

Dave: Father, thank you that we can gather and sing to you because you have made a way for us to path from death to life, from darkness to light, through your Son, Jesus Christ. We also thank you for making a way through our greatest need and we know that you tell us that you're going to meet our every need in and through Jesus Christ. So we gather as a needy group of people and we have needs for health. Father, we've got people struggling against cancer, we've got careers crushing, we've got marriages crashing, and so we gather as a needy people to cry out to you and say, would you make a way today for us?

I've got nothing to offer your people and as we walk through chapter 14, Father, it seems like a geography study. There's lists of names of places. So I believe that your Word is living and active. All of it. So I pray you'd use Acts 14 today to strengthen our hearts about the reality of what you're about, that Jesus told the truth. You're building your church. So I pray that as I empty myself, you would fill me with your Spirit and feed your sheep, your children, for your glory. I ask that you would do this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well welcome newcomers. I'm so glad you're here. I've met a number of you and I just want to say, welcome to Hillside Fellowship. My name's Dave but there's nothing you need to know about me. I want you to know that at Hillside, we believe that Jesus changes everything. He has, is and continues to change everything and he does that by changing us individually and then putting us together in this body called the church and he uses the body to be every day missionaries in every day places and he begins to change everything around us.

So I just want to say, welcome. We're so glad that you're

here. We've been walking through the book of Acts looking at the earliest picture of the Christian church to show that Jesus is still actively building his church and changing everything. So today we're in Acts chapter 14. I'm going to read Acts chapter 14. I'm going to start in verse 24 and go down through 28. But then we're going to walk through the entire chapter together. And it really is like a giant road trip. Anybody ever had a road trip? This is like Paul's road trip. So you're going to have 16 different specified names of locations and it's easy to kind of tune out when you're listening to somebody else's road trip, right? You're like, "lame."

[Laughter]

You would never say that. But I watch your faces. It's like you just glaze over. I'm going to walk you through and show you three beautiful things. Even about this geography road trip. What it's done for me is just clarify discipleship. Let me share this before I read it.

If you were a pastor and you were sitting up here and you knew you were going to be held accountable for shepherding the sheep, there's different modes and models of pastoring. Sometimes the pastor thinks we need to motivate the sheep to do some they don't want to do. It's more like a coach. It's kind of the pastor/coach model. So we get together. RAH, RAH, RAH! GO, GO, GO! And you leave and you're like, AHHH! We think our job is to motivate.

I was listening to a sermon on the radio yesterday. It was very clear *that* pastor felt like he needed to manipulate people. Unless you emotionally manipulate people, they're not going to do what they should do or ought to do. So

some pastors motivate. Some manipulate.

Some just are about managing. Managing sin, managing chaos, managing the structure. They're very binary, linear. What Paul does here is life-changing. If it filters down, he doesn't motivate, he doesn't manipulate, he doesn't manage. He simply models the Christian life to us. He models it. He airdrops in and, yes, he preaches a powerful message. He'll preach it to the Jews, he'll share truth with the gentiles. But what I want you to see today -- you want to change the world? Your marriage needs to change, your family system, your neighborhood, your community, your country?

Paul doesn't say, focus on what everybody else is doing. He says, hey, guys, you became imitators of me. You watch me "whip it," you watch me "nay, nay." You just followed me in this thing called -- I mean, really! If you're older and you don't know what I just did, I just pulled 26% of the young people in.

[Laughter]

I'll take you through Thessalonians. I'll take you through Timothy. Paul wasn't just there to be a coach and motivate, he wasn't there to manipulate, he wasn't there to manage. He airdrops in and he just models it. I'm going to walk you through and show you. You want to make a disciple? Then you be the disciple you hope that person becomes. You want to disciple your kids? Awesome. You want to disciple a group? Awesome. Then you *be* that disciple that you hope they'll become. Because that's how life change happens.

So let me read it to you. I'm going to show you that to be a disciple or make a disciple, it's going to take time, and I'll

show you in the text. Then I'm going to show you to be disciples, it's going to take transparency. You're going to have to let people see you suffer. And then to be a disciple and make disciples, it's going to take a team. You can't do it alone.

