

THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

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...for granted, the concept of the sacrifice, in our culture which is so entertainment oriented and our whole life is based upon [UNCLEAR] get, help us realize, father, that we don't come here to stay; we came here to go. And remind us, Lord, that we didn't come here to get; we came here to give, and that being our heart's desire today as we humbly ask that you'd be pleased once again, Father, to open our eyes that we might behold you more clearly for Christ's sake, and may it be so, for His Name. Amen.

Continuing our examination of the major theme, the formation and function of the church. Again, we're going through the series of Mark Dever's little book, or the outline at least, on a healthy church. The word "healthy" is the word that he uses, that I use, to describe a church that is alive and that is growing—growing in grace and expanding in size. Healthy means that's it's not perfect, but that we're moving in the right direction hopefully.

We've been looking at the essentials of a healthy church. The first one we looked at several months ago was the fact of expository preaching, and essentially that means why is it the pastor in the pulpit chose to say what he said? Why did he choose to say that? What's the basis of his saying that? That would be expository preaching where essentially you expose people to the Word.

Based upon our understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture, the Scripture is sufficient to give us everything that we need for life and godliness, as Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1. The word "life" there means quality of life, and the word "righteousness" means worship rightly directed.

We come from a position in the church suggesting that the church really must have its basis on everything that is said from the pulpit or from the ministry as a result of exposing people to the Word, to the Scripture. Jesus tells us, "Sanctify them by thy truth. Thy Word is truth," so how is it somebody's going to be set apart, to be all that God desires them to be and to give away what He's given? It's going to be coming as we are exposed to the Word. That's expository preaching.

The second thing as Bishop Rogers taught us a couple of weeks ago, the second ingredient, would be biblical theology. That our decisions and our platform of thought is based upon the biblical theology. The word "theology" means, essentially, the study of God. The more we understand the person and work of God, the more we're going to understand the decisions we need to make. The basis there is having the foundation of all of our decision-making process really is based upon a biblical theology. It's the God, not of human imagination, but the God of Biblical revelation is the one on whom we base our understanding.

Now we've been talking about biblical gospel. The Gospel, essentially, biblically, is the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person of Christ, the work of Christ, and repentance and faith. The handout that I gave you is the summary of my doctoral dissertation that I did on the Puritan View of the Pulpit, where I contrasted the content, not the style, but the content of the Gospel preached by the Puritans in the years 1566-1670 and contrasted that with what's going on in the world today from about 1820 to 1984. What you have on the outline there is a contrast between the two styles.

What you think of God determines how you're going to be involved in your evangelism. Your view of God shapes your methodology. When you look at the methodology of modern evangelism, it really takes you back to a certain view of who God is. When you look at the methodology of the Puritans, and their reformed emphasis on biblical theology, you would see that when you examine their methodology, it takes you to their understanding of who God is. It really starts with our second point of a healthy church

is biblical theology.

If you pull out your little sheet there, which is the contrast of these two different styles, as we saw, first of all, the view of salvation process is determined by the needs of man, whereas biblical evangelism, the process is determined by God, not by the needs of man.

We're down to number 6 right now. Modern evangelism would basically say the Holy Spirit's role is to persuade, to cause something to happen. Biblical evangelism would say that it is the Holy Spirit's job to apply. What is it the Holy Spirit applies? He applies truth. The contrast would be we need to persuade people to believe, to repent and believe, as opposed to preaching with conviction the truth of the salvation, the Gospel of Christ, that the Holy Spirit will apply that to somebody's life and cause them to respond by giving them a desire they never had before.

The critical ingredient is there...how can a dead man be persuaded to do something that he doesn't have a desire to do? You really can't do that. But yet, modern evangelism says the role of the Holy Spirit is to really persuade this person to [UNCLEAR] some action.

This had its roots in the 1820's with a man by the name of Charles Finney, who basically established what then was called the anxious seat. In an evangelistic campaign where the Gospel of Christ was preached, or Jesus was preached, he would have a seat over here that would be called an anxious seat. It basically was, it was his mentality that it was his job in the Holy Spirit to persuade somebody to go from this location over to this location to sit at this seat and then afterwards, you would persuade them, convince them, that they needed to choose Christ and invite him into their life.

That says something about your view of God. You see, you've got to understand this, guys. When you look at methodology, you look behind the methodology and it reveals your view of who God is. You look at modern ministry today. You look at the methodology and you go behind those methods and it really reveals their view of the personhood of God.

