

INTRODUCTION

Our theme this month is “A Church on Purpose.” If I said I would give you \$50 if you could write down our purpose statement, would you earn the reward? Here’s a reminder: Green Acres exists to Exalt God’s Greatness; to Evangelize God’s World; to Equip God’s People; to Express God’s Love through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I’ve told you we must be on purpose across the aisle: we ought to love one another. Last week I challenged you to be on purpose across the street: we must go outside the walls of our church to share the good news with others in our community.

Today, I want to remind you we must be on purpose across the globe. When it comes to understanding God’s global call, some of us are like the man in Louisiana I read about. I nominate him for the Clueless Award of the Year. This man lived in a rural area where one of those “deer crossing” signs were located on the highway in front of his home. He called the Highway Department and complained that cars were hitting too many deer in that spot, so he wanted the sign removed so the deer wouldn’t cross there anymore! Obviously, this guy isn’t the sharpest knife in the drawer. He was so clueless he thought the deer were crossing there *because* there was a deer crossing sign there! There are 6 billion people on this planet and if you think you can just trust Christ, get your ticket to heaven punched, but not have a burden for others, you qualify along with this guy for the Clueless Award.

Green Acres has always been a mission-minded church. We’ve sent short-term mission teams to every continent and we are doing much more than most other churches. In fact, I could spend this entire message bragging on how we have been going across the globe for years.

But instead, I want us to hear the words of Jesus that challenge us to see the tremendous opportunity before us in the 21st century. Even though we’ve sent thousands of people to dozens of countries and given millions of dollars to missions, I believe we have only scratched the surface. God is in the process of gathering a church family of thousands of people right here in little Tyler, Texas. He is doing this *not* so we can just gather in Tyler every week and sing and hear sermons and fellowship together. No, I think the Sovereign Lord has reached down and selected Green Acres to be a leader in how a local church does missions. Jesus said “If you are faithful in a few things, God will entrust you with greater things.” Let’s look at what God’s word says about being a Church on Purpose Across the Globe.

Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

That’s the call of Jesus to global missions. Now let’s see how the early church obeyed Jesus.

Acts 13:1-3: (12:25) When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark. In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who was brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work

to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

I want to try to answer four simple questions about global outreach: What? How? Where and Who?

1. WHAT? BE WITNESSES

In Acts 1:8, Jesus didn’t say you ought to *try* to be witnesses, or you *should* be witnesses, He said you *will* be witnesses. Every believer here today presents a witness for Jesus every time you act or speak in the presence of an unbeliever. But what kind of witness are you presenting?

This week, I took three local pastors and we attended a conference in Orlando for pastors. Ed Young, pastor of Fellowship Church in Grapevine spoke and told a story about taking his wife to the largest flea market in America—and he asked if anybody knew where it was—all four of us could say, “Canton, Texas!” He told about taking his wife there for the day and they stopped for lunch at a chicken place in the display area. They were sitting out in front of the restaurant and an employee was walking around passing out free samples of the chicken but she was only giving them to the customers who had already bought their lunch there! Ed’s wife remarked if she had only walked another 15 paces she could have been giving the free samples to the hundreds of hungry people walking by who hadn’t eaten yet. What a waste of chicken to give the free samples to those who were already eating! That’s the problem with many churches today. We keep on serving the bread of life to the same ones Sunday after Sunday and they have already been fed! Our job is to take the Good News to the millions of lost people who haven’t yet tasted the Bread of Life or the Living Water. In fact, Gene Mims wrote:

“A church that does not go to lost persons and share the gospel with them is like a restaurant that has food prepared but refuses to serve the hungry customers.”(*Kingdom Principles for Church Growth*) How long would a restaurant stay in business if it only prepared food, but never served it? Jesus is telling us we will be witnesses.

