

# Belief Unlocks the Power//Acts 3:1-17

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Summit, we had the most incredible weekend last weekend... this was by far the most evangelistically fruitful weekend we've ever had—I really was blown away, and I'm not talking about just in terms of numbers (it's easy to be skeptical talking about numbers), but in terms of the significance of the decisions...

Person after person talking about how they had come to faith in Christ in the last few months here...

And I thought this picture was great... **PICTURE** "Our small group baptized more people than your small group..."

- Let me tell you why... one of my dreams for our church has been that there would be a day when the vast majority of people who get baptized I have no personal part of—you see, people rarely get baptized just by hearing a sermon... they'll make a decision, raise their hand... but when they get baptized, or really become disciples, it's almost always through the personal interaction with someone. At first, in our church, that person would always be me or one of the other pastors. I've been dreaming of the day when for most of the people coming through the baptismal I would not be that person... it would be just our members. Last week that dream came true.
- **I saw people who were brand new Christians bringing others...**
  - **One guy I know personally, I led to Christ last year, standing outside waiting for his dad** (who was coming to church for the 1st time). Told me his brother in law was getting baptized today.
  - **And I saw 1 guy who trusted Christ and got baptized this time last year** counseling other people who had trusted Christ last Sunday.

- Then there were the parents of 1 of our college students who said, in the baptismal, *"Our kids invited us to come to church with them... we didn't know why (I knew why) we thought we were just coming to spend some time with them this weekend... I had no idea this was what God had planned for us."*

Could we just thank God together? Summit... this is our mission!

In addition to that, you know that one of our visions as a church is being able to impact our society with the Gospel in the places that it is hurting the most. That's what that video was about

- So, we've identified these 5 groups... HOPUD
  - and I've told you it's not that I want to house ministries here in the church, but I want to release you and empower you to go to them.
  - What you just saw was a story of 1 of our members doing that... (great lawn cutting business. They actually do my lawn: he told me he'd give me \$5/off for any customers I got him, so if you'll mention my name....)

Well, that's what our Believe project is all about... so we can continue to reach, disciple and empower people to do more of *that*.

- Like I've told you repeatedly, to the point of nausea, building buildings is not the mission. Reaching people is the mission. Buildings are simply tools to accomplish that mission.
- I don't want to build a big monument to Jesus in the Triangle, because Jesus is not a God who dwells in temples made with hands and whose mission is not just to construct pretty buildings with His name on them. In fact, after 3 years of ministry, Jesus didn't leave a building behind at all, He left a church that He told to go everywhere preaching the Gospel. That means that the greatest monument we can leave Him are the changed lives of men and women in our community and in the world.
- So, buildings that we build are just tools to that end.

- That is one of reasons we think it is a good idea to buy this warehouse I'm standing in. We know we need a permanent home... a hub location, and at this point this seems to most efficient option. It may not be as pretty, but it will be efficient and effective.
- It's also why we pursue the multi-campus approach. We know it's easier to reach people when there is a campus close to them. So our strategy is not only to build one huge building in the middle of the Triangle that everyone comes to... this building is big, yes, but we want to tell people: **stay where you are; serve where you live; be the church in that community.**
- Our mission is not a building; it's you taking Jesus to people where they are.

Today, we're going to give to take a huge step forward in that. We're going to go through a Bible passage together that encapsulates our mission, and then we are going to take up this Believe Project offering that we've been talking about for a while which is, hopefully, going to allow us to take a huge step forward in our mission.

Pay attention... (50%) God told me that someone, who didn't even know they were going to give, is 1 million dollars before this day is over... and it may be you...

Guests... not talking directly to you, but hopefully you'll see some things about our church, and hopefully the spirit of Jesus.

While you are turning there... I was thinking how much I've loved leading this church for the past 8 years. It's been my privilege to stand up here each week and yell at you from the Bible... and you keep coming back.

