

ARE YOU IN IT TO WIN THEM?

This morning I want to start off with a thought experiment for those in the room who are followers of Jesus. This isn't a bible story or a bible teaching, but I want to share a thought experiment to get us thinking about the people in our lives. Imagine if there were 2 lines of people. Both parallel, but they were both heading toward different directions. Now imagine you are in one of those lines. You realize the line you are in is the line heading toward heaven to the Lord and the other line is heading toward hell away from the Lord.

As you are walking in the direction toward the Lord in heaven, you glance at the other line. And you start recognizing the people there. Some are family members, some are friends, some are co-workers, some are former classmates, etc. And each one, as they pass by you, asks you one question, **"Why didn't you tell me about Jesus?"**... Do you wish you could go back in time and share Jesus with the people in your life? Now... You still have time.

Welcome to **Week 5 of Spirit & Truth!** Over the last couple of weeks, we have been talking about how God's plan for taking the Gospel of Jesus to the world is through the church. Not this building or this Sunday service, but through the church, aka the followers of Jesus. This week we will be discussing how we are to use our freedom in Christ to try to win others to Jesus. More specifically, we are going to look at 2 mindsets we should have when it comes to sharing the good news of Jesus with others. Before we jump into scripture, I am going to **PRAY** for us and we are going to get started.

Before we talk about our mindset about sharing the gospel, I think it is important to briefly talk about what the gospel is. Paul hits on what the gospel is in **1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (NIV)**, "Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. **2** By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. **3** For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,"

The gospel is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day. That is the good news. You and I played no part in making the gospel what it is. Jesus did all that was necessary to save us, so that if we trust in Him, then we will be saved. **Romans 10:9 (NIV)**, "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Jesus even explained this many times, while He was on earth before He went to the cross.

John 3:16 (NIV), "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Mark 10:45 (NIV), "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus came to live the holy and righteous life we couldn't, die the death we deserve for our sins, and to rise from the dead to bring us life. Our response is to either trust in Jesus or not trust in Jesus. To place our faith in Jesus means receiving salvation from God, forgiveness of our sins, and adoption into the family of God. To not trust in Jesus is to reject salvation, forgiveness of sins, and adoption into God's family. What Jesus did on the cross and how we respond have huge implications. For us who have trusted in Jesus, we get to celebrate the victory and salvation we have in Jesus. **But we should be very concerned about those who have yet to trust in Jesus.**

If anyone is questioning whether God has called them to go share the gospel to those who have yet to believe in Jesus, then let me remind you what Jesus said after He rose from the dead in **Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)**, "18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Not only are we called to share the gospel with others. We are called to go make disciples.

Meaning that we are to share the gospel with people and help them trust in Jesus. And after they trust in Jesus, we are to help them grow in Christ and to train them in making disciples. Discipleship is what we are called to do. It's not just a pastor's job or a ministry leader's job. It's every Christian's job. The whole church's job. To help people trust in Jesus, get baptized, learn how to follow Jesus, and to grow in their relationship with God.

If someone hasn't trusted in Jesus, then we can't baptize them or help them follow Jesus or help them grow in Jesus. Because they haven't even been saved by Jesus, they haven't even been adopted into the family of Christ yet. It's on us through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit to point people to Jesus and to share the gospel with them.

If you don't know if the people around you have trusted in Jesus or not, guess what? You need to find out. You should want to know because they should matter to you. Do you care more about having comfortable conversations or whether people are heading to heaven or hell? I hope the latter.

If you are still not convinced, then I pray the Holy Spirit will show you and bring you to repentance and bring you to the place of loving people enough to share Jesus with them. But if you understand what God has called you to do, and you are scared or feel unprepared to share the gospel and make disciples, then ask your pastors for help or ask fellow believers you see living this out for help. We all wrestle with the fear of sharing the gospel and making disciples. You are not alone. And we want to help you be who God has called you to be.

So as we share the gospel and strive to make disciples who make disciples of Jesus. **What mindsets should we have when we go out into the world trying to win people to Jesus?** There are 2 particular mindsets that the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthian Church in 1 Corinthians 9.

Mindset 1: Be all things to all people

Let's look at **1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NIV)**, "**19** Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. **20** To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. **21** To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. **22** To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. **23** I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

Paul makes an interesting claim in verse 19. He says, "**19** Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible." Paul understands that in Christ that he is free and that he belongs to no one (no one, except Jesus). Before I go any further, I want you to know that if you are in Christ, that you are FREE and belong to no person. You are in bondage to no one. You follow and belong to King Jesus.

