

## Why Do We Exist?

### **The great calling: God is Creator, Redeemer, and Judge**

We sometimes ponder the three most fundamental questions of life:

1. Who am I?
2. Where did I come from?
3. What is my destiny?

Which question is most important? In my humble opinion, the key question is the second one: *Where did I come from?* Based on that answer, you will know who you are and what your destiny is all about.

God has chosen us to be a royal priesthood—that is our mandate. “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). God has not chosen us to become kings nor prophets. I know some of us would like to be a king or a prophet, but God has chosen us as a priesthood/servants. By definition, a priest does two things: *serves God* and *serves God’s people*.

Therefore, I personally feel the fundamental question is not *Who am I?* but *To whom do I belong?*—because that defines *who we are* in this world. We belong to God, and we were created, saved, called, commissioned, and commanded to serve—serve God, and serve His people.

Sometimes as Christians, we have a great understanding of the Word of God; we have lots of theology—head knowledge and head faith. But the head is not connected to the heart, which should have a passion for God’s mission and a passion to serve, and our hearts are not connected

to our hands—to demonstrate our commitment and love for God and His people. This is why non-Christians say to Christians, “Christians don’t live in reality.” We just blow hot air; we talk about the love of God, but in reality, that love doesn’t exist. And that’s why we need to ponder our values and principles. Jesus says that “as the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21, NRSV). That’s why our mandate is to go where people are and make a difference.

In fact, during the first century in the book of Acts, you see this great movement begin and evolve. People from Hellenistic backgrounds, Samaritans, Romans, and Gentiles come together and start a re-venant movement: Christendom.

The Pharisees and Sadducees begin to ridicule them by saying they are dangerous people, that they are a contagious disease. Christians are about to turn the world upside down. “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too” (Acts 17:6, NKJV). The Pharisees misinterpreted God’s mission, but they called this movement perfectly: Christians are contagious and we turn the world upside down for the kingdom of God, on this earth, as it is in heaven. That’s why we exist.

But sometimes we come to church week after week and systematically and mechanically participate in a religious ritual. We become religious practitioners instead of living our lives as disciples. We pray every day for the kingdom of God to be a reality on earth, as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). But is that true?

That’s why I believe God has called us to carry out the mission of turning the world upside down. God has called us to proclaim the three angels’ messages, that beautiful everlasting good news: God is the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Judge. Ellen White writes, “The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary.”<sup>1</sup>

The cross of Calvary is our focus; it’s where we see not only the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but how He lived His life. Yes, the death and resurrection of Jesus is one of the core values of our belief, but we must see how He lived on *from* the cross of Calvary. Instead, we have developed a displacement culture and understanding between the kingdom of God (kingdom of grace) and the kingdom of heaven (kingdom of glory). We say, “This is not my world; we are going home (heaven),” but while we sing and talk about it on earth, we only care for

two things: maximizing our pleasure and minimizing our pain. “Who cares about people dying from hunger, the sick, and the imprisoned, as long as my life is satisfying and I’m content? That’s all I care about.” And so we say, “This is not my world; we are just passing through.” Perhaps this is why non-Christians say Christians are hypocrites. Because we are not being real.

We will be in the kingdom of heaven through the sacrifice of Christ, but we have a responsibility and duty in this kingdom of God *today*. We are living in the kingdom of grace on earth *today*, and we must be faithful to our duty and responsibility in this world *today*, as we practice for living in the kingdom of heaven tomorrow. Our focus should not be the kingdom of heaven alone, or the kingdom of glory, but being faithful in the kingdom of God by fulfilling our duty and responsibilities.

Christianity is a journey with God. Unfortunately, God’s people don’t always understand the journey, and that’s what was happening in Luke 17:20, 21. The Pharisees came to Jesus and asked *when* the kingdom of God was coming. But Jesus implies that the focus is not *when*, but *where* the kingdom is . . . today: “Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, “Look, here it is!” or, “There it is!” For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst’ ” (Luke 17:20, 21, NASB). The New Century Version of the Bible says, “God’s kingdom is within you” (v. 21, NCV). Jesus was talking about Himself and also us, the disciples of God. Jesus is the kingdom of God, and the kingdom is not here or there; it’s within us. The focus is not *when* the kingdom of God will occur, but *where* the kingdom of God is today. As a result of our faithful presence individually and collectively as a church, have we made a difference in our community as a part of the kingdom of God on earth?

