



Gospel Advance 6

Showing Up for Divine Appointments

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No regrets, no regrets. You've heard people say that, I'm sure. But I'm here to tell you when they do say that they're either lying or they're not very attentive to their own lives. Because all of us, all of us have regrets. Right? Things we wish we would have done differently, things that we should have done and didn't do. I mean, we live with regret. If anyone ever says I have no regrets and they mean it, they've just defined something about their worldview. It's a lot like someone shooting an arrow and then wherever it lands, just going over and drawing a bull's eye around it. And saying, "Hey, I did it. I meant to do that." Right? That's it. They've become a law unto themselves and they basically say, "My life as it was lived, I mean, that's success. That's what I determine success to be."

The more sane among us would say, well, no, I know there's a standard that's outside of who I am and I am not living up to it. I mean, most of us recognize there is a God and he has the right and, in fact, actually did draw a bull's eye and he says, here's what it looks like. Here's how to live. He even sends his Son to live among us. I mean, he says, this is it. This is Christ is the standard. He calls us to walk as he walked, to use that phrase, live like he lived. And we know that if we're honest and attentive, we will look at our own lives and say, we fall short. We don't measure up.

The good news is that we can repent of that and that, in the grace of God and the payment of Christ, we can be forgiven. And that's fantastic. And then in our sanctification as God's Spirit invades our lives, our job then is to look at the bull's eye more intently and to aim more carefully and have God help us hit the target more often. And of course, we all stumble in many ways, but the goal is to get up, get up, get up, keep hitting the target as best you can. Live in light of what Christ has told us and aim well, shoot well, do what God asks us to do.

Now, the good news is that at the end of our lives, we want to not only recognize that there's no condemnation for us in Christ, we'd like to, as First Corinthians 3 says, get to the end of our lives and see that the opportunities and crossroads of our lives, we hit the target more often than not. That would be great that we have, as it's described there, have a lot of "gold, silver and precious stones" that are going to be glorifying God and he is going to generously reward us for those. We want to mitigate and minimize the "wood, hay and straw." We would like to not have a lot for which we, as that passage says, "suffer loss over." And I don't know if your theology is rightly including that, but you know that just because you're a Christian doesn't mean you're not going to stand before God and give an account of your life. We call it in Christian theology the Bema Seat of Christ, the Greek word "raised platform." Paul talks about the fact we all stand before that raised platform of Christ and he will call us to give an account for our lives.

So the goal is to take the opportunities that are before us and make sure that we hit the target more often than not. Our job, of course, is to try and do the best we can to never miss out on what God would have us do in any given situation. And the good news is, as we study Acts



Chapter 8, we've got a great opportunity for us to have a text that if it's rightly impressed upon our hearts and we respond rightly to it, I can assure you that you will have less regret on the day of our Bema Seat judgment than you would if you slept through the sermon.

So this is good, right? You listen and pay attention today. I can guarantee you this, you will miss less opportunities and you will be ready and able at those crossroads of your Christian life to say, I chose to do what I should do, as imperfectly as sometimes we carry that out, to make the right decision in those circumstances. Now, this is not a sermon about temptation and just your moral ethical issues of sanctification. It's about something very important and central to the Christian life. We've been studying it in Acts Chapter 8, an eight-part series on what we call Gospel Advance. It's very important in the book of Acts that we see that that principle of seeing the gospel go from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth, that we recognize that in every generation the church has to take that commission seriously. We ought to make disciples of all the nations. We've got to start in our own backyard and we got to make sure that we're doing all we can to make that gospel known in our generation.

And so we see in this passage and we've seen him throughout this text, Philip, the evangelist, as he's called later, which, by the way, that title does not in some way relieve us of our responsibility. We're all to be evangelists. We're all to be sharing this message. But he was known for that and for good reason, because in this text, we see him responding rightly to the call of God to actually do the hard thing, which is to step up and engage in a conversation with a non-Christian. It's a remarkable passage.

It's so remarkable and it's filled with so much good information that I want to break it in half and deal just this week with what we see as God sets up the scenario. How Philip ends up in a chariot with an Ethiopian sharing the message of Christ as he reads the scroll of Isaiah. It's remarkable that he even got there. We want to learn how that worked and we want to figure out how we can make sure that we show up for God's divine appointments because you can't read this without seeing that this is a divine appointment. God had prepped the soil, we need the sower to step in with the seed and together we see this thing bear fruit all throughout Africa, frankly, historically, as God takes the gospel to the ends of the earth. In Homer's Odyssey he talked about Ethiopia being the "end of the earth." Right? This is way down south in Africa. It was a reminder that God was going to fulfill his promise from Acts Chapter 1.

So take your Bibles and let's read this. Let's study it. Let's apply it and make sure that we have more met opportunities than missed opportunities this week when it comes to our job to advance the gospel. We're going to look at verses 25 through 29, which gets us right to the cliffhanger, this will make you come back next week as we then get into the conversation that Philip has with the Ethiopian. So let's start, verse 25, follow along as I read it for you from the English Standard Version. Really this scene starts in verse 26. If you're reading an ESV, you'll see it's got a title there, paragraph heading over verse 26 and that is where we're going. But it's important for us, and I left verse 25 from last week so we can see the transitional nature of what's happening after the scene with Simon the Magician. Remember that? And Peter and John were dispatched from Jerusalem, the apostles, to kind of ratify, verify that this was actually happening. They're going to bring the news back to Jerusalem. But that pivotal verse,



I think, helps us understand something about the culture and the mindset of the early church that really prepared Philip to be obedient to the call for this divine appointment.

Let's read that, verse 25. It says, "Now when they," and though it may include more than this, it certainly included Peter and John, the apostles, "had testified," they verified, they ratified this conversion of the Samaritans in the Samaritan city, "and they spoke the word of the Lord there in that scene, they returned to Jerusalem." Now as they were going, look at this, "preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans." That was the whole thing, this pivot of the Samaritans getting saved. Then we had this weird detour with Simon the Magician, and now they're on their way back and they're just stopping, you know, for gas more than they need to so they can sit there and share in the villages of the Samaritans about the gospel.

Now focus back to Philip, verse 26, "Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Rise and go toward the south, to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.'" Now, Luke adds this line, "This is a desert place." Which is more than, I think, just a geographical notation of what that place was like on that road. It certainly reminds us that this is a place that Philip wouldn't just go hang out. If I said, "What are you going to do this afternoon?" You say, "Well, I'm just going to go I-10 until it gets really deserted and just go there." I'm like, "Why? What for?" This is a place that God is calling Philip to go that doesn't make any sense, a deserted place, a desert place. But he went. God knew, providentially, he had a divine appointment set up, verse 27.

