

My 12 People

by Chris Famisaran

Good morning, everybody. Grateful to see you all. Wow, got a good crowd today. Thank you, Evan, for my inbox that's about to be blown up. No, it was funny. I got a text yesterday from Rick about three o'clock. He's like, Pastor, I'm just I'm so grateful for you. I really appreciate you. Thank you. I thought, oh, that was really nice. And then Crystal texted me and Kelly texted, I was like what's going on. And I figured, oh, it's October. Folks, I just want to say thank you. I love you all. I appreciate you all. And you make ministry fun and great, and just the people I get to work with. It's a joy to be here, my wife, and I love you all. Thank you so much for accepting me, and allowing us to come in and continue to be part of your lives. So thank you.

Let's go ahead and begin with prayer. Father in heaven as we now begin a new series today. Lead and guide us, help us in all that we do as we learn, as we study, as we have to ask some difficult questions, Lord. And as we ask these questions, as we wrestle with these things, help us to find understanding, and a way forward in Jesus name. Amen.

Well, we've been talking about it for the last couple of weeks, and today is the first day in a new series that we're going to begin I've been wanting to do this series for a while, um, shortly before the pandemic was gonna explode. I wanted to start this and then obviously, well, we didn't know should we meet or not. So it's been on the back burner, but I'm very passionate about this particular series. We're all called to go forth and share the good news. Can we all agree on that? Okay, so Matthew 28, I've said this countless times and preached on it, go forth, teach, preach, baptize, and make disciples, and the promise of that God would be with us forever. Now, for some of us, we think we're joyful. And that's awesome. And for some of us, that might be oh, I don't like talking to people. I don't like being close to you. I don't want you know, maybe how can I outsource my ability to evangelize? The reality is we're evangelizing whether we realize it or not. And in some ways, it's so much more simpler than you think. We're going to share some tools, we're going to have discussion on how we can share the gospel of Jesus with others, especially for those who are closest to us, our family, our friends, our church family, and our unchurched friends, and over the next four or five weeks, we're going to talk about this we're going to wrestle with this.

Now, to begin with, I want to I want to read the first chapter to our book, okay. And by the way, if you have not signed up yet, we have a sign up in the back. And then also you can sign up online, we still have some books, and if we have to make a special run to get some books because I personally know the author, he's a really good friend of mine. And we want to make sure everybody is able to join us. This is how this book got started.

"I want you to meet Dr. King. His eyes are sharp, his smile wide and bright, matching his brilliant mind. He's not foreign to our country, but he is foreign to Christianity. Out of curiosity, he visits a church for several weeks. He has definitely heard of Christianity, but he knows next to nothing about it. So he visits and he studies. He doesn't study the materials, he studies the methods. He is not as curious about the doctrines of the people as he is about the disciplines of the people. To him, that's what matters most. So

he watches and for after several weeks, he's satisfied that he's found a pattern from their consistent behavioral patterns he gets is what Christians think they are called to do. So he writes it down in a journal. Jesus definitely has commissioned these people to go and make attendees. Ouch. They are sincere people. They definitely love their God and thirst for heaven, but they seem most concerned about attendance. And additionally, instead of word of mouth, they outsource their marketing. They mail out flyers to people they don't know inviting them to come and listen to hired speaker they don't know to talk about a God most of the church members don't really know. All the people who don't know each other come together for a few weeks until the speaker leaves down in some people stay, others leave. Who stays? It's difficult to tell. We don't know them in the first place. The proper name for this might be stranger hood evangelism."

Some of you may be wrestling with this personally, when I first read this I did. Part of me was joyful. Because Okay, I can understand, but at the same time, too, it's like, Okay, what can we do to move on from here? The story's a little hard hitting because I think we sometimes, let's just be honest, we sometimes feel like I just want to go to church. I'm not, I'm not comfortable sharing Jesus with others. It is beyond me. I don't know how, folks, we're going to give you the opportunity to be able to share Jesus with anybody. And it all begins with prayer. And some of you are thinking, Pastor, that's just too basic. No, when you look at the disciples, what did they do? What were they doing all the time? They were praying, they were studying, they were sharing meals with each other, but they were bathed in prayer. All evangelism needs to be based on prayer. And so whether you're doing personal evangelism, whether you're going out, you know, sharing the message, or sharing books, or whatever you do, it begins with prayer.

