

Equipped for Service

Part 1: The Word!

PETER DEWITT
AGATHOS CHURCH
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Full Text (for reading on your own)

I will do a new thing!

Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea and a path through the mighty waters ... "Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isa. 43:16,18-19) God will make a way. You step in and He steps up!

Do not remember the former things! "Wait, what!?" It is actually really good to build on the foundation you have in the Lord. That's why experience has a benefit. It's good to stand on other people's shoulders; that's why discipleship, mentorship, and relationship have a benefit. Keeping with those truths, let's add a new thought: sometimes your need to not remember the former things and not consider the things of old - because God is doing a new thing!

Don't get rid of the former things. Don't build a new foundation. The foundation is already set and there is only one foundation. BUT - sometimes you have to consciously decide to say "God it's a new year and You've told me You are doing a new thing and I am going to let you out of all the boxes I have you in."

"Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it?" This is not a word to destabilize your heart. It is a word to encourage and incentivize intimacy. All innovation (new creation) comes through intimacy. God is wanting to encourage you at the start of this year "look, I am is doing some new things!"

"Shall you not know it?" He wants to tell you the new things that He is doing. He wants to tell you the new plans that He has for you! But, He can't tell you His secrets if you are not alone with Him. How can someone tell you a secret if you are not alone with Him - it is no longer a secret!

He has some certain secrets for you. He's doing some new things. But you have to be with Him. You have to be intimate with Him. The fact that God is doing a new thing is not a word to destabilize your heart. Everybody loves change until it happens to them. This word is not meant to destabilize but to incentivize intimacy. You've got to be hearing. "Shall you not know it?" God wants you to

know what He's doing in this season - especially if it is a new thing. But the way you figure out what He's doing is through intimacy. You have to be with Him.

Specificity of Adventure with the Holy Spirit as Tour Guide!

I believe the Lord is staging a massive personalization for the mature in Christ in this season. There are specific, personalized territories God has for each of us (particularly for the mature in Christ) that He is wanting to lead you into. He is wanting to lead you far further into the specificity of your gifting and calling - how He's made you and what He's made you to do. BUT you cannot get to the places that are particular to you only by listening to others.

I want to listen to other ministers. You will hear some of yourself and your calling in other ministers. You will relate to their personality and gifting on some level. You will think "that so feels like who I am on some level." BUT, that only gets you so far. There is a place in God where human tour guides cannot take you. God has a specificity - a personalization - to your calling. This year, if you say "God show me what it is that you are wanting to take me into that I don't know about yet" you will discover new, personalized territories in God.

This is going to be a season of adventure - an Ephesians 3:20 word: "exceedingly abundantly above what you've asked for or taught of before." He has new territories and new adventures for you! For each of us there are some things the Holy Spirit has hidden for us, but we have to follow Him to get there. You have to trust God to become your guide into the uncharted, unmapped territories that have your name on them in Heaven. 2017 represents an opportunity to explore unknown territory with a known God. You can't just have human tour guides for everything. There is a specificity to your calling, and you need the Holy Spirit to take you there! Cultivate intimacy with God in this new year because He is doing some new things!

Equipped for Service

We are going to be honoring all the facets of the five-fold ministry from Ephesians 4. We are going to be receiving their reward in this body! The five-fold ministry has been given for the "*equipping of the saints for the works of service.*" This series will be about being equipped in: (1) The Word, (2) Discipleship / mentoring, (3) Prophecy, (4) Healing, (5) Witnessing. These correspond to the five-fold ministry! This sermon series will be about being equipped in the how-to components of the works of service that all believers are called to.

Outreach: The Key to Agathos' Prosperity

Two months ago, the Lord asked me "do you want Agathos to prosper?" I said "yes." He then showed me that Agathos has wonderful products: (1) Presence of God, (2) Powerful Teaching, (3) Power when we Pray, (4) Beautiful People, and (5) Kingdom Purpose for your life. We are bathing it in

prayer and we are founding it in prayer ... but it has to get to people! Why? Because the church is supposed to grow!

