

Intro

My name is Mike Smith. My wife has known Vicqui and Archie since she was a baby, and thankfully, they were willing to adopt me in when I arrived on the scene in 1995. We have worked along side the Hook's and have been recipients of their wisdom and generosity throughout our lives.

Not quite 2 years ago, Archie asked myself, my wife Candis, and my son Garrett to each provide a message on 3 Sundays while they were travelling. Well, they are travelling again!

If you were here last week we had a chance to hear Larry Glaze share with us 3 practical ways that we can strengthen our walk with the Lord. He suggested the following routines as very beneficial practices to engage in:

- Stillness -
 - *I love the commentary about rocking chairs being an American invention. We take pride in always moving, but it can also be very detrimental to our lives.*
 - *He also suggested that sometimes, all we need to do is breathe, and that is enough.*
 - *Finding time to be still is a fantastic discipline.*
- Reading scripture - *Larry shared some great points:*
 - *Start with scripture you like! - I had never thought about this before, but it really makes a lot of sense. Start with something you enjoy before moving on to something more challenging.*
 - *Read entire chapters or books to get the whole picture. There is deep history, culture, and wisdom to be understood and enjoyed!*
 - *God's word is a feast!*
- Prayer
 - *Sometimes we bring our needs before God*
 - *Sometimes we bring our joys before God*
 - *Sometimes we are thankful for unanswered prayers - when God acts on his wisdom on our behalf.*

While I was busily writing notes on what Larry was sharing with us, I happened to notice your Vision and Mission, in your weekly bulletin:

Our Vision: Making God visible to all.

Our Mission: That everyone knows the grace of God,

- By proclaiming the good new of Jesus
- By demonstrating the love of Christ;
- By personally inviting others to move into a new life in Christ:
- By encouraging the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

I found this very refreshing to see in your weekly handout that you are constantly reminded of what your core focus is. Whenever someone asks "Why are you here?", you have a very clear answer to give. We are here to...(go back through list).

I felt like God was drawing my attention specifically to the line about demonstrating the love of Christ. And, in the same spirit of practicality that Larry started last week, I wanted to share some very practical examples that are outlined in the 4 gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John - of what the love of Jesus looks like, so that we could demonstrate those to a hurting world.

I spent the time until now doing a flying overview of the gospels so I could try and pick up themes that were common among them. I boiled them down to 6, though this is certainly not an exhaustive or comprehensive list. So, here we go:

How can we practically demonstrate the love of Christ?

1. **Bring healing wherever you go.**
 - a. We are told throughout the entirety of scripture that have been given the power to bring healing into any situation.
 - b. Sometimes the healing is physical - caring for those who are hurt or injured
 - c. Sometimes the healing is spiritual - prayer, speaking blessing over those around us, inviting the spirit into any situation.
 - d. Sometimes the healing is emotional - words of encouragement, time spent with others, simply demonstrating concern.
 - e. ***Jesus did this extensively throughout the gospels***
 - i. ***John 9 - man born blind, mixing mud and having him bathe in the pool of Siloam.***
 - ii. ***An official's sons, Jairus's daughter, Lazarus, man with a withered hand, a blind beggar, a centurion's servant, a widows son...the list goes on and on!***
 - f. You say your faith is not yet big enough for some of these? That is OK, start small, start practical. Your faith will build over time.
2. **Make time for the younger generation.**
 - a. My wife and I both had fairly young grandparents, and some of my most cherished memories are when they took time to enjoy us for who we are.
 - i. Floating on inner-tubes through irrigation ditches
 - ii. Turning fire extinguishers into squirt guns for a water fight
 - iii. Going on back-to-school shopping trips
 - iv. Day trips to no-where in particular, just to have a picnic lunch
 - b. Candis and I are now grandparents and we cannot wait for the adventures that we can take our granddaughter on. Junia Ginny Smith, 9 months old. Our little June bug.
 - c. YFC Circuit Riders at our home. Between 15-20 kids distributed among every room in our house. What a blessing they have been!
 - d. ***Jesus did this by making sure children were welcomed:***
 - i. ***Matt 19, Mark 10, and Luke 18 all record Jesus addressing the disciples initial objection and then commanding them to let the children come to him.***
 - ii. ***He doubles down and suggests that unless our faith is like these children - simple, innocent, trusting, believing - we may be missing the truth of the gospel.***
3. **Feed people!**
 - a. Who doesn't love a good meal, and how much more does it mean when someone intentionally prepares it for you?!
 - b. It is amazing the difference food can make in any situation. It communicates love and concern for the recipients, nourishes them, and instantly creates community.
 - c. Office culture.
 - d. Gathering of fellow believers
 - e. Picnics in the park with grandparents, eating cheeseballs and doritos.

