

“We Do Whatever It Takes To Reach All People” // Luke 15:4–7; 1 Corinthians 9:19–24 // *Be the Movement* #2

We’re in a series called “Be the Movement,” in which we’re looking at the core values that define the mission of TSC. These are not new values for us, just fresh articulations of the values that have guided us now for going on two decades.

These are values that should not only define our church, they are values that should define our lives. They are the essence of what it means to follow Jesus, and I am showing you how they are all thoroughly anchored in his life and ministry and in the lives of the Apostles who followed him.

I want you to know these values--to embody them at the core of who you are and live them out.

Before I get to that, let me say one word about the season that we’re in—We’ve said for a while that our mission at TSC is to be a movement of DMDs both in RDU and around the world. We don’t want to merely be a group that gathers each weekend for a large religious show, but a group of DMD’s who carry the gospel with you wherever you go.

Well, this season has given us a chance to actually take huge leaps forward in that, because we’re in a season where we can’t come together as several thousand in big locations--so we’ve called on you to lead smaller gatherings of the church in your home. Hear me: the church needs to still gather; not gathering is not an option, and no one should worship alone. This is an opportunity for multiple leaders to rise up and lead in the movement in their homes and neighborhoods, even workplaces. We’re going to supply you with materials--Summit Online--but you get to lead the movement. To BE the movement.

**Awhile back I made a statement to you that we needed a new standard of success for our members—It was a quote from Francis Chan:

"Long gone are the days when we should be content with a bunch of people who sing out loud, don't divorce, and give to missions. I now want to know I can drop off any member of my church in a city, and that person could grow in Jesus, make disciples, and help start a church." We want to know that if your job sends you to Dubai, and there are no churches, you'd be capable of starting one and making disciples there. You see, that's what God wants for his people--that's Jesus' vision for you as a disciple.

And, like I said, we have a chance to actually do that in the next few months. Y'all, listen: if we do this right, y'all, when this chapter is over, and I hope it's soon--we're going to see a lot of leaders equipped to lead in this mission like never before. A lot of you are going to discover leadership gifts you didn't know you had. So, go to summitchurch.com/gather today to find out how you can lead or be involved. Also, if you're already doing this--hosting people in your home to fellowship during the service--we want you to formally let us know. Why? Because we want to be able to resource you as well. We want to make sure a pastor is able to be connected to you and care for you as you be the movement and lead well. So please please please, even if you are already gathered and there is no more room in your home for more people, still go to /gather and let us know.

Works consulted:

“The Cost of Mission,” sermon, Tim Keller

“Luke 15,” sermon, Dr. Scott Hildreth

“8 Non-Negotiables of the Great Commission,” sermon, David Platt

The first of our four values was **1. We prioritize the gospel above all, which we looked at last time.** For Jesus, and for the Apostles, the gospel was a message of *FIRST* importance, which meant that all - other - agendas, no matter how good, worthy and important, take a distant second place.

The second value is **2. We do whatever it takes to reach all people**, and that's what we will discuss today.

In **Luke 15--turn there first if you have your Bibles**--Jesus tells 3 stories that are absolutely gripping—they show you how God feels about people separated from him--how he feels about YOU if you are separated from him. 3 parables that teach the same point, each increasing in intensity.

Hey, do you ever wonder how God feels about you? This is how.

- First, Jesus tells a story about a shepherd with 100 sheep that discovers that one is missing. The shepherd doesn't say, "Well, I got 99 more. A 1% attrition rate isn't bad." No, he is so distraught over the 1 lost that he stows the 99 in a safe place and goes out all night searching for the 1. That's how God feels about you. He doesn't look at the size of TSC and say, "That's a lot of people!" No, he cares for you. He wants *you*.
- The second story is about a woman who loses a valuable coin--this time it's 1 of 10, and we are to assume that means it represents a tenth of her life savings--and she spends a whole day tearing up her house looking for it. You wouldn't do that for a penny; you would only do that for something valuable. Lost people are valuable to God.
- In the 3rd parable, the value of the lost object increases once again: this time it is of a lost son—the son rejects his father, shames him, and runs away with his inheritance to a far country. The striking thing is that the father--rather than disowning his son or harboring anger toward him--stands at the door every day looking out toward the far country, longing for his son will come. And when he does, the Father can't contain himself. He casts aside all dignity and runs to embrace him. He just can't be happy without his son. He just can't be happy without you.
- The point is: *Lost people matter to God*

