

Allow me to tell you an awkward moment your pastors have every 10 days or so. Inevitably, there are meetings or events or ministry calls that require that some of your pastors—or all of your pastors—leave the offices to go somewhere together. And all of us have to go. A couple of us have to drive. Someone has to drive.

The problem with your pastors is we never know whose job it is to drive. I'm always real shrewd to leave the office and leave my keys in the office so that I don't have to drive. And there've been many times that we've left out the side door of the offices, and we've walked toward the cars, and we've slowed down and really looked at each other out of the sides of our eyes. And then, you know, we realize as we stopped awkwardly that no one planned to drive.

And I'm the first to always say, "I don't—I don't have my keys." And they're on to me, because often no one has their keys at that point. "I thought it was your turn to drive." "I don't want to drive." "You're supposed to drive." "You always drive." Happens at least every 10 days.

I'm just glad that those guys never have that experience on a weekend. Can you imagine? They show up at church and then say to Pastor Lucas, "Well, I thought you were leading worship"—which, by the way, you don't want, I can assure you of that! Pastor Pete never says to Pastor Mark, "Yeah, no, it was my turn to preach at True North." You know, Pastor Elliot doesn't show up and say, "Well, I don't know if I had to preach at Thrive."

Everyone—when it's important—I mean, we know what our assignments are. And we arrive on campus, and we know what we're called to do. That's the way it ought to be when it is important.

Now, I'm going to preach to you for the next six sessions in our study of Luke, about a very important assignment that we all have. It is an assignment that you don't want to get to the end of your life and stand before your Maker and go, "Well, I didn't know that was my job. I thought someone else was doing it."

You want to stand before God, knowing exactly what you were called to do in your period of time here on this earth as it relates to this topic. That is critical. It's very important.

And I want to start with two verses that I'll refer to throughout, because it builds a paradigm that will allow us, I trust, to accept this responsibility and not try to wiggle out of it. Two passages—just jot them down. We won't take time to turn there. You know them. Certainly you know the

first one, Matthew chapter 4, verse 19. Jot that down—Matthew 4:19. Matthew 4:19 says this—you can even complete it; I'll start it. Jesus said to His disciples there as He was calling them for the first time, "Follow me, and I will..."

Okay, and that's kind of cute, because they were fishing for fish, and they had their nets, and—oh, you know what—stop fishing for fish. Now you're going to fish for people? Well, maybe that was just an opportunity for a really pithy line to come up with? No, of course not. That's something that—now the second reference should make clear—is not just unique to the 12. This is something that's directed toward you. And the passage is 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 18. 2 Corinthians 5:18, and it says this.

Now note this: there's a first-person plural pronoun here that you've got to focus in on. It says that Christ reconciled *us* to Himself. Now, who's included in that *us*? If you think about Paul, writing to the Corinthians—well, the real Christians at the church at Corinth, and then of course himself; he's included in that, and his ministry partners—and, good, I guess everyone that is really saved, whether it's in Corinth or Ephesus or **Philippi**, or Thessalonica. Those are the people that are the *us*. We have been reconciled to Christ. Christ reconciled us to Himself and—here comes—gave *us*, same *us*, the ministry of reconciliation.

So we know this: that's kind of a more specific way to say what Jesus said when He called people to follow Him. Hey, I'm going to catch you in this. You're going to be my follower now. I'm going to make you a fisher of men. I'm going to pull you into the kingdom, and now your job is to pull other people into the kingdom. He's reconciled us to Himself.

So if you sit here this morning and you say, I am reconciled to the living God, I had a problem—it was a sin problem. God took the barrier away. I put my trust in Christ. The finished work of Christ on the cross has made me right with my Maker—then you are reconciled to Christ. And then here comes the conjunction: and He then gave the same *us* the ministry of reconciliation—ministry, the service, the responsibility of reconciliation.

Now, that's what our passage is about. We're gonna spend six weeks in Luke 10 looking at it. It begins with the commission of the 72. This is not the 12. This is the 72. It sounds a lot like the 12, in that they're being told the same thing that the 12 were told regarding what they're called to do. Well, here's the thing: it's the same responsibility that we have. That's important for us to catch.

And because I would like to use words that I think are about to slide off the table in our discussion and into the trash, I'd like to grab them as they slide off the table and salvage them.

That's why I put that chart at the top of your worksheet. You see that chart? This is the lazy man's chart. There's nothing to fill in, right? Just look at it. Follow along now.

You see that Greek word—of course the New Testament is written in Greek, **Koine** Greek, common Greek—and that common Greek word there that I transliterated for you: *euangelion*. That's the first word I want us to note: *euangelion*. **Eu** in Greek—epsilon, upsilon—that's funny to say back to back; **eu** in our language. It means “good.” It's the particle that means “good.” “Good” is—if you combine that with other words like *logos*—the good word (*eulogy*: the “good word” someone says about the deceased)—if you know the eulogy.

Euangelion—*angelos* is the messenger and *angelion* is the message. *Euangelion*—that is transliterated into English “evangel.” And if you say, “Well, I don't even know that made-up word.” No—look it up in your dictionary. Though it has fallen out of use in English, it is an English word, and it simply transliterates the Greek letters into English. It's not translated for us—that's what the third column is for. If we translate the word *euangelion*, then we get what those two compound parts of the word mean: “good message,” the good message or the good news—or as we say from an old English word, the gospel. When you say the word “gospel,” what you're saying is the *euangelion*, the good message. And if you want a passage, I give you one representative passage for all of these—Mark chapter 1, verse 15. We are to repent of our sins and trust in the good news, the good message which is all about Christ, that He finished the work on the cross as the substitute for our sins, and I can be right with God because the sin problem is taken out of the way. I repent, and I trust; I believe in the gospel—the *euangelion*.

