"The Church *GOD* Wants to Be a Part of" // Acts 11:19–30; 13:1–3 // (Standalone, Nov 2026)[1] / Su 9

Summit Collab Recap Video

Let's all stand, if you will, for the reading of God's Word: **Acts 11:19**
Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. 22 The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose… 24 And a great many people were added to the Lord.

Pastor: *This is the Word of God for the people of God*
Congregation: ***Thanks be to God***

You may be seated.

Well, before we begin this morning, let me give you a quick personal update: This has been an eventful couple of weeks for me… 2 Sunday nights ago I went to bed after preaching here and woke up with a severe pain in my abdomen that I at first thought was food poisoning… but eventually I went to the emergency room and to make a long story short, a few hours later they removed my gall bladder. *(Apparently I'm at the age now where you wake up with pain and go to the hospital and have random things removed from your body.* ***It's all hevel, Amen?***) But I didn't tell you all about it because (a) it all happened so fast and (b) there was nothing you could do about it anyway. I know some of you found out, and you prayed for me, so thank you. The doctor told me I should avoid fatty foods for a while, so naturally I went to the State Fair the next weekend and stood in line for an hour so I could eat a box of Peachey's donuts. So, I'm not sure whether the residual pain I'm feeling now is from the gallbladder surgery or the fair.

But, anyway, I'm alive and well, and the next time I have a gall bladder it will be a glorified one in the new Jerusalem, which will work perfectly well, so I'm looking forward to that.

Acts 11 this weekend, if you haven't already found it. *Here's my question for the morning:* ***What kind of church do you want to be a part of?*** After being a pastor here for going on 25 years, I've heard a lot of things.

- Some want a **"Doctrinally-Rich Church"**, which means they want the pastor to preach long, theologically-rich and precise sermons.
- Some want a "**Spirit-Filled Church**" with powerful worship and spiritual-gift manifestations and deliverance and lots of prayer.

[1] Sources consulted: Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*; Vance Pitman, personal conversation (reflections on Acts 11). And others as noted throughout.

- Others are looking for a "**Family Church**": a place where you belong and feel needed and known. Where everybody knows 'your name.' (Cheers Church)
- Others are seeking a **"Felt Needs Church"**: great kids' programs, men's and women's ministries, and sermons that speak directly to their lives.
- A lot of people want to be a part of a **"Missional Church,"** where you're constantly hearing about community impact and reaching the nations.

Which one of these is the most important to you? What if I told you that more important than **"What kind of church *YOU* want to be a part of"** is **What kind of church does *GOD* want to be a part of**?

The church in Antioch gives us a picture of the kind of church *God* wants to be a part of.

The church at Antioch was one the healthiest, fastest-growing churches in the 1st century. It became known as the missionary-sending hub of the early church--in fact, Antioch was so closely associated with sending that numerous mission organizations today have adopted the name "Antioch"—for example, "the Antioch Movement," or "the Antioch Network" is another one--because they are seeking to emulate the impact of this church.[2]

But Antioch's secret wasn't its sending program, its leadership model, its organizational structure or even its strategy. Luke, the writer of Acts, gives us Antioch's secret in **vs 21**: "...the hand of the Lord was with them."

[2] The Antioch Movement; Antioch Partners; Antioch Network; Antioch Churches, etc.

More than anything, Summit, I want this 👆🏽👆🏽 So, often we focus our efforts and our conversations on what ***OUR*** hands can accomplish:

- Money *WE* can raise
- Programs WE can run
- Problems WE can solve

All good things, **ultimately, we don't need better strategies, we need the hand of God.** So, I'm going to step out of our series in the Sermon on the Mount for one week and talk about**:**

The Church *GOD* Wants to Be a Part Of (Acts 11:19–30)

And here's why this is on my heart, and why I'm interrupting our series to talk about it: I've had an extraordinary few weeks where God has let me experience a few things, and I just haven't had much of a chance to catch up with you about them--having my gall bladder removed and whatnot.

