

Spiritual Disciplines: Sharing Your Faith

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

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So we've been talking about spiritual disciplines, and today I just want to spend a little time talking about sharing your faith. Have you ever had someone call you or text you and ask for your opinion or your advice? It could be on anything. It could be because they're looking for a contractor to paint their house because they know you just had yours painted. It could be looking for a good surgeon because you just had shoulder surgery and now they need to have shoulder surgery. And so they say who? Who was your surgeon?

Did he do a good job? It could be to ask about the latest movie that has come out to the theater and you went with your family. And so they call and say, hey, is it worth us going and watching this movie at the theater or should we just wait until it comes out on DVD? It could be about the decision of sending your kids to public school or homeschooling and so a young family calls you and says, hey, what are we supposed to do? Maybe they're calling to ask you about your college experience because their kids are older now and they're looking for a college.

And so they want to know about the specific college that you went to. Maybe you're in a position where somebody calls you for a reference because somebody you know is applying for a job and they've put you down on the reference sheet. Maybe you've left a review on Amazon or somewhere else for a product that you have purchased, and I'm beginning to believe more and more that all of those are fake, by the way. All of the reviews on Amazon, maybe it was a pair of shoes that you purchased at finish line.

Maybe you left a review at the last place you stayed through VRBO on your vacation. And if you don't know what that is, that's okay. Maybe you filled out a review on your receipt at Culver's so that you could get a free scoop of ice cream. Did you guys know you could do that, by the way? If you don't, you should do that, all right? It's a really quick survey review. You get a free scoop of custard, your next time you're there. And just so you know, someone told me today that it's national ice cream day in frozen custard counts in my book. So if you want to go to Culver's and get a scoop, you can do that.

Maybe you've gone home with your spouse after spending time with a new couple that you're trying to become friends with and you talk about your experience. I know some of you don't do this, but have you ever critiqued the church service at lunch with your Friends afterwards? You talk about the church service. You see, without knowing it, many of us are really good at sharing our experiences, sharing our stories, sharing the things that we've gone through in life.

And what we would recommend or not recommend, but there are two areas that we are afraid to talk about, that if these come up, we usually go quiet, and those two things are politics and religion. When those conversations begin, most of us will just close our mouths and excuse us from the conversation. Why is it that we steer clear of these two topics? We all would agree that are important. They're good to talk about. We need to talk about them.

But many of us are afraid to do so. And please know I don't blame you. Because I think about my own experiences, and I think that you guys would have similar experiences. You have decided that these two topics are not worth talking about because you have received your fair share of black eyes from unknowingly jumping into a conversation with certain individuals about faith and politics. I have been tongue last quite a

few times as I have talked to people about faith and politics and as I try to share what I feel and how they feel.

So what happens is you get into these conversations and you begin to make a black list, and it's just in your head, many of you don't write it down, but you just think, okay, note to self, don't talk to so and so about faith and politics, right? And for some of you, it's even in your own family. I have those in mind as well. We say, okay, we're not going to talk about those things because it's just going to get messy. And so you begin to make this black list, but the problem is that eventually everybody ends up on that list and you just say, you know what?

I am not going to talk about these two things again. But in the midst of that, even in my own life, I can not ignore what Peter says in first Peter chapter three 15. Look at what he says to us, the church, believers, but in your hearts, revere Christ as lord, and always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

Peter says, I must be willing as a follower of Jesus Christ to be in dialog with others about my faith in Jesus. You see, in church, whenever we hear the word evangelism, we close our ears. Now, I know that happens because I was raised in the church. And whenever somebody would talk about evangelism, I would close my ears, but I would leave my eyes open so they thought I was still with them, all right? I don't want you guys to do that today. Keep your ears open.

We are going to talk about evangelism, but not in the way that you are used to hearing about evangelism. So don't close your ears today. I want to look at this verse a little more closely to make sure that you picked up on what he said. So I want to highlight a couple of these words. But in your heart's revere Christ as lord, always be prepared to give in answer. To everyone who asks you, do you notice what Peter is saying here?