So "He," Philip, "rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch." It's not just something describing his biology, it's something about his status, his court official status of Candace, which is the Nubian word for queen. And it's repeated for us in Greek, the next word, "the queen of the Ethiopians." So Candace, perhaps that's her name. It certainly is her title. And it's translated here, Queen of the Ethiopians. It's probably modern-day Sudan, the Nubian desert, but it's way south of Egypt, down the Nile. And so she is a big wig and this is a big wig because this eunuch, this official in the court of the Ethiopian magistrate, the leaders, the queen, it says, "was in charge of all of her treasure." So think about that. That's an important official, the minister of finance or the head of the Federal Reserve or, you know, the CEO of a giant company. This is a big and important role.

Interesting, "He had come to Jerusalem to worship." There some debate and discussion about why there would be someone coming from such a faraway place. There are discussions anthropologically and sociologically about what was going on in Africa at this time and how there was a lot of disgruntled and dissatisfaction with the religious scene. Nevertheless, it's God working and bringing at least a God fear, perhaps a proselyte to Judaism, to Jerusalem to learn about the one true God. And as we'll see you next week, he's got the scroll of Isaiah 53 that he's reading. But he's an important man. He's in Jerusalem and he's there to worship and he's going home. Verse 28, "And he was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading," talk about God preparing the situation, "the prophet Isaiah." Great opportunity, divine appointment. And Philip's got to show up for this. Verse 29, "And the



Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over and join this chariot.'" That's all and draw a line right there. We'll deal with the rest of it next time.

But let's just look at this particular passage and say, wow, look at God moving people around in this situation, a primed and prepped piece of the soil of God's Church that's ready to receive the gospel, been prepared and Philip's just got to get there and God is going to call him to go there.

Now, I know as you read verse 26 and verse 29, "The angel of the Lord said to Philip," and, verse 29, "And the Spirit said to Philip..." You're like, "I would show up for all my divine appointments if I just had this, you know, angel of the Lord showing up and telling me to go. Right? That's easy, right? Of course. So, you know, I don't have as much respect for Philip as you're trying to present him as we ought to have, because, of course, if God shows up and tells me to go somewhere, I'm going to go."

Really? I just want you to think about that. I mean, think about, speaking of the angel of the Lord, the angel of the Lord showing up in the Midian desert, the Burning Bush and Moses, saying, "Hey, I got a divine appointment for you. I need you to go talk to Pharaoh in Egypt. Hey, Moses, go." Do you remember what Moses said Sunday school grads? What did he say? Here it is. "Send someone else." That's what Moses said. Send someone else. And the next verse, "and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." OK, you want an audible voice from God, you want the angel of the Lord to show up. There are a lot of situations where the will of God is very clear and you think if I just knew exactly what God wanted me to do, I would do it.

Well, hats off to Philip, because even in volume one of Luke's two-volume history here in the Gospel of Luke, we meet in the very first chapter a man named Zechariah. He's a priest, an angel shows up and says, "Hey, you're going to have this kid and you're going to raise him. He's going to be the forerunner to the Messiah. He's going to be the one Malachi talked about. John the Baptist is going to be your kid. So give him the name John," all of that. He gets the information. So he's having an audible voice experience. And what does he do? "I don't really believe you. I don't think that's going to happen." He doubts him. That's the word in the text, the English text. Doubts. See, and so was God happy with him? Nope. You know the story? It ends up making sure he can't speak for months.

So God is not happy. God's not happy with Moses. God's not happy with Zechariah. And here's the thing, I'll bet there's a lot of regret. Did God get his will done? Sure he did. But I'll bet Moses looks back and said, "I should have listened the first time." Zechariah goes back and certainly within minutes he probably regretted that he didn't believe God and do what he said. And so we have to say look at Philip. He is a good example. Whether or not you think he has the great advantage of having God speaking to him audibly through an angel or the Spirit speaking to him. Whether this was audible or not, the point is he's responsive. So I want to get us to the end of this sermon saying I'm going to step into my week making sure that I do what God tells me to do, what he asks me to do, given this very important task we have to advance the gospel in our generation.



So context, verse 25, "When they," Peter and John and whoever was with him on their little entourage with them, "had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans." Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, So, Philip, you'll remember we met in Chapter 6. He's a deacon in the church. He's administrating things and serving the Hellenistic Jews, he's a Hellenistic Jew himself. And we have his pastor, Peter, he's been arrested. We know all the realities of Philip's background, at least as it relates to his church. He's a part of a church that is sold out to advancing the gospel. They're being obedient to the command of the beginning of the book. Right? Which is in verse 6 Chapter 1 that they are supposed to be witnesses through the power of God's Spirit. They're supposed to go out and share the message to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

He is in a group that is committed to the mission that he is about to be called in to advance. Again, we already met him in Chapter 8 advancing that mission. But again, he's going to have this divine appointment. He's going to respond. But the underlying commitment of the church, if you will, that he's a part of, of the band that he's a part of, of his own life, we know this: he's resolved to share the gospel.

So here's the deal. I know you're never going to really be inclined to show up to the divine appointments for you to open your mouth about Christ if you're not already, the precondition here, resolved in your life, this is my resolve, to share the gospel. Number one, take notes. "Be Resolved to Share the Gospel." It just starts with that. Now, notice what it's not saying. It's not saying go out and share the gospel this week. It's saying, I just want you to start with this, be resolved to share the gospel. Do you accept the reality that you are a spokesperson for God in this world? That you're holding out, to use Paul's phrase here in Philippians, in a "crooked and perverse generation," the word of life. You're holding fast to it and I think the idea, even in that text, is holding it out to them, shining as bright lights in the darkness. Not just your behavior, but your words.

And again, I know what some of you are saying, "Here we go again. This series, man, I should have waited to start coming to church until after Chapter 8 because I always feel bad. It's about evangelism, I'm not an evangelist. I'm not a pastor, I'm not a public speaker. I don't know apologetics. I can't do this." Listen, it's not to be received as some drudgery, some duty. But is it a duty? Sure it is. I'd like you to have the right proper perspective where this particular responsibility can feel a lot like what we've just been through, and that is singing and worshipping and being grateful that we have a relationship with the living God.

