

Title: Faithful to Plant: Learning to Share the Gospel with Confidence

Sermon Summary: This sermon challenges believers to move beyond passive faith and embrace their role as active witnesses for Jesus Christ. Drawing on the Great Commission and the agricultural imagery of planting and watering found in 1 Corinthians 3, the speaker emphasizes that while only God saves, believers are called to be faithful in sharing the gospel. The sermon provides practical guidance through the LEAP acronym (Listen, Emphasize, Ask, Pray) to help ordinary Christians engage lost people in genuine, compassionate conversation. Through personal testimony and powerful video accounts, the speaker illustrates that effective witnessing does not require extraordinary ability but rather availability, faithfulness, and a willingness to let God work through ordinary moments and ordinary people.

Key Points:

- The pressure to save souls belongs to God alone; the believer's responsibility is to faithfully plant the seed of the gospel and trust God for the increase
- Every Christian will one day give an account at the judgment seat of Christ for how they used their abilities to further the gospel to lost people
- The Great Commission in Mark 16:15 was not given exclusively to pastors, missionaries, or ministry organizations but to all believers
- The LEAP acronym provides a practical framework for gospel conversations: Listen to where the person is hurting, Emphasize by meeting them where they are without leaving them there, Ask transitional questions that open spiritual doors, and Pray before and during every conversation
- A believer's personal testimony is one of the most powerful witnessing tools available, particularly when speaking to someone who feels they have gone too far to be forgiven
- Spiritual preparation through prayer is essential, specifically asking God to create sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading and to place people in need directly in one's path
- Declining membership in gospel-distributing ministries means fewer laborers in a harvest that is already ready, and waiting until retirement or a more convenient season is a missed opportunity

- When a person does not accept Christ during a conversation, it is not failure; faithfulness in planting is the believer's job, and the result belongs entirely to God

Scripture Reference:

- Mark 16:15, in which Jesus commands his followers to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature
- 1 Corinthians 3:6, in which Paul describes how he planted, Apollos watered, but God alone gave the increase
- Proverbs 29:13 (referenced in principle), warning against answering a matter before fully hearing it, applied to the importance of listening before speaking in gospel conversations
- Acts 17:23, in which Paul references the altar to the unknown God as a point of connection with his audience in Athens before declaring the living God to them
- John 9:25, in which the man born blind offers the simple testimony that whereas he was once blind, he now sees
- Psalms 86:7, referenced in the testimony of Donnie Wells as the verse that gave him hope to call upon God during his son's crisis

Stories:

- The speaker recounts witnessing a fellow Gideon named Jerry repeatedly and naturally engage waitresses and strangers in gospel conversations, leading them through a prayer of salvation, illustrating that this kind of witnessing is a learned and practiced skill available to any willing believer
- The speaker shares his own testimony of joining the Gideons in 2007 following the end of a 39-year marriage, finding purpose through the encouragement of an older Gideon named Jim Webster who urged him toward active involvement rather than nominal membership
- At a Marshall University scripture distribution in 2014, the speaker handed a Bible to a woman who later returned in tears, believing her past abortion had placed her beyond God's forgiveness; the speaker told her simply that his Jesus could save her, and she accepted Christ on the street that day; months later she returned to show him that her mother, father, sister, and brother had also come to faith after she shared how her burden had been lifted

- The video testimony of Donnie Wells, a pastor who recounts how a coverless Gideon Bible placed in a hospital chapel became the instrument through which a woman led him to faith during his young son's five-day brain-dead crisis; after Donnie prayed and made a covenant with God, his son was miraculously revived; Donnie went on to pastor the same church for over 35 years and his son also became a pastor, with Donnie having shared this testimony for 44 years as a tribute to the work of Gideons distributing God's Word