

Intro: Baseball. It is August and people actually care about baseball. I've never been much of a baseball guy. There could be plenty of reasons. I have countless traumas associated with my brief baseball career. When I was in fifth grade, I was larger than most kids and I had some muscle, so naturally the coach thought maybe I could pitch. And I could throw the ball fast. There was only problem, I had no control. I could put some speed on it, but there was no telling where it would end up. One of the teams had a girl on their team, of course I was pitching, of course I was out of control. And I beaned her. The girl. In the head. This was traumatizing for her. And of course it was traumatizing for me. In another traumatizing incident that I do not care to revisit, I as children occasionally do, had an accident while playing right field- because I didn't want to abandon my post and I thought my pants were dark enough and no one would notice. Baseball traumatized me growing up.

When I look back at it, I think there is one thing that really turned me off to baseball. When I was younger we had coach pitch. Your coach on your team through you a nice slow ball right over the middle. Because I was a larger child, I could crank it just about every time. Life was simple, coach would send it right over the plate, all I had to do was swing every time. But 4<sup>th</sup> grade, we moved to kid pitch. I guess I am lacking in the hand eye coordination category, but this was a disaster for me. I was no longer sure when to swing. I no longer knew what was a sure thing. There were several differing elements of speed and direction, timing. And I struck out all the time. Things became complicated, I was no longer confident of a sure thing. I no longer was certain of when to swing.

Our migration and growth in the Christian life is not dissimilar to this. Early on- we have a sure thing. Just follow Jesus, pray, and swing at everything he gives you. But then life begins to be complicated, our faith is crowded by the worries of this life, the pull of sin, the tension that resides in every corner of the scripture- sometimes he says go sometimes he says stop, and we are no longer sure when to swing. Sometimes he says fight for it, other times he says to stand down. Sometimes he says move on, sometimes he says stay put. We don't know what is a sure thing. This is true for many people as I hear them pray about taking a job or marrying this person, or if they should move houses. But take it one step further up to the idea of sharing your faith. When do you swing? When is it a sure thing? We have become very sensitive to the idea that evangelism is not like door to door salesmanship or telemarketing. You cannot argue someone into the Kingdom. But because of our sensitivity we have made evangelism much more complicated. When is the right time to share, to love, to bless? I want to build up a relationship first and then 32 years from now I will share my faith. I will just let them watch my lifestyle for 38 years, and then if they ask me then I will tell them. We have made sharing our faith a complicated situation, and to a certain extent, it is with good reason. When do we swing? When is it a sure thing?

The theological conundrum at play here is the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Divine sovereignty is the simple idea that we serve an all knowing, all powerful God, and he is in control of every beat and every movement. He is sovereign, nothing takes him by surprise. Human responsibility on the other end of this question is asking, so what do we do. If we serve a God who is in control of it all, then how do we respond? What is God's job in the process of salvation and what is my job? You have probably heard it said before, God will accomplish his plans no matter what. When you hear that you might be prone to think, why does it even matter? But then of course you read the great commission and hear God's grand imperative for us- Go and make disciples. There seems to be no wiggle room, it is

a command. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility. What is our job and what is God's job in the process of salvation.

Colossians 4:2-6

This is especially pertinent to us today, because our church is taking a big step forward in taking the Gospel to our community. We are starting a new campus of Fellowship Dallas on September 12<sup>th</sup> in the White Rock area of Dallas. This is the last week of our Colossians series, and when you think about it, the purpose of Paul's letter is refining and shaping God's church. So what better way to end our series on Colossians than to receive God's refinement and shaping of our church as we begin this new chapter. And so I want to briefly address this idea in Colossians of divine sovereignty and human responsibility and then I want to share what God has done and hopefully share our dreams for what he will do in the coming weeks, months and years through this new campus. What is God's job and what is ours? Where do we land in the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility? In all of this, I hope you will get a picture of what this new campus will look like.

