

Discipleship

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[0 : 00] In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Well, there's the topic, the call and the cost of discipleship. I think, first of all, we've got to define the terms before we go into the scripture.

! That sound good? Kind of covers it all, does it not?

But it also is a verb when you use the word disciple. It describes the process by which the learner or pupil grow in knowledge, obedience, or faith.

The term disciple described followers who were committed to a particular cause, teaching, or a set of beliefs. And there's been many great teachers out there.

You probably all studied at one time, Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, so they had their pupils. So we're familiar with that terminology. But when Jesus Christ came, he really changed radically the concept of being a disciple.

[1 : 18] It's significantly different. Again, disciple is a noun. When we're talking about being a disciple of Christ, you are a follower of Jesus Christ.

And by the way, let's keep in mind, there is a significant difference between recognizing Christ as a person and being a follower of Christ.

There are many people who recognize Christ, said he was a great teacher, he was a great healer, he did a great miracle. But few of them actually believed in him completely and decided to follow him as a true disciple.

And I'm afraid so many times that even within our churches, we have people who really truly are not followers of Christ. What's interesting, I find, is you probably read in the Bible, over 500 people saw the risen Christ at various times and in places.

I don't know about you, but if I'd seen a dead man who died the most cruel death, suddenly alive, I'm hanging with him. There's got to be something special about that man.

[2 : 28] But then we read in Acts where Jesus said, hey, go to Jerusalem, wait, pray, the Holy Spirit's going to come. Only 120 people were there. Again, who are believers of Christ and who were truly followers of Christ.

Now, a disciple as a verb, one who believes and accepts Jesus' claims of his identity and truth of his words. We truly believe in our heart that he was a son of God, that he was, again, the truth, and he spoke the truth.

It's one who learns with a purpose to obey what is learned. One who not only believes, but then also lives a lifestyle of a follower of Christ.

And one who is committed to the mission of establishing the kingdom of God, because that's why Jesus came. Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God. So a disciple is a disciple maker who intentionally helps others to follow Jesus Christ.

And I want you to focus on that word intentionally, because as a disciple of Christ, we are to be intentional about being a disciple and also discipling others.

[3 : 49] So a disciple. Being a disciple of Jesus means that we are being transformed into the image God wants to change us so much that it intrigues others.

Is that our lifestyle? Think about it. The Jewish nation failed. That was God's purpose. He chose Israel. Israel. He chose his chosen people so that they would have these laws, these commandments, and follow him and worship him.

And that that would be such a miraculous relationship with a living God that others would come and say, we want to serve him also. But we know the story.

The Israelites failed miserably. They went after other gods. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5.1, therefore, we are, as disciples of Christ, imitators of God as beloved children.

Paul also wrote in 1 Corinthians 11.1, be imitators of me as I also am of Christ. That should be our goal as disciples. We should be, again, imitators of Jesus Christ.

[5 : 00] So, M.J. Wilkins said it, I think, very well. You and I, we are to go out with the same message, the same ministry, the same compassion, exercising the same servanthood, and also experiencing the same suffering.

Do we have disciples defined well enough? We clear? And I love what J. Reverend F.W. Robertson, he's an 1840 preacher in England.

Jesus made religion a thing of the heart, not rabbinical learning or rabbinical theology. So, we need to disciple, or we need to then define discipleship also.

Discipleship is the process of growth and development as a disciple. Again, it's learning with the purpose to obey what is learned.

And it describes the process by which we encourage others to follow Jesus. And I like Mark Dever, who made the quote, I like people to make things simple.

[6 : 11] He said it well, helping people to know and follow Jesus. Pretty well defines discipleship, does it not? But then we have to look at Jesus' ability to be a disciple maker.

His discipleship was completely different. Jesus implemented a unique form of discipleship far different from others, great teachers, great leaders.

Perspective disciples of a rabbi approached the rabbi and asked to study the law with him.

Jesus, the rabbi, approached his disciples and called them to obey and follow him. A significant difference of the calling of discipleship.

