



Summer Family Reunion

Part 6 – When We Go

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Last week, we talked about sharing the good news, so personal evangelism. Now we're talking about going to the ends of the earth. Today we're talking about *When We Go*. When we say *when we go*, we're talking about as a church. What does it look like for the local church to go to all the nations of the earth? What does it look like for you and your mission in world missions? What is your role and my role to play individually as we seek to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Something we say around here often... You'll hear it several times a year if you've been here for a while. but it's a core value of our church. We believe that every member is a minister. We believe that every member is called to ministry. We believe that if you have been saved and you are a member of this church... Here's the idea. The idea is when you are saved, when you give your life to Christ, sometimes you might here people say this. If they don't say it in words, it's in tone. "I'm saved, heaven is my home, but now I'm going to live life however I want. I'm going to do whatever I want." You need to know that line of thinking is contrary... You won't find it anywhere in the New Testament that I've given my life to Jesus and now I'm going to do what I want.

In 1 Peter 2: 9, we read, ***9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood... We believe every member is a minister because we believe in the priesthood of the saints. There is not one or two or three pastors that lead this church. It's all of us ministering. We believe God has called you, and you're a part of a chosen people, a royal priesthood, ...a holy nation, God's special possession... Everybody in here has a ministry to perform and everybody in here is a 10 at something. Why are we part of this and chosen and called out for those who are saved and given their lives to Christ Jesus? ...that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.***

You are called. One way we are doing that... We just talked about this. Just making room for people. We understand that when we give our lives to Christ, we give up all of that – I demand this. This is my desire. No, I am now about God and his purposes. It's not I am saved so I'm going to continue to live out my purposes and my plan for life. No, it's Now I am saved, and I am going to live out God's purposes for my life.

Today, we are going to go one step further with this. Every member is a minister, we believe every member is a messenger. We believe every member has a mission. Let's start with The Great Commandment as we look at the five purposes of the church played in The Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

In Matthew 22: 37-40, we read, **37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”** So, this is worship. **38 “This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’** This is now ministry – serving others and meeting the needs of other people, not just demanding our own needs be met. **40 “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”**

So, this is where we started last week and where we pick up today. **The Great Commandment calls us to love and the Great Commission calls us to go.** If you talk to a lot of believers today, we love to focus on the love part. As believers, we are just called to love. You get online and you're like, “Don't judge me; just love me.” If you are a believer in Christ Jesus, you are called not only to love, but you are also called to go.

We get this in the Great Commission, Matthew 28: 19-20. **19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...** Now there are three questions that are typically asked about the Great Commission when we talk about who this is given to? Is it given to the eleven that are addressed in Verse 16? Is this command of Jesus the Great Commission, given to the church? And is this given to you and to me individually? The answer is yes, yes, and yes. It says, **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.** It's given to the eleven, it's given to us, and it's given to you. Jesus gave the Great Commission to the eleven, to us, and to you. And you have a part to play. Remember when Jesus prayed to his father? We read in John 17: 18-20 **18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.** Speaking of his disciples. **My 20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message...**

As the eleven were sent, you and I are sent. How many in here remember the television show *The Lone Ranger*? How many of you have never heard of The Lone Ranger. It was a great little show your parents and grandparents watched way back in the day. I watched, not because I wanted to, but I lived in one of these pretty strong households where whatever Dad wanted to watch, that's what we watched. So, I watched that and Peter Jennings, that was pretty much my life – The Lone Ranger, John Wayne, and Peter Jennings. He had the same rule in the car. Who thinks the driver picks the station? Those are old rules. When my kids want to change the station, I'm like, “Hey, whoa, we're not that kind of family.”

I think The Lone Ranger is a great television show, but the bottom line is this – The Great Commission is not for lone rangers. It's not for the person who says, “I'm going to do it on my own and by myself.” The reality is yes, it's possible you maybe could hit all 197 nations of the earth, but... There is one church I know of in our country that they set the goal for their church that in 10 years, they sent 13,000 members to all 197 nations of the earth.

Today, we're looking at what it means for you and for me. Not to be lone rangers and to do our own thing and to go our own way. I love when people tell me, “I don't need the local church.” I always respond with “Oh, you absolutely do.” You can't fulfill The Great Commission on your own. You can't go and make disciples of all nations, but you can be a part of going and making disciples of all nations. You and I can when we fulfill our mission. So, what's your mission? What's my mission? If it's not to be a lone ranger. Your mission is to live out The Great Commandment – love. And the Great commission – go.

