Spiritual Disciplines

Lesson 4: Wednesday September 15, 2021

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**Spiritual Discipline: Evangelism (Testimony/Witness)**

The spiritual discipline we are looking at tonight is evangelism. The most precise definition of evangelism is - the proclamation or preaching of the gospel. The word evangelism comes from the greek word for gospel (euangelion). Most literally it is translated “gospeling”.

In simple terms it is sharing the good news of Jesus life, death, and resurrection.

Of all the spiritual disciplines we are going to cover in this series, I would venture to guess that this one on evangelism is probably the one that most universally causes an immediate sense of failure and fear. Before we jump into the meat of the lesson and start talking about practical application, I want to do my best to prepare you to rightly receive the encouragement, exhortation, and instruction that the word of God gives us in regards to evangelism by reminding you that you are not saved by your good works, or your performance. In our flesh we are quick to compare our performance to others or to a self-defined standard of perfection that can cause us to sinfully despair and feel like we are incapable of ever reaching maturity or real growth. When we are walking in the flesh and not by the Spirit, this kind of despair will cause us to find ways to set aside the clear commandments of God and not even think about them, much less put them in to practice in any kind of disciplined way.

There’s not a person in this room including me who has not failed to share the gospel when certain opportunities were given. Those missed opportunities should cause us to grieve and repent, but not despair. So let us be repentant of how we have not done as much as we should to share the life changing message of the gospel with others and move forward with confidence in that same gospel message, bearing witness to its power to set us free from the enslavement of sin.

One of the ways that Satan will try to sideline us from the great commission is by convincing us that our own sin disqualifies us from calling others to repentance and faith. We need to be mindful of how our actions affect the credibility of our testimony. We’ll talk more about that, but what we need to remember is that we are not calling people to works-based salvation. That is not the gospel, and if we truly believe the gospel ourselves than we will know that our own works or performance is not what qualifies us to be a witness for Christ.

Our only qualification to authentically share the gospel with others is that we are IN Christ, having been saved from the penalty and enslavement of our sin by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. We have to believe the gospel ourselves if we are going to authentically share the gospel with others. God is sovereign, even over our sin. Our sin can be used by God to create an opportunity for us to display genuine, humble repentance and faith in Christ alone for our salvation. It can become an opportunity to display the power of the gospel’s work in our lives.

So, if *you* are IN Christ, *you* are of those called and commissioned to this glorious spiritual discipline—take heart: you are qualified IN Christ.

LET’S PRAY…

Most of us would probably agree that fear is the biggest hindrance to evangelism. There are many reasons for this fear and I hope to address most of them in our time tonight but I want to start by saying that I think many of them stem from a deficient biblical understanding of what evangelism is and how it applies to all believers.

Evangelism - the proclamation or preaching of the gospel, does not apply to every individual believer in exactly the same way. Not everyone is called to preach a gospel sermon every week. Likewise, not everyone is naturally gifted with an ability to speak clearly and articulately.

So, for people who are terrified of public speaking and have difficulty bringing to mind the right words to say what they are thinking, it makes sense why they would be terrified of evangelism **IF** that is all they have in view. They picture a trained church pastor or the guy on the streets with a bull horn preaching and engaging strangers in apologetics.

If that’s your only understanding of evangelism I hope you will come to see that it is one kind of evangelism, but it is not the ONLY kind, and in fact it is not the typical way that most Christians will do evangelism.

**The Gift of Evangelism**

On one hand, an evangelist could be defined as anyone who proclaims the gospel, but we also see in Ephesians 4 that the office of evangelist is a particular gift.

**Eph 4:11-12** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

This particular office of evangelist is referring to a vocational evangelist, someone whose primary work is evangelism.

It is interesting to note that the only person in the entire Bible who is named as an evangelist is Philip.

**Acts 21:8** On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

This doesn’t mean there weren’t other evangelists but it does give further evidence that the office of evangelist was a particular gifting that not everyone was given. That said, even though none of the apostles were called evangelists, they did do evangelism, as did Jesus, as well as others:

Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 to “do the work of an evangelist” - that is proclaim the gospel wherever you go.

