



# MERGE

the community we are meant to be

May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016

## The Hopeful Community

Embracing The Deeper & Truer Christ Story –  
All Christians Are Called To Share The Hope-Filled Story.

***But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. - 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)***

***We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's people, <sup>5</sup>which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News. <sup>6</sup>This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace. - Colossians 1:3-6 (NLT)***

### THE META-STORY OF CHRIST (HIS STORY IS OUR STORY)

- **HIS DEATH - *You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God - Colossians 3:3 (see also Luke 9:23)***
- **HIS RESURRECTION - *When you were buried with Him in baptism, you were also raised with Him through faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead - Colossians 2:12 (see also 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:10)***
- **HIS ASCENSION - *Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God - Colossians 3:1***
- **HIS RETURN - *When Christ, who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory - Colossians 3:4***

# SHARING HOPE

## 1. We Must Live The Christ-Life Before Others.

*Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. (verses 9-10) Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, rejoicing in hope. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality. (verses 11-13) Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody. (verses 14-16) Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it." (verses 17-19) - Romans 12:9-19 (MSG)*

*Through us, he brings knowledge of Christ. Everywhere we go, people breathe in the exquisite fragrance. Because of Christ, we give off a sweet scent rising to God, which is recognized by those on the way of salvation—an aroma redolent with life. But those on the way to destruction treat us more like the stench from a rotting corpse.  
- 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 (MSG)*

## 2. We Must Share The Christ-Life With Others.

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect - 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)*

- STAY READY
- SHARE HIS LIFE
- BE GRACIOUS
- WAIT FOR INTEREST

*Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves.  
So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. - Matthew 10:16 (NLT)*

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. - 1 Peter 1:3 (ESV)*

## I Will Merge by...

- Memorizing [1 Peter 3:15](#).
- Becoming passionate about the story of Christ.
- Preparing myself to be ready to witness for Christ this week.
- Giving my life to Jesus as Savior and Lord, for the first time.

## WALK THE TALK

### A Growth Group Guide

1. What has been your own experience with witnessing, evangelism, or sharing your faith with others? Why is having a living hope so important to doing so?
2. Review *The Meta-Story of Christ*. Why is it so extremely important to fully embrace the story of Christ so that it becomes part of who you are before you share Christ with others? How does the phrase, “*the more you grow into His story, the more the story grows into us*” help you?
3. How does a “life in Christ” lead to changes in our behavior? Why is that important to being a witness with your life?
4. James Bryan Smith has said: *When we tell the truth when it is hard, when we sit in the waiting room with a hurting and scared friend when we have pressing things to do, when we strive to stay in harmony with people who disagree with us, when we find a way to spend less so we can give more, when we offer a blessing to someone who curses at us, the essence of Jesus, who lives in and through us, is emerging* (James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful Community: Following the Spirit, Extending Grace, Demonstrating Love*, page 55). How is the fragrance of Christ being inhaled by the people around you? Is Christ shining through the give and take of your life right now?
5. How is your plan to witness to others coming into its own? Are you preparing yourself to be a witness when the opportunity arises? How so? What have you found to be the most helpful to sharing Christ with others?

# SOUL TRAINING – SHARING YOUR FAITH

(WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT OR COERCION)

## A Personal Transformation Exercise

### The Principle:

Who should you witness to? What are the criteria in deciding who to share your faith with and when to share it? And finally, how do we go about it? Keep in mind that we are always witnessing, whether we know it or not. People are watching us, and our actions communicate something, for good or for ill. Remember that the key to sharing your faith effectively is to be relational and meet people where they are.

### The Plan:

This week there are 7 different activities for you to use to share your faith. Each of these activities will vary from person to person depending on your relationship with them, but they are all effective tools in sharing your faith with them.

1. Pray - The first thing we can do is pray for God to send us someone. This is a powerful prayer that nearly always gets answered, and soon.
2. Watch - Once you have prayed, keep watch. Ask God regularly, "Help me see who you are bringing me. Give me eyes of compassion. Let me know who it is and when I can take the next step."
3. Reach Out - Once you have a sense about who that person is and have sensed God preparing the relationship, find ways to reach out to the person in nonthreatening ways.
4. Listen - Listen well. This is so seldom done in our harried and hurried culture that it almost seems like a lost skill. Simply by listening you are demonstrating love.
5. Connect - If you have discerned what is pressing on the person's heart, try to connect his or her situation with the message of the Gospel.
6. Share - At some point you might be asked to tell your story or share your thoughts. If that happens, do not be afraid.
7. At a certain point in your relationship, invite the person to join with you and other Christ-followers in some capacity. It may be in church.