

Get a Finishing-the-Great-Commission Attitude

By David Talley

David Talley:

Ron always makes me feel much more important than I am, and I just want you to know, Ron, if you can come to my house some time and let my kids know what a great guy I am, I would deeply appreciate that. Yes. Any of you that want to come to my house and tell my kids what a great dad I am, I would I would very much appreciate that. You know, I think that Ron Hafer has been here probably since I was born. He's been at Biola. I wouldn't doubt it. He's got to be somewhere close. And I just appreciate you saying those nice things about me. And isn't Biola a much better place because we have people like Ron Hafer who love students? Maybe you should come up here. I think I did tell your daughter that once, I do want to talk about getting a finish the great commission attitude. Tonight I want to stick with that particular theme of get an attitude. And I've been burdened with the whole concept of what it means for us to be a people who finish the great commission. We might even yes, we do have that up behind us even here tonight. But this past summer, I went to Brazil with my wife, Joanie, and we had a wonderful--is that someone from Brazil? Yes, [unintelligible] is where I was, and we just had a phenomenal time, and during that time, God stirred in my heart in amazing ways. And what I want to do tonight is share with you some of those insights that God continues to stir in me. Even now, God is used and is using this trip from this past summer to challenge me in ways that I haven't been in a while. And I feel constrained to pass that on to you. And I want to say ahead of time and all that I say this evening, I want to make it clear that I am not minimizing the wonderful efforts that so many of us are already making with regards to the great commission.

Even this morning, I had some students come into my office. The first one comes in. We ended up talking about her life, her goal, go to Indonesia to reach an unreached people. I was fired up after that conversation. Next meeting, a young man in his life, his plan for tomorrow is to go to San Diego and share Christ with two former high school friends. I was fired up! Next meeting, young man. His goal, train Christian leaders here and abroad. And you guessed it, I was fired up after that, too. There are so many wonderful people here at Biola and in the churches where we serve that are serving God in incredible ways. And I say, keep it up. Go for it. Tonight, I don't want to speak against anything, I'm speaking for the greatest cause known to humanity, a cause to which each of us are called. No one is without excuse here. These are thoughts of what God is threatening my heart. I'm wrestling with them in my own life and I offer them to you tonight. The challenge, all of us, to the greatness of our calling. And the question I want to answer tonight is, are we committed to finishing the great commission? Let's pray. Our father, this is a big question. It's a question that you see each one of us to answer in the quietness of her heart. But not only answer it there, but answer it with our lives. God, we pray that your Spirit would be powerfully at work in our lives. That you would let this world's grip on us be broken. That our hearts would be tuned into the needs around the world and what you've called us to. God, we pray that there would be a calling tonight, that people would respond to your greatness and the greatness of this task, but also the greatness of the message. And we pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.

We're going to look at a few passages tonight, but mostly I'm going to talk to you about concerns that are in my heart. I'm over 40. I'm now 40, almost 44, which means I'm allowed to say things that matter to me. I've been around the barn, is what I tell my children, just a few times. And

when you've been around the barn a few times, you know what the barn looks like, and wisdom grows out of that. But in Acts chapter one, verse eight, I want to remind us of what Jesus said, his last words to the disciples before he ascended into the heavens, because these words should always be ringing in our hearts. We should never lose sight of this particular commission and what God has passed on to us through Jesus Christ. It says in chapter one, verse eight. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, and Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the Earth. That's our commission. If you want to know God's will for your life, there it is, clear and simple. We are called to be witnesses to the uttermost parts of the world. Let's flip over to Matthew 28 as well, very familiar verses to us. And let's remind ourselves of what Jesus said here again, the great commission, this is before he goes up into the clouds. And spends time with the Father before he comes back again, and Jesus came and spoke to them, the disciples, saying all authority has been given to me in heaven, on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.

All the nations. That's you and me. That is our command, that is what's been entrusted to us, and these verses obviously serve as Jesus-Jesus's last words to his disciples, his last words upon the face of the earth before he goes back to heaven, and they provide us with our purpose while we walk this face as his disciples. You see, the Lord is committed to be known in the world, his great name being known, and he has committed to us, entrusted to us the responsibility of being ambassador, that makes his name known so that all the unreached people groups in the world have a knowledge of who he is, that they understand the gospel. Philippians chapter 3 verses 10

and 11 remind us where everything is heading. That at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, every tongue confess, that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God, the Father. That's where all of history is moving. That's where all of time is moving. That day is going to happen. And our responsibility is to make his name known to the nations so they can bow the knee. Second Corinthians 5:17-21 reminds us that we've been entrusted with this ambassadorship. That's our calling. We know that one day every knee is going to bow, every tongue is going to confess that Jesus is Lord.

