore.

"And Jesus saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets." What does that mean? It means the day's work is done, they've given up. They've pulled their nets in, they've ridden into shore. They've gotten their nets out, they're cleaning their nets so that they don't get damaged. This is the end of the day, right? It's your business, this is where we're locking up, we're shutting down the lights, we're totaling out the till, we're shutting everything down, the day's work is done. "Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's" or Peter's, he's the first leader that's called. He becomes the leader of the disciples. "He asked him to put out a little from the land." So here's what Jesus does, "And he sat down and taught the people from the boat." Jesus didn't have the benefit of amplification and sound system, right? And he's got a crowd pressing around him. It's very hard to preach when everyone's pressed in on you, because the acoustics don't travel. All right, the first few rows of people that are pressed in around you, they can hear, but nobody else can hear.

Historically, God has given some people, Bible preachers, amazing voices, like George Whitefield. He was a great Reformed evangelist, and it is recorded that he would preach to crowds upwards of fifteen or twenty thousand people in open air without an amplification system, and then he would cough up blood, but that's the cost on the vocal cords.

Well, Jesus needed to preach to this large crowd, so what he did was he grabbed Peter's boat. He already knew Peter. And he said let's push offshore a little bit. One, that gives Jesus some space between people. And two, it allows the water to serve as a natural acoustic. Jesus is into the technology of his day. All right, here's his Internet, right? This allows him to magnify his message, so it reverberates over the water. Have any of you been out on the water? You're boating or something or swimming and somebody talks all the way on the other side of the lake and you can hear them? It's amazing how sound travels over water in a way that it doesn't over land. Jesus is aware of all this and he wants his message to go out to as many people as possible, that's why we use technology for that same reason. So he goes out on the boat, so that he can preach to the people and they could all hear him.

"And when he had finished speaking," verse 4, "he said to Simon, "'Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.' And Simon answered, 'Master, we have toiled all night and took nothing!'" How long have they been working? All night. How tired are they? Very tired. What did they make? Nothing. And Jesus says, "I got an idea, let's go fishing." Now, is Jesus a fisherman? No, he's a carpenter. Is Simon a fisherman? Yeah. Maybe generations of fishermen. It wasn't uncommon in this area that if you were a fisherman, it's 'cause your dad and your grandpa and your great-grandpa were all fishermen. They passed down the boats, they passed down the nets, you'd live in the same place and you'd carry on the family business. There are certain places in the lake that the fishermen know that's where the fish generally are, particularly at a certain time of day. Jesus comes along, carpenter, tells Peter, "Let's go fishing." "Come on, Jesus. We fished all night. We've ridden in. We've cleaned the nets. The guys are tired. We didn't get any fish. I'm a fisherman, you're a carpenter. If this involved wood, I would defer to you."

Now how many of you, it really is hard, though, to take advice or even trust God in your area of expertise? See, there are things that you're an expert at, you're good at, and sometimes God will ask you to trust him in an area of your expertise, and it's hard 'cause you're like "Look, I know you're God, but I'm really good at this." And sometimes God asks you to do something that doesn't make any sense just to show you that he's God. So what's Peter gonna do? "But at your word I will let down the nets." Verse 6, "And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were," what? "Breaking." Jesus is like, "I told you we should go fishing, and you need bigger nets." "They signaled to their partners in the other boat." So he's got a fleet of boats; this is his company. "To come and help them." And they were both filled. And the boats were so filled "that they began to sink." That is a good day of fishing. This is the biggest load, payday, Peter's ever had. He fills up his nets, and they're sinking the boats. What does that show you? Shows you that our God can provide, our God does provide, and rather than arguing with him, sometimes we just need to obey.

So what's Peter gonna do? "But when Simon Peter saw it," verse 8, "he fell down at Jesus' knees and said, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'" Here's what I love about Peter. He is a guy who fails all the time. He is Charlie Brown of the Bible. He never gets his foot on the ball. He is always running, slipping, right on his back, that's Peter. And he always gets up and he's like "Jesus, I'm sorry again." Jesus is like, "I know Peter, I love ya." "Jesus, I'm sorry again." "Yeah, Peter, I know, I still love ya." "Jesus, I'm really sorry." "Yeah, I know, we've sort of done this a lot." And what I love about Peter is if you were gonna pick the leader of the disciples, name him first in the list of the disciples, make him the spiritual authority

—earthly speaking—of the early church, let him write books of the Bible, I'm so glad that he's a regular guy, who's not perfect at all.