So, let's go to the book of John. John 1:35, Jesus calls his disciples You can also find all the Gospels share and relate how Jesus called the disciples. I think can find it in Matthew 4, Mark 3, and I think it's Luke 5, but we're going to go to John 1 today. Okay, we're going to see from John's perspective, how he calls the disciples. So John 1:35, we all there? All right. Verse 35, the next day, John was there again with two of his disciples, right? This is Jesus, his cousin, John, when he saw Jesus passing by, he said, Look, the Lamb of God. And when the two disciples heard him say this, they followed him, turning around Jesus saw them following and what do you want? They said, Rabbi, which means teacher, Where are you staying? Come, He replied, and you will see. So they went and say, they saw where he was staying, and they spent the day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother was one of the two who heard what Jesus has said, and who would follow Jesus. And the first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon, and tell him we've found the Messiah, that is the Christ, and he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, You are Simon, son of John, you will be called Cephas. Which, when translated, is Peter.

So let's just pause here for a second. You know, when you look at this story, we see John the baptist with two of his disciples, and they're gonna cross paths with Jesus. And John points out that this is the Messiah, this is the Lamb of God. And these two disciples, all of a sudden, they're cruising with John, and now all of a sudden, they're gonna hang out with Jesus. When John says, This is the Lamb of God, he speaks with it, with a sense of he had buy-in from them already. When he says, This is the Lamb of God. They went, and they followed Jesus. And John knew that his light as he talks about, as John talks about gets smaller and smaller, because ultimately, while he was the forerunner to share and let people know

that Jesus was coming, when he finally points out that the Lamb of God is here, the disciples, then turn course and follow Jesus. John was pointing them to Jesus. We also find that we just read that when Andrew finds out that they've found the Messiah. What does he do? He goes, and he looks for his brother, Peter. When Peter finds out he hears and he two runs because he knows his brother, why would his brother lie to him? Well, maybe when they're five, it was a different story. Y'all have brothers and sisters growing up and maybe you would try to trick each other? Okay, we've all done it, let's just admit it. But they're adults, they're older. And when they say when Andrew says I found the Messiah. Peter gets up in, he runs.

Later on the next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. This is verse 43, finding Philip, he said to him, follow me. Jesus says, Come follow me. Philip, like Andrew and Peter was from the town Bethesda, Philip found Nathaniel and told him we have found the one Moses wrote about in the law, about whom the prophets also wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And then Nathaniel, responds with Nazareth? Can anything good come from there Nathaniel asked? Phillip then responds with come and see. Nazareth was not the not a great place to be known to be from right? Nathaniel had some skepticism in his mind. Verse 47, when Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching and said to him, here truly is an Israelite and hope there is no deceit. Nathaniel's like, Well, how do you know me? Jesus said, I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you. And then Nathaniel declared Rabbi, You are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel. So Nathaniel is professing who Jesus is. The Jesus responded, you believe because I saw you under the fig tree, you will see greater things and that he added, then very truly I tell you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

Now what's interesting about this, John's version, okay, Jesus goes, and he calls them, but he sheds light on the fact of the relationships that were there. So John the Baptist points, these two disciples, we don't know exactly who they are, but he points them to Jesus, and they follow Him. Likewise, Andrew, when he hears that the Messiah, he goes and grabs Peter, his brother, and later on, we find that Philip, he goes in, he calls, Nathaniel. So it's not Jesus calling them forth. Hey, I found God. Philip, and Andrew, they found the good news and they want to share it with others, just like we have all been called to do so.

Now, when you look at the life of Jesus, okay, Jesus spent the most time with the 12 disciples, they ate together, they shared the same accommodations. They shared the same boat multiple times. They shared many meals sometimes on a mountainside, sometimes in the upper room. Imagine being together that long and it was important for them because Jesus was teaching them, he was training them, he was sharing all of the lessons that they would need later, as they were about to share the good news when Jesus would then leave them. The disciples were his closest friends.

And yet also Jesus calls us to love one another. You know, looking back on some of my childhood movie, favorite actors? John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, Rambo. Arnold the Governator. Let me ask you this, do they ever say I love you? No, and so we're growing up in a culture where especially I think this is probably more challenging for men, because we're supposed to be strong, we're supposed to be tough. We don't say I love you. We're dudes, right? Yeah, what does Jesus say? Love God with everything right? And love your neighbor as yourself. There's some challenges though, because when we try to say maybe we love somebody that there are some barriers. For instance, maybe we're scared of being rejected, like I just say, Hey, man, and there's nothing just like, Hey, man, I love you. They may take it the wrong way,

and they feel rejected and all of a sudden, oh, I'm not going to try, you know, share how I feel. Or maybe they just don't feel comfortable. Maybe they have a negative upbringing. Maybe they want to different things. Maybe we have a skewed idea of relationships.

