

Series: **Simplifying Church** – week 5

CDOBC – beginning on 2/5/17

Today's Title: **"Committed to Sharing Christ"**

Step #4: Share

March 19, 2017 - Selected Passages

OBJECTIVE: To help people realize the fifth step in following Christ is to share the Gospel with others.

Prayer / Sketch Intro:

Is there anything more intimidating and fearful for the Christian than sharing the Gospel with a non-believer? The sketch we just saw was obviously exaggerated and 'over-the-top' to emphasize the point that believers tend to be very nervous and uncertain about sharing Christ. Because we're so nervous and uncertain, we tend to rely on some sort of script or formula which is usually very impersonal and insensitive to the person you're talking with.

This morning we are finishing this short series: Simplifying Church - and today is step #5 - Sharing (Sharing Christ).

My goal today is to help you understand the Biblical and theological basis for sharing Christ - and then I'll explain our church's plan / strategy for each of us to share the Gospel of Christ with the lost.

Here is a basic premise: *Sharing Christ is the most important Christian work we can do in this life.*

We often think growing in our knowledge of God through Scripture and living a more holy life are the important things - but these are not the primary reason God has saved you.

In **Ephesians 2** the Apostle Paul says we have been saved by the grace of God - and He says we have been “...created in Christ Jesus for good works”. What are the “good works” he is talking about?

I would propose some (not all) of those good works is the work of evangelism - sharing Christ with those who are unsaved and as he says a few verses later (vs. 12) about the unsaved - they are “separated from Christ...having no hope and without God in the world.”

The Biblical / Theological basis for sharing Christ

We have an obligation to share the Gospel.

We are Christ’s ambassadors / representatives on earth.

Nobody else can speak for Him - only Christians can do this!

1 Corinthians 1:17

“For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel...”

Jesus commanded / commissioned us to this work

Matthew 28:19a

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”

Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 5:19-20** that in His wisdom, God has entrusted us with the message of the

Gospel - the message which reconciles sinful humanity to God through faith.

“...in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

Philippians 2:15-16 - *(every Christians responsibility to make the Gospel known)*

“...that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...”

Our life should look different - it should be a contrast to the darkness and sin in the world.

We are obligated to use the light of Christ in us to share the Gospel and our life gives proof of the power of God to save us and transform our life.

We have an opportunity to share the truth about Christ.

Sharing Christ is the Christian's opportunity to share the truth of Christ with the unbelievers in our life.

Evangelism is more than the offer to put your faith in Christ.

Evangelism / sharing Christ includes the broader truths in the Bible. The nature and work of God - the person and work of Christ - the spiritual truths

of Christ - the truth behind the deadly nature of sin
- the promises of God for life now and for the
future - the truth of God's future judgment - the
truth of Heaven for those who are saved.

All this and more is part of sharing Christ.

Paul explains this in his writings:

Ephesians 3:8-9

"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things..."

Colossians 1:28

"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."

Luke describes Paul's evangelistic activity as:

*Disputing / Reasoning / Arguing / Teaching /
Persuading*

Each time you share Christ with someone, the conversation doesn't always get to the specific and clear offer of salvation through faith in the work of Christ. It may take 5 conversations...2

conversations...25 conversations before you have the opportunity to lead someone to the point of belief. Evangelism / sharing Christ is a great opportunity to teach the truth of Christ in many

areas of life! Sharing Christ is our obligation and a wonderful opportunity - but it has a clear objective.

The objective of evangelism is to save sinners.

Allow me to bring an exact, yet mysterious work of God in the saving of sinners.

We don't evangelize / share Christ so we can produce converts.

Only God can give spiritual life to the spiritually dead.

Only God can regenerate someone's soul.

Only God can draw someone to Himself and give the gift of faith.

But God has chosen to use us in that process -

"entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:19)

Only God can produce converts!

- We evangelize / share Christ to obey Christ.
- We evangelize because of love (*more about that in a few minutes*).

Only God can produce converts - but He has not only included us in this miraculous work - He has given us a very significant role.

Luke 1:16 (referring to John the baptizer)

"And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God..."

James 5:19-20

“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

1 Corinthians 9:22 (also Romans 11:14)

“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.”

These passages don't deny or contradict that God is the only one who gives spiritual life to lost souls. But they do tell us our role is a significant one - one which has a clear objective:

- To call sinners to repentance...
- To seek a response to the truth we share...
- To communicate the Gospel hoping for conversion...
- To inform people of the truth and inviting them to put their faith in Jesus.

Evangelism is teaching about Christ with the objective to make an appeal for people to put their faith in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:19

“We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

This is a wonderful, beautiful partnership with God - as we share Christ and He uses us in the miraculous work of giving spiritual life to the spiritually dead.

Our plan / strategy for sharing Christ

Over the past 100 years, the church in America has centered their plan / strategy for evangelism with church programs and church events.

There have been so many huge changes in the culture that these strategies no longer work as they once did.

Our strategy is centered on LOVE!!!

3 expressions of love...

Love expressed in the church

The truth of Jesus' sinless life, along with His death, burial and resurrection (1 Cor. 15) is the basis of the Gospel, *but the soil for the Gospel is the love we have for others.*

We can divide 'others' into 2 groups - believers in the church and those outside the church.