It was unique to his status as a messianic son of God whose discipleship ultimately worshipped him. An action reserved solely for God with his people.

[7 : 17] No other rabbi, no other great teacher had a group of people who worshipped Jesus Christ. And the verse we find that is in Matthew 28, 17.

At the end of Matthew it says, when they saw him, they worshipped him. Because he deserved all worship and praise. Wilkins again wrote in a great article called Disciples and Discipleship.

Listen to the words. For discipleship to be understood and practiced most clearly, the view of Jesus with his disciples from the Gospels must come first as we attempt to apprehend what it is like for discipleship today.

Discipleship today is living a fully human life in this world in union with Jesus Christ and growing in conformity to his image.

And that becomes the question. Are we being disciplined and are we becoming more and more like Jesus Christ? Got to throw a little humor in because that's pretty heavy stuff, right?

[8 : 24] You cannot be an obedient disciple without discipling. It would be like calling yourself a cook without actually ever cooking. Well, at least I got a smile.

I think very much. Now, here's the simple truth about discipleship. A disciple disciplines others, other disciples, who in turn disciple more disciples.

Can't be any better than that, can it? Again, Jesus is the model of the disciple maker. Since he did such an excellent job making disciples, we need to look at him and see exactly how then do we become good disciple makers.

Jesus' ministry of calling, training, and sending out disciples stands as a captivating historical phenomenon. Never before in history was a person, of course, like Jesus Christ.

Jesus didn't simply lead a weekly Bible study. Not that that's bad. He invited his disciples to learn through actions as well as words.

[9 : 33] Again, follow him, but also do as he did. He spent his earthly ministry investing in a small group of people, teaching them, challenging them, and walking with them.

Have you ever thought about that? Can you imagine actually living, following, being with Jesus for three years every single day?

Watching him do his miracles. Hearing him teach, say the word. His model wasn't flashy or rushed. It was relational. It was consistent. And most importantly, transformative. Time out for a drink. False teeth makes you stick.

I'm sorry. By the way, just a side note, because I think, you know, Jesus is so great. Look at that. A great master with female disciples? Not until Jesus.

[10 : 39] It was an unusual occurrence in Israel, the first century. And that says a lot about Jesus. He welcomed them all. So Jesus' disciples were called by him, followed him, and were

commissioned by him to build the kingdom of God.

Have you thought about the great responsibility that you and I have as disciples of Christ? We have been called to build the kingdom of God. So look at it.

Called by Jesus. Friends, we are called to respond to the call of kingdom life. Folks, there are two worlds out there. There's a secular world and there's a kingdom of God.

And we are called to respond to be part of God's kingdom. We're called to count the costs. We'll look at those chapters later on, Luke 14, 25, 23.

But we're also called to lose one's own life and finding new life in the family of God through obeying the will of the Father. Mark 31, 3, 31, 35. You and I here this morning have been called by Jesus.

[11:50] That's a personal call. The Son of God chose us to be his disciple. Following Jesus. That means literally being attached to Jesus.

He is your and my best friend. It's growing in discipleship. Jesus taught, corrected, admonished, and supported his disciples. Together with him and service to him in his mission.

That's what it meant to follow Jesus. And that's what it means to us as we follow Jesus. And then Jesus commissioned. Matthew 4, 16 or 4, 19.

You know this verse well. And he said to his disciples, Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Again, Wilkins says it well. The meaning of making disciples is to proclaim the gospel message among those who have not received forgiveness of sin.

With the intent of them becoming disciples. In the early church, to believe in the gospel message was to become a disciple. So the task force, of course, is as a disciple of Christ, is to become like Jesus.

[13:07] So let's talk about that. What was Jesus like? What was his lifestyle? Luke 29, 39, 41.

And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives.

The disciples also followed him. Now when he arrived at the place, he said to them, Pray that you do not come into temptation. And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw.

And he knelt down and began to pray. Notice I highlighted the word custom. Custom means a normal common practice, or you might use the word habit.

