



**START SLIDE (Blank)  
(DO ENTIRE GREETING IN SPANGLISH...)**

**“Hola mis amigos! Mis hermanos y hermanas a Trinity | Big Rapids y a Trinity | Newaygo! Me Llamo Patricio, y yo soy el pastor de Newaygo iglesia.”**

**“Tu Entiendes? Levante su mano si me entiende...Newaygo iglesia, tu Tambien...”**

**...Really, I don't know a lot of Spanish...even though I took 3 yrs of Spanish in high school and traveled to South America...**

**TR: If you were to just throw me in right now in the middle of L'ArCada, where Jessi Ruiter is now, what I'd be speaking would be more like...**

# Spanglish

## **READ SLIDE...**

- I know just enough Spanish to maybe get by... there'd be a lot of English and hand signals

**TR: Similarly, I'd say many of us who claim Christ, when trying to articulate our faith with someone (whether believer or unbeliever) speak something along the lines of...**



**READ SLIDE...**

- **We might know a few vocab words, some Jesus catch phrases, the big picture**
- **OR maybe we've studied and practiced enough to give a Presentation TO Someone BUT what about knowing enough to have a Conversation WITH Someone...?**
- **Do we know the Gospel (Good News of Jesus) well enough to speak it fluently with someone in their unique situation?**

**TR: To live out our vision and have greater Gospel INfluence IN our Communities, we need greater...**

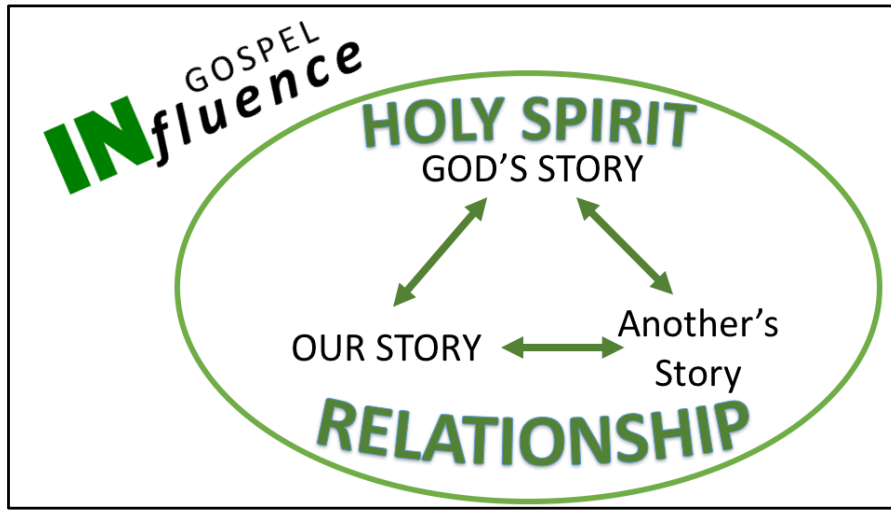


**...GOSPEL FLUENCY – Believing and speaking the good news of Jesus INTO the Everyday Stuff of Life...**

- **It's a term used a lot by pastor Jeff Vanderstelt... who's written a couple books on this topic that have had a lot of Gospel Influence on me.**
- **To be fluent is to have the ability to accurately hear and respond in a specific language.**
- **To be fluent in the gospel then is to know the good news of Jesus and be able to accurately apply it to normal, everyday life.**
- **"You gain fluency in a language when you move from merely**

**translating an unfamiliar language into a familiar one to interpreting all of life through that new language. It happens when you can think, feel, speak, even dream in that language ...and it becomes the filter through which you perceive the world and help others perceive theirs and yours.”**

- **TR: I believe the more fluent we become in the gospel, (which is our native tongue in Christ) the greater gospel INfluence we will have in our church and in our communities...**



**...the more we will clearly point them to Jesus – Connecting God's story (The Good News of Jesus) to our story to their story, in the context of relationship (characterized by love and humility), as led by the Holy Spirit.**