Earlier this week, I was listening to a podcast of a guy named Mike Sarraille. He teaches on leadership. But 15 years ago he was serving as a navy seal in Ramadi and on the podcast, he had two of his former teammates who were with them there on that day in September 29, they were standing on... they were sitting on a rooftop overlooking to make sure the other soldiers were safe. When all of a sudden they heard a thump on the roof that they were sitting on. And lo and behold, they saw what? a grenade. The fourth member of the group, Mike Monsoor, who was actually the furthest away from them, ran and threw his chest on the grenade to absorb the blast. And he didn't die right away, but and he was not able to absorb the whole blast, but he was able to cover most of it. To some degree, they were all injured, some more than others, Mike especially and believe, Doug, that he was able to make it out, okay. Afterwards, of course, they're injured, they get sent to get medical care, Mike would eventually succumb to his wounds shortly thereafter, if you look it up is named though. He earned the Medal of Honor for his actions there and eventually named a ship after him the Monsoor. But 15 years ago, this experience happens. And normally, after every time you would go out, you'd have an after action report, they would come they would talk about what happened. And because Mike and Doug were severely injured, they had to run, they couldn't run, they had to be taken to the hospital, eventually they ended up in Germany where they would get the proper medical care that they needed. And 15 years go by. And all three men are burdened by what happened. Number one for the loss of the trusted and well beloved teammate. And carrying this guilt with them for many years. Earlier this week, they sat down and they finally talked about this situation, talked about what happened, and kind of just shared what they were feeling. There was a lot of pain. But after this whole conversation, it was about two hours. Mike courageously said, Guys, I don't think I've ever said it. But I want to make sure. You know, I just want to say, I love you guys.

Jesus has called us to go forth to share the good news to be an example. And share and emulate Jesus' love of kindness, of compassion, of empathy, to be able to go forth to build relationships, to have trusting relationships. So God calls us to go to love one another. And evangelism must be or become relationship based. I'm not saying that all other vandalism is bad, but at its root must be relationship based. Why? Why relationship? Because you're going to meet people, right? And as you get to meet people, there's trust. For instance, we just talked about Andrew and Philip, when Andrew went to go get his brother, with Philip, when to go get Nathaniel, when John tells the disciples, this is the Lamb of God. They spoke with a position of trust and to a degree of authority. And that means when we build relationship with others, we're building trust. And so when we say something, people know we're saying it's not just anything, but it can be trusted. People know who we are. We watch and especially if you say you're a Christian, they're probably doubly gonna be watching everything you do, and perhaps even what you say. Amen? But they observe people. Kids, you know, as parents, kids watch you, right? Maybe you observe everybody around you, maybe your neighbors, maybe your mail person or the UPS driver, people at the grocery store. I just, I don't know. I like to see human behavior firsthand. But evangelism, we have to be able to build friendships, we have to be able to build networks.

And as trust builds up, you're able to share life together, share your joys, get to know your neighbor and share, Hey, I just got a job promotion, or my mother's going through cancer. I'm having a difficult time with my child. My boss, he's so difficult and as he builds relationships as you build trust, then you finally

are able to be able to speak from a position of authority. When they come to you, you're able to share Hey, look, I don't have all the answers, but I do know this. I know Jesus loves you. He wants to have a relationship with you.

When I go to the mall, I like to go to the store called... Bath and Bodyworks. I know some of you are chuckling, you may not want to say it out loud. I know some of you were chuckling. But there's one particular flavor scent, I think it's called Sweet Pea, whether it's in candle form, whatever, I just love that smell. And especially right now, because it's fall, they're trying to hit those candles, all right, because they want to get the cinnamon flavor or the apple flavor, all of the fall flavors. There's one thing about candles that I love is that when you light a candle, it it enhances, improves. Maybe your kitchen or your living room, wherever. It's the aroma that goes out.

Let's go to Romans chapter 12. Romans chapter 12. It says, Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God. This is your true and proper worship. When talks about as a living sacrifice the in some ways when you think about the aroma when you serve God, okay? Imagine yourself being the aroma of God going out. And people are attracted to Well, people are attracted or not attracted to a different aromas. Right? If it's good, it's pleasing. But if it stinks, you might want to go in a different room or run away, right? But Paul, it's calling Hey, man, serve God with everything, be the aroma of Christ, attract others, that you may be able to share the good news with others.

Now, reality is I can't believe I'm saying this, you are Christ's influencer to your friends and family. Right? Who better to be able to share the good news with others than you. Because you have family, you have friends who spent time with them. And you have a special connection to be able to talk about who God is. In fact, there's a quote that says when you influence a child, you influence a life. When you influence a father, you influence a family, when you influence a pastor, you influence a church and when you influence a leader, you influence all who looked to him or her for leadership, you have numerous opportunities to influence and make a major difference in someone's life. And you never know what influence those who have influenced will have on other people over the years. When you look back, okay, from your childhood, or even here in the church, who's made a difference in your life. It could have been a Sabbath School teacher could have been a pastor could have been the head Deacon or the head elder, it could have been somebody, a greeter, right? We're all called to make a difference. And so how do we begin this journey?

