

***3,500 Hours Makes a Disciple***  
Kenwood Baptist Church  
Summer Sermon Series: **Join His Mission**  
Pastor David Palmer  
August 4, 2019

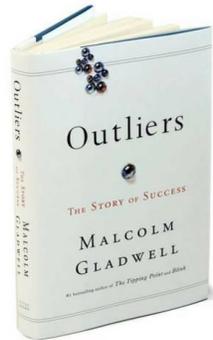
**TEXT: Acts 19:1-10**



Good morning, Kenwood. What a joy this last week was. We learned soccer skills, and had lots of fun with friendly volunteers and a great atmosphere. Special thanks to Pastor Sara for organizing such an amazing week, and I am grateful to all of you for inviting friends and neighbors and for the number of engaging conversations that happened around the fields. Thank you, Erica, for inviting your friend. I got to talk at length with her father about the Lord Jesus Christ two nights, which wouldn't have happened had that invitation not gone out. I'm thankful for that time. This morning, we begin the third month of our summer series. We've been looking at *Joining God's Mission*, and I am deeply encouraged to see so many of you wearing Join His Mission shirts and participating in a variety of ways. We had another team go to prison ministry this past weekend, and 77 people gave their lives to Christ, so we are praising God for this work in and through each of you.

This morning, as we look at the third missionary journey, I want us to see an important shift that sometimes escapes us when we think of following Christ. We get excited about conversion, as we should. We get excited and rejoice to see people filled with the Holy Spirit, and we should. And yet, the call and commission from Jesus is to be a community that actually makes disciples. To make a disciple is a long-term process, and we want to look at that. How do you become good at something? If you ask Malcolm Gladwell, he describes the process of becoming excellent at something in his book *Outliers*. Gladwell is a Canadian journalist; he has written for

the “New Yorker” for many years. His first book was called *Tipping Point: How Little things Can Make a Big Difference*. His second book, *Blink: the Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, describes how we make decisions based on accumulated, previous knowledge. There is a great opening illustration in that book about how the Getty Museum purchased a Greek statue, and a Greek archaeologists took one look at the statue and said: “It’s a fake.” It’s a great story about how we actually make decisions based on accumulated knowledge and habits. In his third book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell examines the factors that contribute to a high level of success. To support his thesis, he examines why the majority of Canadian ice hockey players are born in the first few months of the year. He examines how Microsoft founder Bill Gates achieved his extreme wealth; how the Beatles became one of the most successful



musical acts in human history. Throughout the book, *Outliers*, Gladwell repeatedly mentions what he calls the “10,000-Hour Rule,” claiming that the key to achieving success or mastery at any skill is to a large extent a matter of practicing the correct way for a total of about 10,000 hours. If you want to break 10,000 hours down, it is: 20 hours a week for 10 years; three hours a day for 10 years. In terms of skills that are enduring, lasting, shape your life, I have experienced this 10,000-hour rule in many areas. To learn an instrument well takes a long commitment; to learn a foreign language well takes about 10 years to be proficient and fluent. The 10,000-hour rule really flies in the face of our cultural paradigm that says we can achieve great success with minimal effort in almost instantaneous time. I want to tell you this morning that that's a lie. It isn't the design that God has for us. God's design for us to make disciples is a process that happens over time, that is brought to fruition and success through sustained commitment, as Eugene Peterson says: “A long obedience in the same direction.”

I want us to look at Acts 19, because in Acts 19, we see in the third missionary journey that Jesus causes Paul to stop in the city of Ephesus and remain in that city for years. We often have the impression that apostolic ministry is going from one city to the next all the time, and yet in the third missionary journey, we get the clearest picture of how disciples are actually made. There is a sustained commitment to discipleship as we'll see. Keep your Bible open to Acts 19, and let's take a look at this glorious passage.

We want to look at it with a view as to how disciples are produced. Acts 19:1 locates the events of this chapter in the city of Ephesus. We read that Paul passed through the inland, or literally the high lands. He passed through the highland areas of Galatia moving west and came to the city of Ephesus. Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman world at this time, a major

strategic location, fourth place only to Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. It was a city of about 250,000 people; it was enclosed with a five-mile wall, and a long colonnaded street came down the center to a vast theater that we will hear more about next week. This was a strategic city—the gateway to the East. Paul came to the city, and we read that there he found some disciples. This term *disciple* is really an important term in Christianity. *Disciples* is actually a Latinism. A disciple means a student, a learner. The Greek term for disciple is *mathetes*, where we get *mathematics*. It is someone who is committed to learning and studying. Jesus uses this term. The Hebrew equivalent is *tamid* where the noun *Talmud* comes from as a compendium of learning. The followers of Jesus are characterized by Jesus, more than any other term, as *learners*, which might cause some of us to think: “That means I don't know things.” But, what an invitation to be invited by the Lord God Almighty to learn from Him! People travel tens of thousands of hours over a year to align themselves to be present for one master class, and here is the Lord Jesus inviting us and calling us to be students of Him. We need to be learners because God's ways are not intuitive. They cannot be discovered by looking within; they can be learned only from the Master.