And if we are to become like Jesus, what is his daily custom? Pray. And as disciples of Christ, if we are becoming like Christ, we are called upon to pray.

And Brother Mike also did an outstanding job last week on prayer. Challenged us all to be prayer warriors. But that's not all.

[14:05] Luke 4, 16. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up and was his custom. He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read.

Folks, we are called, as an example of Jesus Christ and the follower of Christ, to come to church. That's where we are disciplined.

This is where we also have the ability and the opportunity to disciple others. It may be through a Sunday school class. Not only do the Sunday school teacher, but as you discuss the word of God, we learn from one another.

It is so important that we are faithful when the church doors are open to attend church. Because that was Jesus' custom. And obviously the word I underline is read.

Obviously Jesus knew the word of God because he was the word of God. But he knew how important it was for us to read the word of God. And as a follower of Christ, it's so important to have time reading God's word.

[15:09] And then Mark 10, 1. Getting up, he went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan. The crowds gathered around him again. And according to his custom, he once more began to teach them.

It's our responsibility to teach what we know and hear about the word of God. That's how we become like Jesus. Prayer.

Read the word of God. Attend church where we can hear the word of God. Learn more about him. Worship him. And also to pray. So simply said, here it is.

The goal of the believer's life of faith is made clear. His disciples are equipped because we do these things to make disciples. Imagine Jesus walking up the first disciples and saying something like this.

Hey, would you guys mind identifying yourselves with me in some way? Don't worry. I don't actually care if you do anything I do or that you change your lifestyle at all. I'm just looking for some people

who are willing to say they believe in me and call themselves Christians.

[16:25] I'm sorry. I like sarcasm. This is a quote, by the way, from a reverend out in California. His name is Francis Chan. He wrote a book called Multiply. It was all about discipleship.

It's an excellent book. And it gives a great deal of good tips on how to do discipleship. But that's not what Jesus did, is it? Instead of saying that, what did he say?

The Great Commission. Hear the words of God. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. The Great Commission. We know it well, don't we? Do we realize, again, along with Jesus saying the two most important commands were that we love God with all of our heart and that we love our neighbor, he also gave us a command to go out and make disciples.

Jesus committed his earthly ministry to making disciples within Israel in that region. Jesus believed in discipleship so much that he commanded his followers to spend their lives teaching others to follow him.

[17:52] The Great Commission is God's master plan, master plan of salvation for all mankind. It's the good news for the whole world.

And by the way, God shows no partiality. He loves every person, regardless of race, regardless of gender, regardless of ethnicity, whether you're poor or not, whatever your status is.

The good news. Jesus Christ. And here's what's amazing. Jesus invited you and I to be a part of his plan. To go out and make disciples.

To go out and make disciples. but had no clue what it means.

Sadly, 76% of those who go to church have no clue what the Great Commission is all about. Now, when I read that and put that in the slide, I said, oh, wait a minute. I got to talk about World Trade Baptist Church.

[19:18] We are very fortunate. We have a pastor who disciples us, but also encourages us to be involved in discipleship. We need to praise God for this church and the people within it.

But it's a problem, is it not? How can that be? So here's the problem. First of all, the biblical principle of disciple-making has been neglected.

Think about it in your own experience throughout church, how much attention was given to disciple-making. There's been a lack of doctrinal training.

Again, we got to praise God that we're in a church where a pastor teaches doctrine well. Well, and stands for it boldly in truth. There's been a lack of discipline and self-denial by us, by believers.

We've been a little lazy. And here's the sad part. We've developed a culture where a minister ministers and the rest of us sit back and enjoy church from a comfortable distance.

[20:29] Folks, if you, again, spend time with people and look at their lives and talk with them and see them, people truly are looking for something worth living for.

They may not show it, but you can tell by their lifestyles, they're struggling. And we can help because we're part of the solution to the problem.

We know the truth. That truth has set us free, and we have a responsibility to share that truth with others to help them get set free.

So let's look at the Great Commission. You notice I've highlighted several words.

