

# Five Weeks to Live

## Do Something Great With Your Life

Unedited Transcript

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Good morning men. Please turn in your bible's to John, chapter eight, verse 31. As we get started let's do a shout out. The shout out today goes to a group called DGAW. We asked them what that meant. They said it means "Don't go all woman on us". These are four guys that have been meeting on Mondays at 8:00 AM for two and a half years. The leader is John Stilson. They're Buena Vista Wesleyan Church in Canisteo, New York. I wonder if you'd join me in welcoming Don't Go All Woman On US, to the men in their bible study?

One, two, three, hoorah. Hey, I actually saw three guys over here not clapping. Has this become so routine that we don't welcome new guys? I'm just giving you a hard time.

Okay. Down in Key West, probably you've been to the cemetery down there where they have all these wacky tombstones. One of the favorites is, of everybody, it's widely publicized all over the world ... I told you I was sick. Then another one says "If you're reading this you desperately need a hobby". Pretty good. My personal favorite, "Well George, at least I know where you're sleeping tonight". How do you want to be remembered? We're going to look at this in this series, "Five Weeks to Live".

This morning we're going to talk about doing something great with your life. How do you want to be remembered? Is it for your accomplishments? Is it for your possessions? Is it for the investments you've made in other people, the people that you have influenced? Is it for your family? Is it for your character?

This morning what I want to do is I want us to do a little tombstone theology. This morning I want to first talk to you about your five tombstones. Now there can be any multiple of these, but for our purposes your five tombstones. They correspond with these Five Weeks to Live, these five messages we're doing, these five realms of our lives that we've been talking about, these five big chunky, extremely important realms. I guess somebody didn't want me to wander today, they put a chair right in the middle of the isle so I couldn't wander.

The first one, the first tombstone is the one between you and God. The second tombstone is the one between you and your wife, if you have one. The third tombstone is the one between you and your children, if you have some or one. The fourth tombstone is between you and your character and how people remember your character. The fifth tombstone, the one we're going to drill down on today is the one between you and your mission.

For example, we said in the deepening your personal relationship with God that the big idea was the turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is. God is who he is and no amount of wanting to reinvent him in our imaginations to be the God that we want him to be is going to have one iota of impact on his unchanging nature and character. For me,

what I would like to see the way I would like to be remembered for my God tombstone, and my wife knows this, the words, this has been this for twenty years I said "Until you hear otherwise from me, please put on my tombstone 'conquered by grace'", because I am a rebel as most men are. Conquered by grace, that's what I want on my tombstone.

Then the second one is the relationship with the wife and the tombstone about her. We said in the message on finding a new best friend in your wife that after God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority. For my wife tombstone it would be the same thing at our wedding rehearsal dinner. I had a wood worker do a circle with a big line through it. I gave that to Patsy and my pledge was "through all we'll be one". That would be my tombstone for my wife piece.

The third tombstone is the one for the kids. We said that our children's greatest need is for us to father their hearts, not their performance. My child tombstone I would want to read "I love you, and I'm proud of you", or I guess I did love you and I was proud of you since I'll be dead.

Then the character one, and we'd not gotten a lot into Christian character and so forth, but what's your word? When it comes to character, what's your word? My word is integrity. The most important word of all words to me with regard to character is integrity. I have, as far as I know, I've only done one thing in my entire career that lacked integrity. I did that for the benefit of the person who's integrity I was, however you would say that. Integrity.

Then the fifth tombstone is the mission tombstone. This is what we're going to drill down on today. For me, I would like mine to say, "he invested in men who invested in other men". That's what I would like on my mission tombstone. Now, the title of this message is "do something great with your life". When you start thinking about who are the greatest people that ever lived, certainly somewhere in your thinking, probably you would place the twelve disciples of Jesus and probably the apostle Paul. In fact it was apostle Paul who said, "I wish you could be like me, except for these chains". You remember that? Paul said, "I wish you could be like me, except for these chains". Then you have these twelve disciples who did all of these incredible and amazing things. Imagine the kinds of things that could be put on their tombstones.