However, even though we are free in Christ, Paul goes on to say that he has made himself a slave to everyone. Be honest with me. Doesn't that sound weird? When the Bible says something weird or something that is strange to us, it is usually important. Why would Paul make himself a slave to everyone if he has freedom in Christ? I don't know about you, but I don't want to be a slave to anyone or be told what to do by anyone. That might be my flesh talking, because I should have no problem with the LORD telling me what to do.

But really, why is Paul making himself a slave to everyone if he is free in Christ? Paul says in order "**to win as many as possible.**" Paul sought to win people to Jesus Christ by being sensitive to their needs and identifying with them. We should try to reach people where they are today and expect to see changes later.

Paul believed he had an obligation to the people in this world to win them to Jesus. More specifically, to talk to people about Jesus, to love people, to debate and discuss Jesus with people, and to help people trust in and grow in Jesus. Do you and I think the same way? Do you believe it is YOUR responsibility to preach the gospel to people and to win people to Jesus? Or do you pass that off to the pastor or church leader because you view other things as more important?

Paul even says to the church in Rome that he feels obligated to share the gospel with all people. **Romans 1:14-15 (NIV)**, "**14** I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. **15** That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome." Paul says he was obligated to all people of all backgrounds to preach the gospel. So it doesn't matter if people are an atheist, agnostic, Muslim, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, or whatever. Everyone needs to hear about the truth and good news of Jesus.

Now I can imagine some having the thought, “Well that’s Paul and he was an apostle, I am not Paul.” Let me push back by quoting Paul in **1 Corinthians 10:31-33 (NIV)**, “**31** So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. **32** Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— **33** even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.**1 Corinthians 11:1 (NIV)** Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” Paul literally tells us to follow his example if you are a Christian. You and I are both called to do what we can in order to help people trust in Jesus and be saved. This is very important. If our walk with Jesus doesn’t include preaching the gospel to those who are lost, then I would argue that our love for others stinks. How can we say we love God and love people, if we withhold the message of salvation and freedom from those who need it?

1 Corinthians 9:20-23 (NIV), **20** To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. **21** To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. **22** To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. **23** I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.” If we are going to model Paul’s walk with Jesus, then we need to understand the people we are going to be preaching to. Meeting people where they are and not trying to conform them to our thing!

Paul said he became like a Jew though he was not under the law anymore. There are people who put extra expectations and rules on themselves that Jesus doesn’t put on us. However, we shouldn’t flaunt our freedoms in their faces or follow rules that would be sinful to follow, but we should try to meet them where they are at to be able to share the freedom found in Christ with them. Paul also says he became like those not having the law even though he was under Christ’s law. Meaning that there are people out there who live flippantly any which way. We are not to indulge or partner with them in sinful activities because we have been freed from sin and now we follow Jesus, but not everything people do is sinful. Understand the freedoms you have in Jesus and build bridges to those who haven’t trusted in Jesus. Paul also says he became weak to win the weak. Meaning that he was willing to humble himself to connect with those who were either poor, outcasts, or “less than” according to our world.

Overall with every different group of people, we should strive to connect with them in order to love them and share the gospel with them. To win a chance to have their ear to share the truth of Jesus with them. To be available for the Holy Spirit to use us as He convicts and draws people to Jesus. We won’t be able to win everyone, but we are called to try to win as many people as possible to Jesus. See everyone has different issues and life questions, but the gospel answers every question and addresses every issue. So we need to know the people we are talking to.

23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.” Notice Paul didn’t change his message, but did change his approach and behavior. Paul does this all for the sake

of the good news of Jesus, which is the power of God that brings salvation to those who believe. Is what you do in life for the sake of the gospel or the sake of yourself? Paul believed he would share in the blessings of the gospel. Do you want to share in and celebrate the wins of the Kingdom or do you want to merely celebrate in personal treasures and accolades that'll one day fade away?

Overall, this mindset to **“Be all things to all people”** is to connect with people at their level and meet them where they are in order to point them and win them to Jesus. Not faking who you are, but being authentically yourself where they are in the moment. Authenticity is the best conductor of intimacy.

Mindset 2: This is a race, so training and self-discipline are key.

