

## Take Heart (Part 3) – Hospitality and the Greatest Story Ever Told

Matt Chandler – June 19, 2016

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Good morning. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. We're going to be in Matthew, chapter 28. If you have a background in church, you'll actually know this text. It's a wildly popular well-known text if you do have a background in church. In fact, you might not even have a background in church and know this text.

We'll start here, and then I want to go to a couple of places. I think what I'm teaching on this morning won't be unique to us if we've been around for a while, but I do think it's one of those things we need to be refreshed in, so that's my goal in our time together today. I want to finish up this small series we're doing on Christian courage.

In week one, we talked about what the basis of our courage is. The basis of our courage is not that we have cultural and political favor, that the majority culture backs what we believe. Our courage is rooted in who God is and what God has done and how God has designed things to be. We need not the applause of men to be courageous in what God has called us to.

Last week, we looked at one verse, Exodus 15, verse 3. "**The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name.**" We talked about cosmic realities and that you and I, as humankind, are not brains on a stick but there's really something behind all that we see and all that we know that must be looked at. We saw that God makes war against Satan and demons and against those who pledge their allegiance to those dark forces.

We walked through that last week and we talked a lot about what Tremper Longman calls *stage-four warfare*, which is where Christ's life, death, and resurrection has triumphed over Satan and demonic forces, and now the people of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, bought by the blood of Christ, make war against the darkness by doing good, by showing compassion, by sharing the gospel, by being salt and light to the world around them. God's stage-four warfare is not violent but, rather, loving and kind, longsuffering and patient.

So that's what we covered last week. This week, I wanted to end the series by getting a bit more practical. I want to pull it down to the ground and talk about what that looks like in your life and in my life and maybe, if we have time, in the life of The Village Church. What I want to do is look at the Great Commission. That's what this text is called. It's how God is going to accomplish this. Then I want to talk about how you and I fit into the Great Commission.

I'll give you my outline in a second for you type-A-ers, but first let's look at Matthew 28, starting in verse 18. **"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'"** Every time I read that verse I like to stop right there and go, "Okay, it doesn't matter what he says next." At that point, it doesn't matter what he says next. We can be pretty confident that we're going to be all right in it.

If all authority in heaven and on earth... If you think back to week one, where we talked about God's cosmic reach, that God is not inside of time but outside of time so the future is not a place he knows about; it's a place that he is. He is omniscient. He is omnipresent. He knows everything and he is all-powerful. If we start thinking about that and now Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," then it doesn't matter what he says next.

So what does he say next? **"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."** Let's talk about this little phrase in the Greek. I don't need to say the phrase in Greek. I just want to explain it. There's an argument about what's going on in this "Go therefore." I think one of the things that's happening is they're both arguing the same thing foolishly. If you're married, you know exactly what I'm talking about. You're saying the same thing, but you're kind of missing each other. That's what's happening in the argument.

The argument is, "Okay, what this means is that you go. You get all your stuff and head out. You go into all the nations. You pack up your stuff, you leave your land, and you go into a land where Christ is not known and preach and teach the gospel there." Well, I think that's exactly what he's saying here, and many will. In fact, we have many families who have sold their practices, who have resigned from their positions and moved their family to China and India and parts of Africa and all over the world to do just this, to go and make disciples of all nations.

The other side of the argument is that what's going on in the phrasing of this is more "As you go." So it's not that you actually pack up and move, like a missionary would, but rather that all of us would

be on mission. Both are present in the text. I'll clarify here. Maybe this is something I don't even need to tackle, but I just feel compelled.

I don't believe all Christians are missionaries. I think missionaries are those who leave their land and head to a different culture in a different place in the world to herald the good news of the gospel, but I believe that all Christians are on mission. Do you see the difference in that? There's a significant difference. One packs up their stuff and leaves, and one just understands that their entire life as they go is about the mission of God to push back what's dark and to seek and save the lost.

Both are present in this text. It's not that all Christians always should pack up all their stuff and leave. That wouldn't even work. It's that many will go. Those who do not go send and pray and are on mission where they are. So the mission field, yes, is other places that don't know the gospel, but the mission field also is your office and your neighborhood.

**"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make 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 that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

I want to talk about how God actually accomplishes this. This is his big plan: cosmic realities, cosmic warfare, what's dark being pushed back in the world, the light and victory of Christ being made more and more visible to the world around us. How is he going to accomplish it? He's going to accomplish it through his people, the church, the manifold wisdom of God.