The Puritans would have what we would call an invitation, but it was a different thing. It was basically they would be preaching a biblical gospel and they would say you need to "close with Christ," was the phrase they used. "Close with Christ." That meant, essentially, repent and believe, but you can't do that. The Holy Spirit has to do something, and the Holy Spirit has to apply the truth that is preached.

In modern evangelism, the idea is that it is the Holy Spirit's role to persuade somebody to do something that they really can't do, and so you have to persuade them. So you do all sorts of things. You have the right music, you sing the right hymns, you give them the right time, you give them the opportunity to raise their hand, to sign the card, to walk forward. You give them something to do.

I want to read you a quote from a book by Leighton Ford. It's called *The Christian Persuader*. Essentially he is saying this is the role of the preacher, and that is to persuade somebody to do something, because until they do something publicly, they have not responded and it is their need to do something public to convince them that they did something that's correct. Here's what he says, "I'm convinced that giving, the giving of some kind of public invitation to come to Christ is not only theologically correct, but also emotionally sound. Men need the opportunity for expression. The inner decision for Christ is like driving a nail through a board. The open declaration of it is like thinking, clenching the nail on the outer side so that it is not easily pulled out. They must do something to convince themselves they've done something." That's basically the modern evangelistic style that says we've got to persuade people.

Please understand what I'm not saying. Every sermon is evangelical. It needs to be evangelical. Every

message, you need to be preaching to the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares; you just don't know who they are. So every message has got to have some degree of evangelistic or outreach to it. What the difference here is, what is the role of the Holy Spirit? Modern evangelism would say it is to persuade somebody to act. Now biblically, we would understand the role of the Holy Spirit is to apply. What the Father ordains, the Son accomplishes, the Holy Spirit applies. Then you go back to, as we'll see in a moment, did the sacrifice of Christ make your salvation possible or did it accomplish it? You see, there's a difference.

If you made it possible, there's a possibility you could come to Christ. Then that puts the emphasis upon my having to do something, to take opportunity of the possibility that exists. As opposed to, when Christ was on the cross, you were on his mind. You see, there's a difference. A huge difference when you realize this. The magnificence of the most compassionate, tender, loving, kind doctrine in all of Scripture, in my mind, is the doctrine of election, because God took something that was dead—me—and chose to, for reasons only known to himself in the council of his own will, chose to breathe life into me so that I would now have a desire to want to close with Christ, to come to Christ.

What it is, you see, the difference is, one says you've got to persuade somebody to do something, and the other one says it is the Holy Spirit's to apply what the Son has accomplished, what the Father has ordained. You see, it really goes back to your view of God. It really goes back to that.

When you look at methodologies, look through the method because it's going to reveal how they really think about God. How do they really think about the person and work of Christ? How do they really think about repentance and faith? You see, unfortunately, methodology really reveals our view of our theology. If you have a correct theology, you're going to have a right methodology. But often times we put methodology ahead of the message.

Remember what Paul says in Romans 1? "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel, for *it* is the power unto salvation for all who believe." What is the word "it"? It's a message.

Let me give you some understanding of what the Holy Spirit's role is. Essentially it's this. Go to John 16. Essentially, the Holy Spirit's role, in summary, is this—to convict us of our sin, to convince us of our sin, to convert us from our sin, and to comfort us in our new life in Christ. It is to convict, convince, convert and comfort. When we go to John 16, we see the work of the Spirit, really, is to glorify Christ, it is to call attention to the person and work of Christ, not himself.

We have all these conferences on the Holy Spirit. Now, certainly, I can't speak for the Holy Spirit, but as I understand his role and job description, is not to call attention to himself. That doesn't mean that we don't talk about the Holy Spirit, and we don't study the Holy Spirit. No, I'm not suggesting that. All I'm saying is we don't make the Holy Spirit the object of our worship. It is the person and work of Christ that is the object of our worship, because his role is to guide us into all truth, and to really help us understand who Christ. His ministry, his role, really, ordained by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit, is to call attention to person and work of Christ.

As we go to John 16, look at verses 7 through 15, "⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper," the Holy Spirit, "will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. ¹²I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." That's his job description, is to guide us into all truth. Not to persuade you to do something. How can you be

persuaded when you don't have the desire? If there's not the desire there, all the persuasion is going to be for naught. It's going to be essentially emotional manipulation. There could be a lot of emotional manipulation by saying, I'm going to sit there and persuade you to do something that you don't have a desire to do. That's why you see the first thing the Holy Spirit does is to convict us of our sin.

