

(Acts) the Purpose of the Church

by Brian Brodersen

The primary purpose of the church is to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples of all nations through preaching, teaching, and exhortation.

Duration: 49:20

Scripture: Matthew 16:13, Matthew 28:19-20, Ephesians 2:10

Topics: "Church Purpose", "Gospel Preaching"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a man named Mike who shared the gospel with a 17-year-old girl and her father, leading them both to accept Jesus as their Savior. The purpose of the church is emphasized as being to preach the gospel and teach the word of God. The speaker discusses four options for teaching and seeks advice from his children. The sermon also mentions the impact of teaching the book of Acts on a ministry and shares a story of how sharing a gospel tract led to a man accepting Christ and inviting Mike to share the gospel with his daughter.

Transcript

Let's pray and then we'll read Matthew 16. Father, we pray as we, Lord, really kind of just embark on a whole new study here this evening. We pray that you would bless the time, Lord, beginning here tonight and as we contemplate together from your word the purpose of the church.

Lord, we pray that you would speak to us as individual members of the body of Christ, as members of your church, and show us, Lord, more clearly that purpose that you have for each and every one of us. We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Matthew 16, verse 13. Let me read it to you from there. When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that I, the son of man, am? So they said, Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others, Jeremiah, are one of the prophets.

He said to them, But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the son of the living God. Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter.

And on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. So Jesus said that he was going to build his church. And our question tonight is, what is the primary purpose of the church? Why did the Lord decide to build this thing called the church? Why didn't he just come and save us and take us out of this place? What is his purpose for? Leaving us here in the world, that's an important question, and of course, there's been a variety of answers that have been given to that question, and I think there's been a lot of confusion over it.

But I think as we look at the book of Acts, I think we're going to really discover through our study of the book of Acts what God's intention was when he decided that he was going to build a church. But we're going to look at that here specifically tonight. So what is the purpose of the church? Titus 2:14, I think, gives us the answer in Titus 2:14, you can turn there, you can just jot that down.

It's a great verse to memorize. Paul, the apostle, he said this, he said, Jesus Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works. That is really an answer to the question.

Now, there are other answers and there are other things that we could point to as the purpose of the church, but I personally think that based upon the book of Acts. The purpose of the church is just as Paul stated here that Jesus Christ would have a special people here on the earth that. We're zealous for good works that he could have a people here in this world that were committed to serving him and to accomplishing his will to getting his plan carried out in this world.

So a people zealous for good works. There are many good works. But the one good work that encompasses all the others is the work of evangelizing and making disciples of all nations.

And I think as we look again at acts, that is what we're going to see. That was the thrust that was, I think, the purpose that the early church leaders had at the forefront of their mind. They knew that they were to spread this message all throughout the world.

They, of course, had been given what we call the Great Commission. By Jesus Christ himself, Jesus has said to them just prior to his ascension, he had said to them, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. That is what was at the forefront of their thinking process, that is what they set out to do, and that is what, to an amazing degree, they accomplished in a relatively short amount of time.

And that's what we're going to see as we get into the book of Acts in detail. Now, they did this by really doing three things. And these are the things that we want to talk about tonight.

We're talking about the purpose of the church, which is the fulfillment of the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. How did they do it? They did it in three ways. They did it by preaching the gospel, by teaching the word of God and by exhortation to the people of God.

And we want to look at each one of those individually and and really just see if we can get a clear picture of what they were doing and of what we are to be doing today as well. So they were, first of all, preaching. What does it mean to preach? We talk about preaching or preachers or, you know, you will talk about, you know, the fact that that guy was up there preaching.

But what what is really the biblical understanding of preaching? Well, preaching is the proclamation or the announcement of the good news. And the good news, of course, is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's the message that God has forgiven our sins through Christ and that we can come into a relationship with God and inherit eternal life by simply putting our faith and trust in Christ.

So preaching is a proclamation or an announcement of that good news. Now, preaching is generally directed toward unbelievers. We are to proclaim the message to unbelievers, we are to announce this message of the gospel, and it's vitally important that we get the message out, because Paul, in a place.