Go. What's that mean? That means take action. You can't sit back. You've got to be proactive.

You've got to do something. Remember, Jesus went to the disciples.

[21:46] And we are to go to those that we can help become disciples of Christ. Therefore, and of course you know the quote, well, the therefore is therefore something.

Well, it refers back to the statement, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. We go in the authority of Jesus Christ. And that's important.

I like make disciples. Disciples are not born. They are made. And they're only made, again, by coming to hear the word of God, learning about him, praying, reading, attending church.

Of all the nations, again, God has no partiality. He wants all the world to know him. Baptizing him, baptizing them.

Of course, this baptism was not, again, for the purpose of being saved, but it was the purpose of testimony, a testimony to the world that we are a follower of Christ.

[22 : 51] So it was important to us as we make disciples to encourage them to be baptized. Teaching them? Well, folks, you can't teach unless you know the word of God.

That's, again, why we need to be here to hear the word of God in Sunday school and at pastors preaching each time. I underlined I commanded you.

A command, folks, is an authoritative statement. With authority, Jesus has told us to do this. Question becomes, do you and I obey?

And I love the part, again, I am with you always. What a promise from God. We realize as we're doing this discipleship work, Jesus' presence is with us. And he's the one who's going to do the transformation in the person's life.

We just need to be faithful in sharing who Christ is and what he's doing in our life. And I love what Paul wrote in Romans 10, 14 to emphasize this.

[23 : 54] I mean, he said it clearly. But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

And that's, again, our responsibility as disciples of Christ, to tell people. There are many people who will never enter the doors of a church until they have heard from us to tell them about what Christ has been doing in our life and invite them to come.

And I found this in Psalm 51, 10, 13. I thought it was really good. This is, of course, David. He says, you're familiar with this verse.

Create in me a clean heart, God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation. Sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach wrongdoers your ways and sinners will be converted to you. You know why I love that verse?

[25 : 02] Even King David understood discipleship as a faithful servant of God before anything was ever said about disciple making. And Paul again wrote to Timothy, the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful people who will also be able to teach others also.

That is why we sit under the pastoral preaching of the word of God who's teaching us about God and his word so that we can then go out because we're the faithful people coming to church to hear it that we might teach others.

Most of us think, well, wait a minute. Sounds good, Mr. Jones, but I'm not qualified.

Yes, you are. Think about Jesus' disciples. They had some good positive and some negative behavior. Think about them. They exhibited a lot of ambition.

They tended to be selfish. They were argumentative. They were weak in the faith. Sometimes they were fearful. Sometimes they were impulsive. They were immature, slow to learn.

[26 : 20] Sounds like us? They were ordinary people just like you and I. God is not looking for perfect people.

God is looking for willing people to do as he's asked us to do, actually commanded us to do.

Second excuse, well, I'm just not good enough.

Man, I don't have my act together and I just don't do it well. Well, let's be honest. You and I will never be good enough. Our only righteousness is in Jesus Christ.

By the way, if you think about it, look at the members of the Hall of Faith in Hebrews. God elevated the faith of a liar, a murderer, an adulterer, a prostitute, and a doubter and used them greatly.

My suspicion is, I think God can use us. And I love that Brother Mike shared this last week because it's so true. If we're going to do this, if we're going to truly disciple others, we must do as John 15, 4.

[27 : 31] Abide in me and I in you as a branch cannot bear fruit of itself. Unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

We must have a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ, him living in us, us living for him to be able to share the good news. So how do we do that?

Sounds good. A lot of good words. First of all, understand, discipleship is not a quick thing. It's a lifelong journey.

But remember, we have the Holy Spirit that's going to be in us and leading us through that process. Discipleship is God's truth transformed through building relationships.

And that has to be the key, us building relationships with others. And really what disciple is, is God's love flowing from one heart to another.

[28 : 32] Discipleship helps each person to grow in faith. As we disciple others and see them grow in Christ, our faith increases also.

So, where do we start? May I suggest we start with family? I love Deuteronomy 6, 4, 9. And again, this is God speaking to the nation of Israel.