The implication is you and I as followers of Jesus Christ should be ready to give an answer when somebody asks us a question. This is a little less intimidating, at least it is for me, even as a pastor to say, you know what? I can do that. If someone asks me a question, they're asking my opinion, they're asking for my advice. I can give them my story. I can share my faith journey with them. And if they have a question about faith, I can easily answer that.

Where evangelism gets difficult for me or sharing my faith is some of these other things that we're going to talk about in a little bit. So what does it actually mean to share your faith? I want to talk about that a little bit today as we spend our time together. What does it look like for the church to tell others about the love of Jesus? So if you haven't already, I encourage you open your bibles the first Peter chapter three 15. It's in the New Testament.

All right, first Peter chapter three 15, and then let me pray and we'll jump into this. Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us where we're at. Thank you for entrusting your truth. In us to share with others, father, we've all been in difficult situations where things haven't gone the way that we thought they would as we wanted to share our faith with family or friends or those that we love.

It can be a difficult thing to do. People can take offense. It can be awkward. And so I pray that you would give us wisdom as we learn to love others well. We ask this in Jesus name, amen. Before we continue in first Peter, chapter three, and we get to the second half of verse 15, I need to take a minute to talk with you about something that I call false persecution.

Now, this is a term that I am making up as I have been in the church my whole life and talk to people about evangelism and listen to many messages about evangelism. I want to give you my definition of false persecution. This is how I'm defining it. It is carrying around your persecution as a badge of honor when in fact your persecution is because you are doing it all wrong. So we talk about being persecuted for our faith.

When other people do bad things to us or say bad things about us or we feel left out because of our faith and we say, I'm being persecuted and we carry that as a badge of honor when in reality, maybe we're being ignored or pushed off to the side because we are not doing it, how we were meant to share our faith. Now, before I even share these examples, I want you to know that it's not my heart to offend anybody.

If you have tried any of these things that I'm going to mention, I do believe that those that use these methods of evangelism have the correct motives. I believe they're pure. I think their intentions are correct. But I am not sure that it's the best way for us to share our faith. So let me give you three examples of what I would call false persecution. So the first one, if you go to a big city, you go to a big event, and you see the guy on the corner with a blow horn or with a sign, all right? Have you guys experienced that before?

That's not just me, right? You see these signs, they say you know, you're going to hell, you're going to burn. It's kind of like that funny video that we had earlier. And the whole thing is about condemnation. And it's just yelling to anybody that's within earshot of hearing your voice. And so you are proclaiming the truth. It is true. If we don't confess Jesus as our personal savior, we're going to go to hell. That is a true statement, but it's not necessarily done in a correct manner. And so this guy will go on the street corner day after day after day.

And he will go home with pride in his heart because he feels he has been persecuted because multiple people have walked by in responded in anger, and he just says, oh, I'm being persecuted for my faith. And I would say this is false persecution. He wasn't being persecuted because of his faith. He was being persecuted because he was being rude. We wouldn't do this in any other format or any other way would we think this is the best way to get a message across to somebody? Again, I think his motives are pure, but I don't think that's how we're supposed to share our faith.

Now let me talk about another person that maybe you've run into. The lady it could be a guy as well who just seems to over spiritualize everything in her life. So much so that you can't even have a normal conversation with her. You can't talk with her about anything because everything goes back to scripture, right? Which is good. I mean, I love the Bible. You guys know that. We just had a lesson on it last week. But you know the people I'm talking about, you try to talk about the weather and it goes back to something spiritual. You try to talk about sports. It goes back to something spiritual.

And so this lady is so passionate about her faith and about the word of God that everything goes back to that, but people don't want to talk with her. And she says, well, I'm being persecuted because of my faith. Nobody wants to talk with me because I love Jesus. And I say, she isn't being isolated because of her faith. She is being isolated because she is become unapproachable and disconnected with life. So nobody wants to talk with her because they can't relate to her.

Again, motives are pure, but there's a disconnect. Let me talk about the last one. Third person. These are the people that go door to door. And we've heard of this if you've been raised in the church, door to door evangelism. It's not just something that Christians do. You've had the Mormons probably come to your door or the Jehovah's Witnesses and the problem often with door to door evangelism. Again, the motive is correct, but the people that are doing that are often doing it because they feel obligated to do it, they feel guilty to do it.

