

Gospel Centered Living

Acts 20:1-16

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Gold! Gold! There's gold in them there hills. I'm not sure where I heard those words, in school or on Looney Tunes cartoons when I was a child. But that's what I associated with the California Gold rush.

In about the mid 1800's gold was discovered in California. An estimated 100,000 people headed to California in 1849 in search of riches at great personal peril. Some just picked up and left without much knowledge and even leaving families to fend for themselves. Many lost their lives. Some of the effects were beneficial and some, not so beneficial. But the lure of gold and wealth called, and they answered.

Proverbs 16:16 reads, "How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver."

Listen to Psalms 19:7-11 "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;⁸ the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;⁹ the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

As we continue with our series On Mission, we're going to dig deep into the wealth of God's holy word. As we mine its wisdom, we're looking to uncover some spiritual gold on Gospel Centered Living. We will be reading from Acts 20:1-16. We will unpack what Gospel Centered Living looks like and our big idea will be, Gospel centered living motivates us to Gather together, so we can Grow spiritually, Give back what God has blessed us with and Go with the greatest news ever.

Our main point will be "A gospel centered life compels us to Gather, Grow, Give and Go."

Acts 20:1-16, "After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. ² When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. ³ There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴ Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. ⁵ These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, ⁶ but

we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

⁷ On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ⁸ There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. ⁹ And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." ¹¹ And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹² And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

¹³ But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. ¹⁴ And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. ¹⁵ And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and ^[b] the day after that we went to Miletus. ¹⁶ For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost."

Let's pray!

1. As we enter our mine of wisdom, I see the glint of Gospel Centered Living. Did you know you could make the gospel the center of your life? You can. Gospel centered living isn't a job with a set number of positions. Every single child of God can live for the gospel. You may be wondering, "How can I live for the gospel?" Well, I'm glad you asked.

To better understand what gospel centered living is, it can be helpful to look at what it is not. We see people who center their lives around lots of different things. Some people live for sports. They may live to play sports, or watch sports, or even take a stab at being a GM or coach of a team through fantasy sports. People even live for work. It may be hard to believe but it's true. We see this when people seldom take vacation or days off and even when they do, they must work. They need to know what's going on and trusting someone else to perform the job seems almost impossible. Perhaps living for work rings true for you? Other people live for money, or prestige, or hobbies, or their spouse, or children, or even politics.

Think about someone you know who lives for sports? Don't say their name aloud, but whose name popped into your mind? Who do you know lives for money? Let's not be too hard on anyone here, because we do not always see the whole picture. A couple of people who popped into my mind are Tony Dungy and David Green. Tony is all about football, but he's also a child of God who loves the Lord. David Green owns Hobby Lobby and gives away so much money. On the surface it may appear they live for something else, but, in reality, they are living for the gospel.

The men listed here are good examples of people who lived for the gospel because they continued under great hardship. Verse one says, "After the uproar ceased..." this refers to the riot in Ephesus caused by Demetrius the silversmith. Listen to these two verses about the riot. Verse 23 of chapter 19 reads, "About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way." Verse 28 says, "When they (the Ephesians who became part of the riot) heard this they were enraged and were crying out..." Paul and his companions knew the value of the gospel and they were determined to keep it the center of their lives, even in exceedingly difficult times.

We expect this of Paul, but what about the others? We don't know much about the others. They are mentioned a few times. We know from Acts 19 Aristarchus and Gaius were believers dragged out by the rioters and from Colossians 4:10 Aristarchus was a fellow prisoner with Paul. Tychicus is mentioned in Ephesians and Colossians and Paul calls him "a beloved brother and faithful minister." In Acts 29, Trophimus is with Paul in Jerusalem and in 2 Timothy we read Paul left him Miletus because he was ill.

I mention these names to remind us all, that gospel centered living is not just for those we consider spiritual giants. Every single child of God can dig into the wealth of Scripture and can live a life centered around the gospel. Gospel centered living is characterized by Gather, Grow, Give and Go.

2. Right off the main tunnel of gospel centered living, we see another nugget of truth branch off, Gather. If you want to be characterized by gospel centered living, then gather with the gospel. Make it a priority to *gather* weekly and give the gospel the place it deserves in your life. These gatherings could be small or larger. They could happen organically or be planned. They could be long or short.

Right after the riot stopped, Paul sent for the disciples and gathered with this smaller group before he left Ephesus. Paul's writings are full of small gatherings. Relationships prosper better in smaller meetings where there is a close-knit community of believers who care for each. One example found Acts 1:13-14 says, "And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers." Paul also tells us to bear one another's burdens in Galatians 6:2 and James writes, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." (James 5:16)

Jesus met with His disciples in small groups. He met with all twelve of the disciples and with portions of them, like James, John, and Peter.