Remember last week, Ephesians 3:10? We are God's big plan. Just to remind you again, take a look around. Go ahead; glance around. This is God's big solution to all the darkness and brokenness of the world. It doesn't seem like a good plan, does it? Look around again. Really? This is it. We consider ISIS and a billion dark wicked things in the world right now, and this is God's big plan? Well, remember back to last week. C.S. Lewis says we see the church differently than maybe spiritual principalities see it.

We quoted C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*, where one demon mentoring another demon says something like, "Not the church as we see her, mighty as an army with banners. No, he will not be able to see that. Show him instead the woman who sings off-key or the frumpy man with squeaky shoes. He will then see how absurd these people are and think the whole thing is absurd." Cosmic

realities see the church as far more forceful than we see it. We see off-key-singing frumpy people. We're looking around going, "This is not going to do it." But that's not how it's seen behind the veil.

So here's God's big plan in the Great Commission to push back what's dark, to show the victory of Christ over dark powers and over the darkness of the world through his people. But how does that actually look? Well, here's going to be my argument today. *You and I have been uniquely wired and uniquely placed for unique opportunities.* That's the outline. If you're type A, there you go. Breathe out. You got it. Uniquely wired and uniquely placed for unique opportunities.

Again, this should not be new to many of you if you have history here with us. Let's talk about being *uniquely wired*. Let's look at Psalm 139, starting in verse 13. Again, this is a pretty well-known verse if you have a background in church. There are parts of this text that have been attached to almost every women's ministry in the world.

**"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."**

There are three things I want you to see out of this text as we consider being uniquely wired by God. The first thing is that as we read about God weaving us together in our mother's womb and we pull phrases and sentences out of this text and talk about what they mean, we're not denying biological realities. We're pointing to what's *behind* those biological realities.

What I'm saying is that, as Christians, we're not deists. We don't believe that God created the world with a biological design, cranked up the engine, and is now hands-off but that God is actually at work behind the biology to his good pleasure for our good joy. We know where babies come from. We're not morons. We understand the biology. We're just saying that God is at work behind the biology doing something, working in ways that are beyond the mere biology of the person.

Here's what we see in the text. If you look back in verse 15... **"My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth."** This idea of *frame* throughout the Old Testament talks about our physical makeup, how we're built. The Bible is

now saying that one of the divine activities behind the biology going on in our mother's womb is God putting us together for the days he would build out for us.

I've oftentimes thought this about my own life. I am a loud human being. I just am. I don't really possess the ability to whisper. There are not a lot of secrets in my life simply because I can't really do it. One of the great ironies as I look back on my life is my life is filled with detention, in-school suspension, spankings at school, spankings at home, because that's where I grew up.

I grew up where you got a whipping at school, and then your dad would find out and give you a whipping because you got a whipping at school. It was the double whammy. I wonder how it would have turned out if I would have just gotten put in the corner to "think about it." This was the world I grew up in.

Here's how I understand it now. God, knowing the days he had for me, in my mother's womb just made a little extra fold there or something. I don't know. My throat can just go. For years, I did six services here on a weekend and my voice was just as strong at the sixth as it was at the first. I am loud, and God made me loud because of the days he had for me.

Our physical makeup is a part of God's divine plan for our lives. We can look at the genetics of it, but I don't know who in my family is overtly loud. It's just kind of me as this weird anomaly screamer. What I used to get D-hall for I now get paid for. It's somewhat ironic. Yet this is how the Lord has worked in me, and this is how the Lord is at work in you. God is actively involved in your physical makeup. We're not deists.

But that's not the only argument here. He argues not only that God has been involved in our frame, but look at verse 16. "**Your eyes saw my unformed substance...**" What's our unformed substance? Well, the *unformed substance* is speaking to our personality types, what we're like. God is beginning to set courses (and I'm no determinist) for our lives for his glory and our joy.

Think about fight or flight, or maybe you're in the middle. Maybe you're a slap-and-run guy. This is what he's talking about: our personality types. If you're a parent of multiple kids, you know this is true and strange. The same parents can have multiple kids, love those kids the exact same way, and see very different personality types in those children.