The next word there turns the noun into a verb: *euangelizō*. *Euangelizō* is the word that, if it's transliterated, becomes our English word “evangelize,” and another form “evangelism.” There's the noun; the verb “evangelize”—I evangelize—means that, as the third column says, I bring or I deliver or I proclaim or I say or I give the good message to you. That's a good word. That's great—if you've got a good message that can help people, gets them right with the living God. Well then, when you give that, you're evangelizing—like in Acts chapter 14, verse 15. We have four English words translating that one Greek word: “bring you good news.” To bring the good news is the *euangelizō*.

Third one: *euangelistēs*. *Euangelistēs* now is what someone is called if they are bringing the *euangelion* and involved in *euangelizō*, which is—they are evangelizing—they're called the evangelist. And you can see all three of these English words are just transliterated. And that simply means “one who brings the good news,” or, as 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 5 puts it in the last column: they do the work of an evangelist (*euangelistēs*)—an evangelist transliterated, “one who gives the good news.”

Okay? Those words are words that should be salvaged from our English usage today, because these have become—much like the word “preaching”—a bad word. But they’re really all good words about good things that actually are the responsibility of every Christian.

So much so that people that rightly understood the Bible have been labeled “evangelical.” I still use that phrase; perhaps you do too. “What kind of Christian are you?” Well, I’m an evangelical Christian. What does that mean? Well, that means I’m one who believes in the saving power of the *euangelion*—the good message, the good news, the gospel. And I know that it’s our responsibility to be involved in *euangelizō* and evangelization. And that’s why you could say, “If I’m a part of an evangelical church, well, then I am someone who is an evangelist; I am someone who’s giving the message,” because we’re all saddled with that responsibility and given that privilege to share the message of the gospel.

Now, the reason I give you this little chart is to show you that all these words are good words; they all relate to good things. It’s why we call ourselves, if ever the context calls for it at least, we call ourselves the evangelical Christians—because we believe in these things. And we know this is what the Bible teaches, and this is what we’re all about. And I also bring this chart up at the beginning of this series because I’d like to use these words throughout the series, and we all understand exactly what we’re talking about. And you can see that it begins our first point.

Now, before we get to the first point, we certainly need to look at the passage. So let’s look at the passage today. I want you to realize by the little paradigm that I’ve built, that this is not only the call of the 12 to become fishers of men—it is the call of everyone who has been reconciled. And now, as we move to the 72 that have a responsibility, we want to know, “Okay, well I fit in that too. I realize that’s my job description as well.” Now, the context may be different historically, and we’ll note those differences. But the gist of what we’re going to study today—verses 1 and 2—that’s for me. These words are written for me.

All right, verses 1 and 2—let’s read it. If you haven’t already pulled this passage up—Luke chapter 10, verses 1 and 2. “After this”—might want to circle that; draw a line up to verse 51 of chapter 9. After what? Now, we had the intervening three would-be disciples in verses 57 through 62—that’s how we ended chapter 9. But in verses 51 through 56, we had this description of Christ moving from the northern region of Israel and moving His ministry now, as He’s going to finish it, in the southern region of Israel. He moved from Galilee to Judah—or Judea—the capital, Judea down south—Jerusalem. We had all these cities up north; He made His base of operations in **Capernaum**. He did ministry, as He was raised down the street in Nazareth; He had all the cities of the complex out there, out east from the Sea of Galilee—He was doing all this ministry as His base of operations was around the Sea of Galilee. Now He sets His sights to Jerusalem, because He knows that’s where His ministry on earth will end.

And He comes down through the Samaritan territory, which sits like the meat in a hamburger between Galilee and Judah. And He's making His way down. And we saw how He had problems there, and the villagers didn't want Him to come in there, because they knew He was going to Jerusalem. Then we had this little intervening passage about looking at how people responded to Christ's call to follow Him. And we studied that for three weeks.

And now we are realizing, as He's moving down south and He's going to do ministry in the villages and towns around Judea, He's got a job description or responsibility for 72 people. First time we meet them, we don't know anything about them. But here's what we know: God's gonna commission them.

"After this the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them on ahead of Him"—where were they going? South—moving south—to the villages and towns of Judea. "He sent them out two by two." To do what? So that in every town and place where He Himself was about to go, there would be some kind of preparation there.

This is not like when they were setting up the upper room to have the Last Supper. It's not like, "Oh, we need a place; we need to get a hotel room." It has nothing to do with that. This is the kind of preparatory work we saw from John the Baptist when he was sent ahead of the first coming of Christ to prepare people. And that's what these folks were prepared—what they were assigned to do—to prepare people for the coming of the Lord.

Now, there's lots of towns and villages in Judea. So this prompts the next line in verse 2. And He—Christ—said to them, the 72, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore"—and here comes our one imperative verb in the whole passage that we're going to study today—"pray." Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest—He loves that analogy; it's all throughout the Gospels—"to send out laborers into His harvest."

Okay, He sees the cities and towns of the southern part of Israel as the harvest. He's going to go attack the harvest to try and win people to the kingdom. He's sending people ahead of His physical coming through their dusty streets into their town saying, "Here—you get people ready for Me to come. Prep them, because the Messiah is going to walk into their town."