Through worship, fellowship, ministry, discipleship, and evangelism, God's purposes for your life and for his church. **Worship** is expressing love to God. **Fellowship** is expressing love to one another as a body of believers. **Ministry** is serving others and meeting needs in love. **Discipleship** is becoming more like Jesus, doing what he says and taking on his life and his words. **Evangelism**, as we've focusing on last week and this week, is sharing the good news that you would pass it on to others. That is your mission.

We believe every member plays a part in missions. So, how does your mission, how does my mission, go and make disciples of all nations, fit into the local church, big C church, and world missions. This is the third point and where we'll spend the most time today. We believe every member plays a part in missions. Every single person in here plays a part in international missions. As we talk about international missions, where I always love to start... When you get serious about The Great Commission and understand what Jesus gave us, it reminds us that there is a big world outside of Branson. There's a big world that you and I get to be a part of and go and reach.

We read about cross-cultural missions in scripture often. I put this in a chart, and I don't want you, as you see this, to think you are a cog. I don't think that makes anybody feel good. But you get where we're going because here's your mission that we just discussed. How do you take your mission and reach all nations? This is why I'm convinced God's plan is my mission through the local church as the scripture lays out. Because until the Lord returns or calls me home, I will always be connected and living out my mission as part of the local church. It doesn't mean that I'll always be a pastor, but I've asked the Lord, "Until you return or call me home, I will always fulfill my five purposes that you've given me in the local church." I've asked the Lord to allow me to die in this church. I want to be a part of Woodland Hills Family Church until the lord calls me home or comes back for the church.

I'm part of the local church, but even our local church alone we can't reach all the nations of the world, but we are part of big C church. What that means is other churches are giving and supporting and moving forward in sending missionaries to all the nations of the earth. Bob and Dee Dodson are a great example. We've supported them in Tanzania. Many of you know Bob Dodson went to be with the Lord last year. We've supported them for 21 years. Dee is still there. A group of 13 of us are going this week to Kenya. Dee is actually going to be one of those 13 that meets us there. Bob and Dee gave their life to the nation of Tanzania. If you think about the calling that was on their life... and they were sent from a local church. The last letter that I ever received from Bob, we were into the details of how we can help them as a church. At that time, he had 61 local churches that were supporting him, and it was the only way for him to do his ministry in Tanzania.

When you think about this... And some of you, I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand. You grew up Southern Baptist. You know the Southern Baptist is a cooperation in the international mission board. They send missionaries all over the world and this is local churches cooperating together for the purpose of sending missionaries to the field. What I love about this... We'll start right here. I love when people think that the churches in Branson are in competition. We are not in competition. I can promise you that. We generously give members back and forth. We are a sending church. I know some of you think that means missions, but it means a lot of other things too. You've heard people say, "You know so and so from first Baptist is now going to Woodland Hills. So and so from Woodland Hills is now going to Bloom." "So and so from Bloom is not going to New Beginnings." That never stresses me.

Do you know what stresses me? It's when I hear someone say, "You know so and so? They don't go to church anymore." That should concern you more because they stepped out of God's purpose and plan for their life.

I am dear friends with pastors in town. If you ever catch us... There is one pastor in town. It doesn't matter who, but you'll see us and you're like, "Those are two pastors. They're like in a road rage situation right now. They're going at it." No. we're just having a good time. We get along very well, but get on the road and honk at each other and kind of nudge each other off the side. We're having fun because we get along. Why? Our church is not in competition with the other churches in this town. When you understand The Great commission, you understand we are not in competition, we are in partnership. We are praising God that we can come alongside other churches that are sending people to nations we've never given to, we've never visited, we've never been a part of. But when I am plugged into my local church and my local church is partnering with other local churches, we are going and making disciples of all nations. We're a part of it.

So, what does cross-cultural ministry look like? Let's look at the "all nations" piece. I'm going to try to give you the simplest definition I can. Missions is fulfilling your mission – The Great Commission, the five purposes of the church, in a different culture or nation. In a place in the country or even in a state. Let's just be honest. You can be engaging in cross-cultural missions when you go to Rockaway Beach. You can be engaging in cross-cultural missions when you go to Eureka Springs. So, what does cross-cultural missions look like. It's where you go to a place where they don't look like you, talk like you, don't dress like you, don't wear their hair like you, don't speak your language. Whatever it may be, it's outside of your area and your comfort. There is a big world outside of Branson.

