

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Reaching People

PART

3

TITLE

Prioritizing People

SCRIPTURE

Luke 6:12-16



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Well, it is good to see you Providence family. It's always a joy to sing with you. I would ask you for a favor, I don't normally do this, but after the service today, my son and I are actually going to drive to Southern California where he'll be stationed for the next three years. And so, we're going to have an opportunity to spend a lot of time together over this blessed nation of ours. And so, we should have a ton of fun, but anyway, I would love for you to pray.

If you're a guest with us, we're really glad you're here. If you have a Bible in your hand, if you want to turn with me to Luke 6. If you don't, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. And as I say most weeks, if you don't have one at home, take that home as a gift. We would love for you to have it as a gift for you to be able to read when you want. I want to pray for us as we get started.

Father in heaven, we bow before you and recognize that without the outpouring of your Spirit we won't even be able to understand what we read, that without your Spirit's power and control and movement within our hearts is that we will be unmoved and unchanged, and we will leave as we came. We don't want that. We need wisdom. We want wisdom. We desire for our heart to feel a sense of satisfaction and contentment in being in your presence. Father in heaven, we confess to you those who know you and who have experienced the joy of anchoring our life to a rock and refuge that will never move. We confess to you, Father, that the best part of the day is being with you. That when our heart is right, when we are not bound by the guilt of shame and sin, and when we are near you and we feel your presence, when your strength is evident to us, when your promise is before us, it's the best part of life.

All the other good parts of life are made more desirable because of that, because of you. I pray specifically for those in the room who have yet to experience that, who don't know the joy of the clean conscience, who don't know life without the weight of shame and guilt, that you would incline their hearts to morning to put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. I ask, Father, that you would give us clarity and wisdom as we open your word. I ask that you would help us believe. We love you. We need you. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, if you are brand new to the Bible, what you're going to find is if you read it is it's packed with paradox. What that means is you're going to read things that initially you're going to find to be absurd, and yet over a period of time, as God gives more understanding, as there's more clarity, as God's Spirit teaches you, as you begin to understand is there's different parts of the Bible that would begin to make more sense so much so that what began to feel absurd will actually feel infinitely wise. For example, you read when you open up the Bible, a lot of the things that Jesus says, He uses paradox. He challenges the assumptions of what we would normally invent as to what is true and right and lovely. And so, He comes to us almost immediately and He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Now, you wouldn't have invented that, and either would I. If it was up to me, I'd go, probably, "Blessed are the rich in Spirit."

Initially absurd. "Poverty within my heart, that's a good thing?" And yet, when you understand what He's really saying, you find, "Wow, that is infinitely wise because it's going to drive me to the one source that can

make my heart rich.” That’s Jesus. Jesus says other things such as, “The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. The leader must be one who serves. The greatest among you is the servant among you.” He says things like, “Count it all joy when you face trials.” He says things like, “Unless you become like a little child, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Each of these statements, and there’s literally thousands of them, they’re like the first sign of spring when you see the little buds that appear on the bushes, and they’re at first totally unimpressive. These statements, though, once the Holy Spirit gets a hold of our heart and the Holy Spirit begins to give us understanding into these truths is what we find is they explode with benefit and beauty. And so, we shouldn’t be surprised that when we begin to think about, how do we reach people, and how did Jesus reach us? Is that there would be a source, there would be something paradoxical about it. Something that would seem perhaps surprising, something that at first would go, “Why is He doing it that way?” And that’s precisely what we find. The Bible says that Jesus Christ, the king of heaven, divested His kingly garments in heaven, He took the form of a servant, and He came here as a baby. He grew up, and He lived without sin. And yet, He loved people so deeply that what He did was He intentionally chose not to isolate Himself but to dwell among us, to literally camp, to live in a tent next to our tent.

So that we could see Him and know Him and enjoy Him. The Bible says that in spite of all the people that would gather around Him because of His unusual authority and wisdom is that He saw people. Some of you, you walked in this room and you have all kinds of challenges and problems in your life. Some of you feel absolutely invisible to the people around you, and you think, “I just want somebody to see you.” I want you to know this, Jesus sees you through and through. We want to see you. We want to learn. We want to even ask God as we have over the last several weeks, “God, would you change your heart so that we can people as you see people?” But He sees you, and He loves you.