After forty days in the wilderness, Jesus went into the synagogue and read:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:18–21)

Basically, He said all the things you have heard right now are done—finished.

And what was the result of hearing what Jesus said? “All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff” (vv. 28, 29). The Greek for *furious* implies mad enough to kill. After He read the scripture and said it “is fulfilled,” people got upset. They took Him and intended to throw Him off a cliff. They decided to kill the Messiah.

What went wrong on this Sabbath? He was in church reading the Bible. Why would they kill Jesus? They had developed their own theology of hope. It was their own eschatology that made them decide to kill the Messiah.

Isaiah 61 is a Messianic mission statement and a sacred scripture. Traditionally, those with prestige, status, and high standing would read chapter 61. Jesus was a son of a carpenter, He wasn't even educated in a seminary and had not obtained any credentials behind His name, and He was reading this sacred scripture. Then, while reading Isaiah 61, He said “recovery of sight for the blind,” which is not in Isaiah 61. He was adding to the scripture—this was blasphemous. He was a nobody, had no authority, dared to read Isaiah 61, and He was adding to the scripture. We know Jesus is the author of the entire Bible and He has the right to do it, but to that audience, He had no right.

Then He did the unthinkable once again; He didn't even bother reading what they considered the most important part of Isaiah: “and the day of vengeance of our God” (Isaiah 61:2). He ended it at “to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” Most Jews, especially the Pharisees, didn't care about preaching the good news to the poor, binding up the brokenhearted, freedom for the captives, or providing release for people from darkness—no, they only focused on the day of God's vengeance.

They thought, *When the Messiah comes, the Romans will be out, the Gentiles will be out, and the Samaritans will be out. We will restore the nation of Israel once again.* But Jesus didn't even bother to read that. He read “proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” This is known as the year of jubilee. “Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout

the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan” (Leviticus 25:10). Every fifty years the land was to be returned to the rightful owner. All debt was to be cleared. If you were a slave, you were freed from your slavery. This was a social justice system, a personal justice system, a reset button that God had installed every fifty years for humanity’s benefit. But during the time between Malachi and John the Baptist—four hundred years—they did not practice the year of jubilee. They replaced God’s law with their own inclinations; instead of observing God’s will, they developed their own ways of keeping the Sabbath holy.

So during the four hundred years, they developed their own theology of hope, if I might say eschatology, by saying that when the Messiah came, the year of jubilee would be “the sign” of the time. So when Jesus said, “Today this scripture is fulfilled,” they looked around at one another and said, “I’m still a slave.” “I’m still in debt; I still owe a lot of money.” “What do you mean give my land back to the rightful landowner? I worked hard for this land. I’m not going to give it up.”

They labeled Him a false prophet, not the real Messiah. They decided to kill Jesus right there. Because of their own theology of hope, their own end-time understanding, they missed the whole point of the Messianic missional statement, which was *The proclamation of the good news of salvation, compassion for the sick and the sorrowful, and a majestic commitment to justice.*

Today we have the same tendency. We focus on *when* and we miss *where* the kingdom of God is today. We spend more time trying to figure out how close we are to the second coming of Christ than focusing on experiencing the kingdom of God in our lives *right now!* Because of that focus, we are not teaching and practicing the kingdom values and principles; instead we focus on rules and regulations.

For instance, we do not spend money on the Sabbath. Why? Is it because we have spent on the last six days? If that is your rationale, then why drive on the Sabbath? You should walk instead of driving. Instead of eating on the Sabbath, we should be fasting and praying. Perhaps we should stay home and play dead or have meditation with “Saint Mattress.” Here is my understanding: we do not spend money on the Sabbath because of jubilee—kingdom values and principles, the social justice system, which God installed in humanity. When rich and poor do not spend money on the Sabbath, it shows that we are all equal—created equal by God, equal in the eyes of our God and in the eyes of

our society. It demonstrates social equality, personal equity, and liberation, a weekly reminder of the kingdom values and principles that we must teach and practice. Through Christian social and personal justice, we must be engaged and involved in transformative social action, civic engagement for equality, equity, liberation, and civic responsibility.

