

Series: Why Church Matters	Reference: Acts 16:6-10	Title: SIX:EIGHT Matters	Date: 08.18.2019
Website Writeup: If church matters, then Six:Eight matters, and if it matters, then you matter!			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

This is our last sermon in this series, *Why Church Matters*, but we're finishing it off with a unique service next week introducing our new Community Group Leaders, Pastoral Council transitions, addition of a Deacon Board, and High School ministry. We'll also be getting some directional information on where we're headed with Kingdom Opportunities & Prayer Training for the upcoming Bryn Mawr Day!

Last week I challenged you to commit to memory the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 - Jesus' last command, our first concern. Let's recite that again together today before we start...

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them & said, "All authority in heaven & on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Mt 28:18-20)

We've seen in this series, church matters because it represents Jesus, it's a community on mission & it's the kingdoms tool of that mission. And, **If Church Matters, Then Six:Eight Matters!** And if Six:Eight Matters, you matter!

Let's begin by looking at Acts 16:6-10 noticing how the Holy Spirit guided Paul & his companions in their evangelical church planting efforts...

⁶ Paul & his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia & Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸ So they passed by Mysia & went down to Troas. ⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing & begging him, "Come over to Macedonia & help us." ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Go back with me 15 years ago to 2004. What were you doing that year? Were you in school? Getting married? Having your first kid? Starting a new career? Where were you living? How did you get here today from there? What led you here? Just circumstances, or was it something else? Are you here for a reason, or purpose?

In 2004 I was living in on the island of Sumatra in Lampung, Indonesia. And at the very end of that year, on December 26, the day after Christmas, there was the most

devastating Tsunami ever recorded off the coast of Northern Sumatra. Lampung is at the southern end. We felt the earthquake, but didn't get the wave.

Within 5 days, I'd traveled northwest to Aceh at the northern tip of Sumatra, the center of the damage. A place a week earlier which had been closed to Christians & foreigners due to Islamic extremism in the area. A foreigner could go anywhere in Indonesia before the Tsunami, just not to Aceh - it was a closed province with little to no Christian witness - but now it was open.

We spent our first few nights there sleeping wherever we could, bouncing around in our sleeping bags as the earthquakes continued, and trying to figure out what we could do to help. We traveled from the northern tip of the province south, assessing damage, disregarding the warnings of military personnel of the risk of being kidnapped.

We prayed & as we did, we all felt strongly that south was not the area the Spirit would have us work, so we went north, finally settling on an area we could begin to rebuild. We set up shop & we began to bring in Indonesian Christian Church planters to do the work. We got tools & shipped a backhoe up from Jakarta to begin to dig out bodies, and clear land of debris so that the Acehnese could begin to reestablish normalcy & life.

Some Indonesian Christians felt called by the Spirit of God to move their whole lives to Aceh - the equivalent of you moving from Philly to LA in a heartbeat never to return home. A hostile place, which just a week before they could not have entered. They came to begin rebuilding, provide aide & then stayed on there to lead Muslims to Christ & see the church established in Aceh - as far as I know many of them are still there today.

This event was the capstone of our time in Indonesia, we would return home immediately after the work there. Since it was evident that before this, our time in Lampung was already coming to an end. The work I had been doing in Lampung could not be sustained by foreign presence. Going back about 7 years before this, I had shown up in Lampung not knowing a soul. The city in which I lived was filled with Javanese transmigrants from the neighboring island of Java. However, my specific call was to reach Lampung Muslims. Something God had called me to way back here in America; a people group known for being closed off, hostile to Christianity & difficult to reach. I prayed God would give me a man of peace - someone who'd open doors into the Lampung community.

One day I was invited to a neighborhood wedding. I went hoping to meet a Lampungese person. Everyone was Javanese. As I sat talking with one man. I was discouraged, but God said, tell him what you want. So I said, "I'm living here in Lampung, but I've not met a Lampungese person, I'd love to." He said, "Well, I'm not Lampungese." Then paused & I thought, "What good was that God?" But he continued, "But my wife is, and as a matter of fact, she's the sister of a Sultan. I can take you out to the village if you like." This began a relationship with a set of 7 villages all governed by a Sultan who eventually adopted me as his 8th child, renaming & titling me, Raden Angkonan. A title

four levels below the Sultan, so I could sit with all the men of the village & make decisions with them.

