

Introduction: Leading Someone to Jesus

Key Concept: Generously sharing Jesus

Bible Study: Romans 1:5

Introduction

Phase 1 of the disciple-making material focused on how to begin following Jesus. Each lesson was designed to take you to the gospel, the good news of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, because at Bridge we believe that the gospel is both the meat and the milk that we need in following Jesus, or as Tim Keller says, "The gospel is not just the A-B-C's of Christianity, but it is the A to Z of Christianity." Therefore, the hope is that we all have a Jesus-centered (i.e. gospel-centered) way of relating to our money, community, the sacraments, prayer, and all the central areas that we explored in Phase 1.

Now, it is time for us to consider how we can share this amazing good news - this gospel - so that our friends and neighbors receive the love, grace, and joy that we have come to know in Jesus. Paul clearly lays this out for us in Romans 1:16, "It's news I'm most proud to proclaim, this extraordinary Message of God's powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts Him" (MSG). What a Message, what a Hope, what a Loving, Rescuing, Redeeming God we have in Christ Jesus. "Through Him we received both the generous gift of his life and the urgent task of passing it on to others who receive it by entering into obedient trust in Jesus," Romans 1:5. We have received the generous gift of life from Jesus; we now, as a result, have an urgent task of passing it on to others. That is what we will be considering in Phase 2 - how we pass on this generous gift of Jesus to our friends and neighbors.

The Reasons We Don't Share Jesus

Before we look at how to pass along this generous gift of Jesus, it is important to recognize some of the reasons that keep us from sharing this generous gift, and where necessary, confess and repent.

Obstacle #1: "I don't have the gift of evangelism."

Yes, this is probably true, but irrelevant. According to the Bible, sharing the generous gift of Jesus (through evangelism) isn't something that only the "Navy Seals" of Christianity do. All of us, not an elite few, are given the ministry and message of reconciliation that comes through sharing the generous gift of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:18); all of us, not just the original 12 disciples, are called by Jesus as disciples and made into fishers of men (Matthew 4:19); all of us, not just Paul, are given "the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace" (Acts 20:24); all of us, not just those in ear

shot of Jesus' last words, are under orders to "go and make disciples of the nations, baptizing them" (Matthew 18: 19); all of us, not just some of us, are under orders to love our neighbors, and the most loving thing we can do is share the generous gift of Jesus with them (Matthew 22: 36-40).

Another way to say this is that while we may not all have the gift of evangelism, we are all called to do the work of evangelism. According to a recent survey, less than 1% of Christians feel like they have the gift of evangelism. Yet, all of us are called to the work of evangelism—that is simply what disciples do. Family members do family business and sharing the generous gift of Jesus is family business.

Obstacle #2: "I've tried, but I'm no good at it."

Some of you have tried in the past and it didn't go so well, so you think, "Why subject myself to something that I am terrible at? I'll just serve in some other way." There are 3 reasons why your previous "success" or "failure" in sharing the generous gift of Jesus shouldn't stop you from doing so in the future. First, you need to make sure you have a Biblical definition of "success" in evangelism. Success is not "winning souls to Jesus" or "saving the lost" - both of these are Jesus' work, not ours. According to Acts 1:8, the central task of evangelism is to bear witness to Jesus - the results (of salvation) are entirely up to Him. Acts 1:8 says, "And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." That is our role - to bear witness. That is evangelism. Therefore, success is simply being faithful to bear witness to Jesus, or, as we have said throughout, faithfully sharing the generous gift that you have received.

Obstacle #3: "I don't know any non-Christians."

Sometimes the longer people are Christians, and the more integrated they become in the church, the fewer relationships they have with non-Christians. I was having a beer with a follower of Jesus who felt this way and I asked him to consider picking up a new hobby that would bring him into contact with non-Christians. He looked at me and said, "Yeah, but the only reason I would pick up this hobby is....." He paused, then smiled as it dawned on him, "the only reason I would pick up this hobby is.....so that people meet Jesus." "Precisely," I said. "That is what following Jesus is all about. You do things you otherwise wouldn't do so that others meet Jesus and Jesus gets glory. What could be greater in life than doing something with one intent: the glory of Christ! Going to the laundromat to meet people while your clothes are being washed for the glory of Christ; joining Rotary to generously share Jesus; joining a play group to generously share Jesus; attending a neighborhood meeting to love your neighbors; building relationships with co-workers for the glory of Christ. Hopefully, our lesson on "Loving Your Neighbors" has helped and all of you are praying weekly for open doors of opportunity to love your neighbors in word and deed.