- f. Sharing a king-sized candy bar with someone (there are 2 FULL SIZE bars!!)
 - g. When we feed people, we take care of their practical needs which can lead to the nourishment of a soul.
 - h. **Jesus did this so many times:**
 - i. **Matt 15:32-39, Mark 8:1-10, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-15 - Feeding thousands.**
 - ii. **Several mentions of Jesus orchestrating a passover meal.**
 - iii. **John 21:1-14: Revealing himself to the disciples after his resurrection.**
4. Calm the storm
- a. There is constant chaos all around us, and it is amazing what happens when we step into that chaos with calm focus, ready to listen to the move of the spirit.
 - b. Because our confidence is in Christ and the peace that he brings in our own life, we can step in faith into any situation, and calm the chaos in the midst of that moment.
 - c. Conflict at work
 - d. People who have experienced loss or trauma
 - e. Natural disasters whether local or global.
 - f. Each one of these experiences is an opportunity to step into the midst of chaos knowing that the God of the universe has empowered us with the holy spirit to speak peace over any situation.
 - g. **Jesus did this in the midst of storms on the sea and in the middle of peoples anger.**
 - i. **Matt 8, Mark 4, Luke 8**
 - h. **John 8:1-11 - Jesus steps into crowds ready to stone a woman found in adultery**
 - i. **In each of these, Jesus demonstrates his love for those involved by stepping in and calming the situation.**
5. Step outside of the box.
- a. Go places that stretch you.
 - b. Meet people that challenge you. Engage in conversation. ASK REALLY GREAT QUESTIONS!! (Tell me more about your life. What motivates you? What are your core beliefs? Who is the most influential person in your life, and why?, etc.)
 - c. Try doing lots of things that you aren't necessarily good at.
 - d. WHY?
 - i. Gives an opportunity for conversations that might not otherwise happen.
 - ii. Creates an opportunity to seek help from others.
 - iii. Makes us humble.
 - e. **Jesus did this through several experiences:**
 - i. **Luke 7:36-50 - How did Jesus end up having dinner with a Pharisee, and suddenly have his feet washed by a prostitute?**
 - ii. **John 4:1-30 - speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well and telling her about her life.**
 - iii. **John 2:1-11 - wedding at Cana - what does this have to do with me?**
 - iv. **John 5:1-17 - Jesus healing on the Sabbath**
6. Make questionable dinner plans
- a. There is something profound in sharing a meal with people, and even more so when we engage unique personalities from outside our normal circles.
 - b. Invite people over that make you (and the neighbors!) a little uneasy!
 - c. We get to be generous and creative, practically demonstrating the love of Christ through hospitality.

- d. Say yes to invitations outside your normal circle. Bring flowers, be grateful!
- e. Demonstrate the love of Christ by entering someone's home with joy, and bless it as the disciples did.
- f. Bud Jackson's server, Lisa. Sometimes questionable plans lead to being ministered to by others.
- g. ***We see this several times in the gospels:***
 - i. ***Matt 9:9-13 - the calling of Matthew - reclining at the table with tax collectors and sinners.***
 - ii. ***Again! Luke 7:36-50 - dining with a Pharisee and a prostitute.***
 - iii. ***Luke 19:1-10 - staying at the home of Zacchaeus, the tax collector, and a sinner!***
 - iv. ***John 13:1-30 - Jesus washes the disciples feet. This would have been highly questionable and completely counter-cultural. Jesus demonstrated his love of the disciples by making questionable dinner plans.***