### Acts 3:1–17

<sup>1</sup> Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. (3pm) <sup>2</sup> And a man lame from birth

(this is not "lame" like, a loser, but lame like, a guy who can't walk... in case) was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.

<sup>3</sup> Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. <sup>4</sup> And Peter (love this phrase) **directed his gaze at him**, as did John, and said, "Look at us." <sup>5</sup> And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

<sup>6</sup> But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" <sup>7</sup> And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, (will you try and just imagine what this would have been like with me?) and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. <sup>8</sup> And **leaping** up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

<sup>9</sup> And all the people saw him walking and praising God, <sup>10</sup> and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms.

And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

<sup>12</sup> And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? (Peter's all nonchalant, like, "What's the big deal?" I mean, this stuff happens every day—you got to admit, after you've seen Jesus raise from the dead, this is not that big of a deal) <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, **glorified** his servant Jesus, (that was the purpose of the miracle) whom you delivered over and

denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him.<sup>14</sup> But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, (this was the crowd who just a few weeks before had called out for Jesus' crucifixion... and Peter is like... 'Remember, you were like "release Barabbas? Crucify Jesus.... yeah, y'all remember that? Yeah, that was a bad decision...but it's ok because God overruled it by raising him from the dead)(<sup>15</sup> and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead.)

To this we are *witnesses*.<sup>16</sup> His name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong, whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. (Peter is saying, "This healing was a sign, a picture of the Gospel that we are witnesses to... Just like the name of Jesus had power to make this lame man walk, the name of Jesus has power to make your lame souls healthy again."

<sup>17</sup> "And now, brothers...<sup>19</sup> Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out."

A few things I want you to notice from this passage, because these really speak to our mission as a church, as well as how you need to understand God's purposes for *your* life.

### **(1) In the midst of the mass spiritual awakening, God is concerned with the hurting individual.**

- Now, we saw that last week, didn't we? In Acts 8. Big awakening in Samaria; God takes Philip and makes him walk 165 miles south to a gas station to God can encounter 1 man.
- And here we see that again. At the end Acts 2, 3000 people have come to Christ through 1 of Peter's sermons. Crowds, excitement, activity. But out of that excitement Acts 3 opens up with the focus on 1 hurting, needy man.

- This is repeated pattern in Acts. You see, it is easy to forget, in the midst of all the activity and growth, that God is concerned with *individuals* all around us, in need, and God sends His messengers away from all the activity to the person of great need.
- **Summit Church, in the midst of explosive growth, we are never to take our eyes off of the individuals in our society who are of great need, individuals who are hurting.**
  - That's what is behind our identification of these 5 areas: think of these as the "lame men" in our society that we need to "**direct our gaze upon,**" like Peter did for this man.
  - Let me tell you how we as a church are doing that.
    - I've told you that we give somewhere around 21% of our budget away, to take the Gospel to places where it is not flourishing. Some of that goes right here to our own city; some of it goes around the world. We have as a goal planting 1000 churches. In the last few years we've planted or helped plant 1 in Youngstown, OH, Richmond, VA, Greenville, NC, SE Raleigh, and NYC. We're preparing to launch one in Denver.
    - A lot of that money goes to meet needs in our communities. For the last 4 years in a row we have built 4 houses for people without them in Durham County.
      - Pei Shaun Marillo; Aretha Jackson... you provided the cost to build (in most cases the entire cost) and the labor.
      - Last year we helped build a facility for the Agape House, which works with at risk teenagers. (The story you saw with Brent is a guy working in and out of that house to take Jesus to those guys. They are here each week, they are a part of our church.)
    - You've been a part helping to renovate 12 schools. Our projects here are not just about the facilities, but about the individuals in the schools. Members of our

church have had the principals, faculty, and families of students in their homes. You've spent 1000's of \$'s and 1000's of man-hours renovating their facilities, buying computers and supplies, tutoring them, and taking Jesus to them.

