

GO 2019

MATTHEW 28:19-20

Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

This comes a little too late for a Christmas gift. But take note; perhaps you’ll want to use the idea next year.

It’s called, “Pack Up + Go.” Here’s how the website describes their service, “Do you spend weeks dreaming of weekend getaways? Love traveling but loathe planning? Be adventurous. Be spontaneous. Embrace the unknown. Let us plan your three-day weekend. The catch? Your destination is a surprise.” You can even gift the surprise vacation to a friend or a family member...

Here’s how it all works: You plug in your budget, provide a few travel dates, and answer a survey regarding your travel preferences... Then a week before you leave an email arrives telling you the weather to plan for - and where and when your trip begins... On the day of departure, you open an envelope that reveals your destination. It comes with literature to help you best spend your time while you’re there... You’re guaranteed not to be bored. If you want to try it, it’s packupgo.com.

For me, a weekend get-away to a surprise destination sounds fun. It’s certainly adventurous... But if I were to be gone for much longer than three days I’d probably want to know where I was headed, and what to expect.

I would want to approve my destination in advance.

A serious traveler, who plans to be gone awhile, likes to turn over some rocks, and look behind the curtains, and learn exactly what they're getting into beforehand.

An extended stay requires some prior assurances.

And the same is true when it comes to churches. Some folks visit a church on a whim. It's a "Pack Up + Go"-kind of experience. Their goal is to sample a new place. Folks like being surprised by the new and novel.

In fact, often people don't even decide where they're visiting until Sunday morning. They like the adventure. "Why plan? Be spontaneous. Embrace the unknown."

And that's fine, if all you care about is *one* Sunday.

But that's not how you visit if you're really looking to join a church and be part of its ministry. If you're searching for an extended family - a more permanent destination - then you'll want some more definitive information. That's what I want to provide you this AM...

If our church is a "Pack Up + Go" - *surprise destination for you today* - that's fine. Welcome to Calvary Chapel.

But what we really want is for people to share in our vision, and be committed to the values for which we stand. We're looking for longterm partners. And for that to develop folks need a better idea of what we're about.

Rather than view church as a weekend get-away - *a surprise to enjoy* - church should be a home where you settle in and build relationships. It's where you and your family sink roots. Spiritually-speaking we are fighting a battle - *the intensity of*

which increases with each passing year. We need a headquarters on the battlefield where we can find shelter, and receive God's marching orders. This is how we want you to view Calvary CSM.

We're a church that takes seriously Jesus' great commission. Just before the Lord ascended to heaven, in Matthew 28, He said to His followers, **"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."** Like the website, Jesus told His followers to **"Pack Up + Go,"** but not on just a weekend get-away. He commissions them to make disciples of all nations. And orders them to do so til *the end of the age.*

In this passage Jesus tells His followers - *both then and now* - to **"Go"** ... but not as if they were on a weekend excursion, or a surprise vacation, but to **Go long** (for He'll be with you always) ... **Go wide** (include all nations)... **Go deep** (make disciples, not just draw a crowd)... And to **Go far** (even to the end of the age)...

This is what I want you to understand regarding Calvary CSM. Here's what we're about as a church. We're not just weekend adventure seekers - nor are we on a trip tailored to our own preferences. In 2019 we're being called to **go** - to **go long, go wide, go deep, go far**... And that's what I want to talk about this morning...

First, as followers of Jesus we've been called to **Go long**... When we were kids, and playing football in the backyard, and

time was running out - *perhaps it was getting dark, or maybe mom had already called us to come in* - we'd all huddle up and the quarterback would say, "**everybody go long!**" He'd heave the ball as far as he could, in hopes that someone would make a catch.

It was an act of desperation, as time was running out.

And I believe time is running out on us. Jesus is coming back soon! Prophetic events mentioned in the Bible regularly appear in our nightly news... *The Middle East is heating up. Natural disasters are commonplace. Globalism is a driving force. Perilous times are upon us.*

Jesus is calling... It's almost time to come in. And in light of it all, we need to **Go long**. Not as an act of *desperation*, but our **Going long** needs to be more a matter of *dedication*. Rather than toy with *the new and novel*, Jesus wants us to hold fast to *the tried and true*.

