



The Beauty of Multiplication

Beau Hughes – May 17, 2014

Hello! It is great to see you or, for some of you who will be watching on the video, be *seen* by you. If I don't know you, I want to introduce myself. My name is Beau Hughes. I am one of the elders here at the church. So, surprise...for those of you who didn't know that. Then, more specifically, I am one of the pastors and elders who has the privilege of helping lead and serve our Denton Campus in Denton. I'll just give a little shout-out to the 940 up there, north of the bridge.

That being the case, the first thing I want to do tonight is just, first, greet you on behalf of all the Dentonites and tell you we love you, we pray for you, we think about you often, whether you're here in Flower Mound or Fort Worth or Dallas or soon to be the Plano Campus. Secondly, I'd like to thank you on behalf of myself, my wife, our family, personally but then also our entire campus (the leadership, the elders and deacons and, of course, the congregation there).

Thank you for the way you have just loved us during this unique season in the life of our entire church here at The Village but then most especially our congregation in Denton. We have just been so encouraged by your love, by your prayers, by your thoughts. There's not been a week that's gone by over these days and even especially the last couple of weeks that I've not gotten an email, a text, a conversation. Even again today before the service, just having people come up and just express your love and your prayerfulness.

It's really helped hold our arms up during these last five months as our church and our campus has prayed and fasted and, two weeks ago as many of you know, voted to transition our campus to become an autonomous church. Thank you. I just wanted to say we love you, and we're so grateful to God for you. That being the case, I'm also grateful to have the opportunity to, just two weeks here after the vote right on the heels of the *Acts* series we finished last week, come and to preach to you, to proclaim God's Word to you.

What I want to do tonight is I want to journey on with the motif of multiplication and to give you a testimony of multiplication. I want to testify to God's beauty and grace in the life of our campus and our church in general in multiplication. I know some of you are like me. You're going, "Okay, listen. The multiplication topic? We get it. You guys have beaten that dead horse." In fact, I don't know about you; I wake up in the middle of the night sometimes with that sweet yet convicting voice that just is saying, "Out of joy, the church multiplies." I've just had that voice in my heart and in my head.

I mean, Matt said a lot great things during the book of Acts, but I'm going to take that one sentence and that voice with me. That's what I'm going to look back to. "Out of joy, the church multiplied." I know we've talked about it a lot, but what I want to do is a little different. I just want to testify from the trench of multiplication in a particular trench: the trench of a campus multiplying into a local church.

Just to put my cards on the table, a big part of my hope in that is honestly for the Dallas Campus, for the Fort Worth Campus, for the soon-to-be Plano Campus, part of what I would be able to share testimony of is the beauty of multiplication in general, but specifically for our church, even as Matt conveyed last week, the unique form of multiplication in campuses becoming local churches. I just want to talk about that.

Part of my hope is for the campuses that, by God's will, may in the future transition into local churches as well like we're doing in Denton, that you'd be encouraged, that you'd have something set under your feet to know why and why the elders think this is good. I know for those of you in Flower Mound, this may seem a little bit less relevant for you.

You're here. Matt is here. There is no sense that this campus is going to multiply and roll off which, if you think about that, that might be a good idea though. What would that do to the other campuses if we just roll off the Flower Mound Campus? That might be a bit easier. It's kind of a mind-bender there. We're not going to do that.

I think even especially for the Flower Mound Campus, you think, "Man, this may not have as much to do with us." But because you're not necessarily feeling the sense of imminent multiplication some time down the road, I think that actually might mean you need to have the value of multiplication put before you *more*. As Matt said last week, the edge is not there in the same way it is for the campuses that are not in Flower Mound.

I'm even encouraged and hopeful. It's part of what we'll talk about tonight. For those of you who are here that there's no sense in the future that your campus would transition, you'd still be encouraged and motivated by God's Spirit tonight (*compelled* may be a better word) to just see the beauty of what God's plan is for his church and to continue to join in with that.

If you have a Bible, why don't you turn to Mark 4. That's where we're going to start. I'm going to walk us through a biblical theology of multiplication. We're going to start in Mark 4 and kind of push off from there. Then we're going to go from Genesis to Revelation. I promise it will be pretty quick, Lord willing. Mark 4. Jesus is teaching, as he so often did, in parables. This is a way Jesus taught. Just to make plain the teachings he was conveying to the people, he would use a parable. He would lay out a spiritual truth and make it plain through a parable.

In Mark 4, there are all these different parables, but the one we're going to look at starts in verse 30. Part of what he is teaching about here is what the kingdom of God is like. Jesus came. He proclaimed, inaugurated the kingdom of God coming on earth as it is in heaven (him, of course, being the King). He is teaching his disciples and those who had ears to hear what the kingdom of God was like. He did this over and over in different ways.

This particular parable I think is beautiful and so helpful as we consider together multiplication and what the implications are for us personally and corporately. Let's start in Mark 4, and then I'll pray. Then we'll sweep through the Bible and see how God's plan for multiplication from beginning to end is something incredible to have the opportunity to step into. Mark 4. This is what it says starting in verse 30. Jesus is teaching here. He says:

"With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." Will you pray with me?

Father, we thank you for your Word, and we pray tonight that as we look into your Word and what you have shown us of yourself and of your kingdom that you would cause us to see you as beautiful, as worthy, excellent, holy, worth giving our lives over. We thank you for your Word. We thank you that we're not just here as your people without knowing what

you want from us or what you've said to us. You have spoken definitively in and through the person of your Son, by your Spirit, through the Scriptures.

