



Conversations: Listen More, Talk Less Part 2 - Understanding Unbelievers

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Conversations are an interesting thing to me. There are a lot of dynamics in conversations between the people that are involved. It depends on the people that are involved. For instance, you have a different conversation if you're an adult, having a conversation with a child than you do with another adult. You have a different conversation with your own child than you do with someone else's child. You have different conversations with a boss or employer than we do with our peers and friends. Even conversations with our spouse, like Ted talked about last week, that even changes depending on how long you've been married. So, even the length of the relationship with your spouse or someone else changes how the conversation goes.

Then there are conversations that we have with those that don't even speak our language. Those crack me up. We think that somehow talking louder and enunciating and maybe moving our hands is going to help them to understand us. So, it's "Hey, do you know the Wi-Fi password?" and it's "No habla ingles, Senor." Then we begin to speak each word very clearly and slowly, while gesturing each one. Like the interpretive dance is somehow going to help them understand our language. So, there are even conversations we have with people that don't speak our language.

With all of these distinctions of different conversations that take place, there is one that is always in place, regardless of those other distinctions, and that's Christian and non-Christian, and that's what we're talking about today. As we talk about this conversation between Christian and non-Christian and that that distinction is always there, there can be two Christians in conversations, two non-Christians in conversation, or Christian to non-Christian in conversation.

When a Christian is involved, the conversation should be predictable. Here's what I mean out of Galatians 5: 22 - ***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.*** If we receive Jesus, we have received the Holy Spirit, and if we have the Holy Spirit, we should be producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, so our conversation should be predictable.

The most consistent aspect of all conversations should be the heart from which Christians converse. It should be predictable from Christians because of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. Now, already this morning, I've used some language – we'll call it Christian language – that some don't understand. We used different words in our Christian language like *the word* and *fellowship* and *believer* and *saved* and things like that. For those that don't speak our language, we can't just talk louder and use our hands to make them understand us.

I want to be very clear this morning, as we talk about Christian/non-Christian, to **define what it means to be a Christian**. We believe that God has always been and always will be. God exists in three parts: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. He gave us the Bible to understand everything that he wants us to know and understand about him and his creation. We believe that he created everything, including mankind.

When he created mankind, he gave mankind the option of sin or righteousness and man chose sin and with that, mankind took us out of right relationship with God and that had with it a death consequence.

Then, God gave us Jesus Christ, his son, one of the three of his parts, to live a perfect life, a sinless life, and die a sinner's death, so that he could take that death consequence for us and bring us back into right relationship with him. If we receive that from him and accept that and confess that Jesus is the Lord of our lives, we're a Christian.

I just want to clarify that as we start using Christian language and different things of what it means to be a Christian. And it determines if we are going to spend eternity in heaven with God or eternity in hell without God. It determines if we are co-heirs with Christ to an eternal inheritance that will never perish, spoil, or fade.

If we are a Christian and we have this inheritance, then we have a responsibility. We have a lot of responsibilities, but particularly in this Christian/non-Christian conversation, we have a responsibility that I believe is two-fold. To represent Christ well and to make sure people know about Him.

Now, to represent Christ well, let's look at what the scripture says about this in Titus 2. ***7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.***

This is Paul writing to Titus, a leader in the early Christian church. He knew that Titus was going to encounter the same kind of thing that we would. People will have observed Titus' and our conduct and our speech and our actions and that will set forth an opinion about us as Christians. So, what he's saying is you conduct yourself well because there will come a day when you're going to want to say to someone, "I've got good news!" When you say that, they may say, "You know what? I'll bet you do. I've watched you, I've heard you, I've seen your conduct and frankly, I don't want to hear whatever it is you have to say."

So, representing Christ is important in this way and we have a lot of opportunity to represent Christ every day, in a lot of different situations, and we either do it well or we do it poorly. We represent Christ in how we conduct business. We represent Christ in how we treat our waiters and other service people that we interact with. If you are a waiter or a service person, you represent Christ in how you interact with your customers and your clients. We represent Christ in how we interact with our children's teachers and school administrators. If you are a teacher or a school administrator you represent Christ in how you interact with your students and with your students' parents. There are a lot of opportunities and different ways that we represent Christ.

We represent Christ, Lord help us, at the Department of Motor Vehicles when we've waited in line for 30 minutes to get to the front just to realize that we have the wrong form. We represent Christ in everything.