You'll notice the second thing is to convince you of it. Convince you of your unrighteousness. ¹³“he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me.” Now there's the role of the Holy Spirit, guys. It is not to call attention to himself. His role is to apply what the Son accomplished that the Father ordained. He's only going to say those things that are consistent with the person and work of Christ. How many times have you heard somebody say, “The holy spirit is leading me to do this”? Now that may be true. He certainly does lead us through the Word, but it's never going to be contrary to the Scripture nor is it going to be contrary the person and work of Christ because his role, folks, is to glorify the person and work of Christ. That's why you've got to have a Christ-centered biblical message.

His role is to convict us of our sin, to convince us of our sin, and then to regenerate us, to convert us from our sin. ¹³“he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” You see, the role of the Holy Spirit there, first of all, is to convict, then to convince, and then to convert. We can see that the spirit enlightens. He convinces us. You can see that in Ephesians 1:17. He regenerates us (John 3). He sanctifies us. The Holy Spirit is the sanctifier. We don't sanctify ourselves; the Holy Spirit sanctifies us. You see that in Galatians 5. He transforms our lives. You see that in 2 Corinthians 3 and Galatians. He gives us what we need to serve him.

The point here, guys, that I'm trying to stress is the difference between what is the Holy Spirit's role in the salvation process. Is it to persuade you to do something that you don't have a desire to do? Or is to give you that desire? You see the difference is you can't respond if you really understand that you're dead in your trespasses and sins. We can persuade somebody emotionally as much as we want.

Now please understand, that at conversion there's a lot of emotion, and there ought to be. But what is the genesis, or what is the originality of that emotion? Is it something that I conjure up in my own flesh, or is it something that has happened to me where God has now taken my heart of stone and replaced it with a heart of flesh; he now gives me a desire to want to be responding and to be obedient? You see, the key there is this concept of the desire that God gives you. That's regeneration. That's what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3—unless something supernatural happens. You see, much of modern evangelism has removed the supernaturality of the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. It's removed it because it's basically this—boy, if I can just persuade somebody to act, if I can just motivate them to do something. So much of modern evangelism has turned into motivation rather than a message.

We just have to be very careful that we understand the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. Essentially, it is to convict us of our sin, convince us of our sin and unrighteousness, convert us—regeneration—and then comfort us as we live our life in Christ. He gives us all the things that we need to do to serve him. When you look at your methodology, it really does reveal your theology.

Look at number 7. The preacher's role is to preach for decisions to battle the hearer's will. That comes right off the idea that if it is the Holy Spirit's role to persuade, I, then, in the voice of the persuader, what is my role as the preacher? I am to battle your will. I'm really going to take you on and I'm going to try to do everything I can get you to do something. Yes, the Scripture says you must do something, and that is to repent and believe. There is a response. So the invitation always is repent and believe.

Now I do need to say this. The Lord is going to use whatever he wants to use to bring people to Christ, so we don't need to be so hung up on do I have everything perfectly in order. You see, guys, the greatest thing God's given us is the message of truth. He's ordained, the Son has accomplished, and the Holy Spirit applies. That doesn't mean that we can be sloppy. I'm not saying that. But is God going to use modern evangelism to bring people to saving faith? Yes. And why is that? It's because he's ordained that. It's because the Son accomplished that, and because the Holy Spirit is going to guide them to a [UNCLEAR] of truth that they need to come to saving faith. Now that doesn't mean that we can be sloppy in our evangelism. I'm not saying that. But it doesn't mean this, that we have to be so right that everybody else is wrong. I'm not saying that. I'm saying that the Holy Spirit will use whatever truth is needed to bring that person to saving faith because that is something that the Father has ordained in eternity past that will occur.

The Holy Spirit will apply that because the Son accomplished it. Their salvation was not made possible; it was achieved. It was achieved. That's why you can have what I would call less than biblical evangelism and people will come to saving faith. Why is that? It's because God ordained that. Now that doesn't mean that we don't have a part in it. Absolutely we do. My point is this—we just need to make sure that we're proclaiming a biblical gospel because there's such a thing as what we would call a spurious conversion, which would mean a false conversion. When you look at the book of 1 John, which we studied about 15 years ago, there are seven tests of the person of true saving faith. They all start with this phrase, "if you say" or "if you profess, if you confess."

Basically the book of 1 John says this, "If you say you do—believe in the person and work of Christ—and you do, you act like, then you are. But if you say you do and you don't, then you're not." That's essentially 1 John. If you say you do and you do, you are. If you say you do and you don't, you're not.