The New Testament word we translate “witness” is actually the word “martyr.” We think of a martyr as someone like Joan of Ark who died for a noble cause but we are *all* to be witnesses, martyrs. Here are two important things to know about being a witness, a martyr:

a. As a “martyr” you surrender your life for a greater cause

Because of the Muslim terrorists, we have gotten a spurious idea about what a “martyr” is. There are people following a *false* religion who are gladly willing to die for their faith. But a true martyr is someone who is willing to *live* their lives in a way which promotes a cause bigger than themselves. For us that means we are willing to surrender control of our lives to Jesus in order to bring others into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A Christian witness (martyr) is someone who shares the love of Jesus in an unselfish way, that’s what a true martyr is.

b. Our job is NOT to convert, but to communicate

When we think about the 3 billion people on our planet who don't know Jesus Christ, we can get overwhelmed. We wonder how we can ever convert these multitudes to Christ. The job of global missions is NOT to convert people to Christ; only God can truly convert people. Our job is to communicate the good news to these people without Christ. Millions of people don't know how much God really loves them, and they must be told.

2. HOW? IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus indicated in Acts 1:8 that His global strategy of starting in Jerusalem and going to the ends of the earth would only be possible by the power of His Spirit. There are two ways in which the Holy Spirit energizes us for missions.

a. He guides us in what to say

If we will obey and *go*, God will always give us the right things to say. In Luke 12:12 Jesus said, “Do not worry about what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.” You may be afraid to try to talk to someone about Jesus because you fear you don't know the right words to say. If you will start a conversation about Jesus, you'll be amazed at how the Holy Spirit will supply you with the words you need to say. You'll never know this is true until you start the conversation. But the Holy Spirit is working another way as well.

b. He goes before us to prepare the way

He not only gives us the words to say, He is working on the hearts of those to whom we go. Frankly, I was not 100% sure the leaders of Qujing, China would be open to the offer of a cultural partnership with Tyler. But when we got there, all of us were amazed at the warmth, excitement and acceptance they gave us. After our first meeting with the city leaders, we realized this was indeed a “God thing” that none of us could have ever arranged or organized.

Years before, unknown to me, the state of Texas entered into some kind of partnership with the province of Yunnan that included encouraging individual partnerships between cities. I have since learned nothing much was done in Texas about this exchange. One delegation from Austin visited Kunming a few years ago, and one delegation from Kunming visited Texas. But we are the first Texas city to initiate a city-to-city partnership. When we spoke to the provincial officials they wondered what took us so long to get there—they had been expecting something like this for several years. I promise you, the Holy Spirit had to be orchestrating that!

3. WHERE? TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Jesus spoke of being witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. To win Jerusalem, the disciples had only to go across the street, but to go beyond their own neighborhood, they would have to go across the globe.

If you read the first seven chapters of Acts, the church was in no big hurry to leave Jerusalem, they seemed to be quite content to just grow a great church right where they were. Had there been no persecution, they might have stayed there and just become just another of the Jewish

factions within Judaism. But God had a better plan. In Acts 8 we read a great persecution came upon the church in Jerusalem and the church was “scattered” throughout Judea and Samaria. It’s as if God had to allow persecution to occur to move them out of their comfort zone—and from that point on, the church began its global outreach.

Modern churches have the same problem. It’s so easy to settle into our own little comfort zone right where we are that we forget Jesus told us to go the ends of the earth. It’s part of His missionary plan, but it’s also a part of His prophetic plan. In Matthew 24 Jesus is talking about the second coming and the end of the world. In Matthew 24:14, Jesus said, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world (*oikoumené*) as a testimony to all nations (*ethnos*), and then the end will come.”

There are two different words there it is important to understand. The word “whole world” would refer to the geographical world. It would refer to what we think of as the nations of the earth as their geographical borders define them. That has already happened. Every geographical nation on the earth has been penetrated with the gospel. But the next word, “nations” is the word *ethnos* from which we get our word “ethnic.” It would refer to ethnic groups or people groups. For instance, in China there is one nation, but they recognize about 55 different ethnic groups.