Obstacle #4: "I'm too busy."

In Charles E. Hummel's book entitled The Tyranny of the Urgent, he states, "Our greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important." So many urgent things invade our lives every day crowding out important things like the Great

Commandment - loving Jesus and loving our neighbors. And, as my mentor often says, "We don't love our neighbors to share Jesus with them, we share Jesus with them because we love them." Sharing the generous gift of Jesus is the most important, most loving thing we can do for our neighbors.

Bradford and I certainly struggle from this too. In order to combat the tyranny of the urgent, we have found it really helpful to have a weekly meeting to make sure that our hearts and our calendars are in line with this most important value of sharing the generous gift of Jesus with our neighbors. Specifically, here are some ways that we're seeking to bring our hearts and calendars in line with this value (and please don't be guilted into copying our application - this should look different for you):

1. We have a weekly meeting to talk about how we can love our neighbors on our 3x5 card that we're praying for.
2. Our goal is to have 2 non-Christians for dinner every month.
3. Stephen's goal: Share the gospel with 3 people a week.
4. We both try to pray for the salvation of our 3x5 card daily.
5. Missional living - meaning all that we do (play group, going to the park, working out, kids games, etc.) is living out the mission of God, which means being intentional and prayerful with the relationships that are built in moving them towards Jesus.

Obstacle #5: "I have no clue how."

Most people simply don't have a clue where to begin. Not only are they not taught, but they have never seen this modeled. Hopefully, this won't be a problem as you journey together as a group.

Obstacle #6: "I'm not a good speaker or very persuasive."

Yes, but this confuses the central gospel reality that God uses the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Corinthians 1:26). Moses didn't feel like he was very eloquent or persuasive either, but God chose him to make a speech to Pharaoh that would decide the fate of millions of people; David was the the youngest son, a shepherd boy, who became a murderer and adulterer, but God chose him to be the greatest King Israel ever had; Mary was poor and a virgin, but God chose her to birth His son; Paul was trying to stamp out the church of Jesus, but God chose him to be the prominent architect of the church of Jesus. God doesn't need "all star" evangelists to bring people to salvation, but he does want you in all of your weakness to step out and generously share the gift that was generously given to you.

Obstacle #7: "I'm afraid of what it will do to our relationship."

Politics and religion are the two subjects that are universally off limits. We are afraid of what sharing Jesus will do to a relationship in some cases. "What will they think of me? I don't want them to think I am pushy or one of those Jesus-freaks." And, quite honestly, we all want to be liked, but more important than being liked is being faithful and being loving. Let God sort out how they will "feel" about you remembering that the most loving thing you can do is to eventually share the generous gift of Jesus. Think about it. If we knew a store that gave away joy, peace,

and love, would we really be loving our neighbors if we didn't tell them about such a store?

Obstacle #8: "My relationship with Jesus is a private thing."

No, a relationship with Jesus isn't a private thing. It is personal, yes, but it most certainly is not private. Satan wants it to be private so that we are isolated; Jesus wants our relationship to be public and deeply embedded in community. His desire for us is to be freely and openly sharing our failures (so our community can pray for us) and our successes (so that He gets glory).

Methods for Sharing Jesus

All of us are guilty of allowing these things (and others) to keep us from generously sharing the gift of Jesus, but now let's think about some different ways to begin to change. Here are a few ways that we can generously share Jesus in the days to come:

1. Inviting to church

According to studies, the number one way people become Christians is through a friend inviting them to church. Wisdom and prayerful love is required in knowing when (and how often) to invite your neighbors, but know that, as your pastor, I'm committed to making our services and messages accessible and relevant to your non-Christian friends. I welcome your feedback in helping us continue to make our church a place to which you love inviting your neighbors.