Let me show you in the text. Chapter 14 of Acts, verse 24 down through verse 28. God says, Luke writes, [reading Acts 14:24-28.] Some I'm going to walk you through verse 1 through verse 28. But let me first give you a big theological picture so you can walk with me through this.

To read straight through the Bible, one of the truths you're going to realize about God is that he's not in a hurry. I say it this way: God loves to grow things. He's not in a hurry. He loves to grow things. He loves to grow you. He's not merely interested in the final product. He's patient and loves the process of changing you and growing you.

Now the small theological picture, equally important, sin loves to kill things. I've told you before. Sin is like spiritual RoundUp. It will kill things and it generally does it in a hurry by making you hurry. Do you know you'll miss all the mattering things in life if you're in a hurry. It's tough to do anything in a hurry. It's tough to love someone in a hurry, isn't it? It's tough to listen in a hurry, isn't it? It's tough to connect in a hurry. It's tough to care in a hurry. It's tough to argue well in a hurry. Any and all of the mattering things in life, sin will kill by causing you to hurry.

What we see in the gospel is that God, the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- the second person in the trinity took on flesh and dwelt among us. And did you know? For 30 years he grew up among us. Wisdom, stature, favor.

He just grew up. He didn't do a lot. He just grew up. And for three years, he ministered. He grew so that he might go to the cross for my sin, be buried, remove my sin, rise from the dead, give me eternal life and set me free so that I might grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This growth will always take time. Growth in Christ will always, always, always take time.

I'm going to show you -- and here's why I want to show you this -- we read through Acts, and you can read through in just a few hours. You can read through chapter 14 in just a few minutes. But if you don't realize that this is covering years of Paul's life, you may leave and be in a hurry. And we even have a cliché in America. We say, "Haste makes _____?"

Congregation: Waste.

Dave: Yeah. We know it. But if you leave in a hurry to grow in Christ, to reach someone in Christ, you may actually be doing the opposite of what you want. Let me read through this. If I had to put this in a hashtag, I'd put "#discipleshipisbettermeasuredindecadesnotdays" (discipleship is better measured in decades, not days). You can write that down. It's actually really good.

[Laughter]

No, honestly. Discipleship is better measured in decades, not days. You see, if you watch the markets day in and day out, guess what? You get frustrated, anxious. But if you watch the markets decade-to-decade, you're like, "Wow! Something happened."

You see, if I watch my life day-to-day, I get frustrated. Dude honks, flips me off yesterday and I just have a reaction. Right? I didn't -- anyway. So if I watch my life day-to-day, I get disheartened, discouraged. But you know if I watch my life decade-to-decade, it's kind of amazing. I rewind a decade ago, I was out in the parking lot with no shirt ready to fight somebody. AND I was a pastor.

[Laughter]

That's really bad. It's been a decade since I've had my shirt off in the parking lot wanting to fight any of you. Praise God! Amen? See, I may be more excited about it than you are, but just because I see him growing and changing me. Discipleship is best measured in decades, not days. Let me make it very simple in case I've already lost you.

Verse 3, Paul is going to stay in one place, and you'll see the word, "for a long time." Verse 28, he's going to stay in a place "for a long time." So the chapter begins with "he was there a long time," and it ends with, "he was there a long time." And in the middle, Paul serves and suffers. That's. Chapter 14 in a nutshell. Paul's in places a long time, modeling the gospel and he serves and suffers so that people might see the gospel lived out.

Let me show you. In your notes, if you've got them, chapter 14, verse 1 through 7. I've got the word "time" written under there. Let me show you. I'll read it. Watch. Chapter 14, verse 1 through 7. God says, Luke writes, [reading Acts 14:1 . . .] -- and this is good. Jews and gentiles believing, putting their faith in Jesus Christ, being saved. Beautiful.