He's gonna boss Jesus around. I mean, you're gonna see it later. He's gonna tell Jesus what to do. Jesus says, "Who am I?" Peter says, "God. Oh, and by the way, Jesus, you need to do this." Wait a minute, you're God and now I'm gonna tell you what to do? Like, that's a weird conversation. He's gonna deny Jesus later. He's gonna fail Jesus later. He's gonna fall asleep when Jesus needs him to pray for him. Do you know what? Peter is a guy who falls down, but by the grace of God, gets up. He's a guy who blows it, but by the goodness of God, he tries again. That's why I love Peter. All right, he goes from this guy who doesn't even trust Jesus for fish to when it's all said and done, after Jesus dies for sin and rises for salvation and ascends into heaven, he becomes the leader of the early church, writes two books of the Bible and they go to crucify him and he says, "Crucify me upside down." I mean, he changes. We call this progressive sanctification, all right. He's not incredibly spiritually mature and trusting at the beginning, but he's teachable and he's repentant and when he blows it, he owns it. And he keeps coming back to Jesus saying, "I'm sorry. Please keep working on me." I want that for you. Be that person, even when you blow it, go to Jesus, "I did it again, and I am sorry and I need your help and please don't give up on me. I know I'm a piece of work." That's Peter.

He goes on, verse 9, "For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon." So here's the big deal, who become the early core of disciples? Peter, James, John. They become some of the senior leaders among the disciples, and God works providentially through their preexisting business relationship and friendship.

Here's the big idea: Some of you really need to get involved in ministry, start serving, get stuff done. Statistically, about two-thirds of you, all right? You think Christianity is all about sitting in the bleachers rather than taking the field. And some of you will struggle 'cause you'll say, "Well, I don't know where to begin or who to start with or what to do." God, in his providence often puts people in front of you for the express purpose of bringing you together for kingdom reasons. Peter, James and John, they've got a relationship, a friendship, they work together. They have chain of command. They understand how to resolve things. They run a business. They know how to get things done, and as a result, they become a very effective ministry team. If you're married, you and your spouse gotta figure out what your ministry is. If you're a parent, you and your kids gotta figure out what your ministry is. If you're a single person with roommates, you gotta figure out what your ministry is. If you're in business and there's some other Christians in your business, you gotta start thinking about, "Does God want us to work together to, in addition to business, also do ministry or how could we combine our efforts, since we're already growing in our skill set of working together, to really go out and do something important for Jesus." Providentially, God puts in front of you people to work with. That's exactly what he does with Peter, James, and John.

IT'S ALL ABOUT EVANGELISM

"And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.'" It's all about evangelism. Okay, here's the drum I'm gonna beat. One of the most devastating things of being your pastor, and hear this from my heart, all right? I love this church. I am totally excited about what God is doing here, and like Jesus, sometimes I gotta go elsewhere and yell at other people, and then I come back and yell at you too. And I love what I do and I love what God is doing and we got good elders, we got good deacons. We just pulled up the giving, two-thirds of the church is giving nothing or near nothing, but all the elders and deacons are giving generously. It was awesome. The most generous people in the church are your leaders. Those who are serving are also giving, everybody's either in or not in, that's the way it works. It's always that way.

And at the end of the day, it's all about evangelism. Jesus looks at Peter and says, "You catch fish, what about people? What about people? What about my image bearers? What about the fact that they're sinners? What about the fact that there really is a hell? What about the fact that they really are going? Peter, could you take everything that you've learned in business; could you take everything you've learned in life, and utilize it, harness it, unleash it, so that non-Christians meet the God of the Bible; that their sins are forgiven, that their life is changed, that their destiny is altered?"