Acts 2-9 and 16 tell us that churches grow. They grow through addition and multiplication. They grow in a moment and they grow day-by-day, but they grow. God wants Agathos to prosper and prosperity looks like something and we see in Luke 19 (parable of the minas) that profit is important to Jesus!

Increase is important to Jesus. In Luke 19, Jesus says that the master gave his 10 servants minas; in other words, he gave them financial capability to “do business until I return” yet one of them did no business. The issue for that servant was not fear, it was disobedience!

We have to get out of the mindset that having a rich, personal relationship with God is OK without outreach. It's not OK. If God had not told us to do business - if He had not told us to “go out, to reach out, to deliver to others what's been delivered to you” - then it wouldn't be disobedience to not reach out with what we have. But, we have one commandment and one commission, and being that we have a great commission we are responsible to our Christian job description (the great commission). It's an obedience issue. That's meant to be encouraging - it is good to know what your job description is so you can do your job!

So, why do churches not grow? They either do not have a powerful product, or (if they do have a powerful product) they don't get that product in front of people. We (Agathos) have a great product and we are not getting it in front of people very effectively. That's what we are going to change: outreach!

Many Outreaches, One Message

I had been praying in December about whether we should do one or outreach or many outreach initiatives as a body. I received a picture in prayer of a metal-tined garden rake. I later realized that picture was representing “multiple types of outreach, but only one message.”

Paul said *“I've become all things to all people.”* What that means is that according to scripture, outreaches should be the messenger becoming all things to all people. In Acts 16:3-5, we see that Paul circumcises Timothy before taking him to minister to the Jews. Timothy became all things to all people, but think of who circumcised him: Paul! This was the same Paul that opposed Peter to his face because he stood condemned for operating under the Law. Do you think Paul then had Timothy, whom he circumcised, preach circumcision? Did he have Timothy get circumcised so that he could be a proponent of the Law with the Jews? Absolutely not!

So, we see that Timothy became all things to all people so that the Jews would receive him to hear the ONE message. The message is not supposed to become all things to all people. Paul said in

Galatians *“if anyone preaches a different gospel than me, let him be accursed!”* Paul told Timothy “don’t tickle their ears, Timothy! Don’t you dare! You protect that doctrine!” Pastor Brad has laid a doctrine here at Agathos that it is my job to protect and guard! There’s only one doctrine and there’s only one message.

“And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.” The doctrine is set by the leaders! When you disciple people you don’t have to come up with new doctrine and new teachings every week or month when you meet with them! The doctrine should already be set and we actually have a discipleship manual that has that doctrine and those scriptures. The point is that the content is already there for you when you are meeting to disciple people. You don’t have to come up with the content, now it is just about the pastoral piece.

And this is exactly what we see as the scriptural model in Acts 16. You do different types of outreaches (these are the multiple tines of the rake) - because different outreaches reach different people. But there is only one message - only one doctrine, only one set of decrees. It is the same doctrine for everybody. So many believers get into problems because they try to make the message all things to all people. Love causes you (the messenger) to become all things to all people, but love does not cause you to make the message all things to all people!

We are going to be a no-compromise church that does outreach awesome. Remember in Acts 5:13-14 (after Ananias and Saphira have been struck dead for posing as believers and lying to the Holy Spirit) how nobody dared come near the church. You would think this is where they had to become more seeker-sensitive as a church and change the message. They didn’t do that. Yet, we see in the very next verse that the church multiplied greatly! That’s how the Holy Spirit works. He does not want us to compromise the message, and we will not compromise the message. We will preach the truth, the truth, and nothing but the truth. Paul was so strong in his exhortation to Timothy and Titus to protect the doctrine, but the outreach can become all things to all people.

This is why it is so important that the church does not become the only outreach organ of a church. The people are supposed to do the outreach. This can be where churches start teaching milk only. (I submit this very humbly and with no delight). When the church becomes the only outreach organ, then well intentioned pastors are only able to teach milk because there is no one reaching out and feeding the babies milk. The result is that now everyone is perpetually a baby because all they feed on is milk - no one learning to eat meat. Conversely, if a church is teaching a lot of meat, the church itself is not a very good outreach system - because new believers can choke on the meaty teaching. The solution? Keep teaching meat and know that new believers need someone to bottle-feed them just like we needed someone to bottle-feed us initially!