Verse 2, here comes the contrast, the conjunction. [Verse

2 . . .] -- so now, Jews and gentiles, they're embittered and they're busting Paul up. So what does Paul do? Look at verse 3. [Reading verse 3. "Therefore they spent . . . ?]

Congregation: [Responding]

Dave: Yeah. Don't look so bored. This is kind of exciting to me. You can speak "outdoor Texas," like, -- well, maybe you can't. I don't know what the COVID rules are. But you *were* singing. I saw you singing so I think we can do it. Say "a long time" like Texans. 1, 2, 3 --

Congregation: [Shouting.] Long time.

Dave: This is beautiful. See, we think Paul went and preached, people were saved, they grew up and they went -- he was actually there a super duper long time just grinding it out with the enemies who were against him. He found out people were against him, he's like, I should probably stay here a long time. Isn't that crazy? Now watch. That's good. You're getting into it.

[Reading verse 4 to 7.] 1 through 7, verse 3 central, I want you to know it's really tough to make a disciple in a hurry. And it's really tough, I would say impossible, to grow a disciple in a hurry. Hillside, everything that matters in this life takes a long time. Please note that.

Now you and I know -- here's what sin does to me -- I know I don't have a long time. Google it, look it up, my death clock doesn't give me much longer. I was really hard on my body. Gives me 'til 72. So I know I don't have a long time. So what's our typical response to that? We're in a hurry. We don't know why. Rushin' Rushin'. Anyway, that's an

Alabama song. I know.

But it's true of us, isn't it? We're in a rush. And let me tell you this; nothing, nothing, nothing good happens in a hurry. I already went through the list. I can't listen in a hurry. Have you ever been listened to in a hurry? I'll tell you, that's probably your main marriage problem. Dude's running around, "Hey, I've got a big list of stuff to do. I'm in a hurry. Hurry up. Go from A to B. Get there. Tell me what you need, baby." That's not love.

Dudes, you don't get it because you're looking at me -- she doesn't interpret that as love. Right? And yet, we try and do things in a hurry. I went to community college for a long, long time. Most people go through for two years. I think I was there five. It doesn't matter. I had a lot of fun and I took a lot of classes, most of which didn't apply to my major. One of the classes I took that didn't apply to my major, any major, was zoology. It just looked fun. I ilke animals. I like Animal Planet. Why not zoology?

So I get into zoology and I don't like it, right? But all of a sudden we start studying kingdom, phylum, class, genus, species, different kinds of animals. Do you know that there are precocious animals? Non-precocious. Super precocious. Do you even know what precocious animals are? Anybody? Okay. You're going to have to go home and Google it up on the Google machine and make sure I'm not lying. Precocious. P-R-E-cocious.

[Laughter]

Just Google it. Look it up. I'll give you an example. You can just Google, "Blue wildebeest." When a blue wildebeest has

a baby, do you know that baby, within 30 seconds, is up walking around? 30 seconds. Within 60 seconds to six minutes, it's running. Within six hours, it's out-running hyenas. Within one day, blue wildebeest moves out of the house. How about that, parents?

[Laughter]

Huh? Some of you have been trying for 25 years. You told me this morning.

[Laughter]

The blue wildebeest gets it done in one day.

"Hey, mom, how was pregnancy, how was birth?"

"It was a tough 24 hours, but little Johnny is our making it. He's got a job at Frost Bank. He's doing okay. It was a tough day though. We weren't sure he was going to take off."

God made certain animals super precocious. They can get up and take off in a day. You know, as human beings, 18 years you're responsible for that kid. 18 YEARS! 18 years! Over 5000 days. And even then, there's no promise they're going to go.

[Laughter]

Isn't that crazy? And the truth is, God made it that way. Why? Why? He proved to me with the blue wildebeest that he could of made us like that. When you went and had your baby, within 30 seconds, that baby is walking down the hall.

"What's up, nurse?" He could've done that. You could've dressed him up like Boss Baby and he could've been out intervening for a job within a day. He didn't. Why? Because if you're going to make disciples, it's going to take a long time to be together, to connect, to love and to serve.