First, at the beginning of October I got to take a handful of our Summit Collab pastors (our Collaborative is just all the churches that we've planted over the years) to Southeast Asia where Peter Park, our former Downtown Durham Campus pastor, now leads a growing church in a global city there. The church is bilingual (English and the language there)--he's only been out there a couple of years but they are now several hundred people big and they've already planted 2 churches out of themselves.

- Peter helped host a multiplying church conference over there, and through your generosity we are establishing a multiplying church

hub there in the middle of a Muslim and Buddhist stronghold. It's amazing.

Second experience: Last week, we hosted right here, at the Capital Hills campus, more than **1100 staff from churches** we've planted around the world in our annual Collaborative Movement Conference.

In both of these events, I sat a little dumbstruck at what God has let us be a part of, Summit Church. God has taken the smallest seeds of faith and multiplied them beyond our wildest imagination. This past Easter we had over 120,000 people in Summit Collab churches just in the United States and have baptized close to 1,000 in those churches in the last year.

And, it's made me ask the question--what kind of churches are we building? And is God pleased to be a part of them? And what do your and my roles in that kind of church look like?

At one of these events, one of our church planters, Corbin Hobbs at The Heights Church in Denver, preached a message from Acts 11 that I thought was so compelling that I wanted to share some of it with you. I've taken Pastor Corbin's basic framework from Acts 11 and reworked it for our context here at Summit Church, but I want to give Pastor Corbin credit for helping me see some things in this passage that I hadn't seen quite the same way before.

*Think of this as the profile of the church that **GOD** wants to be a part of, or the church God's hand is on:*

1. A church full of ordinary people on an extraordinary mission (vv. 19–21)

First, notice that these church planters didn't end up in Antioch because Jerusalem had identified a strategic location, trained a leadership team, raised money, and sent them out. No, **vs 19,** persecution broke out, believers ***"scattered"***, and some randomly ended up in Antioch and started a church. No strategic plan. No core group meetings. No fundraising campaign. Just ordinary believers running for their lives who decided to take the gospel with them.

- The only names Luke gives these believers are ***"those"*** in vs 19 and ***"them"*** in vs 21.
- If you made a movie about Acts, these guys would be "crowd members #3, 4, and 5" in the credits. No names. Nobodies.
- And yet, these anonymous believers planted one of the most fruitful, fastest-growing, missionary-sending churches in the NT.

In **Stephen Neill's classic book**, *The History of Christian Missions*, it's almost a hundred years old, Dr. Neill says, "Nothing is more notable than the anonymity of these early missionaries. … Luke does not turn aside to mention the name of a single one of those pioneers who laid the foundation. Few, if any, of the great Churches were really founded by apostles."[3]

- It was simply ordinary, anonymous, un-seminary-trained Christians upon whom God's hand rested.
- ***Does God's hand rest on you this way?***

Francis Chan said, "Long gone are the days when we should be content with a bunch of people who sing out loud, don't divorce, and give to missions. I now want to know I can drop off any member of

[3] Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1986), 22.

my church in a city, and that person could grow in Jesus, make disciples, and help start a church."

This was *literally* true of the church at Antioch. The kind of church God wants to be a part of is a church where the members, not just the Apostolic leaders, see themselves as the instruments of God's mission.

- For 25 years here, Summit, this is what I've preached to you: You did not call me to be your pastor so I could do the ministry *for you.* **Ephesians 4:11–12** says that God gave to the church pastors to *"(God) gave pastors… to equip the saints for the work of the ministry."* Look at that phrase. Who does the ministry? You, the saints. And what do I do? I equip you.
- Which is why I say, according to that verse, when I became a pastor, I *left* the ministry. I took a spot mostly in the background to help you do the ministry.