So put a pin here in this passage and go with me, if you would, to Psalm 96, just to give you how these naturally should go together. That I love God. I am thankful for my salvation. Now, I do have a duty this week, but I don't want to see it as some drudgery or some duty. I should see it as a natural outgrowth of what it is to be a Christian. Old Testament context. So I want you to see here that the people of God gathering together just like us on a weekly basis to worship. Here's a statement that I think we quote all the time as it relates to the jubilant and joyful celebration of God's grace. We quote passages like this, Psalm 96. Look at verse 1.



"Oh, sing to the Lord, a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, and bless his name."

Now you gather together. You can't do that every day in the congregation of the redeemed. But, you know you do that. You're excited about doing that. You engage in doing that. You schedule doing that. But then it says, middle of verse 2, "Tell of his salvation from..." week to week. Underline week to week. Is that what it says? From what? "Day to day." All the time. Share this message all the time. As a matter of fact, the opening line about worship is not just, "Hey, devout religious Jews, sing to the Lord a new song." No, all the earth. We're always looking through the prism of what we've just been singing about and what we've been worshiping God for and saying more people need this, "tell of his salvation from day to day." Verse 3, "Declare his glory," Where? Everywhere. If you meet someone from Ethiopia then "declare the glory of God among the nations, his marvelous works among all of the peoples! For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and he is to be feared above all gods." Do you think that's a statement that is used for religious, devout, committed Jews in the Old Testament? No, the point is there are people who have all kinds of gods.

As you sit here and worship, and hopefully that's been a good experience for you to express your devotion and worship and praise to God, there are a lot of people walking their dogs on the green belt in front of your housing tract. There are a lot of people out there reading the news feed at Starbucks, sipping on their favorite latte. A lot of stuff going on out there with no interest in giving praise or worship to God. They don't even see their need for Christ. And here's a passage saying, hey, we just had this great time of worship. You need to see that God is the God who should be "feared above all priorities," all ambitions, all goals of everyone's lives.

So matter of fact, "For all the gods," verse 5, "of the peoples are worthless idols." What a wasted life. You've got to care about those wasted lives, the people who are investing in all those things they're investing in with no thought of the creator. It says, "the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary," and you encountered that, you "Ascribe to the Lord," verse 7, the glory and strength, "ascribed to the Lord, O families of the peoples," not just us, everyone, "ascribed to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribed to the Lord the glory that's due his name: bring an offering, and come to his courts! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him."

Hey, everyone should have this. Everyone should be... We should not be cloistering here and getting together in this little monastery of our Christianity and saying it's just for us. No. "Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns! Yes, the world is established; It shall never be moved.'" Which, by the way, this is not like all those antiquated people thought the earth was on these pillars never to be moved. Psalm 102 says we know the earth is wearing out. It's going to wear out. He's going to cast it off like a garment. This is not about the perpetuity or the constant nature of the earth. It's about his reigning over it. Every time you see that the world cannot be moved, it's usually connected to the verb that he reigns over it, he's in charge. No one's ever going to supplant his leadership. The world is under his, in the org chart, under his



leadership forever. Because of that, "he's going to judge the peoples." He's going to be in charge of evaluating all their lives and calling them before him.

"So let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice," because you can be right with this God, "let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exalt, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and all the peoples in his faithfulness." Look at verse thirteen. "He will judge the world." If you think about evangelism, "Oh, man, I've got to be telling people to turn or burn, man. You're going to go to hell. He's coming back. Turn or burn." Is that true? Yes. If you don't repent, you are going to suffer the consequences of your sin. But you see you get there motivated not by "Yes, I guess I've got to tell people they're going to hell this week." That's not the thought that drives me to it. It's like God is great. Your gods are worthless idols when it's compared to the great God that I have a relationship with, that I went to church and worship this week and you can have this relationship.

God's coming back. You don't have forever to dally around about whether you're going to respond to this. He's a great, majestic God. He made the world, his sovereignty is over the world. You need to respond to him. I mean, just passages like this should remind us what a privilege it is for us who know God to go into our lost world and say, "You need to know him too." And you know, yeah, we have a sin problem and that's a terrible, difficult piece of hard news for us to swallow as non-Christians. And again, it's going to be hard for you. It's hard for me. But you can get right with that God. He sent his Son to be the redeemer of your life. He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and all of our iniquity was laid on him. You can be forgiven and accepted and part of the flock that he now will shepherd and carry the young in his arms. This is a great thing and you need to know about it.

I want you to be committed and resolved to sharing the good news, that's what gospel means, the good news, and it says that's the group that he was a part of in verse 25. Right? He was a part of a team that was all about that. Which by the way, and don't let me get too far off on this. It's the last service, I could go on for hours and I don't want to nor do you want me to. But can I at least say this to extend this sermon longer than it should go? That this is a moral choice, the church that you choose to be a part of. The people who you choose to surround yourself with. If you become a part of an organization that claims Christ, wears the Christian T-shirt, but they're constantly distracted with everything else and there's always an option Satan is providing for the people of God. "Here, how about you get all entangled in this. Debate in this. Write more books about this, have more conferences on this. You know, have blogs that are always talking about this, have all this discussion and debate and frustration about this." When in the reality is we've got a message to share with the lost world. Don't be distracted.

People talk about living on mission or being focused on the goals of Christianity. Make sure you know what those are. It's for us to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. And then to look around and say, there are people who need that. I got to get this message out. I am his ambassador. I'm bringing a message of reconciliation. I've been, Second Corinthians 5, "entrusted with that message." I want people to be reconciled to God. The day



of judgment is coming. You need to be right with God and how good it will be for you to sing with joy as we do to the God who made us.

All the gods of the world are less than our God. All the idols of the world are useless. I need you to be committed to a team. Your small group, your best friends, and the church that you're a part of cannot be distracted with the things of this world and all the latest fads that Christian evangelical churches seem to get all enamored with. The focus is on something that is more important for us to be committed to, resolved to. And the primary thing as it relates to how we interface with our world is the message of Christ and him crucified. You ought to be resolved. That ought to be that the ultimate result.

