

The Next Ten Years

1 Chronicles 12:32, Matthew 28:18-20

Good morning, men. How is everybody doing today? I took my wife to Outback Steakhouse for fish on Saturday night. I dropped her off and parked the car because the parking lot was full. I just love how they recruit these sweet young teenage girls. They must have quite a profile about personality. I walked in and I said, "I'm looking for a beautiful woman." Without skipping a beat one of them said, "We have lots of beautiful women here." I said, "Give me one that is age appropriate then." Without missing a beat she said, "Follow me, sir." We were walking down the aisle. She said, "We have two to choose from this evening." I said, "Well, I'll take that one." She was mine.

We have some new groups joining us from two cities. We would like to give a shout out to you guys. First, the group led by Chris Shehan, Haven of Hope in Keyes, California. They are just starting 25-30 guys in their church. Welcome to you.

Eddie Thrasher is with Gaylord Evangelical Free Church in Gaylord, Michigan. It is a Sunday morning men's group and they do one-on-one discipleship during the week. They started in January doing the Man Alive series. Join me in giving a warm shout out to these guys. One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys. We are glad to have you with us.

We are in the new series, "A City of Disciples." Today the title of the talk is, "The Next Ten Years." Leading up to this series were three messages which stimulated the idea for this series. One of the ideas we had was: What is my agenda? What is God's agenda? Are we working on the same agenda? That is when we looked at the parable of the ten minas. When we looked at the story of Nehemiah, we asked this question. We said a servant is asking, "What does the Master need?" The question is not what do I want, but what does the Master need?

When we did the Battle for Men's Souls, the big idea was, "Anything less than a plan to disciple every willing man is a catastrophic moral failure." There is a moral component to the Great Commission. In other words, this is the command of Jesus. It is right to do it. It is wrong not to do it. There is a moral dimension to the Great Commission. It is not something that if you don't do it that is okay, someone else is going to pick it up. There is a moral dimension to it. It is a catastrophic moral failure not to disciple men.

When churches, and when I say churches I mean us, when bodies of believers are not discipling every willing man in their church...when they see men like my dad come through the doors of the church with four little boys in tow, and they realize he is a rookie husband and father and needs help and they don't disciple him, that is a catastrophic failure.

In my life, and some of your lives, are evidenced of the devastation that is wrought when we don't obey the command of Jesus to make disciples. I thought we would do a series called, "A City of Disciples." Last week, we talked about a fresh movement of God in our city. The big idea was, a city of disciples must first be a city of disciple-makers. A city of disciples must first, necessarily must be a city of disciple-makers.

We looked at Acts 1:8. Jesus said you will be my witnesses here, there and everywhere. Then we looked at Ephesians 4. He has given us different gifts and roles to bring people up into spiritual maturity, to equip them for every good service.

Today we get to this idea of taking a look at the next ten years. Go down the road ten years. Would you like to say I was a part of that in my city? What is going on that makes you want to say, I was so glad that I was part of that?

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Let's talk about these next ten years. First up, the current situation. 1 Chronicles 12:32. In some of the genealogical information about Israel, Verse 32 talks about the men of Issachar. He is one of the twelve tribes. The men of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do. It is tucked in there.

The men of Issachar were men who understood the times. I want us to be men who understand the times. You do, but let's understand them in a collective way. Let's understand the times and talk about what we should do. Do you know what you should do? Do you know what should be done?

All the research that I studied shows that problem isn't that managers don't know what to do. They do know what to do. The problem is they lack models to help implement that effectively. Because there have been such a dearth of effective models to move men along through discipleship over the last 50 years, we have a current situation that there are pandemic problems. You know the problems: the issue with divorce, adultery, pornography – all the sexual things that are wrong in our culture. High school dropout rates. 41% of our children are born to women who are not married. Metal detectors are in schools. There are rampaging shootings. Economic problems are ripping us apart. There is fiscal irresponsibility, corruption, poverty, racism, crime, the prison populations. The list goes on and on. There is a lot of spiritual darkness. We have a great city.