You see, part of that is this. How many times have you heard somebody say, "Well he went forward years ago, but there's not much evidence in his life. But that's okay, because he became a Christian when he invited Christ into his life"? Now what's the evidence of that? You see, in modern evangelism, we evaluate it by responses. Biblical evangelism evaluates it by increased righteousness. There's a difference. We would say, in modern evangelism, after a football stadium is rented and we have a week-long rally...now granted, folks, many are going to come to saving faith, but that's because God has ordained, the Son has accomplished, and the Holy Spirit applies. It's not because we've got great techniques. It's because there's truth in that message of the doctrine of Christ and the salvation of Christ.

But there are going to be a lot of people who thought that something happened to them because they did something. They went forward, they said something, they said the prayer, whatever it is. Now that may be the point of their salvation. I don't know that. But there's got to be some evidence. You see, the way that we would evaluate it, we would say 30,000 people came to Christ. That's our evaluation—30,000 came to Christ, whatever number that might be. Contrast that with how the Puritan evangelists would evaluate what they would say was a revival. They would say this, "We'll come back into that community three to five years down the road and we'll see a couple of things. Was there decrease in crime? Was their increased righteousness? And was there more church membership?"

They'd go back and say, "We can't tell you if there's a revival occurred yet because we don't see the evidence yet. We need to see the evidence of the Holy Spirit applying a biblical gospel to that person, transforming their life, regenerating them, giving them a desire to live differently, and that's going to take some time. So we'll come back in three to five years, and then we'll look at has crime down. Is there increased righteousness in that community? And has church membership increased?" That's a sign that something has happened in the heart of that person who came to saving faith. You see, there's got to be some external evidence.

Our external evidence, in modern evangelism, is pretty relegated to how many people came forward or how many people signed the card or whatever it is. Now granted, we understand that many of those are true converts. We just don't know that. But there will be evidence in their life of that conversion because that is what the Holy Spirit applies.

Modern evangelism says today that the role of the preacher is to persuade you to do something, and you'll contrast that in number 7 with the preacher's role is to preach to the conscience to reveal truth. That's what we do. We reveal truth. Who is the one who is going to guide us into all truth? It is the role of the Holy Spirit who's going to call attention to the person and work of Christ. That's why you hear me pray, Lord, would your Holy Spirit fulfill his job description and that is to guide us into all truth. Apart from that we are powerless. With that we are powerful. Because it is the message unto all who believe.

***Brian:** If we're having a conversation with pastors and people that are going to churches who would, you know, really subscribe to the different Billy Graham Crusades and things along those lines. They're going to find all the good that it does.*

Absolutely.

***Brian:** So how would we, what [UNCLEAR] would come from that? I mean, yeah we talk about stories of conversion, but how is that detrimental?*

How is what detrimental?

***Brian:** Like stories of conversion or somebody who [UNCLEAR]...*

Alright, look at the life of our country. That's what bad. Our church is powerless. Do we really shape society? Or who shapes the church? Society shapes us. That's bad. All you have to do is look at the United States of America and I'll show you what's bad. Remember those figures that Bishop Rogers gave us last week. It only takes 20% of the population of a group to infiltrate change. We are 16% behind because, in that study... Pastor Rogers, help me if I've got my figures wrong...but there were 49% who said they were followers of Christ, but only 4.9% of those people were really living a lifestyle that was indicative of the Lordship of Christ in their life, and if society only needs 20%, we're 15% behind the ball. That's bad.

We have a lot of people, unfortunately, in the church who may think they are believers, but they may not know that, and I don't know that. It is not our role to go probing that. Our role is what? As the preacher, is what? Proclaim truth. Because what's going to happen? The Holy Spirit will guide those people into all truth. That is not our job to persuade and battle somebody's mind. It is to proclaim truth and let the Holy Spirit go.

I've told you the story about Charles Spurgeon. I had the privilege of preaching in the Metropolitan Tabernacle years ago. I was deeply moved by; I saw the podium that Spurgeon used to preach from. One day somebody said to him, "Why does it take you so long to get up to the pulpit?" Well there are 13 steps going up to the pulpit, and he would get on the first step, and he'd say, "I'm trusting the Holy Spirit. (step) I'm trusting the Holy Spirit." He would say that 12 or 13 times before he ever got to the pulpit because he said this, "I know that the Holy Spirit does not go before me. Nothing of eternal consequence will ever happen regardless of well I preach." You see, that's the difference.

What is bad is that we have a lot of people who are saying, "I am a follower of Christ," but is there evidence?

