

Spirit powered witness

1 Cor 2:1-9 CCC – 1/21/23

Well, friends, we are in the year of REACH ONE MORE. I was talking to a friend named Scott here at CCC and he said “Just to encourage you, that “Reach One More thing” really works. My friend in West Bend...

Another person told me that someone she had been praying for for seven years came to church for the first time last week and the friend called the CCC member and asked “Can I come to church with you on Christmas Eve? Another told me that after praying for his One More, that friend called him out of the blue to ask if they could go to coffee and just catch up.

You see, God wants to reach people more than we do. And when we pray, God gives us opportunities. It is a stunning correlation. If you have stopped or forgotten to pray for your one more, keep it up! God works in people’s hearts in his timing, but our job is to pray.

1 Cor 2:1-3

2 And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling.

If you were here last week, you can hear the continuation of a theme. Paul did not bank on human wisdom or rhetoric as he proclaimed the message of Jesus. When I came across this passage as a college sophomore I thought “Ridiculous! If you are going to win people to Jesus, you have to be able to have superior knowledge! You have to argue them under the table until they cry ‘uncle’ and submit to superior thinking.” I was a sophomore... and sophomore means “wise fool”.

Honestly, I thought if I could amass enough information to win arguments, then people would have to admit that I am right and they are wrong and they would repent and follow Jesus. Can you see how backward that is? Now, lets talk about reality. Lets say I had the information advantage – and truly, I studied this stuff for years and was really good at arguing. But do you know what I learned that year – and sorry for being remedial here – If I out-argued someone, it made them feel dumb and less likely to follow Jesus. And, they thought I was arrogant... and they were right. Besides that, I was banking on all the wrong stuff. Seriously I thought I was all that and a bag of chips, but none of my friends followed Jesus because I out-argued them.

So, back to Paul. “I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom and I proclaimed the testimony about God.” I mean, even if you were as smart as Paul and you could persuade people... if their salvation was dependent on brilliant wisdom, then they could walk away from salvation based on the next brilliant secular orator that came to persuade them another direction.

So, what is persuasive? V. 2-3 **Jesus Christ and him crucified – Scandal!**

Friends... this is why we meditated on Christ Crucified. It is the great scandal of God. That his son would take my place. That death would be the solution to death, yet bring life.

OK, so why would this be front and center? Why would this be effective? Preaching about a Messiah who is dead? Who was convicted of crimes? When we were in Israel, there were these pictures of a Russian looking Orthodox Jew on the backs of road signs. I asked our tour guide. “Who is that dude?” And she said “It is Russian Jewish leader who claimed to be the messiah. But he died a few years ago, so the movement is dying.”

But when Jesus died, a few years later in Corinth his movement was exploding. Why? Because Jesus came back from the dead. He made appearances. He was showing up in visions... Victory over death. Over sin. Over Satan. But interestingly, not OVER people. It was victory OVER the grave and FOR humanity. No wonder Paul put it front and center – it is the foolishness of God to win people through weakness, but the most brilliant strategy ever. so people knew his death was FOR something. People will eagerly follow – even run through a wall for a leader who is all out committed to them. For a leader who would die for them? Unstoppable. For a leader who DID die for them... even crucifixion. Oh man, no stopping that. One of the upside down laws of leadership is that people will dramatically follow someone with unstoppable resolve combined with massive humility. Has this ever been captured more than in Jesus Christ and him crucified?

It is why we bank ever, only, always on Jesus. It is the SCANDAL of God. It is the power of God. And it is why we embrace this phrase as our first DNA statement.

WE ARE ALL FOR JESUS

Jesus saves us from our past, remakes us to be like him, heals our broken places, and is coming back as our king.

Paul comes with Christ Crucified front and center, but also in weakness, fear, and trembling.

So, how does that work? Now, you know this is true, but let me say it out loud. You are far more likely to like and enjoy someone who is not self-promoting. You are likely to be actually persuaded by someone who is smart, but humble about it. You are far more likely to follow Jesus if the followers of Jesus you meet are not brash and arrogant. If they are expressive about their faith, but are not doing it for their own advantage – they have YOUR best interest in mind.

In our Reach One More training, we have a phrase that we use often – we are tour guides, not salesmen. In other words, our job in bringing the message is not to be ‘in your face’, it is to be shoulder to shoulder... walking alongside... pointing out the sights... inviting their participation. And allowing them to respond at their own pace. It happens in relationship, and from a position of support under and not power over.

During that sophomore year, God gave me a phrase that I have never forgotten . **Win hearts, not arguments.** I find people respond much better when they have the opportunity to self-discover the truth about Jesus. If they are looking at the Bible and read it for themselves, it is so much more powerful than if I am telling them my spin.