He felt compassion for people. He cared about people who were religious and irreligious. And then the Bible says that Jesus Christ, the Son of God without sin, He took on our sin. He became sin. He went to a cross, and there He died the death that we should have died. He was buried in a grave where we should have been buried. And then He rose from the dead. And what this did was it created everything necessary so that when somebody heard this that they would be able to believe. And He says, “And if you believe, I’ll take away your sin, I’ll forgive you, and I’ll give you my righteousness. I’ll of you eternal life so that you can enjoy a relationship with me.” But the question is this, how then would He reach people? I know that He died for them, but how would people around the world know that He died for them so that His accomplishments would become effectual in their life?

And this is where it becomes absolutely paradoxical. Notice what He says and does in verse 12. He says, “In these days, He went out to the mountain to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples and shows from then 12, whom He named apostles: Simon, whom He named Peter, and Andrew, hi brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas,

and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. His plan to reach the world, absolutely absurd, infinitely wise.

He prioritized people over programs. He prioritized people over stages and platforms and microphones. He prioritized slow over fast, the depth within the soul versus width. His plan was to make disciples who would make disciples who would make disciples. And those disciples, you pass through time, and if you are a person who has heard this gospel and has trusted in Jesus Christ, then you could, if it were possible, trace a direct line to one of these 12 men. It took the gospel and it took Jesus discipling them and decided to disciple somebody else. What I want you to see here is very important, and that is the great commission is not going to be fulfilled through a microphone, it will be fulfilled through you and me discipling small amount of people with such depth that they would desire and be equipped to make disciples who would make disciples who would make disciples.

And let me show you how. The first thing we see here is that Jesus prayed intensely for people. Jesus prayed. The Son of God prayed. He loved His father. He loved to hear from His father. He loved to speak to His father. There was this intimate relationship. We find it throughout all the gospels, there's this intentionality for Jesus to pause what He's doing and to do something it seems so routine, so needy, so unproductive, to go and pray. In pivotal moments such as in the garden before He died, He prayed. In painful moments on the cross, He prayed. In decisive moments, when He had to make a big decision like this one, He prayed. Isn't it true that prayer, in particular the pictures that we imagine when we think of prayer, they feel and appear so passive?

When you think about prayer and you think about somebody's hands, what do you think? If I said, "Hey, do what you do with your hands when somebody prays," most of us would do something like this, right? We would do this or this. And isn't it interesting that when you do this or this with your hands that they can't pick up a load to help somebody else? Looks so passive. Look. Look at all the work that needs to be done in the world. People are starving to death. They don't have clean water. They don't have dentists and doctors. They don't have the gospel. They don't have the Bible translated in their language. All kinds of work needs to be done, and this looks so unproductive.

But in these decisive moments, what did Jesus do? Verse 12, "He went out to the mountain to pray. All night He continued in prayer to God." Now, Luke does not tell us what He prayed about. It was a private prayer, He was alone. We don't know what He prayed, but every commentator I read and everything within me and everything mostly in you, you're going to look at that and go, "Well, I think we know what he prayed of about." Because look what happens next. You see, this prayer undergirded the selection, the solemn selection of the very men who would intimately be invited in to observe His life and to hear the explanation of His teaching that He would give publicly. He would give greater clarity among them. And then these would be the very people that would boldly take the gospel into the world in order to plant churches around the world. That's exactly what they did. These 12... 11, one didn't fare so well. These 11, they literally took the gospel to Europe, Asia, and Africa.

It's an absolutely amazing feat of what took place. They were absolutely convinced, and yet this is not where they began. So when you think about the fact that what happens immediately next, that this decisive moment among all these disciples have to believe that at least part of His prayer was spent praying about them and for them. There's a lot of reasons for this. One is because He knew them. He not only knew them, He knew things about them, He knew their past. Did you know that Jesus knows everything you have ever done, said, thought, or wanted? And He still loves us. He still loves us. He knows everything. He knew that these men, that they had areas of guilt and shame, they had things that Satan would get in and say, "You know what, man? I know that you're thinking that you're doing something for the Lord and He has a plan for your life, but look at your past, He could never use you."