***Audience Member:** I guess the difficulty of having these conversations with them is they would say, “I am,” [UNCLEAR], “I’m lead by the Holy Spirit. I’m filled with the Holy Spirit,” so of course [UNCLEAR]. I’m just wondering how you have conversations with folks like [UNCLEAR].*

I’d talk about the Steelers. {LAUGHTER} I’m not going to convince anybody of anything. First of all, you’ve got to realize this. You’re not going to convince anybody. All you can do is take them to the Scripture. Again, your role in that conversation is not to be a persuader; it’s to be a revealer. You reveal the truth. Let the Holy Spirit work in that person because you can’t do that anyway. I really don’t have a whole lot of conversations like that because I know that I do not have the ability to convince them of anything. All I can do is say, “Well, I would encourage you to look at John 16 and see the role of the Holy Spirit. Now how do you think they’re going to do against the Ravens this week?” Because I realize that I can’t change their mind. Now I’m not making light of that. All I’m trying to say is it’s not our job to go in there and battle with their will to convince them. It may be that they want to engage in an in-depth conversation. Then you go to the Scripture. That’s where you get into your biblical theology, as Pastor Rogers taught us. You go in and have your conversation. Be founded in biblical theology.

***Ted:** I think it goes, it’s what I try to do, is throw a question at them.*

Sure.

***Ted:** It’s often better to leave a question than to leave an answer.*

That’s right.

***Ted:** It’s a question of what is their [UNCLEAR]...and I know what you’re saying, the doctrine of God, what do you believe about God and what do you believe about man. Who is man at his root and who is God at his root?*

Yeah. That’s it.

***Ted:** I was reading a book. I’m trying to think of the name of the book. It was written by a fella who’s one of the top professors, I think, at Wheaton or the one out on the West Coast. Dr. Donald Peace. He did an analysis of statistics provided by Billy Graham, Luis Palau and a number of others. He came up with the understanding that, he did a year of going forward at an evangelistic crusade. Only 5 to 15 percent of people are involved in a church. Think about that. The church is the body of Christ, and only 5 to 15 percent are involved in the body of Christ within a year after they went forward.*

Yeah, those are very revealing statistics. I had an interview, when I was doing my research, with an executive director of one of the most outwardly visible evangelistic ministries. Their perception was this. For every 12 people who come forward and invite Christ into their life, only three are going to survive. In other words, 9 are going to fall away. That was their understanding. They said this is what’s happening, this is reality. We’re going to have 12 people come forward, but only three are going to be involved in the church. That was their understanding, and I’m just thinking, you’re calling that evangelism? But you see, that’s what it was.

I’m belittling them because the Holy Spirit will use that ministry to draw them to Christ. Understand this, guys, it’s not up to you and me. We’ve been positioned to be proclaimers of truth. The Holy Spirit’s going to bring people to Christ when he wants to bring people to Christ. We’ll see that in a moment. It’s a matter of his timing, not ours. My point is this—if God had been pleased to put us in a position to proclaim truth, let’s really be truth proclaimers because that’s what’s going to really shape the body of

Christ.

Carl: *I think we have to recognize that as denizens of God's sacred Gospel, that you're right, we can't persuade anybody, but the message we preach might be for just one person.*

That's right.

Carl: *It might be for that one person, and if it's for that one person, that's what God intends for it to happen.*

It reminds me of something here of another quote, if I can find it here quickly. Forgive me for using some of these quotes, but they're pretty good.

Ted: *I'm listening to the conversations around me, and the question was asked, well, if you only have three that ultimately make it, why not just have a crusade for those three? I would say, simply, we're not to be guided by the results; we're to be guided by what is true. It's irrelevant almost how many people come forward.*

That's correct.

Ted: *If having a crusade and telling people they have a choice is not true, we don't say it.*

Audience Member: *That's where modern evangelism says we've got to be [UNCLEAR]...and that's not what we're after.*

Remember...you've heard me say this for years, guys, and it applies across the board. The only true evaluation of ministry is was truth proclaimed? That's the only way you can evaluate it. Was truth proclaimed? Now remember this, if you're in a conversation, one-on-one or in a group, and you've had the opportunity to proclaim the person and work of Christ, based upon a biblical theology, which is the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ, repentance and faith. Now when you've done that, you are successful, regardless of their response. The response does not determine the evaluation of your ministry. What evaluate in ministry is was truth proclaimed. If we don't have that, then we're going to start manipulating our message so that we get the response that we want.