What I want us to do is I want us to look at how we can be like them so that our ... I mean, who doesn't admire Peter? Who doesn't admire John and Paul? What is it that they did that made them so great that we could do in emulation that would result in us doing something really great with our lives? We're going to look at a number of scriptures. We're going to start at John, chapter eight, verse 31. In John, chapter eight, verse 31 he's speaking to some people. Jesus is speaking. He says, "If you abide in my word", if you meno my logos. Meno, meno is abide. In my version it says "if you hold to my teaching", but if you abide in my word, some of your versions say, "Then you are my", what? "Disciples and you will know", what? "the truth, and the truth" will do what? "Will set you free".

This is a word to disciples. They were disciples and we are to be disciples. If we want to do something great with our lives one of the starting points, these are in no particular order, but one of the starting points is that we learn to abide, to continue. Part of that is to rest in the Lord, to know so that we can know the truth. You know, I prepare these messages. I'm always astonished at how much I learn every week. I've been doing this for a long, long time, over 30 years now. Every week I'm learning brand new things. I was thinking this week, one of the reasons I learn new things every week is because I'm actually taking time to think about these things. You just can't do that without this idea of abiding, of continuing. That's one.

Now if you would, just a few pages to the right, John, chapter 13, verses 34 and 35. Jesus says, "A new command I give you, that you love one another. All men will know that you are my", what? "Disciples if you", what? "Love one another". Disciples are people who are in the business of doing neighbor love, here and there and everywhere. Then John, chapter 15, verse seven. By the way, obviously we could do an entire message on each of these verses, and have in the past and may again in the future, but anyway, today we're doing a survey here. John, chapter 15, verse seven, "If you abide in me, or remain in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish and it will be given to you". You know what Paul's advice to his mentee, Timothy, was? The first thing he said, he said, "First of all I want you to pray". That was the main thing that Paul encouraged Timothy to do. Before the preaching he said I want you to pray.

When we abide, that means that we're growing in the knowledge of the truth. There's lots of mystery here, but the next verse, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my", what? "Disciples". Jesus wants us to abide in him. He wants us to neighbor love others. He wants us to bear much fruit.

In terms of doing something great with your life, this is the foundation. These are the three foundations. There may be others, I haven't found them, where you're actually specifically called out as a disciple if you do these things. These are the three things in scriptures ... Well, deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow me. I guess there are four. I didn't think about that till just now. Sorry about that. There are four foundations here.

Then what do you build on that? In order to do something great you have to have a great foundation. These are the four foundations now. Deny yourself, take up your cross following me. Then, what does it say about disciples there? Since I didn't look it up, anybody remember what that is? Okay, well we'll not worry about it right now. We've got abiding, we have neighbor loving and we have bearing much fruit and we have denying oneself. Those are the four foundations.

If you want to build something great, you have to have a great foundation. That's the foundation. Okay, well what is the mission? Doing something great with your life, yeah we want to have a deeper relationship with God, wife, kids. Yeah, but what is the mission? Well, Jesus said, Luke 19:10, he said that he came to seek and to save the lost. That's what he came to do, and then he gave us that mission of going and making disciples. I like, and by the way the verse, some of you know this, but for those of you who don't, the verse for the bible study, our verse as a bible study for 30 years has been Second Timothy, two, verse two. Second Timothy, chapter two, verse two, which says, what? Anybody? "And the things that you have heard me say in the presence of faithful men, impart to others who will also be qualified to teach others." The things that you have heard me say in the presence of reliable men, entrust those things to others.

Basically the mission is making disciples. Now, let me tell you the problem, a little problem. Not a little problem, I think it's the biggest problem that we have as Christians today. That is that we think that the mission is to become disciples. We think the mission is for us to become disciples, to sit around here and become disciples. We think that's making disciples. We think that becoming disciples is making disciples. Do you see? I don't really think I need to drill down too far on that, but the point is that you're not making disciples until you're making disciples. You're not making disciples by becoming disciples, you're just getting the four foundations in place. Coming here is about giving you the four foundations that we talked about, but this is not making disciples. This is becoming disciples, you see.

