

# Commissioned!

Part 3: "Come with Me"

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Full Text (for reading on your own)

## *To Each One of Us, Grace has been Given!*

*"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."* (Eph. 4:7) Grace is God's willingness to use His power and His ability on your behalf. To each one of us, grace has been given. According to what measure has the grace been given? According to the measure of Christ's gift! What is the gift of Christ in the context of Ephesians 4? The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers! The five-fold ministry are the gifts of Christ to men. To each one of us grace has been given according to measure of Christ's gift.

In other words, if you receive a prophet in the name of a prophet (because he is a prophet), you receive a prophet's reward. If you receive an apostle in the name of an apostle, you receive an apostle's reward. If you receive a teacher because you know that they are a teacher gifted to us by God, then you receive a teacher's reward!

Some of us have a limited amount of grace because we've given limited influence to the gifts of Christ in our lives. We've given the five-fold ministry's words limited access to our hearts and we have thereby limited the grace we are walking in. If you get around a prophet, you will start hearing God - because you honored the prophet because he is a prophet. You received the prophet's reward. What do you think you will get if you get around an evangelist - not just someone who evangelizes but a true born-to-be-an-evangelist? What do you think you will get if you get around a pastor's pastor? You will have a care and shepherding come on you! Why? Because that's a grace that they have on them to release into this world and you listen to them, you receive that grace!

It's a gift and you honor them and you receive the gift that God has given them. This is how God is releasing grace in this earth in the Body of Christ! We need to be good stewards of our hearts in terms of making sure that we are listening to the gifts of God that have been given to us - so that grace can be measured to us generously. If you don't have a heart for evangelism, listen to Reinhard Bonnke and Daniel Kolenda! Read their books! It is the system that God has set up. You will have much greater grace apportioned to you in the things of evangelism when you listen to them.

We need the influence of each office of the five-fold ministry in our lives. Are we listening to a true teacher to have the Word parsed out for us? But sometimes we love the teacher's teaching so much

that we never listen to a prophet. By contrast, some love to listen to prophets, but if you were to analyze the grace on the life of that hearer, it would be clear that they could really benefit from listening to a teacher at some point! They “know what the Lord is doing” but they are not founded in the principles of scripture. What happens is we get founded in one, instead of receiving them all, and we thereby only receive a fraction of the available measure of God’s grace. He gave 5, not just 1 or none. You need to give access for all five into your heart.

### *Keep the Word!*

This is fun! It’s the most riveting thing in the world to follow God! It’s a grand adventure - it’s not dangerous; it’s just awesome! It’s a good thing to be commissioned! It is a good thing to know your Christian job description - which is the Great Commission! We don’t want to be out-of-commission Christians.

To that end, we’ve talked about the importance of keeping the commission before our eyes. When we don’t line up yet with the Word of God, we can have a tendency to try and not look at and acknowledge those parts of the Word. Other times, we bring ourselves to really look at those challenging parts of scripture, but we get condemned (which doesn’t help anybody!). But when we embrace the tension between where we are at and what the Word says - that’s where the rubber really hits the road and we truly are transformed by the renewing of our minds! Listen to how Francis Frangipane describes this process of embracing the tension between where you are at and what the Word of God says:

*“Read [the Word] with an attitude of willingness, humility, and repentance, and even if you cannot fully obey the Word, keep it, holding it in your heart. Right here is where most people fall short. For if the command seems impossible, or unreasonable to their minds, they disregard it. But Jesus said, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me” (John 14:21). Many times, before you are able to obey the Word, you must make yourself keep it. God must work in you both to will and to work. (Phil 2:13). First God makes you willing, and then He makes you able.*

*“In this process, let the Word pierce you; let it crucify you. Suffer with it, but do not let it go. View every Bible command, every, “Though shalt be” as a promise God will fulfill in your life as you steadfastly keep His word. And as you keep His Word, treasuring His commandments in your heart, the Word itself will effectually work within you, bringing grace and transformation as you believe.”*

### *Natural to Your New Nature!*

When the Gift of God came to you - to take residence as the VIP guest of your heart - you received the Spirit of Witness! The Holy Spirit’s #1 priority in this era is not to make the earth, not bring

Jesus to the earth, but to bring the earth to Jesus! It is so natural for you as a believer to want to share the gospel, bring healing from Jesus into people's lives, set captives free from demonic strongholds, cleanse lepers, and raise the dead. That's natural for you as a believer.

When I was a young believer, I met with a very mature Christian counselor who made a practice of always turning me to the scripture and encouraging me to consider my life according to what the Word of God says in all matters. At one point, in meeting with her, she said, "Well, your problem is that you don't understand grace yet." I was so offended. I knew that grace was so central to our walk with God that surely I must already understand it; I had read it a lot in my Bible after all!

About 3 or 4 years later I found I had not actually understood grace and praise God I did start to understand grace because it so freed me up! I was listening to a Kris Vallotton message when I "got it." He was preaching "you're old man is dead!" In other words, you don't have a sin nature. All things were made new. All things now are of God. You, as a born again believer, are 1/3 wall-to-wall Holy Ghost. I remember the road I was on when I was listening to that sermon and it dawned on me and I started screaming at the top of my lungs. "This was the Good News I signed up for!" I thought. I had no idea what I had been missing about the grace of God! Around the same time Brad was sharing 1 John 4:17 with me: "as He is, so are we, in this world." Now!

I was realizing I did not have a sin nature on the inside of me into which I need to try to pound goodness so that it dilutes the badness that's still there enough that I am actually holy. But instead, I realized, from the revelation of the Word to me, that I am completely pure on the inside and all that is happening is that I am renewing my mind so that I can let that holiness out. Boy that's liberating!

