

Building a Firm Foundation

Passing the Baton series

by Chris Famisaran

Good morning, everybody. Let's pray. Father, as we now take a moment to pause, as we begin a new series, Lord, be with us. Especially. And we ask that you be with those who are here those who could not make it. And perhaps maybe if there's anybody on their way, in Jesus name, amen.

How many of you love Legos? Oh, not a lot of parents. Maybe because they step on them. Back in, I think it was 2013 Wired Magazine wrote an article. And they proclaimed or they proclaim they reported that one of the newest Lego additions to the world had been brought forth. In fact, it was the largest and I think still the largest Lego set ever created. Anybody ever heard of the Lego X Wing, not just a small Lego X Wing, but the big one where it's basically the model of the classic Star Wars fighter that has a wingspan of 44 feet. Comes complete with an R2D2 And also the full range of sound effects. Isn't that amazing? I won't want for myself. But it's basically the super duper larger version of the Lego Starfighter set number 9493. And this one, though, okay, this one was made with over 5,335,200 little Lego bricks. So it's probably for sure it's the largest LEGO model ever built, in fact that it eclipsed the other LEGO, former largest LEGO, The Lego robot at the Mall of America by over 2 million bricks. And it was built at the LEGO model shop at a facility in Kladno of the Czech Republic. It took over 32 builders over 17,336 man hours to construct this X Wing. They use 3d design, the construction team had to work with the team of structural engineers to ensure that this model would be safe, it would hold up and it weighed... Anybody want to guess how much it weighed? Over 45,000 pounds, and eventually was shipped to Lego Land.

Now, for them to complete this project. It took vision. It took a team it took leadership it took time wasn't something that just popped up. It took work. But when you have a chance later, Google largest Lego ever built Google Star Wars XWing. It's amazing. I wanted more for myself. But it's true of that whenever you want to build something, you need to have vision, you need to have a dream. And so they built the dream that they would build be able to build the biggest Lego set ever. And they accomplished it took a while over 17,000 man hours spread over 32 builders for a long time. And so they worked on this machine or this this set. And eventually it came to fruition.

Now today is the first in the series that we're going to be going over in the month of August, Passing the Baton. What do we mean by passing the baton? You know what a baton is? Right? Those who run around a track and pass the baton. You've seen it at the Olympics. We're gonna go back in time to the history of the early church and also the history of the early Adventist Church. So maybe what's that? Maybe just in case well, Downey church didn't just come out of nowhere. It's part of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and how many of you maybe actually know how did the Seventh Day Adventist Church get started? Some of you okay, well next week We're going to actually the next two weeks after this, we're going to do a very brief overview of how the Adventist church got started. And we're going to take lessons learned from not only the early church, but the early Adventist Church, up until today, and at the end of the month, we're going to kind of come together and basically ask the question of what have we learned? And what's next? How do we look forward to the future. But we want to take some of the

positive lessons that we can take from especially the early church today, some of the lessons that and some of the things that maybe you kind of be surprised about, that can help build up our spiritual life, and also remind us of the good things. And history is replete of good things. And also lessons learned. And unfortunately, how often do we truly go back to remind us of those lessons, yet, we somehow keep making the same mistakes over and over again as humans.

So let's go to Matthew 28. Matthew 28. It's a passage that we have studied several times, but just as a good reminder, because it sets a basis. Matthew 28. And if we're there, please say Amen. All right, got more than a couple. Matthew 28, verse 16. It says, Then the 11 disciples went to where? Galilee to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go, okay, so Jesus had shown up, he said, Hey, meet me over here. And when they saw them, they worshipped Him. And every time I read this, what what's what's next, it says, what some of them doubted. Jesus was there for three years, they saw him do all these wonderful things, and he rose again, and yet some still have the ability to doubt him, even after he risen. And then here's the key part. Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority, in where? heaven and on earth has been given to me, therefore, go and make what? [disciples] of all who? [nations] Meaning all over the world, not just in Galilee, all over the world, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you, and surely I'm with you, even to the very end of the age. So what is Jesus essentially doing here? What do we call this passage? The Great Commission, so Jesus is commissioning his disciples, what is commissioning mean? He's instructing them. He's giving them a blueprint. He's giving them a mission statement, and a vision of what he is calling all of them to do to go to preach to, Therefore go and make disciples and disciples are what followers of who? Jesus was disciples follower. But in this context, we're, we're calling we're called to make followers, disciples, of every everybody, not just people down the street, or in your community, or your own family, but throughout the world, all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. Jesus left all of these lifelong learning lessons. And fortunately enough, as well. He sends the Holy Spirit, as we talked about in our Sabbath School lesson earlier today, to remind us of everything that we should know and to spread it to other people. This is Jesus commissioned. This is Jesus calling, Hey, I am taking off but I'm not leaving you alone. But this is what I want you to do, teach, preach, baptize, tell everybody, and remind everybody of what I have taught you.

