

Craig Schill
Lake Cities Community Church
February 22, 2009

“Ministry Planning 101”
Mark 6:6b-13, 30-32

Several years ago, while I was working in Human Resources, I was part of an implementation team for a several million-dollar software package called “People Soft.” The People Soft people came to the university preaching the “good news” of how their product would solve all our problems and bring in technological utopia. The gospel was not a hard sell – our systems (for financial aid, accounting, payroll) were home grown and out of date. They could not keep pace with changing laws. So the software was purchased and an implementation team was assembled - with many technical computer experts – Data Base Administrators, computer programmers, as well as lay people from the impacted departments. I was the representative from Human Resources.

How many of you have been involved in some kind of major software implementation? If you have, you might wonder – how did it go? Well that is a good question. It is in fact a question that deserves an honest answer. I will answer that question... later in the sermon.

This morning we will see that Jesus is setting up an implementation team of His own. It is made up of 12 men – his disciples. Jesus also has Good News – the gospel that promises to fix the problems of the world and ultimately usher in Utopia. The world’s system is old, homegrown, and desperately needs to be replaced. And Jesus puts together an implementation team to do just that. Turn with me to Mark, chapter 6.

Verse 6b – Context

At the end of verse six, chapter six we are provided context for this morning's lesson: "And He was going around the villages teaching." Jesus is ministering in the villages of Galilee – which you may remember is the Roman province to the west of the Sea of Galilee. You will also recall that Jesus was born in Nazareth – which is one of those villages. That is where we ended last week as Jesus was rejected in Nazareth. But he will not have his light put under a bushel. He is laser-locked onto his purpose of preaching the Gospel. Recall, briefly, what we have already studied: **Mark 1:14:** "Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God, and saying...repent and believe in the gospel. **1:38-39:** Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also – for that is what I came for. **And He went into their synagogues throughout Galilee.** This is Jesus' plan so far in the Gospel of Mark; and at the end of verse six – he begins another preaching tour but this time with a team of people – verse seven.

Verse 7 – Sending Out the Disciples

Mark 6:7 And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. Jesus says to his disciples, "buddy-up" it is time for you to begin to do what I have been doing. The work of casting our demons, healing people and most important – preaching the Good News.

It is time to delegate. Jesus is going to put the good news in the hands of the disciples. How do you feel about that? Just last week, after panicking in an extreme storm Jesus said, **Mark 4:40:** "Do you still have no faith?" And so we may have some concern about how ready they are for this assignment. But what have the disciples been doing the past year or so? Observing Jesus. Watching him cast out demons. Marveling at His healings.

Listening to Him teach and preach the Good News. *They may not be fully prepared – they still have much maturing to do – but according to Christ they are adequately prepared.*

There is a lesson here – When it comes to ministry – you will seldom feel fully prepared to engage in ministry – but you may well be adequately prepared. Last summer, I heard several teenage boys say: “I can’t do this – I’m not ready!” Some of you will remember I traveled with Trevor’s Running Club to North Carolina, where they were participating in a 35-mile race that included mountain biking, running, orienteering, canoeing and rappelling down a 120-foot sheer cliff. The problem is that all but one of the boys had never rappelled before. So right when we arrived in town, we set up a training session with Dave – an expert rappelling instructor. He trained us and then took us to about a 65-foot practice cliff. No one felt completely prepared but they were adequately prepared and with the application of what they had been taught, they got better and better.

That is what it is like in ministry. It is a mistake to avoid ministry because you don’t feel 100% prepared for the role God has put before you. It is a mistake to avoid ministry because, like the disciples in the storm – you have had some failure in your faith. God wants His disciples in the game – with some preparation, depending on His grace.

Verse 8-9 - Practical Instructions

Now in verses 8-9, Jesus gives practical instructions: **Mark 6:8** and He instructed them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, except a mere staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belt— **Mark 6:9** but to wear sandals; and He added, “Do not put on two tunics.” To me this feels like the list you get before going to camp, or on a short-term mission’s trip. Jesus says – “Make sure to have your staff and a coat – but no bread, or

money.” These seem like odd instructions – why include these details in the narrative?

What is Jesus saying to us?

First, Jesus is saying that His ministry must be faith-based. It was not that they didn't have bread, or money or bags, but Jesus wanted them in a position where they had to trust in God for success. Sometimes, even though we have the means to do ministry one way – we set those aside to ensure we are depending on God.

Second, Jesus is emphasizing a sense of urgency. Jesus' days are limited – perhaps now only a few months left before he has to go to Jerusalem and face the cross. He wants his disciples, therefore, to travel light. His packing list is very similar to the Israelites as they prepared to leave Egypt. Ex. 12:11 'Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the LORD'S Passover. Those of you who travel know that the more luggage you have, the slower and more difficult to the journey.