Matter of fact, I just quoted that verse. Let's turn to it real quick. First Corinthians Chapter 2. And I want to take you to this passage not only because it's one of many passages relating to the resolve of sharing the gospel, in this case Paul coming into Corinth and Macedonia. He shows that it does not mean that he's not afraid or fearful or anxious or trepidatious about the encounters. He knows there are a lot of people in Corinth and in the area, the environs of Corinth, that have expectations that he knows he's not going to meet. He knows he's going to be accused of things just like you know you're going to be accused of things if you speak up about Christ this week, you know, you fear kind of how that's going to go.

First Corinthians Chapter 2, Paul had all of those concerns as well when he came into Corinth. Look at verse 3. "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." Right? Doesn't that make you feel a little bit better, that the guy writing the New Testament has the same kind of butterflies in his stomach when he stands up to talk about Christ? He feels the same way you do. But that was his resolve. Look at verse 1, "When I came to you brothers, I did not come proclaiming the testimony of God with lofty speech and wisdom." Which, by the way, is one of the mistakes we make thinking that we have to have some grand presentation that sounds so erudite and so smart and I'm such a great philosopher. If you got those talents and skills and background, great. But just a forthright proclamation of the truth. That's what he says in verse 2, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Back to the focus of what churches should be all about. We got to love God, we got to know God, we got to proclaim Christ between Sundays. That just has to be our commitment. And in this passage, I just think obviously he talked about other things. Right? You know that. Clearly, I mean, he knew other things in Corinth. The whole book is unfolding all kinds of issues that he addressed. But this is a statement that is showing if I talk about nothing else, it's the top priority that overshadows them all. When I'm interfacing with non-Christians, I want you to know about Christ and him crucified. That just has to be my commitment.

Now, when I came with that commitment, I was there with "weakness and fear and trembling." You know "in my speech and my message, they weren't implausible words of wisdom." Of course, they liked all that. The sophistry of ancient, you know, first-century rhetoric and all that. Fine. People want that. But no, I came with a "demonstration of the Spirit and of power," which he defines, by the way, in First Thessalonians as the fact that it comes with conviction.



This isn't just necessarily a statement of the miraculous signs and wonders that the apostles had, which he does talk about it to the Corinthians, but it's the idea, as he said to the Thessalonians, where people felt the conviction when the truth was shared, just like we're going to see from the Ethiopian when Philip shared the message.

But he says that wasn't about that, about plausible words or some philosophical... It was about the power of God's Spirit in this message "so that your faith," verse 5, "might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." You look back and say, "Yeah, I got the message. It changed my life. The Spirit invaded my life. I'm different now. I'm forgiven. Guilt was removed. The presence of God was established. I was reconciled to God." That comes through people like Paul who are resolved to share it. So you're going to have an opportunity this week to share the gospel and I'm going to say to you before you're done this morning, make sure you show up to all those appointments. Don't turn away. It's got to start with an underlying commitment to say I'm resolved to share this. I'm committed to sharing this. I am all about sharing this. I will share this.

Back to our text. Now, the Spirit, who I think this phrase might even represent here, the message that comes from God. "The angel of the Lord says to Philip, 'Rise and go south toward the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' This is a desert place." Verse 27, "He rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. And he had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah." Again, I just want to talk about the fact that this is a divine appointment which we can only see in the rearview mirror of our week or our month or our year. "Hey, God, put me in touch with this person." Look how that worked out. God had prepped him. Now, I came as the sower with the seed and I was able to bring the message to that person.

And you don't always see that. And again, I just want to emphasize, it's not what Philip wanted to do that afternoon is go to a desert road that goes somewhere where he wasn't going, but God put him there. And as humbling as it may be, I just want you to see the Christian life, at least in part, as God, the chess master, moving pieces around on the chessboard to say, "OK, I need you here. I need you in this conversation. I need you to engage with those people. I need you in this office here because I need you as a light and a mouthpiece for the truth." And you just need to say, "OK, I just need to be willing, like Philip, where I may have other plans for my day, but I'm going to go and be utilized today in this situation to sit in a chariot going south when I'd really like to go north and I'm going to do what you ask me to do. I had plans, but I'm going to let those plans be redirected."

Now, that's a commitment that I know that we have to make. Number one, committed to sharing the gospel. Number two, I need to "Be Ready to Be Redirected." I need to say, "I hold all my plans loosely. The schedules that I've made for this week I plan on doing this. I plan on going to this doctor's office for this appointment. And I should be done by two o'clock and I'll be back in time for this." Well, maybe you won't be back in time for that. Maybe God will engage you in a divine appointment where someone has been prepped and you need to have a two-hour conversation and you won't be home until four. Are you ready to say that's the way



I live my life? "I want to be punctual. I want to be disciplined. I want to go where I say I'm going to go. But if God wants to redirect my schedule today, I'll let him redirect. I'm sensitive and open to that, if God wants to redirect my schedule."

Let's just start with that by going to John 4. John Chapter 4. Speaking of the foundational work that God did in prepping people in Samaria, our last passage, Jesus was in Samaria traveling right through the heart of hostile territory. He stops by a well with his disciples and he is famished from the journey in the middle of the day. He has a conversation, as you might remember, with the woman at the well. Smile at me if you remember that story, right? John Chapter 4. He sends the disciples in across the valley from where the well historically has been discovered to a village called Sychar and off the disciples go to get some lunch. He waits there by the well, has a long conversation that Jesus then relays later and ends up in the gospels of him talking to a Samaritan woman. Which was hard enough for them just to go through Samaria because the Samaritans and the Jews hate each other but he's there having a long conversation, one-on-one with this lady at the well.

Take a look at this passage in John Chapter 4. Just to get some context, look at verse 27. At the end of the whole conversation, which, of course, I guess I should start in verse 26, like the punch line of it all is Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." Right? The question was about the Messiah in verse 25, "I'm the Messiah. I'm the Christ." OK. "Just then the disciples came back," verse 27, "and they marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you seek?' or 'Why are you talking with her?' So the woman..." after some time, we don't know how long that was when they're there kind of being weird about the whole thing, she's like, well, I guess that's my exit. So she goes, OK, "She left her water jar," that means she's coming back, "and she went into the town and said to the people, 'Come, and see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?'" I think she knew he was. That's why she left her jar, wanted them to come back, and they "went out of the town and they were coming to him."

So the disciples have already been into town. They got lunch. They brought it back. During this conversation and probably during the awkward moments of this conversation before the woman leaves, the disciples were saying, "Hey, why don't you eat?" "They were urging saying, 'Rabbi,' teacher 'eat.' But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples said to one another, 'Has anyone brought him something to eat?' Jesus says, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.'"

