Church Update and Philippines Trip Review

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Preacher: Chris Oswald

[0:00] Thank you.

Thank you.
I partnered with, once again, Training Leaders International to bring biblical sort of teaching and also kind of instruction on how to preach particular books of the Bible and so forth to our friends in the Sovereign Grace community in the Philippines, as well as our friends in the CREC community in the Philippines.
So the trip went very well. I definitely felt your prayers, and I'm so grateful for the opportunity to go on your behalf and also to receive all the prayer and encouragement that I did on the trip and even as I've returned.
And the typical day at one of these trainings involves getting up, oh gosh, around, well, as soon as your body wakes you up, which for most of us was about 3 a.m.
[1:46] And from 3 a.m. to say 6.30 a.m., all of us Americans would usually spend time alone reading our Bibles, preparing for the day, and so on and so forth.

Breakfast was at 7.30. Breakfast in the Philippines and in many other places is really not breakfast. It's just dinner with some scrambled eggs. It's all the regular food, but maybe you get eggs.
And so that took me, I'm not a huge fan of that. I like breakfast probably the best out of all the meals. And so that was, every day, that's kind of what we would go through.
Then we would meet together as a group and pray and worship together for some time and then split up into two smaller groups of guys, something like 15 guys each. And those groups are divided by the two denominations that are sponsoring this event.
Well, sponsoring might not be the right word, but something like that. And one of them is the Sovereign Grace Group and the other one is the CREC Group. And so if you're not familiar with CREC, it's the denomination that Douglas Wilson started many years ago.
[2:54] And generally on these particular trips to the Manila, Josh Montague, who was a Sovereign Grace elder in Chaska, Minnesota, a friend of mine, he typically tries to find a couple of guys from Sovereign Grace to come and a couple of guys from the CREC to come.

And I'm an unusual guy in that I have a lot of connections in both worlds. And so I really, in particular, enjoy this trip for that reason. So we meet together as a group and then break up into smaller sections by Sovereign Grace and CREC.
And then, you know, various lessons are taught on whatever the genre is that we're working on. That particular week, this week, we worked on the Psalms.
And as I've told a number of you, this turned out to be an especially strategic and important discussion to be had with these guys because there really wasn't much familiarity with just poetry in general or really a lot of fluency with symbolism and imagery in general.
And so it was important not only to teach the Psalms so that they could understand how to study and preach the Psalms, but also the basic concepts we taught in this particular week were huge in terms of helping them understand a lot of other passages in God's Word.
[4:14] I will at some point be posting a brief sermon I preached to the guys rooted in 2 Corinthians 4. And I had a couple of aims with that sermon.

One was to expose them to a New Testament example of imagery. That's the passage where Paul talks about losing heart and talks about having treasure in jars of clay. So I wanted to share some, I wanted to expose them a little bit to some New Testament symbolism and imagery, but also I wanted to give them a charge on how to not lose heart in pastoral ministry.
And so I'm pretty confident that that was recorded and I just need to get the appropriate Filipino to send me the video or audio of that and I'll post that as a podcast here.

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I'll also be posting another sermon that I preached in the Philippines. This sermon having to do with how I have seen God help me over the years overcome a significant amount of worry and anxiety and turn that into prayer.
And so that was a sermon that I preached that was well received in the Philippines. In many respects, the two sermons that I preached both have to do with this concept that I'm becoming increasingly aware of and that would just be this idea of outgrowing anxiety, outgrowing anxiety.
[5:33] And I want to unpack that more in the future, but I think I'll probably try to produce, you know, post both of those sermons that I preached and then produce something else via podcast that just follows that basic theme of some things that the Lord has shown me, I think, in his word about the idea of outgrowing our anxiety.

You know, in terms of the highlights of the trip, there were just too many to count. We just had a tremendous time, multiple moments where when you're a teacher, you just love to have these moments where you've labored and labored and labored to not only prepare your teaching, but also then to explain it and to re-explain it and to put it into different contexts.
And you just want these ideas to become fluent and native in their hearts. And then you just have this moment of breakthrough where you begin to see that the idea has taken hold and it's not just an idea that's, you know, been imposed on them.
It's theirs now. They own it. They understand it. They know how to apply it and so forth. And that's really the work of education in general. And, you know, everything we do, everything I do in some respects is aimed toward education, teaching, preaching, and so forth, writing.
And so it's just a thrill to see opportunities where you work and work and work and work and you really try and you pray and then, boom, it just happens.
[6:57] The Lord puts that piece of information in not only their minds, but also their hearts. In terms of kind of what else is happening right now at the church, you know, we've just got a lot of things going on, of course, with the building and we just developed our preaching outline for the first John series and we're working on, Dov and I are working on actually getting a preaching calendar put together that'll project out into probably, you know, probably February or so.