And so they come to your door and some of them I've even had them pull out a piece of paper and they just have to get through their script. They don't even care if you're listening. They just want to get to their quota and so they read off that whole thing or they have it memorized if they're really good and they get to the end and say, okay, do you want to believe what we believe and do you want to get connected with us? They don't really listen or ask questions. They just want some mortality marks of people that they've gotten to read a prayer that they think is important.

And so these people get labeled as crazy in the community, and they're happy about it because they say, we're being persecuted because of our faith, when in fact, nope, they're just acting crazy. They have that label because they are acting crazy. Now I could go on, but I've probably offended enough people, so I'll just stop there. Again, I believe the motives are pure, but something is missing. You have to go on to the rest, the second half of first Peter, chapter three 15.

Yes, be prepared to give an answer for those who ask for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect. This is the key to us sharing our faith with others. We've been asked a question and we respond with gentleness and respect. I love that Peter says someone is going to ask us about our faith. How does that happen? What does that look like? This means that somebody is actively seeking. They've noticed something different in you.

That you're different than everybody else that they have come in contact with that they've ever met in this difference according to scripture is the Holy Spirit that is inside of us. The Bible tells us that when we confess Jesus as our personal savior as his followers, that his Holy Spirit enters us in scripture says, we become a new creation. We are transformed. And so because of that transformation, we see the world differently, we respond to the world differently, what we eat, what we drink, how we act, what we watch on TV.

How we view others. All of that changes because of the transformation power of the Holy Spirit. And people notice that. And so Peter recognizes that people are going to notice that. And so they are going to ask questions. And when they do, Peter simply says, you should be ready to answer. With gentleness and respect. I hope you notice in some of the examples that I gave that that was the issue. There was no gentleness or respect or relationship there.

Now I know that I will get the person that will say, you know what? Pastor, you can't always be gentle and have respect. Sometimes you just have to speak the truth. I mean, look at scripture. Look at what Jesus did in the temple. He overturned the tables. Pastor, you are going to offend people when you share the gospel. I have three responses to them because I anticipated this question in some of your minds. All right? Here are my three answers.

Number one, I am not Jesus. Some of you should have said amen on that one. I don't always know when the correct time to be bold is. Jesus did, because he was Jesus. Number two, when I look at the gospels, Jesus was overwhelmingly more kind, gentle and respectful than he was harsh.

If we're going to wait on the scales, he was way more gentle, respectful than he was harsh, and the third point, every time that Jesus was harsh with somebody in the gospels, it was with the religious leaders, not the people who were lost and confused. The times that Jesus was harsh were with the religious leaders, not with the lost and confused. So because of that and how I read the gospels, I am going to err on the side of being gentle.

When it comes to sharing my faith in Jesus Christ. You see, we are called to live our lives in obedience to the spirit. And in so doing, people will ask us questions. Let me give you some examples of how you can do this in your daily life. Maybe after church, you go out to eat and you have your server there and they bring you your food and your drinks and everything else. And at the very end, you thank them for serving you. You appreciate them for doing their job well, and you simply say, can we pray for you?

Is there anything you need prayer for? If they say yes, great, pray for them. If they say no, that's fine as well. But I've never had somebody offended if I asked if I can pray for them. Never, not once. Now, maybe you have, but it's going to be very uncommon. Second thing you can do, you have neighbors, people that live by you, take care of them. When they're sick, when they're not doing well, maybe they've had surgery, bring them something to eat, bring them a meal, just take care of your neighbors. Love those people that live around you. Third thing you can do, be generous.

Give to other people, not just finances, but serve other people, give financially if necessary. Next thing you can do is just be nice and friendly. Just be friendly. I am amazed at how much you can stand out in our world today. If you just have a smile on your face, right? I can't tell you how many people are shocked when I walk by them and I just simply smile at them and it's just like, oh, that was nice. I don't know what's happened in our world.