Jesus knew every hurdle in their heart. He knew everything about them. He knew their strengths and weaknesses. He knew everything about their past. He also knew everything about their future. There's one account where James and John, they corner Him where the others aren't, and He says, "Hey, when you set up your kingdom, we want the best seats." And He says, "You don't know what you're asking." He says, "Oh, we do, we want the best seats." And He says, "Well, you don't know what you're asking because I'm going to suffer, and this is a cup that you cannot bear." They said, "Oh, we can." And this is what He said, he goes, "Well, you can't, but one day you will. One day you will give your life for this, but not now."

He knew their future. He knows your future. He knows who in this room is going to be diagnosed with cancer in the next five years. He knows who's going to be divorced. He knows whose kids are going to rebel. He knows. He knows your past, and He knows your future. Mine as well. And He knew theirs. But there's another thing that He knew about them, and when we want to think about becoming wise as individuals so that we can participate in this historical pursuit of redemption, of reaching people with the gospel, this is something that we need to learn, and that is that He knew what was in us. In John 2 it says that He was careful what He would give and divest to other people, what He would say, it says, because He knew what was in man.

That's not a compliment. He knew what was in man. He knew that we weren't healthy, we weren't trustworthy, we were weak, that we got tired, we were sinful, we were selfish, He knew these things about us. And it's interesting, when you look in the New Testament, most of the New Testament is written to Christians where Paul or some other writer is trying to stir up by way of reminder our worship and our affection for Jesus. And one of the ways that he does is he reminds us who we were before Jesus. In doing so, he gives us a tremendous amount of clarity because many of us forget what we were because maybe it's been a while, or many of us, we don't remember. We don't remember being in these kinds of perilous situations. And this is what you have to remember, when you read what the New Testament says about who you were before you were born again, you may not remember it, but God does. He remembers that's what you were like.

And so, these individual, these 12 disciples, these apostles, you have to grasp that they're not all born again yet. We don't know exactly when all of that took place. They were certainly attracted. They wanted to be near Jesus, and they were learning, and they were wanting to follow him and all kinds of great things were there,

but Jesus knew where they were. He knew the condition of their heart. And before Jesus Christ, the New Testament says four things about us that we should pay attention, that we need to be praying for other people if we're going to seek to reach them. The first is that we're spiritually dead. Ephesians 2:1 says, "You were dead in the trespass and sins in which you once walked." that doesn't mean we're physically dead, it means that we're unresponsive to spiritual things. I'm not saying spirituality, I'm talking about God, the one true God. He pokes, and we don't move.

And as a result of that, a lot of us, we look at people and we share the gospel, and we're so surprised. And yet, you have to understand that when somebody who is unresponsive to God hears something that's supposed to be responsive about God, they don't react the way that we think. And you don't have the power to bring people back from this spiritual dead. But you know who does? The Spirit of God, which is why He says you need to pray. And so, Jesus prayed. The second thing that He tells us is true about all of us is that we misplaced our love. Before Jesus Christ, this is really important, you're like a fire hydrant, okay? You're like a fire hydrant that's stuck on, that somebody took off the plate. All of a sudden, water is gushing out. Your heart loves, and your heart will not stop loving. The question is not if your heart's going to love, it's what are you going to love? If we're not loving God, we may love ourself. If we're not loving ourself, we may even love sin.

In other words, if you don't love what is lovely, you will still love. You'll just happen to be loving something that's unlovely, which is why people around the world... Listen to what it says, "People love the darkness rather than the light." Jesus stood there as the light, and people said, "I don't want to come to Him because I love my sin. I love this." And so, when we think about reaching people and why we need to pray for people is because they love things that are not lovely. And you cannot reorient the heart, but God can. The third thing, it's true is that is when there's a heart that it's spiritually dead, and all of a sudden it loves the wrong things, that creates a lot of chaos or folly. He calls us foolish. Titus 3:3 says, "You were once foolish." How many of you, those of you who are Christians, can look back on a time and you think, "Well, that decision, that season, sophomore year in college, that was a foolish season."