When I say, "**Go long**" I'm talking about sticking with those truths that Jesus taught from the beginning.

For what the Lord begins He intends to finish. As Jesus told His disciples, "*I am with you always*" - and the Lord Jesus never changes. Hebrews 13:8 declares, "**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.**"

We live in a world that's subject to radical and rapid change. Just in my lifetime the transformations have been amazing. When it comes to math calculations: we've gone from an **abacus** (we actually used them in elementary school), to a **slide rule**, to a **calculator**, to a **computer**, to a **smart phone**, now to an **Apple watch**.

I'm just saying we live in a world today of constant change, *and we all feel the pressure to keep up...*

Even in the church we think the answer is to monitor the changes, and adapt accordingly. Stay abreast of the times. And in a sense that may be true. Customs do change, and we need to relate to our changing culture...

But the Bible never changes! Jesus is *with us always*. His words and will are timeless. There are truths and principles we should adhere to until *"the end of the age."*

To me, **"Go long"** speaks of uncompromising ministry.

I want you to know I've pastored this church for 38 years, and there are beliefs and principles I'll take to my grave... *My confidence in the Bible as God's Word. My belief in its ability to change lives. My commitment to teach all the Bible* - these are non negotiable for me.

The Word of God is what we need whether we know it or not - and it's what God has called the Church to do.

And not just our belief in the Bible, but other truths are non negotiable. *Our emphasis on worshipping God, not entertaining people... Our longing for the power of the Holy Spirit, even if it takes us into uncomfortable territory... That marriage is between one man and one woman... That God made humans male and female, and wants men to lead in the family and in the church...*

I realize none of these convictions are popular among growing churches today. The prevailing idea in church circles is to keep with the basics. *Talk about the love of Jesus and little*

else. Don't bring up doctrines that cause controversy or limit your appeal to the society at large.

I'm sorry, but that's not what I'm called to do. I'm about **"Going long."** I've staked my ministry on principles I believe will be as true at the end of the age as they were at the start. What's *truly true* isn't effected by trends and cultural shifts. God's truth is universal and absolute.

Christianity is like investing in the stock market. You need a **"Go long"** strategy if you want to be successful.

If you're always panicking, and selling off shares of stock every time there's a dip in the market, you'll never reap a return. You can't jump ship in the downturns.

And just because what we believe as Christians isn't cool at the moment, doesn't mean it's not true. Jesus is always with us, and His commandments are certain.

Thus, we need courage to **Go long**, and persevere.

Let's be committed to immutable truths, even in a constantly shifting world. As we've often said in the past, **We bring a changeless Gospel to a changing world.**

It's ironic, 35 years ago what set Calvary CSM apart from other churches was our willingness to adapt to the *changing world* around us. Our music and contemporary style were ahead of its time... Today what sets us apart is our willingness to hold fast to a *changeless Gospel*...

I hope you'll stand strong with me. Make no mistake about it, your presence here on Sunday shouts out your support of our values and commitment. When you come to church and bring your friends you take a stand. When you don't, the rest of us

are left thinking that we're going alone. *And we'll do it*, but it's better to **Go long** together.

Years ago, I received a book that's sat on my shelf for decades. The title of that book has become my motto. It's called, "**A Long Obedience In The Same Direction.**"

This is what I want to characterize my ministry.

Jesus promised His disciples, "*I am with you always.*" And as long as He is, we should be faithful to Him.

We need to **Go long**, and we need to **Go wide**. Jesus said we need to make disciples "*of all the nations.*"

Revelation 5:9 gives us a glimpse of the future, and the throne of God. For all eternity people will sing "a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

For all eternity the throne of God will be shrouded in praise, *and the worshippers are identified*. Perhaps they take an [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) DNA test. However its done their ethnicity is documented. Those before the throne come from "*every tribe and tongue and people and nation...*"

Among the worshippers of God all races, and all nations, and all ethnicities are represented. In heaven, in the eternal state, people put their differences aside, and worship as one redeemed people before the living God.

Why is it we don't worship the same way on earth?