Well, my schedule said lunch hour, right? My stomach says I'd like to have lunch. But I'm ready to have my schedule redirected here, because I am, as Christ sets the pattern, resolved to share the message of himself, of the Messiah. I'm going to share that message and I'm going to let it redirect my time. Can you just at least say today, I mean, you're setting yourself up for success with the next opportunity and divine appointment you have just to say number one, I'm committed to sharing the gospel. I'm committed to it. I didn't ask you to share it. I'm just saying are you committed to sharing? Are you resolved to sharing it? And then number two, if God wants to redirect my schedule this week, I will redirect my schedule. If God sovereignly sets something up, I will change my schedule. I will make sure that I do whatever



it is God wants me to do with someone regarding the gospel and I'm willing to have my day messed up. Even if I would rather be somewhere else or had somewhere else to go or had something else to do, I will say what ultimately my schedule is to do the will of him who... What's the word? Sent me.

Which, by the way, you can see that with a big word over the top of Philippians 2, the Father sends the Son into the world to accomplish a task. Jesus said that a lot. Right? "The Father has sent me." The Father has sent me. He says in the great high priestly prayer of John 17, he says, "You know what? I'm sending you, just as the Father sent me." That's the prayer at least he says to the Father. Right? "Father, I'm sending them just like you sent me." And then at the end of the book, Chapter 20, he says, "Just as the Father sent me, I'm sending you."

Jesus doesn't ask us to do something he himself didn't do, and that is leaving the comfort of what he would much rather have done, at least theoretically, staying in the comforts of heaven as opposed to being crucified naked on a cross. I mean, that's a better thing for me personally. But he gives that up to be sent to earth to do his job. And then even the situations of it'd be great to have some lunch right now, but instead I'm giving up the comfort of my lunch break so I can have this conversation because my food, my ultimate satisfaction, is to do the will of him who sent me. What he wants me to do is to be resolved to share the gospel and here's a gospel opportunity, I'm going to take it. That's a great picture of you holding even the elements of your day, the schedule on your Google calendar, keeping that in your mind, like, if God wants to interrupt that, I'm ready to have him interrupt that for the sake of the gospel. That's a really, really good thing.

And you know what, guys, verse 35, he says your afternoon is about to get messed up. "Don't you say, 'There are four months, and then comes a harvest?'" Put it off. Coming. We'll get there. "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes," verse 35, this is chapter four of John, "lift up your eyes, and see the fields," they are ready right now, they "are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life." Certainly he was doing that and now the woman is doing that. She's saying to the people in Sychar, "Isn't this the Christ?" I mean, that's an amazingly satisfying thing when you're storing up "gold, silver and precious stones" by taking the opportunity and showing up for the assignments. "So the sower and the reaper may rejoice together."

Now, here come all these people. They got questions. He says, "For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'" Guys, it's time to reap. Put your felaful down, put your sandwich down. We're going to go and we're going to share with these people. "I sent you to reap," right now, I'm sending you to reap for "that what you did not labor." All these people were prepped by me and now they were prepped by the woman and now guess what? Let's get to work. Let's give up our lunch hour and share the gospel. "Others have labored that you may enter into their labor." God has prepared people in your world this week. There are people appointed to eternal life in this city, in this county, in your office building, in your neighborhood. God is prepping them, but you got to get from there, wherever you would be in your recliner, in your office working on whatever and getting you to a place where you're going to have the conversation. Be ready to be redirected.

The redirection might not just be a block on your Google calendar, it could be much bigger than that. And let me take you here real quick, John 21. As long as we're in the neighborhood, John Chapter 21. He may want to redirect something bigger for the sake of your gospel activity, your conversation about Christ. He may change some big macro things in your life. You... I guess we could look at the beginning of this, John 21. John 20: resurrection of Christ, post-resurrection. John 21 verse 3 to get into the heart of it, "Simon Peter said, 'I am going fishing,'" I'm going fishing, and the others were affected by that and "They said, 'We'll go with you,'" at least some of them. "And they went out and they got in the boat and that night they got nothing."

So, Peter wants to go back to fishing, at least that seems like that's what's happening here and Jesus is going to show up and go, "No, no, no, I don't want you doing that. I need you to redirect your life." Now, there's a lot of behind-the-scenes stuff going on here. Peter had fallen on his face in Caiaphas' courtyard, he claimed he would never deny Christ. He denies Christ three times, the rooster crows. All of that, you know the story from the Bible. We're assuming now in the midst of all of that, he's struggling with the fact that "I don't want to... I don't think I should be doing this." Maybe he didn't feel qualified, didn't feel worthy, didn't feel like he had the track record. But here he is out doing something he used to do and God says, "No, I'm going to skunk you on the fishing trip. You're not going to do it and I'm going to show up," as it says in verse 4, "As day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples didn't know it was Jesus." And so Jesus starts yelling commands that were precisely what happened when Peter was initially called and Peter was called to leave his nets and Jesus said, "You've been fishing for fish, but you follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

So I got a job for you, which, by the way, was a big forecast for where he was headed. Peter, you're going to be an evangelist. Peter, you're going to be a preacher. You're going to be shepherding the people. So here are two contrasting metaphors. You can fish for fish on the Sea of Galilee or you can do what I've called you to do. And that is, if you just drop down to the bottom of this, he says, "Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?" Look at verse 15 and following. "Finished breakfast, Jesus said, 'Simon, do you love me more than these?'" Perhaps the "these" is referring to this whole life, the net, the fish, the fishing boats, your old life. Perhaps it's, "Do you love me more than these other guys? You said you did when you fell on your face. Can you step up now and at least prove this?" Peter said, "'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' And he said, 'Feed my lambs.'" That's what shepherds do. You're not a fisherman for fish. You're a shepherd for people's souls, that I need you to see this differently.

"He said a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He said, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' And he said, 'Tend my sheep.'" Which again is a metaphor for his role. You should be an evangelist. You should be sharing the gospel. And this is going to take you away from these nets and this fishing and this lake. "He said a third time," verse 17, "'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said a third time, 'Do you love me?' and he said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' And Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'"

Now, this is an interesting line, verse 18, "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young," even before Christ came and told him to leave his nets, "you used to dress yourself," underline this, "and walk wherever you wanted." OK, now I think there's some double entendre here. We know where he's going next because it's defined. You're going to be tied up and led to execution. You're going to be a martyr. But I mean, that's a great reminder even of what's happening here in the near field, which is you're out fishing. I mean, that was your chosen profession. I got a different profession for you. I got a different place for you to work. I need you to be doing this. Which, by the way, necessitated in Peter's case, leaving the job that you have. And I need you to be willing to be redirected because I want to maximize your usefulness in evangelism so I'm moving you from this to this.

