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[00:00:06] Stand together today we're in Matthew Chapter five. You guys want to be salt and light. That's better than the first service. So I'm glad I'm glad to hear that. Verse 13, chapter five, verse 13. The Bible says this, y'all. They're okay. You'll get there. You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a lamp. Excuse me, under a basket, but on a lamp stand. And it gives light to all who are in the house. Check out verse 16. Let your light. Well, let's say this together. Okay. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven and father. Thank you so much for your word today for us and God, we pray, we ask that your Holy Spirit would get a hold of our hearts. God, that we would be captivated. God that we would be captivated by what you have for us today. And the impact of it would not just be felt for 24 hours, but, God, that we would see the fruit of what your word says to us in our lives manifested in the coming weeks and months and years that we would see a God once again your gospel, not only influencing our lives and our city, but our nation and the world. We love you, Lord. We pray. Please, God, have your way with us today. This is your church, God, this is your church. We do not want to miss the purpose that you have for us.

[00:01:58] We do not want to play games and so speak to us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. And you can have a seat. The Cambridge Dictionary defines influence as follows to affect or change how someone or something develops, behaves or thinks so. The Cambridge Dictionary defines influence as follows to affect or change how someone or something develops, behaves or thinks. I think that when we think of influence, we oftentimes think of influencers, we think about social media influencers. And of course, those are individuals with a high level of popularity or authority because of their place within an industry. Right. These are very popular individuals that have significant sway over sometimes large portions of our culture. But I don't think influencers are just limited to people that use social media as a platform. I think about news pundits or athletes or politicians or culture warriors or actors and actresses. I'm thinking about, you know, us going through our week and how many people we allow to have influence on the way that we think or the way that we behave. All of those individuals, whatever industry they may be engaged in, oftentimes have very significant influence on our lives. But I want to remind you today, and I know that this is just totally obvious, but I have to say it anyway, for the Christian for the Christian Jesus should be the greatest influence on our lives. Right. He should be. He should be our influencer and he should be the one that we follow. I'm not saying today that you can't have other influences in your life, but all of those influences are mini influences. Many as as like the m-i-n-i version, the small influences that contribute ultimately to the influence that Jesus wants to have over you.

[00:04:00] I think that Jesus is the greatest influencer to ever live. Like there's no one that's been as influential as Jesus Christ. And you might be sitting here today and you might be thinking, well, listen, you know, Jesus only had 500 followers when he was at his ascension. And my Instagram has more than 500 followers. So I have a bigger influence than Jesus. And I know you're not dumb enough to say something like that, right? But it does beg the question, how did how did it go? How did it go from a small group? I would say five hundreds, a relatively small group of people. How did the church go from that small seed to having such a radical impact on the whole known world? Because that's exactly what happened. The church exploded. You know, by the time the Apostle Paul is planning churches, there are people who are talking about the apostles like this. You are the people that have turned the world upside down. And like from our perspective, you know, they didn't turn the world upside down. They turned it right side up. We know that. But what's being said is this this whole Christianity thing, this thing that started so small that seem to be insignificant, that I'm sure the religious leaders in Jerusalem thought, hey, no problem, man, we will snuff this out. This is not going to be a big deal within 100 years. It was the most influential religion, you know, quote unquote, religion in the world. And so it begs the question, how did this happen? And I think that it happened because Jesus built influencers. Jesus built influencers. You say, well, what were those influencers called? Well, they're called disciples. That's what a disciple is. A disciple is a Jesus.

[00:05:43] Influencer is somebody who is a student, a learner, an apprentice of Jesus. That simply means that that individual follows his way, emulates what he believed, what he taught, and how he lived, and then leads other people to do the same thing. That's what a disciple is. Are you a disciple today? I'm just curious. Any disciples in the house? Right. So you're somebody who is a student, you're a learner, you're an apprentice of Jesus. You believed in him with all of your heart, received him personally as your Lord and Savior. And now you follow his way. You emulate what he believed, what he taught, how he lived. And listen. Sometimes our definition of disciple stops there and it can't stop there because it doesn't stop there. It also includes leading others to do the same. You know, today I want to remind you that to be an influence for Jesus, you have to be being influenced by Jesus. To be an influencer for Jesus, you need to be being influenced by Jesus. I think it'd be easy for me to say, Hey, how many of you guys want to be influencers for Jesus? Raise your hand. Easy thing for us to raise our hand and say I do. But remember, he has to be continually influencing your life. You know, the influence of Christ in your life doesn't just go back to one single point in time when a message was preached, an invitation was given, and you responded, It's much more than that. The influence of Christ in your life needs to be happy happening every single day, every day. Now, listen, you do the math for yourself. You evaluate this week, look back on this week and honestly consider who has had the most influence in your life this week.