In fact, let the extreme weight of Jesus' words just settle in on you: **4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. -- There is more joy in heaven over 1 lost person being reclaimed than the faithfulness of the 99. Summit--think about that. There is literally nothing we can do with the 99 that brings Jesus as much joy as rescuing the 1. Yes, we care about the 99. We want to minister to you and take you deeper in the gospel--that's our 3rd value, make disciples not just converts. But nothing we can do with the 99 brings Jesus as much joy as rescuing the 1.

Here's how we say that: **Value 2: We do whatever it takes to reach all people. Let me show you how Paul embodied this priority, and then we'll talk about what it means for our church.

****1 Cor 9--19** For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all (the word there is *slave*, btw. I'm totally owned by something else. Nothing is mine anymore. And what is it that I'm owned by? My desire to); **that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the**

law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. 24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Paul says that for him, winning people to Jesus is like running in a race.

In a race, you lay aside anything that doesn't help you win. If you run in a cross country event, you have the right to wear a backpack, crash helmet and that fancy new pair of cowboy boots you love so much when you run. But it will hinder your ability to win, and if that's what you care about, you'll lay them aside.

Paul says I will lay aside anything that keeps me from bringing more people to Jesus. I have made myself a slave to the mission, which means nothing I have really belongs to me anymore. It's all surrendered to that goal.

Interestingly, the context of 1 Cor 9 is Paul is explaining why he won't defend himself against certain attacks. He says, I have the RIGHT to defend myself, but I don't see how that will help the gospel's advance in your lives, so I lay down that right. See verse 15: **But I have made no use of any of these rights...** Even defending my reputation comes second to the gospel's advance.

Whether it helps him reach more people is Paul's grid for EVERYTHING. Again, we express that here at TSC by saying: **We do whatever it takes to reach all people.**

I want to explain what that looks like practically here at TSC, but before I do, can we just stop a minute and meditate on--marvel at--the love of God for lost people--for us? That's what this value is grounded in.

What this means for TSC:

1. Our mission to the lost trumps the comfort of our members

- Early on at TSC, we decided to set aside our preferences to reach people. ****One of the stories I love to tell about this involves a beloved saint who just went home to be with Jesus a few weeks ago, David Baber.** When I 1st got to the church in 2002, I started a basketball ministry in our gym. Group of local guys from the neighborhood came to play each Monday night. They all had nicknames for each other--money, streak, no don't shoot, air...
- We are where we are because of a group of saints that were willing to make themselves uncomfortable for the sake of reaching others.
- Sadly, the countryside of America is dotted with churches who won't do that. Their members don't want to change, because change is uncomfortable. They sit on furniture designed in the 1940's, listen to music from the 1950's and listen to a pastor dressed like he got stuck in the 1960's. I heard one guy say, "If the 1950's ever come back, a lot of our churches are Baptist churches are going to be ready!"
- Some of you grew up in churches like these, and you know how hard it is to get them to change *anything*. The organ. The handbells. And Lord help us if somebody tries to bring in a drumset; that's tantamount to setting up an altar to Satan.
- The sad truth is that many of these churches have prioritized maintaining their traditions over reaching their grandchildren.
- And I know it's easy for us to hear that and feel smug because *we're so modern*. And this is an amazing church. But you realize how easy it is for that spirit to creep back in. How willing are you to put up with

things you don't like in church for the sake of reaching others? How comfortable are you with being uncomfortable?