He wrote and asked the question, how can people believe in whom they have not heard and how can they hear unless somebody preached to them? So you see, sometimes we think that all people are just going to get saved if we put a bumper sticker on our car or, you know, if we just pray a little bit for a more if we're really nice when we're around them, that's you know, that's going to do it. Those things could make a contribution to it. But faith comes by hearing.

They've got to hear the word of God. And in order to hear it, it's got to be preached to them. And so preaching is directed toward unbelievers and it is carried out by gifted evangelists as well as ordinary Christians.

And that's what we're going to see as we go through our study in the book of Acts. Gifted evangelists preach the gospel. Ordinary Christians preach the gospel as well.

That was the pattern in the history recorded in Acts, and that has been the pattern all throughout the rest of the history of the church right down to today. So as we study Acts, we'll find the gospel preached by gifted evangelists such as Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul, Barnabas and Apollos, as well as by ordinary Christians. We read in Acts chapter eight, verse four, that there was a persecution that arose.

And as a result of the persecution, the believers were scattered all throughout the region. And it says that they went everywhere. Preaching the good news.

The ordinary Christians, the average everyday believer, as they went out and about their daily activity, they went out sharing the good news with others. We also find occasions where preaching is directed toward groups of people such as the thousands that. Peter preached to on the day of Pentecost.

We also find occasions where. The preaching is happening on more of an individual level, think of Philip. They're in Acts chapter eight.

Who preaches the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch or think of Paul and Barnabas, who preached the gospel to the proconsul Sergius Paulus. And so we see evangelism on sort of a larger scale, maybe you might want to call it mass evangelism or group evangelism, but we see individual evangelism as well. That's what we see in the scriptures, that's what we are to.

Seek to carry out today, we have that calling as well as they did to get the good news out to the unsaved, and today we do it through gifted evangelists to groups of people. We also do it on an individual level through the gifted evangelist to groups of people. I think of the outreach that we prayed a lot for over the past few weeks, the outreach in New York City with Mike McIntosh and the Festival of Life there.

And that was an organized effort to bring Christians together to create an environment and to set aside a venue where people could come in and hear the gospel in a relevant manner. And the Lord used that or

we could think about the harvest crusades that we had here in our area this past summer. There's another example of of taking the scriptures and applying them to the situation today.

Gifted evangelists like Greg there in that stadium environment with thousands of people and they're proclaiming the gospel. Raul Reiss does something similar to that with his somebody loves you crusades. We did something sort of like that.

It was a bit different in some ways, but yet it was evangelism to large groups of people when we did our street outreaches in Europe this summer in England and France and Hungary and Russia going out and and going onto the streets and and setting up musically and all of that for the primary purpose of drawing people there to hear the message that we wanted to proclaim. That's what the church is to be doing. We're to be getting the gospel out through the gifted evangelist, but also through ordinary Christians telling their friends.

And we should never make the mistake of thinking that it's only these gifted people that are, you know, sort of in the public eye that are the evangelist. They are just part of the. Evangelistic endeavor that the spirit of God is working, but each individual Christian is also a very vital part, and sometimes.

And those more visible. People don't have anyone to share their message with unless the individual Christians have done their job by sharing the Lord on a personal level with their friends or their neighbors or their co-workers or people on the streets or people in the shops or people in the park or people on the beach or wherever. But you see, evangelism, sharing the gospel, telling people the good news, that is.

The calling of the church, and it's the blessed privilege of every single believer. It's the blessed privilege of every single believer, not just those designated evangelist, but every believer. You know, there's a great story that came back from the outreach in New York City beside all of the, you know, real obvious stuff that was going on with the outreach in Centennial Hall and some of the different things going on in other areas, the Bronx and Queens and places around New York there.

One of our good friends and someone that some of you would know, Mike Harris, pastoring now Calvary Chapel beachside over in Huntington Beach. But Mike, of course, was here for many years. Well, Mike had led a team out to New York to participate in the Festival of Life.

And. And as he was out there, you know, they were just seeking to minister in whatever way the Lord would open the doors. And one of the things they were doing is they were going out and passing out invitations to the Festival of Life.

And there were thousands of people all over New York that were doing that. Well, the story comes back that Mike was there passing these out on the street and he hands this thing to a guy and the guy says, you know, this is the third one of these things I've gotten. What is this thing? And he I think he was on his way to work or something.