Now it's our calling to tell people the greatness of the Lord and share with them the good news of the Gospel so they can respond now, so they can bow the knee now, so they can say his name now. Jesus has commissioned us, how do we respond? There's a sign at the post in Brazil, which is a helpful intro to the sermon, if you could put that next slide up there. Wonderful. This slide right here is found as you walk through the base of where I was at in Brazil, in a state something like this, God invented it, Jesus died for it, Paul lived it, [unintelligible] restarted it or rejuvenated it, and now are you willing to finish it? That's the question that stands before us. That's the question that we want to ask tonight. You can go to the next slide to remind us of the question we're seeking to answer. Are we committed to finishing the great commission? Now, there are three types of responses to this particular question, are we willing to finish the great commission? Three types of responses. The first one is that people recognize the great commission and the response might-might be something like this. Yes, I see the need to do something. There's a second type of response, that there are people who participate in the great commission and their response might be, yes, I've shared Christ with others. And then there's a third response that I want to call all of us to, and that is one who orients their life to complete the

great commission. Everything is about completing the great commission, the response is yes, everything about me is focused on this commission.

And let's look at these responses. The first one, a person who recognizes the great commission. This is probably the largest response amongst Christians. Christians are obviously aware of God's call in our lives, at least to a minimal degree, is to tell others about him. At the very least, we are aware of the need to spread the gospel, because before we can respond to Christ, someone had to tell us about him and about the cross. To come to Christ, a person must hear the good news of the gospel. We heard the hearing of the good news from another, and others will hear if we share with them. Romans 10 verses 4 through 15 is very clear on this. It talks about how people must hear, and how will they hear if there's not a preacher, and how were they to be a preacher if we're not sent? It's very clear hearing has to happen. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God. We're all aware of that on some level, and some of us live only with this awareness of the great commission, the commission. But this awareness does not lead to any kind of action in our lives. Instead, life continues for us and is not affected in any way by these last words of Christ in Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28 verses 18 to 20. Other activities occupy our minds. Other concerns take up our energies. Other interests occupy our money. Other priorities consume our passions. Now, regardless of whether or not we are gripped by our responsibility to share the gospel, this fact is true. Neighbors, co-workers, friends who do not know Christ are going to enter a crisis for eternity, an eternity in hell.

The second group of believers would be those who do participate on some level in the great commission. This is probably the second largest response amongst Christians. In fact, these first

two responses probably make up the majority of Christians in this world. I'm not certain how many Christians have shared their faith with another at some point in their life. Some may have, others may not. Those of you here in this room, some of you may have shared Christ with another, some of you may have not, for those who have shared it may have been multiple times or maybe only once, but they at least have shared the good news. They have participated in sharing Christ. Perhaps some of you have been a part of leading another person to the Lord. Obviously, there can be various degrees of what we mean by participate in the great commission. Some are proactive in knowing the spiritual condition of people they work with or people who live around them in other apartments. Others simply bring it up whenever it's convenient. Some may join in evangelism programming for the local church for a while and be vigilant in sharing the gospel. Others may give out tracts at Halloween like some do on our street. And all of these efforts are good. We need to continue. But many of these efforts are accomplished without upsetting our comfortable, world centered lives in our comfortable, world centered neighborhoods and our comfortable, world centered activities. Participation is often based on convenience rather than out of a love for the greatness and the glory of God. And that must grip our heart so that his great name is proclaimed to the world. It's no longer a calling when we relegate it to convenience. God is no longer the priority when we simply do it because it fits into our lives.

The third type of people are those whose life is oriented toward completing the great commission. They live for this. This is the smallest number of Christians who fit in this category. And I find this to be a tragedy. Because, Jesus, his words are so clear to us that this is our purpose in life, it is what we are to be about. And this category is--we think about a life oriented

in--are people who have a singular focus in life that's oriented everything. Moving toward the proclamation of Christ to a world who needs to hear it means orienting one's lifestyle in every way for the sake of the gospel. This is what Jesus is calling the disciples to in Acts chapter one, Matthew 28, in other places. And this is what I want to call us to tonight. We have made life about where we live, what we do to make a living, activities we are involved in, the clothes we wear, the car we drive, where we go on vacation, at what age we will retire. And then, and only then, we make a decision about how much the great commission might fit in with the time or the energy that is left over. Now, we wouldn't call it leftovers, and we may even be offended by the use of that term, but we must recognize that the priority we give many things in our lives are really of little importance eternally. And this misplaced priority distract us from what really matters, what is really of significance in our lives.