And then we are, you know, just doing all the kind of normal counseling things that are going on. And we're trying to do a good job between all of us of ensuring we're connecting with the new people that are coming to the church.
And yeah, it's just a busy, fruitful, but joyful season. You know, I think that one of the more exciting things that's happened while I was away was, you know, we have this book by John Owen, this little booklet called Rules for Walking in Fellowship.
And Dov and I concocted the idea of just asking the men in our men's group to read that book and teach a particular chapter from that book at our men's meetings.
And so that was so encouraging to see guys just step up so quickly, really, and take on particular passage of particular chapters. So really, for the next, you know, big chunk of time, men's ministry is going to be, you know, guys actually processing the work of John Owen related to fellowship, church membership, and then sort of explaining that to the rest of the group.
[8:38] That's an exciting development. Very, very grateful for that. We've got the men's retreat coming up soon, and I think that's on the fear of God. And that's always a wonderful time.

The teaching is always good, but it's definitely a fellowship-forward kind of experience. And certainly, this is absolutely the place you would want to bring an unbelieving friend, relative neighbor, because the gospel is showcased not just in the fact that it's explained, but that it's, you know, it's exemplified in the way that we enjoy one another and enjoy God's gifts and so on and so forth.
So I would just wholeheartedly commend you getting involved in the men's retreat and not only you going, but maybe also bringing somebody with you. In terms of wanting to touch on the building project, you know, it is just, Dove asked me, you know, what makes you the most excited about the building project?
And I think the main answer is that we are going to be in a situation where truth and beauty and community is communicated not only by our fellowship and by our singing and by our preaching and teaching, but also by the facility itself.
I really think you're going to see, wow, this is, this has allowed us to really emphasize the truth and beauty of God, not only with our words and our actions, but also our facility.

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[10:12] So it's, it's coming along nicely. We of course have had setbacks. It's kind of, you know, the rule of thumb when you're undertaking a construction project of this size.

All in all though, it's gone quite well. Want to give a special shout out to the leadership team in particular throughout this season.
I think they, I'm pretty confident in fact, that they conspired without me at some point to sort of exclude me from most of the decisions.
And, and that didn't take offense to that at all. I'm guessing that's the case. I might be slandering them, but I think that might've happened. Anyway, I'm, I'm not, um, I'm not sad about that at all. I'm so grateful for the way that they've sought to care for me in that respect. And then, you know, especially everybody's, everybody's working hard, but, you know, Noah Maher has really just owned this whole thing and a, and a really extreme degree.
[11:08] And this is a busy man with a very full life and many worthy things that he could give his time and attention to. And so I'm especially grateful that, that Maher is, is handling so much of this.

He's doing an excellent job in terms of, uh, you know, our timeline for that. We, we, we are running up against what we think is a pretty firm timeline with maybe a little margin for error.
But the idea being that in November, we have to give over the gym to our soccer contract that we keep each year with blue Valley soccer. And so, uh, that starts in November.
And if we had to stay in the gym during that time, we are, we are stuck in a situation where we'd be setting up and tearing down each week. So we are extremely focused on not allowing that to happen.
And if there is any bleed over in terms of, uh, you know, having to set up and tear down, we really just want that to be extremely limited. We're doing our very best to make sure that doesn't happen at all.
[12:08] But if, uh, if it does, then that's kind of, that's kind of in many respects, God's gift to us as sort of a firm, get this done boys kind of situation, because we are all aware of the tediousness, uh, and just the kind of, the kind of soul depreciating, you know, effect that set up and tear down has on everybody.

