

## What to say?

Today we are in **Week 3** of our series called **ON TARGET**. We are exploring the MISSION we have as followers of Jesus and what it is that we are supposed to be doing with the spiritual gifts God has given us. As we have been saying each week, God wants to use our giftedness to reach people with the Gospel of HOPE. This is the TARGET of our mission and this is what we are to use our spiritual gifts to accomplish.

Over the course of this series we are ASKING and ANSWERING FOUR QUESTIONS. In **Week 1** we dealt with the question of **WHY? “Why are we to make disciples?”** And as we looked at **Matthew 28:18-20** we determined that the answer to that question is because **“It’s what followers of Jesus do.”** We are to make disciples because Jesus our Lord commanded us to. We are to make disciples because it is through this process that we experience His intimate presence. We are to make disciples because as followers of Jesus we have a new identity and our new identity is that we are an AMBASSADOR for Him building bridges between God and those who do not know Him.

Last week we asked the question of **WHO? “Who are we to reach?”** Well, again the answer is fairly simple. **We are to reach the world!** We are to start with our physical sphere of influence (our Jerusalem -the place where we live, work and play) and while we do that we are to keep our heart open to how God may want to use us in the world at large to engage others with the Gospel of Hope.

Today, we arrive at that 3rd question to help us stay ON TARGET with our mission and that is the question of **What? “What are we to say?”** Before we jump in and explore this question, let me pray for us and ask God to open our hearts to what His Spirit wants to say to us today.  
**(PRAY)**

If there is a part of our mission that we struggle with the most, this is most likely it! **What do we say?** When it comes to sharing the Gospel with others this is the one question I hear most frequently from believers who tend to struggle with sharing their faith. It’s not that they don’t want to share their faith, it’s just that they are a little hesitant because they are not sure what they are supposed to say or they may be a little afraid that they might not be able to answer questions that others may have about God when they try to share. For others of us, you may have found the conversation a little awkward or maybe even a little hostile and so to avoid that awkwardness or hostility you make the decision not to share with others at all.

Well, to help with that I want us to take a look at a few passages of scriptures that give us insight into some of the spiritual dynamics that are involved when we share the Gospel and then I want to give you a few thoughts to consider regarding ways that you can share the Gospel that doesn’t seem awkward and can lead to further conversations about God.

First of all, let’s clearly define the Gospel. **“What is the Gospel” and “What are some passages in the Bible that are clear and concise depictions of the Gospel”** that we can share with others?

There are many places and passages where we find references to the Gospel but here are 5 of what I consider to be the most concise and clear passages found in the scriptures.

**John 3:16-17 (NIV)** **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. The whole reason Jesus came to earth was to save us from sin.

**Romans 10:9-13 (NIV)** **9** 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. **10** For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. **11** As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” **12** For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, **13** for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” This salvation is available to all of us and it is received by confession of our mouth and belief of faith in our heart. It is not achieved by any other means.

**Ephesians 2:1-5 (NIV)** **1** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2** in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **3** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. **4** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. Because Jesus defeated death and sin you can be made alive with Jesus.

**Colossians 2:13-15 (NIV)** **13** When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, **14** having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. **15** And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. He died in your place taking your punishment for sin and because of that your sin debt is canceled.

**2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (NIV)** **17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! **18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. Sin has been removed and we can now have a relationship with God. You have been made new by faith in Jesus alone.

The Gospel is a simple message and all of these passages clearly point to the fact that **God sent His Son Jesus to live a sinless life, to die in our place for our sin, and be raised back to life from the dead so that sinners who turn from their sin and trust in Jesus will be forgiven and have eternal life.** This is the message we want to make sure people know and understand. It is not about our works, it is about what Jesus has done for us because He loves us. We must simply

come to the place where we realize our need for Him and trust Jesus to do what the Bible says He has done. We must come to a place where we trust Jesus to rescue us from our sin and we do so by turning from our sin and now seeking to follow Jesus by faith from this point on. This is the Gospel! This is our message! This is what the Bible story is all about from Genesis to Revelation.

As for what we are to say when we engage people with the Gospel, let me give you THREE thoughts to consider when it comes to sharing your faith?

