

A Fresh Movement Among the Men of Our City

Acts 1:8, 2 Timothy 2:2, Ephesians 4:1-16

Good morning, men. Last weekend I was in Edmonton, Canada. You know how when you wake up in the middle of the night and you have to go to the bathroom, you are a little catatonic? I don't know why, but I decided when I got up in the middle of the night in Canada not to turn the light on – maybe so I wouldn't have trouble getting back to sleep. I went in to the bathroom, and I was thinking to myself they sure have quite toilets in Canada. I went back to bed and got up the next morning. I had peed all over the floor.

I thought we should start a new series at the Bible study this morning. Over the last few weeks, we have been looking at this whole area of being faithful in discipleship, making disciples, and rebuilding broken down walls. We looked at the parable of the ten minas, and the big idea was, "What is my agenda, what is God's agenda, and are we working on the same agenda?"

Then we looked at the life of Nehemiah during FUEL week when most men from FUEL were here. The big idea was, "A servant is not asking what do I want, but a servant is asking what does the Master need?"

The last time we were together we did the Battle for Men's Souls and the big idea was, "Anything less than a plan to disciple every willing man is a catastrophic moral failure." I thought we would do a short series, maybe for six weeks. We will call it "A City of Disciples."

What will this city of disciples look like, and how can we make that happen? Probably just as important, what would God like to see happen in our city? When He looks at our city what does God see? What is His agenda for the city, and how can we be a part of that?

The first thing we will do is give a shout out. The shout out this week will go to two groups, Peter Linebaugh with the Encounter Community Church in Belding, Michigan. They are a men's group wanting to grow in our relationship with Jesus. They want to reach out to their community to share the grace of Jesus. Welcome to you men.

A second group led by Terrence Redd, at the Concord Fellowship Baptist Church in Richmond Virginia. They are a men's group that has been together for twelve years. They are looking to move to a deeper level in Christ.

These two groups are joining us at the Man in the Mirror Bible Study. Join me in giving them a warm welcome to Man in the Mirror. One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we are glad to have you. If you are online and we haven't given you a shout out, or you haven't gotten one in a while, send me an email.

WHAT IS GOD'S AGENDA?

Today's message is called "A Fresh Movement Among the Men of Our City." Turn with me to Acts 1:8. Jesus when he leaves, gives the Great Commission. The book of Acts is what laymen do with what Christ has given us. I will read from Verse 4 on.

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

What is God’s agenda? It is for us to be his witnesses. What is God’s agenda? God’s agenda is for us to take this power that He gave us and be His witnesses here, there and everywhere. That is His agenda.

We see also in 2 Timothy 2:2. That when Paul took this command to be the witness of Jesus seriously, then he gave instruction to the people that he was witnessing to and his instruction is found in 2 Timothy 2:2. He writes, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”

Paul is saying follow my example as I have followed Christ, and the things I am teaching you, you entrust those things I taught you to reliable men. I am saying that to you. Follow me as I follow Christ. If you see a place where I am not following Christ, then don’t follow me there. But follow me as I follow Christ. The things you heard me say and you go out in our community and entrust those to others – to reliable men who they themselves will be qualified to teach others.

You want to start a fresh movement of God among men in this city? That is how you do it. You obey God’s agenda. There is one more Scripture to give it a little bit more texture. Ephesians 4: “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

He goes on: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” You want purpose buddy? That’s it.

He goes on: “to each one of you He gave gifts.” In Verse 11: “Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Why don't we have a city full of mature disciples in Christ? Because of disobedience. He lays out the master plan. Go and be my witnesses and trust the things that you are told to reliable people. You have been given gifts. Now it is required that whoever has been given a trust must prove faithful, take the gift and do the work of an evangelist, do the work of a prophet, do the work of an apostle, do the work of a teacher, do the work of a pastor...equip people to do good works, to be mature spiritual disciples, obtaining the full measure of Christ.

When you look at any city and you see a city that is not filled with disciples then you know in that place there are people being disobedient to God. There are enough Christians in the United States to overwhelm every city in the United States.