So that's, that's, that'll give you some idea of where we, where we're looking. It's, it's, it's not that far away if we're going to honor that, that deadline, uh, in terms of, you know, just other things to do, we are just trying to ensure above all else that everybody who visits Providence gets connected, you know, via, you know, relationships, lunches, dinners, coffees, they're included in the appropriate groups, plugged into the appropriate ministries and so on and so forth.
And so, you know, really above all else, I'd just encourage everyone who's listening to this to just be diligent. And I see no evidence that that's not taking place, by the way, every time I go to talk to somebody that's new, there's a line of people already ready to talk to them.
So I think it's going well. I would like to remind you that, you know, the central ministry at Providence, the central ministry that we ask everybody to engage in is hospitality.
It is really just a, it's just a superior method of ministry compared to almost anything else. And so, uh, if we, in fact, if we were just a church that did preaching, singing, and hospitality, we would probably be, you know, mostly feel fulfilling God's expectations for our creation of disciples.
[13:48] So it's just a key thing to do. And I just want to encourage everyone to consistently have people in your home. And it's just a means of expressing care, of fostering connection.

And it's also just so wonderfully helpful to remind your children that the church is something that happens not only on Sunday, but that the church has a role to play in daily life.
And really to see their faith in action. There's something about giving your kids a responsibility. My wife would do it this way. She'd be like, okay, on Tuesday, we're having the Smiths over.
Does anyone know what? She talked to the kids like this. Does anyone know, you know, if there's any food allergies? How old are the kids? What, what would be a good thing to cook for them? And so forth.
And then as the time drew nearer for, uh, for that person to come over, that family to come over, she would then give them tasks. You know, Wesley, you set up the silverware.
[14:42] Sarah, you get the drinks. You know, Brooke, you get the door, whatever. And all these sort of activities. And you, you, you wind up building ministry out of your family when you do hospitality.

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So it's a key thing. Um, I would, I would let people know also just that, you know, we are, uh, really grateful to see the, the many new visitors.
And I just think that this is a moment in history where you should assume that, that the majority of people you talk to right now are thinking about possibly going to church.
I, I, I'm not, I don't think I'm overstating that. I think that that's actually real. And so, boy, I'd really encourage you to, um, I'd really encourage you to just assume that your neighbors, your relatives, and so forth are thinking about attending church.
If they aren't, assume they are thinking about it. They're considering it. Church attendance has gone into what you might think of in, in, in, uh, sociological terms as a preference cascade.
[15:47] And you'd be shocked by how quickly things change in one direction to another. And it would be great to harvest that particular sort of thing that the Lord is doing and to be very intentional about it.

Well, I think that's a decent overview of what's been going on at Providence and also the trip itself. Once again, as you saw in that video, which we'll post also as a podcast, as you saw in that video, I really am excited about some of the possibilities, not only for me to care for this particular group or for Sovereign Grace, the region, uh, our Midwest Northwest region and Sovereign Grace to care, continue to care for the Pakistani group.
But, but really, I, I suspect that we are just on the very first page of a long story that involves Providence's commitment to equipping leaders and blessing the world with leaders, uh, not just this country, but blessing the world with leaders.
I'm working on some possibilities there. I'm actually meeting with someone, um, tonight who might be able to help us think through how we could be a blessing to the Filipinos professionally, because almost every pastor in the Philippines is going to be a Bible, a bivocational pastor.
And so one of the more obvious sort of opportunities to support, uh, emerging leaders in these nations is to think through, do we have anything to contribute either to, uh, elevate their potential employment opportunities or, uh, maybe even to find virtual assistant type employment opportunities for them, so forth.
[17:26] And our church is really well positioned, I think, uh, given the roster that we have of members, our church is really well positioned to, um, you know, to, to, to help in some of those areas.

The, the, the issue is just going to be the details. Like, how do we do it? What does that look like? How do we turn this into something that is, you know, uh, repeatable and scalable and so on and so forth.
But I have a meeting tonight where, uh, I think that I'm seeing a, a way forward that would develop over the next year that would allow us, in addition to caring for a number of pastors in terms of their theological development, their life and doctrine might also be able to open some doors for, um, some potentially better employment situations for a number of these pastors.
And, uh, that would be, that'd be pretty amazing if that, if that paid off. It's worth exploring. I mean, it, it's certainly worth exploring to see whether or not we could do something like that. There's a lot to figure out there, but it's worth exploring.
All right. Well, with that, I'm going to let this podcast come to a close. I'm going to, um, actually immediately go into another podcast on the biblical doctrine of, uh, sufficiency of scripture. And, uh, we'll see what else, uh, probably also do another podcast, uh, just doing some additional comments on Charlie Kirk situation as it's developed over the past two weeks.
[18:48] All right. Until then, God bless. Have a wonderful day. Bye-bye. Bye-bye.

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