

“Go B.A.S.E.”

Ephesians 1: 3-14

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing **in Christ**. 4 For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world **to be holy and blameless in His sight**. In love 5 He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—6 to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. 7 **In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace** 8 that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

11 In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised **Holy Spirit**, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of His glory.

It happened in the mid 90’s. A woman named Jan Davis inspected her parachute in preparation for a jump. Davis, a 60-year-old veteran parachutist, strapped it to her back and edged out closer to the jump-off spot. But she wasn’t diving from an airplane. She was atop Yosemite National Park’s spectacular El Capitan with a group of five other jumpers who were staging a protest against the park rules prohibiting such jumps. They were there to demonstrate that BASE-jumping was safe.

With her toes on the edge of the sheer cliff, she pushed off into space. She plummeted for more than 20 seconds as her chute failed to open and she hit a pile of rocks at the bottom of the mountain and was killed instantly. Her husband, a skydiving professional watched the whole fall and slumped onto the camera he was using to record the event. Needless to say, they did not persuade the park to change it’s rules.

BASE-jumping began to become a craze in the 90’s. The Gen-Xers began to skydive off cliffs, high wires, and buildings. Going BASE, the title of my sermon today, means jumping from B for Buildings, A for antennas, S for spans, meaning bridges and E for Earth which refers to jumping from cliffs and mountains. It sounds crazy, but it is fairly popular even though it is very dangerous, much more dangerous than skydiving. The one that gets me is Antennas. People climb all the way to the top of a radio tower to jump off with a parachute. People who are into Base-jumping believe that in life there is

too much Adagio or slow and not enough Allegro, meaning fast. All over the globe, people are strapping chutes on their backs and jumping off ground-bound objects that make up the acronym BASE.

Yes, I think some people are crazy. But our concerns for skydiving safety should not obscure the fact that the church itself, meaning you and me (a church is a family of believers, not a building) are called to go BASE in a daring exercise, going on mission for this century. Now I am NOT suggesting that Jesus followers should be jumping off cliffs, bridges, sky-scrapers, or TV-towers, but I am saying that as Christ-followers we should be **B – building** relationships with non-Christians, **A – be Antennas** to spread the Word through technology, **S- spanning** the gaps between people and their God and **E – exploring** the earth to reach new people with the gospel. The goal, as I see it, is gospel saturation! The goal is for the love of Jesus, caring relationships, prayer, and gospel proclamation to be happening in every network of relationships. I am not going to ask you to share about inviting people to church. I want people to start sharing during testimony-time, labeled “Fish Stories” in the bulletin, about inviting people to pray with you, to read the Bible with you, and opportunities to show the love of Jesus. [NOTE 2]

By starting with the example of Base-jumping I want to say to you that Christianity or better yet, **following Jesus** is more of an extreme sport than it is a pious pastime. We are not meant to remain earthbound as we serve the God who tells us in verse 3: that He has “blessed us in Christ with EVERY spiritual blessing in the **heavenly** places.” The only place that the term “heavenly places” is found in the Bible is here in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians! It refers to the unseen spiritual world—that world that exists behind and above the material world. The heavenly places are a BASE place, a place where God has chosen us and destined us, to be His children, a place where all things are gathered up in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth, a place where we embrace our redemption as God’s own people. The heavenly BASE place is where we see God’s eternal purpose clearly, and where we set our sights, as we participate in Christ’s redemptive work on earth. That’s one of the greatest things that we learn in this passage. God is involved in our lives. He has a purpose for our lives. To fulfill our God-given purpose, we need to read and hear God’s Word, and then we need to be obedient. We are called to praise and worship God, we are called to witness, and we are called to take a risky step out there and share the gospel so that others might know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

But like Base-jumping, it is a risky proposition. God loves you just the way you are, but He also loves you enough to not let you stay that way! The Holy Spirit directs, encourages, and calls us to get out of our comfort zone to be a positive witness and impact the world around us. Throwing money at problems just doesn’t do much these days. Keith Green, a piano playing songwriter and singer who was very big in the Christian music scene in the 80’s said on one of his albums and at many concerts, “Let’s not think about sending a check, how about me going this time? God can’t cash out of state checks in heaven.” Think about it. For something significant to take shape, we are

going to have to throw our lives into Christian action—like Base-jumpers throwing their bodies into the air and flying off a bridge. [NOTE 3]

{pick up backpack and step up onto the first rung of the ladder}

Like Jim Swearingen of Columbus, Ohio, his ministry called Urban Concern, is building a playground. NO big news there. But HOW they are doing it is deeply significant: Swearingen and a number of his partners in ministry—most from white, middle-class suburbs—have relocated to the inner city to create a recreation area, a children’s program and an adult home –church. “It’s different living here rather than visiting to do ministry,” says Swearingen. “Their needs become your needs. People start realizing that you are committed to helping turn the neighborhood around,” when you move in and live there yourself.