**TR: Remember, this all fits and ties in with our 3-yr vision as a church...**



**...READ SLIDE...**

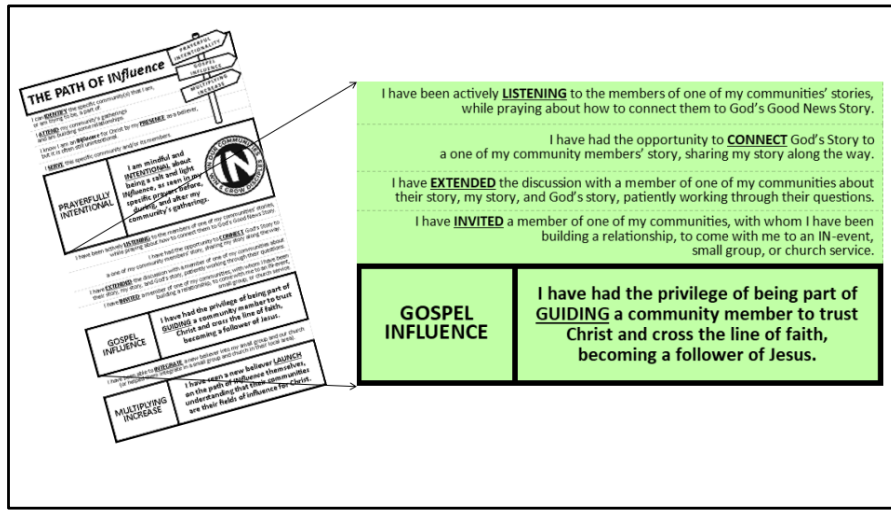
**TR: To BE what Jesus called His followers to BE...**



**...Salt and Light in a Decaying and Dark world...**

- To share with people HOW Jesus is good news to their lives...**
- Jesus declared, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me because He has anointed me to proclaim GOOD NEWS to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty for the captives and recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed. To proclaim the year of the Lord's Favor."**
- We are to proclaim good news to people, that Jesus, our King and Rescuer, is here, a magnificent light in the darkness, hope in the brokenness of our communities, freedom from bondage to sin and addiction...**

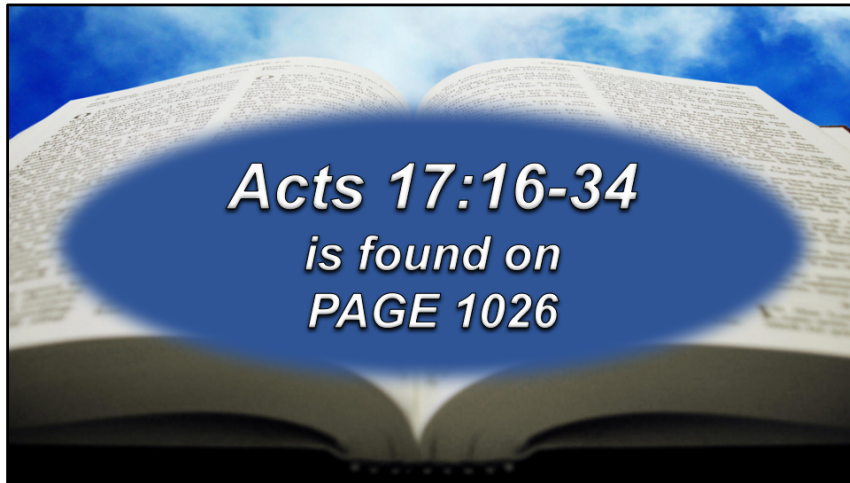




- If you take out the insert in your worship flyer, you'll find our vision (more specifically stated) on one side and the Path of Influence on the other...
- these are some of the steps that we take with a person on that path of influencing someone for Christ.
- There are **THREE** major signposts that point us along on this path, the **FIRST** being intentional prayer...toward gospel influence (which we focused on last week), the **SECOND** being Gospel Influence...actually having opportunity to hear someone's story and connect it clearly with God's story (which is what we're focusing on today), and finally the **THIRD**, seeing multiplying increase...seeing a new believer now launch on the path of influence with someone