Based on that understanding, we must seek the second coming of Christ *from* the cross of Calvary. It will change our perspectives regard-

---

*“Discover Grace.* Our hope is that when people discover grace—Christ and God’s gift of grace through the cross—that they will have an eternity change. *Grow in Grace.* We also hope that we can help them grow in understanding that grace. As a result of knowing Christ, we want them to have a life change. *Live Gracefully.* We also want them to get engaged in living out grace—to find ways to serve and allow grace to show up in how they live. We want to help them change their part of the world.”

—Rick Rusaw

---

ing the second coming of Christ. We’re not working toward victory, but working *from* the victory. We’re not working toward salvation, but working *from* salvation. That’s why salvation is not something to obtain, but to retain. This is why it has been said, “Salvation is Jesus Christ—period, and plus nothing!”

M. Craig Barnes says, “We killed Jesus, not because he claimed to be the Messiah but because

he became like us. That is a blasphemy against our greatest hopes for what a messiah will do. We don’t want a savior who descends into our humanity. We want a savior who will rescue us from all the judgments we have faced.”<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps we have similar challenges understanding the Messiah’s missional heart. We keep forgetting the cross of Calvary is the first and foremost reason for our existence, and therefore we’re not fulfilling our responsibility in this world. Through the cross of Calvary we see and hear the good news—the three angels’ messages, which talk about God who is the Creator of the entire universe and mankind, including the Sabbath day; the God who delivered us from our bondage as the Redeemer; the God who delivered us from the darkness of Babylon into His marvelous light; the God who is the Judge full of amazing grace and mercy. In fact, our focus should not be limited to “How will I be judged?” but “*Who* is the judge and *what is my relationship* with the judge?” We belong to God, who is the Creator, Redeemer, and Judge.

We are His. That is why the three angels' messages are good news, the everlasting gospel. We must be liberated from the fear of judgment and discover the graceful and merciful Judge, and live accordingly.

Pastor Rick Rusaw from the LifeBridge Christian Church explains the importance of grace in a meaningful and relevant way:

*Discover Grace.* Our hope is that when people discover grace—Christ and God's gift of grace through the cross—that they will have an eternity change. *Grow in Grace.* We also hope that we can help them grow in understanding that grace. As a result of knowing Christ, we want them to have a life change. *Live Gracefully.* We also want them to get engaged in living out grace—to find ways to serve and allow grace to show up in how they live. We want to help them change their part of the world.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Great Commission: evangelist and disciple**

Isaiah 61 is the Messianic job description, and Isaiah 58 is *our* job description as Christians. But we often focus on verses 13 and 14 in chapter 58 and ignore the rest of our job description. When you have a job, you are obligated to fulfill your entire job description—it's mandatory that you fulfill all aspects of your job, not just the parts that you like, or you get fired. And the entire chapter of Isaiah 58 is our job description.

In verses 1–5, God's people are criticized for making God's work about themselves. In verses 6–11, God defines true fasting, which was misunderstood. Perhaps we are supposedly fasting in remembrance of people who do not have food to eat. For now, let's focus on Isaiah 58:12:

Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins  
and will raise up the age-old foundations;  
you will be called *Repairer* of Broken Walls,  
*Restorer* of Streets with Dwellings (emphasis added).

God has chosen us to become repairers and restorers. When you look at the Hebrew word for repair (*gadar*), it implies we are here to reconnect the broken relationship between God and His people. And God has said we are restorers (*schuwb*), which implies to turn back, to change societal values with His kingdom values. We are change agents—difference-makers.

“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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19, 20)—this is called the Great Commission. When we baptize people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are we being restorers or repairers? We are being repairers. We are reconnecting people to God, reconciling their broken relationship. We are not just getting people wet in the institutional initiation; we are baptizing them into this beautiful relationship with God. That’s why we proclaim the three angels’ messages.

Then when we “go and make disciples of all nations, . . . teaching them,” we are being restorers. We are enlightening, educating, developing, and equipping change agents—difference-makers. We are connecting people with God and His people.

As repairers and restorers, we have challenges. The first challenge is to *go*—go where God’s people are. But we often hide inside the walls of the church, and we say to the rest of the world, “Come and see.” Come and see *what*? God says, “Go to where My people are.” We have developed a passive attitude regarding community outreach, and we do not proactively engage with the community, which exists outside the walls of the church.