- **I want you never to forget this: In the midst of a great movement, we see God is concerned with the hurting individual.** *Listen: our mission is not to build a great big church. That's a by-product of what we do.* Our mission is to reach individuals, particularly hurting individuals, with the message of Jesus. If we build a great big church in the process, so be it. But the focus is on individuals.
  - One of my favorite baptisms... A UNC girl who, when they asked her why she was coming to be baptized, said, "Because I have been bad; a child of wrath, but God has saved me and reconciled me to himself." Interesting... I thought, "Surely, using language like this, this is just a seminary student who has never been baptized.... 'child of wrath,' seminary student... when you say, "child of wrath," that means you either are in seminary, or you grew up Presbyterian. However, she found me afterward and said something that floored me: "The 1st time I came to this church was when we were studying Ephesians 2. You opened showing us how Ephesians 2 says we are bad, 'children of wrath'... as you talked, I thought "This is all my parents (who weren't Christians) ever told me... how bad and how worthless I was. And now, this is what the Bible says, too? But then you got to 2:4 which says, 'But God... (and here she got a little emotional)... and I'd never heard that before. I knew I was bad... God loved me... washed over my soul and God found me that Sunday... and tonight I got baptized tonight showing that my life has been completely changed.
  - **God focuses on the hurting individual...** maybe that is you.

## **(2) Peter and John reached this man in the streets as individuals, not in the church as pastors**

- The other thing I want you to notice is that this is not the big church as a whole doing this, but Peter and John as individuals. They'd taken off their "church leaders" hats and now they were just a couple of broke dudes walking around downtown.
- The needy in our community will not be impacted by *the church*, but by you, *individually*, where you are.
- You see, it's easy to start thinking, "Well, God's doing a lot at the church. I'm a part of it. Every week I get to sit and be a part of it." The church is not where God does most of his ministry... it's through you, in the streets. Like I've often told you... the vast majority of the miracles in Acts.
  - One of my favorite moments last weekend was watching one of our pastors baptize his neighbors. It lets me know that our guys get it... not just what we do in here, but it's in the community.
  - In fact, I'll venture to make this bold statement. All the individuals who were baptized on Sunday that had come to Christ did so because somebody from our church had invested in them. That's how it happens.
    - A girl this week left this on my blog: "I was baptized on Saturday after being an unbeliever my whole life and actually trying to convince others to doubt Christianity. I was brought by my friend Karla to the Summit... at first I thought Summit was crazy but the music touched my heart (*I'm assuming since she said she liked the music that it was the pastor that she thought was crazy*). Then I started believing and soon God became my strength that has enabled me to endure the most difficult time I have had in my life when I lost my husband.... My baptism on Saturday was my profession of

love and trust in God and a bunch of my awesome small group friends were there to support me along with Karla who played a vital role in finding my faith.”

- It is you, out there, not just me, in here, that facilitates real life change. **Summit, if we just want to see a bunch of Christians from other churches baptized**, or people come in and make quick decisions) then fine, we can do that (our program here is good enough to bring people in off the streets and get them to make quick decisions)... but if we want to see people brought from darkness to light... it's going to be because you are invested in people's lives.
- So here's the question: **Who can you point to that you are ministering to personally?** Our church is growing... but is it growing because of you, or simply around you?
- **My wife said something that really convicted me:** our church is successful evangelistically because you guys on pastoral team pray, plan—think strategically—and then work like crazy to make things work. The result is the church is successful. Maybe the reason we are not more successful at reaching our neighbors because we don't pray, plan, think strategically and work as hard at reaching them as you do at the church.
- What are you doing to reach your neighborhood, your dorm or suite, or the people you work with?

