

Going: Week 2  
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Sunday, April 14, 2018

We are taking some intensive time to talk about how this word, "going" describes who we are as a church. We are specifically thinking about the life of our church from now until 2020 and the kinds of things that we are really giving attention to. It doesn't mean that we're stopping other things or that other things aren't important, but there are some things that we need to do.

We need to strengthen. We are doing something that will stretch even beyond 2020 and really for a lot of us beyond even our lifetimes. What we're talking about during these days is work that I believe that God is calling us to that will have an impact until Jesus comes back or for decades and decades to come. This idea of going is not new. We didn't just come up with this word. We didn't just come up with this idea. It's not new. Three weeks ago, we started talking about how the resurrection of Jesus Christ changes everything. When we think about going, you can go back to 2,000 years ago when Jesus Christ died and rose again. This risen Savior looked at a group of guys, and He told them to do something. He gave them a commandment. We call it the Great Commission.

Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples," and the disciples started going in the power of prayer and the filling of the Holy Spirit. They began to go. As you read through the 28 chapters of the book of Acts, you see the power of God. You see the prayers of the people, you see the proclamation of the Word, and the kingdom is advancing. People are giving their lives to Christ, and eternity is being changed as they go in obedience to Jesus Christ.

Fast-forward to 1880. In 1880, Watkinsville Baptist Church started going. At the very first meeting of Watkinsville Baptist Church on November 27, 1880, a group met in a room of the Methodist Church downtown, and they started going with just 10 people. The history books say there were "seven sisters and three brethren." That's how history writes about those ten who met together for that very first meeting. In 1908, the church was going again. They built their first permanent worship space in downtown Watkinsville, and then in 1970, the church was going again. In 1970, our church moved from downtown Watkinsville to this piece of property here on Simonton Bridge Road. I just learned this yesterday - someone that was a part of that move and understood some of the details of what was going on there said to me, "Carlos, one of the reasons that we wanted to move from downtown Watkinsville out here to this piece of property is because we were landlocked. We didn't

have room to grow there on that piece of property where we were. We felt like the only way that we could keep doing missions, the only way we could keep reaching the world, and the only way we could reach our community was to move from there to this piece of property." That's amazing!

Here we are talking again in 2018 about maximizing this property and about going to the world. It goes all the way back to conversations of 1970 and the late 60s. In 2008, our church was going again. We set our eyes on future generations. We talked about the people that were not here yet. At that time, we could stuff a lot of people into small amounts of space. We proved that. Every room on the property was being used, in many cases multiple times over and for multiple purposes. We adopted a master plan of our property's use. We believed then, and we've said it hundreds of times since then - we believe that we are to maximize this space of property and we are to plant churches.

We aren't looking to buy more land. We're not looking to relocate. We believe God's given us this territory. If you go this way, to my right you have the neighborhood. Out here in front of me you have the railroad track. Behind me you have the highway. To my left you have a highway. There are about 20 acres here. We've said, "How does God want to use this piece of property to be home base so we can send people to reach the world? So that we can send people to plant churches?" We're at a time of trying to complete the picture of maximizing this property.

Since 2008 - for 10 years - what's happened? We first built Watkidsville. This morning, there are about 300 children plus the workers over in Watkidsville. We've filled it up! I don't know if you're aware of that. All of our children no longer meet in Watkidsville, now some of our children's classes have moved over into what we call the café building. Tonight at 5 o'clock, do you know where I'll be? I'll be here with Scott Carson, Leah Sowell, Gayle Vice, and 16 families with new babies. They are dedicating themselves as parents and their children to the Lord in a brand-new parent baby dedication. That happens two to three times a year for us. We are continuing to see the fruit of making that decision to minister to children and families in our community.