We are going to Kenya and Kent is leading that trip. He'll also be leading the 11:45 meeting that we are having at The Chapel after this gathering. It's an open meeting for anyone interested in going to Guatemala in September. Come and learn more. I'll be over there at 11:45 with Kent to get that started. He sent us a two page email a few weeks ago to the team going. It's basically an email teaching us how to behave in Kenya. Because we don't often behave when we leave our culture. We sometimes get obnoxious. You can ask a lot of people in the world, and they sometimes think we get there and we're like we're the savior. No, we're there to share with them who the Savior is.

Paul gives an example of this, a clear understanding of how he did it in 1 Corinthians 9: 20 – 23. Here's what we read. Paul is putting the gospel ministry above his personal desires and rights. He's going to put his personal desires aside and he's going to change. And he's not compromising; he's learning the culture, he's going with the culture for the purpose of sharing the gospel. In other words, our methods can change, and they change everywhere around the world, but our message never changes.

I says, ***20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews.*** I took on the law and I took on Jewish customs. ***To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law)...*** But I did that while I was with them. Why? It was for the purpose to win them, to share the good news. ***...so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law...*** He's talking about the Gentile now. He said, "While I was with them, I didn't observe Jewish customs. ***(though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law)*** Meaning everything I do is submitting to the will of Christ ***so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to***

win the weak. I have become all things to all people... Not to compromise, not to change for the purpose of meeting my desires and my needs, or to pacify people, ***...so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.***

Cross-cultural ministry... Rene Schlaepfer was here last month. Rene pastors in Santa Cruz, California. When Rene comes here to Branson, Missouri, Woodland Hills Family Church and preaches, we love him, but I need you to know something. When he stands up here and preaches, he is engaging in cross-cultural ministry. What I love about Rene is when he's here, usually for a week, as he is driving around Branson, he's a learner. He has a strong desire to learn the culture that he's in and the place he's in. He'll text me pictures from around Branson with the question, "What's going on here?" You and I understand what's going on because it's where we live and it's what we do and what we embrace. There are some of you who moved here during the pandemic. You're still going, "What is going on? I just wanted some freedom, and I got all this craziness coming with it.?"

He'll text me these questions because he's wanting to learn and grow.

I remember when I was in Texas. I am born and raised in Chicago, and Texas was a little bit of a cross-cultural ministry for me. I remember being taken, by our senior pastor that I was working for, to a chicken joint, this big, huge chicken joint. I went to use the restroom, not knowing... I was the only one in there, thank the Lord, but I was using the Hen's room. The farmers are laughing because they know the difference between a hen and roster, but the city guy... When I go to Hurts Donuts, I ain't studying your pictures; they are questionable. But don't get creative with your signs because hens looks a lot like mens. I walked out and a lady was walking in. she said, "I think you're in the wrong place." I go, "I think you're in the wrong place. She goes, "I'm a hen." You think I'm the only one that's ever walked in that restroom in that chicken joint in Texas. I can promise you... Hundreds of people a week study those bathrooms before they go in.

By the way, in Texas, they speak English. I know they think they're their own nation, but we're not going for the nation of Texas. They speak English. Do you know where else they speak English? England. I remember being there. I went up to a lady in a store and I said, "Do you have a restroom?" She goes, "What are you into?" I know times are changing and I'm trying to keep up with the times. I looked at her and I said... Think how awkward this is. What am I into? And I respond with "Men." Hold on a second. Everybody back it down a notch. We were having a little bit of a translation issue and we both speak English. But guess what? She thought I had an accent. I speak where English originated from here in the I... She though I was asking, "Do you have a restaurant? And she was asking me what I was into. Then I would have said, "Hamburgers, cheeseburgers, but I had to explain to her that I was looking for a men's room. And back and forth we went.

I have to say this because I travel a lot around this county. Ever since the pandemic, a lot of things have changed. I remember coming back some time ago and somebody in the lobby asked me where I was this weekend. I said, "Michigan." And their response was, "I hate Michigan! I wouldn't be caught dead in that state." Okay, I, we've got some work to do when it comes to taking the gospel to all the peoples of the earth. I know what you were saying and you're in here and I love you... You may be in this service or you may not be, but I just want to encourage you. Don't allow some governor's restrictions to cause you to hate an entire people group in another state.

This is a series for us to grow our hearts to be more like God's heart for the whole world. You can't go and make disciples of all nations if, in your heart, you have an attitude toward nations. We have to have a heart for all the nations, all 197 of them.

We just came out of the 4th of July, and I know the debate in our country, the debate in our churches. And there are some of you in here that believe to be patriotic means you're being an idolater. That's not true. You can love Jesus and love your nation, but here's the trick, here's the secret for us, follower of Jesus, love your nation, celebrate your nation, but have a heart for all the nations. Go and make disciples of all nations.