- In the plan of salvation, God opens the doors
- 4:2-3 All of salvation is predicated upon God's work. He opens the door and closes the door and allows us to take part in the in-between. God opens doors so that the Gospel may be proclaimed.
- This is difficult for us to accept and to rely upon. All of American life is built upon a can-do attitude. We can fix anything, we can change anything, we build anything. We are after all the duct tape nation. There is no problem that does not have a solution. This is true in almost every situation except in matters of salvation. God alone draws people. God alone changes hearts. And this is difficult to handle sometimes.
- Illus- Have you ever locked your keys in the car? It is nauseating. Probably even more so because you can see the keys sitting in your console or hanging from the ignition. You can see that a change has to take place, but there is really nothing you can do short of a couple of options. In our age of powerlocks and onboard security systems, the only real thing you can do is call for help. Whether it is onstar or a locksmith the only way in is to call out for help. Well there is another way. For the more stubborn or impatient among us you can break into your own car. You can shatter your window and break in, but the euphoria of success is immediately tempered by the recognition of the damage you have done.
- How much more so in the Christian life. There are people all over this globe, and they are locked from the inside. Sometimes our north American attitude, our impatience or self-sufficiency leads us to break in. This never works. You cannot force people into the kingdom, you cannot scare them into the kingdom, you cannot argue or push them into the Kingdom. God alone draws hearts. God alone opens the door.
- Jesus called us to be fishers of men and women, but there are churches all over America who are fishing by dropping dynamite in the pond. You might get a few fish, but you have ruined the pond. God doesn't want us fishing with dynamite. We can't bulldoze, scare or fight people in the Kingdom- we end up blowing up relationships and blowing up future opportunities.
- You can break in and cajole, fight and squabble with someone about Christianity. More times than not, you will look around and realize the damage you have done more than anything else. God alone opens doors.

- In the plan of salvation, we walk through open doors
- What is our job in the plan of salvation. First and foremost, this passage begins with prayer. Devote yourself and ask for open doors. Before we can walk through and engage in the doors he has opened we must pray for things to be opened up. Why does God work this way? If God is slow to anger and wants all to come to repentance, why must we ask for open doors to walk through. Why can't everything be a sure thing? Why can't we swing at every pitch? Why do we have to beg and cajole God to soften people's hearts?
- Two reasons: 1) The plan of salvation is not systematic or normative. It is not a 3 or 4 step plan to be worked. Because we are dealing with a dynamic God and a dynamic faith, nothing in the Christian life is paint by numbers. If it was a simple system to be worked not only would it become static, but it would be boring, cumbersome and thoroughly ungodlike. ( this person is a step 3 right now, can I get someone to lead them to step 4. Anyone? This conveyor belt method of sharing the Gospel does not exist. 2) God is interested in His own glory. If everything was a sure thing, if we could swing at every pitch, then we might begin to think, "look what I did." "Look how many people I convinced/led/persuaded into the Kingdom." The plan of spreading the Gospel is not systematic, it is not static. And God does this, so that we are thoroughly and regularly reminded of His mercy, his preeminence, his power. So that is why we ask. When the door is locked- when your neighbor is antagonistic through to your faith don't try to break down the door. Trust in the God who opens doors. Ask, seek and knock for a door to be opened.
- Pray that God will open doors, and when he does have the wisdom to walk through. You don't have to wait 32 years. Walk through. Every time you can walk through. So why are less and less people coming to the accept God's Gospel. I think in large part it has to do with how we are walking through the door. God is opening doors all over the city, all over your life- but we forget these words-
- 4:5-6 Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders and seize the opportunities you are given. Be wise, gracious and salty. Think strategically, always full of grace, and salty- let your words make them thirsty for the water of life. Too often our words are filled with antagonism. Anger. Malice. We forget that the bible says our battle is not against flesh and blood but the principalities, the spirits of evil. We have been forced into a moral dilemma where we have the right and the left, the pagan and the Christian. Us vs. them. These are the people drowning in the toxic stew of sin. They are going to act like sinners and not like Christians, but that does not make them our enemies. Satan is the enemy. If God is the author of abundance and life, Satan is the author of death and destruction.
- Illus- I heard a story this past week that was not meant to be comedic, but it came out that way. Ohio church is upset by the stripclub in town, and they want it closed. And so they fight every week with this strip club, and they began to protest. Picketing and yelling at the strippers as they go in, yelling and shaming the patrons as they go in. Well the strip club got sick of this, and so now the strippers go to the church on Sunday and picket the church. I just started to laugh when I imagine the shock of this congregation seeing strippers protesting in their parking lot.
- These people are trying to bash in the door. I realized not too long ago that the church has become the moral watchdog of our communities, and it is kind of ridiculous. We

protest, and push for legislation to make non-believers act like us. We are bashing in the door. It is difficult for Christians many times to act Christian even with the Holy Spirit in us, so why in the world would we think antagonizing, taunting and insulting people who don't know God might draw them to the God we serve. We are trying to bash in the door.