This community isn't going to be reached by a great pastor, but by Spirit-filled members with God's hand on them. In fact, let me tell you one of my favorite **Summit baptism stories**…

A few years ago, a young lady stood in my kitchen talking with Veronica and me. I'd never met her—or at least, I thought I hadn't. She was one of my daughters' new small group leaders, and they were hosting an event at our house.

So I introduced myself, and she smiled and said, "We've actually met before. You probably don't remember, but a couple of years ago we were both at RDU airport waiting for a 6 a.m. flight to Atlanta."

She said, "You walked past me and noticed I was reading a book by Richard Dawkins—The God Delusion—and you said something like, 'Well, that's some really heavy reading for this early in the morning!'

Then you asked if I was trying to figure out if God really existed. I muttered something about having a lot of questions, and you took that as an invitation to tell me how you came to know Jesus."

(BTW, when she said that, I suddenly remembered the conversation, because I remembered seeing the book and sensing the Spirit prompting me to say something.)

She said, "I thought this was all a little random, but I actually had been wrestling with questions about God, so I listened."
"Then we got on the plane, and I ended up sitting about two rows behind you. You struck up a conversation with the guy next to you and started sharing your story with him, too, except this time you went a lot deeper because you had more time." And then she said, "Now, I don't know if you know this, but you don't really have what you'd call an INSIDE VOICE. Which means you were basically sharing the gospel with the entire Comfort-Plus section of the plane."

She said, "Honestly, I was a little annoyed. It was 6 a.m. All I wanted to do was sleep. But I'd forgotten my headphones, so I had no choice but to listen to you!"

"Finally," she said, "we landed in Atlanta. I was exhausted and just wanted coffee and a bagel, so I walked to the other end of the terminal and got in line at Atlanta Bread Company. Suddenly I heard this voice ahead of me. I looked up and thought, YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME. IT'S THAT GUY AGAIN! Except this time you were helping a woman with 2 kids--the woman was at the register struggling to find her money, and trying to manage her 2 kids, and you told her not to worry about it and you paid for her. So I thought, 'Well, this guy doesn't know how to use an inside voice, but at least he's not a total jerk.'"

Fast forward six months. She's talking with a coworker at Duke about her questions about God, and the coworker keeps praying for her and inviting her to church. Eventually she agrees to come, mainly to get her coworker to stop inviting her. One Sunday she walks into Summit, sits down, and out onto the stage walks…ME.

She said, "My jaw hit the floor. I turned to my friend and said, 'THAT'S HIM! THAT'S THE GUY I was telling you about in the airport!'" I'd never told her I was a pastor, of course. People get really weird when you tell them that.

Fast forward another six months. She's been coming regularly, receives Christ, gets baptized, and eventually joins our high school ministry team. And I meet her standing in my kitchen as one of my daughter's small group leaders. That's the first time I've heard any of this!

Here's what I love about that story: I'm not the hero. I had one conversation with this lady and completely forgot about it. Never thought of or prayed for her again. But there was another believer, a coworker at Duke whose name you wouldn't recognize, who kept praying, inviting, and loving her until she came to faith in Christ. God used both of us.

Summit, that's how the gospel advances. Ordinary believers, each doing their part, with the extraordinary hand of God upon them. You don't have to be a pastor—in fact, being a pastor in these situations is usually a liability: people scrambling for their headphones and faking phone calls! You don't have to have all the answers. Just open your mouth in obedience to the Holy Spirit and see what God does.

So, first, God's hand was on this church because it was a church full of ordinary people on an extraordinary mission. Second, God's hand was on them because the church at Antioch was…