- Let me make this real for a minute. Paul's illustration for how he applied 1 Cor 9 was having Timothy, his travel companion, circumcised. For Jews, being circumcised was the thing you did to show you respect your heritage. Well, Timothy had a Jewish mom, and a Gentile dad, and so he had never been circumcised. That became a huge problem for a lot of Jews they were trying to reach--it became a stumbling block for them because they thought Timothy was disrespecting his heritage. Paul says, "According to the gospel, he doesn't need to be." But in order to remove any obstacle to the gospel, Paul had Timothy, a grown man, get circumcised. That gives whole new meaning to have some 'skin in the game.' Right?
- Keep that in the back of your mind as the standard for being uncomfortable. I feel like Timothy would say to a lot of us, "Please don't BELLYACHE that the MUSIC is not exactly to your liking."
- We believe we should always be pushing the envelope here. We want to get comfortable being uncomfortable. We want to do things innovatively, even when it feels risky: I love how a pastor friend, Craig Groeschel says it: "To reach people no one else is reaching you have to do what no one else is doing"
- Hey, this is why we chose to pursue multi-site all those many years ago. Just to be clear, multi-site is a headache for everybody. But we figured that it was easier to reach more people in the Triangle if lost people had a facility they could come to within a 15 min drive of them. I'm flattered you would drive... So rather than build one big, gargantuan "6 Flags over Jesus" kind of building, we said, let's build slightly smaller outposts all over the Triangle. We say, "Stay where you are, serve where you live..."
- I hope you, and I, will always feel a little bit uncomfortable here. Because the mission is not to meet our needs but reach our neighbors.

Number 2: Being a church willing to do *whatever it takes* to reach all people means:

2. We pursue width, not just depth

I sometimes hear the criticism that we need to stop focusing on growing and instead focus on taking people deep. And I get that--our 3rd value is that we make disciples, not just converts.

But you see from Jesus' parable that there is literally nothing we can do with the 99 that brings Jesus as much joy as reaching the 1, which means that in all our focus on taking people deep, we can never lose the priority of going after the 1. Nothing we can teach to the 99 brings Jesus as much joy as restoring that 1 lost sheep, as reclaiming that one prodigal son or daughter.

**Charles Spurgeon, who was not known for light and shallow, seeker-friendly preaching, said, "If my hearers are not converted, I feel like I have wasted my time; I have lost the exercise of brain and heart. I feel as if I lost my hope and lost my life, unless I find for my Lord some of his blood-bought ones... I would sooner bring one sinner to Jesus Christ than unpack all the mysteries of the divine Word, for conversion is the thing we are to live for."

So yes, we want to grow deep. But believers that grow deep without growing wide are probably not as deep as they think they are, because growing deep in the gospel always makes you reach wide for the gospel. We're not supposed to be a stagnant pond where you simply receive, receive, receive, we're supposed to be a river where gospel water flows through us to others.

3. We go after ALL peoples in our community, not just one kind

Our statement says “Do whatever it takes to reach ALL people.”