Holiness is not something you are trying to "put on" as a believer. It is a process of taking wrong thinking off so that you can let something out that's already on the inside of you - the Spirit of God!

What I experienced many years ago about grace and my new nature is what is happening right now with you and the Great Commission. You are discovering that the Great Commission is not something that you need to put on - it's something you need to let out.

The Great Commission came with the Holy Spirit! When you received the Holy Spirit, you received the burning Spirit of Witness. You are not trying to put more Great Commission on, you are trying to let more Great Commission out! You can't get the Holy Spirit to be more excited for the Great Commission that He already is. He's burning for the Great Commission. The first thing that happened when the believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit is that 3,000 were saved. That's the Holy Spirit's prerogative.

As a Spirit-filled believer, you are going to start to notice a naturally supernatural drive develop in you for the Great Commission! You are going to begin to experience a surging motivation for

sharing the gospel, discipling people, disclosing nations, healing the sick, and casting out demons - the whole package! It's the words and the works! The words and the power - both! You are going to develop a Godly unction for all aspects of the Great Commission.

### *By Faith not by Might*

When Jesus sent out the 12, He said *“And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”* (Mt. 10:7-8) Is it possible that many times we think that “healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, and casting out demons” is by God’s power but that preaching the gospel “saying the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” is by our own power? Jesus said “greater works than these will you do.” Is it possible that the greater work He was referring to was the work He had not done yet at that point?

When Jesus spoke of not only equaling but also surpassing His works, He had not died yet - no one was saved yet. Is there a greater miracle than the regeneration - than the Holy Spirit carrying out our new birth? Preaching the Gospel is just as miraculous - if not more miraculous - than seeing people healed and raised from the dead. Preaching the Gospel is a miraculous, faith-based operation. It is not a will-powered mission! It is a faith-powered mission.

And how do we increase in faith? We get in the Word! Memorizing and mediating on the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20 and Mk. 16:15-18) can have profound impact on your faith for what is contained in those scriptures.

Joseph Prince says, “Right believing produces right living.” We know Proverbs 23:7 says “as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” If right believing produces right living, if you aren’t seeing the sort of living that you want yet, you aren’t doing the sort of believing that produces that sort of living - yet. That’s where that simple truth becomes so powerful - because it is now prescriptive. It tells us “if I don’t see the fruit, I’ve got to change the root - and the root is what I believe.”

If you don’t yet see Great Commission fruit in your life, or (if like me) you see it but you have a personal witness within yourself that you could see so much more, then you need to change the root, change the belief, so that you change the fruit - change the living. Some of you might have already started to change your mind, but you have started to see the fruit yet. If so, don’t grow weary in doing good for in due time you will reap a harvest if you don’t give up! Don’t get worried about that delay.

Andrew Wommack says he does not need to know all of your thoughts in order to know what you believe - he just needs to see the fruit. No one needs to see me plant seeds in my garden in order to know what I planted. Just come back to the garden in September. Are there tomatoes or are there weeds? The fruit tells you what the seeds were.

## *This is the Work of God!*

There are some scriptures that you have to fight so hard or dig so deep to get the revelation that once you get the revelation, you will remember it because you had to work so hard to get there. In other words, the process of discovery caused the truth to settle deep into your heart. By contrast, there are other scriptures that are simple to understand - so simple to see the revelation in - that you have to work after you get the revelation to sow it deep enough into your heart that it stays with you. When I receive a revelation quickly, if I don't do some follow up work with it (write it down quickly, teach it to someone, purposefully memorize that scripture, etc.) the revelation will be gone two days later and I will forget what it was.

In Jn. 6:28 the people asked Jesus *"What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"* What shall I do that I may work the Great Commission? What shall I do that I may be pleasing to my Father - and do the works of God?

*"Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."* They asked Jesus "what shall I DO?" Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you BELIEVE." According to our Savior, the work of God is that we BELIEVE in Him whom God sent - that we believe in Jesus, that we believe in The Word God has sent!

We need to have a bookmark in our Bibles that says, "This is the work of God, that you believe the Word He sent!" This is what the work of God is! How do you the work of God? Believe the Word He sent!

It is not a difficult revelation to understand, but we need to slow down enough on this point to really personally consider the marvelous applications of that truth in your life! What shall I do that I could see God's blessing in my business? Do you remember Brad's story about losing money hand-over-fist to being on nationally syndicated television about his success in business? What was the work that Brad did? He believed the Word! He was in the Word and he declared the Word! This is the work of God - that you believe the Word of God - you believe the One whom He sent!

Every area of my life in which I walk in tremendous blessing has been forged through this same process. For instance, it is very rare for there to be any strife in our household. And if there is any strife, it is there for 10 minutes, maybe 20. Why do we walk so free of that? We walk in that because God taught us a long time ago that He doesn't work on marriages. He works on people! So instead having a nebulous idea that God is going to bless our marriage, I instead take personal responsibility to let the Word of God transform my heart. All the while my wife is doing the exact same thing and do you know what is blessed? Our marriage!

Somewhere along the line I started believing the Word God had sent as it relates to relationship dynamics and therefore I am now doing the works of God as it relates to our marriage. There is a lot more for me to learn, but we are experiencing such tremendous blessing in this area of our life because we have done the work of God in this area of our life. And what was the work of God that we did and still do? To believe the Word He sent!