We are ALL called to do the work of an evangelist. In fact, look back at the Ephesians passage for a minute. It says “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,”

These gifts are given to the church to equip the church. So the gift of evangelism is given to evangelists in order to equip the church for the work of the ministry. God uses means to accomplish His purposes and one of the ways He equips the church/ the individual members of the body of Christ to do evangelism is by giving other individual members of the body the gift of evangelism. Praise God that we have members in our own local church who are more naturally gifted in areas where we are weak so that we can learn from them and be encouraged by their example.

So if you’re thinking, “I don’t have the gift of evangelism so I’m off the hook”, to quote Jesus words in Mark 12:27 “you are quite wrong.”

Evangelism is the call on every one of us in the great commission.

**Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

All believers are disciples of disciples, who are disciples of other disciples going all the way back to the original disciples of Jesus. That doesn’t mean that we have all had the same level of discipleship, or that we have all been discipled in the same way, or even the same quality of discipleship. Regardless of the level or thoroughness of the discipleship we’ve had, God’s Word is clear that the non-apostolic instructions given to the original 12 disciples of Jesus apply to all of His disciples.

Jesus said “teach them to observe (that is obey) all that I have commanded **you**.”

The you here is the disciples that were in His presence, but it obviously applies to ALL disciples who would come after them. Teach them ALL that I have commanded you. Not just teach them what the instructions are, but teach them that they are to observe them, to do these things themselves. Everything not tied to their unique office of Apostle that the disciples were commanded to do applies to us if we are true disciples of Jesus. That includes doing evangelism, whether we have been given the particular gifting of an evangelist or not.

Testimony and Witness

Let’s look now at testimony and witness.

Giving testimony and bearing witness are not the same as proclaiming the gospel, but they can be evangelistic in the sense that they give account to the power and truth of the gospel at work in a person’s life.

There is a popular idea in Christian-eze that has been very un-helpful in understanding the critical role of proclaiming gospel truth in evangelism – it’s this idea of “preaching the gospel with your actions”. The truth is, it’s impossible to preach or proclaim the gospel without communicating actual words.

But what is sometimes rightly meant is that we should point to the truth of the gospel with our actions—and that we should seek to live/act *in ways constant with the Christ* of the gospel. That’s what our witness in particular is meant to do. You can think of our testimony as the words we speak, and our witness as the way we act. Our witness serves the truth of the gospel by displaying its power at work in us. That said, no one will ever come to faith in Jesus Christ simply by our actions, no matter how perfectly we might display our obedience to the gospel. No, they need the facts of the gospel clearly communicated in language.

Our testimony may include the gospel, but what I want you to distinguish is the kind of testimony that doesn’t necessarily include the gospel. It is testimony that speaks to what a person has seen, heard, or experienced, in regards to God’s work in their lives. It could be as simple as telling someone about how God gave you peace in a very difficult situation, or sharing your amazement at God’s work of creation when you see a beautiful sunset. You are speaking to the truth of something God has done, but not the full proclamation of the gospel.

Our witness and testimony can be a powerful component of evangelism but they are not evangelism. If we depend on our testimony and witness alone to communicate the gospel, we are leaving people in the dark and not doing what is truly necessary for them to know and be saved by the gospel.

I read a story somewhere recently about a man who got saved and when he told his boss at the office where he worked his boss replied “That’s great! I’ve been praying for you for the last 2 years.” The man replied “wow, really? Why didn’t you ever say anything? You were one of the biggest reasons I resisted for so long. I figured that if you could live such a model life without Jesus, I could to.”

His boss was apparently doing the many of the good works of a Christian, but he never spoke out in a way that connected those things to Christ.

**2 Corinthians 10:17** "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

**Matthew 5:16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Think about it, if our good works are never credited to Christ by our words, we are allowing people to think that we deserve the credit. We can be guilty of boasting in ourselves without ever saying a word. We should always be looking for ways to give credit to God for the good works that He is producing in us so that He gets the glory, not us.