Since then, there has not been a lot of building taking place. Our going has been related to going to our world, and our going has been related to going with our giving. We've lost count, but there are - without exaggeration - dozens of people who are now serving in other parts of the world. Watkinsville, Georgia, other states, and other continents - their vocation is in ministry service and leadership. Pastors, missionaries, teachers, businessmen, businesswomen, doctors, military service. Just a few days ago, we saw the Burgesses leave to go be the international director for Global Health Organization. We

know of Eric and Ellen as the international directors for Pioneers. I think about just a few days ago when Carla and I visited with a former college student who left here and went to medical school. Now she's a pediatrician, and she met her husband who was studying to be a surgeon. They've left to go to North Africa to take their medical training to work in a missionary hospital there with the rest of their life. Jennifer Brostand was her name when she was here before. It's a story you may not be that familiar with because we haven't talked about it a lot.

The North American Mission Board is our sending agency for mission work throughout the United States and Canada. They oversee the work of about 5,000 missionaries scattered across the U.S. and Canada. They handle millions and millions of dollars worth of disaster relief. They are the sending agency for thousands of chaplains that work with our military. The guy that signs every check, oversees every budget, is involved in every piece of financial strategy, the controller and the future CFO of the North American Mission Board is a graduate of UGA and has been sent from our church family. Matt Smith - I sat down with him this week. Just a few years ago, Matt and a couple of other guys, one of those being Reed Carr, would come on Thursday mornings and meet with me for what I called "Preachers Class." Matt would come on Thursday mornings at 6:30, and I would just think to myself, "Man, I don't think he's going to be a preacher!"

So I said, "Matt, why are you here?"

And he said, "I'm just trying to figure out what I want to do."

"What's your major?"

He said, "Well, I'm an accounting major."

He graduated and said, "Carlos, I still feel like God's got a place for me in ministry, and I'm trying to figure out what that is."

I said, "I'm praying for you, and I hope it works out."

He took a job at a big firm in Atlanta and called one day after several months and said, "Carlos, I'm still searching. I know there's something else God wants to do with my life. I want to be involved in ministry somehow, but I know I'm an accountant."

I said, "Matt go on the webpages of Lifeway and the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board. They post job opportunities all the time." The next thing

I heard, Matt was working for the North American Mission Board as an accountant. Then I talked to him again, and he said, "I'm the controller at the North American Mission Board." I sat down with him on Thursday morning of this week in his office in Atlanta and he said, "They are telling me that they are preparing me to be the CFO here at North American Mission Board." That's crazy! It's a picture of how people are going from our church family with their lives.

People are also going with their giving. So many of you have contributed to what we are able to do so that we can go to the world with our giving. We give each year to the Acts 1:8 offering that goes to the IMB, the North American Mission Board, and special projects that we're a part of. In just the last three years in our Acts 1:8 offering, we have given right at \$575,000. That's crazy! That's amazing! To God be the glory! Over the last 10 years running - this is a conservative estimate - if you look at what we've given away to ministries and missions outside our walls, it is in excess of \$2 million. There is a lot of going with our giving, but there's a lot of going also with our lives and with local ministries. Untold numbers of people have made professions of faith through your witness in the workplace, your witness with people that you live around, and your witness as you go on mission trips. From what I can tell, right at 500 people have been baptized over the last 10 years just here locally right here in our church, making public their faith in Jesus Christ.

In 2020, our church family will mark 140 years of going. 140 years of going! In between now and 2020, I'm trying to show you a map, if you will, of where I believe that going will lead us to. Before we even take a look at the details of that, just remember why. Why do we gather? Why do we go? We're going because the risen King Jesus has commanded His disciples to go, and we dare not be the generation that decides there are more important things to do than see to it that all the lost here and the next generation know the hope that we've been given. That's why we go! And the torch was passed from the disciples to someone else to someone else or someone else, and in 1880 it was passed to another generation and another generation. And now, it's us! We are gathered in the sanctuary and gathered here in the life building right now. Serving in the children's building, upstairs with college students, over in the basement in the youth room right now with teenagers - it's us! It's our torch to take to the next generation.