This is why we are launching seeker groups at CCC. Allison is our champion and trainer for these, but this is the idea. Lets say you have three friends interested in Jesus. Or five. Or just one. You have had some entry level conversations, but they are not quite getting to Jesus. Well, how about asking “You know, it has been an amazing adventure for me to read the eyewitness accounts of Jesus first hand. Would you

ever be interested in doing that with me? No pressure, but I'd love to hear your reactions and opinions." And if they are interested, just set a time. Maybe limit it to four weeks. Then when they are really interested, offer to extend it.

You may think this invitation induces weakness and fear and much trembling – well, join the Apostle Paul! This is how the gospel moves forward. To be honest, I have led these groups since 1987 – starting on that dorm floor. I have trained and helped hundreds to do it well, like Allison is doing for CCC today. And guess what? Guys from that very same dorm floor came to look at the Bible for themselves. They self discovered the truth, and fell in love with Christ Crucified. They asked questions, we all laughed and about two guys each year came to faith in Jesus.

You can do this. And we want to help you do it. If you want to learn more about this contact Allison. She can help [Seeker Group Training -Allison - Allisond@cccomaha.org](#) . Training Starts February 11 – if interested, go to [cccomaha.info](#).

I don't know about you all, but I am dreaming about **reaching a city**. We don't compete with other leaders, but last Thursday, 500 leaders from across the metro gathered to ask how can we bring the Kingdom of God to Omaha. White and black, men and women, Catholic and Protestant. And this guide is a huge tool to make that happen. In fact, I don't know if you have thought of this... this is a great gift for any leader you know. A principle, an executive at work, a city official, a neighbor, a business leader. It has SO much amazing demographics that any Omaha leader would drool to get this information. Plus, there is a plan for how we will tackle mental health, invest in kids, make neighborhoods better... and more! The book itself is an amazing way to demonstrate the practical realities of bringing heaven to earth. And just like last week, if you can't afford one for yourself or friend you want to invest in, just put it on Marks Account and we will cover the \$15. I've probably given away dozens already because it is SUCH a good investment!

1 Cor 2:4-5 **4** My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, **5** so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

Now Paul adds another element. That he came with a demonstration of the Spirit's power. I was trying to remember... did Paul do any miracles in Corinth? I went back and checked Acts 18 and interestingly, no miracles were recorded by Luke from Paul's time in Corinth. Then I scoured 1 and 2 Corinthians and sure enough I found a reference at the end of 2 Corinthians when Paul is defending his ministry among them.

2 Cor 12:11-12

11 I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the "super-apostles," even though I am nothing. **12** I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles.

So, for Paul in this context, he had done signs, wonders and miracles. We don't have any known details that I could churn up. But that was one way that the Spirit's power was at work. And many of you have experienced something like this. You, or someone close to you, had a supernatural healing. Perhaps, you were being harassed by demons and you were delivered from them. Perhaps, you were in the midst of circumstances where connections were made and God's leadership was so obvious that you were like

“There is no way this could have happened without God’s hand.” These are all demonstrations of the Spirit’s power. They are stories that HAVE to be told. It is an important piece of your world that needs to be known by those around you.

Because NOBODY can argue with your story. Nobody can say “Aaah... that didn’t really happen to you.” They can argue science and faith or historicity of the gospels, or reliability of the Bible. But they can’t argue about your story. Because it is your story. And it is a story that points to Jesus. Dramatic or mundane, it is a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.

You know what else is a demonstration of the Spirit’s power? The fruit of the Spirit being lived out in you. When people run into Christians who are typified by Love, Joy, Peace, Patience... and when it is every Christian they meet who is like that... they begin to put 2+2 together and think “There is something different here. I don’t care what the media or tiktoks say about Christians – I see outstanding character in them.” It is a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.

You know what else is a demonstration of the Spirit’s power? The service of Jesus through you or the broader church. I find my neighbors are utterly unimpressed that I am a preacher or the content of what I say. But when I talk about the Christmas store, or the hospital in Africa, or stories of benevolence, or renewal groups or citycare or city serve... that makes them sit up and be interested. And, it is like “whoa, I don’t know anyone else doing THAT.” It is demonstration of the Spirit’s power.

This defines us as a church. In fact, our second DNA statement is all about the Spirit’s power in our lives.

WE ARE EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit within us enables us to live life beyond belief—a life filled with joy, purpose, and power. We live in a supernatural reality that includes yet transcends the physical universe.

More on supernatural reality later. But as God’s people, the work of the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit and the Love of the Spirit poured out on our community are palpable. Let’s continue to lean in and fill up on Him.

1 Cor 2:6-8

6 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we declare God’s wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Now there is an interesting transition here from v 1-5 to 6-8. Paul is guarding against an extreme. He wants us to know that he is NOT saying that we don’t value wisdom. Or that we prefer to act foolishly. No, as you mature in Christ, you NEED wisdom. But it is counterintuitive wisdom. It is non-conventional. It doesn’t come from late-night comedians, self help books or internet gurus. You won’t find it in youtube messages or from Business Icons. Listen, the rulers of this age are coming to nothing.