We pray tonight you would speak to us through it. Help us. Encourage us. Convict us. Challenge us. Awaken us. We love you. We pray tonight you would give us our daily bread, knowing we don't live on bread alone. We live by every word from your mouth. Feed us. We're thankful yours is the kingdom and the glory and the power forever to do these things. In Christ's name, amen. Amen.

Well, Jesus, as he said here, teaches something about the kingdom of God. What he teaches is what we've seen all through Scripture, that before the foundation of the world, God's plan for his kingdom, for his people, is multiplication. He has actually woven it into the fabric of creation. You see this clearly not just in Jesus' teachings, which we started with here, and I think we're right to do that. Not just in his parables.

We actually see it from the very beginning of the Bible, the very beginning of the biblical story. In the beginning, if you've read the Bible (the first part of it that is), you know that God, out of nothing, created everything. He spoke into existence out of nothing all things that are. As the pinnacle of his creation, at the pinnacle of his creative activity, the crown jewel of his creation was that he created mankind.

He created male and female, the Bible says, in his own image and likeness. He stamped upon them something he didn't stamp upon anything else: the image of God. As he created male and female, he brought them together in marriage. This is the Bible. This is Adam and Eve coming up and getting married. God officiates and brings them together. Then the Bible says the very first thing God commands the man and the woman to do in Genesis 1:28 is the same thing he already commanded the fish and the animals on the ground to do.

That is this. I have it for you up here. It says, "**Be fruitful and multiply...**" The first command to human creatures made in the image of God was, "**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**"

Of course, this commandment in Genesis 1 is a commandment implying multiplying physically (having babies, mingling of souls). If you don't know what that is, come to the event. It's a free event (Mingling of Souls). This is what he is talking about. Mingle souls. Make babies. The purpose of making babies is not just to have physical offspring. Tied to the command to make children, to be fruitful in that way and multiply, is multiplying something more than just physical descendants. It's multiplying the image of God.

Again, man is made in the image of God. Part of what God is saying here is, "I want my image, I want my beauty, I want my glory, I want my weight, I want my justice, I want my holiness, I want my love, my rule and reign over creation, to be extended through my creatures, my man and woman creatures I've made." The command to multiply is more than just, "Have children." It's, "Have children made in the image of God who will take that image of God and spread it over the earth like the water covers the sea."

There's a lot going on here at the very beginning. It's, "Yes, have children. Be fruitful." In having children, the command is also, "Hey, take the image of God, the rule and the reign of God, and as God's vice regents (his mankind), take that and spread it over the face of the earth." God is essentially saying, "Listen. I want my rule and my reign to spread. I want you to make more little images of God who can spread and reflect my glory and worth to creation."

It's amazing what he is saying in Genesis 1. Of course if you keep reading the story, they don't do that. I mean, they make babies, but things go really bad really quickly. You read Genesis 1. You read Genesis 2. Genesis 3 is a horror story. If you've never read it, you should read it, and you should read it with horror and terror. I'm not talking about like those cheesy sort of horror films. I'm talking about the ones that are really horrible.

That's Genesis 3. It's called the "fall of mankind." Mankind, even though they were made in the image of God to spread that image of God, the rule and reign of God, over all of creation to show his worth, they rebelled against this good God who created them to do that. They

said, "No, thank you. We have a different plan. We'll do what we want to do. We want to be in our own image. We want to be our own gods."

They rebelled against God, and they sinned against God. God leads them out of the garden, but what's amazing is this. Just because mankind sins against God, his plan for multiplication, his plan for men and women made in the image of God to go out and reflect his glory, doesn't stop. You know this because you read Genesis 9. After God has flooded the earth because all human beings are rebelling against him, so he judges the earth through a flood, it says this after Noah and his sons get off the boat.

The very first command is the same command he gave to Adam and Eve. This is them getting off the boat. It says, "**Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.**" Yes, man sins against God, but the image of God doesn't go away. It's marred. It's distorted, but mankind is still made in the image of God. God's plan for his glory and worth and beauty to spread through men and women made in his image doesn't go away either.

God is still committed to multiplying his people out so his glory can cover the earth. As you keep reading through Genesis, this is a major motif in the book of Genesis. I mean, even Abraham. Abraham comes, and God comes to Abraham and does what? He promises what? "I'm going to make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven." Multiplication. You keep reading Genesis. At the end of Genesis, the people are going down into slavery into Egypt. Then you start Exodus.

What you see in that transition even when the people are going to slavery... What I want to make sure to point out is they went to slavery. While they were in slavery, they continued to multiply. Of course, God leads his people out of slavery, and he leads them through the wilderness. Through their disobedience, he doesn't give up on them. He kills some of them. He judges some of them, righteously, but he doesn't give up on them.

He keeps leading them. He leads them into the Promised Land. A big part of what he says when they get into the Promised Land is, "Okay, I've led you into the land I promised. Now I'm going to continue to multiply you as I promised." Yet they get into the Promised Land

and, just like Adam and Eve in the garden (which is sort of a forerunner to the Promised Land; it's that little Promised Land of the garden), they rebel against God as people rebel against him.

Like he kicked Adam and Eve out of the garden, he kicks them out of the Promised Land. He sends them in judgment into exile. Even while they're in exile, even when they're in Babylon, do you remember what the prophet Jeremiah says in Jeremiah 29? He says, "While you're there, increase." I'll just read it for you. It says, "**Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters.**"

Again, it's very similar. It echoes Genesis 1. God has not changed his mind. He has not changed his plan. He has not changed his commands. He says, "**Increase in number there; do not decrease.**" Again and again and again as you keep reading the Bible, one thing you learn is that growth is in the kingdom of heaven under the direction and leadership of the King, and the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, is meant to and will grow. It's meant to grow, and it will grow under God's oversight, under his direction, under his lordship.