My oldest is completely fearless. My middle child is nervous. I threw them both in the air as high as I could, angering my mother-in-law, and yet one loved it and wanted more and the other one had a look of terror and asked Dad to put him down. What happened there? Surely environment can help shape that raw material, but all of us are born with a personality type. We are aggressive. We are extraverts. We are introverts. This is part of how we were designed.

The Bible is saying biology, genetics, parts of the brain, yes, but there's a divine happening behind all of that, and the reason God has wired you physically like that and then wired you with that personality type as a harmonizer or an achiever or a persister or whatever your little graph or chart at work says you are, your Myers-Briggs profile says you are... God has been at work in that for what reason? I love when you ask questions that are what I'm answering next in my outline.

Look at the end of verse 16: **"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."** So God (keep in mind who we're talking about here) who is outside of time (tomorrow is not something he knows about; it's a place that he is) knows all the days he would have for you. *All* of them.

Knowing those days that would be formed for you, he uniquely wired you. He wired you in stature. He wired you physically, but he also wired you emotionally. He wired you with personality: your fight and flight syndrome, your harmonizing, your persisting, your achieving. All of that built in, hardwired into you by God behind the biology of it all. We've been uniquely wired. You are you. This is why it's criminal for you to want to be someone else.

To want to be someone else is an accusation against God, that God has done something poorly, that God has made some sort of mistake with you, that as he was at work in your mother's womb he got distracted by something and gaffed you up. We know this isn't true, because the Bible has just been clear that you are fearfully and wonderfully made. And it repeats itself. "Wonderful are all your works." All that God has done is wonderful. You have been uniquely wired for the days God has for you.

Speaking of the days God has for you, you've also been *uniquely placed*. Now let's look at this. This is Acts, chapter 17. I love this text also. This is going to also help us understand how the Great Commission is fulfilled. So we have us uniquely wired. I didn't say this on uniquely wired, but let's

think about it for just a quick second before we read Acts 17. In your being uniquely wired, specifically that unformed substance, a big part of the trajectory of your life begins to unfold.

Let's say it this way. I don't think you've ever met a math genius who also excels at poetry and painting. Have you? No. They're prone to be engineers, controllers, CFOs. I've never met a guy that math is just the joy of their life who also likes to write some poetry. Nor do I think you've come across too many great poets who really love algebra or calculus. What happens is how we're bent begins to set a trajectory for the domain of society we end up in.

Most, not all, but most doctors tend to be a bit type A. They tend to be tight. They need to know things in a linear way. "Tell me how it works." They tend to be a bit more controlling. There are domains where certain personality types thrive and other personality types would shrivel and die. So this unformed substance is God at work leading us into this Acts 17 text. Let's look at this now. Acts 17, starting in verse 24.

**"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything."** Here's where we're going to camp out. Verse 26: **"And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him...[though he is] not far from each one of us..."**

Not only have we been uniquely wired by God, but now we've been uniquely placed by God. I don't know if you were dialed into that verse 26, but here's what it just said. Not only have we been uniquely wired, but the boundaries and times in which we would live have also been set by God. We've been uniquely wired, but now we've also been uniquely placed.

If you're like, "Wait a minute. What if I pack up and move today?" Then you pack up and move today. Again, we're not determinists. I'm saying wherever you are, there you are, and God is at work. This is the cool thing about the will of God, specifically in this arena. If you get up and move, you're actually kind of participating in maybe what God is up to. Thus, the sovereign reign of God is so infuriating to those who would rather shake their fists at him.

I said last week that no one has a choice on whether or not they'll glorify God. No one. It's what makes it so heartbreaking when hardened atheists with so much anger shake their fists at heaven. In their rage and blasphemy, they're only simply glorifying God in their rebellion, because all of us will be objects of his grace, trophies of his mercy, or objects of his longsuffering wrath toward those who have joined sides with his Enemy.

We should always weep for the angry atheist. Our hearts should always break for them, as even in their rebellion they will ultimately glorify God. What we see in this text now is God's sovereign reign being such that where we live and the times in which we live are actually determined by God for... Here's why the text says God has done this. "So that men might seek him and find him, though he is not far from any of us."

Let me start to put this together before we move to unique opportunities. What we see happening is God actively at work in our mother's womb, building out our frame, setting up our personality types, knowing all the days he has for us. Then he uniquely places us in that from that unique wiring into certain domains of society, and certain domains of society lead to certain neighborhoods in which we live.