- “All” there doesn’t just mean as many as possible. It means *all KINDS of people*. Certainly we want to reach as many as possible—that’s the whole point of the story of the 99 and the 1. Every lost person matters to God.
- But “all” there also means all KINDS of people: people from every walk of life, from every socioeconomic strata, from every ethnic group.
- When Jesus gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28, he told the Apostles to go and make disciples from “panta ta ethne,” literally “all the people groups”—the different tribes and ethnicities and language groups. That’s why we send out so many missionaries from this church—we have 276 members living overseas right now. We don’t do that because everyone in the Triangle is reached and we’re done here, but because Jesus wants people from every tribe and tongue to be a part of his family.
- And that’s also why we as a church try to reach all the different kinds of people in the Triangle.
- And by the way, the vision for doing that is not separate churches for each of the different kinds of people, but one united church where different kinds of people come together in a united family in Christ. When Paul went to Corinth, he didn’t try to plant a 1st Jewish Baptist on one side of town and a 1st Gentile Baptist on the other, even though that would have been way easier; he planted one with them together and then wrote letters like Corinthians to help them get along with all the culture clash they experienced.
- Why did Paul do that? He explained in Ephesians that the mystery and glory of the gospel would be revealed in a special way in a community of people who had little in common culture but everything in common in Christ—more so than it would in a church where everybody looked the same, liked the same things, and approached social questions the same way.
- BTW, did you notice that in 1 Cor 9, when Paul talked about being willing to do whatever it took to reach all people, that most of the examples he used of how he was willing to adapt were cultural?
 - Vs. 20: To the Jew, he says, I became like a Jew. I did Jewish things. I ate Jewish food. I resonated with Jewish questions, I entered into Jewish struggles. I wore Jewish clothes. I made Timothy get circumcised. That’s a cultural adaptation.
 - To those under the law he became like one under the law. I respected their traditions, I followed their protocols and adapted to their community as much as possible, even though technically I was free in Christ to live outside the Jewish law. Again, that’s cultural.
 - To those weak—Paul is most likely referring to those Jewish converts “weak” in their understanding that the gospel had released them from Jewish OT laws, like he discusses in Romans 14. He says, “I accommodated their weakness. I didn’t make a big deal out of it, and did my best not to offend them.” Again, cultural.
- Quite often, the thing that gets in the way of people hearing the gospel are cultural barriers. The gap between us and many of our neighbors, Summit Church, is often a cultural one. Jesus didn’t just die for Republicans, or conservatives, or white people, or middle-class families with kids. He died for all peoples at all stages of life of all economic strata. And to reach them, we all have to be willing to lay aside parts of our culture sometimes. We have to enter into someone else’s world. And, I’ll tell you, **that’s hard**.
- Listen: It’s easy to nod our heads at that in affirmation. But it’s hard when the rubber hits the road. Let me show you what I mean.
- One of our members of color, who attended a Black church for most of his life, told me that growing up, in times like these, the church was the one place he could go for refuge, confident that everyone there felt his pain, shared his anxieties, and just understood. In the church was the one place he could just be. The trauma of slavery and Jim Crow laws created a solidarity in the Black community that served as a refuge in times of trial. So, he said, when something tragic happened in the Black community, he could expect it to

be discussed at church that week because that shared pain and fear was on everyone's mind. In choosing to come to a multiethnic church, especially one where the majority of the membership was white, he said, he had given up that comfort because not every person in the church understands his worries. Some, in fact, seem primarily concerned to show that his worry or his pain is not legitimate. He's chosen to be a part of our community here because he believes in the vision of this church. But it's hard.

- And here's the truth: He shouldn't have to be the only one who has to adapt. For those of us in the white community, we too have to enter, as much as we can, into the culture of others. To take on their burdens. To listen to them. It doesn't mean we say that their perspective is infallible and ours is wholly flawed. But it means we lay aside cultural preferences and perspectives and try to enter in with each other and remove as many barriers as possible--to lay aside whatever we can for the gospel.
- It also means all of us are muted on some of our perspectives to keep from causing unnecessary division in the body. Romans 14: LISTEN: Paul was willing to be quiet, or muted, on secondary convictions he was fully convinced were right, because he thought the unity of the church and its evangelistic mission were more important than maintaining a uniformity of perspective in these other things--even though he thought they were important.
- ****Hear me--EVERYTHING to Paul was a secondary matter behind bringing people to Jesus.**
- Being willing to do whatever it takes to reach all people means removing any obstacle we can that gets in the way of gospel proclamation. We see a great example of this philosophy at work in the early church. In Acts 15, Jewish and Gentile believers were so divided over a cultural issue that they could no longer worship together. Churches led by Gentiles were experiencing a "Jewish flight" and *vice versa*. The Apostles knew this undermined Jesus' prayer for unity in his church, a unity he said would demonstrate the veracity of his message. So the church leaders came together to try to work something out. Their solution, however, seems confusing. They basically said that Gentiles should (a) avoid sexual immorality and (b) avoid eating things that had died by strangulation (both of which were a regular part of Gentile culture) (Acts 15:29). ****The reason for the prohibition on sexual immorality is clear enough, but the prohibition on eating something strangled? Of the entire Hebrew law, *that* is the regulation they want to enforce? "Don't eat things that died by choking." Was this really among the most essential of all the Old Testament laws?**
- No! James explains the reasoning for these regulations: *"For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him ..."* (Acts 15:21). In other words, there were a lot of Jews in every major city. Lost Jews--who needed to be reached for Jesus. And the Apostles knew that if these unsaved Jews came into the church and people there were eating strangled animals, the Jews wouldn't be able to stomach being there (no pun intended). And because of that, they wouldn't hear the gospel.¹ So, he asked them from doing some things they had a right to do to remove obstacles to people hearing the gospel.
- James explains their overarching rationale as this: **"... we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles [or Jews] who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19 NIV)**. He asked both Jews and Gentiles to behave in ways that would not make it hard for unsaved members of the other group to find their way to God. Both would be a little uncomfortable; both would have to be willing to have their fur rubbed the wrong way sometimes.