And so time goes by we find that the disciples of course, though, they got to rebuild what, what next, God has called them and we find ourselves in Acts chapter two. And the Holy Spirit what happens in Acts chapter 2, what it what great event happens there, Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit just comes down on all of the disciples. And are there is that does everybody at the beginning? Are they speaking the same language? No, there are people from everywhere there. It's a melting pot. And when the Holy Spirit descends on everyone, everybody could understand when Peter steps up to the plate and he starts to speak to everybody. Everybody could understand him. It's as if everybody, if you had somebody from France, from Mexico, from Japan, from Fiji, all over the world, they got together. And Peter starts to talk and everybody could clearly understand them. Even though they didn't know, the Greek, that Pierre was speaking makes sense. And it's an important point because this Holy Spirit has been promised, all the way back even into the Old Testament. So Jesus doesn't leave us hanging as John's Gospel says, He sent the advocate or the counselor or the helper, and it's there that the Holy Spirit would lead them into the next direction, the next phase of the gospel ministry. And so there everyone, they those who kind of

figured out Wait a minute, we're all speaking different languages, yet we can understand him clearly. They're impressed.

And suddenly, people begin to join this movement, they begin to join the church. And here now let's go to verse 42. Acts chapter two, verse 42. This is after Pentecost has happened after Peter addresses the crowd. Here we see there's the fellowship of believers, the the early makings of the church, and this is a passage that we have studied Yes, but we're just we're not going to focus totally on at least the first part, because we've already done that. This is just a reminder, let's look at the other parts. But in verse 42x, two, verse 42, they devoted themselves to the apostles, what the teaching, the fellowship, and the and finally, last but not least, prayer, they devoted themselves. This was the early church, and they didn't have a fancy church like this, where they could gather together, where were they meeting, they were meeting in the homes, maybe the courtyards, the backyards, maybe on a hilltop, but they all met, they have their small groups, they vote devoted themselves to the apostles that preaching what they have learned. And they were doing what Jesus had called them to do, reminding them of everything that he had taught them. They were fellowshiping, because you need community, they broke bread, because can life happen without bread without food? Now, some of our fondest memories probably are when we're at the table, sharing a meal with a loved one or a family member, or getting to know somebody, hopefully to be able to spend a life together, amen. But the Capstone as well. The last part is we have to be able to bath everything in prayer. And it's here that this is just the beginning. In verse 43, everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders in signs performed by the apostles, they were able to do miracles, verse 44, all of the believers were together, they had everything in common. They sold what property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts, they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all of the people in the Lord added to their number daily, those who were being saved.

So the basics we've already kind of gone over, we've talked about that teaching fellowship, bread and prayer. That was just the blueprint. But what are some of the things that we can learn from the early church and even the Adventist Church will we'll go more into depth next week about the Adventist aspect. But both of them share the fact that both the early church and the Adventist church had vision the early pioneers, the early believers had known what they were called to set out to do. The blueprint of the Great Commission, propelled them forward to teach, preach and to baptize. And here we see them doing this already. In chapter two. They knew what the goal was, their lives had changed dramatically other people's lives around them were being changed. Word spread by word of mouth, people's lives, they were giving their lives to Jesus in spite of even the hardship that they would face. So they had vision. They knew where they were headed. But the early church and the admin as pioneers also sacrificed and gave not just a little but they gave generously, as it says in verse 45 days sold property. Property means something right? It's not something that it's like just a couple of bucks, but in our eyes, that could be potentially anywhere from 10s to hundreds of millions of dollars. Maybe they had a different viewpoint. Maybe it wasn't it's much back then. But they sold their property in their possessions to give anyone who had in need early Adventist church as well, they didn't have a great benefactor. Many of them were giving of their own time, donating their their time selling properties, helping to make sure that the movement, this Advent movement would propel the church forward because they believe that Jesus was coming back. Many of them sacrificed, many of them literally lost their lives, as we'll talk about in a little bit. Some gave everything to the cause. Because they believe so

hard in they believe so much in this person called Jesus to go teach, preach and baptize. They didn't have a huge budget. They use their own means many times.

We think of when you think about the first martyr as well, Steven. He's the first recorded person to have been martyred, but many other people, many that we don't know. Because guess who was trying to suppress this movement? Paul, also known as Saul, before he transitioned to Paul. But so he was a faithful member of the Jewish faith. And he believed that the church, this movement was a threat. And so he did everything to snuff it out. But not just him, many other people, and eventually also the Roman Empire, they were causing problems to the people. So what did they do they try to snuff this movement. But when something that is great is happening, and you wonder, why is everybody putting so much effort to snuff it out? You got to ask, Well, why are they doing that? And when they find out, the goodness that's coming from this group, pretty soon, everybody wants to hear about it, amen. And so, you know, we were studying Mark's gospel recently, one of the problems the earliest gospel written, having to deal with persecution, these individuals were all being persecuted for their faith. And yet, they did not care they gave generously and they sacrificed much. Paul also talks about in his writings about the generous offerings that were used for missions later on to other areas that can continue the gospel, going out to all of the world. In fact, in one of the letters, it's noted that there was a collection on the first day of the week, the early Adventist church also before it was even incorporated, where basically small groups throughout the country, using their own means raising their own money for the, for the mission of the church to tell the world that Jesus was returning. Now out of all of that, because of their faithfulness.