This is prophesied all through the New Testament. I mean, even some of the Christmas hymns we sing talk about this, talk about this King Jesus who is going to one day come. They're prophesying, and it says this about the King. If you think about Isaiah 9, it says, "**Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end...**"

There is coming a King who is going to have a government that's going to increase without end. It's going to multiply forever, his rule and his reign, just like he promised and intended from the very beginning. It says, "[This King] **will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.**"

You know this is going to happen because, "**The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.**" All through the Old Testament you see this. This is God's plan for his kingdom. This is his plan, for his worth and his beauty to spread through his creatures

made in his image. Even though they're rebellious, he sticks with his plan. He is loyal to himself. He is faithful even when we're faithless, as we'll talk about later.

After Jesus is prophesied about, he actually comes just like Isaiah 9 talks about. The King himself, Jesus, finally comes. This is the New Testament, if you've never read the Bible. Jesus comes, and he validates his kingship. He comes and says he is the King, and he validates his kingship by doing exactly what the Scripture prophesied he'd do. He dies for our sins. He is crucified and executed. He who knew no sin became sin.

Even Jesus, when talking about his death, says... Tying it back to the initial command in Genesis 1, John 12:24 says (this is Jesus speaking), **"I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."** This isn't the only passage that interprets his death.

Jesus says a lot of things about what his death accomplishes, but part of what he is saying is, "In me dying, that's going to fulfill what God has intended to be fulfilled all along. That's going to create descendants, more people of God following him, because I'm dying to purchase them. Through my death, I am going to die, but it's going to mean more fruit in the harvest of God's world and his kingdom."

It's unbelievably beautiful. Jesus is stepping on the scene, and he is fulfilling and doing perfectly what Adam and Eve, what Noah and his sons, what Abraham and all his descendants all the way to us spiritually and otherwise have never done. Jesus steps on the scene and perfectly fulfills those prophecies and those commands.

After Jesus (the good seed) falls into the ground and dies, he was raised up. He didn't stay dead. He was raised up out of the grave. Before he ascended to go take the throne of David, just like Isaiah said he would do and others said he would do, Jesus gave his disciples the very same charge God gave Adam and Eve, which is what we talked about last week from Matthew 28.

The charge was this: "Be fruitful and multiply. Go and make disciples." You see there that at this point in the revelation of Scripture, the people of God are very aware that God's rule and reign spreading, being fruitful and multiplying, is not just about baby making. It's about disciple making. It's not either/or, but it's definitely about disciple making. Whether or not we're making babies or not, we're to be making disciples.

So of course this is something for us as Christians on this side of the thing, we see, we read about and, man, it's beautiful. When we've read through the book of Acts, what you're seeing in the book of Acts is this happening. You're seeing what has been commanded in Genesis 1 that has come to fulfillment in the sense of needing the Lord to help us do it in Jesus Christ right into the disciples and the apostles in Acts.

In Acts, the constant refrain is the people of God, as they're following God, empowered by his Spirit, led by his Spirit, they are being fruitful and multiplying. They are making disciples. I'll just read... I know we just went through this series, so I'm not going to read the whole thing but just these refrains you see in the book of Acts.

In Acts 6, it says, **"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing... So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."** Acts 12: **"But the word of God continued to increase and spread."** Acts, chapter 13: **"The word of the Lord spread through the whole region."** Acts, chapter 19: **"In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power."**

Even that amazing text in Acts 9:31 that David Platt, if you saw the video last week, talked about, that the people of God were walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Spirit, and the church was multiplying. That's what we've been talking about all spring, and yet even as you continue to read the Bible, you see...

You go to Revelation, and you get to the last chapter of Revelation. What you see in the last chapter of Revelation is multiplication of God's fame and worth. Babies aren't being made at the end of Revelation. No disciples are being made, but you see the throne room of

heaven. What's being multiplied in the throne room of heaven is the praises of God forever and ever and ever. Multiplying praise and glory and honor to God, singing, "**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty...**"

From beginning to end in the Bible, multiplication is God's plan for his kingdom. It always has been and...listen...it's a good plan! It's key that we know that. It's a beautiful plan. It's not just a fact of Scripture that we sort of can study and turn around and go, "Oh, that's neat. Yeah! It makes sense. It kind of helps me take Genesis and go to Revelation. That's good."

We need to have biblical theology but to step back from the biblical theology and go, "That's wise. That's beautiful. That's compelling. I want to be a part of that! I want to be under that kingdom. I want to be under that King." Even tonight if you're not a Christian, you may be listening to this sermon and going, "Wow. That sounds unbelievably totalitarian. You're telling me this God and his Son who came to be man without ceasing to be God (which is weird)..."

If you're new to all this, there are a lot of conversations to have. I totally agree with you. I would be kind of all over the place here. Even if you're thinking about it just in earthly terms and you think, "Oh, so he wants his kingdom to spread all over the face of the earth. What makes that any different than what's happening in the Ukraine right now?"

Isn't that just what all dictators want to do? They just want to take over the entire world. Why is that good news? Why is that good news that this is what the Bible says about this ruler who wants to come and take over the world, including my life?" Well, it's good news for a couple of reasons at least (more than that, but at least a couple).

First, Jesus is different than all the other rulers you and I see in the headlines and despise because he is not trying to get power and authority. He already has it. He is God. That's what we believe as Christians (that he is God). He is not trying to get power and authority; he already has it. His extending his kingdom is not him taking from the weak, taking in a

sense of injustice from those who it rightfully belongs to. All power and authority is his.
Okay?