### **(3) It was the ministry of Christians in the streets that amazed the community (3:10)**

- The Apostles' ministry was twofold: word and deed. They persuaded with their words, and amazed through their works.
- They learned this from Jesus. Persuade with your words; amaze with your works. I went through this week and pulled out all the verses in the NT that showed Jesus and the Apostles doing both... too many to list them all out for you, but here's a sampling:

- **Matthew 9:35** And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, **teaching...and proclaiming** (word) the gospel of the kingdom and **healing** every disease and every affliction. (deed)
- **Luke 9:11** The crowds... followed him, and he welcomed them and **spoke** to them of the kingdom of God and **cured** those who had need of healing.
- **Luke 9:1–2** And he called the twelve together... <sup>2</sup> and sent them out to **proclaim** the kingdom of God and to **heal**.
- **Acts 8:6–8** And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they **heard him and saw the signs** that he did... <sup>8</sup> So there was much joy in that city.

*Word and deed.* And they are closely related together: the works are not just random magic tricks or random acts of kindness. The works demonstrate the word and authenticate it. **This was a sign.** Peter was saying, “Just like the Gospel has power to make this man walk, the Gospel has power to save your soul!”

Here's why this is important. *It is when a community sees the power of the Gospel in action that they become open to believing the Gospel.* Thus, we are to *We are to persuade through our message; and to amaze through our good works.* This is what God has commissioned us, and empowered us, to do.

**Now, I know what you are saying** (I can hear your unbelieving little thoughts). “Well Peter and John are all like, ‘Rise up and walk.’ If I went down to the hospital and walked from room to room and said, “*Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto you...*” I'm probably going to look like a fool!... So how are we supposed to do what they did?”

- Yes, sometimes when you try to imitate the Apostles you can end up looking dumb. **A few years ago I spoke on campus at UNC, and I had spoken on John 4...** <sup>13</sup>“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but if you eat and drink of the food I give to you, you'll never be thirsty again.” Homeless

man just looked at him and turned and walked away. The guy said to me... "That totally worked for Jesus."

Good question: **4 ways the church in Acts "amazed" the community:**

- **Miraculous answers to prayer.** Supernatural works like this one.
  - I will go on record... I don't think we take enough chances letting God demonstrate His power.
    - When Elijah wanted to prove to the people of Israel which god was the real God, the test would be which God would answer prayer. Prophets of Baal... set up your altar and ask Baal to send fire from heaven, and then I'll ask God to do it. And God answered, big time! I think we need to pray and ask God to answer in supernatural ways that show off His power in our lives.
  - Listen, Peter's not even surprised here when God does that. He says, "Of course God will show off through us."
- **Radical generosity**
  - Self-sacrificing, lifestyle altering generosity that makes your neighbors ask, "Why on earth would you do this?"
    - My favorite example: Acts 16
  - We heard that in the story 2 weeks ago... our small group that gave a huge sum of money to a guy who needed an operation... and it made the guy ask, "Why would you do this?" "I never knew I had a need until you gave me the money."
- **Joy in the midst of persecution**
  - God authenticates his message in Acts by letting Christians suffer so they can demonstrate that they have a joy that is greater than suffering and that suffering cannot take away!
    - That's also in the story of Acts 16. Singing at midnight! Told you before, I don't think Paul

was a very good singer... like one of those outtakes on American Idol. But his singing had such joy in it that it amazed the jailor and caused him to fall on his knees before Paul and say, "Tell me what you got that I don't!"

- **Interesting Bible Factoid:** There's not a single instance of a believer being healed of sickness in Acts. It's always unbelievers. Now, there are believers who get raised from the dead, but none healed of sickness. (In fact, it's interesting: no unbeliever ever gets raised from the dead; no believers ever get healed)! Let you chew on that one for a while.
  - So, what does that mean? That Christians should not pray for healing for themselves? Of course not. James 5 tells us clearly that we should ask God to heal us.
  - What it means is that quite often God glorifies Himself in the lives of Christians by giving them a chance to show off their joy in Him in the midst of pain... to show that they have a joy that is greater than pain. Like we often say here, "**God is glorified when sick Christians get well; he's also glorified when sick Christians die well.**"
  - When you can say, "My body may be destroyed by cancer... but God has given me a hope and joy in Him that my cancer can't touch!" That's when you amaze the world and bring glory to God. When you say, "Jesus is a possession that is better to me than anything else life can give or that death could take away."
  - Do you realize that when you are in pain, when things are not going your way, when it's all going wrong, that it is *then* that you have one of the greatest chances to glorify Jesus and put Him on display?