So, we go out and reach out to people (multiple times - multiple outreaches, but only one handle - only one message). You get them built up and when they are coming to church you sit next to them and talk with them after the sermon, go out to lunch, see how they're doing, see if the sermon made sense to them, etc. Bottle feed them until they get built up and are ready to eat solid food!

Discipleship

In Matthew 28 we hear Jesus say *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded..."* What did Jesus just command them? To make disciples! So, one of the things that all believers should do is to make disciples!

In Acts 4:13 *"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus."* The religious authorities were stunned at how bold Peter and John (uneducated men) were in preaching the gospel and they found out that they had been with Jesus. There is a very powerful truth there: you do not need to have a theology Ph. D. in order to disciple someone. You just need to be with Jesus!

Hebrews 5:12-14 says *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."*

So, who should be teachers? Everybody in the body of Christ should be able to teach. Did you know that? Do you know what else everybody in the body of Christ ought to be able to do? Cast out demons, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers.

So, everyone ought to be able to teach in the body of Christ, but there is a five-fold teacher. Everybody ought to be able to perform signs and wonders in the body of Christ, but there are apostles. Everybody ought to be able to witness, but there are evangelists. Everyone in the body of Christ ought to be able to prophecy (*earnestly desire spiritual gifts - especially that you may prophecy*) but there are prophets. Everyone ought to be able to pastor and disciple but there are pastors. The five-fold ministers are to be equipping the saints for the works of service!

Notice that these were the gifts of Christ to men. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, themselves are the gifts of Christ to men. (Eph. 4) Jesus was perfectly an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. Jesus' sermon on the mount was a pre-cursor to Billy Graham! On the

road to Emmaus Jesus, while walking with his two disciples, Jesus laid out for them (in an orderly manner) what had been prophecies about him starting with Moses! Sounds like a teacher! Jesus was fully an apostle, fully a prophet, fully an evangelist, fully a pastor, and fully a teacher.

So, Jesus then gave gifts of people to the church for the equipping of the saints for the works of service. You might then wonder why Jesus did not just give His whole self (such that one person could then do all of those things)? Easy. He wants us to be in relationship with each other! He wants us to be interdependent. He doesn't want any one leader in the body of Christ to have the whole package.

But what ends up happening in the body of Christ is we get upset with the prophet for not looking like a teacher - and upset with the teacher for not looking like a prophet. We get frustrated with an apostle for not looking like an evangelist, an evangelist for not looking like an apostle, and an apostle for not doing what a pastor ought to do! Stop it! You have to receive grace from all 5! Jesus wants us to be interdependent. He gave that five-fold gifting for the equipping of the saints for all of those works of service! If you look at these 5 types of service you'll notice that it covers everything that's in the great commission! We're getting equipped for the works of service! So, for example, what do the teachers do? They equip the saints such that all the mature are able to teach!

1 Corinthians 15:34 says *"awake to righteousness and sin not."* We are not going to be a "flesh clean-up event discipleship church." We are going to be spirit-based discipleship church. 2 Corinthians 5 tells us to regard each other no longer according to the flesh. Baby Christians and mature Christians alike are new creations in Christ! We need to teach them who they are and let them see in the Word who they are in their born-again Spirit! They've got the incorruptible seed of God in them once they are born again and that Word of God will just change them, change them, change them ... if we direct them to the Word and not to their flesh!

The mind set on the flesh is DEATH! So much of what happens in discipleship is flesh-analysis. You wonder why you are still meeting with the person 3 years later and nothing has changed! You need good teaching from the Word. With the discipleship manual it is going to be very easy to orient people to who they are in Christ. They will awake to righteousness and sin not!

Your World needs You!

Some of us may wonder: "but who would want me to disciple them?" So, consider this "what is the world looking for?" Did you come up with some of the things on this list below?

- Freedom from: anxiety, addiction, depression, fear, anger, self-hatred, envy
- Healing from: sickness, poverty, indebtedness, disease, demon-oppression
- Wisdom for: family, career, relationships, parenting, business, big decisions

- Purpose for life - stepping into their true calling - how they were made to be
- True Joy, Love, Peace!