We represent Christ in how we use social media. If you remember when social media first came out with Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and everything, they would say, "Join the conversation." Do you remember that. You could "Join the conversation." News and entertainment outlets would say, "You can be part of this conversation." But, what we are seeing is that the way we use social media is not to converse, but rather to express our opinions, mostly. How are we representing Christ with the use of our social media? Because we *are* representing him, good or bad. And it should concern us how we represent Christ. It concerns Christ. When Jesus walked the earth, being God himself, he was concerned with how the religious activists were misrepresenting him.

In James 1: 19... Ted talked about this last week with leading into our conversations. ***...let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger...*** And so, we learned about how first we're supposed to listen and then, eventually, slowly, we speak. But, look at this: "slow to anger." It doesn't say don't get angry, it says be slow to anger, so what we know is that Jesus got angry. He got angry at different people for different things. One of them was that he got angry at people for misrepresenting him and his Father.

So, that should concern us a little bit because we have a lot of ways that we can misrepresent Christ. One of them is right here (picture of a ichthys fish on a car). Recognize that? You see where I'm going with this one, right? I don't have an ichthys fish on my car. If you have one, that's fine, I've got no problem with it. I don't. I believe it elevates you to a higher level of accountability in your driving etiquette. So, I don't have one, but if you have one, do me a favor; quit flipping me the bird when you're driving.

The car is a hard place because conversations are hard to have when we're driving in our car. All we really have to communicate when we're driving is our horn and our horn doesn't have facial expression or inflection or tone or things like that. It's just a horn. The length of the horn, really, is how we communicate. The question is how long can you honk and it still be a Christian honk? As we are communicating with our horn, it's very difficult.

I have a rule. When I'm at a stop light and the light is red and I'm second in line and the light turns green, I give a five count. Someone said to spell green. Green is a count of five. Once I get to five, it's fine for me to honk, so, I'm just going to honk quickly, I little Christian honk. The problem is my horn requires a little bit more force and it's kind of sticky, so instead of a little honk, I get this long honk and that's not what I meant. But, because our horn doesn't have inflection and tone and facial expressions, it would be nice if our horns did because then we could communicate more like we want to.

With the short horn that I'm going for, I would say it is maybe like a woman from the south because they always sound sticky sweet even though they're really ticked off at you. So, the light turns green, you count to five, and it would be something like "Hey, y'all, light's green. We can go now. God bless you."

That's how I would like to convey the honk, but, unfortunately, what comes out is something more like, "Hey, a green light means the same thing in Branson as it does in Iowa. Now, some of y'all have uttered those very words in Branson; don't lie. Is there anyone here from Iowa? We've got someone from Iowa back there. We're glad you're here; welcome to Branson. We love you. We don't really think that you're just out wandering around. We just want to say, "When the light's green, we can go." We pick on people from Iowa in Branson a lot, don't we?"

So, since I'm picking on you today, we want you to enjoy a meal on us. This is for you. This is a \$25.00 gift card to Chili's. It's from Chili's because you can see it's got red and green on it. We love our driver friends from Iowa. Bless their hearts. My father in law tells me you can say anything you want about anybody as long as you follow it with "Bless their heart."

But, the car is a hard place and so that ichthys fish... I'm telling you, right? And we use the ichthys fish other places too, don't we? They're on our business cards sometimes and it's the same thing. When I was finishing my residency... So, med school and then residency and then finishing and going out into practice. Dr. Smith, one of my dear mentors, was giving me advice as I was setting up my own practice. He said, "Travis, I'm going to tell you one more thing as you're setting up your practice. Don't do business with anybody that has a Christian fish on their business card." He was dead serious. He knew I was a Christian. That hurt because that man had misrepresented Christ to Dr. Smith. Frankly, I believe that Jesus got angry with that man in the way that he misrepresented Christ in his business conduct with Dr. Smith, whoever it was.

That's not an isolated event. I wish it was, but the truth is it's widespread so much that Mahatma Gandhi said this one time: *"I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so not like your Christ."* Double ouch. This was Mahatma Gandhi that said this. You see, because of the examples everywhere from Dr. Smith to Mahatma Gandhi and everywhere in between, I believe this is a result of our disobedience to the command in Titus 2 of how we are to conduct ourselves and how we are to represent Christ.