There is so much to celebrate in this city. This city also has a dark side. It has a hidden underbelly of spiritual darkness that pervades. There is domestic abuse. There are problems that we have. There are sexually transmitted diseases. There are problems we have in our city that are pandemic. Beneath the Disney-esque patina of this city, there are deep problems in this town and in every town wherever this message will be heard. There are deep problems in our cities, towns and villages and communities.

What is really wrong? Why are these problems here? What is really wrong? What is really going on? Every one of these problems I mentioned and every one you are thinking about – addiction, alcoholism. All of these problems that are coming to your mind as I am speaking; behind every single one of them, virtually, you will find the failure of a man. Every one of those problems I mentioned is a symptom of a deeper malady. Every single one of them is a symptom. These are symptomatic problems. These are not root problems. When you go upstream, behind every one of these problems you will find a failure of a man, and in most cases a man who didn't want it to happen.

Michael Harrington who runs Salem Radio News – 2000 stations. He told me recently he listens carefully what leaders are saying. It should be encouraging to all of us that leaders are now talking a lot about the problem of men in the church. It is now a top five issues.

This problem is now on the radar. Hugh O. Maclellan, one of America's leading Christian philanthropists, who basically spends all his money overseas, says the biggest problem we have in America is to reach our men. The biggest need we have in America is to reach our men.

It is on the radar. This is the root problem. This is the problem we need to figure out how to solve. It is untenable, men. We are at a crossroad. It is like when you have personal financial problems. They are untenable. But there comes a point when you come to a crossroads where if you don't get a fix, the next step is bankruptcy. We can't just go on. We can't go on another ten years like this. Ten years from now if we keep repeating this same behavior we are not going to be where we are now, we will be insolvent, or bankrupt or worse spiritually in this city – this city we love.

We can't let that happen, men. We can't let that happen. Let me ask you. What is the problem that God has given you a burden for and a passion to solve? It could be homelessness. There is a guy I know in Longwood. His passion is helping homeless men. He has helped hundreds of them over the years. There are men in this room – there is so much ministry coming out of this room. As I look around the things that some of you have done and are doing in every arena of this city. But we need more men. How do we solve these problems? How do we change this?

We need to solve teenage crisis pregnancy. We need to solve that problem. But we also need to solve the problem that causes the problem. If somebody has cancer and you give them chemotherapy; if you give them a medicine but they actually have a tumor, what you do is cut the tumor out. You deal with the real problem and then you give them medicine to treat the other symptomatic things involved.

Let's understand that we need to be passing out prescriptions for medicine. But we also need to pull out a scalpel and do the cutting that needs to be done to solve these problems.

Let me give it to you from Martin Luther. He said, "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

The current situation is full of opportunity because of the big idea; because God is hope. God gives hope, and He has given us something for the next ten years and the ten after that, and ten after that, that resolves the current situation. It is called making disciples.

This is the big idea: **making disciples is God's designated way to release the power of the gospel on every problem facing this city.** That's it. That is the über-solution. That is the thing that releases the power of the gospel, making disciples.

We have a problem with homelessness. Make disciples who love God with all their heart and desire to do unto others what is done unto them, who then are equipped to love God, to be His disciples, equipped to do service and then God calls them to homeless people.

We equip them to walk with God to know God, to know about God, with good doctrine about God, and then, God, the Holy Spirit, He knows the needs. We are not trying to organize Christianity. We are trying to release the power of God on our city and the way you do that is by making disciples. That is God's method. That is His designated way for pulling this off. We don't have to micromanage it. You don't need ZIP code captains. All you have to do is disciple whomever you can disciple and then the Holy Spirit will release that person for service and the Holy Spirit will micromanage everything. He's got this. But He needs us to make disciples. This is His designated way. That is why not making disciples is a moral failure. Because the Holy Spirit can't do what the Holy Spirit wants to do when we don't do what the Holy Spirit tells us to do.

