



Summer Family Reunion

Part 5 – Sharing the Good News

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We are going to begin today, and move into the next couple of weeks, talking about sharing the good news – evangelism, missions. Travis and I are going to team up on this for the next several weeks. But today, we're starting with just *Sharing The Good News*. For you personally, sharing the good news with family, friends, co-workers, strangers. I really had two titles for this message. This is what it ended up being, but then I thought I should probably show you what I was thinking about which I felt it was a little too abrasive, but here's what it was. Sharing the Good News Without Being Weird or a Jerk. I felt emboldened to do that after Alex Himaya was here last week. There is something about Alex preaching at our church that makes me want to go at it with people.

Some of you do not share the good news of Jesus with people because you are afraid you're going to be looked at like you're a Jesus Freak. You are afraid people are going to see you as weird. And then there are others who think they might be sharing the good news, but really, you're just sharing your opinion on something going on. And if we are not careful, we can be combative and defensive. And we can come off like a jerk and that's why people say, "If that's what it means to follow Christ, I want nothing to do with it."

So today, let's talk about what it means to share the good news. What does it mean to let people that we come in contact with, that we spend time with know that Jesus died for them. We live in a world full of bad news. You've heard a lot of bad news lately. Every morning we wake up and find out what we should be mad about today? What should outrage me today and get me all spun up? And if we're not careful, we forget that yes, the great commandment is to love the Lord your God and to love your neighbor and the second is love thy neighbor as yourself. So, the great commandment is to love. The great commission is to go. You and I are called to love and go. It's not just something we do; it's part of our DNA. If you are a believer in Christ Jesus, it is in who you are that yes, you are called to love and you are called to share the good news of Jesus.

Here's a concern I have for myself. I don't want all the bad news to keep me from sharing the good news. I see this happening with believers today. We get so much bad news and why are we so quick to share this. Proverbs calls gossip a dainty morsel. I've always loved that word picture because when you hear gossip, it is like a dainty morsel. You can't help but take it and it just tastes good going down. And you can't wait to share that dainty morsel with someone else.

Bad news works kind of the same way. It's like once we get it it's like man, this is good and I gotta make sure the next person that I meet that conversation starts with "Hey, did you hear about..." We are actually enthusiastic about the bad news. But I have to remind all of us that we are not a bad news people. We are a good news people. and we need to have enthusiasm for sharing this message.

So, there are some conversations that you may get into this week. Here are two of them. There are the conversations about your faith, initiated by others. So, someone asks you about your faith. I get asked this often and it usually starts for me with, "What do you do?" I get this on airplanes all the time. If I say I'm a pastor, it can either shut the conversation down, people apologizing for all the foul language they use leading up to that announcement. Do you have any idea the number of times people have said, "I'm sorry for what I said before I knew what you did." You ain't gotta worry about me. I ain't your issue. But then I love telling people I'm a pastor and they go, "Get the bleep out of here. Are you serious? That's awesome."

So, conversations can be weird for me. I love when people ask me what I do, and I respond with "I'm a teacher." "What do you teach?" "History and ethics." But then they ask where and that gives it away. "In a theme park." Eventually, I have to have better answers. And no matter how the conversation starts, you and I both need better answers. What do we read in 1 Peter 3: 15? **15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...** You are going to meet combative and defensive people. The key here is that we are able to share with someone who is combative and defensive without ourselves becoming combative and defensive. Sharing the good news with gentleness and respect. There are going to be a lot of conversations where people initiate with you, and we need to be ready. We'll talk about that today.

But then there are the conversations that you initiate, that you are bold enough, that you understand "I am an ambassador for Christ." We read in 2 Corinthians 5: **20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.** We take this good news because **We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.** And that is why we share the good news with those who are lost.

Today, let's start with this question and then look at some of the thoughts that maybe you've had, thoughts that keep you from sharing the good news, things that maybe you've said out loud or things that you have just thought. What keeps you from sharing it? We are going to look at five today.

