

Back to Basics part 8:
“Witnessing: Sharing the Good News”
2 Corinthians 5:17-21

2 Cor. 5:17-21

Pray

Intro

Cancer is a terrible disease that is taking many lives each day in this country and around the world. Just the mention of the word cancer brings up a number of emotions in each of us. And though there are **many treatments** for this terrible disease, there is still **not a cure** for cancer. Much money and effort is going into finding a cure.

Pretend for a moment that you were a research doctor and that in your laboratory you actually discovered the cure for cancer, and that it was a cure for all cancers. What would you do with that knowledge? What should we do with that cure?
(So many lives can be helped and saved! Surely you could not just keep it to yourself.

Well, beloved, there is a far worse cancer out there called the **cancer of sin**. It has infected everyone and it will kill everyone and could send them all into a Christ-less eternity **but there is a cure** and that cure is the blood of Jesus Christ that if put into your spirit will take away the cancer of sin.

And we have the knowledge of that cure! It is called the Gospel, the Good News, and it is for all people, all ages, all races, for all time. It is a certain and eternal cure. Now, what should we do with this cure? Keep it to ourselves or lovingly and boldly proclaim it to all who will receive it????!!!

As you can probably imagine, our topic today in our series called “Back to Basics” is **Witnessing: Sharing the Good News**.

And yet, I am aware of how a topic like this can surface many fears for people. Most Christians struggle with sharing their faith because they don’t know how people will respond; they fear rejection, and they feel inadequate if a hard question is asked. Well, I think this message is going to help all us today.

TS We are going to look at Witnessing from 3 angles today: the call to witness; the motivations to witness and then some practical “how to’s” in witnessing.

1. The Call to Witness

We saw in our scripture reading today that we are ambassadors, agents of reconciliation, as though God were entreating through us. God calls us to be witnesses of the Good News. Jesus commands us in

Mt. 28:18-20 to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations

Acts 1:8 you shall receive power ... and you shall be my witnesses

Jn. 20:21 Jesus said as the Father sent me, so send I you
Mt. 4:19 Follow me and I will make you fishers of men

We are commanded to share the good news with those who do not know Christ. Jesus calls us to get out of our comfort zones, be among the unsaved, and show and tell the message of salvation.

“The number one way, then for Christians to be the salt Christ commands them to be is to teach His relevance, to demonstrate His relevance, to live His relevance in every area of life. We cannot accomplish this by talking only to ourselves, writing only for ourselves, associating only with ourselves and working only in the ‘safe’ careers and professions.”
Robert Briner in Roaring Lambs, p. 40

In other words, we are not to remain in our holy huddle but we are to be out in the world, though not of the world, and be witnesses for Christ.

TS Now, what are some of the reasons we are to witness for Christ?

2. The Motivations for Witnessing

a. We are commanded by God.

We have really already covered this under the call to witness. We have marching orders from our enlisting officer: the Lord Jesus has commanded us to go into all the world and share the Good News. It is **ultimately an obedience issue**. Now we are going to see later than when we talk about witnessing for Christ, we aren't just talking about sitting down with someone and telling them how to be saved. That is a great thing to do, yet we want to be thorough in our understanding of witnessing by acknowledging that there are many ways to effectively help others come to know Jesus.

But it is important today to realize that all Christians are commanded by God to share the Good News of salvation with those who are not saved.

TS Speaking of saved, saved from what? Saved from sin, and that leads to our 2nd reason to witness:

b. Jesus is the only solution for the sin problem.

This is such an important point and often overlooked today. The main reason people need Jesus in their life is **not** to make them happier or meet some tangible need or even to give them joy and purpose in life, as much as Jesus wants to do this for people. The main reason people need Jesus and this is a huge motivation for witnessing is because without Christ they are lost and dead in sin.

Romans 3:23

Ephesians 2 we are dead in our transgressions and sin

Isa. 59 your sin has separated you from your God

We have gone our own way and broken God's moral law. We have not loved Him with our whole heart and we have not loved our neighbor as ourself. We have broken God's commands and done what is displeasing in His sight ...

Our sin separates us from God and there is no way on our own that we can solve this problem. It is impossible to save ourselves. Sin is like cancer and spreads to all parts of our lives. And there is no cure except the blood of Jesus Christ. God sent Jesus for one main purpose – to pay the divine penalty required for sin. To shed His blood for us.

Jn. 3:16

1 Peter 3:18 Christ died for sins, once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that...

Eph. 2:1-6 we are dead in our sins but God in his mercy sent Jesus and it is by grace that we are saved through faith.

Romans 3:23-25

This is why

Jn. 14:6 I am the way the truth..

