

## MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: ReKindle

Part 2 Rekindling the Dedication

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 09.19-20.09

Good evening. Don't you think Milo did a wonderful job tonight? You know if you've ever fanned the embers of a dying fire then you know what it means to rekindle that fire back to life. When you rekindle something you revive it. You renew it. Part of our conversation week in and week out as a production team, a worship team is how do we bring to you something that will revive you out of the world, for just a few moments into the presence of God so that He becomes your focus. That's our desire, week in and week out is that you come here and you're able to separate and join together as the church and worship the one triune God. And so when we have these opportunities to come sing and to worship you need to know that our desire is to revive and to renew, to rekindle inside of you. Your purpose and your calling, not only in that moment as worshippers of the risen Christ but your calling as His follower – that this moment, right here, coming together would energize you, jumpstart you, revive and renew you to go out to follow your calling that Christ has specifically given to you as His follower.

That's really what this series is all about. We've been talking about what it means to rekindle the passion of our calling. Last week we zeroed in on the calling that Christ gave us right before His ascension where He said, not to the church globally, not to an organization but to individual followers of Christ – go, as if He was saying – you, go. Make disciples of all nations. In other words, anybody that you run into, your neighbor, those who live beside you as well as those who live across the world from you – you, go make disciples, baptize them and teach them everything that I've commanded you to teach. So, that was our first calling is to understand that we are disciple makers. We as an organized body of believers say it's our mission corporately.

You've heard me say, I said it last week; it's part of our literature. It's part of the fabric; part of the DNA of who we are to turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ. That's the mission of Crossroads. But where did we get that? We got that from Matthew 28, the last words of Christ on this earth. And so last week we talked a little bit about rekindling, reminding, reviving – this idea of our calling to make disciples.

Now, tonight what I want to do is remind you of your second calling because last week we talked about the calling or the work of evangelism. This week we need to talk about the work of ministry. That you have a calling to be ministers of Jesus Christ. Now, let that soak in for a moment. According to the Word of God you are called to be ministers. Now right away, if you're processing that with me you're probably already thinking wait a minute, that's your job. That's what you get paid to do. That's your calling. You're called to be the minister. You might be thinking I can't preach. I can't teach. I'm not very good at hospital bed-sides. I'm not very good in those situations that require someone who's a pastor or a minister or someone out of the clergy and if we could dissect the church of today's culture out of history for just a moment and ask collectively all members of the church who are the ministers. I think we would get a similar answer. It would be, well, the pastor. They're the ministers of the church but that is not what the Word of God tells us.

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I'm going to have you turn to begin with to Ephesians, chapter 4. Ephesians 4 gives me my calling very clearly and it reveals your calling just as clearly. In Ephesians chapter 4 Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus and in chapter 4 he comes to the aspect of the unity of the body of Christ. He's teaching the church at Ephesus how to be the church; how to be the body of Christ; how to function. And in this in verse 11 of chapter 4 he gives us very clear callings. He says, "He", this is Christ, "gave the apostles, prophets, evangelists, the pastors and teachers,"; actually should be translated pastor teacher, he's given all these, these different types of gifted men to do what? Verse 12, to what? To equip the saints for the, say it with me "work of ministry". That's your calling. You see my calling? My calling is to equip you for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ. So that's why I say tonight what I want to do most of all, my homiletical proposition, my big idea is to revive or rekindle inside you your calling to be a minister.

You might be scratching the back of your head and you're thinking, you know, I don't know what I have to offer. Like you said, I can't teach. I'm not sure if I could lead something. I'm not sure if I have the necessary talents or gifts or abilities to follow this follow this calling of mine. If this is true, that I'm supposed to do the work of the ministry as a follower of Christ then you might be saying well, what is that work? I'm not sure if I have the necessary abilities to do that. But you do. See, that's the wonderful thing. When Christ called us as His disciples He gave us the ability to follow His call when it comes to the area of sharing your faith. He says you go down the road, you begin the process – I'll give you the words to say. Trust me. When it comes to the area of the work of the ministry He says I'm going to gift you. I'm going to specifically give you spiritual gifts so that you have the necessary talents and abilities that you didn't have before to carry out your calling. Just look at verse 8 of this chapter. Chapter 4, come into verse 8. Actually, back up to verse 7. He says, "But grace is given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore," it says, "when He ascended on high He lead a host of captives and He gave gifts to men." He gave us gifts to be about the work of the church.