If you have your Bibles, turn to 1 Corinthians 2. Paul is going to share in here with the Corinthians, not just what he shares, but how he shares it. I hope this is encouraging for you. I hope it emboldens you to share your faith more. I hope it prepares you with that answer to give for the hope that you have in you and to do it with gentleness and respect. The more I read these first five verses... You are going to see... If you have your Bible, you can write these notes right next to it. You're going to see clearly how we communicate and hopefully it removes some of the roadblocks that maybe have kept you from sharing the good news.

1. "I'm not a good communicator." I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand, but there are some that would say, "I'm not an orator. I am not a public speaker. I get into conversations with people who

speak better than I and I find myself shutting down.” I want us to address this first and foremost because this is where Paul begins in 1 Corinthians 2: 1. He’s picking up from Chapter 1, speaking on the futility of human wisdom. He says, **And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom...** I didn’t come to you like the Athenian philosophers. In Corinth at this time, they prided themselves on their wisdom, their wealth, their ability to communicate. Maybe you’ve been in a situations like this. Maybe at work or in a classroom. I’ve dealt with this in classrooms. We all find out at some point in our life that you're not the smartest person in the room. I’ve been in a lot of those situations. I’ve been in a lot of situations where I am intimidated by the subject matter and people are smarter than I am, and they know a lot more about the subject than I do. So, this can be intimidating, but what does Paul say? He says, “I didn’t come to you with that eloquence or with human wisdom. He says, **I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.** To people who prided themselves on wealth, wisdom, and strength. He says, “I brought to you the gospel message.”

I want us to remove this stigma of you’ve got to have all the words just right. I joke with my entertaining friends in this town. “I always love to come at the beginning of the season to your first show. You don’t have all the kinks worked out and those are my favorite.” I love it when mistakes are made on stage. How many of you love it when mistakes are made on stage? It livens up the whole show. You forgot a line, you forgot a punch line, the mic didn’t work. I think that’s awesome.

At the Garth Brooks concert in September... How many of you were there on the Thursday night where it was kind of with the staff and the Bass Pro, Big Cedar folks? That was my favorite night because Garth got there late after we were all there. He didn’t have time for a mic check, so he came and did his mic check for us. That was my favorite part of the whole weekend. It was utter nonsense and chaos and he’s changing out packs and changing out his guitar. I thought it was incredible. It was my favorite part. Why? Because I love to see this guy, worth a few hundred million dollars, one of the greatest entertainers of our day, trying to figure it out in the moment. And then he walks back... He kept singing. He did a Meryl Haggard cover, and we were all cheering. This isn’t the show. This isn’t it yet. Then he walked back stage and you saw him. The camera was on him. He goes, “Ladies and gentlemen, probably the best entertainer of all time – Mr. Garth Brooks.” He comes out and everybody loses their mind. I was like, *Oh, I prefer the mic check!*

Some of you think that when it comes to sharing your faith. You have to have the “press play.” I don’t know about you, but when I share my faith, I find myself in conversations and in moments that the press play doesn’t work. Questions are being asked, conversations are being had. A lot of times, sharing the good news feels more like a mic check. We’re talking through this together. The truth is going to be proclaimed, but it doesn’t come out like the four spiritual laws that some of us were trained in. I doesn’t come out like Evangelism Explosion like some of us were trained in. Those are great and I think we need the training. For those who have been trained officially in some system of evangelism... But for those who say “I’m not a good communicator. I don’t know how to put words together. I stumble over my words. I get around people who know more about things in the world than I do...”

2. “I don’t have answers for all that’s going on in the world.” Watch what Paul says in Verse 2 **2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.** I don’t know if that encourages you. That encourages me. Do you know why? He’s saying here is, “My message is straight forward.”