Verse 3 says Paul was there a long, long time. This is how disciples are made. Write down 1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verses -- well, no. Really, the whole book of 1 Thessalonians. Paul says, I was with you and you guys became imitators of me. You know what that means? Paul wasn't there saying, I'm going to motivate you to do something you don't want to do. He wasn't there saying, I'm going to manipulate you to go do what you *should* do. Paul was there saying, watch me. Watch me. As I follow Christ, you follow me, and this is going to take a long time, but that's okay. God hasn't made us super precocious. He's made us communal; to be together.

Mom, dad, you want to raise disciples? Do you want to raise kids that follow Jesus? Don't *tell* them what to do. Talk is cheap. Don't preach at them. Go ahead and practice what you preach. You want to make disciples? You be the disciple you hope that they will become. You live your life before them. Let me tell you this. Where your words and your works don't line up, repent.

Do you know they took a survey? Most kids that have grown up in church don't think their parents sin.

Congregant: What?

[Laughter]

Dave: Yeah, right? I read that and I'm like, no, no, no. What? Because we don't live life before them. We tend to hide things. You want to raise kids that love, love, love Jesus? Just model it. Live it before them and repent often, because we sin often, don't we? See, Paul was there a long time just living his life before them.

Now watch what comes second. This is no fun, but it's true. I'll read 18 through 20 to you. Not only do we need a lot of time, but we're going to need a lot of transparency to live our life before the people that are watching. [Reading verse 8-20]

Luke spends an extraordinary amount of time -- Paul goes, he serves and he cares and he heals this guy and then, as a result of that, he's misunderstood and he. You see that? He serves this guy. "Get up." The guy leapt up and everybody misinterpreted it. Paul's a great guy. So all of a sudden he goes from serving to suffering. Let me explain what's going on here, because it happens over and over and over in acts; and it will happen to you, too.

Let me explain it this way. Cones, rods, retinas, eyes? It's tough to shine in a hurry. I think that's the theological way I would put it. It's tough to let your light shine in a hurry. That didn't connect. Um, have you ever walked out of a movie theatre and your eyes hurt from the outside light? Anybody? You ever got up in the morning and walked outside and it was bright? That's called photophobia. Light sensitivity syndrome. Your eyes aren't adjusted so all of a sudden it hurts and you literally have to squint or put on sunglasses.

This is true in a spiritual sense as well. When you let your light so shine among men, first there's going to be a spiritual

photophobia. Number one, they *will* misinterpret it. "Ah, man. Luke did great? That's just because he's a great guy. Let's serve and worship Luke." We'll misinterpret it. Any good deed, done in front of the world, it *will* be misinterpreted.

Once you say, "No, no, no. I'm not a good guy. I'm the chief and foremost of all sinners," then it will turn from misinterpreting your good deeds to maliciousness. "Well then, now I have to do away with you." We've got a word for this, a phrase. We've got a cliché, I think.

Congregant: ... [indistinct] ...

Dave: No good deed goes . . . ?

Congregation: Unpunished.

Dave: Oh, so you *do* know that? Did you know that that's actually a spiritual truth? You stop to help somebody, and you get hit by a car while you're helping them change a tire. And people would say, "Well, no good deed goes unpunished." Like it's a normal thing. Do you know it actually *is* a normal thing.

Let me tell you why. I can show you through biologies, through zoology, physics, engineering, mathematics. Here's the truth. I look at you and I see a physical, human body. There's Conrad. God looks at us and he sees the heart. He sees a spiritual, eternal being. We look at each other and we see the outward, the physical, the natural. God looks and he sees the internal, the real substance.

Now, do you know anybody here can say, "Hey, I'm a

Christian?" Anybody can. Anybody ever known a fake Christian? They said they were a Christian, but they totally ripped you off. Anybody? Can I get a "what, what?" This is south Texas; the Bible belt. I might go to buy a car and they say, "I'm a Christian, too."

"Then I expect you to be honest."

"Yeah, I'll be honest."