He was in a hurry, so he didn't really want to stop and chat. He just asked the question. Then he sort of, you know, continue to walk.

Well, Mike said, well, you know, hold on. Let me walk with you and I'll explain it to you. So he took off with this guy walking with him, and as he went, he shared the Lord with him.

And after a couple of hours of being with him, he led this guy to Christ. And the man was so thrilled. About this newfound relationship with God, he said to Mike, he said, could you come to my house with me right now and could you tell my daughter about this? She needs this.

And so Mike went over to their house and he spent another hour or so talking to this young 17 year old girl. And sure enough, she prayed to receive the Lord. And that afternoon he left father and daughter, both brand new converts.

They're excited about Jesus in their apartment. You know, what a great thing. What a great story.

What a great privilege to be able to share the gospel with people. But that is what we are supposed to be doing. That's what God wants to.

Lead us to do by the work of the spirit in our lives, so the purpose of the church is to get the gospel out, to preach the gospel, and then we see that another purpose of the church was that of teaching. Preaching and now teaching. Now, the difference between the two is that we're preaching is directed primarily at unbelievers in order to bring them the good news so they can come into the kingdom of God, the family of God, the body of Christ.

Teaching now is directed. Primarily toward believers with the intent of bringing them to maturity in the faith. And so once we preach to people, then we have the responsibility of discipleship.

As we read there from Matthew 28, go into the world and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things that I have spoken to you now, one of the things that's happened many times. Is that where the church has been zealous for evangelism and zealous for preaching and has perhaps gone out and got the message out many times they have left off with just the evangelistic effort and not followed through with that discipleship, the teaching. So people have been led to salvation, but they've never been taken beyond just that initial salvation into a place of spiritual maturity so they can grow up and become strong, effective Christians.

And as important as preaching is. Teaching is equally important. Because if we simply preach to unbelievers and get them converted and don't give them anything that will help them to grow up, well, the devil, of course, will come along and perhaps snatch away what was sown or keep them in a. You know, an immature state where they never really come to bear any lasting fruit for the Lord, so making disciples, that is what they did next.

That is what the church was doing back then. And of course, this is what we are to be doing now. Again, as you look through the book of Acts, you find that there in Jerusalem.

They were meeting on a regular basis. And as they would come together, they would continue steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers. That's what we're doing today.

That's what every church ought to be doing. That's the model that was laid out for us. That's the God inspired model for what the church is to be doing in regard to believers continuing steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and in prayers.

They did that in Jerusalem. We know that Peter, James, John and then James, the brother of the Lord, they were all in a leading position in the church in Jerusalem. And for many years they were there faithfully discipling the believers.

They were there teaching the saints who came to faith in Jerusalem. And then we look at Paul as he goes out in his ventures, as he goes out in his missionary journeys, and he goes out and preaches the gospel. He was a preacher.

He was an evangelist, but he didn't simply go into a community, preach the gospel, see some people respond and then take off for the next place. He, first of all, made sure that those that had come to faith were going to be taken care of. Sometimes he stayed himself.

He stayed a year and a half in Corinth. He stayed three and a half years in Ephesus. If Paul couldn't stay, he would leave someone like Timothy or send Titus to them to help them out.

But they understood that it was vitally important that people, once they get converted, that they really get plugged in to the word of God. And that, of course, is the model that we are following and we want to continue to follow. I remember years ago when the Lord led us over to our first outreach endeavor in Eastern Europe.

We went into northeastern Yugoslavia and after some frustrations early on in the trip, we finally landed in this city that it just seemed that there was something special about this place. It seemed like God wanted to do something. There were lots of young people around and there was a real sense of anticipation.

And there we were. We went out to the streets and we began to share. And sure enough, as we began to share, many of the young people gather around and were very interested in what we had to say.

And so as a result of that time that we spent there, about a dozen or so young guys and girls gave their life to Jesus Christ. Now, this was a trip that I think was about a 21 day trip, and we probably hooked up with them about halfway through it. So we had about a week or so to spend with them and to just try to encourage them at all.

But, you know, as the time came for us to leave, to head back home, I looked at that small group of people and I thought, you know, if we just leave them, they'll never survive. They're never going to make it. We have got to do something.