Now, I’ve been in ministry for over 25 years, and I meet people all the time who are looking for depth, the mystery, the secret of the Bible. Listen, the secret of the Bible is Jesus. People want depth. Here’s what he’s saying. “The message I brought to you, I know you have your traveling orators, the Athenian philosophers. They stop places and their students are with them, and they begin teaching. He says, “I know what I know and what I know is Christ and Christ crucified.” We live in a time where it’s like we have to Google every day to figure out what’s going on. I ask that you don’t amen on this, I ask you to honor this as a big deal, but I know some of you are boycotting Target. I’m not a big boycotter, I’ve never been a big boycotter in my life, but we have decided... I asked Amy to boycott Target, but not for the reason you’re probably boycotting. I just said, “You can’t spend money anymore at Target.

I told her years ago that when I die, I want to be buried in the Target parking lot. That way I know she’ll come see me three or four times a week.” But that’s where our prescriptions are set up and I had to go pick up a prescription this week. I went in there. Again, I don’t know what’s going on and I haven’t followed it enough. But I went in there and it was kind of a ghost town. I kind of felt bad. I saw some of our church members and I felt like a Baptist in a liquor store. I was like, “Hey, how are you doing?” *You’re not supposed to be in here.* But then I did see a Baptist deacon walking in the aisle. I go, “What are you doing in here?” He whispered, “I’m getting my Bud Light.” So, the Baptists have found a safe place to buy their beer. I said, “I don’t know how many sins you’re committing. You’re in Target, you’re buying beer, and you’re buying the wrong beer.” Target, Bud Light, Pandemics, Vaccines, politics. There are so many things that people feel like that have to be really engaged.

Awareness is good. I like to be aware and engage in these conversations, but when we talk about sharing the good news, the priority is Christ and Christ crucified. Sometimes we can get lost in these secondary issues and think the secondary issues are the gospel. No, Christ and Christ crucified is the gospel.

3. I fear rejection by family and friends. I think this is the one we spend some time on because this is what most research tells us keeps us from sharing the good news. “I fear it will affect our holidays if I proclaim the name of Jesus and share the good news.” Look at Verse 3. Now you really get into Paul’s approach here. **3 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling.** I can’t tell you how many times I’ve shared the gospel with my lower lip quivering. My lower lip quivering is like my lie detector. That lower lip quiver is coming from a place I can’t control. I think that’s a healthy place for all of us to be in. If you find yourself confident and demanding, that probably goes against the gentle, respectful approach. That fear and trembling approach says *okay I am going to share the good news.* I think sometimes we have to get back... Mark Batterson said it this week and I shared it earlier this week, but I want to have it here for all of us to see.

He said, “*When did we start believing we could follow Jesus without being betrayed by Judas, mocked by pharisees, tempted by the enemy in the wilderness, or crucified by Roman soldiers? When did we start believing that God called us to safe places to do easy things with nice people?*”

We're called to be loving, with gentleness and respect. We're called to be loving, but it doesn't mean we are going to be loved. Jesus said, "If the world hates you, remember they hated me first." Now, this isn't a challenge for you to go out and seek ways to be hated. But when you share the good news, you will encounter those who get in your face.

I don't know if you saw the video weeks ago. This woman was mauled by a buffalo in Yellowstone. It was a fascinating clip. This lady gets mauled by a buffalo and gets knocked down. And I'm just going to tell you. If you get mauled by a buffalo in Yellowstone, you deserve it. You're too close. You shouldn't be that close. I told Amy, "I'll never ever in my life get mauled by a buffalo." Some of you are like, "How can you be so sure?" Because I won't ever take a selfie with one. That's why I won't get mauled by a buffalo. This woman was taking a selfie with a buffalo. The buffalo just got... I thought it was a really gentle little nudge to tell her to get out of his way. It knocked her to the ground. She got up and she's like, "What's your problem?" I don't want to speak on behalf of all buffalo but he's just being a buffalo. You got too close. He wasn't mad at you; he just wanted you out of his space. He just nudged her and she went flying.

I think this happens all the time to believers. We share the good news, we're met with hostility, and we're like, "Hey! What's your problem?" Lost people are going to act like lost people. Angry people are going to get angry. Combative people are going to be combative. We have to stop having this attitude like, "Hey, what's your problem?" You're a buffalo. I should expect this. Sharing the good news will bring you face to face with defensive and combative people. Do you know what the key is? Don't you yourself become defensive and combative. Share the good news. And do it with gentleness and respect.