My son Andrew and I recently completed reading the biography of Jim Elliott, one of the missionaries to the Indians who gave his life in the proclamation of the Gospel in Ecuador. And all of his life, Jim Elliott lived with a singular passion for the gospel. When he was sitting where you are, he made every decision in his life based on where he was going and how he was living. He joined the wrestling team simply so he could get into shape for the jungles in South Africa, South America, where he felt God had called him. He majored in Greek simply so he could be best prepared to translate the the Bible into another language so people could hear the good news of the gospel. He was on a special diet for the simple reason of training his body to be as healthy as it possibly could be for what lay ahead in missionary service. Sing Your Passion, a life focused on gospel proclamation. He reflected the calling of Jesus in his life, and it seems that Jesus is calling us to make our life about the great commission, and then and only then to make

decisions about where we live, what we do to make a living, activities that we are involved in. Life in this world is secondary to fulfilling the great commission, to being about what God has called us to be about. When Jesus is calling us, what Jesus is calling us to means that our life's plans are to be oriented with this purpose in mind, it means that we are to create ways to give more and more of our money to the work that God is doing around the world. It means choosing a major in college that will assist in completing the great commission. It means exploring opportunities to take employment overseas so that the gospel can be heard in nations that need to hear it.

It means maybe even starting your own business so that you can tell others about Jesus. It means planning vacations around growing a deeper interest in gospel proclamation and the needs of the world. It means offering languages in Christian universities oriented toward finishing the great commission. You see, being the top salesman in the company, receiving the highest GPA, receiving placement in a prestigious grad school, completing a Ph.D., receiving a large raise because of job performance, being recognized for significant contributions on a project, finding success in athletics, being promoted to a new position, finally marrying the man or woman of your dreams, all of these are to be secondary to our highest calling, finishing the great commission. Ultimately, it means that we are to be weaned from the things of this world, meaning that these things no longer have a grip on our heart. We are to pursue the things that matter to God as a first priority, regardless of what it might cost us personally. It means that we are to repent of this world, which is a turning away from everything that dishonors God and pursue a life that is pleasing to him, which is a turning toward everything that honors him. We

are to wean ourselves from the things of this world in order to find life in the blessings of God. This requires a focus that is not of this world, but of eternity. We are to seek his kingdom.

Acts 3:1 to 4 reminds us we are to think about those things which are uh, think about those things that are eternal. Are we committed to finishing the great commission? If we can commit our lives to living with an orientation toward completing the great commission, that is, putting everything in our life focused on reaching the unreached world, what's it going to take? What's it going to cost us? What does that mean to have that kind of vision for the world? I want to talk about four things. We need people who are willing to share Christ, we need money to finance this endeavor around the world, we need people to be biblically trained so they can tell others about Christ, we need a passion to complete it no matter what, even if it means death for the sake of the gospel.

Let me unpack these. The first one is we need people who are willing to share Christ. This point assumes that people need Christ. Acts 1:8 tells us that people need to know Christ in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth. For us that means La Mirada, L.A. County, California, North America, uttermost parts of the world. There is no shortage of lost people. Jesus said the fields are ready for harvest, but the laborers are few. This statement is just as true today as it was two thousand years ago. The issue is not the field, it's white with harvest. The issue is one of laborers.

We need to spread laborers in every field. In fact, we need to have a focus on what this means for us to get laborers throughout the harvest in America. It's no surprise that we have an abundance of Christians and full-time ministers and missionaries. Is there a need in America? Absolutely. We need to continue to be laboring faithfully in our land until the Lord comes back. I love

hearing students talk about the ministries that they are involved in right here in America. And I say go for it. But I want to lay before you tonight that there are other fields out there that are white for harvest, other fields where the laborers are truly few. Consider the present state of the church's missionary focus. Listen to these facts. 74 percent of our missionaries serve in areas that are already strongly Christian. 74 percent of all missionaries going out are already in an area where there's a strong Christian presence. Only 6 percent of our missionaries serve in the second largest religious group, one point five billion, 6 percent of our missionaries going to one point five billion people, the Muslims, many who live in unreached areas or countries that are closed to the missions, efforts or creative access nations. There are still ten thousand, ten thousand, unreached people groups who have never heard the gospel. 10,000, at least Bush, who preached here Biola last year or the year before, coined the term the ten forty window, if you could put that next slide up there, the ten forty window.

This is this area, 10 degrees, 40 degrees latitude north of the equator, two thirds of the world's population lives here and much of it is unreached. Do we have a heart for this? The fields are white with harvest, and that's where it's widest right now, the unreached people who live in that area. Consider these more facts, 20 percent of the world still has no portion of the Bible in their language, 20 percent. If we had a village of one hundred people, if this village represented the world, then sixty-seven of the people would not be Christians. If we can just shrink the world down to one hundred people, sixty-seven would not be Christian. Seventy-three would be from Asia and Africa. Seventy-three. Asia and Africa. And this is where we find the 10 40 window located in part, only five of that hundred would be from North America. Yet most of our mission dollars are focused on the five. Why is that? Are we committed to finishing the great

commission? When we think about our world, where are we putting our money? Where were the workers come from and not only that, how will they be paid as Americans? We put a high value on living in America and enjoying the pleasures that we enjoy. In fact, the world is very aware of our comfort of living. They want to get to America so they can enjoy the privileges that we have. But when we came into the body of Christ. We became citizens of another place, we became citizens of heaven. Philippians 3:20 and 21 makes it so clear. We are not only simply Americans, we are citizens of heaven. That's our citizenship.