I want you to open your Bibles to Acts chapter 4. I've had such an amazing time over the last couple of weeks reading slowly again through the book of Acts. In the book of Acts, you see the disciples. They've gone from being cowards around the cross to now being courageous proclaimers of a risen Savior. They pray, they are filled with the Holy Spirit, they go, they tell, they love, and then they go again. In Acts 4, Simon Peter and the other

disciples have spoken to lame beggar who is at least 40 years old, and he's healed. He speaks to him, and he gets up and he walks. In chapter four, we see what happens next.

Verse one: "And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them-" Now, don't miss the image of that. They had just healed a guy who had been paralyzed for at least 40 years. They are rejoicing and then they look up and see that crew coming at them. Here come the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees. I wonder if Simon Peter looked at his buddies and said, "Oh no" or "Here they come."

Verse two says that they were "greatly annoyed." This guy has just been healed, and they are "greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand."

It started with 120 in an upper room praying after Jesus ascended to heaven. Chapter 2 tells us of the scene where the numbers grew to 3,000. And now chapter 4 tells us the number believers grows the 5,000.

Look at verse five:

On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Why are we going? Because there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved! Let that sink in! Let that create a burden in your heart! Let that register in your soul! Salvation is needed. God has created us, and we're not like Him. He's holy and we're not. He has never sinned, and we're

sinful from birth. That sin separates us from a holy God, but He loves us. He loves you, and He wants a relationship with you. There's not a single thing I can do to reconcile myself to God. I cannot pay for my sins. I cannot do enough to make myself right with God. We're all going to die. What happens then? God has made a way for us to have salvation. God has made a way for us to be saved! Every person's in the very same predicament. We all have the same sickness - sin. "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

Now, here's the question. What options do we have? How many people are there out there that can reconcile us to God? How many different religions are out there that can make us right with our Creator? How many different opportunities are there for us to find our way to heaven? How many roads lead to eternal life? How many? One! "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Simon Peter didn't make this up! He was quoting His Savior. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but through Me."

So why do we go? Why do we give? Why do we send? Why do we proclaim this good news? Because there is no other name by which we must be saved. In other words, there is no back door. There's no side gate. There's no different route. There's no detour. There's one way that we must be saved, and it is through Jesus. Now, I want to make sure we keep grabbing ahold of the "why" we are going. As I've been praying and talking and thinking and listening and reading the word, God's distilled down into my heart seven things that show us how we're going to go.

I'm calling you to do this together. This not "the preacher project." It's not the "pastor's problem," but is *our* action and *our* going. Together. There are seven pieces to this going challenge. This Going Challenge is to:

- build a culture prayer and evangelism
- love the Oconee region with ministries of compassion
- maximize our property by building and repurposing facilities
- revitalize dying churches
- plant churches, beginning with one in Boston
- engage one unengaged people group
- fund the vision

I'm asking you to join me in praying that we would be able to see this Going Challenge accomplished for the glory of God. The first one - "build a culture of prayer and evangelism-" there's a pieces of this culture that's been scattered across our history as a church since 1880. History tells us that in 1880 when the church met, in that first meeting,

they did four things. The first pastor wrote down the four decisions that they made in that very first meeting in November 1880. The very first thing they did was vote on a resolution of thanksgiving. I think about what Jason said just a moment ago about being grateful. When he was saying that earlier in the 9 o'clock service, I thought, "How awesome is that?" He's challenging us to be grateful, and the very first thing listed that our church did in 1880 when they first met was to vote on a show of thanksgiving to the Methodist Church for allowing them to meet in their building.

The second thing that they did in that meeting number two was establish the weekly prayer gathering that would meet in private homes. Since 1880, this church has been praying. I'm calling you today to help one another and to help us build a culture of prayer and build a culture of evangelism. When people ask you to tell them about your church, let it be one of the first things you say, that it's a people of prayer and evangelism.