Then it gets worse. We've got this type of stuff (picture of protesters). Stuff is a nice word. I don't know if you know about this, but people are actually protesting the funerals of fallen gay soldiers. I say people; I don't say Christians because I truly don't believe that that type of disgusting, despicable, dark, hatred behavior could come from a heart of a person that truly has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That's what I believe. There is only one judge over us all and one day we will have to face him. I believe that unless people, in this type of behavior, repent of their darkness and truly receive Jesus Christ in their life, they will one-day face God Almighty and hear the words, "Depart from me, you worker of iniquity. I never knew you." "Get out of my face" is basically what they'll hear, I believe.

Scripture says this about it in 1 John 1. **5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.** You see that these dark practices cannot be of the Lord. **7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.** You see, I don't believe that kind of behavior can be in light; I believe it is pure darkness.

Some people would tell you, in these types of behaviors, “We’re just telling you what the Bible says. In the name of Jesus, we’re telling you what the Bible says, and we know the Bible.” And to that I would say, “So does Satan.” Satan knows scripture. Satan quoted scripture to Jesus when he was tempting Jesus. It’s important for us to understand that simply quoting scripture, in and of itself, is not a righteous behavior.

You see, some people think that because the belief that they are stating is biblically founded, that they can express it whenever, wherever, and how ever they want and that’s just simply not true. You see, Satan knows scripture, Satan quoted scripture, and it’s not always appropriate to express things when, how, and in what method we want to.

We may step back and say, “Praise the Lord I’m not as bad as those people,” right? Let me ask again. How are you representing Jesus? It’s not okay, just because something we’re expressing is biblically sound, to express it whenever, wherever, and however we want. So, the question is: How are you representing Christ?

Last week, Ted also mentioned Proverbs 18: 2, which says this: A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion. That was our little bee stickers. That was our bee understanding, bee quiet, bee kind.

The important thing for us, as Christians, to do is to be understanding and not so concerned about expressing our opinions. I believe, over the last couple hundred years, or longer even, that we’ve been so concerned about expressing our opinion that we’ve even gone so far as, in many cases, to have lost our witness. Some of y’all recognize that phrase. “Lost our witness.” That’s what happens when you leave the DMV. You’ve lost your witness, right?

Now we are going to start to actually get into this issue of the conversation, but I believe it’s been important for us to lay this groundwork, to describes the grounds on which this conversation is taking place, so we can understand where we are and where this conversation comes from and where it’s going to. A conversation is required for us to understand someone. We have to converse with someone to fully understand who they are and what they believe and that usually takes some time. Very rarely is it a short conversation.

It is possible and I can prove it to you. Most of us in here know Joe White. We hear Joe White teach and we hear his stories about his short conversations in evangelism that he has with people. How in the world does he do that? You know and hear of people that go door to door or try to share their faith with someone in a short conversation. For the most part, people are just standoffish; they don’t want to hear it. But, you give Joe White five minutes with someone and they are going to be crying, giving him a hug, and receiving Christ. Y’all know Joe. How does he do it?

Today, I’m going to tell you Joe’s secret. The truth is it’s not even a secret. Joe tells you every time he tells you one of his stories about leading someone to Christ and sharing his faith. When he tells you how the conversation goes, it goes something like this.

“What’s your name?”

“My name is Josh.”

“Josh, tell me your story.” These are four words of conversational brilliance. They communicate that you are listening, you want to understand them, and you’re not going to criticize or dispute anything they’re going to tell you.” After all, it’s your story. I can’t dispute your story. You’re telling me about you. So, you’re opening up this conversation for yourself to understand when you ask someone, “Tell me your story.”

You know how it goes. Within five minutes, Josh is crying, giving Joe a hug, and receiving Christ. But, a conversation is required to fully understand. And to fully understand, you need to know their story.

I want to tell you about an old friend of mine that I worked with named Michael. It was very evident in his lifestyle that he was not a Christian. It was in his language and the way that he approached women and his weekend activities. He just made it very clear and he was, frankly, proud of his lifestyle. The Christians around him, for the most part, would make it very clear to him what their opinion was about his lifestyle. They would make it very clear to him what they thought he should or should not be doing.

I got to know Michael fairly well over the years. One day, I said, “Michael, I know your girlfriend has been in church; I wonder if you’ve ever gone with her?”

He said, “Yeah, I went one time. They were certain to tell me what they thought about me and what I should be doing. They knew about me because of my girlfriend, so they told me how I needed to change and all these things.” He said, “I told my girlfriend, ‘You can go; I’m just not going back.’”

