

Advancing into the Next Century

Introduction: The text before us has a very interesting and important backdrop

- In Matthew 15, Jesus healed the Canaanite woman (Tyre and Sidon) a Gentile area
- As he moved back toward Galilee he was still in predominantly Gentile area
- There he fed 4,000 showing he could not only meet the needs of the Jews (5,000) but the Gentiles as well
- As he moved back into Jewish territory (chapter 16) he was met with resistance and a demand for a sign from the Pharisees and Sadducees
- The only sign he would give was Jonah (dead 3 days) but by then it would be too late, after they had crucified Him
- Jesus then warned his disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (false teaching that he called yeast because it spread)
- The false teaching could take a toll on disciples because now the popularity in Galilee was turning to opposition
- They left the synagogue and headed for the region of Caesarea Philippi (Phillip the Tetrarch) had built a temple to Caesar, mountainous area, niches carved in the rock for statues of gods
- It is with this backdrop that Jesus wanted to know what they thought of Him...”who do people say that I am?” “Who do you say that I am?”
- Peter’s confession: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”
- Great statement of Jesus

“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:17-18
NKJV

Interesting Note: Hell’s Gates would not prevail!

- Gates do not move...they are fixed
- Implies the Church moving toward the Gates of Hell
- Advancing: forward movement

TRUTH: The picture Jesus painted of the Church was not a club of people gathering , trying to get by or hold onto their traditions and desires until He returned. Instead, He pictured a people marching forward, advancing their influence, and storming over the very gates of Hell. How far the modern church has fallen.

A. Jesus commanded ADVANCEMENT

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “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 you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.”
Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
Acts 1:8 NKJV

B. Jesus expected a pattern of ADVANCEMENT (and it happened)

1. Acts 2:41 (3,000 saved)
2. Acts 2:47 “Lord added to the church daily”
3. Acts 4:4 “the number came to 5,000”
4. Acts 5:14-“Believers were increasingly added to the Lord”
5. Acts 6:7-“The number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem”
6. Acts 9:31-“The churches (Judea, Galilee, Samaria) we’re multiplied”
7. Acts 11:21-“A great number believed and turned to the Lord.”
8. Acts 12:24-“But the word of the Lord grew and multiplied.”
9. Acts 13:49-“And the word of the Lord was spread throughout the region.”
10. Acts 16:5-The churches increased in number daily

The entirety of the Book of Acts was a pattern of ADVANCEMENT

C. Jesus explained the power of ADVANCEMENT

“The gates of Hell cannot prevail”

1. Mustard seed
2. The leaven
3. Progress tearing down the influence and evil control of Hell in our world

God has called GT to ADVANCE

- This year we celebrate our 100th anniversary
- Opening paragraph of The Glad Tidings Story

“We begin by turning the clock backward to the year 1919 where a group of people hungry for more of God assembled in a tent at 8th and High Streets worshipping God under the anointed ministry of Maria Woolworth Etter. It was here the Glad Tidings story had its beginning. Following the close of the tent meeting, a small group who were determined to follow the Lord regardless of cost, met in various homes for cottage prayer meetings.”

100 years have passed and I pray we are still determined to follow the Lord...to ADVANCE!

Advancing into the next century...

I. We will ADVANCE in His Word

- A. The issue of biblical illiteracy has become a national epidemic (Albert Mohler-former president of Southern Baptist Convention)

Researchers George Gallup and Jim Castelli put the problem squarely: “Americans revere the Bible—but, by and large, they don’t read it. And because they don’t read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates.” How bad is it? Researchers tell us that it’s worse than most could imagine. Fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospels. Many Christians cannot identify more than two or three of the disciples. According to data from the Barna Research Group, 60 percent of Americans can’t name even five of the Ten Commandments. “No wonder people break the Ten Commandments all the time. They don’t know what they are,” said George Barna, president of the firm. The bottom line? “Increasingly, America is biblically illiterate.”

Multiple surveys reveal the problem in stark terms. According to 82 percent of Americans, “God helps those who help themselves,” is a Bible verse. Those identified as born-again Christians did better—by one percent. A majority of adults think the Bible teaches that the most important purpose in life is taking care of one’s family.

Some of the statistics are enough to perplex even those aware of the problem. A Barna poll indicated that at least 12 percent of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife. Another survey of graduating high school seniors revealed that over 50 percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. A considerable number of respondents to one poll indicated that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham. We are in big trouble.

We will not believe more than we know, and we will not live higher than our beliefs. The many fronts of Christian compromise in this generation can be directly traced to biblical illiteracy in the pews and the absence of biblical preaching and teaching in our homes and churches.

This generation must get deadly serious about the problem of biblical illiteracy, or a frighteningly large number of Americans—Christians included—will go on thinking that Sodom and Gomorrah lived happily ever after.

- B. As we move into this next century, WE WILL ADVANCE IN THE WORD!