What is God's agenda? God's agenda is this: to mobilize an army of bold, equipped disciple-makers; to take the cities; to be obedient. What is God's agenda? To be obedient to His Word. God's agenda is this: **This is the big idea. For there to be a city of disciples there must first be a city of disciple-makers.** How can you end up with a product when you don't have the manufacturing plant? A city of disciples must first be a city of disciple-makers.

IT STARTS WITH ME

How can we make this agenda of God happen? It starts with me. You are thinking, perhaps, what can I do? You are asking the wrong question. The question isn't what can I do, it is what can our great God do through me? It is not you. It is not what you are going to do, it is what God is going to do when his Holy Spirit comes upon you and you then go be His witness. It is not what you and I are going to do, it is what God is going to do. If you are asking what can you do, you are asking the wrong question. A much better question is what can God do through me? I think the reason a lot of men are asking what can I do, is because they do not have a big enough God to think God can do something bigger than what God can do. They think they are more powerful than God.

If it is going to start with me, it is going to start with me having a more powerful unfiltered God. I need a bigger God.

I am in a small group with a man named Bekele. He is the vice president for Global Church Led Movements for Campus Crusade for Christ. It's a big position. His dream was to be a scientist. He wanted to be a great scientist. He came to the United States and five weeks later God called him back to Ethiopia where he is from. Bekele grew up in a small village in Ethiopia.

He was related by blood, to the witch doctor who lived at the top of the hill. The witch doctor was possessed by demons, worked for the demons and was the demons evangelist in the area. Bekele's father was also taken by the demons and the demons gave him very specific instructions. You are to smoke, to drink and you are to beat each of your three wives. If you disobey me I will kill your children. Bekele had a big family and when his father would disobey the demons the demons would kill one of his children. Bekele lost 12 brothers and sisters who were killed by demons.

I'm talking about an unfiltered powerful God here; an unfiltered more powerful way of seeing the world. When the family would eat each night Bekele's father would take the first plate of food and he would go outside and place it under a tree. The family was not allowed to eat until

the demons ate the food. When the food disappeared then Bekele's father could go in and the rest of the family was allowed to eat.

In the morning, at each of his three homes, they had an altar with a large bowl filled with alcohol. He had specific instructions that his wives were to keep these bowls full at all times. The first thing he was to do in the morning was to drink the alcohol.

One day when Bekele was four years of age, the demons told Bekele's father to begin training him in the ways that he was following. He began smoking and drinking at the age of four. When Bekele was five years of age, two angels came to appear to his father. They told him about God. He didn't know about God. The angels took him to heaven to see how wonderful it was, and then they took him to hell to see how wicked it was in the body or in the mind or in the vision – they don't know. Then they asked him where do you want to be? He said I want to be in heaven. I never wanted to leave heaven once I was there.

Not long after that, the two angels finished their conversation. They said in two days some men will come and tell you how you can be in heaven. Two days later two men arrived and they were itinerants. They couldn't read. They were illiterate. They had only been Christians themselves for one week. They told Bekele's father about Jesus and how he could accept Jesus and go to heaven. Bekele was listening in and said, "If my Father accepts Jesus does that mean he will stop beating my mother?" Bekele said, "Then I want to receive Jesus too." On that day both the father and his five-year-old son received Jesus Christ. Everything began to change radically.

Not long after that, Bekele's father was walking along the river and saw a Bible on a rock. He had never seen a Bible before and he heard a voice say, "That is the Word of God." He was illiterate, he could not read or write. He opened up the Bible and he could read the words. For the rest of his life when he opened the Bible he could read the words. When he would open any other book the words were dark to him. He could not read any other book, but he could read the Bible when he opened it.

He went back to his village and since he had been a powerful evil man, when he called the village together, all 400 villagers came. He told them about Jesus Christ and all 400 villagers received Jesus. The entire village was converted. This was happening in other places in this tribe of 1 million people in Ethiopia at that time. He was not the first man to have these angels appear to him in this tribe of one million people in Ethiopia, 37 years ago. Now today, 97% of those one million people follow Jesus Christ.

Now, let me ask you about your God. Are you following an unfiltered God, or are you following a filtered God? Are you following an American sanitized dumb-downed version of God, or are you following the powerful God of creation, the Maker of all things? Or are you listening to those different thing that are going on in our culture, all these different conversations, all these stupid, foolish ridiculous conversations? If you wanted to start with you, then ask the question, what can God do here, in this city? What can God do?

