

Where We Are Going Series

Mission Statement Key Verse (Col. 1:28)

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At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Mission Statement Key Verse

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Dying Church Culture

1. In his Book *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive*, author Thom Rainer interviewed former members of churches who had closed their doors permanently. He asked lots of questions about their experiences in the last few years of the church's existence. As they described what their church was like prior to closing their doors, they made the following types of comments:
2. "We were going through the motions."; "Everything we did seemed to be like we were in a rut or bad routine."; "We became more attached to our ways of doing church than we did asking the Lord what He wanted us to do."; "We were playing a game called church. We had no idea what we were really supposed to be doing."; and "We stopped asking what we should be doing for fear that it would require too much effort or change."¹

- B. Purpose is powerful and life giving.² As Thom writes, churches who had died were mostly, "engaged in an activity called, 'This is the way we've always done it.'" Losing sight of purpose and holding onto tradition is quite literally a fatal mistake in the church. Knowing this is not only a problem, but also that it is the natural tendency of churches if they are left to follow the normal life cycle, we want to interrupt this pattern by bringing purpose back front and center.
- C. Last week, we learned that 95 % of churches in our country do not have a disciple making culture. The ancient messages that Jesus gave to the churches in Asia minor are just as relevant for the American church today. Jesus told the church in Ephesus to return to their first love, remember their past faithfulness, to start doing the deeds they used to do, and to repent (Rev. 2:4-5). He also told the church in Sardis to wake up and strengthen the good ministries that remain in their church but were about to die in order to obey the message they had received (Rev. 3:2-3). Finally, He also encouraged the church in Thyatira to continue doing what they were doing so that their most recent deeds would continue to be greater than their previous deeds (Rev. 2:19). Each of these messages from Jesus to the different churches all centered around the idea of revitalization—restoring spiritual life back into the church.
- D. One way we are bringing life and purpose back into our church is to emphasize and focus on a key verse that captures our mission. We want to permanently fix our attention on the Biblical mission given to the church by Jesus. We don't want to drift into the fog of purposelessness. Reminding ourselves often of our updated and clarified mission statement key verse, Colossians 1:28, will help us stay attached to purpose. The desired result is for our purpose to continually breath spiritual life into our church. Let's take a closer look at this key verse.

¹ Thom Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2014), Kindle 593

² For more practical advice on how to reinvigorate the church with purpose see Gary McIntosh's *There's Hope for Your Church: First Steps to Restoring Health and Growth*.

II. Mission Statement Key Verse

- A. While several passages of Scripture were considered as a key verse that will capture our mission statement theme, Colossians 1:28 was identified as one of the best verses on which to ground our updated and clarified mission statement. This verse communicates the personal ministry philosophy and focus of the apostle Paul and the rest of the early church workers, “²⁸ We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. ²⁹ For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” (Col. 1:28-29). The leadership of Community Alliance Church wants to follow the early church’s example of investing the energy and resources that God supplies in order to produce spiritually mature disciples. The kingdom building activity of God on earth is not all of God or all of us, it is both God and us working together to accomplish God’s desires. The work of God on earth is a joint venture that includes both divine intervention and human effort. Both the human and divine aspects are needed to accomplish the results; neither one can be lacking.
- B. Those who think we passively wait for God to do all the work fail to understand the way God has determined to work in people’s lives. On the other hand, those who think the church’s success relies exclusively on their own wisdom and effort are equally mistaken. A person can work as wisely and as hard as they want to and their effort won’t matter if God does not use it. We need to be careful to keep a balanced approach to our work for Jesus that recognizes God’s role in building His church and kingdom, as well as our responsibility and role as well. Disciples should not be lazy or a workaholic.
- C. We believe Colossians 1:28 lays a healthy Biblical foundation on which our updated and clarified mission statement stands: “Transforming convictions, character, and conduct to those of Jesus.” As we go through this verse, we will see a parallel between our mission statement and the central principles of this verse. There is a harmony between the two. As we discover the close connection between Jesus and the Bible with our mission statement, we can move forward with confidence, knowing we are pointed in the right direction as a church.