- **The love within the church**

- The unity between the races; how they love and take care of each other!
- There's a famous letter from the early church written by a guy named Aristedes to Caesar (non-believer describing this to another non-believer), describing why the early Christian churches were growing so fast:

"They refuse to worship strange gods and they go their way in all humility and cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them; they love one another; the widow's needs are not ignored and they rescue the orphan from the person who does him violence. (baby runs... we have families who do that; we need more)

He who has gives to him who has not, ungrudgingly and without boasting. When the Christians find a stranger, they bring him to their homes and rejoice over him as a true brother (took in refugees—we have families that do that... we need more). They do not call "brother" those who are bound by blood ties alone, but those who are brethren after the Spirit and in their God.

When 1 of the poor passes from this world, each provides for his burial according to his ability. (In the Roman world, criminals and poor people would be left to rot or thrown on trash heap)

If they hear of any of their number who are imprisoned or oppressed in the name of their Messiah, they all provide for his needs and if it is possible to redeem him, they set him free. If they find poverty in their midst and they do not have spare food, they fast two or three days in order that the needy might be supplied with the necessities.

- This was the early church, and it was massively effective in the ancient world. Just like we see here in Acts 2 and 3.
- Listen: ***our church will be massively effective in our community when we are this way, too, when we are people of miraculous answers to prayer; radical generosity; indauntable joy, and compassionate love in the church.***

- So let me use all this to comment on our mission as a church.
  - Our vision is to see you, our people, mobilized and equipped to go out to minister to the community.
  - Let me show you 2 pictures and I want you to figure out which one best describes the future of our church.
    - ***I had to make a collage depicting who I was...***
    - **PICTURES.**
      - Luxury
      - Not luxurious... gets the job done. Can take out small planets.
    - Now, we're not blowing up anything here at the church... but a good metaphor.
      - The work of an aircraft carrier happens not on the ship, but out there...
      - You can park your plane here, and we'll spend lots of money to help equip you to take off into the community... but if what you want is a luxury ride... this is not the place for you.
      - We do spend money, but it's on stuff that helps us get the mission done.

**Here's the bottom line:**

- We know that God loves the man in Acts 3, and *He is our mission*. God uses us to get to him, and we build a church to empower people to get to him.
- Tell you something I really believe. I *really* believe it. The local church really is the hope of the world. Do you believe that?

Then I need you to put your money where your mouth is and give to it, because we have a very important step in front of us that we need to take strongly.

**Review:** we bought the warehouse. Cheapest way to get a permanent home. Now, we need to be able to get to work on it... we think it will take 1 million to get a good, healthy start on it.

- 70/20/10

We've called this project "believe," because we believe that belief unlocks the power for the mission. We believe that God's willingness to save people and His power to do so are nearly unlimited. We believe God wants to change people's lives more than we do.

What God's people are put here to do is to believe on behalf of others. Just like here in Acts 3. Peter and John believed that God loved the lame man and wanted to save him so they stepped in and released God's power into his life.

Intercessory faith... we do that on behalf of our city. We are to do 2 things: believe and give... John 6. Jesus had all the power necessary to feed the multitude... the little boy gave 5 loaves and 2 fish and God used it to feed everybody.

That's where we are before our city. We have to believe on behalf of our city... and put our resources in His hands so that He can use them...