Now, that's a great picture historically of what's going on. And I'm telling you—the paradigm of us being responsible to prepare people for the coming of the Lord certainly parallels this. The difference is: they're preparing for the first coming of Christ; we're preparing people for the second coming of Christ. But really, it's not any different, is it? Really—I mean, He's coming. His feet will touch the Mount of Olives one day. He will come, as I often like to quote, and He

will create in this world a kingdom. And as I put it—as the Bible puts it, in the book of Revelation—“the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord (that’s the Father) and of His Christ (that’s the Messiah), and He—the Messiah—will reign forever and ever.” That’s what’s happening.

My job, much like the 72’s job, is to go ahead of the coming of Christ and get people prepared. Now that assumes that I’m prepared—that my trust is in Christ, that I’ve repented of my sins, that I’m a real reconciled person to the living God—to my Creator. If I am, I’ve got a responsibility to go ahead of Christ’s coming and get people ready.

Because when He comes, He will come like a shepherd and separate sheep from the goats, and the sheep He’ll say, “Enter into the kingdom—this kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Enter into the happiness of My Father and of the kingdom.” It’ll be great. The goats: outer darkness, isolation, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

You want to be on the right side of history. As I wrote to you last week, we need to make sure that we understand what it means in our lives to get people ready for the ultimate point in history, which is the kingdom of the world becoming the kingdom of our Lord. And the only way to be ready for that is to repent of your sins and put your trust in Christ—to be ready to receive the Messiah. Let’s put it that way.

You want a motivation for evangelism? It’s—think very much like this paradigm in Luke chapter 10: let us evangelize—share the good news—because the King is coming. And you understand that, don’t you? Everything in the Old Testament prophets led up to the first coming of Christ, and Christ left, and He said in Acts chapter 1—at least the angels told us this—He’s coming back just the way you saw Him leave. And we were told this by Christ: “Go and be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.”

Welcome to the ends of the earth. You’re as far away from Jerusalem as you can get. We’re on the other side of the planet. We are here, and our assignment in Acts chapter 1 is: before He comes back again—before He touches His feet down, and His toenails come down on this planet, and He becomes the King of all people, and takes those who did not prepare their hearts for Him and excludes them, and then brings into the happiness of the kingdom those who were prepared—we need to know where we’re supposed to be, as witnesses, to testify, to get people ready.

Now, Luke chapter 1 would be a good—speaking of paradigms—a nice little paradigm to look at and say, “Well then, I guess the job for us is much like the job for John the Baptist.” Let’s look at

that passage afresh—Luke chapter 1. Let's see these phrases and start to apply them secondarily to ourselves. We know this is a message from God and His messenger to Zechariah the priest and his wife, Elizabeth. But what John the Baptist was going to do, we're called to do as well. This is what we're called to do: get people ready for the coming of Christ—not His first coming, but His second coming.

Luke chapter 1, verse 14—let's start there, 14 through 17. To Zechariah and Elizabeth, they could look forward to a happy time. Why? Because in their old age, they're gonna have a child. "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth." But that's not just because you had a baby. Really, ultimately, there'll be joy everywhere, including in heaven. Why? Because he's going to be great before the Lord. "He must not drink wine; he must not drink strong drink, and he's even gonna be filled with the Holy Spirit—even from his mother's womb." Very unique exception to God's rule for the Holy Spirit's involvement in people's lives. Wow—amazing.

"And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God." You see that? That's reconciliation—he's going to get them connected with God. And if they're connected with God, then they're gonna be ready for the coming of Christ. As a matter of fact, Christ is the incarnate God Himself. That's why verse 17 reads the way that it does: "and he will go before Him." Now let's take both of those pronouns and make sure you know what they're referring to. Let's read the whole sentence now: verse 16, "He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God," and "he (John the Baptist) will go before Him." Who's "Him"? Well, the reference there is bottom of verse 16—"the Lord their God." So the Lord God is coming. That's why He's sending John the Baptist. Yes, He is. Christ was coming. He was a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare people for the coming of the Lord—just like Isaiah said—and that voice crying out for people to repent and get ready for the coming of Messiah is exactly what's going on here in the text, as the angel says, that's going to be his job—the Lord is coming; he'll get people ready.

Verse 17: "He will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah," which is a powerful voice in the ancient world. He's going to be like that. And what he's going to do—he's going to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.

Now, here's my interpretation. I could look at all of the options on this, but let me just throw it out for you. The "fathers," I think in this context, because we just talked about in verse 16 "children of Israel"—Israel, you do know, is the changed name of the patriarch. We have Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—these people, the patriarchs of Israel, were called the fathers of Israel. And the children of Israel were the people living in Israel at this particular time—and everyone that came after Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. And the fathers weren't real keen on the generation that was there, because they had turned away from the Lord their God. He was going to turn their hearts to the Lord God, in his preaching—calling them to repent. And the fathers now in heaven, who longed to see the day of the Lord, would see the children of Israel

now, and their hearts would be turned to them. Now there would be even reconciliation with the patriarchs in heaven. It'll be great.

“He'll turn the hearts of the fathers to the children”—who had their arms crossed prior to this, right?—looking at the generation, saying, “Listen, they're disobedient.” And he's going to turn those disobedient children—verse 17—“to the wisdom of the just” (the same word that translates “righteous”)—they'll be just; they'll be righteous; they'll be virtuous. He'll turn them to the wisdom of righteousness “to make ready”—now, here's the part you should highlight—“to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

You want to redefine evangelism a little bit in a philosophical, theological way? Here's my job: to prepare for the Lord a people prepared. That's what I'm trying to do. In South County, I want to have people in this county prepared when the Lord comes. They need to get ready. That's what the good news is about. You can be ready—completely, 100% acceptable—to the coming Messiah. You can be. That's what the gospel is all about. I want to evangelize because the King is coming.