And this, Mars Hill, is what absolutely troubles me to my core. We enjoy so much of God's grace. We are a miracle. We are a miracle. What we enjoy is miraculous, miraculous. We grew by almost two thousand people last year, baptized eight hundred. It's insanity. Hundreds of people married, hundreds of children born. And at the end of the day, it seems like it takes about twenty minutes for someone to meet Jesus, get baptized, get in a community group, and retire. Done. If they even get to a community group, retire. "Great, my sins are forgiven, I met Jesus. I got some Christian friends, the church is there for me. I'm done." "What about all those other people?" "Tough." Some of you would say, "I would never say that I don't care about lost people." You vote with your wallet, you vote with your schedule. Don't tell me what you believe, show me how you behave. Don't tell me that Christianity is a belief system, it's also a lifestyle.

Mars Hill, there are tens of thousands of people that Jesus has appointed for us to introduce to him. Only God saves, we're just messengers and ministers, that's all we are. We are not done. See, 'cause what happens is you can get to a certain point, all of a sudden it's like, "I think we've done a good job." No. Every dollar, every day, every gift, every resource, every opportunity is so that someone else would meet Jesus and enjoy a changed life through him. This is my heart, I wouldn't have said years ago that I'm an evangelist, more and more, I am. I love non-Christians. If you're not a Christian, welcome to Mars Hill. We love you, we built this for you. We pray for you, we want to serve you. We're not asking for money from you. You're going to hell, and we're really worried about you. Jesus loves you. Jesus died for you. Jesus rose for you. Jesus will hear your prayer. Jesus will forgive your sin. Jesus will change your heart and your mind and your life. Jesus will impact generations of your legacy. Jesus is amazing. Jesus is good. Jesus is God. Jesus is alive. And the non-Christians that don't know that, that's why we're here. That's why we're here.

And some of you would say, "Well, what about this program and what about this need and what about my feelings?" Get on mission. You know what? Everything seems important 'til you have the kind of meetings that your pastors do. I mean, last week, it was a young gal, comes up to me. "I'm not a Christian, I'm cutting myself. My dad took my virginity." I don't care if you don't like the band. That is not as big an issue as this gal's situation. "Well, I had a hard time finding things on the web site." Whatever, whatever. "The coffee's bad." Of course it's bad, you guys are cheap. We can't afford the

good stuff, you know?

And I want you to be excited about what God's excited about, and that is fishers of men, non-Christians, people meeting Jesus. It's the most wonderful thing in the world to see people meet Jesus. I never get tired of it. At Mars Hill, this is the joy. It's for the glory of God and the good of others; that's what it's about. And Jesus looks at Peter, he's like, "Peter, let's change your life course. It's not about how many more boats you can get and how many more nets you can buy and how many more fish you can bring in. It's about people, it's about people who need me. Help me, help me get to them." That's the invitation to Peter. That's the invitation to all of us.

WHAT'S IT GONNA COST?

The question is, what's it gonna cost? Verse 11, "And when they had brought their boats to land, they left," what, Mars Hill, they left what? "Everything and followed him." They walked away, not just from the fish, the biggest catch they'd ever had. They also walked away from the nets, which were very valuable, and the fleet of boats. They walked away from their business. Now, see, some of you, you say, "I will follow Jesus providing it doesn't cost anything." And because we're such a grace-centered, grace-oriented, God's a generous God, he's a giver, salvation's a gift; some of you can fall into something called "cheap grace." "Oh, so life and ministry and people and church, it's all cheap." No, it's priceless. See, the reason God gives grace is not because his love is cheap, but because it's priceless. To be involved in ministry is priceless. The perpetuating of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Church of Jesus Christ is priceless.

And Peter leaves everything. What I love is he doesn't say, "Okay, Jesus, I'll be there in three months. First, we gotta take these fish in and collect this money, 'cause this is a lot of loot. And then, we gotta sell the nets, so we gotta put that on eBay. That could be a few weeks, we gotta knock that out. But then we gotta sell the boats, 'cause the boats are worth a lot. And once I get all that squared up and I get money in the bank and I get my affairs in order and everything's secure, then Jesus, I'm ready to roll." What he does, he just... "That's it, I'm following Jesus. I'm following Jesus." Am I saying every one of you should quit your job? No. Should some of you? Yeah, if God tells you to do that. It's amazing. They left everything.