Yet, for the most part, we do not own these verses in our lives, in other words, it's easy for us to live as if verses like that don't exist. We hold tightly onto being American and living in America because it's our home. In some sense it is, but in a more important sense, it's not. We are not primarily Americans. We are ambassadors for Christ, whose home is heaven. That's who we are. As such, we need to abandon the kind of thinking that thinks simply like Americans and instead think like citizens of heaven, we are on our way home. Citizens who are ambassadors of Christ, we represent our king, not to America alone, but to the uttermost parts of the earth. Since America is not our home, we should be able to move freely about and strategically complete the great commission. We need to become a people who eagerly answer the call to take gospel proclamation to the world. And again, I'm not minimizing taking the gospel to your neighbors or to your co-workers or to the homeless man you meet it in front of the grocery store. I simply want us to think beyond this. Are we willing to commit to the great commission? If you could put that slide back up, there it is right there. Commission. Americans also put a high value on family. We often choose to live close to family to maintain contact with our blood relatives. But

we must heed the examples in the teachings of Christ who modeled something for us to think about in Luke chapter 8 verses 19 through 21.

They said to Jesus, hey, your mother and your brothers are outside. What does Jesus say to him? Behold, my brothers and sisters are those who do the will of God. When we were going through Luke at our church and I had to preach this passage, my wife and I had--and I had many conversations about this verse in our home, Jesus makes it clear that our family is not simply by blood, but rather by calling. That we've been called into the body of Christ. That's our family. Our Father, who has called us out of darkness into light, who has bought us with a price, is now our heavenly Father. And our family is now our brothers and sisters in Christ. Now, we don't disregard our bud-Blood family. The Ten Commandments show a high priority, honor your father and your mother, and we should. Respect must not be lost, but I'm trying to get us to see that our bond must go deeper than blood. Our bond is in Christ. We have a spiritual bonding. This is family in the truest sense of the word. As such, we need to abandon the kind of thinking that looks at blood family as the most important, and instead think like members of the body of Christ who have been commissioned together to take the gospel, not to America alone, but to the world. We must realize that we now have family in the truest sense of the word all over the world. We must move freely for the cause of Christ. Don't allow your roots to go down deep into American soil. Be free to move wherever God might call you. We must commit ourselves to be globally minded and as we have children, encourage them to be globally minded as well. We must find no greater joy than being a part of finishing the great commission.

When I was down in Brazil, I met Tanya Lopez. [Unintelligible]. Can you sit where you sat a couple of years back? Intercultural studies major, maybe a sophomore, she was challenged to go down to Brazil, join the Radicals Project where I was, is now married to Abazillion Denilson, a wonderful man, has a wonderful marriage, and they are focused on reaching the unreached. She has a passion for that. Are we willing to have a passion for that as well? And Tanya now basically, bless her mom's heart, is back in, I think, Sacramento. She has had to release her daughter to the world because of the great commission, her mom has to realize that the bonding of blood is only so deep. But the bonding that we have in Christ to take the gospel to the outermost parts of the world is the calling of her daughter. So what do we do? Do we all drop out of school? We can get you out of some of your exams and classes, but do we all drop out of school? Do we sell our homes? Do we quit our jobs? Do we move to the 10 40 window? I think that we all should be willing. I think that we should all find it in our hearts to live with this kind of resolve. But to answer the question, no, not necessarily. I don't think we all should necessarily move to the 10 40 window. We have to think more strategically than that. We have a missionary that we support down in Columbia, and I want you to listen to some words that he sent to me in an email that really opened my eyes to what is going on in the world.

We've got to think globally, this is what he says, with thousands upon thousands daily passing from our world, awakening to the reality of a Christless eternity without hope or salvation. New strategies toward the evangelization and disciples of the nations are desperately needed. Today, we're witnessing, more than ever, a move of the spirit across former mission fields as the second and third world takes aim toward the daunting challenge of completing the great commission mandate. Praise God. Such a reality gives cause for great joy. As Mission Ministry is no longer a

Western movement, countries like South Korea, China, and Brazil are changing the way we've always thought of mission work. History is being rewritten before our very eyes. There's no doubt the Latin American Mission Movement is making and will continue to make a significant impact in reaching many of the still unreached creative access nations, particularly within the Islamic family, with tremendous linguistic advantage. Worldview commonality in a simple physiological similarity, some of the best missionaries to the Islamic peoples are proven to be Latin American in heritage. Might it not be wise for us to think strategically, to work in conjunction with what God is apparently doing through such movements today? Could there not be tremendous blessing and joy for us as we partner with such movements showing appreciation for God's new envoys? We believe the answer to be an exuberant yes.

