

How to Build Something Great
Never Forget This One Thing
September 24, 2017

PRE-SERVICE VIDEO

Feature Song – You Will Never Run / Rend Collective

Explanation

Good morning everyone.

As I said at the end of last Sunday's service and wrote in my blog on Friday, today's service is going to follow a pattern that's very different from what we typically do each week ... which is why I am standing up here and talking to you *now* instead of at 10/11:30.

That's because today is the final installment of our series "How to Build Something Great" in which we've been discovering how to move from mediocrity – where "good enough" is good

enough – towards greatness in whatever it is we're building. As I've said we're all in the process of building *something* whether it's a business, a team, a marriage, a family, a small group, or a church.

And the reason today's service is going to take a different track is because not only do I want to teach you about the final principle – the glue which holds it all together, the foundation on which everything else rests, the critical component, the secret ingredient – not only do I want to teach you about *that* ... I want to give you the opportunity to practice it and to experience it.

So, we've laid out our time together in this service in such a way that, hopefully, that happens.

Now, in just a few minutes, I'll explain that final principle but, first, I want to do a very quick summary of the first five principles which, as you know if you've been here for any of the messages

in this series, are based on our values as a church. These values define for us how we want to go about accomplishing the mission for which God put us here 23 years ago next Sunday. They define our culture.

And they can define yours, too, in whatever it is you're building because they're transferable. And they're transferable because they're based on the teaching of Jesus which is incredibly relevant to everyday life.

Principle number one is “redefine success”

...

... to include all three elements that are present in whatever we're trying to accomplish: the people, the process and the production. Around here we call this the value of *holistic ministry*.

Principle number two is “lose the mask” ...

... which means to be appropriately transparent and vulnerable about your weaknesses and

failures. We refer to this as the value of *authenticity*.

Principle number three is “put the first thing first” and that first thing is *you*.

Since you and I can't give away what we do not have, we must prioritize doing what it takes to stay filled up emotionally, spiritually and even physically. Around here we refer to this as the value of *personal responsibility for spiritual health*.

Principle number four is “walk towards the mess” ...

... which means dealing with conflict instead of ignoring it, pretending it's not there or taking it underground as gossip. We call this the value of *relational integrity* where how you act towards someone externally matches what is going on internally.

Then, finally, principle number five (which we talked about last week) is to “ask the hard questions” ...

... so you can evaluate how well you are actually accomplishing the mission of whatever it is you're building. Around North Heartland, we call this the value of *effectiveness* – a commitment to continually seek the most productive strategies, structures and leadership and then a willingness to make changes as God guides us to.

And, as always, if you missed any of these messages, I invite you to watch, listen to or read it in the media section of our app and website.

Now, at this point, we're going to take very short break because one of things we need to do today – one of the things we put on our calendar long before we planned this series – turns out, is actually an application of our “effectiveness” value!

It's our *congregational survey* ... which we do three times a year because it gives us a sense of who is here and what's really going on in our

congregation. I know how much everyone loves it when we do this – especially if you’ve already done it a dozen times – but it really is helpful to us.

So, I’m going to turn it over to Shannon because whatever she does just seems to be more fun. So, Shannon tell the folks what we need to do.

Congregational Survey

Seriously, thank you very much for helping our leadership team be more effective in leading us to accomplish our collective mission.

Introduction

Well, now it’s time for the final principle in building something great. And, as I said, this one is the glue, the foundation, the critical component, the secret ingredient.

But before I give it to you I should probably tell you that doesn’t mean it’s a guarantee that you

will be successful in whatever it is you're building. Instead, this principle turns out to be extremely helpful in dealing with the fear and tension that's associated with the possibility that you *won't* be successful or, at the very least, that things won't go exactly as you envision.

I don't know about you but everything I've ever been part of building in my life has been harder, taken longer and cost more than I expected, including this church ... *especially* this church!

For example, during our core group stage (before we opened to the public):

- The first staff member I hired in January of 1994 quit after a month. I was like “what? Am I that bad of a leader?”
- A month after that, our top financial supporter – who was good friends with that former staff member – decided I must've been that bad of a leader, so he and his

family also quit.

- We originally planned to launch in early August but, in May, I realized we just weren't ready, so I had to tell everyone we're going wait until October.

We had a pretty rough beginning.

When we finally *did* launch ...