[00:07:35] You say, Well, how do I determine that? I would say one way to determine it is by just taking a look at who got most of your time, what influence their got most of your time this week. Was it the Lord? Was your Bible open? Were your ears open? Was your heart open? Were you devoted in prayer, seeking a space and on a daily basis asking him to influence you so that in turn you could influence others to follow him? You need to do that evaluation for yourself. But it's important for us to remember that if we do want to be an influence for Christ, we have to be walking daily with His influence in our lives. And the truth is this Christians will have three types of influence. Christians will have three types of influence. This is important because when we took our survey, you guys remember the survey that we took a couple of weeks ago. We had a question about how you would rate yourself in sharing your faith. That essentially just simply means how you're doing as a Jesus influencer. And the. The vast majority of you gave yourselves a three out of five, three out of five. So if it's like the normal grading system most of us got to see, you know, you're being honest about how much of an influence you have you're having on the people around you. And the majority said, well, you know, I'm probably a C, I'm not great. I'm not absolutely miserable, but I know I could be a lot better. And the truth is this as Christians, we're going to have one of three types of influence. First of all, of course, we're going to have a good influence. And that simply means this, that we're living in a way that leads people to see Jesus in our life and encourages people to follow him.

[00:09:15] That's a good influence. You're living your life in a way. You're comporting yourself in a way where people can see Christ in your life and it inspires them. It encourages them to want to follow Jesus as well. Some of us as Christians, we're having a bad influence, right? We're leaving people with a false view of who Jesus is and what it means to be a disciple. Now, this can happen for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it happens because the lifestyle we're living is in conflict with what we say we believe. In other words, I'm saying, you know, we can be out there saying that we're Christians, but then our lifestyle does not support does not support that statement. We're living in ways that are obviously not ways that Christians should be living. And so we give people this impression, this false impression of what it means to follow Christ or who Christ is. So you've got good, you've got bad. And then can you guys guess the third type of influence? Christians have non zero, no influence at all. So we're talking about people who are living as undercover Christians. Undercover Christians. You know, you work with people like this, you've worked together for five years and then all of a sudden, you know, one day you're having this conversation and and this person is like, yeah, you know, I believe in Jesus. And I go to this church and you're like, You don't say it out loud. You don't say it out loud, but you're like, I would have never guessed right. I would have never guessed. You're a Christian. We've been working together for five years and you've never even shared your faith. Listen, I don't I don't want to be cynical today, but I do want to be honest.

[00:10:56] And I think there's a good portion of Christians who are living in this third category. They're undercover Christians. No one would ever guess. You know, they're kind of benign. It's not a good influence. It's not a bad influence. It's just no influence. And I'll tell you why I believe that in a minute. But but before I do, I want to tell you why it is important to influence people for Jesus. So there are two reasons today why each of you and of course, including me, why we should want to be Jesus influencers. The first one is this is up on the screen for you. The only thing that you can take with you to heaven are the people that you bring with you. Right? So. So you're sitting there today and you're like, man, well, I'm saved. I'm born again. I go to church, you know, I read the Bible sometimes that's good enough, right? And I say, too, you no, it's not good enough. You say, Well, why isn't good enough? Because we're having this conversation with each other today because no one else is here. And I say to you, because when you get to heaven, you're not going to be able to take your stuff. You're not going to be able to take your stuff. You know, the all of the possessions that you've been so focused on accumulating for yourself when you die and I'm doing the memorial service, we're not going to hook your coffin up to your U-Haul. All right. And I'm not going to give the message. Hey, you know what? They worked really hard is good. They did. Because because their mansion in heaven, everyone else's is going to be empty, but they're going to take all of their stuff with them to heaven.

[00:12:25] I'm not going to preach that message because you're not going to take your stuff right? The flesh will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. You say, Well, what? What can I take? I say, You can take the souls that you've influenced with the gospel, those seeds that you've planted, the seeds that you've watered, those opportunities that you've been bold enough to say to somebody on the airplane, Hey, have you put your trusted faith in Jesus Christ? Have you believed in him? Listen, those those opportunities, those divine appointments that God has given to you, give you the opportunity to take something with you to happen. The second thing is this, and this second point's really sharp. And I'm not going to I'm not going to dull the sharpness of it. Influencing people for Jesus is your purpose. So the second thing is this. You say, Well, Pastor, like, give me a reason why I should be an influencer for Jesus. And I say to you, Well, because influencing for people, excuse me. Influencing people for Jesus is your purpose. And without that, you fail as a Christian. Without that, you fail as a Christian. When Jesus gave the great commission to His disciples, it went something like this. Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He didn't say, Hey, if you want to. He didn't say, Hey, if it feels good for you. He said, Hey. He didn't say, Hey, this is up for grabs. And so, you know, like, you can take this or leave this. He didn't say, hey, this is really for the people who are on fire, you know, those born again Christians who really dedicate their life now.