You see, something's happening in our world, it doesn't necessarily mean that we all pack our bags and go, we got to think more strategically than that. God is moving in second and third world countries and creating the missions movement that we can partner with. Our missionaries from our church, Kelly and Sherry Green, are doing this in Colombia, the radicals project is doing this as well. We could see the next three slides. This is the group that I went down to in Brazil. It's a group of people who are training for missions work. You can see some of the beautiful faces here of the students. Go on to the next slide. There's my lovely wife right there in the center. It's just some wonderful people. One more slide for that. These people really wanted their picture taken, the radicals project in Brazil is doing this as well. It is a youth movement directed at the Muslim world and completing the great commission, they constantly keep the nations before them. Let's look at the next few slides. When we think about what they're doing to keep the nations in front, they wouldn't have a global center for the nations. Look, all the nation

flags, they're always thinking about the world. Let's go to the next slide. When you walk around their campus and they have a worship service, they have a particular worship service where they all put on some traditional Muslim dress. This is-this is an outfit I got from Nigeria, I believe. But what are they doing here? They're breaking down these little worlds in which they live and they're thinking globally. They're reaching beyond themselves.

We can go on to the next slide. They-they love to dance. They got me dancing there in the middle. I got my American dress on. They have all their international dress. I was representing America at that point. Go to the next slide. When you walk around their campus, you see these flags of the nation's posted throughout their gardens and on trees everywhere you go. Flags of different nations. And you'll see students walking around and they stop, they'll pause, they'll kneel, they'll pray that God's work will be done in these nations. They think about this all the time. They're constantly moving in that direction of thinking about how God can use them in the world. Let's go to the next slide. You see, they've got scripture all over the place. Ask me and I will give you the nations as an inheritance. That's what they think about, the nations, what God is doing in the world. And that brings us back to, are we willing to finish the great commission you saw in those pictures? Some of the guys have really long beards. When you go to the radicals project, you don't shave. You grow your beard the whole time you're there. That's significant because when you're in Brazil growing a large, long beard like that, it's a-it's a-it's a sign of shame in the Brazilian church and they are learning already what it means to be in a cross-cultural situation, and to be shamed simply for who you are simply because you have facial hair.

They're learning what it means to live in the midst of that and still continue to proclaim the great

name of Christ. Most of these students could not communicate with us. They speak Portuguese or some other language. But if you put a world map in front of them, they would point to the country where they are going, they are focused on where they're going. They'll point with joy as they think about going to share the gospel with those people who need to hear. They mostly think about completing the great commission. We need to be willing to go, but more importantly, we need to be good stewards of this global movement that's taking place, people who are willing to go, we need to be good stewards of the moneys that have been entrusted to us, the passions that God is throwing around the world. We have to begin to think differently and strategically about completing the great commission. The question will always loom over us: are we willing? Are we ready? America has two advantages in completing the great commission first, we are the wealthiest nation in the world. In fact, I think California is the fourth wealthiest nation in the world. We have lots of money. We have the majority of the resource of what we call money. If we truly valued missions, we could finance in America alone much of the evangelistic effort around the world. Think about that. We could finance it, but what would it take to do this?

What kind of sacrifice might we be called to, what would it mean for us to steward our resources for worldwide gospel proclamation? Dream for a moment, just think about what it would take. Is it possible for us to do it? I'm not talking about financing our comfortable American dream lifestyle first and then giving, I'm talking about living lean because we have a vision for what God wants to do in this world. I'm talking about creating a subculture where keeping up with the Joneses has a radically different meaning. Keeping up the Joneses becomes downsizing our living situations in order to give to Gods greater work. The early church in the book of Acts chapter 4, we see an example of this Acts 4 becomes a negative example when, and I said, if I

rely to the Holy Spirit for us, it may mean that we need to see how long we can hold on to our technological devices rather than how quickly we can invest in the latest model. It may mean that we pack a picnic when we go on a date rather than go out to a restaurant. It may mean that we need to learn to share cars rather than everybody having their own set of wheels, or at least have a minimum number of cars which forces families to work together so that money can be provided to complete the great commission. It may mean that God calls us to something radical in our life. Our pursuit is to be the great commission. We may need to limit the amount of entertainment that we engage in that we seek so that we can be investing more in the work that God is doing in this world.