**else...disciples who make disciples who make disciples...**

**TR: So, this morning we're going to look at how the apostle Paul spoke the gospel fluently with the people of Athens ...**



**. . . Turn with me in your bibles to Acts 17:16-34...**



**...The apostle Paul, had just been sharing Jesus in Thessalonica and Berea, and there were some Jews stirring up trouble for Paul wherever he went with the Gospel...**

- **And so he was sent by the believers in those places as far away as Athens...The place of all philosophy and higher learning and deep thinking and lots of religious practices and gods, the Cultural Mecca of the world**
- **while Paul was waiting for his fellow co-workers to come to him (Silas and Timothy), he notices all the many gods around him, and his spirit is stirred up within him to courageously make some connections to the one True God...**
- **And so he preaches Jesus in the synagogue...and**

**marketplace...**

**TR: And this catches the attention of some of the philosophers and thinkers, because the text tells us that the people of Athens loved nothing more than to talk and hear about new ideas, philosophies, and thinking...and what Paul was saying about Jesus and His resurrection was certainly a new idea...**



**.....And so they brought him to the Areopagus...the place of the highest court in the land, charged with supervising the affairs of the national religion...**

**with the Acropolis in the background, with the Parthenon clearly visible (temple for Athena, the patron goddess of wisdom, craft, and war)...**

**TR: ...Paul begins to carefully and courageously connect God's story with that of the Athenians...**



**.....FOLLOW ALONG WITH ME in your bibles as I READ ALOUD...starting in verse 22 and going through 31...READ PASSAGE...**

**TR: So, let's take a look here at how Paul connected stories. . .**

## **Gospel INfluence in *Athens*...**

### **God's Story**

*Creation ~ Fall ~ Redemption ~ New Creation*

**. . . It all starts with knowing God's Big story of redemption...**

- **There are many various ways to know and tell this story, and if you've been around at Trinity for any length of time, you know that we tell it through the 8 Simple Drawings...**
- **Well, for today, we're going to boil it down to FOUR key movements...CREATION, FALL, REDEMPTION, and NEW CREATION...**

**TR: Let's review now Paul's speech and fill in this story framework...**



## Gospel INfluence in *Athens*...

### God's Story

*Creation ~ Fall ~ Redemption ~ New Creation*

God made the  
world and  
everything in it.

**. . . It starts at Creation, and Paul identifies in (v.24-26) that it is God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth...He himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth..."**

- He created us, and created us in His image for His glory. We were made for relationship with Him and to find our greatest joy and delight in Him.**

**TR: But clearly it didn't continue on that way...**

## Gospel INfluence in *Athens*...

### God's Story

*Creation ~ Fall ~ Redemption ~ New Creation*

...Divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of men.

**. . . The first Fall started with Adam and Eve in the Garden, but it continues on in every generation...being born into sin and acting out our own rebellion against God...**

**- (v.16, 29) Athens was full of idols... Worshipping the Divine Being, based on their own thinking and imagination...**

**- Paul wrote in Romans 1, "Claiming to be wise they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things...They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the Creature rather than the Creator..."**

**- And it is the Fall that has brought about Death, Decay, and**

**Darkness...**

**TR: But praise God that He didn't leave us this way...**

## Gospel INfluence in *Athens*...

### God's Story

*Creation ~ Fall ~ Redemption ~ New Creation*

...that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward Him. Yet, He is not far from each of us...

**. . . God put into action a plan of Rescue...Paul doesn't go into great detail about it here in the short moments he has with the Athenians...he simply emphasizes that God does not leave us on our own but is near and wants us to find Him...**

- **But we know That Jesus is central to that plan. He is the Hero who was promised through out the entire Old Testament,**
- **who then finally came and moved into our neighborhood as the perfect, sinless man, showing us how to live,**
- **who then rescued the world by atoning for all our sins through his willing and sacrificial death on the cross and crediting His righteousness to all who believe,**

- and who now reigns victorious over sin, death, and the devil.
- This REDEMPTION is available to all those who repent and believe....TURN and TRUST...