The second challenge is to “make disciples”—enlighten, educate, develop, and equip. But we love to train people to become robotic, to work within the church industry. We operate our church as a Henry Ford automobile assembly line. Because we have adopted an industrial model of organizational behavior, we become religiously institutionalized, a corporate churchianity. For example, we love to use such words as *training*. But we shouldn’t train people in the church—we should *enlighten people*. *We should develop and educate people in the church for discipleship*. My opposition is not so much with the word *training*, but with the attitude behind the word. Church is not an institution, which requires people to be trained to learn a specific skill, such as the military or the medical field or assembly industries. Church is about having a journey with Christ and His followers, through the lifelong process of mentoring and coaching individuals to become more mature followers of Christ, and becoming disciples who follow His instructions with greater conceptual and analytical skills. That’s why the early Jewish society expected Jesus to invest at least three years with His disciples. If you spent any less time with your rabbi, then society didn’t recognize you as his disciple. How can we develop disciples, these change agents,

by electing new local church officials every year or two? This is not effective.

Through the transitional leadership change, we tend to focus on developing technical skills to do the job. However, discipleship requires transformational leadership development, focusing not only on technical skills, but also on human relationship and analytical skills to lead the church and be a difference-maker in our communities. We must stop training people to practice only technical aspects of ministry and begin to engage in developing disciples to learn conceptual and analytical skills, and competencies. (I will discuss this topic in more detail in chapter 6.)

The third challenge is “all nations.” When Jesus cleansed the temple and cast out the merchants, He reclaimed the temple as “a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17). The Sadducees decided to kill Jesus right then and there for two reasons: finances and theology. When Jesus cast out the merchants, the Sadducees lost their financial endowment. And they didn’t like Jesus calling the temple a house of prayer for all nations. To the Sadducees, the temple was only for the Jews, the Israelites, or Sabbarians. In their minds, there was no room for Samaritans, Romans, or foreigners in the kingdom of God. That’s why they decided to kill Jesus. But Jesus said the kingdom of God is for all nations.

You probably assume I go to a Korean church. We all look alike (to some people). We all talk alike, behave alike, and eat alike—it could be a really boring church (to some people). Nevertheless, the kingdom of God is for all nations. Wherever your church is located, your church membership needs to reflect your immediate community. If your church membership does not reflect your own community, there is something wrong with your church. If people in your community are not attending your church, in my humble opinion, your church is not “being a church.”

African American, Asian, Hispanic, or Caucasian—your church membership must reflect your immediate communities. It can’t be just a place you go once a week for your cliquish social gathering. This is why the Great Commission is given to us. To proclaim the gospel to *everyone*, not just to the ones who look like us. And to baptize people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We must serve in harmony; teach and obey everything Jesus has taught us; care for the physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs—the whole person—and witness to our neighbors.

Repairer	Restorer
Evangelist	Disciple
To proclaim the good news	To demonstrate the love of God

If I reframe the aforementioned, we are repairers, restoring the broken people with God, reconnecting their relationship with God and their family, neighborhood, community, and so forth; therefore, we are *evangelists*, and our duty and responsibility is to proclaim the good news. As restorers, we are difference-makers, servants of our God; therefore, we are *disciples*, and our mandate is to demonstrate the love of God. It's not either/or; we don't have a choice. Every single one of us is an evangelist and a disciple.

Every time I travel, I do three things religiously at the airport. I pray for the pilot, to make sure he or she will take us from point A to point B without crashing us to the ground. I pray for the mechanics, to make sure they do their job flawlessly so we don't have any mechanical failures. And third, I check to make sure the plane has two wings, because that plane will not fly with only one wing.

And as a Christian, every single one of us must have two wings. We must be repairers and restorers. We must be evangelists and disciples. We must proclaim the good news and demonstrate the love of God. Regardless of whether you are young or old, male or female—it doesn't make a difference. Every single one of us is commissioned by God to be an evangelist *and* a disciple. Wherever we are, whomever we are—individually and collectively.

We shouldn't say, "I'm not a pastor or elder; preaching the good news or conducting an evangelistic meeting is a job for the evangelist." Everyone is commissioned to proclaim the good news; there is no excuse. Some of us practice a dichotomous model of two separate gospels—the evangelical gospel versus the social gospel. "I can do community service, but I can't do the job of the evangelist." There is no compartmentalization or sectioning of the gospel. We have to proclaim the good news *and* demonstrate the love of God. But sometimes we act like the Israelites, who forgot why they were chosen and their chosen status. We are chosen by God to be a part of His great plan of salvation, and it is our greatest honor and privilege to be His instruments. We are chosen and we are commissioned to proclaim the good news and demonstrate the love of God. This is nonnegotiable. It is an obligatory requirement as a child of God. This is what we signed up for when we chose to follow Christ.