I said, “I’m sorry you had that experience. Would you mind if we got together one time and had lunch, just so you could tell me more about that experience.”

He said, “Absolutely.”

So, we sat up a lunch, got together, made small talk, talked about sports and jobs. He and his girlfriend had just had a baby. I asked him to tell me what it was like to have a baby.

He said, “It’s incredible. It’s something I can’t explain. I don’t understand it and I can’t explain it, but it’s just amazing. Holding her in my arms and looking her and her looking at me is amazing. You know what I’m talking about?”

I said, “Yeah, I’ve got kids; I know exactly what you’re talking about.”

We talked some more. I said, “Would you mind, Michael, to tell me what you believe about God?”

He spent the next little while telling me everything that he had heard about God and what he kind of believed about God and so on.

When he was done, which was quite a while, I said, "Would you mind if I tell you what I believe about God?"

He said, "Sure. Tell me what you believe."

For the next few minutes, I told him exactly what I just told you earlier, just clearly and concisely who I believe God is, who I believe Jesus is, about man, sin, salvation, and all those things. He looked at me and he said, "No one has ever explained that to me."

I said, "Really? Wow."

He said, "Honestly, I would say I want to believe in God, but I don't feel like God has shown himself to me."

I said, "Let me ask you something. Do you remember earlier when you were talking about your daughter and that you can't explain that feeling?"

He said, "Yeah."

I said, "Do you think it's possible that in that, God was revealing himself to you?" And for the first time, I believe ever, I saw the door to Michael's heart crack open just a little bit. I got the head tilt and the eye squint and the "Hmm." I said, "I'm going to do something. I want to be praying for God to reveal himself to you. If I do that, would you mind doing something?"

He said, "What's that?"

I said, "Would you mind allowing yourself to be open to God revealing himself to you?"

He said, "Absolutely." And we finished the lunch and parted ways.

You see, the problem that had caused the breakdown in the conversations so far with Michael is that people were trying to convince Michael to act like a Christian when Michael is not a Christian. The point is just that. **Don't expect non-Christians to act like Christians.** It's foolishness for us to expect that. We don't expect animals to act like other animals. We don't expect a cow to sing/whistle like a song bird. We don't expect a giraffe to hop on two hind legs like a kangaroo. We don't expect the Chicago Cubs to continue winning championships. Bless their hearts.

You see, we need to understand. That's why it's so important for us to understand the people that we're talking to. We shake our fists at the unbelievers and say, "Why don't you act more like Jesus?" It's like shaking your fist at the cat and saying, "Why don't you bark like a dog?" That's just not who they are.

As a Christian, the most important thing for me to understand about the non-Christian is that they don't have Christ. You say, "Clearly, that's obvious. We just talked about what makes a Christian." We know

that, but do we really understand it? People had been telling Michael that he should be acting more like Jesus, and no one had taken the time to tell him who Jesus really is.

Sir William Osler is considered by most to be the father of modern medicine and he said this, and it applies here. He said, *"The good physician treats the disease. The great physician treats the patient who has the disease."*

I love the beautiful irony of his words here because he's talking about medicine, but, as Christians, we use the Christian language *Great Physician* to describe Jesus.

As Christians, we see a behavior, we see a sin and we call it out. We want to call it out. I recognize that. I know that is sin. I've got scripture to prove it and I think it's important for me to express my opinion about that sin. In that process, we neglect the fact that there is a person who is in this condition of this sin. So, just like Dr. Osler understood the relationship between the disease and the patient, it's so important for us to understand that Christ, our Great Physician, is more concerned about the person than the condition of the sin.

Now, a time is going to come when we must talk. In a conversation, we are slow to speak, but we must get there. Here's the important thing. **When it's time to talk, speak clearly.** In order to speak clearly, we must know the scriptures and what we believe about God and his creation.

We see a lot of medical dramas now, now and previously with ER and Greys Anatomy and all these other ones. Of course, they misrepresent medicine in a lot of ways, but it's kind of like how my contractor friends get frustrated with HGTV watching clients who think a whole house can be renovated in like 30 minutes. Reality, right?