In 1647, Jeremiah Burrows said this, my paraphrase, "When money becomes important, numbers become important, and doctrine is watered down." In 1647, when money becomes the issue, numbers become important and you water down the doctrine, because you won't get the numbers and you won't get the money. So what do we say today? How many churches are and debt? In debt. What are we looking for? I've heard somebody say in my own church, "We're not drawing in the right kind of people because they won't be able to sustain the building in the next 20 years." So you have the single parent, mom who comes in, who the Lord has been pleased to grant her saving faith. What's her tithe going to be compared to somebody else? You see, the real issue of evaluating ministry, guys, has really got to be one single thing, and that is this. Was truth proclaimed?

Audience Member: *At the root of all of this, if you really want to break it down to the bottom line, isn't it part of the problem the belief of the proclaimer? A lot of times from the pulpit, you think like a preacher [UNCLEAR] you've got to help God out a little bit. He doesn't really believe, you know, that the foolishness of preaching in their mind is just, it's sort of foolishness, so I gotta kind of help him out a little bit.*

No, that's right. That's the idea of we are persuaders. You see, notice number 7. The preacher's role is to

preach for decisions—we've got to help God out—to battle the hearer's will versus the preachers role is to preach to the conscience, to reveal truth. It really goes back to, guys, it goes back to what Bishop Rogers was saying. What's your biblical theology? What do I know about the personhood of God? What do I know about the personhood of Christ? What do I know about the personhood of the Holy Spirit? What do I know about the condition of man? Are men just sick? Therefore they can choose. Or are they dead in their trespasses and sins? You've got to go back and look at that? What is my belief of man's total depravity? What is their condition?

You see, all of that, your methodology really reveals your theology. You've got to take a look at the methods we use today.

Now here's an interesting fact I just learned recently. Another pastor was sharing this with me. In a recent study over the last 50 years, a group has determined—I'm not sure if it was Barna or one of the other consulting groups—but basically saying the biggest failure in church ministry in the last 50 years has been youth work. Biggest failure in the last 50 years of the church in America has been youth work. The number people who come through youth programs, who are mature in Christ now, proportionally is very, very minimal.

I look at my own church and the number of kids who when, 20 years ago, went through the youth program. Where are they now? I have no idea. But they found out this also. Those who were young—middle school, teenagers—who are now mature in their faith; the real critical ingredient was the number of adults who were in their life. It was not a church youth worker. It was the number of adults who gave them an understanding of maturity, mentored them in the faith. It was not the fact that they were involved in a youth program. The real difference was the number of adults who were in those kids' lives when they were teenagers.

Doesn't that sound familiar? The older men teach the younger men. The older women teach the younger women. Hmm, that's really original, isn't it? {LAUGHTER} You see, what we've done...you've got to look at our methodology.

I remember when I was the pastor of a church out in Chicago. We really struggled with...it was a new church. We were struggling with our youth work. The elders and I, the three of us, four of us, went round and round and round on this for several years. My position, coming out of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, was we need the guitar-playing, mustache-wearing, long-haired guy to be the youth director {LAUGHTER} because we need him to identify with. Fortunately, my elders were mature {LAUGHTER}, and I was less mature at that time. We ended up hiring, to be our youth worker a man in the church who was a 52-year old former high school football coach. Best youth worker I ever saw. Fifth-two years old. Bald. Overweight. But I tell you what, he could relate to their parents. Our youth work became parents. Youth work is dealing with parents, not kids. We had 50-60 fathers and mothers involved in the youth program because we wanted our youth to be around adults.

Now, of that group, that we started with back in the 1980's, six of those kids are now on the mission field. Six of those kids who grew up in that youth program are in the mission field. I hear from them frequently. So I look back and say I think those statistics are right. The greatest failure in the church is youth work, because we think its entertainment. We think it's getting them involved. Really, they need to be around whom? They need to be around mature older adults who can shepherd them, who can mature them, who can mentor them, who can guide them in the life of faith.

***Audience Member:** It even sounds like the greatest [UNCLEAR] is the mature elders not being mature.*

Absolutely.

***Audience Member:** If you don't have that guiding you, you don't change your youth.*

I mean, if they had done what I wanted to do, would have been another statistic. But I'm so grateful that in the struggle that we had as the elders, we went back to the Scripture, went back to the Word. We began to realize that the truth of this is we need to have older kids, mature people, dealing with their younger kids. So we're not going to reinvent some new paradigm and say you need to have a guitar-playing, mustache-wearing, long-haired guy leading the youth group. We're going to try to say how can we get our mature adults in the lives of these young kids. The result of that now is, you know, six of those young kids are now in the mission field, because they matured.

***Audience Member:** All this discussion is about [UNCLEAR]...parallel to what Frank talked about in parable of the sower?*

Absolutely.