More often than not, the carpenter and the neurosurgeon aren't in the same neighborhood, correct? I mean, they're a pretty stunning carpenter if they're in the same neighborhood as the neurosurgeon. They just built a couch from a single tree or something like that. Just a stunningly gifted carpenter. We live in certain neighborhoods based on aptitudes, based on domains of society in which we work. In the middle of this, here's why: so that men might seek him and find him, though he is not far from any of us.

Here's the line we're drawing here today. You have been uniquely wired by God, given certain dispositions, certain aptitudes, certain passions. Those aptitudes have put you in certain domains. You're a teacher. You are a welder. You are a lawyer. You are a doctor. You are a coach. You are in finances. Whatever you are, you are because of aptitudes and because of how God has designed you and now because of how God has placed you. In that domain, you have now moved into specific neighborhoods.

The argument Paul is making in Acts 17 is that all that has occurred so that men might seek him and find him, because he is not far from any of them. Now when he's saying he's not far from any of them, he's not talking about his omnipresence. He's not talking about the fact that God is

everywhere in his fullness always and at once. He's saying here that God is not far from them because *you* are not far from them.

If you think about the ramifications of that, that alone should be the eradication of boredom for all Christians, always. What that means is God has been at work behind everything, setting me up as a herald of the good news of the gospel to everyone. He has also been at work in my neighbors and, for whatever reason, he has put me next to my neighbor. He has put me in the DFW area, and it looks like I will be in the DFW area for the rest of my life. That's what the Lord did.

Texans, I'm not from here; I just got here as soon as I could. Isn't that what your bumper stickers say? I got here. I learned the mistakes you learn when you move to Texas. You know, we're not a Southern state; we're Texas. We're not from the South. We're our own deal. I had to pick up on that pride. I began to operate in it, buy a truck, those kinds of things.

The Lord has uniquely wired and uniquely placed me here in the same way he has uniquely wired and uniquely placed *you* here. Why? Because all around us he has put those who he longs to reveal himself to, darkness he wants to push back in all sorts of domains, and here we are, the salt and light of the world to accomplish and do just that.

That leads me to our *unique opportunity*. I think we have multiple. I'm just going to share two for time's sake. Here's the first unique opportunity as believers in Christ uniquely wired and uniquely placed. We have the opportunity to show hospitality to all. Let's talk about hospitality, because I think, in some ways, the idea of hospitality kind of got hijacked by Martha Stewart, so now it kind of means how you decorate for the seasons, which, man, go get it. I get it. My wife does that. Come October, there are pumpkins and gourds all over our house magically. It looks beautiful.

I'm not against that. I'm saying that's not what the Bible means when it talks about hospitality. When the Bible talks about hospitality, it almost always ties it to aliens and strangers, so this is a good working definition of hospitality. *Hospitality* is benevolence or good done to those outside one's normal circle of friends. To do good, to show benevolence, to show kindness to those who are outside one's circle of friends. Hospitality is opening our lives to those who believe differently than we do.

The Bible is serious about hospitality. Let me give you two verses. Hebrews 13:1-2 says, "**Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some**

**have entertained angels unawares."** I don't know what that looks like, but it sounds awesome. By showing hospitality to strangers we have entertained angels unaware.

Then just to show you how serious God is about it, if we look to 1 Timothy, chapter 3, and we see the list of traits necessary for a man to be qualified for the office of elder in a local congregation, you find this list: **"Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach..."**

God is so serious about hospitality among his people that in order to be an elder, an overseer, a leader in a local congregation... The rest of these kind of make sense. Right? Respectable. I mean, who's going to say, "That guy who's not respectable...he should lead us. The guy who's kind of half in on his wife...maybe he should be an elder." The guy who can't teach the Bible at all and has no idea what it says... You don't make that guy an elder. Right?

But hospitable? He has to be able to open his life and show kindness to those who believe differently than he does? He has to open up his world to those who are outside of what he believes and what he senses? This is serious. Now why would the Bible be so serious about it? Well, if I could just boil it all down to its most simple truth, it's because God has been so hospitable to us.

God has extended hospitality to us. It is God who invited us in, God who came and rescued us, God who opened the door and said, "Come on in." It's God who has shown his kindness to us over and over and over again, despite us being aliens and strangers, us being outside the promises, us being in rebellion against God. God showed hospitality to his enemies in saving us as sinners.