Hear Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These words I am commanding you today and shall be on your heart.

And you shall repeat them diligently to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk on the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. You also tie them as a sign to your hand and they shall be as on your forehead.

You shall also write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6, 4, 9. God was telling the nation of Israel, disciple your children.

[29 : 38] We have a great responsibility as parents and we have a great responsibility as grandparents to continue to share Christ with our family. And I love the wisdom in Proverbs verses 4, 20, 23.

My son, be attentive to my words. Incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight. Keep them within your heart for they are life to those who find them and healing to all their flesh.

Keep your heart with all diligence for it flows the springs of life. What we share about Christ to our children, our grandchildren, truly are the springs of life.

All right. So, first steps. Practical. Ready? Pray. Go figure. Folks, pray specifically for someone. Pray for God to lead you to someone to disciple. And God answers prayer. Get to know your neighbors, your coworkers, your colleagues, your business partners, the teenagers of church or someone in your small group and even in Sunday school class.

[30 : 49] Even those within our Sunday school class needs us to come together and be good disciple makers. There are people, again, that you and I will reach that will never hear the pastor preach.

plan to intentionally spend and invest time with individuals. You've got to get to know them. It's about building relationships. And they can only be attracted to Jesus Christ because they've seen you grow in their relationship that they've seen Christ in you.

And I love that word again, folks. This has to be an intentional part of our lives. And show interest and build relationships with individuals. And I love this because it's really true.

Ask questions. I've found it interesting. People typically like to talk about themselves. All you've got to do is ask them about what's going on and what's new in your life.

And they pretty much share. And in that sharing it gives you the opportunity also to share. Other ideas. Establish a time in a day on a weekly basis to meet together.

[32 : 02] maybe an early breakfast just to sit down and have a cup of coffee. Share what's going on in your life that day. Share what you maybe read. Share maybe what you heard in the pastor's sermon that day.

Invite individuals to come to your house and have a meal together. That's again building the relationships with folks. Once a week invite individuals to your house to join with a bunch of other people from church or neighborhood.

In other words, folks, spending time investing your time and investment in these people's hearts and souls. Share with them what's going on in your life and ask them to share.

Plan to spend a little time reading a small portion of scripture with them or read a very good daily devotional and just talk about it. What did you hear? What did you think? What about that person's ideas?

And then ask them, can I pray for you? How can I pray for you? Because that shows again that you have an interest in them and care about them and their lives. Or have men's and women's breakfast one Saturday a month with a short devotional.

[33 : 12] And that devotional can be shared by a different person each week. It doesn't have to be a long time. It is a fellowship of time together sharing Christ.

keep in mind and remember it's not about having all the answers. I don't have them. You've heard the pastor say that as well.

I don't have all the answers. Just show up share your faith point to Jesus and then let God do the transforming work in their lives.

You are not called to be successful. You and I are called to be faithful.

And are we being faithful in discipling making? And remember all the success is nothing about us. It's from God's transforming grace.

[34 : 11] And it's amazing that God is willing to use you and I. Okay. Well that was the fun part. Now is the serious part. You're called but you also need to remember there's a cost to discipleship.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it really well. The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ suffering that every person must experience is a call to abandon the attachments of this world.

It is the dying of the old man which is a result of his encounter with Christ. When Christ calls a person he bids him come and die.

So I think there are through the word of God essentially four laws of discipleship first law law of self-denial.

We must deny ourselves our wants our desires. There's a law of sacrifice. Each of us will have a cross to bear.

[35 : 19] It may be different for every person but there will be a cross that you're asked to pick up if you're a true follower of Jesus Christ. there's a law of submission follow me not your own path but God's path and there's a law of occurrence and that has to be something we do on a daily basis.

So look at the scriptures Matthew 16 24 then Jesus said to his disciples if anyone wants to come after me he must deny himself take up his cross and follow me.