There are roughly 6,000 different language groups in the world, and only about half of them have a portion of the New Testament translated into their own language. Some will never be able to *read* the New Testament because they don’t have a written language but with the future satellite technology, within five years you will be able to stand anyplace on earth and download to your cell phone or your PDA an audio or video message in almost every language known to man. Plans are currently being carried out to take the good news to every one of these ethnic groups. You may think, “Ooh, does that mean that when the last ethnic group hears the gospel that BANG! Jesus will return?” Not necessarily. We aren’t taking the gospel around the world just to fulfill this prophecy so Jesus will come back, we do it because God so loved the world, because Jesus died to save everyone—and He told us to go and tell them about His love.

I love to read missionary stories. A few years ago, I traveled to Malawi, Africa to teach the missionaries there in their annual Mission Meeting. We met on beautiful Lake Malawi, near the very spot where the pioneer missionary David Livingstone lived and died. David Livingstone was a highly trained Scottish physician. He heard the African missionary Robert Moffatt say “on a clear morning, the smoke from a thousand villages could be seen where the name of Jesus Christ had never been heard.” That vision was burned into Livingstone’s mind, so he traveled back to Africa with Moffatt and later married his daughter. He understood what Jesus meant when He said to go to the ends of the earth. One of Livingstone’s African translators reported that they journeyed until they came to the end of the earth and could go no further without falling off the earth. Livingstone preached Christ, treated the sick, and prepared the first maps of the interior of Africa. He was out of touch for so long a newspaper hired an explorer by the name of Henry Stanley to find Livingstone. After searching for many months, and not seeing a European, when Stanley found Livingstone, he spoke those famous words that are a fine example of British understatement, “Dr. Livingstone, I presume.”

Now, for the rest of the story: Stanley was an adventurer for hire, but he was a coarse and wicked man by his own admission. But meeting Livingstone changed his life. Henry Stanley wrote of David Livingstone:

“For 4 months and 4 days I lived with him in the same hut, or the same boat, or the same tent, and I NEVER FOUND A FAULT IN HIM. I went to Africa prejudiced against religion as the worst infidel in London. But little by little, seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness, and how he went quietly about his business, I was converted by him, although he had not tried to do it.”

On May 1, 1873 Livingstone was found kneeling by his cot, dead. By his request, his heart was removed and buried in Africa before his body was mummified and returned to England where he received a hero’s welcome. Over and over he was referred to as a sacrificial servant of Christ. But he wrote in his journal before he died:

“People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice, which is simply paying back a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice, which brings its own blest reward in the bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word in such a view and with such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege.”

And after his death, someone returned to Africa to take his place preaching the gospel to the Africans—who else? Henry Stanley. Whether it’s David Livingstone in Africa, or Hudson Taylor or Lottie Moon in China, or our own Richard and Karen DeLeon who go to the ends of the earth in Southern Argentina, *all* these missionaries and others have understood what Jesus said about taking the good news to the ends of the earth.

4. WHO? A LOCAL CHURCH

Acts 13 is a beautiful picture of God’s pattern for sending missionaries. The church in Antioch was itself a “mission point” for the mother church in Jerusalem but they heard the Holy Spirit telling them to send missionaries out to the ends of the earth.

The Biblical model is for a local church to send out missionaries. When a church sends out missionaries like Antioch did, it means there is a group of people who are praying for the missionaries and providing for their support.

Paul had a vision to go the very ends of the earth. The limit of his geographical world was to head West and keep going until he came to the Atlantic Ocean; that was his dream. He wrote to the church in Rome in Romans 15:23-24, “I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there.”

We don't know if Paul ever made it all the way to Spain, but that was his goal. And he expected the church at Rome to “assist” him on his journey there. In other words, in both Antioch and Rome, we discover the team concept of global outreach.

When I used to play football, our coach was always telling us about the importance of teamwork. He was constantly telling us there was no letter “T” in “team.” There IS great value in teamwork. I never played in the band, but I have always been amazed at how 100 band members can get out on the football field at halftime and create marching patterns. It's one thing to get 11 guys to cooperate on a toss sweep, but I think it must be a lot harder to get 100 band members working together as a team. Some of you were in sports, or in the band, or you were cheerleaders, or were in the drill team. Everybody had a job to do, and if you did your job in cooperation with the other members of the team, the result was good. But if one team member didn't perform his role, the entire team suffered.