[00:14:01] He said, if you're a disciple, if you're a disciple, this is my commandment. This is my commission. And without the fulfillment of that commission, you will fail as a believer in fulfilling your God given purpose. And so I say that to you today, and I do pray and I don't know what's going on in your heart right now, but I do pray you're thinking something like this. God, you know what? I of of all of the things that I do, I want to be, first and foremost an influencer for Christ. I want people. I hope, I hope, I hope. Listen, I hope, I pray. I plead with Rachel and I pray and fast. Because if we don't get this, this church will be dead. Do you understand that? Like we will just be a little group of people that gather together, and we'll have this institutional experience, and it'll be just a religious game. And I don't want to I don't want to play a religious game. And I know you don't want to play a religious game either. And so I do pray that you're provoked. You think you know what, Lord, I've got room to grow in this area, and I want my life to have some eternal value and eternal meaning. And I don't want to miss my purpose. And so how how can I be a more effective influence for Jesus? Well, I'm glad that you feel that way today. And if you're taking notes, the first thing that you can do is remember, our influence is most effective when it's undiluted and uncovered. If you really want to be an influencer for Christ, you need to remember that your influence is going to be most effective. You're going to have the greatest impact on the way people think and the decisions that they make towards Jesus.

[00:15:41] When your witness is undiluted and uncovered, let me say it a different way. No one needs a watered down Christianity lite. No one needs that. Our culture does not need a soft pedaling of the Gospel that the unbelieving people that God has placed in your life do not need a watered down version of what it means to be a Christian. And not only that, but they don't need you to be an undercover Christian. They don't need your light to be covered like Jesus is super clear, right? You says to the disciples, You're the salt of the earth. You are the salt of the earth. There's no other salt of the earth but you. And so if you lose your flavor, you have no value. He says you are the light of the world. You're not one of many lights. You in the sense of like there are all sorts of different belief systems to follow that lead to God. No, that's not true. This is not universalism. This is exclusive to the cross of Christ is exclusive. You are the light of the world and you will do nobody any help if you take your light and put a basket over it. A city is set on a hill. This is you know, if you go to Israel with me, we'll talk about this possible city that he was talking about in the Galilee that sat on top of a hill. And, you know, it was set on top of a hill and the lights would shine so that people would come to it. The purpose of your life is that your light would shine and people would see your good works and connect that to your father who is in heaven, and then give him the glory.

[00:17:16] So your salt. Your salt. As salt. You need to be potent as light. You need to shine. Now, you might be thinking today that, you know, I don't really know how to do that, Pastor. How do I do that? And I think it's a legitimate question to ask and to answer it because according to the survey, 28% of you have just been believers for one year. Right. One year or less is the extent of time you've had to really learn what it means to be a follower of Christ. And so I want to give you today, this is this is still point number one. Okay. So I want to give you four things under point number one, four ways that you can be very simple ways that you can be an influencer for Jesus. And if you're in a life group, this is one of the questions that I put in the curriculum. So you're going to want to write this down before I give you these four simple ways. I just want to set your mind at ease, right? Because some of you are like, Now, what do I have to be? Do I have to be Billy Graham to my neighbor? Like, am I supposed to get a pulpit pastor and put it on my front porch and, like, preach to people as they come out and while they don't water their lawn, because that doesn't happen in our city. But, you know, when people are coming and going, do I need to be like Billy Graham or do I need to just drop for spiritual laws or listen, sometimes we complicate what it means to be salt in light. I'm just going to give you some very simple things. Everybody in this room can be an influencer for Christ in a very powerful way.

[00:18:43] So number one is this you can be an influencer for Jesus by loving Jesus authentically, by simply loving Jesus authentically. I want to strongly encourage you today. Don't be ashamed that you love Jesus more than anything else. Don't be ashamed of the reality. Now, listen, if this is not a reality for you as a Christian, you've got another step to take. But we're going to let you take that step on your own. Let me just say, don't be ashamed that you love Jesus more than anyone or anything else. I'm just saying let people know. Let people know that your life is all about him. Be willing to talk to other people about how you love the Lord. Be willing to talk to other people about what He has done in your life. Now, let me ask you a question. Has he done some stuff in your life? Has he done anything? Has he done anything? All right. Okay. Let me just tell you, like the last service, it was dead silence. And I'm like, we got major problems at the 9 a.m. service, major issues. And so let me I want to hear I want to hear a little bit I want to hear a little bit about what he's done in your life. Okay. And so try to be ordered is kind of comes out is like blah, blah, blah from up here. But just shout it out was What's he done? My husband, man, that's awesome healing. Of healing from depression. Healing from addiction restoration. Children getting say. That's awesome. Provision. Yeah. Yeah. Would you say enlightenment? Let me just say you guys got something to say. You guys have a story to tell. You have a story to tell. And your story always connects to the why, right? What he has done connects to the how and to the why.

