

The One Thing: Knowing, Living, and Sharing the Gospel

Declare! Your 8 to 15: Who has God put in your circle?

Last week Nathan gave us some great tools for sharing the gospel. You may think his presentation was focused on going into the mall and stopping strangers. Well, it definitely can be used very effectively with strangers, or acquaintances. The point is, when we have the opportunity, we want to be ready with some tools that help us know what to say when God calls on us to speak.

Today is focused on sharing the gospel with those you do know.

What percentage of people attend church for anything besides weddings or funerals?

What percentage of people in Ventura County know a Christian?

What percentage of those people have heard the gospel from one of those Christians?

The reality is that most people come to faith in Christ because of a relationship with a Christian. Usually, it is because we demonstrate a relationship with God that they are hungry for.

This falls short because:

We don't demonstrate anything they are missing.

We often don't say anything because we believe they don't want to hear about God.

Dr. Thom Reiner and his research team of 17 men and women, did a research survey that covered three years and all fifty states, and every demographic of the population.

Here are some of the findings of this survey: "Ten Surprises About the Unchurched"

Many feel guilty about not going to church, but feel they would be out of place.

Most would go to church if invited, but only 2% of Christians ask them to come.

Very few have had anyone share how to become a Christian.

Most have a positive view of pastors and the church.

Many have a church background, but stopped going at some point because it did not seem relevant to their lives.

Most don't want you knocking on their door to talk about Jesus, but most would like to have a genuine and sincere relationship with a Christian.

Many are more concerned about the spiritual well-being of their children than themselves.

What does this tell us?

We probably believe things that are holding us back from sharing the gospel.

Relationship is the key to reaching the lost and changing the world.

Even missionaries, those who go to tribal groups, and those who go to cities in foreign countries see people come to Christ through relationships with those they go to. It is rare for large evangelistic meetings to be the primary way a church is planted.

How about changing the world? Can we change the world thru the gospel?

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

So, what do we do with this?

First, we want to be pro-active and on purpose to see the gospel bear fruit in our relationships.

Second, we trust God to do the work. In a sense we relax, knowing:

That God will use the relationships he has put in our lives, and we don't need to figure out who we should share the gospel with. We don't have to go find them.

Our job is to have genuine relationships, caring for the people in our circle, and waiting on God to lead us and open their hearts to be ready to hear truth.

Sharing within your existing relationships is not a program that has to be managed, it flows naturally out of the Christian lifestyle. As you daily grow in your faith, you have a testimony of God's love and goodness, His power to change your life in amazing ways.

So, how do we become more on purpose in seeing the power of the Gospel in our relationships?

- 1. Identify who God has given you relationship with today. (Ask the Lord to lead you.)**
 - Relatives: Spouse, children, extended family
 - Co-workers: Those you know, not the whole company, etc.
 - Neighbors: Focus on the ones you already know, and be ready when God grows this list.
 - People with shared activities: School, sports, hobbies.
 - People you see regularly: The grocery clerk, the waitress, your hair dresser, etc.

- 2. Move your relationships beyond the weather.**
 - Care about them.
 - Get to know their needs, desires, problems. Ask good questions.
 - Ask them if you can pray for them, and then pray for them.
 - Pray for God to prepare their hearts.
 - Pray for God to help you be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit and the faith to follow His lead.

3. Prepare to give an answer to those who ask.

1Peter 3:13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” 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, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

How do we prepare?

Know the key truths of the Gospel and how it changes our lives.

Make this a lifelong endeavor. Know that you probably still have aspects of the gospel to learn or to even correct in your thinking.

Consider your testimony every day.

What is God doing in your life today?

How is He showing Himself powerful in your day?

What is He teaching you? How has He corrected your thinking?

How has He directed your path? What difference did it make?

What do you love more today about God, your Father, your King and Lord?

Start each day asking God to direct you and make you sensitive to the leading of the Spirit.

Expect Him to open your eyes to relationships and people’s needs.

Expect Him to lead you to go beyond the way you would “normally” talk about God and what He is doing in your life and heart.

Discussion Questions:

1. Survey the group to see who came to faith thru a relationship?
Why is hearing the gospel thru as relationship often more meaningful than other ways?
2. What survey results were surprising to you? How might knowing how the unchurched help you prepare to share your testimony and the gospel with them?
3. What preparations do you think you could do easily, and which are more difficult?
How might you overcome the difficulty to actually prepare in those ways?

Homework:

1. Start putting together your list of 8 to 15, identifying at least five people that you can start praying for.
2. Review the ways to prepare and pick one thing to start working on this week.