Now, before the chapter in Luke 1 ends, we know something about the birth of Messiah that is right in conjunction—at least in the same timeframe—as the commissioning of John the Baptist from birth. We know that the timing is like one—it's a one-two punch: John the Baptist and, within his lifetime, here comes the Messiah.

Now, we're not preparing people for the first coming. We're preparing people for the second coming. Question: when will the second coming take place? Well, I don't know. I have to go to that prophecy conference and find out. If the prophecy conference tells you, don't go to the prophecy conference, okay? Because what does the Bible say about the return of Christ? Luke chapter 12—be good if you're a copious note-taker—verses 35 through 40. Luke chapter 12, verses 35 through 40—looking to the second coming of Christ—says this: you won't know, and you're not supposed to know.

So great—we'll kick our feet up on the table, and we'll relax till He comes back. No. It ends this way: “You must be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

That's a bit of an oxymoron—slow that down for a minute. How can I be ready if He comes at a time I don't expect? The only way to be ready when He comes at an hour I don't expect is to expect Him all the time. You follow that, right? That's the only way I can be ready. If it's at a time He's not going to tell me, and it's a time I wouldn't expect—well, that means all the times I

wouldn't expect, I should expect Him. That means I'm going to live with what we call the doctrine of the imminent return of Christ.

We evangelicals are fueled in our evangelism by the fact that, in preparing people for the coming Lord, we don't know when that's gonna happen. The imminence of it is: it could happen at any time. It could happen today. You don't understand—there's a time clock on this game, if you will, that is ticking down to the return of Christ, when Christ will be dispatched to get His church, and your evangelistic opportunity will come to a complete 100% end—you'll be done. And that clock is ticking away.

The thing about the Christian life is He's put a big sheet over it. I just want you to think for a second—what do the numbers read right now? Just think proverbially. I know there's not a clock, but let's just imagine there is a clock. I mean, there is a time—He is coming back. He promised to come back, and the Father is going to send Him at a particular point in human history. When will that be? Well, you could put some numbers between now and the time it's going to happen. I wonder what the clock reads? Well, it's got a big sheet over it, and the Bible says no one can peek. Even Hal Lindsey can't see under the sheet—you understand that? The prophecy guys don't know. But under that sheet there is a clock.

I wonder what it reads right now—50 years? 150 years? 50 months? 50 days? Is it next Tuesday? I mean, are we down in single digits? What is it? What does it read? Well, we don't know. But that's the thing that you should be motivated by—to say, "I gotta get more people ready." I think—I gotta get people ready because Christ is coming.

If you were dispatched in the 72, with your partner, to go out there to this particular town, and Christ didn't give you a docket as to when He was going to come—was He gonna go to Bethany before He goes to Bethsaida? Is He going to go to Jerusalem before He goes down to Jericho? Well, we would like to know those things. But let's say He didn't give you the docket and the schedule. I would always be—"What, is it today? Is He coming today?" I went with my partner; we don't have cell phones; we can't track people on, you know, Life360 or Find My. So I don't know when He's coming. But I'm gonna get people ready today, because He's gonna come. He's going to walk down that Main Street, and He's going to walk here, and people better be ready to sit at His feet and acknowledge Him as Lord. That should be the thing that motivates all of us.

"After this the Lord appointed..." I just want to kind of make a quick point about the word "appointed." Since I got the mic, I'm going to do it. Here it is: "appointed"—it's only twice in the New Testament (the Greek word). It's a compound word; it's only used twice. I guess the root of it is used more times than that. The root of it is the word "to show," "to demonstrate." The front of that is a preposition, which means "up" or "going toward"—it's this sense of elevation. And if you put those two words together, the thought—graphically—is you're being

placed up here so that everyone can know it. You are being “appointed,” is how it’s translated—people can see that this is your job. It is clear there on the designation of who you are.

Again, I just want to emphasize—there isn’t a single person in this room that is reconciled to Christ that has not been appointed to prepare people for the coming of Messiah. That’s what they were appointed to do. And as we’ll see in verse 2, there weren’t enough people to do it—even in their day. There needs to be more people to do it in our day.

“And sent them...” Even that word, by the way, as long as we’re in the Greek language this morning—okay, I know you lost some sleep last night—but that word that translates “sent” is the word *apostellō*. Does that sound familiar? There’s another transliterated word—*apostellō*. We get the word “apostle” from that. Were they the 12 apostles? No. They’re not the 12 apostles with a capital A. They are the 72 apostles with a small a. Their names are not going to be on the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem. They’re not going to sit on the 12 thrones of Israel, judging those 12 tribes. They are just like us. They’re another group beyond the 12, given to do the same things—to make people ready for the coming of Christ.

I don’t want to make too much of “two by two,” but it is something that makes me sit here and say, “Why two by two?” Couldn’t you reach more? You could get 72 cities at one time if you send them one by one—why cut that in half? Well, if you know the Bible, there’s a lot of practical and kind of “no duh” statements about the advantage of having two people. You know the reference—Ecclesiastes chapter 4, verses 9 through 12. Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 gives us four reasons that two are better than one—two are better than one.

The first reason is because they have a better return for their labor. Teamwork often is better than solo work for how much you can produce. I can’t perfectly apply that in this case, other than to say—I don’t know—there’s something about teaming up in our evangelism that’s helpful. And it’d be better for you, if you have someone you’re sharing the gospel with, to have someone else “in the know.” And that doesn’t mean every discussion about Christ I’ve got to have two Christians—that’s not the point. It’s not a command; it’s just an example. But I do recognize they have a good return for their labor.