During these years I also gathered other Indonesian Christians who felt called by the Spirit of God to join us in reaching the Lampungese. They moved themselves to the province from all over the country. And we set up teams & various works around the province so they could share the Gospel & improve the quality of life for Lampung Muslims. We formed an Indonesian church planting work called *Wai Mios*, which meant 'Living Water' in Lampungese. That worked progressed so far that it was evident I needed to replace myself as the head of the organization; it needed to be under indigenous lead. And during my time in Aceh, the Spirit of God brought together all those necessary for that to happen back in Lampung, including a new Indonesian Director. It became evident God was calling us back home, but to what?

I remember sitting on my roof in Lampung during one of my short visits back from Aceh. I prayed that day about what God wanted next of my life. I felt very strongly I wasn't to come back & just join the workforce, but that God wanted to continue to use me in church planting work & that the Spirit was calling me to plant a church on the Main Line. There were churches here obviously, but none of which a guy like me would feel comfortable walking into. I came home not knowing how to do that, let alone how to begin. I floundered for a year, making plans on paper, but not knowing at all how to begin, or where to go to recruit people for a team. I was again discouraged, and all I could do was again pray for direction.

Then one day two pastors from Church of the Saviour in Wayne called me up & wanted to meet. They had no idea of my plans, and I had no idea why we were meeting. We sat in *The Great American Pub* in Wayne as they told me they felt the Holy Spirit telling them that I was to plant a church on the Main Line & they wanted me to pastor at Church of the Saviour for 2 years to begin to build a team to do so. They were hearing the same call I did, although we'd never talked about it. I showed them my plans. That's how Six:Eight began. God calling people, directing here & there, just as He did in Aceh & in Lampung. He's been faithful over the years to direct us.

Listen to this passage again...

⁶ Paul & his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia & Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸ So they passed by Mysia & went down to Troas. ⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing & begging him, "Come over to Macedonia & help us." ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

This is how God works. He works through His people. He's interactive. He's calling. He didn't just write a book & leave us to life, He expects something of us - even when we don't feel we have a specific calling. Remember, Dallas Willard said, 'God's not against effort, He's only against earning.'

We don't earn our salvation in how well we do what God expects of us, but He does expect & even commands our obedience in this task of kingdom building as a result of His grace. *Paul & His companions didn't sit around wondering what to do, they knew the 'what' - go & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

They knew the why, 'For God's glory through God's mission.'

They knew they were within God's will in doing so, and were assured of Christ being with them in the work - *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

And sometimes they were called to a specific place & people. And as we see, the Spirit of God is faithful to lead despite our confusion & occasional discouragement.

Theirs was an interactive life filled with the ups & downs, joys & dangers, confusion & clarity, and tension & peace of kingdom building as they went about it.

We don't know why the Holy Spirit held them back from certain areas. Perhaps the time wasn't ripe for that area. We don't know specifically how He directed them - through direct revelation, or circumstance. We do know the one vision Paul received, although we know little of it, other than some guy begging them to come to Macedonia.

We do know they did the work of Kingdom building while following the Spirits lead. We know their central purpose was to preach the gospel to people in the areas they'd been led, and this is how the kingdom of God is spread, in Paul's day, as well as in ours.

Remember, a few weeks back we quoted Charles Spurgeon who said, *"Every Christian is either a missionary, or an imposter."* And Jesus said in John 20:21, *"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."* And we've heard that He prayed for us in this endeavor, commissioned & even commanded us to it.

(What follows is adapted from an article by Tim Hartman - SEND International)

J. Herbert Kane said, *"The term 'missionary call' should never have been coined. It's not scriptural & therefore can be harmful. Thousands of youth desiring to serve the Lord have waited & waited for some mysterious 'missionary call' that never came. After a time they became weary of waiting & gave up on the idea of going to the mission field."*

That mysterious missionary call J. Herbert Kane talks about is arguably the most misunderstood term when talking about the Great Commission. There are five common myths concerning the missionary call & Jesus' Great Commission to His Church.

Myth 1: The call happens at a definitive, memorable moment in time.

Some people can name the time & place they knew God was calling them to be a missionary. For people like me, it was a variety of circumstances. It was exposure to cross-cultural ministry via short-term opportunities. It was people in my life who were passionate about God's heart for the nations & exuded that passion. Was it a decisive moment for me? No. Was it clear to me over the course of time, God was leading me to work among Muslims in Lampung, or to planting a church on the Main Line? Yes! But it developed over time as I explored God's Word & heard stories about what He was doing in the world. The call's right here & over there! When called to Indonesia, I went. When called here to plant a church, I went. The Gospel's needed everywhere, and we often grow into understanding that to which God calls us specifically.