We embrace wisdom, but the mysterious wisdom of God. He has been hinting toward it since the beginning of time. He has woven it into the history of Israel. When they did well, when they were evil, through prophets and kings, God was teaching truth, painting pictures and dropping clues about the

messiah who was to come. Humans didn't grasp it, debated it, preserved it... but it was like grabbing smoke... it just eluded.

And the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans didn't get it. Just an obscure, crazy, marginalized people group descended from Abraham – who did nothing to deserve it, they were just the objects of God's affection. The rulers of this age totally missed it! If the Romans, if Pilate, if the Sanhedrin, if Caiaphas knew that the Lord of Glory was standing before them, they never would have crucified him.

But God kept it hidden so Jesus would get crucified. Because that was Plan A. God knew that no other plan would bring forgiveness to everyone. Jesus had to die because the sins of the masses – the adulteries and genocides and betrayals and murders and gossips – were just that bad. Big crimes demand big punishments. So God kept it hidden, so that it would actually happen. It is one more piece of evidence of how much he loves us.

But then, in verse 9, he writes the mind blower...

1 Cor 2:9

9 However, as it is written:

“What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived” the things God has prepared for those who love him— these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

Let me diagram out what we have seen in this passage: (Three Clicks, growing in size)

- Hidden for Ages – Poems, Pictures, Prophecies, Hints
- Revealed in Jesus- Heart and Cross
- No Eye has seen –

You think the shift from hints to fulfillment in Jesus is a big deal? It is. But not so big a deal as the shift that is about to happen. You see, just as the rulers of the past couldn't see stage two in the coming and crucifixion of Jesus, so we cannot see the future. And you think there was a transformation from stage 1 to stage 2? Oh my. The coming transformation is even bigger.

I believe that the coming transformation is dimensional in nature. Now, I want to warn you that I am stepping out on a limb here. Combining Physics, Astronomy, and Bible into one mass. This is not clear in the Bible, it is “No Eye Has Seen” speculation. Can you roll with me a bit?

I was provoked by a book about a dozen years ago. It is a book by Hugh Ross called “Beyond the Cosmos”. (Book Cover and Hugh Ross face). I read this book cover to cover on vacation in Orlando one year. And I remember staying up all night one night even though I had four small kids and Disney World the next day. It was one of the most powerful worship encounters of my life because I thought “Oh...my...gosh... God is so much bigger than I ever thought.” And here is what it surmises.

Physicists have come to the conclusion that the Universe exists in ten dimensions. We experience four of them, Length Height Width and Time. But the Math related to the Big Bang does not work if you assume four dimensions. So they tried it using five, six, seven.... Eventually ten. And there is where the math worked out. Ten dimensions. Seriously. And the other six are kind of rolled up into little balls.

From this, you get a lot of the ideas around string theory.

Now, if a **line is one** dimension, a **plane is two**, a **cube is three** and a **cube in time is four**, I can get that. But I have a hard time wrapping my mind around the fifth dimension – if you are someone who imagines alternate universes or **branches of timelines**, this is fifth dimensional thinking. Or the sixth... would be **all possible universes**... Seven dimensions begins to make me go (confused verbet sound...) and ten is just mind numbing.

OK, now lets go up a level to God- who created ten dimensions. Who thought up string theory, astrophysics and all possible universes. He is degrees smarter than the most complex thoughts we can imagine. And what if... and I think this is plausible... what if the new bodies we get are from higher dimensions. What if the New Heavens and the New Earth are from more dimensions. What if our paltry experience on earth and our faith in God is just a preparatory journey for the real thing. Life in say, six experienced dimensions.

What if Time is not a line, but a plane or a sphere? What if angels and demons experience dimensions 3, 4, 5, and 6 and that is why they are existent, but shadowy figures in our reality?

Kinda crazy, huh? And I'll repeat. I don't know if this is right. I know it fits the Biblical evidence. I know the math and physics fits the known data, but still is theoretical at best. But just like the leaders of Jesus day were clueless as to how the Messiah would be made manifest, so we are clueless about the breadth of our future in Jesus.

Music Here: Here is what we know. It is bigger, broader and more beautiful than we could ever imagine. We could use words to describe it, but they fall short. No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived... but it is real and it is our destiny. And we get the joy, the privilege of inviting others in. Every time we reach one more, there is a birth of an eternal dimensional magnificent being who makes the heavenly experience even more glorious. And on this planet you... and you and you get the privilege of inviting them in!

Lets stand together and pray. We are going to pray for our "one more". Lets raise our hands – one finger up in order to signify that one person who we are praying to connect with God, to turn to him in faith. And repeat after me.

Heavenly Father. It was your idea to reach one more. You have invited us in your plan. I pray for my one more. Reach them. By the message of Christ Crucified. By a Demonstration of Spirit power. Include them in your plan. Bring them to the place no eye has seen. No ear has heard. No mind has conceived.

In the name of Jesus – our savior – our sanctifier – our healer – and our coming king – amen!