People have a hard time listening to the good news when you're raising your voice or rolling your eyes. Let's share with gentleness and respect. So, what keeps you from sharing? These are the top two that you hear. If you look at any research, you can boil it down to this – fears that keep us from sharing.

1. Being preachy or coming off as judgmental holds us back from sharing the good news of Jesus.
2. Hurting the relationships or ending a relationship. What are your roadblocks.

A couple of weeks ago, I went to see 88-year-old Pat Kershaw, a widow in our church. She lives out in Taneyville. There are two ways to get to Pat's house. You can take the paved roads through downtown Taneyville and it's beautiful. If you've not been out to that part of Taney County, it's absolutely gorgeous. It's one of my favorite rides. You go down through Forsyth and over the bridge.

But there is another way to get to Pat's house. You can go on a gravel road. One of the most beautiful pictures in the Ozarks. It's got a bluff that goes up one side of your car and a creek on the other side. I was ready for some adventure. I drive a Tacoma and my algorithm is full of Tacomas doing adventurous things. By the time I got to Forsyth, I said, "I'm taking the gravel road." Pat told me two years ago that the road is closed because of the landslides and all of that and the boulders everywhere. I'm like, "We'll see." I took the gravel road. I probably made it a quarter mile down, but the boulders were about this high. I sat there for a second. I'm thinking... Obviously I'm not going left; that's a big wall. There's a creek over here. Remember I've told you for years I've wanted a snorkel for my truck. Now, I've got a

biblical, ministry reason to get one. I've got a widow in bad need of a visit. I looked and I thought, *It's not going to work. The ditch is too deep.* Then I'm thinking... I got the tow strap out and I'm going to wrap it around the boulder that was on this side and I was thinking if I could just move this one boulder, then I could keep the left tire on the road, put the right tire in the ditch... At this point, I'm dropping a pin to Amy, so she knows where to gather my body. She always says, "You do this stuff." To go fishing, I always have to drop her a pin. I sat there for a couple of minutes and realized I had to back up. Did I feel like the biggest wuss on the planet? I backed up.

I think all of us do this when we hit a roadblock. We don't spend one minute of thinking, *How can I get around this?*" Ask the Holy Spirit to recall a verse that you've memorized. "I need wisdom and discernment in this moment." Instead of just hitting that road block, we just shut the conversation down and keep going.

When you are gentle and respectful in a conversation, sharing the good news, I'm telling you that you don't have to back up right away and end the whole thing. The conversation continues. And you don't need to let a roadblock stop you.

4. I don't know what to say. This is different than the first concern of fear that we sometimes have saying, "I'm not a good communicator." But what words do I use. If his preaching was done with fear and trembling, look at what Paul says about his message. ***4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words...*** You have to think about the Corinthian mind in thinking about that. They prided themselves on impressive words that move the needle in the minds of people. You're going to see as we end out this text, I didn't use impressive words, persuasive language because it is all about God's power working through the gospel, not me. It's not the words that you pick and the words that you choose... What is the gospel as we can state it today? The bad news is you are a sinner. The bad news is for there is none righteousness, no not one. The bad news is for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The bad news is the wages of sin is death, but the good news is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

You are a sinner, yes, but he died for you. Maybe this might help some of you with your family. You have someone in your family that is not living for God, they've never placed faith in Jesus, they have a lifestyle that you don't agree with, and you have told them they are a sinner. But every time you're with them, you remind them of the bad news. Maybe it's time to remind them of the good news. Even if you don't say it anymore, it's all over your face, and they know it and they know what you believe. That's the bad news, but the good news is Jesus died for you and we are good news people, reminding people of the life that we have in Christ.