- Measure that story with another story I heard about a church that reached out to the women of a strip club. They didn't shame them for living like the pagans that they were, in fact I don't know if you know this, but most women who do this job for a living don't like what they do and can hardly look at themselves in the mirror and to have Christian shame them and insult them, for some reason doesn't draw them to God. But this Church reached out to these women, loved these women, and help them to find jobs, most of them single mothers so they could feed their babies and pay their bills.
- You can transpose this story on any situation where the church is engaging with sinners. While we are not condoning their behavior, we cannot make them the enemy. Walk through God's open door with grace, with wisdom, with saltiness. Another example might be the issue of abortion. While it is detestable to take the life of an unborn, the tactics of many Christians are far from gracious, salty and wise. From the zealots who place pipe bombs in clinics and shoot doctors to the more tame but equally offensive slandering, mocking, and general degradation of people on the other side. Instead our focus should be education, volunteering at pro-life clinics, and adoption agencies.
- We cannot expect pagans to act like we do. So we read here, when the door is open-walk through but do so in this manner: let your words be wise, graceful and salty. The people in this world who are drowning in sin are not our enemies, they are simply being attacked and chewed up by the enemy.
- What is our God's part in the plan of salvation? He is the great door opener. What is our part in the plan of salvation? We are to pray and walk through open doors with grace, with wisdom, with saltiness.

#### Campus Plant-

- We have been praying and working for some time and God has opened the door. The right people, the right time, the right support have fallen into place. It is time to swing. A school in Dallas has opened up their doors to us. They are allowing us to worship on their premises, they are allowing us to minister to them. A former pastor works on their staff and is working with us to help bless this school. The door is open. The time is right. The opportunity is now.
- 4:5- krainon- is not simply time. Specific season. Mark 1:15 when the time was right-Jesus was born. It is not random. I think of it as the idea of carpe diem. Sometimes, everything falls together. We must seize this opportunity.
- So how are we going to walk through this door and not bash it in? How are we going to walk through this door with grace, wisdom, and saltiness?
- A couple of things that I want you to hear that will give you a picture of this new campus and how it will work. 1) The mission has a church, the church does not have a mission. This means we will not simply preach and do music in a new part of town. We want to be like the Park Lane station of Fellowship- we want to be a people of blessing, a people on mission. We do not think singing a few songs and listening to a few

sermons will fulfill the great commission. How do we know this? Because the church has been doing this for the last 50 years, and they have gotten very good at it. Producing tightly scripted programs of 1:10 services with some of the best music, best lighting, best preaching you can imagine, and yet the numbers in the NA church continue to decline. The Sunday morning experience is not enough. It is essential- we are called to gather together, but it is not enough. It certainly is not the whole of the Christian life. And so we will start with a mission. Our mission is Hotchkiss elementary. We want to bless that place with wisdom, grace and saltiness. We want to leave them wanting more. And so school drive. Teacher's lounge. Mentoring. We are going to be a people of blessing in this school and we will also gather there to worship on Sundays. We will start with a mission and let the church arise from it.

- In fact we believe so much in this idea of serving and blessing that we are rolling out a new model for our worship calendar. 3:1
- What will this accomplish? At least 3 things- discipleship growth of our community. 2) Ethos/ credibility with the community at large. We give up our "church" hour to serve- it elevates its importance. 3) Wide front door to invite others to church.
- How will we determine success? If Fellowship White Rock closes in three years will anyone notice? Will anyone care? We want to be a people of blessing

Conclusion: Conrad- Student- what a great church. Teacher- what a great church- it makes me want to show up there. 3) Principal- this church walks the walk and talks the talk. This all makes me feel great. For years now, the word Church and Christian makes non-believers shudder. We are entering a new era at FBCD- as we seek to live as the people of God- a people of blessing. This is what church is supposed to be like. We are not to be the moral watchdogs, we are not to be obsessed and associated with a political party, we are not to be antagonistic people who bash in doors. We are to be gracious, wise, salty. When we are absent, people should not breathe a sigh of relief when we leave the room, they should gasp because we have left them wanting more.