[00:20:33] So you can talk about how he's rescued you, how he's delivered you, how he's provided for you, how he's blessed your family. And then you can connect that to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Rachel and I were flying not so recently, and we were having a conversation with somebody who just sat down next to us and just launched into a conversation. And it was great, you know? And like for an hour and a half, there's nonstop talking, which is not the way I normally fly. But but it was amazing, you know, and it was a for sure divine appointment. And we started talking about, you know, young lady and we're talking about family and we're talking about marriage and we're talking about how, you know, God made marriage. There are questions about marriage. So, you know, how have you guys just had our anniversary 26 years? How have you guys. She's going to have a lot of rubies and diamonds in her crown. Let me tell you something. But, you know, the question was, how have you had a healthy marriage? And so it comes back to you, of course, for us. Well, you know what? God made marriage. God made marriage. And he's given us guidelines, instructions on how to have a healthy marriage and all that's contained in the word of God. Right. So he's given us he's given us, you know, the instructions. But it's not just the instructions, because you have to have the power to be able to fulfill the instructions. And so I'm like, listen, you know, it's great he's given us guidelines, but without his power, it's impossible because I'm not an easy person to love. Don't say amen today. I'm not an easy person to love. And so she's got to have the power of God in her life to love me the way that God's called her, to love me.

[00:22:11] Which opens up an opportunity for me to talk about how our lives are centered around the Lord because of how He's delivered me like that. He pulled me out of addiction, that he rescued me from being in jail, you know? And it all comes back. It all comes back to the person of Jesus Christ. It's seed planting. It's seed planting. And God is going to be faithful to cause those seeds to bear fruit. I'm just saying to you, your love for God shining naturally through your life will have the greatest impact on people around you. Your love for God that naturally shines through your life will have the greatest impact on the people around you. The second thing that you can do is this walk in sincere faith. Walk in sincere faith. By that I mean, don't be ashamed to let people know that you humbly trust God with your life and with the decisions that you make in your life. Now, I think when we're hanging out with brothers and sisters, you know, we're really good about talking in humble terms about how we trust God with everything and we trust God with big life decisions. I'm saying to you that you can let the nonbeliever in on your journey. You can let the nonbeliever in on your journey. And I think just open so many doors, because the truth is this the non-Christian is very curious how the Christian lives his or her life. So, for instance, you're single here today. You know, I mean, you can raise your hand if you want to, just so we know who's available. Right. I mean, I want to help everybody here in the congregation. So it's all right. Single people, raise your hand. Best. Best place to meet somebody who's going to be your husband or wife is at church.

[00:23:51] And so no issue for me and just opening the door for that opportunity. May God bless you. So, so so you're single, right? And you and your your unbelieving non-Christian friends are like, hey, man, you know, you're single and the clock is ticking and time is running out. And why aren't you. Why aren't you canvasing the bars? You know, why aren't you. Why aren't you going out and hitting the clubs so that you can find who your mate is supposed to be? And that provides an opportunity. Like, you're not an idiot for saying, You know what, I'm trust in the Lord. I don't do that because first of all, the person I'm looking for is probably not there, right? Is probably not there. But but in addition to that but in addition to that, I trust God, you know, like the Bible says, that if I seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, all these things will be added to me. Right? And so what I do in my life as a Christian is I pursue God and I'm obedient to what he calls me to do. And then he handles everything else. And the the non-Christian is going to be thinking, that's crazy. Like you have that type of living relationship with God is in Christianity just about going to church. Answer No, it's not. And so when you are walking in that sincere faith, it opens up opportunities for people to see how it really works. The third thing is this You can be a Jesus influencer by loving people like God loves them by loving people like God loves them. So if you love with God's love, I'm not talking about your love. I'm not talking about love with strings attached. I'm not talking about love that carries with it all these expectations that have to be fulfilled.

[00:25:37] I'm talking about a gap, a love. I'm talking about the Self-Giving love of God that is not only unconditional is oftentimes sacrificial. Right. That's the way that God loved us. He gave his only begotten son. He gives himself to us at great cost to himself. Do you understand what I'm talking about today? That's very different than our human love. That is that has all of these expectations, that has all these strings attached. You know, that's all that's all based on human performance. And the Bible says that we're called to love people in a way that God loves them. And so the truth is this God is the only source of that love. That type of love does not find itself naturally within your heart. I know. You're amazing. And beautiful and awesome and extraordinary. But you're. But you're not God. You're not God. And that that source of that type of love is only it only comes from him. And I'm saying to you today, that is why you need to be putting yourself in a place where that outflow of God's love is being poured into your life so that you can be an outflow of his love into the lives of others. The fruit of the spirit is love, love, right, and joy and peace and goodness and patience and faithfulness and gentleness and kindness and self-control. But the first thing is love is love. If you love others, just like God does, you will shine in a loveless world. You will shine in a loveless world. I know you guys are paying attention to the news and you saw some things that happened last week that have been in answer to prayer 50 years plus of prayer and seeking the face of God and.