When we talk about, for example, taking men to the prayer breakfast, that's just one of many ways to do that, but the point is that this is preparation for you. This is equipping. This is training. All scripture is inspired by God and valuable for teaching, reproof, training, correction so that the man of God, you, may be thoroughly equipped for every good work, to go and bear fruit, to do your mission, to take the things that you have heard in the presence of faithful men and then teach that to other men who also some of them be qualified to teach others. Do you see it? That's the mission.

Our walls are broken down. Everybody is opining on this these days. There's widespread agreement that our culture is headed in the wrong direction. I mean there is, okay. What do you think is the solution for government corruption, for business corruption, for poverty, for racism, for the educational system being broken, for the criminal justice system, to the errors that we in it? How do these things get fixed? These things are so huge. How do they get fixed? How did Jesus say they would get fixed? Jesus didn't say a word about how they would get fixed. What he did say is "Go and make disciples." Here's why he did that, here's why Jesus said "go and make disciples". This is why Jesus didn't say go and fix poverty, in fact Jesus even said, "you will always have the poor with you". Ouch. Jesus said "go and make disciples because", watch this, making disciples is God's designated means to release the power of his gospel on every problem we face. It is the systemic solution to all of the problems.

Yeah, do we need to take care of the poor? Absolutely we need to take care of the poor. When Paul went up to Jerusalem in Galatians, chapter two, they approved his ministry. Then in Galatians, chapter two, verse ten he says, "The only thing they asked me to do was to continue to take care of the poor, the very thing I was eager to do." You remember, Paul would take up as he was doing the mission, part of his mission but not the mission, a sub part of the mission was taking up collections for the poor in Jerusalem. He did other things like that too, but he didn't get confused. He didn't get confused that the mission was taking care of the poor. The mission is making disciples. The mission is not taking care of the poor primarily. Taking care of the poor and solving these other problems and ... I know a number of you are probably thinking about running for elected office because of the joy of being in government service. Well, for those of you who are, remember that making disciples is the mission and healing the government from within is a sub-mission.

Whatever kind of work you do, there is intrinsic value in the work you do. Your work as a vocation, it is a ministry, it is a mission, but it's a sub-mission. You can build a company that lasts for 100 years or you can build a person that lives for 1,000,000 years. We just don't need to spend a lot of time talking about why our work is an important mission, but it's part of the bigger mission of making disciples. It doesn't make any difference how we got into whatever situation you're in. There's really only one way to get out. You're not going to legislate your way out. You're not going to borrow your way out. The only way out of whatever problem you're in or we are in as a culture, community, or your family or whatever it is, or your church, the only way out of that is to disciple our way out.

The Big Idea today is this, **the greatest mission to which a man can aspire is to be a disciple-making disciple**. Now, if you're on the front end of this then you can amend this a little bit that my mission now, instead of saying the greatest mission you could say, "My mission now is to aspire to be a disciple." That's okay. You need to understand, become a disciple is not the mission. Making disciples is the mission. If all you ever do in your life is become a disciple and you don't engage in making disciples then you have disobeyed, it's a moral failure on your part because it is a command, go and make disciples. It has moral implications. Anything less than making disciples is a moral failure, and your tombstone is going to read empty.

I'm just saying this in the way I'm saying it because I want to rattle your cage. I do want to rattle some cages this morning. The reason I want to do that is, absolutely, absolutely today the biggest bottleneck that we see in the Christian church is disciples not making disciples. That's what's holding us up. That's why we don't have more influence on culture. We have now for a generation, possibly two, we have so focused on becoming disciples, and the church has ... Everybody is culpable. We have so focused on becoming disciples that we have become spiritual over eaters. Most Christians today, I'm not saying you guys because you're here, but most Christians today don't need more food. They need more exercise. Spiritual obesity is the spiritual health crisis of our age. That's why I'm pretty wrapped up on this.

