

BUILT
Built to Go
SOCC Acts 1:6-11 Oct. 25, 2026

The 1989 blockbuster fantasy baseball film, *Field of Dreams*, spawned a quote that reached #37 in the top 100 movie lines ever. “If you build it, he will come...”. Kevin Costner’s character hears a voice encouraging him to build a baseball diamond in a cornfield near Dyersville, Iowa. He does and players from baseball’s historic past walk out of the cornfield to play again. If you like baseball, it is a great movie. If you don’t like baseball, it’s still a fun movie. And the movie set field has become a major tourist attraction and is still used for baseball. As a matter of fact, just two months ago on August 13, the Philadelphia Phillies walked out of that same cornfield to defeat the Minnesota Twins. “If you build it, they will come.”

This morning we will explore the theme, *Built to Go*, but for generations, the church has often held to the philosophy, “If you build it, they will come.” And in the past, it often worked. A new building created excitement and seemingly drew new crowds. The simple invitation to a friend, “Come to church with me,” was frequently accepted, but I think those days are mostly gone. It might work for a Christian who’s moved to town and is looking for a church family, but it’s not likely to impact one who is seeking to find spiritual truth.

And while a building is a tool for ministry, it does not define who we are. I was reminded of that truth in a defining moment 35 years ago last month. I got a call in the middle of the night alerting me that the church building was on fire. (relate the story...). Jim Bohn’s message on the sign, told the true story, “The building is damaged, but the church isn’t hurt.” For the next two years we met at BHSS auditorium but on that first Sunday morning there, a family approached me. The father said, “Our daughter attends high school here through the week and doesn’t feel comfortable coming back for church on Sunday. So, when you rebuild, we’ll be back.” In other words, “Build it and we will come.” That was a disheartening moment, but I knew that’s not who we were. In fact, that’s never been the DNA of the church.

God created us for *go* not *come*. So, what can we learn about going? Let’s begin with a look at:

His Last Words

Last words have great meaning. Perhaps the most famous in American history spring from revolutionary hero Nathan Hale before he was hung as a spy, “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.” While historians debate if those really were his last words, I’m confident our Lord’s last instructions to the disciples and ultimately to us are inspiring and significant. Let’s break them down like this:

Build on my promise. Acts 1:6-8 (NIV) **“Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”** Let me pause here. The disciple’s question had to disappoint Jesus. The Jews believed that the Messiah was going to restore the physical nation of Israel to world prominence but that had never been the promise of God. Jesus may have been thinking, *Guys, don’t you get it? This isn’t about the renewal of an old Kingdom; it’s about the beginning of a new and lasting Kingdom; my Kingdom and you will help build it!* Graciously, Jesus responded not with criticism but with this promise: **⁷He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...** In other words, you don’t need to know everything – that knowledge belongs to the Father, but I promise, you will be given a divine power and presence – the Holy Spirit.

That the Holy Spirit works in us, is a tough concept to grasp. I believe the Holy Spirit is that inner voice that cautions us before making a sinful choice. The Holy Spirit helps us remember Scripture – did you ever have a time when a meaningful verse came to mind at just the right moment? Or have you been asked a tough spiritual question and the right words came just when you needed them? That’s the Holy Spirit. Let me suggest another way I think the HS works powerfully in our lives that we often overlook. *Interruptions.*

Stop thinking of interruptions as *inconvenient obstructions* and consider them as *incredible opportunities*. Have we forgotten that some interruptions are good? A newborn baby is certainly an interruption – your schedule is now dictated by one who can’t even walk or talk, you surrender your freedom, you operate with less sleep, your bank account goes down while your level of worry goes up. From a standpoint of pure logic having a baby doesn’t make much sense, and yet there is no greater joy than being a parent and then being a grandparent. That’s a wonderful interruption!

Some interruptions change history. Noah was just going about his business when God interrupted him with a set of blueprints for a floating zoo – that interruption gave the world a second chance. David was patiently taking care of sheep when Samuel interrupted him by anointing him to be the next king of Israel. That interruption preserved the lineage of Christ. Mary was busy planning a wedding when Gabriel, God’s messenger, interrupted her life with the news that she would soon be pregnant out of wedlock. That life-changing interruption brought us the Savior.

Jesus was no stranger to interruptions either: he was enjoying a wedding when the servants revealed they had run out of wine and Jesus performed his first miracle. Blind Bartimaeus called to him from the busy road and asked for his sight, mothers interrupted his teaching to have Jesus bless their children, the Rich Young Ruler interrupted him with a question of eternal life, the synagogue leader Jairus interrupted his schedule to have him heal his dying daughter, and while he was going to that house a woman with a

chronic bleeding problem interrupted him by touching the fringe of his garment. A funeral procession interrupted his journey, and he raised the widow's son to life. The list seems endless. So, when it comes to interruptions in *your* life, watch for the HS to work.