And they totally rip you off and you're like, "Whaaaaat? You're not a Christian, dude."

It's like, "Don't judge me."

"No, you just ripped me off. That's not what a Christian would do."

Right? And I think we've all been there. And we live in a day and time when just saying you're a Christian is met with cynicism and skepticism. That doesn't mean anything to anyone anymore. You know that? Like, when I tell people I'm a pastor, they're actually *more* suspicious of me. People will say, "Oh, no, dude. I don't want to see how the sausage was made." You ever heard that? "I don't want to go to a business meeting." The sausage is ugly. There's actually cynicism and skepticism.

Do you know why we say words like, "no good deed goes unpunished?" Let me walk you through the truth. Paul just said get up and walk and showed the power of God to heal a man. Now the people attribute that to Paul. In the sculptures, you're going to see this. Wherever you serve for Jesus, you're also going to have to suffer for Jesus. This is

the stress testing, the load testing. It shows people what's literally inside. It shows people what's inside of you.

I can say whatever I want. It's not until I'm actually suffering that you see what's going on inside of me. It didn't connect. How many of you have ever taken a math class? Any math class, anywhere, at any time? How many of you cheated in math class?

[Laughter]

Why do you laugh? I think the majority of us, at some point, probably have or do. I did. I just found it was quicker and easier.

[Laughter]

And that's all I needed. So there was this guy in front of me, Adam, I said, I'll pay you 5 bucks when you get done. And he was brilliant.

Anyway, that doesn't matter. That's not even part of the sermon. It's not even Germaine to the sermon. What question did I ask you? Okay. Have you ever had a math class? So Mr. Easterday knew, I'm sure he knew. I'm sure he knew I was cheating. So what he would do is say, Dave, on this problem I want you to show your work.

[Laughter]

That's like, I don't need to. I'm just super duper smart and I just come up with the answers. And on other parts he would say, show your proof. That's a mathematical thing. Did you know that? Proof it. So you take it and arrange it to show

that it all equals out. He totally busted me.

You see, what Paul does here is he serves. God allows him to suffer so that everybody sees there's something different about what's inside of Paul. I'm proclaiming a supernatural message. If you put your faith in Jesus Christ, he'll take all of your sin, give you all of his righteousness, put his Spirit in you and you'll have abundant life. So, I'm proclaiming this supernatural message. There better be supernatural evidence of that.

And so what Jesus says is, here's the supernatural evidence. Let them see you suffer. See, in America we say, "Never let them see you . . . ?"

Congregation: Suffer.

Dave: See? You know that one, too. Do you know why that's why most kids grow up feeling condemned and overwhelmed? "Mom and dad never struggled. But now I'm struggling." What Paul does here, verses 8 through 28, he goes, no, no, no, no. Let them see you sweat. Let them see you suffer. And also, you consider it all joy when you encounter these trials, knowing that God is just testing your faith. That's a good thing. You don't believe me? Go to an engineering class where they do stress testing and show failure rate. You want that bridge stress tested, amen? You *do!*

I don't want to drive over a bridge that's never been stress tested and where I know the failure rate. Sometimes I'm stuck on those overpasses in San Antonio and there's like 50, 60, 70, 80, 100 cars on it. I'm like, "I wonder what the stress test rate is on this?"

[Laughter]

I'm really grateful it's been stress tested, amen? Are you grateful when your life has been stress tested? Every time it does, I fail at some point, he's showing my fatigue rate; my failure rate, only so that he can love me and grow me and encourage me. Paul said, let them see you sweat.

Number 1, to be a disciple, it's going to take time. And disciple others. Don't lose heart. Listen. A lot of us are broken and messed up and even when you're loving us and disciplining us, we're going to relapse. We're going to fall. We're going to fail. It takes time.

Number 2, it takes transparency. Let them see you suffer. Let them see you sweat. Let them see the sweetness of knowing Christ Jesus in the midst of suffering. Paul was stoned, dragged outside of the city. What does he do? He gets up and walks back into the city. [Scoff.] Crazy. But he did it. And he said, hey, guys, I just want you to know I'm still not against you. Jesus loves you. It's clear you don't want me here because of the whole stoning thing, so I'm going to another city. Right?