We've got to take care of them. What are we going to do? And I didn't know what to do at the time, but I just looked at him and I said, you guys hold on, just hold on for a month. I promise you that we'll have somebody back here to carry on what we've started within a month's time.

And the Lord worked that out. As a matter of fact, it was Mike Harris, the guy just told you about New York City, 18 years old. He was the guy he went and he began that discipleship and he laid the foundation and he took those young Christians and he began to feed them.

And now today we have several churches beside that one that were born out of that initial effort. So you see, it's so vitally important that we follow the biblical pattern of following up on those who come to faith and making sure we get them plugged in. Maybe you're a new Christian and maybe you're wondering, well, how do I grow? What what are the steps? What should I do? Well, plug in, that's the key.

Just get as involved as you can, just come as often as you can and stay in your Bible and get around Christians and get people to pray for you and just participate in anything and everything that's happening. You do that and you'll grow. You'll become strong.

And if you have maybe been ministering to someone or maybe you've led someone to the Lord and you're wondering, well, what do I do for him now? Just bring him along. Get him plugged in. There are so many different opportunities here.

There's really no excuse for anyone ever falling through the cracks. Because we have just every conceivable thing going on to help people. But the whole goal is to help them to get plugged in, to get established.

And so they were preaching to the unbelievers and they were getting converted and then they were coming along and they were teaching them. They were taking them through the scriptures, the apostles doctrine. And this, of course, is what the church is supposed to be doing now.

You know, when you talk about that here, it's like preaching to the choir. You know, we know that we do that. It's a given here.

It's, you know, as they say, it's a no brainer. That's just what we do. But you know, what we do here is really quite unique when you look at the overall picture of what's happening in the church today.

Because if you were to visit churches outside of the Calvary movement, for the most part, you would find that there's not a whole lot of this kind of thing going on where people are just actually teaching the Bible, where they're opening up the Bible and going through chapters, going through verses, going through, you know, numerous chapters. You just don't find that happening in many of the churches today. I would venture to say you don't find it happening in most of the churches today.

And because that's not happening, Christians are not being strengthened. And people are not really maturing as they should be maturing, and subsequently, the church isn't very strong. The church doesn't have a great impact on the community because of the weakness of the individual members, but it goes back to a lack of teaching.

You see, the word of God is the power of God to transform our lives. It's a miracle how it happens. It's unexplainable.

It's a supernatural thing that as we just subject ourselves to the word, as we open it up ourselves and meditate on it, or as we sit before those that God is gifted to teach it, something supernatural happens. As the word comes, it does something in us. It strengthens us, it builds us up in the faith, it brings us into a maturity in Christ and enables us to walk in victory and it enables us to impact our world around us.

Satan, as we mentioned in our spiritual warfare series, he is a wise strategist. He knows right where to go to prevent the church from really having any sort of an impact against his kingdom. He goes right at the word of God and he attacks it.

And he tries to keep Christians from getting into it, he tries to keep the leaders from putting an emphasis on it and teaching it, and he'll distract them with a number of different things. Oh, the Bible, you know, it's sort of outdated and boring. You need to be more relevant.

Just talk about things that people are concerned about today, talk about the economy, talk about politics, talk about family living, talk about those little subjects. People need to have some practical where the rubber meets the road kind of stuff. You know, when you're talking to him about the book of Acts, what does that have to do with anything? That's the devil speaking.

Well, you see, that's where the power of God is in the word of God. So if Satan can sidetrack the leaders to get off into these other tangents, these other things, talking about psychology and all of this kind of stuff. The church prospers and flourishes under the teaching of the word, and that's what was happening.

Back in the very beginning, and that is what is to be happening today, and as we look at acts as we go through it, what we're going to see over and over again is really that the book of Acts is the model for the church. It's the only. Portion of scripture that gives us a close up and personal view of what was happening in the church.

Now, why did God record that for us? I believe with all my heart that he recorded it so we would have something to follow so we could look at that thing and say, OK, that's how it works. This is how you do it. This is the way it's supposed to be done.

And, you know, I've got to just tell you on a personal note, as I asked you last week for prayer about where we're going to head, I really wrestled all week in prayer. You can ask my wife. I've just been I've been miserable in in that.