Here's another example: I remember being a brand new believer reading my Bible and seeing "in that hour I will give you what to say." It stood out to me and struck me to the heart as I read it and the Lord has developed that revelation in me over time. More than a decade later I often have people remark to me "how do you speak so rightly to the situation?" Why do I walk in this blessing now? Because somewhere along the line I believed what the Word says, "That the Holy Spirit will give you utterance." So, right before I start talking in those appointed, anointed times, I say, "Holy Spirit your words, not mine." He knows that heart stance in me and the rivers of liver water begin flowing forth in verbal format. It's the right words, it's supernatural clarity, it's supernatural scripture recall. But what was the work of God associated with that blessing? Was it practicing my eloquence in front of a mirror? (Not that there is anything wrong with rehearsal; I rehearse for sermons so that the congregation gets a more polished product). Was rehearsal the work? No, it was believing in the Word which He sent!

I used to be such an anxious worker until I believed that God wanted to supernaturally bless my business - that He wanted to bless the work of my hands! All the work of my hands is blessed! In all the things I do, I prosper! (Psalms 1) When you start believing that, you realize that He doesn't just have for you to just be like everybody else. My work is supposed to be supernaturally anointed - way better than it could be on my own. Far faster and smarter than it could be own. And that is exactly what happens IF you believe. That's the work of God as it relates to being a witness for Him in terms of the quality of your work - that you BELIEVE that He wants to bless you in the quality of your work!

Stop at this revelation long enough that you get it! Put it on your wall over where you read your Bible! Make a bookmark, do what you need to do to not be confused. THIS is the work of God: that you BELIEVE Him whom God sent - that you believe the Word! That's the work!

### *Follow Me and I will Make You Fishers of Men*

In Matthew 4:17 Jesus begins preaching that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Within two verses Jesus has already found some preachers for Himself. When God has a message, He will develop His messengers. We read in verses 18-19 "*And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them,*

*“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”* When you follow Jesus, He will make you a fisher of men.

Any one part of the Word of God is completely pregnant with revelation. Jesus said that He so valued every piece of the Word of God that He would not even consider getting rid of any dots or iotas. So when you see a phrase like *“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men”* and we realize there is some meat on that phrase! If we want more revelation when we read the Word, we should take it literally. A phrase like that is a promise! (Now, I should mention, when you have revelation of a scripture like that slightly beyond its context, you need to bounce that revelation off of the rest of the Word of God. If it doesn't line up, don't feel bad, just put it aside. Don't hold on to any “revelation” that is not in-step with the rest of the Word. We want to be in-line with the totality of scripture with what we are getting from a certain phrase.)

*“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”* Your action verb is to FOLLOW. His action verb is to MAKE. We don't need to be self-made Great Commission Christians. He'll make you. You follow Him and He will make you a fisher of men.

Look similarly at Acts 1:8 *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* You have two action verbs in this verse: RECEIVE and BE. I know that “be” is not an action verb actually, but I am making a point. Your action verb is to “be.” You have the Spirit of Witness on the inside of you! It is about taking things off to let Him out - not about trying to shove something in. You are not trying to put the Great Commission *on* – you are trying to let the Great Commission *out*! You have the Spirit of the Great Commission living on the inside of you and He is burning to reach out and touch others with the Gospel of Jesus both in word and in deed!

Acts 1:8 says to receive the power and all we have to do is BE. This is who you are! Understand that you are a new creation and you will BE holy. Right believing will produce more righteous living than any amount of “holiness training, self flagellation, or repeated confession of sins, etc.” You understand who you are in Christ and you start living right! You start understanding that you have the Spirit of Witness on the inside of you and you will be a witness all the time!

You might think of Mark 16 and wonder, “How can it be a witness to be able to pick up snakes without harm?” Ask Paul! He escaped the shipwreck only to be bitten by a poisonous snake! The locals thought he truly was cursed by God to have escaped one opportunity for death only to be literally bitten by another! But they sure changed their tune (calling him a god) when they saw the snake's venom have no effect on Paul! When people see God protect us or even turn evil for good in our lives it convinces them “they have something else going on in their life!” They wonder how your business flourished in a season when everyone else's tanked. They wonder how you came up

with a business model that was so much smarter than you are on your own! Speaking of Andrew Womack's ministry his mom said, "Andrew, you know that's God!"

There is one more thing to glean from Acts 1:8 - the power is for a purpose. We love the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but Jesus didn't even get out of verse 8 before telling the disciples about the purpose for the power that was going to come on them! The purpose is witnessing. I am not saying the Holy Spirit isn't working to reveal the love of God to you, but I am telling you He wants to reveal the love of God to others! You have the Spirit of Adoption on the inside of you and He is teaching you personally to cry out "Abba, Father." He is loving on you; He is witnessing to you. But, I am telling you who else He wants to witness to - others.

That power came on you for a purpose. So, just as we would not want to have the purpose of the Great Commission without the power (which is exactly why Jesus told his disciples not to leave until they receive the power), we also do not want to have the power without a purpose.

### *"Come with Me"*

I asked the Lord "what are you saying to the Angel of the Church of Agathos." As soon as I asked I heard Him say "Tell the people 'Come with Me.'" That tells me two things: (1) He's going somewhere and (2) He wants us to get ready.

In Joshua 1:10-11 we read that *"Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 'Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.'"* Within 3 days you will go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess! Get ready Agathos! Get ready! Come with Me and I will make you fishers of men.

Two Sundays ago, Brenda received a word from the Lord in which He was asking her if she (and the church) wanted to be part of His Special Search and Rescue Team. I am telling you that the answer for Agathos Church is yes! But, just as God doesn't work on marriages (He works on people), let me also tell you that God doesn't work on churches (He works on people)! He will speak to churches. He lines us up so that we are all ready for the same sorts of things, but I am telling you: "He's working on YOU." He's working on ME. Personally responsibility for revival!