I have my marching orders. Frankly, you have yours too. The question is whether or not you are going to obey them.

The big idea today is this: **A city of disciples must first be a city of disciple-makers.** Now, some of you are not ready to be a disciple-maker. You are the makee, not the maker. You just take this in today. Men, if you have been discipled, if you know what it means to have Christ on the throne, if you really have surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, then if you have not been marching then today is the day to begin. Most of you are. This is a Bible study of guys who get it and are getting it done. But if for some reason you have not been getting it done, or if were lulled into a little complacency; If you are meeting people and you look in their eyes and you can see nothing and you don't say something, then you need to reenlist.

The city of disciples must first be a city of disciple-makers. That is the way it is. To become a true believer that God is as powerful as God says He is, and to become a true believer then obedience is what He requires of me.

WHAT DOES THE MASTER NEED?

Next, and last. What does the Master need? What is God's agenda? It is that we be His witnesses. It is for us to entrust these things to others who would also be qualified to teach others. It is for us to take these gifts we have been given, this grace that has been apportioned to us, that we would be worthy of the calling we received and bring people in our community to maturity. We call it a fresh movement among the men of our city, because God is not calling you to win the women and the children. He is calling you to win the men, then equipping them to win their families, and to lead their families. Win the men, win the city.

Win the men, win the family. Who did I say said it first Satan. Who said it best? God said it best. When you win the man, you win the family. Win the family, win the church. Win the church, win the city. Win the man, win the marriage. Win the marriage, win the family. Win the church, and you do win the city.

There is a problem that many churches are not making disciples. I get that. But I tell you this – the greater problem is that many churches think they are.

I want to give you five preliminary steps for what the Master needs. The first one is to be a leader. Not just any kind of leader, but a leader of a certain type. I have a Ph.D. in Leadership and Organizational change. That means I read the literature on leadership. Most of it is gilled with glittering generalities.

There was a study done a number of years ago, decades ago that found no common set of characteristics among leaders except something that had to do with longevity of marriage. Other than that there was no particular personality, age, temperament, educational background. However, there is a powerful research based conclusion that Jim Collins came to and is recorded in the book *Good to Great* about what they call a level five leader. I will give you an overview of this.

In 1971, a seemingly ordinary man named Darwin E. Smith became chief executive of Kimberly-Clark, a stodgy old paper company whose stock fell way behind the general market. Smith was the company's mild-mannered in house lawyer and he wasn't so sure the board made the right choice, and the board wasn't so sure they made the right choice either. But what a twenty years it was.

In that period, Smith created a stunning transformation of Kimberly-Clark into the leading paper-based consumer products company in the world. Under his stewardship they had four times as much return on their stock. They beat out rivals Scott Paper, and Proctor and Gamble. They outperformed Coca-Cola, Hewlett-Packard, 3M and GE. I'm reading from the book. "It was an impressive performance, one of the best examples in the twentieth century of taking a good company and making it great. Yet few people – even ardent students of management and corporate history – know anything about Darwin Smith. He probably would have liked it that way. A man who carried no airs of self-importance, Smith found his favorite companionship among plumbers and electricians and spent his vacations rumbling around his Wisconsin farm.

...But if you think that Darwin Smith was somehow meek or soft, you would be terribly mistaken. His awkward shyness and lack of pretense was coupled with a fierce, even stoic resolve toward life.

Smith brought that same ferocious resolve to rebuilding Kimberly-Clark, especially when he made the most dramatic decision in the company's history. He sold all their mills. They made this decision, and because they wanted to be a world-class competitor against companies like P&G. Like the general who burned the boats, they sold all these mills and announced this decision.

The business media called the move stupid and Wall Street's analysts downgraded the stock. Smith never wavered. 25 years later Kimberly-Clark owns Scott Paper outright and beat Proctor and Gamble in six of eight categories.

Smith is a classic example of what we came to call a level five leader. Here it is: An individual who blends an extreme personal humility with an intense professional will. Humble and determined. We found leaders of this type. This refutes the previous findings in leadership literature. We found leaders of this type at the helm of every good-to-great company during that transition period. Like Smith, they were all self-effacing individuals who displayed the fierce resolve to do whatever was needed to make the company great, or this city or church great.

