

Advantage to Obedience

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, March 23, 2025
PASSAGES	John 6; Matthew 5; Colossians 1; Revelation 21
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:20:28 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

God is entirely competent to save people without you. He draws them, he convicts them, he has uncountably many servants already. So the reason to make disciples is not that he is short-staffed and worried — it is that the attempt itself is where *you* get disciplined. Obedience is a party invitation, not a heavy thing laid across your shoulders.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ What resists obedience is a self-preservation impulse. Every change is a loss of something, even the loss of a habit we know is killing us — so obeying can feel like a death before it feels like anything else.
- ◆ Jesus draws people to himself. Scripture says nobody comes unless the Father draws him. God is not one important ingredient in a conversion; he is the main one.
- ◆ And yet words are required. “Preach the gospel at all times, if necessary use words” does not survive contact with Romans 10 — for every man, woman and child it is necessary to use words at some point.
- ◆ The sender is God, not a guilt-driven appeal. He can send multiple waves, he can send someone to clean up after you did a bad job, and he can show up himself.
- ◆ Ask who actually benefited in the Bible's stories of obedience — the widow, Mary, Zacchaeus, Naaman. In each case, the one who obeyed.
- ◆ Being nagged into doing evangelism perfectly or not at all stops people cold. Matt's alternative: don't be rude, then go ahead and do a mediocre job.

- ◆ Wanting honor is not the problem. The question is whose honor you are after — Jesus commends the faithful servant, and it is healthy to want to hear it.
- ◆ Fear is not a personality trait to manage around. Whatever your calling is, fear does not serve you in it.

► 1:20:28

Matt picked up where he had left off the week before, on practical obedience, and narrowed to the one part of the Great Commission most people flinch at: evangelism. Not because it is the whole of disciple-making, but because it is the biggest hurdle, and because our thinking about it is usually a little off.

Why obedience feels like a loss

► 1:21:00

Christianity is not meant to enter our heads, stay there, and die on a shelf. What stops it, in Matt's reading, is a self-preservation impulse that defends our way of life, our habits, even our addictions. Letting go of any of it can feel like a death. What helps is grace, love for him, and knowing him well enough to know he is trustworthy — remembering the times you felt transferred out of the domain of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved Son. We do give things up. In exchange: life for death, peace, the honor of serving him, the joy of his presence.

“It's really supposed to feel like a party invitation. Here's a thing we could do that, when it's done, is a lot like dropping dead weight.”

Back to the Commission — and the question underneath it

► 1:24:08

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:18–20 ↗

“I am with you” is a recurring line in Scripture, and when God says it he means he is going to accomplish the project. He is the active party; being with him is what we do. But this week the question was not *how* — it was *why*. Why is it better to be a disciple than not? Eternal life is a large part of the answer, but not all of it. Even if you knew someone would come to faith on their deathbed regardless, the Spirit would still move you to speak, because the dominion of darkness is insufferable right now and the kingdom is on offer right now.

► 1:26:27

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”

REVELATION 21:3 ↗

That is the ultimate goal, and it is for later and for right now. Which means the goal is not productivity. It is intimacy.

God is competent

► 1:27:56

Matt had fun with the idea of angels watching us fixate on becoming servants like them — *are we a joke to you? We already are the thing you're anxious about becoming.* He has uncountably many servants already. He was never short-handed.

Then the harder point. John 6:44–45 and John 6:65: no one comes to Jesus unless the Father draws him, unless it is granted him. “It appears to me that God is competent,” Matt said — “not just an important ingredient in this process, but the main ingredient.”

► 1:29:21

And yet somebody is needed, which is Paul's whole argument:

“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”

ROMANS 10:14–15 ↗

Which retires a familiar slogan. “Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary use words” — Matt's response was flat: for every man, woman and child it is necessary to use words, at least at some point. We are humans; we communicate in human language. The gospel being articulated matters enormously to God.

Who is the sender?

► 1:29:56

This was the point he wanted to land, and he knew some preachers would dislike it. The worry is that unless you burden people with obligation, they won't move. Matt's answer: that isn't even true. Living under the weight of that burden is not motivating — people ignore it, or they embrace it and burn out.

Yes, churches and agencies send people; that happens practically. But the grace to send is the Lord's, and it is his harvest. If you are afraid of botching an evangelism attempt, remember he can send more waves, he can send someone to clean up after you, and he can send himself — as with the accounts of Muslims around the world dreaming of Jesus. He is perfectly capable of getting off his throne.

► 1:31:56

“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything... that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.”

ACTS 17:24-27 ↗

He sounds involved. He sounds motivated. Could he hypothetically handle the whole project himself? John 16:8 — when the Helper comes, he will convict *the world* concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. That is a considerable load-bearing capacity. And the church's nourishment already rests on Jesus: Paul tells husbands that no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church. We are members of his body. He does not act hatefully toward us. So we obey him not as butlers but as children and friends.

So who actually benefits?

► 1:34:41

Matt ran four stories through one question. The widow puts two copper coins in the treasury and Jesus says she gave more than anyone (Mark 12:41-44). Who benefited? Not the treasury — God is not served

by human hands as if he needed anything, and he was not waiting at the temple to see what came in. She got the honor and dignity of serving God with her whole self, and she is spoken of all over the world today.

Mary anoints Jesus' feet (John 12:1–8) — not because the disciples needed it done, since some of them were annoyed by it. Mary got the dignity and joy of pouring out something expensive and something of herself. Zacchaeus climbs the tree, and Jesus talks him into repenting (Luke 19:1–10). The people he had overtaken had likely long since written it off as the cost of living under Rome. Zacchaeus found life; the kingdom came into his house.