That's a great concept for a church. We must understand the team concept of doing church. Here's a good acrostic for TEAM: Together Everyone Adds More! Without you as part of our global mission team, there will be something missing. When I started talking about taking the good news across the globe a few minutes ago, some of you tuned me out because you don't think there is any way you can go to China—you may not have the money, or the time, or even the desire. So many of you have simply been waiting for this message to be over, since it's obviously *not* for you.

My friend if you are a part of a local church, you *must* be a part of the TEAM for global missions.

IN A TEAM APPROACH TO GLOBAL MISSIONS YOU MAY:

1. Pray

The first and best thing the church at Antioch did for Barnabas and Saul was to lay their hands on their heads and to pray for them. Prayer is the foundation of releasing God's power. I have enclosed a prayer reminder in your handout. Every Sunday, after the services there are dozens of sermon note sheets scattered on the floor by people who choose not to take notes. That's okay with me but I want to ask that you don't just drop that prayer reminder on the floor. I want you to stick it in your Bible, or in your purse or pocket. Carry it with you and pray, pray, pray. Not everyone can go, but everyone can pray: that's how you can be a part of the team!

2. Give money so that others may go or come

Traveling to China is the most expensive mission endeavor we have ever undertaken. It will cost approximately \$2,500 for every person who goes. Not many churches in America could undertake what we are doing but Jesus has said, “to whom much is given, much is required.” You may not be able to travel there, but you could give so someone who can't afford to go can. We are going to take some college kids this summer how many of them do you think have \$2,500 just sitting around in their pockets? They can't even afford to go to a Chinese buffet, much less travel to China! My dream is to bring at least a dozen college students *from* China to

Tyler to study English. Several young, sharp, Chinese doctors are anxious to come and learn from our excellent doctors here. But *none* of these people in China have the money to pay their way. But they would be thrilled if there was an American scholarship offered that would pay their way to Texas. Like the church in Antioch, we need to support those we send.

When Paul wrote to the strong church at Rome and told them he wanted them to *assist* him in his trip to Rome what do you think he was talking about? He needed their prayers and their love, but he also was talking about financial assistance.

I’ve got good news and bad news about the money for our China project. The good news is: we have all the money we need to fund this China project. The bad news is: most of the money is still out there in your pockets.

I’ve always been honest with you about financial needs. To do everything I believe God wants us to do in China this year, it’s going to take another \$100,000. This amount is in addition to the portion of the World Mission Offering that is going to China. If God moves you to give to this project, just write China or Asian partnership on any envelope.

3. Give time to organize details

I’m a visionary, and God has given me a vision of the people in Tyler making an eternal impact on people of a city in China. I’m convinced God is going to use this partnership in a way that is beyond any limits we might think. I’m into the vision, but I need some of you to join the team to help us work out the details. Some of you have been gifted in organization. Join the team and use this gift to help us.

4. Open your home to foreign guests

Now, you may be thinking, “I haven’t found my place on the team yet. I pray, but I’m not really a great prayer warrior. I don’t have the resources to give money or time to organize.” Try this one on: you have the gift of hospitality. You have an empty room or two in your home, and you’d be willing to host a college student or a business or professional person for a week or up to three weeks. The best mission work will be done when we bring these sharp people to Texas and let them get exposed to the life of Christ lived through us. Will you pray about that?

Oh, yeah, by the way, you can

5. Go

We won’t be taking large teams to China this year. But we need some of you to volunteer to *go*. For instance, if you sign up to go with me as a businessperson in April, you aren’t committing yourself to enter into some kind of a joint venture with a company in China. It’s an investigative trip. It will give you a chance to meet the Chinese business people and learn how they do business, and in turn, they will learn how we do business in Texas. The main purpose is to build relationships. It is perfectly legal and perfectly acceptable for you to share your faith with people you meet on a personal basis. If you are even remotely interested in learning how you can use

your business expertise and experience to impact the kingdom of God, I invite you to call my office and ask for information on this trip.