Let's talk a little bit about how does this happen. How do you get to this mission? We have these four foundations of a disciple that we've already talked about. We're going to build on top of that. We're going to become a disciple. Those are the four foundations. Then we're going to make disciples. We're going to build on top of that. That's the mission. Turn with me to Luke, chapter 22, verse 24. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Luke 22, verse 24. These 12 disciples, they got it. They got it. They were abiding. They were neighbor loving. They were bearing much fruit. They were denying themselves and taking up their cross and following Jesus. That's what he said. He said, "Unless you deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me you cannot be my disciple". Okay, I just thought of the verse finally.

They've got that going on and then they got the mission going on. They're going out two by two and all this and they're seeing all this fruit. They're coming back and giving these reports to God and they say, wow I am really doing something great with my life. I'm so impressed with me. I just can't believe how good I am. Then, at the last supper Jesus has done the bread and the wine. They started to question themselves about who's going to do the betrayal. Then in verse 24 it says this, watch this, this is so interesting, "Also, a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be the greatest". They're arguing about which of us 12 guys, which of us is the greatest. Who's going to get the best tombstone out of this deal?

Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them", and by the way I think that Jesus was probably very gentle in saying this. That's conjecture on my part, but I think that's probably the mood here. "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors. But you are not like that. Instead the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves". If Jesus in his upside down way of often turning things around, he says that the greatest is like the least. The greatest is like a servant.

If you want to do something great with your life and you want to be one of these disciple-making disciples, then the thing to aim for is not a big ministry or a big impact. The thing to aim for is to be a servant. First Corinthians, chapter four, verse two says, "Now, moreover, whomever has been given a trust must be found faithful". We're entrusted with something to be faithful with it, this mission that we've been given by him.

Turn with me to Luke, chapter 17, verse seven. "Now suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking for sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; and after that you may eat and drink'?" That's the way servants get treated, right? Then Jesus goes on, "Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do?" We're not serving

principally to get positive feedback for ourselves. Verse 10, this is it, "So you also when you have done everything you were told to do should say, 'We are unworthy servants. We have only done our duty'."

The mindset of a servant, one way of thinking about it, is like this. A servant isn't asking, you've heard me say this before, a servant isn't asking "what do I want? What do I want out of this?". A servant is asking a different question. There's so many big ideas in this message that it's got too many big ideas in it, but this is a very big idea. A servant is asking a different question. A servant asks, "what does the master need?". In every encounter, when I'm at the gym and somebody who usually is friendly towards me all the sudden is downcast, what does the master need? When the other day at the gas station it was windy and I had a paper towel, and the wind caught a hold of the paper towel, started blowing across the parking lot of the gas station, my question was, "well, what does the master need?", and I chased after it. You know what happened by the way, it blew right into where the Dempsey dumpster is. How about that? I didn't have to pick it up after all.

This idea of having a mindset of a servant, there's another piece to it. We see it in Luke, chapter 22, verse 24. No. We see it in somewhere. Matthew, chapter 25, oh yeah. In Matthew, chapter 25, this is the parable of the talents, the three servants. You want to have the mindset of a servant, here you go. Matthew, chapter 25, verse 14. It says, "And it will be", talking about the kingdom of God, "it will be like a man going on a journey who called his", what? "Servants". This is *doulos*. You know the Greek word *doulos*, as everywhere else we've looked at it. "He called his servants and he entrusted them with property." "Now to whomever has been given a trust, they must be found", what? "Faithful", that's First Corinthians four: two. We see that going on.

Now watch this. Down in verse 21, after the three men had done their ... One man doubled five, another man doubled whatever it was, three or two I guess it was, then the other guy buried his. To the guy who had done the five, verse 21, his master replied when he gained five more, "Well done good and", what? "faithful servant". The mindset of a servant is, what does the master need. I've been given and trusted with this mission. What does faithful look like? Is it just laying the foundation and then not building anything on it? You've seen ruins before. Guess what? Men who 20 years ago laid the foundation of becoming a disciple and haven't built anything on it since, you know what they call that man? Ruins. Not the kind of ruins that people are going to visit probably.