III. The Means of Accomplishing the Mission

- A. Our mission statement theme verse begins with the central focus being set squarely on Jesus: “We proclaim Him”. Who is the “Him” of this verse? This reference goes back to “Christ” (v. 27) and “His beloved Son” of verse 13. Jesus is the One who rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into His kingdom. He’s the One who saves us through forgiving our sins. Jesus is the One of highest rank over all that has been created, including the church. Jesus is the only person capable of fixing the most foundational problem of the universe. Since Jesus is such a significant person, Paul’s ministry begins and centers around Him. Anyone who is working for the kingdom in proclaiming Jesus to the world does so with Paul’s objective in mind.³ Paul doesn’t limit this work to Himself, as He says “We”(plural) are proclaiming Jesus (Col. 1:1, 7-8, 4:12-13). All true gospel workers communicate the person of Jesus for the sake of

³ David W. Pao, [Colossians and Philemon](#), Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 131.

producing spiritually mature individuals for God. All true Christian workers are doing what Paul himself is doing.

- B. What does Paul do regarding Jesus? Paul “proclaims” Him. To proclaim is to make known openly and with wide distribution the identity and accomplishments of Jesus.⁴ Paul distributes a knowledge of Jesus as broadly as he can. To proclaim is to speak publicly.⁵ The content of Paul’s message is the person of Jesus so that people will know who Jesus is. In this proclamation, Paul clearly indicates the idea of evangelism—telling people who are unfamiliar with Jesus about Jesus. Paul wants to publicly proclaim who Jesus is to as many people as He possibly can, which was the motivating factor behind all his mission trips throughout the Roman empire. Paul travelled to the commercial centers of the empire with the intent that the message of Jesus will spread from the larger cities to the rest of the surrounding areas (Rm. 15:20-21, Ac. 13:1-14:28, 15:40-18:22, 18:23-21:17). Paul wisely built a ministry strategy in which the message about Jesus could spread to the largest audience through church planting (Ac. 14:21-23, 15:36, 1 Cor. 3:10). Paul was not ashamed to do this because he knew the value of the message he carried (Rm. 1:16).
- C. As leaders, we are in the process of figuring out how to spread the message of Jesus as widely as we can in our community. We want to influence the largest number of people as possible for Jesus. Understandably, accomplishing this objective will partly require us to raise up a group of disciples who are knowledgeable about Jesus and can converse with others about Him. We need to equip you to be able to have informed conversations about Jesus with others. This is why we’ve had at least four classes focused on evangelism training in the past few years. It is also one of the reasons we are currently going through the Person of Interest class by J. Warner Wallace in Sunday school. We want you to be comfortable and confident in your ability to talk to others about Jesus because this is a critically important part of the mission of the church and the expansion of the kingdom of God on earth.
- D. One of the primary tasks of any disciple or Christian worker is to communicate the person of Jesus to others in a way that helps them live a better, more God-centered life. Every Christian should be knowledgeable enough about Jesus to be able to converse about Him with others who have varying degrees of understanding about Him. We must know Jesus well enough to be able to teach others about Him and help them understand the difference Jesus makes in their daily living. We ought to be able to correct the misconceptions people have about Jesus. Being able to respond well to different views of Jesus and move people closer to a historically and biblically accurate view of Jesus is essential. Are you able to do this?
- E. How does Paul proclaim Jesus? He does so in two activities: admonishing and teaching. In these activities, Paul clearly indicates the idea of discipleship—helping other people develop spiritually. Both terms are closely related in meaning, while one is negative and the other positive. “Admonishing” is negative in connotation in that it means to warn or counsel in terms

⁴ Logos 9 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Colossians 1:28 “proclaim”

⁵ Eduard Lohse, [*Colossians and Philemon a Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*](#), Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 76–77.

of someone's behavior.⁶ Admonishing is to tell someone to stop what they are doing or warn them of the harmful consequences that will result if they continue.

- F. Admonishing is necessary not just for those who don't yet believe in Jesus, but for the church as well (1 Cor. 4:14). In order to accurately correct others, there are specific qualifications that need to be met: ¹⁴ "And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another." (Rm. 15:14). In order to correct another person's behavior, some qualities must be true of the person offering the correction. This is similar to Jesus's teaching in Matthew 7:1-5. If one person is going to accurately correct another, they must understand what the morally good path is and be experienced in living it out ("you yourselves are full of goodness").⁷ Sin and immoral living have a blinding effect on us so that we can't see things as they really are (Heb. 2:13). The more immoral a person becomes, the less clearly they will see themselves and others. Therefore, if true and accurate correction is to be given, a person must be living a moral lifestyle. Second, a person offering admonishment must have accurate knowledge ("filled with all knowledge"). It is likely Paul has in mind the previously mentioned spiritual knowledge of the will of God, possessing spiritual wisdom and understanding so that a life that is pleasing to God will exist in order to have an increasing knowledge of God (Col. 1:9-10). An accurate understanding of God and His moral standards is necessary to provide accurate correction to others. These two qualifications enable a person to be "able also to admonish" others.
- G. Good life advice can't be found just anywhere. It is only found with a certain kind of person. Every disciple needs to be careful about where they get their counsel and their information about Jesus, the Bible, and the life of discipleship. In short, disciples need to develop spiritual discernment to distinguish between good spiritual advice from poor spiritual advice.
- H. The other activity associated with proclaiming Jesus is "teaching every man," which refers to imparting knowledge or skills.⁸ Knowledge of Jesus is to be passed along, as well as how that knowledge is practically implemented in order to help others live a life that follows Jesus's example. Teaching communicates the idea of imparting learning in the way of Jesus.⁹ Biblical, Jesus-focused instruction points out the spiritual needs of every person, convinces individuals of their need to change, and gives them a plan to guide them in doing so.¹⁰ Paul, with the skill of a teacher, is imparting theoretical knowledge and practical skills to His students.¹¹ This is the type of teaching Paul has in mind. Christian teaching will clear up confusion, tie together the