And he says, "When you were young," you did whatever you wanted, "you walked wherever you wanted," you wore whatever you wanted, "but when you're old, you're going to stretch out your hands and another is going to dress you and carry you where you're not wanting to go." So here was a sign of his martyrdom. He said this, I know that from verse 19, to show what kind of death he was to glorify God. Which, by the way, sidebar, that's not a very nice thing to say, right? How's that going to encourage him? Right? Well, remember the background, which I think is the undercurrent of this passage. Peter feels like a failure, that's why he's not willing to step up into the pulpit and preach and lead and be an evangelist. And here Jesus says, "Listen, no, trust me, you're going to be so committed and loyal that you are going to die as a martyr for me. So get out there and do what I asked you to do." Matter of fact, that's a great line. Bottom of verse 19, "And after saying this, he said to him, 'Follow me.'"

So I'm just saying it may be that in your life, God redirects a few lunch appointments this week, but he may also direct something much bigger than that. It may be that you're up right now for some kind of promotion in your job. And if that thing happens, it will be, you know, curtailing the effectiveness you could have had over here and you were starting to see happen over here and you would be someone who would be more effective in the evangelism of your life. And you have to say, you know what? It doesn't make sense maybe to some of my family members, it doesn't make any sense to my colleagues, but I'm going to say no to this because I know God's redirecting me over here, because my resolve to share the gospel is going to be curtailed if I take that job, if I take that promotion.

Maybe some of you are saying, "I need to leave this job altogether. I need to work in this job because this is going to give me more opportunities to engage with people and the gospel," and usually you say, "I'm willing to be redirected." I need to stand here just as a pastor and say to you, aren't you committed to that? If Christ made it clear that you should be in some other line of work, would you be willing to do it? I'm not just talking about being a professional preacher or something. I'm just saying, if God wants you to go somewhere, I mean, that's the ATAPAT attitude we talk about around here. That's our acronym. ATAPAT. Right? "Any Thing, Any Place, Any Time." Well, the topic on the table for the "thing" is the gospel. Any Thing. OK, the gospel. Am I willing to share the gospel? Am I willing to do it any place and at any time? About the place, the environment, is there something God wants to change about that?



By the way, they're on the Sea of Galilee. Where does God want Peter to be? Well, he's going to be the pastor of the first megachurch in Jerusalem. He's going to be preaching on the big open expanse of the Temple Mount. He's going to be leading and coordinating and organizing even how the Hellenistic Jews have their widows fed and served with their daily food. He's going to be a pastor, administrating and preaching and leading. And where? In Jerusalem. Where's that? Four days journey from where he's at. So you need to change your zip code, Peter.

As a matter of fact, when he gets to Jerusalem, remember that's not where his family's from. It's not where his mother-in-law lives. It's not where he's from. It's not his hometown, people don't sound like him there. And even in the beginning of Acts Chapter 1 verse 4, he says to Peter and the gang, "Stay in Jerusalem, don't leave Jerusalem. Not until these things happen. Stay here." Even that I'm thinking, "Oh, I'd just like to go home. I like to have my home-cooked food. I like to have my friends. I'd like to get back to..." No, stay here. Talk about God redirecting. He may even redirect, not only your schedule and redirect some things about your life and your job, he may redirect where you live.

I'm not talking about you just going on the next church plant so you can get a bigger house or more square footage, I'm just talking about you saying if God calls me to a place where it is going to be useful for greater engagement with people for the sake of the gospel, am I willing to say I'm not married to this zip code? God can call you somewhere to make disciples and you just need to say, "I'm willing to do it." And by the way, it works inversely too, When all your close friends go to our next church plant or our last church plant and God's having you stay here because your effectiveness for the gospel is critical in the particular environment that he set you, you need to be willing to say, "I'm willing to stay. I'm willing to go wherever God wants me to go."

We need to be willing to have our lives redirected and Philip is a great example of that. He went to Samaria, God wanted him to go to Samaria. He went to this desert highway. God wanted him to go to the desert highway. God had a plan for him. It's easy to see in retrospect. Hard to see sometimes ahead of time. But our commitment to the gospel and our flexibility in our lives makes us the kind of people who aren't going to miss our divine appointments to be effective in God's hand for the advancement of the gospel.

Back to our text, one more verse, verse 29. "And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over and join this chariot.'" And you can look at verse 30, "So Philip ran to him and heard that he's reading Isaiah," and on the story goes. "And the Spirit said to Philip." I know this: God's commitment to this gospel task, to the advancement of the gospel in our world, is always going to put you in a place where you're engaging with people. I don't think the Monastic Movement or the Desert Fathers or things that may happen great in isolation is anything that we can derive from Scripture as a long-term commitment of your life, that I just want to go in a cabin somewhere, you know, and be Ted Kaczynski and not be around anyone. I don't think that is... well, certainly not Ted Kaczynski, but isolated.



God's commands in moving you on the chessboard is always to engage, just like a chess player, the chess master wants to engage with different people. That's the goal. So let's just start with that and then we can kind of grapple real quickly with "and the Spirit said to Philip," because it'd be great if I knew exactly where he wanted me to be. "And I'm listening. Right? Just your servant hears, right? I would be like, Samuel, I'd just like you to tell me." But let's just start with this, I know wherever the next move is going to be in your life, it's going to be because God wants you to engage with people. And sometimes it's easier not to engage with people. "I don't want to talk to more non-Christians. I don't want to have that. If I can just go to some Christian enclave and join the monastery, that would that be more comfortable."

Number three, I just want you to be obedient. He's here going to someone who does not look like him, not from his background. Philip is called to engage with a person, and it's going to be a stretch for him to sit in a chariot with an Ethiopian eunuch. It's going to be hard. Number three, you've got to "Be Obedient to Engage People." So I know God is going to do things in your life, maybe staying right where you're at, but he wants you to engage with people.