**TR: And one day He's coming back...**

## Gospel INfluence in *Athens*...

### God's Story

*Creation ~ Fall ~ Redemption ~ New Creation*

...He has fixed a day on  
which He will judge the  
world in righteousness...

. . . (v.31)...READ SLIDE...

- He's coming back for those who are His, those who turned and trusted...
- He's coming back to make all things right...Justice will be done, and the kingdom will come in its fullness...EVIL will be done away with, Tears will be no more, Sin and death will be a past reality, and we will be with our Jesus forever in the New Heavens and the New Earth...
- This is the True story of God and humanity and the world, the Gospel, the "language" by which Paul interprets everything...his story and everyone else's...

- **TR: But now how about their story...that of the Athenians...**



**. . . It's hard to communicate effectively and make connections with someone, if you don't know their story in some way first...**

- **So it takes CARE to Notice and Listen to what someone else's story is BEFORE you jump in with the answers and share God's story with them...**
- **I thought it was Charles Spurgeon, but now I believe it was actually Francis Shaeffer who said, "if he only had one hour with someone on their deathbed, he'd spend 55 minutes listening first to their story, and then spend the last 5 minutes speaking something meaningful into that person's story..." in other words sharing how Jesus is good news to that person specifically...**



- **The idea with Gospel Fluency is to hear someone's story and listen for the "Gospel Gaps" ...places where the Good News of Jesus is missing...**

**TR: Everyone actually lives out the same basic gospel story framework...so Gospel INfluence is paying attention to how people are living out a false Gospel...**

## Gospel INfluence in *Athens*...

Their Story – Care to Notice/Listen

*Creation ~ Fall ~ Redemption ~ New Creation*

*Identity ~ Problem ~ Solution ~ Ultimate Hope*

**KNOWLEDGE**

**. . . Everyone has a Creation story...a CORE IDENTITY that they live out of, who or what made and shaped them into who they are today...We all find our identity in someone or something...and live out of it...**

- **I AM what I have, what I do, who I'm related to, what school I went to, what country I live in, what people say about me, what I control, how I perform, how I look, what I know, etc.**
- **For the Athenians, it seems that at least one of their core identities was in what they KNEW, UNDERSTOOD and CREATED...**

## Gospel INfluence in *Athens*...

Their Story – Care to Notice/Listen

*Creation ~ Fall ~ Redemption ~ New Creation*

*Identity ~ Problem ~ Solution ~ Ultimate Hope*

### IGNORANCE

- . . . Everyone has a FALL story...a PROBLEM that they have to deal with and overcome...
- It's something that threatens to destroy their identity and purpose, or it already has...
  - It's what they see as the chief cause of brokenness in their world and why things are not the way they should be.
  - The blame usually falls on someone or something for why things are wrong in their story...bad boss, bad job, bad spouse, bad neighbor...
  - In the case of the Athenians, it's not clear exactly what their problem may be, but generally it's probably something along

**the lines of not knowing enough, not knowing correctly, not understanding fully...IGNORANCE perhaps...from what little I know of epicurean and stoic philosophy, it was lack of knowledge and reason that led to pain and suffering in the world...**

## Gospel INfluence in *Athens*...

Their Story – Care to Notice/Listen

*Creation ~ Fall ~ Redemption ~ New Creation*

*Identity ~ Problem ~ Solution ~ Ultimate Hope*

NEW KNOWLEDGE

**. . . Based on the core identity and biggest problem, everyone has a redemption story, a SOLUTION to overcome the problem...a Savior of some sort...**