[00:27:25] And, you know, there was a setup for that. You know, as Esther came from the Women's Resource Center and talked to us a little bit about what was coming down the pike. And let me just remind you that there is a tectonic, spiritual shift that's underway in our country. Right. That's one issue of many issues, like make no mistake about it, there are a lot of there are a lot of things that we need to be praying for. But all of this is just evidencing that there is a tectonic, spiritual shift that is underway. And I just want to remind you today, I feel compelled to remind you that when you're watching the news and you see all of this turmoil, remember that what you're really seeing is a spiritual battle that's happening in the unseen world. Right? You're just seeing the manifestation of it. And and in these moments, especially as Christians, we need to be very careful not to take the hate bait. Write the devil. The devil wants to entice you. He wants to entice you to to hate people, to view people as the enemy. He wants to draw you into the world of us versus them. But remember, this life of the Christian is not about us versus them. It's about leading people to him. It's about leading people to him. So listen, as you as you see these things play out before you, I want to remind you that when you see people, you're not seeing enemies. You're seeing opportunities. When we see people, we're not looking for left or right, we're considering up or down heaven or hell. Like fundamentally, this is what we need to be concerned about. And when you're loving, like God wants you to love, like God empowers you to love.

[00:29:10] It is going to cause people to stop and say, Wait a minute, what is going on in your life? The final thing today. The fourth thing is this You can be a Jesus influencer by acting like an influencer. I know this is not going to be like rocket science or brain surgery, but I'm just saying simply to you that if you want to influence people for Christ, they need it. You need to act like it. You need to act like an influencer. Your actions need to reinforce your message. Your lifestyle needs to be in alignment with the gospel. And first and foremost, that happens, by the way you and I speak. I think a lot of us impact our influence in a negative way because we speak in ways that don't honor God. You say, well, what way is don't honor God lying, gossip, hatred. Right. Abusive type of talk. Talk that tears people down instead of builds them up. Talk that might be influenced with falsehood instead of the truth. And so let's make sure as influencers for Christ, that the way we speak always honors the Father. And then the second thing with that point that I would say is actions always speak louder than words. Actions always speak louder than words the way. And we've touched on this already, so I'm not going to, like, hit this hard again. But the way that we live our lives, the behavior that we have. Right. We don't live like we used to live because we were rescued from that type of lifestyle. We don't manipulate anymore. We don't exploit people for our own selfish purposes anymore. We're not partying anymore. We're not getting drunk. We're not smoking dope. We're not taking LSD. We're not into.

[00:30:58] We're not into magic mushrooms. You know what I'm talking about? We're not into psilocybin. So let me just. You laugh. You laugh. But I'm telling you, that's one of the next big cultural issues that we're going to have is the use of psilocybin to deal with issues of mental health. And this is the research is being done right now. It's not a taboo issue anymore. It's being justified in religious circles. I'm just saying all of this, so I can ask you the question, has there been something in your life that is dimming your light? Has there been something in your life? Maybe the way you've been speaking, maybe the way that you've been living is not lining up with the message that you've been preaching, and it's affected your potency as a witness for Christ. Tonight, this afternoon, this morning. Whatever time it is, the response that you and I have to have is repentance. If there is some something that is in fact hindering our witness, we need to turn away from it and we need to turn to him. Ephesians five eight says this for you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord walk as children of light for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and in truth. The second main point today is this We will have no influence if we focus on ourselves as the people of God. We will have no influence if we focus on ourselves as the people of God. Our gospel influence is intended to spread. The gospel was meant to go viral. And let me just tell you, that's not happening in our country. The gospel is not going viral in the United States of America. And the truth is this there are 380,000 churches in this country.

[00:32:39] There are 230 million people who call themselves Christians. Now, I know that we need to unpack that number and we need to do some due diligence on who really is a Christian and who isn't a Christian. But I'm saying to you today, there are more churches and more professing Christians in our country than in any other country. And the truth is, Christianity is declining in Western Europe, in North America, Christianity is on the decline in Western Europe and in North America. And I know some of you might say this to me, because some of you do say this to me, well, you know what? There's just something wrong with our culture. And I say to you, there's not something wrong with the culture. I mean, there is. But the real issue isn't the culture. It's Christians. There's something wrong with Christians. It's easy for us to say, well, you know, what is this culture that we're living in? And we place the failure of the church at the foot of the unbeliever. And God is saying, hey, listen, you know what? You before you do that, you need to take a hard look on the inside. Before you do that, you need to ask yourself, are you being faithful? Are you fully influencing others? Are you a witness for the gospel like I've intended you to be? And then some may say, Well, you know what? It's just so hard. It's just such a hard culture. I mean, Pastor, you know, I'm out in the world and it's just all against us. And my response to that is this If the early church could flourish under the persecution of the Roman government, and if the early church could flourish in a culture that was absolutely godless, anti-God, if the church could flourish, then the church can flourish now, because our God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