1. I am going to preach through the Gospel of Mark on Sundays
2. The Whole Truth on Wednesdays
3. Will be changes in children’s curriculum and ministries to family
4. Student Ministries Center to develop biblical sound youth
5. NorthPoint Bible College to train ministers

II. **We will ADVANCE in our Prayer**

- A. Have made some great strides in this
- B. Want more people to enjoin the 5 minutes of prayer
- C. Six family nights of prayer with greater emphasis on prodigals and the miraculous work of God
- D. Devoted to Prayer next two Sundays

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” Colossians 4:2 NIV

- E. 21 days of prayer and fasting-REACH 3

Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance ... it is laying hold of his highest willingness.—Archbishop Richard Trench

III. **We will ADVANCE in our influence**

- A. The New Testament Church was called to broaden their influence
- B. Go into all the world...Jerusalem, Judea, Uttermost parts of the earth
- C. We are called to influence people for the Kingdom
- D. Our vision is to advance that influence (NorthPoint, Dunkirk)
- E. Personal discipleship (time with people) who are you discipling?
- F. Challenge every strong believer to disciple someone

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” 2 Timothy 2:2 NIV

Power of One-On-One Influence (Discipleship)

In the late 1600s and early 1700s a half-literate Italian craftsman named Antonio Stradivari designed and made a series of beautiful musical instruments. Today, those violins, named after the Latinized form of his name, Stradivarius, are considered priceless. In 2010, a Stradivarius was purchased for \$3.6 million. It is believed there are only around five hundred of them still in existence, some of which have been submitted to the most intense scientific examination in an attempt to reproduce their extraordinary sound quality. But no one has been able to replicate Stradivari's craftsmanship.

Today we do know that Stradivari used spruce for the top, willow for the internal blocks and linings, and maple for the back, ribs, and neck. He also treated the wood with several types of minerals, including potassium borate, sodium and potassium silicate, as well as a handmade varnish that appears to have been composed of gum, arabic, honey, and egg white.

But the genius craftsman never once recorded his technique for posterity. Instead, he passed on his knowledge to a number of his apprentices through what one scholar called "elbow learning." The apprentices of the great Stradivari didn't learn their craft from books or manuals but by sitting at his elbow and feeling the wood as he felt it to assess its length, its balance, and its timbre right there in

their fingertips. All the learning happened at his elbow, and all the knowledge was contained in his fingers.

IV. **We will ADVANCE in our sacrifice**

- A. God has given us a great vision for the next several years
 - 1. SMC building
 - 2. NorthPoint
 - 3. Dunkirk plant
 - 4. Missons around the world (Dick Brogden with Live Dead will be here in March)
- B. Sacrifice will be necessary to advance our influence
- C. Advance Fund (big dream and big vision)

(ILL)

On September 3, 1939, German troops invaded Bielsko, Poland. A fifteen-year-old girl, Gerda Weissman, and her family survived in a Jewish ghetto until June of 1942. That's when Gerda was torn from her mother, kicking and screaming. Her mother, Helene, was sent to a death camp. Gerda would spend three years in a Nazi concentration camp, followed by a 350-mile death march that she somehow survived. By the time she was liberated by American troops, Gerda was a sixty-eight-pound skeleton. And in what must rank as one of the most improbable love stories ever, Gerda actually married the soldier who found her, Lieutenant Kurt Klein.

There are six glass towers at the Holocaust Memorial in Boston, Massachusetts, representing the six extermination camps where six million Jews lost their lives. Five towers tell the story of unconscionable cruelty and unimaginable suffering, but the sixth tower stands as a testimony to hope. Inscribed on it is a short story titled "One Raspberry," written by Gerda Weissman Klein.

Ilse, a childhood friend of mine, once found a raspberry in the camp and carried it in her pocket all day to present to me that night on a leaf. Imagine a world in which your entire possession is one raspberry and you gave it to your friend.

The true measure of a gift is what you gave up to give it. One raspberry isn't much unless it's all you have! Then it's not next to nothing; it's everything. The same is true of two billion dollars or two mites. Big dreams often start with small acts of kindness. It's powerful when we're on the receiving end, but it's even more wonderful when we're on the giving end.

- The unspeakable gift (2 Corinthians 9:15)
- He gave His all
- How important are the people in Dunkirk?
- How important are the youth?

V. *We will ADVANCE in His Presence*

(ILL)

The following Buddhist poem, in the form of a "waka," was written in the 12th century by Saigyō Hoshi after he visited a Shinto Grand Temple:

God's here?
Who can know?
Not I.
Yet I sigh and tears flow tear on tear.

(ILL)

An article in the Washington Post is titled "I'm an atheist. So why can't I shake God?" and it suggests that it's "hard to believe in nothing when your psyche is wired for faith." The author Elizabeth King tells how she abandoned her childhood Christian faith for atheism. "Until my mid-teens, I was a 'born again' Christian who loved God with all her heart. These days, though, I'm an atheist with nothing to prove.

"The story of my departure from the church resembles those of many others who have abandoned the flock. When I was about 16, I started asking questions during services that my youth pastors couldn't or didn't want to answer: Why is it a sin to be gay? Why is it okay to spank children? Where does the Bible say we can't have premarital sex?"

Still, in spite of her atheism, King states, "somehow God has found a way to stick around in my mind." She thinks that "God's lingering presence" could be attributed to "the inner-workings of the human mind" against which the atheist battles hard. She claims, "If I could ... banish this figure from my psyche, I would."

In the end, she has to admit, "I have no choice but to accept that I'm an atheist with a sense for God."

- A. We are created for His presence
- B. His presence is what changes people's lives

(ILL) At the age of 16, at District Council, times in the sanctuary

"Blessed is the man You choose, And cause to approach You, That he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Of Your holy temple."

Psalms 65:4 NKJV

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." James 4:8

C. In 2019 and beyond we need to be known as people of His presence

1. Not something we prove by silly demonstrations that many grew up with
2. Something people sense as we enter (we have prayed, we are corporately the Body of Christ, we praise and He inhabits that praise)
3. We don't change people...His presence does

Conclusion: Advancing into the Next Century

- The Word
- Prayer
- Influence
- Sacrifice
- Presence

"I'll go anywhere as long as it's forward." ~ David Livingstone, Scottish Medical Missionary to Africa