More specifically, if you want to see this in another place I can take you to many passages that speak of our spiritual gifts but come with me to 1 Peter, chapter 4 for just a moment. 1 Peter 4:10 reveals that we have been given gifts and these gifts have been given to us for a reason. Peter now is writing and he says, "As each has received a gift," There it is. It is a spiritual gift. "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." He says you have been given something from Christ. Now use it. It's a spiritual gift. You say, what's a spiritual gift? It's different from a natural talent. I just put together, actually a combination of definitions to help you get an idea of what a spiritual gift is in scripture. A spiritual gift is the divine ability given by the Holy Spirit that is beyond a natural talent or skill to do the work of ministry. You've been given something that is beyond your natural ability. You've been given something by Christ. Why? To carry out the work of ministry. He's taken care of you. He's not only called you to what to do but He's given you the ability to do it.

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Now, we happen to live in a time, especially in this last decade or so when the church has been consumed with discovering our spiritual gifts. And, honestly, Crossroads is a part of that. We have classes. We've had seminars in the past help people understand, determine their spiritual gifts. We've had spiritual gift tests and spiritual gift profiles but, you know, as I've watched this unfold I think we've put the emphasis in the wrong place. I think it has less to do with discovering your spiritual gifts and more with the desire to do the work of the ministry. I think if you have this internal desire that was wrought by your calling from Christ to do the work of the ministry you'll discover your spiritual gift.

I agree with John Piper. John Piper is a pastor in Minnesota; prolific in his writing. If you every see anything written by John Piper it's worthy to read. He writes this:

*"I believe that the problem of not knowing our spiritual gifts is not a basic problem. More basic is the problem of not desiring very much to strengthen other people's faith... The basic problem is becoming the kind of person who wakes up in the morning, thanks God for our great salvation and then says, 'Lord, I want to strengthen people's faith today. Grant that at the end of this day somebody will be more confident of Your promises and more joyful in Your grace because I crossed his path.'*

In other words, bring me someone that I can do the work of ministry with. He says:

*The reason I say becoming this kind of person is more basic than finding your spiritual gift, is that when you become this kind of person the Holy Spirit will not let your longings go to waste. He will help you find ways to strengthen the faith of others and that will be the discovery of your gifts."*

So, I say again – it's not so much the idea of discovering the gift that God has given you. It's the desire to follow your calling to do the work of the ministry.

You know, when we started the church fourteen years ago everyone was involved. Everyone was one-hundred percent participation. In fact, we weren't even that concerned if you had a spiritual gift. We just wanted you involved. We needed a warm body to do something at that time. You know what I found happened? Is that as we began to place people into the ministry, as we begin to teach them the mission, they're calling there is an excitement level that started to rise within them and they found areas that they were good that they never would have thought of before. You see, it's getting yourself to that point but one thing I've noticed – that fire that once burned bright into the servants of our church has started to flicker; turned to embers. People are much more satisfied to come and to receive than to give.

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And I started to think about that and I started to wonder why? In fact, I was a bit perplexed by it. Why, when we're given an internal call, supported by an external, biblical reference to ministry, to doing the work of the ministry would we ever be satisfied to just sit and receive and not serve? And the only thing I could come up with was the idea that we have bought into our cultural concept of consumerism. That we have understood the idea of consumerism and we've transferred it to the church.

Consumerism used to be solely about the purchase of some kind of material possession. But now consumerism has developed into a philosophy of not only what you do but who you are. We hear this. If you do any sense of reading of the culture you know that the culture, the experts of the culture call this the consumer age where we're wondering what can we receive rather than what can we give. We're looking to be served rather than to serve and that is a dangerous combination when you bring it through the back doors of the church and into the very center of learning. You say, this is just a place to learn, receive and then to go rather than this is a place to gather, to serve and to grow.

So what I thought I'd do with you tonight is just look at a few verses – five to be exact and give you a scriptural defense against consumerism; to help you understand the biblical make up of your call to serve, to be a minister. Now I have twelve fill in the blanks, you see that? That's a lot. You're already thinking that's a lot. You're never going to get through this in time. I promise you we'll get through this in time and because I have so many points in my message this week next week's sermon will be pointless. I just wanted to see if you're awake.