I love what John Piper says about this. Then I'll talk about what it actually looks like. "When we practice hospitality [we become] conduits of God's hospitality [instead of] self-decaying cul-de-sacs. The joy of receiving God's hospitality decays and dies if it doesn't flourish in our own hospitality to others." We should be thinking, "How can I draw the most people into a deep experience of God's hospitality by the use of my money, my things, my home, and my church home? Who needs to be asked out? Who needs to be asked in?"

John's argument, and I think his right argument, is that where we receive the hospitality of God's kindness and grace and do not extend it to others, our own experience of that hospitality begins to shrivel and decay. Our joy in the Lord can be cut off by not extending the hospitality we have been shown by God.

I've come to passionately believe this is true. You will not grow in a zeal for the Lord by continuing to learn more and more and more information outside of practice. No, we grow in a joy of the Lord by extending hospitality that we have received. As God has invited us into the beauty of life in Christ, we now extend that invitation to all and thereby experience the joy of the Lord.

I'm not telling you not to read your Bible or read good sound theologically rich books. Please do that. I'm saying doing that alone will not fan the flames of your heart into an inferno like being obedient to invite others into the hospitality of God. I've seen it a thousand times. There's a joy that's found in sharing your life with others and having spiritual conversations about Jesus Christ that far trumps any navel-gazing trying-to-do-better-ness.

I keep telling you the least sexy version of our faith there is is moral betterment. It's exhausting and weak and it's not even what God has for you. No, that stuff happens inside out. Well, how do you get inside out churning? You take the step of obedience to show hospitality to all. This is your unique opportunity to open up your life.

So what does that look like? Let's talk about what it looks like to show hospitality. These are just four quick ways. I think they're mainly no-brainers, and I think if you're an introvert you might struggle some with them, but we'll talk through that. I think one of the easiest ways to show hospitality is just *greet everyone you meet*. One of the things I teach my children (and feel free to test them on this)...

If you see my children and introduce yourself to them, they will shake your hand and look at you in your eyes. My son, it'll get weird. He'll linger. Like, I've had to go, "Back off, bro. Just glance and then look away. You can't just... That's how fights get started among men. That's a sign of dominance. You're 10. It's not time to try to show your dominance right now. So just look them in the eye, say your full name, and then remember their name. Say their name back in your head."

We just want to greet everyone we see. We want to be known as friendly open people. That's an easy thing to do. Don't think I don't know the introverts in here aren't in distress right now. "What's number two? Because that ain't happening. Just go to number two. I swear to you, I love the Lord. I want to be hospitable. That can't happen. I'm sweating just thinking about it." So number two. It's not going to get better for you. *Engage people.*

Here's what I mean by "engage people." We quoted C.S. Lewis last week multiple times. One of the things we quoted Lewis saying was that you have never met a mere mortal. Everyone you have ever met is eternal in some sense. Everyone you know will one day be a creature so lovely that if you saw it now you'd be tempted to worship it or a creature so distorted and evil-looking that if you have ever seen such a thing it would only be in your nightmares. All of us are headed to one of those two ends. We have never met a mere mortal.

Well, if that's true, then engaging people as those made in the image of God who are eternal becomes significant in showing hospitality. I don't think this is overly difficult. I think this is asking open-ended questions, letting your inner curiosity out. "What do you do?" "I'm a controller." "Okay, what's a controller? What does the week of a controller look like? What do you do on Monday? Do you control stuff? How does this work? Okay, is Tuesday any different? Do you have a day that's very different?" This is just engaging.

"Tell me about your life. How long have you been married? How did you guys meet? Current pain points in your life?" You're like, "That's really personal." I think you'll be surprised at how willing people are to engage you, because in our "know everyone and know no one" world we live in, people are really hungry to be known and really hungry for conversation that goes deeper than how we think the Cowboys are going to do this fall. This is just engaging people where they are.

I love *C* and have preached *C* for 13 years to you. *Make dinner a priority*. The Bible over and over again talks about the holiness of eating together. Long dinners with good conversation that centers around what God has done, who God is, our fears, our hopes. That's a good dinner. Good food, good drink, good company. The Bible says that's holy.