**Don't let questions people have about God intimidate you!** In fact, questions can be a great way to engage people with the Gospel. Asking people what they think about God and Jesus can be a great way to begin a Gospel conversation. However, we need to be aware of how people can use questions to shy away from a deeper conversation about Jesus.

Sometimes questions are a defense mechanism people use to justify their rejection of God because they don't want to deal with the real issue of their sin. We see this with the **Rich Young Ruler** in Mark 10.

**Mark 10:17-22 (NLT) 17** As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" We know this isn't a sincere question because he already has an answer or at least he thinks he has an answer. In fact, it is his own answer to the questions that creates a real question in his own heart as to why he needs to trust in Jesus in the first place. **18** "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good. **19** But to answer your question, you know the commandments: 'You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.'" **20** "Teacher," the man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young." **21** Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. Notice the Gospel conversation Jesus is having with this man is because He loves him. Everything Jesus does is because He loves us. When you are talking with people about God do you genuinely love them? At the end of the day LOVE must be the motive in our conversations with people. **21** Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," he told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." **22** At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. The ONE THING is what keeps this man from trusting in Jesus and following Him. Once the rich man gives this up, then he'd be in a place to easily trust in Jesus. For him it was his material possessions (his money). If you haven't trusted in Jesus then what is that ONE THING keeping you from trusting in HIM? Unfortunately, with people like this there is not much else to say to them. They really don't think they need an answer to the question they are asking because in their mind and heart they think they already know.

Sometimes the questions are satanic distractions to confuse the witness and the one being witnessed to like **the Woman at the Well**.

**John 4:4-20 (NLT)** **4** He had to go through Samaria on the way. **5** Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. **6** Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. **7** Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." Sometimes all we need to do is just start a simple conversation in order to create an opportunity to talk about the Gospel. **8** He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

**9** The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"

**10** Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water." Jesus straight up transitioned the conversation about water to God. We need to look for the places to transition the conversation to the Gospel.

**11** "But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? **12** And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?"

**13** Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. **14** But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." **15** "Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water." **16** "Go and get your husband," Jesus told her. **17** "I don't have a husband," the woman replied. Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband— **18** for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!" Here Jesus is trying to confront her sin so that He can press into the real solution for her spiritual situation by helping her see that He is the Messiah who has come to deliver her and she goes off on a theological tangent. Btw, I want you to notice the nature of her question. It was a question generated by man-made religious practices and traditions. One of the mindsets we have to overcome in sharing the Gospel is that when it comes to Jesus it is about a RELATIONSHIP with GOD not RELIGION.

**19** "Sir," the woman said, "you must be a prophet. **20** So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?" Notice what Jesus does. He doesn't bother with the rabbit trail created by her question because this is a distraction to the real issue and it is designed to muddy the waters and create confusion. So what does Jesus do? He brings it right back to the central message at hand, which is, the Messiah has come and Jesus is that Messiah!

**21** Jesus replied, "Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. **22** You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through

the Jews. **23** But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. **24** For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” Jesus wasn't shy about speaking the truth. He tells her that the Samaritans' knowledge was lacking while the Jews' knowledge wasn't lacking, not because they were superior people being Jews, but because they stayed true to what God had revealed to them in His word. We can't shy away from speaking the truth and calling out falsehoods. But we must do it respectfully and gently. Jesus doesn't attack people, but rather attacks beliefs and falsehoods that are opposed to His word. We should share the truth in such a way that it enables people to lean in, not push away. **25** The woman said, “I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” **26** Then Jesus told her, “I AM the Messiah! It's almost as if she is like “well, only God knows.” If we aren't careful we may let conversations end too soon. Jesus responds by revealing Himself to her. We on the other hand should pray for God to reveal Himself to those we talk to and we should strive to point people to the Word of God. So if someone responds, “well, only God knows” then we can respond by saying “God has shown us the answer, have you looked for the answer in the Bible?”

Other times it may simply be ignorance about God that needs to be clarified such as in the case of **Nicodemus**.

**John 3:1-15 (NLT) 1** There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. **2** After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. “Rabbi,” he said, “we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you.”