***Audience Member:** The Word might go out, but it's not really on you, the sower, as to where you spread the Word. I don't know, I'm sort of [UNCLEAR]...*

My point a moment ago when I said whenever you have the opportunity to share your faith in Christ, to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ, repentance and faith, you are successful. That's because of this. You might be a seed planter, you might be a waterer, or you might be the harvester. You just don't know which one of those three you are. That's why, when somebody asks me, "How many people have you lead to Christ," my answer is, "None that I know of," but I have been the OB/GYN who's presided at their new birth because I know this. If they came to saving faith, somebody prior to me had watered something that somebody prior to them had planted. Absolutely, every time you see that you proclaim truth, you know that you're successful. It has nothing to do with the results of the response of the audience to whom you're sharing your faith, or whom you're teaching.

We've got to get it through our heads. You see, our orientation in America is the biggest, the best, the biggest. When was the last time you ever went to a pastor's conference and you had a pastor who is the pastor of 50 churches give a speech? No, you get somebody's who's got 3,000, 4,000. Because we're saying, "Well, what are you doing to get 3,000?" "Oh, you wrote a book? Let's look at your book. We're going to do the same thing that you're doing in Arizona and we're going to do it in Pittsburgh, because if it worked in there, it's going to work here." Well maybe, guys, the Holy Spirit wants to do something in that little church in Pittsburgh different than the one in Arizona. Let him have it. Proclaim truth. He'll show you what he's going to do. "I will guide you into all truth." Jesus says, "The Holy Spirit will show you what to do." You don't need to figure it out. Just proclaim the truth. You will be successful. We need to get it through our head that you don't evaluate ministry on the response of the audience because it is not our job to be a persuader; it is our job to be a proclaimer of the glorious wonderful Gospel of Christ.

***Audience Member:** I think, too, we forget that twice Paul was to [UNCLEAR] die, and if we're concerned about preaching the Word to others, showing them the Gospel, we need to make commitment to that person, not just to expose them to the Gospel, but to be their friend, to give yourself to them, that over time, the Holy Spirit will do this for you.*

Absolutely. Now guys, please understand what I'm not saying. I'm not knocking how the Holy Spirit has worked in evangelistic ministries. I'm not knocking that. All I'm trying to say is let's really understand where our power is so that we can be involved in the work of the Holy Spirit that is applying

what God the Son has accomplished, what God the Father has ordained. I mean, that is our base of power. We go back to what Bishop Rogers said. That's our biblical theology. When you look at somebody's methodology, you begin to understand their theology. All I'm saying is let's reverse it. Let's start with a theology that determines our methodology. You see, I'm just saying let's just reverse it. Therein can be the power that we have in the local church.

How about number 8.

***Audience Member:** Bruce, before you move on, on this whole topic of what's going on with youth ministry, let's turn it around a little bit. What are we doing as Brave Men to advance the youth ministries of our perspective congregations?*

Amen! Great question. Thank you for asking that. Everybody hear that question?

***Audience Member:** No. Repeat it.*

The question was let's reverse it say what are we doing as the Brave Men on Fridays, who get here ever Friday, have wonderful time together, what are we doing in our local church to enhance the ministry with young people? What are we doing? Are we giving away to somebody else what God has given us? That's ministry. What are we doing when we leave this place as it relates and impacts the youth of our church? Now that's why I really appreciated so much during the summer when some of you men have been bringing your sons and grandsons. That's really encouraging when I see that happening. Now I know we can't do it during the academic year, but to see a father bring a son, or a grandfather bring a grandchild, to these meetings on Fridays, has been wonderful. That's the real question. What am I going to do about what I'm learning? The question for us is how do I go back into my church and give it away, specifically with our young people? I'm over the hill. I'm a relic. I'm an antique. There's a next generation coming along, and I just want to try to figure out how I can equip them to keep the torch going. That's what we need to ask ourselves. That's a great question.

***Audience Member:** Bruce, as a youth worker for the past 20 years...*

Great.

***Audience Member:** ...to get other men, especially, to be involved is worse than pulling teeth.*

Yes it is. Speak to that. Thank you.

***Audience Member:** And I can tell you that, and I mean, seeing it, and you know, when you, I'm not well read, so when you start throwing some more statistics at me say alright, I start thinking back of the number of kids and how our youth ministry evolved to where, yeah, it went from entertainment to eventually kids told us, "We don't want that." So when we shifted gears and changed [UNCLEAR], you know what, instead of having a band, we're going to have another night where we're just going to sit with somebody with a guitar and kids are just going to pour out their hearts. That's one of the biggest things, is adults are not involved, and it is tough, and it's very hard.*

Thank you for speaking to that.