Alright. Let's go verse by verse and help you understand the scriptural defense against consumerism. Let's first look at Romans chapter 12, verse 1. You don't have to turn there in your bibles. I put them all in your notes so that we could do this rapidly. Romans 12:1. Paul says, "I urge you brothers." Now stop right there. Why would he urge you right off the bat? It's because he spent eleven chapters teaching theology; the great theology of salvation; the great theology of us moving from depravity to being in a position of seen as righteous because of the work of Christ. And so he goes through eleven chapters of theology, gets to chapter 12 and he says because of all this that you know "I urge you, I urge you because of what you just have learned brothers, in view of God's mercy now to offer your body as living sacrifices." What do you know about a sacrifice? A sacrifice is not often living. It's put on the idea of a some type of consuming fire or some kind of altar. And it's not a living sacrifice. It's a sacrifice that was reminiscent of Old Testament, the idea of that Old Testament sacrificial system was that a life was lost. But he says no, view yourself as a living sacrifice. You're offering yourself to God, holy and pleasing. This he says is your spiritual act of worship. And so what can we surmise of this? Well, we can say consumers use serving as a means of a personal end but that's not we as servants view it. We view serving as an act of worship. You see, if you come here as a consumer you come here and you say what's in it for me? There's got to be a

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personal end. But if you come here as a follower of Christ, wanting to be used by Christ you say that I come her to serve and that is my act of worship.

Now, I just talked to you about worship a moment ago. Worship is more than what we do within and contained in these four walls. Worship is something that we do, not only here but outside of here when we serve. It's an act of worship to our God. When we use the gifts that he has given us to further the kingdom of God, the church, it's an act of worship.

Second verse. 1 Peter 4:10. Again, we were just there. "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." This is the point I want you to hear. As good stewards of God's varied grace. Consumers evaluate service in terms of personal cost; servants in terms of stewardship. Let me say that again.

Consumers evaluate service in terms of personal cost; servants in terms of stewardship. What is a steward? We've learned about stewardship in the past. What do we know about a steward? A steward receives something from their master and then that steward is called to care for it and use it appropriately. So I'll put this in the context of what you're learning. You have been given a gift. Peter says now you need to steward that gift. That's Christ's gift. He gave that to you so that you could do the work of the ministry. And so what is your responsibility as a steward? To use it properly. Not to misuse it. Not to abuse it. Not to not use it but to use it like a steward; to use it appropriately.

Third verse. Matthew 6:2. Jesus is sitting outside the temple. He's watching the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the Scribes. They're going into the temple. As they're going in they're making a huge show of their offering. And He leans over and He teaches the disciples, "When you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward." Now, in this I think we can extract a principle, a defense against consumerism that consumers find their fulfillment in being appreciated by others, being seen by others. Servants find their fulfillment in being used by God. That's the difference. I know people here who have served in the church for fourteen years, ninety-eight, maybe even ninety-nine percent of you don't know their names and they've served silently, quietly, faithfully. Why? Because they're not serving before others; they understand they're used by God. That goes against the grain of consumerism. Consumerism says I want to be appreciated by others. What is in this for me? A servant says I'm doing this an act of worship; as a steward to be used by God.

Fourth verse. Titus 3:8. Paul's writing to a young pastor. He says, "I want you to insist on these things," Now whenever you read a sentence like that you need to back up from it. This is Paul saying of all the things I'm teaching you do not leave this out. "I want you to insist," Titus, on when you teach these things, when you teach your people. When you teach the people of the church, teach them, "so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable

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for people." I want you to circle the words excellent and profitable. What are we called to do? To devote ourselves. Do you know what a consumer will do? A consumer will quit when personal needs interfere with their serving. A servant will persevere because the body is dependent upon them. They understand that there is a sense of excellence and profit for the body that they serve.

Fifth verse. Ephesians 6:7-8. "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does..." Consumers are focused on self and temporal fulfillment. Servants are focused on others and eternal fulfillment. Really, that's the crux right there. Consumers are focused on self. Servants are focused on others. Consumers are focused on what they get now, temporal fulfillment. Servants are focused on eternal reward. Now we did that rather quickly and I did that purposefully because what is our role when we come to scripture? Our role when we come to scripture is what? To evaluate our life by it. It's not always easy. That's why scripture talks about the idea that it cut deep as if it were cutting into our bones, into our joints, our marrow. It can be painful at times. But when you look at this list and you look at your track record do you find yourself more in the consumer category or the servant category? Now, be careful. I want you to see my heart in this. I want you to understand the Word of God. I'm not trying to guilt you into something. I'm trying to help you become awakened to something. Where would you fall? What category just based on scripture?

Alright, you've taken twelve fill in the blank notes. Now, just put your notes aside for a moment and let me talk to you. We have just a few minutes left. Let me talk to you as a pastor. Why do I want you to serve? I could talk to you about the reason you should serve because you saved to serve; you were called to serve; you were gifted to serve; you're commanded to serve but really I just want to give you two things to think about. Why do I, as your pastor want you to serve?