God's focus of influence is always individual. This is why we will all stand before God individually in front of His throne. He will not ask you what your wife did or what your pastor did for that matter. He will ask you what you did. This is how God works. His chosen mechanism for changing the world is the changing of human hearts - and that can change everything! God is working in individual human hearts. Our church will come with Him if EACH person comes with Him. Joshua sent out officers to pass through all the tests in the camp. He did not just shout from one spot to all

the people Himself. It wasn't a collective messaging (as though the Israelites as a whole nation was the entity that needed readied to cross the Jordan). No! The Israelites as a nation concept did not need readied, THE PEOPLE needed readied! It was every person, every tent, every box, and every knapsack that needed packed and prepared. It was about every person getting every person ready to go! Come with Me!

### *Peter's Story of Following Christ*

If we follow Him, He will make us fishers of men. Our action verb is to "follow." His action verb is to "make." Our part is simple, but it is not easy. So, let's look at Peter's life and His history of following Jesus in order to learn something very important about following Christ.

We've already looked at Matthew 4:18-19, but let's revisit it and now add verse 20 as well: *"And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' They immediately left their nets and followed Him."* They left their nets and followed Him.

We see something similar in Luke 5:10-11 *"And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.'" So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him."* They forsook all and followed Him. Perhaps you are noticing a pattern.

In Matt 19:27 we hear Peter plainly share with Jesus: *"See, we have left all and followed You."* Do you see the connection? Following Christ always means stopping following something else. Every one of us is a follower. We have been made by God to follow. If you chase two rabbits, you will catch none. If you chase one you might catch one. Perhaps, for a while, you could think that you are successfully chasing two rabbits if they happen to be running in similar directions. But once they veer away from each other, you will either chase one and catch one or stand in the valley of indecision and become stagnant in your pursuit of both.

And so it is with Christ. Many times people left things behind to follow Jesus. They left nets and a tax business. They left parents and Jesus told one to "sell all you have." In other cases they left their family or household.

I should make it clear, by the way, that cults take this sort of concept of commitment and they twist it/pervert it. God will never take something from you that He doesn't give back to you many fold over! You follow Jesus and your family will be blessed! You follow Jesus and your Dad (who hasn't died yet, but you want to stay with him until he dies so you can bury him) is going to be blessed through you following Christ. God blesses families. We see plainly in the New Testament that we are worse than an unbeliever if we don't take care of our families. It means something to God! God

says the widows ought to have the families taking care of them. Family means a lot to God. So don't take this type of commitment to the Commission the wrong way.

Even with the rich young ruler whom Jesus told to see all he had, the issue was that his heart was divided. Jesus saw that he was following riches and our Lord therefore said, "if you don't sell all that you have, you can't follow Me. But if you were to sell all you had and follow Me what would result is that I would give you greater riches that you've ever had - and I am not just talking about spiritual riches!" That young man had business acumen and he had resources and influence. God would have set him up. He would have had a Kingdom business that was making impact. He would have lost nothing and gained everything - but he had to sell all he had and stop following all he was following in order to follow Jesus and gain everything.)

Peter chose Jesus. We've seen it clearly from scripture. He could honestly tell Jesus that he had "left everything" to follow Christ. He forsook all. He left his nets. So, as far as Peter knew, he had chosen Jesus entirely - correct?

So, now let's fast-forward to Mark 8:27-34. This is a very interesting section of scripture. We've probably all heard parts of these sections of scripture, but I am not sure that we have realized that these were all part of what appears to be one continuous storyline. When we read the Gospels there are often many lines of red and then a few lines of black, which indicate that the scene just changed and they went to a new town. There are no such lines of black text in this section of Mark 8. It appears that this all occurred within a short period of time - within largely one scene.

*Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, "Who do men say that I am?" So they answered, "John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him. (Mark 8:27-30) What an amazing revelation! We see in another account that Jesus says, "Flesh and blood did not reveal that to you Peter!"*

Now look at what Jesus immediately begins to share on the direct heels of Peter's revelation: *"And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."* (v. 31) Now, hold on! Peter just received a revelation that Jesus is the Messiah and Jesus (I believe sensing that Peter might take that revelation somewhere where it was not meant to be taken) immediately launches into a purposeful teaching. In this one verse teaching Jesus says, "That's great that you figured out that I was the messiah, so just know that means I am going to suffer many things, be rejected by the chief priests and elders, be killed, and after all of that rise again."

Do you ever spend time with people that have a lot of wisdom and you are talking and they add a little “and comment” to what you say - a real gentle teaching that is actually a rebuke or a warning? If you will listen to those sort of people and take that comment as though they had shouted the rebuke and integrate it into your life and make the change or put up a barrier in your thinking so you never go too far with what they were warning you about ... If you will do that, they will never have to rebuke you formally. That’s why Jesus says, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” We want to have ears to hear. We want to be sensitive to what the Lord is saying.

In Mark 8:31 Jesus is being so gracious! Peter has said, “You are the Messiah!” Jesus, sensing in Himself, I believe, that Peter was going to take that revelation somewhere where he shouldn’t take it gives them a little tiny teaching “you know that means I am going to suffer and die after being rejected thoroughly.” Why did He do that? To put up a guardrail to say “Peter you are going to take this thing you just got from Heaven and you are going to run way past where you are supposed to take this in your thinking.” So Jesus says “so what this means is I am going to suffer and die.”