**3** Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.” **4** “What do you mean?” exclaimed Nicodemus. “How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?” **5** Jesus replied, “I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. **6** Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. **7** So don't be surprised when I say, ‘You must be born again.’ **8** The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit.” **9** “How are these things possible?” Nicodemus asked.

**10** Jesus replied, “You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don't understand these things? Jesus says this probably because what He is talking about can be found in scriptures. **11** I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe our testimony. **12** But if you don't believe me when I tell you about earthly things, how can you possibly believe if I tell you about heavenly things? **13** No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. **14** And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up (on the cross), **15** so that everyone who believes in him (by faith) will have eternal life.

Nicodemus and his questions were sincere as he was trying to learn more about God. Jesus sought to address his questions but notice with each answer Nicodemus had even more

questions. It reached a point that not even Jesus was going to be able to answer all of his questions to his satisfaction and so Jesus teaches him that at some point FAITH is required. In fact, faith is what is necessary for salvation. And the same is true for all of us as well. It is ok to have questions. But at some point we must trust God by faith and this was true for Nicodemus and it is true for those we encounter with the Gospel.

It is in these moments we need to trust the Holy Spirit for discernment and react accordingly. If it is the RICH MAN example. He is trying to come up with every reason why he doesn't have to receive Jesus. This usually is a pointless conversation and what you need to do is resist rabbit trails, give him or her some things to think about as Jesus did the RICH MAN and pray for God to draw them to Himself.

If it is the WOMAN AT THE WELL example and you feel their questions are confusing you will need to redirect them back to the main issue and try to table their questions for another discussion at another time. This confusion is meant to distract them and you from the real issue that God is trying to deal with in their life, mainly their sin and separation from God which Jesus wants to remedy.

If it is a NICODEMUS conversation then listen to their concerns and spend some time in further conversation exploring their questions. If they are really seeking God you will not have to force this issue. It will happen naturally as they really do want to know God more. In the end all of their questions will come down to faith. Will they trust Jesus or not? **Don't let questions people have about God intimidate you!** Here is a second thought we need to consider when it comes to sharing your faith.

**Personal Testimony is one of the best ways to share your faith.**

**Revelation 12:11 (NIV)** They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; .....

Find ways to condense this into a 1 or 2 minute conversation. If people want to know more you can share more. But you should be able to do in a brief way to begin with and then let God direct the conversation from there. Your testimony should consist of three elements.

**Life BEFORE Jesus**(minimal details)

**WHAT brought you to Jesus**

**Life AFTER Jesus** (be honest about struggles)

(Let's give an example of this by sharing our testimony)

**So, Don't let questions people have about God intimidate you!** Develop your **Personal Testimony**. And finally,

**At some point, make sure you INVITE people to Jesus.** No matter who they are or where they happen to be in their relationship with God, offer an invitation. Remember last week when we looked at how the Gospel spread in John 1. It spread simply by an invitation offered by others to follow Jesus. (It can be as simple as an invitation to explore Jesus further in the Bible on their own, starting with John's Gospel. It can be an invitation to explore His word with you as you meet together and study the Bible together. It can be an invite to explore Jesus further through coming to church with you ( Let me emphasize **"with you"**. Don't rely on other people. You need to be intentional with them. Let scripture and church service be a springboard into further conversations about Jesus and having further convos about what is being taught. It can also be an invitation to receive Jesus on their own - they don't need you and they don't need a special prayer to do this. They simply need to know the Gospel and be prompted to call on God as a result of what Jesus has done for them.

So let's INVITE People to Jesus!! We aren't just trying to get people INTO a church building. We are trying to help people turn to the Lord for salvation. God is calling the church (aka Christians) not the building to share the gospel and make disciples. Easter is coming in two weeks. Will you invite people in your life to explore Jesus? Next week we are going to address the question **Where do we go from here?**

**Worship to come back up**

**Invitation:**

Do you have questions about God? Which one do you identify with? The rich young ruler who was using his questions as a reason why he didn't need Jesus. The woman at the well who was distracted by her questions. Or, Nicodemus who was wanting to know God more. Have you trusted Jesus by faith?

If you don't have a testimony that you can share in 1 to 2 minutes will you work on establishing that this week and ask God to give you an opportunity to share it.

Will you ask God to give you an opportunity to invite someone to Jesus this week?