But we don't. Dr. Martin Luther King once said, "It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning." *Why is it that racial groups are reluctant to worship together?*

Michael Emerson, a Rice University sociologist, defines a multiracial church as **a church where no one racial group is more than 80% of that congregation.**

Base on that measurement, Emerson says only 8% of Christian churches in the United States are racially mixed to a significant degree. Compare that statistic to the multi-ethnic throng worshipping in heaven, and the Church on earth should be utterly embarrassed...

It seems human beings in general, like to worship with people who look, talk, and think like them. I'm not saying this is an evil tendency. It might just be convenience...

It's easier to worship with people you assume you know and understand. Sharing a similar background breeds trust going forward. It's harder to develop a camaraderie with people of a different color or culture.

Unless they're nudged by God to do so, I doubt if most people want to put out the effort to bridge the gap...

You have to stretch to understand someone raised differently than you. It takes an open mind to educate yourself. You have to grow if you want to get along with folks who have a different frame of reference, and life experience. It's easier to hang out with your own peeps.

But this year I want to challenge Calvary CSM to **Go wide.** I believe this is what God is doing in our church.

He's going against the grain. He's doing something special you rarely see. God is putting together the same consortium on earth that you find at the throne of God in heaven. And if you want to be a part of this family you need to join the effort. You need to get with the program.

Recently, after the Ladies Christmas Event my wife sent me a photograph. It was taken at the coffeehouse.

Kathy was so proud of this photo. She told me, "This is our church now. This is what God has called us to be."

And here's the photo, *from left to right*: lovely **Edith** from the Philippines... **Julie** who lives in the subdivision across the street, a former pastor's wife from Nigeria...

Gianna from Venezuela, who could be a pastry chef, *I might add*... **Lauren** who was raised Jewish, and is now half of a successful interracial marriage... **Michelle**, a faithful single mom... **Carolyn**, a former Methodist and one of the biggest-hearted people I know... Then there's **Donna** who's a kind of artsy, creative hippie... and then my friend, **Angelica**, a sweet grandma from Chile...

And four more women of color... Edith brought a friend, and Michele brought her sister, and there's another Michele on the far end who's been coming to Calvary Chapel for years... This group of ladies is as diverse as it gets, yet they've become *real* friends. In fact, they're more than friends, they're sisters in Christ.

This photo is a microcosm of Calvary, and I'm proud to be a part. I want to do all I can to foster this health.

You're aware that our country is seriously fragmented along racial lines. Even after two terms of an African-American President, race relations in the United States are worse today than they've been in the last fifty years.

Yet racial togetherness can happen. It is possible.

If you and I are committed to it - if we all see it as part of our calling... God has positioned Calvary CSM to model to a fractured world the unity of His Spirit.

Our church can be evidence of the love of Jesus...

But along with His love it also takes effort ...

In 2016 the racial harmony of Calvary CSM was threatened by a contentious election. At the time, I made a comment that offended an African lady in our church.

It wasn't malicious on my part, but her life experiences and mine caused us to see a thing differently. *It happens.* Yet rather than nurture her hurt, she took the time and made the effort to talk to me. We worked it out.

It would've been easy for her to walk away and go to a racially exclusive church. But she was an example of the commitment it takes to produce true racial harmony.

If you're black let me ask you, *do you only hang out with black friends?* If you're white, *do you only buddy up with white friends?* When was the last time you called a friend of another race? Or invited that friend to hang out?

Several months ago I was invited to dinner by a Nigerian family in our church. I wasn't familiar with all the food on the table, and I'm sure I made some cultural snafus that evening, but they showed me hospitality.

It would be easier for them to attend another church, with a Nigerian pastor, but God called them here.

I'm just saying, we've been commissioned by Jesus to **Go**, but Jesus has called us to **Go wide**... and include all nations in our discipleship, and therefore our church.

Let's **Go long**, **Go wide**, but also Jesus has called us to **Go deep**... He told His followers *"to make disciples."*

Notice, He wasn't after just *decisions* but **disciples**. And there's a difference. There's a really big difference...

Years ago, Time Magazine reported on a Billy Graham Crusade. A year after the crusade they returned and surveyed those who had responded to the invitation.