- I read that thing a few minutes ago about the early Christians fasting if that's what it took to share food. The need before us now is to build a facility that could help us reach our community. Would you be willing to do without so we can get these things constructed?
- Again, I know there are some of you who say: "I hate it when they talk about money. I want to go to a church where they don't talk about it." Abused?
- You want to be on a cruise ship... we are an aircraft carrier

- If you say that, that you don't ever want your church to be on mission, (and yes, I'm deliberately picking a fight with you) what you really mean is that you want to go to a church where they are not on mission and so they don't ask you for anything!
  - If that's the kind of church you want to go to, GO! Though you can't really call it a church... because a church is a group of people following Jesus on mission. And mission means sacrifice. So yes, unapologetically, we are asking you to give sacrificially to reach our community with the Gospel.
- And that starts with me. Veronica and I have pledged a minimum of 30K to this project over 3 years. That affects the kind of cars we drive, what we do on our vacations, and our lifestyle. But it's a joy, because I want to invest in this mission. I believe in reaching people, and I want to leverage my life and resources for eternity. I don't want to spend my life and my money on me! I want to go into eternity having invested my life in things that will last forever.

Not our guests... our members. This is the moment!

## Envelope:

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- **You say... What if I committed to give last year?** Is this in addition to that? No. For those of you who committed last year to give to Believe, we are asking that you give as much as that as you can today, or in the next few weeks, and then you let us know how much of your Believe Project commitment you can give by the end of the year. That will help us plan. You say, "Well, I can't give any more of my Believe commitment today... it comes out of my salary..." that's fine. But some of you can.
- I want you, especially those of you whom God has given greater means, to think about where you are investing your life. God has



blessed some of you immensely. Nothing wrong with that; you don't need to feel guilty about it. But He gave you all that, in part, to invest for His kingdom.

- Do you really want to walk into heaven having taken the majority of what God gave you and spent it on yourself? To have spent it on your 70 years?
- Do you want to enter into heaven having invested so little of your life into eternity? God gives us what he gives us not to pile up stuff here, but to invest in eternity. Think of it like any other investment... you pay now, reap dividends later. Investing in God's Kingdom is something that will cause you to reap dividends for the rest of eternity. There will be people who are able to be in heaven with God with us because you leveraged the resources God gave you and invested them in His Kingdom.
- Guys, let me be clear. Not talking about your pocket change... I'm talking about changing your lifestyle, radically, so you invest in God's Kingdom... what He is doing. Leveraging your life and your stuff for the Kingdom of God because you are so overwhelmed with what God has done for you, and so in love with Jesus, and believe in the mission so strongly that there's nothing you could think of that would be a better investment with your money.
- **Listen: Everyone should participate.** (Our studies show that 50% of you that will give to this didn't know what you'll give when you came in... we want everyone who considers this to be their church to be a part of this, because...) This is not my mission or the mission of a few of us. We all have a part of believing. Even if it's not much, you should invest yourself in this.
  - I can't give much. That's fine. That's not important to God. You can't give what you don't have, and you shouldn't feel guilty about it. Plus, God can take your 5 small loaves and 2 scrawny little fish and do more with it than you've ever imagined, anyway.
- It's time to take the step. Let me pray for us, then we'll give.
- Guests, not talking to you. Not asking for anything from you. This is our church and our mission. We are doing all this because we believe in the message God has given us... that message is that **Jesus Christ is the Son of God and He alone can save.** He's the only one to conquer death and the grave. He's the only one who can forgive your sin, reconcile you to God, and create in you a life that is pleasing to God. He's the only one who can make our **crippled spirits walk again. We hope you'll ask us...** ask the one who brought you today, what this message is and why it is so important.
- **Let's pray:** *"God, give us courage to take this step. Let us step out in confidence believing you will take what we offer and use it beyond our wildest imaginations. God, help our church to see the value of the Gospel and to, from their hearts, rise up generously to help reach their neighbors and the world with this message. Help those who are our guests to see through this that there is only message that can save, only one Savior who can save us from death and hell and give us life worth living. In Jesus' name, Amen."*

# Bullpen:

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- We have missionaries who can't get on field yet!
- We can't build... because we don't have the money!
  - 
  - "Status quo" church (comfort people from the world) spiritual resource
  - "Successful" church (draw people out of world, sanitize)
  - "Bridge-building" church (equip people to go into the world) We bless the city and change it. Proverbs 11:11, "By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted!"