Can you remember from before knowing Christ what it felt like to never know peace? To not have that abiding rest? Have you experienced freedom from something on that freedom list? Or healing from something on the healing list? Have you experienced wisdom about something on that wisdom list? Surely this list is not even exhaustive, yet we can easily see that the world is looking for what you have! In other words, your world needs you!

I recently received a mailing from Gloria Copeland (Kenneth Copeland's ministry) in which she wrote: *"They don't care what you preach. It's the religious people who get worried about that. The world, the sinners, are smarter than that. All they care about are the results. That's why they'll come to your church when they hear people are getting healed, delivered and set free from suffering. That's what they're looking for, and that's what God wants them to receive."*

Do you realize that what Gloria Copeland is talking about is what we have?!? We have the doctrine which has led to the results. The world is looking for the results and we have them. The financial testimonies, the healing testimonies, the relational testimonies, the wisdom at Agathos are incredible. We have it. We have real results and real relationship with God that we can really offer real people!

I bring this up to make a point: sometimes, when you think about reaching out, sometimes you think in the back of your mind that you are hocking some sort of philosophical ideas to try and get people to ascent your brand of something. Not the case at Agathos! We have real, powerful truth in demonstration and in word to actually be able to give real, tangible solutions to people in need.

I want us to have this mindset: you have what the world is looking for! If you ask God for someone to disciple, He's going to give you someone! Have you asked? Recently I was listening to a Kris Vallotton message in which he mentioned having his 12 he was discipling multiple decades ago. I said "God, give me my crew!" Quickly God started answering that prayer!

You can disciple more than one person at once. It is not that strenuous to disciple someone. I'm talking about meeting with someone twice a month maybe. Take a phone call here or there. You have the materials - you are not having to teach everything to them. But at least one; everyone will be discipling someone! If you don't feel like you are ready to disciple someone we will start with discipling in house to make sure that you are ready to go!

Start with the Word!

Let's look at John 1:1-4. We see that Jesus is the Word, so let's read these verses inserting "the Word" where it talks about Jesus. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He (THE WORD) was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him (THE*

WORD), and without Him (THE WORD) nothing was made that was made. In Him (THE WORD) was life, and the life was the light of men.”

Where do you start anything that you want to accomplish in your life? In the Word! All things were made through the Word and without the Word nothing was made that was made. Wow!

Look at John 15:5,7-8 *“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”* Verse 5 says *“without Me (the Word) you can do nothing.”* That sounds a lot like *“All things were made through the Word and without the Word nothing was made that was made!”*

“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (Jn. 8:31-32) So when we are thinking about stepping out, about reaching out, and discipling people, we want to start with the Word! And when you think about your new year and any resolve or any resolution that you have this new year, know that the main resolve you want to have is being in the Word! It will effect everything else! *“For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”* (1 Tim. 4:8)

Developing your Spiritual Bank Account

When you are going to minister, you need to be in the Word more. Before I began as lead pastor, Pastor Brad told me that 90% of my job would be taken care of by being in the Word and in prayer. Sage advice. I took it to heart and began to ramp up my time in the Word and in prayer in preparation for my lead pastoring which was going to start in September. It ended up being a seamless transition to step into my new role.

I told you in December and I am telling you again now: you are potentially going to be stepping into more ministry than you've been in before so you need to be in the Word more than you have been before. The Lord told me this summer *“I'm the vine, your the branch, and you are only supposed to feed people fruit.”*

What happens to a lot of ministers is that the branch gets taken away from the vine, and now that the branch is away from the vine, it bears no fruit, and now the people eat the branch. The Lord said *“you are supposed to stay in Me and only feed fruit.”* He will never minister through you more than He ministers to you ... but you might try to minister more than you are getting ministered to. Don't do it!

Another way to say this is to “give away the golden egg, not the golden goose!” Statistically, the average pastor that quits pastoring spends 23 minutes a week in the Word and in prayer. There’s your data point.