That doesn’t mean we have to go around going “yeah, I just did this, or that, or I just donated $1 million to build a homeless shelter because I love Jesus.” It’s not the good works we are pointing to or even pointing out. If we have to point them out then we probably aren’t doing as much as we should. What we want to do is to live each day so that our actions AND our speech line up in such a way that it all points to Christ.

**Christian Witness**

Every Christian is given the blessing of being a witness for Christ. If you have been saved by God’s grace then you are necessarily a witness of God’s grace.

**Acts 1:8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Not only have we been commissioned to be witnesses for Christ, but we have also been empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a witness. To be a witness for Christ is to be someone with a testimony of who He is and what He has done. This empowerment of the Holy Spirit works in conjunction with the word of God. As we learn and know more of the scriptures, the Holy Spirit enables us to draw to mind those truths in our speech and our actions.

But, while important study and growing in understanding is important for believers, we don’t have to wait until we’ve been through Bible study or catechism in order to be a faithful witness for Christ. We are a witness for Christ the moment we are saved. We don’t make ourselves witnesses by bearing witness. We are made witnesses by God, by the fact that we have been saved by Him.

In John 9 he tells the story of a man born blind who was healed by Jesus. The Pharisees were in an uproar because it happened on the Sabbath.

**John 9:24-25** So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man [Jesus] is a sinner." 25 He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

This man became a witness because of what Jesus had done for him and he gave testimony of what he knew of Him. He was not equipped to sit and have a theological debate with men who had spent their entire lives arguing the finer points of Jewish law, rather he simply stated the facts that he did know. And when he says “whether he is a sinner I do not know”, that is his way of saying I’m not going to argue with you over the finer points of Jewish law. He knows that Jesus is not a sinner by the fact that Jesus opened his eyes.

We see this in verses 31-33 when he tell the Pharisees, *”We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."*

This blind man was one of many who Jesus miraculously healed for the ultimate purpose of validating who He was.

**John 10:25** Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,

**John 10:37-38** If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; 38 but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

The good work Jesus had done was ultimately meant to validate what he SPOKE, namely, that He is God. And the good works He has done and is doing in us are also meant to bear witness to gospel truth, that He is the God of salvation.

We are always acting as a witness for Christ as long as we bear the name of Christian. Sometimes that will mean having to suffer for the sake of Christ.

**Matthew 10:18** and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.

Jesus Himself was dragged before Pilate to bear witness.

**John 18:37** Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world— to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

When we suffer well for Christ by joyfully enduring suffering for His sake we are bearing witness to the truth of the gospel. Our actions give visible affirmation that what we say about Jesus, who is our eternal hope is true.

Another way that we are witnesses for Christ is in standing up for the truth of His word. We have been blessed as a nation to have the freedoms to worship and to live our lives in a way that is in alignment with how God has called us to live but those freedoms are now facing a real threat. As Christians we are quickly coming upon a time where we may have to take a stand for Christ that requires us to disobey unbiblical/unlawful demands of the governing authorities. There’s no time in this lesson to address any of the specific threats we are currently facing and that’s not the point anyway. The point I want to make is that when we are forced to take a stand against injustice that God’s word condemns, we are loving our neighbors by bearing witness to the truth that it is in fact unjust. We honor God and we love our neighbor when we testify against the unbiblical and evil practices of our government.

One prime example of this kind of witness would be abortion. Abortion is an evil that is clearly condemned by the word of God. Being a witness for Christ therefore requires us to condemn it as well. The sin of abortion has had a devastating impact on society and countless individuals, beyond the unborn victims themselves. Women who have had abortions have suffered physical, spiritual, and emotional trauma as a consequence. The world will say that is unloving to speak out against an issue that has so much pain and suffering attached to it, but what is even more unloving is to not truthfully identify the sin that is so damning and to offer the only hope of real and eternal healing found in the gospel.

When we are bearing witness to the truth by standing against evil, we must be very careful not to lose sight that our ultimate goal is to share the hope of the gospel. Being salt and light means that we don’t engage the world in worldly ways, we stand out as distinct. If we are unhinged or hateful, we are not displaying the true nature of the Christian faith. Our hope is that our testimony and witness will lead to opportunities for evangelism.