2. A church that grows wide and deep (vv. 21–26)

- First, notice in **vs 21** how Luke celebrates the wide part of their growth: "…a great number turned to the Lord." Then, three verses later, vs 24: "A great many people were added to the Lord." And just two verses after that, vs 26, Barnabas and Saul "taught a great many people."
- That's THREE TIMES in FIVE VERSES that the book of Acts celebrates size! I'll just go ahead and say it: I do not understand churches, or church leaders, or church members that are skeptical or derogatory about numerical growth. Now, I get it: Just because a church isn't growing large doesn't mean God's hand isn't on it. No, God uses lots of small churches. And, I get that there are plenty of artificial, smoke-machine, advertising-driven, fleshly ways to grow a church. The haze of a smoke machine is not evidence of God's hand, I get that.
- But Luke clearly celebrates numerical growth, and I don't understand Christians who are instinctively cynical about it. ***Y'all, Jesus didn't come to shrink his church but to grow it!***
- We celebrate EVERY number here, without apology because each number represents an individual person being rescued from eternal separation from God. It represents marriages restored. Drug addicts delivered. Prodigals coming home to the Father. Prisoners being saved and restored to society. Which of those numbers do you want me to leave out?
- The question isn't whether you prefer big churches or small churches. I am so sick of hearing that. Who cares what you prefer? The question is whether we love seeing lost people come to Jesus.
- Listen, there have always been detractors and cynics. Even in Acts! In Acts 2, the Spirit falls, 3,000 people get saved and baptized in one day, and everybody is like, "This is awesome!" and

there's a bunch of theological critics off to the side going, "Well, I bet these people are drunk." Don't be that person.

- And yes, growth creates inconvenience. New service times. When you figure them out, we're gonna change them, so get ready for it. Cramped parking lots. New campuses. Giving campaigns because we need new buildings.
- So let me just acknowledge this: If you're looking for a church where you can park in your favorite spot, sit in your standard seat, and see basically the same people every week, this church is going to frustrate you. We're a family, and we want you to be known and connected through small groups and serving teams. But if you want a nice, cohesive, contained, controlled experience, this place will frustrate you.
- But if you love seeing people saved, lives changed, and these baptismal waters stirring often, you'll gladly put up with some inconvenience for the joy of seeing that.
- Based on what I read in Acts 11, that's the kind of church God wants to be a part of. Always making room for one more.

Someone once asked me, "Who are the 100 most important people in Summit Church?" I thought for a moment: Our 100 biggest donors? Our 100 best small group leaders? Our 100 longest-tenured members?

- Those are all important. But the 100 most important people in our church are the NEXT 100 we need to reach. The 100 most important people aren't even here yet.
- We get that from Jesus: Jesus said the good shepherd leaves the 99 to go after the one, and that there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents than over 99 who don't need repentance.
- That's Jesus's heart. And he wants to be part of a church that has that heart**, too.**

So, that's ***wide*** growth. But notice the church that God's hand is on also grows ***deep***:

Vs 25: "So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul (an interesting guy who would change his name to Paul and write ⅔ of your NT), 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians."

Barnabas and Saul spent an entire year teaching this church. They didn't just baptize them and leave them. Why? Because God's plan is not just to get lost people into heaven, but to put heaven into them so they would represent him and glorify him on earth.

Notice that little detail Luke tucks in at the end of **vs 26**: *This is the first time believers were called Christians.*

- After a year of Barnabas and Paul's discipleship, these new believers were called "Christians." It wasn't even a term they gave themselves; it was a term the community gave them, probably intended as an insult. Scholars say it meant something like "the ***Jesus-y*** people." But see, these believers were so like Jesus that people identified them by him.
- ***That's what discipleship does. It transforms you from someone who looks like the world into*** someone who looks like Jesus.

At Christmas of last year, I challenged some of you who were checking out Christianity to give us a year. I said, don't just show up at Christmas, Easter, maybe Mother's Day, and then Christmas again. Come consistently, every weekend. Some of you have done that, and you've even been saved and baptized! I know, because some of you have told me your stories.

- Now it's time for the next step: Start growing. Get into the

teaching of the apostles. Join a small group, a men's or women's discipleship group, or a volunteer team. Start putting down roots.

