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Now the old way of doing church was that we would be “open for business” on Sundays. Christians would come to church and worship. Inquirers would also show up seeking God in their lives. But if you haven’t noticed that way of “being church” really doesn’t work anymore. Maybe it worked in the 1950’s and the 1960’s but in 2019 it doesn’t work anymore. Most people we encounter out there in the world have at best a vague recollection of church, perhaps their grandparents were active members, maybe they’ve been inside the doors of church once or twice in their entire life. People aren’t lining up outside the church doors eagerly waiting to run in and experience Jesus Christ. We have about 750 members. What would happen if only 200 of those members took Christ with them each day to work? Would there be more than the 5 adult baptisms we do each year? Would young families come to our Sunday School and bring their children? Would your next door neighbor be invited to come and see something in you as a Christian that they wanted in their own life and it induced them to come? People need the Lord. People are literally dying for lack of the Lord of Life in their life. People need to go to heaven and that is not possible apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. As more and more of our society fills out their census data and checks the box “None” where faith affiliation is concerned, how are we going to connect with them? Not by having better programs. Not by having a larger choir. Not by having a better preacher. Not by having a more beautiful facility. None of these tactics will fill the church again. But people who are Christians willing to speak about their faith and have others know they are Christians, that can make a profound difference in other people’s lives. Taking Christ out into the world, ceasing to hold Him captive within these four walls, being willing to be a Christian and to have others know you are a Christian, that is what the church needs and what the world needs and what people need. That is what people desperately need, only they don’t know they need it. Yet.
Our scripture are the words of Jesus’ last will and testament. He is speaking last words to the disciples He loves. He is telling us most important things. So we should mark these words with care. We should write them upon our heart. We should live them with our lives. If we believe in Jesus then we will do what He says. My followers hear my words and do them, says the Lord. And in what is referred to as the Great Commission Jesus begins by saying just one word. Do you know what that one word is? Jesus says, “Go…” (Matthew 28: 19) Just stop there; don’t read any further. Just savor that one singular, simple word, “Go”. Jesus doesn’t say “stay”. He doesn’t say “Come to church”. He doesn’t say “Sit passively in your pew”. He doesn’t say, “Hide out behind the walls of the church.” Jesus leaves us with His legacy and He tells His disciples whom He loves, “Go…” In the Greek, it is in the form of a command. It is an imperative, not a suggestion. Jesus commands us to “Go.” He says: “GO THEREFORE and make disciples of all nations…” And it ends in a promise; because He promises that WHEN WE GO, when we bring Jesus to work with us, when we are open to being Jesus for someone around us, then as HE JESUS promises, “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” (v. 20) When you “GO” then Jesus promises to GO WITH YOU. When we take His words seriously and do them then He promises to be with us always, even to the close of the age. There’s way too much “staying” and not enough “going”; there’s way too much passivity and not enough activity; there’s plenty of means for filling up every church to overflow once again...its just the disciples aren’t going, speaking, sharing anymore.

Now maybe your cup of tea isn’t leading a Bible Study or a Prayer Group. But you could speak as part of your regular conversation about your church and about why you come to church with your friends at work. Even teachers who are prohibited from expressing their faith can wear a cross if they choose and if asked by their students can explain it. If someone knows you are a Christian and shares a piece of bad news with you, don’t just say, “Oh, I’ll pray for you.” No, take their hand and look them in the eyes and pray simply, “Lord, please bless and heal my friend in Jesus’ name. Amen.” And then ask if they’d like to be prayed for by our Fellowship of Concern. You could do that. You could bring a small basket of strawberries to a neighbor and ring their doorbell. If they’ve had a death or an illness, you could remind them you’re praying for them and the reason why you’re doing this isn’t just because you’re nice but because you love God. You could do that. You could open the door for the Lord to be at work in their lives. Now I’m a very shy person. But I figured out that I have a lot of interactions with people every day where I can bring Jesus with me. I love all the people who work at the Giant Eagle Customer Service Desk. I bring my shirts to be laundered there; I send money Western Union there; I DON’T BUY LOTTERY TICKETS OR CIGARETTES THERE (for the record!). But I ask them about their lives. I tell them I’m going to be particularly nice because some people are particularly crabby. I tell them about why I’m sending money to help people. They know I’m a Christian. And then they will share with me when something is wrong in their life. And I will look at them with my eyes wide open and pray a very brief prayer for them, right there in Giant Eagle. And even though I’m a very shy person I know I can bring Christ with me to Giant Eagle. Because He’s promised to come with me. He says when I’m obedient to His words then He will give me the opportunities and even the words to speak. I don’t have to worry what I will do or what I will say, He’ll do it and say it through me, if I’m open to Him. You can do this prompts the Lord. This is possible and do-able; its not weird or strange. Indeed, you can “Go…” because I promise when you do, I’ll be with you. Promises Jesus –“Lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age.” Amen and Amen.

By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania
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