Sorry. The Holy Spirit does not have the same options on South Orange Blossom Trail if we are not figuring out how to make disciples out of people who care about South Orange Blossom Trails.

WHAT DOES JESUS WANT TO DO IN THIS CITY?

Second, what does Jesus want to do in this city? What is it that Jesus Christ wants to do in this city? He wants us to make disciples. It is the Great Commission, because making disciples is how He will release the power of His gospel on every problem that is facing this city.

What He wants us to do is to make disciples. Then He will release all of that power as we equip people to do the work of service; each one of us doing our part. We need more men making disciples. We need more churches making disciples. Some of us want to work in addiction. I praise God for that. Make disciples of those addicts so they can turn around and multiply what you are trying to do in the lives of other people. If your passion is business, then do what my former general manager has done. I know he is a discipler of men. In his business he brings in interns. He brought in seven interns and hired two of them. He has a vision for reproducing Christian men for the marketplace.

He met with one commercial broker, for two and a half years, and disciplined him on how he could be a man of God in the marketplace. Another guy he was meeting with was going through a divorce, so he started meeting with him every two weeks for a year and a half. Guess what? He is not divorced.

God used Chuck to help Bill not get divorced. Just imagine how happy that wife and children are today. Picture the grandchildren running around in the future if the devil had his way. What Jesus wants for us to do in this city is to make disciples. It is for every church in this city to disciple every willing man in this city. There are about 2,000 churches in this city. There are about 850,000 men 15 years of age and older in this city. On any given Sunday in these 2000 churches there are about 350,000 people, about 17% to 18% of people in church. When you ask the question, did you go to church last Sunday, 40% said they did. When you ask them what did you do last weekend, 18%.

There is a thing called the social desirability bias when you ask a question people give you the answer they think you want to hear. When you ask a blind question, actual church attendance is about 17%-18%. About 350,000 people in our entire metropolitan would actually be a part of a church.

There are 850,000 men in our city and of that number, about 120,000 men actually go to church – about a third of men. Out of 2 million people we only have 120,000 men who are actually actively engaged in church. Not all of them are believers. Most of them I am hoping are.

But what if we were to just tithe our men over the next ten years? 850,000 guys – that number will grow to about 1,000,000. What if we tithed our men? God we want to tithe our men to you. We are going to tithe 100,000 men over the next ten years. That is only 10,000 men a year. But it takes all 2000 churches to make that happen. It is one Holy Spirit and one church but it is all of us actually doing this thing that Jesus wants to do in this city.

Here is the problem. Picture an investor and picture an entrepreneur. The entrepreneur says, “I have an idea. I want to start a computer company. It is a highly specialized computer for industrial use and I want to produce 100,000 units over the next ten years. In order to do that, we are going to change the world. If we do this it will completely systematize every industrial and commercial application in the entire world. The world will never be the same again, here are all the reasons why, and I need 100 billion to make that happen.”

You made such a scintillating presentation the investor says, “Here is \$100 million and you take it, you run and you report back to me in ten years.” Ten years go by. You set the meeting up and you were so excited because you did not produce 100,000 units you actually produced 150,000 units. You just know your investor is going to be so unbelievably excited. You show him how you have manufactured 75,000 refrigerators for international distribution. And 12,000 microwaves. And 50,000 units of a new improved HVAC system that is so energy efficient. And 4,000 computers. And I didn’t get the math right, but 150,000 total units and you were so excited. But there is a strange look on the investor’s face.

You say, “What’s wrong? We were going to do 100,000 units. What’s wrong?” He said, “I really thought we were going to change the world. You made it better. I wanted to make it different. You improved it. I wanted to change it.”

Brothers, that is what we are doing. We are making refrigerators and microwaves, not disciples in our churches. I’m talking about us. There are churches in this city that are getting it done. They are models for the others. If you are one of those churches, congratulations. But now, you need to take what you have and help the other churches who don’t get it yet so they can make disciples, so they can release more of this power of God on the problems that are facing this city. That is what Jesus wants to do in this city. **Making disciples is God’s designated way to release the power of the Gospel on every problem facing our city.** That is the vision. What’s the plan?