When Paul arrives in the city, he finds a group of disciples, and the first movement of this passage is somewhat of a curious account of disciples whose knowledge of the gospel is incomplete. In Acts 19:2, he meets a group of people. We find out later that there are 12 of them. We read:

*“And he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ And they said, ‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’”*

The presence of the Holy Spirit is characteristic of following Christ, of believing in Christ. They had not heard of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. This group of people are people who have heard so far only about a baptism of repentance. The conversation continues. Paul says in Acts 19:3:

*“And he said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ They said, ‘Into John's baptism.’”*

John's baptism was preparatory; John's baptism was calling people to repentance. The gospel writers tell us that John came as a herald in the wilderness, preaching: “Repent for the kingdom is at hand.” He was calling people to “prepare for the way of the Lord.” John was inviting people to confess their sins, and yet in John's own ministry in Matthew 3:11 he says:

*“I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*

There is no Holy Spirit-less discipleship in the New Testament, and sometimes we hear only half of the gospel, because the first half of the gospel is “repent of your sins and receive forgiveness.” The rest of the gospel is to “be filled with the Holy Spirit so that you can live the life that you are created to live.” God's design for you and for me from the very beginning is

that we would walk closely with God, that we would hear His voice, that we would understand His will and do it for our joy and His glory. That's the plan. Sin cuts us off from God's presence; it hardens our heart; it invites us to go our own way. God's presence moves back from sinful people. The glory of the gospel is that our sins are forgiven so that we can be filled with God's presence and renewed and restored to walk with Him. This group had heard only of repentance.

Paul explains to them that John baptized with the baptism of repentance telling people to believe in the One who is coming after him, that is Jesus. As he explains the good news of Christ, the rest of the gospel, they hear this, and we read in Acts 19:5:

*“On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”*

This is a moment of conversion. They believe, and we read in Acts 19:6, after they believed:

*“And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.”*

The initial evidence of the Spirit for this group of 12 is speaking in tongues and prophesying, just like in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit came upon people and they began speaking in a way that heralded the good things of God. When the Holy Spirit comes upon us, we share Christ. That's what happens. When the Holy Spirit comes upon us, we begin to understand God's will and purpose. This is the beginning of disciple-making. It's meeting people where they are, even people who have some of the facts but maybe understand the gospel only as turning away from sin. It would be like having only the negative commandments in the Scripture and omitting all the positive ones, like love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and spirit. They believe; they confess Christ as Lord, and they are filled with the Spirit. You will meet people at times today in this situation. They might not explain it as well, but you do meet people who have an incomplete vision of Christ. You meet people who have heard that following Jesus means just a repenting of my sin, and they have a vision of discipleship that says: “That just takes me from a debt I could not pay to neutral.” But the vision of Christian life is not going from a debt you can't pay to neutral. It is having a debt you cannot pay but that is forgiven, washed away, so you're cleansed, renewed, and filled with God's presence. The great thing about the gospel is that Jesus not only forgives us of our sins, but He promises to send the Spirit so that we can walk in new life. We don't have the power to obey God without the presence of the Spirit. In Ezekiel 36:25-27 the Lord says:

*“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My [ways].”*

Discipleship begins with conversion and being filled with the Spirit. The Bible says that no one

can say “Jesus is Lord” without the Holy Spirit. You can't do and mean it, so we believe and are filled with the Holy Spirit, and this is the beginning of new life.

The second part of the chapter describes for us that discipleship actually develops through patient instruction over time. What Malcolm Gladwell documents in his book *Outliers* is that we become good at something by practicing it in the right way, every day, for an extended period of time. One of the great joys of being a pastor is that you just live in a high-intensity zone. It's a little like a paramedic where your waking hours are intersecting with people in the big moments. It's exciting to watch people. Some of them in those big moments just collapse, but others have big moments, like a job loss, or a significant sickness diagnosis, or a moment of great joy, and they react with their eyes riveted on Christ. You ask yourself how they are doing that, and you realize they didn't just start living with their eyes fixed on Christ, but it's a habit of discipleship that has been rooted and formed so that they ready for those big moments. The big moments in this life are just one more step of obeying Christ. The big moments are going to come. Will you be ready?