Now, does Peter listen to Jesus gently rebuke? Nope! Peter turns around and rebukes Jesus! Peter didn’t get this one right! He started rebuking Jesus! Now listen to what Jesus says next. Again there is no break here in terms of change of scene. *“When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”* (v. 34) There was something going on in Peter’s heart to which Jesus was saying “I know you think you want to follow Me, but you want to follow your version of Me.”

Look at John 13:36-38 36 *“Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.”* This was not the sort of prophetic word you want to receive! *Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You now?”* That’s a revelatory question! “Lord, why can I not follow You?”

If we follow Him, He will make us fishers of men. What I am proposing to you today is that there are some mindsets that we can have - some of our own ideas we can have - that will keep us from following Him. Peter thought He had left everything to follow Jesus. But Jesus says “you can’t follow Me right now.” Peter exclaimed that he would “lay down his life for Jesus’ sake.” Jesus said, “Will you lay down your life?” Jesus knew his heart.

Now before we move further along this chronological timeline of Peter’s experience in following Jesus, take a moment to be encouraged! If this story strikes our heart, remember that this is the story of the same Peter whose shadow later healed everyone whom it touched. This is the same Peter who preached the Gospel FIRST! Some people stood on the Moon first, Peter preached the Gospel first. Right on his resume you would now see “first person to ever preach the gospel.” You would see “shadow healer, lead apostle, friend of Jesus.” That’s Peter. “Author of 2 books of the Bible.”

Imagine that on your resume! “Water walker.” (The time frame for that job description was a little bit short!)

There are some hindrances that will keep us from following Him and we want to be ready to “Come with Me!” If we follow Him, He will make us fishers of men, but Jesus says “if you want to come after Me” you need to (1) deny yourself, (2) take up your cross, and (3) follow Me. You have to do a “denying” and a “taking up” before you can do a following.

Peter has already been rebuked by Jesus for this. Peter has already resisted this. And in John 18, they come to arrest Jesus and we find out what’s been in Peter’s heart the whole time. Peter had left everything to follow Jesus but he had not left this one idea about who the Messiah ought to be to him! Peter had one idea that he was holding onto so tightly that it was a lens that he viewed everything about the Messiah through. And we see that lens, that perspective, that prerogative expressed because as Jesus is about to be arrested, in a moment of panic, seeing that clearly this is NOT what is supposed to happen, Peter slices off the ear of Malchus with a sword. And we see in that moment what Peter was after the entire time - our Messiah, our savior, must be coming to prop up Israel, drive out the Romans, and set this thing straight! “I’m his right hand man, top general, I’m Peter and praise God I found the Messiah!”

Jesus responds to Peter’s swift sword in the same way He did in Mark 8 when He said, “*Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.*” Here Jesus says, “*Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?*” And in this moment Peter’s dream of Jesus starts to die. He follows Jesus after His arrest, but he follows Him from behind. He doesn’t go into the courtyard with Jesus, but John (I am assuming it was John) comes out and asks the servant girl to open the door. So John was standing there when the servant girl asked Peter about Jesus and Peter denied Him. Why does Peter deny Christ now? What has changed for him? Peter’s whole time of following Messiah was through a lens of “surely He is our military Savior.” And that notion came crashing down for Him upon Jesus’ arrest. The more that notion came crashing down in Peter’s mind, the more emphatically he denied Christ because his notion of who Christ was had crumbled.

Peter was completely honest and genuine when He told Jesus that He had left everything to serve Jesus. Peter was genuine when he asked, “Why can’t I follow you?” And that’s what this is about. In all of our genuineness, why can’t we follow Jesus sometimes? Jesus was saying, “You can’t follow Me because you aren’t going to be willing to lay your life down.” Peter was genuinely reply, “No I will lay my life down. Anything for you Lord!” But, as Peter heard Jesus talking with the priest from within the courtyard while warming himself by the fire, he began to deny Him more and more as he likely thought “that’s not going too good in there.”

Peter was following Christ, but he was following Christ through his framework, through his lens. He had given up everything - except this one idea. And that idea was of a militaristic savior that was going to come and set the military and parts of government straight.

Of course in John 21, Jesus reinstates Peter and what does Jesus tell him? The same thing He told Peter at the start in Matthew 4: "Follow Me." Now Peter gets it. Jesus says, "you are going to follow Me and you are going to die the same death that I died." Now Peter gets it. Now he is willing to lay his life down. Now Peter gets it and understands that is the call - it's a servant's call.

During that exchange in John 21, Peter asks about John "what about him?" Jesus says, "don't worry about Him. YOU, follow Me." That's a good word for us too. We don't need to be comparing, we just each need to be following Jesus.

### *Hindrances to Following Christ*

Isn't God so patient! God was so patient with Peter the entire time! He knew exactly what was going on from the start. That is why He clarified what being the Messiah was going to look like for Peter in Mark chapter 8. He's so patient with us!

There are three hindrances that can exist in our hearts to keep us from actually following Jesus. These are blind spots. Peter was genuine, but he couldn't follow Jesus because of a mindset. Peter had not denied his own ideas, taken up his cross, and actually followed the real Jesus.

The first hindrance goes like this: We think to ourselves "Lord, I am all about your Great Commission! I want to do the Great Commission! Praise God for the Great Commission! I'm on fire for the Great Commission! I can't wait to get after the Great Commission! I am going to see people saved, healed, and set free of demons. I am going to disciple people and nations! I can't wait! Lord I will do anything to serve You and accomplish the Great Commission ... as long as it doesn't cause anyone to think badly of me - as long as it doesn't hurt me in the sphere of public opinion. As long as no one will say something evil about me because I stepped out into the Great Commission."

John 5:44 says, "*How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?*" Jesus is saying "I don't know how it would be possible, I don't know how you could believe IF you receive the honor that comes from man instead of seeking the honor that comes from the only God." Jesus, Himself, did not entrust Himself to man. (John 2:23-25) Why?

