

“GOSPEL STORY VS SALES PITCH” / SPEAKING OF JESUS 5

My youngest son Cade grew up playing several team sports but it was baseball that always seemed to ask him to do something he detested – fundraisers. And, specifically - selling door to door. 2 reasons. 1) He didn't like baseball or the candy bars he was selling that much. 2) He would rather pluck his eyebrows hair by hair and go to school without eyebrows than do door to door cold sales. ... I think speaking of Jesus is like this for many of us. We don't like people laying a sales pitch on us and even more we detest the thought of giving them a pitch – especially when the product is something we don't really love all that much. Often, the idea of “speaking of Jesus” seems like a sales pitch to many of us and truth is – the product – Jesus, isn't someone that stuns and moves us that much.

We have spent the first part of this series talking about the barriers that keep us from speaking of Jesus and how those barriers can be pathways that God uses to move our hearts and minds to speak of Jesus. Our love for God is a huge barrier. If it is cold or luke warm as we have talked about it will be a barrier – but if we are stunned by who He is and His affection toward us - it can move us to speak of Him. It is one of our ongoing prayer items in our CG books. (READ IT) Today, we are going to talk about another huge barrier that keeps us from speaking to others about Jesus – and how God can make this barrier and actual pathway that helps speak of Jesus. *Here's the barrier ...*

When speaking of Jesus is a sales pitch – very few want to speak of Jesus.

We think of cheesy salesman & we cringe, we think I can't do that and we would rather pluck our eye brows, But-

When speaking of Jesus is engaging in a story – we can speak of Jesus.

*Seeing & engaging with Jesus as a story will not in itself move you speak of Jesus. IF the story of Jesus is stunning and captures your affection – you will speak of it. And, if the story of Jesus involves you – it becomes something you can invite people into. You Harry Potter lovers – why did you tell others about those books long before the movies came out? You became a part of the story. Those of you who have recently found yourself in love – you don't just tell others a guy or girls name and that you have a girlfriend unless your 12. No – you tell a story about her. Those of you who are parents for the first time – why is this little one in every story – because this person and this story of **your lives together** - has captured you. Why? Because **story** is how you live, **story** is how you engage in life and **STORY IS WHO YOU and I ARE!***

When speaking of Jesus is engaging in a story – we can speak of Jesus.

I am excited about this because I believe it is going to give many of us a whole new idea and way of actually of engaging others and speaking of Jesus in our every day lives.

We need to believe three things if we are to allow God's Spirit to change this from a barrier to a pathway:

01. We need to believe that speaking of Jesus is a story - not a sales pitch.
02. We need to believe Jesus as a story - takes time to engage others and be shared.
03. We need to believe Jesus as a story - makes speaking of Jesus something we/I can do. 5:00

01. We need to believe that speaking of Jesus is a story - not a sales pitch.

1 Thessalonians 2:2, 5 (ESV) 2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. ... 5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed – God is witness.

- A sales pitch is selling a product. **When speaking of Jesus is a sales pitch we often make Jesus out to be something He is not. Jesus is not a product that can exists to make you a better version you – like a new weight loss program or the latest self help book. Jesus is God – not a product, and when we present him as a product – we present a distorted Jesus, with the emphasis on us – that people have to accept or reject like a candy bar.**

Kelly Gray lives in Arnold and is the wife of A29 pastor Tim Gray. She had been praying for someone to engage in the story of God. Then she met Sandra in an exercise class– she liked her but felt uncomfortable around her. She learned over time why she felt uncomfortable around her. She was from NY, she was bitter, she was a lesbian, she was lonely, and she was a Jew who made it real apparent she was not interested in church. She told Kelly – I don't want what you are selling. Kelly said – fine, how about we just encourage each other to not quit this class.

The gospel is not a sales pitch – it is the grand redemptive story of Jesus – His person & work.

The truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that He is God – not a product and the gospel tells the grand redemptive story of this whole world with Jesus as the hero – and it offers to engage you because you are in this story. It is the story of an All-Powerful and Loving God who created you and I so we could share in the love and joy that has been shared amongst God the Father, Son, and Spirit for eternity. God didn't create to enjoy us. God created to share

His joy - so we could know enjoy Him. But we wrecked everything when we rebelled and choose to find our joy in everything but God. This rebellion is called sin and it broke this world and our souls. But, from eternity past God knew this would happen and planned for Jesus, His son, to lay down His crown and come into this world as a perfect servant and take on our rebellion and be punished in our place. But - amazing at that is - even more amazing - He rose from the dead. In his perfect life, death in my place, and resurrection - God reconciled everything that was broke by our rebellion. Now - those who faith the person and work of Jesus are made right and acceptable before God - reconciled to Him as forgiven rebels and who are now loved sons and daughters. But God is not through - He is now restoring all things to how they were meant to be. By faith we are his - but one day our broken souls will be fully restored into the image of Jesus. 6:15

Speaking of Jesus is a story ... a powerful, compelling, and stunning story that calls us into God. Jesus never intended talking to others about him to be a sales pitch - do you believe this? Jesus and his redemption of this world and your soul - is the story of all of history and beyond. When we believe this - it changes everything we think about speaking of Jesus. **Do you believe speaking of Jesus is a story - not a pitch?**

02. We need to believe Jesus as a story - takes time to engage others and be shared.

- A sales pitch is about speed. In the past, the gospel was often presented as just a way to avoid hell. The focus was speed and simplicity. Length = Confusing. This has led to some poor presentations of the gospel. **We have reduced the gospel to a deal (heaven or hell) or a simple prayer (ask Jesus into your heart).** The gospel is neither of these - it is a story that requires you to hear, absorb, dialogue, and eventually requires you to repent of your story of believing there is no God or your work can make you right with Him - and Turn to Jesus and trust your soul to His work alone to be right and acceptable before God. In Acts 18 - Paul resides in Corinth for a year and half reasoning with the people and teaching the story of God in Christ. Why? ...

The gospel story takes time because actions and words are needed to engage people in the story.



The gospel circle - is a simple tool that we will use to help equip us in sharing and engaging others with the story of Jesus. This circle takes into account that the gospel story takes time for the sake of clarity and dialogue.

God has called us to "speak of Jesus" as a way of life - not a sales pitch.

God calls us to engage people with His story that is 1) demonstrated in our lives and 2) told in our words. Both are vital. **Actions and words are needed to engage people. Jesus didn't just speak the Gospel "Believe in me and you will be saved" - he actually gave of himself - did the action - that made the gospel happen.**

11 Thess. 2:7-8 (ESV) 7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. We engage people with the reality of Christ's work/gospel with words that tell the story & actions that demonstrate it. **BOTH are VITAL.**

Please, join us over the next 8 weeks as we learn together how to live our lives in this gospel circle. We want to reshape our culture - not learn a sales pitch. We want to be a part of God's grand redemption plan. Will you join us? Let me demonstrate how this works.

- 1) **Prayer** - is all thru this circle. It is in our CG books with a place to pray for your friends by name. They are not a project to be won but a person to be loved. **Pray that you would love well and for God to rescue.**
- 2) **Go in Love** - we pray for love and that we would go in genuine love. Engage, enter their world, LOVE is key!
- 3) **Serve to Bless** - as we engage in love, we serve? Why - that is just how we live with friends - we serve. This is not about - doing to get. We serve bc Jesus lives in us and as we do - yes people get a taste of Jesus. How? We befriend - simple friendship, invite into our homes to share a meal, hang out by a fire pit, and ...
- 4) **Listen to their Story** - We ask them questions about their life and listen. There are some things we are going to learn about listening to others stories that will make it easier to speak the gospel. We will get there and spend a lot of time there - but for now: **one of the greatest ways we love and serve - is to listen.**
- 5) **Tell your Story** - As we listen, we will be able to tell our story as it fits into the gospel story.
- 6) **The Gospel Story** - is at the center of this circle for two reasons - 1) It reminds us that engaging people in this story is about telling people a greater story - Jesus. At every point, we are listening to the Spirit of God to prompt us to tell the literal Gospel Story with words - Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration - and how the apex or climax of this story is in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

*This has happened to me. I shared I am a pastor and I got asked – I have been wondering if God is punishing me. At that point I'm not going to say – well we can talk about that later - first I need to demonstrate gospel story to you by loving you, serving you, and listening to you. **NO! This is the Spirit saying – speak!***

2) The gospel story is at the center bc it reminds us – our story is not the gospel story. Our story fits into – as a part – but the gospel is Jesus! *I include a part of my story in the gospel story, but it is a part- not the story.*

This gospel circle is a way of life. It is not a formula but it has many moving parts that allow for dialogue, questions, and people to get a taste of Jesus by being around those living in the gospel story. This engages people in the story through actions and words. ***This is life & eternity changing stuff.***

*****God rescues in a moment, but the actual sharing of His story – takes time: actions and words.*****

Kelly was way out of her comfort zone. So - she desperately began to ask God to give her a genuine love for Sandra. And because she was engaging Sandra through a story and not a sales pitch – God not only had time to work on Sandra's heart but he had time to work on Kelly's life as well and give her a love for Sandra.