Not only foolish, disobedient, led astray. That means that we had a collar and somebody had a leash and sin and temptation were like, "Hey, come over here." We're like, "Okay, what's over there?" He says we're slaves to various passions and pleasures. That means an addiction or our body says, "Feed me this," and we were taught, "Well, we must feed my body that."

Then he goes on, I always find this to be not comical, it's so sad, but when you love the wrong thing, this is what you do, He says, "Passing our days in malice and envy." You're like, "We got 24 hours, we got to spend all of them, what should we do? Let's be mean to people, and let's wish that we could have their things." All this, it creates this relational chaos where we hate others and other people hate us. That's why there's so many broken relationships in the world. You might think, "Man, if all this is happening, just open your eyes." But Jesus knew a fourth thing about all of us, and that is that before we were born again, we were spiritually blind. 2 Corinthians 4:4, it says, "The god of this world is blind to the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing

the light of the gospel, the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Some of you, you look into the culture and there’s people who have an absolutely different world view from the world view that you read within the Bible. And instead of feeling sympathy for them, you hate them. And the reason is because you forget that they’re blind, they cannot see. They act foolish because they can’t see what’s not foolish. And you don’t have the power to remove that blindfold because it’s held by evil hands. And so, the only hope for natural man, natural man meaning men and women who were not born again by the Spirit of God, is for God to awaken the heart. It’s for God to reorient our love. It’s for God to heal our past. And it’s for God to remove the blindfold that’s being held tight by evil hands. Only God can do that. And so, Jesus prayed, then we must pray.

The second thing that we find here is that Jesus chose and poured His life into people. So He prayed for them all night long, and then He comes at a break of dawn, so He is weary, he’s been up all night, and yet He’s really wise. And what does He do? He calls His disciples and chooses from them 12 whom He named apostles. The word apostles, that simply means sent one. Someone who had been taught, who had seen the resurrection, seen Jesus rise from the dead. And all of a sudden, they’re sent to tell other people. That’s what an apostle is. I’ve often thought about this though, it’s so interesting if you really think about it, it’s like some of us we think, “Oh, how many disciples did Jesus have?” Most of us go, “12.” Not true.

This is what He says. He says in verse 13, He says, “He called His disciples and chose from among them 12.” In other words, there was lots of people who were following Him. Over the last every weeks we’ve talked about, what is a disciple? It’s someone who worships Jesus, who loves Him, learns from Jesus, who wants to be a part of His family, who serves people, and who helps other people by pointing back to Jesus. That’s what a disciple is. And there was a lot of them, and He chose 12 to become apostles. I’ve often thought, “How bad would it be to be number 13? What if I was 13?” You? No, not you. You, you, you, you 12.

We only see the positive in this because we know the 12, but think about the rest. Initially absurd. Why not go with 20? How many you got? Let’s go with that many. Infinitely wise. For the next two years, Jesus would prioritize training these 12. Oh, He certainly cared for the masses and the crowds, and the crowds came because of His authority and power, and yet, isn’t it true that every time there was a big crowd, almost invariably, at the end of the day, it says that He would withdraw from the crowd? He would seek an isolated place where He was just with the 12. And that’s when they would come, they’d say, “Hey, you told a story back there about weeds and wick, can you explain that?” “Let me explain it.” He’s discipling, and he’s training these. So we’re showing compassion to people. When there’s tons of people around, He’s not ignoring them, but He’s intentional with these 12.

His initial efforts amazingly had little or no recognizable effect upon the spiritual or moral condition of the world, much less Galilee itself. Think about this for a second, think of how the Son of God left the earth and 120 people followed His advice to pray for power. And all this time, He’s spending with 12. The moral

condition of Galilee wasn't affected at all. Nobody even cared about these 12. They were relative nobody's within the culture. And yet evil... I'm sorry. Yet, really powerful seeds were being planted. And the reason is because these men were being changed by Jesus Himself. They were being convinced and challenged to the core of their being. They were being filled and prepared with a mission, and that mission was this, "Go make more of you."