SO WHAT’S THE PLAN?

The lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered movement is one of the most radically successful social movements of recent memory. They have been able to move the needle in just the last few

years farther than just about any social movement in our nation, not necessarily around the world. How did they do that? First of all, they persuaded a lot of closet gays and lesbians to come out.

Could we do that? We have Christians in positions of influence everywhere in this community. Maybe we can come up with a bumper sticker or a series of bumper stickers to suit your personal tastes. One can say, "I am a Christian." One can say, "I follow Christ." Maybe we could just have a mechanism for people to come out, because in the gay and lesbian movement when you have people like Jody Foster, or you learn about the former vice president's daughter and now the former presidential candidate has come out for same sex marriage because he has a gay son.

There are all of these people who are coming out. They are telling their story. Jody Foster didn't want to. She had been leading a quiet private life but she sacrificed her own personal comfort for the greater good.

They have been very successful in persuading people to make it known to take a stand and to tell their stories. The idea is to humanize their situation so that the antipathy and the myths and the scary things are diminished, and what has happened?

They had been powerful and successful. I am not talking about the merits of the movement; I am just talking about the movement. What is the plan? Could we do something like that? They are a revolutionary movement, we are a reformed movement. Could we have a reformed movement to reform ourselves and our churches to get this gospel? Nod if you would like to do that.

If we tithe our problems, if we tithe our men, we can tithe our problems. If we tithe a man why can't we also tithe our problems? Why can't we say in ten years we will have 10% fewer divorces, 10% fewer births out of wedlock, 10% fewer men in prison, 10% fewer STDs. Why can't we do that? We can do that. But, it is not going to be done with lofty words alone. Somebody is going to have to roll up their sleeves and actually do this work, develop strategy, develop tactics for yourself and for your church – you don't have to do it for the whole city – the Holy Spirit is doing it for the whole city. Somebody needs to make sure the trains run on time. We can cast vision out and we can walk out, but unless we come out we will not stand out. Unless we do that, you will not change our city. This is the big idea. Making disciples is God's designated way to release the power of the Gospel on every problem facing our city. Making disciples is it. That is the designated way.

By the way, there is no other way. Government is not going to resolve these problems. We are not going to elect somebody to go and fix these problems because people solve problems. People create problems. You don't fix people with policy. You fix people with the gospel of Jesus. Systemic problems require systemic solutions. Making disciples is the systemic solution to the problems in our city. What is the plan?

I am going to talk to you over the next several weeks. I am going to train you and teach you on some strategies and tactics. Two-thirds of you are already doing it. Let's just say you are in. What do you want me to do? That is what I want to talk about in the next few weeks. I am going to show you what the Bible says you should do and then how to do it in terms of winning people

to Christ, helping them to grow and mobilizing them to serve. That is what a disciple does. A disciple is called to live in Christ, equipped to live like Christ, and sent to live for Christ. Those are biblical categories and they are actionable. We are going to develop actionable plans for you to personally implement and then to mobilize your church to implement to make disciples, because that is God's designated way. That is our part.

What is God's part? God's part is to release the hope that is in Christ into the lives of the people that we will touch. Ten years from now, what is it that you want to look back on and say, I was part of that? This task of making disciples of every willing man in our city – this is the task that will release the power of God on every problem facing this city. Let's pray.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, Jesus, Holy Spirit, our dearest Father. We love this city. We have problems. We want to solve those problems. We don't want to sit idly by for the next ten years. We want to be part of the solution. Father, I pray that if there is any among us that is not yet a true believer that making disciples is Your designated way to release the power of the gospel on these problems, I pray that You would change our hearts and make us true believers. I pray the evidence of these believers would be that we would do something; that we would be doers and not merely hearers of Your Word. We understand the times. We know what we need to do. We pray You would give us the power to do it. In Jesus' Name and for Jesus' sake. Amen.