And the next thing that text says—if one falls, someone who’s with the person can pick them up, because if you fall by yourself, no one’s there to pick you up. Some people stumble in the task of evangelism, and they haven’t done it for a long time. Well, if you have someone else in the know about your job and appointment to be an evangelist, I guess if you haven’t done it for a while, they’re gonna say, “Hey, what about those people we’ve been praying for that are in your office that aren’t saved—you were going to talk to Christ about?” There’s someone to pick you up.

The third thing on the list in Ecclesiastes 4 is—if there's a need in one person, hopefully the other person can meet that need. If there's some deficiency in the one, there'll be some advantage in the other one. And if there's something lacking, you'll have some partnership in this quest. And then, fourthly, it says this: if one is attacked by himself, he's more vulnerable than if two are attacked—as it puts it, “A man might prevail against one who is alone; two will withstand him.” So there's help even—and I can easily apply that in our evangelism and apologetics. I can get stumped on something regarding why this person says Christianity is stupid. Well, with two people, I've got some help in this.

Here's all I'm saying—without going too far and applying an observation (which is, you know, it's not an imperative; it's an indicative—it's something that just describes a situation), but I do realize that if, in your life, your evangelism is only something that you strategize on your own, that you keep yourself accountable for doing, that when you are hit with a question, you're always on your own trying to figure out the answer—I'm just saying this: you would do better letting someone else in on your evangelistic efforts.

And that's why in our church, just like I hope in any good church, there's not just Sunday morning where we have your chairs side by side, saying, “Well, I checked the box on church this week.” You ought to have something that turns the chairs face to face, where there's some kind of interaction going on. And we often talk about spiritual growth—and that's good. But what about our job and our appointment as evangelists?

We've got a harvester's bag over our shoulder that we got the day we got saved. And there's a farmhouse down there, and it's a place that Christ has prepared for us, and He's going to go away and prepare a place first, and then He's going to call us to be His own—He's going to come back and march us into the kingdom. And all I'm telling you is—with that harvester's bag over your shoulder—if you just sat around in the field fellowshiping, and you didn't realize our job was to make disciples of Christ, to see people caught for Christ, then you may march in with an empty bag over your shoulder. If you just at least partner up and say, “There's someone in my small group, my home fellowship group, my partner's discipleship relationship, that knows who I'm trying to reach for Christ,” there can be some accountability—so you don't march into the palatial dwellings of the farmhouse (if you want to put it that way) with an empty harvester's bag.

Get busy about the work. Let someone know that you're going to be busy about the work. Let someone know who you're praying for. If you're not involved in some kind of interaction in our church—whether it's a home fellowship group, or a women's Bible study small group, or a Thrive small group, or whatever it is—get involved in something in the church where your chairs are face to face, and at some point in that relationship, talk to them about who you're trying to reach for Christ. Two are better than one—they have a better return for their labor.

Verse 2—the 72 appointed and sent on ahead of Christ. And that paradigm fits perfectly with our responsibility. Christ is coming a second time—let’s get people ready. He then says, “Hey guys, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” Now, this is not the first time He said this. He loves the analogy. He’s even said this verbatim before He appointed the 12 apostles. This, though, reminds us that not just to the apostles does He think, “Wow, the job’s bigger than 12.” He says to the 72, as they go to the southern part of Israel—to the cities and villages and towns of Judea—He says, “You know what? The harvest here, even in the south of Israel, is bigger than the 72 of us can handle.” That’s why He ends with verse 2, saying we need to pray for more workers, more laborers.

Let’s just think about that statement. The harvest is plentiful. We need more laborers. There’s not enough laborers. Why? Because of the immensity of the harvest. When you hear those words—if you’re part of the 72—you say, “Well, we need to pray for more workers.” If you’re not a part of the 72—if you’re just along for the ride, saying, “Well, I’m just here to learn from Christ; I mean, I don’t want to be part of the commissioned 72 appointed to tell people about the coming of Christ into their village”—I think you’re going to be feeling the pressure at this point. When Jesus, who sends out 72—and you’re the 73rd person—and He says, “You know what? We just don’t have enough.” Why? Because the harvest is so big.

See, this certainly pulls people into the responsibility of saying, “We gotta be personally involved.” There should be 73, 74—there should be 104; there should be 1,000 people, if they’re listening to Christ in Galilee, who are willing to march down to Judea and get people ready to meet the Messiah. There has to be more people, and everyone should be involved.

And since I’ve already made that case with a simple paradigm of two verses—where the 12 are called, “Come follow Me; I’ll make you fishers of men.” If you’re reconciled, you’ve got the ministry of reconciliation—then I hope you recognize we’ve already made the point. But let’s feel it when we just think about the plentiful breadth of the harvest.

I put it this way—number two: you need to see the need for you to be evangelical, to be evangelistic, to be sharing the gospel. Why? Just think about the mission field. And I don’t want to think about Guatemala, and I don’t want to think about Jordan, and I don’t want to think about Huntington Beach. I want to think about where you live—right here in South Orange County. I want you to think about what a big job this is. And if you’re like a lot of Christians today, you think you’ve hired pastors and it’s their job to reach people for Christ. We need to sit here and realize there’s no way 8, 10, 15 people can do this in this church. Everyone is required because of the breadth and the multitude of people that need to be reached.

Let’s talk about Orange County for a second. There are 3.1 million people estimated in Orange County today—3.1 million people. When I came to Orange County from L.A. County to do

ministry in Orange County, the population in 1988 of Orange County was estimated to be 2.3 million people. Follow this now—27 years ago, in 1988, there were 2.3 million people, and now today as I stand here and preach—I started preaching here in 1988—now there’s 3.1. That’s a 35% growth rate in our county.

Now, think that through. If we as evangelical Christians are just keeping pace with the growth of our county, that means that every single evangelical ministry in Orange County should have grown by 35 percent just to keep up. In other words, if you grew 35%, and you’re doing this—“Go and look at our growth”—you’ve really lost ground, just in terms of population. You’re not even keeping up. In other words, you’ve made no dent in the kingdom of the enemy. You have not advanced the kingdom of Christ. We’ve done nothing.

“Well, you know, that’s what—church—great.” Do you mean that the multiplication of evangelical churches has been 35%? If it has, then we’re just keeping pace. We’re not making any dent in the kingdom of darkness. What we’re doing is simply keeping up. And that means there’s 35% more evangelical churches in Orange County. Do you think that’s the case? Doubt it.

“Well, you know, Santa Ana, Anaheim—all those people up there—it’s crowded. That’s where all the growth is.” I’m glad you brought that up. Let’s think about that for a second. It took 28 years for Orange County to go from 2.3 million to 3.1 million people. That’s a 35% growth rate in 28 years. My question to you is—in South Orange County, how long did it take for the population of South County to grow 35%? Do you think it took more time or less time? Well, obviously, I couldn’t say it’s happened if it was more time—it must be less. How much less time? Well, maybe it did it in—I don’t know—25 years? No. Maybe 20. Maybe 18. Maybe 12. It only took South County 10 years to grow 35% in our population. We’re over a million people now in South County.

Let’s think this through. And of course you’re saying, “Well, of course—everyone wants to live in South County because you live in South County, and it’s such a great place in South County.” All I’m telling you is that in the last 10 years alone, every evangelical church in South Orange County better have grown 35–36% if they’re going to make any intrusion—and that’s just a toe in the kingdom of the enemy. And the Bible says the gates of hell will not prevail against the advancing church. But we’ve barely just put our finger under the gate if we’ve grown 36% in 10 years—do you follow what I’m saying here?

We have a big mission field. And when I start talking about that—if you think your pastor, yakking on the weekend, hopefully seeing some people saved in a service, is going to do the work—my point is: the mission field you live in is so vast, if everyone doesn’t get involved, we’re never going to make a dent in this.

Let me just say this: the harvest field that you live in—which is about a million people within reasonable driving distance of this church—is an under-harvested field. I hope you know that. I hope you realize how under—“Well, it’s California—no one likes God here.” Listen, I hope you recognize that when it comes to our job, God can certainly save people from this particular culture. “Hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom”? God can do it. What’s impossible with men is possible with God. I don’t want to give ourselves a pass on why we can’t reach more people for Christ. I want to say, “Yeah, we’re gonna—we’re gonna do this.”

What percentage should it be? I don’t know, but let’s think it through. Now—this is Mike **Fabarez’** statistics here. And by that I mean I’ve done this research because there’s no company out there doing this research. But I can say this—as a pastor for almost 30 years in Orange County, South Orange County—I think I can estimate this probably pretty well, better than the average guy on the street. When it comes to evangelical Christian churches in South County, with evangelical Christian populations in those churches, I’ve estimated that there’s about 50,000 of them. And that’s being generous and very magnanimous about the whole estimation. 50,000 converted, born-again evangelical Christians—50,000.

Now, if we’ve got a million people—mathematicians—a million people in South Orange County, and I’m estimating there’s about 50,000 evangelical Christians, what’s the percentage there? Come on. Not a trick question—5%. 5%. Now, I know the gate is small and the road is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it. But I don’t know—are we going to bed tonight with 5%, you know, in the harvest of South County, feeling good about that? No.

I’ve made this comparison before, but my brother pastors a church in a farm town in Kansas. His church alone—and there are more than his church in terms of evangelism—his church alone has 5% of the entire population of the town. Do you realize what I’m saying? If we just had the hit on the kingdom of the enemy and made the advances with the kingdom of Christ in this church at a 5% rate, letting some other churches have a little bit of the action beyond that, but we’re saying we’re winning people to Christ at a rate of five—we’d have 50,000 people in this church. We’d certainly need a bigger church at that point. Well, we’re not 50,000 people.

All I’m telling you is—it’s an under-harvested field. There are people here that are lost, and we need to start to look at those people differently. We have an under-harvested field, which means we have, percentage-wise, more non-Christians who are not evangelical Christians—who are not right with their living God, who have not been reconciled and had their hearts turned to the Lord—than we should have here, and we’ve got a job to do. That means we need you enlisted in the work.

I know that when you're in line at the drive-thru at In-N-Out Burger, you're looking at all those cars in front of you and—what a hassle. Why does everyone live here and want hamburgers at the same time? I do. But I want you to start seeing all those cars in front of you—not as an inconvenience to your rumbling tummy. I want you to look at every one of those and say, “You know what? I live in a very, very broad—or, as it says here—plentiful harvest. There's a lot of people.” Instead of looking at the brake lights on I-5 as you're commuting to work saying, “What a hassle—all these people—I wish someone would move to Nebraska,” or whatever you think—I hope you say, “Thank you, God, that the harvest is big here. There's a lot of people to reach for Christ.” And we're barely scratching the surface—if Mike's magnanimous stats are anywhere close to right—at 5% in South County. There's a lot of work to do.

And if you're going to get there, you better have the heart of Christ and not see people as an inconvenience, but start to see them as an opportunity to see Christ glorified in their lives. And let me give you a passage on this. Turn with me to Matthew chapter 9 real quick. I told you that Jesus said the exact same words about the harvest when He spoke to the disciples just before He appointed the 12. I want you to look at the passage—the end of Matthew chapter 9, beginning in verse 35—and see that here's the context for the first time we have recorded that He said this. He might have said this 100 times, for all I know—dozen times—who knows, in His preaching. He loved the analogy.

But here's something that I think is helpful for us to have the heart of Christ. If you want to see the need to be evangelical, you're going to have to be moved in your heart to have eyes for the harvest. And I think it's going to start with the heart of Christ.

To get a little context, let's start in verse 35. “He went through all the cities and villages.” Why don't you slow down, Jesus—you're working too hard. All the towns and villages, right? “And my therapist says you're really not taking enough time for yourself.” Come on—you're overzealous. And even His family thought He was crazy, because—why?—He was skipping meals to do this ministry. Why were You so into this? Why are You teaching in their synagogues day after day, city after city, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing their diseases and afflictions? Why? Verse 36—because when He looked at a crowd, He didn't say, “What a hassle. I wish they'd move somewhere else.” He said—when I see the crowds, I feel something—compassion. I feel compassion for them, because they're harassed and helpless. And the Help, really, we should think about is with a capital “H”—they need Help on the Day of Judgment; they need to be right with the living God; they need the Shepherd that's going to usher them into the kingdom. Well, they are like sheep right now without a shepherd.

“So then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.’” So you're never really going to catch on to the implications of that statement until you start to have the heart of Christ.

I just want you to look at the bustling freeways and the crowded streets and the long lines at Fatburger—you know—oh, they took our Fatburger away, didn't they? Did you know that? What kind of travesty is that? No, seriously—I am mad about that. They gone bankrupt or something? Why would they take Fat—of all places—Fat? I've got plenty of restaurants you can take away from the Town Center—plenty of them. Call me; I'll tell you which ones to take. Not Fatburger. (Edit that out.)

Next time you're in line somewhere thinking, "What about all these people?" I want you to remember this passage. The first time we have recorded Jesus saying, "The harvest is plentiful; the workers are few," is because the crowds worked on His heart, and He said, "Man, they need the gospel. They need the Shepherd. They need help. They need to have their lives right."

Let me say this: some of you think that I'm asking you to go out on street corners with a bell and a sandwich board—"Turn or burn"—and a smirk, preaching on a soapbox. You want to do that? That's fine—just do it with the right truth and the right attitude and a loving heart. Fine. I don't care. But we don't even need to do that. You know we don't need it. Why? Because I'm going to preach to enough people this weekend—just think of our million-person harvest field here in South County—I'm going to reach enough people just here this weekend, that if everyone that we have in our church took all the non-Christians they know by name—people they rub shoulders with every day of the week, people that don't know Christ—if everyone just said, "Well, listen, that's my mission field. I don't have to go talk to people I don't know—I'm going to start talking to people I do know," we would start to reach—what—15,000 people? I mean, you could do the math. I don't know how many non-Christians you know by name that you rub shoulders with—even if it's eight—we're into the 11,000-person range. And some may overlap—I get that. But you realize and you recognize, don't you, that there are many, many people that we already know that need this message.

I just want you to look into that. You don't have to look at the stranger at In-N-Out Burger. Can you just look at the person that you know in the next cubicle and say, "Well, there's someone that needs Christ—let me start having compassion for them"? And if you start working the six degrees of separation theory on this for a minute—think about this: how many people, if you shared Christ with one non-Christian, are going to—even if they don't like what you said—talk to someone else about the things you said? You don't need six degrees of separation to reach the whole world; you'd need a few degrees of separation in South County, and you're probably sharing the gospel with Kevin Bacon before you know it, if you follow me—you know what I'm saying? We just need to say everyone has to get involved. And you don't need a bell or a sandwich board; you don't need to yell at people that are strangers; you don't need to get up on a box and preach. You just need to recognize that when you were saved, you were given the ministry of reconciliation.

And let me say one more thing: I'm not talking about you talking to people that don't want to hear it. I'm not talking about you arguing with people who say, "Shut up and don't jam your

religion down my throat.” Jot the reference down—we have no time to look at it—Acts chapter 13, verses 45 through 49. Acts 13:45–49—it is a picture of Group A and Group B that Paul was dealing with. Group A said, “We’re sick and tired of hearing you preach about Christ.” He said, “Fine, then I’m going to Group B.” Group B said, “Fine, we’d like to hear it.” And then this great theological statement in verse 48: “All who were appointed to eternal life believed.” What’s that mean? That there are people that God picked out who were receptive. I like to put it this way—they were the low-hanging fruit in Paul’s life. And they said, “We’ll listen to what you’re saying.” Some of us are so busy throwing pearls at the face of the snorting swine, going, “Come on, come on—I want to convince you,” when there’s someone right behind that swine, saying, “We wouldn’t mind talking to you about that.” And “all who were appointed to eternal life”—and there are some among the names of non-Christians that you know and rub shoulders with every week.

But we’re never going to know the right fruit until we start talking. We have to.

But you know what—I’m going to start very simply in the series. You’re thinking so far, “I knew this was gonna happen—you’re gonna hammer us, and we’re gonna feel guilty about not sharing the gospel.” We’re gonna make it really easy. I’ll make it easy, because I’m going to take the bottom of verse 2 in Luke chapter 10, and I’m gonna apply it directly the way it is stated. Okay—and what is the statement here? The statement here is: “Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest...” Now highlight it—here it comes—“...that you would be a great evangelist.” Highlight that. Is that what it says? No. You pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers. That’s third-person talk now—other people—into the harvest.

Now, you’ll say, “Well, the assumption is that they’re already in the harvest.” Let’s just forget all that for just a second. Can I just apply this directly in our lives? Let’s put it this way—number three: let us start praying for more evangelists.

Let me be very specific about this, if I can. I want you to look at people somewhere in this room—someone—maybe the person sitting next to you. Maybe look across the room. I know, we’re not an interactive church—this is South County, after all—but let’s just pretend that we’re willing to look around right now a little bit. And just—you see someone, and you say, “I know that guy.” Even if you’re brand new—you’re visiting—“I see that guy; I don’t know that guy—but there’s the guy.” Okay, I got a guy picked out—great. Pick someone out. And just say, “I’m gonna start praying for them to be”—as the text says—“sent out into the harvest.”

Now, usually I preach against the L-shaped “amen” that I talk about—you know what that is—when you make the L shape, you say, “Preach it, Pastor—that guy needs it.” You’ve seen that, right? And I try to say, “No, no—that’s not the way you should...” This time, I’m going to give you permission—“Preach it, man. All that stuff about needing to—hey, well, I want that guy to

hear what you're saying." Perfect. That's what the text is asking us to do—at least here. I want you, right now, to pick one person, at least in this church—let me just limit it to that as your pastor—and say, "Would you start praying for them, that they would be an effective evangelist for Christ?" I just want to start praying for them. Say, "Okay—at least this week, let's apply the sermon today—hear another sermon—I'm gonna apply this one in this sermon. I'm going to start praying for someone that I picked out, I caught eyes with, or I looked at, or I came with, and I'm going to pray that they would articulately, boldly, clearly proclaim the gospel."

Paul uses this strategy to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. He said, "Pray for me, would you?" Now, do you think he could sit there and say, "Why don't you guys share the gospel?" Here's what he did—"Pray for me. Pray for me that I can open my mouth and clearly declare the mystery of the gospel." He said this in Colossians—he said, "Would you pray that a door for the word would be opened for me so that I can state the gospel boldly?" Just pray for me.

All I'm telling you is—there's something that happens when you start praying for other people about something you know we all should be doing. So it's going to work—work, I mean—we're all going to feel that. But I just want us, for one week in the series—we're just getting started—praying for someone else, that they will start seeing people in other places in their lives as people who need to hear the message of the gospel, because they're growing in compassion for them.

Oh, and by the way—this isn't just something to throw in your prayer list. The words that translate "pray earnestly" is one Greek word. It's the strongest Greek word we could pick. It sounds like *dechomai*, which I often talk about in terms of reception—it's not *dechomai*—it's *deomai*. *Deomai*—here, this word is the strongest word in the Greek language to try and express someone begging for something: to beg, to entreat, to implore, to urgently request, to earnestly ask. It says that's what you should be doing—for what? For more laborers in the field.

This is our mission field—a million people strong. We're barely making a dent in it. And if we don't grow by three and a half percent every year, we're not even keeping up with population growth. So we've got a lot of work to do. Let's start this week by praying for someone in this room that they will be effective in sharing the message of the gospel. Not gonna happen without prayer. And it's not just throwing one up quick before lunch today—it's about really learning to care enough to beg God: "God, we need to reach this mission field." Pray that way.

And installment number two will come next week, and we'll keep working through this great passage to learn to reach this mission field for Christ.

So stand with me, and let's dismiss with a word of prayer. By the way, Daniel 12—not to continue the sermon much longer, but to continue it for a second—in Daniel 12, in one of the clearest statements about the bodily resurrection in the Old Testament, it says, you know, there's going to be a resurrection. And I love the way he puts it—Daniel 12:3. It says, “And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above.” And then he defines what he means: “and those who turn many to righteousness”—the people that are out there converting people, people that are out there turning people to God, the people that are out there reconciling people—they are going to “shine like the stars forever.”

I think the people that we hold up as superstars in evangelicalism probably aren't. It's the people that leave sermons like this with a real heart for the lost, that are willing to talk—don't have to be on a street corner on a soapbox—to people they actually know about their need for Christ. And even if you're not willing to make this application directly for you, and you really start praying that someone in this church would be the next person who gets out there and shares the gospel and turns people to righteousness—because you know this—man, those will be the stars of eternity. That's a great, great verse. I love that verse.

Let's pray. God, we're not doing this for our fame or glory—I recognize that—but You do say You're going to reward people who take the task seriously of seeing people won to Christ. We're not out there to win an argument; we're out there to win people. We're not out there to argue and try and get our egos involved. We just want to see people who, right now, are helpless for the day of their own death. They're helpless; they're harassed; they don't have the Shepherd to atone for their sins in their lives. And we want to get that message. It's a good word—the *euangelion*, the gospel, evangel. And now we have a chance, God, to be evangelists—to really earn the name that is supposed to characterize who we are, the evangelical Christians. Let us be such.

Let it start with us praying this week in a way that maybe we haven't prayed before—maybe on our knees or face down in the closet of our house or in the den of our home—and just saying, “God, please let more people at Compass Bible Church”—praying for somebody's name—“let them be thrust into the harvest field. Let them be put into situations where they can share the gospel boldly.” I know that'll spill over. I know it'll make us hungry to share the message. But let us start by praying for others, just as this text says.

God, dismiss us now with a perspective that's more like Yours than when we came in. In Jesus' name, Amen.