Then there is a little shaded box. Level Five leaders channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company – or city or church. It's not that Level Five leaders have no ego or self-interest, indeed they are increasingly ambitious. Their ambition is first and foremost to the institution, not themselves.

What does the Master need? He needs humble leaders with determination that they are going to succeed no matter what, because they have a powerful unfiltered God working for them. They have a powerful unfiltered God they are working for. That is number one.

Number two: prayer. Luke 6:12 tells us Jesus prayed all night before making a major decision. What was that decision? The selection of the twelve disciples. As a preliminary step he needs you humble and determined, and He needs you to pray. He needs us to pray for our cities.

Number three. Turn with me to Romans 13:7. The next thing God needs from us, right now, is for us to realize that we are not the first ones to have these thoughts. That we are standing on

the shoulders of great men and women of God who have faithfully been gospel workers in this city and every other city where this message will be heard for decades. We are just the next iteration of people who have a vision for this city. I see this all the time where a new ministry and new leaders who is not humble, will come along and say he will change the city and he acts like he is the first person who had this thought and alienates everyone else along the way. He really turns them off, and acts like he is the one that we have been waiting for.

Now, Romans 13:7 says give respect where respect is due, and give honor where honor is due. That is why we do things like give the Jim Siebert distinguished service award. That is why at the Leadership Prayer Breakfast we give a lifetime achievement award to a leader who has been in the trenches and made it happen year after year. That is why last year we had a pastors appreciation 5k run to give honor where it is due; to give respect where respect is due. Instead of barging in, honor those who deserve honor. The seniors who have been at this for a while, give them respect and honor. You and I would not be here if somebody else had not been here before us. We didn't give ourselves spiritual birth. We didn't come out of the birth canal and pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and cut the umbilical cord by ourselves. We didn't do that. Somebody did that for us. We need to give honor where honor is due.

Number one is be a level five leaders. Number two is start with prayer. These are the preliminary steps. Number three is before you start reaching out, make sure you give honor to whom honor is due. Number four, it starts at home.

A man reminded me recently from our field conference in Huntsville. He was all revved up to do men's discipleship and take his city. I said, tell me about yourself. He was having problems at home. I said, I don't want you doing ministry to men until you get your ministry to wife right, which he followed, to his credit.

Your number one discipleship group is your family. Your chief responsibility is your family. He put us in families. Your chief responsibility is to disciple your family. Your number one prayer group, Bible study group, share group, home group is your family. What does the Master need for a fresh movement among the men in our city? He needs you to disciple your own family first.

A fifth preliminary step is to get yourself trained. If you don't know how to go and be a disciple-maker...the big idea is that if we are going to have a city full of disciples, it first has to be a city full of disciple-makers. Get yourself trained to be a disciple-maker. There are easy ways you can get involved. For example, this new book, *Is Christianity for You?* I wrote this book to go straight into the Books by the Box program. You can get these books for about 80 cents a piece. We have them for sale back there. Buy a case of 12 or 48. Buy some books and this weekend, go around to your neighbors and invite them to church on Sunday, and give them a copy of this book. That is the kind of thing that disciple-makers do. If you want to start a fresh movement among the men in our city, then you have to be a disciple-maker. That means you need to get trained.

What are you going to do with the rest of your life? Ten years from now is it going to be the same way it was ten years ago? No, it's not. So many of you who are making this happen, I praise God for you and for those of you who had a stirring to do something great for God, this is something you can do. You can be a disciple-maker. This is the mission. This is the Great Commission. Let's pray.

CLOSING PRAYER

Our dearest Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You that You are unambiguous even though the enemy tries to put veil after veil in front of this truth so that it looks blurry to us. Thank You we have places like this – Bible studies where we can hear the truth unvarnished and hear about God, and the power of God in an unfiltered way.

Lord, I pray for those of us who have been the frog in the kettle, being lulled to sleep, I pray we would jump out of that hot pot and we would get into they business of making disciples. We would see here a city of disciples and everywhere, cities of disciples. We make this prayer for Your Glory, for Your praise, because of your power. Amen.