- On our first Sunday, 367 people showed up at New Mark Middle School. It was an amazing day.
- But less than three months later, on the Sunday before Christmas, only 180 showed up and our offerings were pitiful. I seriously wondered if we would make it through January.

In our fourth year, our people committed to give \$625K over and above their regular offerings to

buy land and begin a building project. It was awesome.

- But in our fifth through seventh years we investigated purchasing or leasing four existing church buildings, three empty grocery stores, three movie theatres, a tennis facility, a clothing store, a dance studio and an elementary school. Obviously, none of them worked out.
- In addition, during that time, we had *signed contracts* on three pieces of land but they all fell through because of a problem on the seller's side.
- With so many disappointments during that time, our attendance declined.
- Then, our top financial supporter quit. I thought about quitting, then, too.

But, in our eighth year we found this building and

put a contract on it. Everyone who was still with us was so excited.

- “Finally,” we thought, “a place called home for our church.”
- However, we couldn’t find a bank that would loan us the money. At 3:00pm on the final day of our 75-day due-diligence period, we finally had one bank make us an offer but the terms were so stringent that there was just no way that we could agree. And I thought, “What in the world will we tell our people?”
- It was so demoralizing ... until late that evening when, miraculously almost, a lender we never seriously considered said “we’ll be happy to do it” and gave us a deal we could live with.

And I could go on and on with story after story like this of how almost everything has been

harder, taken longer and cost more than I expected over the past 23 years but, in the end, they all illustrate the same thing: *the principle we're talking about today*; the *one thing you should never forget* especially when you start hearing voices in your head and in your heart that are telling you that “you're destined to fail” ... “you're not enough” or “you don't have what it takes” ...

- To build a great marriage
- To build a great family
- To build a successful and profitable business
- To build a God-honoring people-developing ministry
- To build the next season of your life, whatever that might be.
- Maybe even to *re-build* something – establishing a new normal after a disappointment or loss.

Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about because you're trying to do those kinds of things

right now and it's harder or it's taking longer or it's costing more than you ever dreamed.

And you're starting to be swayed by the doubt and the fear in spite of the fact that *you know for sure* that you are doing what God told you to do or that you're right where God wants you to be.

That's why, if you're trying to build something great, you must ...

Never forget that it's not all up to you.

Would you say that with me out loud? “Never forget it's not all up to you.”

If you're a follower of Jesus – if you believe He is who He said He was – then ...

- Your marriage is not all up to you.
- Your family isn't all up to you.
- Your business isn't all up to you.
- Your career isn't all up to you.

- The next phase of your life isn't all up to you.

One of Jesus' best friends tells us of a time when Jesus was talking to his disciples about this exact issue.

Here's what He said to them:

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

John 15:5 (NLT)

If you're a follower of Jesus and you're trying to build something, Jesus Himself is telling you that you can't do it without Him. He's telling you that it's *never* "all up to you" ... which is why you must "remain in Him."

In other words, your efforts must be characterized by a continual dependence on God to reveal, lead, and intervene on your behalf.

... which is exactly how we phrased our final value when it came time to define what mattered to us about how we did our ministry. We want – no, we *need* – to depend on God.

I'll confess to you that it's been so challenging for me to do that; to remember that building a great church isn't all up to me because it can *feel* like it at times. And whenever I let that feeling guide my thinking and actions, then when it gets too hard, takes too long or costs too much, I'm tempted to give up!

However, the truth is that this whole NHCC-thing is ultimately God's deal. And He's way more concerned about it than I will ever be. He wants it to be great far more than I do.

So the key for me is *to depend on Him* as much as I can *while I work* as hard as I can.

That's what the Apostle Paul was getting at when he wrote:

We tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. That's why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me.

Colossians 1:28-29 (NLT)

Paul was working and struggling as hard as he could while depending the mighty power of God as much as he could.

And if you want to build a great marriage, business, family, small group, team, ministry, life – whatever, you need to do the same exact thing. You must work and struggle as hard as you can while depending on the mighty power of God working in you as much as you can.

After all, He's way more concerned about those things than you will ever be. He wants whatever you're building or rebuilding to be great far more than you do. That's part of why He put you here –

to be great for Him!

Experiencing Dependence

So, the question is ... *what does it look like to depend on the mighty power of God as much as you can (while you work as hard as you can)?*

Well, I think there are five pieces to it. But instead of just telling you what they are, from this point on in the service I'm going to invite you to experience each one of them.