Then for the guy that did the, was it two or three? I can't ever remember. Two, down in verse 23, his master replied, "Well done good and faithful servant. You have been", what? "Faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many", got the same reward because he was faithful. Oh gosh, there's so much more could be said about that but you get the idea. Whether it's the 26 year old waitress who's trying to raise a six and eight year old boy on her own and her car won't start and she looks down, you invite her to pray with you at lunch. She's encouraged, give her a few extra bucks, maybe an extra 20 or 30 or \$50 at the end of the thing, or just a kind word. Maybe it's taking a homeless guy to lunch. I know some of you do that kind of thing. Staying married, giving kids the time that they're due, these are just some of the ways you could be a servant. Sharing your faith, doing your work well.

You want to be a servant? I don't control your life, which means I don't try to control your life. Trying to control other people? Instead be a servant. Not what do I want, what does the master need. This idea of having the mindset of a servant is how we execute the greatness of discipleship. The greatest mission to which a man can aspire is to be a disciple-making disciple.

Finally, what does faithful look like for you? It means laying these four foundations and then doing something with it. There's no one way to do it, no one way of disciple-making because there are all kinds of different callings and gifts. Listen, if you are involved in a mission that's helping the poor or working on some issue exclusively, in my opinion, and I believe that this is the opinion of scripture too, you are missing it. You are missing it. This is a big epiphany for me this week because I'm out trying to raise \$2,000,000 by the end of the year and it's hard, hard work. I've talked to a lot of men who have these great missions that they're involved in to the exclusion of making disciples. They're doing great work helping right here in Orlando for example, rebuild our inner city. There's this thing going on. I won't go into the detail. There's this thing going on in Orlando, it's absolutely fascinating. I'd like to be a part of it.

I've heard about a number of incredibly good ministries. I don't know all the details of all these ministries so I could be wrong about some of them, and probably am, but if a ministry is not primarily about making disciples, you have missed the point. You have missed the point that Jesus was trying to make.

Equip the next generation, there you go do that thing. Don't forget to do that. You've heard me tell the story, the elephant story, here about Kruger National Park in South Africa where they killed off the adult elephants. By the time the teenage male elephants then grew up they had to guess at what normal male behavior looked like. They went crazy. These teen elephants killed viciously 36 rhinoceros. Park rangers brought in six male bull elephants into the park and just turned them loose with the young teenage bulls. Not a single rhino was killed after that because the younger bulls didn't have to guess at what male behavior looked like anymore. Let's be sure that in the making of disciples that we're making disciples of the younger men too.

By the way, when we say the big idea, when we say that the greatest mission to which a man can aspire is to be a disciple-making disciple, dash starting at home. Don't tell me about what you're doing over in Asia, for example, if you are not investing in your own kids. Your kids will turn out the way they turn out. I like to say a child can accidentally turn out wrong, but turning out right is no accident. It takes work, engage them and so forth.

Then I guess my final thought here today, just remember this, not even God can change the direction of a stationary object. If you've got the four foundations and you're just sitting in place, God can't do anything with that. You have to move. You have to take some initiative. The reason that we do this is because of all the greatness that we've heard this morning coming pouring out of these scriptures to realize this, the greatest mission to which a man can aspire is to be a disciple-making disciple. Final word, remember how I chose my five tombstones at the beginning? Guess what. We don't get to choose our own tombstones. They're chosen for us. It's not how we want to be remembered, it's how others remember us that counts.

Will you be remembered as a disciple-making disciple? Wouldn't that be a great epitaph put on your tombstone? "Here lies my husband, a disciple-making disciple". Let us pray. Our dearest father, in the name of Jesus, Lord thank you for Five Weeks to Live. Thank you for these five tombstones. Thank you for these five realms that we've looked at. Lord, we could've looked at a lot of things, but I do think, Lord, that we have looked at what the world needs now and what you want now and what the master needs and what we ourselves ... I know we long for these things, Lord, so give us the desires of your heart. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.