**Personal Testimony**

The most common understanding of testimony is an individual’s story of how they were saved.

One of the best parts of our quarterly all church celebrations is getting to hear testimonies of God’s saving grace at work in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. In order for someone to become a member of the church, they must have a credible testimony of saving faith in Christ. It is not uncommon for people to have difficulty sharing their testimony of salvation, both new and long time believers, but this simply should not be. Of all the things we could tell someone about ourselves, there is nothing more glorious than the miracle of the gospels power to raise us from the dead unto eternal life with Christ.

One reason people struggle with their testimony is because they have been too influenced by the man-pleasing kind of “testimonies” that entertain and glorify the story teller. Certainly, some testimonies are quite stark in just how lost and how hardened the person may have been before they were saved. Many Christians fall into the trap of judging the value of their testimony by the way that it compares with the testimonies of others. They think that if it doesn’t engage and entertain an audience like a Tom Clancy novel that it is not worth sharing. They let man’s opinion hold more sway than the word of God. The way we combat this lie is by remembering the truth that our testimony/our story of salvation, is *a part* of God’s story of redemption. Our testimony of salvation is not about us, it’s about the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His gospel promise to redeem a people for His own pleasure from every tongue and tribe and nation. Each one of us who has been saved is part of a much larger story that has been written by God and He is the one who has written the story and knows how it all fits together to make a beautiful mosaic that glorifies Him more than any other story. So when we think that our testimony, our part in the story is not as good as it could be, it’s not our story that we are dismissing, its’ God’s.

If we are going to glorify God in the story of our salvation, we have to know the gospel’s power in our own story. We need to know the details of how and when we were saved. That doesn’t mean you have to know the exact day and hour, but it does mean you must be able to contrast your life before salvation, and your life after, all in light of the truth of the gospel.

This is often harder for people who were saved at an early age and don’t remember any rebellion towards God. It is easier to see the contrast for a person who lived a long life of debauchery and was brought to repentance and faith as an adult.

When our testimony of being saved is limited to the moment of our salvation it will seem very uneventful for those who were saved at an early age. That is why it is so critical to understand that the gospel is at work in us from the moment of our conversion until we graduate this life and that the testimony of how we are “being” saved is a major part of the story we must tell.

As fallen creatures, we may be tempted to think that God is more glorified in the salvation of the murderous adulterer than He is in the salvation of the preacher’s son who was a model citizen, but that is our own ignorance and pride revealing itself.

No matter what age we were saved, or what our life looked like before salvation, if we are truly saved, the Holy Spirit, working through the word of God will cause us to grow in sanctification all of our lives. Our maturity is a result of growing in the knowledge of God. As we grow in our understanding of the magnitude of His holiness, we will automatically grow in the knowledge of how far we fall short of His beautiful perfection. We become more aware of our sin, and more amazed by His grace. Our testimony becomes more and more exciting to share as we become more conscious of just how amazing our story of the gospels power at work in us is!

This is why our testimony must be true according to God’s word

When we are first saved, our understanding of the gospel might be very basic and even lacking in several parts, but it must be a true understanding of the just penalty of our sin being forgiven by God through our faith in Jesus giving His perfect life as an atoning sacrifice for all who put their trust in Him.

We might not even understand the full meaning of those words when we first believe, but we have a true trust in Jesus alone as savior and Lord that starts us on a lifelong journey of learning and growing in our knowledge of Him and His word. As we grow in our knowledge of the gospel and in our love for God, it is reflected in the way we are sharing our testimony. This is something that we must cultivate through discipline.

**1Peter 3:15a** but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you

It says be prepared. Being prepared requires discipline. Just because we know we have been saved doesn’t mean that we are rightly prepared to tell others about how we were saved.

I’m willing to guess that I am not the only person in the room who has experienced having prayed for God to give me opportunity to share the gospel with someone, and then didn’t know what to say when the opportunity came. Our failures should be good motivators for us to be prepared for the next opportunity. God’s word commands us to be prepared.

**The whole truth**

One of the modern problems with so called evangelism is that it does not tell the whole truth. It is a watered down message of good news that deliberately seeks to avoid anything hard or offensive in order not to scare the person off.