If you get an invitation to play the piano at Music Hall with a full orchestra, I hope for your sake, and everyone else's that bought a ticket, that you have thousands of hours of practice underneath that moment. An invitation to Music Hall would be a big moment, and that wouldn't be a moment to enter into casually. Becoming a disciple happens through patient instruction over time. Do you have a hunger and an appetite for such instruction? Do you have a habit of reading God's Word, or does the first input of your day come from somewhere else? Whose is the first voice instructing you of the day, what you should care about, what you need to know? Is it Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ should be the first voice of your day, shaping you, shaping me, because I need it and so do you. In Acts 19:8, we read:

*“And [Paul] entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.”*

This term *reasoning* is used 10 times in the book of Acts. It doesn't mean reasoning like in a philosophical way. The term *reasoning* that's used here is used of Paul as he is interpreting Scripture. Acts 17:2 is the first usage:

*“And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures.”*

The Greek word *dialogomai*, is used to signify that he was talking about the Scripture. Discipleship happens over time. When we are listening to Jesus as the first voice of the day, when we are in small groups, or in the worshiping community where the Word of God is taught and explained, then in we grow. Paul spent three months speaking of the Scripture, about the kingdom of God. As he continued speaking and teaching and explaining God's Word patiently over time, some of his listeners, we read in Acts 19:9, became hardened. The ESV says

*stubborn*, but the text says that they became *hardened*. Their hearts were hard.

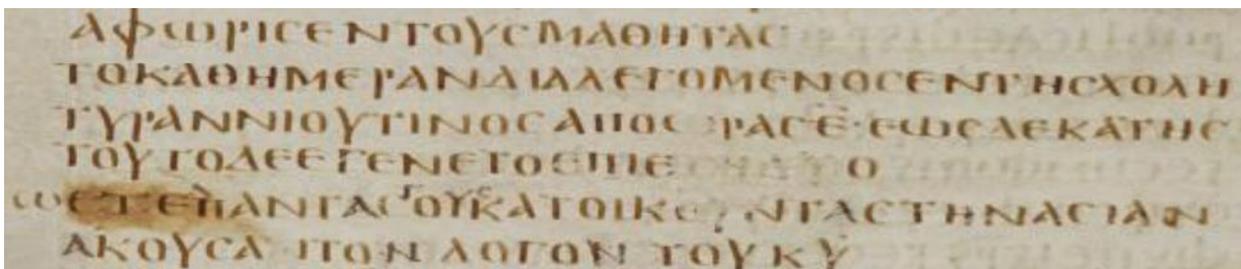
As you hear God's Word, you have a choice to receive it or you can harden yourself, or steel yourself, against it. God's Word never leaves you as God's Word finds you. That's actually a good thing, although initially it doesn't feel that way. It's like a coach or like a trainer. You see these people in the gym paying \$70 an hour just to have someone following them around saying: "You shouldn't do that!" We need that. God's Word, thankfully, does not leave us as it finds us. Never harden your heart when God's Word is seeking to break in. Some became hardened and continued in their unbelief. Finally they got so upset that they started maligning Paul's ministry, so he withdrew from the synagogue and took the disciples with him. The Lord, the sovereign Lord Jesus, opened up a surprising venue, and we read that he was reasoning daily. Again, notice that term *reasoning* is not that Paul was out there doing abstract, philosophical reasonings. He was interpreting the Scripture; he was teaching the Bible daily in the Hall, or School, of Tyrannus. Tyrannus is a proper name attested in Ephesus. It could be reflective of a family that has some royal blood. We don't know for sure. Other scholars think that Tyrannus was a nickname. What kind of a guy has a school and gets the nickname Mr. Tyrant? I'll let you meditate on that. Surprisingly, Mr. Tyrant says to Paul: "You can use my school." Daily lectures, patient instruction, we need that.

Paul taught the Scriptures over time. Acts 19:9 has one of the most interesting textual variants of all the variants in the New Testament. Textual variants are slight minor differences in the manuscripts of the Bible. The early manuscripts of the Bible were hand-copied. The amount of material for the New Testament surpasses any other document. The New Testament is overwhelmingly the best-attested documents from the ancient world. If you stacked the pile of the New Testament manuscripts we have, they would be a mile high. If you have a mile-high stack of hand-copied documents, there are going to be minor differences. Sometimes a scribe is copying, and his friend yells from across room and says: "Hey, what are your plans after dinner?" You look, and you miss a word. That's a variant. The most common variants are changes in the spelling of names, because a name like John is not a Greek word, and so there are four different ways to spell John in the Greek New Testament. None of the variants have theological significance that disrupt any Christian doctrine.