Keep in mind where we are. We're talking about hospitality, and hospitality is showing benevolence, showing good to those who are outside of our normal group of friends. Yes and amen, have these kinds of meals, these feasts with your Home Group, with your good friends. We just had one a couple of nights ago with some of our closest friends, and it was amazing.

You need to do that, but you also need to have those spaces in which there are people around that table who do not believe like you believe, who do not know what you know about the God of the Bible. They're not projects. They've been invited into your life so that you might know them, engage them, love them, serve them, and walk alongside of them through a broken and shattered world. This is making meals a priority.

Lastly, *pay attention*. I think you'll find this to be true everywhere. In every work environment, every neighborhood, there are people who, for whatever reason, are kind of outliers. They don't have a lot of friends. Not a lot of people know them well. If you're just paying attention, you can spot this. Those of you who have lived a little longer are like, "Yeah, I know. And there's a reason. Every time I've engaged, there's a reason they're outliers. They're socially awkward. They lack people skills. They're life-sucking leeches."

I'd like to just lay before you that you were probably all of those things as Christ wooed you and are still several of those things as Christ continues to love you. We extend the hospitality that God has extended to us. I am passionate about you understanding that and grabbing hold of that, because I think your joy is tied to that. There's a joy that comes in memorizing... My family is memorizing a chapter of Scripture this summer.

There's a joy that's far greater than that, and that's seeing someone sit around our table, ask questions about Jesus, have that conversation, and then pray for that person as they're there, and then after they leave, as we're going to bed, praying that God would open their heart, open their mind. Then by his mercy, if they become a Christian, think about the joy that floods into our hearts and minds that way surpasses intellectual knowledge. God just took us to work with him. How crazy is that?

I don't know if you ever got to go to work with your dad. That's just kind of a cool day. Yet the heavenly Father is like, "Hey, I'm saving some folks. Do you want to come?" We show hospitality. Keep in mind what we're doing here in this being uniquely wired, being uniquely placed is we've been through all of that and God has been involved in all that so that men might seek him and find him, though he is not far from any of us.

So not only do we have the unique opportunity to show hospitality to all, but on top of that, we have the unique opportunity to herald the good news that Christ has come not to condemn the world but to save the world from condemnation. I was in a fascinating and convicting conversation earlier this week. Many of you know who Russell Moore is. You've probably read a lot of his stuff. He's writing in *TIME*. He's kind of all over the place right now. I honestly don't know if he sleeps.

One of the things he said my generation did (and I think he's right in saying that) is when he was younger, churches did things like Christian Witness Training (CWT) or Evangelism Explosion (EE),

and they trained their people how to share the gospel. What my generation did is we saw some of the silliness behind that. He even gave an illustration of something that happened when he was out doing door-to-door evangelism, which is so uncool these days.

He was with a guy, and the guy handed this woman a tract, and the woman was like, "Hey, I'm not really interested." He's like, "Well, that's fine. Just if you would, turn it around and read the back out loud." He had written the sinner's prayer on the back of the tract. So she reads the sinner's prayer out loud. "God, will you forgive my sins? I just pray that you would come into my life and be Lord of my life."

When she finished reading, he was like, "Praise God, sister. Welcome to the family." *We'll count that.* Right? That's the kind of stuff that's silly and pathetic and, I'll go further, evil. To give false assurance of a reality that's not present? That's evil. Guys like me saw that and were like, "Nah, we're not going to do that." So we tore down that house, but we didn't build anything in its place. Now because nothing has been built in its place, so many of us know we should. We have a longing to, but we're just not quite sure what to do.

How do we share the gospel as we show hospitality? What has happened is a lot of us have become really good friends with lost people and have never gotten around to really sharing the gospel with them. Or all the pressure is on me. You bring your lost friend and you're like, "Man, I hope Chandler is there and I hope he's good. I hope that dude is good today. I brought my lost friend. I've hyped you up, Chandler. Don't let me down."

You guys do this to me. I'll be in the foyer. You're like, "Hey, man. I brought my atheist friend. You on today? What are we talking about? You feel good? Man, you ready? Is that coffee? What are you drinking? Are you ready?" I'm like, "Whoa! Salvation ain't on me. It's not on me. You can't put that on me." No, no, no. God has uniquely wired *you*, uniquely placed *you*.