Secondly, no one can take it from him. He is not fearful and motivated by, "Well, I have to do *this* and do *that* because I'm afraid if I don't do *that* or do *this*, somebody is going to take the power away that I've stolen from others." Well, he already has all power. Because he does and because he is God, nobody can take it from him. Even he said, "Hey, listen. Nobody can take my life from me. I lay it down on my own accord. Nobody is taking my life here. I'm willingly giving myself over."

If you're not a Christian, those are just a couple of things that set Jesus apart, his "Godness," but then also the reality of what that Godness means for his rule and reign that's different from the rulers and those who are in authority in the world we know and see with our eyes and in the headlines. Secondly, if you're not a Christian, you should want the fact that Jesus being a king is going to bring his kingdom to earth as it is in heaven... You should want that to be true even if you're not a Christian. That's what I would suggest to you.

You should want that to be true because Jesus is perfect. He is perfect in love. He is perfect in power. He is perfect in justice. His kingdom is established on the foundations of justice and mercy and love, not injustice, not hate, not sin. Righteousness. That's what Isaiah 9 talks about, is it not? That's his government. Jesus being the King is a good thing.

Even if you don't believe in him, it's a good thing if you can see and sense from the Bible that this is what it says about him. He is perfect. Why wouldn't you want a perfect ruler who could actually come? When he comes, what he is going to do is he is going to vanquish injustice. He is going to take away those things that make us groan, that make us sad, that make us angry.

There are not going to be any more Nigerians kidnapped when Jesus comes and rules. There's not going to be any of this waiting on certain authorities to do things and to have courage, because he is going to come, and he is going to rule with an iron rod. That is the best news for the entire world, whether you believe in him or not. If you're not a Christian,

maybe that just gets a conversation started, because I know there's a lot here that you just go, "Man..."

Those of us who are Christians, we think about this stuff often. So honestly we don't think a lot about how sometimes this can seem weird. It is if you're not really thinking through it, through the lens of one who doesn't yet believe. I hope that helped. My point is really for those of you who are Christians in our church that multiplication in the kingdom of God is a good thing. It's something we should pray for, be excited about.

Church, as we've talked about all spring, it's a sign, it's a mark (not the *only* mark, but it is a mark), of a healthy and flourishing church. As we've talked about, where multiplication is not happening in the local church, where that's not happening and where it's not celebrated, it might just be a sign of a lack of health. Maybe I can make this plain by just giving you an example physically we very often come up against.

You know, yesterday was actually my youngest daughter's second birthday. Of course there's nothing else going on for 2-year-olds in the world than *Frozen*. We had a *Frozen* party. Not just 2-year-olds. I mean, I went to that sing-along for the eighth time, and it was like this group of college students from Denton singing. I was like, "Who are all those adults? Oh, those are members of our church. That's awesome...I think."

Anyway, we threw a *Frozen* party. I got you a picture just because I could. I had the stage, so I was going to dote on her. That's Elliot. My mom made her that. That's Elsa. She just made that from nothing, which I'm not that creative. Anybody who can create out of nothing like that (well, not like God, but in a different way, imaging God, taking his rule and reign into fabrics and things), it's wonderful.

Anyway, it was a great party. I wish we could sell those and it be legal, because I think we could make a lot of money. We can't do that, and we probably couldn't mass-produce them. All that to say, thinking about her birthday this week and thinking about even the process that led to the day she was born, it was good for me. It was encouraging for me. You know, I

was thinking about it and just how, two years ago this week, my wife was *very* pregnant. I mean that in the most beautiful of ways. She was just ready to have a baby.

Bless the Lord, by his grace, everything happened in terms of the development of Elliot while she was in the womb just great. She was healthy. It was good. We walked through it. Kimberly was praying, "Man, before the hot summer months would come, let me just have this baby, Lord." We had the baby. That was a blessing from the Lord. We just thanked him and worshiped and celebrated. It was good. It was good for me this week to think about that.

You know what *wouldn't* have been healthy is if she had carried that baby to 13 months. It wouldn't have been healthy for my wife. It wouldn't have been healthy for Elliot. It wouldn't have been healthy for anybody. To be pregnant and to be healthfully pregnant and ready to give birth and to *not* give birth is not a good thing. Some of you in the medical profession could probably say, "No, it's actually a really bad thing" in much more detail than I'm even aware of.

If you're pregnant and you're not able or willing to give birth, that's not good. The parallel for the church is giving birth is a healthy, natural, God-ordained thing at a certain point in time. So it is with the church. A church that's pregnant spiritually, however you want to define that, for them to *not* give birth is not a sign of maturity. It's a sign of immaturity and not good health.

The reason you look in the Bible and you think about even what the Lord has done here at The Village and you get excited about multiplication, it's because it's so normal. It's so biblical. It's not a split. It's not a divorce. It's giving birth, which is a good thing. Cutting the umbilical cord is a good thing. It would be totally awkward if you didn't do that. Again, I don't know anything about the medical realities, but it just wouldn't be good.

You do that! There's a point in time when you do that. You do it because that's the way God has ordained it. I think the parallel obviously breaks down at some point (or at many

points) with the church and multiplying, but I think the point is made clear that, in the Lord's will for his people, this is part of what we do as the people of God. We multiply.

If you're a reader and you want to read something fascinating, Jonathan Last wrote a book called *What to Expect When No One's Expecting*. It's a book about the declining birthrates all over the world physically. This is like a scientific demographic book. A big part of what he says is countries, nations that do not have high birthrates where they're reproducing themselves and multiplying, do you know what happens to them? They die. They go away.