That's a call to wholeheartedly loyalty to Christ that accepts suffering rejection and loss. Place Christ above our ambitions our comforts and our reputations.

you may face rejection you may face persecution and family division but that's part of carrying that cross.

Luke 14 33 says it well so then none of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his own possessions we are to surrender daily.

[36 : 33] God claims a right of disposal of all our possessions we are only trustees and stewards of what he has given you. Are we willing to give up if we follow Christ?

Luke 14 26 if anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father mother wife children brothers sisters yes and even his own life he cannot be my disciple.

Christ is asking us to have an unrivaled love for him. By the way the word hate here is a Hebrew idiom meaning simply to love less than Christ.

And I quoted earlier from Reverend F.W. Robertson and I love what he said the hardest and the severest the last lesson which man has to learn upon this earth is submission to the will of God.

And that has to be folks on a daily basis. so why is it important for us to be good disciple makers?

Matthew 16 25 28 says it pretty well for whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it for what good will it do a person if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul or what will a person give in exchange for his soul for the son of man is going to come in the glory of his father with his angels and will then repay every person according to his deeds as we are faithful to Christ in being disciplined as well as discipling others we will see great rewards for what we do for the glory of Jesus Christ summary the great commission is a call to go and tell the world what Jesus has done for us displaying his love by being his hands and feet and helping discover a relationship with the God who created them pretty simple are we up to the challenge will we follow

[38 : 36] Christ oops cheated sorry about that so that's really the question it's a new year 2026 what's one person and you probably know someone already on your heart that you will pour your time and invest your activities in 2026 to help disciple them and bring them to know Christ this is one of my favorite pictures that kid has such determination oh that you and I as followers of Jesus Christ and making disciples have that same determination amen amen questions fearing all of them Rebecca well we'll give

God the glory for that it's his word and his word is always excellent I mean just doing it just making it a priority in your life because he did so much well he did so much for me and I try to pass out gospel tracks where am I go I get a little bit scared I'm talking to people I'm not talking to people and then I'll say can I give you this and then I give it to them and say oh thank you so I mean I try to show the gospel that one on one I'm a little bit too much of it but I'm trying to be better yeah picking one person and putting time into them and getting to know them and then sharing my story and letting

the Holy Spirit work on their heart like the Holy Spirit for me again the best thing is we don't have to start out sharing Christ we just need to know them and who they are and their life and obviously they're going to be witnesses of your life and your testimony and also this is very very important so you have to ask appropriate yes anyone else yes last week on Wednesday my grandson we were sitting and he turned around and said they came and I said who and he said two boys off his bus he invited to church they've been talking he doesn't know them as well he said he was talking and I don't know what he had talked about he could tell me that but he said they asked him where they he his church and he said here and they said let him let him come and he didn't know they really would show up but they came and he thought yes absolutely yes that's all it takes

I mean let me actually come or come it's not the issue the question is are we invited to be a part of what God is doing it's not it's not easy I mean let's be honest we are busy people are we not I think that's part of Satan's great strategy we've got to keep you so busy with your lives and what's going on that you're not going to take the time to get to know one another we have to be careful about that because folks again people are hurting and we have I would ask you to do something crazy are you willing stand up we always have a time to fellowship pretty much we all sit in the same area and we go see the same people here's my challenge to you I want you to go to somebody in this body that you really have never shook hands with and don't know their names

I have to confess about a month ago I went up to my brother what's his name Sarah and Rodney jokes I just what's his name the older couple sent back I said hey I've seen you guys here I've never what is your name I've got something died Thank you.

Thank you.

[44 : 45] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Sorry about that. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Okay, hold on, hold on, hold on.

[46 : 15] Raise your hand if you shook hands with somebody that you never greeted before. Do it every Sunday. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you and praise you because you're God.

You deserve it. We love you. Help us, Father, to love others. Help us to be good disciples and be good disciple makers.

We ask your blessing upon every family that's here. You've called them, Father. You've asked them to follow you, and you've commissioned us to be like Christ. Help us to do just that.

In Christ's name, amen. Break time. Let's go. Thank you.