I've just really been, you know, trying to just sense from the Lord, Lord, what do you want to do? And, you know, of course, you've got sixty six books in the Bible, so I've got sixty six options and then you sort of start narrowing things down. Well, I came down to four different options. And as a matter of fact, this morning I was still in desperation this morning and pulling my children, asking them now, here's the four.

What do you think, Kelsey? Charlo, come here. Let me ask you now out of these four, what you know, so it's pretty desperate. Lauren, speak.

And but, you know, the interesting thing is this past week I was up doing a conference up in Northern California with Chuck and Don and John. We all went up and a good friend of mine was up there and we got to talking and he said to me and, you know, the whole while I'm I'm everywhere I've been, I'm just sort of praying in my in my heart, Lord, OK, you know, Saturday's coming. And so that's just right there at the forefront of my thinking.

So I'm talking to him and I said, well, what are you teaching right now? And he said, man, I'm teaching the book of Acts and it's just revolutionizing our ministry. So it's just transforming my life. And and he said, you know, it's so thrilling what's going on as I'm teaching acts, the women's ministry came and said we want to teach acts and the men's ministry came and said we want to teach acts.

So basically the whole church is teaching acts going through the book of Acts right now. And he was just talking about how it just seemed like the Lord was reviving him and reviving the church. And, you know, so as he said that, I'm thinking, oh, well, that, you know, maybe Lord, maybe that's something, you know, maybe that's maybe you're speaking to me.

But it wasn't one of those. Thus sayeth the Lord, Brian, teach acts. It was more like, Lord, please just, you know, whisper it.

I don't anything. I just need to hear something. And so anyway, you know that.

But that got me thinking about acts that got me just sort of. You know, it was in the back of my mind, it it was was put on my list and then the other night John and I were together and he asked me, said, so so what are you teaching this Saturday? Because he knew that I was in this transitional thing and I just sort of

looked and I said, you know, I'm still. And he goes, have you ever thought of doing acts? And I said, oh, maybe the Lord speaking now, you know, Richard and now John.

And but, you know, going beyond that, as I was really just kind of seeking the Lord yesterday on the whole issue, you know what it really came down to? I just I just started thinking, Lord, where what I want to do is I want to preach from teach from that that area of of passion that you're working in me or from that vision that you've given me. In other words, I want to be able to get up and communicate not just a message, but a message that you've put on my heart, a message that you've burned into my being. And so, you know, it's more than just, you know, here here's a few principles and let's, you know, apply this and we'll see you next week sort of a thing.

And as I began to think about it, I thought, you know, where is my passion? My passion right now is for everything that we have in X. My passion is for getting the gospel out. My passion is for seeing churches started. My passion is to see the Holy Spirit work in a greater way in my life and in our lives collectively as a congregation.

So, you know, today, as I was sitting there, it finally just all clicked. And I thought, yeah, that's it. And so.

We want to have that that word from the Lord, we want to have that message, you know, you could obviously just open the Bible and teach from any passage because it's all God's word. But remember when we were talking about the the subject of spiritual warfare and we talked about the word of God, the sort of the spirit, the word of God, and we talked about the rhema of God, that Greek word meaning a specific word from God. And I really believe and I've always believed this and I've always tried to function according to this.

I believe that the Lord has specific things that he wants to say to us at specific times. And so my prayer all week has been, Lord, what do you want to say to the Saturday night congregation? What do you want to tell us? What do you want to communicate to us as a group of people that are coming together every week? And I think he said, I want to communicate through acts. So here we are.

That's what we're doing. But we go on to our third point of what they were doing back at that time and what we are to be doing today. I mentioned they were preaching, they were teaching and then exhortation.

Now, what is exhortation? Well, exhortation, if preaching is to the unbeliever and teaching is to the believer. Exhortation has the passion of preaching. But the.

Application of teaching. So what exhortation is, is really that helping of the people of God to apply what they're learning. You see, you can be taught in as much as you can.

Get some information passed on to you, but the information that's passed on to you needs to be assimilated and applied into your life, right? And that's where exhortation comes in. So we're not simply just telling you things about what God has done for you. We're not just laying out the dry facts, if you will, but we're actually taking those truths and saying, now, this is the truth and this is how it impacts your life.

This is how you apply it. This is what it means. This is how it works itself into your daily experience.