Acts 4:12 there is no other name

2 Tim. 1:5 there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ

Prop: Key If someone ever challenges you about God just having one way for salvation, ask them this question: do you think it strange that just one key opens the door to your car. Would you want many keys working for your car (or house)? If it is not strange that just one key works for your car, why do we think it odd that God would have just one way to unlock the door of salvation – one way for us to be saved?

(Mohammed is not the answer; Buddha cannot save; Mary Baker Eddy cannot remove sin; and good works cannot cure the cancer of sin. Only Jesus Christ and His death and His resurrection and His blood shed for us. And all people need Jesus.

c. Heaven and hell are real places.

Now I know that people don't like to talk about this stuff today, but folks it is in the bible and we are not to just talk about what is comfortable and popular but rather speak the truth in love. Look with me at some passages on this because I want you to see this for yourself:

John 3:16-18

2 Thess. 1:5-10 Very sobering passage

Rev. 20:11-15

I think it is pretty clear here that when we die we go to one of 2 places: heaven or hell. There are no other options. There is no middle ground. There is no purgatory. It is heaven or hell.

Jesus is the difference in where you and I and everyone else will spend eternity!!!! Heaven and hell are real places and they really do last forever. I submit to you that in

light of this, the greatest way to love another person is to share with them the Good News of salvation so they can discover the way out of hell into a relationship with God and thus spend eternity in heaven. Love is doing that which helps meet a need in another's life. Well, the greatest need everyone has is to be forgiven of their sin and discover the cure for sin. Jesus is that answer, so the deepest way to love another is to share with them how to be saved, and we are called to love our neighbor as our self.

TS So, we have seen the call today and the reasons why we are to do this. Now, let's make this very practical:

3. The How To's of Witnessing

a. Prayer

Jn. 6:44

Being that God is the only one who can ultimately change a heart and bring someone to faith in Christ, probably the most powerful and important thing we can do for anyone who is not a Christian is to pray, because what prayer does in a powerful and yet mysterious way is it aids in restricting the influence of Satan in a person's life (**2 Cor. 4:4** says that Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers; Mk. 3:27 says how can you enter a strongman's house unless you first bind the strongman) and prayer aids in releasing God's power to help bring them to salvation.

Let me show you a **diagram** that shows this:

Diagram of the world and a person praying to hinder satan's influence over the world – I have used this before.

I encourage you to regular pray for those you know that do not know Jesus. Some do a "top 10" list....

As you pray, also pray what Paul prayed in **Col. 4:2-4** for God to open doors of opportunity.

b. Example

This is so important. This has to do with how we live. We must realize that we are a witness by virtue of the fact that we are a follower of Jesus. If we never say a word we are a witness – by our life – either a good one or a poor one. If we say it but don't live it, we are a hypocrite. And unfortunately we have probably all seen examples where someone has been turned off to Jesus because of hypocrisy in those who claim to be a Christian but live a poor example.

The Pharisees were that way in Jesus' time and He did not like that at all.

Mt. 23:1-12

Ex. Mahattma Ghandi: the reason he did not want to be a Christian is because of Christians.

Now, listen carefully to this: perfection is not required but integrity is. No one expects you to be perfect but it is crucial that we be people of integrity. In other words, don't pretend to be something you aren't If you make a mistake or sin, admit it, come clean and ask for forgiveness. That will be respected. But to talk the talk and not walk the walk is an offense to Christ.

“Preach the Gospel all the time. If necessary, use words.” St. Augustine

2 Cor. 2:14 seek to be the smell of Jesus everywhere you go. What a great doctrinal prayer.

Personal: this week at Fayzes: Carl Begreen My parent's anniversary: how different our lives would be if they didn't stay together....

c. Acts

What we mean here is acts of kindness. Tangible demonstrations of God's love. Meet a practical need first. Someone once said: **evangelism is about show and tell and it is important to show before you tell!**

Jesus modeled this all the time.... Healed Fed them ... showed compassion and then preached.

Matt 14:14

14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Matt 15:32

32 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."

Matt 20:34

34 Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

Mark 1:41-45

41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. 43 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 44 "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 45 Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news.

Mark 6:34

34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

The early church followed this example and did the same: they fed people, met needs, even prayed for the unsaved to be healed.

Acts 2:41-47

God is looking for people who are willing to participate in acts of love and kindness to those outside of their present circle. He is looking for people who believe that a humble demonstration of love plants a seed of eternity in the hearts of others that will blossom into faith in Christ.” Steve Sjogren in Conspiracy of Kindness

Servant Evangelism = deeds of love + words of love + adequate time

This is one part of evangelism that all of us can do. We are not all wired to be able to stand on a street corner and preach the word, but we can all do something kind and benevolent and loving toward another person – whether it is giving someone money or making them a meal or offering them a ride or providing food for our food pantry or just offering to pray for them (**Ex. Video**).the idea here is that we show the love of God before talking about the message of Christ. Earning the right to be heard. And I think in the day and age we live in this is increasingly important.