[00:34:25] And the fact is this the early church changed the world. The early church changed the world. You know, I think that the early church changed the world in part because they follow Jesus a strategy. Jesus said to his disciples, This is what you're going to do. Your witnesses are going to start in Jerusalem, and then it's going to go out a little bit from there into Judea, and then it's going to go out a little bit from there to Samaria, and then it's going to go out all the way to the ends of the earth. So he gives a strategy his like, You're going to start but you're not going to stay. You're to start in Jerusalem, but you're not going to stay there. It's not about getting everyone to come to you. You need to go out and reach people with the gospel. And so you do that in Jerusalem, the place where I was crucified resurrected, the place where I ascended. And then you're going to take a step beyond and you're going to go to Judea, southern Israel, and then you're going to break across racial boundaries and religious boundaries, and you're going to go to the Samaritan people who were widely disrespected and marginalized by the Jewish people because the gospel extends beyond religion and ethnicity and creed. We'll talk about that in a minute. And then he says, you're going to go to the ends of the earth like this was the DNA of the early church. It was to influence the world for Jesus. So, you know, you're thinking today, well, how does that apply to me? That was 2000 years ago today. This is what we do. This is what we do. This is what you do. You say this.

[00:35:52] You say my family, my neighborhood and my city. This is this is how we apply that strategy to our lives today, individually as disciples, we start here. We say my family, my neighborhood, my city. I want you to say that with me today. My family. My neighborhood, my city. Say it again. My family. My neighborhood, my city. But listen, it doesn't stop there. Then it goes to my nation and my world. So I want you to say my nation and my world. Right. So this is the progression of your influence for Jesus Christ. It starts with your family, then it goes to your neighborhood, then it goes to your city, then it goes to the nation, and then it goes to the ends of the earth. This is what Daniel said in chapter 12, verse three of his book. He said, Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. Now, what an amazing promise to those who will shine as a light for the Lord like stars forever and ever. A light so powerful it shines in the darkness of outer space. You're thinking today. Listen, I love to be that. I would love to be that. I would love to have an influence on my family, my neighborhood, my city, my nation and the world. I would love to shine in such a powerful way that even the darkness could not overcome it. But I don't have the power to do that. And if that's you today, you're absolutely right on track. You do not have the power to do that. And the early disciples understood it wasn't by their power that they were going to fulfill a command that was literally impossible for them to fulfill in the flash.

[00:37:38] They had to have power that came from somewhere else. And the final point today is this The power of our influence comes from the gospel and from the Holy Spirit. The power for our influence, you know, today might feel overwhelming. You're like, man, there's no way I can do that. And I want to set your mind at ease today. It number one, your influence relies on the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul said this. Paul said, I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. Do you believe that today? Paul understood when he rolled into a village or a city, or when he was trying to reach a region for Jesus Christ, he understood. It wasn't his brilliance. It wasn't his charisma. It wasn't because he'd memorized as a Pharisee the first five books of the Old Testament. Paul understood it wasn't what he brought to the table. Paul understood that there was power in the message of the Gospel that we preach Christ and Christ crucified. He hung on the cross for our sins as a substitute for us. He hung in a place where we deserved to hang. He took the punishment for our sins that we deserved to take for all of eternity. And he was victoriously raised on the third day from the dead. Death could not hold him down, that the stone that covered the tomb was rolled open and he revealed himself to his disciples. And then he gloriously ascended to the father, to the right hand of the Father, where the Bible says he lives, making intercession for those who come to him in faith. There is power in that message. There's power in it.

[00:39:20] Listen, when you like, you're going about your business. You're you're sharing how you sincerely walk by faith. You're loving people. The door opens. You're sharing a little bit about what God's done in your life. It always comes back to that point. It always comes back to that point because that's where the power is. Like, if you can see in the spiritual realm, when you share the gospel, it is like a nuclear bomb going off and it is breaking strongholds, it is tearing down walls, it is bringing spiritual enlightenment to the lost. There is something that God does when the gospel is shared. You say, I'm not a preacher, will remember the word preach just simply means to herald. It means to declare. You can tell people what Christ has done for them. Paul goes on to say in that verse, He's like, I'm not ashamed. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes first for the Jew, then for the Greek. So Paul, Paul is saying, listen, it is all inclusive. He can save anybody. And so let me say to you today, it is for the Jew. It is for the Greek, it is for the black. It is for the white. It is for the Republican. It is for the Democrat. It is for the gay. It is for the straight. It is for the rich. It is for the poor. Don't ever count somebody out. Don't ever count somebody out. Don't ever take a sub. Culture of our culture and write them off. Don't do it. You know, that inevitably is the group of people that God will go after. And if the church isn't willing to do it, he will find somebody who is.