**Galatians 5:11** But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

What Paul is speaking to hear is the Jews who were trying to add works to the gospel. They were offended by the grace of God that saved Gentiles apart from any other works, including circumcision.

If we are going to obey the call to evangelize, we must know and proclaim the gospel, in its fullness.

Q68. What is the gospel?

The gospel is the good news of the grace and power of God to redeem undeserving sinners to eternal life through Jesus’ perfect, sinless life; substitutional, sacrificial death; and victorious resurrection from the grave.These sinners are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone from the eternal wrath they deserved, and they are reconciled into an eternally secure relationship with God.

We can use different words to proclaim the gospel but we cannot add or subtract anything from the substance of the gospel that is summarized in this answer. And we need to know and understand the importance of each part.

Modern strategies have been scientifically formulated, tested and proven by collected data showing the supposed success or failure of certain methods of sharing the gospel. Their model for success is the method that has the highest rate of conversions, or the highest rate of numerical growth within the local church, whether those numbers represent professing believers or not. The most important factor is the end result, so the ends justify the means for those who defend these strategies.

There’s nothing inherently wrong with using scientifically collected data to help us better understand how to evangelize our culture. The problem comes from how the data is viewed and how much weight is given to it. It must be subordinate to scripture. When it is viewed with unbiblical priorities such as numerical growth or conversions that are marked by someone simply reciting a prayer, it’s going to produce strategies that are also unbiblical.

When the data is viewed with biblical priorities such as genuine faith and repentance as defined by scripture, it will lead to strategies that are wise and in accord with what God has commanded.

What we see when we look at the scientific data or statistics collected over the last several decades is that these church growth and big tent revival strategies where large numbers of people are walking down an aisle to recite a prayer to accept Jesus has resulted in generations of lost souls who believed they had checked a box that secured their salvation without even knowing the truth of the gospel, much less believing it.

I pray that no one listening who might have been saved in this way takes offense. I’m not saying that none of these conversions are valid. I myself was lead to faith under these kinds of strategies. But we don’t need the statistics to know firsthand how many people have made false proclamations of faith because they were deceived – not by what they heard, but by what was missing in the message they heard.

The gospel message must include its offense as well as its blessings in order for those blessings to be rightly received. If all a person hears is that they are no better and no worse than anyone else, and that Jesus loves them just the way they are, they are robbed of the needed truth that they as an individual have committed grievous sin rightly deserving the eternal wrath of God. Until a person rightly sees their own sin they cannot repent of it. It’s one thing to agree that I am a sinner just like everyone else, but unless I see that my personal sins (known and unknown) are grievously offensive to God who has revealed His perfection in the person of Christ, my repentance will be worthless. There won’t be any real change of direction. I will simply continue down the same path all unregenerate sinners are on, comparing myself to others and finding my identity in how well I perform compared to the general public. Perhaps I will experience a new commitment to my moral effort, but it won’t be true repentance.

When we look at the ministry of Jesus while He was on this earth, we can see that He always sought to address a person’s most pressing need. Of course that need is salvation. But in His love, He always sought to help them see what was in the way of their salvation, that is, their wrong belief or the sinful idol they were clinging to.

When Nicodemus comes to Jesus in John 3, Jesus challenges his pride in being a Pharisee and knowing the law of God, by teaching Him that his salvation is only possible if he is born again by the Holy Spirit and that his belief that Jesus is a teacher from God is not enough. He must put his faith into Jesus as the Son of God, the messiah.

In Mark chapter 10 when the rich young ruler comes to Jesus and asks Him “what must I do to inherit eternal life”, it says that Jesus loved him and told him that he must go and sell all of his possessions and then come follow Him. And the man walked away sorrowful, unwilling to give up his wealth.

This guy walks up just ripe for the picking, practically asking Jesus to lead him in the sinner’s prayer. There’s no way this guy wouldn’t have repeated those words if Jesus had just told Him that was all he needed to do. But Jesus goes right after the one thing this guy will be most offended by and forces him to choose between eternal life or his temporary possessions.