Now, how do I know? OK, so if this can... just for a minute, if you'd give me a little pastoral latitude here to have a little mini-sermon within a sermon, I've got to step out of this text and at least say, how do I deal with that line, "The Spirit said to Philip"? How do I know what the Spirit says about me? I know that these principles you're giving me are biblical. I should be committed to the gospel. I have to be flexible about my plans. And I certainly should be willing to engage with the people of this world to be a light and to be salt and to give them the message of reconciliation. But how do I know the specific of where and when?

Four quick things, number one, letter "A." You need to know the Spirit wrote a book. Let's just start with that. I know it's being redundant here because everything I've said has come from the book, but let's just talk about that. I know that when it comes to what the Spirit wants you to do, I mean, the principles that are derived from the narratives and the didactic sections of Scripture and the parables of the Bible, these are the things that God would want you to do. And the Spirit wrote a book. Second Peter Chapter 1 verse 21. The Spirit moved these writers along, these prophets along, and the result is you've got God's word right there. And if some have humorously said, if you want to hear the audible voice of God, just read the Bible out loud. Right? And that will work. You'll be able to read that it says make disciples of all the nations. You can just turn that around and go, "OK, this applies to me as a disciple of Christ. I need to make disciples of all the nations."

So we can get the basics, at least, which doesn't really help me with the specificity of "go into that chariot," but let's just start with that. I know that the Spirit of God has written a book and in that book he's got information and that information is what the Spirit says to me. OK, that's the start. OK, number two, let's go to Second Corinthians Chapter 16 real quick. You get three more. That was letter "A," here's letter "B." First Corinthians Chapter 16. Let's get a little of the context here. Let's start in verse 5. Did I say First Corinthians or Second Corinthians? I meant first, whatever you said, which I could not understand. Let's call it First Corinthians. I might have said both, did I say both? (audience says "you said both"). I'm not a relativist, there is one Corinthian letter you need to go to, and that's First Corinthians.



First Corinthians Chapter 16. Are you with me? Verse 5, "I will visit you after passing through Macedonia." So he's talking to the Corinthians and here's his plan as the English Standard Version title there, right? Which is not God-breathed. It's just helping us understand the paragraphs. "I'm going to visit you right after I pass through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter there so that you may help me on my journey wherever I go. I do not want to see you now, just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you," now underline this, "if the Lord permits." So he's seeing divine direction here and he's saying, "Well, I'm planning on that." But just like we've said, he's holding his plans loosely.

But why are you not coming now? Here's why, verse 8, "But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost," the Feast of Pentecost, the annual festival, "for," here's why, "a wide door for effective work has opened to me." So put that together with verse 7. The Lord permitting, Lord not permitting. It looks like here he's blaming this on God that there is a wide door for effective work. Now, what's his concern? Well, the ultimate resolve of his life is I want to make sure that I share the gospel. And I know right now here is a circumstance, a door has opened circumstantially, it's an analogy, where I see that God is directing me to stay here.

So, number one, the Holy Spirit speaks through his book. That's the book he wrote, the Bible. Number two, the Holy Spirit speaks through circumstances. The divine direction of God is sometimes the circumstantial opening of doors, which is an analogy to say sometimes the circumstances just stare you in the face and it's like, here is the Spirit of God working in that circumstance. Which, by the way, a lot of modern evangelical American Christians think, "Well, then that means it's going to be just smooth sailing. It's like a red carpet. I know it's the Lord's will because it's convenient and comfortable." OK. Look at the rest of the verse that I didn't read. "And there are many adversaries." There's a wide door for effective work that's open to me, but there are many adversaries.

Now, think about that. It doesn't mean it's easy, but it means circumstantially, it seems like this is going to maximize my effect for the Lord and so I think the circumstance of opportunity is here and I'm going to say it might be God speaking through that circumstance. Therefore, I've got to say, even though it may be hard, I know the door is open and I know the pieces are falling into place, even though there's a lot to step over. The door's open but in the threshold there are a lot of hurdles.

Go with me to Second Corinthians, not too far, Second Corinthians 2. First Corinthians 16, now we're at Second Corinthians Chapter 2. I want to put an addendum on that, because not every open door is the Holy Spirit's green light. Verse 12, Second Corinthians 2:12, "When I came to Troas to preach the gospel," that sounds good, that's in line with his resolve to share the gospel, "Even though," even though, even though, "a door was opened for me in the Lord." OK, well, there's a sense of circumstance. Looks like the Lord is opening that door. "My Spirit was not at rest, I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and I went on to Macedonia." Ah, Paul, so you messed up the whole gospel commitment you had? No, no, no, no. Verse 14, "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal



procession," there was the will of God in that, "and through us he spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere." I didn't go where I thought I was going to go and I didn't stay where I thought I was going to stay. God did not give me rest in my spirit.

Now some of you have a theological background where you don't want to open the door at all to that subjective feeling part. But if you've been through Partners, our discipleship program, you'll see in that chapter on the leading of the Spirit, there's no way to get around these passages that say there is something about God's Spirit testifying with my spirit. There is some connection there. We have to at some point say God is working in the rest or non-rest of my spirit. So I recognize this: never is God's Spirit going to lead me to something that it's in violation of his book that he wrote. The same person who wrote the book, the same person trying to direct me. But I realize this: sometimes he's opening opportunities, circumstantially and say, "Look, it looks like the Lord is opening a door for me, this is the Spirit of God." But then I realize this, number three, if you want to put it this way, letter "C," I know the Spirit sometimes is going to speak and prompt and convict me through the things that I feel, the rest in my spirit. But even with that, I ought to be super careful.

Matter of fact, you're in Second Corinthians, turn to Chapter 7 verse 5. He's talking about this open door and he's talking about the will of God. And we're talking about rest in our spirit. Well look at verse 5, "Even when we were in Macedonia," this is Second Corinthians 7:5, "our bodies had no rest." Some of you think that rest means. "It's like in my whole of life I need to feel so good. I feel so great about that decision to be a part of that church planning team." It doesn't mean that. You may have circumstances in the Holy Spirit led confirmation in your spirit, and of course, it's all in line with what the Holy Spirit wrote in the book. But you could have a lot of unrest in your life, circumstances in your body. "We were afflicted at every turn -- fighting on the outside and," even to speak to a certain part of your life, your inner life, "fears within."

Just like Paul knew it was the will of God and the Holy Spirit had sent him to preach the gospel, First Corinthians Chapter 2, and yet he was there with "fear and trepidation." So you got to be super nuanced in this whole discussion about the fact that just because there's an open door, it's in line with the principles of God's word and now I'm stepping into it and there is a peace that I'm looking at that I know is provided by God's Spirit. There's going to be a lot of things that may punctuate that that may seem opposite of that. It's hard. "But God, who comforts the downcast," verse 6, "comforted us by the coming of Titus," which was the peace of the will of God in all of this, as we learned earlier in Chapter 2.