But, with these medical dramas, there's something they get right. This representation of how the attending physicians ask questions of medical students and the residents. That's part of the learning process: asking questions in order to learn. When I was a resident, there was Dr. Medina. He was a brilliant man and one of the world premieres of head and neck cancer surgery. When he would ask you questions, there were two acceptable answers. One was the right answer and the other one was "I don't know." "I don't know" was acceptable. So, he would say, "Dr. Brawner, what are the six surgical indications for primary hyperparathyroidism?" There were two appropriate answers: either the right answer and he would say, "Great answer" or "I don't know" and he would say, "Good answer, but you're going to know tomorrow, aren't you?" "Yes sir, I will."

The same applies when we're asked a theological question or in conversation about our faith that we don't know. There are two good answers: the right answer or "I don't know." When it's "I don't know," you say, "I'm going to find out. Can I get back to you?" That is an acceptable answer. Our desire should also be to be moving from this condition where we're mostly saying "I don't know, I'm going to find out for you," to where we're learning more and knowing the truths and scripture about God and his creation.

A few weeks ago, we were at a charity benefit/silent auction and I bought a guitar. After I bought this guitar and I'm carrying it around, about half a dozen people that I know said, "I didn't know you played the guitar." I don't. That's why I need a guitar. Makes sense, right? If I don't have a guitar, I can't learn the guitar. So, I got it home, sat it in the corner of the room and for a couple of weeks, I still didn't play the guitar. Finally, I picked it up, opened an app, learned a few chords, play a few chords, and now I'm starting to learn to play the guitar. I'm no Eric Clapton, but I'm better than I was a few weeks before I even owned the guitar. You see where I'm going with this.

It's the same thing with the Bible. It's the same thing with the truths that we find in scripture. First you must have a Bible. If you don't have a Bible, see us back at the Resource Center; we want to give you one. Once you have a Bible... If you already have one and it sits on your shelf or sits on the table and you're not taking it out and reading it and studying it, reading commentaries and doing Bible studies, then you're not getting to know it any more. You see, the only way we are going to move more towards knowing the right answer is studying God's word. "I don't know" is okay, but we need to be moving this direction.

I believe that it's the "I don't know" that holds a lot of us back from conversations. Am I right? That's me sometimes. I don't want to enter into a conversation with someone because of the things that I don't know about Christianity, the things that I don't know about God and theology and the things of him. So, that holds us back.

The thing is **you don't have to know everything about Christianity to talk about your Christian faith.** Remember earlier, "Tell me your story?" The same thing applies to you. Your story is your story. You know the truth about Christ and who he is and you have received him. Therefore, you have something to tell. God does not need us to know everything. He just wants us to talk about what we do know.

The other thing is we don't have to be perfect to talk about God. That may keep some of us from entering into a conversation because we say, "Well, I'm a mess. I'm full of sin. I'm a wreck. I should not talk about God." Here's the thing, that is the gospel. We are all sinful. We are all a hot mess in our own little way... or big way. We all have our sin and that's the gospel, so don't hold back from talking about your faith because of sin in your life. As a matter of fact, that is part of your story. If only perfect people who knew everything about God and everything about scripture talked about him, then there wouldn't be any conversations. We are all ministers of the gospel, those who have received Christ, and we are called to represent him well and to make sure people know about him.

Now, when it does come time to talk, it's important for us to not soften what we know to be true because we know that there are some who are going to seek teachers that will suit their own pleasures. Scripture puts it this way in 2 Timothy 4. ***3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.***

So, you see, this is why it's so important for us to stick to sound truth because some will be seeking teachers to suit their own passions. We have to be very careful about the phrase "What this means to me." The Bible has one interpretation, any passage in scripture has one single interpretation. It may

have many applications. It can be God communicating this to me in my life and how this applies to my life, but God only means one thing, there is only one truth that he is speaking in any passage of scripture.

As we can get into this thing called relativism – people are seeking their own truth – that’s exactly what we are supposed to be against here. So, what’s true for you is true for you is true for you is true for me. Relativism is “You know what? What’s true for me does not have to be true for you. You choose what you want to be true for you” and those are myths.

I want to avoid us being ambiguous here at Woodland Hills and I want to speak on a few things because there are a few specific topics that people are seeking teachers to suit their own pleasures and there are evangelical Christian churches who are willing to do that. So, just to be clear, I want to talk about a few things here. One is that we believe that God knitted us together in our mother’s womb and he created us male or female and he does not make mistakes in those assignments. We believe that God created marriage and he intends it to be between one man and one woman for life. We believe in the sanctity of life and that life begins at the moment that the fertilized egg implants into the mother’s womb.