Sadly, only 15% of those who had made a decision to receive Christ were still living as an active disciple.

Understand, I'm not knocking Billy Graham. I think he was the greatest thing since sliced bread - and let's be thankful for the 15% that stuck - *but the statistic points out it's a lot easier to get decisions than make disciples.*

A clear presentation and a needy heart can combine to produce a decision, but to make a disciple it requires time, understanding and application of the Scriptures, trials, perseverance, brokenness - and did I say *"time."*

Jesus told His men to go and baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - then teach them to observe or do all that He commanded. The goal was not just *a verbal profession of faith*, but believers **acted on their faith and were**

baptized; then added to their faith and were taught to live the way Jesus lived.

This is a disciple... he **acts on** what he believes, and **adds to** what he believes... *he grows... she matures...*

Are you **acting on** and **adding to** your faith?

I know there are churches in our area that are more up-lifting. Church is more like a pep rally, or a day spa.

The pastor gears his sermon to the lowest common spiritual denominator. He scratches where people itch, and uses the Bible to meet their felt needs. Each week he shows you how biblical truths help you. *And they do.*

The Gospel meets us where we're at - it gives hope.

But **if the pastor never takes me beyond what God can do for me; he's done nothing more than sanctify my selfishness.** We're made for God - not vice versa - and we find our highest pleasure when we bow to His will.

This is why the Bible not only encourages and comforts - it challenges us, convicts us, exposes our sin, and cuts us to the heart. The Scripture slays selfishness.

Its intention is certainly not to aid and abet it.

When we go through the Scripture, the Scripture goes through us. It's not the easiest exercise to endure. When you study the Bible you're challenged, not just consoled.

A real Bible study is more like a chiropractic adjustment than it is a back scratch. We like shoulder rubs, but what we often need is a radical realignment.

As a pastor, my goal is not to teach you what I want you to know from the Bible - or what I think will please you and bring you back next week - it's to teach you the Bible itself. I want to let the Bible speak *without my spin*.

This is how we make disciples. We immerse our thinking in God's Word until it conforms our mind to His will. Rather than skip along the surface, we **Go deep** and grasp what the Bible means and says about life!

It was AW Tozer who once said, "**Sermonettes make Christianettes.**" He was saying, light-weight sermons produce wimpy and light-weight Christians. And I agree.

At the end of the day every pastor should remember that his congregation will not only be counted, but weighed. So what if a lot of people come to church and leave unchanged. I promise you if you come to Calvary CSM I won't waste your time. We want to **Go deep**.

In fact, this Wednesday night we'll start what most folks consider the meatiest book in the Bible, Romans.

Every Bible doctrine finds its *best defense and fullest explanation* in Paul's letter to the Romans. Come and you'll be stretched and transformed, as we **Go deep**.

And lastly, we want to **Go far**. In 2019 we want to **Go long**, and **Go wide**, and **Go deep**, but also **Go far...**

There's a big world out there that needs Jesus, and we want to reach beyond the four walls of our church.

Jesus said He will be with us "*until the end of the age.*" But that wasn't so we could sit still, and take up space, and get

nothing done. He's with us *"until the end of the age"* so we'll have time to reach the *"ends of the earth."*

At Calvary CSM our vision goes beyond our church. We want to have an impact wherever God directs us.

In 2012, before he went to heaven, my pastor, Chuck Smith, asked me to help oversee the Calvary Chapels. He appointed me to the CC Leadership Council.

And over the last several years I've tried to be faithful to that calling. My focus and concern has expanded, and my travel schedule has followed suit. In 2018 I taught 76 Bible Studies outside of our own church. In addition to crisscrossing the United States, I spoke at Calvary Chapel conferences in Japan, New Zealand, and Haiti.

And I hope you noticed I made it back for most Sundays. My first concern is always Calvary CSM, but other responsibilities have been added to my plate. *And to yours as well.* Each year we host several conferences that encourage the Calvary Chapels here in the South.

Jesus told His followers in verse 19 to make disciples of *"all the nations."* That *"all"* implies **no limitations**.

Believers in Jesus should be open to wherever He sends them, even if it's far-away... like *Newnan GA*.