The early church, not earth church, my bad, the early church experienced and evangelistic what explosion. When you read the gospel, or sorry, the book of Acts, how many people were being added to the church daily? 3000 In one case, 1000s were being added in multiple parts where it says 1000s were being added daily to the church. When was the last time you heard that there was a couple 1000 people being added daily to the church? Not recently, right? What has happened? I remember, early on when I first started working, I was part of a evangelistic series. And when all was said and done, we got together at this, this place and hundreds of people were being baptized. And that was awesome. That was great. But can you imagine 1000s being added, and not just like one time, but daily. This is how important Jesus meant to these people. And the efforts that were they were going forth. Same thing with the early evidence church they gave and evangelistically You know, it grew not as fast as the early church. But when they could when the word spread, it grew like fire. And in the midst of all of the hardship that they face, the early church in the admin, early Adventist SDA pioneers experienced what joy in the face of hardship, when you have purpose in your life, when you know what you're called to do. You are able to overcome many obstacles and do it with joy, this quiet, purposeful drive knowing that everything is going to be okay. And it brings this wonderful feeling of I know what I'm doing and it's making a difference in the world. The early believers and the early pioneers The Adventist church didn't have to wonder they knew they were making a difference.

Anybody ever heard of a guy named Ruben Pardo? Probably haven't. He's a man who was an elevator operator. I don't know if he's still alive because he's older. But for many years, I think he's retired now. He started as an elevator operator on August 14, 1976. And for many years he he was an elevator operator for a building in LA on Wiltshire, in one of the Art Deco buildings, and although his life some may consider simple, His purpose is clear. His heart is full of joy and gratitude. For many years over the years that he has operated this elevator. He's met many people, business professionals, people who

have made tons of money. And until more recently, when the building was changed to office space, he would meet young entrepreneurs influencers trying to make a world of difference. And their everyday he faithfully served as an operator for the elevator to go up and to go down. When he was young, he learned the value of hard work by going out on a paper route. He learned that you had to work hard to make a living. But every day he would go to work faithfully six days a week. And every day he greeted everybody with a voice of cheer. He knew all he knew all of the employees by name. When young employees would come and go, Reuben would be would stay and become a fixture. In fact, one young executive pointed out he's been in this elevator longer than I've been alive on the planet. Pardo was the son of a shop owner born in Mexico City. When he was seven his family immigrated here to the United States. He learned to paint garages, shovel snow, operate elevators like the one he manages. And he was able to support himself and also his wife. He rarely took paid vacations. But on Sunday nights, he would take his wife to dinner as a good gesture of gratitude. He said his wife, he and his wife were happy. While the young people in the office building was sometimes move on, get married, travel the world. Rubin has been steady constant, doing the thing that he's done for many, many, many years. Luis Zavala. He's a 30 year old at the time, web graphic designer described Rubin as like a glass of fresh water every morning. I don't know how he does it. But every day for him, it just seems to be a bright opportunity for something.

The early believers, the Adventist Church pioneers had this joy this, there's something in them that moves them forward to share the good news of Jesus Christ. When something great in your life has come into your life and affects you. Do you want to just keep it to yourself? No, you want to share it? With the world. Especially when you find something that you're very passionate about whatever it may be, okay, could be fishing, could be the Dodgers could be swimming, it could be cooking. And you you find the joy, you want to be able to talk to anybody about it. Oh, clear example. Anybody know what CrossFit is? Nobody? Oh my word. Okay. So CrossFit is a strength and conditioning program. There's a joke that you can find out somebody who knows who does CrossFit because they just cannot stop talking about it. Alright, so something that you're passionate about these early believers, they were passionate about what God had done in their life and changed their life. Obviously, they wanted to share the world. And despite all of the many obstacles that they faced, they didn't care. They move forward. They move the needle forward to now where because of the work that they've done, we're here worshipping in this building, amen.

So what are some of the lessons that we can take? Let's just as a reminder, the early church had vision. They sacrifice and gave generously. There was an evangelistic explosion in the earth, the Early Church leaders in the early Advent as pioneers experienced joy in the face of hardship. So, as we reflect on these five points that we've discussed, which of them resonate with you the most? And perhaps maybe Are any of these missing in your life? What changes in your life? Could you make that these five principles of joy, of giving generously, of being willing to make sacrifices, to have vision and to serve others? So this week, I want you to find an opportunity to practice at least two of these characteristics that we've discussed. Amen.

So go forth, live with joy, live with purpose, have vision, knowing that what you're doing is making a difference. Give generously. And when I say give generously, I'm not just talking about financially either. You could give in the way of time. There's many ways of giving. So go forth, and be the disciples that God has called us to be. Father in heaven. Thank you, Lord. As we move forward as we build this foundation, Lord, we've started with the early church, and we're kind of creeping into the early avenues

church, Lord, help us to take these lessons with us to remind us, because, Lord, in the face of the present church, or some of these things, it seems like we're missing them. How do we lose them? Speak to our hearts, prepare us but also give us opportunities to serve. And above all, Lord, may we be a difference. And remember to share Jesus with others in Jesus name. Amen.

Grace and peace.