We must realize that oftentimes the reason we so tenaciously pursue entertainment is because we are bored. We don't have any purpose in our life. And so we live for Fridays and Saturdays to entertain ourselves. We turn on the TV because we're bored. We listen to music because we're bored. We go out and buy the latest CD because we're bored. We're often more interested in entertainment than we are about what God is doing in this world, but finishing the great commission is the greatest venture that any of us could ever embark upon. There are many ways that we can begin to radically change our lives financially to live for a greater cause, but I want to talk about that in just a moment. The second advantage of living in America is that the nations have come to us. To reach most parts of the world often can simply mean reaching our neighbors or making efforts toward local international college students. The USA is international and oftentimes these internationals go back to their countries to live and work. If we win them to Christ, they go back as missionaries. But do we have a zeal for this? Do we recognize what a great calling this is? Are we living intentionally, thinking about this great commission and how

we can accomplish it? We live in the greatest nation in the world and this provides us a platform by which we can reach the world with the gospel, but we must be stewards of what God has given to us. We need people who are willing to share, people who are willing to go.

But secondly, we need money to finance this, Acts 4 talks about the Christian community where they're sharing all things in common. And we often understand that is we should share things together in our small communities or in our churches, and we should. But maybe it's important that we think beyond that, that what it means is that we should share globally what we have because of the riches of our nation, because of the nature of our new family, brothers and sisters in Christ being the priority. What does it mean for us to care about our poor brothers and sisters in Christ around the world? We sense it occurring in passages in the Bible. Further, what does it mean for us to partner with other nations in the world in sending out their missionaries because they simply don't have the finances to support it? These are questions that we need to be asking. The Radicals Project has built a display case of Coke products with a saying that might be a helpful reminder to us. We can see those, who can see it across the top. It's just all Coke products, a memorial to this millennium and then onto the next slide, more Coke products. Brazilian evangelicals spend more on Coca-Cola than they invest in, what they claim really matters, missions. You see, they've got their own set of problems. They spend more on Coke than they do on sending people to the mission field. But let's imagine for a moment that we would say evangelical Americans spend more on blank.

What would it be? Starbucks. What would it be? iPods. Movie theaters. Fill in the blank.

American evangelicals spend more on what than we do on the great commission. What would it

be? You see, the responsibility we have to steward our resources is enormous. When you think about what the Bible says about our resources. It's a sober calling that God has given to us when we think about how much we've been given and what it means to be a steward of that, it can be sobering. This afternoon we were looking in the session I was at at Luke chapter 12, where the rich men built bigger barns for which he's called a fool. I call this the American Dream. But you know what, it's a dream that we're probably all caught up in, it's a dream that we pursue without even knowing it, because it's simply the American way to do things. But we are not primarily Americans. We are citizens of heaven. Therefore, we should spend our money in light of that. We're followers of Christ. We are to be radically different than our worldly neighbors. We are to steward our resources not as Americans, but as Christ followers. And this may mean that each one of us need to have a paradigm shift in the way that we live. What if, when I ask these questions at home, my wife Joanie gets just a little uncomfortable when I say Joanie, what if she gets a little nervous? But she's listened to me for twenty-one years and she continues to listen to me, I think she's listening.

She may tune me out when I say what if, but I've been thinking about what if 10 families in my church with good equity in our homes sold our homes and bought a 20 unit apartment complex, we could probably pay cash for it because our our homes are worth so much. These 10 families would then live in ten of the units and hold some of the units open for the poor or homeless, rent out others to families who did not know Christ, or families who were training for mission work or Biola students or Talbot students to be generous. Since the apartment complex has paid for the rent, money could then be used to finance the great commission. To send people throughout the world, the families could then pray for these families that they're supporting. These families

could even maybe go on missions trips to spend time with these families and partner with them, with them, in finishing the great commission. They could learn the language of the nations where these missionary families live. Perhaps when they retire, they could even go and live there and serve. Or perhaps they could simply go. What keeps us from this? We value our individuality. I think the Bible has something to say about that. We value our privacy. I think the Bible has something to say about that, too. We guard our investments for the future. I think the Bible has something to say about that. Are we committed to finishing the great commission? I don't intend to pass judgment on the American ways of doing things. I am steeped in American culture.