These are the types of things that people are looking for teachers to suit their own pleasures. The thing is that as I state these truths, I want to remind us that just because something, a belief we’re expressing, is biblically sound doesn’t mean we can express it whenever, wherever, and however we want. It is to be in love, joy, peace, and all of these things, according to Galatians 5: 22.

You will meet opposition for your Christian faith. Christians, you will meet opposition. We know that from 1 Corinthians 1. **18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.** These truths that we believe are folly, foolishness to some. So, when we meet opposition and people telling us we are fools for what we believe, this is how we respond in 1 Corinthians 16. **13 Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. 14 Let all that you do be done in love.** So, you see, as we stand firm in the faith and we are strong, we let all that we do and how we express our faith be done in love.

We know from the gospels of John and Matthew that the world is going to hate us. Christians, the world is going to hate you and we know that. My hope is that the world hates us for what we believe because they disagree with what we believe, and they hate that. May it not be that they hate us for how we express our faith and what we believe. May it be the beliefs and not the way we express them.

The conversation does not end when you part ways. As a follower of Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit in you and when you converse with someone, particularly someone that is a non-Christian, you bring the Holy Spirit into the conversation.

I want to make this point by telling you another personal story about a guy named Brad. Brad was a guy I played college football with and we were friends. We got to know each other the four years that we were together. He was a quiet guy; he didn’t want to talk about much, particularly not anything about religion or God or the Bible. There was a moment when I thought he seemed like I could at least share my faith with him and that he’d be receptive to hearing me.

So, I asked him, "Brad, do you mind if I just tell you what I believe about God.?"

He said "Sure."

I told him. It was a short conversation and the conversation ended and we moved on. We remained friends. We both graduated. He went on to a long successful career with the Cincinnati Bengals and I really didn't have any contact with him, other than keeping up with his career from a distance.

A few months ago, I was on Facebook. I saw Brad posting something about God leading him. I followed to his page, I scrolled down, and I saw posts about professing faith and about him sharing his faith with young people all over the place.

I had to reach out to him. I said, "Louie," (we called him Louie) "hope you are well. I figure it's been about 18 years since we have spoken. I saw your post about how God is leading you and it made me smile. You might not remember, but back in the day, you and I had a conversation about Christ and who he is. You weren't very interested in talking, as you believed the Bible was just another book and Jesus was just a good person. I remember it like it was yesterday. I committed that day to pray for you and that you would, someday, come to a saving knowledge of Christ. It blesses me to see your profession of faith and know that even if we don't get to talk again in this life, we will meet again one day in the presence of OUR savior."

Brad responded, "Travis, oh man! That is amazing. Thank you so much, brother! Of course, I don't remember you talking to me about God. I was pretty happy living life on my terms. I'm curious how many times I said no to people and didn't realize it. I got saved during my ninth year in Cincinnati. Now I feel like I get the chance to go back and share Christ to all the kids like me. I appreciate you, man."

I said, "Awesome. Your story helps remind me that God has his timing. I'm reminded to simply share the gospel and pray for those that I share it with. The kingdom got a huge win with you."

You see, when Brad and I parted ways at graduation, I committed to continue to pray for Brad and the Holy Spirit went with him and the Holy Spirit got a hold of him and the Holy Spirit brought him home to Jesus. When you part ways, the conversation does not end. I told Brad the same thing that I told Michael and I prayed for Brad the same way that I continue to pray for Michael. If your conversation, whether it's a five-minute conversation, like between Josh and Joe, or an 18 year conversation, like Brad or Travis, as Christians, we have a responsibility to represent Christ well and to make sure that people truly know about him.

I want to close with a quote from Dick Foth. He has preached here a couple of times. I think he says it very well. He says, "Jesus is the center. Friendship is the way. Kindness is the currency."

Father God, we love you. Lord we are so grateful for all you've given us, all you've done for us. Lord, we thank you for conversations that you bless us with. We ask, Lord, for your leading in our lives, for the Holy Spirit to work through us, and for us to walk in the light as you are in the light, Lord.

I pray that we would be quick to hear and slow to speak. God, that you would help us to look for understanding, especially before we speak, and Lord, that when we speak, we would speak clearly, that you would give us words in the moment and if we don't know, it's okay, Lord.

Help us to develop friendships and to express love in all that we do. We pray that those that we would share our faith with would be receptive and that we would be patient.

We love you and we thank you for the grace that we receive, for the gift of your Son Jesus Christ. It is in his name that everyone agreed and said... Amen.