And we need to see this as a form of evangelism and also remember the links of the chain illustration:

Prop: links of a chain: it takes 7.5x for the average person to come to Christ ... you might be number 2 or 3 or One might be a church service and then a meal when sick and then a concert like tonight

Ex. Engles Scale: -10 0 = salvation growth in Christ

(There is one more aspects of acts that I want to bring up here: throughout the book of Acts we see **signs and wonders** being done to bring people to Christ. This might be a healing, a demonic deliverance, a spiritual gift like prophesy or tongues An out of the ordinary display of God’s power on an unbeliever that awakened them to the reality of God and their need for Christ. I happen to believe that God still does this today. It might look like this: praying for an unbeliever to be healed or asking an unbeliever if there is something you could pray for them about There is a great book on this that I recommend: Power Evangelism by John Wimber

Ex. Tennis tournament/____ Fox

TS Now notice that it is not until the 4th way to witness that I get to “Words” because I want you to see today that witnessing is a lot more than just a verbal witness, although a verbal witness is important:

d. Words

It is necessary to use words, namely the Word of God. For you and I to get saved, we had to hear the Gospel, and that meant that either someone shared with us or we heard it

in a sermon or in a tract or book or on Tv or the radio ... but we needed the knowledge of our sin and the death of Christ and all that we learned in week one of this series.

Romans 10:14-17

Video Testimony: now I want you to hear from someone in this church that is making a difference for Christ right where he works and how he verbally witnessed to another.

I think one of the most effective ways to share is the use of a Gospel tract.

Ex. Tract – *can go over it with them or can give it to them and then follow up with what did you think.* Be sure to emphasize the Word of God.

TS the 5th way to witness and to make a difference for Christ is by inviting people to things that will help them get exposed to the Good News:

e. Invitations

This could be a church service or a special event or like tonight's concert. It could be a movie or an invitation to read something. Here is where you have to know the person and their interests and what it is that might capture their heart. And it doesn't have to be something that directly shares the Gospel. For example, I know of someone who went to see the Davinci Code with a friend and then talked about it and gave them my sermon series on it.

We are so blessed to live in a day and age when so much is at our disposal: websites and books and movies and tons of resources someone is hindered by the evolution issue: give them some solid Creation Science stuff Skeptics, refer them to Lee Strobel

TS And the final "how to" may seem odd but it is rest: in the Lord!

f. Rest

To rest in the Lord and God's amazing ability to work in people's lives, God's amazing timing to orchestrate circumstances to arouse one's attention. God's great sovereignty to put other people in their path in addition to you We can rest in that. We cannot change another person. Only God can. But He does use us in the process and what a privilege it is to be a part of God's great plan.

2 Cor. 5:20 "as though God were entreating through us"

Every day can be an adventure with God when we realize that He wants to use. We do our part, but realizing all along that God is the only One who can ultimately change a life!!!!

CCC slogan:

Effective evangelism is taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.

And the fears will come: *how will they respond if I bring this up? They might reject me.* Yes, they might, but we can rest in God's love and acceptance of us. If we share Christ and loose a friend we have gained the smile of God. *But what if they ask a question I cannot answer?* They might, but it is OK to say *I don't know, but let me investigate that and get back to you.* *And what if they show no interest?* That happens a lot, and that is when you back off, don't try to beat the apple off the tree and just pray for them and wait for their heart to soften. All along we can rest in the Lord.

Conclusion

As we wrap this up today, you know what occurs to me in this whole topic today? What a privilege we have to partner with God in witnessing to others. What a privilege it is to pray and reach out to those who are lost.

God made us each with a purpose and that purpose is to know God and make Him known. **The greatest privilege in the Christian life is to know God and to get to know Him more and more each day and have that relationship with Him. And the next greatest privilege is to make Him known.** To be a part of people entering into a personal relationship with Christ!!!!

I can't think of anything greater than to be in heaven one day and to have people come up to us to thank us for sharing Christ with them, for inviting them to church, for giving them a tract, for praying for them. God saved them and He used us in the process. Wow. Oh how blessed we are!

2 Cor. 5 "As though God were entreating through us be reconciled to God"

Pray: time to reflect, commit ourselves to this; ask for open doors; and for proper boldness

Response:

1st: McPherson's

Benediction: **2 Cor. 2:14** !!! Seek to be a sweet smell of Jesus everywhere you go!