

June 14, 2020

# Pray Big or Go Home!

Send-off Sunday for Christ Fellowship Bible Church

Eph. 3:20-21

*We boldly ask God to plant a church during a global crisis because we know who He is and how He is glorified.*

LTS: Eph. 3:7-21

**Just let us a little**

**Churches that plant churches must be churches who pray!**

Approximately 10 years ago when the elders were trying to figure out how to manage the influx of people who were showing up in increasing numbers week after week, we came to a very definitive conclusion; namely, that we would NOT move the church to a new location. We were NOT going to build a large building to accommodate a crowd too large to effectively shepherd. Rather, we would make it our ambition and earnest hope to plant new churches instead.

Five years ago, we hired a young man by the name of **Keith Christensen** to join our pastoral team and replace **Brent Osterberg** whom we had already sent out from Calvary to plant a new church. Brent took approx. 48 people with him and now, five years later He and Ryan Allan - his fellow elder – are still Shepherding **Living Hope Bible Church** in Mansfield Texas, approximately 20 miles from here..

For the past 5 years, **Keith** has been laboring as a pastor here at Calvary Bible Church. He was a good expositor when he arrived. He is an excellent preacher (and leader) now. And I suspect that if we had time, He and Kaity could stand here and use the entire hour to share about the goodness of God to them: how he has grown and matured them; how he has shaped and equipped them for church ministry.

Matt and Emily Scheffler could probably do the same thing at the drop of a hat. But now its time for them, and more than 70 others to fulfill the next step of our mission in the world by leaving. **In fact, today, I am sad to say, will be their last**

**Sunday as members of Calvary Bible Church.** And I expect that five years from now when they look back on what God has done in their church and family they will be able to echo the words of the Psalmist who said, “**No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.**” Their loving heavenly Father intends to bless them in ways that they can hardly imagine as they labor to plant Christ Fellowship Bible Church.

To be sure, **this seems like a less than ideal time to attempt a church plant a new church.** **The world** is experiencing a global pandemic. **Our country** is burdened with a level of unrest that is virtually unparalleled in our lifetime. Moreover, in terms of national and global economics there is a level of uncertainty that eclipses anything we have seen in a generation. **So why are we planting a church now?** Why are we planting a church “**out of season**” as it were?

Well, I’m sure we could answer that question by pointing to several practical issues relative to location and facilities and how our kid’s school year factors in. But I want to offer an answer that flows out of Scripture. So, let me tell you the answer and then I’ll show it to you in Scripture. One biblical answer to the question “**Why plant a church now,**” sounds like this.

We are launching a new church in the middle of a global crisis because **we know who God is** and **we know how He intends to be glorified.** This is the **answer** to the question. Now let me show you the biblical basis. Turn in your Bibles to **Ephesians 3:20-21.**

**Read. Eph. 3:20-21**

I think this text gives us the confidence that we need to plant a church even during these uncertain days of pandemic and unrest. It puts a huge rock under our feet as we take this next **bold** step of faith.

Before we look at the text, however, we should set the stage with a few **contextual** props.

**First,** we should remember that Jesus made a promise that serves as the very foundation of all church planting. He said (Mat:16:18) “***I will build My church and the gates of hades (i.e. death and the grave) shall not prevail against it.***” That statement tells us (among other things) that the primary **actor** and **star** of

the show is NOT the pastor of any local church or even its people – no matter how talented they may be. No, when it comes to church planting the spotlight is always on Jesus. This is **His church** and He is the one building it. We are simply the servants whose privilege it is to carry the water.

**Second**, we should also note that the book of Ephesians, from which we are drawing our text, is mostly about **the church** that Jesus is building. It is a church made up of people who were chosen by Him from before the foundation of the world. A church made up of people who were formerly **mortal enemies**; namely, **Jews and Gentiles**. It is a church whose members are united with Christ; that is, they live in inextricable union with the Savior.

**Third**, we should observe that toward the end of chapter 4, **Paul is praying for this church**. In Fact, Paul makes two audacious requests on their behalf.

1. He asks that according to the riches of God's glory He would make them **so spiritually mature** that they would be **completely at home with Christ taking up residence in every room of their lives**.
2. Second, he prayed that they would come to know **experientially** what is unknowable **intellectually**; namely, the **love of Christ**, and be filled to the fullest with God in Christ.