He traces this and the history of why it is and why birthrates go down. He gets to the end, and he has some implications. Regardless of what you think about domestic policy, foreign policy, some of the things he says are incredibly spot-on and, since I've read it, have happened (things like China reversing its one child policy).

Why? Well, because the ideals they had are coming into direct confrontation with the reality that if you don't have children, you're not going to exist as a nation. You're not going to be a superpower, financially or otherwise. It's just this unbelievable reality. If you don't multiply as a people, you die.

It's the same way with God's people and his church. All that to say, multiplication is part of the very essence of being a Christian. Being a part of a church is a good thing. Giving birth is a good thing. It's God's plan, and it is a beautiful plan.

A big part of what has compelled the elders (getting more specific here) to begin transitioning not just missionaries overseas, which is unbelievable and exciting (we need to pray for more of that), not just church planters to go, not just bringing in more campuses but actually taking campuses and rolling them off into a local church...

One of the things, friends, that has compelled that is just the beauty and the growing conviction of multiplication in the Bible. We see it. The opportunity to use our multi-site campuses as a strategy to plant and give birth to healthy local churches is something we just have united around as the leadership of the church and become so excited about.

Part of what I wanted to do today is... I know we've been talking about multiplication in general during this series but especially again for the Dallas Campus, for the Fort Worth Campus, even for the Plano Campus and, again, for the Flower Mound Campus, who you're doing much of the sending which means you need to be aware of the beauty of it just as much as anybody else.

To drill down a bit on why the elders are so excited, why Matt can get up last week and say, "The Sunday we voted in Denton is the most potentially significant weekend in the life of our church..." it's like wow! That seems like an overstatement if you don't know what's undergirding that. I just want to walk through four things that are really undergirding that. Josh Patterson, who is one of the elders... *Dr. Josh Patterson* after yesterday. *Dr. P.* Encourage him. Congratulate him. He paid me to say that. If you see him, "Dr. P."

He wrote a document that outlines these four reasons, but I just want to put some flesh to it, because we're right in the middle of it in Denton. Here are the four reasons why rolling off campuses, that particular form of multiplication (rolling them off into local churches) we're seeing is beautiful and good and right. The first thing is what we've already talked about: just the sheer biblical force and beauty of God's plan for spreading his worth and glory through his people through...

1. *Multiplication.* That's the first thing. Transitioning campuses is a concrete expression of our mission statement: "...to bring glory to God by making disciples through...gospel-centered multiplication." That's a concrete way to reinforce that. We are living out the mission statement in Denton, Texas. Not that we're not here, but in this particular way, we're living it out.

2. *A particular form of multiplication.* You can go, "Okay, I get it. Multiplication is good, but why this particular form of multiplication? Why *this* form of multiplication? Why not just campuses? That's a form of multiplication. Why moving campuses to the next step?" Well, one of the things we read and we thought about through the book of Acts is this statement George Peters writes in *A Theology of Church Growth*.

I'll put this up here for you to really internalize it. He says, "The concept of multiplication [in the book of Acts, in particular] seems to point in the direction of an increasing number of groups and churches rather than an expansion of existing ones." Let me say that again. "The concept of multiplication..." A type of multiplication. Now we're getting more specific.

It's not just multiplication. The type of corporate multiplication you see in the book of Acts "...seems to point in the direction of an increasing number of groups and churches rather than an expansion of existing ones." In layman's terms, what that means is, when you see multiplication in the Bible, you don't see one church getting bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger.

You see one church getting bigger and then giving birth to another church. Then you see both of those churches (hopefully by God's grace) getting bigger and giving birth to other churches. It's more churches, not one church getting more and more and more and more pregnant. Does that make sense?

That's compelling to us. Even as you look at the book of Acts, you see the apostle Paul's ministry. What did he do? He was set apart by God. You know, Jesus just miraculously, forcefully, unbelievably, powerfully confronted him, changed him, saved him, made him an apostle to the Gentiles. Then you see Paul. He doesn't just stay in Antioch. Antioch is this growing church. We talked about this a little bit.

He goes, and he uses his unique gift and calling, and he gathers people to the gospel of Jesus Christ. He goes into these cities. He preaches. When he preaches, he is uniquely gifted. People come! Sometimes they did, and sometimes they just laughed at him. A lot of times he'd go into the synagogues, and he'd go into these other places. He'd preach, and people would gather around him. He would gather these people around him, and he'd begin to teach them.

Then do you know what he'd do? He would totally leave them. He wouldn't stay. He'd leave them after he had raised up some faithful men and women to serve that church and, in

particular, some faithful elders and pastors. He'd raise up those men, and then he'd leave. You do realize that. He didn't stay and go, "Well, this is it. People are coming to the gospel. I'm just going to stay here, and we're just going to get bigger and bigger."

He said, "No, I'm going to raise up some mature men and women from here. I'm going to put some elders and appoint them. Then I'm going to leave, and I'm going to go to another place. Then I'm going to gather again. I'm going to do it again. I'm going to evangelize. I'm going to gather, and then I'm going to raise up a church. Then I'm going to leave."

He just went from place to place to place, and he did this. This is why we have letters. Do you know why we have letters to churches? Because he wasn't with the churches. He planted them, and then he left them, not on their own but with elders. The letters oftentimes are written not just to the church but also to the elders. He is writing back to Timothy. He is writing back to the deacons and the elders at Philippi along with the congregation because he has left those churches to go start new churches.

As we thought about this, this is the particular form of multiplication you see. Even as you think about Matt's gifting... He is not the apostle Paul. I'm not going to compare him to the apostle Paul. I'll compare him to somebody else here in a minute. His gifting is evangelizing, gathering. The Lord has uniquely gifted him in a power and an authority when he preaches that is incredible, which should cause you not to celebrate but to just be sober and pray for the Lord to continue to use him, which is our responsibility.