CONCLUSION

Sometimes Christians steer away from any kind of global mission activity by giving the excuse, “well, I’m just not called to missions.” I love you dearly, but I believe that kind of attitude is an excuse. God has called our church to global missions and if you are a part of our church, you have been called to global missions—it’s just a matter of finding your place on the team.

In 1861 William Booth, a Methodist preacher, looked at the suffering masses of people in London, and his heart was moved. He started a movement he called the Christian Mission to give them the gospel first and to help feed them in the process. It later became the Salvation Army. Much of his work involved enlisting Christians to share the gospel with these masses of people in England and around the world. He was a forceful man and he had little patience with Christians who told him they weren’t called to Missions. Listen to his words, and see if he is not talking to you today: “‘Not called!’ did you say? ‘Not *heard* the call,’ I think you should say. Put your ear down to the Bible, and hear him bid you go and pull sinners out of the fire of sin. Put your ear down to the burdened, agonized heart of humanity, and listen to its pitiful wail for help. Go stand by the gates of hell, and hear the damned entreat you to go to their father’s house and bid their brothers and sisters, and servants and masters not to come there. And then look Christ in the face and tell him whether you will join heart and soul and body and circumstances in the march to publish his mercy to the world.”

One of the great disasters of history took place in 1271. In 1271 Niccolo and Matteo Polo (the father and uncle of Marco) were visiting Kubla Khan. Kubla Khan at that time was a world ruler, for he ruled all China, all India, and all of the East. He was attracted to the story of Christianity as Niccolo and Matteo told it to him. And he said to them: “You shall go to your high priest and tell him on my behalf to send me a hundred men skilled in your religion and I shall be baptized, and when I am baptized all my barons and great men will be baptized and their subjects will receive baptism, too, and so there will be more Christians here than there are in your parts.” Nothing was done. Nothing was done for about thirty years, and then two or three missionaries were sent. Too few and too late. It baffles the imagination to think what a difference to the world it would have made if in the thirteenth century China had become fully Christian, if in the thirteenth century India had become fully Christian, if in the thirteenth century the East had been given to Christ.

My greatest fear at this time is not from the threat of terrorism. My biggest fear is that we will miss God’s call and opportunity He has given us to take the Good News to the people across this globe who have never heard. Let’s not make the same mistake the Italian Christians made in the 13th century; let’s be faithful *now* to go on purpose across the globe!

OUTLINE

GOD’S GLOBAL STRATEGY

1. What? Be witnesses

- a. As a “martyr” you surrender your life for a greater cause
- b. Our job is NOT to convert, but to communicate

2. How? In the power of the Holy Spirit

- a. He guides us in what to say
Jesus said, “Do not worry about what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.” *Luke 12:12*
- b. He goes before us to prepare the way

3. Where? To the ends of the earth

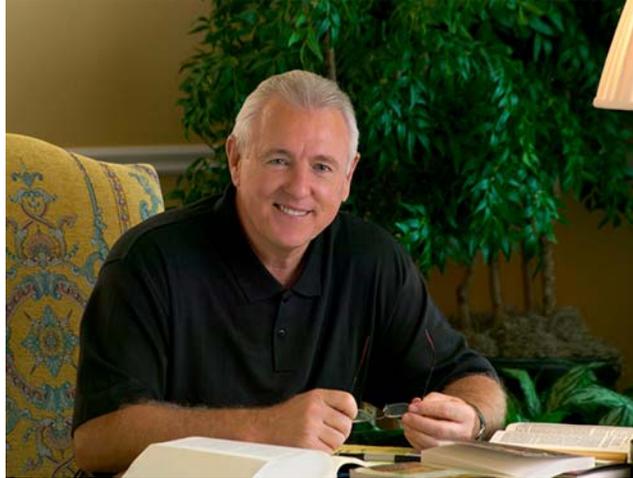
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3. Give time to organize details
4. Open your home to foreign guests
5. Go



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If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes