

The Great Commission

Sermon #4: Teach to Obey

Matthew 28:18-20

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- January 29, 2023

Good morning, Grace! Thank you for surviving that rain coming in. I hope that worship alone was worth that.

This past year a very significant church of great influence in the largest Protestant denomination in the world had to confess that they had succumbed to a simple thing called “mission drift.” They had kind of lost their way. Mission drift is when a person or a company or a church takes their idea off the details, the specifics, of what God called them to—in the case of a church or a person. And it’s easy to do because it’s so subtle. It’s called “mission drift”—you just drift off and lose your way.

And this church had done it and it was during the COVID lockdown that they were forced to stop. Because the way a lot of people drift from the mission that God called them to is that they just get busy. And when you get busy and you stay busy enough, you just veer a couple of degrees off. And after a few years you’re way off.

During the COVID lockdown they required everyone (for the most part) to stop the busyness. And so, the church leadership—just like some individuals and families and corporations—said, “Is this where we’re supposed to be? Is this what we’re supposed to be doing? How did we get lost and how do we get back?” And that’s what they experienced.

This is from a bit of their confessional: “We have focused too much on reaching out--growing wide—but not on growing deep. Mere outreach is not what Jesus told us to do.”

Matthew 28:18-20

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

And then they quote the passage we’ve been looking at for the last few weeks and continue to look at. It’s in Matthew 28. “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of this age.’”

The quote from the church leadership continues: “We can’t be a church that just counts conversions and baptisms. The command is to make disciples. And not just make disciples, but make disciples that make disciples.”

They drifted away from that and just tried to get as many people in the church as possible.

What’s the purpose of Grace Covenant Church? What the vision that we live by? What’s our prime directive? This is it. Now the words have kind of changed over the years, but the meaning has stayed the same. It’s the lighthouse that we strive to see in the storms of life, because trends come and trends go. This is the beacon that we call our North Star. We say this: that the purpose of Grace is to glorify God by guiding people to become like Christ in all of life.

“To glorify God”: to glorify God you just do what He tells you to do. And when Jesus conquered sin and death He came and said, “All authority has been given to me. Make disciples of all nations.” That’s what He said to do. That’s what we’re going to do as a church.

And today we’re going to look more closely at one of those phrases, those participles that give more meaning or specifics about what it means to make disciples, where it says “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...”—we saw that last week—“teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

So, at Grace the purpose of our church is to be a disciple of Jesus and to make disciples of Jesus.

Definition of a Disciple

So, what is a disciple? That seems like an easy question. We've looked at that. But it means to become like Christ. It means to become who you were meant to be, to go back to the original design of who you would be if you lived back in the Garden of Eden before the fall. And discipleship is the process of becoming like that. It's becoming like Christ.

Look what Jesus did with the men and women who followed Him. He absolutely changed their thinking. They went from primarily—if you look at their early life—thinking only about the physical world that's in front of them, to Jesus teaching them to think about the spiritual world that's around them first, and then the physical world.

He teaches them how to have appropriate emotions and not to be consumed with the problem right before them, but rather, be consumed with the fact that Jesus is in their presence and maybe there's more to whatever that problem might be.

Even in their will, their volition, there were common men and women who were cowardly, and He turned them into courageous people.

In all of that they were becoming the way they were meant to be, the way they were designed to be. They were becoming like Christ.

Now we've added at this church to "become like Christ in all of life." We've added that, and we've done that for three reasons. One is our culture compartmentalizes. We can even compartmentalize our Christianity. We can have a reputation at work as being a godly person who's patient, and then at home---not so much. Or maybe we could have an expression of our Christ-likeness at home where we are tenderhearted and longsuffering; but at work we're just a bully. We can do that. So, we say "all of life"—all expressions of wherever you go.

Another reason we say "all of life"—to become like Christ in all of life—is that we talk about the entire soul. It's intellect, emotion, and will. Sometimes we can just look at the intellect like it's trying to win some Bible Jeopardy thing. And that's not what the intellect means. And emotion means having the appropriate emotional response to circumstances around us. And will—having the courage to obey.

Another reason we say to become like Christ in all of life is that they say there are about seven seasons in a person's life. Each season has its own expressions of living by faith. And as we grow in our understanding of who God is and who we are, and His power and His love, then we have to grow and apply those newfound expressions of faith as we grow in the seasons of life. In other words, in your season at age twenty your life with Christ is different than your season at age fifty. And if you don't do that, you stall. You stagnate. Your faith becomes planned and it's not vital any more. So, in all seasons of life.

A disciple is who Jesus would be if He were you.

--- Dallas Willard

I like what Dallas Willard said about what a disciple is. "A disciple is who Jesus would be if He were you"--wherever you go and whatever season of life you're in.

Listen, the most important task in your life is not what you do; it's who you become. The most important task of your life, your experience, your existence, is not what you do; it's who you become. And Jesus said you need to become like Christ. You need to become like Him in all of your life.

So in summary, here at Grace we are out to help people become like Christ in all of life and help you guide other people to become like Christ in all of life. It's a life skill. It's a holistic expression of who you are.

Think of it this way. Here's an example I think we can grasp. Learn to become a powerful swimmer. Actually, be able to do all the things a powerful swimmer can do. And then train other people to become powerful swimmers and do all those things powerful swimmers do. That's a life skill, but if it's true, it's really an identity. *I am a powerful swimmer*—in many circumstances and situations.

Now, to understand that athletically, we want you to learn how to overcome some kind of addiction and all that means and all the actions required to do that. And then go and help people. Guide them to be overcomers of whatever various addictions they have.

So, you can see it's in a physical way and a soul way. We're doing this as well—body, soul, and spirit. Become like Christ in all of life. It's a different person altogether. That's what it means to be a disciple.

How Does God Make Disciples?

Now when we're looking at the passage today it says "teach them to obey all that Christ has commanded." That's an attribute of a disciple. How does God make disciples? How does the Bible show us ways that Jesus is teaching His disciples how to obey---how to obey all that He's commanded? How does God actually do that? I want to look at that today.

There are three elements. If you look at it, it's pervasive in the Bible, from beginning to end. This is how life change happens in the Bible—three essential elements.

Spirit

The first one is Spirit. And when we say "Spirit" we mean the Holy Spirit.

Real life change is a miracle. When you become a follower of Jesus Christ, when you take and put your faith in Christ's death and resurrection—that it was at the expense of your sin—and then you receive His righteousness; when you inherit the righteousness of Jesus, your Spirit comes alive and your soul is cleansed to the point that now the Holy Spirit can, one, indwell your very soul. The Bible says it is sealed, which means the Spirit will not leave you. And then the Bible also says that the Holy Spirit empowers you. It gives you power to change. I'm talking about the Holy Spirit of God, the third person in the triune Yahweh. He lives in our spirit to work and to change us.

But here's the thing. An attribute of the Spirit of God that you need to learn to fear is that the Spirit is polite. The Spirit of God is allergic to pride. The Spirit will not come in and take over your life. He will ask permission. He's looking for people who are surrendered to His power, His unlimited, ultimate power. But it's tempered by if you want it. He won't grab your steering wheel of life. *You want to drive? That's fine.* He doesn't barge in.

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, Yahweh, has to be asked. You have to surrender to Him. You have to say the words, "I quit. I want to just obey." And the way we can apply that, even today, is just to pray that prayer. Just pray, "I quit. I give up. I don't want to be in charge of my life anymore." It's the last song we're going to sing—just sing it like it's a prayer. "Your will, Your way" ... "Your kingdom come, Your will be done" ... "You reign in my heart." That's where the power of the Holy Spirit is unleashed.

Spirit + Truth

Do you want life change and to become like Christ in all of life? Learn to obey all that Christ has commanded. You need the Spirit and then you're going to need truth.

Truth is the second element here because you have to have truth that's found in the Bible and is applied to everything in our lives. Our values, our habits, our temperament, even, our traditions---everything is scrutinized under the authority of the Bible that tells us what truth is. It defines what is right and real and true. Whatever it says is true. It doesn't matter what we think or feel about it.

The idea is how to apply that into our lives in various ways. A good example of a truth that's pervasive in the New Testament is our identity in Jesus Christ, that something radically changes in who we are when we receive forgiveness. Paul writes this in Romans chapter 8: **“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received, rather, the Spirit of adoption as sons and daughters now. And our spirit cries out, ‘Daddy, Father.’”** We call Yahweh “Daddy”—Abba—Father. And then he continues. **“The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.”**

We're at the same level of inheritance as Jesus Christ because we've been adopted into the family of Father Yahweh God. We get to call Him “Daddy.” And that's a fact. That's true. That's who we are now because we have the righteousness of God in us, the righteousness of Christ.

But most of us apply a lie to that. We look at ourselves as, figuratively, costume jewelry. We think that, sure, we have this shiny veneer on the outside—Jesus. We want to look good for Him and this is what He's doing in our lives—cleaning up our lives. The essence of costume jewelry, if you know, is that it's cheap metal, if it's metal at all. It's fake, it doesn't have real value. And we think we're sinful to the core and just have this pretty exterior. But the Bible teaches that, no, it's an inside-out change. That passage declares that we are co-heirs and fellow heirs with Jesus.

Back to the illustration, it would be like we're tarnished silver. Tarnished silver is ugly on the outside but valuable on the inside; likewise, our absolute essence is the righteousness of Jesus Christ and the ugly stuff isn't even really us. Paul says, “I no longer sin, but it's the sin that dwells in me.” The real Paul, the saved Paul, he's saying, is silver—sterling silver. That's the

real nature of who I am now—fellow heir with Christ. And this sin is just the tarnish working its way out that need to be polished off by the Spirit of God.

That’s an example of a truth in the Bible that we have to come believe. And we have to fight for the truth. It’s not easy to change a series of programming in our minds. We have to think about our thinking. But it’s violent, friends.

2 Corinthians 10:5

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Look at the military and the violent words that are being used here when Paul writes to the Corinthians. He’s telling them to think differently. You’ve got to know what the truth says. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, “We demolish arguments and every pretension that has set itself against the knowledge of God”—truth—“and we take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ.” Even our thoughts are obeying everything Jesus commanded. He says to take every thought captive, grab every thought. It comes into your head, you hear something, you say, *You sit down. I’m taking you captive. You’ve been ruling my life for the last seventeen years. Now sit and answer these things. Answer to this. How do you stand up against the knowledge of God? Is it true? And if not, I will demolish you with the truth of God so that—it’s purposeful—so that every thought comes into submission and into obedience of Christ.*

We have to have truth and have to submit to that truth. But we give power to lies. We live our lives in submission to things that aren’t even true. We have to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. It’s a process. Truth is part of this equation for a purpose. We can’t be giving all this power away to things that aren’t even true.

Now certainly, two major influences in our lives--who we are--are how we are raised and how we are made. But so what? It’s easy to go back and say, *Well, I was raised a certain way to believe certain things.* And that has power. But, good grief, you’re not seventeen. You’re thirty-seven! It’s been twenty years since you left the house. How about you take those lies and take them captive and see how they stand up against the knowledge of God and bring them into

submission to the obedience of Christ. Start working your way to those filters. Spit on the grave of the lies that you've been living under.

And then, how you're made—some people just say, *Well, this is just how I am and you need to learn to live with that.* And Paul and the Bible would say that's not submission to truth. Is that the way you were meant to be?

Acknowledge—look, this could be the greatest challenge in many of our lives, because that programming is deep. Acknowledged. But listen, in some respects, the farther down your experience has been, the greater you have to rise. And God has a great redemption story in your life if you just turn that over to the power of the Holy Spirit with truth. We have truth that comes from the Bible and we have the power of a yielded heart towards the Holy Spirit. Man, that's going to be an epic story in the making. That's a life changed. That's a disciple of Christ who is hopefully guiding other people to become disciples of Christ.

Spirit + Truth + Relationship

The formula for becoming like Christ in the Bible is the Spirit of God that lives inside of us; the truth that is found in the Bible; and then, last, relationship. If you want to live for Christ, if you want to become like Christ in all of life, if you want to learn to obey and enjoy all that Jesus commanded, you're going to need a friend. You're going to need some help. People who have had life change have someone that helped, consistently. And I would even say this, that the nature of a human being is wired, designed by God, to enjoy purposeful relationships. In other words, God made us to have intimacy, to have community, to enjoy one another, and to need one another.

I'm going to try and prove this. I can show you this physically, that our soul needs friendships. One way to show this is to look at studies that have been done—electrical and chemical brain studies where they looked at groups of people who had close connections and people who didn't. They looked at the nature of those brains—the physical—not the mind, but the brain. And they found this: the people who had friendships, deep connected relationships, just thrived in their lives. Here are some attributes: performance in life was enhanced, creativity and problem-solving was multiplied; energy level and immune systems were increased; recovery from sickness and illness times were cut nearly in half—if they had someone to enjoy life with.

Your brain runs on three things: oxygen, glucose, and relationships. But somehow something invisible like love and connection ends up with a physical result where our brains actually grow new wiring that makes everything fire and everything work the way it's supposed to.

--- Dr. Henry Cloud

Dr. Henry Cloud, who specializes in relationships, wrote this about the way we were created: “Your brain runs on three things: oxygen, glucose, and relationships. But somehow something invisible like love and connection ends up with a physical result where our brains actually grow new wiring that makes everything fire and everything work the way it’s supposed to.”

That’s physical proof that we need friendships to make life work.

Now here’s my favorite one—I’ve said it before—no apologies—it’s a great story. They took a monkey, and just to show the power of friendship they got a monkey and stuck him in a cage and they stressed him out. They literally rattled his cage. They put strobe lights in just to throw him off and then had crazy noise—really loud heavy metal music—I don’t know. The point was to try and traumatize the little monkey in that cage, to try and scare him as much as they could. And then they took brain chemistry levels, looking at the hormone levels within the brain and also looking at active MRIs and the electrical work going on. And they found out this brain was shifting to different emphases in different parts of the brain. It went to fight or flight. And in a stress condition, fight or flight means to turn down or turn off other parts of your body, and the increase of certain hormones that cause different things to happen. And that’s why people who live in long-term stress end up getting pretty sick, because those other parts of your body or other parts of your brain are neglected.

The point is that they could prove that the stress level this little monkey was experiencing was showing up in electricity and in brain chemistry. That was part one.

Part two—let’s see what happens if we do the same thing but add this other element. It wasn’t medication; it was his best friend monkey buddy from the big cage. They put both of them in the cage and they literally rattled the cage and they put on the strobe lights and they

turned up the acid music and all that kind of stuff. Then they're looking at brain chemical levels and they're looking where the synapses are firing, and guess what? Stress levels in monkey one dropped in half. Same monkey, same situation, half the stress level because he had a buddy. He had a monkey in there with him.

Misery does love company. I think misery needs company. And if you want to become like Christ in all of life, you're going to need a monkey. That's science. Powerful, purposeful relationships—there is power in purposeful relationships.

Even in the book *Atomic Habits* (I love the book—you should read it. It's just about how to do life change with simple habits that you form and how to do that.) But the author said recently in an interview, “I wish I would have written so much more on the power of purposeful relationships. Purposeful relationships is the key to change.”

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:¹⁰ If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?

¹² Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Solomon, the wisest man in the Old Testament, said it like this: “Two are better than one, because they have a good return on their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls”—he's in that cage all by himself—“and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one”—little monkey—“keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

After Solomon said that, Socrates said something similar, and Aristotle, when he wrote a book on ethics for his son, said you'd better make good friends.

And history continues: Jesus taught on friendship and the importance of that. And Paul wrote that bad friends corrupt good morals. Paul—Saint Paul—known for his heroism—afraid of nothing—is on a mission from God. And his mission from God is brought to a stop, a halt, because he was lonely. Paul was called to a certain place, but he had an affectionate and purposeful relationship with his young friend Timothy, and he'd been without Timothy for too long, and he just said, *I can't go. I need to wait for Timothy.* And when he didn't show: *I'm going to go find him.* Paul reroutes himself based on his great relationship with his young friend.

Here at Grace Covenant Church it is our hope—and we structure a lot of things around that hope—that if you're married, that your mate is the most purposeful and intimate relationship you have. But it doesn't end there. It's our ambition that each and every person that calls Grace their home would find one or two people that would have a purpose in their life, and that they might help each other to become like Christ in all of life—a really great friendship.

God's formula to make us like Jesus Christ and to teach us to obey, to help us learn how to obey as Jesus commanded, is Spirit + Truth + Relationship. That's how God does it.

Here at Grace Covenant Church, we are about making disciples and helping disciples make disciples. We're out to glorify God by obeying Him, by helping and guiding people to become like Christ in all of life.

Application

What is your plan to become like Christ? How are you going to do what He wants you to do? I'm just saying, here at Grace—a couple of weeks ago I told you how we did things. This week I'm telling you why, because we combine those two things. Here at Grace we have four different ministry venues gathering options for each and every person to enjoy. But each one of those venues, each one of those opportunities—guess what? We intentionally use the formula that's found in the Bible from God: Spirit + Truth + Relationship.

I don't know if you have a plan, but we have a plan. I don't know if you have a strategy—God has a strategy. And we here at Grace do those two things together. Now there's a weighted average for each one, but let me just review. Our “big church” is Spirit + Truth + Relationship. The Spirit happens—we're all singing together in community with one another. Truth is being told up here. We teach through the Bible in a way that's application-oriented. And again, the weighted average—relationships—it's hard in this venue. But that's why we

encourage you and each person here to look at your seating arrangement. Everyone around you is brought there by God, that you would pray for people to come sit next to you, that you would pray for people when you come to church. When there are just three guys down on the left, I'm just going to pray that for that guy right now. I'm not going to ask, I'm just going to do it.

Look for opportunities to meet and greet one another and maybe be part of guiding people to become like Christ. Bring them up to the front of our greeting center and introduce them to one of the pastors or leaders in our church. Even in "big church" here, in Spirit + Truth + Relationships.

We're going to have holy communion in just a few minutes. It is a spiritual event energized by the Spirit of God. We are instructed by Jesus to do it and we're going to obey. But it's an ordinance that brings us supernaturally closer together as brothers and sisters in Christ. I'm not even sure I understand it. But we're going to do that. And we enjoy that.

Why don't you come to church every week from now until Easter and experience Spirit + Truth + Relationships?

Another of our gathering times is our communities or our courses. This is magic. This is relationship-heavy in many respects, because these life stages are like monkeys in the same cage. We're all going through life in the same way, in the same experience in a lot of ways, experiencing the same stresses. So, we have relationship connection there, and we bring in truth so that we could apply the Bible to that season of life. And the Holy Spirit breaks out in those classes many times when people just open up and are vulnerable or their table, and they just say, *Hey, here's life for me*. People gather round and pray for them. Maybe you could experience that if you came to our community. Because we try to bring all three elements into each one of those.

Our small groups that break out throughout the week and are in living rooms all around—yeah, that's relationship-heavy. That seems easy enough to apply. And the Spirit invades those, because you can only learn so much sitting in rows. But boy, the magic happens when you sit in a circle. And the magic—that's the Spirit of God, inspiring some people in that group to bring truth. *Now that I really know who you are, I can say things like, "You're believing a lie. You should take that thought captive. Quit quoting your mother and start quoting Jesus. Bring that into your life. Be transformed by this truth. I'm going to help you. I'll be that monkey. Let's go.* That's what happens in small groups—Spirit + Truth + Relationships.

Even in service here at Grace, serving in various ways, a lot of times people get connected in relationships and that leads to truth being told and the Spirit being involved when you serve other people—He likes that.

And let's just review from a few weeks ago—all of these cogs working together purposefully with the core curriculum and with this expectation of what God has planned to make life change—Spirit and truth and relationships—look how it all works together.

Do you have a plan? We have a plan. Do you have a strategy? God has a strategy. We work the strategy into our plan.

This revolutionized my life. Years ago, I was in a particularly difficult, critical season of life in my late 30s and early 40s—oh, the grinding years. It just seemed like there were little kids all around the house, career, home—no matter what you're doing you're not doing a lot of things. And there's just this perpetual fever of guilt, just simmering guilt that you live with. But it's compounding—every day, wherever you go, whatever you do, you're not doing things you're supposed to do. It just keeps getting worse. And in that season of life I used to meet with four other men on Sunday morning. And we were just serving the church by doing a college and a graduate school ministry. And we'd meet at 8 o'clock in the morning because it was the only time we could get together, before church even started. We were here from 8:00 to 9:00 to get ready, and it also allowed us not to have to get the kids ready for church, so ... *[laughs]*. (Anyway, the guys love that part.)

The point is that we're all in service together and we're trying to be disciples and become like Christ in all of life while we're guiding other people to become like Christ in all of life. And in the context of that service, we're in spiritual relationships. The Spirit of God is working in our lives and we're adding truth to our relationships with each other and enjoying connecting with each other. One of the big issues in that season of life is guilt of things not getting done. We all had projects at home. We added this barn-raising thing once a quarter. Once a quarter you went to somebody's house. They had all the equipment and all the materials ready. And we would come and do whatever.

I'm telling you this because I was reminded of it just this week. We floored one guy's house. Another guy's house we cleaned top to bottom so they could show it and sell it. And my house—I wanted a tool shed built. I was looking at that tool shed just this week, and I looked at it and thought, Look at that. In that entire little bitty simple shed to hold a mower and a couple of

ladders there is not one thing on there that's level or plumb or square. It's like an impressionistic toolshed.

And I was thinking, *I've got to redo this and do it right.* I'm not even sure how the water even gets off the roof of this thing. And then I thought, *I'm leaving it there, because I remember we spent all day on this.* And that's how guys connect, honestly—shoulder to shoulder, making stuff. And it just reminded me of the affection we had for one another during the grinding years, that whole season, when we just loved hanging out and being purposeful in our relationship as we brought truth into each other's lives and we watched the Spirit of God change us from selfish little victims having pity parties to men who rose up and put their shoulder back and did what was required of them. It was a great season. I couldn't have done it without serving.

I asked you a couple of weeks ago, and I'll ask you again: Where are you going to be in five years? And the importance in life is not the task of what you do; the important task of life is who you become. Where are you going to be in five years? And a better question is, Who are you going to be in five years? Because I'll tell you this. You won't be where you are now. You'll be more like Jesus Christ or you won't even look like Him.

Do you have a plan? Because we have a plan. Do you have a strategy? God has a strategy. We've used God's strategy and our plan. We'd love it if you would join us. And I'm asking you, like I did a couple of weeks ago, How about you do something extra? Why don't you make a commitment to take a next step to yield to the Spirit of God, to start taking thoughts captive, every thought captive? To commit to a good, deep friendship? Pray that God would bring you a great friend. And you can express that ambition by making a commitment to come to “big church” every week from now until Easter. Join one of our connecting communities. Get involved in a small group. Serve here at Grace Covenant Church. Figure out a way to become like Christ in all of life, to be who you were meant to be, how God designed you, who you would be if Jesus were you.

What are you going to do? Choose. Make a choice today. What are you going to add or subtract to get on board with God's plan for your life?

Let's just pray through the outline, to become like Christ in all life.

In the context of God's supernatural Spirit that lives with in the soul, the spirit, of every believer, the third person of the triune Yahweh, I say to you, “I quit. You change me. You take

control of my life. Your will, your way, you do whatever you want. You come, you move, you reign. Your kingdom needs to invade my heart. I surrender. I'm done."

In the context of truth, Lord, I desire that Your Spirit would help open my eyes and think about my thinking, that I'd take every thought captive. I'd make it surrender. I'd demolish the lies. I'd make my thoughts obedient to Christ. I want truth to reign in my mind.

Spirit, I'd ask that You would help me inventory my friendships and help me understand who are friends for fun—that's good—and friends for purpose—awesome. But I need friends for purpose, for my soul. And I know maybe between now and when that friend shows up, there's a desert of loneliness, and I will cross that desert. I want to be a friend. I want to be someone's monkey. I need a monkey. Dear God, help me with this.

Lord, I'd ask that You would help each and every one of us become like Christ in all of life as we guide other people to become like Christ in all of their lives, and as a church, that we're a church known for making disciples, because You said so; that we would enjoy obeying all the Christ commanded.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

In the context of community and Spirit and truth, my friend George is going to lead us in communion.