**The great commandment: Love God, and love your neighbor**

Jesus said, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Matthew 22:37–39). Because God first loved us, we can love—love Him and love His creation (see 1 John 4:19). Out of our love for God, we are to love our neighbors. We are called to live justly and show mercy, to defend righteousness, to live wisely and compassionately, to serve our neighbors. “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?” (1 John 3:17).

A friend of mine went to Africa to conduct evangelistic meetings. During the weeks, he got to know the chief of the village, and at the end of the third week, with a degree of supercilious pride and ego, he asked, “What did you think of my sermon?” The chief replied, “Well, I hear a lot of thunder . . . but no rain.”

Sometimes, that’s exactly how our Christian life looks to outsiders—we blow hot air. *We say* we are a loving church, we are about forgiveness, assurances, and hope in His mercy and grace, but look at our behavior. I have visited churches that are so cold I can ice-skate down the aisle.

We act like the priests and Levites when passing by a dying man, and we say, “If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?” It’s all about me! But the Samaritan passes by and asks, “If I don’t stop and help this man, what will happen to him?” That’s Christianity. When we begin to put others before and above us, we will begin to live like Christ and exude our belief and God’s principles.

Christianity is not about *What do I get?* We need to put others above us. Jesus came and died for us, not because we deserved Him, but because we needed Him. There are so many people dying every day not knowing who God is, not experiencing His love and mercy. They may seem to not want Him, but they need Him. This is why we proclaim the good news and demonstrate the love of God.

So the question is not *Who is my neighbor?* The fundamental question is *Am I being a neighbor? Am I being a neighbor to all people, all the time—not just on Sabbath morning?*

Honestly, we’re not the real us on Sabbath morning. We go to church once a week; we dress up and behave gently. We will know who we are after the Sabbath. Are we still committed servants of God the rest of the week, every moment of our lives? Or are we rehearsing religion like the Pharisees and Sadducees, as religious practitioners?

“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness” (Matthew 9:35). This is who we are. We don’t just look for events, but we live out His example daily. Someone said, “The church begins when the worship ends.”

My friend once said, “Christianity is a great lifestyle,” but I took issue with that. Christianity is *not* a great lifestyle—Christianity is life! If Christianity is simply a lifestyle, then we would be Christians without Christ.

---

“For I was hungry, while you had all you needed. I was thirsty, but you drank bottled water. I was a stranger, and you wanted me deported. I needed clothes, but you needed *more* clothes. I was sick, and you pointed out the behaviors that led to my sickness. I was in prison, and you said I was getting what I deserved.”

—Richard Stearns

---

We are change agents. We are evangelists and disciples at any given moment of our lives. “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10).

To promote social justice, Jesus speaks in the Psalms,

Defend the weak and the fatherless;  
 uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.  
 Rescue the weak and the needy;  
 deliver them from the hand of the wicked (Psalm 82:3, 4).

This is the reason why we ought to be the voice of the voiceless, the defender of those who can’t defend themselves. But we often hide inside the walls of the church and say, “We are a loving church. Come and see.”

Perhaps this is why Richard Stearns wrote this passage, based on Matthew 24 and 25: “For I was hungry, while you had all you needed. I was thirsty, but you drank bottled water. I was a stranger, and you wanted me deported. I needed clothes, but you needed *more* clothes. I was sick, and you pointed out the behaviors that led to my sickness. I was in prison, and you said I was getting what I deserved.”<sup>4</sup>

Michael Horton indicates that the ministry of the church is an institution or embassy instituted by Christ; it should be identified by preaching, baptizing, communing, and teaching everything Christ taught us. Church is where disciples are made. Worldly vocations are where disciples are sent.<sup>5</sup>

The most important identity is not being a teacher, lawyer, doctor, farmer, or plumber—those are secondary identities. The foremost identity is that you are Christ's disciple. You are His faithful servant. That's why you are obligated to proclaim the good news and demonstrate the love of God. But most of us still don't get it.