**Matthew 8:19-20** And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

Jesus doesn’t make it easy on these people. One of the things we are far too guilty of is thinking too highly of a person’s interest in salvation or in God. We think that if a person believes in God or is asking about how to be saved, that they are 90% of the way there and just need a gentle nudge to help them believe the gospel. And we’re scared to death of screwing it up and saying something that will turn them away, thinking that our words are what hold the final sway.

**John 6:60-66** When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" 61 But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

We must not be discouraged by the fact that the gospel message is by its’ very nature offensive to unregenerate sinners. Rather than us being discouraged by the number of people who reject the good news we proclaim, let us be encouraged by the fact that people’s rejection of it is not an indication of our failure as much as it is an indication of their sin and blindness to see it as good news.

Another encouragement is that all of the narratives of personal evangelism I can think of were non-combative. By personal I mean the kind of personal interactions that we are most likely to find ourselves in, not the street preaching that the apostles were doing. These were civil conversations where many of them ended with a rejection of the gospel but not in a hostile way. Just because we know our message has an offensive nature to it, doesn’t mean that we have to be prepared for battle.

There’s a now well-known youtube video of atheist Penn Jillette of Penn and Teller, a famous illusionist act, being asked about a Christian who had evangelized him. Penn did not receive the gospel and his mind was not changed, but his exchange with the man was not hostile. He said “I’ve always said, you know, that I don’t respect people who don’t proselytize. I don’t respect that at all. If you believe that there’s a heaven and hell, and that people could be going to hell, or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward…How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? I mean, if I believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that a truck was bearing down on you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that….”

When we are motivated by love in our evangelism, we will not fear rejection, and our willingness to be rejected bears witness to the truth of our message.

**The results of evangelism**

Our motivation for doing evangelism is Love. First, love for God and a desire to glorify Him. Secondly, love for our neighbor and a desire to do good to them. We have good reason for hope that lost sinners will be saved when the good news of the gospel is proclaimed. We have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to be used by God to share the powerful, life transforming message of the gospel. It is the communication of the gospel that the Holy Spirit works with to bring about the salvation of the elect. No one will be saved apart from hearing and believing the gospel.

**Romans 10:14** How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

God has ordained the proclamation of the gospel as the means He has chosen to bring about the salvation of the elect. But it is not the proclamation of the gospel that does the saving. Salvation belongs to the Lord. God chooses who and when a person will respond to the gospel in faith. We have the privilege of being used by God to testify and give witness to the gospel of Christ, knowing that He will use it according to His perfect will.

Jesus made it clear to His disciples that it was not their job to get people to listen and believe.

**Mark 6:11** And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them."

Jesus is telling the disciples that after they have gone to a place and proclaimed the good news and born witness with good works, if they are utterly rejected and not listened to, then they are to shake off the dust on their feet as a testimony against them. That means that the testimony that was rejected will still serve God’s purpose on the Day of Judgment. Our hope is always that our testimony will result in leading others to Christ. But even if it doesn’t, it is still glorifying God by serving His purposes.

**John 10:25-27** Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

We can rest in the knowledge that God will save His people. As witnesses for Christ, God uses us as His voice when we share the truth of His gospel. Those whom He has chosen will hear His voice (not ours) and will follow. Jesus had omnipotent knowledge of who belonged to Him, we do not. So we cannot proclaim to know that someone is not among His elect even if they do not immediately believe the gospel (or even if years have gone by). As we are faithful to making the gospel call, His sheep WILL follow, even if we don’t get to see it.

Leading others to Jesus is sometimes as simple as making the introduction.

After Jesus had spoken with the Samaritan women at the well she went and told her neighbors to come and see Jesus for themselves.

John 4:39 Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."

It was a simple testimony of what she had experienced with Jesus.

John 4:42 They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

Our goal is to expose people to Jesus so they are able to see Him themselves and come to know that He is indeed the savior of the world. One of the easiest ways to introduce people to Jesus is by inviting them to a church gathering where they can hear the gospel preached and witness the testimony of the redeemed in communion, worship and prayer.

Closing statements…