He is just to get up and preach. We need to pray for him. We shouldn't take for granted that when he opens his mouth and proclaims the gospel, people get saved oftentimes. That is not the norm everywhere. That's Matt's gift. We gather people. Paralleling what you see in the book of Acts, okay, campuses are good, but the step we've not yet taken until now is when do you leave?

Of course, leaving doesn't mean Matt sails across the Mediterranean to Rome or something (although that would be awesome). It means you pull the plug on the video, and you go and

you gather some more. Then you're leaving behind little islands of local churches instead of one big existing church that's just getting bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger.

If you talk to Matt, that's the way he wants to steward his gifting, because he sees it here not in a black-and-white way in the Bible but in a way that's compelling to his own heart. He just sees the wisdom of it. That's one reason. It's multiplication, but then secondly, it's a certain form of multiplication that sees an increasing number of churches through campuses and otherwise being planted, not one existing church just getting bigger and bigger and bigger.

3. *Contextualization*. For those of you if you're not taking a seminary class on missions or something, *contextualization* simply means this. It's the way a church ministers in relation to their particular church and also the particular culture and neighborhood and context around them. That's what contextualization is.

Part of what we feel with campuses is that there is a ceiling on contextualization. You know, it's interesting. It's the first time in church history that the primary teaching pastor, because of the beauty and gift of technology, is not also one of the pastors. In other words, you can actually have a primary teacher who is not your pastor, who doesn't live near the people in that congregation, who doesn't live in that city, who doesn't live in that context.

It's really the first time in church history where you see the opportunity through video (which I'm not knocking necessarily...I'm just saying it's something to think about) where the teacher is not necessarily the pastor. As we thought about that, we thought about a number of things. Part of what we thought about was, "Listen. Denton is not Flower Mound. Flower Mound is not North Dallas. North Dallas is not Plano. Plano and North Dallas are certainly not East Fort Worth."

When you think about that and you really begin to think about, "Okay, first for the congregation, long-term what is the best thing for them? To have someone who is not really walking with them, who is not really counseling them in their marriages, who is not really there at the bedside when children are born, who really doesn't look out and actually

physically see the people when they're preaching on Sunday? Is that what's really best long-term, regardless of how gifted he is and for what reason?"

Or is what's best is to actually have incarnated people who live and walk among the people they're preaching to week in and day in and day out? Beyond just the church, because the congregations are different, what about even the city? We talked about that a little bit in Acts 17. Different idols (or at least idols dressed up differently is probably a way to say that). Different, unique ways to talk. Different demographics. Different ethnicity mixes. Different socioeconomic statuses that make up our different campuses.

If you've been to our different campuses, you feel that right when you walk in the door. To more faithfully be able to contextualize, part of what we sense and feel is that it would be best, when it's time and when the Lord raises up the right people, to have pastors who are actually not just the pastors but actually teaching out of their pastoral ministry where their pastoral ministry, their counseling ministry, is driving what they say.

You know, I'm here tonight. I know some of you, some of you in Dallas and Fort Worth. Most of you I don't know. I don't know what's going on in your lives. I don't know your names. Certainly long-term that has an effect on my preaching and how fruitful it is in your life. I don't think anybody would argue that.

That's one of the reasons we're so excited and so compelled, because multiplication of campuses gives us a better opportunity to contextualize more faithfully, more powerfully, in unique neighborhoods and among unique churches. That's the third thing. The fourth thing is simply...

4. *Proactive succession.* Campuses transitioning to churches here at The Village are proactive successions of Matt. Every church is going to have to face the question of succession, especially when they have a key leader who is really uniquely gifted like ours is. Do you know what Matt has conveyed numerous times in the series but even more specifically when he comes to Denton?

It's a beautiful thing when a church matures to the point where the glue that holds her together is not a particular program or a particular person outside of the Holy Spirit of God. That's a beautiful thing. Again, part of the way the elders sensed that, "Man, we can answer the question of succession along with all these other things being compelled by them that we see in the Bible, and that's good. That's good! It's a good thing to begin succeeding, having a succession plan for Matt."

These are the reasons. There are more, but these are some of the reasons, especially again for those of you in Fort Worth, Dallas, that we're saying, "Man, we don't think campuses are bad. We don't think they've been bad or sinful, but we think *this* is beautiful. The opportunity to transition and multiply campuses off into churches is a really, really, really good thing."

As God wills, this will become the norm in due time for our campuses, which means again for those of you in Dallas and Fort Worth and Plano, as God is building you up through one another and your leader is growing and you growing up, the Lord is preparing you for this. It means here in Flower Mound, the Lord is preparing you to continue to help serve us and pray for us and send us out. It's just as important for the sender as it is for the sent to be aware of these things.

Maybe even more difficult to keep this in front of you because you're not feeling it again... We'll get to that here in a minute, but what I wanted to do (I'll just end with this) is just give you the testimony of how this became so beautiful for me as a campus pastor, now one who is looking to be one of the lead pastors at a local church, not just a campus. I didn't start out here, and I know Matt sort of shared throughout the series about how the process worked with Denton.

I just wanted to come testify from my vantage point, and maybe it will encourage you, regardless of whether or not you even know anything about campuses transitioning to churches or care. Maybe it will just be encouraging to see how God is faithful to lead his church and to lead his people.

I don't know about you. The way God has always worked in my life is actually through an external call first, meaning people around me would say something about my life, particularly in regard to ministry, and say, "This is the direction to go." Then eventually there would be an internal call that sort of measured up with that. Let me just explain it this way.