Our love for one another and our unity in the truth of Christ will be a great help to our efforts to share the Gospel (John 13:34-35; 17:21).

On the contrary, a lack of love and unity will stifle our personal growth in Christ - and it will undercut our evangelistic efforts because a local church that is not loving or unified will discourage evangelism and it will throw cold water on the newly converted.

In Gene Getz's book: Sharpening the Focus of the Church (p. 72-73), he talks about love in the church as a strong evangelistic pull to the unsaved.

“The New Testament...presents the ‘church gathered’ as a context in which non-Christians can view and experience the realities of Christianity - love, unity, and Christ-like living. And, within this context, the Holy Spirit is able to bring conviction and a desire to worship the same God and to know the same Savior.” (p. 73)

Love expressed to one another in the local church is rich soil for evangelism.

Love expressed in your Circle of Influence

Our plan / strategy for sharing Christ with those who are lost - is to equip and empower you to love and serve those in your circle of influence as you live out and share the Gospel.

Evangelism is not a program or event which the church produces.

Evangelism is the Christian's obligation and opportunity which has as its objective to bring sinners to faith in Jesus.

This requires you - and me - each follower of Christ in this church - to read and study God's Word - so we can have spiritual conversations and answer

many of the spiritual questions unsaved people have about life - about Christ - and about the Church.

The local church does have a role to play in teaching and preaching the Gospel - which is the full counsel of God in Christ - but the evangelistic power and zeal of a local church does not reside in the church services - it resides in each member of the Body of Christ as they live each day as ambassadors of Christ.

We talk all the time of our mission statement:
Reaching people for Christ and helping them grow in their faith.

But our vision statement is equally important. The vision statement is how we see the mission being accomplished:

We will transform our community for Christ by equipping and mobilizing Christians to live out and share the Gospel. (Eph. 4:11-12)

This is why I shared a few weeks ago the danger of being too involved with study groups and ministry groups which focus on ourselves. When you do that, you have little / no time to be involved in significant ways with people outside the church - your personal mission field!

The role of the church is to equip and empower and mobilize you to live with this kind of intention in your life (Eph. 4:12) to win the people God has placed in your life - in your circle of influence.

Love expressed for the world

The greatest need all people have is their spiritual need for Christ.

But people also have other needs - and these other needs are not as important, but they are more urgent.

- If someone is without food, their greatest need is Christ - but their urgent need is a meal.
- If someone is without shelter, their greatest need is Christ - but their urgent need is a place to stay.
- If someone is wounded, their greatest need is Christ - but their urgent need is first-aid.

We must love the world - for the sake of loving the world.

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:30-31)

We don't love the world - or love those in our circle of influence - as a means to share the Gospel with them. (The Art of Neighboring, by: Jay Pathak & Dave Runyon)

Yes...we always hope and pray we will have the opportunity to share the Gospel with someone, but we must learn to love for the sake of love - and for

the sake and dignity of the person we are loving and not to see them as an object to pursue in conversion.

‘Bait and switch’ love is not sincere.

‘Bait and switch’ love is using things which are loving to open the door for what we really want. There is no small print or ulterior motive to the command to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Loving your neighbor is the end goal of the command.

We certainly have an ultimate goal that our love would be used by God to soften someone’s heart and draw them to Himself - but we must not confuse our ultimate goal with an ulterior motive (which, by the way - a person can usually discern).

We need to trust in God’s sovereign work of regeneration - His work of giving spiritual life to an unsaved person - knowing that God will provide for them to hear His Word at the right time. That person might be you - or He may use another believer - but in His providential and eternal plan, He will secure the salvation of those He has chosen in eternity past (Eph. 1:4).

Loving the world is why Dick McVey - one of our elders - is building our ministry of outreach to the community around us.

Last Sunday you heard Salina Watson share a testimony about serving at GRM. We have identified some leaders and are not only working to bring groups from our church to serve at GRM - but also to begin partnering with a local school in our area so we can love and serve them.

In addition, we support the ministry of ICS which provides much needed help to the less fortunate in our community by helping to meet their basic living requirements of food and shelter (“urgent needs”).

We partner with other community agencies - Hands of Hope / Salvation Army / IMPACT food bank in Catalina, and others.

Why? Because God has commanded us to love our neighbors.

Apply it...

Read:

Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, by J.I. Packer

The Art of Neighboring, by: Jay Pathak & Dave Runuon

Pray

Ask God to give you the same heart He has for the lost.

Ask God to give you the same love He has for those who don't know Him.

Identify

Identify 3 people in your life (Circle of Influence) to love, pray for, serve and share Christ with.

Write down the names of the 3 people God places on your heart when you pray - and pray daily for them - asking God to give you opportunities to love them - opportunities to share Christ with them through word and deed.

Learn

Circles class - May 7, 14, 21

This is not a program - but a 3-week class which will equip and empower you to live each day on purpose - with Gospel intentionality.

If you haven't taken this class - you need to take this class.

Share Christ!!

Just start doing this now! Don't wait to know more...just share Christ!

Close in prayer