2. Inviting to Bridge group

Many non-Christians are hesitant to come to a church, but they are longing for an authentic community. It is our hope that each of our Bridge groups provide an authentic community where believers and non-believers are serving and loving together. As is often said, our community groups should allow people to belong before they believe. If there are no non-Christians in your community group, then it would be a worthwhile discussion to think through why that is the case and how that can change.

3. Inviting to serve

We should constantly be drawing in other non-Christians who have a heart for renewing the community. Hopefully you can use some of our mercy, justice, and community development opportunities as a way to begin generously sharing the gift of Jesus.

4. Sharing your story

Your story isn't debatable. It is your story. And it is probably the most powerful way for you to bear witness to Jesus. Developing a 5 minute version of your testimony with a bridge to explore Jesus is one of the best ways to generously share the gift of Jesus.

Here are 2 sample outlines for your story:

Life Transformation

*What my life looked like before I met Jesus

*How I met Jesus

*How Jesus has changed me

Impact of Jesus

*Share an example of your sin that separated you from God

*Share how Jesus loved you, as a sinner, and how His love changed you

*Share how Jesus' Spirit (Holy Spirit) has given you power and victory over your sin

5. Sharing A Gospel Presentation (see Lesson 1 - The Gospel)

On some occasions, you may have a chance to share the gospel in one sitting. Knowing Lesson 1 is really helpful for this.

6. Inviting to Curious Discussion Forum

One way for you to generously share the gift of Jesus is by inviting your friends or neighbors to come with you to one of our Curious Discussion Forums hosted by Pastor Stephen.

7. Inviting to Explore the Life of Jesus (Mark Study)

Over the next 6 weeks, we will be learning how to generously share the gift of Jesus by exploring the life of Jesus through the book of Mark.

BRIDGE QUESTIONS

How do you get people to explore the Life of Jesus with you (in a Mark study) over lunch or coffee? Share your story with a bridge to explore the life of Jesus.

Spiritual Journey: We have been friends for awhile, but I have never heard about your spiritual journey. Tell me about your spiritual journey and the things that shaped you growing up. After you listen, you say, "I would love to hear more about your journey and also share with you about my journey. In fact, the person who shaped my journey more than any other is Jesus. What if we read through the book of Mark together for 6 weeks so that we could learn from His journey, my journey, and yours?"

Far from God: Do you feel far from God or near to God? I think probably the best way to address feeling far from God (or solidify that you are close to God) is by reading through the book of Mark because this book provides an answer to how we draw near to God. Would you be interested in meeting with me for 6 weeks to talk about it?

Hope: I believe that Jesus has the power to do for you what He has done for me (and far more) and fill you with hope, joy, and peace. Would you be interested in exploring the life of Jesus with me for the next 6 weeks by reading through the book of Mark?

More?: Guys - conversation will inevitably drift to sports/work/food.

Ladies - conversation will inevitably drift to relationships. I would love for us to get together for six weeks to talk about more than just these things, but to talk about spiritual things and how God relates to relationships and work and all the things we normally talk about. As your friend, I really value your perspective and want to learn from you and where you are on your journey, and I'll share my perspective as a Christian. In fact, it would be helpful to get God's perspective, which is why I suggest we read through the book of Mark together and discuss it for 6 weeks.

Creating an interest to read Mark: Mark is essentially a biography about one of the most influential men that ever walked the planet. Obviously, Jesus is recognized as one of the greatest experts on spirituality that you will find, so it makes sense for us to use him as a reference point. Also, the good news is that Mark is a really short book. You can read less than three chapters (which is usually only a page or two of reading) every week and we'll have read the whole book in 6 weeks.

Individual Study and Group Discussion

Study and Discussion Questions

1. Write out your story using one of the sample outlines for “sharing your story” on pg. 5. Note that this should not be more than one page, single-spaced (with a normal font!). Share this story with your group AND conclude with one of the bridge questions.
2. What obstacle did you most identify with that keeps you from generously sharing the gift of Jesus? Is there another obstacle that keeps you from generously sharing Jesus?
3. Discuss your plan to keep the busyness of life (i.e. the tyranny of the urgent) in check, so that you can engage in this urgent and important task of generously sharing the gift of Jesus.
4. Is there anyone that you sense the Holy Spirit leading you to invite to explore Jesus with you in a Mark Study?
5. Practice the bridge questions together as a group.