I had a venti Starbucks today. And I enjoyed the venti Starbucks that I had. I live in this model and I myself wrestle with it. I lay awake at night, though, and I battle with these kinds of things, and I do want to challenge us out of our complacency to consider what God might be calling us to. Even though money is lacking in some of these parts of the world, they are tenacious and going tenacious. It cost one hundred dollars to support a Brazilian missionary for a month. But they can't even raise that. So it's the radicals project they've been thinking about. Another project called Project Nomad, where they teach people to live off the land and live in tents because their thinking is if we can't raise one hundred dollars a month, how can we do this for free? How can we give ourselves for the cause of the great commission for free, let's live in tents, let's live off the land. Because there's something great at work that God is doing in this world. God wants us to begin thinking in terms of this, and what does it mean for us to partner with our brothers and sisters in Christ? What's it going to take for us to do it? The money to finance it, how is it that you're going to choose to live your life in light of the great commission and the resources that we have in America, who's going to lead the way? Who's going to give the example to follow?

The third thing we need is biblical training to enable people to equip believers in the world. Knowing what God has called us to do is imperative, it's clearly laid out in the Bible and God wants us to pass this on. He wants us to be a people who are equipped. And that's why you're here. One of the reasons. 30 minutes of Bible Biola, because you want to be equipped in our church. I want to see people equipped, and oftentimes we offer adult Sunday school classes. And the majority of people who attend are students who were already receiving the 30 minutes of Bible. It amazes me, but I'm thrilled by it. I'm thrilled that as students there, such a tenacity to be equipped for what God is calling us to. But along these lines, I could also not help but notice that in Brazil, tenacity as well. So grateful for the opportunity that's been given to them, so grateful to learn. And we've got to be a people who get equipped ourselves and go to the northernmost parts of the world to help others be equipped. We've got to have a focus on what it means to partner with a world who has the passion to go, but they need to be equipped in order to go. They are so singularly focused, they're taking all the steps they can, they just need to be equipped, they're laying it all out for their passions because like Jim Elliot, they knew only one passion, and that was finishing the great commission. We need to be that kind of people, as in the church today, people are becoming theologically and biblically ignorant.

In the other parts of the world, there's a movement. Anti-Christian groups are focusing hard on training their disciples in the battles of the day. They are training them with their errant theological views, Muslims are training their leaders in apologetics to win the intellectual battles that are out there. They are mobilizing right now. Two hundred thousand missionaries backed by five hundred million dollars from Muslim nations to evangelize the West. If we look at it that

way, it might appear that we're slowly losing the battle in the training needed to complete the great commission. Oftentimes these missionaries and second and third world countries go into the 10 40 window in Muslim countries, and they are so little equipped that they're actually evangelized and become Muslims. It's a tragedy. God has given us a precious revelation, and we can often treat it with such disrespect, but do everything you can while you're here Biola to become equipped and think about what God might be calling you to, to go overseas and equip others. It's important for us to know what the word says and to live that out and respond to its teachings. We need to have a passion to complete the great commission and that's going to start with a passion to know the word of God.

Are we committed? The fourth thing that we need is a passion to complete the great commission no matter what, even if it means death for the sake of the gospel. The lack in these previous categories obviously feeds into this one, we are lacking in orientation toward completing the great commission with such a focus in our lives. That's what we think about. It's what we eat, sleep, and breathe. Jim Elliott once said, listen to this. Jim Elliott once said, we don't need a big call from God. What we really need is a good kick in the butt. That's what he said. If we're sitting around waiting for this great call from God, what we really need is a good kick in the butt.

Because the great commission is clear in our churches and Christian colleges and our Christian groups on secular college campuses, we need to have a concentrated effort to keep the completion of the great commission before our eyes. We need to cease with infighting so that our efforts can be focused outward, and spreading the gospel to people who need to hear. We need to point our people toward real heroes of this world. Men and women of whom the world is not worthy, who have laid down their lives for the sake of the gospel. I've been reading a book on

Martyr, books on Martyrs. I've been praying for martyrs around the world who daily give their lives for the sake of the gospel, little kids who don't have moms and dads. People are suffering in prison because they love the Lord Jesus with all their heart, so much strength, they would die for the gospel because they boast only in Christ, they boast only in the gospel.

People who were laying their life down, those are the heroes in this world. Not athletes, not professional sports stars, but people who believe so much in eternity and what the gospel is all about, that they die. Those are our heroes, and Hebrews tells us it's men and women of whom this world is not worthy, and we need to honor these men and women who are living their lives worthy of emulation, praying for them that God would keep them in a place of faithfulness as they encounter persecution and hardship. I know that some of you are part of missions, families who faced persecution, you've seen ugly realities in your life. You go to bed at night thinking about these things. Because you're willing to be in a place, whether it was persecution. I've had students crying in my office because they've been there, they've seen it. Those are our heroes in this world, we need to present evangelism not as an option, but the central mandate given to all believers, and we all need to own the fact that we may die for the proclamation of the gospel. That's not an option either. If the proclamation of the gospel leads to death, it's not an option. We need to find those who are willing to go and do all we can to encourage their journey in our colleges and universities like Biola, students are not being challenged to learn languages in the parts of the world that desperately need her, that need to hear the gospel. We are simply not oriented that way. What if we begin to offer those crucial languages of the 10 40 window in our Christian colleges?