Do you think that pastor started pastoring and mapped out their 40 hour workweek and figured that they would spend 1/100 of their time as a pastor in the Word and in prayer? That’s not what they did! What they did was they got disconnected from the vine and then the branch started getting eaten and soon they were in spiritual debt that crippled their ministry to others.

The whole body of Christ is to be equipped for the works of service and we need to stay out of spiritual debt by preemptively building up a spiritual trust fund. He wants us to have a spiritual trust fund with Him where we are giving the increase, giving the interest that is coming from our time with Him. As you give the increase, you get more because as you are faithful with little, you get more as your favor increases with both God and man.

Mary (whose sister was Martha, from Luke 10) experienced this herself. Mary was sitting before the feet of Jesus. Martha was complaining - being busied with much serving. What does Jesus say? “*Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.*”

Jesus does not want you, as you move towards ministering, to allow your time an connection with Him to be take away by any means. Acts 6 says the exact same thing! Remember the Apostles said “it would not be good for us to wait tables and not tend to prayer and the ministry of the Word.” So, they appointed deacons so that their time in the Word and their time in prayer wasn’t affected. That’s wisdom! You may say “that principle only applies to the apostles.” Nope, we are all called to minister.

Just Gather Something

Let’s look at Exodus 16:15-18 (the story of Manna). Do you remember that Jesus said in John 6 that He is the bread that comes down from Heaven and if we eat of Him we will never hunger? So Manna is a type and shadow of Jesus - a supernatural provision of spiritual food. So, we can actually learn something from this story as it relates to being in the Word.

So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: ‘Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.’” Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one’s need.

Give us this day our daily bread! What is the command from the Lord concerning the bread from Heaven? *“Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.”*

This is a powerful truth about grace for your time in the Word. Do not beat yourself up with some sort of huge hours requirement for your time in the Word if you don’t have a grace for that yet. Simply do something! Every man gathered according to his need and did any man lack? No! So, stop worrying about how much you gather and just be sure that you are gathering daily!

So many people trip on this. You do need to have a plan. You need to know what you’re expecting of yourself in the Word - you need to have a resolve - just like you would if you were going to the gym. Paul says to exercise yourself all the more to godliness. You need to have a resolve for how much time you are going to spend in the Word and what your goals are in the Word. BUT, don’t beat yourself up about it! The key is that you gather daily. (There was the 7th day off and I think there may be something to that - to not feel like it needs to be a formal thing 365 days a year - you can maybe be casual the 7th day). The key is to gather daily. Gather something according to your need. Let the Lord cause that to be enough.

Here’s what will happen: if you even set 15 minutes as your goal in the Word each day, your hunger will increase and all of a sudden you will be spending 30 minutes in the Word. At that point, you don’t need to say “well now I am going to demand 30 minutes in the Word from myself.” Simply let the hunger become the driver! All of a sudden you are going to be spending 45 minutes in the Word and then an hour because it is so powerful that your business only takes half as much time as it used to take because you have the wisdom of God flowing!

So, what you want to do is gather something! But, when you are going to start discipling people, realize that there are more people in your tent. If you were gathering one omer before and it was enough and you had no lack, when you start discipling people you may need two omers worth. You have to have enough fruit for both you and them.

The 12 Benefits of Being in the Word

Next time, we’re going to look at more of the “how-to” of being in the Word. Much of it may be a review, but we need to start not just listening for ourselves but so that we are ready to teach it to others. The how-to of being in the Word is in the discipleship manual, so you don’t have to teach it to others from memory, but you want to be fresh to it. It is important to be able to get young believers started in the Word.

The Word of God has so many powerful benefits! Listen to this declaration based on the 12 benefits of being in the Word of God:

Thank You, Father, that Your WORD. . .

MAKES me wise. It FEEDS my Spirit, making me strong. It DEVELOPS my faith as it REVEALS Your love for me.

Thank You, Father, that Your WORD. . .

Is my WEAPON against Satan's attacks and KEEPS ME from being deceived by false doctrines. It EQUIPS ME to accurately minister to others. It MAKES ME a true disciple and SETS ME free.

Thank You, Father, that Your WORD. . .

PRODUCES spiritual growth and maturity in me - RENEWING my mind, and AWAKENING me to righteousness. It ENABLES me to walk free from sin and FILLS my heart with joy and peace.