Honestly, Christian, I'm here for you, to build you up, to help you see and savor Jesus Christ so that *you* might do the work of ministry. My job is to herald the good news of the gospel to all who will hear in this room, in my neighborhood, at the gym I work out at. Wherever I am, I want to herald the good news of the gospel. God did not put me in your neighborhood. He put *you* in your neighborhood. He didn't put me at your workplace. He put *you* at your workplace.

So how do we share the gospel? Let me give you some simple things. We're working on other things I hope will help you in the long run that'll come out in a few months. One of the things you have that no one can really take from you or call you a liar about is your own story. How did you become a Christian? Where were you when Christ became real to you? That's a great story to share.

You'll find this to be... I know several of our members who do this, and it really has been a stunning thing that people are so open to this. Just ask a friend or neighbor if they want to read the Bible with you. Go to the gospel of John. Just read the gospel of John or the gospel of Mark with them. Just read a chapter and have a conversation about it.

If you be so bold, you can throw out, "You know I'm a Christian. If you have any questions about that, I'd love to answer those for you. Do you have any questions?" These are some of the ways we begin to share the gospel with others as we show hospitality. This is a unique opportunity we have to help clarify what most people know only in part, but it's also why you're there.

God is not just interested in you pulling a big paycheck. God wants you to support your family. God wants you to work hard, but God's big plan for you in uniquely wiring you and uniquely placing you wasn't just the good life. It was mission. That feeling that there's something more is a legitimate feeling. There *is* something more to be wrung out for the glory of God in the greatest story that has ever been, the *only* story there has ever been. We've been invited to play, to grab hold of this, to walk into this. This is what God has for you.

The day before yesterday, Friday, was my twenty-fourth spiritual birthday. Twenty-four years ago Friday I became a Christian. As I think about what I'm saying today and tie it back to all that went on before... The United States government decided that Petty Officer Steve Chandler needed to move from the Bay Area to the great nation of Texas. They transferred us out of Hamilton Air Force Base in Alameda, California, down to Galveston. We were actually on the other side of the Galveston Bay Bridge, La Marque/Texas City area.

I joined the football team. (That's all I'll say about that.) As I joined the football team, a guy on that football team shared the gospel with me in the boldest way imaginable. He just walked up and out loud (he didn't whisper it to me) said, "I need to tell you about Jesus. When do you want to do that?" Now I was not interested in Jesus. I'd kind of written Jesus off. There were some things in my family dynamic that made me go, "If Jesus is real, I don't want to have anything to do with him."

I was very much an agnostic. I thought there was something more than just what I could see, but if there was, it couldn't have been Jesus. But Jeff's boldness and my cowardice attracted me to Jeff's boldness. What I mean by that is I'm one of the guys in the locker room lying about this girl, lying about how hard we partied, and really I was at home by myself playing Nintendo. That's just what you do in a football locker room. Anybody who says other than that is a liar.

Then here's Jeff, not concerned with that image at all, going, "I need to tell you about Jesus. When do you want to do that?" So I started going to church with Jeff. I want to be really straight with you. It was the most kitschy, ridiculous, awful thing ever. The first thing he took me to is a thing called JAM. It stood for "Jesus And Me." They would spell words with their body. "J-O-Y down in my heart, deep, deep down in my heart." Everything about it I thought, "This is absurd. This is ridiculous." I would get in Jeff's car and he would take me back home and I would just tell him, "Really? Really?"

Things started to culminate. At the Houston Summit I went and saw Run-D.M.C and the Beastie Boys on a Friday night, and then on Saturday night I went with Jeff to see Michael W. Smith and DC Talk. Now keep in mind I am a lost kid with lost lenses watching Michael W. Smith and DC Talk. If you loved the Lord, I'm sure it was amazing. I did not love the Lord and I thought it was a *Saturday Night Live* sketch.

Yet here's what was happening. I didn't have this language back then. I have it now. As much as I thought it was all silly, I couldn't stop coming. As much as I disagreed with what was being said, Jeff would go, "Do you want to come back next week?" and I would say, "Yes." This is called the *effectual call of God*. God was wooing me. I just didn't know it. I just felt like, "There's something here. I need to get to the bottom of this."