What if we begin to build into our college students? Is that learning language was not about fulfilling a college requirement, but about preparing for future missionary work. Do our universities have this kind of vision? Does Biola? In our Christian communities, we are often failing at becoming multicultural. We are not doing a good job of moving out of our ethnic focused, shared values. You are like me and we're not like them attitudes. After all the years of racial tensions in America, can we say we bridge the gap in the church? Can we say that we've seen ourselves in light of ethnicity and begun to see ourselves as children of God, brothers and sisters in Christ with the same father? As brothers and sisters, have we been able to look past color of skin or obvious accents of language or completely different cultural perspectives and ways of doing things? If we cannot overcome these kinds of hindrances in America, if we can't overcome these kind of differences at Biola. What makes us think we're prepared to move out into the world, cross culturally, and reach the unreached in other lands where we may die? How do we begin to live so that we change all of this? We begin to choose friends who are different than we are, different skin color, different homeland, different perspectives, and we begin to move beyond those differences to forge a common desire to glorify God with proclamation of his great name to the whole world. Even in how we choose our friends breaking out of comfort zones so that we become more global, more international, more transcultural.

In our homes, are we challenging our families with the great commission? In many ways in America today, children rule the home environment. These days, the focus of the average American family life is often going from one school event to the next or one athletic event to the next or one extracurricular activity to the next. And on it goes. These kinds of activities can

certainly be opportunities where we complete the great commission by telling people about Christ. We do not know him. But often the driving concern behind all of this is that we do not want our children to miss out on many good opportunities available to them. We want them to have the same advantages that other kids do. Could it be that our attempts to give our children every advantage has led to our disadvantage in them in growing a passion for the great commission? Have we taught them that life revolves around them rather than the great commission? Have we taught them that life is more about being a good athlete than the great commission personal success than the great commission? Living a good life in America, then the great commission, where a family vacations, we're focused on equipping our children with the great commission, reaching the unreached serving people in need.

What if we planned our lives around the great commission rather than our child's next activity, what if the priority for our children became a passion for the lost rather than a new car on their 16th birthday? What kind of home are you going to have when you get married? What are you going to point your children to? They will learn from what burns in your heart. At the project in Brazil, families are giving their 13, 14, and 15 year old children to the work of the ministry. As I looked into their eyes, I could see the eyes of my own daughter, Amanda. And God did a work in me at that moment where I freed her for God to take her wherever he wants to take her. And I felt both tears and joy as I dreamed of what God might do teens 13 to 16 or signing up for teen revolution. If you could show that these are ones who are giving the next seven years of their life for Bible translation and reaching the unreached people groups in the world, they're devoted to it. I wish I had better pictures to show you some of the beauty of their hearts and their lives. Some are still finishing junior and senior high schools. And you can see 13 to 16 year olds

committed to what God is doing in the world, 13 years old, but signing up for a job that may cost them their life. One young lady, 17 years old, had a vision all week long, a vision, I don't know what you think about this, but she had a vision that started on Monday and ended on Friday, the only thing she did was get up and go down and eat.

And she went to church on Wednesday night. All the rest of the week. She said that the Lord brought like a video picture of her life before her eyes. And she was distressed because on Friday, the video, this vision ended with her in prison, curled up in a fetal position all by herself. And she looked at me just weeping. Just sobbing violently and she said, I don't know if I have the faith. I don't know if I have the faith to go through with this, but I want to. 17 years old, knowing that she may face death. Are we committed to finishing the great commission? What about our money? What if we shifted our priorities? What if we shifted our priorities from leaving something for our children when we die to investing in the spread of the gospel? What if we begin to instill in our children the need to care for us in our old age? Those are the kinds of things that I think about. What are the things that you need to be thinking about? The world needs the partnership of America, we are the richest nation in the world, but it's going to require stewardship for us to partner with other nations to see what God can accomplish in completing the great commission. What if we turned our whole world upside down and begin to think and live differently with one focus? What if you got out your day timer and the next years of your life and said one focus: finishing the great commission. How would your life change? What would it look like? What keeps us from doing that? Are we committed to the great commission?

Talley: Get a Finishing the Great Commission Attitude

Last slide, I want to leave with you. It's in Portuguese. So we'll go to the next slide.

From John 1, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. The Bible puts it this way, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust don't corrupt. Eternal treasure. Are we willing, committed to finish the great commission? I want to encourage you to think about what that would mean in your life and what God would call it, call you to. There's a beautiful song that has these words in it. May the burden of the world. Rise among this.

[Audio cuts out]