And the way we're going to do that is through a combination of music, scripture reading, quiet reflection and, of course, a little bit of explanation. So, let's begin with part 1 of what it means to depend on God.

Part 1 is to simply affirm God's power.

After all, if God isn't powerful, then what's the point of depending on Him for anything?

But the Bible – and our own experience and the experience of millions of other followers of Jesus through the centuries – tells us that He is. And part of dependence means simply affirming that our God is mighty and awesome in power and, furthermore, that His power is *for* us and not against us. What Jesus did on the cross and in His resurrection is proof of that.

So, that's what we're going to do right now – we're going to affirm God's power. I'm going to ask you to stand <pause> and we're going to read some scripture together and then sing together.

Leader:

I pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him.

Everyone:

This is the same mighty power that

raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand. Ephesians 1:19-20 (NLT)

Leader:

Glory be to God, who by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of...

Everyone:

*... infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes.
Ephesians 3:20 (TLB)*

Leader:

"I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"

Jeremiah 32:27 (NIV)

Worship Song – Our God

You can be seated.

So, part 1 of depending on God is to affirm – and keep on affirming – God’s power.

Part 2 is to declare your trust in God’s goodness and plan (in spite of the challenges).

See, it’s one thing to affirm that God is powerful. It’s quite another to say “I trust You, Lord, even when it’s harder or it takes longer or it costs me more than I was expecting it would be when you gave me this assignment.”

Rick Warren says that when God gives us a dream – an assignment to build something great – He typically takes it through six different stages.

Stage 1: God gives you a dream.

Stage 2: You decide to go after the dream.

Stage 3: Your dream is delayed.

Stage 4: Your dream encounters difficulties.

Stage 5: Your dream hits a dead end.

Stage 6: God delivers your dream.

Throughout each of these stages, he says, while you're working on your dream God is working on you. More than anything else, God wants you to trust him.ⁱ That's why He allows delays, difficulties and dead ends in things *He Himself* told us to do!

The Apostle Paul puts it like this:

I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. Philippians 4:12b-13 (NLT)

Now, the reality is that some of us here this morning are running on empty. We're seeing little progress in what we're building. Our dream has been delayed. It's taking longer than we expected. We're experiencing difficulties and dead ends. It's harder than we expected.

But the promise is you can get through this. You can endure and persevere with God's help and strength. For you at this point, depending on God means declaring your trust in His goodness and His plan in spite of the circumstances.

So, that's what I'm going to invite you to do right now as our band leads us in our next song ... for which you can stay seated.

Worship Song – Trust in You

- So, part 1 of depending on God is to affirm – and keep on affirming – God's power.
- Part 2 is to declare – and keep on declaring – your trust in God's goodness and plan.

Part 3 of depending on God is to simply ask for guidance.

Whenever you're trying to build something great, you're constantly faced with tough decisions.

For example:

- If you're trying to build a great family, how should you discipline your kids?
- If you're trying to build a great company, who should you hire?
- If you're trying to build a great career, should you work for that company?
- If you're trying to build a great church, what property should you buy?
- If you're trying to re-build your life after a disappointment or disaster, where should you live? What should you do next?

And the examples could go on and on. But it's not necessary because so many of us right now are faced with tough decisions and the questions are very clear to us.

Now, what a lot of us do in these situations (and believe me I know this because I do it) is we *research*. And that's a good thing. That's part of us working as hard as we can.

But depending on God takes it one more step. We ask Him to reveal and to guide.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
do not depend on your own
understanding. Seek his will in all
you do, and he will show you which
path to take. Proverbs 3:5,6
(NLT)*

So, what I want you to do right now is to take whatever decisions that are weighing on your heart and mind this morning and just offer them up to God. Literally, in your mind say, “Lord, what should I do about <>?”

I'll be quiet for a minute while you do that.

<silence>

Ok, let's stand again and read some scripture together. <stand>

Everyone:

Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. Psalm 25:4-5 (NIV)

Leader:

*This is what the Lord says - your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go."
Isaiah 48:17 (NIV)*

Everyone:

*This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.
Psalm 48:14 (NLT)*

Let's sing.

Worship Song – My Lighthouse

You may be seated.

- So, part 1 of depending on God is to affirm – and keep on affirming – God's power.
- Part 2 is to declare – and keep on declaring – your trust in God's goodness and plan.
- Part 3 is to simply ask – and keep on asking – for guidance.

