



Christian Life Fellowship

Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



Tools

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Introduction:

I want to talk to you this morning about tools. Tools can be useful to build or destroy. There are times we are to use the tools God has given the church to build up and other times we are to use those tools to destroy. The building up is important, but sometimes in order to build something first has to be torn down. A couple of years ago when our missions team went to Mississippi to help rebuild after Katrina hit, there had to be some tools used to demolish things that had been damaged. One could not rebuild without first taking inventory and clearing out what was ruined. Once the way had been cleared by using tools, then something that was useful and valuable could be built.

The opportunities that God gives to us at times go unnoticed. Sometimes our eyes are closed to the things that God wants to do with us. God wants to use each of us to bring His life, His hope, His authority into the world where we live, study, work, learn and do business. God uses the things that He permits in our lives to develop us, to formulate us and solidify the truth of what we know into the foundation of what we believe. God wants to use us to accomplish wonderful things for His glory with His authority. We may not have the physical strength that Sampson had or the incredible mind and knowledge that the Apostle Paul had, but God has given us tools that we can use to accomplish the task He left to the church. Those tools will accomplish the same thing for you that they will for me.

The church of Jesus Christ is alive and well. Does it have problems, yes; does it always act like God wants His church to act, no. But the church is the venue through which God works today. The church can limit or advance the work of God by how she uses the tools that she has been given to do the work God has called her to do.

Last weekend, Julie and I had the joy of being at a former place of ministry where they were celebrating 40 years of ministry. One of the former pastors was speaking on Saturday evening and he shared a tidbit of information that has gripped my heart. It is a powerful truth. He said, "If each person here would reach one person for Christ this year and disciple them and then those people duplicate themselves in the next year and that would go on each year, within 31 years the entire population would be reached with the gospel!" That seems unbelievable, but it is possible. So why isn't the whole world reached yet? Could it be that we as the people of God aren't using the tools He's given us? With the power of the Holy Spirit, it is possible to take the gospel to every creature within one generation.

This morning I would like to revisit the tools that God has left to the church to get the job done for Him. If you were to go to your job tomorrow and your boss told you that you had to do your job and all you could use was

paper, a pen and a telephone, many people would be lost. You would say to your boss, "If you want me to do the job, you have to give me the tools to get the job done. I have to have resources. I have to have a computer or a calculator. I have to have certain programs and people or else I cannot be effective and I won't be able to get the job done." The right tools are important to get the job done.

If you were to paint the outside of a house, someone could say, "Go get the job done. There is a paint brush and some paint." It would take longer and you would not be able to do as good a job if you were given an artist's brush as opposed to a wide paint brush or even a sprayer. Jesus didn't leave us with any old tools. He gave us the right tools that we would need so there would be efficiency and effectiveness in doing the job.

I. Tool of God's Word

The mandate to win the world for Christ starts with one person and it is a mandate from Jesus Christ Himself.

Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

When Jesus was alive in bodily form, there were people who wanted to know by what authority he did what he did. They wanted to know if they should really listen to Jesus and his teaching and radical ideas. So they asked Him, "Who gave you this power? Who told you to heal the sick?"

This winter at CLF we had some snow that fell down from our carport onto the sidewalk. Since it is a public walkway, we did not have the authority to block off the sidewalk, yet we did not want people walking there due to the possibility of falling or injuring themselves. So we called the city and asked if they would bring some barricades to put up there so the sidewalk would be blocked until the ice and snow melted. They did so. They had the authority as the department of public works to shut down that section of the sidewalk.

When we share the gospel, when we are intentional about it and we utilize the tools God has given to us, it is not that we have dreamed up some half-baked ideas of our own. We have been given authority as God's children, to make disciples, baptize those disciples, teach them to follow in obedience the principles and directives that God has given.

Keys represent authority. When you have the key to something you have authority for access. Not

everyone can go there, but you have been given authority to be there and authority to keep some people out of that area or away from what is there.