⁶ Logos Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Col. 1:28 "admonishing". In general Greek literature, this term also applies to intellectual correction—fixing the way people think. However, it is unclear whether Paul's use of the term included the intellectual element or not. Daniel M. Gurtner, "[Colossians](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 597.

⁷ The quality of being morally excellent and actively working this quality out in their life. Logos 9 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Rm. 15:14 "full of goodness"

⁸ Logos Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Col. 1:28 "teaching"

⁹ Michael F. Bird, *Colossians and Philemon*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 68.

¹⁰ Grant R. Osborne, *Colossians & Philemon: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 58.

¹¹ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 124.

loose ends of half-grasped ideas, correct any distortions so that Jesus can be properly appreciated and lived out.¹²

- I. Biblical teaching helps people build a healthy life of fruitfulness for God.¹³ Biblical teaching is discipleship focused. A danger the church must be aware of is getting distracted from a discipleship focus for their teaching to a self-help focus. Much preaching today has little to do with helping Christians pursue godliness and everything to do with pursuing a more comfortable life. It is spiritually dangerous for the church to make this shift in focus. When the church's instruction primarily comes alongside people to help them improve their marriage, manage their finances, build healthy relationships, overcome harmful habits, etc. they generally tend to stop discipling people. While our quality of life will improve under the influence of Jesus, that is a side effect of spiritual growth. When a church focuses on spiritual growth, it gets the benefits of that growth, but when a church focuses on the benefits, they usually lose the growth.
- J. How is the proclamation of Jesus, the correction He encourages, and the teaching He offers to be carried out? The answer is "with all wisdom". Wisdom is the method of employing these discipleship activities. To do something with wisdom is to use knowledge and experience with common sense and insight.¹⁴ In short, it means to teach and admonish in a smart way using practical understanding. Discipleship is to be done in an informed and intelligent manner. Disciples aren't to just throw something together and hope for the best. Rather, they should use their understanding of human nature and spiritual realities to their advantage for maximum impact and effectiveness. Disciples try to make other disciples in the best way possible. Gaining experience may require some trial and error. Some disciple making strategies that were a good idea may not work as expected in reality. Adjusting to more useful techniques is a part of wisdom. Paul used any means necessary, without compromising his message or truth, to save as many people as he could (1 Cor. 9:22-23). Methods were not set in stone, the message was.
- K. God's work on earth should be carried out wisely. Jesus told His disciples to be innocent yet shrewd (Mt. 10:16). For that reason, CAC is developing a ministry plan and strategy that will help us do our work with wisdom. This is why we've come up with what we are going to be calling the Four E's. We will be learning more about the Four E's in the upcoming messages, but for now, we should know there is a discipleship plan that will guide us in carrying out our mission, which will help us work smarter. We want to be wise in the way we help others be transformed. It is desirable for our work to be carried out with insight and understanding.

IV. The Goal of the Mission

- A. Not only does our mission statement theme verse explain what we are to be doing as a church, it also articulates the reason for doing it. The purpose and the goal of ministry activity comes into view with the words "so that we". We see in this verse not just "what" the church should

¹² N. T. Wright, [*Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 12, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 97–98.

¹³ Grant R. Osborne, [*Colossians & Philemon: Verse by Verse*](#), Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 58.

¹⁴ Logos 9 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Col. 1:28 "wisdom"

be doing, but the “why” as well. These words point toward the reason for which the activity is being done.