He knows when to hold them, when to fold them, when to walk away, when to run.

[Laughter]

Alabama and Kenny Rogers. Never done two bands in one message. Anyway, so he gets out of Dodge, but not until the Spirit leads him and he suffers openly. Watch the third one. I'll show you this one. [Chuckling.] Verse 21 through 28. I

think the best way I can describe this to you is with Animal Planet. Well, let me read it to you and then I'll explain.

Watch what Paul does. It's going to take time to grow. It's going to take time. A lot of you today are just discouraged, you're disappointed. You think you should be further along than you are. Anyone? Yeah, honest people. I'm 45. I'm a pastor. Most days I wake up and I say, "Lord, I'm so sorry. I should be so much further along than I am. I'm still struggling to love Brooke well. I'm still struggling to pour into my kids, to be present. To be present is hard. I'm struggling to love my neighbors, my community. Lord, I should be much further along than I am."

I want you to be encouraged. God's not in a hurry. It takes time. I want you to be encouraged. It takes transparency. You're going to need to suffer openly.

Number 3, you're going to need a team around you. You cannot do this alone. Many of our marriages are messed up, we're broken, we're not friends with our spouses, therefore we can't get into community groups. We can't be open and honest. Therefore sin overtakes us. You can't do this -- I can't do this alone, and I'll explain why. Watch this.

[Reading: verse 21 . . .] Here's what they were doing. And these weren't quick trips, y'all. I mean, it wasn't like running down to CVS. Each one of these took a lot of time, energy, effort. Watch what Paul was doing. Verse 22.

[Reading: verse 22 . . .] What you're suffering through isn't weird. It's necessary to suffer. That's the only way to tell the counterfeit from the real deal. The bologna from the actual beef. That's the only way that God uses to show what's

going on inside. So Paul encouraged them. He strengthened them. He said, continue on. Don't give up. We've got to keep pressing on. Now watch verse 23.

[Reading: verse 23 to 28.] It begins with a long time. It ends with a long time. Guess why? This is what I found. Not only is it impossible to make a disciple in a hurry, not only is it impossible shine your light in a hurry, it's impossible to encourage somebody in a hurry. And it's impossible to be encouraged in a hurry. That takes a long time.

Let me walk you through this. You happen to live in a world that's filled with anger, abuse, attacks, addiction, anxiety. I mean, this world is just brimming full of anxiety and that anxiety will come out of people in attacks and anger. And that anger is sticky. Sin is sticky. It really is like Super Glue. I don't know why, but an angry, anxious attack sticks to me more than 50 encouraging emails. Even an attack from somebody I don't know.

I was just pulling out of Chipotle. I'm not even moving. This is a true story. My cars not moving and I know that because I've got my foot on my brake and I'm looking at my Chipotle chips.

[Laughter]

Because they're delicious. They've got this lime twinge to them. I don't know what it is. It's . . . good. I'm getting ready to pull out. I'm not even moving. A guy comes around the corner and I think he thinks I'm about to move, so he honks and flips me off. I'm like, I'm literally not even moving. I don't even know what you're angry about. Funny thing was he had a church sticker on the back of his car and I know the

pastor of the church he goes to. So I was like, one of your congregants just honked at me and flipped me off. Because I like him. He's a buddy of mine. His retort was awesome. He said, it's probably a stolen car.

[Laughter]

Isn't that quick? Isn't that good? He got me. Yeah, you got me. And I love a pastor who will stick up for even the black sheep. Right? Even their fallen ones that honk and -- anyway.

[Laughter]

I can't remember why I just told that. Oh! I *do* know!

[Laughter]

So my next step is just to go home and enjoy Chipotle. And now I can't even enjoy it because I just got honked at and got saluted with one finger. And I think that's totally rude. And that sticks with me. So I wake up this morning kind of grinding on it. Like, "Man, I should've beat that guy up."