None of them raise the moral average of the group. Peter was arrogant and impulsive. He made big promises and had bigger failures. Andrew, his brother, didn't say as much. Maybe they formed this pattern at home. One talked a whole lot, so maybe one didn't talk so much. Because we don't find Andrew saying a whole lot. Folks would come and ask Andrew, and he'd go, "I don't know." And he'd just point, "Let's go talk to Jesus." This is really important. Some of you, you may talk a whole lot, and some of you may not talk at all. Some of you, you have all the answers, and some of you have very few. But He can use both. If you can point, just look at Jesus, "I may not know the answer, but it's over there. I know it is." Well, that's Andrew. James and John, we've already talked about the fact that they're selfish, that they got Jesus alone and said, "We the best seats." But not only that, but they're also pretty vindictive, so much so that Jesus nicknamed them both the sons of thunder.

You say, "Really?" Really. There was a day that Jesus was coming out of a town. They didn't believe, in fact they were pretty hostile towards Jesus. And James and John said, "Hey, Jesus, do you want us to pray to God in heaven and have Him throw down fire and burn up the city?" And Jesus is like, "What? Are you kidding? No, no, let's leave the fire up there. Let's be kind." Sons a thunder. Some of you are vindictive, you have a temper, and Jesus can use somebody like you. Philip was the accountant or the engineer. We don't have any of those here. That's a joke. Lots here actually. Philip was the bean counter who could never account for God. "Oh, you want to feed Him? All right, hold on just a second. Its like 5,000 men here. So women, children, that's a bunch of people. What do we got? Five, five, let's see, carry the one... No, we can't do it." "Don't worry about it. I'm God, I can make bread."

Some of us, we're like that. We look at the mission, we're like, "Give me a spreadsheet." And if it doesn't work on the spreadsheet we say, "It can't be done." And God can use people, God can use people like Philip. Bartholomew, sometimes called Nathaniel, he's only mentioned... Or not mentioned. He only speaks one time, or his words are only recorded one time in the Bible, and when his words come out, they spill out racial, ethnic, prejudice. God can change a racist prejudiced heart and use it in His kingdom.

Matthew was a legalized thief called the tax collector. Thomas always anticipated the worst. He was kind of, "I need the evidence. I'm not going to believe unless I can feel and see and touch. A pessimist. Most pessimists, they call himself realist. He was a realist, and he struggled, and God can use realists. The only thing we know of James was his dad's name. He was the son of Alphaeus, that's it? But this is really news, I think, and this is why he took the gospel all over Europe. But God can use people who nobody knows. They have a place.

Then there's Simon. Simon was a Zealot. Zealots were covert terror operatives aiming to overthrow Rome. One of the people they loved to kill were tax collectors. So Matthew probably slept with an eye open for a year just to make sure that he wasn't going to die. They had political ideologies that were totally different. One wore blue and the other wore red. One voted for this candidate, the other for that. Judas, sometimes called Thaddaeus, this is the first Judas, it's interesting, he's only recorded one time also. Do you know what he does? He questions Jesus method. He said, "You know what? You're really good at all this stuff, we should get you a platform, a stage, and a microphone. This whole private thing with 12, this isn't working so well. The masses, they're going to walk away from you."

And then there's Judas Iscariot, the trader. What I hope you see here is this is just a big pile of hot mess. Just like us. Weaknesses, insecurities, fears, pasts, all kind, and yet this is who He used in order to get the gospel to you. The Lord tarries and He waits another 200 years, do you know the kind of hot mess that He's going to use in order to transfer it from our generation to the next to the next to the next? He's going to use us. Us, that's His plan. Initially absurd, infinitely wise.

1 Corinthians 1 says, "Not many of you were wise according to the worldly standards, and not many were powerful, and not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish to shame the wise." Don't you see? Some of us, we think, "Man, if we could just get these celebrities to get saved, they could use their platform." It's never His plan. They're only potential just as ours was that the gospel is Christ in you the hope of glory, that Jesus was going to live within them. And that gets us through the third point, and that's Jesus commissioned His disciples to make disciples. For two years, He continued to pour into them until He marched them to Jerusalem. He went to a cross, He died, He was buried, and He rose from the dead.