{Step up to the second rung} [NOTE 4] Some antennas are going up as well. Urban Concern is focusing on new technologies, installing computer labs in several nearby homes. After-school homework help is offered at the Harambee Christian Center, a former coin-operated laundry that has been converted into classrooms and every Monday night an Urban Concern Bible study draws up to 230 children. There is just no limit to the number of people who can be reached if we erect antennas and use new technologies to spread the Word of God’s redemptive work. We need to make the best use possible of social media. We need to use Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, Twitter, email and whatever comes around the corner in technology to communicate. We need to use these medias to communicate prayer requests, event details, and reach out to anyone using their computer, iPad, cell phone, or whatever device they might acquire. **{Step to**

third rung} [NOTE 5] Spans are also important challenges. Neighborhoods and communities are deeply divided by numerous barriers. Groups like Urban Concern are building bridges across barriers that have long separated parts of the Christ-Body, even in areas where African Americans have been skeptical of Whites, and Hispanics have been suspicious of Asians. “God wants us to build relationships across racial, social, and economic barriers,” claims Swearingen, a man who’s not afraid of being a counter-cultural Christian. Jesus was extremely counter-cultural and radical. We are called to be Jesus followers! The word disciple means learner. If you call yourself a Christian, you should desire to follow Jesus. Love the way Jesus loved. Forgive the way Jesus did. Care for and serve people like Jesus did. Steward creation like Jesus did. We are called to reach across racial and economic spans to help kids to come to know Jesus and become disciples, along with a good number of their parents. **{Step up to the fourth rung} [NOTE 6]**

This brings us to Earth, the last of the four areas for BASE Christianity. Our task is to explore the earth and reach new people through sharing the gospel, a mission that probably scares the average Christian about as much as a swan dive off El Capitan. But it doesn’t have to be that way. 1 John chapter 4 we read that “God is Love” and “There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out all fear.” So don’t let the prospect of sharing the gospel produce fear in you. It doesn’t have to be complicated! It doesn’t

have to be rocket science. It doesn't have to be intimidating. Sharing the gospel needs to become part of who we are and natural. There are simple and repeatable ways to share the gospel. But being a Jesus follower is not about getting someone to pray the prayer and get saved. It is all about developing relationships and engaging the Bible daily. It is about starting with Prayer and listening to people and discovering their needs. Then it is growing the relationship by sharing meals together. Then taking what you discover about their needs and serving them in some way. Then simply share your story and the story of Jesus. It is so simple and we make it complicated. But it can be as easy as jumping off a ladder. **[[Jump off the ladder]**

Our mission as a church is to become disciple-makers in the power of the Holy Spirit by standing on the Word, walking in love, and resting in the arms of Jesus. It is not our job to get people saved. It is our job, our calling to love people where they are at, serve them and teach them how to listen to and obey God. Our Discipleship Groups are simply about that. If you are interested in being in a discipleship group, please talk to me after church. If I am talking to someone else, just interrupt long enough to let me know you are interested and I will contact you later today or during the week. If you are interested in fellowship and growth but don't think you are ready for a Discipleship group then let me know that also and we will get a Life Group started.

One misconception that is rampant about evangelism or sharing the gospel is that it has to be done one on one: one professional evangelist speaking to a potential believer. In a way, that is convenient because it allows us to tell ourselves, "evangelism" is just not my gift. But when Jesus was talking to His disciples at the end of the gospel of Matthew, He did not say, "Those of you with the gift of evangelism, go and make disciples." What Jesus did say, is "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them all I have commanded you." It was a blanket statement meant for each and every one of those present. Did they all have the gift of evangelism? NO, and yes I am positive of that. Did they all "go"? Yes they did! Each of the disciples died a martyr's death, which means that they were killed because they would not renounce their belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and they would not stop talking about it to others.

If you think of all evangelism as one "evangelism expert" and one believer it is a nerve-wracking prospect, because that means you have to become an "evangelism expert!" But Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Community Church in California and a number of other church leaders believe that evangelism is best done through small groups of 3-10 people. When these small groups or what I am learning to call "microchurches" multiply and form more groups, the body of Christ expands exponentially. Most people in this rural area that are church goers think they are living in Christian communities. But the statistics don't bear that out. There are 65,000 people living in Barry County and on any given Sunday, Less than 10% are in church. If you want to help your friends, if you want to impact our community then don't worry about inviting them to church, invite them to get to know you. Invite them over for a meal or

go out for a meal together and talk to them. Pray for them. Listen to them and learn their needs. Then find a way to serve them and share your story. Then share the story of Jesus and start meeting together to read and talk about the Bible. That will influence their lives and change them for the better faster and more profoundly than inviting them to church. There is no high pressure in this at all in any way.