I think back to the 1990s. In the late 90s, the church was going through some struggles. There was a group of ladies that began to meet in prayer on Tuesday mornings. They are still meeting on Tuesday mornings praying for the future of our church and praying for the needs of others. I'm convinced - we will find out in heaven, but I believe that so much of the fruit that we've experienced this past 17 years flows right out of the prayers of those ladies on Tuesday mornings.

In that meeting, somebody presented them with a Bible. In years past, churches had what was called the "pulpit Bible." It was a Bible that was on display that belonged to the church. Many times, it would lay on the Lord's supper table. In 1880, it was presented to Watkinsville Baptist Church. Another thing they did in that very first meeting was they chose a pastor. There were only 10 of them there! I thought it was interesting and wondered how they did that with only ten people in the room. One of the men was elected pastor.

The second piece of this is to love the Oconee region with ministries of compassion. Our community needs to know we love them, and we need to love them because God has first loved us. It's a part of the new commandment that Christ gave. We talk about the Great Commandment, which is the love the Lord your God with all your heart. The Great Commission is to go make disciples. Sandwiched between the Great Commandment and the Great Commission is the new command. Jesus said in John chapter 13, "A new commandment I give you to love one another."

To love our region, we want to identify what the needs are through prayer and conversation. We want to identify the gifts and passions of our church family. We want to

identify what current ministries are going on and help with those. And we also want to initiate new ministries where we see people hurting and struggling and need somebody to come alongside them to help them live and know Christ.

The third piece of this is maximizing our property for ministry by adding space and repurposing current space. It's time for us to complete the picture on our property. We're not out shopping for more land. We're not looking to relocate. In my lifetime as your pastor, this is our 20 acres right here, and I believe God wants us to do everything that we can on this piece of property in order to reach as many people as we can in order that we may send as many people as we can into this community and world. We've got some gaps. We've got some needs. We've got some things that we really do not need to hand off to the next generation. I'm part of this, too. We do "temporary" longer than anybody else I know. It was never our long-term final answer for the fourth and fifth-graders to be doing children's ministry in the café building. That's what we built Watkidsville for, but we outgrew it. So "temporarily" we moved into the café building.

It was never our long-term answer for us to be in three worship services in multiple rooms on a Sunday. If anybody said to me seven or eight years ago, "Pastor, we need you to preach three times every single Sunday morning for the rest of your life," I probably would've paused just a little longer. I would love to see us get into a schedule with two 70 minute services. It would add a few minutes to our time of worship for us to be able to do more. It would add a little space, add a little breathing room, add a little room there for spontaneity, and that's why I'd love for us to be in two services. That's what we're looking at in this new worship space.

We want to give the Life building to the teenagers of our community. We want take this room and equip it and prepare it so that it can be teenager space. It will be for them to be able to gather in, hang out in, listen to the Lord's word, pray together, play together, and eat together. It will be a spot where they know that it was built for them, designed for them, and purposed for them.

Let's complete the picture. I can see a day where I'm not standing in front of you saying, "Hey, we need a few million dollars to build more buildings." I'm coming to saying that I believe this is it in my journey. I believe it's it in our generation. We need to complete this picture and plant churches.

The fourth is to revitalize churches. Listen to this: in the Southern Baptist Convention, there are about 45,000 churches. On average, 900 of those churches close their door every year. Every year, 900 of those churches close their doors. We are planting

about 1,000 churches a year, so the net gain is about 100 new churches each year. But hear this: 70% of those 900 churches that close their doors are in communities that are growing with people still left to be reached. They have facilities in those communities that are growing, they just need new life and fresh leadership. I'm calling us to be prepared to come alongside some of these churches that are the point of closing their doors to try to help them see new life and experience a resurrection so they can reach their community in those places that God has given them to be.