The way the campus transition for Denton happened for me was Matt initiated a conversation. I was just working, trying to figure out... It's like, "What in the world is a campus?" We didn't know any of this back then. It's like, "Where's my job description? Oh, I don't have one? Thanks. That's awesome. I have to go figure it out. What are all these weird people doing in Denton all the time? What's going on here?" "Why all these beards and non-pasteurized milk thing, Pastor? What's going on?"

I was just learning about all that stuff. Matt came and said, "Hey, where do you see this multi-site thing ending?" I said, "I have no idea." He said, "What would you think about you actually eventually becoming the lead teacher as you pastor this church, this congregation becoming a local church?"

At the time, I was just trying to figure out a campus. What's a campus? You know, Denton was the first campus. We didn't know anything. I was trying to figure that out. I was also coming out of a season of depression, which was awesome. Then my wife was pregnant with our first son, so it was like, "Hey, that's nice. No, thank you. Why don't you just preach and leave me alone to figure out what my job is and how to be a dad and how to be happy? Okay? Why don't you just help me out here?"

I told him that. I said, "No, thank you." It was kind. The other thing was, I mean, who wants to follow Matt preaching? It's sort of like who wants to go after the modern-day Charles Spurgeon? Does that sound fun? No! "No, I'm cool, man. You just keep doing good works. I'll be over here doing what I'm doing, and we make a good team." You know? That was kind of where I was at for, I think, healthy reasons, unhealthy reasons.

He didn't let up. Then Josh Patterson (you know, Dr. P.) comes along. He starts asking me (I'm trying to weave that into the culture, Dr. P.) the same thing Matt was, but he didn't know Matt was asking, and Matt didn't know he was asking. They weren't together. They were just kind of taking it a step further and saying, "Hey, listen. We actually think this would be a good and beautiful thing along some of the same lines we thought about here."

It was just a conversation among brothers. We were obviously going to take it to the elders, but this was the conversation that started to happen. I just said, "No, thank you." Then again, other elders started saying it. Other pastoral sages in my life came to me and started saying the same thing. You know, at this point I'm still saying, "No," but then I'm beginning to wonder, "Okay, most of the godly men in my life are saying the same thing."

I've learned at least this much: when that happens (because it hasn't happened to me very much, particularly about big transitions), you ought to listen. I was listening, but I wasn't really sure. Then internally, I was really beginning to wrestle through a number of questions about the church, about the nature of the church. "What is the church? What is a church? How would you define that?"

It's like, "I'm going to give an account for how I care for our church. I'd better know what it is." Sadly enough, most seminaries don't teach you what it is. They just kind of put the study of the church in with systematic theology for a week and then move on. It's like a robust understanding of what the church really is, why she exists. I didn't have any clue. I started to learn about that which, of course, led me to different questions.

I started to hear more about gospel-centered multiplication from our campus outreach staff. Then I also began to think through things like, "What's the wisest way long-term to steward Matt's voice? How do we do that? Not that we're in control; the Lord does what he wills..."

But if we're really trying to steward what the Lord has given him in terms of gifting, what's the wisest way to do that? To just keep adding campuses? Is that the best thing, or would

the best thing be to actually raise up other leaders through him who can lead churches?" I began asking that question.

What's the wisest way to really end multi-site? You know, there are thousands of churches now that are doing multi-site. What I wasn't hearing at the time was what the exit plan is for multi-site. What are we going to use? Is there just going to be video forever and ever amen, and then we're going to go try to find another Charles Spurgeon to follow Charles Spurgeon?

I mean, I really wonder. It's like, "What are we going to do? We have these super-apostles teaching through screens," which is, again, not a bad thing, but if we're not thinking through what we're going to do on the other side of that... I started to think through that. Even more particularly, this little church in Denton, Texas, that was founded in 1949. Our elders at the Denton Campus walked by the little house today a block away from our campus where the prayer meetings happened before the church started.

Thinking about this little church, God has kept this little church that meets there on Oak and Fulton alive for a long, long time. Why? I think again it's easy to just go, "Well certainly it's for this decade I'm alive and in it. Certainly what he is doing right now is why he kept her alive. This is it. The Lord might as well just descend now because this is the epitome of what he had in store for this church."

You know, it's funny. We think about our local church way different than we think about our finances (most of us). Most of us think about our finances into generations. Most of us do not think about our local church that way. We're thinking about our generation. We're not thinking about our grandkids and what's going to be of this particular local church for our grandkids, for the people who are going to be in this neighborhood 60 years from now.

I think to our shame we don't think about it, so I began to think, "Okay, Lord. What if the reason you kept this little church alive wasn't just to be able to have The Village come along and be one with Grace Temple so we could see what we're seeing as magnificent as that is? What if the reason you kept this little church alive was for something far more powerful

and amazing than we've ever seen? What if this splash really is intended by your Spirit to be led into ripples that will last into the generations?"

That's what I began to think of. All of this was happening, and then we went to a breakfast up in New York City with one of our partner churches. It was me. It was Shea Sumlin who was the campus pastor here at Flower Mound at the time. It was Dr. P.

When we were there and we were talking to him, I asked him, "Okay, brother, just tell me. What do you see as some blind spots here at The Village? You know us. You're an outsider who is really an insider. Speak into our leadership. Speak into our church. What are some things you can see that we can't see because we're so close to it?" He didn't know anything about all these other conversations or what was going on in my mind.

