**John 4 (Matthew 28)**

**FUNNY – Checking the tires with my reading glasses**

THE PLAN

**8––OPEN YOUR EYES**

**John 4:35 (NKJV)** “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”

1. **America is becoming increasingly ripe for harvest … we must open our eyes:**
   1. To the ever-ripening harvest here in America
   2. To the increasingly-ineffective approaches of the American Church
2. **Jesus called us to make disciples of ALL nations.**

**Matthew 28:19–20 (NIV84)** “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

1. **Though American churches have largely focused on addition––how large we can grow our churches…**
2. **Churches in the book of Acts rapidly multiplied.**

**Disciples**

**Acts 6:7 (NKJV)** Then the word of God spread, and **the number of the disciples multiplied** greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

**Churches**

**Acts 9:31 (NKJV)** Then the **churches** throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, **they were multiplied**.

1. **We see big churches…**

**Acts 4:4** **(NKJV) [Jerusalem church]** However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

1. **And we see small churches…**

**1 Corinthians 16:19 (NKJV)** The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with **the church that is in their house.**

1. **We also see churches within churches.**

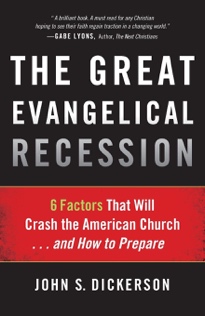
**1 Corinthians 1:1–2 (NKJV)** Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, **2** To the **church** of God which is at Corinth…

* **However, there seem to be FIVE House Churches mentioned in Corinth:**

1. Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor 16:19)
2. Justus (Acts 18:7, Acts 4:11)
3. Crispus (Acts 18:8)
4. Stephanas (1 Cor 16:15)
5. Gaius (Rom 16:23, 3 John 1)

* **Yet ... Paul speaks to the members of all the churches as one church.**
* **Jesus also wrote letters to 7 churches in Revelation 2 & 3, but it seems clear that there were many house churches that were a part of each of those churches.**

1. **The American Church is experiencing a Recession**



* The Great Evangelical Recession –– John S. Dickerson

1. Inflated – the % of evangelicals in America is inflated … closer to 10%
2. Hated – there is a growing hatred in America toward Christians … it’s increasing
3. Dividing – American churches increasingly divided by worldviews & politics
4. Bankrupt – Americans are giving less, and most generous givers are aging
5. Bleeding – The American Church is losing members … primarily the young
6. Sputtering – The American Church is running out of steam … less effective

* **ChristianPost.com article … Barna Research … Covid 19 greatly affected churches … in the next 18 months … 1 in 5 churches will close** [**[Article]**](https://www.christianpost.com/church-resource/1-in-5-churches-face-closure-within-18-months-due-to-covid-19-shutdowns-barna-president.html)

1. **However … God has been speaking to us about His plan to shine in darkness.**

**Isaiah 60:1–2 (NKJV)** Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. **2** For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.

1. **Though we don’t yet see this in America, the glory of God is shining brightly in other places of the world … right in the midst of deep darkness.**

* **Remember Iran – Sheep Among Wolves – Vol. 2?**

1. **Church Planting Movement (CPM) VIDEO** –– [Beyond CPM (updated 2019)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-IUraCyByU&t=321s)
2. **How is this happening?**

* They have discovered some kingdom secrets to multiplication … and one of them is … “bigger does not always mean better.”

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elephants** | **Rabbits** |
| Only fertile 4 times per year | Practically continuously fertile |
| Only 1 baby per pregnancy | Average 7 babies per pregnancy |
| Mother carries baby for 22 months | Mother carries babies for 1 month |
| Age females can have a baby = 18 years | Age females can have babies = 4 mos. |
| In 3 years: 2 elephants become 3 | In 3 years: 2 rabbits become 50,643 |
| In 3 years: 26,000 lbs. of food | In 3 years: 661,000 lbs. of food |
| In 5 years: 2 elephants become 4 | In 5 years: 2 rabbits become 69,000,000 |
| In 5 years: 38,000 lbs. of food | In 5 years: 925,000,000 lbs. of food |

1. **How many of you can you see the benefit of rabbit churches?**
2. **Elephant churches do serve great purposes.**

* I read an article about the benefits of elephants:
  1. Elephants are seed transporters … they sow seeds of vegetation everywhere they go.
  2. Elephant dung feeds insects and fertilizes plants.
  3. Elephants dig water holes that provide water for many animals.
  4. Elephants clear pathways for smaller animals to walk.

**We need elephant churches but we need many more rabbit churches.**

1. **Rabbit churches:**
   * + 1. They can move much more quickly than elephant churches.
       2. They can occupy spaces that an elephant church could not.
       3. They are much more cost effective.
       4. They can multiply very rapidly … and exponentially … and reach far more people.
       5. They can spread to and survive in new cities, regions and nations more easily.
          1. Elephants are on two continents of the world.
          2. With the exception of Antarctica, rabbits are on every continent.
2. **This is why God has called us to launch house churches … it’s not that they’re better FOR US … but they are much useful to God to reach a dying world.**
3. **Rabbit churches––house churches–– are like the mustard seed.**

**Mark 4:30–32 (NLT)** Jesus said, “How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it? 31 It is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, 32 but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade.”

1. **Questions:**
   * + 1. We have started over 150 certified house churches (both ministries) … who else will help us by starting a house church (rabbit church)?
       2. Those who have not yet begun attending church again, will you consider joining a house church?
       3. Those who are leading a house church, will you be a multiplying house church?
       4. Those who are attending a house church, will you let God prepare you to start another house church?
2. **More training is coming…**