I remember, just to give you more of this, because it's hard when you step into a different culture. We were in Tanzania, and I was being asked questions about polygamy. I was speaking on marriage and family to about 500 pastors from Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. They said, "What happens when a man who has been saved has four wives and 12 children. What would you say to him. I looked down at all our missionaries sitting on the front row and they'd all divert their eyes. Band of brothers. Way to go guys. Way to stick with me.

Here's what we know. The Bible and the truth of scripture transcends all cultures and all generations. So, what the Bible teaches about marriage and family... to look at a pastor and say, "Instruct that man," He still bears a financial responsibility for those women and those children. But no more wives. He's not taking on any more.

I've been to Haiti... Travis was sharing with me. Travis Brawner, who leads out on our missions here at Woodland Hills. When undercooked food comes to you in another nation and you're hesitant... I'm sitting next to our missionary. He's just sawing away on it and just enjoying it. I go, "Help me here. Am I eating this. I don't feel really comfortable eating this." He goes, "Ted, I don't just pray and thank God for my food, I pray for every morsel going in me. I've been all over the world and I eat whatever is placed in front of me, trusting God with the rest."

Listen, our goal, Woodland Hills Family Church, when we go to the nations of the earth, is not to take America to the nations of the earth. Our goal is to take Jesus to the nations of the earth.

This week, I was thinking about our friend, Bob Dodson. I miss him. A year later, I can still say I mourn his death. I look forward to spending time with Dee. We're bringing Dee up from Morogoro, Tanzania, up to Mombasa, Kenya this week. I was looking through some of the letters that Bob wrote us. It's interesting when you go back and look on the missionaries who truly went to another nation to die. They bought one-way tickets when they were young and gave their lives and served over 25 years.

I've always called Bob the Indiana Jones of missions. It was so great to watch him minister in Tanzania. He knew the language. We got pulled over six times by the police in Tanzania because Bob had lead foot. He got out of every one of them, without a bribe. He would talk to them and joke with them and they'd pat him on the shoulder, and we would just take off and keep going.

This letter that he wrote me said, *“Hey, Ted, two of my brothers came to visit Dee and I at the end of June. These boys were in the utter most parts of the world. I was hit again by how much we have to die to self to cross that boundary. It’s not what’s on a map. You have to become like a child (don’t miss what he’s saying here) and learn again how to talk, act, and react in this world. If we are not stretching and struggling, we are not growing. I am the worst at loving my comfort zone. But God knows how to poke the bear as in me. I heard this quote from Hudson years ago and he shared this with me. (and I think it fits perfectly with what we are talking about) Missions starts off with ‘this is impossible.’ Years later, hopefully it moves to the next stage with ‘this is a struggle.’ It’s what’s true for Bob Dodson. And it concludes with ‘This is done’.*

I know Bob can hear the words *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”*

We hope that some people go on these short-term trips that we are going to begin doing. We’re going to put a vision together for the next 10 years of our church just for international missions and what it means to take these short-term trips. I’m looking around at a lot of young people right now and I hope you go on some of these trips and come back and say, *“I’m going to give my life to that country.”* We as a church have a strong desire to buy one-way tickets for you to another nation. We’re talking old school missions because I know a lot of my younger friends, as we talk about this, they’ll hit a spot here or there for a little bit and move on to the next spot. But we’re looking at someone who goes to a nation and says, *“I’m going back to America, selling everything and I’m going to give my life to this nation. And when I die, send my body or my ashes back to that nation to be buried.”*

Our missionaries all over the world have given their lives to it. here’s the problem when you just think short term. Missionaries are always going to quit at the *“This is impossible”* stage. You have to work through that as you’re learning the languages, as you’re learning the culture, to the *“This is a struggle.”* One of the things I can say, *“Woodland Hills Family Church, is that I’m grateful for you as you are a great encouragement to our missionaries that are in the ‘This is impossible’ and ‘This is a struggle stage.’* We love encouraging the marriages and the families of our missionaries.

On the front row of one of the Q & As that I did in Tanzania back in 2019, I’m going to show you a picture of Bob. He’s the one in the red shirt. He’s an Arkansas Razorback. See, even a Razorback can be a missionary. This is Bob praying for me before this Q &A gets started. I don’t know what he said, and I don’t want to speak on Bob’s behalf, but I know he’s sitting there going, *“Dear Lord, give Ted the words because he is clueless about what we’re going to have happen here.”*

I hope many of you will gather at 11:45 to learn about Guatemala and learn about the future of short term trips here because when we go as a church, we see the need first hand. We see what God is doing around the world and what we get to be a part of. Again, I don’t wear the weight of all the nations on my shoulders alone. Our church doesn’t carry the burden of all the nations on our own. We fulfill our mission within the local church, partnering with other churches and sending missionaries to the field. It’s the only way The Great Commission can be fulfilled.