The Holy Spirit wrote a book. It's going to help you know whether or not you should be in that chariot with that Ethiopian sharing the gospel. He works in circumstances. The guy's asking you questions about the Bible. I think that's probably the Spirit opening the door. You're going to have some peace about the fact I think this is what the Spirit wants me to do. Number four, go back to First Corinthians Chapter 3. Let me give you one last one here. I know we always think about spirit, temple, body. We think about those things in terms of my individual relationship with God and in First Corinthians 6, we talk about that as it relates to sin in our



lives. We ought to know that the Spirit of God dwells in you and your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. But in this passage, it's about the Church at large.

First Corinthians Chapter 3 verse 16, 3:16. "Do you not know that you are God's temple?" Let me read that the way it ought to be read. "Do y'all know that y'all God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in y'all?" OK? I'm not trying to be cute. I'm just trying to show you the difference between a second-person singular pronoun and a second-person plural pronoun. And the point here is God's Spirit dwells in the Church, in the body of Christ, in us. So I know this: that there's something about the synergy, there's something about the sharpening, there's something about the stirring one another on to love and good deeds that are in the will of God, that I'm not just going to sit there and go, "The Bible says, circumstances say, and now my spirit feels like it's at the kind of rest that we're talking about, I'm not going to check in with anyone else."

The Spirit of God works in his Church, in the council of his people. And we see that all throughout the Scripture. There is a need for us to check in with others. Even in our passage, we see that the conversion of the Samaritans was ratified by other people in this case, to put it this way, outranking people in the body of Christ who said, "Yes, this is right." So all I'm telling you is if you want to know whether the Spirit has you involved in that church plant, the changing of your job or not taking of that promotion, and maybe depending on the circumstance, even whether you should take that lunch appointment, it's not only what the Bible says, that's the Spirit of God speaking, on top of that, it's the circumstances. Is there an open door? Number three, do you have that peace within your spirit? That the Spirit is working in this and opening this door and having you step through it. And number four are the people of God confirming that.

And if so, and you know, based on the principle of engaging people with the gospel, if that's the open door, then, man, that's it. Walk through it. Which, by the way, even when I say all that, if you're fighting the will of God in your life, I know you get good at telling other people why it's not the will of God for you. But I'm not going to be there on judgment day when you're standing before God. I mean, I might be there about fifty in the line somewhere else. You don't have to justify it to me ultimately. You have to justify it to God. And here's the thing, we're all going to put our hand over our mouth, as Job did, and go, "I got nothing to say." There are no defense lawyers with you. There are no best friends. There are no small group leaders that can go, "Yeah, well I told him." You're going to have to know that I wasn't supposed to engage this person with the gospel and I'm talking to the one who was trying to engage me or not have me engage with that person. So you got to answer to him.

We quote all the time in preaching the gospel the great lines from the Ephesians Chapter 2 verses 8 and 9 that we're saved by grace, not by works. A lot of people struggle with that. So we quote that passage, saved by grace, through faith. It's not a result of our works. Verse 10 that comes on the heels of that helps us think about the pathway of our Christian life, talking about divine appointments. He says, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which the Father has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." There is a set of assignments that you have this year, this month and even this week, he's prepared



those good works for you. One of the best works of all is sharing the message of reconciliation. And the question is, are you when you have that open door in line with the principles of God's word and in your spirit you know I'm supposed to speak up right now. If you need to text me then text me, "Yep, speak up." And you got all the confirmation you need, I need you to show up for that assignment.

CBI is just underway, our Compass Bible Institute across the street. I get a chance to teach a little bit in that program, which has been great. I remember being a student and having that first day of class, when you get the syllabus for your class and you have what's called affectionately syllabus shock, remember that? I have a little different perspective now that I'm issuing that. I feel bad for those students. Not bad enough to change any of the assignments, but I feel for you, it's a shocking thing to see all these pages I have to read and books I have to read, and papers I have to write and it can be overwhelming. But just like my professor said to me, I want to say to my students, "Hey, listen, just one at a time. Just take it a chapter at a time, a page at a time, an assignment at a time, a paper at a time. Just do it. And do a little bit at a time. Don't be overwhelmed by the syllabus.

I'm grateful that when I look at my future, God just doesn't just hand us an assignment, I don't really need to know way down the road. I don't want to know. I don't want the syllabus-shock of knowing what God has called for me to do. Sometimes, like with Peter in John 21, and he gives them a couple of big assignments that are coming. But I'm just saying great. I just need to know what's next. What I need to read today. What do I need, what paper do I need to write this week? And so I'm grateful that God is going to show you those assignments. And I know this: even if you didn't have any sense of where it's going to be next year, next month, I think it's going to be clear, based on the resolve to share the gospel, the willingness you have to engage in doing what he says, and then that sense that you recognize I'm going to obey when the call is there. That if he asks you to join in someone's conversation about God this week, you're going to go, "Yep, I'm going to do it." And I just want you to pass that test.

As feeble and inelegant as you may think you are in talking about Christ, show up for the divine appointments. Philip did. And we're going to read next week how well that went, the amazing thing that went on in that conversation in that chariot. I'd love to hear about yours as well. It would be great. When many of us come back the next time we get together and around the donut table, say, "Here's what happened in my divine appointment this week." I look forward to hearing what God does in your week.

Let's pray. God help us to be the kinds of people who are faithful to show up for the assignment. To share the gospel, to speak up for you and to resolve that above all else, I want to resolve, if I couldn't speak about anything else, to talk about Christ and him crucified on a cross for us. The forgiveness of our sins, the payment of our sins, the propitiation and satisfaction of the justice of God, so that I don't have to be punished for the sins that I've committed. God, how good it is to know there is a moral lawgiver and judge and he has revealed his will, and though I admit I fall short, my sin has been forgiven, and now as a Christian, I would like to be showing up for every appointment you've scheduled for me. I want to do your will. And God, I just pray that I would have less that's "wood, hay and straw" at the



end of my evaluation and more, that's "gold, silver, precious stones." I pray that for all of us here this morning. Give us the resolve to do your will this week as it relates to our job. The representatives of you in this world.

In Jesus name. Amen.