God doesn't want us choosing between a church that's a mile wide and an inch deep, or a church that's a mile deep and an inch wide. *He wants a church that grows both deep and wide. That's our goal here at Summit Church.*

Our 3rd characteristic of the church God wants to be a part of:

3. A church that turns grace into generosity (vv. 27–30)

Look with me at vs [27]: Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. [28] And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). [29] So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. [30] And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

The church in Antioch heard about a famine coming all over the world (which would have included Antioch!), but they knew the church in Jerusalem was going to be especially hard hit because the church was so persecuted up there, so they opened up their pocketbooks and gave.

BTW, there's a **beautiful reversal** here. The believers from Jerusalem had brought the gospel to Antioch, and now Antioch was sending financial relief back to Jerusalem. (I'm tempted to use this to tell our big, successful church plants they need to start sending some of their budget back to us. ***You hear me, Two Cities? Mercy Hill?***)

But here's the point: ***The recipients of spiritual generosity became agents of material generosity.***

Pastor Bryan always says generosity is an indicator light that shows you've encountered the gospel. Those who truly believe the gospel always become like the gospel.

BTW, notice it wasn't just the rich people who gave. EVERYBODY gave, ***"according to his ability."*** The rich gave a lot because they had a lot; the poor gave a little because they had a little. But *everybody* gave. You see, when you've received the greatest gift in the world, something inside you has to give in response! You want to give from what you have! Of course you give your first 10% back to the Kingdom of God—that's the baseline. But when you've experienced Christ's generosity, you want to give more.

I was talking with a pretty wealthy guy in our church who'd been saved here. One Sunday he heard me preach about the poor widow who gave her two mites, basically an eighth of a penny. Jesus said she'd given more than all the rich people because what she gave represented so much of all she had.

Afterward he came up and asked, "Is that a real story, or one of Jesus' made-up stories… like… a parable?"

I said, "It's real." He said, "So I'm going to be in heaven with this woman?" "Yeah." "I'm gonna meet her?" "Yeah."

He said, "I do not want her to be able to look at me and say, '*I* gave more than you.' So, whatever her gift represented to Jesus about her heart, I'm going to make sure my giving represents that same thing about mine."

It's not about the amount; i's about what your giving reveals about

your heart. Does what you give to God make a statement about the value of his salvation in your life? Is what you give a worthy thank-you for what he's done for you?

Did Jesus throw pocket change and his leftover lunch money at you when you needed to be saved? Based on some of your giving, that's what you think he did.

A church where God's hand dwells overflows with generosity.

Summit, I hold in my hands ***a copy of a Bible translation*** we just finished through a group called Illuminations. It cost a few hundred thousand dollars to produce, and this particular translation was started at the request of one of our church planting teams in East Africa. They had moved there to work among one people group and discovered a neighboring Muslim people group with no believers, in all of their history, and who has never had a Bible in their language. So through your generosity, we produced THIS: the first New Testament ever translated in this language.

And I'm HAPPY TO REPORT that there are now 300 believers in that people group that previously had none. (You 300 who started with me 25 years ago—you! You did this. One for each of you.)

Sadly, the government forced our people to flee the area a few years ago, making contact much more difficult. But they left THIS.

Our church planter told me that these 300 believers have made a commitment that anyone who takes one of these Bibles will take TWO, one for themselves and one for a Muslim neighbor they will share it with.

Y'all, think about the chain of generosity represented here (hold up Bible):

- Summit members who sacrificed to move overseas.
- Your generosity in sending them and funding this translation.
- And now the generosity of these new believers, literally putting their lives on the line to share it with their neighbors.
- And it all goes back to the radical story of generosity contained in this book: a Savior who was rich beyond measure but for our sakes became poor so that we through his poverty might become rich!

Those who have received great grace instinctively show it in response.
And so, heads up: Over the next few weeks, as we do every November, you're going to hear what God is inviting us into as a church and have an opportunity to recommit yourself to his mission through Summit.

The hand of God was on this church because they didn't just receive grace. They became conduits of it.