Maybe it's learning to not be selfish or conceded to learn more about other people than just sharing about yourself. When I was a youth pastor, and I would go to the school lunches. This was back when they would let youth pastors go to school lunches at all the schools. And it was always interesting. I would go and I would sit at the lunch table and one kid would share a story about something that happened in his or her life. And then the next kid would have to share a better story and the next kid. It had to be about me.

And you just saw this work its way around the table that everybody wanted the conversation focused on them. And I remember coming back to the teenagers and I said, what would it look like? If when you sit at the lunch table, you just ask questions about them. You don't have to bring the conversation back to yourself. And it's amazing how much of a difference that makes that we don't become so conceited that life's about us, but we learn about other people. You see others will not be offended when you talk about your faith, if they've asked you a question.

If they have pursued you, how could they be offended? I've never offended somebody by telling them that Jesus loves them more than they could ever know. I've never offended somebody when they've asked me about my faith or have had a question. They don't walk away angry that I actually answered their question. It is true that the gospel is offensive. I can not change that fact.

Part of the good news of Jesus Christ is recognizing that we have sinned against a holy God, and I don't know about you, but I don't meet many people who like to know they've messed up. It's not encouraging to know that I've messed up. Every single one of us here is a sinner that has been saved by grace. But even though the gospel is offensive, that doesn't mean that we need to lose respect or dignity for the people that God loves.

We need to make sharing our faith in answering their questions as comfortable as talking about our favorite movie or hobby, it should be natural, not canned, it should be real. Some of you think I just pulled first Peter from the Bible to make a point. And this really isn't what evangelism is. So let me share with you quickly one more verse. This comes from the Apostle Paul and Colossians, chapter four versus 5 and 6.

The Apostle Paul says, be wise in the way you act toward outsiders, make the most of every opportunity. And I just want to pause here and let you know that I don't always do this. I don't always make the most of every opportunity. Some of you might think as a pastor, it's easier to share your faith or it's just natural for that to happen, but let me share with you that I think sometimes you have an advantage over I do. Let me just give you a quick example.

This last week I went to a conference down in Orlando, Florida for the missionary church, and so I had to get on a plane in Fort Wayne and fly into Orlando. And I don't know what it is about planes these days, but either they're getting smaller or I'm getting larger, right? But you sit in the seat and I'm literally going to be touching these two people next to me the whole flight. Like I can't get away. And so you sit there and you know you have your small talk and you say hi and what are you doing and where are you going and everything else? And inevitably, when you have that small talk, one of the first questions that everybody asks is, what do you do for a living?

So they'll eventually ask me, what do you do for a living? And I have to be honest with you because there's been times that I don't want to lie, but I don't want to be a 100% honest. And so I want to say things like, I'm a social worker. I work with people, which isn't fully lying, right? I work with people. I haven't done that, so I

said, hey, you know, on the way down, I said, yeah, I'm a pastor at a church, and we're going to a conference down in Orlando. And they say, oh, that's nice. Which translated means don't talk to me anymore.

So it's hard because there's times where maybe want to or I'm willing to share my faith or just have a conversation and they don't want to have that on the way back. I sit next to you, you know, while we're down there, hopefully you guys don't look down on me, but you know we're going to a restaurant to eat and the restaurant is so busy. It's an hour wait, but there's places at the bar where you can sit. Well, I don't have my kids with me, and I'm just going to get food, so I'm like, hey, I'll just go to the bar. So I go to the bar and, you know, I sit down and there's two guys sitting next to me and they're drinking, not soda.

They're drinking alcohol. And you know, they sit down and we begin a conversation and I find out that they're down there for a conference as well. And they're at a school resource officer conference, which I didn't know they even had those. They use a phrase SRO. And so I would never want them at the school that my kids are at. But anyways, they're drinking, you know, and they're having a good old time and they begin a conversation with me and they're like, oh, what are you down here for? I'm here for a conference. I'm trying to be as vague as possible, right? I'm down here for a conference.

Oh, what's your conference? Oh, it's for churches, you know, and they kind of give me that weird look. Like, what do you do for a living? I'm a pastor. Oh, that's nice. I mean, don't talk to me anymore, right? So, I mean, they were friendly, and we ended up not even eating there. We ended up getting a table and eating somewhere else. But sometimes sharing your faith as a pastor can be even harder because you just have that wall that people put up. And unless you are a pastor, maybe you don't understand what I'm talking about.