Jesus said in Matthew 9: 37, ***37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.***

Let's look at the harvest. According to the international mission board, 59% of the world today is considered unreached. Meaning Jesus is largely unknown among 4.6 billion people.

You're heard us say it around here time and time again. "Do for one what you cannot do for all." When we meet needs in this community, we're doing for one what we can't do for all. We look at the homeless problem in Branson. This church has a strong desire to do something about the homeless crisis in Branson. But if we look at the whole crisis, all that is happening in Branson, we go, "Lord, this isn't that big of a town. This is a town that it seems we could do something about that. We can make a difference. I'll tell you it will never happen unless Woodland Hills partners with first Baptist, Bloom, First presbyterian, and the other churches in this town. It's the same thing as we're talking about with international missions. When we go, as a church family, to one nation as we did in Ecuador... We sent a team to build in Ecuador and we all went on that trip. Kenya this week, going to meet the physical needs and serve people in feeding centers and pass out food. We've sent money ahead and construction has already started on a project. We are all going on that trip. When we go as part of a church family to one nation, we're part of reaching all the nations. And that is why, if you look at those cogs that we looked at a second ago, we celebrate what God is doing in the church down the street. We are not in competition. We celebrate what God is doing down the street and the nations they are reaching.

Here's the power of a short-term trip for me. When we go... I know this will be true of me when I get back to the States on the 18th. When we go, we come back ready to pray, serve, give, and go back. Again, this is our prayer for one-way tickets. We pray that some people will take these trips and go, "I'm giving my life there." We are asking the Lord to call full-time missionaries out of our church to leave here and let us be your sending church, working with other churches to get you on the field.

When Paul was planning his visit to Spain, he told the Romans, "I'm going to visit you on the way." We read in Romans 15: 30 -31, **30 I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit...** This is all part of our mission with The Great Commandment and The Great Commission. **...to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.** We start with prayer. Then he gives them specifically what they can pray about. **31 Pray that I may be kept safe...** We prayed that for our youth going to Florida this week. **...from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution...** Now we talk about giving. We pray, we give. **I take to Jerusalem may be favorably received by the Lord's people there.**

In Romans 10: 13 – 15, we read, **13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?** Let's be a sending church when it comes to missions that's part of your mission in fulfilling The Great Commission, the Great Commandment through the five purposes of the church. **As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"**

At the end of this letter that Bob wrote me back just a couple of months before he died... Bob always ended his letters with "Cheers! Bob." But he added a P.S. I looked back over the letters, and I didn't see any P.S. This was the only P.S. He had a final thought. I thought this was the perfect way... I don't have a lot of P.S. to the sermons, but this is a P.S. on today's message.

Here's what he said... "Dee and I came to Tanzania because we were invited by a friend. Exposure to missions prompts thoughts of *Perhaps I could do that*. That's our prayer for many and praying that God calls out missionaries from this church.

"But you say, I'm not going. I'm never going to leave this country. I barely leave Missouri." I love going on trips and I hope to go on a trip with you sometime. I love going on a trip with someone, that it's their first time out of the country, their first time on an airplane. Those are my favorite. I always tell the group coordinator to put me by that person. Then when we hit a little turbulent I'm like, "I've never felt that before. That doesn't usually happen. Oh, we better go talk to pilot! You better hold on! Strap in! And then it really gets fun when I start singing Live Like You Are Dying by Tim McGraw.

Father, in the name of Jesus, we thank you for The Great Commission, going and making disciples of all nations. That is our prayer. And thank you for letting us individually be a part of that. Thank you for our church as a part of that. Thank you for the other churches that we partner with in that, that we would go and take the gospel to all the nations. For all the unreached people of the world, that we would take seriously our role in taking the good news to them. I pray a blessing over this church family as they continue to give, as they continue to be generous with giving so we can send more, give more. No greater feeling, Lord, than when a missionary calls with a need of \$25,000.00 or \$50,000.00 and we are able to say, "Yes, we can meet that need to continue to bless those that are on the field."

I pray for one who has never trusted in Jesus that today is the day of their salvation, that they would gather at the front with someone from our prayer team and confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord, repent of their sins, believe in their heart that he's been raised from the dead that they will be saved.

Thank you for Woodland Hills getting more serious and more strategic in being a sending church. We pray this in the authority of the name of Jesus and everyone agreed and said... Amen.