- **Everyone needs to be rescued from something, because clearly everyone has problems in this world. The question is, who or what is their Savior?**
- **And every Savior, if it's not Jesus, fails and falls short at some point...Only Jesus is the perfect Savior that can handle our deepest problem, which is sin.**

**TR: Again for the Athenians, it's not quite clear, but it seems that their Solution to their problems was greater knowledge and New Ideas and The ideal**

**philosopher/thinker/teacher...Also, WORSHIPING gods that they imagined and created to fill in the gaps where there were HOLES in what they thought they KNEW...**

## Gospel INfluence in *Athens*...

Their Story – Care to Notice/Listen

*Creation ~ Fall ~ Redemption ~ New Creation*

*Identity ~ Problem ~ Solution ~ Ultimate Hope*

FULL KNOWLEDGE –  
NO SUFFERING

. . . Finally, Everyone has a New Creation Story, or an ULTIMATE HOPE that keeps them going, an ideal future, some sort of happy ending that they believe will come if they just keep living out whatever their SOLUTION story is...

- For the Athenians, and again from what little I know of Stoic and Epicurean philosophies, the ultimate goal through greater knowledge was freedom from suffering...which brought about happiness and pleasure



- It takes **CARE** to notice and listen to someone else's story, and it takes **COURAGE** to connect...
- And ultimately It takes prayer and listening most of all to the Holy Spirit and following His lead toward Gospel INfluence...
- So, the false gospel for the Athenians is I am what I know, the problem is ignorance, the solution is new teaching from philosophers and gods, and the ultimate hope is full knowledge that brings about freedom from suffering...

**TR: So, do you see where the "Gospel Gaps" are and where Paul Courageously begins to make some connections?**



## **Gospel INfluence in *Athens*...**

*Identity ~ Problem ~ Solution ~ Ultimate Hope*

### **Gospel Gaps? – Courage to Connect**

- “To an Unknown God...” (Problem)
- Made by the CREATOR (Identity)
- Don’t seek after knowledge and gods in your ignorance. SEEK HIM! (Solution)

**. . . The first obvious connection is that Paul sees they are religious, believe in higher divine powers, and are even worshiping an unknown god...**

- **And Paul addresses one of their problems...the UNKOWN and Ignorance, and He begins to make God known...because He’s near and can be known...**
- **Paul then addresses their solution of going after gods, and says go after the Creator instead who made you and knows you...your identity goes back to Him**
- **So, Repent and stop seeking after knowledge and your own gods. Seek HIM! In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (as Paul says in Colossians)...**

- **And some just mocked Paul and his gospel...didn't even let him finish, but there were others who wanted to hear more and still others who believed, and that will be the same with us...**
- **So what about Gospel INfluence in our stories today? Gospel INfluence can happen with Anyone by following the same basic story framework...**
- **TR:.. For example, I knew someone when I was younger who basically lived out the following basic story line...**