Kelly began to love Sandra and serve Sandra and just be her friend – but her hostility for Jesus didn't shrink.

Would you invest the time and your heart in someone seemingly hostile to Jesus – but, ok with you? Would you love and engage them with the gospel story? Don't miss this – That was you and I. We might have been ok with God – but we were hostile to His story of redemption that involved us admitting our sin and needing a Savior.

Engaging thru story gives time for the gospel to work on us – to love – and on them – to believe and repent.

10:45

03. We need to believe Jesus as a story - makes speaking of Jesus something we/I can do.

- A sales pitch usually means one cares more about the sale than the person. ***In a sales pitch, closing the deal is all that matters. If we pitch Jesus: people know when they are a project & this gives people an awful view of God and you. God doesn't see you as a project & He doesn't see the people we are speaking to as a project.***

The gospel story moves us to love the one we are engaging.

11 Thessalonians 2:5-8 (ESV) 5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed— God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we *were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves*, because you had become very dear to us. *Paul didn't use words to manipulate, seek approval, or control. Rather – he loved as God had loved him - a murder!*

When the gospel is a story that has gripped us – because we realize we are Sandra too - we will be moved to love the one we are engaging. *A sales pitch allows me to not care. Engaging others in the story of Jesus in which – I am a part – God moves us to love. The gospel story moves us to love the one we are engaging.*

- People who can do a sales pitch as a way of life are rare.

According the National Conference of State Legislators & the Labor Department – less than 11% of the work force is in sales of any kind. In almost all companies, the highest turnover rate of employees is in the sales department.

Everyone can tell stories – because story is how we live, how we engage in life, - who we are.

- How do you remember any part of your childhood? Facts – Stories, maybe with the help of pics, but still stories.

- How do you talk about vacations? Deals. Maybe, but even then you tell the story of the deal. Most just tell stories.

- How do you talk about tragedy and great celebrations? With a brief like a business report? No! You tell the story, because you lived the story. Everyone tells stories bc story is how we live, how we engage in life – who we are.

Speaking of Jesus is a story and that makes – speaking of Him something you & I can do.

Kelly – continued loving Sandra. Invited her to Easter lunch – not even church, just lunch. Sandra said, “you would invite a Jew to your house for Easter.” Kelly who had begun to love Sandra and get use to her rough and tough exterior – said, “you're not a practicing Jew – come to lunch.” She came. They joined a book club with some other ladies and really engaged in a simple friendship. All the while Kelly is loving, serving, and listening. One day – Sandra shows up on Sunday to worship – out of the blue. Kelly cried – and got her to come sit with her. For the last six months she has been coming to worship – hearing songs about the story of Jesus, listening to Tim preach about the story of Jesus and hearing stories of redemption in Kelly's life and some of her friends lives. Then one day – Sandra said – I want to get baptized.

There were never huge arguments about Judaism and Christianity, or is homosexuality a sin. There could have been for sure - but very recently Sandra stood in front of the whole church and confessed she was a sinner who had trusted Jesus to make her right before God. Tim said – it was one of the greatest celebrations he had ever seen.

Kelly has told this story over the last year of her life, it inspires me, and moves me. WHY?

Bc this about Jesus ultimately. Jesus did the amazing and rescued Sandra.

And He used story - a way of life- not a cold call. *It wasn't about Kelly debating anyone. It wasn't about some great moment of discussion that led to Sandra bowing before Jesus. It was a simple life lived that engaged another life in the story of Jesus through actions and WORDS.*

I know that – every story does not end up like God's story with Sandra. Every person we engage with the gospel story will not faith Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us two vital things about story:

1) We were made to live in God's story – *so let's engage others with that story. If it is a story – and I think we have seen that it is. Then we can all live in this story.*

2) When we as the body engage others with the gospel story – some will faith Christ. *And the celebration here and heaven is wild and great as we get to see others come into the joy they were created for.*

Application:

- **God help me believe today that speaking of Jesus is a story in which I can engage others over time.**
- **God – give me a friend or love for a friend – I can engage in Your story.** *Pray by name or for that name.* 11:00

Blessing: II Corinthians 5:14-15