Number one. Because you're needed. You are needed. The body needs you. That's what scripture tells us. 1 Corinthians 12. All of you together are the one body of Christ. Each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it. Each one of you are necessary. If you hear nothing else tonight you need to hear that you are necessary. What happens when one part of your body isn't functioning correctly? Last week I told you I took a trip with some friends to Canada. A part of our trip had to do with riding four wheeler, quads. First day out I got bucked off my quad and I found out that Canadian rocks are not quite as forgiving as Ohio rocks and I landed on my one side; upper kidney area and I was bruised. I still am bruised down one whole side, down my leg and I kind of drug my left leg around camp for the rest of the week and it was painful. Now, I was hurting of one area of my body but my whole body seemed to hurt because that's what happens. See, when one part of the body isn't functioning right the whole body suffers.

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Imagine if your circulatory system just called up one day and said, you know what, we're going to take the year off. We'll see you next year. What would happen? The whole body would suffer and that's Paul's point exactly to the Corinthians. He says you are needed. And just as Paul was teaching that to the Corinthian believers, I'm teaching that to the Crossroad's believers. Every single one of you are a necessary part and you're needed if this body is going to run at full potential. I want you to think about this. According to Jesus Christ, the church is the redemptive hope of mankind. It is the last place of hope for the world. Not government. Not schooling. Not business. The church. The redemptive hope for the world. He calls us His bride. It is the only institution, organization that Jesus Christ has endorsed. Where do you want to spend your time? You want to spend your time as followers, your master has called you. He's called you to do the work of the ministry.

You say, well, where can I get involved here? You know what, just jump in. There are so many places. How do you do it? Many different ways. You could sign a card and tell people, you can stop by the Connect Kiosk. You hear us talk about the Connect Kiosk. That's why it's called the Connect Kiosk so you could connect. Stop at any ministry leader and they'll take you in a moment. You just jump in. You know, if you don't have the gift of teaching or you think you have the gift of teaching, teaching children – teach children. Or small groups – teach your small group. Celebrate Recovery, Crossroads University. You know one of the reasons why we pulled Wednesday night out is because I had this basic belief that God has gifted more teachers to this church than just me and the other teaching pastors. Many of you are gifted to teach so we wanted to give you an outlet to do that. That's Crossroads University. Some of you have been gifted with administrative skills, great organizational skills. We need you in the office. You know, none of our pastors have administrative assistants. Our pastors need administrative help. Jump in. Computer help, any kind of serving. There's so many places to serve. You could serve in the café. You could serve in the parking. You could serve in cleaning team, security. You know security is one of the foundational ministries here at the church because it's a great place to get involved and to do something that's natural to most of our hearts and that's protect children. We live in a day and age where we need people who would say I value children. I value the safety of children. I'll serve on the security team. In the production department you run a camera. Run one of the sound boards. Run the light board. Learn the switcher. Do you realize that right sitting in the back is one of the most state of the art pieces of equipment in the whole area. I mean, the whole Mansfield area. We bought a switcher from CNN. There's Steve – he's working at it right now. You say that's too high tech for me. No. We will train you on this. These are some of the areas that you can get involved in. You are needed.

But the second reason. I told you there was two. The second reason. Because you were created for this. You're gifted, called and created for this. Serving in the body is what is missing in your life and I can say that with complete confidence because this is how God wired you. If you're not serving in the body something is missing in your life. I know it.

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This is the emphasis of the scriptures. Listen to this passage out of Mark. “If you try to hang on to your life you’ll lose it. but if you give up your life for my sake,” Jesus says “and for the sake of the good news you’ll save it.” He says if you give your life to me you will save it. You know you’re going to live for something. You will give your life for something. It might be a career. It might be a bank account. It might be pleasure. It might be achievement. We’re all going to give our life for something. Some people just have this idea we just want to keep on living. Have you ever heard of cryogenics? Cryogenics is that when you come to the end of your natural life, if you pay enough money they will freeze either your entire body or just your head. I don’t understand just the head part but the idea is that they’ll use that then to help bring you back from the dead. I’m thinking if I was going to go I want the whole thing, not just the head. And what is their purpose? Their purpose is because they’re trying to live longer. But listen, you know it’s not about the duration of your life. It’s about the donation of your life. And Jesus says give it to me. I gifted you for the work of the ministry. It will bring you internal fulfillment because this is how I’ve created you.

Now, where do we go from here? You have to fan the embers into a flame. It’s up to you. Take those scripture and take the next step. But be careful because right now you could be sitting here and you could be sensing the Spirit of God pulling you saying yes, I need to do that. But it’s easy to let the rest of life take hold and that desire slip away. Act. If the Spirit of God is talking to you tonight act upon it. He has something for you.

Let’s pray together.