[Laughter]

Something. Chased him. That's unfair. And you can laugh like you never thought of it. You're Texans. You thought about worse than that.

[Laughter]

Because you're packing. I know. I didn't have a gun in my car. Mine was just a fist fight.

[Laughter]

And it dawned on me, sin is sticky, isn't it? Sometimes just a look from our spouse can just -- sin is sticky. It just sticks to your soul and it can just beat you down and weigh you down. What did Paul do after he was rejected? He preached the gospel and he was rejected. He preached the gospel and was rejected. You see where the chapter ends? He spends a long time with the saints who are just loving on him and encouraging him.

Read through 2 Corinthians. There were times Paul despaired of life. It's like, "I'm just done. Listen, I've been floating for days, I've been stoned, flogged. Man, lions." There was lions in there somewhere. "I'm just done, guys." And then he had the saints that came alongside.

You see? In the animal kingdom, you watch Animal Planet, I just love it. I love the monkey part. I know baboons are in that family. I don't like baboons. I think they want to eat you.

[Laughter]

And if you Google it on your Google machine, people who have kept baboons do get attacked by them. So I'm not talking about baboons. I like the little spider monkeys, because even if they wanted to eat me, I think I could take a spider monkey. One-on-one. So I like them. But when I'm watching Animal Planet, there's something beautiful, there's something spiritual, there's something absolutely profitable for us to learn.

Go home and watch the social habits of monkeys. You ever

watched them? They'll sit there and they'll -- they call it "social grooming." And you can watch it for hours on YouTube. It's awesome. It's actually very calming. Because they will sit there [imitating a monkey grooming] and do you know what they do when they find a lice? They'll eat it, but it's not a part of their overall diet. If you look at a monkey's diet, it's not lice. I don't even think they like it, but they can't ask, do you like eating that lice? Because monkey's don't talk.

But they eat it because they know if they just pick it off and throw it away, that lice will come back. And they will socially groom for hours and hours. And they just open themselves up to one another. Do you know, sin is sticky? It really is like spiritual lice. It will begin to gnaw at you. You will become agitated and spiritually itching, not able to stand your own skin.

Here's the truth. When I'm discouraged, do you know, I can't encourage myself? Do you know that? When I am despairing of life, literally to the point of suicide, I cannot encourage myself. When I'm struggling with depression, I cannot get myself un-depressed. Do you know that? Do you know that when your spouse is struggling with discouragement, she or he cannot encourage themselves. That's why he gave us the body of Christ to spend a lot of time together, because discipleship takes decades, not days. To be transparent about where we're hurting and suffering together so that we might walk together and to socially groom and pick that spiritual lice off one another so that we might not be overcome.

This is why the scriptures say, encourage one another day after day, as long as it is called today so that none of you will

be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Because when you're discouraged, you cannot encourage yourself. One of the best gifts that Jesus gave you was the body of Christ. To socially groom.

To say, "Hey, man, let's sit. I can tell you're having a lot of suffering and discouraged. And let's just see if we can groom some of these spiritual lice off. I can tell they're chewing you up. They're killing you."

He says, encourage one another. He says, bear one another's burdens. Because when I'm burdened down, I'm too weary to bear my own burdens. So he says, man, socially groom. Be together. Bear one another's burdens. Love one another fervently from the heart. Be tender-hearted, forgiving.

You have to have a team. Discipleship is going to take longer than you think. It is. It's going to mean more suffering and transparency than you think so that others can see Jesus is real and his life inside of you really does bolster you. You'll never know who's watching. Do you know that? When I'm suffering, I don't know who's watching. I don't know why I'm suffering. It's generally a mystery to me. I'm like, why am I having to suffer? He doesn't tell me. Oftentimes, he'll show me later.