Father, I declare, Your every WORD carries the DNA of a Spiritual fruit. So, I now CHOOSE to sow your Word into my heart, knowing that it will GROW and PRODUCE your fruit in my life. I don't even need to understand it. I will simply eat your Word and IT WILL TAKE ROOT and PRODUCE YOUR FRUIT in my life. Holy Spirit BLESS my time in Your Word! AMEN!

All Scripture is Profitable!

One last scripture! Let's look at 2 Timothy 3:16-17 *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

Notice that it is instruction in righteousness not instruction in sinfulness! People need instructed in righteousness! They need to know who they are in Christ. That's what they need instructed in! They need instructed in how to walk out the righteous reality of what their spirit is. That's what we've all been instructed in at Agathos by Brad! That's why we all came alive in Christ and that's why we are all proving God's perfect will in this world!

At the start of 1 Timothy 1, Paul tells Timothy that the Law is good if it is used lawfully. Do you know how the law should be used? With sinners! Not with saints! Jesus fulfilled the Law for righteousness! Romans 10:4 says it *"Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness for all those who believe!"* Now, as new creations in Christ we have the Law written on our hearts with a propensity to do good and serve God!

So, there's a way that you teach where you want to instruct believers in righteousness - awakening them to who they are in Christ! If a church teaches against sin, sin, sin, sin, sin, do you know what people do? They sin, sin, sin, sin, sin. Do you know why Agathos church walks in great purity? (Even the Lord Jesus told me that "I love this church because of it's purity...") Do you know why we walk in great purity? Righteousness-consciousness! Brad set that standard and foundation and it was

brilliant because it is what the Word says to preach! That's what Paul is saying in 1 Timothy "be so careful Timothy! Teach it like I gave it to you!"

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good (AGATHOS) work." The good work here is "Agathos." Our church is rightly named and this scripture is spot on for who we are!

Know this: Satan is going to oppose you getting in the Word. He is more opposed to you getting in the Word than just about anything else. You getting in the Word and you reaching out - those are about the two things He is most opposed to. He doesn't want to get the Word because the Word will change you - and once you have the Word, He doesn't want you to get out because the Word in you is going to change everybody else! So, be wise to that and know that Satan is going to use emotions and circumstances to mess you up in the Word! So do you know what you can do?

Make a plan. With a plan, you have already pre-decided that emotions and circumstances are not going to mess you up in your time in the Word. How powerful! First the natural and then the spiritual! Satan is saying "no they made a quality decision for the Word - I'm done for!"

God bless you! Happy New Year! Such an exciting time to be alive!

Text Summary (for reading as a group)

"Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isa. 43:18-19) Sometimes your need to not remember the former things and not consider the things of old - because God is doing a new thing! Don't get rid of the former things, but sometimes you have to consciously decide to say "God it's a new year and You've told me You are doing a new thing and I am going to let you out of all the boxes I have you in." This is not a word to destabilize your heart. It is a word to encourage and incentivize intimacy. He wants to tell you the new things that He is doing, but He can't tell you His secrets if you are not alone with Him. You have to be with Him.

He is wanting to lead you far further into the specificity of your gifting and calling - how He's made you and what He's made you to do. I want to listen to other ministers but that only gets you so far. There is a place in God where where human tour guides cannot take you. God has a specificity - a personalization - to your calling. This is going to be a season of adventure - He has new territories and new adventures for you! For each of us there are some things the Holy Spirit has hidden for us,

but we have to follow Him to get there. 2017 represents an opportunity to explore unknown territory with a known God. There is a specificity to your calling, and you need the Holy Spirit to take you there! Cultivate intimacy with God in this new year because He is doing some new things!

We see in Luke 19 that increase is important to Jesus. We see in Acts 2-9 that God wants churches to grow. We have to get out of the mindset that having a rich, personal relationship with God is OK without outreach. God has told us to do business - to “go out, to reach out, to deliver to others what’s been delivered to you.” We have one commandment and one commission, and the great commission is our Christian job description. So, why do churches not grow? They either do not have a powerful product, or (if they do have a powerful product) they don’t get that product in front of people. We (Agathos) have a great product and we are have been called to start getting it in front of people! We are going to be reaching out!