And that is what they were doing in the early church here in Acts, and that is what we are to be doing today. We're receiving the teaching and then we're applying it to our lives so that each and every one of us. Our functioning in our God ordained capacity.

You see, because the thing that we've got to realize as the church is that the church is made up of many members, not just one. And that each believer individually is a member of the body of Christ, and as a member of the body of Christ, each one of us have a function, each one of us have something to do. There are no spectators in the kingdom of God, or at least there shouldn't be.

God has not called you to be a spectator. He hasn't called you to come and just sit in church and watch somebody else exercise their gifts. God has given you gifts and he's calling you to.

Take and to exercise those gifts for the furtherance of his kingdom, and that's what exhortation is all about, it's all about helping you to understand how this truth applies in your life so you can put it into practice and you can play your part in the overall work that God is doing of expanding his kingdom. So every Christian has a gift from God to share with others. That is the teaching of the scripture.

And in acts, that's what we see. We see the gifted evangelist. We see the apostles.

We see the prophets. We see the pastors. We see, you know, the Peters and the Johns and the Jameses and and Paul and Barnabas and Apollos and and these people.

But then. We see Aquila and Priscilla. A husband and wife team who are tentmakers by trade who just happened to meet Paul on an occasion, and then they become a ministry companion with him.

And we see other individuals like that. We see young and old, we see people, just different people in the church of Jesus Christ coming together, and we see them all working together in those early days to establish the work of God, and that's the thing that we want to see today. And so exhortation helps us to understand our gifts and to stir up our gifts.

Some have prophetic gifts, teaching gifts, encouraging gifts, giving gifts. Gifts that are more on a verbal level, being gifted by God to just come along and really communicate in a way to people that will strengthen them, that will comfort them, that will build them up and prod them along. Others have gifts like mercy.

Or helps or hospitality. Giving, leading. Administration, things like that.

You know, the gift the Bible talks about gifts of administration. And, you know, I misunderstood that for so long, I used to think of administration. In more of a modern sort of a. Definition of it, you know, when I think of a person who's an administrator, I think of a person who basically sits behind a desk, pushes a pencil around all day.

And, you know, make sure everything's in order in the company and all that sort of thing. And and so administration always to me sounded like a thing that I never wanted to even be involved in at all. And, you know, the funny thing was, a few years ago.

When the Lord was speaking to me about leaving England and coming back here. The Lord said, I've given you the gift of administration and I want you to go use it, and I thought, well, that's a good reason why I don't want to go. Lord, I don't want to go sit behind a desk.

And I'll never forget one day I was out in this place where we used to go to do our outdoor ministry. And we were setting up to do this outreach, and I just all of a sudden I thought I thought, you know, the last thing I want to do is trade this in for a desk job, because that was my thinking. But the Lord one night he

spoke to me.

And he said, Brian, you have the you have the wrong idea about the gift of administration. You don't. You don't realize what it is.

And then the Lord just began to minister to me about the gift of administration, and the Lord showed me that the gift of administration is not sitting behind a desk pushing a pencil, but it's the ability to sense that I'm doing something. It's the ability to sense when I've got my hand on somebody's life and it's the ability to put those things together so I can get my will accomplished. And the Lord just spoke to me and said, I've given you that and now I want you to go apply that.

And then the Lord just started in my mind, putting all of these things together. Putting this ministry and this person together and this person in this ministry and this ministry in this person, and I was marveling and I thought, Lord. All right, the gift of administration, I like that.

Administrating the things of the spirit, what the Lord is wanting to do, he gives us, in a sense, advanced information on that, and then he gives us the power to go and implement it to see that it's carried out. And so we all have gifts. We all have different.

God given abilities, but they are all for the one larger purpose of building up the body so it can become stronger and stronger and it can carry out that grand purpose of the church, which is the Great Commission and making disciples of all nations. And you know what? It's just amazing when you sit back and think about the players in this and the contributions that are made. And so often, so much of it is carried on in the background.

You know, when you come to church here, generally you see, you know, just a few people, don't you, in the sense of, you know, there's a few guys that are up here in the pulpit sharing the word with you. We have the pastors down in the front, so you'll see them there. But, you know, there are hundreds of people that are always working behind the scenes so that everything functions properly around here.

Now, most of them, you would never know that they're doing what they're doing. But let me tell you, if they stop doing it, you would know it real quick. It would be a disaster around here.

But you see, each one of those things are very important to the overall function of the ministry and to the ability to advance the kingdom. So God has given you a gift or perhaps several gifts. And God wants to stir those gifts up in you and the exhortation ministry is to help you realize that God's called you and gifted you and to help you know how to implement what God has done.

Now, some will use their gifts more outside the walls of the church. And here's something that I think we make a big mistake in thinking. I think we make a big mistake in thinking that the gifts of the spirit, oh, that's what happens when you dim the lights and you have an afterglow.

That's a major mistake. I almost think we should just. Throw out the afterglow.

Because, you know, we are to be ministering the gifts to one another when we gather together as God's people, it doesn't have to be a dim light setting, mood music playing. It doesn't have to be any of that. It's just as we come in together and as we see each other and as we pray with each other and as we share with each other what God's doing, who knows, but what prophecy is taking place right there? Words of wisdom, words of knowledge, perhaps healings are going on.

Administration, all kinds of things are happening. Mercy, giving, leading all of those things. They're happening as the people of God come together.

But they're also happening as the people of God go out. And as we look at the book of Acts, we'll see that many of the gifts were operating as the apostles went out into the community. God would work.

He would perform miracles. He would heal people. He would do things, dynamic things.

Prophecy would take place as they would speak and so forth. And so the gifts of the spirit were happening both as they would go out into the communities and, of course, as they would come together. And that's the way it's going to happen with us.

Some of us will use the gifts more outside the walls of the church because we spend more time out there. That's where you are. God's placed you out there in the workforce somewhere.

God set you in a neighborhood somewhere. God's got you connected with a group of people somewhere. You're going to see the gifts of the spirit working in that environment wherever you are.

But then God has called some of us to be more involved. You know, here at the church, quote, unquote, the building, the place where we come together, the church, of course, are the people. But you know what I mean? He's called some of us to to be in this environment.

So then obviously the gifts would would function more in this context. But. Everyone, to a certain extent, will use their God given gifts in both arenas.

Both as the body of Christ gathers together and as you go out into your respective duties and responsibilities that you go out into. So. What is the purpose of the church? The purpose of the church is simply to turn people into followers of Jesus Christ.

To make them disciples, and we do that by preaching the gospel to them, announcing it, proclaiming it, however you want to describe it, through gifted evangelists, through ordinary Christians, and then we take them and we teach them the truths of the word of God. But we don't simply leave them there just with that information. Then we exhort them that they would take that.

And apply that to their life and then step into those things that God would have for them as well. That's the purpose of the church, and that's what we're going to be looking at in detail as we go through the book of Acts, so I'm excited about the book of Acts. I hope you are.

I would ask you to continue to pray because, you know, each week when we come together on Saturday, like I said a moment ago, I want the Lord to meet us here. I want him to speak to us. I want him to take a portion of Acts, you know, four verses, 10 verses, a chapter, whatever it's going to be.

And I want him just to speak to us that are gathered here, that we could be instructed by him and that the things that were happening there. Could happen among us, and boy, was it exciting. You know, there was never a dull moment back in that period of time.

It was one exciting thing after another. There were great manifestations of God's presence and his power. There was great opposition to that.

There was persecution. There was adventure. People were going out and spreading the gospel and all kinds of great things were going on.

And I pray that as we get into acts, I pray that we could get into some acts as well. We could have some serious acts of the spirit happening all around us and right here among us and and out into wherever we're going. So we'll look forward to that.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that. You are speaking to your people today and Lord, we thank you for the fact that you've given us an understanding, a clear picture of what you intended when you brought the church into existence.

Lord, as we read tonight, you intended to set aside for yourself a people zealous for good works. And Lord, as we've seen, we know the great work, the best work of the good works is that of leading people to Christ and discipling them and seeing them raised up to lead others to Christ and to disciple others. So, Lord, to that end, help us, we pray.

And Lord, as we embark upon this study of acts, we pray that you would really meet us here each and every week. And Lord, as we read about the great things that were going on back there, I pray, Lord, that it wouldn't just be history, but it would be our present experience that, Lord, you would work mightily among us. We ask you to do that, Lord, not for our sakes, but for your sake.

In Jesus name, amen.

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