One more, real quick, because it's so important to us…

4. A church where Christ matters more than culture (11:19–20)

Vs 19 says that when the first Jewish Christians got to Antioch, they basically only preached to fellow Jews. That was the easiest thing for them. They spoke the same language; had the same customs, and liked the same things. See **vs** 19? They spoke… the word *to no one except Jews*.

But then **vs 20** says that others came along and began preaching the

Lord Jesus to the Hellenists, too. The Hellenists were Jews who had adopted Greek culture. Not "***hellions***," like they were a bunch of wild partiers, "***hellenists"***: Jews who had adopted Greek customs.

Y'all, it would have been SO easy for the earliest Christians in Antioch to have gotten siloed into 3 different churches: 1st Baptist Jew; 1st Baptist Gentile; and then 1st Baptist Hellenized Jew. Instead, they formed *one* church, even though it meant rubbing shoulders with people who weren't like them, and that created some friction.

And don't miss this: It's immediately after Luke tells us this, in **vs 21**, that he says, And the hand of the Lord was with them.

Think that's an accident? The immediate context for God's hand being on this church was their pursuit of unity across cultural and ethnic divisions.

In fact, ***jump ahead to chapter 13***. Luke lists the leaders of the church at Antioch and makes a point of showing us their different backgrounds. Let me put it in a chart so you can see it:

Leader	**Background**
Barnabas	Hellenistic Jewish believer
Simeon called Niger	African background
Lucius	From North Africa
Manaen	Roman--Served in Herod's household
Saul	Jewish Pharisee, highly educated

What did these guys have in common? Nothing.

Is this some kind of DEI checklist? No. Luke is showing us that these believers chose the harder road of pursuing unity in Christ rather than retreating into their own cultural groups. And God's hand was on them.

Here's why I didn't want to skip this point: It's election weekend. And nothing brings out our cultural divisions quite like an election, amirite? **I want to say two things about this, so buckle up.**

First, Christians have a responsibility to think biblically about the issues at stake in an election. A lot of these questions aren't simply matters of personal preference or Republican versus Democrat. They're profoundly moral questions about the sanctity of human life, the nature of marriage and family, what a man or woman is, religious liberty, justice, and the kind of society we're leaving our children. Those things matter. A LOT. We can't shrug our shoulders and say, "Well, politics doesn't matter because Jesus is King." Don't you dare say that. Jesus being King is precisely WHY we should care about justice, truth, and the well-being of our neighbors.

So I urge every one of you, in the strongest terms, to vote. Not because our ultimate hope is in an election—it isn't—but because loving your neighbor means caring about the society your neighbor has to live in.

But here's the second thing: Even when we agree on biblical moral principles, we won't always agree on the best political strategies for implementing them. I'm not saying there aren't wiser choices, or that whatever you do is fine. Listen, you can make some profoundly bad decisions in an election! I'm just saying that people from different backgrounds sometimes prioritize different political questions. Which brings us back to Antioch. These Christians came from different backgrounds, with different customs, histories, and perspectives. **But they had something that transcended all of that**:

JESUS.

The church at Antioch wasn't united because they shared a culture. They were united because they shared Christ. Their differences were real, but their Savior was greater.

Summit, I want us to be a church where our convictions are deeply biblical, our consciences are informed by the Word of God, AND our commitment to Jesus Christ is greater than any cultural identity.

There. I've pointed out 4 things that God loved about the church at Antioch; 4 things that resulted in his hand being upon them. They were: 1. A church full of ordinary people on an extraordinary mission; 2. a church committed to growing both deep and wide; 3. A church that turns grace into generosity, and 4. A church where Christ matters more than culture.

There's so much more I could pull out of this passage,[4] but I'll stop there. These were the reasons, and the evidence, that **"the Lord's hand was with them."**

My question, Summit. Is he with us? Does Jesus love being a part of the church here?

One more thing. Look at the result of God's hand being on them. Ch 13 vs [2]: "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." [3] Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off."

