

“Like their lives depend on it”
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The Woodside Church

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Good Morning everyone. For those of you who may not recognize me, my name is Markie Watson. I am a youth director here at Woodside. So you can find me on Wednesday and Thursday nights getting to spend time with all of these lovely students! Praise God! In honor of three wonderful people, Ava, Grace and Paul presenting their statements of faith today, I have the opportunity to come and address you all as well as instill confidence and support to these awesome students! I would like to call this message; “Like Their Lives Depend On It.

On a wing and a prayer - a new movie out on Amazon Prime-we open up on a story about a man named Doug- Doug aspired to be a pilot- he tragically loses his brother and flies in to be at the funeral. After the funeral- his family boards a departing flight to return home. Doug is invited to sit in the co-pilots seat. He is watching intently as the Pilot does his job and suddenly- the only pilot on the plane has a heart attack- now if this isn't dramatic enough- apparently Doug in all of his aspirations to become a pilot- never quite mastered flying or landing. That's why it was an aspiration- it was a failed attempt and it never worked out. So now Doug is in a rough spot, he needs to land this plane without really knowing how. Through the urgent help and directions from air traffic control and flight instructors, he was able to listen and do as he was told and even eventually land the plane safely. I look at this true story and can't deny the connections that we can make to our walk with Jesus.

Matthew 28:16-20. The Great Commission. Open your bibles or you can take a look at the screen; it says starting in verse 16: “**16** the eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped but some doubted. **18** Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. **19** Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

So let's break this down; I want to draw our attention to verse 19: Go, therefore, and make disciples- let's make a pit stop there: what does that mean? Well Go is an action word- go in this verse means take action; it's the shot at the beginning of the race it is the invitation to start! We see the words make disciples: what is a disciple? A disciple is a student or follower. Disciple is not really a title used in our everyday lives; but this is truly what we are when we decide to accept Christ. We see all throughout the gospels that Jesus gives the invitation to 'follow him'. Even after we accept Christ and he invites us to follow him; we are still a student and we continually grow in our relationship with him and our faith. He leaves these instructions

to make disciples of all nations- all nations are all over the world- wherever you look near and far- neighbors next door and neighbors across the world. Then directly after he tells us to make disciples, he tells us to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit- baptism is simply the outward demonstration that we are moving from death to life. The picture that is painted when there is immersion in the water is that we are dead, then we are raised to life again- so while we may not be lining our neighbors up in our backyard ready to dip them in a baptismal pool- we are charged with this command- to walk alongside others in this journey! Reading these instructions we can see that we are commanded to walk alongside one another- and share the gospel. How can we do this? Well the easiest way to do this is to share life with each other.

I recently graduated from college- Cairn University-I graduated with a master's degree in special education; in teaching we have this model- it's called the gradual release of responsibility- I do- We do- You do; repeat this with me: I do- We do- You do; now that we have this picture- is this not the model in which the Lord teaches us? Jesus came and started his ministry- the disciples, his students watched, After they watch, he send them out while he is still here so they are participating in the ministry together- then as he ascends into Heaven he leaves them with this command that they must go- using what they have learned from him and go and make disciples.

Christianity is all about multiplication- God is the giver and the maker of all life- we are made in the creator image- we in turn need to create life in others. So what is life? Life is finding Christ- meeting Him and engaging in relationship with him- These disciples that we make are not disciples of ourselves but of him! Because once you meet Jesus; you become more like Him. We die to ourselves and find life in Him. When you know Him- you begin an intimate relationship with Him When the source of life, truth and love pours into you- you can pour into others. This leads me back to that baptism part we touched on earlier, what is the purpose of baptism- now that we know what it means- what's the point? Well we know the purpose is bringing from death to life- to make new it's the renewal of spirit- these students today have professed faith and it is now our job/ it's our opportunity to walk alongside them in this journey just as we walk alongside one another and encourage each other from death to life. Notice a journey is continuous, our destination is heaven; so on our way we walk and grow and encourage one another in their walk with Christ for the rest of our lives.

Far too often we have a kids table. You know what I mean by that? We have our holiday meals and the kids have their separate table- The message of Christ- is not an adult only conversation! Community that floods our table can be filled with people of all ages and stages of life. We must invite others, peers- youth- young and old to our tables.

Another thing I want you to take notice of, Jesus says that He is with us till the end of the age in verse 20. This can be directly translated to- end of days. A timestamp isn't given- no

appointment time was set up. We should live everyday as if it's our last day- the message we have is far too important. Confirmation is a beginning- it is a continuation of relationship and faith in Jesus, much like our relationship with God it moves with you- through your ups and downs your jogs and your sprints- we don't have a countdown of days- so every moment should be lived like it's your last. I titled this message like their lives depend on it- because, oh my goodness they do. When you are left with instructions, you follow them- so what difference does it make? Why now?

I knew a great man- He loved and feared the Lord like no other. His name was Dave. Dave was diagnosed with Cancer and it took him so very quickly. In a matter of months. Throughout his journey of sickness- he praised the Lord along the way. Bringing light, hope and joy to his circumstances- his doctors, his nurses- his wife and children and even me. With his last words- to each of his children- to each of the people he loved- he stressed this message- of continuing to walk with God no matter the circumstances. He expressed to each of us how proud he was and how much he loved us but ended with something far greater than that- In a moment that I will never forget- even as his voice was failing him and he was in and out of consciousness- He said that he knows he is going home- as our tears flowed- I think no one wanted to believe the fight had been so quick- But the Lord needed him home- His words were " Keep going- Keep the faith"- I knew that the Lord is good even now he is always Good - I knew that his message was saturated with that truth. I was asked to speak at his funeral- a mighty charge for a mighty person- the perfect thing came to mind- before he passed I wrote him a letter that I read aloud to him over the phone; not knowing if he would breathe another breath as I spoke to Him. That He should know the Lord will say well done- because every second of his life- even before I entered it he lived this message. He loved, he walked alongside others he lived this charge until he could speak no longer on that last day- He knew the truth he held to was the cure- The cure for physical and spiritual bodies- he knew that our lives and all the lives of the people he touched depended on him telling this message. He knew in those final moments that his message was urgent- lives depended on it and he acted like that was true.

I met Christ officially when I was 12 years old. These camp counselors from push the rock met me at my kids' table- they showed me love, joy and shared an urgent message with me. They met me like my life depended on knowing what Christ did for me. After that I was shown what it meant to be living it out. I watched. After I watched, I felt I wanted to join in. I received guidance- after I received guidance in taking the next steps I took them, I made a personal decision to walk with Him. Woodside family, confirmation students- we all have this opportunity. Friends we see these youth professing their faith and now we can guide them. Confirmation students, you took a step of knowing Christ on your own- now share it- walk alongside others as your family at Woodside has walked beside you.

I leave you again with this thought- our World is engulfed in sin and death- spread the word of God like it's the cure; because it is. Love and lead others like their lives depend on it; because they do.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father- we humbly place ourselves before you today- knowing what it is you have done for us- what you have taught us and now what you have asked us to do. I pray over each of these students who professed faith and relationship with you. Lord, surround their hearts- wrap them in your love, because there's nothing greater. Lord help us all to meet others at their tables- to fill our lives with all different kinds of people and walk with them as you have commanded us. We know that when two or more gather in your name- you are there. Lord help us to meet others like their lives depend on it! Prepare the hearts we meet and bring them to yourself. You are so very good Lord. We love you and we want to look more like you every passing day. In Jesus name. Amen.