

# To the Mentor...

I want you to know how grateful I am for you. There will come a point in the not-too-distant future when people will use this material without the opportunity for a conversation between them and I, but I believe God will use our contribution to move mountains.

We may not be able to spend as much time as we would like getting an understanding of one another's story, convictions, or hopes. To that end, I wanted you to know why this content was written, in what temperament, and to what end. I wanted you to at least read about my heart and humbly ask that you carry it forward as you invest this material into the life of another eternal soul.

This content extends from burden and belief. It was born out of my mutual and simultaneous belief and concern about something I deeply love: the church of our Savior and King, Jesus Christ. Never forget that the church is not ours; it is His. We are not owners; we are stewards. While our preferences and traditions are important, they are not our true north. We are people who gladly submit to God's words and ways.

## The Burden

*I am burdened for the preparedness of the Church.*

Jesus comes to his disciples, pulling us into the future more than pushing us from behind. We are called to live out of our past, in our present, and into our future. Our way is following Jesus forward. I am afraid we may be the least "formed" and worst prepared generation of Jesus followers while facing some of the greatest challenges. There are things happening in our culture that have not happened at any other point in the human story. We must be prepared to follow Jesus into the future that is uncertain to us but perfectly clear to Him.

These lessons don't intend to teach everything that could be taught. They don't intend to say everything we could say or everything I believe on the subjects listed. They intend to teach the truths around which we should be both unified and prepared. A significant part of our preparedness extends beyond what we know and into how we treat one another. We must recommit ourselves to the prayer of Jesus that we would be one as he and the Father are one. (John 17:20-23)

*I am burdened for the impulse of the Church.*

I recently read an author who called out two illnesses in the Western church: First, we have a reproductive crisis. We are not reproducing faith in our children, our churches, or our communities. Any species that isn't reproducing itself is classified as endangered. The only thing worse than this problem is the second illness: we don't know we are sick. (anosognosia) Every significant study of God's move in the world observes a shift from the global north to the global south. In the global south, our faith is growing. In the global north, our faith is shrinking. One hundred years ago, eighty percent of Christians lived in the global north. Now, eighty percent of Christians live in the global south. The Western church is endangered, and we must respond if we expect not to become extinct.

*I am burdened for the presence of the Church.*

In the early church, there was an emphasis on the kingdom. They viewed the church as a bridge between the kingdom that was and the kingdom that would be. In light of this, their emphasis was not on conversion but on presence. Rather than promoting a transactional entrance into the kingdom, they focused on presence within the community they inhabited. They regularly asked, "How do we live in light of Jesus as our king in this community?" The kingdom and the kingship of Jesus drove their decisions. It is the reason they responded to persecution the way they did. It is the reason they served the poor, adopted the fatherless, shared their resources, and cared for widows. They believed this behavior exhibited a kingdom where Jesus was king. Their presence led to

explosive growth in the church and millions of conversions. In just three centuries, the church overtook the culture and religious establishment of Rome. It is an influence and fruitfulness the church has yet to replicate since.

There is much debate about why the impact of the church has waned since the first few centuries of its existence. But one idea is undeniable. When the church focused on presence, it saw conversions. When the church focused on conversions, it failed to see an impactful presence or significant numbers of conversions. Century after century, the church has moved away from a philosophy of kingdom presence to transactional evangelism. The church cloistered behind its walls has proven impotent.

## My Belief

*I believe God's promises stand*

I believe with all of my heart in the word, will, and ways of God. You can give your life to it and base your life on it. This conviction is what you are committing to see developed in another person. There is nothing more important than the investment we are preparing you to make.

*I believe in the church.*

God's personal advent to this world was clothed in humility. His plan to reach the world is like it, humble. The church is not perfect. It should not claim to be. But it is good, and it is central to the delivery of God's plans to the world. Much of God's blessings in my life have come via the church. She is worth committing to, standing up for, and strengthening.

*I believe in you*

Paul called Timothy to give to faithful men the words he had been given. (2 Tim 2:2) He trusted Timothy to take the charge seriously and believed something about Timothy in giving the charge. I give you the same charge with the same belief. Be faithful to give what God has entrusted to you.

## My Ask of You

### The Preparedness of the Church:

- Take personally the challenges facing the Church. The Great Commission isn't for "them"; it is for you. You are called. You have a part. The Church needs you to step beyond attending and into membership (participation). We need to not only ask for more, we need to expect it. Heaven and Hell are real, and real people are going to one or the other every day.
- Pray about your personal walk with Jesus. Commit to growing in your faith.
- Teach your disciple to be a follower of Jesus and a uniter of his people.

### The Impulse of the Church

- Make Disciples. When we talk about "making disciples," we are talking about your commitment to certain practices.
  - Maintain an exemplary testimony to your disciple. You aren't simply investing what you know; you are investing who you are. We want to mimic Paul, who believed that if you followed him, you would be following Jesus. (1 Cor 11:1)
  - A mentor understands the limits of their investment. We are not aiming to have disciples look like us. We want them to look like Jesus. To that end, we aim to establish them in practices that allow God to teach them more than indoctrinate them into every element of our theology.
    - Establish them in God's word, fasting, and prayer.

- Establish them in corporate worship.
- Establish them in godly community.
- Establish them in use of their spiritual gifts to the service of the church.
- Establish them in generosity.

## The Presence of the Church

- Over the next handful of months, you will build a relationship with your disciples as you work through this content. The who (people) and the what (curriculum) are important, but so is the where. Where you meet and are regularly present make up an important part of your missional presence in our community. The people of God are most effective beyond Sunday morning, beyond the wall of the church, and out in their community, representing the kingdom of God as it will one day be. Plan to have your group meet somewhere in the community, not on church property.
- Here are a couple of simple habits to employ:
  - *Be a "regular" somewhere.*
    - Presence requires consistency. Regularly go to the same one or two coffee shops or restaurants. Intend to know and be known by the people who are employed there and people who are also "regulars."
  - *Smile easily and often.*
    - As a "regular," you will develop a reputation. Be kind, have great manners, open doors for people, smile easily, and intend to be a bright spot in someone's day. We all have bad days and bad moods, but make sure you are intentional about your facial expressions, body language, and tones when you are at your regular spot.
  - *Be the best tipper under the roof.*
    - Manners are great, and smiles are important, but there is a power to generosity that is hard to simulate. Treat your server with dignity and kindness, and go out of your way to bless them financially. Remember, this is someone's livelihood. Your kindness goes further than you think.
  - *Initiate conversation and be a good neighbor.*
    - Get to know the employees of the shop you frequent. Introduce yourself. Know and be known. Do whatever is necessary to remember details of the lives of the people who are serving you and express their value by checking in on issues you know are important to them (school, kids, trips, etc.). If a need arises, be helpful or generous in tangible ways.
  - *Pray for who you meet.*
    - As you build relationships and hear stories, be sure to begin to pray for people by name regularly. It isn't enough for you to be a friendly presence. You need to ask God to give you eyes to see and ears to hear in a way that allows you to be his hands and feet.
  - *Do everything in your power to have people working at that shop or restaurant look forward to your return!*
    - Be the staff's favorite! Make sure when you walk in the door of that shop or restaurant the staff is happy to see you.

I love you dearly. Let's serve the King together

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