► 1:37:56

And Naaman, the Syrian commander who finally took a slave girl's advice and dipped in the Jordan (2 Kings 5:1–14). The Syrian army could have hired someone else; the nation was not desperate for the fix. The man himself benefited from an act of obedience that started out embarrassing. Obedience brings glory and wholeness and beauty into our lives — and it is something we get to do *with* him.

Tijuana, and the man with the blue eyes

► 1:40:02

Spring break 2007, Tijuana, on a team from his church at the time. Matt had been praying hard — not to share the gospel more, he admits, but to finally lead someone to Christ, to seal the deal. That afternoon a Mexican man with striking blue eyes asked what they were doing; Matt, interpreting for his team, explained the evening conference and the prayer they were offering.

► 1:41:45

Five or six hours later, in a square with several hundred people, the man found him again and brought someone: *this guy wants to know Jesus*. Matt thought he was being messed with. They prayed. The man came back with a younger man. Then a boy. Then two at once.

“I got the distinct impression that there was grace, that God is strong — and I also felt really unnecessary, like I was slowing the whole process down.”

The man was a native Spanish speaker bringing Spanish speakers to a foreigner who could have been skipped entirely. Matt's read: the Lord lets us serve him relationally. Which is not a small thing to be handed.

The obstacle is fear, and fear is an enemy

► 1:44:59

He was specific about his own. A semester of praying for classmates at UT by name and never once speaking to them — so on the last day he handed over a note that said, in effect, sorry I wasn't brave enough to talk to you about Jesus, but I pray for you, and here is what I love about him. A longtime friend he never had the guts to talk to, until he asked her whether it bothered her that he didn't try to convert her; she said no, and he said, doesn't it though — can I talk to you about Jesus? A goth student in the algebra class he taught for three years, and a book left tilted on the corner of the desk until the kid asked to borrow it.

“I'm afraid they'll be mean to me or not like me anymore. That's basically it. It's not an impressive fear. It's just regular fear.”

► 1:47:58

He keeps a journal so he doesn't garble these stories later, and the entry right after Tijuana reads: September 26, 2007 — felt like God told me to tell this rough-looking guy the gospel. I did. He walked off immediately. Fixate on production and that is a failure. Fixate on relationship with God and learning to obey, and it is a success.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

MATTHEW 5:10–12 ↗

Matt was honest about the root: he wants to be honored by people, and being disliked feels like dishonor. But wanting honor is not the sin. [John 5:44](#) asks how you can believe while receiving glory from one another and not seeking the glory that comes from the only God. The change is not to stop wanting it — it is to change whose it is.

“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”

MATTHEW 25:21 ↗

Four good reasons, and two bad ones

► 1:50:13

The true reasons to make disciples: he said to; it is a way to show loyalty to him, and loyalty under fire means more; it is genuinely better for the people who come in, because living in the kingdom now beats living in the dominion of darkness now; and it is hard, which forces us to confront our own immaturities, fears and doubts. To anyone nagged by other Christians into doing it perfectly or not at all, he offered a two-step remedy: don't be rude, then go ahead and do a poor job.

The dumb reasons, delivered deadpan: God needs you so badly that he is failing without you, and between us he is a little annoyed at how slow you've been. And — since all authority has apparently been handed downstream to us — other people are entirely in your hands while God watches passive-aggressively.

What Hope Chapel would get out of it

► 1:53:25

Matt wants Hope Chapel to be deliberately evangelistic — and then said the part that sounds wrong out loud: not primarily for Austin's sake, and certainly not because God needs Hope Chapel. He thinks Hope Chapel would benefit most. His own aim is to obey because God is his father, and to say yes quickly; second best is to get there eventually; third is to say no outright and then work around and obey anyway. The longer he sits on the bench, the harder the yes becomes, and fear stays coiled in the shadows growing.

He does not consider evangelism his gifting, or his second gifting. He does it anyway — because it is something to do with Jesus, because a bored faith turns on itself and starts drama, and because it is a chance to cut a head off that fear.

“I don't think God really needs me to talk to that guy. I think I need me to talk to that guy. The attempt at making disciples actually disciples us.”

► 1:57:42

It only sounds strange, he said, if you were raised to believe the only way to move people is to tell them God is struggling and lay a heavy thing on them. The truth is liberating instead. He closed by praying for relational depth with the Father as the prize — and he would not trade that night in downtown Tijuana for any number of nights he stayed in.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Colossians 1:13
- Matthew 28:18–20
- Revelation 21:3
- John 6:44–45
- John 6:65
- Romans 10:14–15
- Acts 17:24–27
- John 16:8
- Ephesians 5:29–30
- Mark 12:41–44
- John 12:1–8
- Luke 19:1–10
- 2 Kings 5:1–14
- Matthew 5:10–12
- John 5:44
- Matthew 25:21

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt described a self-preservation impulse that treats any change as a loss. What is it currently protecting in you?
2. If God is the one who draws people and the one who sends, what does that change about how you have been carrying the idea of evangelism?
3. Run Matt's question on your own history: think of an act of obedience that cost you something. Who actually benefited most from it?
4. He named his obstacle plainly — fear of being disliked. Name yours out loud to the group. What would getting from where you are to one step further actually require?
5. If the attempt at making disciples is what disciples you, what is the one step you take this week — a name to pray for, an invitation, a conversation?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whPbJvx9mFA&t=4828s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.