Matthew 16:19 (NIV) I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Jesus told His disciples, "You have been given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Binding and loosing are your responsibility and privilege. Whatever you lock up on earth will be locked up in heaven and whatever you untie on earth will be untied in heaven." Authority is something that is given. Authority comes from a source of recognized power and might that is beyond our own ability.

The Word of God is powerful. It is transformational. When I hear testimony or read testimony about someone who read that Word of God and came to faith in Jesus and the power of the word transformed them; that is a powerful tool. We have been given God's Word as the source of nourishment for our spiritual life. David said, "The Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. I will hide it in my heart that I might not sin against God." I hope you cherish the Word. I hope you commit it to memory. I hope you allow the Word to change you. I hope you let the Word reflect the true condition of your heart. I hope you allow the Word to rise up within you and strengthen you. I hope you believe the Word, that you can do what it says, you can be what it says, you can go where it says. The Bible has been written through the creative power of the Holy Spirit and its words are true.

II. Tool of prayer

John 14:13-14 You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, because the work of the Son brings glory to the Father. Yes, ask anything in my name, and I will do it!

How do you want God to be glorified? How do you want Jesus to work in a particular person's life or in your business or home or school or neighborhood? Would you ask Him to do that? The tool of prayer should not be underestimated. When we pray, we don't just appeal to God who is all powerful to bring His will and His influence to bear, but through prayer we agree with God's will being accomplished.

Pray it into being. If you read the book of Acts, I hope you will be inspired. People were healed, people were released from jail and people had encounters with God because of prayer. The culture was impacted because of prayer. People who were into sorcery were delivered because of prayer. People who were into lifestyles of sin were changed because people prayed.

You want your spouse to find Christ, pray. You want revival, pray. You want your children to find Christ, pray. You want your neighbor to find Christ, pray and pray and keep praying. Don't give up. I think we should have a spiritual hit list. On that list we should put the names of people we are claiming for the kingdom of God and we should pray like we mean business. When we pray it should be with faith, fervency, passion, intensity, with tears, with humility, and with the spirit.

In a few weeks, leading up to Pentecost Sunday, we are going to be organizing a season of fasting and prayer here at CLF. Begin to think about what God might have you fast and pray for. Begin to think about how God might want to use you, empower you and prepare you to make a difference when it comes to the work of advancing the kingdom of God.

Conclusion:

God has called us to make a difference and I want to challenge us to live our lives that way. We are members of the body of Christ. Let's act like it. Let's renew our determination to skillfully utilize the tools that God has given us as His people to see the world changed.

III. Tool of the person and power of the Holy Spirit

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you. Since Jesus was leaving His disciples in His bodily form and He knew they needed help, He pledged to them this counselor who would go with them and never leave them.

It's good to know that we are not alone. It's good to know that we have one who can direct us. It's good to know that we can have available all the resources of heaven at our disposal, to move the kingdom of God forward and to see the completion of God's vision for His kingdom accomplished. It's good to know that no weapon formed against us will prosper. It's good to know that we win in the end.

It's good to know that Jesus is coming back for His church. He promised He would do so and God keeps His promises. We don't know when, but we know that His coming is closer to us now than when we first believed. We also know that He is coming back for a spotless bride, one who is radiant, one who is pure, one who is victorious, one who has overcome and I could go on and on. Jesus did not come to leave the dream for His church, His bride, the love of his life, to fizzle out in a corner somewhere, but to complete the challenge. He expects His people to be witnesses to His life-changing message; He expects us to tell others that He is alive. He expects us to bring deliverance to people who are bound and in captivity to drive out evil spirits that control them and desire to destroy them. He expects us to lay hands on the sick so they recover and in His name to use His authority to establish and advance His kingdom in the hearts of people. Until He comes we are to be salt and light. It is our joy to serve God by making a difference in the places where we are positioned.