Every week when we take Communion, one of the things I say is that if you're not a believer but you're here and you're trying to get to the bottom of it... I say that because I was that for a year. I just tried to figure it out. Then Jeff graduated and went and played football for Texas A&M. I was working at a place called Texas City Fabricating as a summer job. I had an industrial sander and I was cleaning I-beams and cutting rebar in 100-degree weather, 230 percent humidity.

One of the guys I met through Jeff Faircloth at First Baptist Church of Texas City said, "Hey, there are scholarships to youth camp. Do you want to go?" I'm going, "Mom would let me do that. That's better than this. Yes." It was at that camp that God opened my eyes to believe, and I have never recovered.

I had a list of about 15 questions I was going to need God to answer before I'd give my heart to him, and in a really sweet divine way, God kind of patted me on my head and said, "Those questions are cute." Then he opened my heart to believe in him, and nothing in my life has been the same. Twenty-four years later, everything about the trajectory of my life has changed.

How? Well, gosh, if I'm thinking about this, God was at work in all sorts of ways. The military moving us, Jeff Faircloth's grandparents... There were some situations there that caused him to move in with his grandparents that you would think might turn his heart away from the Lord, but he was just captivated by Jesus Christ in a way where he understood grace and not law alone.

He was able to provide some clarity to my confusion. He put up with me for well over a year, had me into his home, invited me into his church, answered my questions, put up with my hot and coldness, where I'd go, "Let's go, let's go, let's go. Tell me more. I don't want to talk about this anymore." Then Christ saved me.

Before I knew much of anything, I started sharing the gospel with others. I didn't really know a lot other than God was awesome and hell was real. You didn't want to go there. You wanted to go with *this* guy, not *that* guy. You should consider. Then I started using Chick tracts. Do you remember those little cartoon tracts? Some of them were awful, but some of them were actually pretty good. I used the one called "This Was Your Life." I just handed it out to people, and they would come and ask questions.

I love telling this story, because if you drop your kid off in Little Village... Let me tell you a Carl Brower story. The first young man I ever led to the Lord was a guy by the name of Jimmy. He was just a pot-smoking thug. My people. I handed Jimmy a "This Was Your Life" tract. He read it and he came out to me. I was out in the hallway because I was having that conversation in class and I can't whisper. So I'm sitting out. He comes out and throws it down.

He was like, "I would love to do that. I can't do that, man. I smoke weed all the time." He's just telling me why he can't give his life to Christ. This starts (because I don't know much) this weird series of conversations, where I have Fire Jolly Ranchers in my pocket and he wants a Jolly Rancher. I try to offer him one. He's like, "Oh, I don't like fire," and my comeback is, "Well, remember what we talked about? You probably want to get to the bottom of that if you don't like fire."

What a great evangelistic strategy *that* was. Don't do it this week. Don't go, "Oh, what did he say? Get some Fire Jolly Ranchers." That's probably not going to go well for you. But Jimmy becomes a Christian at JAM. Then years later in college, Jimmy is a waiter at Abuelo's, and Jimmy walks up to another waiter at Abuelo's named Carl Brower and says, "Hey, I need to tell you about Jesus. When do you want to do that?" And Carl Brower becomes a Christian.

This is what you and I are caught up in, and this is what we must embrace as God has called us to mission. Brothers, sisters, you have not been called to boredom but great rich purpose. Don't be afraid. Christ has died for those who will believe. He has called us to play a role in calling them to himself. Uniquely wired you, uniquely placed you. You have unique opportunities. Embrace them. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for my brothers and sisters. I do pray that even in this moment you would put people on our hearts, that faces and names would flash in our minds, that we would begin to prayerfully consider how we might invite into our lives, how we might open up our table, how we might share our story, how we might answer questions, how we might get conversations around Jesus Christ.

I pray right now that every man and woman in this room would get a couple, a man, a coworker, a neighbor in our minds, and even now, we pray that in your mercy you would make them receptive to the gospel message. I pray there would be those who are ultimately born again because of our service here today. I pray for unbelievers who are here among us, that they wouldn't be struck in weird ways by this sermon but, rather, if we believe what we believe that what I'm encouraging us to do is the most loving, kind thing imaginable.

Will you make us bold? Will you help us overcome our fears? We thank you that you are mighty to save, that your arms are not too short to save. Will you drive boredom out of our lives, out of our homes, out of our workplaces, out of the places we play, and let us see all through the lenses of your call on our lives to live out on mission. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.