Myth 2: The call is only for those who are specially gifted.

Some feel being a missionary is only for those who are super-spiritual, endowed with some special gifting. Anybody involved in missions, or we might say kingdom ministry in general, will be the first to admit they feel the least capable to be bringing the light of the gospel to anyone. But, isn't that the attitude we all should have? 2 Corinthians 4:7 reminds us, *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God & not to us."*

Amen! How often have I felt inadequate in ministry, standing either in front of a Sultan in Indonesia, or an Intellectual Atheist on the Main Line - it's not about me, or who I stand before, but rather the call of Christ & the leading of the Spirit for His glory among all peoples!

Myth 3: I can only take steps into missions once I'm called.

The best test of whether or not God's calling you is to start taking those first steps. Or better said, we live in the mission field, if anywhere, He's called us here to those right in front of us. A more specific call may come, and it may be a series of confirmations as opposed to a specific event.

For instance: Blaine is a young man who has always had a heart for Japan. He didn't know where it came from - he claims it's always been there. Recently, he knew it was time to step out & explore what serving in Japan would look like. It was a struggle at first. Was God really calling him to this? After all, he never had a specific call. But, Blaine pushed forward in taking those initial steps. Blaine is now heading to Japan for three months & being mentored by career missionaries with an eye toward long-term service. God's call may or may not be that specific to you, but we're all called to be kingdom building with people right around us!

Myth 4: A missionary call is completely irrelevant to becoming a missionary.

Throughout Scripture, God moves people to accomplish His purposes in the world. The church only moves forward when God's working & calls people to do great things for Him. William Carey once said, *"Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God."* True, and sometimes during that attempt, God will give a more specific call He desires for you.

In Acts 13, the Holy Spirit specifically sets apart Saul & Barnabas “*for the work to which I have called them.*” Notice how God didn’t call the entire church in Antioch to go. Scripture said there were several teachers & prophets gathered at that church, but only two were specifically called to go. The church instead sent & supported the two who were called. The call of God confirms the moving of God, and if God’s moving, He’ll be with those whom He calls, to the very end of the age.

Myth 5: The Great Commission only applies to those whom God has called. The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 applies to all believers. We’re not all called to go cross-culturally to some foreign place, but we are all called to be involved in making disciples of all nations.

Locally, that means crossing the street, crossing the office, or crossing the coffee shop to share the love of Jesus with others. It means engaging in our Kingdom Opportunities, like Bryn Mawr Day coming up on September 7th. Or, actually viewing your neighbors, coworkers, family & friends as those who need Jesus, praying for them, and engaging the message of Jesus with them.

Globally, that means praying & supporting those who go. As we have committed ourselves to the works in Syria, Lebanon & Morocco. Not going doesn’t mean not doing. God’s mission’s bigger than going overseas. Each one of us has a sphere of influence in which God has placed us; in some cases, we’re the only light in peoples lives. Each one of us has people we know who are being sent who need our prayers & finances to reach the unreached in foreign lands. And all of us have people right around us who need the gospel.

Are we being faithful to what God’s asking us to do in kingdom building among the nations? As John Piper puts it, “*There are three kinds of Christians when it comes to world missions: zealous goers, zealous senders & the disobedient.*” Which one are you?

Perhaps these myths & misconceptions on calling have been created by the Enemy to keep Believers from being truly mobilized to God’s mission for God’s glory. Imagine the work which could be done if all Christians took the mantle of the Great Commission upon themselves & not only discovered their role, but zealously fulfilled it!

I ask again, how did you come to be here today? What led you here? Just circumstances, or was it something else? Are you here for a reason, or purpose? What would keep you from engaging in God’s mission? Pray about it. Ask God to open your eyes & heart to understanding. Read Scripture & see how many imperfect people in the Bible were called by God to do extraordinary things. Our missionary calling is not something God wants to keep secret. He desires to use each of us to reach the lost with the gospel & bring the saving message of Christ to the ends of the earth. Sometimes that’s a general call we all engage in, and at others, it is specific where we gather our resources to send someone out to a place the Spirit has put on our hearts. If church matters, Six:Eight matters here, and you matter as a part of it!