***Audience Member:** That comes from pulpit.*

It does.

Audience Member: *The pulpit, the pastor can say, "I'm all for adult ed", but they never press...I'm all for adults being involved in youth work. They never make that a priority in the pulpit. It doesn't happen. It just, that's a pastor who simply has an activity that needs to be filled, and you're the filler.*

Amen. That's...

Audience Member: *It's not happening here, but I've been around youth preachers who don't want adults around them. That scares me.*

Yeah, that's scary. That's a red flag. Yeah, that's very much a red flag.

Tom: *I think along with what Ted's saying, it's also important that the responsibility is with us because we're not just preaching inside the church. We need to preach outside the church. If we evangelize children, we'll get a church of children. If we evangelize women, we'll get a church of women and children. If we go out and evangelize men, we'll get churches of families, and that's where it all goes. The male role in the family in this society is so diminished, we have very immature congregations.*

Amen to that. Ted's got a great point I want to just conclude with. All ministry starts in the pulpit, guys. That's biblical theology. That's expository preaching. It's a biblical gospel. That's why these are the essentials of a healthy church. It starts with exposing people to the Scripture. It starts with exposing people to biblical theology. It starts with exposing people to a biblical gospel. Those are the three things. You remove those three things from a church and you can just watch it go downhill. That's bad. That's what I see happening. That's why I'm emphasizing these first three things of the ingredients of a healthy church. All ministry really starts in the pulpit. What the people hear in the pulpit is going the shape and drive the whole ministry of the local church.

Bob: *Bruce, I just wanted to make a comment. This is personal, but I think it's relevant. We talked about truth proclaimed and the youth development and who has influence in your life. When I look back on mine, like many of us would say this, yes there was a coach, yes there was a father and the mother, the parents, and yes there was a teacher. But in my case, and I think in all of our cases, there was another unusual people. In my case there was a janitor, there was a neighbor's wife, there was a barber, that had tremendous influence because they proclaimed truth and they gave me some piece of Scripture and it was very important. We all have, in our role, whatever that role is, we all have an obligation.*

Absolutely. Remember, ministry is giving away to someone else what God has given you. Guys, the Holy Spirit's been very, very gracious for these 16 years that we've been meeting, to give us a lot of stuff about himself, to call attention to the person and work of Christ. We just need to say as we walk out the door, "What am I going to do about what I just learned? And Holy Spirit give me the courage, the understanding, the discernment to know how I can give it away." That's what ministry is about. We're being equipped to be ministers, and that means you just give away what God has been giving us. May God give us the grace to do that.

Coach: *In regard to pulling teeth, to get men to involve themselves. I remember being challenged in a men's Bible study to help with the fourth graders. I was challenged to help in the Sunday school, fifth graders. I taught seniors for 25 years. When it came to me, I realized when I said, "No, I'm not going to help," I wasn't trusting the Lord. He says He'll be with me, and I was trusting in my own ability. Until I understood that, I didn't. Then when I understood it, I did. I think that's the biggest thing for all us. That sign up there says "Exit." It should say "Entrance." That's the world. Outside.*

Amen to that.

Coach: *That's a Sunday school man, teacher, that realizes that he's got to trust the Lord.*

Amen to that. Thank you.

Audience Member: *I just had one question on this whole thing with the youth and the men. We've been dealing with this stuff for years at our church. Isn't part of the problem, though, that we're trying to get dead men walking? We come, you know, talk about preaching the Gospel and sharing the truth, and we come back door and try to get dead men walking—dead. You're not going to do anything. If we try to get them to do stuff, we wonder why it starts off good, you start a new year or something, and then it falls away, and then we never get around to the power of the Gospel.*

That's a great expression. We have a tendency to get dead men walking, thinking that we can persuade them to come alive. What God the Father ordains, the Son accomplishes, and the Holy Spirit applies. We need to be dealing with live people who the Holy Spirit has regenerated. That's something we can't do ourselves. We'll continue this next week. Happy Veteran's Day. If you see a Veteran, be sure and thank them. Let's pray.

Father, we are overwhelmed by the power of your truth. We thank you that it is your Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth and we don't have the say that we are [UNCLEAR] of truth. We pray, Lord, that you would give us discernment, you would give us wisdom, that we would be able to discern the difference between that which is true and that which is false, and most of all, Father, surround us with grace as we are truth proclaimers. May we always proclaim grace and truth, and may it be so Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!