Before I move forward, let me just say, for those of you who have never trusted Christ, this is an opportunity for you. You see, you have to do something with that. See, the reason He did that was for you, in order to save you, to forgive you of your sin, and to bring you to heaven. And you can do that by admitting your sin and believing in Christ and confessing that He's Lord, and you can do that right now where you're seated. And if you will, you join the ranks of everyone else who has trusted Him. And one of the things you join or you receive when you do trust Him is not only forgiveness and eternal life and righteousness and a family, but you also receive a commission. And that commission goes like this: "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

The question then always comes, "Well, how are we going to do that? How are we going to do that?" How we're going to do that is we're going to imitate Jesus. We're going to do what seems initially absurd, and yet it's proven through generations to be infinitely wise. See, our big temptation is to move fast and to aim for size, big, let's fill Carter-Finley. But did you know, I've told you this before, that if we filled Carter-Finley with 58,000 new people every single week one time, did you know it would take 2,600 years for the 7.9 billion people on earth mathematically to hear. And yet, if one Christian spent one year sharing the gospel, and one person came to faith, and they continued to pray with them and read the Bible with them and help them to

learn who they are in Christ and help them to learn how to share their faith with someone else, and so in year two, number one and the person they first led, they each lead someone to Christ. And then in year three, they each lead someone to Christ. One person, one year leading one, the 7.9 billion people mathematically would hear the gospel within 31 years.

This is His plan. Even Billy Graham who gathered people in enormous, enormous ways wrote in his book called *The Holy Spirit*, “Mass crusades in which I believe and to which I have committed my life will never accomplished the Great Commission: one-on-one relationships will. And so at the end of Jesus’ time, only 120 disciples gathered to pray. But then God filled those people with power, and they went to Europe and Asia and Africa making disciples who made disciples who made disciples, who eventually told you, told me. And we trusted Christ. The point is the baton is now on our hands, and the question is, what are we going to do with it? Are we going to get creative and say, “Hey, let’s go big and move fast, find the most eloquent people, put a microphone on their face and let them talk.” No. No, it’s always going to be individual faithfulness, to say, “You’re in my circle of influence, let me tell you who’s changed my life.”

What will we do? So let me encourage you with a few things, and then we have the opportunity to observe a baptism. First, let me encourage you to identify four people who are far from God, four people. I want you to just think about the spheres of your own life, where you live, where you work, where you play, maybe your home, maybe your own kids, maybe family, friends, co-workers, who do you know who doesn’t know the Lord? Or who do you know that you don’t know if they know the Lord? Identify them. Now, don’t go to them and say, “Hey, I’ve got a little traveling group, I’m going to camp for three years, and I’d love for you to join me.” Not that kind of identifying, it’s a little different than what Jesus did obviously.

But here’s the importance of you identifying four. Some of us, I know, instinctively, we’re like me, you’re a rule questioner. Someone suggests something, you say, “What do I have to do it that way?” You don’t. You don’t. But here’s what happens, when you identify people and you begin praying for them simply because you’re like, “You know what? These four people, I’m going to pray.” What happens is you are reminded more frequently to think about them. You’re reminded to care for them. You’re reminded to serve them in some practical way, to bless them. You say, “Well, why four?” The reason why four is because simply Jesus describes every human heart as one of four different kinds of soils. And so if there’s four people that you’re sharing with, there’s a really good possibility that one of them is the soil that’s going to take the gospel, and it’s going to absorb it, it’s going to believe.

My question to you is this, would you commit today to one? You say, “I don’t have four.” Some of you say, “I don’t even have one. I don’t know a single unbeliever.” Well, you can just go meet one, they’re everywhere. We just start with one, identifying and saying, “This is a person I’m going to seek to bless.” Second thing, let me encourage you, is to invite encouragement and accountability. Let me encourage us as a church family to be intentional in this. Bring it up in your life groups. I mean, making disciples was the last command Jesus gave us, so it should be one of the first things that we think about when we gather together. So what I want to ask

you to do is this, if you will commit today, we simply as a church family and as a staff want to help you by giving routine encouragement and some ideas and a platform and an opportunity for you to be able to even tell us anonymously, “Hey, here’s something that I did that might be an encouragement. This was a practical way I blessed somebody,” that somebody else within the church, if they knew, they’re like, “That’s a great idea.”