Third, Jesus ensure that his disciples will minister in humility. They come with the gospel from a position of poverty and dependence. This is not a well-funded powerful crusade – with big name speakers. It is not a heavily marketed meeting in amphitheatre with CD's and t-shirts on sale in the lobby. It is not targeted at the rulers and cultural elite. The disciples come in humility and poverty to show clearly that the power is not in the messenger – but fully and only in the gospel itself.

Verses 10-11 – Contingency Planning

Jesus' instructions continue, (10-11) with some contingency planning: Mark 6:10
And He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. Mark 6:11 "Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake

the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.” Jesus anticipates two responses – either people will receive you, or reject you. If you are received – Jesus says, “stay there.” Don’t complicate things by changing houses – for example, if a better house is later offered to you. And if you are rejected (i.e. Nazareth) leave in haste. It was a custom for Jews when returning to the Promised Land from a Gentile region – to shake the dust off their feet before entering their land – so as to not pollute it. Commentator James Edwards says, “This commandment is tantamount to declaring a Jewish village heathen” (181). Now in our day, we are not under the same time-crunch as Christ. If you share Christ with your friend at Starbucks and they say, “Thanks, but I really don’t know if I am ready for this.” Don’t lean down and take off your shoe... Continue to love them, while at the same time recognizing that there is an urgency to the message, and none of us know how much time we have.

Verse 12 – The Disciples Go Out

So with bags packed and instructions in mind, verse 12, **“They went out and preached that men should repent.”** The plan is executed – and that may seem obvious, but at some point the theory and talk, must translate into positive action. There is movement from deliberating to doing, from talking to traveling, from planning to proceeding forth.

Now at this point in the story – we see another “Mark Sandwich.” He starts with “disciples preaching the gospel” and then interrupts it with the story of the death of John the Baptist and comes back to finish the “disciples preaching the gospel” story. We will not study John the Baptist this morning – but consider for a moment why Mark weaves these two stories together? Why? What possible connection could they have? If you think about

it– the connection becomes clear. The disciples went out and preached that men should repent – OK. What did the John the Baptist do? The same thing. What happened to him? Oh he died. Mark reminds us that death and suffering are never too far away for Jesus and His followers. Remember 3 and verse 6? “**The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him as to how they might destroy Him.**” (3:6). The purpose for which Jesus came was to preach the gospel – but the ultimate reason was to die.

Mark 6:30-31 Debrief and Rest

Turn now to the final section of our passage, verses 30-31: **The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.”** (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)

Christ, here, values two things very highly – debriefing, a time of evaluation and then a time to rest. Each Tuesday when Tyler and I get together we ask, “How did the service go?” What went well? What didn’t go so well? And each week there is something we are working to improve for the next Sunday. My challenge is that if you are a ministry leader, make it a value to take time after a ministry event to debrief and talk about how things went. What can we do better next time? That is what Jesus took time to do.

After evaluation – then it is time to rest. Restoration physically, emotionally and spiritually. Jesus says come away “by yourselves” not with other people, and rest “a while” – must be enough time and “in a secluded place” a place different from where they are now.

In other words - it is biblical to take a vacation! That is what Jesus did – yet we often think the really spiritual one is the person who does not ever take a break.

One man challenged another to an all-day wood chopping contest. The challenger worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break. The other man had a leisurely lunch and took several breaks during the day. At the end of the day, the challenger was surprised and annoyed to find that the other fellow had chopped substantially more wood than he had. "I don't get it," he said. "Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, yet you chopped more wood than I did." "But you didn't notice," said the winning woodsman, "that I was sharpening my ax when I sat down to rest." Resting restores and revised us. If you have not rested recently – that would be a good application from this sermon.

Summary:

Let's summarize: Jesus gives us here a snapshot of wisdom as he begins to pass the baton of preaching the gospel to His disciples. In Jesus' plan he has shown us the importance of (1) Preparation – the disciples may not have felt 100% ready, but they had been prepared for this day. (2) Instruction – Jesus gives detailed instructions that the ministry would be (2a) Faith-based, urgent and is done in humility and the instructions go over (2b) Contingency plans – anticipating how people may respond. And finally Jesus elevates the importance of (3) Execution – move from prep to practice. (4) Evaluation and (4) Restoration.

Conclusion

Let me close with the story of our People Soft implementation. How did that go? Well, the implementation work team decided to make t-shirts. I love t-shirts! Common shirts can be inspiring and create a great sense of unity. Here is the t-shirt they designed. The Hindenburg in all its fiery glory with the tag line, "We know what we're doing." Now it was meant (I think) to be a joke! The crashing of the Hindenburg as you may know was one of the biggest and most famous disasters



But it ended up being prophetic – the project was a disaster. Why? For one – we were not **prepared**; we had very little expertise on the team, and our best people were hired by other companies for more money during the project. And because of that – **instructions** were vague and left the team scattered. Our saving grace was in a time of **evaluation** – where we regrouped, talked about it, reorganized. Don't panic, we can work through this. And after our evaluation and a short break – most of the problems were corrected. Preparation. Instruction, Execution, Evaluation, Restoration. To His glory as we advance His Kingdom. Let's pray.