In 2010, I shared with you that I believe God would use our church to partner in the planting of 20 churches by 2020. It is 2018. What's the scorecard? As best as I can tell, we have played a significant part in helping through sending people, sending mission teams, and sending money in the planting of 17 churches at this point. We're getting close. That's three local: Living Hope, Calvary Bible, and North Avenue. One in Washington state, one in New York, one in Vermont, three in Boston, one in Rome, Italy, and seven in Uganda. Our next step is to help in a very significant way with Jonathan Mosley by planting Kings Hill Church in Mission Hill the Boston area. God is using us to send people and to plant churches.

Number six is to engage an unengaged people group. There are over 3,100 unreached people groups in the world. These are people that have no gospel witness. There is no church planting movement going on among them. I'm saying to you, let's be the church that takes one of those off the board. There are really no easy groups left, or else they would already be taken. The reason there are 3,100 is because they're so hard to get to. There is difficulty in language. Many of these don't have a Bible in their own language. Part of us reaching an unreached people group may be us working with Wycliffe and other Bible translators to get them a piece of the Gospel of John or get them a little bit of the Bible in their language. Let's take one off the board.

The last piece of this is to fund the mission. We will fund some of this mission through our general budget. We will fund some of this mission through continuing to give to our Acts 1:8 offering each year. But we're also building toward a May 6th ask and commitment for our church to commit to give sacrificially on May 6th to what we believe God would have us to give over the next two years to fund this Going Challenge. It costs. But as I quoted before from Andy Mineo, "If we're not driven by the mission, we will be driven by the cost." The mission is so great that it's worth us asking God, "Show me what I have to give and let me be a part of advancing the kingdom."

I want to close with this, and I may need to go a minute over. When you look at the book of Acts, Jesus said, "You'll be my witnesses Jerusalem, Judea, and in the ends of the earth." And then he said, "Go back to Jerusalem and wait." You may say, "Pastor, I thought

you said to go!" But Jesus said to go back to Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. Then they started going. The Holy Spirit has already come, and we're in a position to go. Do you know what they did while they waited? They prayed. Do you know what they did after the Holy Spirit came? They prayed. The book of Acts uses some form of the word "prayer" 29 times.

I think of the words of John Bunyan. He said, "You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed." So I'm calling you today to let the Going Challenge start by praying and by having this culture of prayer. There are three ways I want to ask you to join me in praying like the New Testament church. Number one: would you consider setting your watch, your smartphone, or whatever device that you get reminders from - would you consider setting it to the time of 4:12? You can pick a.m. or p.m. When that reminder comes on, you can think about Acts 4:12: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." For the next 21 days at 4:12 a.m. or p.m., would you pray, "God help that grip my heart and help our church go share the gospel and complete the Going Challenge?"

Number two: would you join me in 21 days of prayer and fasting starting tomorrow? From tomorrow to May 6 is 21 days. Would you make a commitment in your heart today to pray for the next 21 days for this Going Challenge? Would you commit to fast over those 21 days? It may be food, it may be some activity, or part of it may be something that you look forward to. But would you say no to that for the next 21 days? Because when you desire that, you'll be prompted to pray and seek God for success of this Going Challenge.

The third thing is to join me here in the life building on April 25 for Round Two. Round Two is a gathering of our whole church family for prayer and worship and scripture from 6:30 to 7:30. Let that event be what determines when you do other things. Let's fill this place up and run out of room. When I look in the book of Acts, their prayer was passionate, desperate, and corporate. I'm calling you to join with me in prayer every day at 4:12 for the next 21 days and for Round Two in passionate, desperate, corporate prayer. Would you do that? Let's go together.

Father, we bow before You. You've called us to go, and I pray the testimony for every one of us together would be that we are a going church. Would You help us? Would You do things in these weeks and months that totally would have to be laid at Your feet for You to receive all the glory? Thank You for using us. Thank You for loving us. In the name of Jesus we pray, amen.