I almost made multiplication my fifth point, but I think it's actually the result of the other four. ***When God's hand was on this church, they multiplied***.

Dayton Hartman, who is one of our Collab pastors who planted Redeemer Church up in Rocky Mount, said something this past week at our Collab Conference that really struck me. He said, "In the biological world, something is not mature until it can reproduce. Maturity is marked by an organism's ability to reproduce. But even though the church is a living organism, we don't apply that standard to it. Why? Spiritual maturation is demonstrated not by the accumulation of information, but by your abilities in multiplication."[5]

Think about that. How do you define spiritual maturity? By how much Bible you know? By how consistently you come to church? Those things matter, but maturation is demonstrated not by the accumulation of information, but by your abilities in multiplication. So

[4] Namely, that the church in Antioch was known for its diversity. One of the characteristics of the church God's hand stays on is that it pursues diversity!

[5] Dayton Hartman from Redeemer Church in Rocky Mount, NC, at the 2026 National Collab Movement Conference.

here's the best question to measure your maturity: Who are you multiplying into? Who can you point to and say, "They're here because I invited them. I shared Christ with them. I prayed for them. I helped them take their next step toward Jesus"? Is that happening with you?

God never puts his hand on a church, Summit, merely to bless that church, and he never puts his hand on a believer merely to bless that believer. He puts his hand on us to bless the world through us.

VAMP So, as I close, let me encourage you with something I saw firsthand over the last few weeks. I mentioned visiting our new church-planting hub in a **global city in Southeast Asia**. While I was there, I connected with several Summit members whose lives are a picture of what multiplication looks like.

FIRST, [redacted for security]

SECOND, Peter: Peter was a campus pastor here at Summit with a comfortable, thriving ministry. But God called him and his wife, Grace, to leave that behind and move overseas. After completing our Collaborative church-planting residency, they moved to Southeast Asia to lead Garden City Church. They've already planted two churches and are now helping launch our first overseas Collaborative church-planting hub. Peter says it's the hardest thing he's ever done—and the most rewarding.

THIRD, Bailey and Madison (I've changed their names for security): These were two Summit college girls at UNC who felt called overseas. They learned that *Kingdom Refugee Center*, a ministry we helped start in Southeast Asia to serve refugee children, needed teachers and staff. Their degrees in math and communication made them perfect fits. So they went. And now they're not only serving refugee children, they're helping launch the young adults ministry at Garden City Church.

You know what these people are? They're the crowd members #3, 4, and 5 from the beginning of the sermon. Ordinary believers whose names most of the world will never know, but whose lives God is using to change eternity.

They were sitting here, just like you, and now they're out there multiplying. That's what a healthy church looks like. And some of you should be next! If God is stirring something in you, stop by the **Next Steps area** at your campus and talk to your sending coordinator. They're there today at every campus. Whether it's a short-term trip, supporting missionaries, or exploring a long-term calling, they'll help you take the next step.

And Summit, this is what your giving supports, which you'll hear more about in the coming weeks.

Summit, 25 years ago, I could never have imagined what God would do through this church. We've baptized more than 11,000 people. We've planted churches and sent missionaries all over the world. And when I look back on all of it, I know one thing for absolute certain: ***WE didn't do this.*** The hand of the Lord was with us.

And my prayer is that 25 years from now, if Jesus hasn't returned, people will look back on what God did through Summit in these next two decades and say the same thing.

Not, "What an extraordinary pastor." I mean, 25 years from now I'll be 58 years old--and that's ancient--so nobody will be talking about the pastor anyway.

Not even, “What an extraordinary church.” But, “What an extraordinary God! The ***hand of the Lord*** was with them.”

Can I leave you to ponder these **four things** and listen to the Holy Spirit for a few moments? What’s he telling you to do? To give? Maybe to put yourself forward to go? Maybe to reach out and share Christ with a neighbor? Our worship leaders are going to give you a few moments to respond before we worship together.