Okay, so do you have your little handouts your notes, wave them up, wave them high. All right. I want you to put them on the back side. Okay, let's take a look at this. We're going to talk this series is called My 12 People. Okay, My 12 People. And we're going to write down three names for each category. We have family. We have friends. We have church family. And finally, we have unchurched friends. Now some of you may not have pens, that's a that's a unfortunate dilemma for me. I should have provided pens to make sure if so if you don't have pens, we'll make sure you get to pens. But take some time, if not right now, later today. Think about this. Who were three family members in your life right now perhaps that you're close to that you would like to pray for? Starting now. Okay. Who do you spend the most time with Who do you feel the love of God Most with or needs the love of God most? Okay, now for some of you, maybe you don't have family All right, so maybe you have a surrogate mom or dad or a, you know, adoptive friend who serves in that capacity, if that's if that's the case, okay. We also have your friends who you spend your most time with, whether it's going out to dinner, going to the beach,

whatever, going for a walk, or maybe even who's willing to grow spiritually and accountable with you. The third part is, obviously we need to be praying for as for each other as a church family, right? And so who do you Who do you regularly interact with the church? Who do you have as a relationship that you only see them at church? Is there anybody who you think needs to have prayer in our church? And finally, the last part is our unchurched friends, maybe it could be a co worker from work? Who do you share hobbies and interests with? Right? Do you have a sewing club? I just made that up? Whatever you're passionate about, okay? Your neighbors, do you know your neighbors? Maybe you don't want to know your neighbors. Man, I tell you, it's hard to meet neighbors. Now. I can tell you I, for Lisa and I knew our neighbors above, to the left, to the left and above, we didn't really want to hang out with them. They were not nice. And then the people behind us. And then when we moved here, we met a few people. But we live in a complex and doesn't seem very people are very friendly, especially the guy in front and to the left of us, is always making noise. But, you know, we try to talk and it's very short, very, very quick. Here's an opportunity to be able to pray for them. All right. Perhaps the people that you ride the train with or the bus, you do that every day, who sits in front of behind or to the side, maybe pray for them. Some of these, of course, may cross over maybe your best friend is your sister or, or your cousin, right? But have fun with it. And over the next month, we're going to be praying for these individuals. We're going to expand on how can we pray and minister to these groups. Does that sound fun? All right, so we're gonna be talking about practical ways that we can minister to these groups and baby steps, friends, baby steps. Let's start with baby steps. And as Bill said earlier today, may this be a transformation for our church, it's not just going to be any small group. It's not just going to be any series, but it is going to be transformational. As time goes by as well. Well, maybe we'll have to update our lists. If you want to be really courageous, maybe let your people on the list know that you're praying for them. See what happens then.

And just close with there's a story. So Roy, who wrote the book shares of a time I think Bill may have even shared a little bit as well. He was in his house and his neighbor, I think he's a deputy came over and asked, Hey, can I borrow a certain tool? And I think Roy said that I don't quite have that exact tool, but I have something. So he goes to his garage, he grabs it. And as he meets his neighbor, he says, Okay, let's go. The neighbor thought he was just going to give them the tool. So they go next door, they start to work on the problem. And after a while, the neighbor asks hey, you know, you're a pastor, right? And Roy says, Yeah, and because they start to ask him questions, and ultimately gives the opportunity for Roy, to be able to share Jesus with him. And what my hope is that as we continue through this series, that as you're praying for your family, your friends, our church family, and our unchurched friends, you're going to have these God moments with people that are going to be so unexpected. And I look forward to especially celebration Sabbath next month. I want to hear stories of how God has worked in your life. Does that sound awesome? All right. So let's go forth. Let's read. Let's pray. Let's see what God has in store for us.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank You for Your goodness, Your love, Your Grace. Lord, you've called us to go forth, to share the good news, to love you with everything and to love one another. Help us to do so. And exceed that, Lord. Help us to be loving, kind and compassionate to be the ambassador's. You've called us to be to be the aroma You've called us to be. Father, forgive us because we're simply sinners. But through you all things are possible. We're grateful for what you've done in the past, and what you will do so in this series, and in all of our lives. And Lord, the things that are on our hearts and our minds, Lord, we give them to you for whatever concerns we have maybe the things that we're

fearful of, help us to overcome them, and to to deal with the challenges that we are facing, and that Lord, it may be a God thing that we see and understand who you are. Bless this church, Lord, be with those who could not make it today. And as we go forth, may You reign supreme In Jesus name, amen.

Grace, and peace, everybody.