Let me tell you about the interesting variant in Acts 19:9 as it pertains to our topic. The variant is found in manuscript D which is an early copy of the New Testament written on parchment. It is one of a half-dozen or so manuscripts that are among the most important for knowing the text of the New Testament. This image is actually Acts 19:9 in this manuscript. It's called manuscript D by scholars. It also has a fancier title: "Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis," which literally means it's the book that Bezae gave to the library in Cambridge. Bezae was the



successor to John Calvin during the time of the Reformation, and this manuscript was probably produced in Beirut in the third century. It is one of the earliest copies of huge portions of the text that we have. It's written in all capital letters with no punctuation. This manuscript is distinctive for a number of reasons. It is the oldest manuscript that has the story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8. It is a polyglot manuscript, meaning it's a bilingual manuscript that has the Greek text on one side and the Latin translation on the other. What's amazing about this is that this is a Latin text before Jerome's translation of the Vulgate, so it's a really significant manuscript. It is also the earliest manuscript that has the longer ending of Mark's Gospel. All those features are interesting, but what's most interesting for us today is if we come in little tighter on Acts 19:9, this manuscript, manuscript D, the Western text, includes some very minor notations that give geographical data pertaining to the Acts narrative. For example, one location is described in this manuscript as having over seven steps there. In Acts 19:9, we



read that Paul was reasoning, lecturing, teaching the Scriptures daily in the Hall of Tyrannus, and in this manuscript, Acts 19:9 actually gives the hours of the class. It has in it that Paul taught daily from the fifth hour until the tenth. When you count time in the New Testament, time starts with sunrise at six in the morning, so the fifth hour is eleven in the morning. So, the manuscript tells us that Paul taught from eleven in the morning until four in the afternoon, every day for two years.

When you think of following Jesus Christ, when you think of growing in faithfulness, how many hours does it take? Sometimes we have such a small picture of Jesus that our presentation of the gospel is just the one minute version. God can use the one minute version, to be sure, and people can be converted and filled with the Spirit. More and more it is the case today that people who have had no contact with Christ need more time, and certainly those who come to believe and are filled with the Spirit, what happens next? If your vision of following Christ is exhausted by coming to church once or twice a month, you won't grow into a successful, vibrant disciple. Paul had enough to say about Jesus that he could talk for five hours a day for two years. What happened as a result of this? In Acts 19:10, we read:

*"This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."*

Discipleship happened through patient instruction over time: five hours a day, 365 days, two years. Malcolm Gladwell invites us to think that to become a world-class expert at something you need 10,000 hours. In this passage, 3500 hours really gets you on your way. But discipleship

is not just about logging hours; it's about a lifestyle. It's about walking together with others, and what is so remarkable about what we see in Acts 19 is that the church explodes and Paul doesn't go anywhere. What happens when you really take discipleship seriously? The Word of God roots down in you, and you go. The great news of how God designs His mission is that it would not be carried out primarily through one, two, or a handful of people. This season of ministry means that Paul and his team are planted in Ephesus, teaching the Scriptures, and as people are converted and believe, they are filled with the Spirit. They grow in their discipleship and then they go. Epaphras first leaves and founds the church in Colossae. Discipleship radiates out through others.

This morning, I want you to take your own discipleship seriously. If you embrace the word disciple, that means that you are in a posture of a learner. There is actually great freedom in being able to say: "I don't know." I love hearing that at Kenwood. "I never knew that," or people say: "I'm really growing in understanding the Lord." I love hearing that from young, from old. It doesn't matter if you've been coming to church for five weeks or fifty years, we have room to grow. I want to commend to you Jesus Christ as the Master Teacher. No pastor, no preacher, in person or online, can take the place of Jesus Christ. He's the Teacher. He even tells us to be careful about calling other people your teacher. There is only one Teacher. I want to encourage you to take your discipleship seriously. If you've never trusted Christ and repented of your sin, I want to invite you to do that now and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. If that has happened in your life, then I want you to take your discipleship seriously in a new way. Make a fresh commitment to reading God's Word and say: "Jesus, I want Your voice to be the first voice of my day." Choose an accountability partner who will review your online presence, even once a week. I wonder how many other teachers we really have, when we really need only One. I want you to pray for our elders, because the Lord has raised discipleship up in our hearts and minds for Kenwood, to be intentional about making them and to being committed to doing so. There were many highlights for me at soccer camp: great conversations with people, powerful testimonies from the athletes, but my absolute highlight was when Pastor Sara said to the children after explaining the gospel clearly: "If you want a Bible, please come see me." I got to see from the side a Bible rush. Kids were pouring to the table and asking for God's Word, and I heard one voice say: "I need to read the Bible, because that's where I find out more about Jesus." I think that's something that we can all say.

Amen.