Scripturally, we should have multiple types of outreach, but only one message. Paul said *“I’ve become all things to all people.”* With outreach, the messenger becomes all things to all people. For example, in Acts 16:3-5, we see that Paul circumcises Timothy before taking him to minister to the Jews. This was the same Paul that opposed Peter to his face because he stood condemned for operating under the Law. Do you think Paul then had Timothy, whom he circumcised, preach circumcision? Absolutely not!

So, we see that Timothy became all things to all people so that the Jews would receive him to hear the ONE message. The message is not supposed to become all things to all people. Paul said in Galatians *“if anyone preaches a different gospel than me, let him be accursed!”* Paul told Timothy “don’t tickle their ears, Timothy! Don’t you dare! You protect that doctrine!”

There’s only one doctrine and there’s only one message. *“And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.”* The doctrine is set by the leaders and we actually have a discipleship manual that has that doctrine and the associated scriptures. The content is already there for you when you are meeting to disciple people. You don’t have to come up with the content, now it is just about the pastoral piece.

And this is exactly what we see as the scriptural model in Acts 16. You do different types of outreaches (these are the multiple tines of the rake) - because different outreaches reach different people. But there is only one message - only one doctrine, only one set of decrees. It is the same doctrine for everybody. So many believers get into problems because they try to make the message all things to all people. Love causes you (the messenger) to become all things to all people, but love does not cause you to make the message all things to all people!

We are going to be a no-compromise church that does outreach awesomely. It is so important that the church does not become the only outreach organ of a church. The people are supposed to do the

outreach. When the church becomes the only outreach organ, then well intentioned pastors are only able to teach milk because there is no one reaching out and feeding the babies milk. The result is that now everyone is perpetually a baby because all they feed on is milk - no one learning to eat meat. Conversely, if a church is teaching a lot of meat, the church itself is not a very good outreach system - because new believers can choke on the meaty teaching. The solution? Keep teaching meat and know and act on the fact that new believers need someone to bottle-feed them just like we needed someone to bottle-feed us initially!

In Matthew 28 we hear Jesus command the apostles to teach all believers to make disciples! In Acts 4:13, we see that the religious authorities were stunned at how bold Peter and John (uneducated men) were in preaching the gospel and they found out that they had been with Jesus. There is a very powerful truth there: you do not need to have a theology Ph. D. in order to disciple someone. You just need to be with Jesus!

Hebrews 5:12-14 shows us that everybody in the body of Christ should be able to teach. Everyone ought to be able to teach in the body of Christ, but there is a five-fold teacher. Everybody ought to be able to perform signs and wonders in the body of Christ, but there are apostles. Everybody ought to be able to witness, but there are evangelists. Everyone in the body of Christ ought to be able to prophecy (*earnestly desire spiritual gifts - especially that you may prophecy*) but there are prophets. Everyone ought to be able to pastor and disciple but there are pastors. The five-fold ministers are to be equipping the saints for the works of service!

Notice that these were the gifts of Christ to men. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, themselves are the gifts of Christ to men. (Eph. 4) Jesus was perfectly an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher, but then Jesus then gave gifts of people to the church for the equipping of the saints for the works of service. You might then wonder why Jesus did not just give His whole self (such that one person could then do all of those things)? Easy. He wants us to be in relationship with each other! He wants us to be interdependent. You have to receive grace from all 5! We're getting equipped for the works of service! So, for example, what do the teachers do? They equip the saints such that all the mature are able to teach!

1 Corinthians 15:34 says "*awake to righteousness and sin not.*" We are not going to be a "flesh clean-up event discipleship" church. We are going to be spirit-based discipleship church. 2 Corinthians 5 tells us to regard each other no longer according to the flesh. Baby Christians and mature Christians alike are new creations in Christ! We need to teach them who they are and let them see in the Word who they are in their born-again Spirit! The mind set on the flesh is DEATH! So much of what happens in discipleship is flesh-analysis. You wonder why you are still meeting with the person 3 years later and nothing has changed! They need good teaching from the Word. With the discipleship

manual it is going to be very easy to orient people to who they are in Christ. They will awake to righteousness and sin not!