[00:41:02] The final thing today, just when we're talking about power, is this gospel power and its Holy Spirit power. It's Holy Spirit power. Jesus. I kind of handled it backwards. You know, I gave you the strategy. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, uttermost parts before. He says that, though, he says, I want I want you guys, you crew of disciples. You go to Jerusalem. You wait there until you are in, dude, until you are in dude with power from on high. The Holy Spirit. We're not talking about the the indwelling of the Spirit of God that already happened to them in John, chapter 20, verse 22. We're talking about the dynamic. Power of God's Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples so that they literally would be overflowing with this power. The word power in Acts chapter one, verse eight is due to us is where we get the English word dynamic or dynamo or dynamite. It is a supernatural power that comes from God. Jesus was talking about this when in the Feast of Tabernacles, he said, If anyone comes to me out of his or her most inner being, wolf flow torrents, torrents of living water. Listen, when you're baptized in the power of the Holy Spirit. And this is why he told them to wait. I mean, let me just add some words there. He's like saying to his disciples, Hey, listen, you guys can't do this. You can't do this on your own. You don't have the power. You don't have the strength. This is not just human influence. This is not your charisma or your ability to network. This is dynamic, heavenly power. Like you need a pipeline that is flowing from heaven into your life so that what you're overflowing with is not yourself, but you're overflowing with me.

[00:42:43] And when you're overflowing with me, when your cup is so full that is overflowing, what's going to happen is living waters are going to pour out of your life onto those who are around you, who are spiritually thirsty. And as they taste of these living waters, they're going to be drawn to me. This was what he was saying out of his or her most inner being will flow torrents. We're talking about a raging river pictured in your mind, out of his or her innermost being will flow torrents of living water. Let me ask you today, are torrents of living water flowing out of your life? You got torrents, you got torrents or you got trickle if you like. Is it a trickle? Is it a dribble? Like some of us. Maybe we got a dribble. We got a couple drips coming out of our life. You're like, how? How? How can we evaluate that? Does your life express the fullness of the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit? Some of us might be like a raging, rushing river. Some of us might be like a triple a trickle. And then some of us might be like the Hoover Dam, you know, where it's like there's this big thing that's holding everything back and that water level is decreasing over the course of time until there's going to be nothing left in it. Right. And and this the reality is, this is why we need to be being continually filled with God's Holy Spirit. Look, you love the father, right? Say it if you do. Do you love the father, right? You love the son, right? Have you learned to live dependently on the power of God's Holy Spirit? Some people have called the Holy Spirit the forgotten God because, you know, we can be all about the Father and we can be all about the son.

[00:44:28] But. But we've not really learned to be dependent on God's Holy Spirit. And so what happens when that happens is there's not a torrent. There's a trickle. And then maybe every now and then there's something. But the truth is this our lives are spiritually dry because we've not learned to go to the father every day and say to him, Fill me afresh, fill me afresh and empower me, God. I want to start my day with an absolute overflow of your spirit in my life, so that when I go to work, when I'm ministering to my kids or I'm serving my wife or serving my husband or I'm at church, that there is an overflow of you in my life. I don't want people to get me. Me is not going to save anybody. I want people to get you. And the only way that will happen, Lord, is if you are overflowing and like you're engaging in the work of God in your life. You're aligning your life to His divine purposes. And you're saying to him, I'm a willing vessel. Like Isaiah said, Here am I. Send me, but don't send me without your power. Right. I think I think the truth is this. We can look at our lives and we can see that there's really not been a big spiritual impact because we've not aligned ourselves to the purpose of God and we've not depended upon the power of God's Holy Spirit. The main evidence of the empowering of God's Holy Spirit is that you will be a witness. That's what He says. Wait in Jerusalem until you are endowed with power on high. Then you will be my witness is how do you really evaluate whether you're baptized in the spirit? It is whether or not you're being a witness for Christ.

[00:46:05] You know, I want you to think today as I'm wrapping up about somebody who has an endless supply of money. You know, like all of these endless resources of finance that some of you were sleeping until I just said this and now you just woke up. You're like, well, oh, yeah, amen, pastor. Amen to that and the supply of money. But they're living, you know, in total poverty as a homeless person, just completely indigent. You know, that person, you would say, dude, man, pull your debit card out and get some money, like buy a house. And while you're at it, buy Bentley and you know, let's go shopping together. If you're not going to use the car, give the car to me because you have all of this unaccessed opportunity. And the fact is this the vast majority of Christians today live the same way. They have not access the power of God's Holy Spirit. Right. It is gospel power. It is Holy Spirit power. And now it's your decision. Are you going to be one of those people who just allows all of that power to sit unused and accessed? Or are you going to align your life to God's divine purpose and ask Him to baptize you in the power of His Holy Spirit? The truth is this. The truth is. A church of 100 people who are influencers for Jesus and are baptized in the Spirit is more powerful than a church of 3000 people living for themselves. That's just a fact. It's just a fact. God can do more. God can do more. God can do more with people who are serious about following him. And what would we love to see? But what do we pray for? We pray for all of us.