- Peter and John as an individual

- The Muslim girl in full burka who came AGAIN and sat on the 2nd row. She watched all of the baptisms after the 2nd BCAM service, and told me that I was her "Christian teacher," and asked me to sign her copy of *Breaking the Islam Code*. The Southeast Asian lady who was with her who asked me to come to their house to teach her Muslim teenagers about Jesus. (CURT)

## God has given the church the power to persuade through their message and to amaze through their works

- "Most astounding to the outside observer was the extent to which poverty was overcome in the vicinity of the communities, through voluntary works of love... Christians spent more money in the streets than the followers of other religions spent in their

temples." (Eberhard Arnold, *The Early Christians in Their Own Words*)

- You've heard story after story... small groups. Baptisms.
- Last 4 years in a row...
  - Pei-Shaun Murillo – single mother of 3. Summit volunteers are actively involved in construction.
  - Boarding school at Agape Corner – a boarding school in downtown Durham for at-risk children.
  - Aretha Jackson...
  - We paid the cost and provided the labor

12 schools

- Movements are made up of individuals, w/ individual stories.
- Finally, my favorite... A UNC girl who, when they asked her why she was coming to be baptized, said, "Because I have been bad; a child of wrath, but God has saved me and reconciled me to himself." Interesting... I thought, "Surely, using language like this, this is just a seminary student who has never been baptized.... 'child of wrath,' that's got Presbyterian written all over it. However, she found me afterward and said something that floored me: "The 1st time I came to this church was when we were studying Ephesians 2. You opened showing us how Ephesians 2 says we are bad, 'children of wrath'... as you talked, I thought "This is all my parents (who weren't Christians) ever told me... how bad and how worthless I was. And now, this is what the Bible says, too? But then you got to 2:4 which says, 'But God... (and here she got a little emotional)... and I'd never heard that before. God loved and cherished me anyway. That changed my life and I got baptized tonight showing that my life has been completely changed.

**We believe in something here called "intercessory faith":** A lot of times we think intercession is simply prayer... and it is, but as if we

were just telling God some news that he didn't know about...

intercession is believing on behalf of someone else.

- For those of you who are new, let me tell you where we get this... (a number of places) but one of the clearest ones is John 6 where Jesus wants to feed a starving multitude and so he asks his disciples what He should do, as a test, to see if they understood how willing and able He was to accomplish the miracle. They didn't... and so Jesus took 5 loaves and 2 fish, a Hebrew Happy Meal, and fed 5000 people so much that there were 12 baskets left over. **And what it demonstrates to us is that God is willing to save RDU and feed it with the Gospel; He puts us here to believe He wants to do that and offer our 5 loaves and 2 fish on behalf of our city.**
- Matthew 13:58. We don't want that to be our city.

(I'm always a little skeptical of numbers. Because you never know what they mean... we had 5300 people in church last weekend...

"Well, how many are simply Christians from other churches?"

"We had 300 decisions" Yeah, but how many of them were just an emotional response that won't bring any real lasting change?" But the stories I heard on Sunday coming out of the baptismal are things that cannot be doubted.)

- Got to watch 1 of our volunteers get to baptize his roommate... a guy who had been a skeptic and very resistant to any previous attempts to talk with him about God... This guy just shows up at church, didn't even tell his roommate, our church member, that he was coming... the 1<sup>st</sup> time our church member noticed it was when he saw the guy in the line to be baptized.
  - \\ My final favorite... guy who walked right past me, coming forward to be baptized, with what I'm almost sure was a 20 oz. beer can in his hand. I thought, "Alright, I'm glad we feel free in Christ around here, but that's a new one right there..."