Timothy Keller says this about the gospel – *"The gospel is that I am so sinful that Jesus had to die for me, yet so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. I can't feel superior to anyone, and yet have nothing to prove to anyone."*

Coming out of June, I thought Pastor Shane Pruitt said it well when he said, *"The goal of the gospel is not to affirm you, celebrate you, and accept you. The goal of the gospel is to rescue you, transform you, and redirect you."*

And what did Satan say when he was talking to Adam and Eve? He said, "You're not going to die." And yet the Bible says the wages of sin is death. "You're not going to die. Actually, if you take of this fruit, your eyes will be opened and you'll be like God."

That's still the same like many of you are falling for today. You thump your chest and you're like it's my life. I'll do what I want, I'll live how I want. I'm not going to have any destruction for this way I'm living. My eyes are open, I'm an illumined individual, I'm an enlightened individual." And what you're saying is you are God. But the gospel says you are not God. You are a sinner, and to repent of your sins, and to confess Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that he has been raised from the dead, then you will be saved.

You can't be saved when you are God. You can't be saved when you're looking for a gospel that affirms you, celebrates you for what you've decided to do and how you've decided to live. No, it's coming face to face with the Savior and understanding I am lost, I am blind, I am dead in my transgressions, and I need a savior from all of this, and realizing Jesus died for you. That is the gospel, placing faith alone in Christ alone.

5. I've not been effective in the past. For some of you, this is what holds you back. You look back at the times that you have shared the good news, and you haven't seen any results, and you're like *why does it matter? Instead, I'll just invite people to church and let the professionals do it.* It's not about your persuasiveness, it's not about some impressive presentation that you can put together. It is about God working through you. His power through you. Look at what the scripture says. ***But with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on Stephanie's power.***

So, for the one today who has never placed faith in Jesus, I pray that after this service, whether you are in the courtyard or outside or online, connected with one of our pastors who are in here. Come down to the front, give your life to Jesus. For the next several Sundays, we're going to be talking about taking this message to the ends of the earth.

You know we had a great trip this year already to Ecuador as a church family with a great project. We've shared that and we will share that again in the next couple of weeks. A group of about 11 of us are going to Kenya on July 11, led by Kent and Stephanie McMillan, who are in this service. And then we have a trip coming up that we are opening up to the entire church family. We're thinking it's going to be capped around 30 – 35 people, to Guatemala.

Next Sunday at 11:45, over in the Chapel, if you are interested in learning more about missions... We know a lot of people will attend a meeting like that just to learn more. Learn what they can do if they're not going, but there's a part for you to play in prayer and in caring for the team. But if that is something the Lord has placed upon your heart like "Yes, I want to go and serve internationally." I'm super grateful to say at the end of this year we've had three trips, actually four. There is a smaller group going to Peru next week that our church is tied to. But I just want to encourage you if this is something the Lord has been laying on your heart... I'm so grateful for the McMillans and not just their roll in this church. One of the reasons I love them leading this trip is because these are two evangelists who share the good news here at home and that's something you look for before you think about going to share the good

news in another country, let's share it in our neighborhoods, let's share it in our own town. So, that will be 11: 45 in the Chapel next Sunday if you are interested in going to Guatemala in September.

If you have placed faith in Jesus, here at Woodland Hills or in recent months or you've been a believer for a while and never been baptized, July 30. I can't encourage you enough to put that on your schedule, be here. What a great time that is for our church family to be able to celebrate with you walking into the water, professing your faith in Christ. It's an outward expression of an inward decision.

Father, we're grateful for what you continue to do in this church as the good news goes out from our church family, and into this community this week, I pray that they pray for someone specifically that they want to share the good news with. And they pray leading up to the next time they are going to be with that person. And then you give them the words to share. Give them the boldness to share the hope that they have in Jesus in a gentle and respectful way. I thank you for how you continue to use this church and the growth that we have experienced in recent months. We ask that you help us, equip us, empower us, to steward that well. We want many to come to saving faith in Jesus, and that this church would boldly proclaim that until the Lord returns. For the one who has never placed faith in Jesus, that today is the day they step down to the front, meet with someone, and give their life to Christ.

We pray all of this in the authority of the name of Jesus, and everyone agreed and said... Amen.