Gathering with the gospel can be large too, like our gathering today. Let's dig back into our passage Acts 20:7-8, "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break

bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ⁸ There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered.”

We need to stop right here and process this. Edgewood, we pride ourselves on being a biblically centered local body of believers, right? So, let’s have a real biblical sermon today. Be prepared, cause we going to Midnight!

But before we hit that major gemstone of truth, notice the beginning of verse seven, “On the first day of the week...” Have you ever wondered why the church typically gathers on Sunday, the first day of the week versus Saturday the sabbath? One reason we met on Sundays is because we are following the model given to us in the Bible. The apostle Paul met with believers on Sunday because he taught in the synagogues on Saturday to the Jewish people in whatever town he was in. We see this in Acts 13:13-15, “Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, ¹⁴ but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.”” In Romans 14, the apostle Paul tells us not to make a big deal about a specific day, but to worship our Lord every day. At Edgewood we have worship services on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings.

Gotquestions.org puts it this way, “The key point in all of this is that we are not to limit our worship to any particular day of the week. We are to rest in the Lord every day. We are to worship the Lord every day.”¹

Picking back up in verse 7, Paul describes the setting of this gathering, “he prolonged his speech until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered.” So, we have them meeting in the upper room, at midnight with many oil lamps. We know its late, heat rises so the upper floor would be warmer than the main floor and the lamps would make the room at least a little smokey.

Even if we hadn’t read our passage already, I’m sure you could see what’s coming. Verse 9 tells us, “And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer.”

This is the part I love, Eutychus fell asleep listening to Paul. Can you imagine that? I picture the Apostle Paul as a fireball preacher. I do not know if that’s true, but that’s how I see him, and yet Eutychus fell asleep. The Greek word translated fell asleep seems to indicate he’s fighting against falling asleep, not just giving into it. I wonder if he’s sitting in the window trying to get a bit of fresh air to help him stay awake. So, if you’ve fallen asleep in a sermon, you are not alone.

This next part I do not like, and I picture it as an incredibly scary moment. Verses 9-10 says, “And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, “Do not be alarmed, for his

life is in him.” So not only did he fall asleep, but he then fell out of the window and died. The word translated dead is *nekros* where we get our word necrosis or dead tissue. But Paul rushed down to him and by God’s grace and miraculous power, Paul brought him back to life.

The next part of this passage is another wow moment. Jumping back to verse 11-12 we see, “And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹² And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.”

Did you catch that? After he brought Eutychus back to life, Paul went back up to the third floor, ate a meal so he could get his energy level back up and then preached until dawn. Now I know I’m good preaching for 4 hours.

We can live a gospel centered life and it starts by gathering with the life changing gospel message. “A gospel centered life compels us to Gather, Grow, Give and Go.”

3. Journey with me down another path in our spiritual gold mine to see even more beauty and treasure in God’s Word. Growing in the Gospel is another priceless part of the treasure found in God’s Word. It’s also one of the unique parts of Gospel Centered Living. The church, local bodies of believers, meet with the purpose of growing in the gospel. This happens in large and small gatherings.

Let’s start with the large group gatherings. Now don’t fall asleep as we take another look at Paul’s sermon. Paul was preaching to them, teaching them from God’s Holy Word. The preaching of God’s Word is integral to any local body of believers. It’s the preaching of God’s Word that can pierce our heart and reveal our hidden motives. Listen to Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Or 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” There are so many more verses we could turn to and reinforce the glittering beauty of growing in the gospel and hearing the preaching of God’s Word as His church.

We can also grow in the gospel as a smaller group. We get a brief glimpse into a small group in our passage. Looking back at verse one, we see Paul’s purpose was to encourage the believers he met with in Ephesus after the riot, prior to him leaving. Encouragement is so good. It’s like medicine for the soul. The word translated encouraged is *parakeleo* which means “to call near, comfort, exhort or encourage. It indicates a willingness and ability to help. An ability to strengthen another person or add courage to their spirit.” The same root word is used for the word translated as Comforter referring to the Holy Spirit.

The supernatural power of God working in us is the most valuable part of growing. Romans 1:16-17 reminds us, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the

righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." The gospel is the power of God to free us from the penalty and power of sin. God started this powerful work in our lives, and He promises to finish what He started. Philippians 1:6 reminds us, "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." Again, we are reminded in Philippians 2:13, "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

I can summarize it like this, the gospel is the power of God to save us. God started it, He will finish it, and give you the motivation and ability to be obedient. Gospel centered living is our goal. We accomplish this by gathering with the gospel and growing in the gospel.