Self-discipline and training are things we'd probably hear if we went to the gym or were playing a sport. Paul ironically compares the task of following Christ and sharing the gospel to running a race. In **1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NIV)** Paul says this, **“24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”**

“Paul's new metaphor compares living in service to Christ to athletic competition. He likely had in mind the Olympic games, as well as the Isthmian (i-smee-uhn) games which took place every other year in Corinth. Foot races were a common event in such competitions. Corinthian society was highly competitive.” We are very competitive as well as in American society. **“24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.”** The point that Paul makes here is not that only one Christian wins an award or that we are competing against our brothers and sisters in Christ, but rather, if we participate in sharing the gospel then we should be striving to win. Striving to give it our all, leaving it all out on the “field of life.” Striving to win people to Jesus, not striving to win debates and conversations. The idea is to set aside our personal rights and freedoms for the good of others. In this case, the good of others is trusting in Jesus and getting saved. Majority of Christians are like the athlete that has “it all” (as in all the talent through the Holy Spirit), but they do not have the discipline or desire to carry out their potential to its full capacity for the Kingdom.

“25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.” We should be training in sharing the gospel and making disciples. There are many ways we can train, but here are six:

- 1.) **One part of our training is learning to lean on the Holy Spirit and growing in the fruit of the Spirit**, which we see in **Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)** is, “... love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

- 2.) **Another part is reading, studying, and applying God's word.** Paul says this about God's word in **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)**, "**16** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and **training in righteousness**, **17** so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
- 3.) **Another part is prayer.** Sometimes we forget that prayer is one of the most powerful things a believer can do. **James 5:16 (NIV)** says, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."
- 4.) **Another part is fasting.** God says this in **Isaiah 58:6 (NIV)** about fasting, "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?" There is power in fasting too.
- 5.) **Another part is being connected to other believers.** **Proverbs 27:17 NIV** says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." And we see **Hebrews 10:24-25** also showing us the importance of having Christian community in our lives, "**24** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **25** not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."
- 6.) **Another part is resting in and enjoying the LORD and His presence.** Rest and joy are very important things in life. We need to make time to rest and enjoy life. To enjoy the LORD. Jesus even says in **Matthew 11:28 (NIV)**, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." God even tells us to keep holy the Sabbath day, because we need to rest in Him. Jesus even says that in Mark 2:27 that the Sabbath was made for us humans. And not only are we to rest, but we are to enjoy the LORD. **Philippians 4:4 (NIV)** says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

1 Corinthians 9:26-27 (NIV) says, "**26** Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. **27** No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize." Not only do we need to train, but we need to have self-discipline. We need to learn how to strive for the goal of winning people to Christ and make our lives submit to that goal. Paul says that he made his body his slave so that he would preach the gospel to others and to remember that this is a life long race to be run. Not merely an activity that he did once a week.

It should be the same for us. We need to tap into the self-control that we have available to us through the Holy Spirit and train ourselves to be disciple makers. Notice, this is not something else we need to add to our lives, but it is something we need to make part of our everyday lives. Remembering that sharing and preaching the gospel is a race, will keep us from being "Sunday-Only-Christians" and will help us to live out our faith every day. We should feel a sense of obligation to share the gospel with our family members, friends, co-workers, classmates, and neighbors, as well as with strangers we bump into every day. **Every person is a soul that needs to be saved by Jesus.** It may not happen in one conversation, but it may take time. You can't make people trust in Jesus, but you can pray for them, you can be there for them, and you can talk to them about Jesus.

Jesus says in **John 6:44 (NIV)**, ““No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.” I share this verse to tell you that the pressure is not on you to get people saved, however you are a vessel God can use to draw people to Jesus. You should want to win people to Jesus. God calls you and I to share the gospel with nonbelievers and to make disciples of all nations, while knowing that the pressure isn't on us to be perfect, but rather to be faithful. You and I are not perfect. But you know who is perfect? Jesus. And that's who we should be trusting, following, and striving to win people to. It's a life-long journey trying to win as many people to Jesus as possible. But it should be a joy to share the freedom we have in Christ and the freedom Christ offers to whoever believes in Him.

So As The Worship Team Comes Back Up, let's process through some questions with the Lord.

Invitation:

- **For those in the room who are followers of Jesus...** which of the two mindsets of sharing the gospel do you struggle most with? Being all things to all people or understanding this is a race that requires training and self-discipline?
 - Take time to ask God for help to really grasp these 2 mindsets and to go preach the gospel with the people in your life.
 - Who do you need to go share the gospel with this week?

- **For those in the room who haven't trusted in Jesus,**
 - I want to share **John 3:16-18 (NIV)** with you, “**16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.**” Jesus came to save you, not condemn you. Without Jesus, you are standing condemned already because of your sin. Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead to bring you life and freedom. Will you turn to Him and trust in Him today? (Lead them in a prayer of salvation)

Pray out