## Gospel INfluence in *Anything...*

*Identity ~ Problem ~ Solution ~ Ultimate Hope*

AMERICA

EVERYONE ELSE

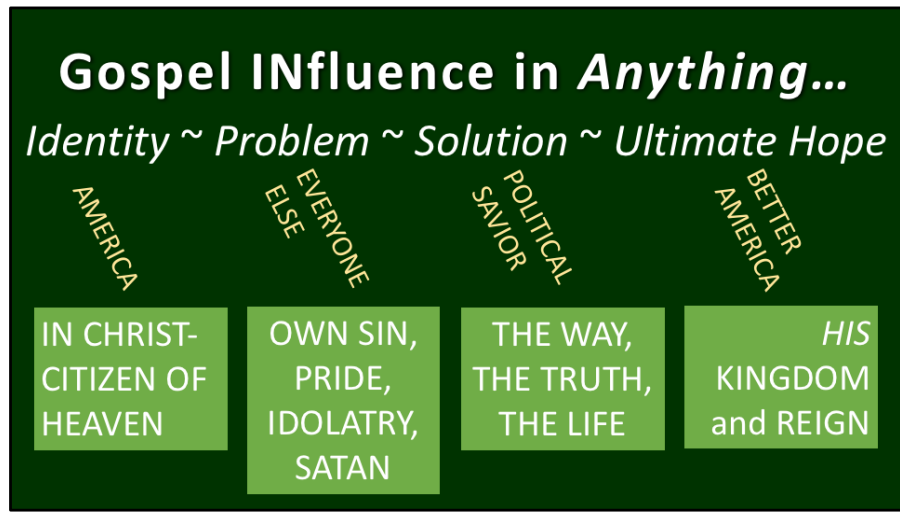
POLITICAL SAVIOR

BETTER AMERICA

- One of his big identities was America, the Red, White, and Blue, through and through...
- The problem was everyone who was destroying America...Democrats, Middle East, Blacks, Hispanics...
- The solution was lock them up, vote them out, take them out...better policing, more aggressive preemptive military, and a strong ideal political leader to make it all happen...
- The ultimate hope was a better America, the best country for his family to live safely, peacefully, and securely in...

TR: Even when I was younger, I felt something was off...gaps

**where the Gospel was missing...**



**. . . When it comes to our core IDENTITY, we all better follow Paul's lead when he says in Phillipians, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...everything else...RUBBISH!"**

- **Our biggest PROBLEM...we ought to first examine our own hearts..."If my people who are called by my name would humble themselves, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and heal their land." Often times, it the very thing that we put in the SOLUTION that is actually the PROBLEM that we must turn away from and turn to Jesus instead...it's idolatry...**
- **AND clearly then, the SOLUTION is always Jesus...He is the**

**better leader, he shows a better way, offers a better life in Him, and brings about true and lasting change.**

- **Our ULTIMATE HOPE then is not a perfect country BUT Rather an unshakable Kingdom, one made up of every race, tribe, and tongue, those who are no longer slaves to fear, but are children of God in whom Christ dwells and delights...**
- **You can see this basic story framework in every movie, book, video game, every person...what identity are they living out of, what's the someone or something they blame for their problems, what's their functional savior that they turn to, and what's their ultimate hope in?**
- **...(If time, share about girl with 100+hrs of Overtime, and how Jesus says come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.)**

**TR: Some of you may be wondering...do I have what it**

**takes...Do I have the courage to connect...to walk with  
someone on this path of INfluence...**



...You might be thinking, I only speak a little Gospel, I'm not fluent enough yet...Here, talk to my translator (my pastor, elder, SGL, etc.)...

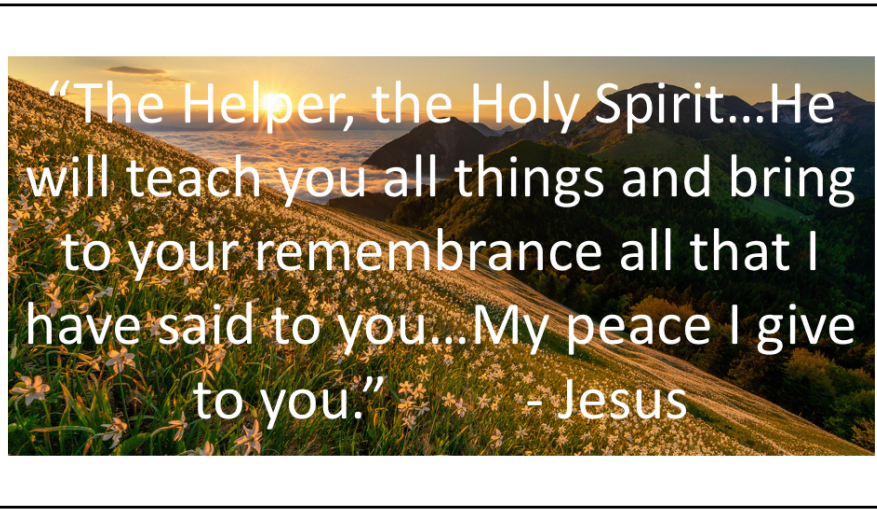
- You might be thinking, I can serve and love people, but to actually speak about my faith and how Jesus has changed me and how Jesus is relevant to someone's life...I don't know if I have what it takes...