Part 4 of depending on God is to express your need for God to act in ways that you cannot.

This goes beyond asking for guidance. This goes beyond asking God to give you the power to endure and persevere.

- This is a prayer for God to actually intervene

on your behalf.

- This is a prayer for deliverance.
- This is a prayer for God to do far more than you would ever dare to ask or even dream of.

One of the dumbest things Christians sometimes say to each other is “God won’t give you more than you can handle.” It sounds good and we mean well but those words are nowhere in the Bible.

What it actually says is that ...

*God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.
1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)*

This verse is only about temptation—not about you or me facing more than we can handle.

Truth is that God will *often* give you more than you can handle. He will put you in a season, a chapter of your life, when you are in over your head. He will give you an assignment to build something

you cannot possibly build on your own.

For example, the Bible tells us that one day, God appeared to Moses and said,

“Go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You will lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

“But who am I to appear before Pharaoh?” Moses asked God. “How can you expect me to lead the Israelites out of Egypt?” Exodus 3:10-11 (NLT)

Translation: “Lord, I’m flattered, but this is way over my head!”

Now, why would God put Moses in this position?

Why would God put *some of us* where we are right now – in over our heads with a “building project” that requires more than His guidance or the supernatural ability to endure? Along with Moses, we ask, “who am I to carry out this kind of

assignment?”

Let's see God's response to Moses.

Moses protested, “If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ they won’t believe me. They will ask, ‘Which god are you talking about? What is his name?’ Then what should I tell them?” Exodus 3:13 (NLT)

God replied, “I Am the One who always is. Just tell them, ‘I Am has sent me to you.’ This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations.”

Exodus 3:14-15 (NLT)

Translation: “Moses, it is My Name and My reputation – not yours – that’s on the line. So I will come through for you and your people.”

And if God has put you in a position like that, you can express your need for Him to work in ways

you cannot and that is what He will do.

And I know that's what some of us need to do this morning. It may not be exactly clear how you need God to intervene on your behalf but that's what you need.

I'll be quiet for a minute while you raise up that issue to Him in your heart and mind.

<silence>

Our next song expresses a very simple request along those same lines: "Lord I need you." So, let's stand and sing together.

Worship Song – Lord I Need You

You may be seated.

By the way, the greatest need all of us have ... the greatest deliverance we all need ... the greatest need we have for God to act in ways that we

cannot is with respect to our sin because we cannot atone for it on our own.

Thankfully Jesus has done that for us on the cross. God has already intervened on our behalf and all we need to do is to trust him and receive what He has done for us which is amazing ...

But let's move on to the final component of what it means to depend on God.

God has invited you to build something great; something that's probably over your head. And you're affirming his power, declaring your trust in his goodness and plan, asking for guidance, expressing your need for Him to do things that you cannot.

Now, when you've done that for a while, you probably have some idea of how it all ought to play out going forward ... which is why part 5 is so important (and challenging).

Part 5 is to surrender your expectations of the outcome.

The book of Psalms tells us that ...

In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.

Proverbs 16:9 (NIV)

And through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord says:

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways ... As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV)

Back in 1994, I would have never chosen to own a building and property like this. And I remember realizing two things when we signed the contract:

1. It was undeniable that God had intervened

on our behalf and had led us to this place.

2. I had to let go of my expectations and invite God to have His way which was not my way.

And I think this morning maybe some of us need to do that same thing with respect to whatever it is we're building. And so, that's the purpose of our final song ... for which you can remain seated (and feel free to sing along).

Worship Song – Lift My Life Up / Unspoken

Well, that's the final principle of "How to Build Something Great" explained, hopefully, in some useful and practical detail. Bottom line, if you're a follower of Jesus, it's not all up to you. You must work and struggle as hard as you can but also depend on the mighty power of God working in you as much as you can.

Let me pray for you.

- Affirm Your power.
- Declare our trust in Your goodness and plan.
- Ask for guidance.
- Express our need for You to intervene and act in ways that we cannot
- And we surrender our expectations of the outcome.

CLOSING COMMENTS

1. Prayer pastor
2. Offering @door
3. Golf tourney – last day for discount / will match up with a team
4. Lots of other stuff – read the program, watch our Facebook page

Endnotes

ⁱ <http://thewordorlando.com/devotionals/11751996/11751996>