¹ The ESV Study Bible summarizes James' ruling this way: James concludes his appeal by noting the widespread (in every city) teaching and affirmation of the Mosaic law, thus suggesting that there is no need to give unnecessary offense either to Jewish believers or to unbelieving Jews who might otherwise consider becoming Christians in the future.

- But the gospel was worth it. Whatever it takes to reach people for Jesus.
- Summit family, I wish I could plaster James' phrase on every single one of our hearts and make it the headline for each of our Facebook pages. *Do all you can not to make it hard for Gentiles who are turning to God.* Don't make it hard for our Black friends to find God. Don't make it hard for Democrats. Don't make it hard for Republicans. Don't make it hard for white seekers, brown seekers, or Asian seekers. Don't make it hard for public school teachers or policemen. We have a gospel too precious and a mission too urgent to let anything stand in their way.
- For some of you, you are all into politics and social solutions--and we should care about justice and righteousness in our society--but you let the particulars of your perspective create an obstacle for others to be here. Of course, we should be united in speaking out against injustice and for life, but our perspectives on the best solutions for these things or our convictions on which candidates best get the job done should never get in the way of the one essential thing we must do--preaching the gospel.
- Hear me--I know I sound like a broken record--it's not that these things are unimportant; it's that the gospel we preach is THAT important. For many of you that stay constantly offended here, on the verge of leaving--perhaps the problem is not that the issues tempting you to leave are so important, it's that the greater mission of the gospel is not important enough to you.

4. Our members take responsibility for the mission

Here's maybe the most important truth that you'll hear this weekend.

Doing whatever it takes to reach all people means that each of YOU takes responsibility for reaching people. At TSC, we do something called **WY1? Every person...

You say, "It's not my gift." Jesus said, **Matthew 4:19, "Follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men."** When you accepted the call to follow Jesus, you were commissioned to reach people. This command--called the Great Commission--is not a special gifting for some, it's a mandate for all.

You say, "But I don't know how."

- Well first, you should learn. We're going to provide several opportunities for you to grow in this this Fall. We have some tools on our website now. Check them out at **summitchurch.com**
- **So, first, learn. **But second, how hard is it?** I mean, if you were trapped in a burning building, about to pass out from smoke, and just when you thought all hope was lost a fireman broke in... You could point people to your rescuer.
- And if for a while you're still learning the Bible verses and the right questions to ask, you can point people to Jesus: Invite them to join you on the weekend for service. **Or, how about this? Tell them your story.** One thing **on the front page of our website** is a tool for helping you write and tell your story with God in less than 3 minutes. Go check it out.

2 questions:

- **Have you met Jesus?** This is Jesus' heart for you! He left the 99 *for you*. He stands at the gate of Heaven every day looking out after you. He can't be happy until YOU are restored to him. Are you ready to come home? ... Pray. Text your decision to **33933**
- **Do you have a ONE?** Go to **summitchurch.com/one** and get involved in this!

Check out this awesome story: [Testimony](#)