TR: Yeah, this young girl had those same feelings of fear, anxiety, hesitancy, wondering if she had what it took...a different context, but same emotions...take a look...



**VIDEO**

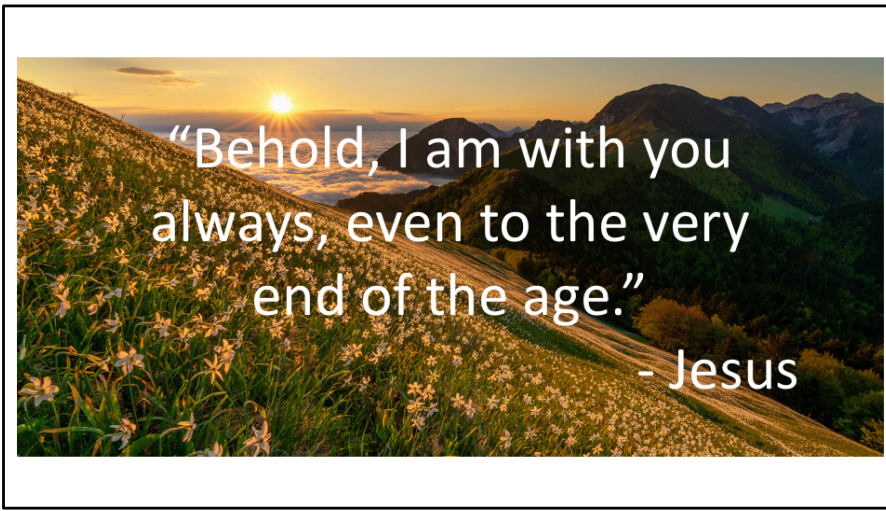
**Video of Girl's First Ski Jump**



**...READ SLIDE...**

- **Take Courage...you have a Helper to help you make the connections...**

**TR: AND you have Jesus...**

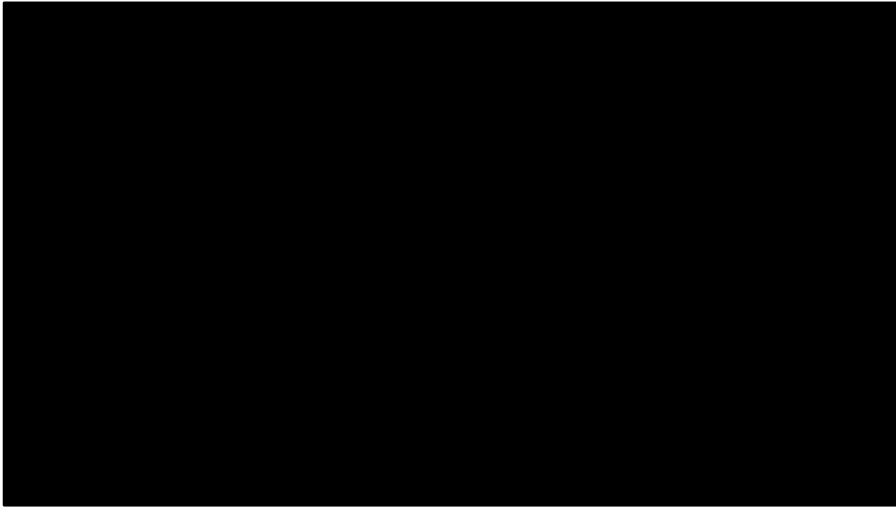


**...READ SLIDE...**

- **You are not alone in this mission...not by a long shot.**
- **He's right there with you.**
- **He's in you, the hope of glory...**

**Remember who you are..."You are one in whom Christ dwells and delights, and you live in an unshakable kingdom."**

**LET'S PRAY...**



**END SLIDE (Blank)**