Recently, my wife taught me a huge lesson. Pastor Joel from the Calvary in Newnan called, and asked me if I knew of a good man he could hire to do youth ministry and lead worship. I said I'd pray about it, even though I had just had a conversation with

JP Garrison about his availability. JP was open to helping another Calvary.

A few days later I told Kathy about my chat with Joel. I laughed and confessed, “Well, there’s no way I’m letting JP know about this. He might just do it, and that means Stephanie would go with him.” I would kinda miss JP, but I sure didn’t want to see Steph go anywhere else.

I’ll never forget the gentle words God spoke through my wife. Kathy said, “Well, when did you become God?”

Wow, I was busted. She was right. God has called us all to “Go.” We should hold on to each other with a loose grip. None of us are home until we get to heaven.

Today is JP and Stephanie’s last Sunday at Calvary CSM. (*Of course, I expect Steph to visit often.*) Pray that God will use them both mightily in the Calvary Chapel at Newnan. But also pray for the next person at our church to hear the Lord say “go,” then step up to fill their spots.

Surely, the call to “go” doesn’t mean everybody ought to leave the church, but it does mean we all should have a “go posture”... Last summer teams from our church were willing to “go” and help at three youth camps... In October volunteers were willing to “go” to the Carolinas and do hurricane relief... Next week, Pastor James and Alan will “go” to Liberia... In April, I’m scheduled to “go” to the Philippines... In 2019 God wants us to **Go far.**

And if you can’t go; then **give** so another can go.

We have a choice to make. We can be a *sitting church* or a *going church*... I've read the Great Commission a number of times now, and nowhere does it say "sit."

In fact, the Bible uses the word "Go" 1,542 times, but it contains only 69 usages of the word "stay." The Bible is all about "go." **Go long, Go wide, Go Deep, Go Far.**

Calvary CSM may not be a *big church*, or a *rich church*, or a *hip church*, but we can be **a going church.**

We can continue to make a difference in our community, in the Southeast, and around the world.

And sometimes to **Go far** involves going just around the corner. To go out of your way for a neighbor in need, *a person who's lonely, or lost, or loveless* - your compassion is like help from heaven. It goes *a long way!*

Here's a short poem, "**Go takes you places. Go to see. Go to hear. Go to feel. Go to touch. Go to learn. Go to know. Go to serve. Here nothing much happens. So Go.**"

Ecclesiastes 3 reads, "There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing..."

He has made everything beautiful in its time." I'm sure the author could've also added, "*a time to wait and a time to go.*" I believe our time to go is now! 2019 is the year to **Go long, Go wide, Go deep, and Go far.**

I want to be honest - *and I know I'm now preaching to the choir, the folks that are present today are probably not the ones who need to hear what I want to say* - but at times I get

frustrated. I wonder if folks care about their church. *How can they truly care and be so nonchalant?*

The Little League team, or the PTA, gets more of their allegiance than God's representative, His church...

Metaphorically, if this church building were an airplane, and we could *go - and lift off*. If we could sprout wings, and really fly. And I said we were taking off right now...

Would you be ready to go, or want to stay put?

Let me close in an odd way. I'm going to leave you with a Delta Airlines commercial. It's called, "Runways."

Here it is, "The old saying, "Good things come to those who wait," is just that, "old." Those good things - you have to get out there and chase them. We see it in the millions of people we fly around the world. All of them, living proof, that good things come to those who **go!**"

Hear again the Delta punchline, "good things come to those who **go.**" That's what I've been trying to say this morning. Good things come to those who **Go long**, and **Go wide**, and **Go deep**, and **Go far**. *But you've got to go!*

2019 is the year for you and I to rise up and go...

Go long and support what we're doing at Calvary CSM with your attendance, and finances, and prayers...

Go wide this year. Target someone you wouldn't naturally gravitate toward - *a person different from you* - and turn them into a brother or sister in Christ...

Go deep into the study and application of God's Word. Really make an effort to grow spiritually this year...

And **Go far**, step out in a way that God can use you. Don't sit back in 2019, make this year your time to go...

Go long, Go wide, Go deep, and Go far. For let's remember, **“good things come to those who go...”**