[00:47:50] We pray for the 3000 or whatever. Number of people that go to this church that call this the community of Christians that they belong to. Our prayer is that all of us, all of us would be all in. Because, listen, if you can take 500 sold out spirit filled disciples and turn the whole world upside down, like this room is full of more people than that. What could he do? What could he do today? You might be talking about all the change that you want to see happen in your family and in your neighborhood and in this city and in our nation and in the world. I'm saying to you, be the change you want to see. Be the change you want to see. It starts. It starts with you. And all of us have a platform. Don't be thinking. Well, you know what? When God gives me a platform someday, then I'll do it. No, you have a platform right now. And you know he won't give you more until you're faithful with what he's given to you. Let's pray together, Father. Thank you for your word and help us. We pray. God help us. We pray. We want to take what you've spoken to us today and we want to be obedient. God, we want to be influencers for your son. We want to be empowered by your spirit. We want our influence to be potent. God, we do not want the light that you've placed within our lives to be hidden. Under a bushel. We want to be like that city that's set on a hill. We want people around us to see how good our savior is and be inspired to pursue him and to seek him. We do not want to play religious games or pacify our conscience just because we attended a service.

[00:49:41] Because, Father, we know you have so much more for us than that. And we know that the needy souls around us deserve more than that. We're going to just wrap our service up today with an opportunity, an opportunity to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And Jesus is really clear about this. He says. If we ask the father, then the father will supply. It's that simple. We ask the father and the father will supply. We need the baptism of the spirit every single day. This is what Paul said to the Church of Ephesus. Don't be drunk with wine, which is destruction, but be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit. And so today, listen, maybe you have you've just been in a dry season. Maybe for you today the overflow has not been an overflow. It has been a trickle or less. What you've been missing in your life is a daily dependance upon the Spirit of God. And that's what's going to enable you to be the witness God has called you to be. And so what we're going to do today is if this is you, you want a fresh baptism of God's Holy Spirit. Maybe for you today, there are honestly some things in your life that have been diminishing the light, affecting the potency of your witness. Some things you need to repent of. Maybe today, you know, you just you want to align yourself. You know, you're you've been fulfilling some aspects of discipleship. A man you've missed, a big one. You've just missed a big one. And I know you. I know this church. Like we do not want to be a church that plays games. God, in these last days use our lives. And so I want invite you today.

[00:51:35] If this is you just to come on forward, you need a fresh baptism of God's spirit. You can come up here and stand next to our follow up leaders and elders and pastors today. There's no shame in this today. In fact, listen, if the whole church isn't down here, then we've got a problem, right? Everyone needs a fresh baptism of God's Holy Spirit. So let's all stand together today, and I'm going to invite you just to make your way down fresh baptism of God's spirit, maybe something that you need to leave at the altar today in confession. Maybe, you know you want to be a greater influence for Christ. Sam is going to lead us in a song of worship. Come on down. I want to pray for you today. Lord, we're here present today. God, your sons and daughters humbled and surrendered and submitted to you God, knowing that there's more of our hearts, there's more of our lives that needs to be handed over to you. God, we confess today. The sin and the selfishness and God, the self-absorption and the focus that we so often have on things that don't last forever. God, we. Take responsibility. We take responsibility for the the lack of impact that the church has had in our own country. And, God, our hearts are grieved. But, Father, we're asking that you would be merciful. Be merciful once again. God, we know it starts with us. And so fill us to overflowing with your Holy Spirit. Baptize us in his power. God caused torrents of living water to flow from us. Show us anything that would. That would dam up the flow. God. Anything that would restrain the fullness of your work. Anything that would dim the light.

[00:53:38] God, we pray that you would show us. And that Father, we want that day in heaven to be an extraordinary moment where we can say that we have heard the words, well done, good and faithful servant. And so we pray God, just for a renewed spiritual rawness within our hearts. God, an awakening. An awakening of our minds. It's not that the unbelieving world is asleep. God, your people are asleep. Were asleep to you. And so wake us up. Lord, shake. Shake your church. And as a consequence, God, shake our nation. We ask for our nation in Jesus name. For souls of men and women to be saved, delivered, restored, redeemed, rescued. God, we know the fields are ripe for the harvest. And so here we are. Lord, send us. Bless these today. God, with great courage and boldness. God with influence. God opened doors that no man could shut. I pray this week many seeds would be planted. And God, that those seeds would be watered. And that there would be divine fruit. Eternal fruit that that would come to pass. God for your glory. For the glory of the Father, for the glory of the Son and for the glory of the Holy Spirit. God, we pray that you would preserve and protect the work that you've done in our lives today, and that we would see the fruit of it manifested in years to come. We love you, Father. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.