



## Your Best News

Text: John 1: 43-46

Founding Pastor Ken Werlein

1. What is the best news you ever received? Was there any “backdrop” of bad news behind it or that came before the good news? How might that have influenced how this piece of good news rose to the top as the *best* news?
2. Who were the people and what were the key events and seasons in your life that lead to you putting your faith in Jesus? Or if you have not yet put your faith in Jesus, who and what has brought you to a place where you are seeking?
3. Read Matthew 28:1-20. In vv. 19-20, Jesus gives his followers what is known as the Great Commission. However, to fully understand the weight (and the joy!) of this command, it is helpful to have an understanding of the context.
  - a. What events occur shortly before the giving of the Great Commission, and why is that important?
  - b. What does Jesus command his followers to do?
  - c. Does this command apply to all believers today? Why or why not?
  - d. What sources of encouragement does Jesus give his followers as they pursue obedience to his command?
4. Reflect on your own desire and attempts to share your faith.
  - a. What struggles do you have when it comes to sharing your faith? What are the hurdles you have trouble crossing in order to be more open and frequent with your evangelistic efforts?
  - b. What, if anything, have you learned or experienced that has helped you begin to get over those hurdles?
  - c. For most people, coming to faith in Jesus is a journey, a process that takes places over weeks, months, or years of being exposed to Jesus and his people and his message. Who do you know that does not yet know Jesus, and how can you invite them to “come and see”? (See Study Deeper)

Challenge: In Luke 15, Jesus tells a series of parables about God’s heart for the “one”, those who are far from him? Who is your “one”? Create a 3 x 5 card to use as a bookmark in your Bible that list three people you want to commit to praying for regularly and earnestly for them to come to know Jesus and for God to open an opportunity for you to share your faith with them.

Prayer: As a group, pray for the following:

**Pray for compassion for the lost.** Compassion is a necessary element in witnessing. It motivates you to speak, to teach, and to pray for others to come into the kingdom of God. Compassion helps you to cry over the lost and to come to God in humble request for their salvation. Paul said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation," (Rom. 10:1).

**Pray for the desire to witness.** Pray this regularly and watch the Lord change you and give you a desire to reach out and tell people about Jesus. God will grant your prayers and joy will fill your heart as you fulfill the command of God by witnessing.

**Pray for boldness.** Pray for the courage to step out in faith and speak up when needed. Many Christians are timid because speaking a word for the sake of the Lord can be risky and frightening. Boldness gives you the courage to risk ridicule and to endure the scorn. Ask God for it. "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," (2 Tim. 1:7-8).

**Pray to the Lord to bind Satan and his angels.** There is a hierarchy of demons seeking to hinder your witness and steal the seeds of the Gospel that you plant. You cannot fight spirits with reason or flesh and blood, but you can ask the Lord to fight. With prayer, you can assault the camp of the enemy and weaken his false kingdom. Prayer is a mighty tool, a powerful tool. You need it if you are going to witness.

## STUDY DEEPER

### Do You Really Care about Evangelism? If So, You Need To Do More Than Pray

Prayer is the starting point, not the endpoint, of our journey in helping people from darkness to light.

We are likely all familiar with Jonah, who was a prophet of the Lord.

Jonah lived during a time of relative prosperity for the nation of Israel; however, there was, of course, some trouble brought on by a certain city: Nineveh. As the capital of the Assyrian empire, Nineveh and those residing within her walls were known throughout the ancient world for their infatuation with brutality and violence.

Every Israelite from the tall to the small knew that the Ninevites were bad news— and so did Jonah. That's why when God told him to go to the city to preach a prophetic message, he looked the other way.

Many of us read this story of the legendary man who spent time in the belly of the whale and wonder how he managed to disobey God so blatantly. We pat ourselves on the back whilst enthusiastically reassuring ourselves that we could never manage to behave that badly.

After all, if God called us to go and share his word we'd eagerly go, right?

## The Ninevite in the Mirror

If we're being honest, each of us has our own Ninevites— the sometimes unpleasant, occasionally disagreeable people whom God has called us to witness to. They're our nosy next-door neighbors, unkind co-workers, and grumpy grocery store clerks.

Like Jonah, we might not feel like loving them or feel like sharing Christ's message of redemption with them. Nevertheless, scripture is clear: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation..." (Isa. 52:7).

Now, maybe some of us feel that we're doing what we can right now to share the gospel. Instead of reaching out and trying to connect with our neighbors as we should, we choose what we feel is a simpler approach: prayer.

We trust that God hears us when we call. We know that he loves our unbelieving family members and friends even more than we do. So, we've determined that our well-intentioned prayers and warm wishes are enough to result in these folks coming to Christ.

## Prayer Isn't Enough

I want to be really explicit here: prayer alone will not save a single soul. Prayer is the starting point, not the endpoint, of our journey in helping people from darkness to light.

Now, don't misunderstand me— prayer is important. We should all be going to God and asking him regularly to open hearts and ready minds to receive his message. Prayer is a part of the process, certainly, but it mustn't— it can't— simply end there.

In Matthew 9, Jesus commands his disciples to "pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest." Prayer, in God's eyes, is the catalyst, not the end result. There are people in our communities, families, and friend circles who have never heard the good news of the gospel.

If we say we follow Jesus, than this should bother us. The notion that so many wander through life apart from his love should motivate us share the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

## Building Your Individual Approach

Its important to recognize that each of us is likely to approach evangelism differently. The skills and talents we have were given to us by God with intention; no one person occupies the same space as another in the church body. The key is this: to find the way you do it best!

My approach has always been more verbal. For someone like me, jumping into a cab or an Uber and starting a conversation with someone I've never met feels exhilarating. I enjoy asking questions and hearing people's stories as this allows me to later redirect the discussion to the gospel.

But this, of course, isn't the way all believers are required to go about sharing the gospel. For some, doing acts of service, writing cards, or sending gifts (and sharing why) might come more naturally. It's all about leaning into the ways God is calling us individually to engage in the work he's doing in the world.

In the words of 20th-century British evangelist Leonard Ravenhill, "Any method of evangelism will work if God is in it."

Ed Stetzer holds the Billy Graham Distinguished Chair of Church, Mission, and Evangelism at Wheaton College, is executive director of the Billy Graham Center, and publishes church leadership resources through Mission Group.

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