4. As we study the depths of gospel centered living, we see the nugget of giving glittering. A gospel centered life motivates us to Give for the Gospel. Two ways we can give are from our finances and from our God given talents.

Financially, Paul was collecting finances to help the poor in Jerusalem. Romans 15:25-26 says, "At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem." Paul wrote Romans while he was in Corinth. We understand this from Paul's mention of Phoebe from Cenchrea in Romans 16:1. Cenchrea was Corinth's port. Gaius is Paul's host and the Corinthian church's host too. In 1 Corinthians 1:14 Paul says, "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius..." In 2 Corinthians 8 we see, "We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part."

My wife Beth and I give every week electronically. This method of giving suits us best. Pastor Brian and his wife Beth write a check weekly. Many of us have even continued our giving to Grow time to help pay down the principle on our loan quicker. To be honest with you, Edgewood has a Giving heart. Even through the struggles of COVID, our giving has increased. I'm proud to be a member of Edgewood and see our financial giving change our community and the world around us.

We can also give back from the talents God has entrusted to us. The apostle Paul and the others named are great examples of this. They used their gifts to encourage and teach believers as they travelled to all the churches.

Many of us at Edgewood are serving somewhere. We have people serving with our local Go Team partners like Youth Hope. We have members serving at AWANA, Second Winders, MainSpring, and Celebrate Recovery to name a few. We have a good name in our community not only because we give financially, but also because we physically give of ourselves and serve our community.

To live a gospel centered life, we need to gather with the gospel, grow in the gospel and give for the gospel. “A gospel centered life compels us to Gather, Grow, Give and Go.”

5. As we mine this last run of gospel centered living, we see the wealthy wisdom of Going with the Gospel shining brightly back at us. Going with the Gospel enables believers everywhere to be a part of the biggest possible purpose in life.

Finding a purpose for our lives is something most of us struggle with at some time or another. God has wired the need to have a purpose into our hearts. People everywhere need to answer this question, “What is the purpose of life?” Are you struggling with knowing your purpose in life? God put this need to have a purpose into you. But He didn’t just put the need to have a purpose in you, He has invited you to join Him and the biggest purpose in the world, the Great Commission.

Listen to God’s invitation to join the great commission (Matthew 28:18-29), ‘And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” We could summarize this passage in Matthew 28 as Go and as you are going make disciples. Mark records the great commission this way, ‘And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”’ We could say, Proclaim the gospel to everyone.

What a purpose! You and I can be on God’s gospel proclaiming first string. We are God’s A team, His first choice to get the gospel out to the lost. We are not only His first string, first choice, or A team, we are His only team. There is no other plan. We are it. But we do not have to embrace God’s plan. We get to be a part. We have the privilege of serving our Lord and Savior and *going* with the gospel.

Paul and his coworkers accepted God’s invitation and took their place in going with the gospel. On this trip, Paul’s third missionary journey, they took the gospel all around the Mediterranean Sea.

At Edgewood, many of our people have become missionaries: Stacey Hohbein who serves with SEND in the Chicago area, Kim Contreras who serves with World Impact in Fresno, California, Pattie Eager who serves with TEAM in Baja, California, and Dave Bennett who serves with Timberbay in Brainerd, Minnesota. There is also George King who has served in Japan for over 55 years and his daughter Ruth King.

We had 12 people go through a two-year missionary training program. Jim and Amy Smith, Bobby and Lisa Bechtel and Stephanie Torres are still serving in overseas missions. Speaking of our past missionary interns, Matt and Kim Deshon finished the missionary training program and served in Turkey. A few years ago, they had to leave the field because Matt developed brain

cancer and had a significant setback as his tumor grew considerably. Please be in prayer for Matt, Kim, and their adult children. They love the Lord and are trusting Him, but it is hard.

Last month, we started supporting SW, one of our Edgewood family, who will be serving in a difficult part of the world. Due to safety concerns, we are not able to say SW's full name, but perhaps you remember when we interviewed her in person and shut down the video and audio recordings to keep her safe? If you missed this interview, please talk to me or Pastor Kyle and we can fill you in on it.

Today it is our privilege to interview one of our Go Team partners, Lynell Smith.

1. Lynell, would you please tell us where you are serving, what your ministry looks like, and how long you have been a missionary?
2. Can you please tell us how God called you to Go overseas with the gospel?
3. How has God grown you spiritually over this last term?
4. Please share with us how you have seen God transform the life of a person you have ministered to.
5. How can your Edgewood family pray for you?

Thank you Lynell! Lynell will be at her display table by the café. Please stop by, sign up to receive her email updates, and encourage her after the message.