Move beyond your comfort zone. ⁸**...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."**

Jesus responded to their question with something like this, "Don't worry about Israel, I have bigger plans and important places for you to go." You'll start in Jerusalem – *so far so good*. Then all of Judea – *that's fine too although. Some places in Judea are better than others, but at least they're all Jewish*. Then Samaria – *okay now, just hold on, Lord...surely not Samaria. We hate those people and they hate us. We don't go through Samaria. Don't you know we're not even supposed to let the shadow of a Samaritan fall on our path – seriously, you can't expect us to go there – not Samaria, Lord!* Then the ends of the earth...

That text is so easy to gloss over without giving it any real thought. Let's apply that for a minute to our 21-century setting. Jerusalem – that's our Bloomington. Judea – all of Indiana. Samaria – that's gotta be Kentucky and the ends of the earth...

Where could God send you that would make you respond, *Really God? That's where you're leading me to go?* One winter many years ago, I was asked to do a leadership seminar for a church in Marquette, Michigan. I went; ice covered the runway when we landed, people were shoveling snow off their roofs to prevent them from collapsing, I couldn't get warm, my suitcase with changes of clothes never made it until I returned to the airport to come home. I had minister friends who were doing guest preaching at the same time in Florida and I was asking God – *really, Lord, Michigan in the winter?*

Where could God lead you that would be out of your comfort zone? To a next-door, obnoxious neighbor you can't stand; to that co-worker whose voice just grates on your nerves; how about that classmate who wants to hang out with you but is so terribly annoying, or is it your conceited in-law that ruins every family dinner? **Abraham Lincoln once said, "I don't like that man. I need to get to know him."** What if every Christian adopted that attitude remembering that God loves those who rub us the wrong way as much as he loves us. Move out of your comfort zone! In our polarized culture today, the media would have us believe that those who disagree with us are enemies; I would suggest that we view them as friends we haven't yet met. After all, how else will they see Jesus in us? God calls us to Samaria and beyond!

Focus on tomorrow. Acts 1:9-11 (NIV) ⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the

sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Don't waste time staring at the sky. There's work to do before He comes back. The Lord's return is such great motivation, isn't it? Don't you wish you knew when He would return? I do! But Jesus wisely kept that a secret. If we knew his return was another 200 years away, we could get lazy about sharing the life changing story of Jesus. But if his return could happen tomorrow – and it could – we would be more urgent about sharing Christ's message of salvation. I have this fear that someone is going to look at me on judgement day and ask, “Why didn't you tell me about Jesus when I still had time to make a choice?” How many opportunities have I squandered because I thought I've got plenty of time.

So, from our Lord's last words:

...We know the *what* – go...go in the promise of His divine power and Presence.

...We know the *where* – go anywhere He leads even out of our comfort zones.

...We know the *why* – go because He's coming again and time is of the essence.

But what about:

Our Lasting Work

For most Christians, we know we need to share the good news about Jesus, but our big question is *how...how should I go? How can I do this?*

Perhaps we make it harder than it needs to be. Our work for Him begins by being an extraordinary example in our ordinary lives. Simply put, just live in such a way that people around you will be drawn to what makes you different in a positive way. I don't remember where I first heard it, but I like it. *Wherever you are, be there!* We miss so much because we often fail to engage. We can be where God wants us and be a million miles away at the same time. Right now, not all of you in this room are really here – you're thinking about what you're going to do this afternoon, what you are going to have to eat when you leave here, about that wonderful purchase you made yesterday, or the vacation trip you recently took. I don't take it personal – not much! We miss a lot by not being where we are. When our grandkids were little, they noticed things I no longer saw – a tiny bloom on a weed, a crawling bug, a bird's song in the tree. As they have grown older, they've become more like us adults – they don't notice little things like they once did. When you are following God's lead, when you are living out the interruption, *be there!* Be engaged, do your best, follow the Holy Spirit's lead. Let me share a few thoughts on *how* to be engaged, how to *be there*:

Be relational – go where the people are. Learn people's names, smile, ask questions. Oh, the power of a question to build relationships! People like to talk about themselves

and when you listen to their stories, you're being relational. Relationships are often built around skills, hobbies, interests, clubs, associations and careers. All are connecting points. When I meet someone who enjoys classic cars, they're my new best friend. You'll have connections that I won't have – you can reach people I never could.