I mean, we're in a day when following Jesus and seeing people get saved, for the average Christian, is not even in the—literally if you kept a journal—in the top 100 priorities, if you actually followed the dollars and the hours and how they were spent. Some of you don't even know your non-Christian neighbors. Some of you don't even care about non-Christians. Some of you don't even talk to them. And man, I just don't get it. Now, my heart is like a dad's, so whether you're good kids or bad kids, I'm still your dad, okay? I'm here no matter what. The elders feel the same way. We're here, but Mars Hill is an immature church. And here's the mark of immaturity, "It's about me, not them. It's about what I get, not what I give. It's about how I'm served, not how I serve. It's about what I want, not about what the city needs." It's the mark of immaturity. What does a baby think about? Themselves. What does an adult think about? Someone else. Some of you say, "Yeah, but we're a young church. We're single. We're new. We just started our campus. We just started coming." I know, but guess what? There's still a need, and if God has saved you, you're it. You're it. You're it.

They left everything, left everything. What are you willing to pay so that people would meet Jesus? I mean it really, man, there are days I just I bang my head against the wall, 'cause as we look at the statistics there are a faithful core of people who are serving and giving and praying and making it happen, and so much of what we enjoy is the fruit of their labor. And then there are so many people that are doing nothing. I mean, statistically, about a third of our people are giving or serving to any meaningful degree. The other two-thirds are doing nothing or next to nothing when it comes to giving and serving. Imagine that, imagine if after service I said, "Okay, three of you jump on one person's back and they'll carry you." You would say, "That's cruel," but that's what you're doing. Three of you are climbing on someone, "Pay my bills, serve me, take care of my needs." And what happens is then those faithful leaders, they get tired, they get burned out, they get exhausted. They don't get the day of solitude, like Jesus enjoyed. And then what even happens is then greedy, selfish consumers, life suckers, they come in and they say things like, "Oh, I didn't get my needs met or somebody didn't return my call or I don't feel like I was served very well." It's like, well, it's because there's a pig pile on one volunteer and they can only carry so many people until their legs buckle under them, and then to complain because you didn't like the free piggyback ride is not very loving. This is the same drum we've been beating now for fourteen years since we started the core group of Mars Hill Church about this time fourteen years ago. We have the same issues, just more zeros.

FOUR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I'm gonna close with four questions for you to ponder and to discuss with your community group, and if you're not in one, get in one. Number one: Are you pouring yourself out in ministry? What are you doing? What are you doing? You say, "Well, I'm thinking about." No, what are you doing? "I'm praying about it." No, what are you doing? "Well, I've been—" What are you doing? I talked to a guy recently, he said, "I've been coming for seven years and I think God's calling me to do something." "Yeah, you think? Seven years, seven years, seven years." Did I say that? You gotta be kidding me. I said, "Well, what's your background?" He said, "I went to seminary." "So you know the Bible. Do you know any of the parts where it says to do stuff? I mean, I had someone recently, had been coming for three years, they said, "You know what, I think it's time I do something." "Yeah, I think so. "Do anything. Do the wrong thing, just get started. Least we can course correct. Do anything." Some of you say, "I don't know what to do." Look, here's what you do, you want to be an usher? Great. You want to be a greeter? Great. You want to be in a band? Great. You want to work with kids? Great. Junior high, high school? Great. Little kids? Great. Lead a community group? Great. Host a community group? Great. You say, "Well, I'm shy." Great, you can write code on the computer. You can come count money at the office. You can serve in janitorial. You're a construction guy? You can help with the building. Right? You know how to organize things. We're very disorganized. You'd be a great help to us. You say, "Well, I'm a graphic artist." Great, 'cause we could use you, film, video, whatever, we got all kinds of needs, everywhere, whatever you got, we probably need it. Say, "I don't know how to get plugged in." Fill out that card. There's a little piece of paper. A tree gave its life, right? Make it count. "Hi, my name's so and so and I'll do whatever it is." Stop by the information desk. "Hi, I need to do anything. Give me anything to do." And like Jesus, you go do some

stuff and then you pull back and figure out what you need to focus on. You don't find your perfect thing out of the shoot. You go do a few things and then you focus in on what you're really good at. Or you can go to The City, which is our online social networking tool. Under your campus, you can click on service, and just actually send in a request and they'll help plug you in.