In Matthew 4, satan comes to Jesus and says "worship me. You're hungry. Worship me. I will give you all these things." Jesus rebukes satan and says "satan you should have been worshiping me this whole time. God already said and I am telling you again now 'you should only worship the Lord,

your God, and Him only shall you serve.” Jesus was telling satan “you should be worshipping Me!” So, if satan can’t control you, he will seek to control you through people.

When you get a compliment from someone who means something to you, the question is “did you entrust yourself to them?” If so, the enemy will try to use someone, or some career, or some sphere of public opinion that you’ve entrusted yourself to and he will manipulate you. You will be sold out for the Gospel until you come around that person or that group of people and then you go silent. Then you become spiritually impotent. In the context of those people you have committed yourself to, the enemy can leverage the fear of rejection to control your actions. What is the one thing he will try to keep you from doing? Being a witness to Christ in word and in power!

Here’s another hindrance: riches. “I’m all out for the Gospel unless it costs me money.” You might think, “It doesn’t cost money to share the Gospel or pray for someone! Well, let me say this: we have some assumptions about the life that God wants to live in Christ. For many of us it is a cultural assumption that we can’t possibly be asked to share the Gospel at 3pm on a weekday because “I’ve got to work a full-time job!” I’m not saying it’s wrong to work, I’m just saying it doesn’t say in the Bible that you have to work a full-time job. (I’m not telling you to quit your job). I’m trying to identify blind spots. Peter thought he was sold out to Jesus, and Jesus said, “You can’t follow Me.” Why? Because Peter had this “idea.” He was all out for Jesus in the context of Jesus kicking some Roman tail and winning militarily. We are prone to the same. “God I am all out for your Great Commission as long as it’s on the weekends when I’m not busy, and in the evenings when I’m not working ...” These are limitations that God is not really thinking about. If you actually went all out as a witness for Christ and thought, “well, God, none of that career stuff has to be exactly like that necessarily” He might have you stay in exactly the same job - or He might change your job! It’s not about the action, it’s about the willingness, and if we are not willing for Him to adjust how we go about finances, we will be limited in our ability to serve God and carry out our commission. The Word of God is clear: “you cannot serve both God and Mammon.” Mammon is controlling a lot of believers. For some believers, there are whole territories of the Great Commission that could be happening in your life that are ABSOLUTELY off-limits to God and off-limits to your thinking, and you don’t even know it because you are beholden to Mammon. You are not in the flow of realizing that God will supply for you supernaturally to create flexibility in order that you can accomplish His Great Commission. This is not just for missionaries.

If you get serious about the Great Commission and you say, “God, I don’t want anything to hold me back! I don’t want to have this one thing that makes you have to fit into this little box.” He will give you supernatural ideas about how to make simple adjustments (and sometimes big adjustments) that will free you up for His work!

Here's the last hindrance: Self-preservation, or as Mark 4 calls it "the desire for other things." "I have this hobby ... My woodworking, my garden. I just bought a home. I just bought a field. I just got married." Do you remember some of these examples? "I can't follow you now, Jesus, I got a wife." "I just bought a new car." "Well didn't you already decide to buy it? Isn't it already in your possession?" "Yeah - I have to look at it!" Again, this is a heart stance! I am not preaching some sort of an aesthetic ideal: there is richness in the Kingdom!

There is an oppression that can come on us with the fear of man. In the Greek, "demon possession" doesn't mean possessed necessarily, it just means afflicted or tormented. We don't think of it, but the fear of man is actually demonic in origin. The fear of man can be on you in an oppressive way. You are wondering why you started feeling bad all afternoon at work - it's because someone might say something bad to you! That's demonic influence on your thinking. You've partnered with a spirit of unbelief.

When I started learning to share the Gospel with people I was so intimidated by what they might think of me that I was shaking in my shoes. But, praise God, a few years later, it is now natural to share the Gospel with people! Around the same time (a few years ago) I was realizing that I didn't want to share the Gospel because I wanted my summer vacation from being a school administrator. One day I realized how backwards that was according to Matthew 6:33. I was telling God that I could not seek first His Kingdom because I needed a break.

You've got to take this seriously if you want to be used by God! You have to leave something in order to follow a new thing. If you will follow Christ, I can promise you what He will do: He will make you a fisher of men! But you cannot follow two things simultaneously: "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.*" (Mt. 6:24) We all want to serve God, so I'm trying to share some hindrances here because they can be total genuine blind spots for us just like Peter!

When I realized that I was backwards in my thinking as it relates to Matthew 6:33, I said "God I am going to seek first Your Kingdom; show me how!" That's where Brad started ministering to me about supernatural financial strategies. He told me "because God said you cannot serve both Him and Mammon, He therefore has a supernatural financial strategy for every one of His children." It is a different strategy for every Child of God, but He has a strategy so that you do not have to be beholden to Mammon and so that you can do the work of God freely and liberally!

We don't want to be locked into a system that causes us to say "all of your Great Commission God! ... but not from 9-5 on Monday through Friday!" Again I am not saying you have to change your job. I am saying that if we don't trust God enough with the Great Commission and His call on our lives that we are unwilling to even have a conversation with Him about being willing to follow Him

outside of the context of what we are already doing, then we have a thing (like Peter) that we are holding on to and we need to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and actually follow Him.

According to *Street Level Evangelism*, 95% of believers have never led someone into a saving relationship with Christ. I am not saying that shamefully, it's just data - and important data. In a Pew Research study many church-going Americans say that the best thing to do is to avoid religious conversations with others! That's the fear of man gone to seed!