Do you know that during this COVID thing, we're all locked up at home. Everybody's freaking out. Brooke and I decided to do some landscaping in the front yard. All of a sudden the HOA is in an uproar, neighbors are in an uproar. Everybody's in an uproar. I'm getting calls from everywhere. I'm like, what is going on? I'm getting calls from multiple people. Hey, we're calling from the city. We're calling from

the management company. Hey, we're calling from the HOA. And I'm like, I don't know who any of you people are.

But all of you want to tell me what to do. I finally -- because Carlton is at my house and John Denman is at my house, because I'm getting ready to film a sermon for you. So I tell them, hey, if you have the authority to tell me not to do this, send over somebody official with a cease and desist letter. Then I'll listen to you. Otherwise, I don't know who you are. Right? You could be a joker, a clown. You could be anybody. But I don't know who you are.

So I'm preaching to you guys and I'm looking at the camera telling you about Jesus and the gospel. About God changes lives. I don't know what I was talking about. But it was something spiritual. All of a sudden, the doorbell rings. You know who it was? The official who had a cease and desist letter. So I didn't stop. You can look up the sermon. I kept preaching. I sent Brooke to the door.

[Laughter]

She's tough. She's a lot tougher than me anyway. So she went and got the door. But the whole time, I'm wondering. It's just river rock and grass. Why am I suffering? You see, most of my life, Jesus just stamps over it, "I'll explain I'll of this later. I'll explain it later, but right now, I need you to suffer."

Discipleship is going to take time. Discipleship is going to take transparency. And discipleship is going to take a team. And Hillside, I love how you love one another. I really do. But I want you to know that we cannot go through this life without a team. It's really tough. It's impossible. When

you're down, you can't encourage yourself.

You see, Paul goes through -- Luke writes chapter 14 not to just give us geography, he went from here to here to here to here. You can look it up. You can Google it and I can say, look at the pretty map and all the different places Paul traveled. It's just gorgeous. What Paul did was absolutely profound.

He didn't go and try to motivate them to be better Christians. He didn't go and try to manage their sin. He didn't go and try to manipulate them to do something they didn't want to do. He went in and said, Jesus served me and suffered, and I want to serve you and suffer and show you the gospel.

You understand that we live in a world that desperately needs to see the gospel lived out. That's great. We've got a lot of great Bible teachers in America. Tons. Love it. I love when I hear great Bible teaching. You know what we need more than just words? When words and works align, where what you believe and how you behave align, where when people see you suffer for your Savior, they say, there's something genuine. Our world longs for something genuine, organic, real, true, authentic. And Jesus has put you right there in the neighborhood and said, serve and suffer for me. Serve and suffer for me. You may never understand it, but that's what our world needs to see.

You understand our world is so cynical and skeptical about Christianity. Our world is so cynical and skeptical of pastors. Our world is cynical and skeptical of just about anything. They don't know what to believe. So what Jesus does is he puts us in places and says, hey, I'm going to need you to stay here for a long time. I'm going to need you to serve

and suffer and do it with a team of people so that others might see that the gospel is real.

Hillside, just to end it I'm going to tell you this. God's not in a hurry. Right where you're at is where he wants to meet you and move the needle just a little bit in your life today. So today, Hillside, if you hear his voice, whether it's about your marriage, your family, your career. Whatever it is, today if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Humble your heart. Ask him for help. He'll meet you right there and he'll grow you today.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for your love for me. The fact that you're not disappointed in the years and years that I wasted. But you, in fact, use those failures, those weaknesses, those brokenness to make more of the gospel and your glory. And so I pray for the body here. For those who are struggling, feeling downcast, discouraged, disillusioned, depressed, feeling like they should be further along. Father, today, would you encourage their hearts. Would you encourage them with the fact that they're right where you want to meet them and grow them today.

So I pray for the marriages that are just suffering, the relationships that are suffering, the hearts and souls that are suffering with anxiety and the rest of the world. Holy Spirit, would you meet them and open their eyes to the fact that discipleship is a process of decades and that you've given and team to socially groom and care for them? Father, would you allow us to live in such a way that people see Hillside Fellowship and are drawn to Jesus Christ because of the love that they see in and through us? I pray you do these things for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