Some of us may wonder: “but who would want me to disciple them?” When you think about reaching out, you may think in the back of your mind that you are hocking some sort of philosophical ideas to try and get people to ascent your brand of something. Not the case at Agathos! We have real, powerful truth in demonstration and in word to actually be able to give real, tangible solutions to people in need. I want us to have this mindset: you have what the world is looking for! We have individually experienced freedom, healing, wisdom, purpose, love, joy, and peace from God! If you ask God for someone to disciple, He’s going to give you someone!

Where do you start anything that you want to accomplish in your life? In the Word! All things were made through the Word and without the Word nothing was made that was made. In John 15:5, Jesus says “*without Me (the Word) you can do nothing.*” So when we are thinking about stepping out, about reaching out, and discipling people, we want to start with the Word! And when you think about your new year and any resolve or any resolution that you have this new year, know that the main resolve you want to have is being in the Word! It will effect everything else!

When you are going to minister, you need to be in the Word more. The Lord told Peter this summer “I’m the vine, your the branch, and you are only supposed to feed people fruit.” He will never minister through you more than He ministers to you ... but you might try to minister more than you are getting ministered to. Don’t do it! Another way to say this is to “give away the golden egg, not the golden goose!” The whole body of Christ is to be equipped for the works of service and we need to stay out of spiritual debt by preemptively building up a spiritual trust fund. Jesus does not want you, as you move towards ministering, to allow your time an connection with Him to be take away by any means.

Exodus 16 teaches us a a powerful truth about grace for your time in the Word. Do not beat yourself up with some sort of huge hours requirement for your time in the Word if you don’t have a grace for that yet. Simply do something! Every man gathered Manna according to his need and none lacked! Here’s what will happen: if you even set 15 minutes as your goal in the Word each day, your hunger will increase and all of a sudden you will be spending 30 minutes in the Word. All of a sudden you are going to be spending 45 minutes in the Word and then an hour because it is so powerful that your business only takes half as much time as it used to take because you have the wisdom of God flowing! So, what you want to do is gather something! But, when you are going to start discipling people, realize that there are more people in your tent. If you were gathering one omer before and it was enough and you had no lack, when you start discipling people you may need two omers worth.

Finally, let's look at 2 Timothy 3:16-17 *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* Notice that it is instruction in righteousness not instruction in sinfulness! People need instructed in righteousness! They need to know who they are in Christ. At the start of 1 Timothy 1, Paul tells Timothy that the Law is good if it is used lawfully. Do you know how the law should be used? With sinners! Not with saints! Jesus fulfilled the Law for righteousness! Romans 10:4 says it "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness for all those who believe!" Now, as new creations in Christ we have the Law written on our hearts with a propensity to do good and serve God! You want to instruct believers in righteousness - awakening them to who they are in Christ! Do you know why we walk in great purity? Righteousness-consciousness!

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good (AGATHOS) work." The good work here is "Agathos." Our church is rightly named and the scriptures are equipping us for our Agathos Work!

Know this: Satan is going to oppose you getting in the Word. He is more opposed to you getting in the Word than just about anything else. You getting in the Word and you reaching out - those are about the two things He is most opposed to. He doesn't want to get the Word because the Word will change you - and once you have the Word, He doesn't want you to get out because the Word in you is going to change everybody else! So, be wise to that and know that Satan is going to use emotions and circumstances to mess you up in the Word! So do you know what you can do? Make a plan. With a plan, you have already pre-decided that emotions and circumstances are not going to mess you up in your time in the Word. God bless you! Happy New Year! It's such an exciting time to be alive!

Points to Ponder . . .

- What do we learn from Acts 16 about outreaches and the message of the outreach?
- Who is supposed to disciple in the body of Christ?
- What scriptures help define the difference between discipling according to the spirit instead of according to flesh?
- What's the role of the 5-fold ministry? What are all believers supposed to be able to do?
- How can those ministering stay out of spiritual debt?
- What does Exodus 16 teach us about making a plan for being in the Word?