Being a disciple who makes disciples is not about being professional. It is for ordinary people who want to follow Jesus. Look at what Jesus did. He spent a lot of time with three guys, sharing life with them. He spent a good amount of time with 12 guys, sharing life with them as they walked along. He spent time, once in awhile in a large group setting with 72, with a few thousand, and a few times, with 5,000. But you don't see Jesus trying to get people saved. He tells them to follow Him.

Time after time God does amazing things through ordinary people who are willing to be used by God. God is looking for people who are not afraid to pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God is looking for people who are willing to listen and obey, serve others, forgive others, and put the needs of others first.

Chuck Colson tells this story: "By the time we got to the prison chapel, it was on the verge of exploding with the excitement of more than 125 inmates and several dozen Prison Fellowship volunteers, all of whom had been participating in one of the in-prison ministries. With us, recalls Colson, was Wintley Phipps, an internationally known gospel singer who had sung only the day before for President Reagan at a prayer breakfast. When Wintley let loose in the cinder-block prison chapel, I thought the walls would come tumbling down. It was glorious. Then Herman Heade gave his testimony. Herman had been converted while in a solitary-confinement cell. He had tremendous rapport with the inmates and his message was powerful, dramatic, and convincing.

The excitement continued as I challenged the men to accept Christ, then prayed with them. An aside, in case you aren't familiar with the name Chuck Colson, he went to prison because of his part in Watergate with President Nixon and was converted to Christianity while in prison. He wrote a book and became a well-known speaker. He also had a nationally syndicated radio show for decades. After the prayer, the inmates crowded around, hugging and weeping. The next day our instructor, Dick Robinson, was relieved to find all the inmates were back for the seminar's final session. He had thought the last day might be anti-climactic. Several inmates gave their impressions of the previous day, they shared how they had been impacted.

One tall prisoner said, "I really appreciated Chuck Colson's message. 'Wintley Phipps' singing stirred my soul beyond words and Herman's testimony touched me where the rubber meets the road. But frankly, those things didn't really impress me as much as what happened afterward. 'When the celebrities and TV cameras were all gone,' he continued, 'the ladies among the volunteers went into the dining hall, with all the noise and confusion, and sat at the table to have a meal with us. That's what really got to me,' he conclude, his voice shaking as he got choked up."

Wintley's singing, Herman's testimony, and Colson's sermon were all appreciated. But the most powerful message came from the volunteers who went into the crowded, dingy dining hall to share prison food with the inmates. [NOTE 7]

We might not be fearless when it comes to jumping off the Empire State Building, but we are to have NO FEAR about building relationships with people, spending time with others, and building great works for God! We might not be courageous enough to climb a TV-station antenna and take a leap, but God expects us to use whatever technology He puts at our fingertips to use for His glory. We might not have the guts to leap off the Mackinac Bridge, but we are commissioned to build bridges between children and their creator. Help people to see their neighbors as fellow creations of Yahweh and care enough to get involved in the lives of others. We are called to build bridges between people through the power of the Holy Spirit ... "by partnering with parents, schools, family and friends." We may not have the boldness or daring to glide off El Capitan, but we are empowered to impact our corner of the world with the love of Jesus Christ. Each and every one of us is called to go and baptize and teach others about what Jesus has done for us and what He calls us to do. We are not meant to remain earthbound as we serve the God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Paul is telling us here in the first chapter of Ephesians to "Go BASE!" Build relationships and extend fellowship, use the Antennas of technology, Span the gaps between different people, between people and God, to unify them in glorifying God and Explore and Encourage others to point people to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It all starts with prayer. Please start praying for three people. Write their names on the bulletin, put their names on your phone and pray for God to use you to impact their lives for Jesus. Let's take a moment of silence and if God puts any names or pictures of people in your head, on your mind, or in your heart, write it down or type it in your phone where you will see it. Let's pray ... AMEN

Sermon Notes for "Go BASE" based on Ephesians 1: 3-14
Given at Doster Community Church on September 11, 2022

- I. BASE stands for Buildings, Antennas, Spans, and Earth to Sky Divers. To us it stands for **B**uilding relationships, using **A**ntennas to spread the Word through technology, **S**panning the gaps between people and their Lord and Savior and **E**xploring the Earth to reach no people through sharing the gospel.
- II. The earthly realm and the spiritual realm. We need to make connections through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- III. **B**uilding relationships – spend time with people and listen to them. Discover their needs.

- IV. Erecting Antennas to spread the Word through technology. Make technology work for us.
- V. Spanning the gaps to connect the body of Christ – friendship-fellowship. Invite them to share a meal.
- VI. Explore and Encourage – serve them and share the gospel. Then send them out to do the same.
- VII. We are called to find a way to allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through us to have an impact on people. Start with Prayer. What are we going to do about it? Write down three people that you will pray for every day. Pray for an opportunity to talk and listen!