When you have a passive message such as "Come and see," all you care about is having a weekly worship service, the highest goal being an attractive church. And then, we go to church mechanically and systematically. We see the community as a fishing pool. We don't see people; we only see the prospects of possible church membership. We don't see the precious souls that belong to God, because we only care about growing the congregation.

While I was living in Dayton, Ohio, I was privileged to plant a new Korean congregation there and serve as an interim pastor. There were a few interracial married couples within a small Korean population of about two hundred. There weren't a lot of professionals at that time—no lawyers, but a few doctors. Our members went to the hospital or the courts and translated for people who were in need of that service.

One day I got a call from county court about a man who had been arrested while driving under the influence. It was his third time, so he was going to prison for six months and had to pay a fine of five thousand dollars. Our appointment was for one o'clock, so I got there at twelve thirty. But the defendant showed up at one thirty. And when he showed up, he was clearly intoxicated. I couldn't believe it! He was about to go to prison for being drunk and had to pay a fine. Yet he showed up late and drunk again.

This is the point: Every time I went to an appointment like this, I would carry cards with my contact information and directions to the church. Usually after such an appointment, I encouraged the person to contact me and visit our church. And while I was translating for this defendant, I felt the card in my pocket. So while my left brain was translating for him, my right brain was contemplating whether to share my contact information with him or not. In the end, I chose not to share my contact information with him.

I was more concerned about *my* church, *my* new congregation, and *my* children. I didn't want this drunkard coming to contaminate our newly planted congregation. Because I was not looking at him as a precious soul belonging to God, I was looking at his qualification and my standards. And too often we do that because we don't see people as God's children. Sometimes we see them only as a project or prospects for

church membership growth because we don't focus on *saving people*—but only on *winning souls for baptism*.

That's why we have to change our perspective from “Come and see” to “Come and be with Christ.” Become a disciple and be equipped to be change agents; create a church where difference-makers are educated. Our immediate community wherever we are must be different from the world. It must be the kingdom of God on earth, as it is in heaven. And taking the three angels' messages to the ends of the earth—that is a church.

There is a Seventh-day Adventist church in Paradise Valley, California, that, because of the complexity of environments and people moving away, was declining. Meanwhile, people from all over the world come to Paradise Valley as refugees, and the community has greatly changed. When the church members began to reach out to the community holistically, the church benefited, and it continues to grow in numbers.

By providing simple health screenings, clothing distributions, community gardens, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, a food pantry, a thrift ministry, transportation, and interacting with the community, the church provided services that were needed by the community. Within five years, they baptized more than 350 souls, and they continue to make a huge difference. When we focus on how to save people, we will win souls as a by-product. And our church will benefit and grow. Church is about *saving people*, not just *winning souls*. God wins souls as we help people through their physical, mental, social, and spiritual challenges.

This is why I believe God has called us, commissioned us, and commanded us to change the world—to turn the world upside down.

---

“The Christian life is not adding Jesus to one's own way of life but renouncing that personal way of life for His and being willing to pay whatever cost that may require.”

—John MacArthur

---

“These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also” (Acts 17:6, KJV).

John MacArthur said, “The Christian life is not adding Jesus to one's own way of life but renouncing that personal way of life for His and being willing to pay whatever cost that may require.”<sup>6</sup> We need to remember, “I have been crucified with Christ and I

no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Pray that God helps you to be a missionary. Pray God helps you to be a faithful servant. Pray God helps you to be a difference-maker. Stearns interprets what Jesus commanded us to do in Matthew 28:19, 20: “Go, do what I’ve told you to do, teach what I’ve taught you to teach, act as I’ve taught you to act, and love as I’ve shown you to love. Build my kingdom in all the nations. This is what you were made to do.”<sup>7</sup>

Let’s be evangelists and disciples!

---

1. White, *Gospel Workers*, 315.

2. M. Craig Barnes, *When God Interrupts: Finding New Life Through Unwanted Change* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), Kindle edition, chap. 4.

3. Eric Swanson and Rick Rusaw, *The Externally Focused Quest: Becoming the Best Church for the Community* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 68.

4. Stearns, *Hole in Our Gospel*, 59 (italics in the original).

5. Michael Horton, *The Gospel Commision: Recovering God’s Strategy for Making Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 231, 232.

6. John MacArthur, *Matthew 8-15*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 24.

7. Richard E. Stearns, *Unfinished: Believing Is Only the Beginning* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 52.