**Beloved, these are NOT small prayers.** Paul is asking God to bring about radical transformation in their lives. He is praying **BIG!**

My question, then, is, **“Upon what bases did Paul make these bold requests.** Why did He believe that God would answer these prayers? We discover the answer in Paul Doxology (20-21).

Upon what basis did Paul feel justified in asking God for these gifts? Well, first because...

## **I. Paul Knew Who God Is:**

1. **Who is God?** well, an exhaustive answer would require a lifetime of Study. But in this particular passage, Paul refers to the Father as (listen carefully) **“Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.”** One translation

says, “He who is able to do far more abundantly than we could ask for or imagine!” Paul is intentionally piling **superlatives** one on top of another!

2. Think about it! He has just made two audacious requests of God. Then he tells us that **to God, these requests are no problem at all! Consider the history of Christianity:**

- A. How could a dead Messiah save the world? No problem. God would simply raise Him from the dead
- B. How would 11 mostly uneducated men change the world by a simple gospel message? No problem! God would send His Spirit with them.
- C. What are the chances Saul of Tarsus, the infamous persecutor of the church, would become the man who would almost single-handedly take the gospel to the ends of the known world? No problem! God would do it through Him.

3. Think of the greatest obstacle you can imagine to planting a church at any time, any place in history. **It’s no problem for God. He is able to do far more abundantly than anything we can ask for or imagine.**

A. The Prophet Jeremiah declared, “Ah Lord God. You made the heavens and the earth with your outstretched arm and your great power. **Nothing is too difficult for you!** To which God replies. “Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; *is anything too difficult for me?*”

B. No wonder Paul was a man of audacious prayer. He believed that God’s power is NOT limited by anything! So when he prayed he laid down really Big requests. For example,

- **Rom. 5:15** he asked for a spirit of unity in churches made up of Jews and Gentiles.
- **Rom. 15:30** He prayed that he would be rescued from unbelievers who were trying to kill him!
- **Eph. 1:15** He prayed that discouraged believers would be filled with hope!
- **Rom. 10:1** he asked that **Israel may be saved.**
- **What do we normally pray for?**

4. Listen, beloved. Church planting is NOT easy work. There will be many, many challenges. And we know the teaching of Jesus who said, **“I am the Vine and you are the branches. Apart from me you can do nothing!** Everything **Christ Fellowship**

**Bible Church** needs is available in Christ. Therefore, **we Must PRAY**. We need to pray about little things, to be sure, **but we also need to pray Big Bold Prayers. And Frankly**, if we aren't willing to **pray BIG** then we might just as well just **go home!**

## 5. Churches that plant churches must be churches who pray!

6. Paul knew who God is. He understood that God is *able to do far more abundantly that we ask or imagine*. So he Prayed BIG **Big!** And so should we.

## II. Paul Knew How God is Glorified:

1. What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We exist to magnify the glory of God; to set His splendor on display for every created being in heaven and earth to behold. And if you think that's a stretch just glance back to **vv. 9-10** where Paul says that God has now revealed the mystery of the church that had been hidden for past ages and generations **so that through the Church** the manifold wisdom of God might be known (or set on display) to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places.

You see, beloved, the primary vehicle through which God is glorified is His church – the people whom he purchased with His blood.

2. Notice what Paul says (20b-21). **Read**

3. There is so much here that we could consider, but the main thing that I want you to see is that God intends to glorify Himself through the church. **The church is God's most precious possession.** He is more committed to building it than we could ever be. And the power by which he accomplishes his divine plan for his church is **the power that works within us**. **The power that saved us and brought us into the church; the power that sanctifies us as members of His church**, is the same power that will be at work for us to accomplish **the expansion and spiritual growth of the church**.

4. **If our goal is to glorify Jesus by building His church, then God will share His power with us.** And that power will bring about results that will last “**throughout all generations, forever and ever.**”

5. **If you think that God is not able to plant a church in the middle of a global crisis** **Your God Is Too Small!**

6. For our part, *We boldly ask God to plant a church during a global crisis because we know who He is and we know how He is glorified.*

- Invite Keith and Matt to the platform
  - **The gospel of joyful, tearful goodbyes.**
- Read the names of the CFBC families
- Invite Jason and Rod to platform
- Pray

**Benediction:**

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. **Amen.**