So where do those sorts of data come from? Don't they know about the Great Commission? Well, that's probably not the case. Because, actually 99% of Christian leaders (according to Street Level Evangelism) believe in the responsibility of every believer to preach the Gospel to a lost world! So, there are likely many believers who thoroughly believe in the Great Commission so long as it doesn't require them to change anything they are doing with their career in order to create more flexibility and follow God's financial plan for them, AND so long as it doesn't interrupt their vacation, their weekend, their family time, football on Thursday night, Saturday, Sunday night, and Monday night, AND not that one show either! "I'm pretty much sold out to God!" Not a lot of the Great Commission is left after that! We have a millimeter of the Great Commission when it's supposed to cover the earth because we THINK we're following Jesus, but we've got these pet projects and pet ideas.

"I'm going to totally follow God as long as He's the type of God that is going to cut everyone's ears off and send them to waste, put us back on top, and make me a general in His army. Praise God, amen!"

We are going to follow Him as long as He doesn't make us say some things that cause someone to disagree with me (or Heaven forbid!) not like me. Do you forget that the Bible says that the world hates Jesus! It goes on to say that if you have received His word, then the world hates you too! Newsflash! Be of good cheer; He has overcome the world. But they hate you!

The battle is not against flesh and blood - but against the principalities and the prince of the power of the air. He (satan) hates you because you've received Jesus' word. So, what do we do? We go love people!!! That's the response - the logical, Biblical response to the hatred of the world is to love people by giving them Jesus in both word and power! But if we are afraid of people, we will never do it!

If you fear man, I would estimate that you will only every accomplish 30-40% (at most) of what you could have in terms of the Great Commission. If you also struggle to trust God with your finances, now that 30-40% becomes 15% and you still have all the desires for other things! Now it's down to about 1 or 2% effectiveness in your life. And you will forget about the Great Commission in all practical terms in your life it is only functioning at a 1 or 2% effectiveness rate ... and all while you

absolutely and genuinely love God and love His Word and are totally aware of the Great Commission!

I love ya! Peter was totally genuine and didn't know. And God was totally patient with Him. I am trying to identify for you the three things that hinder your witness for Christ. Now, these three things came from my personal experience. But, check out Mark 4:18-19 *"Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."* One of the fruits you are supposed to produce is other believers! Many of us have received the Word and we have cherished it in our hearts, but there is something choking the Word in our lives. The cares of the world (the opinion of people), deceitfulness of riches (serving Mammon), desires for other things (hobbies, etc.).

Here are your action items: (1) work on memorizing the Great Commission according to Mark 16:15-18. (2) Some of you need to break commitment with the fear of man. If so you need to break commitment with that spirit of fear and change your mind! "God I realize I've been letting people's opinions rule me my entire adult life and I am today renouncing my dependency on people's opinions of me in the Name of Jesus. That controlling spirit of the fear of man, go! Get out of my life and never come back!" As necessary, do the same thing with Mammon, "Thank you God that you provide for me supernaturally; I am no longer going to be controlled by the fear of money!" Same with "the other things" ... "God thank you that if I seek you with my whole heart I know that you will give me plenty of vacation, plenty of breaks, plenty of good times, plenty of time with family, plenty of times for hobbies - all sorts of fun stuff is coming my way when I follow you! I thank you God that I am going to follow you and you are going to honor me before men!" You break commitment with that desire for other things that can latch on to your heart and make the Great Commission shrink and shrivel right up until it proves unfruitful."

I pray for all the fruit to come forth in the name of Jesus!

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## Text Summary (for reading as a group)

*“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”* (Eph. 4:7) Grace is God’s willingness to use His power and His ability on your behalf. When you receive a prophet in the name of a prophet (because he is a prophet), you receive a prophet’s reward. Some of us have a limited amount of grace because we’ve given limited influence to the gifts of Christ in our lives. We’ve given the five-fold ministry’s words limited access to our hearts and we have thereby limited the grace we are walking in. If you don’t have a heart for evangelism, listen to Reinhard Bonnke and Daniel Kolenda! We need the influence of each office of the five-fold ministry in our lives.

It’s the most riveting thing in the world to follow God! It is a good thing to know your Christian job description - which is the Great Commission! When we embrace the tension between where we are and what the Word says - that’s where the rubber really meets the road and we are transformed by the renewing of our minds! Francis Frangipane says, “Many times, before you are able to obey the Word, you must make yourself keep it. God must work in you both to will and to work. (Phil 2:13). First God makes you willing and then He makes you able.”

When the Gift of God came to you - to take residence as the VIP guest of your heart - you received the Spirit of Witness! The Holy Spirit’s #1 priority in this era is not to bring Jesus to the earth but to bring the earth to Jesus! The Great Commission came with the Holy Spirit! Holiness is not something you are trying to “put on” as a believer. It is a process of taking wrong thinking off so that you can let something out that’s already on the inside of you - the Spirit of God! Likewise, when you received the Holy Spirit, you received the burning Spirit of Witness. You are not trying to put more Great Commission *on* – you are trying to let more Great Commission *out*! As we realize this, we are going to develop a Godly unction for all aspects of the Great Commission!

Is it possible that many times we think that “healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, and casting out demons” is by God’s power but that preaching the gospel saying “the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” is by our own power? (Mt. 10:7-8) Is there a greater miracle than the regeneration - the Holy Spirit carrying out our new birth? Preaching the Gospel is just as miraculous - if not more miraculous - than seeing people healed and raised from the dead. Preaching the Gospel is a miraculous, faith-based operation. It is not a will-powered mission! It is a faith-powered mission. And how do we increase in faith? We get in the Word!