All right, it's time to get into membership. It's time to get into a community group. If your community group's full, you walk up to your community group leader. The best way to get something done at Mars Hill is just walk up to the leader. You're a musician, walk up to the worship leader. "Hi, I play an instrument, how do I need to audition?" You're in a community group. Walk up to the community group leader, "I want to be a community group leader. I want to be a community group host." You're in a redemption group, walk up to the leader, say, "You know what? I'm here. I want to help those who are addicted and abused. How do I get started, how do I get trained?" You want to plant a church? We plant 'em. Let Acts 29 know, we'll assess ya. You want to get more theological training? We have a master's in missional leadership. If you prove yourself faithful as a member, we have a full formal coaching system that lasts a year to help you get your whole life teed up to be fruitful for Jesus. There are training mechanisms for anything you can imagine. You let us know who you are.

And here's the deal, some people say, "Well, I sent in an e-mail in 1998 and nobody got back to me, so I quit." Really, that's the threshold of pain? "I would die for Christ, but I didn't get an e-mail." You know, then here's what you do, you keep sending the e-mail, you keep calling. Maybe you volunteer for the team that answers the e-mail 'cause obviously there's a hole, right?

Here's what I'm gonna do. I didn't plan on doing this but I'm just sort of freaked out. All right, so if you are an unpaid volunteer in the church serving, please stand. And I know this will be weird at the campuses, but that's okay. If you're a volunteer, please stand, please stand. Look around, look around. Nice. Okay, now stay standing. Stay standing. Some of you shy people want to sit down. You're killing these people. You say, "What do you mean by that?" I mean you're killing them. Now you look around, there's way more of you than there are of them. These are ushers, greeters, worship team leaders, redemption group leaders. These are people doing biblical counseling. These are people leading community groups. These are people who are tired. You know what they don't need? More guilt. You know what they don't need to do? Give more money. You know what they don't need to do? Give more hours. You know what they're gonna do hearing this sermon? Kill themselves, because they're gonna do more, and you know what they need to do? Less. They need to get a day with God. They need to get their silence and solitude. They need to take a nap. They need a break. Okay, that's you. Okay, you guys can sit down. You guys are our heroes, the rest are our zeros, okay. True. Some of you are like, "I can't believe he said that." Well, I'll say it again, some of you are zeros on the Richter scale of fruitfulness, zeros. Put the book down, go do something.

Okay, so number one: Are you pouring yourself out in ministry? Some of you aren't. These people are, most of you aren't. Number two, for those of you who are pouring yourself out in ministry, rest and recovery and solitude. What's that look like? Are you getting your time with God? Are you getting your break? Maybe the silence and solitude template on our blog would be helpful. Get your break. Here's what I don't want, every time I hammer, hammer, hammer, the faithful people do more and the unfaithful people continue to do nothing. That's not what I'm going for. I want to honor those who are doing things and I want to assault those who are not, with the love of Jesus deep down in my heart.

Number three: What value do you place on ministry? Have you ever asked yourself this, "What does Mars Hill mean to me?" I know we love Jesus, but I love the Church, I love this church. Jesus gave his life for the Church, we need to give our lives for the Church. What does ministry mean to you? For Peter, James, and John, it meant everything. They walked away from everything. I mean, if you showed up today at Mars Hill and we were shut down, would that even trouble you? If your campus doesn't make it, is that gonna bother you? Or it is just like, "Well, you know, look, I'm a consumer. It's just like Burger King, if it shuts down, I go to Wendy's. It doesn't bother me."

Number four: Are you getting trained and training others? Okay, are you getting trained and training others? See, Jesus reached the point, he needed help, so Peter, James, and John, and then they're gonna add more. Are you getting trained through the community groups or the redemption groups or whatever it is that you want to serve, security, kids? Like I said, all these opportunities, have you made yourself known, and have you been working on getting trained? For those of you who are leading things, I think maybe you need to do less and train more. You need to identify those people, like Jesus did, to invest in them.

