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**Sermon Outline for Heck Jones Offering Speakers**

**Written by WMU President, Deborah Taylor**

**Scripture: I Corinthians 3:5-9**

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building."

**Outline Points: Relentless Growth**

1. **We must DESIRE growth**
2. **We must DEVELOP growth**
3. **We must DEDICATE ourselves to growth**
4. **WMU’s goal is to Deliver Relentless growth**

**Intro:** *The story is told of an encounter Billy Graham had in an elevator. The other person who got into the elevator said, “You’re Billy Graham, aren’t you?” He said, “Yes.” “Well,” the man said, “you are a truly great man.” Billy responded, “No, I’m not a great man. I just have a great message.”*

1. **We must DESIRE growth**

**When we become a Christian, we are given a purpose for our lives—to make disciples. Jesus’ last words before returning to heaven were to His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20—what we call the Great Commission. Jesus expected His disciples to make other disciples and teach those believers what He had taught them. Many times we do not focus on that mission and we fill our lives with other things. God’s plan for us is to focus on growing the kingdom of believers. In our churches we have many good things—beautiful music or surroundings to help us worship, outstanding education and activities for our children and families…..these are all GOOD things, but they are not the MAIN thing, so to speak. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is how to survive and do ministry in new ways—often not inside the church building. The church should not be known just for these good things, but as Dr. Graham said, for our great gospel message. Building or growing Christ followers is imperative and should be our MAIN focus. Matthew 6:33 says “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.” If we desire something, it is more than just a wish. It implies longing for as if we had a hunger or thirst. So it is with kingdom growth—if we do not have a passion or longing to see others join us in knowing Christ, we will not experience or see that growth. We need to view each person we encounter as a divine appointment for gospel engagement, just as Jesus did with the woman at the well or Paul did with Lydia and the women at the river. Paul had planted the church in Corinth and he kept his focus on desiring for all of the Gentiles to hear of the gospel. We too must plant the seeds of the gospel and have a desire for the people around us to come to faith in Christ.**

1. **We must DEVELOP growth**

**The second part of the Great Commission is teaching believers what we have learned about Christ. In order to teach others, we must be life-long learners—growing in our own relationship with God through Bible study and prayer. We do not have to spend our time frantically trying to find purpose or answers. We are blessed to have the Holy Spirit as a guide and a copy of God’s Word. We can observe how Old and New Testament people lived their lives—sometimes being faithful followers and sometimes not. We have the recorded words of Jesus from His life here on earth and we can use the principles He modeled in His daily life and interactions with people. If we want to have a beautiful garden of flowers or vegetables, we must develop one—we must prepare the soil, plant the seeds, make sure there is water, remove the weeds, protect the plants from insects or other animals, etc. If we want to see relentless growth of God’s kingdom, we too must find ways to develop growth—provide leaders to help in reading and understanding God’s Word, provide opportunities to practice sharing our faith and meeting needs in Jesus’ name. Apollos had watered the seeds that Paul had planted in the believers in Corinth—had taught and trained them. Just as Apollos, we must become leaders who raise up other leaders to develop followers. We sometimes use the phrase-- “disciples who make disciples.” We must seek to develop our children, youth and all believers to sustain and continue relentless growth.**

1. **We must DEDICATE ourselves to growth**

**The dictionary definition of “dedicate” is to set apart and consecrate to a deity or to a sacred purpose or devoted wholly and earnestly. As Christians we must be set apart and devoted wholly to the purpose of loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves. If we are dedicated to God our Father who is holy and worthy to be praised, we will be humble and recognize our need for Him. If we are dedicated to loving God, we will put our trust in Him and not depend on our own works or understanding. If we are dedicated to loving our neighbors as ourselves, we will not be selfish, jealous, or judgmental. Just as the people in Corinth were reminded that their devotion and allegiance were to Jesus the Savior, not Apollos or Paul, we must make sure our love and service are dedicated to God. Serving God is not for our own gain or recognition, not to check off a list or make ourselves feel better. To achieve relentless growth, we must dedicate ourselves to following Christ’s example—not the culture around us, or other philosophies or teachings. We must also be relentless and dedicated to continue through the difficult times because we know we have a higher purpose—a sacred purpose. To be successful in growing a flower or vegetable garden, we must have knowledge of the surroundings—what plants work better in what type of soil. We would not expect to grow an orange tree in the cold of Alaska, but in the sunshine of Florida. Orange groves do not produce grape juice—just as James said we cannot have sweet and bitter water flowing from the same spring. In Revelation, John wrote that we must not be lukewarm—neither hot or cold. We must be devoted wholly and earnestly to the relentless daily work of growing disciples and making believers. Many times we need the reminders as the church in Corinth did, that our dedication is to God—not to an earthly leader. We too must recognize that we cannot achieve growth in our own power, but only through the Holy Spirit.**

***OPTIONS: Show powerpoint or videos of WMU—“umbrella” list of 3 areas –Education, Leadership, Compassion missions supported by Heck Jones, videos listed on WMU NC Heck Jones resource page, national WMU video with Sandy Wisdom Martin about the Biblical basis of missions, share personal testimony of how being involved in WMU has changed you, etc.***

1. **WMU’s goal is to DELIVER relentless growth**

**I am honored to represent WMU NC because I know that throughout their history, WMU has followed the Great Commission. WMU has desired growth---to make believers by witnessing of God’s love and care for our neighbors; they have developed growth by providing missions education for all ages and training leaders; they have dedicated themselves to growth—by focusing on God’s call, by praying for and supporting others who have answered God’s call to serve all across the world as missionaries. I know that the last year has been called many things—unprecedented, difficult, the worst, debilitating—and I would agree with many of those descriptions. Many of our “normal” life activities and church ministries have been affected. However, we know that God placed us here during 2020 and 2021 for a purpose and there are still ways for us to honor Him and make disciples. WMU has and will continue to partner with you as Christians and as a church. We appreciate your contributions through the Heck Jones offering, named after our first North Carolina WMU leaders, Fannie Heck and Sallie Bailey Jones. These contributions help us to be relentless—we do not let COVID stop us from learning about missions, praying for missions, supporting missions, and participating in missions. When COVID hit, WMU NC followed Acts 1:8 and made a commitment to reach our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. We recorded trainings, held zoom and face time meetings for children, youth, and adult missions education, held virtual prayer walks and days of prayers, supported work with refugees, military, prisons, encouraged medical personnel, educators, truck drivers, and government agencies and first responders. With health protocols in place, we hosted retreats for ministers’ wives, military wives, and children in action, day camps and weeks for mother/daughter and girls who heard from missionaries. We continued to minister to women and men through Christian Job Corps and partnered with many groups to sew masks, provide food gardens and food distribution, and free Bible studies and educational materials for individuals and groups dealing with anxiety, depression, or discipleship needs. We promoted and supported giving to missions—even writing handwritten letters to churches just as Annie and Lottie used to! We are excited that we were able to financially support seminary students, international students, and missionary kids, as well as the Red Box gifts for incarcerated women. We are grateful for your continued support. We seek to join with you for Relentless growth that will bring honor and glory to God so that we can say as Hebrews 10:39 does—*But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but those who have faith and are saved.* We join with Paul, Apollos, Fannie Heck, Sallie Bailey Jones and others to be relentless to make disciples of Jesus who live on mission.**