The tech giant, **Apple**, had barely escaped bankruptcy when Steve Jobs lured **Ron Johnson** away from Target in 1999. Johnson had an idea, but it was a long shot: open Apple stores. They took their product line where people already were: the nation's malls. Instead of copying other electronics outlets, they modeled the stores on the warm service of the Ritz-Carlton hotels. Johnson, whose Christian faith shaped how he treated customers, told Steve Jobs, "Most of our future customers will be introduced to Apple through the store." Today there are more than 500 Apple Stores worldwide. We should do the same: Go where people are, demonstrate the warmth and peace of following Christ. Most future Christians will be introduced to Jesus through us. Be relational.

Don't let worry and fear control you. Fear and worry are huge deterrents in life. **"Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength."** – Corrie Ten Boom **"What worries you, masters you."** – John Locke. Our word *worry* comes from the old English word which means "to strangle." And when worry and fear control us, it will strangle the Gospel in us. When it comes to sharing our faith, fear asks questions like: "What should I say, how do I act, what if I don't have the right answers, what if people laugh at me, what if I blow it?" Just be yourself; tell your story, what Jesus has done for you. Don't let worry and fear will you feel inferior, or inadequate, or unloved, or left out. Our fear will fuel pessimism and convince us that God won't be there when we need Him most or He won't be enough for the moment. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I like what **Rick Warren said, God doesn't give us a piece of pie, he's a pie factory.** God is with us and always more than enough.

Use what you have. I've noticed that some people are reluctant to use gifts. New shoe, shirts or sweaters may stay in the box, because...well...I can get a little more use out of the ones I'm wearing. Sadly, sometimes these good folks die without ever enjoying their birthday or Christmas gifts – they've saved them for a day that never comes. What about the giver? How painful to know that what had been so generously given out of love was never used or enjoyed. Do you realize how heartbreaking it is for us to never use the gifts that God gave us! Imagine how God must feel when he gave you his best gifts and you died with them still in the box, unused.

For years, I watched with admiration as Carthell and Peggy Everett used their gifts. They didn't take special training, they just opened their home to international students and God multiplied their efforts. There will be Christians in heaven from China, India, Korea, the Middle East and many more countries because Carthell and Peggy shared what they had. They hosted and taught hundreds if not thousands over the years; they started the Smithville food pantry to help local folks. They just used what they had and God made

the impossible, possible. Peggy still is. There are opportunities all around us to make a difference; open your eyes. Do what you can, use what you have and then let God do what seems impossible.

Be faithful - To me, Demas is one of the saddest characters in the NT. Paul certainly valued him; according to Scripture, Paul considered him a fellow worker along with Mark, Luke and others. That's good company. Twice he is mentioned in Paul's closings as one of his companions and co-laborers. Evidently, Demas was in Rome during Paul's imprisonments, but when Paul needed him most, Demas abandoned him and headed for Thessalonica. The verb implies that he had not simply left Paul but left him during Paul's time of need. Paul was facing execution. And it wasn't just a case of being tired of ministry or a relational conflict with Paul, this was a spiritual matter. Demas left because he loved this world or as the NLT translates 2 Tim. 4:10 because "he loves the things of this life." The Enemy got to him. I don't know what you are wrestling with, but don't let the Enemy get to you – be faithful to your very last breath.

Several years ago, I met **Emmanuel** in India. Christian preachers in India are often the subject of persecution but most are not deterred. Emmanuel and his wife served in an unreached area to spread the gospel. One Sunday, Hindu extremists attacked their small, fledgling congregation; the terrified people fled in all directions. The thugs beat Emmanuel and his pregnant wife terribly and threatened that if they did not renounce their faith, they would take turns raping Emmanuel's wife. Both refused. They tied Emmanuel to a tree and forced him to watch as the extremists took turns. Emmanuel's wife pleaded with him not to give in to their demands and not to give up on Christ. Before the dastardly deed was finished, her screams drew the attention of others in the surrounding area. Village folk came to their aid and the terrorists fled. Emmanuel had lost consciousness and both were rushed to the hospital.

The physical wounds healed normally; the mental and emotional wounds healed much more slowly. Had that been me, I would have packed my bags and moved my family as far away from those awful memories as possible. I would have nursed a bitter grudge against such cruel and heartless men and plotted my revenge. I would have prayed hard against my enemies not for them. Not Emmanuel. He and his wife remained in the same area, continued to work with the same people and faithfully preached the same gospel of grace. Wow! God honors such faithfulness. In the years that followed the struggling church where Emmanuel preached grew to seven hundred and planted seven new churches. Then came that fateful Sunday when five of the rapists showed up in front of the congregation again. That Sunday, however, they had come to be baptized! Be faithful!

The state of Iowa still maintains that Field of Dreams in a cornfield, but did you know the NT also speaks of a field of dreams. Jesus said, "Look, the fields are white for harvest." In other words, there's a whole world just waiting for us to go!