- B. The goal and purpose of discipleship is to “present every man complete in Christ.” What does it mean to be complete in Christ? To be “complete” is to be at an advanced stage of spiritual development.¹⁵ Paul has already explained what this means in verse 22: “²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—” (Col. 1:22). Fully instructed and trained disciples will be 1) holy 2) blameless and 3) beyond reproach. An individual who is at an advanced stage of spiritual development will have the characteristic of moral and ritual purity. They are closely connected to God because they consistently live a life that is pleasing to Him. Mature individuals also will be free from moral defects. They will not have serious, habitual, or life controlling sin issues. This doesn’t mean they will be sin free, but it means they are not overcome by sin, and when they do sin, they quickly repent. Lastly, a spiritually mature person will be like Daniel in that they live in such a way that it is difficult to charge them with wrongdoing. Their manner of life is such that people don’t even suspect them of evil. This is Paul’s description of spiritual maturity.
- C. Spiritual maturity (being in a state of advanced spiritual development) is the result of Biblical instruction, practical real life experience with Jesus, and time. There are no shortcuts for spiritual maturity. Being a fully grown disciple is the objective of Biblical instruction.
- D. The goal is to get disciples developed to maturity by the time they stand before God at the final judgment, which is the intent of using the word “present”. The individual is being offered to God for His approval. Biblically informed teachers know that every individual will stand before God on their own. Nothing else will influence God’s evaluation of them other than what they have personally done before Him. Since God’s judgment is individualistic, this is the desired outcome for each person. It is the heart’s desire of every Christian worker to see each individual become mature, not just some. The work of the kingdom longs to help produce as many spiritually mature disciples for God as is able under the circumstances they are working in— anything else will not be satisfying.
- E. All of this kingdom activity happens “in Christ”. Progressing to an advanced stage of spiritual development is only possible for those who are attached to Jesus and have access to the power and resources of the Holy Spirit. A person must be part of God’s kingdom if they are to genuinely participate in this work. Neither the teacher or the maturing individual will be able to do this work if they are not connected to Jesus. This work happens only because of Jesus.
- F. Paul worked hard in the power God supplies to accomplish this mission (v. 29). The elders and I seek to do the same. We want to work hard with all the resources and abilities God has given to us to produce disciples who are at an advanced stage of development and are prepared to stand before God on judgment day. This is why Community Alliance Church exists and why we, as leaders, will be making the decisions and taking the actions we will be doing. We want to move our church in this direction.

¹⁵ Logos 9 Bible Study Software Exegetical Guide on Col. 1:28 “complete”

- G. What Paul is talking about here is a universal need that every disciple has. Every Christian needs to be taught and admonished with the message of Jesus.¹⁶ These instructions are true of every single person in the church. The spiritual development process is the same for everyone. This is made clear in the three-fold repetition of “every man”. The means of producing spiritual maturity is relevant and applicable to everyone without exception. Every Christian should be moving through this maturation process. This verse communicates God’s desire and will for every single disciple. No one will be able to reach maturity without the process that is being described in this verse. Without the proclaiming of Jesus in admonishing and teaching, a person will never reach maturity. They won’t ever become a mature disciple capable of a fruitful life of kingdom impact. Without this discipleship process, a person will not be prepared to stand before God.
- H. Therefore, we want to intentionally create systems and structures that will naturally move people towards spiritual maturity that everyone who participates in the life of our church will have access to. Introducing people to Jesus and moving them to an advanced stage of spiritual development is the work of the church and is the purpose of Biblical instruction.

V. Conclusion

- A. Colossians 1:28 will function as a good theme verse for our updated and clarified mission statement because it communicates what the church is to be doing, how the church is to be doing it, and communicates the desired result of the church’s activity. This verse outlines the church’s mission from start to finish.
- B. It is our hope in using this key verse that it’s use will help our church intentionally focus on our most important responsibility before God: to make mature disciples. Colossians 1:28 will hopefully protect us from drifting away from our mission by getting distracted.

VI. Questions for Further Thought

- A. In your Christian life experience, has anything really helped you move toward spiritual maturity? What?
- B. What do you think about our theme verse? Would you have used another verse? If so, which one?
- C. Paul provides more details of what a spiritually mature person looks like in Col. 1:9-12. How is spiritual maturity described?
- D. How might we, as a church, express a commitment to and a valuing of making mature disciples?
- E. What practical steps or adjustments could we take as a church to actually produce individuals who are at an advanced stage of spiritual development? What might be helpful for you?

¹⁶ Grant R. Osborne, [Colossians & Philemon: Verse by Verse](#), Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 58.