He leaned across the table and just very kindly said, "I think you all have an opportunity to better steward what the Lord is doing both in your congregation and through the uniqueness of Matt, not just to have an existing church get bigger but to actually create a multiplying movement of planting churches." When he said that at breakfast, something in me collided (the external things these guys were saying and the internal things).

It just became clear to me, "This is it. I agree with you, and I agree this would be a better way to do that." I flew on the plane home with Steve Hardin. He had joined us by that time. Steve Hardin in New York is quite the experience. Steve Hardin on an airplane for three hours? You should try it some time. I was sitting next to him. I respect him almost more than anybody in the world I know.

I just asked him, "Steve, is there anything you'd encourage me in or rebuke me about that you see in my life just as we meet together and talk together?" He just said, unprompted (didn't know about the conversation at breakfast, didn't know about the other conversations), "Man, I just really see the Denton Campus becoming a local church and you leading it."

It's like, "Okay." I'm starting to feel disobedient, so I got home, talked to my wife. At that point, it was like, "Hey, dumb-dumb. How many more opportunities of affirmation and confirmation do you need?"

I called Josh Patterson the next morning and just said, "Hey, if what you and Matt and the rest of the elders as we begin this conversation (because it hadn't gone beyond that, collectively) sense is that this would be a good and wise way for us to lead our entire church, starting with our campus, I am not just willing to do that now. I think it would be the *best* thing to do. I don't know what it's going to look like, I don't know how it's going to end, but I think this would be a good thing to do."

Then I watched over two years now as the elders began to discuss this (they were not on the same page at the very beginning) and unanimously as the Spirit of God has brought the elders into unity around this. Then as he brought the elders and the deacons at the Denton Campus into solidarity about this... Then as he brought the entire congregation over the last five months into a place where we voted 96 percent *yes*, it's been unbelievable to see the Lord work.

I'm just convinced in my heart of hearts that this is the will of the Lord for me, for our campus, that he has raised us up, brought us together, matured us for such a time as this. Lord willing, I believe in the days ahead for Dallas and for Fort Worth and for the Plano Campus, in due time, when it's good and right before the Lord, this is best for the kingdom of God, for that little mustard seed to continue to grow into a bigger and bigger tree.

I get so excited. I'm just again honored for you to have prayed and thought about us in these days. I'm so encouraged by the way you've done that. You know, do I have fears personally? (I'm going to turn this into a confession session.) Yeah, I do. There are unknown things. Are there days of sadness? Absolutely. As Matt has conveyed, some of these guys are my best friends in different ways, and I have been walking closely with them in different seasons.

Not just at our campuses but in our Home Groups, in our families, where we're not willing to say *goodbyes* (even if they're hard) for the sake of the gospel going forward, again that's not a healthy place to be. That's not a good place to be. One of the things Mike Turner, who is one of the pastors up at the Denton Campus, said at one of our meetings over the last five months that struck me is, "You know, I was called into ministry. It was less of a calling into ministry in general. I was called into multiplication."

I was like, "I never heard that." He said, "God called me into multiplying my life." I was like, "Wow! That's a man. That's a spiritual man, a multiplication man." I had never heard it. I've thought about it, though, and I've thought, "Isn't that, though, the call on all of our lives?" When Jesus bids us, he bids us come and die, to fall into the ground not in the same way as he did but after his example that others might live through our lives being lost.

Isn't the call on all of us gospel-centered multiplication? All of our lives, personally. All of our Home Groups. Every church. I guess my question tonight for all of us (kind of bringing it back in) is...*Are you living in light of this commission?* For those who know you, would they be able to say, "They are living in light of the call to multiply and be fruitful"? Are you making disciples?

Is your Home Group preparing to say goodbye for the sake of those who don't have a Home Group? Are your campuses binding together in love and unity to grow up into all God would have to the point where they're able to mature? If not, what's hindering that? What's hindering you from making disciples personally? What's hindering your Home Group from being willing to make another Home Group because there are hundreds of people who are at this church who don't have Home Groups?

Is it just the fact that there's good community there that's a gift? Are you willing to say goodbye to that for the sake of the gospel? Are you willing to multiply your Home Group? Are we willing to multiply our campuses in the faith and the hope that what we're doing is not just a sort of random thing because we felt like it one time but because this has been God's plan all along, and he has called us into it?

I'll just end with this, and we'll celebrate the Lord's Supper. We're here because Jesus Christ left heaven and came. In the mystery of the Godhead, somehow he was leaving the Godhead by becoming a man without ceasing to be God. He put on human flesh. The Scripture said when he did it, he didn't count equality with God something to be grasped, but he laid aside his rights to stay within the Godhead.

He didn't have to leave! He didn't have to make a way for us to be brought in. God the Father didn't have to plan that before the foundation of the world. The Holy Spirit didn't have to draw us to Christ. The Godhead, most explicitly seen in the person and work of Christ, brought us in. That's what we remember when we celebrate the Lord's body being broken and his blood being shed.

Because of his life and death and resurrection, we have now a way to be brought into the family of God. All of that because Jesus forsook his own comfort so we who are the enemies of God could become sons and daughters of God while the Son of God became an enemy of God to make that possible.

Father, we pray you would help us to believe and see that gospel-centered multiplication is beautiful. I thank you for my brothers and sisters here in Flower Mound and in Dallas and in Fort Worth and those who are soon to be in Plano. I just pray, Lord, that you would bless them.

I thank you for the way they've loved us in Denton so much, so faithfully, so richly, as they've celebrated with us and labored in prayer with us. I'm grateful to God for them, and I pray your blessings upon them. I pray, in the days ahead, you'd teach all of us what it means to make disciples of all nations, to be fruitful and multiply for your name's sake. Amen.