But I will be honest and share with you, I am not always making the most of every opportunity on my plane ride back home. I wanted to sit next to people that didn't want to talk. I was just tired. It had been a long week, and I just thought, okay, I am not going to make the most of this opportunity. And so I just want to confess that to you. And now I feel better. All right. So there we go. So sharing your faith. Make the most of every opportunity. Look what he says in verse 6.

Let your conversation be always full of grace. Seasoned with salt so that you may know how to answer everyone. What does that imply they asked you a question? Always be ready to answer when people ask you a question. We can't miss this point. You see, in biblical times, outsiders, those that were not part of the church, nonbelievers, knew who to talk to if they had questions about faith because those people were different.

They were different than everybody else that they had ever run into. And Peter and Paul and the other believers were living in such a way that their neighbors, their coworkers, their friends, would come to them if they had a question about the God that they were serving. And so here is the real question today. Are you living in a way that people would feel comfortable asking you questions about faith in God? Are you living in a way that your neighbors, your Friends, your family, your coworkers, would feel comfortable coming and asking you questions about faith and God?

Or are you the person that has the correct motives? You truly care about people, but unfortunately you've scared everyone away. Paul tells us to live in such a way that those around you who don't know Jesus will want to know him because of you. Be a mirror that reflects who God is, be a light that shines wherever you are, Matthew, chapter 5 16.

Jesus says, in the same way, let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven. Jesus says, let your light shine. Don't be overbearing. It's good to share your story when people ask, but don't be pushy. No when to back off, be a student of people, pick up on non verbal communication, just like when the guy next to me says, oh, that's nice. And I know that he is saying, don't talk to me anymore.

Pick up on the non verbal communication. I know I've given the analogy before, but sometimes you just have to move the ball down the field. You don't have to score a touchdown every time. What does that mean? That means that it is very rare that somebody on their first conversation and trying to understand who God is will immediately give their life over to him. It will take time after time after time, maybe for you, your responsibility is to help them take that next step towards Jesus, and that next step might simply finally coming to the truth that all Christians aren't crazy.

You can be a normal person that loves Jesus and goes through life and has ups and downs and has good days and bad days, but you're putting your faith in Jesus Christ. So what is this good news that I'm talking about sharing? Now you didn't ask, but you walked into the church today, so I get to share real brief. The good news of Jesus Christ is the understanding that if I am willing to confess my sins to a holy God, to admit that I have made mistakes.

And if I'm willing to repent of my sins, which just simply means turn away, do my best by the power of the Holy Spirit to not fall into those traps anymore and sin against a holy God. And if I am to proclaim him as lord of my life, hand over control of everything that I am and say, God, you are now in command. If I put my faith in the resurrection of Jesus, believing that I can also be resurrected when that day comes. Then I will be saved.

Apostle Paul says that if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved, not maybe, not possibly, not hopefully. You will be saved. And so maybe you walk through the doors today or you're watching online or listening on the radio, and you're not even sure why you tuned in or why you're here. I just want to share the good news with you.

That Jesus loves you, and that he has made a plan for you to spend eternity with him. That if you would proclaim him as lord, repent of your sins, and invite him into your life, you will be saved. For all of eternity, that is the good news of Jesus Christ. As always, the altar is open. If you feel your heart beating, if you feel a sense to want to ask some questions, I encourage you to come to the altar.

If that's too awkward or hard for you, I will be upfront here, staying afterwards, intentionally just sitting in my pew. If you want to come ask me questions or talk to me, I am available. There is nothing greater than I would want to do than to share with you the good news of Jesus Christ. Let's close in prayer. Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us. Again, every single one of us here are sinners. Saved by grace. It's by your mercy.

It's by your love. It's not by our deeds. It's nothing we can do. It's simply because of your grace. So lord, if there is anyone here today, anybody listening on the radio, watching online. And their heart is pounding. I pray that they would seek somebody to ask questions to. They would invite you into their hearts and into their lives. And they would experience the goodness of you. We ask this in Jesus name.

Amen.