Also, there are a few other members of our Edgewood family who are trusting the Lord to direct them into full-time missions. Pastor Kyle and I dream about more of our Edgewood family taking the gospel to the lost around the world. Pastor Kyle told me he wants to start a gap year program. In the gap year program, we would have Edgewood members explore what missions looks like, receive training to serve in our church and local Go Team partners, and go on an overseas trip and experience full-time missions up front and personal. We see this as a nine month to a year program. I love this idea and will be working with Kyle to help equip our young adults for full-time missions.

To be a person focused on gospel centered living, we need to gather with the gospel, grow in the gospel, give for the gospel, and go with the gospel. Let's remember, "A gospel centered life compels us to Gather, Grow, Give and Go."

So how can we take this information and turn it into transformation?

1. Gather- We can commit to Gathering weekly for a weekend worship service with God's people. It's easy to slip in and out of the habit of Gathering, but we can choose today to make it a priority. According to a 2020 finding by Barna research group, only 29% of Christians attend church weekly.
2. Grow- At Edgewood, we believe growth happens best in small groups. You can commit to attending a small group and growing in your faith with close relationships. We have Sunday growth groups during the 9:00 and 10:45 AM services and weekday growth groups. If you like more information on this, write or type Growth Groups on your paper

or online connection card and we will contact you and discuss the options. Also, we have discipleship groups, which are smaller and more personal than the growth groups. We have a men's and ladies Bible study that meets during the week. We have small groups at Celebrate Recovery you can join to help find freedom from Life's hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Also, you can commit to reading your Bible daily. Pastor Tim graciously produces a monthly Bible reading plan for us. You can pick a paper copy up at the kiosk or find an electronic copy on our app or website. In 1996, I committed to reading my Bible every day. Man, did I grow, not because of my stellar study routines but because God is gracious and faithful. Oh, and btw, my faith wasn't very deep, so I had a lot of room to grow.

3. Give- The church is the only organization I know of that exists for people other than its members. We exist to bring the message of salvation, faith alone in Christ alone, to the lost around us. One of the ways we accomplish this is through giving. Commit to give of your finances and your time. If you haven't started giving regularly, then maybe this is the time for you to step out in faith and start giving regularly. I know this can be challenging. I still remember when my wife told me she wanted to start tithing. At that time, I worked at the paint factory in Moline, and I thought she was crazy. Well, she married me, so I know she's a little crazy. Finally, after much arg... discussion, we agreed to try it. I was shocked. We were able to tithe, and we made it. We needed to cinch our belts a little, but God was faithful, and we were fine. I would encourage you to trust God. We set a time frame to reevaluate our giving, I believe it was three months, and if necessary, make a course correction.

We also started giving of our time and talents. We served in children's church, at AWANA, and taught a Sunday growth group for young marrieds. Ahh, that was a couple of days ago. Giving back is so important. It helps take the attention of you and your circumstances and puts it on our Lord and others.

God was so gracious to me. He constantly and faithfully worked in my life and still does today. I had a part in it. My part was to step out in faith and do the right thing, like show up to church, stick to our budget, and dig into God's word. But I can tell you this, God can do the same thing for you that He has done for me. Just believe and step out in faith and do the right thing.

4. Go- Join me in taking the gospel to the ends of the world. You can do this by giving. Edgewood currently has 79 missionaries and organizations we partner with and 12% of our budget goes to missions because of your generosity. SW has just started raising her monthly support. Perhaps the Lord would lead you to supporting her monthly, or Fishers of Men, or Lynell Smith, or anyone of our current Go Team partners.

You can also commit to praying for a missionary. SW is looking for Edgewood family members who will commit to praying for her daily, perhaps that could be you. You can sign-up for Lynell's email updates and pray for her, or anyone of our current Go Team members.

You could even Go yourself. You could Go with the gospel on a short-term mission trip. Or maybe you are beginning to feel the leading of the Lord into full-time missions? Both Pastor Brian and I were a little older than normal when we went to the field. I went to Bible college at 30 years old.

You can also partner with one of our local Go Team partners like Pregnancy Resources or Safe Families or even a nonprofit like River Bend Food Bank or Habitat for Humanity and share your faith there.

We just finished the elective, Sharing Your Faith with Confidence. Commit to sharing the gospel with your lost loved ones and friends.

If you'd like to sign-up for anything I discussed or want more information, please write "I want more information" on your Connection Card and we will contact you.

Edgewood, we can live a gospel centered life and make an impact here in our community and around the globe. "A gospel centered life compels us to Gather, Grow, Give and Go."

1. <https://www.gotquestions.org/worship-on-Sunday.html>