And so, if you have a phone, you don’t have to do this today, but I welcome you to do it today, next week, you’ll actually see these QR codes all around this place. But if you have a phone and you pick it up, and you simply let the camera focus on that, even from where you’re sitting right now, what you’ll get is you’re going to get a text, and it’s going to say ReachYourFour. Basically, you hit on it and it’s going to send you saying, “What’s your name?” Now, some of you are like, “I knew it, they just want my name.”

If you put your name and you send it to us, it’s simply this, it’s simply an invitation that you’re giving to us to send you a text nearly all weeks, it will only be one. One text a week. It says, “Hey, here’s an opportunity. Here’s an idea that you would think about as a way to bless, as a way to pray, as a way to go about seeking to care for them.” And so, I simply would ask that you would participate. Would you commit to blessing people with the gospel?

And then third is this, is let’s pray for those who are far from God. The only way for somebody’s heart to be made new and for the blindfold to be removed is the Spirit of God, and so we must pray. I can tell you that, but it’s so nice to have a testimony, which is what we have right now, a little video. Frankly, it’ll warm your heart. It says, “You know what? That’s something that I think I want to do, I want to pray for people.” So watch this.

I’m Kiale, I’ve been in Providence for 10 years. I met my husband, Wes, at Providence, and we’ve been married since 2013. Growing up, I was raised in the South, kind of the Bible Belt. There is a culture of people go to church because that’s the thing that you do. I was at a winter Bible study on February 13th, I’ll never forget it, and the preacher was standing up talking about the Tower of Babel. And as he talked about God confusing the language of the people, I literally stood up in the middle of it and said, “I want to know when I die that I’m going to go to heaven.”

I had felt the calling several times before. I’d heard it. I knew that I needed to believe it and accept it, but it wasn’t until that night that I literally just, I guess, confessed my belief and God changed my life. I started putting away some of my old behaviors and habits. My brother and I, we used to go out, and we would party. And we had the same friends and different things like that. And as things started changing in my life, obviously people are curious as to why don’t you do certain things that you used to do. And so, that would give me an opportunity to share with him, “These are the ways that God’s working in my heart and in my life.”

Years ago at Providence, I remember they challenged us. They gave us cards, and it was like, “Write down three people that you’re going to pray intentionally for over the next few months or next year.” I remember,

Brett was the first one that I wrote down. He was my number one. Over Christmas, Wes and I went down to Florida, we were visiting with his family, and I got a phone call from my brother. I took the call and I was like, "Hey, what's going on? What's up?" And he was like, "Well, I've got some exciting news to share with you." I was like, "Okay." He was like, "I want you to know that your brother has decided to join the church and be baptized." And I was like, "What?" I was very surprised. It was just kind of out of the blue.

I prayed for years for my brother that God would just put people in his life, even if it wasn't me, that God would use his circumstances and the people in his life to just speak the gospel and speak life to him. And it's been amazing to hear all the different, whether it was a boss or just a friend that he met or a girl that he dated, I mean, there's just so many of different circumstances. His wife now has been a huge influence in his life. I mean, she was such an answer to prayer. And so, just don't give up, God is able to do all things. And so, we put our trust in Him. We know that we can't save people but God can, and He desires to do that.

So let's pray together. Father in heaven, we thank you for this time. We thank you for your Word, and we thank you for your incredibly wise and practical plan to make disciples who would make disciples who would make disciples. And we thank you that the baton is in our hand. God, I thank you for each person here, for the individual who told us about Jesus. We thank you, Father, that it was passed to us and now for the privilege that we have to pass it to somebody else. What a joy and privilege that is. And so, even as we prepare now to celebrate and rejoice as a church family as we observe Sarah being baptized, bearing with of her faith, I pray that as she bears witness of her faith by being baptized, that those in the room who are considering trusting Christ would be inspired to do so. And those of us who have already trusted Christ would be inspired with the privilege and the thought and the vision of people that we know and love one day trusting Jesus Christ. And so, we ask that you would help us to be faithful in all these things. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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