THE MIDDLE COUNTS

Now, here's what I'm gonna close with. Christianity is not just about accepting Jesus, his death, burial, resurrection, in your place for your sins so you can go to heaven when you die. That's true, but it's also so that you can live passionately for him in this life making it count, not blowing your dollars, not blowing your days but giving your life to the glory of God, the good of others and getting some good stuff done. That's what life's all about. And too many of you have believed an incomplete, half-hearted gospel that is "Accept Jesus and go to heaven." So in the middle, you're on vacation. You're just sort of hanging out, depressed. "I don't have meaning in my life. I think I need yet another flat screen TV. You know what I need to do, I need to go to see *Avatar* 'cause I got nothing else to do with twenty bucks." Or "you know what I need? I need to increase the number of Facebook friends that I have or I need to tweet more. I'm depressed. Or "I need a hobby or a pet." People are dying and going to hell. Feel free to see the movie, Twitter, and pet the dog after first thing's first.

I had this conversation with Gideon, he's four. It wasn't exactly like this, but I had this conversation with him, my son. And we're always talking to him about Jesus, God, Jesus is alive and Jesus is good. And his brothers kept trying to close him. All right, they're like, "Giddy, you want to become a Christian?" He's like, "No." I appreciated the stone-cold honesty, but I was concerned. And Gideon is like, "No, I don't want to be a Christian." So finally his brothers talked to him. They're like "Giddy, you want to give your life to Jesus?" He's like, "Not now." "Well, when?" "It's gonna be a long time." Pastor dad's having his own little earthquake. "Really?" So we kept talking to Gideon, trying not to pressure him or cajole him. Here's what he said, he said, "Daddy, I love Jesus, but I don't want to be a Christian 'cause I'm not ready to go to heaven." Somehow in his little four-year-old mind,

he thought if you give your life to Jesus, immediately, zing, you go to heaven. And he said, "I still got T-ball and I want to go to school and someday I'm gonna get married, and I'm gonna have kids and be a dad." Like he's got a to-do list of stuff he wants to get done, at four. Actually a good list. Like "I want to hit a ball, marry a girl, make some babies. I got stuff to do, all right?" So I said "Buddy Gideon, here's the deal, man, if you accept Jesus, you don't immediately go to heaven, that's later." He's like "I'm in. I'm in." So Gideon repented of his sin, gave his life to Jesus.

But it was so weird 'cause Christians describe Christianity that way so much. "Give your life to Jesus and then when you die you go to heaven." We miss the whole middle. The middle's huge. The middle matters, the middle counts. The middle's now, the middle's you, the middle's us. Pour yourself out in ministry. Get your solitude with God. Pursue your calling, not your potential. We need ya. God bless ya. I'll pray.

Father God, I pray against the enemy and his servants, their works, and effects. I pray, Lord Jesus, for the Holy Spirit to motivate us to be a people who are trained for ministry and train others for ministry. I pray for this church, God, you've been so good to us, and we have been so unfaithful to you. Not all of us, God, there are some amazing people in this church. There are people who have given their life, they have made enormous personal sacrifice and, God, they are, in the right sense, heroes. And God, there are a lot of people that are zeros. They've done nothing, given nothing, complained about anything. Lord God, for those that hear this message, those who are not Christians, I pray that they would see that Christianity is not just about dying and going to heaven, though that's true and wonderful. It's about meeting Jesus and making your life count here too. Widows, orphans, those who are sick, dying, those who are stuck in sin, those who are depressed and without hope, those who are harassed by the enemy, God, they need, they need Jesus. I pray, God, for those of us who are Christian. I pray God, for those who are pouring themselves out and they're frustrated. They're sick of it. They're tired. They're giving up their days off. Their phone's ringing off the hook. They're overwhelmed with needs. They probably got family and jobs and a bunch of people that are just climbing on board and exhausting them. I pray, Lord God, that they would get their time with you and that you would clarify their call to them. And God, I pray for those who aren't doing what they ought to do, that they would do, they would do much for the glory of God and the good of others. Amen.

[End of Audio]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.