“Right believing produces right living.” If you aren’t seeing the sort of living that you want yet, you aren’t doing the sort of believing that produces that sort of living - yet. No one needs to see me plant seeds in my garden in order to know what I planted. Just come back to the garden in September. The fruit tells you what the seeds were. Jesus said, “This is the work of God, that you BELIEVE.” According to our Savior, the work of God is that we BELIEVE in Him whom God sent - that we believe in Jesus, that we believe in The Word God has sent! Do not be confused. THIS is the work of God: that you BELIEVE Him whom God sent - that you believe the Word! That’s the work!

In Matthew 4:19 Jesus said, “*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.*” When you follow Jesus, He will make you a fisher of men. Your action verb is to FOLLOW. His action verb is to MAKE. We don’t need to be self-made Great Commission Christians. He’ll make you. You follow Him and He will make you a fisher of men.

Acts 1:8 “*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” You have two action verbs in this verse: RECEIVE and BE. You have the Spirit of Witness on the inside of you! You are not trying to put the Great Commission *on*, you are trying to let the Great Commission *out* - to be who you actually are: an on-fire witness for Christ!

We also see in Acts 1:8 that the power is for a purpose. The purpose is witnessing. Just as we would not want to have the purpose of the Great Commission without the power (which is exactly why Jesus told his disciples not to leave until they received the power), we also do not want to have the power without a purpose.

In Joshua 1:10-11 we read that “*Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, ‘Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, ‘Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.’*” Get ready Agathos! Peter asked the Lord, “What are you saying to the Angel of the Church of Agathos?” And he heard Him say, “Tell the people ‘Come with Me.’”

God’s going somewhere and He wants us to get ready. Remember, God works on people; His focus of influence is individual. This is why we will all stand before God individually in front of His throne. Our church will come with Him if EACH person comes with Him. Joshua sent out officers to pass through all the tests in the camp. It wasn’t a collective messaging (as though the Israelites as a whole nation was the entity that needed readied to cross the Jordan). No! The Israelites as a “nation concept” did not need readied, THE PEOPLE needed readied! It was every person, tent, box and every knapsack that needed packed and prepared. It was about every person getting every person ready to go! Come with Me!

If we follow Him, He will make us fishers of men. Our action verb is to “follow.” His action verb is to “make.” Our part is simple, but it is not easy. Peter’s life and his history of following Jesus provide an illustrative example.

In Matthew 19:27 we hear Peter plainly share with Jesus: *“See, we have left all and followed You.”* Following Christ always means stopping following something else. Peter chose Jesus. He could honestly tell Jesus that he had “left everything” to follow Christ. He forsook all. He left his nets. So, as far as Peter knew, he had chosen Jesus entirely - correct?

So, now let’s fast-forward to Mark 8:27-34. Here Peter shares that Jesus is the Christ and Jesus immediately shares this on the heels of Peter’s revelation: *“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”* (v. 31) Peter said, “You are the Messiah!” Jesus (sensing in Himself I believe that Peter was going to take that revelation somewhere where he shouldn’t take it) gives them a little preemptive clarification. Now, does Peter listen to Jesus’ clarifying warning? Nope! Peter turns around and rebukes Jesus! Now listen to what Jesus says next. Again there is no break here in terms of change of scene. *“When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”*” (v. 34) There was something going on in Peter’s heart to which Jesus was saying “I know you think you want to follow Me, but you want to follow your version of Me.”

Look at John 13:38, Peter asks a revelatory question! “Lord, why can I not follow You?” If we follow Him, He will make us fishers of men, but Jesus says, “If you want to come after Me” you need to (1) deny yourself, (2) take up your cross, and (3) follow Me. You have to do a “denying” and a “taking up” before you can do a following. Eventually Peter’s shadow healed all it touched, but at this point Peter had not left this one idea about who the Messiah ought to be to him! Peter had one idea that he was holding onto so tightly that it was a lens that he viewed everything about the Messiah through. In all of our genuineness, why can’t we follow Jesus sometimes? Peter had given up everything - except this one idea - and God was so patient with Peter the entire time!

There are three hindrances that can exist in our hearts to keep us from actually following Jesus. These are blind spots. Peter was genuine, but he couldn’t follow Jesus because of a mindset. Peter had not denied his own ideas, taken up his cross, and actually followed the real Jesus.

The first hindrance is being given to the opinions of people. John 5:44 says, *“How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?”* If Satan can’t control you, he will seek to control you through people.

The second hindrance is riches. The Word of God is clear: “you cannot serve both God and Mammon.” Mammon is controlling a lot of believers. We want to be in the flow of realizing that

God will supply for you supernaturally to create flexibility in order that you can accomplish His Great Commission.

A third hindrance is self-preservation, or as Mark 4 calls it “the desire for other things.” I have this hobby, I just bought a field. I just got married, etc. Again, this is a heart stance - not some sort of an aesthetic ideal: there is richness in the Kingdom! You have to leave something in order to follow a new thing. If you will follow Christ, I can promise you what He will do: He will make you a fisher of men! But you cannot follow two things simultaneously: *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.”* (Mt. 6:24) We all want to serve God, so let’s remove any hindrances!

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### Points to Ponder . . .

- In what ways is learning to walk in the Great Commission like learning to walk in holiness?
- How can the work of God really just be to “believe in Him whom He sent?”
- How is following Jesus related to the Great Commission?
- What do we learn about following Christ from Peter’s life?
- What are the three hindrances/blind spots to following Christ?
- Would anyone be willing to try and recite Mk. 16:15-18?